
LANGUAGES, BOOKS AND LAWS: THE ERASURE OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes a review on the formation of the Brazilian State, from the perspective of colonialism and coloniality, guided by the theory of decoloniality, lableure of indigenous cultures. The features of the Brazilian colonization, its differences compared to Latin American neighbors, and the echoes of this process in contemporary Brazil permeate the four points in which this work is structured, namely (1) the linguistic diversity of the early Brazil and changes due to European conquest process; (2) the never

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completed independence process (political, economic, and cultural) and the overlap of dominations, which made the hierarchies more complex, creating dominant people who dominate other dominant people and dominated people who subjugate other dominated people; (3) the way ruling colonial powers have remained (to themselves and to the nation) on the scope of modernity and rationality ideals, from the enlightenment perspective; and, finally, (4) colonialism and coloniality echoes in contemporary Brazil on indigenous cultures, especially in their languages, and the resistance of the indigenous peoples. For this purpose, the deductive method is employed always and when the place of speech of referenced authors can be associated with the Brazilian reality, although sometimes inferences are made from historical and statistics data in a qualitative approach. The conclusion is that the recognition of multilingualism and the participation of indigenous peoples in State decision-making can allow the rights of these peoples to be enforced.

Keywords: colonialism and coloniality; cultural rights; decoloniality; linguistic diversity; linguistic rights; political and cultural history of Brazil.

*LÍNGUAS, LIVROS E LEIS: O APAGAMENTO DA CULTURA
INDÍGENA E RESISTÊNCIA*

RESUMO

O trabalho propõe uma revisão sobre a formação do Estado brasileiro desde a perspectiva do colonialismo e da colonialidade, orientada pela teoria da decolonialidade, partindo da história das línguas e dos livros em direção à lei e ao apagamento das culturas indígenas. As peculiaridades da colonização brasileira, suas diferenças frente aos países vizinhos latino-americanos e os ecos deste processo no Brasil contemporâneo perpassam os quatro pontos em que se estrutura este trabalho, a saber: (1) a diversidade linguística do Brasil originário e nas mudanças decorrentes do processo de conquista europeu; (2) o processo de independência (política, econômica, cultural) nunca concluído e as sobreposições de dominações que complexificaram as hierarquias, criando dominadores de dominadores e dominados que subjagam a outros dominados; (3) reflexões sobre como os dominadores coloniais mantiveram-se (a si mesmos e à nação) à margem dos ideais de modernidade e racionalidade na perspectiva iluminista; e (4)

os ecos do colonialismo e da colonialidade no Brasil contemporâneo sobre as culturas indígenas, especialmente sobre suas línguas, e a resistência dos povos originários. Para tanto, ainda que sejam feitas inferências a partir de dados históricos e estatísticos em abordagem qualitativa, emprega-se o método dedutivo sempre e quando o lugar de fala da autoria referenciada seja equivalente à realidade brasileira. Conclui-se que o reconhecimento do multilinguismo e a participação dos povos originários na tomada de decisões estatais pode permitir que os direitos desses povos passem pela efetivação.

Palavras-chave: *colonialismo e colonialidade; decolonialidade; direitos culturais; direitos linguísticos; diversidade linguística; história política e cultural do Brasil.*

INTRODUCTION

Starting from data on Brazil's cultural history, from the 1500s to the present, an analysis of the fossilization of abyssal thinking is proposed (SANTOS, 2010, p. 33), excluding views and knowledge structured into paradigms other than those said to be "scientific" (such as popular, traditional or local knowledge), and colonial norms (written or not) that subordinated the indigenous peoples' languages and narratives. Furthermore, one seeks to present characteristics of Brazilian-type colonialism, that is, to point out singularities of the formation of Brazil as an "independent" State that differ from its cultural-political-legal reality in relation to the set of countries in Spanish America and that lead to the need of Brazilian interpreters for proposition of an effective break with coloniality and its marks in contemporary Brazil.

Without clamming originality, dialogue with other areas of knowledge is sought, since a genuinely decolonial proposal could only arise from a multicultural and multidisciplinary perspective that does not separate knowledge into disciplines measured by their usefulness to capital. An essentially interdisciplinary and multicultural research is proposed, that is, operating the interpretation and treatment of data and knowledge of the essence of the research object, that is, the erasure of indigenous culture and the invisibility of its resistance.⁵ Giving voice to interpreters in Brazil

⁵ The word is used in its common sense, not as a military or political meaning. In this article, the word resistance follows the first meanings brought by the Houaiss dictionary (2009), invoking the act or effect of resisting and the ability to withstand adversity, including submission to others' will. In this

from different fields of knowledge and seeking support from decolonial theorists⁶ whenever the reality of their places of speech coincides with the questions asked, we start from the constructs of modernity and rationality, considered European heritage, to demonstrate how Brazilian colonial elites, neither modern nor much less rational, settled centuries of delay (under Eurocentric parameters and perspectives). Thus, despite the use of contributions from Brazil's history and historiography and Brazilian languages and cultures, as well as demographic data and the referential framework that comes especially from the fields of Sociology, Law and Letters, this is an article fundamentally committed to decolonial criticism.

It is understood, with Catherine Walsh (2005, p. 22), that decoloniality does not differ from decolonization. Thus, in this work, decoloniality is understood as a strategy that goes beyond transformation and proposes breaks with colonial structures. This is the main scope of this work, which aims to interpret the colonized reality from itself, in order to trace its transformation. Still following Walsh (2005, p. 22), it should be understood that, while decolonialism is concerned about historical relations and their legacies, seeking transitions, overcoming and emancipations from the interior of modernity, decoloniality is positioned as a perspective of exteriority in the face of the same modernity/coloniality relation, but also in the face of racial, social, epistemic and existential violence experienced as a central part of it.

