Colonial encounters in the state of Paraná, Brazil

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ABSTRACT. A three-fold ethnographic text called Descoberta dos Campos de Guarapuava, written in 1771-1772 by Portuguese lieutenant Afonso Botelho de Sampaio, is analyzed according to post-colonial theory. The text narrates the unsuccessful attempt of the colonial government to invade and occupy Kaingang land in the central and southern region of the state of Paraná. It records the ideology of Portuguese and Brazilian colonizers to subdue and other the natives so that capitalist expansion could start in the vast region. The post-colonial theory on othering is applied to reveal the policies and strategies of the colonial power in its tragic endeavor to deculturize the Kaingangs. However, within the colonial text voices of resistance are constantly heard, enhancing the theory that the native has never been silenced and muted.

Key words: occupation of land, post-colonialism, othering, Kaingangs, Paraná, resistance.

RESUMO. Encontros coloniais no Estado do Paraná. Analisa-se um texto etnográfico subdividido em três partes chamado Descoberta dos Campos de Guarapuava, escrito entre 1771 e 1772 pelo tenente português Afonso Botelho de Sampaio, de acordo com a teoria pós-colonial. O texto narra a tentativa frustrada de colonização pelo governo português em invadir e ocupar a terra dos Kaingangues na região centro-sul do Paraná. Relata-se a ideologia dos colonizadores portugueses e brasileiros para subjugar e “outremizar” os nativos para que se começasse a expansão capitalista naquela região. Aplica-se a teoria pós-colonial da “outremização” para fazer emergir as políticas e as estratégias do poder colonial em suas trágicas tentativas de desculturalizar os Kaingangues. Contudo, ouvem-se constantemente as vozes de resistência, as quais confirmam a teoria de que o nativo jamais foi emudecido ou silenciado.


Insults or dignity?

When the capuchin friar Luis Cemitille was talking with the Kaingang chief Manuel Aropkimbé about religion in the village of São Pedro de Alcântara (north of the state of Paraná) in 1866, the latter gave a definition of God that surprised the old priest. Aropkimbé said that God is a whiff or breath. Although unknown to Fr Cemitille the Amerindian had pronounced one of the most significant words in Biblical vocabulary for the deity (McKenzie, 1966), the Catholic priest concluded that he was incapable of conversion and regretted that his attitudes were exactly opposite those adopted by the fictitious Friday in Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719). While Friday quickly shunned cannibalism, his ancient gods and culture, accepted a subaltern role on the island and converted to Crusoe’s Anglican religion, Aropkimbé refused to abandon his four wives and never accepted the Catholic religion or its tenets. He was even incapable of making the sign of the cross (Taunay, 1931, p. 99). This short, albeit significant anecdote represents, as late as the latter half of the 19th century, many characteristics of colonial encounters in the New World. Even though it focuses on religion, the encounter is a metonymy on the hegemonic stance of the European representative with his culture, science and power by which he endeavors to belittle the half-naked man of the forest, who, in his turn, is actually clothed with the dignity of a freeman.

Throughout more than four hundred years the frontier of the state of Paraná has been pushed westward through the colonizing schemes of European colonizers, with the consequent jeopardizing of the Guarany, Kaingang, Xokleng and Xeta tribes living on it. If in the 17th century the colonial frontier of Paraná was limited to the coastal region and the Curitiba plateau, the 18th and 19th centuries respectively witnessed the colonization of the Campos Gerais in the center and the vast region...
of Guarapuava (called Korã-bang-rê by the natives) and Palmas in the south and west. The last frontier to be vanquished was the northern and northwestern region of the state of Paraná by European colonization (1920-1960), which left the whole region depleted of its native inhabitants and their culture (Schaden, 1972).

Our research concentrates on the colonial encounters between white European colonizers and the Kaingang and Xokleng tribes in the state of Paraná reported in a three-fold document written between December 1771 and January 1772. These specific encounters occurred during the last years of the pre-Independence colonial period and ought to be placed in the international context of the waning of Portuguese colonial power in Brazil and in the local situation of the pre-Emancipation period of the state of Paraná. Our research will analyze the othering process in a world that, it was supposed, was gradually adopting a liberalizing policy. If placed in the context of the colonizing policies practiced by Europeans in Africa and India during the same period, one may see an underlying leitmotif of invasion, division, domination, exploitation and deculturation. Post-colonial theory will be applied to the othering strategies of the Portuguese colonizers and their Brazilian allies so that their ideology and motives for degrading the natives could be revealed. On the other hand, the type of resistance ensued by the natives of the Paraná will also be analyzed. It will surely give us parameters to measure the deep cultural wounds inflicted on them by representatives of the metropolis.

The text under analysis is entitled *Descoberta dos Campos de Guarapuava*, written by the Portuguese lieutenant Afonso Botelho de Sampaio (1728-1793), subdivided into three parts: (1) *Descoberta dos Campos de Guarapuava*, written in December 1771; (2) *Relação do primeiro encontro que o tenente-coronel Afonso Botelho de Sampaio teve com os índios do sertão do Tibagi nos campos de Guarapuava*, written in December 1771; (3) *Relação do segundo sucesso acontecido com os índios no acampamento do rio Jordão*, written in January 1772. This three-fold text was published for the first time in the *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, in 1896, and recently by Sallas in 2001.

