

43 - EPISTEMIC RACISM AGAINST THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN CHILD IN THE SCHOOLING PROCESSES OF BRAZIL

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- The meaning of the birth of the Banto / Sudanese child in pre-colonial African culture

To better understand what we are talking about when it comes to the ethnic birth of the Afro-Brazilian child, we must first understand the meaning of this birth in Africa, or how the ontologies of cultures brought by slaves to Brazil represent this human being permanently integrated with vital forces of both the their spirituality. In another exercise, to understand also how the sacred African matrices [religious narratives and practices reminiscent of the advent of the diaspora and that have come to give rise to our afroreligiosidade], remain as place of preservation of those ontologies of African cultures.

What we are interested in, the Umbandas and Candomblés expressions - both generated in an originally Brazilian hybridism - show traces of ritual homogeneity or origin and visions of the common world, caudate of the different religions brought and assimilated by the enslaved. Cunha Jr (2009) presents the following elements, present in both the Bantu and Sudanese cosmogonies, as well as in the constructions of these expressions referred to and practiced today in Brazil:

- Worship of nature and ancestors, under a pantheon of magical deities linked / represented / resignified and related to man and the forces of nature;
- The direct and permanent relationship between the world of the living, the immediate reality and the supernatural world, where the ancestors live, guarded by the cosmogonic deities;
- The primordial energy of the vital principle that governs all living beings, in the reference of the bantos, or axé - in the reference of the Yorubá culture, both with a great contribution in the sociocultural formation of Brazil;
- The need, in ritualistic practice, to keep in balance with nature for attainment of prosperity and happiness;
- The phenomenon of trance and spiritual possession as a practice of reverence and direct communication with the ancestors;
- The various forms of plastic representation, such as music and ritualistic dances, sacred foods, arts, just to name a few of these forms.

From these principles, it can be inferred that religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda do not work in the questions of salvation for another life, but on earthly problems, the happiness of beings and the preservation of the forces of nature in this world. They would be earthly religions in this sense, concerned with the connection between the past, present and future of the beings of nature on earth, in an interpretation of life that implies "circularities as representations of succeeding generations" (CUNHA Jr., 2009: 100-102). We will see that this "circularity" refers to the lineage of each individual within the chain of ancestry, where descent [renewed life] is one of the most important "vital forces".

To understand values, symbols, signs and other Brazilian religious representations inherited from these cosmogonies, we try to find their roots in the African territory. But, mainly, from the weltanschauung of this African.

- The world view of the African brought in the diaspora

In the infinity of peoples, kingdoms and empires scattered throughout pre-colonial Africa, we find a rich agricultural and livestock production, with exploitation of mining and metallurgy, sophisticated handicrafts and diversified small offices, all in a complex system of trade and merchandise negotiations, occupying all the fertile or cultivable extent. With its own currency and commanding international freight traffic networks, negotiating with the peoples of the Mediterranean, the Arabian peninsula, China and India, among other economies.

There are records of travelers' narratives, Portuguese Christian missionaries and navigators (LOPES, 1988), who describe, in their view, how these Africans interpret the universe, life on earth, coexistence with their deities, ancestry, name primordial, anyway. On the Bantu of Central Africa, of the N'gola Kingdom [Angola]:

As the supreme creator, they believe in N'Gana Zambi, a distant and vague superior god, who seems independent or indifferent between the concepts of Good and Evil: a creator who recognizes, loves and respects himself - but who does not dreads From Zambi neither Good nor Evil comes. It comes the life of beings and the creation of things. He is a somewhat indifferent author to his work. Good and Evil are the work of agents, not always determined, but constantly active (Galvão & Selvagem, apud LOPES, op. Cit.: 122).

This cosmogonic representation is recognized in Afro-Brazilian religious knowledge spread today in Brazil: a supreme creator, who no longer interferes in its creation, therefore, indifferent and independent. Both in the rituals of Umbanda and those of Candomblé, their primordial importance as deity is recognized, but images of this supreme being are not worshiped; they do not sing or dance in their praise, nor do they offer them feasts, sacred foods or any offerings, unlike all other mediating entities which are annually celebrated - the saints or iniquices, orixas and voduns among others - the mediators between the entity human being and the supreme god and also his own spiritual ancestry.