Thus, despite the use of foreign references, whenever the theoretician's place of speech can be associated with the reality analyzed, efforts are sought to confront, from itself and from other arguments and other thoughts, dehumanization, racism and racialization, as well as the denial and destruction of other fields of knowledge (WALSH, 2005, p. 22) and even other languages. For this reason, it is demonstrated how some languages and indigenous narratives have resisted and continue to give diversity to the Brazilian linguistic and cultural heritage, although they are treated as subordinate and constantly threatened.

These proposals are organized into four central points of analysis. The

article, it is not understood as a term to indicate organized paramilitary action, a term that configures the 11th meaning brought by Houaiss (2009).

6 The review of the language used in this article followed the *Manual pedagógico sobre el uso del lenguaje inclusivo y no sexista* [Pedagogical Manual on the use of inclusive non-sexist language], of the Comisión Permanente Género y Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres of the Reunión de Altas Autoridades en Derechos y Cancillerías del MERCOSUR y Estados Asociados (2018), which recommends the use of slash, without space, in nouns and adjectives of two genders, to refute the invisibility of the feminine promoted by the supposed neutrality of the masculine employment for reference to collectivities formed by women and men.

first focuses on the early Brazil's linguistic diversity and the changes resulting from the arrival of European conquerors. The second deals with the never completed (political, economic, cultural) independence process and the overlap of dominations that made the hierarchies complex, creating dominant people who dominate other dominant people and dominated people who subjugate other dominated people. In the third point, one demonstrates how colonial domination remained (to itself and to the nation) outside the ideals of modernity and rationality in the Enlightenment perspective. The fourth and final point brings the echoes of colonialism and coloniality on indigenous culture in contemporary Brazil, especially on their languages, and the resistance of native peoples in their efforts to make their cultural and linguistic⁷ rights effective.⁸

The deductive method is used as long as the referenced theoretician's place of speech can be associated with the Brazilian reality. From the coloniality of the indigenous power, being and knowledge and of the indigenous resistance to preserve their culture, especially language, a constituent element of it, it appears that the recognition of multilingualism and the participation of native peoples in State decision-making (interculturality) can allow the cultural and linguistic rights of these peoples to be put into effect.

1 THE EARLY BRAZIL'S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Similarly to the people that colonized Brazil, who used not only the Portuguese language, but also Latin and Spanish (and, later, French and English) as common languages for the transmission of knowledge and for commercial and diplomatic matters, the indigenous peoples, subjugated by the European colonization, also dedicated themselves to acquire other tribes' languages to relate with them. Thus, according to Lia Wyler (2003, p. 31), it is estimated that, in the sixteenth century, Brazil was a polyglot territory where there was coexistence of speakers of "hundreds of languages and dialects that nowadays can be classified into 102 groups and three language branches: Tupi, Macro-ge and Aruaque". In 1500, the speakers of these languages were homogeneously distributed throughout the territory now known as Brazil and had relationships and contacts with

⁷ At international level, see: Art. 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Art. 14 of the Protocol of San Salvador; Art. 17 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; Art. 42 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights; Art. 32 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. At the national level, see: Art. 225 of 1988 Federal Constitution.

⁸ See Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. (Also known as Barcelona Declaration).

each other, reason why it is supposed “that such linguistic diversity would stimulate bilingualism – perhaps plurilingualism – and intergroup translation, because, where there was an opportunity, *linguas francas* developed” (WYLER, 2003, p. 31). Examples of *lingua franca* include Abanheenga, with a Tupi trunk (later renamed by Father José de Anchieta as Nheengatu, or *beautiful language*), spoken on the coast, and Cariri, with a Macro-ge trunk, spoke in the interior of the Northeast region (WYLER, 2003, p. 31).

The existence of these *linguas francas* and their appropriation at the service of the colonial enterprise by men and women who promoted the conquest of Brazil played a significant role in the process of spoliation of the territory and domination of the indigenous peoples, forming a genuine Eurocentric process. This process implies the concept that wealth and human beings of the whole world were at the service of colonizers and that their knowledge and languages-culture would forge a universal idea, that is, valid for all the peoples worldwide. The Eurocentric process focuses on several aspects, among which the “linguistic (European languages, derived mainly from Latin and Greek, become the only ones in which it is possible to express true and valid knowledge)”, taking into account that indigenous peoples “have no language but dialect” (GARCÉS, 2007, p. 220).

Through this process, despite the linguistic and cultural wealth of the early Brazil until the European conquest, the manuals used by Brazilian students often present Brazil as the first chapter of the 1500s, as if the arrival of the colonizer in the Americas had inaugurated the notions of history, culture, language and literature.⁹ It appears that the colonization process constituted “the zero degree from which modern conceptions of knowledge and law are built” (SANTOS, 2010, p. 36). But not only this; presumably, there had been nothing in the Americas before the arrival of men and women from Europe, and the colonized culture was an empty vessel just like the soul of its early inhabitants, following the interpretation of the bull *Sublimis Deus*, of 1537, through which Pope Paul III postulated that inhabitants of the conquered lands would be “savages”, of *anima nullius* (SANTOS, 2010, p. 37).

The effort to deny indigenous peoples soul and humanity, as well as a history, a religion, a language and a culture, related to the intention of legally legitimizing the spoliation of their wealth and destruction of their communities, also submitting them to forced labor. By the way,

⁹ By way of example: “What for our history meant an *authentic birth certificate*, the Letter of Caminha to D. Manuel, giving news of the land found, is part of a genre copiously represented during the fifteenth century in Portugal and Spain: travel literature” (BOSI, 2006, p. 14, emphasis added).

with Quijano (2005, p. 207), it is necessary to remember that the death of indigenous men and women in the first stages of Spanish colonization would not result from the illnesses or the battles for the conquest of the territory, as it is commonly said, but from the fact that their bodies have been used as disposable workforce, obliged to work until final exhaustion: death. In the Americas, slavery was deliberately instituted and organized to transform human beings into goods designed to produce goods for the world market and thus serve capitalism (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 219).

