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## MUCH BEYOND BORBA GATO: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE INDIGENOUS IN DISPUTES FOR MEMORY AND HISTORY TEACHING

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**Abstract:** The article starts from the disputes over memory and school history in the contemporary world to investigate the representations of the indigenous population in the teaching of Brazilian History. Significant examples of approaches to the theme are presented in 20th century didactic works that express the conflict between a homogeneous national identity, a clear derogatory view of indigenous peoples and, more recently, the struggle for spaces and other representations of the histories of this population in School history. It seeks to show that this dispute reflects the very dynamics of the construction of colonial society and internal colonialism that was perpetuated with the formation of the Brazilian National State. Finally, it is proposed, as an example, a possibility of overcoming, using excerpts from narratives that address the political struggle of indigenous women leaders for the demarcation of lands and for the recognition of their cultural production, as a way of making visible the clashes in relation to coloniality, taking advantage of and expanding gaps and interstices that can, in the medium term, infer transformations in collective memories and interpretations about Brazilian society represented in school history teaching.

**Keywords:** History Teaching; Indian people; Decoloniality; Didactic books.

On July 24, 2021, the Bandeirante Borba Gato statue was set on fire in the city of São Paulo. The act took place in the context of a major economic and health crisis, where the poorest and most peripheral population and social movements find themselves increasingly cornered by the loss of social rights and the apparent endless well of impunity enjoyed by those in power since the coup of 2016.

In addition to a claimed Peripheral Revolution, the symbolism of the action is given by the dispute of memories where the bandeirantismo was associated with the boldness of São Paulo in the clearing and colonization of the sertões. The idealization of the pioneers covered, for a long time, their colonizing and enslaving action of the native peoples of southern Brazil.

Although a Tupi toponymy, often artificial (NAVARRO, 2020), became intense at the beginning of the 20th century, the memory and representation of indigenous peoples remained, throughout the trajectory of the Brazilian National State, denied or fraught with prejudice. A long-term historical process makes the vast majority of the Brazilian population unaware of and even denying their origins. The indigenous presence, visible to those with eyes to see, in the faces of a large part of the Brazilian population, is not accompanied by the awareness of the Brazilian population's indigeneity. One of the important vehicles of this cover-up was the school education itself, which remains, even today, under dispute.

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the republican program for the creation of *School Groups*, a good part of the school contents and activities, including a very wide range of festivities, sought to build the nation, or rather, a nation project that promoted cohesion among a population. marked by extreme diversity. Inspired by French originals, the elementary school reading books that

walked *pari passu* with the literacy process, also fulfilled the function of disseminating the desired historical knowledge and consequently consolidating the vision of a homogeneous Nation that would follow a path towards progress and civilization.

One of the books officially adopted at the beginning of the century in the state of Paraná and in much of Brazil (MORENO, 2003) was: *Histórias da Nossa Terra*, by Julia Lopes de Almeida<sup>1</sup>, with a series of short stories for children, some in an epistolary genre, others simple narratives that tell stories of characters, usually children, who inspire noble, heroic gestures and, above all, of Christian charity and piety. In the book, each story takes place in a Brazilian state and also becomes a roadmap to discover the different regions of the country.

*Histórias da Nossa Terra* presents a clear derogatory view of indigenous peoples, highlighting their animal instinct, detachment from material things, lack of care for their properties and anthropophagy. This is how the Indians of Brazil:

they defied danger, were drunk with blood, and were ignorant of charity. Women were like slaves, but equally bloodthirsty. They wouldn't be very ugly if they didn't flatten their noses and deform their mouths, piercing their lips (ALMEIDA, 1915, p. 28).

This way, Julia Lopes shows that children must be grateful for “what we are now and what the savages were before the discovery of Brazil” (Idem, p. 26):

What joy fills my spirit when I think of the happiness of being born four hundred years after that time, when man was a wild beast, unworthy of the land he was ravaging, and how I shudder with gratitude for the multitudes who came to redeem this land, digging it up with his ambition, watering

it with his blood, saving it with his cross! (Idem, p. 29).

