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Gilberto Freyre and the geopolitics of race: the transatlantic circulation of *Casa-grande & senzala*

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- Afrique - Europe - Amérique du Sud - Amérique du Nord
- L'espace atlantique dans la globalisation

How did *Casa-grande & senzala* , Gilberto Freyre's main work, navigate between different scenarios and interact with expectations, desires and dilemmas of international geopolitics and culture? This text analyzes its reception on both sides of the Atlantic: from the USA to France, as well as Portugal, Guinea and Cape Verde.

Gilberto Freyre was one of the best known Brazilian intellectuals in the international scenario. His principal work *Casa-grande & senzala* (1933) has been translated in various countries. On its fiftieth anniversary it had 23 Portuguese editions (21 Brazilian and two Portuguese), 14 French, three Spanish, three in English, two in German, and one in Italian.[1] In 2013, on its 80th anniversary, its 52nd edition was published. Controversial in his writing, its author was considered an innovator for introducing a style of writing that dealt without any shame with the private lives of rural producers in the Northeast of Brazil during slavery, and based on these relations drafting an interpretation of the formation of Brazilian society exalting a mixed society.

Initially, Freyre was appreciated in a general manner as an iconoclast and progressive for drawing inspiration from the culturalism of Franz Boas to refute the thesis of the hierarchy of race. He also valorized the *melting pot* of the Brazilian people at a time when the eugenic precepts of the so-called 'scientific racism' were in force in the West. He was praised by historians, notably the French writers Fernand Braudel and Lucien Febvre who saw him as "the great historian and sociologist of Brazil."[2]

Gilberto Freyre's international circulation since his graduation in the US, as well as the preparation and conception of his principal work, *Casa-grande & senzala (Master and slaves in the English translation)* written partially in Portugal during political exile in the 1930s, and the consequent circularity of the reception outside Brazil, marked the transnational DNA of an author who was considered both in Brazil and abroad as one of the principal interpreters of Brazil and an interlocutor who enjoyed privileged spaces in international forums. The network of intellectual sociability constructed with professors, intellectuals, and politicians of different nationalities is an important indication to understand why, for so many years, the ideas of Gilberto Freyre directly or indirectly influenced the construction of the image of Brazil, especially abroad.

In this way, studying the circulation reception of his work from a transnational perspective allows us comprehend the different appropriations and receptions of those who have read and commented on the work in consonance with historic and political aspects of the spaces of reception. From this approach, studying the reception of *Casa-grande & senzala*, his principal work, involves asking the following question: How does a work navigate through different scenarios and interact with the expectations, anxieties, and dilemmas of international geopolitics and culture? In this case, this does not involved observing the *effects* of the work or its reception through quantitative means, but unraveling its historicity to the extent that the same text responds to the needs of the public with which it dialogues at distinct epochs and in different reception spaces.

To better understand the international circulation of his most discussed and translated

work the aim of this text is the reception of *Casa-grande & senzala* on both sides of the Atlantic, in different countries: from the US to France, as well as Portugal, Guinea, and Cape Verde.

Freyre and the US

Freyre's relationship with the United States began when he went there in 1918 to get a Bachelor of Arts in Baylor. After graduating he went to Columbia University in New York, through the intermediation of his mentor and friend, the diplomat Manuel de Oliveira Lima. Lima convinced him to study Brazilian history and society. In the American university he had the opportunity to study with the anthropologist Franz Boas.

Diving into Boas' culturalism, Freyre assumed the centrality of the racial question to understand Brazil. Studying Brazilian miscegenation became a mission: "*It was as if everything depended on me and those of my generation; our way of resolving secular questions. And of Brazil's problems none disturbed me so much as that of miscegenation*."[3]

The network of sociability with professors and colleagues interested in research concerned with Brazil was no less important. One example is his relationship with Rudiger Bilden. The young German student and Freyre's colleague in Columbia, travelled to Brazil in 1926 with a grant offered by the American university. Many of his conclusions were contained in an article published two years later: "Brazil, a laboratory of civilization." In his essay the young German separated the concepts of race and culture to explain the social problematic of Brazil alleging that to deal with Brazilian problems "a historical and not biological, a cultural and not racial explanation is necessary."[4]

The study of social history focused on cultural and behavioral aspects would be one of Freyre's principal characteristics in his Master's thesis, defended in Columbia in 1922, a year before returning to Brazil. With the title "Social life in Brazil in the middle of the 19th century" it was initially published in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. The aim of its thesis, which held the seed of the principal questions of *Casa-grande & senzala*, consisted in telling the daily history of families on rural properties in the Northeast of Brazil. It was inspired by the reading of *American Negro Slave* (1918) by Ulrich Philips, a controversial historian who wrote an epic history of slave owners from the *Old South* highlighting the family relations with slaves in the *Big Houses*. For Freyre the Northeast was very similar to the South of the US in the way that slaveowner-slave relations were processed, including in relation to a supposed mildness of these relations.

Finally, in 1933 *Casa-grande & senzala* was published and it has had many repercussion and been the subject of many debates. In the 1930s and 1940s, the book came to be a reference for Brazilianists who studied Brazilian social formation and for studies on race.

US reception

Before being translated into English, Freyre's work was the theme of a small biography written by Lewis Hanke, a prominent US historian and specialist in the History of Colonial Latin America, and organizer of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*. The text was published in 1939, by the Instituto de las Españas in the United States.

