

POSTCOLONIAL HISTORICAL AMBIGUITIES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL TENSIONS IN PARANÁ, BRAZIL

*Ambigüidades históricas pós-coloniais e  
tensões ambientais no Estado do Paraná, Brasil*

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DISRUPTION AND EXPLOITATION

The great capitalist movement begun by the Portuguese and Spaniards in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, followed by the French, Dutch and English in the next centuries, triggered in its wake the occupation of vast areas and the environmental interference in foreign territories aimed at supplying Europe with prime goods. After five hundred years of European occupation of the New World involving a “necessary” policy of devastation and extinction, insignificant percentages of forest areas, biodiversity, languages, Indian tribes and culture remain. Even though the Americas are now part of the Western World and their process of modernization is irreversible, the biological and cultural loss has been not only unjustifiable but highly discriminatory and unsupportable.

Current paper discusses how the colonizer’s disrespect for the people and the environment and the tensions produced therein. Research focuses on the environment in the Brazilian context through an analysis of texts and contexts that, to the author’s knowledge, have never been worked out in international postcolonial studies and rather scantily in Brazilian ones.

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This paper will focus on the southern state of Paraná, Brazil, which seems to be a blatant case of colonial encounters between colonial subjects and colonizers on the issues of land, culture and biodiversity, not only during the pre-Independence period but especially during the period in which European capitalist interests reigned supreme with the connivance of the Brazilian elites. Three texts on the Paraná from different historical periods will be investigated: (1) first, two reports called *The discovery of the Guarapuava hinterlands*, written by the Portuguese Afonso Botelho de Sampaio between 1771 and 1773, and *Memoirs on the discovery and the colony of Guarapuava*, written by Father Francisco das Chagas Lima in 1809; (2) second, *Pioneering in South Brazil: three years of forest and prairie life in the province of Paraná* written in 1878 by the Englishman Thomas P. Bigg-Wither who traveled throughout the highlands and plateaus of the middle Paraná between 1872 and 1875; (3) third, depositions by pioneers and transcribed in *Colonization and development of northern Paraná*, published in 1975, but dealing with 1924-1940 events in the northern region of the state of Paraná. Enhancing the methodology and strategies of the Europeans to control and develop the land exclusively to their own benefit, the three texts will reveal how the biological equilibrium in a vast area has been disrupted by the deep tensions between the colonized and the colonizers, characterized by the latter's capitalist thrust and by the fierce resistance of the native Indians of the Paraná.

#### BOTELHO AND CHAGAS LIMA: LAND OCCUPATION AND WORLDING

The south-western region of the Paraná, called Koran-Bang-Re by Kaingang Indians who lived there for hundreds of years, and renamed Guarapuava by the European colonizer, seemed to have been "discovered" by the Portuguese Cândido Xavier de Almeida e Sousa in 1770 (CARNEIRO, 1986). The 1771-1772 reports of Afonso Botelho de Sampaio (1728-1793), the colonial government representative, narrate the first colonial encounters with Indians in the vast Guarapuava region. It is an ethnographic text by means of which Europeans represent to themselves the subjugated others (PRATT, 1999) and the fabrication of regions outside Europe by travelers, historians, fiction writers, geographers, scientists, and others (SAID, 1990). Botelho's ethnographic report is celebratory of the "heroic" achievements of daring men who faced the wilderness and contacted, against all odds, the "wild savages" of the Paraná, and a document of Kaingang life and costumes in the Paraná.

Botelho describes the exploration of the land, its current produce and its future productivity. 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 covert sexual imagery, characterized by a blatant violation of the land and by a pervading “fear”, is understood through the amusement and the frolic of a religious festive day in which all participate. However, the penetration of the land is not complete unless the Indians are found, subdued and “civilized”. On the other hand, the subjectivity of the colonizers is constructed only when the land/Indian complex could be thoroughly and entirely under their control. It is only thus that the colonizer can practice worlding and put the central-southern region of the Paraná on the map. Signs of the phallic symbolism of conquest and success are everywhere: the presence of dozens of well-armed colonizers, the raising of the flag, the building of the stockade, the raising of the cross, and the christening of trails, harbors and rivers foreground the incoming victory. Further, the colonial discourse seems to form a polarity between modernity and the nativeness: whereas the non-European is qualified as obsolete, stationary and pre-historical, the Portuguese expedition forms part of a highly sophisticated process in the construction of itself as a modern state

#### DEGRADATION

Colonial encounters are very similar worldwide and Botelho's report of his first encounter with the Kaingangs is no exception. The first contact, occurring on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1771, is made with sign language and the exchange of trifles. On the next few days more Kaingangs appear and they offer food and weapons while the Portuguese give them clothes and knives. The Kaingangs return with their women and children, totaling 70 people, on Sunday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, and are received with joy by the Portuguese and Brazilians. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1772 the colonizers are surprised by big huts, large quantity of food and great number of Kaingang Indians. However, eight Portuguese/Brazilian adventurers are allured to a secluded spot and attacked. Only captain Carneiro escapes and informs the other colonizers on the debacle. On the 11<sup>th</sup> January Botelho decides to strike camp, beat a retreat and return to Curitiba.

