



Province of Alagoas, Brazil: the presence of orphaned, black and brown students in secondary school independent classes (1844-1847)¹

Província das Alagoas, Brasil: a presença de alunos órfãos, pretos e pardos nas aulas avulsas de ensino secundário (1844-1847)

Provincia de las Alagoas, Brasil: la presencia de alumnos huérfanos, negros y pardos en las clases singulares de enseñanza secundaria (1844-1847)

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Abstract

The text is intend to reveal historical particularities of Province of Alagoas with regard to the presence of orphans, blacks and browns in the so-called sparse classes of the secondary education, yet in the first half of the nineteenth century. The research consisted mainly in locating, transcribing and analyzing school maps Latin Grammar classes both in the capital and in the interior of the Province, produced between 1844 and 1847 by the teachers of the time. The said maps are shelved in the Public Archive of Alagoas, Brazil. Using the theoretical-methodological contributions of Fonseca (2007), Veiga (2008) and Cruz (2009), we sought to reshape the situation and social action of blacks beyond enslavement and marginalization, considering that they too they too were inserted in the schooling process and civilization.

Keywords: Sparse classes. Secondary school. Orphaned students. Black and brown.

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Resumo

O texto objetiva revelar particularidades históricas da Província das Alagoas no que diz respeito à presença de alunos órfãos, pretos e pardos nas chamadas aulas avulsas do ensino secundário, ainda na primeira metade do século XIX. A pesquisa consistiu, sobretudo, na localização, transcrição e análise de mapas escolares das aulas de Gramática Latina tanto da capital quanto do interior da Província, produzidos entre 1844 e 1847, pelos professores da época. Os referidos mapas encontram-se acondicionados no Arquivo Público de Alagoas, Brasil. Utilizando os aportes teórico-metodológicos de Fonseca (2007), Veiga (2008) e Cruz (2009), buscamos redimensionar a situação e ação social dos negros para além da escravização e marginalização, tendo em vista que também eles estiveram inseridos no processo de escolarização e civilização.

Palavras-chave: Aulas avulsas. Ensino secundário. Alunos órfãos. Pretos e pardos.

Resumen

El texto tiene por objeto revelar particularidades históricas de la Provincia de las Alagoas en lo que se refiere a la presencia de alumnos huérfanos, negros y pardos en las llamadas clases singulares de la enseñanza secundaria, aún en la primera mitad del siglo XIX. La investigación consistió, sobre todo, en la localización, transcripción y análisis de mapas escolares de las clases de Gramática Latina tanto de la capital cuánto del interior de la Provincia, producidos entre 1844 y 1847, por los profesores de la época. Los mencionados mapas se encuentran envasados en el Archivo Público de Alagoas, Brasil. Utilizando los aportes teórico-metodológicos de Fonseca (2007), Veiga (2008) e y Cruz (2009), buscamos redimensionar la situación y acción social de los negros además de la esclavización y marginalización, teniendo en vista que ellos también han estado introducidos en el proceso de escolarización y civilización.

Palabras-clave: Clases singulares. Enseñanza secundaria. Alumnos huérfanos. Negros y pardos.

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Introduction

Secondary education was introduced to Brazil by the Jesuits, although other religious orders such as Carmelites, Franciscans and Benedictines also devoted themselves to this level of education. Based on the *Ratio Studiorum*, Jesuit secondary schools introduced literate culture into an environment in which writing was rare or absent and in which there was a notable differentiation between the humanities-based education of elite children and the education of native groups, which focused on teaching catechism. After the Jesuits were expelled in 1759 during the Pombaline reforms, Brazilian secondary education consisted of classes in all the captaincies, maintaining the same distinction between elite and poor students. Secondary schools established during the imperial period followed the same lines, and their main social function was to provide university preparation for those who would become the political-administrative elite of the provinces and the national Brazilian state that was being formed.

