



God Bless
John the Baptist!

A contribution on the St. John's Bath
of Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes





God Bless
John the Baptist!

A contribution on the St. John's Bath
of Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes

Incentivo do Fundo de Investimentos Culturais - FIC/MS - do Governo do Estado de Mato Grosso do Sul

(Lei n. 2.645/03 - Campo Grande - Mato Grosso do Sul - 2012).

Todos os direitos reservados. Proibida a reprodução, armazenamento ou transmissão de partes deste livro, através de quaisquer meios, sem previa autorização por escrito.

IDEALIZAÇÃO, CURADORIA E COORDENAÇÃO GERAL

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes

FOTOGRAFIA-CAPA

Albano Fernandes Sahib

FOTOGRAFIAS

Albano Fernandes Sahib

Aleksander Batista

Anderson Gallo

Andriolli Costa

Bolivar Porto

Bruno Calanca Nishino

Carlos André Zucco

Clóvis Neto

Fernando Antunes

Keverton Velasques

Marco Antônio Corrêa Calábria

Otávio Neto

Ricardo Albertoni

Ricardo Carvalho

Silvana Moraes Ramos

Virgílio Napoleão Sabino

William Zimi

TEXTOS

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes

PROJETO GRÁFICO

Estúdio Eureka de Comunicação

TRADUÇÃO

Bertha Salek Sokolovsky

Fernandes, Hélènemarie Dias

F### Deus te salve São João Batista! Uma contribuição sobre o Banho de São João de Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul / Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes. - Corumbá: Edição do autor, 2012.

p.: il.

Registrado na Biblioteca Nacional sob o número: ####.####- Livro: ###- Folha: ###

1. Patrimônio cultural - Porto geral de Corumbá - MS

2. Territorialidade 3. Desenvolvimento econômico 4. Planejamento Regional. I. Título

Corumbá, 2012

PATROCÍNIO



INVESTIMENTO



Esta publicação encontra-se à venda em:

E-mail: marie@marieconsultoria.com.br

Site: www.marieconsultoria.com.br





The mission of the Vale is to transform natural resources into prosperity and sustainable development. And that was one of the reasons that led us to support the production of the book May God blessing you John the Baptist! A contribution on the St. John's of Corumbá - MS.

The book is an important form of registration, if not the best way to preserve this tradition and religious festival of Corumbá, which has its meeting at the slope Cunha and Cruz, towards the small beach of Rio Paraguay. It is also an essential instrument for contributing to the diffusion of elements and characteristics of this immaterial from Mato Grosso do Sul being for the current generation or for the expansion of knowledge of the new generations.

Added to such factors the inestimable value of Corumbá to Vale and our constant pursuit of preserving respecting and encouraging the events, local customs and traditions.

Therefore, the encouragement producing the book of Saint John's Bath Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul is our way of telling the local population and its culture our thanks!

Alexandre de Paula Campanha
Chief Operating Officer of Ferrous Midwest







May God bless John Baptist! A contribution on Saint John's Bath of Corumbá

- Mato Grosso do Sul is the result of a survey which invites the reader to dipping in Rio Paraguay stream as a helmsman in search of a deeper understanding of part of our cultural identity.

Taking into account that a people's identity is built up propped on a repertoire of senses and values accepted by the communities holding this knowledge, the author revisits the Saint John's Bath of Corumbá in prose and beautiful images.

The information about Corumbá St. John's Bath as a faith demonstration and the preserving of ritual kept by great number of families in Corumbá, throw a waft of cool air renewing this rich and high-meaning immaterial folklore, rescues history and contributes to the preservation of our immaterial asset.

Recognized by the Government of Mato Grosso do Sul through Decree no. 12 923, of 21/01/10 as cultural and historical immaterial asset, the St. John's Bath is registered on the Celebration Book were the outstanding rituals and commemorations record work activities, religiousness, amusements and other social practices of the community.

The imagistic asset of this survey surpasses the level of simple photographic footage and induces us towards a more accurate look over the details and nuances of all stages of St. John's celebrations in Corumbá. Once in again our look is more collective, sometimes anonymous characters surprise us with their uncompromised look with the stance for the camera lenses and, this freedom at image taking from diverse angles allows scenes of pure magic, joy, emotion and affection.

Hélénemarie took a very wise Choice when she made up her mind to write in hybrid form, in which text and image dialogue aiming at filling up the blanks of meanings of this strong tradition and faith and the sustainability of the pantaneira roots. The hues of this tradition, through the text or images recorded, take us onto a trip of much history, tradition and poetry. Certainly, this research is a precious contribution to safeguard plan of this manifestation which identifies and enriches all the touristic and cultural potential of Corumbá.

Américo Calheiros
President of the Culture Foundation of Mato Grosso do Sul



The intentions in the book God bless John the Baptist! A contribution on the St. John's Bath of Corumbá – Mato Grosso do Sul it was been to tell, visually, the element of the story of the festive event permeated by religious principles, showing the rites and rituals, devotion, joy and festivity of the apex , which happens at bathing the saint in the waters of the Paraguay River. It was assumed, as the prerogative to support the preservation, construction of a memory and the apprehension of a reality.

