

Shortage and bounty: cosmological categories and subjectivity in festivals of the holy ghost among Portuguese immigrants in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Abstract

This article explores the Azorean immigrants' native cosmology such as it is expressed in the festivals of the Holy Ghost in Rio de Janeiro/Brazil. In this cosmology, the relationship of men with the Holy ghost is crucial. Human beings are not defined by their "basic needs", as they are with western cosmology and anthropology in the interpretation of Marshall Sahlins,¹ but by their reciprocal relationship with the Holy ghost. It is only to the extent that they move away from this relationship that they can then be exposed to needs, hunger, sickness, shortage. The Holy ghost thus performs a fundamental mediating role: he is the mediator between heaven and earth, between the soul and the body, between God and men, soul and body, hunger and taste, containment and excess, shortage and bounty. In this cosmology the category "work" has a pervasive role. It appears simultaneously as an economic category and as a moral and religious one. It is through intense and disciplined work that shortage becomes bounty, where honor is maintained, and grace is granted. It is through this intermediary that the individual and collective self-consciousness is formed, and a balanced relationship is achieved between the soul and the body, between the supra-mundane and the mundane.

Keywords: religion, rituals, ethnicity, Azorean festivals, food, immigration

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The brotherhoods of the holy ghost and the Azores House¹

The objective of this article is to explore the native cosmology of Azorean immigrants in Rio de Janeiro / Brazil, focusing on some categories that articulate their social, moral and religious relationships between human beings and the Holy Ghost. Our purpose is to describe and analyze these categories and the social and ritual contexts in which they are used, namely the social organization of the brotherhoods and the ritual context of the Holy Ghost Festivals.

Let's begin by the brotherhoods.

Founded and currently run by immigrants from the Azores,² catholic religious brotherhoods worship the holy ghost in various neighborhoods and suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There are brotherhoods in Vila Isabel, in Tijuca, Catumbi, Engenho de Dentro

¹This article is a result of field research into the Azorian festivals of the Holy ghost carried out in two national contexts of Azorian immigration: United States (New England) between 1999 and 2000; and Brazil (Rio de Janeiro) between 2001 and 2004; as well as a brief stay in 2004 at Ilha Terceira, one of the nine islands which make up the Azores archipelago and where the festivals of the Holy ghost Holy ghost are especially important. Although our data refers principally to the Brazilian context, we have made use of the data we gathered in the United States and from the Azores. We would like to thank our Azorian friends who, throughout the research, in Brazil, the United States and on Ilha Terceira, received us attentively and with generosity, especially Álvaro and Laura Mendonça; Albino Alves (in memoriam) and Magali; Francisco Rocha (in memoriam) and Lucília; Judite Toste; Liduino and Fátima Areias; Gilberto and Conceição Costa; João Luis (in memoriam) and Alizalda Evangelho; Ramiro and Etelvina; to the directors and members of the Catumbi brotherhood, especially Valter and Suely; Paulinho and Bete; Zeca; Dona Rosa; and to the directors and members of Azores House in Rio de Janeiro. This research received financial support from CNPq, CAPES, FAPERJ and FUJB.

²In Rio de Janeiro, each brotherhood is organized in a bureaucratic structure, in which the "provider" (or president) has the highest position; followed by the members of the board (social director, treasurer, director of religious matters, etc); and the group of "brothers".

(Outeiro Brotherhood), Encantado, in the Fluminense hinterland (Olinda) and one in the Engenho neighborhood, in the city of Niterói.³ Of these, the oldest is probably that of Outeiro, in the suburb of Engenho de Dentro. The Azores House headquarters is situated in Tijuca, next to Largo da Segunda-Feira and it also has its own brotherhood. Some brotherhoods have probably been in existence since the end of the nineteenth century (such as that of Outeiro); whereas Azores House was founded in the twentieth century, at the beginning of the fifties.⁴

The collective life of these immigrants in Rio de Janeiro revolves largely around these two institutional poles. On one side is their religious identity, and on the other, their cultural one. In one of these spaces, they represent themselves as "devotees of the Holy ghost"; and on the other, as "Azorians" and bearers of a certain "cultural heritage" expressed ideologically by the category of "Azorianness".⁵

³Some of our oldest informants mentioned the existence of a rich brotherhood in Estácio, during the first half of the twentieth century but which had ceased all activities. When asked why it had ceased all activities, the informants were unanimous in saying that "the Church took over". They were obviously referring to the Catholic church and were expressing the ambiguous and tense nature of the relationship with the Church: the brotherhoods seek autonomy, while the Church seeks to control and discipline them.

⁴Azores House in Rio de Janeiro, a "Luso-Brazilian non-profit association", was founded in July 1952. Its web site states that among its objectives is that of "...maintaining the Azorian community in Rio de Janeiro united, always maintaining the Azorean traditions..." (<http://www.casadosacores>, October 2005). Besides Rio de Janeiro, there are Azores Houses in other cities such as Porto Alegre, Santa Catarina and São Paulo. National and international meetings of Azores Houses are regularly promoted.

⁵One important contribution to the anthropological understanding of this category and to a bibliography on the topic is certainly Lacerda.² For the discussion of "ethnicity" among Portuguese immigrants, the studies by Feldman-Bianco^{3,4} are fundamental. The contributions by the Portuguese anthropologist João Leal^{5,6} are especially relevant. Among Azorian intellectuals, Vitorino Nemésio is notable as a formulator of the category of "açorianidade".⁷

These brotherhoods historically establish strong ties with the population of their respective neighborhoods, and are a part of the local collective memory, and there is no very great distinction between “Azorians” and “Brazilians”;⁶ but the Azores House transcends the particular and local identities of the brotherhoods, gathering its members at a spatially and symbolically common point, markedly expressing their identity as “Azorians”.

The extensive web of collective annual events (religious festivals, social festivals, meetings, commemorative lunches and dinners) put on and shared by this community of immigrants necessarily goes through either one institution or the other. Among these events, one stands out in its importance in the life of this community: the annual celebration of festivals in worship of the holy ghost.⁷

These festivals are celebrated by the brotherhoods, which, in relation to Azores House, occupy a closer affective link in the representations of these immigrants.⁸ When they tell of their history and their arrival in Rio de Janeiro, they always refer to the experience of going to one of these festivals affectionately (some of them are cited constantly, such as that of Engenhoca, in Niterói, and to that of Praça Sete, in Vila Izabel) where they had the opportunity of establishing or re-establishing contacts with the social network of Azorians in Rio de Janeiro. Naturally, for analytical purposes, we have deliberately exaggerated the distinctions between one institutional space and another. In fact, both the brotherhoods and Azores House are simultaneously channels of Azorian immigrants’ religious and cultural aspects of identity. Azores House, as we have already indicated, have their own brotherhood; and in its turn, each brotherhood shows the Azores flag at the altar, along with the flags of Portugal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and, obviously, the flag of the holy ghost; and in their architecture, some reproduce traces of the “impérios”⁹ in the Azores.