It is important to note that in Botelho's report there is a continuum between the Kaingangs' cultural diversity and downright othering. The Kaingang Indian is described as a man with a family, a collector of pine nuts, naked, with an anatomically perfect body, peculiar hair dressing and beard, stealthy walk, speaking a different tongue, friendly, obedient, trustworthy,

happy in giving presents and easily satisfied with those received. Since cultural difference is shunned by the explorers, they immediately impose their “superior” stance on the Amerindians in three instances: nakedness, hair and beard style, language. On the other hand, the European colonizers are described as unselfish, organized, polite and cultured. For instance, the reader is constantly reminded that the colonizers can go to the extreme of standing in their underwear so that the Kaingangs may be dressed. Thus the othering of the Amerindian and the corresponding attributes of the Europeans should be seen within the overall ideology of hegemony.

We raised a big cross as a memorial of our arrival at this place. It was on this spot that God opened the doors of his divine benevolence for this most gentle people, which I never thought I would find so humane and malleable as I have just experienced (BOTELHO, 2001, p. 40).

He ends the text with the following words: “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” (BOTELHO, 2001, p. 43). The choice of these words shows an equivalence between God and the metropolis and the apparently innocuous comment is rife with a degrading ideology and the concomitant leit-motif of conquest and dominion.

In a second instance Botelho's text states that the Kaingangs are treacherous, ferocious, barbarians, wary, thieves, ungrateful, alluring, cruel and perfidious, with hearts full of wickedness. 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 around many ranches and farms, he acknowledges that Indian property will be taken from them and that their land will be distributed to European settlers.

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 Indians and invasion of the vast region for capitalist agricultural use. 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, notoriously belonging to others, observe 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 racialized differences materialized in weapons (rifles versus arrows), religion (religious ceremonies versus supposedly no religious practice) and clothing (nakedness versus outfits). The invasion and occupation of Indian land in the Paran  does not merely entail an expanding capitalism, but hails from a racialized ideology and *a priori* superiority, with the concomitant degradation of the colonial subject to enforce the distinction.

#### RESISTANCE

Mota (1994) enumerates and describes the various types of resistance which the Kaingang Indians waged against the white invaders. Ethnographic texts written by Europeans always downplay the importance and magnitude of the resistance undertaken by Indians. Botelho’s text shows that he knows that his troops are on Indian ground and foresees that the Kaingangs are preparing an attack. Paradoxically the text reveals that the Indians are absolutely certain as to the chief aims of the Portuguese expedition. Resistance against the invaders is prepared on three fronts: silence, sly civility and attack. The invaders, however, do not perceive the strategy of sly civility used by the colonial subject. Although the Portuguese take great pains in alluring the Indians with “superior” culture and organization, it seems that the seduction strategy is really practiced by the Indians. In fact, the Indians entertain the invaders (accepting their gifts and being friendly) and divert their attention (promising to bring their women and children) so that through sheer numbers the Portuguese may be defeated and forced to quit their land. The subjectivity of the Indian emerges with all its force from Botelho’s text. Through mimicry and by doing what the invaders expect of them, they lead the Portuguese to “safe and comfortable” attitudes propitious for being vanquishing. “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). The Kaingang Indians’ attack on the Portuguese and Brazilian expedition is first and foremost their prime resistance against colonization and its consequences. In fact, it was their high moment of subjectification.

## FOR GOD AND THE KING

Although forty years have passed since Botelho's failure to invade Kaingang territory and expand colonial dominion in the south-western Paraná, things came to a head when two royal charters acknowledge the "infestation of Indians" around Curitiba and Guarapuava and legitimize "the establishments of [white] settlements" (MARTINS, 1915, p. 81). Diogo Pinto de Azevedo Portugal with two hundred soldiers, accompanied by Fr. Francisco das Chagas Lima, starts the conquest of the territory on June 1810. The latter records these events, occurring between 1810 and 1827, which are published in 1842. Actually Fr. Chagas Lima remains 17 years in the region to undertake the conversion of the Indians. If Botelho's report is a history of military failure, Chagas Lima's may be considered a register in religious failure too in spite of the impressive numbers of baptisms, church marriages and catechetical endeavor he mentions.

Chagas Lima (2001) constantly insists on "subduing and civilizing" the Indian through the strategy of othering ("rusticity", "difficult to speak to"; "almost-barbarians"; "difficult to learn", "lexically and grammatically defective idiom they speak") so that the wealth of the region ("rich mines", "fertile land" and "cattle ranches") may be appropriated by the Portuguese and Brazilian landowners. When he mentions the Kaingang's laziness, nudity, polygamy, all-night dancing, re-marriages, sexual orgies, lack of any organized religion, ritual maize-fermented drinking, killing of disabled children, he is placing the Christian religion as a paradigm and hierarchizes the Eurocentric culture as the best and the Indians' as wrong. Since it is a question of empire, he doesn't establish any dialogue with the Kaingangs' different culture and no effort is made to understand it.