In the first pages of the biography Hanke contrasted *Casa-grande & senzala* with the racial and eugenic theories of the time. In his text, the American professor reproduced for readers the classical Freyrian thesis that the biological mixture in Brazil, operated by the Portuguese colonizer, occurred in a friendly manner and allowed a "social democracy based on *mestiçagem*" to occur in Brazil.[5] However, the director of the Library of Congress was not very convinced by Freyre's arguments, principally that *mestiçagem* would generate a "new and stronger race." Despite his reticence about the 'impetuous' generalizations of the Brazilian sociologist on racial problems, Hanke highlighted the political weight of his ideas in facing the problems that had emerged on the political horizon at the end of the 1930s:

> “I believe that Freyre's doctrine is loaded with political dynamite and has a defined relationship with some of the most serious political problems of Brazil at this moment. The danger that Brazilian will let themselves be won over by

fascist ideologies has received, recently, important attention from the US press and, if we take into account the ease with which Brazil accepts foreign intellectual movements, this danger is not purely a theoretical possibility."[6]

Hanke put Freyre's work on the horizon of expectations of US readers back in 1938. Practically on the eve of the Second World War, the US looked with concern and suspicion at the growth of Nazi-Fascist ideologies in Europe and respective sympathies of Latin American governments with these countries. Freyre's writings acquired an important political role as anti-racist and anti-eugenics texts, above all due to his representativeness as an intellectual close to the US.

As the French would do later, Hanke reduced the importance of some incongruencies and inconsistences in the work of the author of *Casa-grande & senzala* in favor of the political importance of questions raised by the Brazilian sociologist. As will be seen later, the defense of *mestiçagem* in times where eugenic theories and the superiority of races dominated was more important for those intellectuals than the conceptual contradictions or problems of the work.

At the request of Freyre, Hanke translated in 1954 a text that was published in *Journal of Negro Education*. With the title "Brazil and the international crisis," the Brazilian sociologist presented readers with his understanding of the difference between being black in Brazil and the United States: "*For Brazil has no 'African minority' but Brazilians of various origins*[...]."[7] In another part of the text, he stated that miscegenation and the possibilities of social ascension of the *mulatto* "*did not permit the development of that Brazilian consciousness of being a Negro which exists in the United States.*"[8]

Freyre benefited from a time when the so-called *area studies* were forming and becoming established in the US. As Hanke states, the 1939- 1945 period "*saw an unprecedented expansion of Latin American Studies in the United States*."[9] Private and governmental initiatives funded projects, exchanges, and publications of Latin American scholars. The war on the other side of the Atlantic prejudiced and impeded the circulation of professors to Europe, leading them inevitably to move among the Americas. With Europe outside the university scene, it was the time to improve ties with Latin America.

In its 1940 *Annual Report*, the Rockfeller Foundation called attention to the need to establish methods of investigation to have a "*more intelligent understanding of the cultural life of Latin America*."[10] In this context Brazil, an important political ally of the US, awakened the interest of researchers and institutions as an area of strategic importance not only due to the political aspects but also because of its size, resources, and proximity with West Africa.[11]

In the same sense, Freyre, even before being translated, also attracted the interest of black intellectual leaders. An example is the text by James W. Ivy, a collaborator and future editor of *The Crisis*, a periodical founded by W.E.B. Dubois in the 1910s. In 1938, eight years before the publication in English of *Casa-grande & senzala*, Ivy wrote a review in which he presented Freyre to the readers of the journal, highlighting the latter's principal arguments. In the same text, Ivy relativized the criticisms which the Brazilian author received in Brazil because the work was considered as not very scientific, emphasizing instead the appreciation which the work attracted in other parts of the world: "*Freyre has of course, been severely criticized by his Brazilian colleagues for his anecdotica and 'lack of seriousness,' but along with the criticism has gone the fulsome praise of scholars in other parts of the world*."[12]

To reinforce Freyre's merit to his readers Ivy cites Richard Pattee, a well-known specialist in Afro-Latin American studies, director of the Ibero-American Institute of the University of Porto-Rico, and an assiduous collaborator of *The Crisis,* who stated that *Casa-grande & senzala* was "*one of the most extraordinary studies of the Negro in modern times.*"[13]

Important in this scenario is a series of talks given by Freyre in the University of Indiana in 1944. The aim was to present to the US university public a socio-historical inventory of the *ethnic melting pot of Brazil*. In the following year the talks were transformed into a publication entitled *Brazil, an interpretation* (1945). This is a summary of the principal arguments presented in *Casa-grande & senzala*, cited by the historian Frank Tannenbaum as one of his inspirations for the 1946 work *Slave and citizen: The negro in the Americas*. In the same year that Tannenbaum's work appeared, *Casa-grande & senzala* was published in English (*The masters and the slaves*) and

Brazil, an interpretation received its second edition.

For American readers, Freyre's writings assumed that Brazil, despite a Slaveocrat past similar to the United States, did not have any racial extremism or polarization. An example of this reading of Freyre's work can be observed in the words of Glenn Morrow, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Pennsylvania, in an article published in 1951 about Freyre:

> "The thesis of this communication is one which, though apparently involving merely a local question of Brazilian culture, really involves one of the major world-problems of our time. Whether or not the native American and African peoples in Brazil have genuine contributions to make to the development of Brazilian culture, and whether if so they will be allowed to make them, or will be suppressed in favor of the dominant European tradition, is a local example of the world-wide problem of inter-cultural and interracial relations."[14]

The circulation of Freyre's writings and talks in the US opened doors for his ideas to be received in Europe through participation in UNESCO forums. Initially the organization was strongly influenced by intellectuals who taught or studied in US universities. An example of this is the psychology professor Hadley Cantril who organized a meeting in 1948, under the auspices of the project *Tension Affecting International Understanding,* approved during the 2nd UN Assembly. The event, whose title was *Tensions that cause wars*, brought together eight experts from the social sciences and humanities from different parts of the world to discuss the reasons for 'aggressive nationalisms.' Among the participants were Freyre, Georges Gurvith, Gordon Alport, Max Horkheimer, and others.

