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The Influence of European Racial Theories on the Formation of the Brazilian Historiographic Matrix and History Teaching

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The Influence of European Racial Theories on the Formation of the Brazilian Historiographic Matrix and History Teaching

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Abstract

This article is part of the PhD research developed in the Post-Graduate Program in History (Federal University of Goiás) entitled "Intercultural historical learning from the knowledge conveyed in indigenous and non-indigenous educational contexts". Its aim is to present a critique of the Brazilian historiographic matrix, highlighting the influences of European racial theories during its formation process and to analyze the incidences of this matrix on the historical conceptions of the students from Dona Gercina Borges School, located in the Brazilian city of Formoso do Araguaia, in the state of Tocantins, which borders several indigenous villages of Javaé people. The theoretical methodological framework is linked, above all, to the studies and discussions developed by the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality movement, the historical perspectives of two great indigenous leaders, Gersem Baniwa and Daniel Munduruku, and the positioning of the students themselves heard in the research.

Keywords: Brazilian historiography, racial theories, colonialism, history teaching.

La Influencia de las Teorías Raciales Europeas en la Formación de la Matriz Historiográfica Brasileña y la Enseñanza de la Historia

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Resumen

Este artículo es parte de la investigación doctoral desarrollada en el Programa de Posgrado en Historia (Universidad Federal de Goiás) titulado "Aprendizaje histórico intercultural a partir del conocimiento llevado a cabo en contextos educativos indígenas y no indígenas". En el primer momento, presentaremos una crítica de la matriz historiográfica brasileña destacando las influencias de las teorías raciales europeas en su proceso de formación. En el segundo paso, analizaremos los efectos de esta matriz en las ideas históricas de los estudiantes de la Escuela Doña Gercina Borges. El marco teórico y metodológico está vinculado, sobre todo, a los estudios y discusiones desarrollados por el movimiento modernidad / colonialidad / decolonialidad, las perspectivas históricas de dos grandes líderes indígenas, Gersem Baniwa y Daniel Munduruku, y la posición de los propios estudiantes escuchados en la investigación.

Palabras clave: historiografía brasileña, teorías raciales, colonialismo, enseñanza de la historia.

In Brazil, the approval of the Law 11,645/2008 made the study of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture mandatory (Nazareno & Araújo, 2018, p. 37). This new institutional framework resulted from the struggles of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous social movements undertaken especially since the 1970s. Racism and its social consequences, such as unequal wages, limited access to education and housing, religious persecution of these populations along with their historical memories, have become important political and educational issues.

In this context, the main goal of this article is to contribute to the discussion that questions the perception spread over centuries that European colonization would have been the leading force of progress and the civilization process of peoples considered primitive. In Brazil, this assumption continued to be conveyed by the imperial government established in 1822, the year of Portugal's political independence. It is the reason why we strive to map the presence of racial and Eurocentred theories in the creation of a national historical memory.

Likewise, the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute (IHGB), founded in 1838, was responsible for researching and defining what the colonial past would have been like. After the Proclamation of the Republic (1889) and the abolition of slavery (1888), some elements of the first narratives about this past were reformulated, especially by the generation of professional historians connected to higher education institutions. In this context the question that orientated the research was: how should the colonial past and multiraciality be configured in the narrative of Brazilian history in order to be written and taught?

In the second moment, we present the research that was carried out with students from the Dona Gercina Borges School, located in the municipality of Formoso do Araguaia (Tocantins), in order to identify which elements of the Brazilian historiographic matrix still remains in the way students of primary education perceive ethnic-racial relations in the region where they live.

State of the Art

Along with the colonialist projects implemented from the 15th century onwards by the European powers, the racialization of human beings has become a global phenomenon directly affecting native populations in

America, Asia and Africa and also minorities in Europe. These processes have been researched by authors such as (Mello et al., 2019; Lopez, García & Martí, 2018; Racionero Plaza et al., 2018) who bring important contributions to the analysis and confrontation of the impacts caused by such identity policies. Also, the movement known as modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, comprized by scholars such as Walter Mignolo (2017), Dussel (2000), Quijano (2010), Castro-Gómez (2005; 2007), Arturo Escobar (2015), Edgardo Lander (2000) and Nelson Maldonado Torres (2008), bring out new understanding perspectives of the colonial past, especially in Latin America, from the assumption that coloniality of power is one of the fundamental elements of modernity and did not die out after the processes of political independence of the former colonies.