In 1500, there would be, in Brazil, around 4 million indigenous people; in 1823, less than 1 million remained: men and women “escaped or underwent miscegenation or were pushed towards the interior of the country. Miscegenation occurred due to the commercial and male nature of Portuguese colonization” (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 20). The enslavement of native peoples was prohibited by law in 1560 for religious reasons, the “strong opposition from the Jesuits” (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 20), but also because of pragmatism, as they were being rapidly decimated. Since the ban on enslaving indigenous peoples, however, the enslavement of African peoples has intensified and, in addition to this, another practice characteristic of the formation of Brazil: disobedience to laws.

The systematic disobedience to laws and the origins of Brazilian paternalism, according to Carvalho (2002, p. 21-22), result from the lack of justice structures in the colony:

The king’s justice had limited reach, either because it did not reach the places that were most distant from the cities, or because it was opposed by the private justice of the large landowners, or because it had no autonomy before the executive authorities, or, finally, because it was subject to the magistrate corruption. Many causes had to be decided in Lisbon, consuming time and resources out of reach of the majority of the population. The ordinary citizen resorted to the large landowners’ protection, or was submitted to the more powerful people’s will.

Devoid of effective protection against arbitration, indigenous peoples continued to be kidnapped, contrary to law, to forced labor imposition, especially by *bandeirantes* from São Paulo, who “were only remotely and nominally at the service of Portugal and often disobeyed El-Rei’s orders” (ALMEIDA, 2013, p. 24). The enslavement of indigenous peoples was the most frequent disobedience.

One of the consequences of systematic attacks on native peoples during the colonization process is believed to have been the current concentration of indigenous peoples in Northern Brazil.¹⁰ Until Cabral arrival,

¹⁰ According to IBGE (2012, p. 10), based on data from the 2010 census, it is in the State of Amazonas that the largest self-declared indigenous population in Brazil is located (168,700) and in Roraima, the

indigenous women and men were homogeneously distributed throughout the territory, concentrating a little more on the coast; however, throughout the sixteenth century, successive migratory waves headed North. At the linguistic level, it is possible that the dissemination of a “lingua franca or general Tupi-based language throughout the colonial territory” (WYLER, 2003, p. 31) is a result of these migratory movements and also of the contact between native peoples previously not communicating, even among people in the service of colonization, to which the Jesuits greatly contributed. This language, Nheengatu,¹¹ was also transmitted to enslaved African people¹² and was so widespread that it became known as the “general language” and lasted until the nineteenth century, even competing with Portuguese and French languages regarding the decision on which would be the national language during the 1823 Constituent (WYLER, 2003, p. 58).

People of European origin also contributed to this Brazil’s Babel. After all, the Portuguese¹³ used Latin, Spanish and French languages as a source of culture and spirituality. French language, although of a more restricted use, had such relevance among the ruling layers that it came to be considered as the official language of the independent nation. Although this did not materialize (perhaps because the Constituent Assembly was dissolved by Dom Pedro I, who granted the 1824 Constitution), the mere inclusion of French language among the official language proposals for the nation that became independent proves that the formation of Brazil was not only due to the overlap of the colonized culture by the colonizer one; there was also the (economic and cultural) domination by dominant people, that is, the existence of dominant men and woman. The overlap of dominations

highest relative concentration in the total of the population (11%).

11 Nheengatu means “beautiful language”, name given by José de Anchieta to the Tupi-based language. About Anchieta, Wyler (2003, p. 40) says: “His *Arte da gramática na língua mais usada na costa do Brasil* [Art of the grammar of the most used language on the coast of Brazil] was initially reproduced in manuscript and later printed in Coimbra, in 1595. A century after the discovery, Nheengatu taught and disseminated by the Jesuits throughout Brazil established itself as the official language of the colony”.

12 Regarding the languages of enslaved African people, Raimundo de Nina Rodrigues would classify them into three major groups: Chamito-Semitic, Sudanese and Bantu, and possibly Nagô or Yoruba (from the Sudanese group) has been adopted as lingua franca in Bahia, and Quimbundo or Conguês (from the Bantu group) in the North or South of Brazil (WYLER, 2003, p. 34). However, it is believed that, as a result of the dispersion forced by the Portuguese conqueror, the Black, upon disembarking, has been forced to learn Portuguese language to serve the colonizer and Tupi language, the lingua franca, to get along with his/her fellow slaves (WYLER, 2003, p. 34). After all, “Portuguese imports followed the policy of varying the ethnic and linguistic composition of each group as much as possible, keeping the nuclear tribal groups dispersed in order to avoid their unity and disobedience” (WYLER, 2003, p. 33).

13 Portuguese and Brazilian women were denied access to basic literacy until the nineteenth century, even among the elite. Female illiteracy was seen as a virtue.

has made social relations in Brazil more complex, and it will be developed in the following section.

2 A NEVER COMPLETED INDEPENDENCE AND OVERLAP OF DOMINATIONS

Brazil became independent in 1822, in a process intermediated by England, and undertook to pay Portugal an indemnity of 2 million pounds sterling. This decolonization simulation, which perpetuated the House of Braganza in the monarchy, received support from local elites fearing that Brazil could go through what had happened in Haiti, where enslaved/rebellious people proclaimed independence and expelled the white population (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 27). Certainly, the Brazilian independence, built from fear of popular power and intermediated by a new dominant nation, would not be able to encourage the necessary changes in social dynamics; not even the Republic, proclaimed in 1889, would do so. The last nation to abolish the enslavement of human beings would be formed by privileging the race construct for the attribution of prestige, since not even white men inserted in structures of material and symbolic comfort came to be accredited as participants in the direction of the nation and continued being mostly illiterate. In this sense, material conditions were never created in Brazil to break the bonds of colonial power and thinking.