This vision, however, was mixed with another type of approach in didactic production, especially from the 1920s onwards. The discourse of racial democracy and the myth of the union of the three races gained strength as a desire for a new image of the country and the peoples. Indigenous peoples become the founding representations (MORENO, 2014) of the nation. In one of them, the moment of the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil, for example, despite the discrepancy of representations between superiors and inferiors, some form of peaceful coexistence and fraternization would prevail, indicating the foundation of the new nation.

As an example, take the book: “*História do Brasil*” by Maria Januária Vilela Santos, originally published in 1973, intended for primary education (5th and 6th grades). The work is part of a movement of renewal in didactic production, from the 1970s, to overcome the old textbooks that were used since the 1930s. In small format (approx. 15x21 cm), it is rich in images with photographs, small maps and many illustrations. There is the use of comics, especially in the early part of the work, with the artifice of “time travel”.

Right at the beginning, there are three pages with the illustrated narrative of Cabral's voyage and the discovery of Brazil (Image I). Upon arrival, “Nicolau Coelho went ashore”; an indigenous man approaches, apparently offering a headdress; the Portuguese extends his hand and says: “How gentle they are!” (p. 46). The native, of course, does not respond, in fact the natives never say anything. The same happens in the illustration of *first mess*, in large size - still as a comic book -, when they observe in amazement the erection of the

<sup>1</sup> Author of novels, short stories and plays Julia Lopes will be among the most important writers in the period of nationalization of didactic works, publishing, in addition to: *Histórias da Nossa Terra*, the work in prose and verse: *Contos Infantis*, written together with Adelina Lopes Vieira. *Histórias da Nossa Terra* was first published in 1907 and had twenty-one editions, the last being in 1930. In the state of Paraná, the book was officially used in schools until 1921 (MORENO, 2003).

wooden cross, “symbol of all Christians” (p. 47).



Picture I. Source: SANTOS, 1973.

Also in the approach of the Dutch in Brazil there is a precarious reproduction of the canonical image of the “Batalha dos Guararapes”, without identification. Just below appears the image of three men: one black, a white and an indigenous, apparently talking. The caption explains: “the great result of the struggle against the Dutch was the union of whites, blacks and Indians” (p. 95).

However, when considering the “positive” version of the union of the three races, even at this moment there are highly derogatory interpretations of the indigenous population, which have been expressed since the beginning of this didactic work. On page 28, the student is asked “Did you know that: the Indians of Brazil were backward? Did they live by hunting and fishing, did they have the most primitive agriculture and many of them were semi-nomadic?”. The information is confirmed further on, highlighted with a yellow background, when it comes to “ethnic formation”: “Brazilian Indians were very backward. They were still in the prehistoric period” (p. 82). Some cultural absences are listed (which they did not know about). In religion, it is also highlighted that “the Indians did not have anything similar to our churches, but they believed they had a soul that did not die” (p. 84). In the same way, the text informs

us that:

The Brazilian Indians were not a united people, as we are today. In the same territory in which we form a single people from north to south, they were divided into several peoples, often enemies of each other. Therefore, they did not have **national** unity (p. 80, a highlight was made in the original document).

This view is predominant, but not the only one to circulate in the didactic works of the 1970s. The collection: “*Estudos sociais: o processo de ocupação do espaço brasileiro*” by Elza Nadai, Joana Neves and Suria Abucarma, published by Editora Saraiva, was, in 1979, in its 3rd edition with 192 pages. As in other works, a great deal of space is devoted to the subject of entrances and Flags. But, published in the late 1970s, this manual already invests in a posture of desacralization of the icons of São Paulo and Brazilian history. The authors insist a lot on the issue of bandeirismo hunter of Indians, attributing, based on historiographical references, another meaning to bandeirismo oppressor:

The arresting banderismo represented, however, the armed and conquering colonizer. His vision as a “militarized” contingent of the Colony, in arms against the gentile who were intended to be used as workers, can be exemplified in the attitude of the authorities of the captaincy of Pernambuco who, in 1699, hired the services of the pioneer Domingos Jorge Velho to fight the Quilombo de Palmares (p. 111).