The French Welcome

Freyre's participation in the *Tensions Project* increased his sociability network in France, since it was on this occasion that the author of *Casa-grande & senzala* personally met the sociologist Georges Gurvitch, who would later become one of the principal articulators and enthusiasts of the translation and publication of Freyre's work in France. During his exile in the United States (1941-45) the naturalized French sociologist of Russian origin worked in the New School for Social Research and participated in the foundation of École Libre des Hautes Études in New York. In 1947 he was invited to teach in Universidade de São Paulo, returning to France the following year.

In his letters written to Freyre, Gurvitch reported his efforts to have his Brazilian friend's book published by Gallimard, as well as narrating his contacts with Roger Caillois, editor of the collection *La Croix du Sud*. In subsequent years Gurvitch tried to get Freyre elected as doctor *Honoris Causa* in Sorbonne and organized together with Roger Bastide, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel a colloquium dedicated entirely to the work of the Brazilian sociologist.

With the title *Gilberto Freyre: Maître de la sociologie brésilienne* the event, coordinated by Henri Gouthier, was held in 1956 in Castelo de Cerisy-la-Salle and counted on the participation of intellectuals such as Leon Bourdon, Roger Bastide, Jean Duvignaud, Clara Malraux, Michel Simon (Miguel Simões), and the Angolan Mário Pinto de Andrade, then a student in the Sorbonne and editor of the journal *Présence africaine* created by Alioune Diop.

Gilberto Freyre between Juan Liscano (on the left), Georges Gurvitch (on the right), and Mario Pinto de Andrade. Castel of Cerisy-la-Salle, 1956.

The French reception was considered by Freyre as the most welcoming. In one of the prefaces to the second Portuguese edition of his work *Sociologia*, he declared that his work had obtained in France "the best comprehension and the most penetrating criticism which an essay of its type could aspire in any language."[15] In another article published in *O Cruzeiro,* Freyre praised the welcome of the historian Lucien Febvre and the connection between his works:

> "*L'initiative est venue de lui de me recevoir de façon exceptionnellement affectueuse. Cela pour avoir découvert dans mes travaux - disait le Professeur Febvre - des affinités de nature historico-sociologique avec les travaux que Marc Bloch et lui-même avaient mis en valeur en France.*"[16]

Freyre was received enthusiastically by people from the French intellectual world such as Georges Balandier, Jean Duvignaud, Georges Gurvith, Fernand Braudel, amongst others. Translated by Roger Bastide and with a preface by Lucien Febvre, in the year of its publication in 1952, *Maîtres et Esclaves* (a translation of the title into French) received two editions. Between 1952 and 1974, it was republished 11 times in the same collection.

To understand the particularities of the French reception, or in other words how Freyre's work came to the knowledge of the French public and why its publication awakened interest, it is possible to list some factors which facilitated the insertion and the discussion of Freyre's book in France, amongst which were: the creation of an intellectual sociability network by Freyre and the professors who were part of the French mission to Brazilian universities in the 1930s; the creation of UNESCO in the Post-War period; and the crisis of late colonialism in Africa.

Approximation with the French university mission

At the beginning of the 1930s, the exchange of French professors in Brazil intensified when the universities of São Paulo (USP) and the Federal District (Rio de Janeiro) were founded. In scientific cooperation missions between the two countries, French professors lectured in the recently founded universities between 1934 and 1940.

Universidade de São Paulo, for example, received professors such as Fernand Braudel, Pierre Monbeig, and Lévi-Strauss, amongst others. Braudel was a professor of a lyceum in Algeria when he went to Brazil in 1935. While he was in Brazil, he had contact with the writings of the Brazilian sociologist who at the time was internationally known. Some years later, in a letter sent to Freyre, the French historian showed that he was an attentive reader of his works.[17]

When he returned to France in 1937, Braudel concerned himself with writing his thesis on the Mediterranean and constructing his university career. During the Second World War he was imprisoned by the Germans in a prison camp. He wrote there, at the

suggestion of his supervisor Lucien Febvre, a long article about the work of Gilberto Freyre which was published in 1943 in *Annales*, at the time called *Mélanges d´Histoire Sociale*. In his article entitled *À travers un continent d´histoire, le Brésil et l´ oeuvre de Gilberto Freyre*[18] the future author of *The Mediterranean* concluded that *Casa-grande & senzala* was the work which best attracted interest to the Brazilian past.

The French cooperation mission in Brazil also resulted in the sociologist Roger Bastide discovering Freyre's work. After becoming a professor in Universidade de São Paulo (USP), the French sociologist followed the intellectual production of the author of *Casa-grande & senzala*. In his correspondence with Freyre Bastide asked for book suggestions and discussed his publications.

In the methodological field, to the contrary of criticisms which he received from USP sociologists, who drew on US inspired scientific sociology, Freyre's writings were considered original in France, a type of sociology of daily life. In a review published in *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, the anthropologist Georges Balandier highlighted that Freyre's work "*révèle incontestablement un souci de se situer hors des catégories usuelles(...); un souci d'échapper à tout conformisme scolaire*."[19]

For authors who wrote about *Casa-grande & senzala* in the French intellectual milieu, the work of the Brazilian sociologist was a contribution to a more "mixed" writing, so to speak. In the same manner that Freyre defended the mixing of races, he also presented his work as the fruit of a hybrid, frontier, sociology. In times when sociological knowledge was specialized and where the influence of US sociometry was present, Freyre's work served as a counterpoint, at least in France of the 1940s, it was used as an example by some more heterodox authors in dealing with the discipline such as Georges Gurvith, Jean Duvignaud, and to a certain extent, Roger Bastide. In other words, the reading of Freyre's work provided elements that had adherence both in the scientific disputes and discussions of that context both in the discussions of a political order related to colonialism and racial questions.