It is estimated that there are currently over one hundred groups of "feasters" of the St. John's Bath in the city of Corumba – Mato Grosso do Sul. Such groups can be identified by their Christian names, although they receive a reference nickname for emotional proximity or geographic location: Monte Castelo Community, Place of Mrs. Beré, Mrs. Concha, Sha Onça, Mrs. Janet, Clemilson, Mrs. Oraide, Mrs. Maria Paula, Pepe, St. John's Baptist Spirit Tent, Ilê Afro Axé Orixá Spirit Tent, Ilê Axé Ti Oxum Blessing Home of Mother Oxum spirit tent, Spirit Tent of Umbandista Caboclo Estrela do Norte, among others constituent elements of intangible and prominent heritage being presented in pictures.

It was necessary to be attentive to the explosions of fireworks, proclaiming another year's cycle of prayers and / or a festival that would begin in "feasting communities." Visual artists responded to the call, which includes the acceptance of the invitation to the challenge of building a cooperative work. In search of the elements we had in order to emphasize the whole forming the identity of this ancient tradition. The St. John's Bath of Corumbá that we present stands not for a mapping of numerous groups, types and religions, but by focusing on the strength of the relationship of cohabitation and religious commitments of people who are starring in this popular event.

Although there was a script and a research about what we intended to carry out, for a few moments the photographers were taken by the condition of the unexpected to record the festival. Thus they faced the challenges of short light intensity for, in most cases, the prayers and festivities take place at night. So they decided to dispense the use of flash for not interfering in the scene. The apparently unfavorable conditions, technically (lighting), and the production (immediacy), both were used as esthetic strength, becoming a guiding thread throughout the book.

In that moment, the curatorial position has always been working towards dialogue to resolve uncertainties and settle for the convictions of photographers, even to those who were in disarray with the propositions of the action of trustees. One of the directions was to identify and highlight elements that, besides those

already predefined, were present, but perhaps obscured, or that appear by recurrence, opposition or exclusivity, such as the rites and rituals that precede the bathing of the saint, the ambience of "feasting communities", sometimes by day, sometimes overnight, religious syncretism constant in some communities, the ashes of the bonfires, the waters of the Paraguay River, etc.. Thus, the highlights were spontaneously raised points already at work. Other references were translated to point out nuances of the city of Corumbá, and stronghold of this intangible heritage.

Therefore, there was a compromise with a form of esthetic expression. This is not a formal research on the subject. The abolition of subtitle was part of a team decision, which chose to avoid the interference of page numbers, detailed descriptions, and references.

A clean design and rich images of signifiers is the obvious ... And here it is!

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes
Curator



THANKS

First of all thanks to the "party-going communities" that gave us total freedom in the universe of their festivals.

To visual artists Albano Fernandes Sahib, Aleksander Batista, Anderson Gallo, Andriolli Costa, Bolívar Porto, Bruno Calanca Nishino, Carlos André Zucco, Clovis Neto, Fernando Antunes, Keverton Velasques, Marco Calabria, Otávio Neto, Ricardo Albertoni, Ricardo Carvalho, Silvana Moraes Ramos, Virgílio Napoleão Sabino and William Zimi for image acquisition and analysis support in the photos.

My Special thanks to Alfredo Monte Castelo Community, Mrs. Janete, Mrs. Joaquina, Mrs. Concha, Mrs. Maria Paula, Mrs. Oraide and Pepe.

To Gonzaga Ana Claudia da Silva, Fernando Silva da Cruz, Gesiel Rocha, José de Carvalho Junior, Elisa Maria Antunes, Monique Conti, Dib Ocanide Assef Rolim and Rodolfo Vieira for supporting this project.