The indigenous population is highlighted in the work. There are 7 subchapters dedicated to the theme. A map of the occupation of the territory by indigenous groups at the time of publication of the work is presented, identifying the Tupi-Guarani, the Jê, the Aruaque, the Cariba, the Cariri, the Pano, the Tucano, the Charrua<sup>2</sup> and other groups (p. 54). It also presents situations of violence

<sup>2</sup> We kept the spelling of ethnic groups in the singular and their initials in capital letters, as commonly used in current

such as the Tupinambá attacks and the Tomé de Souza Regiment authorizing an aggressive reaction (just war). Next, the authors identify that

As the Portuguese replaced the extraction of brazilwood with agriculture, with the introduction of sugarcane, relations with the Indians began to be marked by open conflict. The Indian came to be seen as an obstacle to land tenure, a plentiful and secure source of labor and one of the great threats to the security of colonization, intensifying among whites the desire to dominate the indigenous (p. 59).

The authors then comment that indigenous peoples were left with no option for survival, as the direct struggle, submission and flight to the interior ended up resulting, in the medium term, in the elimination of their culture (p. 60). They also bring an excerpt from Momboréuaçu against the alliance of the Tupinambá with the French, where a certain awareness of some processes to which the indigenous peoples were subjected is revealed.

Finally, the authors invest in the recurrence between past and present to talk about current indigenous issues, according to them, “although the conditions are different, a certain similarity can be verified between the current situation and that of the Colonial Period” in three aspects:

- squatters and ranchers with their gun men fighting to obtain the lands of the Indians whenever the use of these lands is in their economic interest.
- Indigenous and religious missionaries (Catholic and Protestant), both Brazilian and foreign, making contact with the Indians (...).
- authorities trying to reconcile the interests of progress, which sometimes requires the occupation of lands belonging to indigenous people, and the preservation of indigenous people and their culture. To this end, the

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anthropological research.

Brazilian government has been creating institutions and adopting different measures to organize action in relation to native groups (p. 111).

The stance of denunciation of extreme violence and genocide and the relationship with the present time is a harbinger of another stance that History textbooks will bring from the 1980s onwards, with the process of political opening. But, before proceeding with this reasoning, it is necessary to go back a little in time and realize that the representation of indigenous peoples in textbooks reflects the very dynamics of the construction of colonial society and internal colonialism that was perpetuated with the formation of the National State.

### **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: COLONIALITY AND PUBLIC POLICIES**

Daniel Munduruku (2012), an indigenous author, highlights three historical moments through which official policies in relation to native peoples have passed: the extermination paradigm, the integrationist paradigm and the post-1988 Constitution.

From the first contact and with the consequent seizure of American lands by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 16th century, the first paradigm was established by the Europeans: the exterminationist. Indigenous people were classified as soulless and, therefore, if they resisted foreign incursions, they were liable to be killed. According to Munduruku (2012), this changed very little with the promulgation of the papal bull of Paul III in 1537, which gave the inhabitants of the new world the status of “humans with souls”, as the view prevailed that such populations had no beliefs, rules and regulations. and social organization.

If there was a legal impediment with the

bull: *Sublimis Deus*, the European discourse ended up changing, conceiving the natives as barbarians, savages who had to adapt to the new imposed standard. This civilizing mission made use of the concept of “just war” to carry out a massacre: either the natives accepted colonization, working compulsorily, or they would be the target of violence justified by the European moral duty to expand their modern/colonial system.

Anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha disagrees that the extermination was meticulously planned, stating that both men and microorganisms were the main agents and that the reasons for the violence were banal: greed and ambition put into practice by mercantile capitalism. In the case of diseases, the large concentration of indigenous people co-opted in missionary and official villages favored mortality. It is also clear that when they became ill, there was a considerable drop in the birth rate, which was already negligible in the villages (CUNHA, 1992).

The wars incited among the natives to supply the need for slave labor is another important factor that contributed to the decimation of these peoples. The exploitation of indigenous labor is an enterprise that will lead to the ruin of many peoples, contradictorily still continue to be claimed today that they are not suited to toil (RIBEIRO, 2009).

The Portuguese will classify the indigenous people as lazy and indolent, not paying attention to their own way of life and social organization. This stigma will be reproduced relentlessly until today. Opposition and rebellion against forced labor, in the molds of modernity/coloniality, were not understood as challenges to exogenous customs, they were simply read, from the European perspective, as a repudiation of any physical effort. It is important to emphasize that basketry, hunting, gathering, subsistence agriculture, production of ornaments and other community activities

were not seen as work, since they did not generate the accumulation of goods and did not awaken the sense of individualistic possession.