⁶The brotherhoods in Rio de Janeiro are known by the names of the neighborhoods in which they are situated. For example, the “Catumbi Brotherhood of the Holy ghost”, founded according to some members in the thirties, but registered in the records office in 1942 (Statutes 1942). The other brotherhoods are known colloquially as “Praça Sete brotherhood (Vila Isabel); “Encantado”; “Engenhoca”; “Engenho Novo”; etc. In the United States context, in New England, there are more than a hundred brotherhoods. In Bristol, Rhode Island, where we concentrated our field work in the period from 1999 to 2000, we found two brotherhoods.

⁷There is a vast amount of literature which has been produced about the festivals of the Holy ghost. Folklore researchers;⁷⁻¹⁰ historians;^{11,12} anthropologists;^{5,13-16} have produced an extensive bibliography on the occurrence of these festivals in Europe, in the Azores archipelago, on the Island of Madeira, in Brazil, in the United States and in Canada. In spite of the important contributions, they bring in terms of information, the folklore studies (the most numerous among the three categories of studies we outlined), as well as some of the studies of history which restrict themselves to a purely descriptive perspective, these were quite rightly criticized for their ethnocentric assumptions with which they were conducted. Thus, anthropological and modern historical studies have displaced their attention from the “cultural traits” which distinguish these festivals, as well as their process of diffusion, to the social and symbolic functions which they perform in certain societies and historical periods. Within this context, recent studies carried out by anthropologists and by historians have focused on the celebration in specific socio-cultural contexts: in the Azores;^{5,15} in Brazil;¹¹⁻¹³ and in the United States.^{14,17} The methodological perspective of these studies has predominantly been monographic, leaving to the background the possibilities of comparative investigation raised by this phenomenon, or even excluding them altogether.

⁸It is worth noting that most of our interviewees were from Ilha Terceira. Apparently, in Rio de Janeiro people from this island predominate, in contrast to São Paulo, where immigrants from the Island of São Miguel predominate. Although worship of the Holy ghost is common throughout the archipelago, on Ilha Terceira it takes on special proportions.

⁹“Impérios” (“empires”) are small architectural structures which play an important role during the Holy ghost celebrations to the extent that they are seen as the symbolic house of the Holy ghost.

So, there is a continuity between the religious aspects and the cultural aspects. Our purpose in this article is to describe and analyze some of the categories of thought used by the Azorians which allows mediation between these dimensions. These categories also enable the social and symbolic articulation of this population at the local level (of the neighborhood, of the city), as well as at non-local levels, as the brotherhoods, but principally Azores House, establish formal and informal ties with similar institutions at the national and transnational levels.¹⁰

The time (and the spaces) of the festivals

The annual celebration of the festivals of the holy ghost is an important part of the history of the city and has existed approximately since the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, through to the end of the monarchy with which it was strongly identified, it took on large proportions involving practically all social classes. With the proclamation of the Republic, the festival was banned. Up to this time, its repercussions on the population of the city was such that intellectuals even proposed to choose it as a national symbol.¹²

The festivals of the holy ghost celebrated by Azorian brotherhoods apparently date from the end of the nineteenth century and have remained strongly associated with the identity of this segment of immigrants in Rio de Janeiro up to the present day. In a certain fashion, the Azorian brotherhoods gave continuity to the festivals on a local scale and in small proportions which were banned by the Brazilian national state. They obviously take part in these festivals in neighborhoods where there are Azorians immigrants alongside the local Brazilian population, together with other immigrants of different origins, whether European Portuguese or Italians. But the Azorian participation is intimately linked with the individual and collective identities. For this population of Azorians and their descendants, the festivals perform specific functions and meanings, totalizing and symbolically distinguishing their historical and collective experience.

In telling of the origins of the festival, Azorians include it within Portuguese history, placing it mythically in the reign of Don Diniz (1261-1325). The myths of origin also place the foundation of the festival in the sixteenth century at the hand of the saint Queen Isabel (1271-1336), the wife of Don Diniz, who fulfilled a pledge to the holy ghost to end the wars between her husband and her son. The fulfillment of this pledge was to be in the form of wide and generous distribution of food and drink to the poor. In some versions, the Queen crowned the poor with her own crown.¹¹ It was noted that the religious inspiration of the saint queen was said to be the Franciscan monk Joachim de Fiore (1135-1202), whose messianic ideas pointed to the existence of three ages of the world: the age of the Father, the age of the Son and the age of the Holy ghost. With the third age of the world, a new era would be known, and the realm of the Holy ghost would bring peace and bounty to all. The “time of the festivals” (in the Azores, the “time of empires”)¹² is a category used by the Azorians to distinguish that part of the annual cycle in which festivals of the holy ghost are held. They are celebrated annually from Easter Sunday and during fifty days until Pentecostal Sunday. This time is marked distinctly by a series of spatial, behavioral, emotional and physiological alterations, using material objects and which symbolically establishes a delicate and progressive separation in relation to everyday, profane time dedicated to mundane activities.

¹⁰There are national and international meetings of Azores Houses held regularly in various Brazilian states and in various countries.

¹¹In the North American context, this myth is quite present among Azorian immigrants, who frequently have an adolescent girl dressed with a cloak, scepter and the Saint Queen Isabel’s crown in their processions. I am still gathering versions of the origin myth.

¹²See Leal¹¹ in this regard.

During this time of the festivals, social and symbolic exchanges are intensified between human beings (rich and poor, men and women, neighbors, godparents, relation, friends etc.); and between them and the holy ghost (“divino”).¹³

This new quality of time has significant consequences on the individual and collective life of the faithful. Exchange is intensified, space is condensed, meetings in the brotherhood chapel or in the houses of the devotees are more frequent. In a certain way it could be said that the people are separated from an old time, from a time which is limited in terms of resources and are progressively incorporated into a new time which is marked by “bounty” and by the intensive encounter among mankind and between mankind and the holy ghost. The festivals thus promote a collective passage, approaching something like a ritual of the calendar,¹⁸ and inaugurating a new time under the total power of the Holy ghost. There is an intense mobilization of resources in this passage: objects (food, clothes, candles, altars, prepared dishes, drinks and money) and people circulate intensively.¹⁴

In the urban context of Rio de Janeiro, the brotherhoods situated in different neighborhoods of the city are visited by many people in this period, especially by members of other brotherhoods located in other neighborhoods. Residents of the same neighborhood who are not Azorians and who are not necessarily affiliated to a local brotherhood, are brought closer together through the festival of the holy ghost. On the Saturday immediately before the principal day of the festival (Pentecostal Sunday), residents of a given neighborhood (specifically slum-dwellers and those in the poor areas of the neighborhood) seek out the brotherhood for the traditional distribution of rump of beef and of bread. On the same day of the festival, Pentecostal Sunday, the residents in general take part in the activities put on by the brotherhood: mass, dinner, games etc. It is the festival which in this period brings all the people together socially (Azorians, members of the brotherhood and residents’ neighborhood in general), integrating them into a “collective memory” of the neighborhood.¹⁹

Although the activities of preparation of the festival are carried out throughout the year prior to the festival, on the night of Pentecostal Sunday (when the seven brothers who are to be responsible for the festivals in the coming year are drawn),¹⁵ it is as of Easter Sunday of the next year that activities are intensified and gain a

stronger ritual dimension. During the seven consecutive weeks after the night of Easter Sunday, seven brothers and their families will keep the crown of the holy ghost for one week (made of silver and with the figure of a dove, and accompanied by the scepter, also in silver). During these weeks, each family chosen will receive other “brothers” from their brotherhood, as well as from other brotherhoods and people from the neighborhood in their house, to pray the rosary or novenas in worship of the Holy ghost.