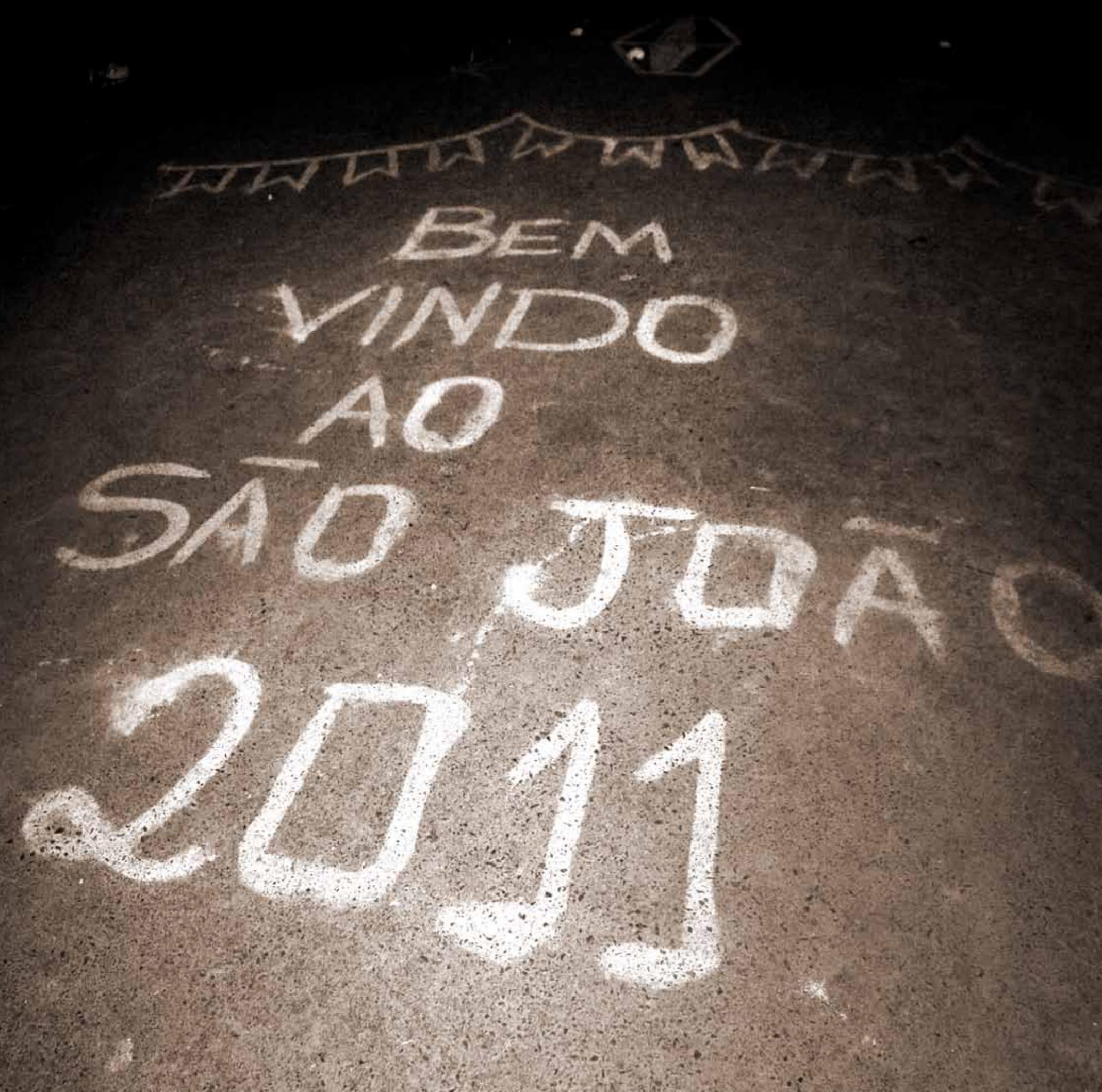
We pay special tribute to the great characters of our corumbaense culture that left us during the making of this book, Berenice Paes and Heloísa Helena da Costa Urt.

To Saint John Baptist for the protection in this project.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children, Albano and Jordana that inspire me and are with me wherever I go.



REVISITING THE SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BATH OF CORUMBÁ - MATO GROSSO DO SUL

The Saint John's Bath is a festive event with religious principles, only known by this name in Corumbá - Mato Grosso do Sul, referentially for having its apex the holy bath in the waters of the Paraguay River. It is a ritual manifestation of popular culture with connotations of fun as payment on the promise of grace or gratitude reached through the popular Catholic saint - St. John Baptist that happened in places consecrated to the cult of Umbanda and Candomblé by a supernatural entity called Xangô.

It is very common to find participants and praise devotees joined in ceremonies of the Catholic faith in this festival. These devotees offered in June novenas, prayers and masses to St John Baptist and also sing melodies to Xango thanking him for the grace achieved. This apex that happens the night of 23 to 24 of June. Generally, it lasts all night and starts in the houses of "feasting communities", in the street, outside the house of a devotee or in a place devoted to ceremonies and Afro-Brazilian cults.

The celebration of the Saint John's Bath is based on the initiative of people who make promises. Because of the similarity with the name and other common elements in commemoration of St. John spread across the country, the Saint John's Bath of Corumbá / MS could be confused with other holidays, for those unfamiliar with its history and do not participate in this social cultural environment in which it takes place. Devotees of Corumbá, of this feast of local popular culture, are called "feasters".

It can be asserted that the city becomes endowed with a mystical atmosphere in which afloats its social character and reflects the peculiar religiouness to that event, even in public spaces. The St. John's Bath has the participation, of the Catholic and African religious people from Corumbá belonging to the social standards of low income. This presence does not mean the elimination of other segments of higher purchasing power also involved and sometimes they are the "feasters".

When referring to the Saint John's Bath of Corumbá, it is meant a privileged

sacred territory of pluralism, syncretism, of hybridization resulting from the immigration of which this town was the scene with the arrival of European and African ethnic groups, which met here with the Indians. Without being different in South America, these authors promoted a symbiosis with the ancient folk art, beliefs and myths. The cause of this phenomenon lies on the fact that the Pantanal universe was a space of conquest, in which several forces confronted, annihilated or exceeded until there was a demonstration model of the popular native culture without being totally deprived of the heritage of the Iberian metropolis.

There are references in the popular memory of this event in the newspapers of the late nineteenth century. According to the researcher Frederico Fernandes, the feast of the Pantanal was reinterpreted and became "a melting pot where we feel the vibrations of the European pre-Christian culture, the religiousness of the Portuguese missionaries of the eighteenth century, the Arabs - from which the washing of saint - of Indians and Negroes. Certainly, all this variety formed the concrete that still holds the tradition ..." (FERNANDES, 1997/1998, p. 122 apud SOUZA, p. 05, 2004).