Genocide lasted for centuries, accompanied by the use of this enslaved labor. Despite the Holy See opposing the physical massacre of these peoples at various times, on the other hand it undertook a cultural massacre, an ethnocide, an “imposition of social, moral and religious values, leading to the disintegration and consequent destruction of countless indigenous societies” (MUDURUKU, 2012, p. 29). This concept was coined by the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, who defines it as follows:

If the term: **genocide** refers to the idea of “race” and the will to exterminate a racial minority, the term: **ethnocide** points not to the physical destruction of men [...], but to the destruction of their culture. Ethnocide, therefore, is the systematic destruction of the ways of life and thought of peoples other than those who undertake this destruction. In short, genocide kills peoples in their body, ethnocide kills them in their spirit (apud PIMENTEL, 2012, p. 26, author’s emphasis).

Another extermination that cannot be overlooked and that intersects with ethnocide is epistemicide. This term, created by the Portuguese Boaventura de Souza Santos, tries to encompass the crimes carried out by modernity/coloniality against the knowledge and knowledge of the original and traditional populations. When they were not extinct, they were reduced to the category of illusion and/or superstition. Thus, their epistemologies (notions or ideas that support valid knowledge) were cruelly crushed by another that was considered the only true one, the European one. In summary, the meaning of epistemicide would be the “suppression of local knowledge perpetrated by an alien knowledge” (SANTOS; MENESES, 2009, p. 10).

The exterminationist paradigm ends up inverting for an integrationist in the 19th century, where the State starts to yearn for an ethnocide. In this model, inspired by positivism, indigenous people are seen as backward parts of humanity, which would find themselves in an evolutionary stage close to that of the Paleolithic peoples. As the anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha says:

[...]A summary evolutionism consecrates the Indians and many other non-Western peoples as “primitives”, testimonies of an era we would have already passed: fossils, in a way, miraculously preserved in the forests and that, kept in prolonged puerility, would nevertheless have as their destiny, access that telos that is western society (CUNHA, 2012, p. 60).

This vision continued forcefully throughout the 20th century, this time supported by the idea of progress and fueled by the belief in the end of indigenous societies, which would be incorporated and dissolved in “Western civilization”. A crucial moment for the institutionalization of the integrationist concept was the creation of the Indian Protection Service (SPI), in 1910, which constituted itself as a tutelary body for these peoples and their territorial domains. The institution was born out of a need of the young secular Republic to guarantee the possession of its territories, to expand the “civilizing” process and to take a stand regarding these inhabitants, who were being co-opted by religious orders with a growing history of conflicts. Under the leadership of Marechal Cândido Mariano Rondon, who sought to expand telegraph lines in the states of Mato Grosso and Amazonas, the SPI guaranteed certain rights to these peoples, but with a clear idea of assimilation and a utilitarian vision of their territories, points of support for a border control policy (MUNDURUKU, 2012).

The tutelary regime over indigenous

people was consolidated in the first half of the 20th century. With advances in theoretical perspectives, especially anthropology, the struggle for minority rights, and subsequent questioning by intellectuals, the situation seemed close to changing. However, with the military coup of 1964, the idea of assimilation persisted and in 1967 the SPI became the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI). This exposed indigenous peoples to the abandonment of basic services, due to the lack of financial resources injected by the government; it despised their territories with the construction of large enterprises characteristic of the regime and approved the controversial Statute of the Indian (1973). The Statute reiterated the 1916 civil code that considered the native population to be “forestry with relative capacity” and removed all their autonomy, prescribing their irremediable assimilation.

Contrasting with this certainty was the resilience of these peoples. Believing that, through insertion in the labor market, these societies would break up from the breakdown of their traditional economies, the government starts to invest in economic projects that disarticulate their social bases. However, as Darcy Ribeiro noted, what was happening was a “socioeconomic integration, without any cultural assimilation”, the resilience of indigenous cultures made the market economy bend without giving up their identities:

Many Indians become salaried workers or producers of some commodity, because they need resources to buy tools, medicine, cloth and other items they need. But, even so, they remain Indians, because they identify and are accepted as members of their ancient indigenous community (RIBEIRO, 2017, p. 16).