To further his imperial ends under the guise of religion Chagas Lima utilizes the "comprador" policy through which a handpicked colonial subject is chosen to serve as a middleman between the colonized and the colonizers. Kaingang Indian Antonio José Pahy, highly praised by the missionary for his zeal in preaching to and converting the Indians to the Eurocentric religion, is utilized by Chagas Lima for the political and cultural colonization of the Kaingangs. The domination and the domestication of the Kaingang Indian in the Guarapuava region are textualized by adopting the previously employed policy which systemizes the Indian tribes and their language and fabricates their features so that the European's control of their land may be entire and guaranteed. Chapter 2 of the *Memoirs* analyzes the different Kaingang subgroups, their degree of savagery and laziness, occupations and moral qualities, cruelty, and lack of religion. Further, Fr. Chagas Lima gives a very short glimpse on what he calls their "extremely poor"

language with its faulty and irregular grammar. He thus concludes that the Kaingang language is so barbarian and inadequate that only the Portuguese tongue may be resorted to in prayers and religious explanations. Actually the information given by Chagas Lima shows the Eurocentric stance from which he writes. In Chagas Lima's text there is no place for any cultural difference, or rather, the representation of Kaingang culture as a totality, autonomous in itself, constructed by the subjects and standing in its own right, without any hierarchization with other cultures (BHABHA, 1998).

### BIGG-WITHER'S GAZE

Bigg-Withers's *Pioneering in South Brazil: three years of forest and prairie life in the province of Paraná*, published in 1878, is an ethnographical report of an English engineer who is posted in the central region of Paraná between 1872 and 1875 and gives firsthand information on the area teeming with wild life and Indians. Bigg-Wither (1845-1890) was contracted by the Paraná and Mato Grosso Survey Expedition to analyze the feasibility of a railway linking the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and took this singular opportunity to narrate his experience in Paraná, perhaps one of the remotest stretches of land at that time. Bigg-Wither's gaze is consequently a metonymy of the desire of domination and appropriation for imperial ends. It is a communicative strategy for future colonizers to install themselves on the land and profit by it. Although analyzing the term from different points of view, Spurr (1993) and Foucault (1977) explain how the surveyor's gaze objectifies and interpellates the colonized subject. It is frequently associated with term "worlding", coined by Spivak (1985), linked to the innocent-looking European who is just being on colonial ground and merely strolling the countryside. When the traveler Bigg-Wither goes beyond the town of Curitiba and penetrates dense forest, the reader has the feeling that the Englishman undergoes a radical transformation: he becomes "a monarch" of all he surveys. On the one hand, Bigg-Wither's description of the jungle perils and the *jararaca*, for instance, aims at instilling terror (MELLO; SOUZA, 1993; ZIEBELL, 2002; WOORTMANN, 2004) and, consequently the ambiguity of the place with its allurements and dangers. On the other hand, Bigg-Wither describes in a positive stance the fauna and flora of the Paraná, especially the pine-tree. Needless to say, these detailed descriptive sketches of forest are never neutral and are representative of colonial dominion and appropriation. The professional surveyor, constituting himself as a panoptic and invulnerable observer, inscribes them according to his European ideology,

rife with the binary structure he is accustomed to. The objectivity and neutrality he assumes is presumptuous since he places himself as the subject who processes them according to his values. Relegating them as objects to be observed microscopically, Bigg-Wither fails to place them according to their intrinsic value and reference. However, the culture of the colonial subjects seethes unaware throughout his descriptions and destabilizes the hegemonic fixed culture exhibited by the European. Perhaps inadvertently, his gaze reveals that the Indian of the Paraná is not “naked” but exhibits a centuries-old culture. In spite of this incongruity, the opposite position of the gaze is never allowed, or rather, he is highly critical of the Andrade paterfamilias who locks his five unmarried daughters and keeps them far from the eyes of strangers, but never allows either the daughters or their father or mother to give an explanation for such an attitude. Besides being absolute and indisputable, Bigg-Wither’s gaze is self-centered since the colonizer is firmly convinced that his opinion is correct and the others’ is backward. Further, the precision of Bigg-Wither’s gaze is typically masculine since it divides, subdivides, cuts, measures, enumerates and, principally, it penetrates virgin land with all that it contains so that dominion is absolute and unquestionable.

In fact, the traveler’s supposed neutrality is deconstructed by the capital/labor tension endemic to the European colonizer. Bigg-Wither immediately perceives the potentialities of the land for future capitalist entrepreneurship and makes it a point not only to criticize the lack of capitalist venture of the native subjects but to put on the world scene the vast area of land that may be harnessed by profit-minded Europeans. When he visits the Andrade’s plantation, his capitalist mentality triggers comments on the randomized and promiscuous breeding of cattle and horses.

No care is taken to improve the strain of either, by judicious selection of sires and breeders. No fresh blood is ever introduced into the troop or herd, consequently deterioration must and does take place, more especially in the horses, the troops of which are usually very small, and therefore more liable to suffer from the effects of constant inter-breeding (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 217).

Bigg-Wither’s gaze is also focused on the Indians and half-breeds living in the Paraná forests: he distinguishes between the Kaingang (Coroado) and Xokleng (Botocudo) of the Ge linguistic family, the Kayowá Indians of the Guarani linguistic family and the Xetá of the Tupy linguistic family and somewhat parent to Guarani, in their turn subdivided into domesticated



or wild. However, the domesticated Indians did not learn a great deal from “civilization” or rather, from contacts with the white man. This is especially true with regard to the value of money, work and change in mentality. Bigg-Wither places the *caboclos* almost on the same level of the domesticated Indians who, planting only what was absolutely necessary for bare living, are distinguished for their laziness and only slightly different from the Indians next door. On the other hand, the surveyor characterizes different types of *brasileiros*: wholesalers and mule traders, for instance, are cunning and exploiters of laborers; the landowners lack a capitalist mentality and fail to exploit the potentiality of the land; others are laborers who love the forest life and work hard, albeit terrified by wild Indians.

