

## **The romance of Santa Iria - permanence and diffusion**

**Roberto Benjamin**

Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco – Brasil

**Summary:** The story of Santa Iria of Tomar is narrated in European territories in many different versions - in the Portuguese emigration regions - through the Iberian novel, eminently popular genre that has been primarily studied in terms of poetic variations. In the present study, we propose to consider the Iberian novel, about Santa Iria of Tomar, from the standpoint of popular communication, which is studied in Brazil under the name of 'folkcommunication'.

**Ementa:** A história de Santa Iria de Tomar é narrada em territórios europeus e em inúmeras versões - nas regiões da emigração de portugueses - através do romance ibérico, gênero eminentemente popular que tem sido estudado basicamente do ponto de vista das variações poéticas. Na presente comunicação, propomos considerar o romanceiro ibérico, relativo a Santa Iria de Tomar, do ponto de vista da comunicação popular, que é estudada no Brasil sob a denominação de 'folkcomunicação'.

In communication studies, media scholars have been given priority to economic interests, number of recipients, social and cultural effects. This also corresponds to the fact that most of the professions of communication approved by the Government, in Brazil, are related to the techniques and means of mass communication. For they are offered training courses at the high school level and university.

It must be recognized, however, the importance of interpersonal group communication - including the aspects of mediation - among the population of folk culture, and also in other segments of society.

This is the area of study of "the agents, the media, the means of expressing ideas, opinions and attitudes" referred to by Louis Beltran (folk communication - PhD thesis - Brasília: UnB, 1968), which deals with the communicator, the message, the channel, the receiver, the intentions and effects - in other words, the process of interpersonal and group communication occurring among the population of folk culture.

In the last few decades, education, study, and research, inserted in the whole process of communication - or just some isolated elements of it - were conducted in Brazilian universities from the perspective of folk communication, resulting in the publication of works based on researches and theoretical reflections.

The disciples of the work of Luiz Beltrão sought to expand his conceptions and the relationship between the manifestations of popular culture and mass communication.

Today, folkcommunication is thought to have a greater scope, that includes the relationship between folk culture and mass culture, such

as, among others, the studies of the orality-only popular poets and leaflets, as well as other agents of folk communication - Masters of mirth and singers of the Iberian romances.

According to several researchers, the Iberian romance is verse-write genre of popular literature originated in medieval deeds. Some novels retain traces of political history, religious and social development in the Iberian Peninsula. That is the case of the novel of Santa Iria, which refers to events in the seventh century, the time of the Visigoth kings, in the region then known as Nabancia.

Almeida Garret presents this popular novel, based on the arrangement of several versions collected in mainland Portugal (GARRETT, 1916 : 107/8):

*Estando eu à janela coa minha almofada,  
2 minha agulha d'ouro, meu dedal de prata,  
passa um cavaleiro, pedia pousada:  
4 meu pai lho negou: quanto me custava!  
- Já vem vindo a noite, é tão só a estrada...  
6 Senhor pai, não digam tal de nossa casa  
que um cavaleiro que pede pousada  
8 se fecha esta porta à noite cerrada.  
Roguei e pedi – muito lhe pesava  
10 mas eu tanto fiz, que por fim deixava.  
Fui-lhe abrir a porta, mui contente entrava;  
12 ao lar o levei, logo se assentava.  
As mãos lhe dei água, ele se lavava:  
14 pus-lhe uma toalha, nela se limpava.  
Poucas as palavras, que mal me falava,  
16 mas eu bem senti que ele me mirava.  
Fui o erguer os olhos, mal os levantava,  
18 os seus lindos olhos na terra os pregava.  
Fui-lhe pôr a ceia, muito bem ceava;  
20 a cama lhe fiz, nela se deitava.  
Dei-lhe as boas noites, não me replicava:  
22 tão má cortesia nunca vi usada!  
Lá por meia-noite, que me eu sufocava,  
24 sinto que me levam coa boca tapada...  
Levam-me a cavalo, levam-me abraçada,  
26 correndo, correndo sempre à desfilada.  
Sem abrir os olhos, vi quem me roubava;  
28 calei-me e chorei – ele não falava.  
Dali muito longe que me perguntava:  
30 eu na minha terra como me chamava.  
- Chamavam-me Iria, Iria a fidalga;  
32 por aqui agora Iria, a cansada.  
Andando, andando, toda a noite andava;  
34 lá por madrugada que me atentava...  
Horas esquecidas comigo lutava;  
36 nem forças nem rogos, tudo lhe mancava.  
Tirou do alfanje... ali me matava,  
38 abriu uma cova onde me enterrava.  
No fim de sete anos passa o cavaleiro,*

