

History, Memory and Tradition in Indigenous School Education: a Kaingang School case study

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RESUMO

A educação escolar indígena no Brasil foi imposta aos povos originários desde os primórdios da colonização, com o intuito de catequizá-los e civilizá-los. No entanto, coerentes com suas cosmologias, esses povos mantiveram um modo próprio de educação. Apesar dos prejuízos infligidos historicamente pela escola nas sociedades indígenas, estas aprenderam a com ela conviver e, em muitos casos, a demandam e a recriam. Observa-se hoje uma ‘indianização’ das escolas nas aldeias, por meio de práticas que buscam na memória, na tradição, nos saberes ancestrais e no ensino de história a afirmação de suas identidades étnicas, fazendo dessa instituição e das práticas que nela desenvolvem possíveis aliadas de luta.

Palavras-chave: educação indígena; ensino de história; tradição e memória.

ABSTRACT

Indigenous school education in Brazil has been imposed on indigenous people since the beginnings of colonization, with the aim of catechizing and civilizing them. Nevertheless, in agreement with their cosmologies, these peoples have retained their own way of education. Despite the harm historically inflicted by the western form of teaching on indigenous societies, they have learned how to live with it and in many cases they demand it and recreate it. Today we can see a process of ‘Indianization’ in many village schools, through practices that seek in memory, tradition, ancestral wisdom and in the teaching of history the affirmation of their ethnic identities, making this institution and the practices developed within it possible allies in their historical struggles.

Keywords: indigenous education; teaching of history; tradition and memory.

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Indigenous school education in Brazil has a long trajectory, woven since the very beginnings of colonization and whose predominant model, alien to indigenous cosmologies, was imposed with an explicit colonizing, integrationist and civilizing purpose. Nevertheless, coherent with their modes of life, indigenous peoples have affirmed since the first contacts with Europeans their own model of education, though this was shown to be inadequate for school practices, since in traditional societies, amongst which we situate indigenous societies, “the theories of the world, of man and society are global and unifying.” In these societies knowledge is accessible to all, “divided through the level of initiation reached, and through a sectorization of knowledge that fragments it”,¹ as occurs in the organization and transmission of school knowledge in the western model. Even today in indigenous societies indigenous, three principal aspects shape an educational unity: the economy of reciprocity; the house as an educational space, along with the family and the kinship network; religion, in other words the symbolic concentration of the entire system, expressed in rituals and myths.

Although they affirmed and still live with their own forms of education, during these centuries of conquest, the Amerindian peoples were also invaded by school, an institutional that was created by – and constituted – another concept of the world. Gestated in western modernity, inspired in modern science that orders and fragments knowledge, the school imposed on the indigenous peoples was the bearer of an educational project for the formation of Christians and subjects of the Portuguese Crown, and later of citizens with a national identity.

However, in recent decades, in ethnic affirmation movements, another school model has appeared in the educational scenario: indigenous peoples' schools. Supported by laws that constitute a differentiated and specific model of school education, each people have taken for themselves the task of preparing school curriculums and pedagogical proposals, informed by their cosmologies. Although the most forceful school model in villages is still that of western modernity, the search for other references for these school practices has been ever stronger, constructing little by little specific and differentiated schools, already recognized by the educational laws of the country. It is with the school education of Brazilian indigenous peoples that this study is concerned, resulting from research carried out in the last decade in the Kaingang and Guarani Indigenous Lands and schools in Rio Grande do Sul. In a more specific manner, we will present here some reflections that arise out of the ethnographic research carried out in the Kaingang village Topê Pãn,

which was supported by the Foundation for the Support of Research of Rio Grande do Sul (Fapergs). In the text we will highlight ‘arts of making’ indigenous school, observed in the movement of the community, with the perspective of building a school curriculum and pedagogic proposals that approximate their way of life. More specifically, we seek to understand the teaching of history and its contribution to the constitution and affirmation of ethnic identities, linked to memory, tradition and to ancestral knowledge.

HISTORIC ASPECTS OF INDIGENOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

To understand the recent effective creation of indigenous schools, it is necessary to go back some decades and to follow the trajectory of school education of indigenous peoples in Brazil. According to recent studies that deal with the history of indigenous school education,² distinct moments in the modality of this type of school can be identified in the history of education in Brazil. Going back to colonial society and lasting until the twentieth century was a model of school education developed by religious orders, especially the Company of Jesus, the purpose of which was the Christianization of the gentile. However, “to convert, first civilize; more advantageous than the precarious conversion of adults, the education of children far from the native environment; rather than simply preaching the good news, the incessant policing of the civil conduct of the Indians,” asserts Viveiros de Castro.³ From this perspective a type of school was justified whose principal target was the *culumim*, this was developed since the sixteenth century, as documents of the time show, especially the letters of priests who worked in the colonial period and reported their efforts to Christianize, civilize and Europeanize first peoples, considered by them as without faith, without king and without law.