Given this finding, enrollment and attendance of orphaned, black and brown students in independent Latin Grammar classes in Alagoas leads us to question one of the paradigms held by studies and research in the field of educational history with regard to Brazilian secondary education in the 19th century. This assumption, to which most scholars in the field subscribe, is based on the basic idea that this model of education was intended only for elite students, i.e., white students, not black or brown students.

Based on the empirical evidence presented in this article, we suggest a working hypothesis that confirms that students were from the less privileged social strata, although some of them may have belonged to more well-off social groups. According to Cruz (2009), although the criterion of skin color was the main method of distinguishing social groups, it was not always possible to know "[...] who was in fact, a slave, such as in the case of an African descendent or Brazilian-born black person, especially in urban areas, where the economic activities carried out permitted greater autonomy [...]" (CRUZ, 2009, p. 113). In addition, the mere condition of being an orphan was not necessarily an indicator of poverty, as elite children could also be orphaned.

The temporal cross-section chosen, from 1844 to 1847, is justified by the existence and location of the documents analyzed, which are stored at the Public Archives of Alagoas, Brazil. The main sources are school records kept by teachers at that time.² The first set of records was kept by Fr. Francisco de Assis Ribeiro, a Latin teacher in Maceió, dating from 1844; the second was kept by Fr. Leopoldino Antonio Fonseca, a Latin teacher in the town of Atalaia, starting in 1847; and the third was kept by Fr. Antonio Craveiro de Barros Leite, who taught Latin in the city of Penedo, also dating from 1847.

The theoretical-methodological approach taken is based on Fonseca (2007), Veiga (2008) and Cruz (2009) seeking to reassess the circumstances and social action of blacks beyond enslavement and marginalization, considering that they were also involved in the process of formal education and civilization. We therefore want to contribute to the underexplored discussion of the presence of less well-off social groups, especially black and brown people, in secondary education during the 19th century.³

²School records were documents kept by teachers in primary and secondary schools that were to be delivered promptly to inspectors. They primarily served the bureaucratic function of attesting to students' enrollment and attendance, as well as the payment of the teacher's salary. They therefore served as instruments for the control of teachers' work. They also provided access to information about students, such as names, parentage, birthplace, behavior, skin color and progress.

³It is important to emphasize that the documents examined (school records) use the terms black and brown, as reflected by the title of the article. In some parts of the text, however, we chose to use the term black, and this category is increasingly gaining recognition and meaning in studies that address the groups known as "preto," "pardo," "crioulo" and "cabra" in Brazilian society. To better understand this terminology, see Fonseca (2007).

It is important to highlight that according to population records, the total population of the province of Alagoas in 1849⁴ was 207,766, of whom approximately 70% were black or brown; of these, 72% were enslaved, and only 28% were free by birth or manumission. As a large part of Alagoas's population had no access to formal education, it is notable that although the number of black and brown students in secondary schools was small, they came into contact with literate culture, which offered an opportunity to master the behavioral codes of free people and be considered civilized in the eyes of society. According to the social arrangement of the time, the presence of these "men of color" in secondary education testifies to the ability of black and brown people to circulate in Alagoan society and equipped them to exercise a wide range of roles in and beyond the province.

In addition to the introduction, the text is divided into two parts. In the first, we analyze the case of Justiniano Honorato de Almeida, an orphan in the Latin Grammar class in the provincial capital of Maceió in 1844, as well as his social trajectory and that of his family. Next, we discuss the presence of black and brown students in Latin Grammar classes in the provincial towns of Atalaia and Penedo in 1847. Last, we present our concluding thoughts.