Unesco and fighting against racism

When *Casa-grande & senzala (Maîtres et esclaves)* appeared in French bookshops, a series of texts and publications by the United Nations formed a new racial relations library in the West. Previous texts were discovered and their authors came to acquire a renewed status. Among them were Gilberto Freyre. The Boasian culturalism present in his writings labelled him as an intellectual precursor at a moment when anti-racist discourse was the order of the day. In the wake of the valorization of *mestiçagem*, Roland Barthes, in a brief review written in 1953, gave Freyre the quality of an anti-racist activist:

> "*Enfin, si l'on veut bien songer à l'effroyable mystification qu'a toujours constitué le concept de race, aux mensonges et aux crimes que ce mot, ici et là, n'a pas encore fini d'autoriser, on reconnaîtra que ce livre de science et intelligence est aussi un livre de courage et de combat. Introduire l'explication dans le mythe, c'est pour l'intellectuel la seule façon efficace de militer.*"[20]

French commentators in particular, and Europeans in general, looked at Brazil as a utopian projection of the meeting of races as a positive counterpoint to the segregation observed in the US and South African apartheid. In his preface, Lucien Febvre declared with apparent enthusiasm: "*Grande leçon de cette histoire brésilienne telle que la met sous nous yeux Gilberto Freyre. Elle est toute entière une immense expérience, une expérience privilégiée de fusion de races, d´échanges de civilisations*."[21]The idea of success in the mixture of races defended by the intellectual Brazilian exercised so much influence on the construction of the image of Brazil that Unesco decided to support a project about racial relations in the country, with the participation of Roger Bastide, Charles Wagley, and René Ribeiro amongst others. In general terms the purpose was to observe if the idea of racial harmony was scientifically valid, as "*several incidents, and some angry statements made by Negro organizations, suggest that social relations were not as harmonious as many Brazilians and foreigners liked to believe.*"[22]

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LE BRÉSIL a-t-il réalisé l'harmonie raciale ?

par Alfred MÉTRAUX

LE voyageur qui séjourne à Bahia, la grande métropole noire du Brésil, en retire deux impressions en apparence contradictoires : il est frappé par la multitude et la force des survivances africaines qui ont si profondément marqué la vie de la cité et par le petit nombre de nègres vraiment « noirs » qu'il rencontre, même aux endroits les plus populeux. En effet, si presque toute la population de Bahia est de « couleur », les croisements entre blancs, Indiens et noirs ont créé un type original qui finira peut-être par se stabiliser dans cette région sous la forme d'une race nouvelle.

Pour qui est familier des cultes vodous d'Haïti, rien n'est plus étrange que d'assister à leurs contreparties brésiliennes. Les **orixa** (dieux esprits), les rites, les chants sont à peu de chose près les mêmes, et s'ils diffèrent de ceux d'Haïti, c'est par une saveur plus nettement africaine. On sent à Bahia que la côte d'Afrique n'est éloignée ni dans le temps ni dans l'espace. Cependant, **Baba-lorixa** (prêtres), **mãe de santo** (prêtresses), **filha de santo** (servantes du dieu), sont parfois si clairs de teint qu'on a peine à les considérer comme des noirs.

C'est dans ce prodigieux amalgame que se manifestent le plus nettement, au Brésil, les tendances raciales qui ont prévalu depuis la période coloniale. Celles-ci sont illustrées par une anecdote célèbre que nous raconte Henry Koster, un voyageur anglais. Ayant demandé à un de ses amis si un certain **Capitão-mor** (Gouverneur de province) était mulâtre ou non, il reçut une réponse qui ne manqua pas de le surprendre : « Il était mulâtre autrefois, mais il ne l'est plus. » Prié de s'expliquer sur ce point, son interlocuteur, étonné, s'écria : « Mais un gouverneur de province peut-il donc être mulâtre ? »

Esprit de tolérance, sentiment familial

CE dialogue résume, à lui seul, la différence essentielle d'attitude envers le problème des races existant au Brésil et dans une partie du monde anglo-saxon. Alors qu'aux Etats-Unis et en Afrique du Sud, les hommes de couleur, même s'ils n'ont qu'une goutte de sang noir, sont classés comme nègres, au Brésil, la situation sociale a beaucoup plus d'importance que la pigmentation de la peau. En ceci, les Brésiliens se montrent les véritables héritiers des Portugais, pour lesquels le sens racial n'a jamais eu une grande signification et qui se sont croisés très librement avec tous les peuples des pays où ils se sont imposés comme conquérants et colonisateurs.

Dans les colonies portugaises et plus tard dans l'empire brésilien, le sort des esclaves a toujours été plus doux que dans les établissements français ou anglais, car l'Eglise et les traditions juridiques étaient favorables aux esclaves et tendaient à respecter en eux leur dignité d'homme. Aussi, l'émancipation était prônée et considérée comme œuvre pie.

L'absorption se fait du clair au foncé

ON possède de multiples exemples de l'ascension rapide des mulâtres et du rôle important qu'ils commencèrent à jouer, dès le XVIIIe siècle, dans la société brésilienne. En fait, ils formaient une sorte de classe moyenne, intermédiaire entre les esclaves et les blancs. Le régime impérial, quoique ayant maintenu l'esclavage, fut indulgent aux mulâtres et les carrières libérales leur étant ouvertes, les plus intelligents d'entre eux y entrèrent, recueillant honneurs et distinctions. Ainsi, nombreux sont les Brésiliens distingués ou illustres qui étaient mulâtres et auraient été classés, ailleurs, comme « nègres ».

Cette ascension des sang-mêlé vers les plus hautes situations intellectuelles et politiques se poursuit toujours et s'il est vrai que le président de la République Nilo Peçanha avait du sang noir dans les veines, c'est le sommet même de la hiérarchie qui a été atteint par les hommes de couleur.