These attacks on traditional cultures were part of the National Integration Plan (PIN) of the 1970s and aimed to “open up” the Amazon

to development, adding indigenous labor. This undertaking raised civil society organizations, religious and academic sectors in favor of native populations. Thus, through external interference and previous experiences of these peoples, they increasingly begin to mobilize in a unified way. It was in 1974 that the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), an organ of the Catholic Church, promoted the first meeting of indigenous leaders, with no link to the interests of the State, which would put in motion the articulation of their peoples and the beginning of a political front. properly indigenous (MUNDURUKU, 2012).

In 1978, with the government promulgation of a proposal for the emancipation of the natives, which questioned the ethnic identity of some groups, considering them as “acculturated” and with the clear intention of appropriating their lands, the native populations saw the need to formalize your joints. Thus, in 1979, the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) was born, bringing together different indigenous leaders and dialoguing with other entities in support of their causes. This is a moment when the Eurocentric approach is questioned and the subjective and existential rights of these peoples are demanded.

It is through this role that the foundations of the Indigenous Movement are laid and will have a strong impact on the design of the forthcoming *Citizen Constitution*. Another highlight is the political appropriation that this movement makes of the term “Indian”. What was once a word despised by the indigenous people, for establishing a stereotype that eroded their multiple ethnic-cultural specificities, is now used as a marker of difference, a symbol that combats the even more harmful attribute of a unified and homogeneous national identity.

After much struggle by the Indigenous Movement, religious sectors and political and academic personalities, the 1988 Constitution

guaranteed the original right of indigenous people over their lands, to experience their knowledge and cultures, to have a differentiated education, to be considered citizens and the possibility themselves to activate the legal means when they feel injured, without the imperative need for a mediator. However, the Indian Statute was maintained, due to the lack of regularization of a new code, more consistent with the ideals expressed in the Magna Carta. This great advance achieved in a democratic environment has been trying to be accomplished in the last thirty years, but many native societies are still destitute of territory, in a situation of discouragement and facing serious conflicts with the non-indigenous population.

From the 1990s onwards, the Indigenous Movement took on another strategy; after the 1988 achievements, activities became more local and regionalized, as the potential of each leadership to negotiate the demands of their communities with the public authorities became clear. National articulations were not abandoned, it was still necessary to break with the belief in indigenous incapacity and draw attention to the various cases of rights violations. An example that was marked by the exposure of the authoritarian face of the Brazilian government in relation to indigenous people was the tragic outcome of the official commemorations of the five hundredth anniversary of the “discovery” of Brazil, on April 22, 2000 in Porto Seguro (BA), where protesters suffered from arrests and police brutality.

In the last decades of the last century, natives gained greater visibility in claiming their rights and identities. These populations denounced abuse and violence, reclaimed territories and organized themselves into movements, participating in the discussions that led to the 1988 Constitution. The indigenous themselves showed, as historical subjects that they were,



that the readings made about their people were distorted. Their cultures were distinct and could be re-elaborated without any harm and that, unlike those who thought they were disappearing, their population number did not stop growing.

## **IN SEARCH OF OTHER REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIGENOUS HISTORIES IN SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHING**

In the late 1980s, renewed didactic production brought greater space to the indigenous issue in line with the effervescence of social movements in search of a leading role in political openness. Collections such as “Brasil Vivo” (Chico Alencar, Marcus Venicio Ribeiro and Claudius Ceccon, Editora Vozes) devoted almost a third of their content to indigenous history and culture. Marketing and classroom use champions such as “História & Vida” (Nelson Piletti and Claudino Piletti, Editora Ática) and “História & Consciência do Brasil” (Gilberto Cotrim, Editora Saraiva) also give space and voice to indigenous populations to a large extent. proportion in relation to the didactic works that preceded them. The interpretations and indigenous voices are supported in these didactic productions, by the book, published by Editora Vozes in 1982, entitled “*História dos Povos Indígenas: 500 anos de luta no Brasil*”. This document is the result of the work of CIMI – Indigenist Missionary Council – an organization created in 1972, linked to the CNBB. The CIMI text presents itself as the Indians’ view of their own history and culture<sup>3</sup>.