An orphaned student in a Latin Grammar class in Maceió

The first set of records examined related to the Latin Grammar class in Maceió, taught by Fr. Francisco de Assis Ribeiro. In a manuscript dated March 15, 1844, Ribeiro attests to having enrolled 23 students in his class. The students were listed in a hierarchical order according to their level of knowledge, from the most basic level, such as studying adjectives, to more complex levels, such as studying the works of Sallustius and Virgil; those who were at a higher level were considered very advanced students.⁵ Among these were José Francisco Soares, Delfino José Oliveira and José de Souza Barboza. Seven students were studying Sallustius and Virgil, four were studying Cornelius and fables, and the others were progressing in syntax, nouns, language and adjectives. All were well behaved and ranged from 12 to 21 years of age. In the column where parents' names were noted, some women's names appear, such as Felicidade Perpectua, mother of Aprigio Justiniano de Goes, Mrs. Anna Joaquim da Costa, mother of the students Joaquim da Costa and João Luiz de Araujo, and Maria Margarida de [illegible], mother of Custodio Francisco de Mello.⁶

In the column for parental information next to one student's name appears the notation "orphan." This was Justiniano Honorato de Almeida, a 15-year-old native of Penedo. Like the other students, D'Almeida was well behaved and was studying syntax.

Other sources provided us information about D'Almeida's professional and family history. In a letter to Imperial Council member João Alfredo Correia de Oliveira dated September 25, 1888, the graduate of the Latin Grammar class petitions for a promotion in his public service position. In that message, D'Almeida says he has been a public official in the Finance office of the province of Alagoas for more than 40 years. He reports that he has held various posts, including simple first-class guard; unloading officer; second clerk in the Penedo Customs House at the time of its establishment in 1868; and second clerk in the Treasury, the position he held at the time of his petition to the Council member. In the letter

⁴Summary records of the population of the province of Alagoas. Available at: <http://brazil.crl.edu/bsd/bsd/15/000038.html> Accessed: March 12, 2017.

⁵The records do not indicate which works of these authors were studied. These may have included Sallustius' *Bellum Catilinae* and Virgil's *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid*, as these were frequently used in secondary school Latin classes in the 19th century, as noted by Arriada (2007) and Ferronato (2012).

⁶Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapas escolares, 1844. Cx. 0061.

requesting promotion, D'Almeida notes that he also worked on the special commission for the construction of the Paulo Afonso railway in 1883. In support of his request, he presents the following:

The undersigned is married and supports a large family, and his children are currently in need of education, the most valuable legacy parents can leave their children:

He has provided more than forty (40) years of consecutive service to the Finance office in the customs office of Maceió [...].

During a long career as a public servant, he has taken only fifteen days of unpaid leave, during which time he came to the capital city to accompany his family, as his commission in that customs office had been extended.⁷

As mentioned, the fact of being an orphan is not in itself an indicator of a student's poverty, as the children of rich people could also be orphaned. However, this review of the evidence left by the subject reinforces our assumption that in this particular case, the student was poor. First, the fact that he had a large family seemed to the petitioner to be plausible grounds for requesting better financial conditions to educate his children. More particularly, one of his sons joined and used the services of the Educational and Support Society for Clerks (1882-1884).⁸ The Society comprised craftsmen, workers and employees in the commercial houses of Maceió and, among other activities, offered night classes for business education. Notably, at the time, taking night classes could indicate a situation of poverty or social solidarity among workers for training of their partners or people close to them.

According to entries in the baptismal records of the Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres Cathedral in Maceió, Justiniano Honorato de Almeida and his wife, Guilhermina Lima de Almeida, had at least seven children: João Almeida (João Luiz Honorato de Almeida), baptized on June 16, 1859; Graciliano de Almeida (Graciliano de Almeida Xexeo), born on August 12, 1862, and baptized on December 14 of the same year; Octaviano de Almeida, baptized on March 5, 1864; Octavia de Almeida, baptized on March 5, 1864; Cecília de Almeida, born on June 2, 1871, and baptized on February 10, 1877; Ritta de Almeida, born on July 12, 1875, and baptized January 14, 1876; and Anna de Almeida, born on May 28, 1876, and baptized February 10, 1877. According to the obituary for D. Guilhermina, published in the newspaper *Gutenberg* on January 21, 1896, the couple's other son was Benedicto Honorato de Almeida.