Que la « couleur » ne soit pas, au Brésil, une barrière comparable à celle qui existe dans certaines régions des Etats-Unis, nous en avons la preuve dans l'absorption constante des éléments foncés par ceux de teint plus clair. Comme Donald Pierson l'a fait remarquer dans son livre « Negroes in Brazil », les blancs absorbent les mulâtres et les mulâtres les noirs, phénomène reconnu par l'opinion publique et approuvé par elle. Cependant ce serait une erreur que de vouloir simplifier la réalité brésilienne à l'extrême. Si des mariages interraciaux sont fréquents, ils ont lieu entre individus de même classe sociale et sont rarement conclus entre personnes placées aux extrémités de la gamme des couleurs.

Tout le problème tient dans une chanson

LE Brésil peut donc être donné en exemple comme un pays où les rapports entre races sont relativement harmonieux, mais il serait excessif d'affirmer que le préjugé de race y est inconnu. Un certain nombre d'écrivains brésiliens n'ont pas caché leur pessimisme racial en ce qui concerne les noirs. Le folklore brésilien contient même une série de proverbes raciaux dans lesquels, notamment, on refuse d'employer pour les noirs les verbes ou les adjectifs dont on use pour les autres êtres humains.

Une chanson très connue traduit ce préjugé latent :

Negro era o olhar de Maria
E a barba de Sao José,
So branco não quê sê preto,
Mulato tambem não qué.

Il s'agit d'un nègre qui énumère toutes les bonnes choses qui sont noires — le café, la jaboticaba, les yeux de Marie, la barbe de saint Joseph, mais qui constate, non sans ironie, que « seul le blanc ne veut pas être noir et le mulâtre non plus ».

Ces pointes n'empêchent pas les gens du peuple de faire bon ménage malgré les différences de pigmentation. Mais à mesure que l'on monte dans l'échelle sociale, les manifestations concrètes du préjugé racial se multiplient. Elles ne sont jamais cyniques, mais reposent sur des conventions tacites, des sortes de « gentlemen's agreements » conclus au détriment des noirs.

Déçus d'être pauvres plus que d'être noirs

UNE autre ombre au tableau traditionnel des relations raciales au Brésil nous est fournie par le réveil d'un véritable racisme dans les classes ouvrières de villes comme São-Paulo et Rio-de-Janeiro. Ses origines sont économiques, car il exprime la crainte de la concurrence que représente, chez les ouvriers blancs, l'arrivée d'un prolétariat non qualifié désertant les zones rurales pour répondre aux appels d'une industrie en pleine évolution.

Que l'on prenne garde cependant. Le jugement formulé en termes racistes n'est souvent que l'expression d'un sentiment de classe. En raison de la date récente de la libération des esclaves : 1888, les gens de « couleur » se trouvent surtout dans les classes socialement inférieures et constituent le prolétariat urbain et rural. Aussi, la notion d'homme du peuple est trop souvent associée à celle de « couleur ». Un homme de couleur risque de souffrir d'une condescendance, empreinte de mépris, venant de gens plus instruits et plus raffinés que lui, mais c'est aussi en vertu de cette même prédominance de l'esprit de classe qu'un homme de couleur riche ou instruit sera « blanchi ».

Situation envisagée avec confiance

NEANMOINS, si tout n'est pas parfait au Brésil en matière de relations raciales, les antagonismes que nous venons de signaler ne peuvent pas soulever de graves problèmes.

Le préjugé racial, même s'il existe dans sa forme pure, est réprouvé par la morale courante et considéré comme contraire à l'idéal humain dont s'inspirent les Brésiliens comme les Américains. La force de la tradition a ainsi facilité, au Brésil, la solution du dilemme. Les intellectuels de ce pays tirent fierté de la démocratie raciale qu'ils croient avoir réalisée, et aucun candidat aux charges publiques n'oserait aujourd'hui faire étalage de sentiments racistes.

Le gouvernement brésilien a toujours été opposé aux préjugés et à la discrimination raciale. Déjà au temps de l'empire, en pleine ère esclavagiste, il n'était pas considéré décent d'étaler au grand jour de telles antipathies. L'aventure dont le grand architecte mulâtre, André Rebouças, a été le héros, sous le règne de Pedro II, le confirme : invité à un bal de la cour, il se tenait dans l'embrasure d'une fenêtre n'osant regarder les danseurs et se sentant ignoré volontairement par eux quand l'impératrice, ayant remarqué son embarras, le fit chercher pour lui demander de danser avec elle.

Cet ensemble de faits explique pourquoi l'UNESCO a pris récemment l'initiative d'une grande enquête au Brésil, sur les facteurs psychologiques, sociaux et économiques qui expliquent la nature des relations raciales dans ce pays. La réaction des sociologues brésiliens, qui ont demandé à explorer tous les aspects favorables et défavorables de la question, révèle le sentiment de confiance avec lequel tout citoyen brésilien peut envisager la situation raciale dans son pays.

Meu Negrinho. L'expression **meu Negro** (mon Nègre) et ses variantes **meu Nego** et **meu Negrinho**, sont utilisées au Brésil, même par les Blancs s'adressant à d'autres Blancs, pour exprimer la tendresse. Les lettres de l'époque coloniale se terminaient souvent par la formule **„Saudosa prima e muito seu negro"** (Votre cousin et Nègre affectueux).

A l'époque coloniale, la **Maison du Maître** ou **Casa grande**, entourée de ses cases d'esclaves, a joué un rôle prédominant dans l'évolution de la société brésilienne. La discrimination raciale était assez rare. Le maître pouvait être un mulâtre et l'esclave un métis presque blanc. Ci-dessus une Maison du Maître du XIXe siècle dans l'état de Bahia.

Un **caboclo** — métis — du nord du Brésil. Dans ses veines coule le sang de trois races : indienne, noire et blanche.