Such an approach was made possible by a curricular organization that divided the last four grades of Elementary Education (11 to 14 years old) into Brazilian History and General History. However, from the second

half of the 1990s onwards, a new structuring of the organization of historical contents, in chronological form, in addition to the official curricular prescriptions, would be imposed. It was a new nomenclature that came to predominate in didactic works: Integrated History. In this organization, students would study a single timeline of ‘the entire history of human beings’ in Elementary School (new nomenclature after LDB/96), repeating this same organization in High School. With the unique timeline of a chronological organization imagined by 19th century Europeans, any new theme to be included or expanded would henceforth be destined to be an addendum, a complement that runs apart to the ultimate chronological narration of history.

Despite these limitations, the indigenous movements began, from this period on, to demand more intensely the broadcasting of a new story told also from their point of view. In the academic environment, the indigenous issue in Brazil gains a new contribution from the perspective of the so-called *new indigenous history*, as seen in the productions of Manoela Carneiro da Cunha and John Manuel Monteiro. These and other authors sought to understand the indigenous people as historical subjects, active participants against the repression against them, influencing several researches. The aim was to move the natives from a supporting perspective-to a leading role.

Historians and anthropologists are increasingly approaching, deepening the approaches of Ethnohistory, the first interested in behaviors and beliefs and the second seeking to understand the historical processes of social and cultural changes of each people. These exchanges are based on the idea of indigenous people as protagonists of their

<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is a work written by Eunice Dias de Paula, Luiz Gouvea de Paula and Elizabeth Amarante, teachers of indigenous schools, but which was written in the 1st person plural, according to the introduction of the work, “from the perspective of the leaders indigenous peoples expressed mainly in the Assemblies of Chiefs” (1982, p. 9).

own history, who do not need to be tutored, as they can speak and claim for themselves (CASTRO; VARGAS, 2013).

The book: “História dos Índios no Brasil” 1992, organized by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, fulfilled the role of proposing new research on the subject, inspired by this renewal. The primitivist, evolutionist and ahistorical perspectives on indigenous populations were questioned and new questions about memory and history were posed. As for these innovations, one must be aware that “the perception of a policy and a historical consciousness in which the Indians are subjects and not just victims, is only eventually new to us. For the Indians it seems to be customary” (CUNHA, 1992, p. 18).

This is confirmed by the increase in the number of academic texts produced by the indigenous themselves, which are gradually gaining ground in university chairs. In a very significant way, narratives and perspectives of indigenous intellectuals who speak from within the movement, who experience the indigenous cause in their own bodies, began to have more visibility. Daniel Munduruku, Ailton Krenak, Edson Kayapó and Gersém Baniwa are some indigenous authors who stand out in this intersection between the academic and indigenous worlds.

Achievements arising from the pressure of indigenous movements were also present in legal terms, with emphasis on Law 11,645 of 2008 which, by reaffirming the mandatory nature of teaching and indigenous histories and cultures in schools, paved the way for a series of practices, training and academic research with a view to a greater presence of this theme, especially in the school teaching of History.

Recently, a predominantly Latin American theory has been strengthening educational propositions that deal with ethnic-racial re-education. Despite the undeniable European

influence on the Western world, a concept that is also Eurocentric, some authors have been trying to fight for a non-modern epistemological space, or at least one that does not start from the prerogatives of modernity. This space seeks to ensure that the knowledge, traditions and existences of peoples considered peripheral are made visible, protected and treated in a degree of equivalence with regard to their validity in relation to modern discourse. The movement that seeks to think outside the ‘iron cage’ of modernity has been called decolonial. It is within this perspective that we have been developing possibilities to take advantage of and expand gaps and interstices that may, in the medium term, infer transformations in memories and interpretations regarding the indigenous population.

### **NATIVE PEOPLES AND DECOLONIAL PEDAGOGY: A PROPOSAL FROM: “MULHERES INDÍGENAS DA TRADIÇÃO”**

In light of the above, it appears that the decolonial theories and the law 11,645/2008 present alternatives for the restructuring of the epistemological bases of the teaching of History. The ancestral memories of the original peoples of Brazil, once marginalized, are thought, in this perspective, as mandatory curricular themes that aim to highlight and value Brazilian indigeneity.