The festival exists, always, through a vast web of family, godparent, friendship and neighborly relationships, integrating, in the case of the Brazilian context, Azorians and non-Azorians as followers of the holy ghost.¹⁶ It can be said that the individuals take part in the festival to the degree in which they are in some way within a network of family and personal relationships. The social units of participation are “families”: nuclear families and extended families, plus godparents, neighbors and friends. Each member of the brotherhood participates in the festival as a father, grandparent, son, brother, uncle, in-law etc. It is as the head of a family, occupying the center of a network of familial relationships that he takes on the running of the festival.

Throughout the whole year, the families picked to look after the crown prepare themselves to celebrate the Holy ghost in their week and to take part in the celebrations on the weeks of the other “brothers”. This ritual process demands the expenditure of much money: the more someone spends on their week, the more prestige they obtain from the community. The money is spent, for example, in the buying of the necessary ingredients and with the work of the preparation of the beaten dough (a bread which is typical to the Azores); in the acquisition of meat which is distributed and of that which is served on the Sunday of the Holy ghost; in buying the ingredients of the “soup of the Holy ghost”;¹⁷ in the snacks which are offered to guests after the prayers recited in the houses of the faithful; in the decoration of their house; in the preparation of the altar etc. The brotherhood offers the traditional soup of the Holy ghost on Pentecostal Sunday to the whole community of brothers, to members of the other brotherhoods in the city, and to the whole community of the neighborhood. The distribution of meat and bread is done in huge quantities to the poor of the community of the area (in some cases this may be as much as five tons of meat). On this day of the distribution, the sidewalks near the brotherhoods are full of people waiting in line waiting for the meat and of bread which is distributed.

The “time of the festivals” contrasts with the time before and after in terms of the intensity of activities, of the dedication to the “work for the Holy ghost”, of the frequent and intensive social gatherings, of the lunches, snacks and dinners, of the distribution of bread and

¹³“Divino” is the abbreviated Portuguese term to designate the “Holy ghost”, used frequently by both our Azorian and Brazilian interviewees. Whereas Azorians usually refer to the Holy ghost also in a personal way as “Mr. holy ghost”.

¹⁴The analytical perspective explored here is largely lacking in relation to studies of ritual carried out in the Brazilian context by Professor Roberto DaMatta, whose seminal contributions have had a notable impact on Brazilian anthropology in the last decades of the twentieth century.²⁰

¹⁵In the context of Azorian immigration to the United States and especially to New England, the terms for these members of the brotherhood for the “mordomo” and “domingas” types. They are distinct from those who take on the general running of the festivals each year (the “mordomo”), is responsible for the seventh week which culminates in the Pentecostal Sunday. He is hierarchically above the “domingas”, who are six in number and who are responsible for the six prior weeks, before that which precedes the Pentecostal Sunday. “Mordomos” and “domingas” are chosen by lottery. On being chosen, each “dominga” keeps the crown of the Holy ghost for one week. The “mordomo” keeps the crown throughout the year. In the US context, a “mordomo” spends about US\$10,000 annually to pay for the festival; a “dominga” spends about US\$3,000. In Rio de Janeiro, I did not see these distinctions: the category of “brothers” covers all the participants who make themselves available to be picked to look after the crown and be responsible for the festival during one of the seven weeks between Easter and the Pentecost. But there is a hierarchy between the first and the seventh person picked, with him keeping the crown throughout the year.

¹⁶In the United States context there is a clearer demarcation between Azorians and Americans who take part in the festival. Some of our interviewees noted that in the US context, the language is a factor which intensifies the approximation between Azorians; in the Brazilian context where everyone speaks the same language, the frontiers between Azorians and Brazilians are much more fluid.

¹⁷The “soup of the Holy ghost” is ritually valued and occupies a central place in the dinner (or lunch) served on Pentecostal Sunday. The rump of beef (the main ingredient) is cooked together with other meats: chicken, sausage, cow’s blood, liver, lard, heart. All these meats are then taken out and cut up and later served. Cabbage and bread are then added to the broth. The soup is served in silver soup dishes and is the first dish of the dinner (or lunch). The soup is followed by the rump of beef and other meats. In the Catumbi brotherhood, approximately three hundred people are served (sometimes more) and, the members of the brotherhood say “there is always more”. It is once again noted that these meals must be of “bounty”. For the context of the Azores archipelago, there is an extensive and careful ethnography of the culinary activities in the festivals of the Holy ghost in Leal.⁵

meat to the poor, and of the religious activities of prayers, processions and mass, daily throughout the seven consecutive weeks culminating in Pentecostal Sunday. We could perhaps say that while the everyday time is marked by the horizontal and by relative dispersion among the members of the brotherhoods, the time of the festivals is progressively displaced to the vertical, to the extent that the emphasis is then on the concentration among the “brothers” and on the relationships of exchange between human beings and the Holy ghost, between the mundane and the supra-mundane.

The principal spaces of the festival are the brotherhood, the homes of the members of the brotherhood, and the neighborhood Catholic church where the mass is held, followed by the coronation ceremony on Pentecostal Sunday. The space is redefined as a function of the approximation in relation to the sacred and of the renewal of the world. The activities are concentrated alternately in the brotherhood, in the homes of the brothers, in the neighborhood Catholic church, and through the “processions”, which on their route trace out the physical and symbolic distances between these locations, joining them into a whole.⁵

If we accompany the movement of the crown of the Holy ghost (the central object of the festivals, alongside the scepter and the flag of the Holy ghost) throughout the year, we get a chance to perceive the ritually important spaces of the festival. After having stayed for a year in the house of the family chosen in first place in the draw on the night of Pentecostal Sunday, the crown is moved on Easter Sunday of the following year to the brotherhood; it will then circulate during the next six weeks until Pentecostal Sunday, through the houses of the other six brothers who are picked, being kept on specially prepared altars in important spaces in these homes. On Pentecostal Sunday, it will be moved to the neighborhood church (or in many cases to the chapel of the brotherhood itself), in which, after the mass, the coronation ceremony is held, which is always given by a priest. It is then taken to another place in the brotherhood (or to the home of the brother picked in seventh place), where the lunch or dinner of the Holy ghost is to be given, and the “soup of the Holy ghost” is ritually served. Each physical movement of the crown is accompanied ritually by applause and intense expressions of gladness and of welcoming the Holy ghost. While the “soup of the Holy ghost” is served,¹⁸ the faithful charged with serving the guests enthusiastically shout: “Long live the Holy ghost”. The guests repeat the expression, intensifying the atmosphere of exaltation.