Case studies derived from the project collected vast empirical material which deconstructed the idea of racial harmony present in Brazilian society, although this did not prevent the belief that the country was a 'differentiated case' in relation to other forms of racism in the world. This idea was sustained during the first half of the 1950s, losing force in the 1960s, as will be seen below.

Also in the first half of the 1950s, when Brazil enjoyed international sympathy due to the image of racial harmony, Freyre was invited to prepare a study of the racial situation in South Africa, with the report being presented to the UN General Assembly and published in 1954 with the title *Elimination des conflits et tensions entre les races*. In the report presented to the United Nations, the Brazilian sociologist affirmed his '*lusotropical*' thesis differentiated the Iberian model of colonization from the other models, whether Belgian, English, or Dutch, which were based on racial discrimination. In the conclusion written by the author of *Brazil: an interpretation*, the solution for the South African problem was a change in customs based on the Latin American example.[23]

Casa-grande & senzala and the context of decolonization

In addition to intellectual networks, of interest to the theme of *mestiçagem*, what other reason would lead a French reader at the beginning of the post-war period to become interested in a book about Brazil written in the 1930s about Brazilian history and

culture? Again, it is Lucien Febvre who best answers this question. In the preface to the translation of *Casa-grande & senzala* in1952, the French historian calls attention to the colonial question experienced by France at the end of 1952, highlighting the importance of Freyre's work in thinking about this question.

In an article published in the journal *Population*, the sociologist Jean Séguy concluded in 1953 that Freyre's writings "*nous expliquent comment ce pays a échappé à la ségrégation et à ses problèmes*."[24] The example of Brazil consisted of being the demonstration that, even historically under colonial domination, Brazilian society managed to break away from racial segregation and to become miscegenated. This supposed exemplary model seemed opportune at a moment when the principal European powers which were making an effort to combat racism were, at the same time, holders of colonies and protectorates. Was it possible to defend anti-racist discourse and be at the same time colonialist? This question seems to find a response in the Brazil of Gilberto Freyre.

It is from this perspective that the French preface to *Casa-grande & senzala* became a symptom of the concerns and expectations experienced by some French intellectuals given the crisis in colonialism and the "*fate of white civilization in Africa.*"[25] While anticolonialism in France was not majoritarian, Freyre's work appeared to provide an alternative which allowed the maintenance of the colonial system from a so-called 'humanist' criteria, a type of *enlightened* or reformist colonialism[26] which contained or at least delayed colonial conflicts and ruptures. However, this belief did not last very long, since with the Algerian War in 1954, the Bandung Conference in 1955, the Moroccan and Tunisian crisis in 1956, the anti-colonialist movement expanded and acquired broad new adhesion to the *Manifesto of the 121* also known as the *Declaration on the Right to Insubmission in the Algerian War,* signed by intellectuals and writings such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Marguerite Duras, Michel Leiris, and others.

Portuguese reception of Luso-Tropicalism

It was in the middle of European anxieties about the maintenance of their colonies and protectorates that the reception of Freyre's writings was embraced by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* in the post-war period. This welcome represented a change in the way the Salazar regime positioned itself until then in relation to the writings of the Brazilian intellectual. In the first years after *Casa-grande & senzala* the author's ideas on Portugal were not well accepted by the Portuguese government.

Although Freyre dedicated various pages to discussing the *world which the Portuguese created* - the title of a set of talks held in Lisbon, Porto, and Coimbra at the end of the 1930s -, the image of the Portuguese colonizer, portrayed by the author as supposedly prone to miscegenation, was explained as due to their ethnic hybrid formation, the result of a mixture of various peoples, including Arabs and Africans. For Freyre, the Islamic inheritance of the Portuguese explained their assimilating nature, without any ethnocentric vocation.

In a world marked by eugenicist dictatorships, it did not appear very interesting for the Portuguese to be presented as a people "*undefined between Europe and Africa,*" with *"an Algarve which is almost Africa, with an Alentejo that is still semi-Moor*."[27] However, in the Post-War period, when the pieces on the board of international geopolitics moved, the treatment given to the racial and cultural miscegenation were radically resignified.

In a scenario in which countries linked to the United Nations or which intended to join it had to balance their colonial possessions with discourse of assimilation and intermixing, Portugal found in Freyre's work an intellectual discourse which authorized and reconciled the existence of colonial territories with humanist discourses, under the guardianship of an intellectual who had prestige in international forums.

Using the arguments of the renowned Brazilian sociologist was a good way to defend the discourse of Portuguese colonialism, this time with a positive veneer, as it was assumed that Portuguese colonization was distinct from Belgian or British colonialism, since the Portuguese, in their experience in tropical lands, did not suffer from racial hatred and were naturally prone to ethnic confraternization. This argument of Portuguese *soft colonialism* was used as a theoretical justification to help the country get a seat in the United Nations, though this only occurred in 1955, in part due to the hesitations of the Salazar regime to accept the principal of self-determination of people contained in the *United Nations Charter*.

The 1951 reform of the Portuguese constitution occurred in the same year that Freyre was invited by the then Minister of Overseas Territories (*Ultramar*) Sarmento Rodrigues to travel to Portuguese dominions in Africa and Asia (Goa). It symbolizes a set of political and judicial maneuvers, assisted by the pro-regime *intelligentsia,*[28] whose scope consisted in avoiding the pressures and inspection of the UN in relation to the colonial question. The intention was to demonstrate that "*Portugal did not have a colonial empire, but an Ultramar" (or overseas territory).*[29] As Claudia Castelo stated, it was therefore necessary *"to provide Portuguese diplomats with (supposedly) scientific arguments capable of legitimating the presence of Portugal in Africa and Asia."*[30] Luso-tropical ideas served, for example, as a substrata for the reformist colonialism of Minister Adriano Moreira, who in 1957 had the Statute of Indigenous People revoked, a fact that was commemorated by Gilberto Freyre.[31]