That hybridism and religious practices reminiscent of the Saint John's Bath of the Pantanal was contextualized from the baptism of Christ, that once happened in the Jordan River and now it happens in the waters of the Paraguay River. The "feasters" is convinced that at midnight on 23 to 24 June, the waters of the Paraguay River become miraculous, a situation that becomes noticeable in the verses of the hymn to St. John sung by them in processions.

At the end of 1990, the folklorist Eunice Rocha Ajala, studying the Feast of St. John of Corumbá / MS. Conducted a major investigation, which had its edition published in 1997. This publication became one of the major studies on the holiday, which aroused great interest and searching. The researcher is emphatic when she states that "the St. John's Bath represents the identification of people with their historical roots - and its cultural inspiration to religion, which is the motivator and effective in preserving their traditions" (ROCHA, 1997, p. 84).

On January 21, 2010 the Bath of St. John of Corumbá was recorded as intangible heritage of historical, artistic and cultural life of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, the St. John's Bath of Corumbá, was recorded in the Book of Record of the

Celebrations in item II of art. 16 of Act No. 3522, 2008, where are enrolled rituals and celebrations that mark the collective experience of work, religion, entertainment and other practices of social life of the population.

In process since 2010, the state efforts, the "feasters" and organized civil society have been applied to complete the registration of these traditions as national intangible heritage. The national record that can understand and translate the "soul" of the people will ensure that all information on the mentioned popular demonstration is protected and preserved historically by public agencies and the Brazilian society.

Amidst the symbols of purification that inspire "feasters" popular culture manifestation are the elements of fire and water. The custom of lighting bonfires is constant in the doors of their houses, common features that unite and identify them. Possibly this practice is essentially related to the Christian tradition that before the birth of Prophet John, his mother Mary Elizabeth, made a huge bonfire, to symbolize the birth of her son. With this meaning, a belief identified among the "feasters" is the collection of coals of the campfire. They saved the ashes to have the protection of St. John Baptist, believing that, throwing the ashes in the wind, bad weather will disappear, through the saint.

These symbols, of rituals and superstitions, each year are set as new time for the people, renaissance of better days, renewal and regeneration. Therefore, the meaning of bathing in holy water is latent in the devotees, being likely to find communities or individual that bathe in water tanks, taps and even in swimming pools. Once done this, the devotee deems himself as having accomplishment in the duty toward the saint. Consonant, the symbolism, fertility is also considered a mark in that month, it is declared that the water of the Paraguay River begin to decline announcing a new cycle of the Pantanal biome.

As a fixed and not transferable schedule, the feast of the St. John's Bath of Corumbá has rituals that start at the end of the festivities of the last year, on the day of Saint Peter, June 29th. On that day, in each of the 100 "feasting communities" registered and spread areas of the city, each one chooses its own flag, the captain of the mast and fire, the godmother of the altar and the crown queen. They are credited with the commitment of caring for and decorating these objects with flowers, ribbons,

lace and various ornaments in red and white for the next year festival.

The solidarity spirit is identified when it becomes visible the passage of such objects to their "care-takers". He, who is not able to comply with his obligations for personal or financial hindrances, can rely upon the solidarity of other community member. Moreover, the "feasters" set out a host of activities to collect financial support for the next year festivity.

The religious ceremony in honor of St. John and/or Xangô begins with the evening novenas made in the houses of the Catholics "feasters" and in places for the cult of Umbanda and Candomblé, where is the center of the celebrations. It should be emphasized that some groups, perform their prayers in a single residence, others are itinerants, every day in the house of a devoted feasting community. Sometimes the Catholics priests open the introduction of this cycle, in both religions. It is worth mentioning that years ago, most were priest women who commanded the prayers and litanies in the novenas, which currently are motivated by several members of the brotherhood in an organized, voluntary and popular process.

At the same time, groups or a host begin to decorate the altar, making the torches that will follow the procession and decoration of spaces with colorful flags and palm of Acuri (kind of palm plant available in the Pantanal floodplain).

The fireworks are constant in the month of June in the religious dedication in the residences of the "feasters". According to the popular tradition, serve to awaken sleeping St. John Baptist in his day, as to tell the neighbors that the prayers and / or the feast will start. Throughout the month of June is common to hear explosions of fireworks around the city. Among children remains the practice of bursting rockets and firecrackers or mischief at wakes as they wait for their parents.

We notice that, in different communities, the night of June 22, the ritual to St. John Baptist is the exchange of dinner, directed to children, the new generation of "feasters" that included an altar with the image of St. John Baptist as a child. On the 23rd. day in the morning, devotees walk in procession singing the hymn in honor of the saint through the streets of the neighborhoods to celebrate Mass in the church community, reaching the ninth day of prayers and litanies.