Among the children of Justiniano and Guilhermina, João Luiz Honorato de Almeida was a member and student of the Educational and Support Society of Clerks of Maceió. According to Maciel (2011, p. 72), the bylaws of the Society defined five categories of commercial employees: "[...] first were the brokers; then the auctioneers; the third category of commercial employees consisted of managers, bookkeepers and clerks; the fourth was made up of dock-masters and the managers of warehouses and storage facilities; the fifth class consisted of drivers and transport stewards."

João Luiz Honorato de Almeida attended night classes for Portuguese and Commercial Record-keeping taught by the Educational and Support Society of Clerks of Maceió in 1883. With regard to the student's performance, Maciel (2010, p. 11, quotation marks in the original) states that

⁷Carta enviada por Justiniano Honorato d'Almeida para o conselheiro João Alfredo Correia de Oliveira. Disponível em: <http://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/14888>. Acessado em: 07/08/2017. (Our emphasis).

⁸On this and other clerk associations in Maceió, see MACIEL, Osvaldo Batista Acioly. **A perseverança dos caixeiros**: o mutualismo dos trabalhadores do comércio em Maceió (1879-1917). Tese (Doutorado em História) – Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, CFCH. Programa de Pós-graduação em História, 2011.

[...]. It is worth noting that this student's grades are sometimes good and sometimes terrible, showing an oscillation in the quality of his learning. In any event, it was recorded in the minutes of May 20, 1883, that "due to his progress," that is, because of his assiduous application to the lessons and learning, he would be promoted to the "advanced Portuguese class." In addition to highlighting the student's good performance in the subject, it is clear that classes are taught by the individual method. This finding is to be expected, given the small number of students enrolled in the classes [...].

João Luiz was also a Fiscal Advisor to Companhia Progressiva de Fiação e Tecido [Progressive Spinning and Textile Company] (GUTENBERG, 1892) and a Lieutenant in the 7th Company of the First Infantry Battalion of the Parishes of Maceió and Jaraguá (ALMANAK DA PROVINCIA DAS ALAGOAS, 1891).

Justiniano, in turn, retired as a Second Clerk for the Court of Auditors, according to a declaration published in the Official Journal of the Union dated September 26, 1895.⁹ The fact that he had not held a management position and started his career as a simple guard reinforces our hypothesis that he was poor at the time he was a student. Other hypotheses can also be considered, such as that he may have been the son of rich parents or raised by a well-off family. However, the sources do not allow us to draw a definitive conclusion about his life path.

Our assumption is also based on the circumstances of orphaned children in the 19th century, who, in general, were cared for by religious organizations that supported boys and girls who were poor due to bad luck or bad fortune, although others were orphans of well-off parents. These were often children who were illegitimate in the eyes of Christian society and turned over to a charitable institution to be raised. Later, state institutions were set up, primarily by craftsmen and apprentices, to care for and control these unfortunate children. According to Santos (2011, p. 81), these establishments were created to "take poor and helpless children out of the urban social space for the purpose of civilizing, disciplining and shaping the behavior of a class considered 'dangerous' [...]"

Although he did not pursue studies at the college level, as one may conjecture, Justiniano was able to secure a career in state administration as soon as he had finished his Latin classes; he did not, however, hold a management position, as these were reserved for those with college degrees. The fact that in 1888 he mentions having worked for approximately 40 years supports our statement that he was poor as a child, as it means he would have begun working at around 1848, at the age of 16. Nevertheless, he did not go to college as wealthier people did. It is therefore clear that employment was crucial to Justiniano's life, as he was not well-off financially. Another fact, already mentioned, is that his oldest son took night classes in an institution for poor people, such as the Educational and Support Society of Clerks of Maceió. Finally, we consider it important to highlight that D'Almeida's Latin classes, as well as his contact with and learning about literate culture, provided him and his family opportunities for social ascension.