**The historical background**

In the 16th century most of the vast area that at present comprises the state of Paraná was, at least theoretically, part of the Spanish empire. It was gradually encroached upon from the western (Guaira region) and eastern flanks (Paranaguá and Curitiba) by slavers from the town of São Paulo in search for Amerindian slaves and gold respectively (Balhana *et al.*, 1969). Although by the middle of the 17th century only Paranaguá and the Curitiba plateau seemed to harbor white communities, at the same time Kaingang, Xeta, Xokleng and Guaraní tribes abounded in the whole Paraná area (Melatti, 1972). Nevertheless, from the very first years of colonization Paraná was crisscrossed by Spaniards (notably Alvar Nuñes Cabeza de Vaca in 1541-1542) and a few Portuguese on their way to and from Paraguay and Peru using the famous Peabiru trail. When the Guairá province was installed in 1608 by the Spanish monarch Philip III, the western portion of the state of Paraná was allotted to the Jesuits who established various reducciones or aldeamentos for more than 200,000 Amerindians (Sanz and Blanco, 1989, Vainfas, 2000). Needless to say, heavy opposition came from the colonial towns of Ciudad Real and Villa Rica, since their inhabitants were foiled in their endeavor for easily achieved slave labor. Ironically the great concentrations of Amerindians at the reducciones became an easy prey for the Paulistas in their quest for slaves.

As from 1610 the Spanish Jesuits established 12 reducciones for the settlement of the Amerindians, practically all close to the rivers Tibagi, Piquiri, Ivaí, Corumbataí and Parananema. Some Amerindian villages (Tindiquera, Atibagy and Abapany) were transformed into reducciones, while others were built from scratch. However, the controversial Jesuit plan came to naught when, because of continuous ransacking by the slavemongers from São Paulo, the Jesuits Montoya, Dias Tafo and Simón Maceta transferred thousands of Amerindians to Rio Grande do Sul and Uruguay regions (1629), while other 12,000 were enslaved by the Paulistas and taken to São Paulo (1631). Although the western part of Paraná became almost forgotten or not commercially interesting since the 1640s, the conflict between Paulistas and Spaniards in the region actually halted the Spanish occupation of Paraná and guaranteed Portuguese sovereignty. The region was eventually included in the Treaty of Madrid (1750) which established Portugal's dominion over the present state of Paraná.

However, the revoking of the Treaty and the subsequent Spanish-Portuguese war (1761-1777) put Portugal on the offensive to ward off re-occupation of territory in southern Brazil. Portugal's concern was well founded. In fact, the Spaniards had already occupied the Sacramento colony in Uruguay, Rio Grande do Sul and the island of Santa Catarina in Brazil. The Marquis of Pombal appointed Luiz Antonio de Souza Botelho Mourão...
The displacement of the Amerindian tribes and their involved the occupation of land by white people and Amerindians. Occupation of the land and the colonization of the people, the Portuguese government's policy was the last quarter of the 18th century up to the end of the central and western region of Paraná from the cultural uprooting. This was the order of the day for serra de Apucarana range (Apucarana) countryside with its numerous tribes of Amerindians. Luiz Antonio’s description of the hinterland is extremely elucidating and at the same time baffling.

The great hinterland, known as the Tibagi backlands by the Paulistas, due to the fact that they lie beyond this river, whose source is close to Registro of Curitiba, is a vast area ranging from the south to the north. It has always been unknown territory, albeit famous for its wealth which some Paulistas of old have seen with their very eyes during such occasions on which, while persecuting the Indians to hold them unto slavery, they discovered important things of which they couldn’t take benefit, leaving behind them only faithfull maps so that their descendents could find the richness therefrom (in Balhana et al., 1969, p. 72).

Although the myth of the Apucarana mountain range (serra de Apucarana) with its fabulous wealth (grandes haveres) fired the imagination of many people, the Portuguese government’s policy was the occupation of the land and the colonization of the Amerindians.

The sole means to achieve the aim [and obtain this wealth] is to advance towards the backlands and found towns and hamlets every ten leagues at the most; to gather in one place and to civilize all the Amerindians ... Towards these same places all nomad and unoccupied people, dispersed throughout the hinterland, should be also directed. They would form hamlets and towns with magistrates, aldermen and town halls (in Balhana et al., 1969, p. 73).

The Europeanization policy of the backlands involved the occupation of land by white people and the displacement of the Amerindian tribes and their cultural uprooting. This was the order of the day for the central and western region of Paraná from the last quarter of the 18th century up to the end of the 19th, in spite of the momentous political events of Brazil’s Independence in 1822 and the Province’s Emancipation in 1853. The important Botelho’s expedition (1771-1772) should be placed within this Eurocentric context of conquest and occupation, even though it was a military failure. The heroic deeds of the Kaingangs retarded the European occupation of the Korã-bang-rê for almost half a century (Mota, 1994).

In 1809 the region was once more subjected to a mission of conquest. The order was given by the exiled Portuguese Prince Regent, later John VI, through a Royal Charter:

[In the vast land of the Campos Gerais and Guarapuava] the Amerindians called bugres have cruelly murdered all the farmers and landowners who had obtained land and cultivated it for the benefit of the nation. Matters came to such a head that in all the land west of the royal road the farms are being depopulated, either because the Amerindians have murdered the inhabitants, or through fear that the same would happen to them. Even the road is in disuse except for well-armed travelers traveling in groups. ... These and other just motives convince me that it is now high time to suspend the humanitarian measures through which I have sought to deal with them [the bugres and the botocudos]. Therefore order you that as from the moment you receive this Royal Charter you should immediately know that the war against these barbarian Amerindians has started ... You should arm yourselves and organize a small army to persecute the Amerindians who are infesting my territory. I declare that every soldier or inhabitant who imprisons any of these Amerindians may keep them for fifteen years as prisoners of war and may give them hard labor as he deems necessary (in Macedo, 1951, p. 95).