Another important part to the development of this research was the articulation between the racial classification standards depicted by Europe and the formation of colonial empires. Racism is here understood not only in its phenotypic sense, but also as something of the Western modernity (Flecha & Puigvert, 2000, p. 138) that manifests itself with all its social and epistemic violence that has been expressed in the inferiorization of languages, knowledge and ecologies that make up the ontological universe of the various peoples that inhabit the Global South (Santos, 2010).

The inclusion of such debates in the school context, in order to build a decolonial didactic, has been undertaken by recent studies (Ramallo, 2017; Mota Neto, 2016; Nazareno, Magalhães & Freitas, 2019; Palermo, 2014; Walsh, Oliveira & Candau, 2018). As Ramallo (2017) states, the colonial experience also permeates our educational experiences in a way that thinking about resistance, (re)exist and (re)live (Walsh, 2009) has increasingly been configured as a practice of decolonial didactics open to the participation and appreciation of those who have historically been marginalized, silenced and hidden.

In the field of history teaching and History Didactics, with emphasis being put on a research that has been taking place, among other countries, in Portugal (Barca, 2005), Brazil (Schmidt, 2017), Germany (Rüsen, 2010), England (Lee, 2006) and Cape Verde (de Lima, Andrade & Costa, 2019). Although not directly related to decolonial theories, these authors have been carrying out investigations of learning processes in history, from which they

propose the development of humanistic and intercultural perspectives in the understanding of the past and the teaching of history.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research consisted of a qualitative bibliographic analysis of texts that were published in the Journal of the Historical and Geographical Institute (RIHGB) and of works produced by Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1902-1982), Caio Prado Júnior (1907-1990) and Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987).

The field research was performed at Dona Gercina Borges School through a workshop-class in which students made a cartographic analysis of the map representing the great Portuguese navigations. There were 81 non-indigenous students and five indigenous students, from 11 to 14 years old, who were attending the 7th grade of elementary school. We chose here the methodology applied on Historical Education, which has been reaffirming the need for integration between teaching/research and theory/practice since the 1970s, as well as the intermittent dialogue between the subjects of knowledge and their own life experiences (Barca, 2005).

Influences of European Racial Theories on the Formation of the Brazilian Historiographic Matrix

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, Western history is committed to legitimizing itself as an autonomous discipline in European universities. For this purpose, it considered the need not only to build standards of knowledge based on scientific methods, but also to expose their functional qualities. In this context, the figure of the historian emerges, as a specialized professional and with places to be occupied in public and private bodies destined to education, the construction of the national historical memory and the creation/valuation of the rites of progress of each country.

Despite disputes over its role in the modern sciences, history has not remained oblivious to the naturalistic/racist theories that associated biological, geographic and climatic elements with the development of human rational capacities. In this sense, history performed the act of organizing these elements in a progressive temporal logic of societies according to their stages

of civilizational development. The work 'The Spirit of Laws' (1748), by Charles-Louis de Secondat (1689-1755) or Baron de Montesquieu, express in an exemplary way the Enlightenment ideals that hovered over Europe in this period. Factors such as race (biological factor), stage of civilization (temporal factor) and nature (spatial factor) are associated with it in order to think of politics and legislative principles as a science that justifies the human condition in certain regions of the planet. According to the Enlightenment philosopher, the nature of certain countries, such as heat, weakens the body, the human capacity to reason and courage. (Montesquieu, 2000).

The results of these attitudes are expressed in the different lines that have been drawn in order to distinguish European racial superiority vis-à-vis the African and Amerindian peoples. Martin Bernal (1993), in "Black Athens", uses the expressions "continental chauvinism" and "Aryan model" to analyze the elaboration of the paradigm that attributed a self-genetic origin to Western culture. His criticism falls on the negation of Semitic and African, more specifically Egyptian, influence in the formation of Greek philosophy. The Romantics and the racists of the 18th and 19th centuries, wrapped in the paradigm of progress, unleashed any relationship between the origins of Western thought and the African continent, at the same time that the black slave trade to America was intensifying.