The defense of the maintenance of colonial domination with a discourse of a supposed racial democracy based on a Lusotropical community was also fed by the promotion of the writings and publications of the author of *Casa-grande & senzala* by the Portuguese government. In the 1960s, Freyre's lectures during the commemorations of the fifth centenary of the death of Prince Henry were published in the work *O Luso e o Trópico*, which was translated into other languages and distributed by the *Estado Novo* to Portuguese diplomats. In France, the translation received the title *Le Portugais et les tropiques.*

In general terms, Luso-tropicalism, in the words of Freyre, consisted of a systematic study of "*an entire set or an entire of complex of adaptations of the Portuguese to the tropics and of the tropics not only to the imperial yoke, but to the very special trans-European vocation of the Portuguese people. Not only trans-European: specifically tropical."*[32]

The appropriation of Luso-tropicalism by the Portuguese government was not only accompanied by supporters. Intellectuals opposed to the regime rebelled against the Luso-tropical thesis. An example of this is the Portuguese philosopher and essayist Eduardo Lourenço in his articles entitled: "Brazil - Guarantor of Portuguese Colonialism" which appeared in *Portugal Livre, jornal de oposição ao salazarismo,* published by Portuguese exiles in São Paulo between 1958 and 1961, and "Freyre's Purpose," which appeared in the culture and arts supplement of *O Comércio do Porto* on 11 July 1961.

Aspects of the African reception of Luso-tropicalism

It is important to remember that some previous years the criticism of Luso-tropicalism had been led by an Angolan, the poet and writer Mário Pinto de Andrade, who, as emphasized before, had participated in the Cerisy Colloquium held in France. A year earlier in 1955 he had published in the French periodical *Présence Africaine,* the article "*Qu'est-ce que le Luso-Tropicalisme?"(What is the Luso-tropicalism?)* under the pseudonym Buanga Fele.

In his text, Andrade, who would become president of the Movement of the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in the 1960s, severely criticized the Luso-tropical thesis of the Brazilian sociologist. The Angolan writer identified the contradictions of the method used by Freyre to deconstruct his thesis:

> "*C'est justement le refus d'envisager le fonctionement de l'appareil colonial comme étant au premier chef une emprise d'exploitation économique dirigée par un pouvoir politique,c'est ce refus-là, qui détermine la faiblesse de sa sociologie.
>
> [...] Au fond, le métissage a été largement pratiqué au Brésil non pas en vertu de considérations morales ou d'une vision politique mais en raison d'une simple circonstance - le nombre très réduit de femmes blanches*."[33]

Andrade uses statistical tables and data to prove that the propensity of the Portuguese to inter-racial contacts, so defended by Freyre, did not occur in the territories of Portuguese Africa. In Mozambique, for example, in a population of more than five million people, only 25,000 were *mestiços.*[34]

In the Cape Verde archipelago, Freyre's ideas were initially well received by the intellectual elites who in the 1930s created a regionalist literary movement around the publication of the journal *Claridade*. The poet Manuel Lopes stated that "*in the*

sociological and ethnographical essay a portentous book exercised a great influence over the Cape Verdeans: Casa-grande & senzala by Gilberto Freyre."[35] The texts about the author, published in the journal, far from being anti-colonialists, sought arguments in Freyre which denoted the specificity of Cape Verde in the Portuguese colonial complex.

However, in the 1950s, Freyre's visit to the archipelago, sponsored by the Portuguese government, disappointed some Cape Verdean intellectuals. The poet and writer Baltazar Lopes, founder of *Claridade* and an admirer of *Casa-grande & senzala* since the 1930s, declared in a radio program his disillusion with the criticism which Freyre had made of the Cape Verdeans.

Lopes highlighted the contradictions between Gilberto Freyre, author of a work which inspired his generation to valorize miscegenation and mixed cultures, and the Freyre sponsored by the Portuguese government. In his visit, the Brazilian sociologist observed the massive presence of African traits on the island of São Tiago, an aspect which in his opinion, was similar to Martinique or Trinidad. However, for Freyre, this prominently African trait revealed that the miscegenation in Cape Verde had not succeeded as it had in Brazil. For example, he disliked the *crioulo* spoken on the island.

For Lopes, these affirmations were a disappointment and contradiction, since what was expected to be seen as a success, appeared to Freyre as a flaw, a problem. The author of *Casa-grande & senzala* which, in the opinion of the writers of *Claridade,* had rehabilitated the African and *mestiça* presence, this time, to the contrary, resented the lack of the Portuguese element in those lands. In response, Lopes stated that "the Cape Verdeans were neither European, nor African, but Cape Verdeans."[36]

In response to Freyre, the novelist Gabriel Mariano, who had written some texts about Brazilians, also reinforced the thesis that the *mestiço* was the central and active character in the Luso-tropical complex: "*it was the blacks and mulattos who were directly responsible for the structuration of society*."[37]

In Guinea, the historian and navy officer, Teixeira da Mota, highlighted that Luso-tropicalism could not be "lightly applied to the case of Guinea."[38] Similar to what Mario Pinto de Andrade had done in his article published in *Présence Africaine*, Mota invalidated the thesis of a successful miscegenation in the tropics by noting that in numbers the assimilated population in Guinea was minimal and "*just one quarter of it consisted of whites."*

In terms of the liberation struggles in Lusophone Africa, Luso-tropicalism was not well received by African leaders who saw Freyre's ideas as an ideology perpetuated by Portuguese colonial dominion.[39] Amílcar Cabral, one of the fathers of the independence of Guinéa-Bissau and Cape Verde, wrote in 1969 that Luso-tropicalism was the myth through which it was erroneously concluded that "*our peoples lived in the best of worlds, that we were very happy Portuguese of color."*[40]