The colonial Prince Regent finally authorized the governor of the Province of São Paulo to give title of property within this vast area to white people according to their capacity to colonize the land.

The expedition was headed by Diogo Pinto de Azevedo Portugal with more than 200 men and maintained warfare from 1809 to 1819. A detailed report was prepared by Fr. Francisco das Chagas Lima in 1827. Skirmishes with the Amerindians occurred: the imprisoned Amerindians were given to the wealthiest inhabitants and their land divided into plots for the cultivation of grain and raising of cattle (Macedo, 1951). Although waging inferior weapons and unused to systematic warfare, the Kaingangs showed great and varied resistance to the invaders (Mota, 1994). The beneficiaries of this war against the Kaingangs were great landowners who acquired vast areas for cattle raising. Fr. Francisco writes that the great fazendeiros took "their numerous animals" to the newly acquired ranches but they themselves continued to live in Curitiba and its neighborhood. They used to spend some two months on the ranches to supervise their cattle on their vast area "on which they refused to do anything more than building houses and enclosures for confining livestock, or preparing the land for
planting” (in Balhana et al., 1969). In the meantime, the Kaingangs were “civilized” through the religious instruction given to them by priests and friars. Reports of 1836 register the consolidation of landowners on “their” property, the great wealth of the towns nearby (Guarapuava in particular) and the total occupation of land. “There was room neither for extending the existing fazendas nor for more fazendas” (Bandeira, 1937).

However, in 1840s the need for more land and a western commercial route from the Paraná southward towards Rio Grande do Sul became the most recent claim of the great landowners. Since the Kaingangs were an obstacle to the appropriation of land by the capitalist society of the period, information on the whole southern region of Paraná was biased. “[The land] was entirely unknown and exclusively inhabited since time immemorial by many hordes of savages, from where they organize skirmishes at different points in the forest trails, attacking, killing and robbing horse drivers. Their numbers actually reached the mark of many hundreds. Although committed to halting these disasters, the government is at present incapable of doing so”, wrote Pinto Bandeira (1937) in 1851. In 1844 the provincial government of Paraná ordered Francisco Ferreira Rocha Loures to explore commercially the route leading to Rio Grande do Sul and open forest land for agriculture and cattle raising in the extreme southern part of Paraná. By the 1850s the whole Guarapuava and Palmas area was under effective control of the government. The deculturized Kaingangs, excluded from their own lands, were forced, not without great resistance, to give up their land for cattle raising. Since cattle raising became the main commercial activity of the region, the white populations fixed themselves in ranches and towns and introduced slavery as the common labor system.

A note on the official policy with regard to Amerindians is appropriate at this stage. During the colonial period (1500-1822) the Portuguese kings issued highly ambiguous documents on Brazilian natives. Doubtlessly the policy was downright occupation of Amerindian land and the enslaving of natives captured in a “just war”. Needless to say, the face-saving formal prohibition clauses on slavery and maltreatment were always included, especially owing to Jesuit influence. Although the 1758 regimen issued by Pombal declared Brazilian Amerindians free of religious tutelage, a reverse policy occurred in 1808 and 1809 when the Portuguese government, exiled in Brazil, declared war on the Botocudos in Minas Gerais and in São Paulo (which included Paraná), permitting the enslavement of Amerindians for a period of 15 years.

In 1831 the above laws were revoked and henceforth Brazilian Amerindians were treated as minors. The government delegated the civilizing and catechetical job to European capuchin friars invited to Brazil in 1843 for this specific purpose. The policy of wholly integrating the natives (incorporating them in towns, teaching them a profession, giving them jobs, instructing them in religious matters) was made official in 1845. The Land Act of 1850 was particularly harmful to natives. Indian land was declared private property. Uninformed and in the dark as how to ensure their rights on their own land and played down by the greed of white landowners, the natives practically lost all their ancestral property.

Other, other and othering

In existential philosophy, especially in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness, the term other establishes and reveals the relationship between the Self and the Other in the context of identity and self-awareness. In post-colonial theory the term concentrates on subjectivity as analyzed by post-Freudian discourse. In this context the distinction between the Other and the other is of paramount importance. According to Lacan’s theory, when a child (other) looks in the mirror, it becomes aware of the other who resembles itself; at the same time, the child knows that the image is a separate being. In other words, the child recognizes itself in the mirror but knows that the image is separate from the self. This self-consciousness is the basis of the construction of the ego since the image helps in the identification of the subject.

The colonized subject is the other. The others are marginalized by the colonizer’s discourse and they are identified by their difference from the center. From the colonizer’s point of view, “difference in nature but equivalence in value” is impossible (Todorov, 1991, p. 73), due to the fact that the colonizing ego will always try to master the other.