40 *uma linda ermida viu naquele outeiro.*  
- *Que ermida é aquela, de tanto romeiro?*  
42 - *É de Santa Iria, que sofreu marteiro.*  
- *Minha Santa Iria, meu amor primeiro*  
44 *se me perdoares, serei teu romeiro.*  
*Perdoar não te hei de, ladrão carniceiro,*  
46 *que me degolaste que nem um cordeiro.*

From the excerpt, he notes: "*So simple and so natural is the poetic narration of the popular novels as it is complicated and full of wonders those made by the influence of the church*".

### **History of Santa Iria second ecclesiastical chroniclers**

Nowadays, Santa Iria is mainly remembered in two different ways: there is the writing legend that represents the ecclesiastic point of view, and there is the oral tradition, which comes with the traditional ballads in the Iberian Peninsula.

While the ecclesiastical descends, mainly, for the registrations of Almeida Garrett, the orality version comes with the people, diffused the speech in all territories that received Portuguese migration.

According to the written version, Iria, niece of the abbot Celio, retired to a monastery in ancient Sellium, and only went out in public when some Procession was occurring – specially the St. Peter one, in June, 29 - and in company of other nuns. Said to be a woman of great beauty, aroused the passion of Britaldo, son of Count Castinaldo, who ruled these lands.

But that was an unanswered love, since Iria had dedicated herself to the religious life.

Britaldo fell ill and asked for a meet with her, confessing his love and asking for a good answer. Having his claim denied, Britaldo threatened her with death, if she ever gives her love to someone else.

The beauty of Iria also touched the monk Remigio, her teacher, who started to besiege her, but was rejected too. Dissatisfied, the monk would have used some herbs to prepare a potion that resulted in the growth of the her womb and was the cause of her defamation.

Britaldo, imagining her pregnant, ordered his servant Banão to kill Iria, but, first, asked her once more to marry him, in order to save her own life. Iria once more denied the offer, asking for God, therefore being killed, having her body thrown out in the Nabão river, having her body carried by the waters to the Zêzere the river, than the Tejo river and finally stopping in front of a location now known as Santarem.

Back In Sellium, it was thought that the disappearance of Iria was motivated by the shame of 'pregnancy'. But the truth was revealed to her uncle, Celio, during a dream. Knowing the facts, the abbot, some monks and people from the local aristocracy, went to the place where

the body remained. Once there, the river opened itself, revealing the body of the Saint

However, the corpse could not be displaced, remaining in the submerged grave. Almeida Garret says that, six centuries later, the site was visited by the Portuguese royal court, headed by King Dom Diniz and Queen Isabel, and the King "ordered the confection of a monument over the place where the body was found, and that it should so high that the greatest flood in the river could not cover." (GARRETT, 1916: 110).