The ‘civilizing plan,’ aimed at the indigenous people and explained by Nóbrega in 1558,⁴ was meant to “stop them eating human flesh and making war without leave from the governor”; “make them have just one wife”; “dress themselves”; “remove witches”; make them live quietly without moving to other parts ... having shared lands that are enough for them.” With small differences in distinct times and spaces in colonial Brazil, these principles were maintained in the centuries of colonization, reinforced by the actions of other religious orders such as Benedictines, Franciscans, Carmelites, *Lasallistas* and Salesians, and returned to by the Brazilian state at the beginning of the twentieth century, when a second moment of indigenous school education was configured. After the creation of the Service for the Protection of Indians and

the Location of National Workers (*Serviço de Proteção ao Índio e Localização dos Trabalhadores Nacionais – SPILTN*) in 1910, the gentiles were placed under the care of the state, which after the advent of the Republic came to act in a more incisive manner to territorialize, civilize and integrate the indigenous peoples in the so-called national society. In each indigenous ‘reserve’ there was a SPI post, and in each post a school, whose level of activity was resumed as such by Souza Lima.

This involved basic notions of Portuguese (reading and writing) and the encouragement of the abandonment of native languages, as well as the introduction of a series of small alterations in the daily lives of indigenous people through forms of socialization that were characteristic of societies in which schools are the principal vehicle for cultural reproduction. The model of government idealized, and which in some cases was certainly implemented, sought to reach the totality of native activities, inserted in times and spaces that were differentiated from the cycles, rhythms and limits of indigenous life.⁵

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, technical schools operated in order to train labor within the objectives stipulated by SPILTN, and were also part of the scenario of indigenous school education at that time, imposing an integrationist model that pointed towards the extinction of the first peoples. Even with the presence of a state which had intentions of being secular, many religious orders worked among the indigenous peoples in the twentieth century, some in agreement, and even signing accords with the republican government through the SPI and later through the National Foundation of the Indian (*Fundação Nacional do Índio – Funai*), thereby allowing the continuity of the religious presence in the school education of indigenous peoples, although with other parameters of action.

SPI was replaced in 1967 when Funai was created. Small changes occurred in educational practices, but most deserving of attention are the actions of the *Summer Institute of Linguistics* (SIL). This institute, based on an agreement made with the Brazilian state, brought linguists of other nationalities, many of whom were linked to religious missions, to indigenous areas. These began to create a written language for various indigenous peoples. Schools in villages came to be governed by a law of the Ministry of the Interior (Law no. 6.001, articles 49 and 50, 1973), which stipulates indicates the use of the language of each group, along with Portuguese, in the teaching of literary. The law also asserted that “the education of Indians shall be aimed at integration in the national communion through a process of gradual comprehension of general

problems and the values of national society, as well as the use of their individual aptitudes.”

To implement the teaching of native languages in indigenous schools the position of bilingual monitor was created, who was usually a young person from the village trained to perform the role of translator between monolingual students and the non-indigenous teacher. The latter taught Portuguese and the other school subjects, all given in Portuguese. In general the writing of indigenous languages, taught in the first year of school, served as a passage for the learning of Portuguese and for the introduction, among indigenous people, of knowledge and visions of the world of Brazilian society as a whole.

The position of indigenous teacher, among other conquests, resulted from a processes of struggle, that demanded ingenious protagonism in the preparation and implementation of public policies, including school education. In the 1970s an incisive organization movement of the first peoples began which, supported by sectors of the Church, universities and NGOs, and in harmony with international indigenous movements, spelled out their demands for the right to difference, to land, to health and to differentiated education. Following indigenous participation in the constituent assembly process during the 1980s, the 1988 Federal Constitution assured important rights for their societies, including the right to differentiated school. In relation to Indians, Article 213 of the Constitution recognized “their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions,” while Article 210, § 2 allowed for “the use of their maternal languages and their own processes of learning.” In other words, it guaranteed teaching in their own language, with pedagogical processes that allow them learn in accordance with their culture. Indigenous schools which until then had been linked to Funai and thus to the Ministry of the Interior, moved in 1991 to the Ministry of Education. This triggered a strong movement for the affirmation of indigenous school education, through laws, the creation of specific sectors to manage this type of school and the involvement of indigenous teachers and leaders in administering the process.

In 1996, the National Education Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*) reaffirmed some points that had already been stipulated in the Federal Constitution, but went further, citing for the first time the establishment of “bilingual and intercultural school education for indigenous peoples,” with a curriculum, pedagogic project, teaching material and specific training for the teachers. The importance of the history and the ethnic identity of indigenous peoples for their communities was highlighted, and article 78 of the law as presented as one of the objectives of this differentiated education “the recovery

of their historical memories, the reaffirmation of their ethnic identities, the valorization of their languages and sciences.”

Following the path of creating a differentiated school education, in 1998 an important document was published, the National Referential Curriculum for Indigenous Schools (RCNEI). Prepared by indigenous leaders from all over the country, together with specialists from education, anthropologists and teachers of various subjects, it is an instrument that especially helps indigenous teachers and experts from departments of education to prepare the pedagogic projects and curriculums for indigenous schools. The year following this publication, Opinion 14 from the Federal Council of Education and Resolution no 003 from the Council of Basic Education were approved, which created the national curricular directive for indigenous school education and created the indigenous school category. In 2001 the National Plan for Education (PNE) was approved, a document which included a specific chapter to indigenous school education, establishing 21 objectives and targets. At that time the plan foresaw the creation “within a year of the official category of ‘indigenous school’ to ensure that the specificities of the intercultural and bilingual model of education are secured.” Furthermore, the PNE determined the creation of indigenous teachers, the establishment of proper infrastructure, and the creation of specific teaching material, amongst other points.