The holy ghost and human beings

The celebration of these festivals rings a very clear bell with a well-known statement by Marcel Mauss who said:

“One of the first groups of beings with which man had contact and who, by definition, were there to be contacted, were, above all, those of the spirits of the dead and the gods. So, it is they who are the real proprietors of things and of the goods of the world. It was with them that it was most necessary to exchange, and it was more dangerous to not exchange. Inversely, however, it was with them that it was easiest and safest to exchange.”²¹

In the ideology of the believers, the festival is held to please the Holy ghost, in which someone makes a “pledge” or when they make

their intent to repay some “grace” received. These are native notions through which the believers express the relationship of exchange with the Holy ghost. This relationship is interpreted in the categories of giving and giving back, symbolically establishing a permanent relationship with the Holy ghost. The individual and collective work involved in the activities of preparation and of holding the festivals must be interpreted as being a part of this intense and permanent circuit of exchange.

Thus, the categories of giving and giving back extend all the actions and modalities of work carried out by the members of the community of believers throughout the year in a diffuse manner. All the actions which come to contribute to the holding of the festival directly or indirectly (whether by the men, women, young people, the children or the elderly) are classified as “work for the Holy ghost”. Obviously, there are those who work more and those who work less; but the whole set of actions carried out acquire this status of work directed to the Holy ghost.

The work is carried out throughout the year during the interval between the end of one festival and the start of the in the following year. But the activities clearly intensify as Holy week approaches. In the months before Easter, some of the members of the board of the brotherhood (exclusively men) go through the various neighborhoods of the city (the southern and northern zones, the suburbs, the Rio hinterland and Niterói) seeking contributions from the believers for the festivals of the Holy ghost.¹⁹ They go to butchers especially, as this commercial sector of the city was, before the time when supermarkets came to the fore, mostly controlled by Azorian immigrants. The devotion to the Holy ghost by butchers of Azorian origin provides a powerful source of funds. In general, this activity is designated by the expression of the “butchers’ run”. Contributions are usually in money, and this is turned into kilos of meat. In this manner, a believer may offer fifty kilos of meat or ten kilos of bread. These contributions are especially important not just in the preparation of the soup of the Holy ghost on Pentecostal Sunday, but particularly for the distribution of meat and bread made on the Saturday of the week prior to that Sunday. The believer who contributes will receive invitations to the festival of the Holy ghost in exchange, and which he may attend or not. In general, they are accompanied by their family. It is important to stress that it is the fact that many people (from various locations in the city) being seen to be involved directly or indirectly in these extensive relationships of giving and of giving back, which is the measure of the relationship between man and the Holyghost.

Praying to the Holy ghost

The relationship between the Holy ghost and men is also measured by the prayers, especially when they are intensified during the seven weeks running up to the Pentecost²⁰. During the seven days of each one of the weeks between Easter and the Pentecost, the brothers who were picked the year before open their homes to receive the faithful who want to pray and make pledges at the altar where the crown of

¹⁹In New England (United States), the members of the brotherhoods run the same activity. They classify it as “selling food parcels”. A believer buys one or more “food parcels” and in the week before the festival receives two kilograms of meat in their home, one twist of beaten dough and a liter of wine. There are “food parcels for brothers” and “food parcels for ranchers”. The latter are more expensive and involve wealthier people, especially those identified with raising cattle.

²⁰In the words of one of our interviewees: “...it is mandatory to pray a rosary every day of that week to the crown in your house. The rosary is not a normal one you see in churches because it is sung and is directed towards the Holy ghost. Every day. From Sunday, when we get [the crown] through until Saturday. On the next Sunday it goes to another home and is prayed to in another home.”

¹⁸The “soup of the Holy ghost”, depending on the resources of the brotherhood, may be served to more than 2,000 people in one night. The space of the brotherhood where the soup is served is taken up by shifts, attending to between 300 and 500 people depending on the dimensions of the facilities. The emphasis at this moment is on bounty: everyone must be served, and the leftovers are distributed among the poor or are taken to hospitals and orphanages.

the Holy ghost is kept. The prayers in some cases may also take place in the chapel of the brotherhood, instead of at the home of the brother. The prayers are directed to the crown which, from the native point of view, is represented as the Holy ghost itself.

The prayers held in the houses of the brothers or in the brotherhood chapels are conducted by the women. They also prepare the altar where the crown of the Holy ghost and the scepter are placed. The altar of the Holy ghost is generally in the sitting room of the homes in a prominent place, and it receives intensive preparation. With it being the central point of a sacred place in the brother's home, the altar is generally given a special light. The crown of the holy ghost is always illuminated.

The prayers to the holy ghost are held from nine o'clock at night, every day of the week from Monday through to Sunday. Thursday is a special day of the week on which a larger number of brothers take part in the prayers in the brotherhood chapel or in the house of the one of the brothers. Although the collective prayer is scheduled for that time, anyone can go at any time to pray individually to the Holy ghost, as during that week the brother's home will be permanently open for these visits. The nighttime prayers are always collective. At nine o'clock sharp, the housewife rings a small bell for everyone to face the crown, in front of the altar, ready to say their prayers. It is specifically to the crown that everyone directs themselves. The women are placed closest to the altar: firstly, the housewife and then the other women of the brotherhood, generally from the board, and the elder sisters. Coming afterwards are the other women forming other lines and, lastly, next to the entrance door, are the men. The prayer has alternating and complementary participation of men and women.

The rosary is prayed standing, looking towards the altar of the Holy ghost where the crown is kept.²¹ The housewife starts the ritual prayers directing herself to the Holy ghost and asking for help for the brothers who are sick, for all those in need of help, for the brotherhood and for the peace of the world. The rosary is begun with a Lord's Prayer by the women. Soon afterwards the men, who are placed behind, respond, completing the prayer. Then the women begin the Ave Maria and the men, in a similar fashion, complete it, and so on until they have completed the whole set of fifty Ave Marias and five Lord's Prayers.

The prayers constitute a symbolic means of collective and individual concentration of the devotees, throughout all the successive days elaborating a temporal passage between Easter Sunday and Pentecostal Sunday and the arrival of the Holy ghost. But they also constitute a means for the individuals to intensify their communication with the Holy ghost. During the prayers, one can perceive both the collective and ritualized dimension of the prayers and their individualized and spiritualized dimension.²² Both aspects are present in the celebrations of the Holy ghost. It is possible to distinguish the two simultaneous modes of devotion to the Holy ghost: a more individualized, interiorized and spiritualized devotion; and a more collective and ritualized devotion.

After the prayers, the scepter is taken down from the altar and handed to each of the brothers. They respectfully bow their heads to

kiss the dove on the top of the scepter and touch their foreheads with it, then their own chest, and finally their heart. They then place a donation in money in the basket which is taken by one of the brothers. There are also contributions for the brothers who conduct the celebrations in that week. These are done differently, signing their name in a book used especially for this and which stays on the altar during the whole ceremony.