In this cosmogony, there is no conception of a final judgment, or concepts of good and evil, guilt, sin, and other values [as opposed to Judeo-Christian values], since other principles rule the forces on earth between men and nature, as we shall see in another account. However, there are beings or agents, constantly active, in permanent interaction with human beings - these, rather, mediators between man, his real world and the supernatural world. In turn, these are seen by the cited author as responsible for actions of good and evil. Who would these agents be? The orixás, voduns or iniquices, as they came to be called here in Brazil.

To better understand a possible philosophy in this thought or world view, we have recourse to the accounts contained in the book *La Philosophie Bantoue*, by the Belgian missionary Father Placide Tempels (1949, apud LOPES, 1988: 123). It is the most famous account to date of the existence of a philosophy grounded in a dynamic metaphysics, in a universe of vitalism which offers the key to the conception of the world among all the Bantu peoples (Balandier, 1968: 64, cf.).

- The human being is born as a force

Contrary to Western philosophy, which is grounded in the notion of being, here we see the notion of force taking its place, orienting the whole culture with meaning and purpose to increase that force and resist against its loss or diminution. For

this thought, "the ultimate reality of things, also representing their supreme value, is life, the life force" (op cit., 123). This fundamental principle turns every being into force, and this is the key that would give access to the representation of the world. Thus, all beings - spirits of ancestors, living persons, animals and plants - are always understood as a force and not as static entities.

In this conception, the human being is born as a force, which will be revitalized in the experience with the community, with nature and with the ancestral spirits. This view or conception of existence governs the whole domain of human action. For this African man, in any circumstance one must add, add, avoiding to diminish, to subtract. With this same objective, the invocation or evocation of the ancestors aims to increase this vital energy, this force, because in contact with their deceased beings there will be an interaction that results in positive revitalization, both for the ancestor and for the descendant.

The priests, who would also be diviners, know the words that reinforce life and help set the energies of each being in motion. When you are sick, you seek with the remedy to revitalize and strengthen this energy, so that the patient benefits from it and conquer the disease. In many cultures the primordial or essential name holds the key word of this force which it represents and should be invoked whenever the entity is in confrontations as to its health and prosperity.

One of the symbols of this vital energy lies in fertility, both male and female, being the greater representation of the continuity of the people and their culture. Death, on the other hand, is a state of diminishing being - that is why rituals are done to help the dead, so that they can be spiritually revitalized. Ancestry is a factor of survival under the vision of this *weltanschauung*, for to die without leaving descendants means to lose that aid after being killed.

- Birth is marked by the primordial name

Another important aspect of this ontology is the name. According to this foundation, an individual defines himself by his name. Better, he is your name. There are two names by which this individual will be called: a first primordial, or essential, name is that inherited from his ancestral chain, from his preserved lineage, through which he will communicate with his dead and his deities; it is invariably the priest or griot who will "reveal" this name according to the message of the ancestors. In Banto and Sudanese cultures this event occurs on the day of the child's birth.

A second name the individual will receive from their community, in their collective. It may be your tribal name, which keeps your role or function, family or ritual tradition, for example. While the first, primordial name must be kept secret, for its spiritual protection, the second name, tribal, marks its "place" in the collective, attributing to it diverse commitments.

The essential or primordial name is an internalized value, restricted to the parents of the child, which is never lost and differs from the second name, received in a second birth - such as circumcision, or a priestly name, honorific of a political chief [or baptism initiatory, as is practiced today in Brazilian religions of African origin].

This personal, inner name is also indicative of individuality within its ancestral lineage, for, according to this *weltanschauung*, no one is an isolated being. In this interpretation of the universe and of the human being in its existence, every person constitutes a link in the chain of bound vital forces and upholding his ancestry above himself, from whom he has inherited the world and is bound to influence below by his offspring, thus completing their lineage. To lose this ancestral name means to lose oneself of the lineage, to live in erraticity, without the support of those who preceded it. Hence the importance of the name for the majority of the cultures that arrived here brought by the black enslaved.