The Other is Lacan’s Symbolic Other in whose gaze the subject gains identity. The Symbolic Other may be represented by anyone with authority. The Symbolic Other may be the father when the subject enters the symbolic order and receives empowerment; the Symbolic Other may be the mother when the subject considers her as the locus of desire. The Other is important for the subject because the subject desires to exist (and in fact exists) in its gaze.
The Other is the imperial center through its discourse. This occurs in two ways: (1) the Other gives the terms of reference with which the colonized subject identifies itself: the colonized subject starts to perceive that s/he is a dependent being; (2) the Other becomes the only standard by which the colonized standard understands the world. There is no balanced reciprocity between the two, as envisaged by Sartre. In post-colonial societies the colonized subject is locked into a fixed hierarchy by the presumed superiority of the colonizer from which no escape is possible.

Links are so deep that for many colonized subjects the metropolis is considered “the mother country” and their “home”. Further, the initiation and competence of the colonized subject in the language of the colonizer introduce him/her in the Symbolic Order and the discovery of the Law of the Father. Needless to say, both operations happen at the same time, or rather, the colonizing Other builds itself in the same process by which the colonial other comes into existence (Ashcroft et al., 1998).

The term othering was introduced in post-colonial studies by Spivak (1985), who defines it as the process by which imperial discourse creates the colonized subjects. Since the colonized subject is the excluded and mastered other, produced by colonial discourse, the othering process reveals how the colonizer fabricates the colonial subjects. The process may involve four methods. Worlding involves the projection of colonial space into the Eurocentric worldview, as when metropolitan travelers, officers or administrators send information on newly-discovered land, or when the colonizers survey the geography of the land under the eyes of the astonished natives. In these cases the colonizer represents Europe as the Other, which will be a constant referential term to the colonized subject thenceforth. Debasement involves degradation of natives and their culture with the concomitant assertion of the colonizer’s superior stance in civilization, culture and religion. Differentiation involves “we” and “they”, as in Kipling’s The Ballad of East and West:

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgement.

It is the fictitious and assumed superiority of colonizers and their allies that stereotype the “hordes” of uncivilized natives, homogenize them as “they” or “the others” and textualize their European history as the true one. Lastly, fabricating opposition involves the creation of the enemy who “must” exist even if no scrap of proof is available. Through the establishment of an opposition the metropolis defines itself geographically and racially. The empire, therefore, establishes its subjectivity and defines itself by the very act of excluding and marginalizing the natives.

Ethnographic texts

The text under analysis is the report made by a European official representative of the Portuguese State. It is therefore the voice of the colonizer who describes his first encounter with the Kaingang and Xeklong Amerindians of Paraná, and then develops on their customs, compounds, dress, weapons and instruments for agricultural work, cooking and hunting. It is an ethnographic text by means of which Europeans or metropolitan officials represent to themselves the subjugated others. As Said has argued in Orientalism, the construct of certain regions outside Europe has been developed through the work of travelers, historians, fiction writers, geographers, scientists, and others, whose work formed a system of statements and presuppositions on the place and its people. However, this type of discourse, seemingly dedicated to knowledge, established power relationships. Representations of the colonies made by the West led deterministically towards subordination, while ethnocentric repressive discourse legitimized European control through the establishment of a negative construct. Cunningness, laziness, irrationality and cruelty form this construct, against a positive and morally higher construct of work, dedication, loyalty, unselfishness, progressiveness and other attributes defended and propagated by Western culture. It is the exact point at which the hegemony of Western culture may be found. While this type of discourse legitimated imperialism and Western expansion, it convinced the natives of the legitimacy and universality of European civilization. On the other hand, up to this date, no written autoethnographic text that has been constructed by the Amerindian others as an answer back or as a dialogue with the empire has been found in Paraná from the same period. Although written autoethnographic texts are not extant, alternative enunciations of resistance are inscribed within all the reports, as will be shown below.

Celebration and documentation characterize the ethnographic text which will be interpreted accordingly. The result of an eyewitness, it is celebratory of the “heroic” achievements of daring men who faced terrible difficulties in the wilderness and contacted, against all odds, the “wild savages” of Paraná. The text is also a documentary of Kaingang
and Xeklong life and customs in the central and southern part of Paraná, or rather, the report is built by conventions of representation of European writing which will be taken into account through our analysis.