Such a characteristic is certainly not exclusive to Brazil. According to Quijano (2005, p. 237), the mestizo and fractured nation-state of all non-English America ended up consolidating itself on contradictory, fragile and problematic pillars such as: (1) limited processes of decolonization/democratization, even after independence; (2) limited but real process of racial homogenization through the genocide of non-white peoples; (3) an always frustrated process of cultural homogenization, and (4) imposition of the ideology of racial democracy, which masks discrimination.

Thus, the race construct and the complex hierarchies of domination ended up consolidating themselves as the main channel for value and prestige attribution. In other words, in modern/colonial world capitalism, people classify themselves and are classified according to three different perspectives articulated by the coloniality of power: work, gender, and race (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 115). Skin color was defined as the most significant differential mark between dominant or superior people (women and men in Europe) and the set of dominated or inferior people (non-European men

and women). In this way, the white race was attributed to dominant/superior European people, and the attribute of “colored” races to all dominated/inferior non-European people (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 120).

As far as labor is concerned, it should be remembered that people said to be “colored” have historically been relegated to manual activities, whereas the white layers assigned themselves the task of thinking (and commanding). The elites’ children were sent to the metropolis to study at the University of Coimbra. In Brazil, universities and printing houses (as well as the circulation of printed material) were banned until 1808, which put Brazil at a clear disadvantage even compared to neighboring countries in Spanish America. Printing houses were only admitted with the arrival of Dom João VI and, even after the foundation of the Royal Printing in 1808, freedom to print was limited and there was a strict customs control, with control of printed materials brought from abroad and confiscation of titles that were not in the list of works authorized by the authorities (WYLER, 2003, p. 77).

Regarding the educational plan, Carvalho (2007, p. 23) draws a comparison of Brazil with the Spanish Colony:

The Portuguese Crown, in contrast to the Spanish Crown, never allowed the creation of universities in the colony. At the time of independence, there were 23 universities in the Spanish part and none in the Portuguese part. About 150 thousand people had graduated at Spanish colonial universities, while only 1,242 Brazilians had attended the University of Coimbra. Independent Brazil has not radically changed this policy. Only four higher schools were created until 1830 and the first universities only appeared in the twentieth century. Higher public education maintained its function of training elites.

Hallewell (2012, p. 94) also supports numbers: between 1775 and 1822, 720 Brazilians would have been trained in Coimbra, the only university in the entire Portuguese empire. In turn, in the same period, 7,850 bachelors and 473 doctors would have graduated at the University of Mexico alone.

In the analysis of Carvalho (2002, p. 32), this situation had an impact on the absence of conditions for a civic culture in Brazil:

The Brazilians turned into citizens by the Constitution were the same people who had lived through the three centuries of colonization in the conditions that have already been described. More than 85% were illiterate, unable to read a newspaper, a government decree, a justice charter, a municipal posture. Among the illiterate, many

of the large rural landowners were included. More than 90% of the population lived in rural areas, under the control of large landowners. In the cities, many voters were civil servants controlled by the government.

Despite massive illiteracy, which included ruling layers, commonly referred to as “elites”, it is not surprising that, during the 1823 Constituent Assembly, French language had been proposed as official language of the new nation; it was about the possibility of choosing the language to dominate dominant people and remove the great masses of dominated people from political participation, which seems to have always been a conjecture in the Brazilian State. Even after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the granting of 1824 Imperial Constitution, which elected Portuguese as the official language, France would continue confirming its role as a cultural domain, exporting books to Brazil and opening bookstores in the new nation (WYLER, 2003, p. 84), even because taxes on paper imports made the consolidation of a Brazilian book and print industry impossible.

The language, a cultural construct, was dominated. In this sense, Mignolo (2003, p. 669) infers that science (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be separated from language, as this is not just a cultural phenomenon in which people find their identity, but also the place where knowledge is inscribed. And, if languages are not things that human beings have, but something that they are, the coloniality of power and knowledge engenders, then, the coloniality of being.

For Antonio Candido (1989, p. 143), the natural consequence of this scenario was the absence of material conditions for the book and literature and little resistance to external pressures:

[...] The manifestations of cultural weakness are linked to illiteracy: lack of means of communication and diffusion (publishing houses, libraries, magazines, newspapers); nonexistence, dispersion and weakness of audiences available for literature, due to the small number of real readers (much smaller than the already reduced number of literate people); impossibility of specializing writers in their literary tasks, generally performed as marginal or even amateurish tasks; lack of resistance or discrimination in the face of external influences and pressures.

The independence process and the proclamation of the Republic did not change the educational situation of the former colony, and Brazil remained largely illiterate until the 1950s. In the first demographic survey of Brazilian history, in 1872, 8,365,997 people were registered as not capable of reading or writing (84.24%), against only 1,564,481 literates (IBGE, 2014). Despite this (or perhaps for this very reason), in 1881, the Chamber

of Deputies approved law that introduced direct voting, eliminated the first round of elections, and, at the same time, instituted proof of a minimum income of 200 *milreis* to be elected, also forbidding the illiterate to vote. In the analysis of Carvalho (2002, p. 39):

The consequences soon reflected in electoral statistics. In 1872, there were more than 1 million voters, corresponding to 13% of the free population. In 1886, just over 100,000 voters, or 0.8% of the total population, voted in parliamentary elections. There was a 90% reduction in the electorate. The data are shocking, especially if we remember that the tendency of all European countries at the time was towards expanding political rights. [...] The most serious thing is that it was a lasting setback. The proclamation of the Republic in 1889 did not change the scenario.

Considering that it was only on the occasion of the 1960 Census, that, for the first time, it was found that the literate population had surpassed the illiterate contingent, and that only with the promulgation of Constitutional Amendment no. 25, of May 15, 1985, the people who did not know how to read could exercise the (optional) right to vote, it is possible to verify that the majority of Brazilians remained excluded from the most basic exercise of citizenship, the vote, until mid-twentieth century.

