

EXPANDED SUMMARY

Museum documentation and religiosity:

*the case of the collection of textile garments of the
marian image of dressing of the Convent of Our Lady
of Penha Museum - ES*

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Introduction

The research theme in the cultural panorama is dedicated to the collection of textile garments of the dress image of Our Lady of Penha, belonging to the Museum of the Convent of Our Lady of Penha, in its symbolic representations. The investigation focuses on the study and application of musealization, specifically museological documentation, a specialized conceptual and practical process in the field of Museology.

The problem involves the informational and symbolic gap at the textile garments and the institutional preservation processes undertaken in the pieces, highlighting the museological documentation of the project entitled *Inventory and preventive conservation of textile garments from the sculptural collection of the Convent of Penha, in Vila Velha - ES*, year of 2023. In the study of the morphological characteristics and meanings, resources from Iconography and Iconology were used together with religious orientations and Museology, Information Science (Documentation), Arts and Social Memory.

The research, in its final considerations, concludes that the application of the musealization process in the collection of textile garments, which has the character of integrating sociocultural aspects of religiosity in the objects, allows the preservation, safeguarding and museological documentation of the capixaba catholic memory of the materials, full of immaterial meanings, in the Convent of Our Lady of Penha Museum.

Development

The Convent of Our Lady of Penha, founded in 1650, is the oldest Marian shrine in the state of Espírito Santo, located on a cliff with views of the cities of Vitória and Vila Velha. The Virgin Mary, proclaimed the patron saint of the state in 1630 by Pope Urban VIII, plays an important religious and cultural role, especially during the Festa de Nossa Senhora da Penha, which takes place every year.

The image of of Our Lady of Penha is considered one of the oldest in Brazil,

made from wood of different origins, including parts from Portugal. The sculpture, which originally used human hair in its details, has undergone transformations over time, with its garments reflecting the fashion and artistic techniques of different periods. The garments are made by devout families and donated to the convent, representing a ritual connection between the sacred and the human.

The colors of the image's garments have been altered over the years, incorporating the colors of the Espírito Santo state flag, creating a fusion between religiosity and the state's political and cultural identity. The patron saint of Espírito Santo, with her rich and symbolic garments, continues to be an important symbol of faith and the history of the region.

The Convent of Our Lady of Penha, in addition to being an important place of religious devotion, houses sacred objects that connect the material and the immaterial, with significant historical, artistic, and cultural value. Founded in the 17th century, the Convent was listed as a national historical and artistic heritage site in 1943. The preservation of religious objects, including the vestments of Nossa Senhora da Penha, became a priority, especially after the increase in religious art thefts in the early 20th century.

In 1997, a museum renewal project was initiated, including cataloging and conserving the collection, but the process was interrupted, and the objects remained without proper inventory until 2017, when forgotten documents were found and underwent cleaning and regularization. In 2023-2024, a new project, entitled *Inventory and preventive conservation of textile garments from the sculptural collection of the Convent of Penha, in Vila Velha – ES*, was implemented to inventory and preserve the textile vestments of the Convent's sculptural collection, with the collaboration of specialists in museology and conservation. This project aimed to recover the cultural importance of the collection, offering proper documentation and storage, as well as promoting the textile collection through a catalog.

As a result of several meetings and debates with team members, the proponent, and representatives of the Association of Friends of the Convent of Our Lady of Penha (AACP), and in accordance with the request of Secult-ES in notice

06/2022 – Selection of Projects for the Preservation and Enhancement of the Cultural Heritage of Espírito Santo, the inventory and conservation forms and the basic manuals for filling them out were prepared by the museologist Anne Teixeira Barcellos. These materials were used by the team during the documentary process.

During the process of preparing the cataloging form, data standardization was determined, as well as terminological control. Regarding the terminology of the object, the Vocabulary of Basic Terms for Cataloging Costume – VBT (1982), created by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), was used as support material, due to the need for precision in the object terminology to be applied in cataloging integral parts in accordance with international standards. As for the category to which the piece belongs, the terms defined by the Thesaurus for Museological Collections (1987), prepared by Helena Ferrez and Maria Helena Bianchini, linked to the National Historical Museum – MHN, were adopted. As vocabulary control instruments, the materials allowed greater accuracy in the organization and retrieval of information from this collection.

The inventory form was prepared focusing on two informational axes: the first is the identification, along with the characteristics of the object, that relate to data related to the identification of the piece in the collection and its physical characteristics; the second is contextual information that deals with historical, symbolic information, and the uses of the object, covering data with more clarity and accuracy about the artifacts. Thus, the cataloging form provided the identification and complete description of each piece, the elements associated with it, its origin, its state of conservation, the treatments to which it has been subjected, and its specific location. Inventory documentation was kept in a secure environment at the museum.

The materials of a sacred nature were treated with respect in their handling and kept safe. This was done in accordance with professional standards, safeguarding the interests and beliefs of the religious community from which the objects originated. Thus, to collect information on these objects, a methodological analysis was necessary, that covers the aspects of Iconology and Iconography, a method that allows the study of these pieces to be achieved based on coherent

approaches to aesthetic, symbolic, and historical dimensions, in order to have, in this way, an interpretative association as close as possible to reality, respectfully reconstructing their stories/experiences in different related contexts.

Conclusion

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Penha and its image are significant symbols of culture, history, politics, and faith in Espírito Santo, as well as important tourist and religious attractions. The Museum of the Convent of Our Lady of Penha is a recognized institution, with the goal of preserving and valuing the historical and religious heritage of Espírito Santo. It follows national and regional laws, ensuring the protection, access, and interpretation of its collection, which includes the textile garments of the image of Our Lady of Penha. The inventory and preventive conservation project of these garments was carried out based on state and international standards, ensuring that the pieces are preserved and accessible for future generations.

Museological documentation details and preserves the information of each item in the collection, transforming them into sources of research and knowledge. The cataloging of the textile garments ensured the preservation of the memory of the Convent of Penha, which is essential for strengthening the institution and its history. The musealization and documentation contributed to the recognition and appreciation of the faith in Espírito Santo, as well as protecting the pieces from the illicit trafficking of cultural property¹.

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