As Santiago de Castro-Gómez states, these scholars who imagined meeting with "true science", capable of elaborating a universal, neutral and extra-territorial language of observation of the world, actually assumed a specific place in the justification and legitimization of strategies of control over subaltern populations. Illustrated thinkers, both in Europe and in America, who have designated themselves capable of translating and documenting 'exotic' nature and culture in a reliable manner, have made the discourse on the history of Latin American nations take on an eminently ethnographic character (Castro-Gómez, 2005, p.14).

In Brazil, the construction of national identity was guided by the following issue: how could Brazil be included in the march towards progress if this territory was already condemned, from its origins, for the presence of "inferior races", such as the indigenous and black people? The race factor was also associated with ecological factors expressed in vegetation, fauna, geological limits and the climate that constituted what was repeatedly classified as inhospitable nature. It was, therefore, a matter of demonstrating its capacity

within the modern European world that considered Latin America immature both naturally and culturally, according to the theories of naturalists such as Count of Buffon (1707-1788) and Cornelius De Pauw (1739-1799).

Despite the evident contradictions, the first Brazilian historians dedicated themselves to building, as in Europe, a glorious and heroic national memory, to be propagated by the State and to compose the school teaching of this subject. It was with this purpose in mind that the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was organized in 1838, responsible for formulating the historiographic bases for understanding the colonial past. The racial question accompanied this whole process. As José Bonifácio (1763-1838) had already prophesied, still in 1813, "very difficult amalgamation will be the alloy of both heterogeneous metal and white, mulatto, free blacks and slaves, Indians etc. etc. in a solid and political body" (*José Bonifácio apud Guimarães, 1988, p. 6*).

In "How to write the history of Brazil," published in 1844, Von Martius (1794-1868) points out that the physical and moral particularities of the Caucasian, American and Ethiopian races would have converged in the formation of the historical particularities of Brazilian man. The Portuguese is defined as the most powerful and essential social engine, discoverer, conqueror and lord that generated the possibilities of formation of independent Brazil. From comparative studies of languages, architecture, cults and other vestiges of the native peoples of America, the author states that it is possible to conclude that the indigenous Brazilian would be the result of the "most gross degeneration" of previous purer nations. In order to understand the influence of Africans, he highlights that historians should inquire about the "defects and virtues proper to their race in general", paying special attention to the factories installed in Africa by Portugal. A clear political position should converge in these studies to justify the "need for a monarchy in a country where there are so many slaves" (*von Martius, 1844, p. 401-402*).

Following the notion that the races had innate characteristics, Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen (1816-1878), in his work "General History of Brazil" (1859), defended the idea that the indigenous people were peoples who lived in childhood, so that historical studies would not apply to them, but to ethnography. Indigenous people are treated on the basis of 'absences' or 'faults' of civilized characteristics such as: faith; private property; patriotism; social ties; aristocracy; fixed dwellings and centralization of power. Blacks would

fit a few lines in the history of the nation, and these lines should highlight their physical attributes "to whose vigorous arm Brazil owes mainly the work of sugar manufacture, and modernly those of coffee culture (Varnhagen, 1859 in Odalia, 1979, p. 73). Despite taking a stand against slavery, Varnhagen defended the idea that, even living in captivity, the African race in America produced more remarkable men than in Africa. Here, "not only did they improve their luck, but they also improved socially, in contact with more polite people, and with civilization and Christianity" (Idem, p. 74).

Attributing historical ennoblement to the colonial past remained the task of the Institute throughout the 19th century.

For IHGB members, national historiography should be treated on the basis of society's segmentation into three cultural spheres: the indigenous to be civilized; the slave as the limiter of progress; and the European descendants as those responsible for nation building. In this sense, the historian is responsible not only for the fabrication of history, but also for the orientation of policies and pragmatic actions regarding the place to be occupied by each one of the "races" of the country (Nazareno, Magalhães & Freitas, 2019). By looking at the colonial past, historians aimed to align Nation, State and Monarchy with the constitution of a civilization of the tropics that rejected both indigenous and black people at home and the Latin American republican nations at abroad (Guimarães, 1988).