It is peaceful in the researched literature that a "reencounter" with this lineage occurs in the Brazilian afro-religious tradition practiced in Brazil, as in the Umbandas and Candomblés, when initiated followers take notice of who their orishas, voduns or inquices "of head", those ancestors now closer, who will help them to go through this period of existence. An identity construction is also born of this circumstance, when the adept joins a terreiro or spiritual house, becoming part of this new family of brother in *afroreligiosidade*, regardless of its origin, nationality, phenotypic heritage or any other brand.

The initiation into these cults begins precisely from this information about the bond that binds the adept to his ancestry or lineage [eg, the *eledé*, or "head orixá" of the initiate]. Without it, the priest will not know which entity to evoke in the name of the adept.

If in the cosmogony of these African blacks the human being is a force, how do they relate to the variety of living beings, spirits, deities and deities? There is a complex and logical structure in which a hierarchy demonstrates the importance of using this vital force, or *axé* (Silva Cunha, 1958, cf. LOPES, 1988: 124).

According to this order, all beings, according to their potency, are structured into diverse categories. In a simple summary:

a) In the first place would be the supreme being - or Syandya manwa, for the balubas of Angola and Zambiapongo in the Umbanda or Olorum / Olodumare in the Candomblé Nagô. The supreme being has the force by itself and is at the origin of the whole vital force.

b) Then come the first parents of men, founders of different clans - in reference to the beginnings of man's settlement on the planet - these are the first orixás, inquices or voduns. They are the first intermediaries between men and the supreme being;

c) Then the dead of the tribe come, by order of birthright. These are the links of the chain that transmits the principle or vital form of the first ancestors to the living, as well as this knowledge of the cosmogony - here in Brazil, the *caboclos* of the Umbanda, the Old Blacks of the Cabula, the enchanted ones of the drum of Mina, and orixás of Candomblé Ketu / Nagô etc.;

d) So human beings, individual experience fully integrated with the tribal community; each being is a conscious and active vital force, in search of preservation and prosperity, of spirituality and ancestry, as well as of solidarity and descent;

e) After the human forces, there are the animal, mineral and vegetal forces, also hierarchical according to their vital energy or *axé* - for all religions of African matrix, the relation with nature keeps this principle. Hence the knowledge of remedies, food, forces present in nature, such as rivers, lakes, waterfalls, beaches, mountains, forests, etc.

All beings interact with one another in an existential interdependence. They need to nourish their vital energy and the contact with one another favors this strengthening. In the religions here reaffirmed, this contact is kept in the rituals of purification, spiritual feedback or therapies of preservation of well-being or *axé*. Hence the use of various animate and inanimate elements, such as stones, plants, animals, food.

A strong collective feeling permeates the entire community, with the goal of constant renewal and constant feedback, including through communication between the living and the dead. As a general rule, common sense for these African cultures is that "evil is what harms the other, which threatens the peace and survival of the group" (BALANDIER, apud LOPES: 125).

- The African personality and its transcendence with the real

We already know that the name of this human being marks its intersection or existential point in its tribe and in nature, being the link between its trajectory and its ancestors, which will accompany it in the procreation of its own offspring. From this widely publicized ontology in the academic world, a definite African personality was constructed by African philosophers and sociologists. It would be composed of four elements: the body or body envelope; the biological principle, which are the internal

organs and their systems, symptoms etc.; the principle of life, the vital principle and the spirit itself (TAY, see LOPES: 126).

This personality is situated "in a dynamic psychological field" demarcated by three axes, which intersect:

- A vertical axis, which links the person to the supreme being, his ancestor founder and other invisible beings;
- A horizontal axis referring to the social order, which maintains the person in connection with the cultural community;
- And the axis of existence of the person himself, his historical trajectory [world] and physiological [nature] in permanent interaction with the two other axes.