Black and brown students in Latin Grammar classes in the towns of Atalaia and Penedo

School records from December 15, 1847, kept by the Latin Grammar teacher in the town of Atalaia, Leopoldino Antonio Fonseca,¹⁰ show 27 enrolled students between the ages of 12

⁹ESTADOS UNIDOS DO BRAZIL. *Diario Oficial*, Directoria da Contabilidade do Thesouro, Capital Federal, 26set. 1895. Seção 1, p. 12.

¹⁰In addition to being a public school teacher, he was a Provincial Deputy in the 1858-59 legislature (Almanak da Provincia da Alagoas para o anno 1873).

and 18. The classes involved lessons on nouns, language, syntax, Eutropius, Cornelius, the Fables of Phaedrus, Sallustius and Virgil.¹¹

Fonseca reported that one of the students in the class, Joaquim Manoel da Costa, was brown. An 18-year-old native of Atalaia, Costa is recorded as the son of the Reverend Manoel Joaquim da Costa. His level included studying Sallustius and Virgil. However, when the same class was taught by Fr. João da Silva Cardozo in 1844,¹² Costa was reported to be 16 years old, the son of Antonia Maria de Jesus, and at the level of learning nouns. It is worth pointing out that the 1844 records did not mention students' "quality;" therefore, it is not possible to make a comparison in this regard.

As can be observed from a comparison of the two records, the student Joaquim Manoel da Costa advanced from studying nouns to studying Sallustius and Virgil in the Latin Grammar class. Another important issue is the identity of his parents, especially his father because there was a real possibility that Joaquim Manoel was the natural son of Fr. Manoel Joaquim, as the latter also appears as the father of four brown children on the records of the same primary school in Atalaia from 1845 to 1847, as reported by Santos (2011). Therefore, the paternity referred to here may be spiritual or a godfather status rather than biological paternity. Importantly, at that time, before what was known as Romanization,¹³ it was common to find priests who had married or started families rather than remaining celibate.

Even considering the complexity of the terminology used at that time, the indication that the student's quality was "brown" allows us to consider the social position open to him in a slave-owning society. In his study of the "dynamics of miscegenation," Paiva (2015) mapped out terms and expressions used in the Ibero-American world between the 16th and the 18th centuries. According to the author, individuals were classified using a basic formula: name + quality + condition. Condition had to do with a legal status: slave, freed person or person born free; quality, however, involved complex semantics, as it could refer to human types, such as Indian, creole, mameluco, mestizo, black, brown or mulato, as well as to other social categories, such as nation, race or caste. According to Paiva (2015), quality differs from skin color, as it serves to socially identify, distinguish, hierarchize, classify and qualify individuals.

Raminelli (2012) notes that the quality of an individual was related to his nobility or dignity. There was, however, a close association between a person's quality and his or her skin color, so that according to the view of that time, black and brown people suffered from a lack of quality and were unable to inherit the morale and behavior of people considered white. Thus, this author concludes that a person's quality was more important than his or her free or enslaved status.

The records written in December 1847 by Fr. Antonio Craveiro de Barros Leite, who taught Latin Grammar in the town of Penedo, show 40 enrolled students between the ages of 12 and 25. Of these, seven students were reported to be of black or brown quality: Manoel Simplicio de Sacramento, Jacyntho José Bizerra, Joaquim José dos Sanctos, Jose Vieira Sampayo, Jorge Martiniano Lopes, Manoel Antonio Tavares and Benvenuto Antonio de Caldas Lima.¹⁴

The first student described as having black quality was Manoel Simplicio de Sacramento, 21 years old at the time. A native of Penedo and the son of Athanario José do Rosario, Sacramento

¹¹Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapas escolares, 1847. Cx. 0061.

¹²Mappa dos Alumnos da Aula de Latinidade da Vila de Atalaia. In: Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapas escolares, 1844. Cx. 0061.

¹³The concept of the Romanization of Brazilian Catholicism dates from a later period. The origin of this term refers to the environment of the "religious question" (1872-1875) and the tensions between the State and the Church. The latter moved to increase the papacy's control over the Catholic church in Brazil, as legally, priests and bishops were considered servants of the State, insofar as they were paid from public funds. Among other issues, the Romanization movement sought to shape and discipline the clergy. On these issues, see Caes (2002).