Consolidated by laws, indigenous schools in Brazil were affirmed by specific and differentiated schools, principally because they were enrooted in indigenous territory –Indigenous Lands –, they worked with indigenous students and also because most of their staff were bilingual and multilingual indigenous teachers belonging to different Amerindian ethnic groups. The data from the 2006 Inep/MEC School Census registered the work of 10,800 indigenous teachers, representing more than 90% of the teaching staff in village schools. This Amerindian presence in teaching staff is a practice that has occurred at an accelerated rate in recent decades and is marked by a recent past of prohibition, when the admission of indigenous teachers to their schools was ‘accepted’ by indigenist institutions only as monitors.⁶

It is important to understand why indigenous communities have been demanding school education, a modality of teaching that has been growing at all levels, including third level, where there are now more than five thousand indigenous university students. Unlike other historic moments, in which some indigenous groups have sought to isolate themselves as a form of resistance, the majority of them act and participate in a movement for the reaffirmation of identities and in an intense process of dialogue with national society.

Dominating their codes has become indispensable for the maintenance of indigenous peoples and for this reason school has come to be seen as a strategy for ethnic affirmation. It allows contact with the knowledge and wisdom of the non-indigenous world, making it more understandable, and allows indigenous peoples, in possession of these new instruments, to be able to fight for their rights in a more symmetrical way, learning the western system of life, but maintaining and affirming their own forms of education. This moment can be comprehended as being inserted in a broader movement of the organization of first peoples from all over the Americas, in which the recognition of their rights also includes the rights to school education: “The indigenous emergency which crosses the continent ... advocates intercultural and bilingual education which permits not only knowledge of western culture but also the reproduction of their own culture.”⁷

Nevertheless, the introduction the school institution in the middle of indigenous societies, even when desired by them and inserted in a broader process of organization and conflict, did not occur without conflict. In the discourse of indigenous leaders, the care taken to implement schools, and the criticism made about the school institution, an ambiguity could be perceived in the vision that indigenous peoples of school, showing at the same time that they ‘want’ and ‘do not want’ its presence in their villages. They see it as a necessity for intercultural dialogue, to the extent that it is necessary to comprehend national society in order to relate with it. However, they see it as a risk to the traditional way of life, an invasion of their own land, since, as has been mentioned, schools are institutions alien to the way of life of indigenous peoples and historically has caused damage to their own education processes and to the use of their languages. This precaution also means that some indigenous communities did not want school institutions within their own environment, or this school model, such as some Mbyá-Guarani villages in Rio Grande do Sul. However, the current challenge is to transform the school, and this can already be perceived in the modes of appropriation,⁸ in processes of resignification and the recreation of schools in villages, thereby showing the possibility of incorporating aspects of the culture of the other without losing the constitutive elements of indigenous culture. The past is called up, and in a circular concept of time, added to the present, which points to other possibilities of a future for school education from the perspective of ‘Indianization’ of schools.⁹

For Tassinari,¹⁰ the indigenous school can be theoretically considered as a *frontier* place, a space of transit, articulation and the exchange of knowledge,

as well as a space of incomprehension and of identity redefinitions of the groups involved in the process, both Indian and non-Indian.” In other words, a meeting place, a place of interaction and communication between the two worlds, “where interethnic differences emerge and acquire new shapes and where techniques and knowledge coming from different traditions can be changed and thus reinvented.” Observing what has occurred in the school of Morro do Osso in the last two years, and also based on the broader indigenous school education movement in Brazil that we have accompanied, we can state that the indigenous school is a place of inter-culturality.¹¹ The school opens a passage between two societies, two cultures, two forms of life, the indigenous and the non-indigenous, permitting the circulation of two cultures, making them a space of interface between two concepts of the world.

TEACHING HISTORY: MEMORY, HISTORY, TRADITION AND ANCESTRAL WISDOM

The principal concern of the demand for indigenous schools in communities is the acquisition of the skill of being able to read and write Portuguese. However, it also includes, as well as curricular practices that shape times, spaces and specific relationships of the school culture, other curricular components, including history.

The teaching of history, since its creation as a school subject in nineteenth century France, has been linked to the formation of modern national state and the concept of national identity. In Brazil it was implemented in 1838 in Colégio D. Pedro II, Rio de Janeiro, and proposed to create the basics of national unity and hegemony, emphasizing political factors and affirming the state as the administrator and controller of the nation. Both historiographic production and the teaching of history were based on a narrative marked by events which led to the construction of a feeling of nationality, whose heroes paraded in school books.¹² The intrinsic relationship between the history produced and the construction of the idea of the nation and the feeling of civicism was cultivated in a large part of the twentieth century, presuming a linearity and a unique history which praise *branquitude* (whiteness), European descent and the monolithism of society, even when dissenting voices made a counterpoint to what predominated at the time.