Such model would be applied in the school history teaching defining the national heroes, the love for the homeland, the historical milestones, the commemorative dates and the philosophical appreciations that would compose the school curriculum. The manual chosen was "Lições de História do Brazil" by Joaquim Manoel de Macedo (1820-1882), published for the first time in 1861 and used in schools until the first half of the 20th century. Strongly influenced by Varnhagen's ideas, Macedo attributes the narratives a strong nationalist character, as we can see from some elements that comprise this work (Nazareno, Magalhães & Freitas, 2019):

- The origin of Brazilian history is found in the history of Portugal: this period is attributed to an epic treatment surrounded by terminologies such as: Lusitanian glories; impetuosity; brilliant deeds; admirable; thunderous; glorious heritage; path to glory and so on.

- The discovery of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral: the takeover of American territories by European maritime powers is naturalized and justified by canon law (papal bull);
- The concept of colonization: it is based on the idea that to colonize is to populate and establish an administration over the natural resources and people of a given territory; the idea persists that the indigenous presence corresponds to the notion of depopulated territory;
- Nature: it presents itself in its magnitude whose treasures are uncovered as exploration expeditions advance inland;
- “Gentiles” of Brazil: are seen as rude, wild and alien to civilization being described in a generalized way from their physical characters, uses and customs, dances, ornaments, fishing and hunting.

This compendium, despite being limited to the first century of colonization, traces a chronological organization that still predominates in current textbooks: formation of the modern state, especially the Iberian monarchies; the great navigations; the arrival of Europeans in America and territorial possession; presence of the French and Dutch; management and exploitation of the pau-brasil; colonial administration (Martim Afonso de Sousa, hereditary captaincies and general governments) and Jesuit deeds.

At the end of the 19th century, Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927) proposed to criticize the foundations of this matrix settled by Varnhagen and his followers. The end of the monarchical regime, the abolitionist struggles, the emergence of new political actors and the influence of modernist ideas converged in the creation of a new guiding theme for historical studies: the invention of Brazilian People. However, the influence of thinkers such as Spencer (1820-1903), Taine (1828-1893), Bockle (1821-1862) and Ratzel (1844-1904) would mark the understanding of the development of Brazilian society from the articulation between environment, race and history.

Capistrano de Abreu defended the idea that history would fit a scientific genealogy of the nation-state that should not only collect and treat sources but also reveal the history of Brazil through public education (de Abreu, 1998). If the IHGB met the needs of the former monarchist regime, Capistrano de Abreu intended to meet the interests of the earliest Brazilian industry, "limited" by obstacles such as nature and the original peoples, both "savages". Abreu (1998) defines indigenous people as naturally indolent and unable to organize in a cooperative and intelligent way.

In his work "Chapters of Brazilian History", published in 1907, the indigenous people are treated as the antecedents of an exotic history that begins with the arrival of the Portuguese and Africans. While being treated as superiors, the Portuguese are depicted as rude, undisciplined, unconventional and violent (de Abreu, 1998). On the other hand, they are a people who were predestined to maritime life. The conquest of Africa is described in an epic way, featuring since the conquest of the "infidel" Moorish cities and culminating with "the heroic phase of the infantryman D. Henrique, son of D. João I, and grandmaster of the Order of Christ" (Idem, p. 32). With the Portuguese "our history begins, it continues for centuries, mainly due to them the efforts that produced a modern and civilized nation in territory previously populated and traversed by rude nomadic tribes" (Ibid., p. 64).

About afro descendant people Capistrano takes up the recurring idea that they were "destined for work" and that the enslavement and commercialization of Africans was nothing more than meeting the need of Portugal, which in this period had a population so small that it did not fill itself. In addition to the rude work on the plantations "The black brought a cheerful note alongside the taciturn Portuguese and the sorumbatic Indian" (de Abreu, 1998, p. 64). It should be noted that in order to deal with the relationship between the three races the author inserts the black and indigenous female figure in his writings. The mestizaje becomes the place for women in the history of Brazil. "On the part of the Indians, the mestizaje is explained by the ambition to have children belonging to the superior race" (Idem, p. 40). The mulatto women, on the other hand, "penetrated the domestic life of the lords through their nannies and their mucous membranes and became indispensable for their affectionate nature [...] they found appreciators of their strays and were true queens" (Ibidem, p. 29-30).