The Almeida Garret continued the narrative in the same chapter of the book under discussion, explaining how Santa Iria has been reported by poetry folk. About the subject, he says:

*"The Saint (Iria) of the songs are, as I said, very different and much simpler; defined in two words. The saint is in her parents' house: an unknown knight, whom they host for the night, wakes up during the dawn, kidnaps the careless and innocent maiden, runs throughout the way on his horse until reach an unfrequented place, where he tries to rape the damsel... As the Saint resist, he kills her. Thenceforth, as the years goes by, the knight wander here and there and, every time he sees a chapel erected to the Saint, he falls on his knees, asking her forgiveness, to which the Saint speaks back, reminding him of his deadly sin and cursing him."*(1916 : 111)

I share the views of Almeida Garrett: why the Santa Iria of the popular ballads is so different from the hagiographic legends? By the way, I had already written about hagiographic legends:

*"Hagiographic legends are related to the life of the saints, to their martyrdom and miracles and have been recorded and written and used in sermons and other practices of the church hierarchy in order to sensitize the people so they can be incorporated into the religion. Usually, there is exaggeration in relation to the martyrs and the miracles. The lack of creativity of some of these authors has led to assignment of the same facts and circumstances for the most different saints, some of which syncretized among themselves, as it is the case of the miracle of the bread turned into roses, attributed, in the same way, to queens Elizabeth of Hungary and Portugal"* (BENJAMIN, 2004 : 99).

On the same way, Teofilo Braga points that the monastic legend mismatches the popular tradition (1982: vol. III, p. 38).

## **Permanence and diffusion**

The first collections in Brazil were made by Silvio Romero (published in 1882)<sup>1</sup> and Pereira da Costa (published in 1907)<sup>2</sup>. In Portugal, the oldest collection was published<sup>3</sup> by José Leite de Vasconcelos, in **Romanceiro**, dated back in 1889.

Câmara Cascudo, on his appointments about the third edition of Romero's work, published in 1954, presents several collections published both in Europe and America:

Teófilo Braga	<i>Santa Iria</i> , oito <i>Santa Helena</i> <i>Santa Irena</i> (Madeira) <i>Morte de Santa Iria</i> <i>Santa Irena</i> (galega)	<b>Romanceiro geral português</b> , II, 507, estudando o tema, III, 593 <b>História da poesia popular portuguesa</b> , <i>As origens</i> , 205, Lisboa: Manuel Gomes, 1902-1905, 2 vol. (Bibliotheca das tradições portuguesas, 1) <b>Ciclos épicos</b> , 156, Lisboa: Manuel Gomes, 1905
Almeida Garrett	<i>Santa Iria</i> (cap. XXIX) <i>Tradição de Santa Iria</i> , cap. XXX	<b>Viagens na minha terra</b> , com prólogo de Júlio Dantas. Lisboa: Lelo & Irmão, 1916 cap. XXIX
Menendez y Pelayo	<i>Santa Ilenia</i>	Santander
Jaime Lopes Dias		<b>Etnografia da Beira</b> , VI, 32, Famalicão, 1942
Augusto Cesar Pires de Lima		<b>Estudos etnográficos, filológicos e históricos</b> , III vol. Tradições populares de Santo Tirso. Porto : Junta da Província do Douro Litoral, 1948. 566p. p. 508
Firmino Augusto Martins		<b>Folclore do Concelho de Vinhais</b> , I. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1928, p. 213. <b>Folclore do Concelho de Vinhais</b> , II. Lisboa: Imprensa Oficial, 1939, LII, 582p. p. 33,
J. A. Pires de Lima e F. de C. Pires de Lima		<b>Romanceiro minhoto</b> , 67, 68,
Lima Carneiro	<i>Helena Fidalga</i>	<b>Cancioneiro de Monte Córdova</b> , Douro Litoral, V, 30, Porto, 1942,
José Leite de Vasconcelos		<b>Romanceiro português</b> . 2 vols. Coimbra: Universidade, 1958

<sup>1</sup> Romero, Silvio. **Cantos populares do Brasil**, 1882; Romero, Silvio. **Cantos populares do Brasil**. Introdução e notas de Teófilo Braga. Lisboa: Nova Livraria Internacional, 1885. 2ª ed. consideravelmente aumentada (sem o estudo e as notas comparativas), Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1897. 3ª ed. anotada por Luís da Câmara Cascudo. Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1954. 2 v.