With the prayers finished, the scepter circulates around everyone who is present, the women then address the others and invite them to eat. This is the informal and profane side of the prayers. Generally, it is the women who prepare the food for the brothers. It is at this moment of informality that everyone gathers to talk and frequently to talk about the Holy ghost, what they have achieved and how it helped them. The group separates into the men and the women, situated in separate places. At the end of the meeting, those present are given a piece of bread in the shape of a twist, made of "beaten dough", which has been blessed by a priest beforehand.²³

Processions

Besides the prayers, processions also constitute equally important (and more public) moments in the celebrations of the Holy ghost, specifically in the temporal passage between Easter and the Pentecost. The most important of them takes place on Pentecostal Sunday itself and moves from the brotherhood to the local church, passing through various streets in the neighborhood, and then returning to the brotherhood. The procession establishes contact not only between human beings and the Holy ghost, but also between the brotherhood and the neighborhood in which it is situated. The neighborhood, which normally is a place of profane transactions of a commercial order and with intense traffic of cars and buses, is transformed on procession days. In the context of the festival, the relationships established on these days within the neighborhood tend to be total relationships. People from other brotherhoods come to pay homage to the festival. The physical space of the street becomes the route where the procession passes. The people in the street along the route, interrupt their everyday activities out of respect for the procession of the Holy ghost which passes with its notable symbolic apparatus: the flag of the Holy ghost, the crown plus the scepter, usually carried by children or by an adolescent with the cloak of the Holy ghost; also, they carry the flags of the Azores, of Portugal, of Brazil, of Rio de Janeiro and of Azores House. The procession is always accompanied by a musical band. At a slow pace, the procession reaches the door of the neighborhood church, to the sound of the hymn to the Holy ghost. In front of the church, the provider or president of the brotherhood, plus his wife and children, with the other brothers alongside, face the street and the accompanying crowd. The crown of the Holy ghost is raised and shown to the people watching: it is the time of the empire of the Holy ghost. Along the whole route they say the Ave Marias and are sometimes accompanied by residents of the neighborhood. Many residents come to the window of their houses to watch the procession. Some of the men from the brotherhood control the traffic in the streets so that the procession can pass. The festivals are known by the residents of the neighborhoods and, as we have said before, occupy an important place in the collective local memory due to their permanence, as everyone has been there for many decades and are known for various generations of residents. In the interviews we held with older residents, the experience of having taken part at some time in the activities of the brotherhood was through the festivals held in

²¹There is a distinction between the "prayed rosary" and the "sung rosary". The latter is a particular Azorian evolution of the rosary and is classified by the priests as a "tradition". This distinction is especially important from the Catholic Church's point of view and is tolerated but does not officially recognize this form of prayer.

²²Here we make a contrast between ritualization and spiritualization (or individualization), such as that made by Marcel Mauss in his analysis of "prayer".²²

²³Many of the faithful in the brotherhood find it difficult to "receive the Holy ghost" due to not having sufficient resources to take on the responsibility of holding the celebrations during one of the weeks. In these cases, they are helped by the brotherhood and the prayers are held in a brotherhood chapel.

the street (with stalls, games etc.) and in the processions of the Holy ghost. An example which occurs with seasonal variations in Eskimo society studied by Marcel Mauss in a famous essay,²⁴ the festivals of the Holy ghost during the long period of their taking place establish a distinct view of the life of the people and of the relationships between them, which, in this time, as opposed to everyday time, is marked by a “state of continuous religious exaltation”.²¹

The church and the brotherhood: the crowning

The coronation of the children represents the high point in the context of vertical time of the festivals, when contact with the Holy ghost is intensified. At this moment there is an intense closeness between the Holy ghost and mankind, with the necessary and complementary mediation of the church. The coronations always take place in the church and the ritual is conducted by a priest immediately after the Pentecost mass. In the story of an Azorian person, whether men or women, it is recognized as important to have experienced being “crowned” as a child. Whether as a practice recognized as a form of “devotion”, or whether sometimes designated as just an Azorian “tradition”, the fact is that the experience is thought to be important, especially from the point of view of the parents and grandparents. Perhaps this is the most important formal moment of the festival, and it expresses the establishing of a definitive contract between the Holy ghost and the individual, symbolically marking, from on high and over ones head, all their existence, from that moment on under the domain of the Holy ghost. The moment of the coronation brings out the attention and intense emotions in those present, especially by the children’s relations.²⁵

In the ritual context of the crowning, the crown of the Holy ghost not only “represents” the Holy ghost; it is not just a substitution of an absent entity (in accordance with the modern sense of the word “representation”). In fact, it brings the presence of the Holy ghost, thus maintaining a “mysterious” relationship with human beings (as opposed to “transparency”), as two very different universes are in contact, the cosmic order, the social order and the individuals.²⁶ As the visible incarnation of an invisible domain, it is not mere appearance whose form is valued to the detriment of the invisible; it is not an object, but rather an entity; it is the presence of the Holy ghost itself with all its powers and virtues.²⁷ This occurs not just in the context of

²⁴In the “Essay on seasonal variations of Eskimo societies”²¹ Mauss analyzes the “dual morphology” of Eskimo society, divided into a winter society and a summer society. The winter one is marked by many festivals and by religious ceremonies which express a set of collective representations which are clearly distinct from those expressed in summer.²¹

²⁵According to one of our interviewees: “The coronation is generally of very small children, six, seven years old, four, which is an old tradition and comes from the saint Queen Isabel who crowned the poor in her kingdom against the wishes of King Don Diniz, it is something very old. So small children are crowned, they come with the scepter and during those days are little emperors of the festival of the Holy ghost.” When the children are crowned, they symbolically take on the power of the Holy ghost for that period. The emphasis on children points to the ritual dimension of the renewal of the world. It is always children who are crowned. The only time when an adult was crowned, which we saw in our field work in New England, was of a man who had suffered a serious accident at work and who afterwards showed symptoms of mental disturbance. But usually, only children can be crowned on Pentecostal Sunday.

²⁶The mystery, as various authors have indicated,^{23,24} emerges precisely in situations where there are two hierarchically distinct domains - a radical social differentiation, as with castes, or relations between nobles and plebs in the ancient régime; or of relations between gods and men.

²⁷From the point of view of the faithful, the crown is thought of magically as the Holy ghost itself, not exactly as a “symbol” of the Holy ghost. To the extent that it is the holy ghost itself, the crown is assigned free will, purpose, healing powers etc.²⁵

the festival, but also during the period of the festival when the crown may, for example, be taken to the house of a sick brother.