This narrative composition by Capistrano de Abreu reverberated in other works canonized by Brazilian historiography such as "Roots of Brazil" (1936), by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, "Formation of Contemporary Brazil" (1942), by Caio Prado Júnior and "Casa Grande & Senzala" (1933) by Gilberto Freyre. From this perspective Brazil would have been the only country in the world of practical life to challenge the idea of European racial purism. The sex between whites, indigenous and blacks would have made Brazilian colonialism a milder system when compared to other regions. In this sense, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda states that here the European domination was "in

general soft and soft, less obedient to the rules and more in accordance with nature. Life here was incomparably softer, more welcoming to social, racial, moral and even religious dissonances" (de Holanda, 2016, p. 70).

For Caio Prado Júnior, one of the pioneers of the introduction of the Marxist reference in reading Brazilian history, the Brazilian population should be understood not from distinct races, but from the mixture between them, which is explained by the lack of white women in the colony. "This, along with the ease of crossbreeding with women of other races, of inferior social position, therefore submissive, strongly stimulated and even forced the colony to go there to satisfy their sexual needs" (Prado Júnior, 2000, p. 103). This position of inferiority would be underwritten by the idea that "they were the indigenous people of America and the black African, people of a low cultural level, compared with their dominators" (Idem, p. 280).

As for Gilberto Freyre, who wrote under the strong influence of American cultural sociology, shaped the picture of colonial Brazil from the interactions between the Casa-Grande, a large Portuguese ownership, and the Senzala, destined for slaves. Sugar, white, black and mestizo are the characters of its plot with their psychophysiological, economic and ethnic facets. Thanks to the social and racial mobility brought by the Portuguese, it was possible that the inhumane treatment given to blacks could coexist with "an adjustment of traditions and tendencies rare among peoples formed in the same imperialist circumstances of modern colonization of the tropics" (Freyre, 1980, p. 160). In this racial interconnection, the Sudanese blacks are considered to have collaborated most with the whites in the work of agrarian colonization, having even exercised among the indigenous people a "civilizing mission in the Europeanizing sense" (Idem, p. 289).

The so difficult amalgamation among the three races, as José Bonifácio had mentioned at the beginning of the 19th century, thus completes its cycle. With the generation of intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century, which elected *mestizaje* as a symbol of the Brazilian people, there is the transmutation of racialist and biologizing theories into a hierarchy based on the notion of cultural accumulation. The propensity of the Portuguese to relate sexually with "inferior" women would have made possible the formation of a colonial system that, protected their acts of violence, configured itself in a milder way and allowed a social mobility that did not exist in the other colonies of Latin America.

This theory became known as the "myth of racial democracy" and became the object of intense criticism from the social movements that expanded in Brazil from the 1960s onwards. This idea has affirmed itself in such a way in the imaginary of the Brazilian people that the discussions about racism in Brazil had, first of all, to prove that this attitude still remains and underlies the discrepant economic and social inequality of the country. Let us now see how these issues have been addressed in the educational context, especially in history teaching.

Incidences of the Brazilian Historiographic Matrix in History Teaching

The choice of the Dona Gercina Borges State School was made because it is located close to two large indigenous villages inhabited by the Iny indigenous people (Javaé, which since the beginning of the 20th century has maintained more intermittent relations with non-indigenous people (Rodrigues, 2008).

The appearance of the municipality of Formoso do Araguaia occurred in concomitance with the invasion of indigenous lands from the arrival of miners, cattle breeders and bankers in the region. Also the Avá-Canoeiro (Torál, 1998) people, who lived near the Javaé villages, were violently hit by the invasion of their territories, by the action of gunmen hired by farmers and by diseases brought by the fronts of colonization and agricultural expansion.