What representativeness did this identity have which it was sought to forge through the teaching of history, if it did not cover the different groups

that were created in the country? In relation to this, it is important to highlight the direct relationship that exists between history and the production of identities, whether they are ethnic, social or national. However, if history is linked to a group identity, it is history which represents the vision of a world of this group which can be significant in the constitution of its identity. Aware of this, in this part of the text we propose to listen to indigenous voices in relation to what they consider history, what they expect from the teaching of history, what role this plays in an indigenous school, what relationship this teaching has with the ancestral wisdom, memory, and tradition.

According to the statements of Edson Medeiros Ixã Kaxianwaá, Isaac Painko Asheninka, Geraldo Aiwa Apurinã and Fernando Luiz Kateyuve Yawanawá, indigenous teachers from Acre whose words were registered in the National Referential Curriculum for Indigenous schools,

Indigenous history is divided into two parts: the first are the myths, the old stories. Each people explains in a different way how the world was born, the origin of men, the sun and the moon, the names of things, animals, vegetables, feast days, medicine from the forests, the *cipó* tree and all the sciences. The second part explains what happens at different moments of the life of each indigenous nation: the changes in organization, in the government, and in the economy, conflicts between families, wars with other nations.¹³

Kaká Werá Jecupé, an Amerindian writer, registers in one of his books the history of Brazil from the indigenous point of view, and following the precepts announced by teachers from Acre in what they called the 'first part of history,' states:

In telling his history, an Indian, a clan, a tribe start from the moment when their spirit-essence permeated the land and reports the passage of this spirit-essence through the vegetal, mineral and animal kingdoms. There are tribes that begin their history when the clan were water spirit beings. Others use their animal memory as the beginning of the history, while there are those who begin their history from the trees they were.¹⁴

The 'second part of the history,' according to teachers, also includes what we call national history. In addition to relations with other indigenous peoples, it reports contacts with Europeans after their arrival in the Americas and the relations established since then, all from an indigenous point of view and not as officially narrated in the majority of books used in schools, which portray

the vision of the conquerors. It is always the voice of a non-indigenous person who tells the history of Brazil.

Similarly, other indigenous teachers who also contributed to the production of the Indigenous Referential Curriculum, as affirmed by Pianko, from the Asheninka people and Joaquim Maná, from the Kaxinawá, stated:

Each historian writes histories that are important for their people. In the history of Brazil that we write in books, Indians are not registered exactly as they are. The history that we see written only registers the events of the people of the historians, the whites, in other words the powerful. For this reason it is very important that Indians themselves continue to research and to write the history of their peoples.¹⁵

These citations show us the importance attributed to history in indigenous schools and what is expected from it. Other indigenous teachers, reflecting on what it means to study history in indigenous schools go beyond this, considering it to be “the opportunity to give value to their historical narratives,” a declaration that contributes to lay the foundation for an understanding of history which involves the traditional narratives of each people. They state that history also allows for the study of “the relations of each one of these peoples with national society”, principally in order to affirm the rights that contribute to assure the physical and cultural survival of these peoples.¹⁶

These are some of the explanation that allow the comprehension of how the teaching of history in indigenous schools can be constituted as a path for the valorization of the history of the first peoples and as an instrument to qualify intercultural dialogue and consequently to contribute to the affirmation of ethnic identity. This is one of the objectives of the teaching of history in indigenous schools, as shown by the Collective Regulations of the Kaingang State Schools of Rio Grande do Sul: “The school seeks the historical and cultural recovery of the communities, aiming at the valorization of culture and the internal laws of the community to guarantee our people the right to be different from the non-Indian and also to maintain our customs.”¹⁷ To understand how this aspiration can become a reality, it is worth highlighting, by way of example, some of the items proposed for the teaching of history that appear in the Indigenous Referential Curriculum:

- The differences and the similarities between the way of life of a people and other societies;

- The permanence of work, of ways of living and thinking of other epochs, in the present and transformations in time;
- Confrontations, contacts and identities constructed by a people in their relations with groups and peoples in the present and past;
- The commitments and motivations that lead to active participation in the construction of daily life and in historic reality.¹⁸

These are propositions that infer reflection on this mode of life, this past, this identity which the teaching of history proposes to work with in indigenous schools. From what teachers and indigenous leaders state, this part is principally preserved through the oldest people, who are responsible for its transmission from generation to generation, through orality. In societies with an oral tradition histories are always a generation to be extinct, always in the immanence of finishing with the generation that holds the remembrance of these histories, for which reason old people and their memories are cherished. Since they live under the threat of extinction, the knowledge transmitted by orality acquires an agonistic perspective, which makes tradition and memory be used with vehemence. “Old people are our libraries”, repeat indigenous teachers when they discuss indigenous schools and the knowledge that should be included in their curriculums.

In oral societies memory is permanently evoked and recreated, however it is in the present that remembering and forgetting acquire meaning and it is in the present that ancestral wisdom is recreated, through the words of those who transmit this wisdom, in general the older people in the community, also recognized as the ‘guardians of memory.’ It is in answering the questions of the present that some events of the past are forgotten and others remembered. A discussion that has accompanied the west – Plato has already said that memory is a product of the imagination, attributing it characteristics of delirium and forgetting, but recognizing its importance: “it is only for the good use of these memories that man becomes perfect,” he says in *Phaedra*.¹⁹ Bosi,²⁰ in turn says that memory is work, production, imagination, remembering and forgetting produced in the present.