Considering the symbolic aspects of the crown (and also of the scepter and of the flag),²⁸ we can understand the importance of the experience of having been “crowned” acquires in the history of an Azorian individual (man or woman). Perhaps we could say that this experience has a fundamental and complementary role in relation to baptism, while the latter is a matter for the church; the former relates to the brotherhood, whose relations are of constant and simultaneous hostility and collaboration in regard to the church. The ceremony of the coronation, sponsored by the brotherhood, cannot be held in any other place than in church and at the hands of a priest. Thus, there is a strong complementary relationship between the brotherhood and the church, although over the history of this festival (especially in the Azores) there have been moments of tension between these institutions, when the church even banned the festival because of its supposed profane aspects.^{29 5}

Of bounty and the sharing of food

The various moments of the festival, both the principal moments and secondary ones, all seem to be demarcated by specific forms of preparation, presentation, distribution and consumption of food. The plentifulness of the food and drink symbolically highlights this renewed time, this time of generosity in which the cosmos and nature offers its fruits. In other words, in this mediation between a time of shortage and a new time of bounty, the “culinary system”³⁰ seems to perform a symbolically decisive role.

This system orients the acquisition, the preparation, the distribution and the consumption of foods, and mediates between the members of the Azorian community, between the community and the outside world, and between the community and the holy ghost. Everything in these festivals necessarily is accompanied by food and drink and

²⁸At various times in our field work in the United States and in Brazil, we had the chance to observe the intense affection which moves the Azorians believers not only in relation to the crown, but also to the Holy ghost flag, which is stroked and kissed with reverence.

²⁹The reasons alleged by the Brazilian state for the banning of the festivals of the Holy ghost at the end of the nineteenth century were its aspects supposedly associated to “disorder”, such as the existence of games, drink, which are important aspects as a popular festivity, including various social segments, from nobility through to slaves.¹²

³⁰Firstly, this concept displaces our attention to the structured character of this system and to the interdependency of the elements of which it consists of. These elements include: a) processes for obtaining food (hunting, fishing, harvesting, agriculture, raising animals, exchange or trade); b) selection of foods (solids and liquids, sweet and savory etc.); c) preparation processes (cooking, frying, flavoring etc.); d) culinary tastes; e) modes of presentation and serving the foods (marked by formality or by informality); f) corporal techniques necessary for consumption of foods (table manners); g) ‘meals’, that is, social situations (everyday and ritual) in which they are prepared, shown and certain foods are consumed; h) hierarchy of ‘meals’; i) who offers and who receives a ‘meal’ (everyday or ritual); j) classification of principal foods, complementary dishes and desserts; k) culinary equipment and how they are represented (spaces, tables, chairs, mats, cutlery, pans, dishes etc.); l) classifications of ‘taste’; m) ways of disposing of leftovers etc. These culinary operations constitute a place of interaction of techniques, social relations and representations, of whatever variety of their empirical content. The selection of foods, whether a result of available food resources or as an effect of prohibitions (temporary or permanent, imposed on all or on some only), is found on classifications associated with the symbolic ordering of the world, to a cosmology which relates to the person, to society and to the universe, and locates human beings in terms of place and conduct (186-188).²⁶ In other words, the culinary systems always suppose specific sociabilities and cosmologies.

by eating together.³¹ The categories of “shortage” and “bounty”, used frequently by the Azorian devotees, seem to orient the culinary system present in the festivals. The set of practices and items which make up the system are above all aimed at having “bounty”, a dimension which is intensively ritualized in the festival. These categories are, in their turn, dimensions with cosmological and social repercussions, and which constitute a considerable medium through which they conceive of the world renewed and made perceptible by the Holy ghost.

In the myth of origin of the festival, what stands out is the category of redistribution in its eminently hierarchical form: a festival instituted by a queen with the purpose of feeding the poor, as a form of payment for grace being granted through the intervention of the holy ghost. This dimension of generosity and of redistribution is central in the organization and realization of the festival. It is not only the redistribution oriented by the value of “generosity” which stands out, but also the forms of preparation, presentation and consumption of food – not to speak of the ways in which they dispose of the “leftovers”, which are always redistributed among the poor or delivered to orphanages, hospitals etc.

The fundamental opposition between the categories of “raw” and of “cooked”, between the non-prepared and the prepared, is ritually measured out throughout the festival. Within it, there seems to be a long process of mediation where the prepared pole (cooked) of the opposition is emphasized. The cooked, as opposed to the category of “raw” and of “roasted”, expressed especially by the “soup of the Holy ghost” served on the main day of the festival and whose preparation and consumption play a central role, performs the symbolic role of adding social categories and cosmological categories (Azorians, men and women, human beings and the holy ghost etc).

In some contexts (New England in the United States; Santa Catarina, in Brazil) the festival is closed with what they call the “burying of the bones”. In New England, we had the opportunity in our field work of observing that the festival is ended with what they call the “sardine feast” on the Monday following Pentecostal Sunday. Fried sardines and beer, as opposed to the soup and rump of beef (prepared by cooking) served on the eve. In the last phase of the festival, when the passage of “sacred” time is made to that of “profane” time, a “roast” (non-cooked) dish is served and consumed. The festival of the Holy ghost of the Azorians seems to be a super-elaboration of the culinary code with the emphasis being on the “cooked”, where the mediation of social and ethnic processes, family relationships, of gender, of time, of space, and of order cosmological and religious are emphasized. It is worth remembering here in passing that the holy ghost is manifested in the form of punishment of men, usually does this in the form of burning, in roasting, by very direct contact which is not measured between the product and the fire. Our interviewees frequently tell the story of the individual who, having promised to donate a calf to the Holy ghost, ended up refusing to

do so. The Holy ghost made a fire which burned (roasted) his flock, sparing only that which had been promised.³²

To summarize, the mediation operated in the culinary system is through the foods consumed; through their preparation (raw, cooked, roasted); and through their redistribution (reciprocity); in their presentation and table manners; and in the way in which the leftovers are disposed of.

Food is always present in the festival and is thought of from the pole of elaboration. That is, it is represented not as items for satisfaction of “basic needs”, but as symbolically fundamental elements to mediate relationships between the members of the community of devotees, between the community and those outside it, between the Holy ghost and human beings, between rich and poor, between Azorians and non-Azorians etc.

Thus, the concept of “cooking” and of “food” itself, needs to be made explicit from the point of view of what we would call an Azorian cosmology. “Taste” and “need”, as well as “hunger” and “palate” are categories which are “good to think about” in the oppositions of social, religious, ethnic and cosmological nature. Although it is not obviously directed to “taste” or the “palate”, the festival of the Holy ghost is not however a ritual of “hunger” or of “need”, but it is principally of “bounty”. The soup of the Holy ghost (as well as the rump of beef) served on the Pentecostal Sunday dinner is especially appreciated for its taste. In the evaluation of the quality of a festival not only the plentifulness of the food and drink (and of the guests) is considered, but also its quality, and specifically the quality of its preparation.

In referring to the pole of shortage or “need”, the emphasis is not on the biological condition of “hunger” as a “basic need”. In fact, the devotees have the “needy” in mind and not just in relation to food but above all in being outside the reach of the circuit of generosity and redistribution which happens in the festival. These “needy” (or “poor”), in their turn, are fundamental to the holding of the festival, as it is towards them that the efforts are basically directed in the sense of creating a situation symbolically marked by “bounty”. In performing a redistributive function, the festivals of the Holy ghost are aimed principally “to please the Holy ghost”.