In addition to the violence against the indigenous people who inhabited Bananal Island for thousands of years, this process also included the organization of a system of exploitation of poor workers, mostly immigrants from other states. Without access to land, these families find themselves forced to sell their labor force and live in conditions of great financial difficulty. According to data from IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), in 2017, the average monthly wage was 1.9 minimum wages. The proportion of employed people in relation to the total population was 14.9%. Considering households with monthly incomes of up to half a minimum wage per person, it had 42% of the population in these conditions. Only 18.1% of the domiciles have adequate sewage and 1.4% of the urban domiciles are in situation of adequate urbanization.

In this sense, the cartographic analysis workshop aimed to understand how the students coming from the families above mentioned, interpret power

relations based on the identity they could attribute to themselves. The justifications for this supposed choice of identity showed which categories guide their historical ideas and the relationships between the three main matrices that make up the Brazilian population: African, European and indigenous. The class in which the research was carried out is from the 7th grade of elementary school and is composed mostly of poor children. It follows one of the activities that was carried out in this field research followed by extracts from the narratives produced by the children and their analyses.

Five indigenous children reaffirmed their identity:

- “I’d like to be Indigenous”
- “I wanted to see how my ancestors lived, in a place with abundance, beautiful and less polluted.”
- “the Portuguese people have spent for food, but the African peoples suffer from slavery. But the Indian helps one another and they go home together and share the food since they are Family”.
- “I shouldn't be ashamed of myself and life was easier and I there was more culture.”.
- “They lived in Brazil for a long time and I think their way of talking is really cool.
- “I have Indigenous blood, my great grandfather and great grandmother were Indigenous”. Indigenous children reaffirm their ethnic identity in the present to project their gaze on the past as a moment marked by more food abundance and a less explored nature. The community division distinguishes them from Portuguese society, where even food is commercialized, and the absence of slavery distinguishes them from afro descendants.

On the other hand, the statement that "I should not be ashamed of myself" reveals how these children see themselves from the eyes of non-Indians. To assert oneself as an Indian in the city is an attitude not only of identity but also of politics. According to Gersem Luciano Baniwa, the reaffirmation of identity is not a factor that limits the cultural order, it is a revolution in the very history of Brazil (Luciano, 2006, p. 28).

Complementing the idea presented by Gersem Baniwa, Daniel Munduruku (2012) highlights that it was the actions of the Indigenous Movement that forced Brazil to welcome, albeit compulsorily, the native inhabitants of this territory. Especially since the creation of the Union of Indigenous Nations (1973), in the middle of the military dictatorship, these peoples have built an

agenda based on demystifying the pejorative and generalizing term “Indigenous”. The search for strengthening the identity and self-determination of the peoples focused directly on their achievements in the Constituent of 1988, such as the right to a differentiated and bilingual education and the demarcation of their traditional territories.

Nine students said they would have liked to have been indigenous:

- “because their culture is cool.”
- “because I think the Indigenous are stronger and warriors, where they lived is very nice and there can also fish, canoe etc.”
- “there are many cultures”;
- “I already knew the Brazilian lands well”;
- “There were many natural wealth like trees, fruits and so on. It would be great to go swimming in the river, fishing, playing and much more”;
- “I wanted to know their language”.
- “for the ease in which they lived; a simple but rich life, with a lot of culture and familiarity, for the fortress of natural resources that surrounded them”;
- “because it was a time when they lived in nature, there was no pollution, they lived at peace with their lives, and also because I love nature and would certainly not be happy in a big city. Nature in Brazil at that time was certainly a gift”.

This idyllic vision of the indigenous people, projected by Brazilian romanticism, associates the Amerindian peoples with the idea of abundant food, exuberant nature, swimming in the river, fishing and playing, which results in the idea of the “ease in which they lived”. It is as if there was a real erasure of all the extermination wars, biological, by means of the weapons and epistemic against the indigenous people during the colonial period.

Seven students chose to be African because Africa:

- “was very rich, with precious stones, gold and so on.”
- “They needed wealth to live, so I would give them to buy food for them to eat”
- “I wanted to help them out of slavery”
- “I would fight for the rights of no more slavery and free slaves in senzalas.” - “they fight so they won't be slaves.”
- “I would choose to stay in Africa to help children and adults.”