The African personality would stand exactly in the meeting of these three axes. Thus, the balance of this personality or the mental health of the individual depends on the balance of this psychological universe. For this African man, life is the existence of the community, its participation in the sacred life of the ancestors, when all life is sacred. Life is also an extension of the lives of the ancestors and a preparation for this subject to perpetuate in the lives of their descendants (LOPES, 1988: 126).

Both African teacher Sulayman S. Nyang (1982: 30) and Togolese sociologist Amewusika K. Tay (1984: 13-14) argue that this proposal be placed as the "standard belief" of African peoples. This personality is based on the Bantu conception of blood community, cultural and work community and spiritual / ancestral community.

- Can we talk about Umbanda and Candomblé?

In an illustrative section, we will consider only the two most important social and cultural domains in Brazil: the various designations of Umbanda and Candomblé. Lopes asserted that "if there were any notable differences" between these two conceptions, "it would lie in the importance that the Bantu peoples attribute to ancestry," since, in comparing Bantan and Sudanese cultures, both contributors to our cultural and religious formation, they would act directly interacting permanently with the descendants, intervening even so much to teach as to punish (op cit., 127). But the ancestor is, for both cultures, a permanent communication link with the primordial or creative being and primordial ancestors, often expressed or "animating" the forces of nature.

The basis of this relationship with the ancestors is the worship of these pre-existing personalities. Through worship, the community is balanced with the forces of nature, with its own social and political forces, particular relationships, and so on.

Thus, we can infer that the principle of force or vital energy present in all living beings - the basis of the African cosmogonies referred to here - and which represent the core of the Afro-Brazilian religions - is totally ignored in evaluations about what Religion is, when it is done in an approach guided primarily in the great epic narratives [the Hindu Vedas; the Jewish Torah; the Christian Bibles, the Islamic Koran, etc.], as well as the religious meta-discourses which, from the ancient world, contribute and are preserved in what has been called modernity. In this constructed modernity, the concept of "traditional cultures" was instituted to refer, invariably for the purpose of inferiority, to epistemic cultures, but still remaining.

- Epistemicide and resistance in the formation of the afrodescendant child

Beaten, captured, chained, deported, sold, punished and forced to work against his will. Separated from their families, from their way of life, from their social organization. Forced to deny their religious matrices in the name of other values and gods. Silenced in their sacred knowledge and demonized in their religious practices. Inferiorizado physically and culturally, he begins to live in a society that inscribes him between animal and human. This was how the Afro-descendant was born in the slave-owning period. Their descendants will be condemned to this condition. Here resistance takes place, in the preservation of the religions religions re-signified, guaranteeing the transcendence of the lineage through time. Religion was the great guardian of the first strategies of resistance and preservation of those ancestral values. The lineages "broken" by the systematic separation of the slaves according to their ethnic origins would now be "redone", with a rebirth from an event recreated according to the ancestral traditions - secretly recreated within slavery.

Today, the birth of this Afro-Brazilian is surrounded by impediments and denials and even demonizations with respect to their ancestral origins. Against this confrontation, priests, sorcerers and griots began to adapt the rituals of various traditions in a broad ritual, that contemplated all the deities brought from Africa. Now, being born in the Afro-Brazilian religion is possible, making it also possible to recover the lost lineage in the diaspora.

- Schooling as a permanent epistemic project

If the captivity deconstituted him as a force, now freedom wants to annihilate him as a cultural being originating in Africa. After May 13, the Afrodescendant child is born in a scenario where his culture continues to be denied, his knowledge originating in Africa silenced, his communication with his demonized ancestors. Even with all the resistance registered, his strength was not sufficient to prevent an epistemic of proportions comparable only to the one with the American Indian.

Westernization, through curriculum content - as well as forced Christianization - erased the ancestral memory and now this child is born elsewhere. He is indoctrinated not to recognize his ancestors, since the instruments and practices of schooling still function as an effective means of permanent epistemic.

This school does not recognize its ancestral drums because its ethnic representations are invisibilized, denied, silenced or violently withdrawn from the school space. Their ancestral culture is systematically excluded from school content. The discourses of what is conventionally called "modernity" state that "there is no room for a traditional worldview" like that of the pre-colonial African human being. Ancestry and descent are rights to be proved by a notary public, not a griot.