One of Bigg-Wither’s best descriptions is that of the wild Botocudo Indian, probably Xetá, reproduced in words and in a drawing, and that of a group of males and females of the same tribe. The mere exhibition of the picture, he states, would have substituted all Darwin’s arguments in *The Descent of Man*. The surveyor’s gaze on the Xetá zoomorphosizes the man characterized by “wildness and degenerateness”, “horrible” sounds of his language, his supposed imbecility and idiocy. “Civilization” is forced upon them through a massive effort to wash the Xetá Indians immediately, to disentwine and comb their hair, to dress them up with whatever clothes are available at the moment, and to educate the children.

The ambiguity of the colonizer’s attitudes is nevertheless revealing. Whereas the Xetá is classified as a colonial object and othered through degrading terms, the text is rife with the tribe’s culture and disrupts the colonizer’s Eurocentric condition. Actually the text reveals their family liaisons and prodigality, their body ornaments, survival and war weapons, songs and dance, utensils, huts, ropes, initiation ceremonies, language, folk medicine, cooking methods for meat and fish and other cultural items characteristic of the tribe. A similar othering attitude has been shown when the European surveyor describes his Brazilian friends, either of European, Indian (Guarani-Kayowá) stock or half-breeds. Although he classifies himself as the center of activity, management and planning and condemns their laziness, their proneness to alcoholic drinks and their lack of entrepreneurship inherent to their margin position, his text teems with examples of their culture and experience as perhaps in no other contemporary document. The description of family life, the prowess, courage and information methods of Indian guides, the exquisite bird and fish traps, the construction of huts, the dexterous use of jungle survival utensils such as the billhook, the habit of teeth brushing, the use of natural medicine provided by the jungle, especially for snake bites, the eating of frugal but healthy meals of beans, flour,

bacon, coffee and salt are a witness to the deep cultural links between the Brazilian individual and the environment he lives in and partakes of.

Bigg-Wither in fact testifies to the complete integration of the Brazilian man with the fauna and flora of the Paran jungle. Game is never killed for fun or in abundance but only for survival; trees are never felled; paths and clearings are done with the least devastating effects; the mystery of the jungle with its sounds and sights is maintained. There is not a single instance in which the river or stream waters are polluted by man who shows a deep respect for the natural road they provide for him to travel. Even when clearings are made, or fire is set to the forest so that the grass would grow with more vigor, or when large areas are chosen for plantation, sheer devastation is not the rule and a true equilibrium is maintained between the forest and farms. On the other hand, Bigg-Wither's descriptions of his adventure in hunting shows the Englishman's gusto for killing, even though there is not that ferocious zest showed by imperial hunters in Rider Haggard's or Hemmingway's stories. Further, as a surveyor for an international company Bigg-Wither must have known, if the railway were to prove feasible, he would be one of those people who would have provided the foreigner with information that would inevitable work havoc on ecological equilibrium, river pollution, heavy environmental degradation and extinction of species during and after the operations and many years after. Since he actually doesn't even mention the ecological problem and his role as a pawn in the triggering of the process, this fact confirms that the colonizer's gaze is not the innocent appreciation of virgin forest and untouched nature, but should be seen within the context of capitalist ideology of dominating the land for the benefit of trade and commerce without any concern on what would happened on the delicate poise between civilization and nature. Perhaps this is why he is always insisting on the colonial subjects' laziness (COETZEE, 1988), on the lack of kitchen gardens that produce vegetables, on the importation of tobacco from far-off town when the plant is found wild in the neighborhood, on the failure to produce butter when milk is abundant, on the mere rearing of hens and pigs without any effort. Consistent to his ideology, he is criticizing the lack of entrepreneurship of the Indian and, *a fortiori*, of the Brazilian living in the hinterland. "Nevertheless, one or two men with a little capital and more enterprise might still, I think, do something to render Colnia Tereza a profitable member of the state" (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 252). This theory would be a counterpoint to the all-prevailing attitude of the people "of only growing enough of these things to supply their wants year by year, without leaving any surplus" (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 246).

The above concern for the "worlding" of future profit for Europeans may be corroborated by asides that Bigg-Wither makes in his narrative.

On a negative basis he detects (1) the lack of capitalist initiative of the Brazilian farmer when he should give more emphasis on investing in mule transport, cattle fattening and optimization of cattle breeding; (2) futile spending of energy, owing to poor results, by the simple water-driven machinery (called *monjolo*) to pound maize, raised to the symbol of the Brazilian farmer's lack of reflection on energy, results and profits. On the positive side, he detects (1) first class clay, especially proper for fine china, close to Campo Largo; (2) the importance of immediate land occupation either for cattle-raising or for crop cultivation, taking into account long term costs and profits when investing in land, crops, hedges, animal breeding; (3) the importance of bringing "English horses" and start serious horse breeding due to the superior quality of the former when compared to the Brazilian one; (4) a place of retreat for Englishmen for leisure and game, exempt from taxes and other inconveniences proper to "more civilized" countries.