¹⁴Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapas escolares, 1847, Cx. 0061.

had joined the class in February 1844 and had reached the Advanced Latin stage within three years. The previous year, the teacher had noted that he was developing quickly.

After concluding his study, Sacramento followed a career in the church. A note of gratitude to Dr. Socrates Guimarães, the local doctor in the Lower São Francisco region, published in *Jornal do Penedo* on September 5, 1879, was signed by Fr. Manoel Simplício do Sacramento (JORNAL DO PENEDO, 1879, no. 35). In addition to the newspaper, a document published by the Diocese of Petrolina in 2010 titled *Os padres do interior: listas dos padres que serviram nas paróquias do alto sertão de Pernambuco (século XVII ao século XXI)* [*Fathers of the interior: lists of priests who served in the highland parishes of Pernambuco (17th to 21st century)*] shows Sacramento's name as the vicar entrusted with the "parish of Santa Ana do Saco" in Paramirim and records that he baptized a child in the parish of Salgueiro in 1872 and signed the registry of the death records of slaves between 1872 and 1876. Canon Manoel Simplício do Sacramento was also a Cumulative Vicar in the parish of Santo Antônio, in Salgueiro, in 1873 and 1898 (Cavalcante, 2010). Showing that slave society relations were guided not only by economic motivations, Maupeou (2008) affirms that the priest freed his brown-skinned, 28-year-old slave Joana in light of the good service she provided him. In freeing the enslaved woman, the priest declared that "[...] he grants her freedom so that she may enjoy it today and henceforth, as if she had been born of a free womb and that he does so out of charity and without any remuneration, in light of the good service she has provided him [...]." (Notary public's records of Tacaratu, 1880, cited in Maupeou, 2008, p. 81).

Another student described as being of brown quality is Jose Vieira Sampayo. The 19-year-old son of Manoel Vieira Sampayo, born in Palmeira dos Índios, Jose was considered by Fr. Antonio Leite as capable, diligent and advanced in Latin Grammar. Sampayo also appears as simply passing Latin Grammar, as shown by the records of exams held at the Alagoan High School dated November 25, 1859.¹⁵ In a communication addressed to the vice-director of public education in 1861, Sampayo requests permission to set up classes in primary reading, Latin and French in the town of Palmeiras (currently the city of Palmeira dos Índios) or in any city in the province [DIARIO DAS ALAGOAS, 1861 (number not found)]. According to pay records for primary school teachers and earnings statements of public school teachers in 1863, it was possible to determine that Sampayo and his wife, Capitulina Clotilde Alves Vieira, were primary school teachers in the town of Palmeira dos Índios (DIARIO DAS ALAGOAS, 1863, no. 148).

Jose Vieira Sampayo, who was also a notary public, and Capitulina Clotilde Alves Vieira had at least two daughters: Maria Lúcia Duarte (1863-?) and Anna Vieira Sampaio (1870-?). According to the newspaper *O Caixeiro*, Maria Lúcia studied with the teachers Fr. Procópio, Inácio Costa and Antonio Romariz and passed the Portuguese and French exams with honors in 1880 (O CAIXEIRO, 1880, no. 19). After the death of her husband, the Alagoan poet Antonio de Almeida Romariz, Maria Lúcia established and directed the Colégio Atheneu Alagoano for the education of girls in 1883. As a journalist, she founded and edited *A Revista Alagoana* (1887), devoted to women, as well as *Almanaque Literário Alagoano das Senhoras* (1889). Anna Vieira, in turn, enrolled in the Liceu Alagoano in 1882 and, after completing her basic education in 1888, studied at the School of Law in Recife, becoming the first Alagoan woman to obtain a Bachelor's degree in law in 1893 (O ORBE, 1883, no. 80; BARROS, 2005; ROSA E SILVA and BONFIM, 2007).