- The challenges of identity birth

This Afro-Brazilian child is now born without a primordial name, but receives a name of "baptism"; he does not understand the cycle of ancestral lineages, for they gave him a Western name whose meaning has nothing to do with its history; in the midst of Eurocentric devotions, is unaware of his ancestor protector; does not know that before being a social being, it is one of the vital forces of the Earth. The Afrodescendant child is now born into a society in which it is not accepted but denying exactly the values that constitute it as an identity in that society.

Even with the advances and achievements of the black movements, the legal milestones of anti-racist conquests such as the criminalization of racism and the policies of equality and social reparation, beyond the epistemic one perpetrated by the hegemonic culture, are back to explicit racial discrimination and intolerance religious, encouraged by irresponsible leaderships.

In school, which should be a space of intercultural practices, this child will learn very early that there is still no "apparent advantage" in being born afrodescendant. In the media, it will be bombarded by hegemonic common sense, where, when it is not inferiorized, disqualified and silenced, it is offended by the almost total exclusion of its identity image during all programming models. In Culture, he sees the symbols of his African identity being inscribed as folklore, folklore, amusement.

As we already know, place and time predetermine the conditions of the unborn child while defining the marks of that moment. These marks can accompany the individual for a lifetime. It seems that being born black or Afrodescendant in Brazil will still be a misfortune for many, so great is the hegemonic force with which the coloniality still pierces the fate of these born a systemic racism, which runs through the social mechanisms of interaction; but also institutionally, because it is strongly present in the actions and reactions of the social "arms" of the State; and this is given permanently, since the whole of society still contributes directly or indirectly to its maintenance.

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EPISTEMIC RACISM AGAINST THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN CHILD IN THE SCHOOLING PROCESSES OF BRAZIL.

From a historical point of view, we will present aspects of Afro-Brazilians in the perspective of the challenges faced by the traditions regarding the birth of the child in their ethnic belonging.

We deepen an assessment of the sacred African matrices brought to Brazil in the diaspora by agreeing that they translate into our culture the "explanation" of a possible African personality, large-scale tributary of our heritage. This evaluation allowed us to approach the proposed theme while continuing to understand the ontology and thought still preserved in these practices and religious knowledge here in Brazil. We investigate the origins of the meaning of birth, earthly and spiritual life, within an ancestral lineage, as well as the intersections of these aspects in the daily life of human beings, in an interpretation of the religious matrices that most contributed to the formation of an Afro-Brazilian culture, respectively the West African and Central African peoples and the Sudanese peoples of the North West African coast. We emphasize, in the Diaspora, the resistance and strategies of hybridism to guarantee the neglected tradition in the formation of the Brazilian black child. This is the ethnic scenario in which the Afrodescendant child is born in Brazil.

In the processes of schooling, we find the marks and consequences of a permanent epistemic, perpetrated through invisibilization, silencing, denial, demonization and violence.

Key words: ethnic birth - racism - epistemicide.

RACISME ÉPISTEMIQUE CONTRE L'ENFANT AFRO-BRÉSILIEN DANS LES PROCESSUS SCOLAIRES DU BRÉSIL.

D'un point de vue historique, nous présenterons des aspects des Afro-Brésiliens dans la perspective des défis rencontrés par les traditions concernant la naissance de l'enfant dans son appartenance ethnique. Nous approfondissons une évaluation d'origine africaine sacrée apporté au Brésil dans la diaspora, d'avoir accepté qu'ils se traduisent dans notre culture « explication » d'une personnalité possible fiscale africaine, à grande échelle de notre héritage. Cette évaluation nous a permis d'aborder le thème proposé tout en continuant à comprendre l'ontologie et la pensée encore préservées dans ces pratiques et connaissances religieuses ici au Brésil. Enquêter sur les origines de la signification de la naissance, la vie terrestre et spirituelle, au sein d'une lignée ancestrale, ainsi que les intersections de ces aspects de l'être humain la vie quotidienne, une interprétation du siège religieux qui a le plus contribué à la formation d'une culture afro-brésilienne, respectivement peuples bantous d'Afrique occidentale et centrale et le peuple soudanais de la côte nord-ouest de l'Afrique. Nous soulignons, dans la diaspora, la résistance et les stratégies d'hybridation pour garantir la tradition délaissée dans la formation de l'enfant noir brésilien. C'est le scénario ethnique dans lequel l'enfant Afrodescendant est né au Brésil. Dans les processus de scolarisation, on retrouve les marques et les conséquences d'une épistémicide permanente perpétrée par l'invisibilité, le silence, le déni, la diabolisation et la violence.