Returning to the house of the religious, it is served a great breakfast with the specialties of the Pantanal such as tea, milk, coffee, cookie of Pantanal, corn cake, cheese bread and salteña a typical Bolivian pie. This surfeit of food is present at various times of celebrations, ranging from the mid-morning snack to dinner, usually a barbecue in the fashion of the Pantanal and rice with sun dry meat. In the "houses" of worship, there are foods and rituals specific to Orixá Xangô. Between the prayers and songs, finally the food is distributed among those present. In some of these "houses" there is a division on the 23rd. is in honor of St. John Baptist and the 24th. of June in consecration to Xangô.

For the "feasters" these food rituals have a sacred significance, such as bread and wine in the Catholic Eucharist and the desire for wealth is repeated next year. The amount, the diversity of food and decorations in the houses and places of worship are available according to the purchasing power of the host and / or community. But this is just a detail that is overlaid by the religious atmosphere and participatory, where social links are reaffirmed, in a climate of collaboration and fraternization, composed of nuances and the difference of ages.

On the evening of June 23rd, the work at home of the "feaster" is open to pray the rosary. Then begins the ceremony of raising the mast, when a group of people dry in a tree trunk on the ground floor symbolizing the wish to soil fertility and good harvest. Before the mast is raised, it is placed on the top, the flag and the crown adorned with flowers and ribbons with the colors of the saint, which carry the desired order. These ribbons will be kept to be burned in the fire of the next year. A legend says that, through the smoke orders are brought to God through the intercession of St. John Baptist. The colorful ribbons are worn by the "feasters". It is common to find saints' feet tied. According to the devotees, "ribbons" are crossed and tied to body image to request a pardon or protection of the saint. On the grounds of religion yards is possible to notice that the ribbons are also placed in wrists, with the color of the Orixá, for protection and care of the negative vibrations, especially in the days of baptism of the children of Xangô or other supernatural entity.

In the time of rich expression of faith and popular symbolism, the "feasters" pray, touch and kiss the objects represented by contact with the relic of the saint, which will be tied to the mast, standing at the entrance of the houses. After raising

the mast, following in procession and singing the hymn in honor of the saint, walking counterclockwise, the faithful go three times around the campfire honoring the Holy Trinity, representing three different persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is said that some of the "feasting communities" the faithful are the same for seven consecutive years, carry the altar in procession, for having achieved a miracle.

It is noticed for long time the lifting of the mast was made by "curueiros" in the house of "feasters" today only becomes official at the party held in the General Port of the city by the local government. Concerning the "curueiros", they have a special participation in the festival's institutional Bath of Saint John of Corumbá / MS. As a component of management of popular religious ceremonies in the pantanal, with hints of cultural Indian practices and evangelized by the missionaries, teachers "curueiros" stomp and sing religious songs inspired in their daily lives. They sing, dance and pray together with two instruments, the reco-reco and viola de cocho (guitar from Pantanal) that for its unique way of being created and made by hand, won the title of intangible heritage of Brazil.

Following the ritual that happens in the "feasting communities", in processions, with their altars, candles and torches, "revelers take their images to be bathed in the waters of the Paraguay River. Down the slope, the altars and the different religious processions are accompanied by bands of breath and percussion. At this point, you can see demonstrations of religiosity and fun, when all they sing, dance and give praise to the saint. Faith and games are mixed for this stunning ceremony at two points down the slope. After singing the litany religious hymn to the saint, in a playful rhythm, the people jumping from joy singing "If St. John knew that today is his day / He would come down from heaven to earth / with pleasure and joy." Legend has it that if St. John were awake in His day, seeing the flashes of the fires lit in his honor and that party organized does not resist the desire to come down from heaven to accompany the offer and the world would end burned by fire.

At the shouts of "Long live to St. John" (Viva São João) you hear the drums of the African-corumbaenses groups and prayers as Hail Mary and Our Father at the banks of the river. The shores become a great religious atmosphere; prayers kneel with emotion in his faith and his holy ablution. It is on the shore of the river that marks more a superstition; it is believed that who does not see the saint's image in the water

will not be alive next year. Therefore, while bathing, communities meet and fall in the water, watching the reflection of the image of St. John and touch it. That's one of those moments when one notices the dominant belief and devotion.

After the holy bath, at the square of the General Port revitalized and maintained as heritage by the National Artistic Institute and Historical Heritage, stands the institutional mast as was already mentioned. In this space, the public creates a large space with tents, food decorations and outdoor scenery where the devoted are grouped and there is competition of dances and altars.

Usually the "feasting communities" return home with their altars. Up the hillside, it is traditional to greet those who come down with another altar, bowing to each other three times. In many houses the commemorations continue dancing all night long. In respect, according to belief, the dance is always celebrated in other place far from the altar of the saint is.

In the superstition remains the possibility of finding a partner the next year of celebration, for the link between devotees and saints of June, especially Saint Anthony and St. John Baptist. Whoever wants to attain this grace must pass under the altar for seven times. It can be with or without the authorization of the "feaster", it strengthened the desire of taking a red flowers adorning the altar of the saint and to ensure the company next year.

Following with the popular belief, when grace is reached, the devotee should promote the festival for seven consecutive years, which will be identified by the number of steps that the saint has at his altar. Currently, there are few altars with steps, this event was probably built by the population remembering the personal bonds of mutual recognition and the feeling of seeing a world in common, and that makes people feel involved in a single territory.