The late insertion of Brazil in a modernity project had, as a result, the overlap of dominations. Culturally and literarily, France would continue to play its role as a dictator of trends until the 1930s of the twentieth century, when, due to European crises and wars,¹⁴ associated with internal pressures (artistic, such as the 1922 Art Week, and political, such as the Vargas plan for the consolidation of a national book industry), the Brazilian book would become competitive in its own economic system, and the themes of Brazil, touted by the Neorealism, started to find support among interested publishers and readers. This relative cultural independence was soon affected by another imperialist culture, the United States. In short, the coloniality of being, power and knowledge continued to impose itself constantly.

At the political and economic levels, however, it is not possible to claim that there has been a break with dominant nations. Economically and politically, England was directly involved with central episodes in Brazil's history, such as the arrival of the royal family to Brazil in 1808, the independence process in 1822, the abolition of slavery in 1888, besides

14 From 1928 to 1936, the acquisition of French books fell by 94%, as, in fact, occurred with all other imports due to the devaluation of the *milreis*. For the first time, the Brazilian book would be competitive in its own national market, intensifying the editorial boom that could be observed since the first post-war period (HALLEWELL, 2012, p. 440).

involvement with several political-military events in that interregnum. Culturally, France dictated trends and exported legitimacy of thinking until mid-twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, the United States assumed the role of domination – and not only at the political level.

Accentuating efforts during the World War II (1939-1945), which would leverage US dominance in mid-twentieth century, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) was created, which supposedly promoted the strengthening of “friendship” ties between English America and the rest of the Americas. It was the concretion of the so-called soft-power. Understanding the effects of culture on politics, the American campaign to disseminate its own culture and control all other cultures was associated with the promotion of English language schools and financing of translations of works chosen to disseminate the American way of life and cinema. Walt Disney was an OCIAA collaborator and, in the early 1940s, created the character Zé Carioca and productions with a focus on Brazil, such as the film “The three caballeros” (“Have you ever been to Bahia?”).

In this context, it is possible to affirm that Portugal never came to be forged as an absolutist state because the colonizers of Brazil were always subjugated to other dominant cultures. From another point of view, it is also necessary to recognize that domination of the dominated and paternalism were forged undermining the consolidation of a feeling of unity (national, class, gender, race, etc.). The enslavement of people, for example, being a deep-rooted practice in Brazil, witnessed enslaved people who enslaved other people¹⁵ whenever possible. Renting enslaved people was also a frequent practice, where some were rented to perform tasks, others to beg.

This system of domination prevented solidarity between people in oppression and mitigated class values.¹⁶ Whether in the daily life of

15 By the way, it is worth mentioning, in the literature, the short story *O caso da vara*, by Machado de Assis.

16 According to Almeida (2013, p. 28-29): “In Brazil, there were slaves who had slaves. Slaves who bought the freedom of their relatives, but were unable to buy their own (they were either religious orders’ slaves, or too valuable, or were offered as collateral for their masters’ debts). Slaves who formed cooperatives, true consortia of freedom, depositing their gains in these societies of complex economic administration, gradually conquering freedom; when free, they continued to contribute to the others’ freedom. There was a widespread phenomenon of the “peasant breach”, which was almost a “right” for slaves in many regions. They cultivated their own plantation on Sundays, which was good for the master who excused himself from the responsibility of subsistence and improved the diet of his slaves. Some have accumulated enough savings to free themselves”.

the colony, or in the definition of colonizing norms, this overlap of dominations disturbed the social integration and solidarity necessary for the consolidation of nationalism (as well as any other associative elements based on the equivalence between human beings). After all, a portion of the population has always been subjugated to another, as enemies to each other (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 50), which has been perpetuated and is still evident in contemporary Brazil, which reaches the twenty-first century as the tenth most unequal country in the world, where the richest 10% concentrate 43.1% of the total mass of income in the country and the 1% top concentrate 33.8 times the income of the “bottom” half of the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2019).¹⁷

Indeed, the three constructs pointed out by Quijano (2014), work, gender and race, colonial inheritances, are to such an extent fossilized in Brazilian (men’s and women’s social and cognitive) structure as a natural force and legitimizer of predatory conduct on the other elements on the planet, whether natural resources or human beings (QUIJANO, 2014, p. 855), which have become “natural” (and, for many people, invisible or implausible). But there is another construct that requires careful analysis by the attentive researcher: that of language. The imposition of a language (including giving prestige to certain pronunciations of it) and the consequent erasure of other various forms of communicative expression, formed (along with or perhaps even more than the prohibition of universities and printing houses and mass illiteracy) the composition and the mark of a never completed independence, which gave rise to colonialities and continues promoting them.

3 NOR MODERN, NOR RATIONAL; ONLY DOMINANT

Inserted with centuries of delay in a modernity project, Brazil remained largely unable to read until mid-twentieth century. The late and precarious insertion in the Enlightenment ideals of secular and for all education never guaranteed democratic access or the consolidation of what was called secular Western civilization, much less broke with the abyssal thinking propelled by colonialism and endorsed by coloniality.

Thus, and as demonstrated in the previous point, the domination of Portuguese America and the layers that supported it were not more holders

¹⁷ According to IBGE (2019): “In 2018, the real average monthly income of the 1% of the population with the highest income was R\$ 27,744, which corresponds to 33.8 times the income of the 50% of the population with the lowest income (R\$ 820)”.

of modernity and rationality capital than indigenous and indigenized people, that is, those who have historically been victimized by coloniality (QUIJANO, 2014, p. 859). Despite this, the domination discourse was grounded on hierarchies based on intellect, rather than brute force. Even if Quijano (2005, p. 214) recalls that the great transportation routes, agriculture, calendar, mathematics, metallurgical technologies, philosophy and also weapons, wars, history and languages existed long before the formation of Europe, the concept of modernity and rationality was consolidated as exclusive heritage of people of European origin. Current humanity as a whole has thus become the first historically known world-system (SANTOS, 2010).