From the Azorian point of view a native anthropology and a native cosmology are expressed in the festivals of the Holy ghost and particularly in the cooking. In this anthropology, the relationship of the founder of the society is the relationship of men with the Holy ghost. Human beings are not defined by their “basic needs” – as they are with western cosmology and anthropology in the interpretation of Marshall Sahlins,¹ but by their relationship with the Holy ghost. It is only to the extent that they move away from this relationship that they can then be exposed to “needs”, to hunger, to sickness, in fact to shortage. The Holy ghost thus performs a fundamental mediating role: he is the mediator between heaven and earth, between the soul and the body, between God and men, between hunger and taste, between containment and excess, shortage and bounty.

Honor and grace: male and female

In the activities always held in the festival, it is possible to distinguish a masculine and a feminine domain, each of them symbolically demarcated. The categories of “man” and “woman” in this festive context do not express only relations of gender in the modern sense of this term. In fact, they signify complete categories, as in the example of the notions of shortage and bounty, presupposing

³²Many of our interviewees say that “Mr” holy ghost (the way they call it) is “revengeful”.

³¹Some verbal categories that I found, above all in the context of Azorian immigration to the United States, express the relevance of food and of eating together in the classification of distinct moments of the festival: “bodo de leite” (a sumptuous meal); “food parcels” (“ranchers” food parcels, “brothers” food parcels); “the soup of the Holy ghost”; “ranchers dinner”; “burial of the bones” (the ending of the festival). It is worth noting that, also in the US context, the work of distribution of “food parcels” in the weeks before the festival of the Holy ghost. When the people return from distributing the food parcels they are received in the home of the “mordomo” (the person at the head of the festival) for a lunch. In the weeks before the festival, a dinner is served every day in the home of each of the “domingas” (people running the festival situated below the mordomo) followed by prayers. Each Sunday of these weeks, a lunch is served with the “soup of the Holy ghost”, after Mass in church. And at dusk on each of these Sundays, the next “dominga” also serves a dinner.

moral and cosmic dimensions. The feminine activities in the preparation, organization and realization of the festivals of the Holy ghost are essentially complementary to the activities of the men. While the latter carry out their activities in the space between the family, the brotherhood and the outside world, contacting wider social and political circles, especially when they seek funds for the festivals; the activities of the women are predominantly carried out in the space of the family and the brotherhood.

As we have pointed out, it is they who lead the prayers; they take care of the kitchen and of eating together, although they divide these activities with the men at the most important moments of the festival (especially in the serving of the “soup of the Holy ghost” and the “rump of beef”, the main dishes on Pentecostal Sunday). That which is associated to the street and all that comes under the more strictly mundane plane is done through the men. The men do the “walking”. It is they who buy the meat and who cut it up in a formally elaborated situation, when they meet (especially those who are butchers) on the Friday night immediately before the Saturday on which the distribution of meat and bread is made to the poor. The men distribute the meat and bread on Saturday morning after the food has been blessed by the priest. There is an association between the meat (the meat is above all raw) and the men. Whereas the women are classified on the indoors side, with the cooking.

It could be said that as far as “honor” is concerned (the quality, moral personal precedence) is situated basically in the masculine domain, in the relationships between the men, the space of rivalry and of competitiveness, of relationships with the world of business and of politics; “grace” is situated in the feminine arena, especially in the space of relationships of giving and giving back between human beings and the Holy ghost; grace is a unilateral gift granted at the whim of divinity and with no possibility of definitive retribution.³³

We were surprised to find a fundamental distinction there between the “world of the Holy ghost” and the “world of human beings”; between the impenetrability of the will of the Holy ghost whose “grace” is a mystery, and the human efforts to foresee and control the future by calculation and by contract, where “honor” is won. One of the fundamental symbolic functions of the festivals of the Holy ghost is for there to be mediation between these universes. To summarize a quite complex point, one could say the festivals of the Holy ghost symbolically transform the “honor” won by men in the terrestrial world into “grace” granted by the mysterious will of the Holy ghost.

It is also important to highlight the strong rivalry between the brotherhoods and between the various members of any one brotherhood and particularly between those who run the brotherhoods, and also of those who through the lottery take on the running of the festival in each of the seven weeks prior to Pentecostal Sunday. On the part of those who run the brotherhoods and on the part of those who conduct the festivals there is a visible and obsessive effort to realize what is considered to be the best festival, in other words, at which the most guests were received, and which showed and served most plentifully and the best quality of food and drink. Each detail is rigorously evaluated and judged by the members of the various brotherhoods. Anyone who offered a festival at which food or drink was lacking, or at

³³According to Julian Pitt-Rivers: “There are two parallel modes of behavior which correspond to the ancient opposition between the crown and the head: that which is felt and that which is known, the subjective and the objective view of the world, the mysterious and the rational, the sacred and the profane. They are governed respectively by the principle of grace and by the principle of the law, that is, foreseeable regularity, as in justice and the law imposing order on human affairs – and in relation to that which forgiveness (or grace) allow a different course. Coming under the heading of “grace”, are the phenomena which escape conscious and rational control of conduct”.²⁷

which not many guests appeared, would see their prestige fall sharply. Each of those with whom I spoke, especially men, manifested their intense fear that food or drink should be lacking, or that guests would not show up, or that some detail should compromise the festival. A successful festival confirms their superior social and moral position, or their honor. But, given that all the festivals cannot be equally good, many end up diminished at the end of the festivals. It is therefore a test of the personal prestige of each of those who places themselves at the front of the running of the festivities.³⁴ This rivalry is however always contained. Thus, it is out of respect of the Holy ghost that they seek to appear as moderate with their gestures of generosity, enabling the transformation of their personal honor into “grace”. The source of the latter is obviously the Holy ghost. Unlike “honor”, which is something that is won, which is accumulated and defended against rivals, “grace”, an eminently feminine category, is only granted and depends on the whim of the Holy ghost.³⁵

The work as a gift and as economic ethic³⁶

The category of “work” plays an important role in the representations of the Azorian devotees of the Holy ghost. The everyday activities within the strictly economic plane as well as those for religious purposes are both classified as “work”. The activities of preparation, organization and realization of the festivals are intimately related with the everyday activities for work in the secularized sense of the term. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish precisely between the work done for economic success and the “work for the Holy ghost” (the category used by the Azorians to designate the direct or indirect activities of preparation, organization and realization of the festivals of the Holy ghost). Thus, it is these activities classified as “work” which situate the individual in society and in the cosmos, enabling him to have communication both with the mundane sphere and with the supra-mundane sphere, constructing a bridge between the two fundamental and complementary dimensions of his self-consciousness of his conceptions of self.