In the second half of the 1960s, Luso-tropicalism began to decline not only due to anti-colonial struggles, but through refutations of a methodological and scientific order. The British historian Charles Boxer, in his lectures published at the beginning of the 1960s, argued that "*racial relations in the Portuguese colonial empire invariably did not present the harmonious integration which Luso-tropicalismo assumes.*"[41]

In this way, other specialists such as the Brazilian Alberto Guerreiro Ramos who, at the end of the 1950s published an article critical of Luso-tropicalism in the pages of the French journal *Arguments,* and the already mentioned Mário Pinto de Andrade, not to mention others, demonstrated that the Luso-tropical thesis was not valid to explain the complex racial relations developed in Portuguese colonial territories. As an indirect reaction to these observations, Freyre wrote a article in 1966 in which he moved the concept of biological *mestiçagem* to cultural interpenetration.[42]

As in the Brazilian case, the weakening of Gilberto Freyre's thought under the auspices of discussion about racial relations, as well as the scenario of the Cold War and in particular post-1964 Brazil, led intellectuals to refute and to consider as a myth the polemical thesis of a racial democracy in the country.[43]

By way of conclusion

The different appreciations of Gilberto Freyre's work in the international sphere are indications of the adaptations and appropriations of these ideas to different horizons of expectation of their readers under the auspices of geopolitics, customs, and science. In this way, the plastic capacity of Freyre's work, in the frontier between literature, sociology, and history, allowed plural readers of ideas in distinct temporalities and spaces, raising Freyre to the category of one of the Brazilian authors most translated and discussed abroad. The political scenario of the interwar period and the later bipolarization of the Cold War, as well as epistemological changes created in these contexts, provided a fertile ground for the questions dealt with in a work concerned with addressing the colonial slavocracy past in Brazil, could circulate in Atlantic spaces and be received by interlocutors with different intellectual and political orientations.

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3. Gilberto. Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, 4ª edição definitiva, (Ed. Liv. José Olimpio Editora. Rio de Janeiro, 1943) 2 vols., 17-18.
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5. Gilberto Freyre, *Social life in Brazil in the middle of the 19th century*, (New York. n.n, 1922).
6. Lewis Hanke, *Gilberto Freyre: vida y obra : bibliografia : antelogia*, (New York, Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1939), 26.
7. *Ibid*, 512.
8. *Ibid*.
9. *Ibid.*, 32.
10. *The Rockfeller Foundation Annual Report for 1940*, 51 *apud.* Lewis Hanke. *op.cit.*, 33.
11. Helen Delpar, *Looking South. The evolution of Latin Americanist Scholarship in the United States, 1850-1975*, (Tucaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008) 123.
12. James W. Ivy, "The negro influence in Brazil," *The Crisis*, (May, 1941): 160.
13. *Ibid*.
14. Glenn Morrow, "Discussion of Dr. Gilberto Freyre's paper," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol.4, no.2, *Papers and Discussions of the First Inter-American Conference of Philosophy*, (Dec., 1943), 176.
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16. Gilberto Freyre, "Mestre Lucien Febvre," *O Cruzeiro*. Nov., 19, 1957.
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20. Roland Barthes, "Maîtres et Esclaves", *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, Paris, vol.1, (mar. 1953): 11.
21. Lucien Febvre, "Préface, *op.cit.*, 20.
22. Alfred Métraux, "Report on Race Relations in Brazil," *Unesco Courier*, vol.V, 8/9, (1952): 6.

23. Jerry Dávila, ”Entre dois mundos: Gilberto Freyre, a ONU e o ‘apartheid’ sul-africano”, História Social 19 (2010) :138.

24. Jean Séguy, “Gilberto Freyre-Maîtres et Esclaves”, *Population*, vol.8. no.4., (1953): 806.

25. Lucien Febvre, “Préface”, *op.cit*.

26. No artigo “Casa Grande & Senzala, a questão racial e o ‘colonialismo esclarecido’ na França do Pós-Segunda Guerra Mundial”, I discuss the term enlightened colonialism.

27. Gilberto Freyre, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas*, *op.cit.*, 14.

28. João Alberto da Costa Pinto, 451.

29. Fernando Martins, 63.

30. Claudia Castelo, *op.cit.*, 2011, 272.

31. Antônio E. Duarte Silvia, “Sarmento Rodrigues, a Guiné e o luso-tropicalismo”, 2008, p.50.

32. Gilberto Freyre, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas*, *op.cit.*, 2-3.

33. Buanga Fele, “Qu'est-ce que le Luso-tropicalisme ?”, *Présence Africaine*, (oct.-nov 1955): 27-29.

34. *Ibid.*, 25.

35. Manuel Lopes, “Reflexões sobre a literatura cabo-verdiana ou a literatura nos meios populares”, *Colóquios cabo-verdianos, apud*, Luís Reis Torgal, F. I. Pimenta, e J.S. Sousa, (eds.), *Comunidades imaginadas. Nação e Nacionalismos em África*, (Coimbra, Universidade de Coimbra 2008), 16.

36. Baltasar Lopes, *Cabo Verde visto por Gilberto Freyre*, 1956, *apud* Daniel PEREIRA, 36.

37. Gabriel Mariano, *apud.* Daniel Pereira, *op.cit.*, 34.

38. A.Teixeira da Mota, 654, *apud* Antônio E. Duarte Silva, 52-53.

39. José Luís Cabaço Cabaço, 16 *apud* Michel Cahen, “A boa ventura anti-luso-tropicalista de uma tese moçambicana”, Jun. 2014.

40. Amílcar Cabral, “Prefácio”, Basil Davidson, *Révolution en Afrique - La libération de la Guinée portugaise*, (Paris, Seuil, 1969), 11-12, *apud* António E. Duarte Silva, *op.cit.*, 54.

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