The wealth of natural resources, poverty, hunger, slavery and the Christian feeling of charity are the most recurrent ideas in student texts, but also in the national media. Putting oneself in the situation that they would provide wealth to Africans to buy food or that one would “choose to stay in Africa to help children and adults”, it clearly demonstrates the persistence of the imperialist theory of the "burden of the white man", which attributed to Western powers the “difficult” task of civilizing and bringing progress to those regions that were under political and economic control. This attitude also underscores the idea of the incapacity of the African people themselves, while promoting an erasure of the historical responsibility of the West through the centuries of plundering and promoting the racial and epistemic inferiority of African peoples.

58 students would like to be Portuguese and presented different justifications, such as: cultural habits; pacifism; adventurous spirit; racial superiority and power; escape from slavery and prevent slavery.

1) Cultural habits: two students.

- “because the language is easier to adapt than in other countries”; “I am more used to their habits”; “it looks more like me”;
- “because I better have clothes”.

2) Pacifism: four students.

- “because Portugal doesn't get involved in any civil war or because they don't get involved in a war against other countries”; “because I didn't want to bother other people”;
- “they had no slaves”;
- “because it was calm and with various places that have everything near, medicine, food, education and so on”;
- “they live in tranquillity.”

3) Being Portuguese was the only way to escape from slavery: five students.

- “not because of prejudice, but because I think they had less suffering, because at that time everything was so difficult”;
- “the indigenous people were enslaved”;
- “the other peoples would be enslaved except the Portuguese.”
- “because Africans and Indians were enslaved and judged.”
- “because the other peoples were going to be enslaved by the Portuguese, then I would escape slavery.”

4) To be Portuguese to prevent slavery: one student.

- “to prevent the enslavement of the African people and the exploitation of Brazilian territory”

5) Adventure spirit, power, racial superiority and development: 46 students. - “because they travel a lot and I love to travel”; “I like adventures”;

- “because I was going to sail the sea and discover new lands.”

- “because they were the ones who discovered Brazil.”

- “because there are sailings in my home”; “because they were represented by navigation”;

- “because of the history they have with Brazil and Portugal is a great country”;

- “they had various resources, food and comfort”;

- “they started ethnic miscegenation”;

- “they were rich, they didn't work and their things were beautiful”;

- “it was the most powerful country of the time.”

- “because they were in charge and they had power over others.”

- “Besides being a great explorer of wealth and land, it was already a well-developed place with a lot of wealth. Besides being intelligent people”;

- “because of the imperial and colonial expansion”;

- “they commanded.”

- “they had total control over the situation and over the African and indigenous people, who were an inferior race to mine.”

- “they were more developed than the Africans and the indigenous people and I think I would like to have a family in a well structured place”;

- “they had more independence, they had many assets, they were richer, more evolved and more advanced”;

- “I'd like to live in a place where citizens have a lot of rights.”

- “even if they took away the territory of the indigenous and African people, I would choose the Portuguese, because they have better living conditions”.

Such responses given by the students showed that the vast majority identify more with the Portuguese people and give them positive characteristics in social organization, in the use of the Portuguese language, the outfits, in the socioeconomic organization of the country and in the idea that it is a peaceful people both internally and in the relationship with other countries.

Slavery, both indigenous and African, is highlighted in six narratives, five of which demonstrated that being Portuguese would be the only alternative to escape the condition of becoming a slave. Only one student clearly positioned himself against the colonial system, demonstrating that he would like to take power precisely to prevent this model of human and territorial exploitation from advancing. The adventurous spirit was one of the main elements listed to justify the choice for Portuguese identity. This qualification of the Portuguese people is one of the bases of the Brazilian historiographic matrix, being highlighted by historians of both the 19th and 20th centuries and is still present in the history textbooks, as we can see in the following excerpt:

Today's sailing boats are much safer than they were in the past. Today's sailors have precision instruments, high information technology, enough food, knowledge of the wind regime, maps and routes very well done. The travelers of the past had none of these resources; they had no radio to call for help in case of a storm, their maps were inaccurate and their itineraries incomplete. Yet they did throw themselves into the sea on long-distance voyages; in these sea adventures they discovered lands and peoples unknown to them, and even went a whole way around the earth. How could they achieve such a feat? (Boulos, 2015, p. 201).