Mots clés: naissance ethnique - racisme - épistémicide.

RACISMO EPISTÉMICO CONTRA EL NIÑO AFRO-BRASILEÑO EN LOS PROCESOS DE ESCOLARIZACIÓN DE BRASIL.

En una perspectiva histórica, presentaremos aspectos de la afrobrasilidad en la perspectiva de los desafíos enfrentados por las tradiciones en cuanto al nacimiento del niño en su pertenencia étnica. Hemos profundizado una evaluación de las sagradas matrices africanas traídas a Brasil en la diáspora, por concordar que ellas traducen a nuestra cultura la "explicación" de una posible personalidad africana, tributaria a gran escala de nuestra herencia. Esta evaluación permitió que abordáramos el tema propuesto sin dejar de comprender la ontología y el pensamiento aún preservados en esas prácticas y saberes religiosos aquí en Brasil. Investigamos los orígenes del significado del nacimiento, la vida terrenal y espiritual, dentro de un linaje ancestral, así como las intersecciones de estos aspectos en el cotidiano de los entes humanos, en una interpretación de las matrices religiosas que más contribuyeron a la formación de una cultura afrobrasileña, respectivamente, los pueblos bantos de África Occidental y Central y los pueblos sudaneses de la costa noroeste africana.

Resaltamos, en la diáspora, la resistencia y las estrategias de hibridismo para garantizar la tradición negada en la formación del niño negro brasileño. Este es el escenario étnico en que nace el niño afrodescendiente en Brasil. En los procesos de escolarización, encontramos las marcas y consecuencias de un epistemicidio permanente, perpetrado a través de la invisibilización, silenciamiento, negación, demonización y violencia.

Palabras clave: nacimiento étnico - racismo - epistemicidio.

RACISMO EPISTÊMICO CONTRA A CRIANÇA AFROBRASILEIRA NOS PROCESSOS DE ESCOLARIZAÇÃO DO BRASIL.

Numa perspectiva histórica, apresentaremos aspectos da afrobrasilidade na perspectiva dos desafios enfrentados pelas tradições quanto ao nascimento da criança em sua pertença étnica. Aprofundamos uma avaliação das sagradas matrizes africanas trazidas para o Brasil na diáspora, por concordar que elas traduzem para a nossa cultura a “explicação” de uma possível personalidade africana, tributária em grande escala da nossa herança. Esta avaliação permitiu que abordássemos o tema proposto sem deixar de compreender a ontologia e o pensamento ainda preservados nessas práticas e saberes religiosos aqui no Brasil. Investigamos as origens do significado de o nascimento, vida terrena e espiritual, dentro de uma linhagem ancestral, assim como as interseções destes aspectos no cotidiano dos entes humanos, numa interpretação das matrizes religiosas que mais contribuíram para a formação de uma cultura afrobrasileira, respectivamente os povos bantos da África Ocidental e Central e os povos sudaneses da costa noroeste africana. Ressaltamos, na diáspora, a resistência e as estratégias de hibridismo para garantir a tradição negada na formação da criança negra brasileira. Este o cenário étnico em que nasce a criança afrodescendente no Brasil. Nos processos de escolarização, encontramos as marcas e consequências de um epistemicídio permanente, perpetrado através da invisibilização, silenciamento, negação, demonização e violência.

Palavras-chave: nascimento étnico – racismo – epistemicídio.