In the formation of Brazil, the eagerness to have, based on exploitation (whether of nature or of human beings), the neglect of primary education and the constitution of ruling elites that were either too foreignized or essentially illiterate contrasted with the view of the indigenous peoples. With more harmonious values and educational processes related to well-being, perspectivism and *corazonar*¹⁸, the indigenous peoples' thinking was subjugated by the process of conquest. A brief historical reflection on the issue is appropriate.

From 1549, with the installation of the general government, schools and books landed in Brazil. However, the act of Dom João III that delegated to the Jesuits the monopoly of teaching and catechesis in the new colony made it clear that education would take place as missions; teaching would aim only at the formation of priests for the colony (WYLER, 2003, p. 54). Therefore, the bases were laid for an exclusive-access moral and little scientist education, with which one has never broken. There are reports that Father Manuel da Nóbrega would have sent the indigenous peoples' appeals to Queen Catherine to establish schools for girls as well. However, since it was a request for "an extravagance that had not yet entered into consideration not even of the most illustrious Renaissance person"

¹⁸ An interesting passage described by KAHMANN (2017, p. 58) defines the term *corazonar*: "The West gives primacy to reason and to the domain of emotion and feelings, which are considered an obstacle to scientific knowledge. In affective terms, we have to keep distance in relation to the object. The term object itself denotes the relationship of objectification and disregard for the feelings of others, considered ideal for Western thinking. Both the researcher and what will be researched are detached from their affective dimension, a dimension that is considered to be a remnant of our animal origin and which must be eliminated in order for reason to reign. Thus, reason would be what differentiates us from other animals, therefore being what would make us human. In Amerindian thinking, in turn, in order to know, it is necessary to personify instead of objectifying. And one only knows objectively when one assumes the perspective of the other, which includes feelings and emotions. When discussing a human origin common to all beings, this humanity includes not only reason, but also the heart. *Corazonar* is this form of knowledge that combines the heart with reason".

(WYLER, 2003, p. 54), it did not receive attention from the Court. Jesuit education was directed at white men, those considered capable of attending the higher studies necessary to spread Christianity.

For two centuries, only the Jesuits were allowed teaching in Brazil. During that period, they composed libraries that constituted centers of great importance in the cultural formation of colonial elites. Nevertheless, in seeking to break with this tradition, those in power acted with the rules they knew: weapons instead of dialogue, destruction instead of transition. Jesuits were expelled, Nheengatu was banned, and libraries were dismantled. According to Wyler (2003, p. 56): “At the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits and the dismantling of their libraries in 1759, they totaled 12 thousand volumes in Maranhão and Pará, 5,434 volumes in Rio de Janeiro, 15 thousand in Salvador, works in French, Spanish, English, Italian, Latin and Greek”. With the reforms of the Marquis of Pombal, Portugal, lately and inadequately, tried to institute education formally inspired by Enlightenment ideals. Nevertheless, except for the persecution of languages of indigenous origins and revolts due to the expulsion of the Jesuits,¹⁹ the Pombaline Reform did not break with the delay and the elitization of the colony’s educational parameters.²⁰

Nor in Portugal did this reform show the expected results. Among dominants (always subjugated by other dominations), the shortage of qualified personnel continued to be so significant that it forced the incorporation of Brazilians into the bureaucracy, thus easing the roles inherent in a colonial structure. In this way, “traders born in Brazil, having studied at the University of Coimbra or becoming courtiers in Lisbon, acquired social prestige much more difficult to achieve for a *criollo* born in Peru or Buenos Aires” (ALMEIDA, 2013, p. 24). And, perhaps because of this, the fallacy that the Brazilian colonization process was not as vertical or as cruel as that of the countries of Hispanic America has crystallized. It was

19 After two centuries of Jesuit educational dominance, the State retook the control of education – “in a completely inadequate way” (CARVALHO, 2002, p. 22), whether in Portugal or in Brazil. For Pombal’s project, it was necessary to expand the use of the Portuguese language, the only indisputable mark of association with colonial power and control by it. As a consequence, in the south of Brazil the “Guaranitic War” broke out (1753-1756). In the North, in 1755, resisting to the effects of the Pombaline policy in Brazil, the Portuguese language was banned from São Luiz and Belém (WYLER, 2003, p. 40), but in 1759, the last Jesuits were expelled and their last libraries dismantled.

20 According to Lia Wyler (2003, p. 56): “The education elitization was not extinguished with the expulsion of the Jesuits, as it is claimed by advocates of the reform made by the Marquis of Pombal during Dom José’s reign. Even afterwards, with the exception of seminars and monastic classes, both attended by the elite, there were only royal classes (schools) in the most important cities and towns and in limited amount. The masters were improvised and underpaid: in 1777, Bahia had only two teachers; in 1823, Santa Catarina did not have a single public teacher”.

nothing more than a mistake; Brazilian colonialism (and coloniality), with all its overlap of dominations, is much more cruel and more naturalized, and remains in force in contemporary Brazil. This is what is going to be exposed, especially addressing indigenous languages.

4 FROM COLONIZATION TO LINGUISTIC COLONIALITY AND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010, p. 39) already alerted about abyssal thinking: “This reality is as true today as it was in the colonial period”. Abyssal thinking continues to operate by assigning value to “imported” goods and ideas. Culturally, bestsellers, that is, works that come from colonizing cultures and that are called like this not because they sell a lot, but because they are designed to sell a lot (especially to dominated cultures), are responsible for about 70% of translations circulating in the world (TORRES, 2009). Constructed based on criteria such as the simplicity of language and the creation of stereotyped images, these works represent the opposite to openness for the recognition and emancipation of the other, the opposite to diversity and renewal of the system through the entry of new words and thoughts for the enrichment of a language or the ideas circulating in a nation, which would be the foundations of the translations in the romantic perspective.