In everyday life, a strongly positive value can be perceived in relation to the economic category of “work” by the community of Azorian immigrants. The activities involving the functioning of small and medium sized companies in various neighborhoods of the city (butchers, stores) are the object of a highly disciplined attitude, the whole nuclear family being engaged in them and even relations outside this more restricted circle. Many of our interviewees are owners of small commercial establishments and the work activities are closely accompanied by the wife and children. Working and working hard, continuously and with discipline, is a positive and widely held value in the community, constituting an important part of the masculine and feminine identity of the group. We could say that, in

³⁴There is a contrary meaning in this context somewhat similar to the potlatch of the US north-east. One has to have the means, and to show that one has the means, when one takes on one of the weeks of festivals. The purpose undoubtedly is to put others in the shadow. But this behavior is not seen positively. They say that “Mr.” Holy ghost doesn’t like this” and may even severely punish those who are excessive in their vanity and ostentation.

³⁵Analyzing the peasant representations in southern Spain, Julian Pitt-Rivers states that: “Grace is precisely the opposite of masculine honor and places itself alongside feminine honor. In first place, the women, as it were, have preference to grace, not only in the religious context (they are more active in religion than the men), but also in its attribution in most of its forms. Esthetic grace is purely feminine: men are not expected to be graceful in their movements, and although they may dance gracefully, it is commonly supposed that professional dancers are effeminate”.²⁷

³⁶Here we follow Max Weber’s formulation: “The term ‘economic ethic’ points to the practical impulses for action founded in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions” (Max Weber, ‘The social psychology of the world religions’ In: From Max Weber: essays in sociology, p. 267).²⁸

the concept of self, intense work is a fundamental instrument of self, individual and collective realization. In terms of the general economy of the festival, in the sacred and profane spheres, it is the work which permits the passage between the categories of shortage and bounty. The importance and the complementariness of male and female work in this passage is, however, highlighted, given that bounty is thought of as a result of this intense, continual and disciplined work and not as a natural gift to be taken advantage of. In other words, without the mediation of work, there is no arriving at bounty.

The more one works for the Holy ghost, the greater the expected return. But this return is not assured, as the Holy ghost follows his own path and does not necessarily respond to the immediacy of requests made or to the gifts which are offered. We heard from some of our interviewees that, for many years, although they worked a great deal for the Holy ghost, their expectations were not fulfilled (for example, that of being picked to have the crown and to celebrate the Holy ghost), while others who did not work as much were attended. But this resentful attitude is not encouraged, and they soon state that the “Holy ghost works for himself”, has his own designs and knows the right time to attend to a request³⁷ and to grant grace.

Especially during the weeks dedicated to the festival, men and women dedicate themselves intensely to the various kinds of work necessary to the success of the festival: from gathering donations, looking after the brotherhood facilities, preparing and serving food for the snacks, lunches and dinners etc. They work hard right through the seven weeks to Pentecostal Sunday. In parallel, the intensity with which the Azorians work in their commercial establishments is also notable. This positive value given to work is found in the period of the festivals in a concentrated and exclusive form. The extreme dedication to the work for the Holy ghost in this period is ostensive, and everyone who is close to the brotherhood is contaminated by this spirit of absolute dedication to the work for the Holy ghost. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they, in a certain way, see themselves at this time as being possessed by the activity of working for the Holy ghost. One of the fundamental objectives of all this dedication is obviously to obtain grace on behalf of the Holy ghost and especially the obtaining of grace from “bounty”, a concept which is highly valued throughout the festival, and which becomes fully dimensioned, referring simultaneously to the food and drink served in the festival, but equally to health and to success in mundane activities. Bounty is also expressed in the intensity of the work which is dedicated to the Holy ghost. This intense work is considered a blessing from the Holy ghost. Having the health and a large capacity for work and to be able to offer this work as giving, is a sign of grace being granted, as not everyone can work so intensely for the Holy ghost.

If we focus on the form which the self-consciousness of these individuals takes on, we can say that their self consists of these dimensions mediated through “work”: on the one side the permanent relationship of giving and giving back which is maintained with the Holy ghost; and on the other, the relationships with human beings in their everyday economic and social activities. The first consists of pledges, giving and grace; the second consists of the human condition, subject to suffering, misfortune, vices. From the first comes the discipline and the inspiration to work, which reverts positively to the family and to the collective; from the second comes egoism, vanity, ostentation, envy.

There is an intense and complex communication between the supra-mundane and the mundane. This communication appears

³⁷It is not enough to work hard to obtain Holy ghost grace. Many take part in the draw and are not chosen for a long time to be able to keep the crown. Our interviewees frequently say that “...the Holy ghost knows where it is going and when it wants to go”.

visibly during the festivals, when the Holy ghost, represented by the crown, circulates intensely. It is a propitious time for the magical manifestations of the Holy ghost. There are cases of people who experience miracles, seeing the Holy ghost in the figure of a white dove, have visions, revelations. These manifestations may be negative and exist in the form of severe punishments of those who fail to worship the Holy ghost or who simply offend him.

The “work” appears simultaneously as an economic category and as a moral and religious one. It is through intense and disciplined work that shortage becomes bounty, where honor is maintained, and grace is granted. It is through this intermediary that the individual and collective self-consciousness is formed, and a balanced relationship is achieved between the soul and the body, between the supra-mundane and the mundane.

Despite the apparent excess (expressed above all in the quantity of food and drink served and consumed; by the great deal of eating together; and by the relative degree of being at ease in the expressions of joy) the festivals of the Holy ghost seek balance above all else, situating itself delicately between excess and containment, between shortage and bounty. It is a balance sought principally through the individual and collective attitudes of generosity which has, in its turn, to be contained in its contrary excesses.

If the opposition between body and soul is a universal one, in the case of the Azorian devotees of the Holy ghost, there is no conflict or domination of the soul over the body, but rather a relationship of balance and complementariness. There is no duality, in which the “social” part dominates and disciplines the “individual” part (in accordance with the classic suggestion by Durkheim), but rather a fine hierarchical gradation passing delicately from the most material to the most spiritual (and vice-versa). It is not an ascetic relationship, of denial of the body in favor of the soul and nor is it a mundane celebration to the detriment of the soul. Its attitudes to the world are marked by “adaptability”, far from the rigor which distinguishes the puritan personality. However, and in contrast to Confucian “adaptability”, marked by the absence of transcendence,²⁹ the Azorians deal with the world at the same time as they maintain intense relationships with the supra-mundane sphere, through the Holy ghost.

Thus, the category of “work” may at the same time be the gateway to the mundane sphere and to the supra-mundane sphere. It has a strong presence in the Azorian ethos, in their everyday life and in their religious life. Through its intermediary, they enter in touch with the holy ghost, to the extent that, as they themselves say they are “working for the holy ghost”. And through the work they realize themselves as individuals and as families. But work does not take on the same sense as it does in the protestant culture, with the puritan ethos as it is described by Max Weber in his classic study *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.³⁰ The Azorians are far from the rigorous personality of the Calvinists; and if, for them, work is associated with discipline and constancy in the struggles against the difficulties of the world, it is at the same time associated with fun and pleasure, as it is shown by the festivals of the holy ghost and its strongly “profane” side as many researchers have pointed out. What distinguishes the Azorian point of view seems to be the way they conceive of the relationships they maintain with this world and the supra-mundane sphere which are characterized precisely by continuity and adaptability.^{31–40}

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Conflicts of interests

Authors declares there are no conflicts of interests.

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