<sup>2</sup> Costa, Francisco Augusto Pereira da. Folclore pernambucano, in **Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro**, v. 70. 1907. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria J. Leite, 1908, 641 p. il. 3. ed. 4. ed. CEPE, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Vasconcelos, José Leite de **Romanceiro português**. 2 vols. Coimbra: Universidade, 1958 (separata da Revista portuguesa de Filologia, v. 11).

		(separata da Revista portuguesa de filologia, v. 11).
Ataíde Oliveira		<b>Romanceiro e cancionero do Algarve</b> : lição de Loulé / por Francisco Xavier d'Athaide Oliveira. Porto : Typ. Universal, 1905.
Luís Chaves	<i>O romance de Santa Iria</i>	<b>Estudos de poesia popular</b> , 57-92, Porto, 1942
Ismael Moya	<i>Estaba Elenita,</i>	<b>Romancero</b> , II, 267, Buenos Aires, 1941
Lucas A. Boiteux	<i>Santa Iria</i>	<b>Poranduba catarinense</b> , 11-13
José Perez Vidal	Um dos estudos mais completos é o <i>Santa Irene (Contribución al estudio de um romance tradicional)</i> ,	Revista de Dialectologia y Tradiciones Populares, tomo IV, 518, cuaderno 4º, Madrid, 1948.
Rossini Tavares de Lima <sup>4</sup>	três versões, uma de Caxambu (Minas Gerais) e duas paulistas	<b>Romanceiro folclórico do Brasil</b> . São Paulo: Irmãos Vitale Editores, c1971. 112 p.

Researches Manuel da Costa Fontes, Samuel Armstead and Joseph Silverman worked on the Portuguese ballads in Canada and Unites States. In the book **Romanceiro Português no Canada** (p. 261-266) Costa Fontes documents 8 versions, listed between members of the Portuguese community, immigrants from Portugal mainland, the islands of the archipelago of the Azores and Madeira. In the **Romanceiro Português nos Estados Unidos**, Vol I – Nova Inglaterra (121) can be found only one version of Santa Iria, collected in the community of Peabody. In the **Romanceiro Português**, Vol II - California (121) there can be found three versions of that poem, collected in the communities of Manteca, Lodi and Tracy. Manuel Costa Fontes also collected in 1977, four versions in Sao Jorge, Azores, publishing them in the **Romanceiro da ilha de São Jorge** (p. 192-194).

Let's see two Brazilian versions:

## Santa Iria

<sup>4</sup> He has published in the **Revista do Arquivo** n. 162 (SP, 1959) three versions of Santa Iria or St. Helena, (two collected in São Paulo, 1949 and one from Minas Gerais, 1950). They were included in **Romanceiro Folclórico**, who has presented other two versions collected in São Paulo, one in Bahia and another in Mato Grosso (Corumbá), totaling seven versions.

(Version collected by Pereira da Costa, published in Folclore pernambucano, in **Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro**, v. 70. 1907, p. 391-392).

*Estava Santa Iria no seu estrado, assentada  
2 com o seu dedal de ouro e sua agulha de prata.  
Chega um cavalheiro e pede pousada  
4 e seu pae negando-a. Levanta-se Iria  
e diz a seu pae que se não a desse  
6 muito lhe pezára. ....  
- De três que nós éramos a mim me levou  
8 e todo o caminho me foi perguntando  
como me chamava: na casa paterna,  
10 Iria Fidalga, em terras alheias,  
Iria coitada. Puxando um alfange  
12 ahi me matou. Coberta de ramos  
assim me deixou. Sete anos depois  
14 por ahi passou, e vendo pastores,  
assim lhes falou: "Pastores, pastores,  
16 que estais pastorando, que ermida é esta,  
que está levantada? – É de Santa Iria  
18 que morreu degolada. ....  
"Minha Santa Iria, meu primeiro amor,  
20 perdoa-me a morte, serei teu romeiro.  
- Como te perdoarei, lobo carniceiro,  
22 que da minha garganta fizeste um cordeiro?  
Veste-te de azul, que é a cor do céu  
24 e se eu mal te quero, mal me queira Deus*

### **Santa Iria**

(Version collected in Cabedelo, Paraíba, Brazil, in 1995, by Altimar Pimentel, Braulio do Nascimento and Roberto Benjamin, published in **Romanceiro de Tia Beta**. Joao Pessoa: Governo da Paraíba, 2008, 97p. Il. p. 60) .