**Botelho's narrative and Caminha's Letter**

Surprisingly the structure of Botelho’s text is highly similar to that of Pero Vaz de Caminha’s Letter to King Manuel in 1500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caminha’s Letter</th>
<th>Botelho’s Narrative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detailed sounding of the sea depth by Portuguese sailors to find a proper harbor;</td>
<td>Detailed measurements of land covered by Portuguese and Brazilian colonizers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place christened Terra de Vera Cruz</td>
<td>Place christened Santa-Cruz;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sightings of Amerindians;</td>
<td>No signs of Amerindians;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with and description of Amerindians; sign language used;</td>
<td>First Xoklengs: a man with 5 children; flight of Indians;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakedness of natives;</td>
<td>Almost naked Indians;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange of gifts;</td>
<td>Signs of peace from colonizers; giving of gifts and trifles; exchange of gifts and weapons; satisfaction of adults;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naked native women;</td>
<td>Almost-naked women;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A native with head dress;</td>
<td>Man with stick, interpreted as sign of authority;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass; banners, raising of cross;</td>
<td>Great wooden cross is raised;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of natives in religious ceremony; Sign language; Xokleng promises to bring his companions, their women and children;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dances and flute songs by Portuguese; Festivities with one colonizer playing the guitar;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natives thought to be bestial and ignorant people; More Xoklengs arrive, including women and children;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of huts; Description of huts, utensils, agricultural produce;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natives thought to be without any religion; No mention is made of religion or any belief;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of domestic animals;</td>
<td>Fear of dogs and horses;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass by Fr Henrique de Coimbra; Celebration of Mass by Fr. José de Santa Thereza de Jesus, and other religious festivities;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The most important mission: to preach the gospel to the natives; The reduction of the pagans and their acceptance into the folds of the church;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good agricultural land; water Future perspectives such as productivity of land, ranches for cattle-raising, foundation of towns, finding of gold;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey continued; Allurement of Portuguese and Brazilians by the natives; attack by natives; Botelho’s retreat and return to Curitiba;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information is sent to King Manuel on the discovery of land on May 1500; Information on the adventure during late 1771 and early 1772 sent to superiors;</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is a well-known fact that the 1500 *Letter* was discovered in the Torre do Tombo of Lisbon in 1773 by chief librarian José de Seabra da Silva and appeared for the first time in *Corografia brasílica, ou relação históricogeográfica do Reino do Brasil*, published by Manuel Aires de Casal in Rio de Janeiro in 1817 (Dias, 1968; Pereira, 1999). Since Botelho’s report antecedes the discovery of Caminha’s letter by only two years, it must be surmised that there was no influence of one document on the other. Even though some differences may be seen, the stark similarities are due not merely to a stereotyped colonial writing but to the ideology inherent to colonial structures (Bonnici, 2000). First, religion has always been a pretext for and a companion of the colonizers. As late as 1958 the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe was still developing the same idea in *Things Fall Apart*. Second, the system of bartering with and degrading of the natives underlies all colonial texts, especially from the 16th century onwards. The colonial meeting with Hottentots mentioned in the fifth Canto of Camões’s *Os lusíadas* is emblematic. Third, the implantation of Christian and thus European symbols on native soil shows the “right” of the colonizers in occupying “empty space” (Smith, 1988). Lastly, overt or covert resistance is a constant element. Invaded people perceived that the white man’s desire was the occupation of land and the colonizing of their sacred spaces. By diverse means they fought the European and his collaborators as a means of maintaining the subjectification of their collective ideology.

**Worlding: putting the Paraná hinterland on the map**

“I arrived at these sprawling fields of Guarapuava on Saint Barbara’s day, 4th December, at three o’clock in the afternoon. As you may follow from the map annexed, I covered 30 leagues of the backlands, which is thick forest. The days were uneventful which made recording of them useless... I passed a few uncomfortable nights, sleeping on the ground and dining on cold water, and experienced other inconveniences. Since I saw these happy fields I have forgotten all the nuisances, especially as the domains of your majesty have been increased through these extensive grounds and this sprawling hinterland”. This is how Botelho begins his narrative. He goes on to describe the exploration of the land, its produce and its high productivity in the future. Since all Portuguese and Brazilians present in the occupation of the land stroll around the countryside, put up camp, cross the rivers and plan to build a stockade (fortaleza), the text seems to give us a glimpse of the pleasure of the male gaze on the female earth. Botelho’s men seem to be delighted in walking around, seeing and touching the “land”. The penetration of the forest is done without any qualms of conscience; rather, there is a kind of revelry and festivity in the air. Needless to say, the limelight on this “sexual imagery” is relieved by the amusement and frolic of a religious festive day in...
which all participate. The celebration of the violation of the land is undertaken with fireworks, lighting of torches, songs, entertainment and cheerfulness.

Ambiguity characterizes such violation of the land. Something has been achieved; yet something is still being expected. In spite of the conviction of superiority in the colonizers’ attitudes in surveying the newly found land, it seems that a pervasive “fear” is present. In fact there is a lurking motif throughout the narrative: the feeling that the unseen natives are constantly watching them. The text merely mentions the expectations of the colonizers: “I sent lieutenant Francisco Lopes Cascaes to discover the lodging of the Indians, since we haven’t yet perceived any sign of them ... They went to have a look at the river and sent word that there was no sign of the natives” (Sallas, 2001, p. 30). Lack of completion of desire and, therefore, the presence of frustration for not being able to put the discovered land within the influence of the metropolis, brings a kind of despondency in the process of impregnation. The violation of the land is not complete unless the natives are found, subdued and have undergone “civilization”. On the other hand, the subjectivity of the colonizers is constructed only when the land/Indian complex could be thoroughly within their control. It is only thus that the colonizer can practice worlding and put the central-southern region of Paraná on the map. The constant reference to incomplete maps, indecision where to build the stockade [não posso no mappa ... assignalar o logar da fortaleza], defective knowledge of the land [por enquanto não alcanço verdadeiro conhecimento dos campos] and the impossibility of placing sites covered by the expedition indicates that Paraná “hath yet her maidenhead”, as Raleigh would have written.

Nevertheless, signs of penetration and their phallic symbolism of conquest and success are everywhere: the presence of dozens of well-armed colonizers, the raising of the flag (a religious-political ensign with the Portuguese arms on one side and the image of Our Lady of the Victory on the other), the building of the stockade, the raising of the cross (por signal da lei de Nosso Senhor Jesus Christo n’estes sertões), and the christening of trails, harbors and rivers foreground the incoming victory. This may be corroborated by Kaingang and Xokleng “samples”, better still, trophies, such as a stick and a set of bows and arrows that Botelho sends to the governor and ultimately to the Portuguese king. The samples smack of anticipated victory and complete dominion of land and its peoples. Presumably these trophies will be exhibited in the metropolis and “civilized” people will be informed of the existence, customs and submission of the Kaingang and Xokleng tribes.