With regard to the other students identified as black and/or brown in Fr. Antonio Leite's records, it has not yet been possible to trace their activity in Alagoan and Brazilian society. The little that is known about them is what appears in the document.

¹⁵Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapa de exames do Liceu da Capital, 1859. Cx.0061.

Table 1. Records of the Latin Grammar class in Penedo, 1847¹⁶

| Record of the students in the Public Latin Grammar Class in the City of Penedo taught by retired teacher Reverend Father Antonio Craveiro de Barros Leite. December 1847 | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|----------------|----------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| No. | Name | Parents | Age | Place of birth | Entry | Quality | Skill | Diligence | Progress |
| 1 | Joaquim Paulo Barboza | Gabriel Antonio de Carvalho | 25 | Penêdo | February 1843 | White | Not very skilled | Diligent | Very Advanced |
| 2 | Joao Francisco de Godois | José Ferreira dos Sanctos | 19 | Penêdo | February 1843 | White | Not very skilled | Not very diligent | Very Advanced |
| 3 | Joaquim da Natividade Reis | Joaquim da Natividade Reis | 17 | Penêdo | February 1844 | White | | Not very diligent | Very Advanced |
| 4 | Manoel Simplicio do Sacramento | Athanario José do Rosario | 21 | Penêdo | February 1844 | Black | Not very skilled | Not very diligent | Advanced |
| 5 | Jacyntho José Bizerra | Felis José de Sancta Anna | 15 | Traipú | February 1845 | Brown | Skilled | Not very diligent | Advanced |
| 6 | Joaquim José dos Sanctos | Agostinho José de Jesus | 16 | Penêdo | September 1842 | Brown | Unskilled | Not very diligent | Advanced |
| 9 | Jose Vieira Sampayo | Manoel Vieira Sampayo | 19 | Palmeira | March 1846 | Brown | Skilled | Diligent | Advanced |
| 20 | Jorge Martiniano Lopes | João da Rosa Lopes | 20 | Penêdo | December 1846 | Brown | Not very skilled | Diligent | Not very advanced |
| 30 | Manoel Antonio Tavares | Antonio Diogo Tavares | 14 | Traipú | February 1847 | Brown | Skilled | Not very diligent | Art |
| 32 | Benvenuto Antonio de Caldas Lima | José Antonio de Caldas Mundahú | 15 | Capacaça | February 1847 | Brown | Not very skilled | Not very diligent | Art |
| 40 | Rosidonio Augusto de Carvalho Mora | José Hygino de Carvalho Mora | 10 | Penêdo | June 1847 | White | Skilled | Not very diligent | Art |
| TOTAL - 40 | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>During these three years, the following students left for further studies in grammar: Manoel Simões de Mello, Lourenço Antonio de Andrade, José Marques de Sousa Barboza, Felipe Benicio de Resendes Pinto, Luis José da Silva Lemos, José Joaquim de Almeida, and Laurindo da Boaventura.</p> <p>The following left to take care of business matters: Luis Antonio de Medeiros Lino, João Francisco de Sales, João Antonio das Chagas Craveiro, Nathaniel Fernandes de Araujo, Francisco de Assis Asevedo Guimarães, Francisco Joaquim da Natividade Reis, and José Baptista Lemos. The latter showed no progress.</p> <p>The following left to farm: Ignacio Xavier de Barros, José Aureliano Agra Barreto, João Baptista Ferreira and João Ferreira.</p> | | | | | | | | | |

Source: Arquivo Público de Alagoas. Mapas escolares, 1847, Cx. 0061.

¹⁶We present a small sample, focusing on the black and brown students.

Therefore, we engage with a broader debate that a branch of historiography has been developing, in the sense of reassessing the stereotype of black people in the history of Brazil's imperial period, which has generally been associated with slavery and marginalization. In the historiography of education field, efforts have been made to demystify certain statements about black people being prohibited from attending public classes during the period of the Empire, especially at the secondary education level. The fact that the law prohibited enslaved people from attending public schools in Brazil has led to some misunderstandings in regard to the presence of black people in classrooms, as some research in general historiography, and particularly in historiography of education, refers to "black" as a synonym of "slave", without mentioning the progressive growth of a population of people of color born free, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century (VEIGA, 2008).