History is the daughter or memory, a kinship relationships that approximates history and memory. Nevertheless, specific characteristics of both are intensely worked on, as Jacques Le Goff has done.²¹ Reflecting on the relations between history and memory, we can see that in western society there predominates a registered history, a written history that for a long time has had pretensions of being objective, exempt from emotions and value judgments

on the part of those who write it, who produce it. In this way memory has more freedom, since it selects, through individual and collective anxieties of the present, the facts that should and can be remembered or forgotten. In the positivist tradition, history has the intention of registering the truth of all events. Nevertheless, we historians know the impossibility of this task and we admit that there are various truths, various recreations of the same event, which at this point approximates the history of memory.²²

In indigenous communities, memory and history are confused, since history, principally when it refers to the history of the group, is transmitted orally through the memory of the old. Through narratives that seek legitimacy in the past and in tradition, they seek to evoke feelings of identification *of and for* the group: “Narratives reveal the alignment of narrators with certain individuals, groups, ideas and symbols through which they externalize their greater values, positive values, pride in themselves.”²³ From this perspective, it is understood that in the situations in which it becomes more difficult to live in accordance with indigenous cosmology, especially due to the intensification of the contact with the ‘world of whites,’ ancestry is evoked to affirm cultural permanencies and ethnic identities. In school, a region recognized as a frontier, where knowledge that is originally western predominates, indigenous peoples affirm the importance of ancestral wisdom, looking for practices that can assure tradition. The memory of the old assumes the function of history.

We also consider the perspective of tradition and, as Balandier affirms, it also “generates continuity; expresses the difficult relationship with the past,” and is transmitted from generation to generation the values of a determined society: “Tradition is an inheritance that defines and maintains a order by extinguishing the transforming action of time, only retaining the founding moments, from which it gets its legitimacy and its strength.” By affirming permanencies, tradition denies history, for this reason in societies recognized to be traditional, in which the Kaingang society studied by us is inserted, memory and tradition are drawn on and offered as history. However, Balandier makes us understand that tradition in itself “only acts as the bearer of a dynamism that allows it adapt,” playing only in part with the apparent stability. In many situations it is shown to be reworked, giving sense to the new, to the daring. From this perspective, the author continues, “the work of tradition is not dissociated from that of history”.²⁴

TOPÊ PĀN SCHOOL: QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS RAISED BY THE FIELD WORK

The research that supports the reflections presented here was carried out in the last two year, especially in the Topê Pân indigenous school, Morro do Osso. The village which gives its name to the school is located in the city of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, contiguous to an area declared an Environmental Preservation Unit in the urban master plan of the city and also recognized by archeologists as a land of indigenous ancestry due to the existence of an indigenous cemetery in the location. Since 2004 a group of approximately thirty families have occupied the region in a traditional manner, installing there a bilingual, specific, and differentiated school. The school which has been in the village since 2006 was created and administered by the Secretary of Education of Rio Grande do Sul, although not authorized by the State Education Council, due to the fact that it did not possess an adequate physical structure, such as a kitchen, bathroom and library, equipment which, according to village leaders, will be built once the land is regularized. For the time being it is connected to a nearby non-indigenous state school, which since it is geographically outside Morro do Osso is referred to by the Kaingang as the “school there below.” The latter makes the formal registration for the indigenous school, receives them and passes on the school lunches and the school material, informs the State Department of Education about the teachers’ working hours, and above all it is the school that receives the majority of the Kaingang students after they finish the fourth year of primary education in the village school.

The Topê Pân school possesses some characteristics that differentiate it. It is multi-class, in other words children of different ages and levels of knowledge have class together, in the same time and space. It is bilingual, since it teaches in Kaingang and Portuguese simultaneously. In the morning the classes are aimed at a public who, according to the teacher, are equivalent to the third and fourth grades of primary school, and the students have classes of math, Portuguese, social studies and religion – the latter also called the ‘Kaingang class,’ in which many of the stories from the tradition and the ancestral wisdom of this people are told. The organization of study times privileges one subject for each day of the week, and at certain times of the year we can also observe that the teacher concentrated on only one curricular component in each week, leading us to believe that this was a way of escaping the temporal framework imposed by already canonized school hours. In the

afternoon classes, the children were from the first and second grades, and had classes of Kaingang and Portuguese, alternately, though the predominant language in classes was Kaingang.

The organization of the school calendar respects the festivities and rituals of Kaingang cosmology, such as the Indigenous Week, in which the community has festivals and not class, and the Kujá Meeting, a ritual that brings together the traditional leaders from many Kaingang indigenous lands for some celebrations, as well as burials, travel and marriage. Important questions that intervene in the school calendar are the days of the collection of material, production and the sale of craftwork. According to the leaders, these activities are essential, since they integrate the Kaingang life and constitute opportunities for the older people to interact with the children, who can observe and 'do together' this type of work, especially the sustainable management of forests from which *cipó* is extracted, an activity based on ancestral wisdom. We note that teachers do not impose school attendance as obligatory, and that the decision to matriculate and send children to school depends on families, and much of its functioning depending on the social relations and policies of each family in the village.