The colonial discourse seems to form a polarity between modernity and the traditional. Modernity becomes synonymous with the rise of Eurocentrism and European dominance. It means conquest, or rather “the imperial regulation of land, the discipline of the soul and the creation of truth” (Turner, 1990, p. 4), whereas the non-European is qualified as obsolete, stationary and pre-historical. Thus the European modern state starts its domination over the Eastern and Southern regions of the world through exploration and colonization. In our case, the Portuguese expedition forms part of a highly sophisticated process in the construction of itself as a modern state vis-à-vis the archaic Amerindian community. When it places Paraná natives in the world’s cartography and ethnology, it does so by qualifying them as retrograde and, at the same time, by denominating itself as modern.

This may be confirmed by the expedition’s mission: the foundation of colonies for the agricultural cultivation of the region. The term colony, already implying cultivating and making the area productive, constitutes a powerful discursive strategy of imperialism. Many years later, in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt defined this claim: “It is our duty toward the people living in barbarism to see that they are freed from their chains ... It is the duty [of a civilized power] to put down savagery and barbarism” (apud Ashcroft, 2001, p. 212). In fact, through colonialism and cultivation Western colonial powers constructed world reality.

Worlding: degradation

Even though more than 270 years had passed since the first Portuguese landed in faraway Bahia, Botelho’s report of first encounter with the Kaingangs is extremely similar. Successive and increasingly important signs of the natives were found everywhere: the trail, huts of various sizes, utensils and victuals, and finally a man with five children collecting the fruits of the pine tree. The first contact, occurring on the 16th December 1771, was made with sign language and the giving of trifles by the colonizers. On the next days more Kaingangs appeared and the mutual exchange of gifts occurred: the Kaingangs offered food and weapons; the Portuguese gave them clothes and knives. The Kaingangs returned with their women and children, totally 70 people, on Sunday, the 22nd December, and were received with joy by the Portuguese and Brazilians. Since the Kaingangs failed to appear on
Christmas Day, the colonizers became more suspicious and detected signs of being watched and stalked. Reconnoitering till the 8th of January 1772 was undertaken and the colonizers were surprised by big huts, large quantity of food and great number of Kaingangs. In fact, the place they intended to conquer for the metropolis was teeming with people. Botelho then narrates what he considered an act of treason by the Kaingangs: eight adventurers were allured to a secluded spot and attacked. Only captain Carneiro escaped and informed the other colonizers. On the 11th January Botelho decided to strike camp, beat a retreat and return to Curitiba.

Even though the Portuguese colonizer is writing to his countryman, with both men sharing identical colonial ideology, the second and third parts of Botelho’s report on colonial encounters are only apparently different. In fact there is a continuum between the Kaingangs’ and Xoklengs’ cultural diversity described in the second part by the Portuguese colonizer and the downright othering in the third part. The disguised ingenuousness is discarded and the colonizer’s true racial convictions and Eurocentric superiority are evinced. In the second part of the report the Xokleng is described as a man with a family, a collector of pine nuts, naked, with an anatomically perfect body, peculiar hair dressing and beards, stealthy walk, speaking a different tongue, friendly, obedient (mansos), trustworthy, happy in giving presents and easily satisfied with those received. Since cultural difference is not accepted, the explorers immediately impose their “superior” stance on the Amerindians in three instances: nakedness, hair and beard style, language. Intolerance towards nakedness, coupled with a compulsion to cover the “uncivilized”; the strange questions about the natives’ different hair and beard styles; the description of the language, “so barbarian that it was completely different from the general indigenous language”, indicate a hierarchizing of the two subjects. There is no way in which the two subjects speak on the same level: the Kaingangs are othered and placed on a lower scale. Even if at this stage degradation of the native is incomplete, there is a simultaneous and opposite movement in which European culture and attributes are highlighted. The European colonizers are described as unselfish, organized, polite and cultured. For instance, the reader is constantly reminded that the colonizers go to the extreme of standing in their underwear (só com as ceroulas) so that the Kaingangs could be covered. Thus the othering of the Amerindian and the corresponding attributes of the Europeans should be seen within the overall ideology of hegemony. “We gave thanks to God for these first tidings on the reduction of these Indians ... and we were full of happiness due to the hope of gathering in the Christian community this indispensable fold” (Sallas, 2001, p. 43). The choice of these words shows equivalence between God and the metropolis, between divine benevolence and the benefits of colonialism, between humane/malleable and reduction/submittal. The apparently innocuous comment is rife with a degrading ideology and the concomitant leitmotif of conquest and dominion.

The colonizers’ real image of the native of the Paraná emerges in an unequivocal way in the third part of the report, fraught with disparaging attributes. The Kaingangs are treacherous, ferocious, barbarians, wary, thieves, ungrateful, alluring, cruel, perfidious, full of wickedness (damnado coração) and barbarian tyranny in their hearts (tirannia barbara de seus corações). How could Botelho confess surprise by the Kaingangs’ treachery, if he clearly manifests the Portuguese intention of dominating them and depriving them of their land and pasture? When he writes that “the expeditions were intended to conquer the indomitable natives” and to “keep the barbarians in the hinterlands obedient”, he acknowledges a priori the colonizers’ hegemony and hierarchizing system. When he states that the defense of the country demands the establishment of rich settler communities (opulentissimas povoações) around many ranches and farms, he acknowledges that Indian property will be taken from them and the land distributed to European settlers.