The exuberant feelings expressed by the explorer and surveyor Bigg-Wither at the environment with its naked inhabitants, pure air, rivers, islands, fauna and flora, seems to be the rejoice of a European who has found a treasure trove for industries, railways, roads, communication systems, mining, exportation of wood sawed from century-old trees: a scanty benefit of the population and great profit for the European entrepreneur. Perhaps this is the reason why Bigg-Wither gives two pen sketches of the Indians in the forest of Paraná. In two lithographs Bigg-Wither contrasts the wild male Xetá (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 113) with the domesticated Coroado female (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 257). Since, in the surveyor's opinion, the former is more similar to beasts than to human beings, he will never be integrated within the highly sophisticated planning of a "civilized" Paraná and is doomed to die. However, unawares Bigg-Wither sketched the Amerindian in a resistance stance, or rather, the man's challenging face is a metonymy of his undauntedness and fearlessness against every attempt to control or annihilate his culture (MOTA, 1994). On the other hand, the picture of the naked Coroado woman and child reveals an already subdued person. The serene face, the combed hair, and her eyes directed at the reader are not challenging in any way. The child on her back and the woman's maternal breasts are witnesses to her acceptance of the civilized man's terms with the probable consequence of loss of identity through total collaboration in his great "civilizing" project.

When Bigg-Wither went further north in the state of Paraná his capitalist vision on profitable land use becomes sharper, visualizing the culture of coffee shrubs and sugar-cane, and he foresees

the opening up to civilization and commerce of an area of rich and healthy country of at least 100,000 square miles [259.000 square kilometers] in extent, which is now only occupied by half-a-dozen scattered colonies maintaining a bare existence amidst the great deserts of untrodden forests by which we are surrounded on every sides (BIGG-WITHER, 1878, p. 272).

He reiterated this vision in his paper read before The Royal Geographic Society on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1876.

At an elevation of 3300 feet, a very complete view of the whole of the south-west side of the Tibagy Valley is obtained. This view extends from the range of the Pedra Branca above the town of Tibagy, down to and even beyond the valley of the Paranapanema, and stretches away to the westward, where no hills intervene, as far as the eye can reach. This vast stretch of rich and fertile country, embracing an area of thousands of square miles, is covered still by virgin forest, and inhabited only by a few wandering tribes of wild Indians. An thus it is likely to remain for generations to come, either until another Paraguayan was forces the Government to construct the long-meditated road down this valley, or until the country itself passes into the possession of a more enterprising people; neither of which is perhaps likely to come to pass for many long years to come (BIGG-WITHER, 1876, p. 277).

Less than fifty years passed when the Sudan Cotton Plantation Syndicate was focusing on the vast “uninhabited” forest of the north of Paraná.

#### NORTHERN PARANÁ AND NO-MAN’S LAND

Maps of the northern region of the state of Paraná, ranging from 1850 to 1950, have a typically palimpsest status. Characterized as a neutral location where the imperial project could be enacted, they have been gradually and constantly inscribed as space through a non-stop naming of geographical features and settlements. The vast area was classified as “savage”, “uninhabited”, “virgin land”, “savage and uninhabited hinterland”, a nomenclature which, in the long run, emphasized demographic emptiness and the immediate scramble for the land by “civilized people” (MOTA, 1994), subverting the Guarani and the Kaingang’s notion of the *tupambaé* (extensi-

ve collective areas) and replacing it by the alien concept of *abambaé* (private property) (FACCHINI; NEVES, 1988). Whereas hundreds of authentic Indian names were erased, hundreds of inscriptions were invented in their stead and have remained as a testimony of the myth.

The above stereotyped narrative may be testified by jubilee leaflets, books, textbooks, theses and newspapers published in the north of Paraná on the subject, or rather, an area covered with dense forest and swarming with wild animals; Indians are emblematically absent; settlements are organized; the westernizing of the frontier occurs; coffee, cotton, rice, corn, soybean are cultivated; towns and cities are built. Meanwhile, the tragic annihilation of the forest and the erasure of its Indian populations are occurring without a voice to denounce the genocide under way. It may thus be said that in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Brazilian government considered the northern area of the state of Paraná *terra nullius* or uninhabited space. The odd half-breed squatters and their “vicious” progeny were rendered invisible and the vast empty space could be occupied in a productive way. This may have been Lord Lovat’s vision when browsing the map of the Paraná and this is what the Brazilian government did when in 1927 it sold 13,189 square kilometers (6.6%) of the most fertile land to the Paraná Plantations Limited with headquarters in London and its subsidiary in Brazil, the *Companhia de Terras Norte do Paraná*, renamed *Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná* when it was bought by a Brazilian group in 1944. Arthur Thomas, manager of the Company from 1930-1949, gives an epic view of the British colonizing endeavor to “civilize” the immense region of “virgin land and exuberant forests”, south of the River Paranapanema, in an essay published in *The times of Brazil*:

There is something irresistible when the man with imagination contemplates maps where large uninhabited areas, filled with high potentialities, sprawl before him. His thoughts soar to find the ways and means to possess, colonize and develop [these lands] and his dreams will reveal a future in which the desert will be covered with flowers and immense riches sprout from the earth. Such were Raleigh, Penn, Cook and Rhodes. Such was the late Simon Lord Lovat in our time (apud CMNR, 1975, p. 7).