This demonstrates that the entire education/culture process in Brazil is still rooted in models aimed at the consecration of colonizers’ language, culture and thinking. In the words of Sachs (2008, p. 73), as it stands today, education is still an anti-development education, which does not emancipate, which does not maintain the necessary respect for diversity and which should exist as a result of the authentic process of cultural formation. This process results in the erasure of what is different from the Eurocentric model, the disregard of what is singular and genuine, of what is different from the European (or Euro-American), capitalist/patriarchal and modern/colonial world-system (GROSFUGUEL, 2005).

For Khatibi (1993, p. 19) it is urgent to find a different thinking, “a way of thinking that is not inspired by its own limitations and that does not aspire to domination and humiliation; a way of thinking that is universally marginal, fragmented and not consummated; and, as such, a way of thinking that because it is universally marginal and fragmented it is not ethnocidal”. Mignolo (2003) designates it as frontier thinking or frontier

gnosis, that is, a new epistemological dimension, a machine of intellectual decolonization and, therefore, of political and intellectual decolonization.

As it has been demonstrated throughout this work, the abyssal line of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010, p. 34) still prevails: civilized societies are on one side of the line, and on the other, colonial territories, where “there is no real knowledge; there are beliefs, opinions, magic, idolatry, intuitive and subjective understandings that, at best, can become objects or raw material for scientific inquiry”. This abyssal line is so imposing and naturalized that, on this side (from the perspective of the colonized), there does not even seem to be any thinking or culture. Without even reflecting on this line, languages and narratives other than the languages of the Euro-American domain are erased.

However, other languages exist. Not visible due to the fallacy of monolingualism, there are not only the inclusion languages, such as Libras (Brazilian Sign Language, used by the deaf community), but also the oral languages of the different immigrant communities and those of the indigenous peoples.

Despite five centuries of efforts to physically and culturally end the indigenous remnants, they not only continue existing according to the IBGE (2012), but have even started recognizing themselves as such. One of the most significant datum revealed by the 2000 Census (IBGE, 2012, p. 8) is the phenomenon of ethnogenesis (or re-ethnicization):

[...] Even though there is evidence that the indigenous population was experiencing accelerated growth [...] the 2000 Census data exceeded all expectations, with an annual growth rate, in the 1991-2000 period, of the order of 10.8%. Therefore, the changes in the absolute and relative compositions verified from 1991 to 2000 reflect the growth in the number of people who, in the 1991 Demographic Census, identified themselves as belonging to other categories and, in 2000, started identifying themselves as indigenous.

Also, indigenous languages continue to exist and preserve narratives, history and culture of these indigenous peoples. Although they are no longer in the proportion of many hundreds, as mentioned by Wyler (2013), the numbers are significant: the results of the 2010 Census indicated 274 indigenous languages spoken by people belonging to 305 different ethnicities (according to article of ABDALA (2014) for EBC – *Empresa Brasil de Comunicação*). Five indigenous languages would have more than ten thousand speakers in Brazil in 2010: Tikuna (34 thousand speakers), Guarani Kaiowá (26.5 thousand), Kaingang (22 thousand), Xavante (13.3 thousand),

and Yanomami (12.7 thousand). It is a small Babel that bravely resists oppression and various dominations, in this case, those of the language plan.

Certainly, there are many challenges in Brazil's indigenous issue, but these two data on the re-ethnicization and resistance of indigenous languages seem to be good news in the context of this work, and it is expected that Brazil's portrait to be captured by the 2020 Census confirms these linguistic resistances and other elements that constitute indigenous cultural rights.

However, the openness to a truly democratic process necessarily passes through the recognition of multilingualism and the participation of native peoples in the direction of the nation, which permeates the idea of interculturality, that is, of the "processes of building another knowledge, another political practice, another social (and state) power and other societies; another form of thinking related to and against modernity/coloniality and another paradigm that is thought through political praxis" (WALSH, 2007, p. 47) that involves the political representation of the diverse identities of a nation.

In this sense, when the 1988 Constitution consolidates, in just two articles,²¹ the right of indigenous women and men to remain indigenous (SOUSA FILHO, 2013, p. 17), there is, in truth, the deliberate institution of the so-called official multiculturalism, not associated with interculturality, which presupposes, among other things, their participation in a State decision-making.

Thus, although the existence and safeguard of indigenous culture is ensured at the theoretical level, endorsing the coexistence of an internal legal order submitted to their own usages and customs, languages, beliefs and traditions (SOUSA FILHO, 2013), this supposed advance little has respected indigenous culture in allowing it to coexist with the hegemonic form. Otherwise, it only simulates this "new" thinking in order to maintain the same power structures intact. It is noted that:

It is in this new multiculturalist phase of thinking about the "other" that we have the arrival of the permitted Indigenous person to the public sphere. It represents a new scenario in which cultural demands are accepted whenever they do not imply a real redistribution of resources and power, or questioning of the relations of knowledge (COLAÇO; DAMÁSIO, 2012, p. 104).

21 Art. 231. Indians shall have their social organizations, customs, languages, creeds and traditions recognized, as well as their original rights to the lands they traditionally occupy, it being incumbent upon the Union to demarcate them, protect and ensure respect for all of their property. [...], and Art. 232. The Indians, their communities and organizations have standing under the law to sue to defend their rights and interests, the Public Prosecution intervening in all the procedural acts.