The problem with Botelho’s text is that it is rife with ambiguities that manifest the contradictory stances of the European metropolitan agent. While he calls the Kaingangs barbarians, he lists a great number of cultural objects used by the natives, praises their workmanship and their forethought in stocking food and gives credit for their tribal organization. Botelho’s analysis proves him contrary to what he said about their lack of “civilization”. Further, while he tries to insist on the treachery and the ingratitude of the Kaingangs, the colonizers use perfidious methods in maintaining control of the whole situation: armed guards, ready to open fire (cada um com sua peça de artilharia prompta para dar fogo) are placed at vantage points and a series of lies...
against the Amerindians are forwarded to warrant the colonizers’ resistance against them. The natives are accused of stealing horses and poisoning the maize cakes, while the colonizers profess their own simplicity and ingenuousness (pereceríamos todos confiados na imaginada simplicidade que nos mostravam aquellas feras) in colonial encounters. If anyone should be accused of treachery, it has to be Botelho’s group. The whole pacification paraphernalia with all its apparent unselﬁshness and condescension was a concocted setup for the complete submission of the natives and the total invasion of their land.

**Worlding: “we” and “they” as racial conﬂict**

Botelho’s text is extremely conscious of the colonizers as a group of people, at the service of the metropolitan government, with a dual and complementary mission: total submission of the natives and invasion of the vast region for the agricultural utilization of their land by European settlers. The constant use of the ﬁrst person singular and plural reveals the author’s awareness of an ideological coherence behind the panoptic subjects who arrive at a certain place, reputably belonging to others, observe events and signs of these “invisible” people, treat them as minors and expect gratitude for giving them the gift of “civilization” as an exchange for their land. The contrast between the “civilized we” and the “barbarian they” is foregrounded on race. The Eurocentric colonizers, Portuguese and Brazilians, are aware of their origins and superiority. This has been revealed by competitions with weapons (rifles versus arrows), religion (totally organized cult versus a blank on religious practice) and clothing (nakedness versus outfits). In fact, these are the elements that distinguish the two races. The efforts of captains Lourenço Ribeiro and José dos Santos to teach the natives the “Our Father” and the Portuguese language are a metonymy of racial difference, hierarchized in favor of the white people. The invasion and occupation of Indian land in Paraná does not merely entail an expanding capitalism, but hails in a special way from a deep racial ideology and a priori superiority, with the concomitant degradation of the native to enforce the distinction.

The question of race underlies the representation of the Kaingangs in Paraná given by Botelho. In post-colonial theory, when an ethnographic representation is transmitted to the European world, the question of “truth” is always involved. Said (1990) says that all representations are misrepresentations. Since a representation is a process by which ideological concepts are given concrete forms, the identiﬁcation of representation and truth is actually questionable. Paradoxically Western culture has always taken great pains to transmit a “true” image of the other. In its turn, this image has consistently been proved to be untruthful. This is the reason why representations of Central and South American natives, their land and its potentialities that Europeans received in the 16th century were homogenizing and stereotyped. Their untruthfulness, or their truthfulness under disguise, served Europe’s own end of conquest and invasion (Raminelli, 1996).

The function of ethnography practiced by Europeans in their wanderings around the world was to control representation, to furnish a voice that would satisfy Eurocentric expectations of expansion. This boils down to a selling of the truth in the very act of representation: certain secrets are withheld, cultural difference is installed, less-than-heroic features of the natives are overplayed, experience of the colonizers’ oppression is sublimed as heroic and considered an advance in civilizing the native. These items question the “truth” of the historical narrative and warrant its contamination by rhetoric and ideology. The racial question, reduced to the “we” and “they” polarity, establishes a detailed “truthful” text that justiﬁes the occupation of the land and the complete othering of the natives. Botelho’s text may serve as an example of a contaminated piece of information to suit the expansionist and imperialist predilections of the metropolis.

**Resistance**

“The conquest of Kaingang territory occurred in the midst of a constant reaction of the natives against the towns that were built on their land, against the farms established in their country, against travelers, mule drivers, businessmen and adventurers that crisscrossed their forests and grasslands, against the National and Provincial wardens that roamed the countryside and against collaborationist tribes that constantly indicated their whereabouts and persecuted them. These attacks were drawn throughout the 18th and 19th centuries in all invaded territories” (Mota, 1994, p. 93). The author then enumerates the various types of resistance, especially guerrilla warfare, which the Xeklong and Kaingang Indians waged against the white invaders.

Ethnographic texts written by Europeans, especially those hired by the metropolis, will always downplay the importance and magnitude of native resistance. Botelho’s text is in part an exception. It should be noted that the Portuguese commander is certain that some kind of resistance would be
inevitable. In the first part of his report he already mentions a stockade “built with the utmost care to defend ourselves from [the attacks of] the natives” (Sallas, 2001, p. 29). Since he knows that his troops are on the natives’ grounds and recalls “cruel deeds done against them by people some 50 years ago” (pelas tiranissimas ações, que com elles praticaram os antigos, há pouco mais de 50 anos), there is an awareness that the Xoklengs and Kaingangs are preparing an attack.