On June 29th, begins the ceremony of lowering of masts of St. John Baptist. On this day of Saint Peter, the ceremony begins praying the rosary and a group of people remove the mast stuck in the ground. Earlier in a procession and singing the hymn in honor of the saint, clockwise, the faithful take three laps in the new bonfire in honor of the Blessed Trinity. Then begins a new cycle of religious rituals in honor

of the saint for the next Feast of the bath of St. John's of Corumbá in the "feasting communities".

As we noticed, the "feaster" of the St. John's Bath of Corumbá / MS adapted their practices to the contemporary and maintain religious commitment as a fact alive and dynamic. With memories of the past come forward, the manifestations of religious rituals are present in the lives of people in a social network that reinforces their identity, thus promoting the conservation of the intangible cultural heritage. From this social function, based on relations of cooperation, loyalty and trust, of the "feaster" of the St. John's Bath of Corumbá and public administration, promote the conduct of the local development process, promoting sustainable social, cultural and cost of the feast, understanding the local culture, even as an inducer of a tourism demand.

Hélènemarie Dias Fernandes
Master en Desarrollo Local

Source: Image extracted and adapted from the book "A Festa de São João de Corumbá", ROCHA (1997, p. 44).







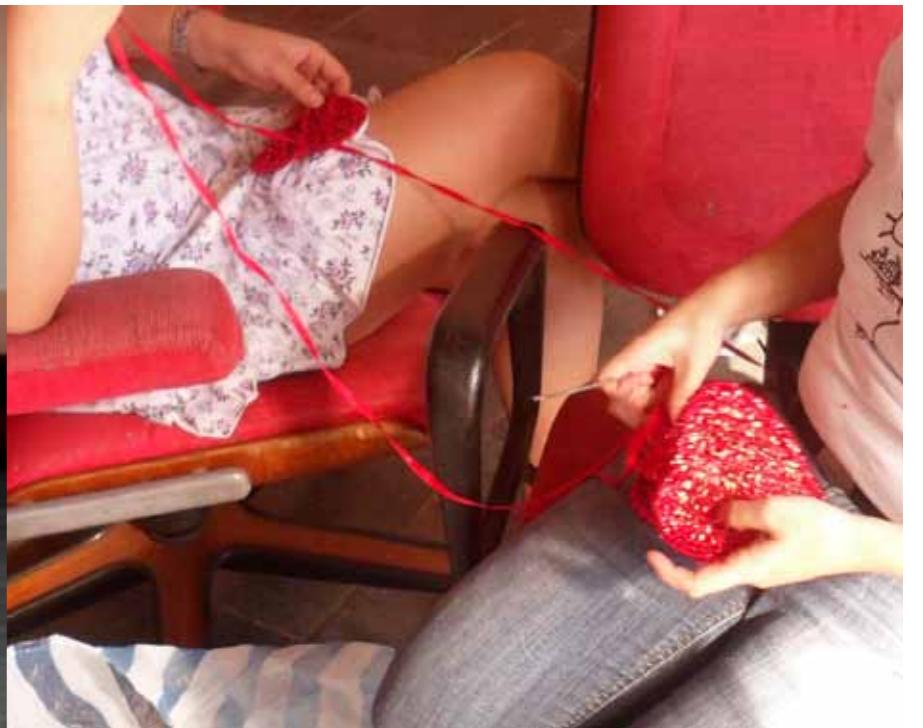












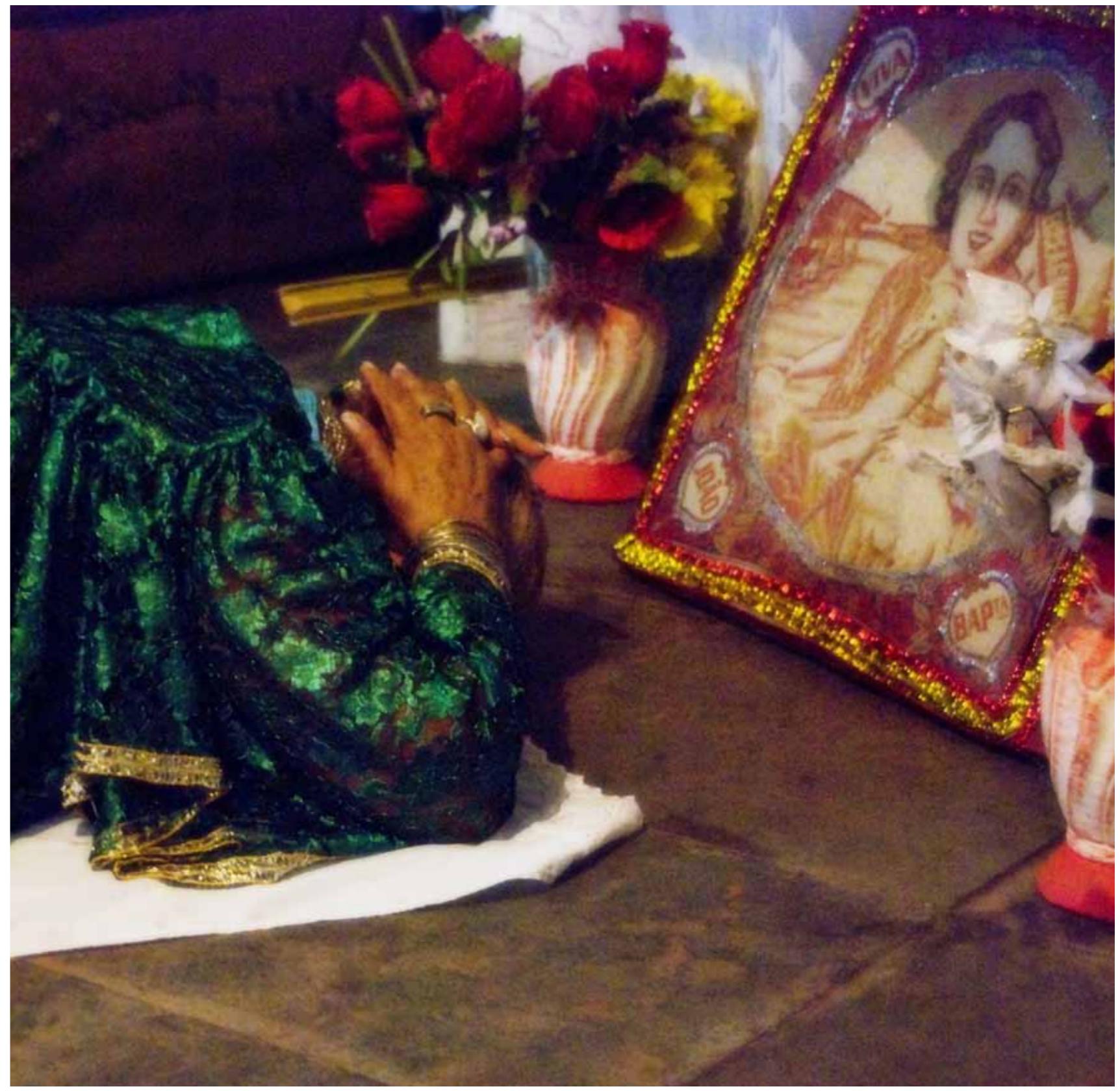




































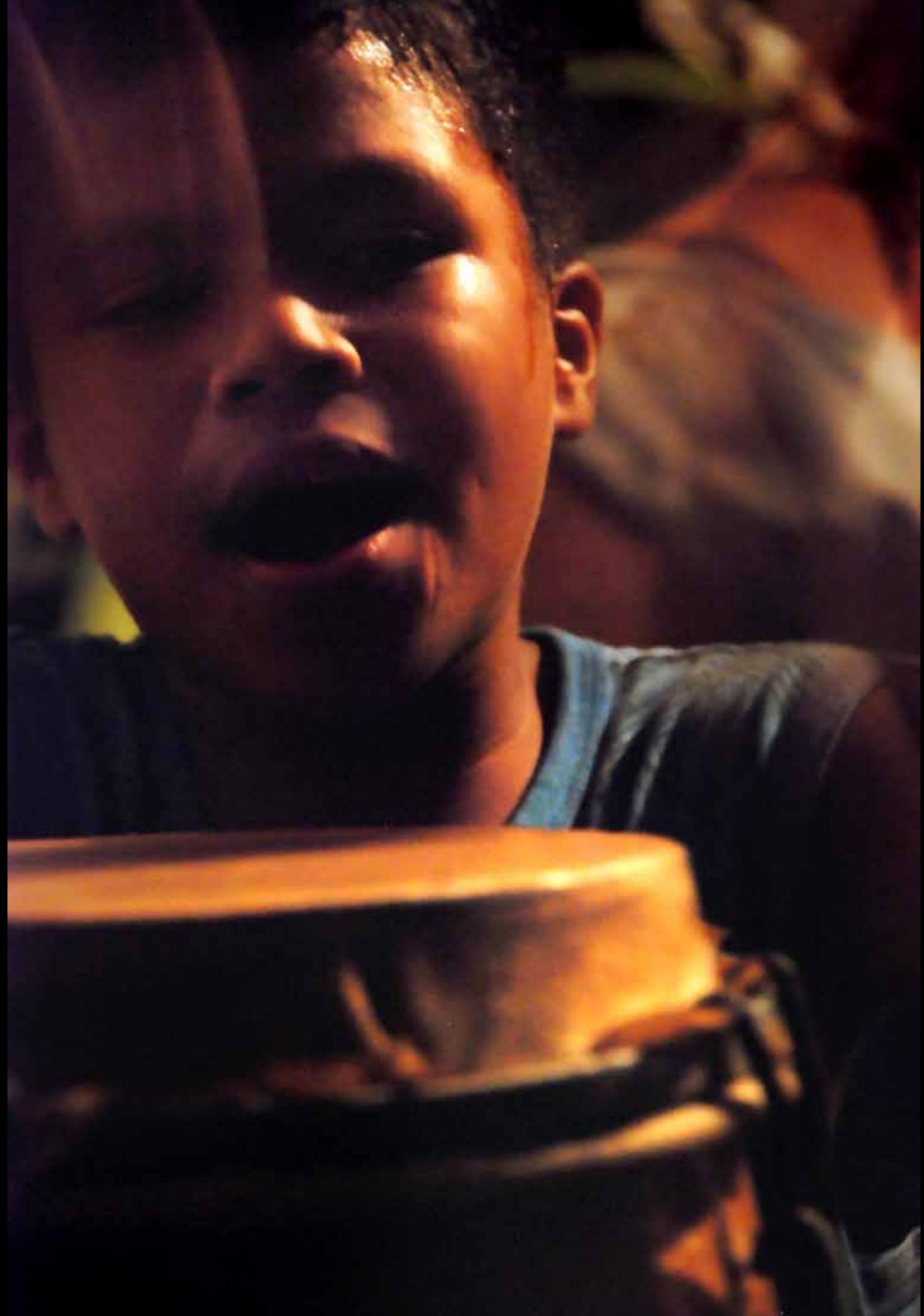
























































PRINCESA DA LABARCA

PASSEIOS
ARIOS (67) 8408-5222

www.labarca.tur.br

CORUMBÁ-MS





























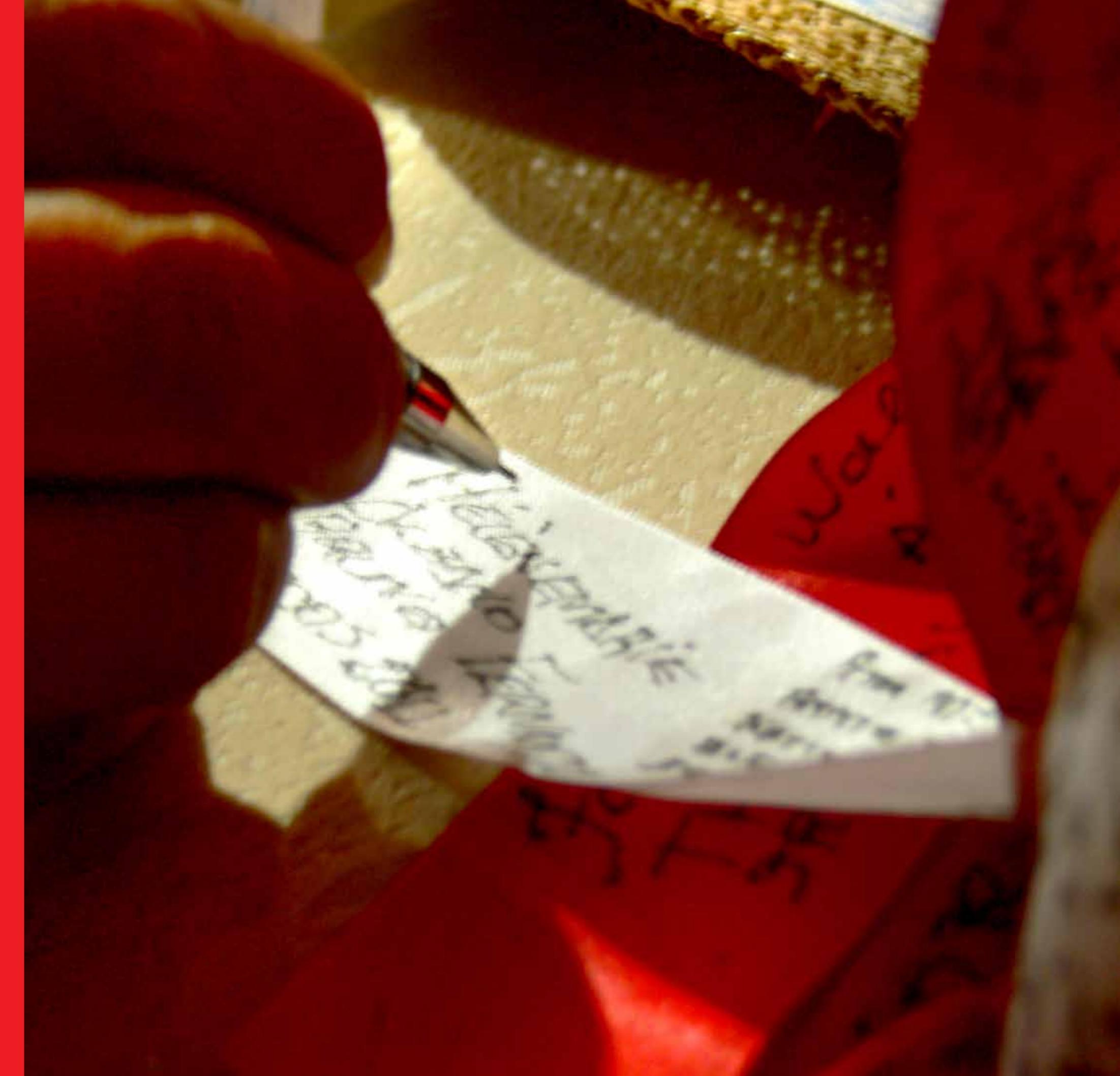














MARIINHA DO BRASIL

UNIPA

Colofão







PATROCÍNIO



INVESTIMENTO