One teacher is responsible for the morning and afternoon classes. He is hired by the Rio Grande do Sul State Department of Education and has been working since 2008 when he replaced the previous teacher, who gave up teaching and returning to his homeland, since he had been living in Morro do Osso without his family and had been missing them. Álvaro, the current teacher, was chosen by the community leaders for his qualities linked to traditional Kaingang education and his knowledge of the native language, both oral and written. He was born in the Votouro Indigenous Land, also in Rio Grande do Sul, where he studied in the village primary school where his father was also a bilingual teacher. He went to secondary school outside his village. According to his statement, he learned to teach with an older teacher, who had already graduated from the Kaingang Indigenous Teacher's Course – a specific differentiated course for training indigenous teachers held in Rio Grande do Sul in the 1980s.

By describing observations made in different classes in the school, as well as situations of life in the village, it is possible to infer some ideas about *how* and *where* the transmission of knowledge occurs and, principally, the teaching of history. In the Kaingang classes the principal objective is to teach the speaking and writing of the native language, and a question which sprang to mind during this period was the growing strengthening of the Kaingang language at school. At the beginning of our observations, which coincided with

the arrival of the new teacher Álvaro, Portuguese was the language most used in the classroom, and now it is practically replaced by Kaingang. In this way, it can be seen that the school has been playing a very important role in the recovery of the Kaingang language, since many children had abandoned the language due to their interaction with the city and attending non-indigenous schools. Questioned about the reason for the Kaingang language in the school, a girl answered that it was “a way of fighting for the land,” leaving it evident that the affirmation of the indigenous language was also an affirmation of ethnic identity.

In the Kaingang classes the teacher generally wrote a text on the board, a text that always involved a history loaded with memory and the knowledge of tradition. It usually began with the word *Vêsa* (in the past), and with no reference being made to the date the narrated fact occurred. We can cite here two examples of stories. One is called *Sāpe* (hat) and tell the story of the meeting of an Indian and a white man who wanted to sell him a hat so he could buy food. The Indian did not buy the hat, but offered him food. The other, *Fag Pén* (pine tree), narrates the story of how pine nuts used to be eaten on cold days, seen this fruit was a typical Kaingang food. Questioned about the origin of the stories, the teacher answered that he had “heard the old people tell them.”

This answer agrees with what appears in the regulations of the Kaingang schools mentioned above:

The ‘Kaingang’ values are worked on at all levels and in all the modalities of the school, substituting religious teaching, and the inclusion of this wisdom and knowledge in the Study Plans will include research with the *ema* [village], especially including the participation of the oldest residents, who will share their life experiences with the students.²⁵

This practice of calling the oldest people to the classroom was reported by Álvaro. He said that Francisco Ró Kag dos Santos, the oldest person in the village, a political and spiritual leader, an indigenous intellectual from Morro do Osso, would sometimes go to the school and tell some stories to the children. Álvaro also reported that he would often listen to the stories of the old people and afterwards write them on the board and pass them on to the students. According to the teacher,

There is Francisco who knows everything about culture, the *marcas*.²⁶ So he speaks, and I keep everything. I do not speak with him every day. Only when he

sits and talk, I listen and I do not forget anything. There is that lady over there, she is old, she knows a lot about herbal medicine, about births. She talks to me. She came here to talk once. If you understand you never forget ... I listen to them talking, then I write it down.

Similarly, João Sejuja, an indigenous teacher and an undergraduate student of history in the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, reported something that approximated Álvaro's discourse: "In fact we do not have a registered history of our people, so who does this type of work are the old people, who we call every week to tell a little of this history to the students." These are discourses that show the role that the older people have in the transmission of knowledge and production of a memory. It is also clear that aspects of the Kaingang culture are taught through oral memory, which prioritizes remembering by the oldest and the oral narratives registered by the teacher through the writing of short texts.

This 'telling' of history is what fills in the gaps left by school books, since these ignore the participation of native groups in a large part of national history. "The Kaingang tell history in a different form ... the Kaingang actually do not tell this history that they tell ... and these things that we think are not true, we replace," explain the teacher João Sejuja. According to Álvaro, he tells history "properly. Not only that of the whites, but the Indians as well ... It is there that the writings are not very clear. I have looked well. [In school books] they are not clear. There I try to explain better. There he is just writing a draft, some little part."

It is in the narration of stories that memory and history mix to form the history of the Kaingang. Both teachers speak of the need to register this memory in the written language, "so that it is not lost," but principally for there to be their own and specific material for use in school. Similar to what Álvaro reported in his interview, Guarani educators reported to Borges²⁷ that they liked to "teach the true Guarani history, the history of old", in counterpart to the history narrated and confirmed in various school books that arrived in their schools. Corroborating the data collected in the field is a further statement of the indigenous teachers who constructed the Indigenous Referential Curriculum:

In the study of the history of each people, the teacher should prioritize history as it is told by those who have lived it. It should be clear that, among various peoples, even the children have contact with the history of their group, through the intermediation of parents, grandparents, or others in the village who have the responsibility of telling it.²⁸

In an event in the Faculty of Education of UFRGS in May 2008, Francisco Ró Kag dos Santos, an indigenous intellectual from Morro do Osso, gave a talk in which he reported the historical presence of the Kaingang in Porto Alegre, and his narrative left clear the composition between memory and history. Francisco referred to historic dates and facts from western history and to the histories of his ancestors indistinctly, as we can find in the passage transcribed below:

In the history of many scholars, it is said that Porto Alegre was Guarani territory and not Kaingang, but we have a story to tell which comes from our ancestors who passed on the stories, my grandfather-great-grandfather-son-grandson told the stories... At the time the whites began to take over, because Brazil was all mine, Brazil was just the Indians. Then immigration started, the Spanish came, they came from various places and the Indians began to decline. Even now I see this in the news. Today in Amazonia they found some Indians who had never seen a white man. Only these Indians escaped... they are in Amazon destroying the forest, the timber and so the Indians go to the end of the forest. That was us, that is what has happened since the discover of Brazil ... before Porto Alegre I have a story that we made: 9000 years before Christ the hunter-gatherers linked to the Umbu tribe already lived here in Porto Alegre. Before Christ the Indians already lived here, more or less three hundred years ago Indians from other tribes began to arrive here... in 1740 the Guarani began to arrived, and they were called ducks, because they came in canoes from Paraguay, but before this there were Indians here, the Guarani came after the Umbu, after the Kaingang, after the Charrua. They came after, the Guarani are recent in Porto Alegre and before this we already lived here. Before this there were already Indians here in Porto Alegre.

We observed that in general in the social studies classes in the Topê Pãn School, the teacher was guided by the parameters of the non-indigenous school, “writing on the board” texts taken from the school books. However, we highlight one of the classes in which the teacher suggested that the students research data about the village and the Kaingang culture with their parents or with the old people. The questions written on the board were:

- 1) How many m² is your house?;
- 2) How many people are there in your family?;
- 3) How many families are there in your house?;
- 4) How many hectares does your village have?;
- 5) How many families live in the village?;
- 6) What is your name according to your culture?;
- 7) How many students are there in your

school at present? Here it is evident that you also learn about your own culture at home.

At first this lesson seemed strange to us, but the teacher explained that it was a way of knowing the families and making students research local history. In a science class we also observed the presence of elements of Kaingang history being taught: the *araucaria* tree and its parts – trunk, leaves, pine, pinion – in the Kaingang language and afterwards the students had to draw a pine tree in their notebooks and locate its parts. These are situations which allows us think that the teaching or transmission of history is not constituted in a specific discipline, despite being part of the curriculum in indigenous schools.

(IN)CONCLUSIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Some considerations and paths can be pointed to through this research. In first place, it is important to highlight that the teaching of history, which occurs both in school and in other spaces in the village, is not limited solely to the discipline of history – or social studies -, it seeks to work with elements of culture and tradition and has a very important role in the affirmation of indigenous ethnic identity and contributes to the formation of a critical consciousness that instrumentalizes resistance struggles.

In groups that intensely live in contact with the world of whites, such as the community of Morro do Osso, whose identity is at the mercy of daily questions, it can be thought that by recovering memories and traditions that were partially forgotten or omitted, historical knowledge can play another role in the life of the community. It can contribute to the valorization of a past that has been neglected, both by local groups and by the official historiography, omissive in relation to indigenous peoples in the history of the formation of Brazil. In this way the recovery of indigenous history/memory can contribute to the transformation of the historiography that predominates nowadays.

“Can the teaching of history and the written registration of myths and the reports of the oldest peoples not affect the traditional forms of the past?” asks Circe Bittencourt in a work mentioned above. We think that it will not affect it negatively, but that it can be recreated in a positive form and thus writing and orality can live together with their specificities. The National Reference Curriculum for Indigenous schools took this into account and suggested how to proceed:

When oral reports were registered in writing or recorded on tapes and used as teaching material, students need to learn to recognize that, despite the existence of the possibility of this version being registered, read and reread, this does not mean they should be used to definitely fix a memory. The register or reports should not serve to interrupt the process of the permanent reconstruction of their meanings.²⁹

We also believe that in this way the registration of oral histories told by indigenous people and incorporated in the historiography can greatly contribute to the implantation of Law no. 11.645.³⁰ Therefore, meeting the demands of indigenous groups in relation to the teaching of history in their schools is a procedure that can also meet at the same time the needs of non-indigenous schools.

NOTES

¹ BALANDIER, Georges. *A desordem: elogio do movimento*. Trad. Suzana Martins. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1997, p.156.

² For this study, we draw on especially BERGAMASCHI, Maria Aparecida. Educação escolar indígena no século XX: da escola para os índios à escola específica e diferenciada. In: STEPHANOU, Maria; BASTOS, Maria Helena. *Histórias e memórias da educação no Brasil*. v.III, Século XX. Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 2005; e NASCIMENTO, Adir Casaro; AGUILERA URQUIZA, A. H. Currículo, diferenças e identities: tendências da escolar indígena Guarani e Kaiowá. In: *Curriculum sem fronteiras*, v.10, n.1, p.12-32, jan.-jun. 2010.

³ VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, Eduardo. *A inconstância da alma selvagem*. São Paulo: Cosac-Naify, 2002, p.190.

⁴ Citado em VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2002, p.245.

⁵ SOUZA LIMA, Antonio Carlos de. Um grande cerco de paz: poder tutelar, indianidade e formação do Estado no Brasil. Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 1995, p.191.