The history of indigenous peoples in school learning represents the construction of narratives reflected from the colonial difference which, for Mignolo (2003), means thinking from the ruins and margins created by the coloniality of power, aiming to recognize other knowledge, arising from subjectivities subordinated and excluded. An epistemic project created from the colonial difference implies, therefore, recognizing and dialoguing with different knowledge

productions of Western modernity.

For Catherine Walsh (2019), in the educational field, decolonial pedagogies are built to the extent that historical narratives enunciate the political struggles of subaltern peoples against coloniality, as well as their social and epistemic practices. This way, we start with the production of an 'other' critical thinking, coming from Latin American experiences, marked by coloniality.

The decolonial paradigm has been appropriated by researchers from different areas, which has generated fruitful productions for the field. Progressively, research materials on the history of subaltern peoples are produced with a view to making visible memories that for decades were stereotyped and marginalized.

As an example of one of these possibilities, we suggest working with an easily accessible material: the photographic book: *Mulheres indígenas da tradição* (2015), available for download on the CIMI website<sup>4</sup>. The work is the result of research on indigenous women in Pernambuco, carried out by researchers from eleven peoples in the state. It was created with the objective of presenting the trajectory of women recognized for their contribution in various areas of collective life and who stand out for the ancestral knowledge they have about the values and practices of their respective peoples.

As the authors describe (2015), the book intends to make visible struggles that are often silenced in the narratives and records about the political action of indigenous women in the Brazilian Northeast. This silencing results from gender coloniality, a term defined by María Lugones (2014) as "capitalist racialized gender oppression" (p. 941). Lugones proposes that analyzing the processes of subordination of Latin American peoples from the perspective of gender coloniality reveals an axis of marginalization that

operates from economic systems that are, at the same time, racializing and gendered. This category of analysis, therefore closely linked to issues of class, race and gender, results in an understanding of the systems of oppression that operate on indigenous women.

Faced with the exposed problem, for the construction of decolonial pedagogies in the classroom, many didactic possibilities can be explored from the work: *Mulheres indígenas da tradição*. One of them refers to the use of biographies in the teaching of history. Especially from the second quarter of the 20th century, biography gained a new status of legitimacy not only as a historiographical perspective, but also as a source for analysis in the teaching of History. Biographical narratives are, then, approaches to teaching history, in which the selected characters become the protagonists. With this, multiperspectiveness is created in historical learning, in which other voices, often silenced, are enunciated based on the teacher's choice (MEZZOMO; PATÁRO, 2020).

In the interface with the decolonial pedagogy, we propose the biographical selection of indigenous characters, mediated by the book *Mulheres Indígenas da Tradição*, because as explained by Lugones (2014), decolonizing the genre is a praxis that occurs as we dialogue with the stories and memories of the resisters who act from the colonial difference. The proposed biographical approach allows students to visualize that the categories individual and society are not opposites, but interrelated and mutually constituted. Eleven women are biographed within the suggested work. They all belong to different ethnic groups. They are: Atikum indigenous people, Pankararu from Entre Serras, Kambiwá, Kapinawá, Pankaiwka, Pankará, Pankararu, Pipipã, Truká, Tuxa and Xukuru.

Throughout the book, all the biographies

<sup>4</sup> <https://cimi.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/livro-mulheres-indigenas-tradicao.pdf>. Visited August 2021.

narrate the common experience of indigenous women in the political struggle for the territory. It appears, therefore, that this is one of the central claims of Brazilian indigenous movements, since fighting for the defense of the territory and for the conservation of nature means fighting for the existence of the people themselves, since the individual and collective life of indigenous groups is directly connected with nature. Their food, religious practices and even their source of income come from nature. Therefore, the survival of indigenous peoples, their culture, their knowledge and memories, depends on the demarcated territory.

Exploring, in the classroom, excerpts from the narratives that address the political struggle of indigenous leaders for the demarcation of land means “to make the struggles against coloniality visible from the perspective of people, their social, epistemic and political practices” (OLIVEIRA, CANDAU, p. 24). Many guiding questions can be asked to assist students in exploring the proposed teaching material, such as: ‘What are the indigenous ethnicities to which the biographed women belong? Do you know any?’ ‘Are there indigenous groups in the region where you live?’ ‘What are the characters highlighted in the book? Other than them, how many indigenous personalities have you studied in the history of Brazil?’ ‘Do you know the indigenous social movements of Brazil?’ ‘What is the main struggle of Brazilian indigenous movements, listed in all the biographies in the book?’