*Estava sentada lá no meu tesouro,  
2 com meu dedal de prata e minha agulha de ouro.  
Passou um estrangeiro, pedindo agasalho;  
4 se meu pai não dera, muito me pesara.  
Eu botei a ceia no melhor da casa;  
6 pratos de vidro, talheres de prata.  
Quando deu meia-noite selaram os cavalos;  
8 de três que nós era, só a mim levaram.  
Botou-me em sela, nem pra mim olhou;  
10 andamos sete léguas, comigo não falou.  
Virou-se pra trás e me perguntaram;  
12 na casa do meu pai, como me chamaram.  
Eu lhe respondi: me chamo Iria;  
14 na terra dos outros, naufragada e maltrapilha.*

*Por estas palavras, me degolou,  
 16 cobriu-me de flores, ali me deixou.  
 Depois de alguns anos, ele voltou;  
 18 no mesmo caminho a mim procurou.  
 Andavam umas pastoras, pastorando o gado;  
 20 - Que amigo é aquele que ali está enterrado?  
 - É santa Iria que morreu degolada.  
 22 - Iria, Iria, meu amor primeiro,  
 se me perdoares, serei teu romeiro.  
 24 - Eu não te perdôo, ladrão carniceiro,  
 da minha garganta, fizeste um cordeiro.  
 26 - Iria, Iria, meu amor primeiro,  
 se me perdoares, serei teu romeiro.  
 28 - Eu não te perdôo, pelo amor de Deus,  
 o mal que te quero assim queira Deus.*

### **Final Thoughts**

The romance of Santa Iria - like many others popular manifestations based only on the orality - can not be established a firm date of origin.

It is possible that the romance came under the impact of the kidnap and death of Iria, and in the following events occurred back in those days, such as the way the body took until find it final destination, Tejo River (the underwater grave).

The cult of Santa Iria is thought to have started shortly after the kidnap, then based on the Mozarabic rite. It is possible that the popular novel was developed then. By that time, the devotion to the Saint led to change the name of the Italian city of Scalabis, place where were found the mortal rests of Iria. Acalabis, later Santa Irene, is now known as Santarém.

With the establishment of the kingdom of Portugal, the cult, already old by that time, was enhanced with the visit of the royal family to the region where the events took place. From that visit, Queen Santa Isabel (1271-1336) ordered the construction of a milestone in the place where the body was submerged and made the cult based on the Roman rite official in Portugal.

The Gothic church of Santa Iria da Ribeira de Santarém was remodeled in Baroque style in 1688, and was reconstructed after the 1755 earthquake. In Tomar, the birthplace of Santa Iria, there is a niche over the river and a baroque chapel.

The presence of the queen and other members of the royalty inspired the hagiologic legend, described by Almeida Garrett and Teófilo Braga differently from the popular tradition, since rebuilt several centuries after the fact occurred.



The popular novel was disseminated in time and space and the hagiologic legend became better known after the insertion that Almeida Garret promoted in his book *Viagens na minha terra*.

The circumstances reported by Braulio Nascimento (2004: 31) in relation to the romance of Julie and d. Jorge:

*"The structure is composed of elements of such emotional intensity that has managed to resist the erosion of time and space. (...) Endure those elements, regardless of the changes that the years and the pilgrimage for several regions are introducing in their structure, giving it characteristics of a living body in constant development"*

fit the characteristics that typify the manifestations of the oral folk communication : in every novel, every occurrence of the narrative is a performance. On the same way goes the romance of Santa Iria, although each version is a recurrence, none of them is repeated in its entirety, yet maintaining the identity of nature and purpose that allow us to assign the same name.

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