Other claims emphasize that the experiences of black people in secondary education dated only from the final years of the Empire, especially after 1870, or during the Republic. There are even some who claim that the only experience black people had with education during the imperial period was the primary school education for free children born to slaves after the "Free Womb Law" of 1871. In addition, some claim that black people had access to education only through charity or welfare institutions such as asylums and shelters. In this regard, Fonseca (2007, p. 9) notes that

There is a pattern in the treatment of black people in Brazilian educational historiography, characterized primarily by the promotion of invisibility for members of this racial group. This is shown in works on the history of education that state explicitly or implicitly that black people in Brazil did not attend school. In general, this statement describes the period during which slavery was in effect and relies on a basic assumption that the relationship between black people and schools in this system could only be viewed in terms of exclusion, that is, black people were slaves, and because slaves were forbidden from attending school, these institutions were interpreted without considering their relationship with the black population.

The records we have presented allow us to question a fairly widely held conception that secondary school students belonged to the white elite who, by appropriating the European values of civilization and progress, continued their study at the college level and took on political and administrative roles in the Empire and the provinces (VEIGA, 2007; GONDRA & SCHUELER, 2008). We consider a discussion of these issues important to avoid generalizations and blanket statements.

Based on these findings, however, other issues arise, such as how should the concept of elite be understood? Do the black and brown students found by this study belong to the cultural, economic and/or political elite? If not, how did they manage to occupy those spaces? Could they be slaves? Were they somehow getting around the imperial law? Based on the premise that they were poor, was there some sort of aid for these students? Could they have been the beneficiaries of some policy of patronage or godparent relationship? In short, there are several questions to which we do not yet have answers.

One clue may be found in Cruz's observation (2008) that teachers often included black or brown students in their class records as free people, even when they were slaves and prohibited by law from studying, in order to pad their earnings, as teachers' salary was tied to the number of students. However, the fact that we found them present in Alagoan secondary school classrooms in the first half of the nineteenth century is a relevant factor for studies in the history of Brazilian education field.

Independently of the questions raised, it is important to emphasize that secondary school education in Alagoas was also experienced by students "of color." They were present in the classroom together with white students and had contact with the sort of education offered to elites; that is, they made use of various skills that allowed them to enter college and later hold public service and management positions.

Final considerations

This article examined three sets of records pertaining to independent Latin Grammar classes in Maceió, Atalaia and Penedo that showed the presence of an orphaned student and eight students of color (black and brown) in secondary school education in Alagoas before the middle of the nineteenth century. Based on the evidence provided in the sources, we sought to trace the action and activity of the black and poor students in Alagoan society and beyond.

The nearly set-in-stone view that presumes black students were absent from secondary school classrooms in the nineteenth century does not hold true for the province of Alagoas. Although not numerically significant, the presence of black and brown students in secondary school classes in Alagoas allows educational historians to see the profile of that type of student through a new lens, offering an alternative to the view that has been solidified by previous works and research. On the other hand, "[...] it is important to note that these remarkable black people are not representative of the conditions of the others, who lived mostly without education, especially at the secondary and higher levels; that is why it is important to highlight them" (SANTOS, 2011).

It is undeniable that black people played a leading role in the development of the province, as enslaved, freed or free people working in the fields, in domestic service and in commerce (SANTOS, 2011), and as we have shown here, some attended classes and were active in the most diverse range of public spaces in Alagoan and Brazilian society.

It is possible that many other black students also attended secondary classes, as many records make no note of color or quality, in the same way that this group played a role in the most diverse spaces and functions of Brazilian society. We therefore consider it crucial to undertake research in educational history that gives visibility to the black and brown population beyond the categories of enslavement and marginalization.

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