Joffily (1985), Oberdiek (1997), Cernev (1997) and Arias Neto (1998) suggest that British interest in the lands of the northern Paraná after World War I was the huge Brazilian debt that could be possibly sorted out by joint ventures. In fact, the 1923 Montagu Mission, which triggered the colonization of the northern region of the Paraná, was made up of British and Brazili-

an bankers and big landowners, or rather, exclusively profit-minded people who gave only lip service to the untouched dense forest and the Indians it harbored (NOELLI; MOTA, 1999).

Once more, the leitmotif of “squatted land” and “uninhabited land” was evoked, although everybody knew that “the region was inhabited by half-breeds and Indians, its natural inhabitants, who were not considered as owners of the land since they had not bought it” (OBERDIEK, 1997, p. 18). The intriguing point is that probably no documents exist and a complete silence hovers on Kaingang or Guarani Indians in the region which in a very short time will belong to the Paran Plantations Limited. Traditions narrate that the Paran Plantations Ltd had a police corps whose job was to expel or kill all Kaingang Indians or “mongrel” squatters who refused to negotiate their land with the colonizing company, which constituted a rather common practice (MACHADO, 2004). In spite of this genocide and within the space of 25 years some 110 urban nuclei, trading posts, railway transport and plantations exhibiting millions of coffee shrubs and crops such as cotton, maize, beans, rice, sugar-cane, ramie and ground nuts are formed at the expense of the forest, its fauna and flora, and the Kaingang Indian.

Depositions by company officer George Craig Smith (1909-1992); banker Antonio Moraes Barros; officer Gordon Fox Rule; general manager Herman Moraes de Barros; surveyor Wladimir Babkov; and director Alfredo Nyffeller are extant. Since all the above people have taken an active part in the very early years of the Paran Plantations Ltd, their depositions always tend to be celebratory of the heroism, and staunchness common to the myth of clearly identified pioneers, with scanty reference to the nameless workers who did the lowest jobs. The narratives give an analysis of the fertile red soil in the region, its high productivity, the wise geographic layout of the plots organized by the British company, the organization of orchards near the farmer’s house and the planting of coffee shrubs on higher ground to prevent frost disaster, the indiscriminate felling of trees for the construction of houses, hotels and shops, as an inchoated town nucleus. They are conscious of the great development that the region and the country will experience when all the hinterland has been settled and consequently civilized. With regard to the hundreds of Indians in the area practically all others are silent on the subject.

## THE DEPOSITIONS

Banker Hermann Moraes Barros's deposition deals exclusively with the legal transactions between capitalists and the state government and with the safety of the financial operation as to future claims on land.

The British investors wanted to eliminate all doubts [with regard to ownership]. Otherwise no one would have had the courage to invest in land. The plan turned out to be highly expensive, but safe. The company bought doubtful and unsafe concession titles of land and property in an area of 415 000 acres. Then the Company suggested to the government that if it [the government] sold us this same land at legal prices, we would tear the litigious titles and the land quarrel which was delaying the development of the state of Paraná would cease. Although the Company paid twice as much, even three times as much, the value of the land, it assured for itself and for its successors an unquestionable right on the negotiated land. Between 1925 and 1927 the Company bought more land totaling 515,000 acres [1246.30 sq. km] of the most fertile land still covered with dense forest (CMNP, 1975, p. 59).

There is absolutely no mention anywhere or any concern on the subjects living in the forest and on its fauna and flora. The main concern is actually the allurements of the buyer, who needs safe land titles, guaranteed profits and free enterprising stimuli.

The saga of the pioneer is highlighted by the long deposition of George Craig Smith, full of silences and lacunae. He lists the names of many "important" people, who made the long "heroic" voyage through the jungle, lived in make-shift huts, suffered hunger, contracted diseases, and worked unceasingly in adverse conditions to bring "civilization" to the region. Whereas he gives the names of the middle-class professionals and public authorities who, in his opinion, were key people in the development of the region, he is reluctant to name the "tame Indian who became our guide; we were delighted at the ease he talked to the beasts of burden, calling them by their names" (CMNP, 1975, p. 63) and the manual workers who "sawed all the wood necessary for the building of the first make-shift inn and store of the Company" (CMNP, 1975, p. 71). Moreover, he gives an epic thrust when he described the "afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1929 when (engineer) Dr. Alexandre Rasgulaeff stuck the first mark in the soil on the arrival of his group on the lands of the Company" (CMNP, 1975, p. 74-75). However, the men and women who toiled in the primitive rice-husking machine and in the open-air kitchens to attend to the needs of the rich plantation owners, who opened

clearings in the forest and built bridges, are anonymous. Craig Smith himself, who received the title of Member of the British Empire in 1992, revealing the master he served, never acknowledged the overwhelming number of “lower class” people who contributed towards the process of growth and development of the region, nor the *a priori* downright exclusion of the Indian, nor the ecological indifference “towards the dense and haunting forest” (CMNP, 1975, p. 67).