This narrative from the history textbook used in schools opens the chapter on sea travel and the beginning of the colonial project in Brazil. It is noted that the student is invited to embark on an adventure that resulted in the discovery of lands and peoples previously unknown in the "Old World". The "discovery" is considered an enormous feat that overcame all the adversities of the time and broke challenges. The subtitles of the chapter reinforce the eminently epic character of the narrative: "Clearing the seas"; "Facing dangers"; "Portugal, the first of the great sailings" and "Sailing with the Portuguese". All the main events of this venture are described through the countless possessions that Portugal has made in Asia, Africa and America and that would have earned it extraordinary profits. (*Idem*, p. 202-209). That is, the student sails through every chapter of the book in a great adventure that resulted in an unquestionable success of the metropolis.

Results

From the bibliographical analysis undertaken in this research it is possible to observe that the formulation of the Brazilian historiographic matrix was based on the principle that the historian should be pragmatic, nationalist and tied to Western philosophical principles. The analysis, validation and comparison of official historical sources were guided by the paradigm that colonizing, Christianizing and civilizing would be necessary elements for the inclusion of Brazil in the march towards progress. From the perspective of historians, in order to accomplish such a project it was necessary to deal with the presence of "inferior races" and of a wild nature, which brought to the agenda the problematizations about the way in which the monarchy, descendant and heir of European civilization, would deal administratively with slavery and the insertion of indigenous peoples in national society.

Field research has shown that among students the idea of European superiority prevails, as evidenced by claims that they possess more resources, food, comfort, wealth and independence. Nevertheless, the element of "power" is the one that most draws attention. Although in only one of the narratives is "power" tied to the racial superiority of whites before Africans and indigenous people, in several other texts we find a clear defense of the colonial and imperial system. It is this hierarchical situation that enables the metropolis to be more evolved, more advanced, to dominate the other, to be in command and control of the situation. Even in the only narrative in which the student recognizes the taking of land by Africans and indigenous people in the colonial period, the choice of Portuguese identity is justified by the fact that he would have "better living conditions".

Final Considerations

From the exposure and analysis of the students' historical ideas what prevails among them is the belief that the colonizer is their main reference in relation to their world view and their ways of existing. It is noticeable, as it was presented in the analysis of the textbooks, that the teaching of history, to a great extent, still maintains the references of the Brazilian historiographic matrix, which justified the colonizing actions and associated them with the ideas of progress, civilization and formation of the national state. Even after

the proclamation of the Republic, the abolition of slavery and the choice of the path of miscegenation as a positive factor in the composition of Brazilian society, the so-called inferior "races", indigenous and afro-descendants, did not cease to be treated as inferior in relation to the white "race", especially when historians of the first decades of the twentieth century exposed, among other things, indigenous women and afro-descendants as being socially inferior.

As Ramón Grosfoguel states (2008, p. 119) "the success of the modern/colonial world-system lies in bringing subjects socially situated on the oppressed side of the colonial difference to think epistemically as those in dominant positions. The concealment of the subject who speaks and of the place of which he speaks promotes this distance between the 'social place' and the 'epistemic place'. The absence of indigenous and afro-descendant speech about colonialist projects points to the need to reformulate the guiding patterns of historical narratives present in textbooks, especially in relation to time frames, periodization, historical characters, concepts, world conceptions, etc. The exposure of the ways in which different human groups perceive and organize their experiences in the world can contribute to the critical formation of students not only about the multiple perspectives but also about the different possibilities of existing and social organization.

In this sense, researching indigenous educational experiences becomes an important tool as it reveals the resistance strategies adopted by these peoples over more than five centuries. Establishing a dialogue with the indigenous school and with the higher education courses for indigenous teachers, as a place of speech and decolonial and intercultural education, may open possibilities for us to expand and question the ethnocentric epistemic references that still predominate in the teaching of history and in the way young students perceive themselves in the world in which they live.

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