⁶ Better details of this, accompanied by a closer analysis of the legislation about indigenous school education, can be found in: BONIN, Iara. Educação escolar indígena e docência: princípios e normas na legislação em vigor. In: BERGAMASCHI, Maria Aparecida (Org.). *Povos indígenas & educação*. Porto Alegre: Mediação, 2008, p.95-107.

⁷ BENGGOA, Antonio. *La emergencia indígena en América Latina*. Santiago (Chile): Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000, p.299.

⁸ Appropriation translates the making something one's own, adequate to the needs of those who appropriate it, even if the origin of this good does not belong to them. According to Michel de Certeau it signifies making an assimilated good, "similar to what it is, making it

one's owns, appropriating it or reappropriating it." CERTEAU, Michel de. *A invenção do cotidiano: artes de fazer*. Trad. Ephraim Ferreira Alves. 3.ed. Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 1994, p.261.

⁹ BERGAMASCHI, Maria Aparecida; SILVA, Rosa Helena Dias da. *Educação escolar indígena no Brasil: da escola para os índios às escolas indígenas*. *Ágora* (Unisc), v.13, p.124-150, 2007.

¹⁰ TASSINARI, Antonella Maria Imperatriz. Escola indígena: novos horizontes teóricos, novas fronteiras de educação. In: SILVA, Aracy Lopes da; FERREIRA, Mariana Kawaii Leal. *Antropologia, história e educação*. São Paulo: Global, 2001, p.50.

¹¹ According to CANCLINI, Néstor García. *Diferentes, desiguais e desconectados*. Trad. Luiz Sergio Henriques. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. UFRJ, 2007, p.17: "interculturality deals with confrontation and interlacing, to which happens when groups start relations and exchanges." The term implies a model of social production, however, according to the author, interculturality "implies that differences are what they are, in relations of negotiation, conflict and reciprocal loans."

¹² BITTENCOURT, Circe Maria Fernandes. O ensino de história para populações indígenas. *Em Aberto*, Brasília, n.63, p.105-116, jul.-set. 1994.

¹³ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. *Referencial Curricular Nacional para as Escolas Indígenas*. Brasília, 1998, p.209.

¹⁴ JECUPÉ, Kaka Werá. *A terra dos mil povos: história indígena do Brasil contada por um índio*. São Paulo: Peirópolis, 1998, p.14.

¹⁵ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação, 1998, cit., p.195.

¹⁶ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação, 1998, cit., p.198.

¹⁷ RIO GRANDE DO SUL. Secretaria de Estado da Educação. *Regimento Coletivo das Escolas Estaduais Indígenas Kaingang*. Porto Alegre, 2001, p.2.

¹⁸ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação, 1998, cit., p.200.

¹⁹ PLATÃO. *Fedro*. São Paulo: Martin Claret, 2001, p.96.

²⁰ BOSI, Ecléa. *Memória e sociedade: lembranças de velhos*. São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, 1993.

²¹ LE GOFF, Jacques. *História e memória*. Trad. Bernardo Leitão. 4.ed. Campinas (SP): Ed. Unicamp, 1996.

²² In her doctoral thesis Lucini studied the relationship of memory and history in a settlement of the Landless Movement (*Movimento dos Sem Terra – MST*). Although her aim was to investigate how historic knowledge was transmitted in history classes, but during research she looked at memory as well, since it was always presented as an element which wove history, at times it overlaps with it. She noted that her observations could not be restricted to the classroom, but had to be attentive for other moments, such as commemorations, training meetings, work and collective social practice. According to the author, the historic narratives and memory practices, inside and outside school, contribute to the

construction of identity of this group. Lucini's study inspired us to look at the movements of approximation between history and memory, both inside and outside the Topê Pân Kaingang school. LUCINI, Marizete. *Memória e história na formação da identidade sem terra no Assentamento Conquista na Fronteira*. Dissertation (Doctorate in Education) – Unicamp. Campinas (SP), 2007.

²³ ERRANTE, Antoinette. Mas afinal, a memória é de quem? Histórias orais e modos de lembrar e contar. *História da educação*, Pelotas: ASPHE/Fa/UFPel, v.8, p.141-174, set. 2000, p.142.

²⁴ BALANDIER, Georges. *A desordem: elogio do movimento*. Trad. Suzana Martins. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1997, p.37-39. The author works with the perspective of movement, explaining it as the result of the intrinsic relationship between order and disorder. The new, the daring, the alien to tradition act as 'figures of disorder,' and we can understand the role of the school in indigenous villages in this way. Tradition, expressed by memory and bearing ancestral wisdom, is placed as order and composes with the school to maintain its apparent stability. In the game it shows its dynamism.

²⁵ RIO GRANDE DO SUL. Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 2001, cit., p.6.

²⁶ *Marca* (literally mark) refers to lineage. The Kaingang ethnicity is organized in two lineages, or halves – Kame and Kainru-kre – which orientate the Kaingang cosmology and social organization.

²⁷ BORGES, Paulo Humberto Porto. Uma visão indígena da história. *Caderno Cedes*, ano XIX, n.49, p.92-106, dez. 1999, p.93.

²⁸ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação, 1998, cit., p.207.

²⁹ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação, 1998, cit., p.203.

³⁰ A 2008 Federal Law that governs the teaching of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in all primary education teaching establishments.

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