There are obstacles even in countries where interculturality has been a little more concrete, such as Ecuador and Bolivia, where the political project of *Buen Vivir* or *Sumak Kawsay* was constitutionally implemented. According to the constitutional model, this should be a possibility “to build another society, based on citizen coexistence in diversity and harmony with Nature, from the knowledge of the different cultural peoples existing in the country and in the world” (ACOSTA 2016, p. 76). However, what was supposed to be an integrating project of diverse indigenous peoples and nationalities, in which their singularities were respected, included, emancipated and heard, what is seen is that the indigenous peoples have been considerably affected by policies aimed at the developmentalist model of global society (mention should be made here of the removal of Evo Morales from the presidency of Bolivia, which took place in 2019).

It shows that the mere consolidation of constitutional devices that protect indigenous rights does not mean their effectiveness and, even less, that these rights are protected from the influences of the hegemonic civilizing process, of the European or Euro-American, capitalist/patriarchal, modern/colonial world-system

In fact, a large part of the acts that deprive indigenous peoples of their originality is violence. For Spivak, there remains a concern about the constitution of an ethical subject in relation to the language he/she uses:

Sometimes I read and hear that the subaltern individual can speak in his/her native languages. I wish I could have such a firm and unshakable self-confidence which the intellectual, the literary critic and the historian have, who, incidentally, affirm this in the English language. No speech is speech until it is heard. (SPIVAK, 2005, p. 57-58)

In this sense, Spivak presupposes the existence of attentive people willing to listen to subordinate people in order to respond on their behalf – this is the ethical imperative of reflection on speech; it implies the participation of subordinate individuals in the a State decision-making. It was in order to reconstruct the identity of this subaltern indigenous subject and speak on his/her behalf (so that his/her speech is heard) that the language aspect was brought up in the process of Brazil’s colonization. After all, the discrimination against indigenous languages in this process, following Santos (2010, p. 38), involves recognizing the violence in the prohibition of the use of their languages and their own names, as well as their cults and their perspective of education, art and justice constituted and disseminated by the languages they use. In short, of their culture. But it also involves

recognizing the persistence and, in good part, the victory in the erasure of Brazilian indigenous culture and, above all, the resistance of these native peoples in the conservation of their cultural and language rights.

Similarly, it is to deny the nation's multiculturalism by submitting Brazil to the "hegemony of agro-exporting oligarchies linked to external interests and adepts of liberal individualism, colonizing elitism and logical-formal legality" (WOLKMER, 2001, p. 84).

Thus, the historical trajectory proposed in this work showed that, in 1500, Portuguese colonizers found a multilingual Brazil, with communicating contact networks using *linguas francas* so effective and so widely spread that the so-called "general language", which lasted until the nineteenth century, was Tupi-based (Nheengatu family). In 1900, the dominant republican Brazil would continue being essentially oral, because it was mostly illiterate, but even so structured in a collective "conscience" built on the supposed inferiority of indigenous culture and knowledge and superiority of colonizing thinking.

Therefore, it is necessary to deconstruct these and all myths so that, free from the abyssal currents, it is possible to promote a real and effective process of political, economic, cultural, linguistic and also theoretical decoloniality, which is why the decolonial theory is accepted in this work that claims for the construction of a Brazilian-style decolonial theory to face the interpretation of the peculiarities of the different colonial oppressions in Brazil.

CONCLUSION

This work started from research on the history and historiography of culture, languages and ways of disseminating knowledge in Brazil to trace an analysis of the insistence of colonial thinking, while presenting peculiarities of Brazilian colonialism that, in opposition to that of Spanish America, prohibited the circulation of printed material and the creation of universities until 1808, when the Court of Dom João VI arrived in Rio de Janeiro.

Similarly, it was shown how, until 1759, education was in the Jesuits' hands for the exclusive purpose of training missionaries, and that the effects of this period are still felt in contemporary times, marked by a patriarchal, exclusionary and little scientist education. The rupture with this model through Pombaline reforms, as it is frequent in Brazilian history,

brought several losses, persecutions and destruction, without implementation of a secular and democratic educational system. Inaugurated in the third decade of the twenty-first century, it can unfortunately be concluded that this challenge is still far from being fulfilled and that it may not be so while the bonds of colonial thinking persist.

Thus, despite the fact that domination was based on the belief that modernity and rationality are the exclusive heritage of Europeans, it was sought to demonstrate that, in Brazil, the so-called “elites” are neither modern nor much less rational, and that they maintained themselves and most of the country mostly immersed in mass illiteracy, which, until mid-twenty century, relegated more than half of the Brazilian population to the margins not only of the most basic literacy, but also (and as consequence of the first element) of the most basic exercise of citizenship, the right to vote. In this context, which is not conducive to social ascension by studying, gender, skin color, profession and ownership (land, money or patronage) continued being the mechanisms that confer prestige in this country, in which entering into an alliance with oppressors (patronage) was forged, for many men and women, as the only or main option in the face of the absence or insufficiency of protection by the State. From this, it was demonstrated how the overlap of dominations prevented social integration and maintained portions of the population always subjugated to others, as enemies to each other.

It was also evident that the mere existence of constitutional provisions that try to ensure the multiculturalism existing in Brazil is not enough to guarantee coexistence with the hegemonic model, in spite of the indicators of indigenous resistance portrayed in the ethnogenesis and in the diversity of indigenous languages still spoken. On the contrary, only when the definitive promotion of multilingualism recognition, expressed in language rights, and the participation of native peoples in State decision-making process (interculturality) are concrete, these peoples will have possibility of enjoying effective cultural and language rights.

Finally, knowledge/recognition and revival of the past, culture, demographic and language characteristics and peculiarities of the Brazilian colonization process allowed verifying the urgency of a genuinely decolonial epistemology, which seeks to recognize itself as Brazilian and dialogues with the Latin American epistemology on what unites all these peoples; which receives differences and other thoughts and annuls the continuous efforts to erase indigenous culture in the face of its marked resistance to

preserve the code that best expresses ideas, thoughts and that constitutes a people's culture, that is, the language, the right to express themselves in their own language.

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