The worlding of the region has been preserved in the deposition of Antonio Moraes Barros in his correspondence of the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1927 to Arthur Thomas after his excursion throughout the region (CMNP, 1975, p. 65-66). The letter describes in details the region with its hill, rivers and streams, its “first class” fertile dark red soil, dense forest, its priceless wood, its potentiality for coffee and cash-crop plantations, without frost occurrences. Once more, the enterprising spirit is in the foreground. Since the letter was written prior to the buying of more land by the British Company, it enhanced the further strolling on colonial ground, a symbol of the possession and utilization of the inscribed land, by a member of the financial oligarchy and national bourgeoisie, while revealing the “virginity” of the land which might be easily and profitably penetrated by the foreigner. No obstacles are mentioned, unlimited penetration is the order of the day, capitalist enterprise and profit are paramount, without the slightest sensitiveness to any other factor.

Although Fox Rule’s deposition is myth-making and full of heroic achievements, its importance lies in the fact that he is the only one who mentions the inhabitants of the forest.

Once we stopped the car on the dirt road to fill the Ford’s radiator with water. All of a sudden, we heard noises coming from everywhere in the forest. Indians, who at that time lived in the neighborhood of what would later become our progressive Londrina, were beating the trees with sticks. The year was 1930. I well remember that everybody’s first reaction was to run away. However, I persuaded my friends to remain calm and do everything as naturally as could be. We were hearing the Indians without seeing them. Slowly we approached the car. The harrowing sounds of the Indians were still in the background. We filled the radiator with water, started the car, and went away on the double. When the Company was building a railway bypass in Jataí, the workers dug out mortuary urns belonging to the Indians living in the whereabouts. Some of the urns were sent to the Historical Museum in Rio de Janeiro (CMNP, 1975, p. 86).



Although the presence of Indians in the region has never been contested by the officers of the British company, there is no mention of their property rights, their subsistence on the forest, their ancestors' land from which they were excluded and their burial grounds. The colonizer's right has been legally safeguarded by the buying of "uninhabited" land from the state government and by the selling of the same land, subdivided in plots, to large and small landowners, with the necessary guarantee that any and all claims by the original inhabitants were null and void. The downright exclusion of the Indians from any participation is symbolically referred to when Fox Rule mentions the violation and removal of mortuary urns. Due to pressing capitalist trends and ideology, the place of the Indian is the museum showcase. No place is allotted to him in the enterprising activities under way. Moreover, culturally the urns indicated Indian ground and territory from which their "undocumented" rightful owners were now being substituted by white people legally constituted with "legitimate" land titles and documents. The Indians' "discourse" implodes the colonizers' fixed imperial center and reveals ambivalence within the Eurocentric other.

Surveyor Babkow's deposition remarkably mentions the renaming of places, rivers and geographical landmarks, a fact that underpins the awareness of absolute dominion that the colonizers had over the land.

Christening was the responsibility of the [Company's] Topographic Department. Its choice of names came from a Guarani dictionary, a list of geographical sites from the European countries that were the birthplace of the immigrants (Spain, Portugal, Italy), names of saints, cigarette brands, football teams, and even the names of fiancées and wives of the land surveyors. Only the names of the river and streams that existed in ancient documents went unchanged and the settlements were named according to the stream that ran close by (CMNP, 1975, p. 128).

Needless to say, this practice has been constant in all settlements where Europeans made their home, revealing a mother-daughter relationship between the settlement and the European background and evoke sites from the dominating culture. Since christening is the prerogative of the master, the erasure of practically all former names symbolizes the new economy to be introduced.

The deposition of Alfredo Werner Nyffeller features the self-made men in the north-western region of the state of Paraná (CMNP, 1975, p. 140-143). Prominence is given to a few European-born people who raised themselves from the working class to highly esteemed entrepreneurs through

sheer hard work, honesty in business and financial control. He insists on the positive role that the Company worked out for the benefit of the foreign or Brazilian farmer and of its own employees. However, ambiguity may be immediately detected in Nyffeller's deposition when he counterpoints the dust, the mud, the felling of trees, exposed tree roots and burnt tree trunks with "the enchantment that the nearness of the forest discloses, [...] everything close by, at a short distance" (CMNP, 1975, p. 141). Whereas on the surface the text is celebratory, at a deeper level it reveals that a disruption of sorts has occurred: the fixed and essential position of the colonizer with his dominion over land and his heroic achievements is overwhelmed by the contradiction of the smoking forest and the magnificence of nature contemplated at the window. However, the capitalist condition doesn't allow for more than a fleeting thought on the havoc to nature and to humans that colonization leaves in its wake. To the colonizer's mind, othering and hierarchization are the rule of the day even though, between the lines, they still unfix him in his supposed sovereignty.

## CONCLUSION

The events narrated in the texts above, albeit from different periods and from people with different world views, show that underlying all colonizing activity there has been an ideology which triggered European expansionist policy for the benefit of the metropolis, without the least concern for the native subject or the biota in colonial space. Actually colonial space did not remain a place in which man and nature could develop but was transformed by the very act of colonization into a contact zone, rife with contention, hierarchization and objectification. The European pretext that the colonial subjects were below the civilization mark, that culture (language, religion, social organization) was proper to the Other but inexistent or negligible in the other, that cultural difference was so profound that a common denominator was impossible, contributed towards an ideology of superiority and rights with the consequent massive invasion of colonial space. So that space could be "civilized" and "Christianized", a degradation policy, called ecological imperialism (CARTER, 1987; HUGGAN, 2004), had to be executed with regard to the biota and the colonial subjects. In the case of the former, the felling of trees, the killing of fauna and the pollution of rivers were the outward sign of dominion and appropriation; with regard to the latter, rendering the Indians invisible and "worlding" them to the point of

being merely exotic creatures, foregrounded the colonial subjects' objectification and the formation of binary dichotomies within colonial space.