The guiding questions can guide classroom debates about the processes of subordination of native peoples throughout the history of Brazil, originating from the colonial period and which are currently reflected in the erasure of their histories and in the struggles that still need to be fought for the basic right of the territory. As previously described, it

is about dehumanizing and making visible the struggles of subaltern groups against coloniality, referring to concrete people, in the case of this biographical approach, the indigenous women of the tradition.

The ancestral practices and knowledge of native peoples are also common elements in biographical narratives. The women protagonists are described as holders of religious and medicinal knowledge, with regard to the knowledge of plants and herbs that have various healing properties.

Furthermore, they are mentioned as the guardians of the historical memory of political and cultural resistance that characterizes the identity of their people. The indigenous women of the tradition are, therefore, responsible for transmitting to the new generations the representations of continuity about the indigenous identity, which will guarantee the cohesion and permanence of the ethnic traditions of their respective peoples over time.

Exploring, in the book’s narratives, the passages that evoke the knowledge and practices of the native peoples implies directing the historical discourse towards the colonial difference. In the terms of Candau and Oliveira, the perspective of colonial difference “requires a look at epistemological approaches and at subalternized and excluded subjectivities. It presupposes an interest in knowledge productions distinct from Western modernity” (2010, p. 23-24). Starting from the colonial difference in pedagogical activities, therefore, implies highlighting the knowledge and practices that characterize the subjectivity of subaltern peoples.

As a photographic book, the work indigenous women of tradition brings many image representations about the history and identity of the subjects. The physiognomy of the characters can be explored by the teacher and the students in order to scrutinize whether

they look like family members of the students, or with themselves, teachers or other workers at the school institution. It is about exploring the indigenities of the students, which can be done by comparing photographs brought by them, to enrich the investigative character of the activity.

In this sense, the teacher can suggest that students create a biographical narrative, as exposed in the book, about women who, for them, are inspiring. Here, other photographs can be brought in by the students, or they can draw them. Instead of a prose biographical narrative, learners can create poetry. It is a playful activity, to explore students' creativity and imagination, in order to insert them in the construction of the historical narrative.

Ultimately, as described by Catherine Walsh (2019), in the educational field, the decolonial perspective that we propose, based on the work *Indigenous Women of Tradition*, does not mean the inclusion of themes merely annexed to the historical discipline, which only reinforce the stereotypes of subaltern groups. Instead, decolonial pedagogies are conceived as the cultural policies that aim to rebel against coloniality and enable re-existence through the construction of pedagogical practices that envision the right to exist in pluriversality.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE STITCHES**

Although Borba Gato was not exactly a prisoner of indigenous people, his figure represents one of the poles in dispute over the identity representation of the Brazilian population. The affirmation of a single identity bias, positivized as an agent, a historical subject and the representation of others as submissive, inferior, passive victims, was a strategy of the coloniality of power that we were able to follow in the representations built by Brazilian society and, especially, in the didactic works, as fundamental elements of a school culture and a disciplinary code

constantly reaffirmed by a selective tradition for almost a century.

Possibilities of overcoming are envisioned in the construction of multiple stories that take into account the point of view of the different indigenous ethnicities. At the same time, narratives and biographies need to be incorporated into a collective history, making the Brazilian "we" become and recognize itself as effectively pluriversal, creating deeper horizontal ties, social affections that reflect values of equality and social justice within this already consolidated nation-state.

Understood this way, decoloniality is no longer a mere theoretical line to be studied and becomes a posture that can be put into practice in all spheres of collective life. With this, it is intended to change the way of relating to the diversity of existing peoples and to change a rude epistemological behavior that insists on conceptual binarisms engendered by coloniality, capitalism and patriarchy. On this path, more than academic musings, decoloniality is the answer to a world that is no longer sustainable, it is a cry for us to hear the voices that, for centuries, were silenced and that have much to contribute to the maintenance of life, the rethinking identities and the re-signification of our existences. The solution may lie in subverting the logic of the "colonizer" and seeking other answers for tomorrow in the wisdom of the "colonized". This is the role we defend for a History teaching in which past and present are intertwined in the perspective of a collective future viable for all.

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