Paradoxically the text reveals that the natives were absolutely certain as to the chief aims of the Portuguese expedition. Resistance against the invaders was prepared on three fronts: silence, sly civility and attack. From the Amerindians’ vantage point there were abundant signs (chiefly the establishment of a stockade, heavy-armed men, the cross, the celebration of religious rites, the banners) strongly indicating that downright conquest and violation of rights of native land were due to occur under their own eyes. The first strategy was silence. Botelho writes successively about an Indian trail, the finding of abandoned huts, signs of intensive agricultural life, without any trace of the Kaingangs. Forced to go inland, into the huts, villages and forest, was not merely a means by which the invaders were allured into a terrain familiar to Amerindians and dangerous to Europeans. It was a symbol for the understanding of a different people who had the right not to be robbed of their land which gave them food and was the final resting ground of their ancestors. Although covering Indian land and fidgeting Xokleng belongings was a silent revelation to the Portuguese who put their noses into everything they found, their conquest ideology and expansionism were unbound. The revelation that the Amerindians had a right to the ancestral land and a culture, albeit different, went unheeded.

As has been discussed above, the encounter between the Kaingangs and the Europeans was a typical colonial one. The invaders, however, didn’t perceive the strategy of sly civility used by the natives. Although the Portuguese took great pains in alluring the natives with their trifles, in exhibiting powerfulness with their weapons, in proving their “superior” culture and organization, it seems that the seduction strategy was really practiced by the natives. The natives knew the aims of the Europeans and that nothing would deter them. They thus entertained the invaders (accepting their gifts and being friendly) and diverted their attention (promising to bring their women and children) so that through sheer numbers the Portuguese would be defeated and forced to quit their land and pasture. The subjectivity of the Indian emerges with all its force from the invader Botelho’s text. Through mimicry and by doing what the invaders expected them to do, they led the Portuguese to “safe and comfortable” attitudes propitious for their being vanquished.

Fanon (1990) places resistance and violence within the context of decolonization. “The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world ... will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters” (Fanon, 1990, p. 31). Subjectivity attains maturity when the dehumanized native attacks the European invader. While the Portuguese had no rational basis to rob the natives of their land and “civilize” them, except an expansionist and capitalist ideology, the Kaingang Indian had every reason to resist Botelho’s expedition. The fact that the Portuguese lieutenant claimed rights to convert the Indians and westernize their culture without any qualms of conscience about cultural differences and objectification problems, is sufficient reason for resistance and reaction. Never has a statement been so true as when Fanon comments on the Christian religion. “The Church in the colonies is the white people’s Church, the foreigner’s Church. She does not call the native to God’s ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor” (Fanon, 1990, p. 32). Actually the conversion of the natives was a pretext so that the transference of land property and colonization would be made easier for the Portuguese. In the religious context the Amerindians showed no mimicry but downright opposition. No Kaingangs were present at the Masses celebrated on their grounds and the teaching of catechism had no results.

The Kaingangs’ attack on the Portuguese and Brazilian expedition was first and foremost their prime resistance against colonization and its consequences. It was their high moment of subjectification. Even if no casualties had been reported (actually, seven invaders were killed), the fact that Botelho decided to beat a retreat and, at least for the next forty years, the Portuguese refrained from further penetrating the land and colonizing the natives, shows the deep ambiguities of colonial ideology. The weakness of the metropolis’s colonizing position may also be seen from the justifications Botelho forwards in the third report: negatively, the lack of prudence of the fallen invaders and, positively, the divine protection by which most of the invaders were saved from death. Once more, Botelho’s text reveals that the deity and
religion are synonymous with the colonizers and the oppressors who, presumptuously, take it for granted that God was on their side.

Decolonizing the mind

The amount of documentary texts and literature extant in Brazil revealing European policies and strategies is staggering. Few however have been used by post-colonial studies to analyze the othering processes of native Amerindians. Even literary texts have been scantily reread from the post-colonial viewpoint so that (mis)representations could be compared and contrasted in the wake of new findings in post-colonial literature. It is notorious that as from the 16th colonial encounters between Europeans and natives, cultural disasters and tragedies have always been a constant leitmotif with terrible havoc for the latter. Since the homogenizing and hierarchization processes have always informed all white people who ventured into the newly discovered lands, it seems that the passage of time altered neither their ideology nor their strategies. From the first Letter of Colombus, through Raleigh’s Discoverie of Guiana, to Swift’s epilogue of Gulliver’s Travels with its scathing description of European methods of colonization, the potentialities of the land were immediately perceived by the European powers which proceeded on its conquest, occupation and utilization for the benefit of the metropolis. In some colonies, such as the Caribbean islands, the native was thoroughly exterminated, while in others high population decrease occurred. Native culture and language had the same fate.

However, the novelty of reinterpreting these texts is not merely to reinforce presuppositions of already known facts. Post-colonial rereading of ancient texts will favor the emergence of the variegated resistance of the Amerindian. Rarely do we find in South and Central America an autoethnographic text (the find of Guaman Poma’s New Chronicle confirms the rule) to give voice to the othered native. Rather, the abundance of muted and silenced Amerindians is simply overwhelming. Nevertheless, due to the very ambiguity of the European colonial text with its deep contradictions, voices and deeds of resistance can be heard. It was what we have heard from the white colonizer Botelho and his Eurocentric text. The sensitive critic or reader needs merely a decolonization of the mind to hear the numberless forms of “stream, without breath, without interruption” (Coetzee, 1987, p. 157) oozing from the text. Against Zeus’ cry “Conquer the world ... It will be yours for ever” in Schiller’s Die Teilung der Erde, there is always Caliban’s answer “I know how to curse”.

References


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