The "civilizing mission" construct that all European colonizing nations, especially Spain and Portugal and later Britain, invented and endeavored to execute for the "benefit" of peripheral populations was the big lie that motivated the scramble of large portions of land for trade and profit. There is a haunting silence in the texts, mostly those from the Paran Planations Ltd, on anything except profit, money-making, trade, propaganda, allurements to sell. It is the ideology of the empty space with complete and absolute control of all it holds. It is this discursive control that metonymically transforms the place into colonial space with its change of names, annexation, colonization, economic regime, agriculture and climate. Perhaps the most serious consequence of this ideology is the intolerance to anything that is culturally different from Eurocentric patterns and parameters. Although the land and its colonial subjects are transfigured almost beyond recognition, the molding of the current Indians, now hybrids, is a new critical starting point as many modern authors (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003; BRAH, 2002; HALL, 2003) dealing with transculturation and the diaspora have been pointing out for some time now.

Nevertheless, the texts, although written by the vanquishing parties, are subliminally fraught with resistance and transformation. Actually the authors were betrayed by the colonial ambiguity they were inscribed in and revealed that, in spite of all subterfuges, the disruption of the delicate balance between man and nature, the othering of the Indian, the suppression of indigenous culture and the superimposition of Eurocentric nomenclature and ideology are greatly accountable for the present situation in climate, pollution, loss of indigenous languages and culture and a lack of true tradition in the state of Paran. Obviously the type of resistance that the colonial subjects made is now obsolete and in fact doomed to fail. No one may pardon the crushing of peaceful human progress which European colonization brought about through ruses, tricks, lies and brutalities. However, transformation is a type of resistance which highlights mimicry, hybridism, parody, carnivalization, extensively studied by Bhabha (1985), Harris (1983) and others. It menaces the hegemony and the very notion of the civilizing mission that is still active through globalization and transnationalization. In fact, culture is extremely transformative and never static. Although events in the Paran narrated in the texts may still exhibit their dire consequences, they have triggered studies on deconstructing a stereotyped view of colonized peoples, on demythologizing the heroic figure of the pioneer, on the true role of simple laborers in the construction of vast areas and on the educational and conscious-raising task in future generations.

## RESUMO

Esta pesquisa discursa sobre a maneira como a violência cometida pelo colonizador contra as pessoas e o meio ambiente e as tensões subseqüentes potencializaram a destruição ecológica no estado do Paraná, Brasil. A pesquisa focaliza o meio ambiente paranaense com uma análise de textos e contextos que, do que se saiba, jamais foram analisados nos estudos pós-coloniais em nível internacional ou nacional. Foram investigados três textos sobre o Paraná oriundos de períodos históricos diferentes. O primeiro texto consiste em duas reportagens, intituladas *A descoberta dos campos de Guarapuava*, escrita por Affonso Botelho de Sampaio, e *Memória sobre o descobrimento e colônia de Guarapuava*, escrita pelo padre Francisco das Chagas Lima, respectivamente do fim do século 18 e início do século 19. O segundo texto é *Novo caminho no Brasil meridional: a Província do Paraná*, escrito pelo agrimensor britânico Thomas P. Bigg-Wither, o qual viajou pelas colinas e planícies do Paraná no último quartel do século 19. O terceiro texto é formado por uma série de depoimentos de pioneiros transcritos em *Colonização e desenvolvimento do Norte do Paraná*. Os três textos mostram como o equilíbrio biológico foi subvertido pelas profundas tensões entre o colonizador e o colonizado.

Palavras-chave: *textos etnográficos; o olhar colonial; ruptura ecológica.*

## ABSTRACT

Current paper discusses how the colonizer's disrespect for the people and the environment and the tensions produced therein had a destructive potential in the state of Paraná, Brazil. Research focuses on the environment in the Brazilian context through the analysis of texts and contexts that have never been worked out either in international postcolonial studies nor in Brazilian ones. Three texts on the Paraná from different historical periods will be investigated. The first text consists of two reports, or rather, *The discovery of the Guarapuava hinterlands*, by Portuguese Afonso Botelho de Sampaio, and *Memoirs on the discovery and the colony of Guarapuava*, by Father Francisco das Chagas Lima, respectively hailing from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whereas the second text is *Pioneering in South Brazil: three years of forest and prairie life in the province of Paraná* by the Englishman Thomas P. Bigg-Wither who traveled throughout the highlands and plateaus of the middle Paraná in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century, the third text consists of a series of depositions by pioneers and transcribed in *Colonization and development of northern Paraná*. The three texts show how the biological equilibrium has been disrupted by the deep tensions between the colonized and the colonizers

Key-words: *Ethnographical texts; colonial gaze; ecological disruption.*

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