

DOSSIER EDUCATION, HEALTH AND RECREATION

ARTICLE - “WITH ADMIRABLE PRECISION THEY EXERCISE SWEDISH GYMNASTICS...”: NATION-BUILDING AND PRODUCTION OF INNOCENCE IN EARLY BRAZILIAN STATE INDIGENISM

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ABSTRACT: An early 20th century photograph in the collections of Museo do índio in Rio de Janeiro shows Paresí children in Mato Grosso exercising “Swedish gymnastics”. The program for physical education codified by Swedish educator Pehr Henrik Ling was practiced in the schools of several SPI indigenous stations in the period, as part of the state indigenist project of “nationalizing” the indigenous populations. With the photo as a starting-point, this article explores the relation between a positivist nation-building project in Brazilian indigenism, and Ling gymnastics as a project directed towards the population and the nation. Applying Mary Louise Pratt’s concepts of colonial contact zone and strategies of “anti-conquest”, as well as Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima’s analysis of state indigenism as a continuation of the war of conquest with other means, I argue that Ling gymnastics resonated particularly well with positivist indigenism. Perceived of as a method of physical education not tainted by chauvinistic militarism, it could find its place in a colonial nation-building project resting on denial of its own inherent violence.

Keywords: Indigenism. Brazilian colonialism. Swedish gymnastics. Physical education.

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“ELES FAZEM A GINÁSTICA SUECA COM ADMIRÁVEL PRECISÃO ...” CONSTRUÇÃO DE NAÇÃO E PRODUÇÃO DE INOCÊNCIA NO INDIGENISMO ESTATAL BRASILEIRO DO INÍCIO DO SÉCULO 20

RESUMO: Uma fotografia do início do século 20 no acervo do Museo do Índio mostra crianças Paresí exercendo “ginástica sueca”. Essa ginástica era praticada nas escolas de vários postos indígenas do SPI como parte do projeto indigenista de “nacionalizar” as populações indígenas. Usando a foto como ponto de partida, este artigo explora a relação entre um projeto positivista de nação dentro do indigenismo brasileiro, e a ginástica do Ling como um projeto voltado para a população e a nação. Aplicando os conceitos de zona de contato colonial e estratégias de “anticonquista” de Mary Louise Pratt, bem como a análise do indigenismo como uma continuação da guerra de conquista com outros meios, de Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima, o artigo argumenta que a ginástica sueca ressoou particularmente bem com o indigenismo positivista. Percebida como um método de educação física não comprometido pelo militarismo chauvinista, a ginástica encaixava em um projeto colonial de nação baseado na negação da própria violência.

Palavras-chave: Indigenismo. Colonialismo brasileiro. Ginástica sueca. Educação física.

INTRODUCTION

Doing research at the library of the Museo do Índio in Rio de Janeiro a few years ago, I was intrigued by a sun-bleached photograph hanging on the wall. Taken at the telegraphic station Núcleo Utariti in Mato Grosso sometime between 1900 and 1922, it showed a group of Paresí children. Small and slightly older boys, all dressed in white, were standing in identical positions, their legs stretched in a long step, their arms lifted wide out from their torsos. According to the text accompanying the photo, the boys were performing “Swedish gymnastics”.

The posture of these children was familiar to me, as a person brought up in Sweden. Not that I really remembered having performed the exercises myself. Rather, they were familiar as mediated through dozens of historical photographs. As children, we had laughed at similar images. The gymnastic program of Pehr Henrik Ling was a topic for parody, signalling a past that was presumably stiff and regimented and teeming with exaggerated claims to represent what was modern and rational. For my generation, Ling gymnastics had become an emblematic image of the risible side of Swedish modernity.

There I was, doing research on a topic that had everything to do with my Brazilian history but nothing, or so I had assumed until then, with my Swedish history. The photo of the Paresí boys in the Núcleo Utiariti, however, made visible a thread of colonial continuity between Sweden and Brazil, a concurrence between nationalist ideas that aimed to mould the bodies of the young generation, whether in Stockholm or Mato Grosso.

Núcleo Utiariti was founded by Marshall Cândido Rondon, as part of the telegraph mission in the Brazilian hinterlands. Becoming something of a national hero, Rondon's original mission for the telegraph would eventually be redirected to a side-effect of the telegraph; the need to "pacify" non-colonised indigenous peoples. As several scholars (DIACON 2004; LIMA 1995) have pointed out, the history of Rondon's expeditions is a history of national formation or, to speak with Todd Diacon (2004), a history of "stringing together" the nation in the vastness of the Brazilian hinterlands. The nation did seem to need stringing together. The vast hinterlands, which were only poorly colonised, or not colonised at all, were a physical manifestation of the discrepancy between territory and nation. The newly born republic was eager to distinguishing the new Brazil from the monarchist empire it had formerly been (RIBEIRO, 2011). The expeditions in the hinterlands would *nationalize* those areas that formally belonged to Brazil and yet still did not really belong to it. Since this was inhabited land, the nationalizing of the territory also included the nationalizing of the índio (LIMA, 1995).

The telegraph and the indigenist politics were thus different sides of the same project of national integration – of territory and population. Rondon made his first expedition in the service of the telegraph in 1890. In 1910, the state agency *Serviço de Proteção ao Índio e Localização de Trabalhadores Nacionais* (SPILTN, from 1918 only SPI) was created. Rondon played a central role in the creation of the agency and also became its first director.¹

The purpose of the indigenist agency was double and, arguably, self-contradictory; on the one hand to protect indigenous peoples who were under the pressure of intensified colonisation, on the other to contribute to the population of the hinterlands. To this purpose, as Lima has shown, the indigenous peoples would, through the practices of contact and pacification, be transformed from índios into "national workers". As Lima (1995, p. 308) points out, the solution of the conflicts between indigenous people and colonizers would thus be

the eventual disappearance of the indigenous. The nation needed to be “realized” on the national territory in its entirety, and the existing indigenous populations were not compatible with this programme. The programme was carried out with patriotic zeal. When Rondon in 1946 looked back at his half-century long work, he paid tribute to all those officials, both civil and military, who had so helped him,

all of them vibrating with civic enthusiasm for the Indigenous Cause, for the progress of our Fatherland and for the good of Humanity (RONDON, 1946, p. 1).

It was a grand enterprise, and somewhere in this enterprise little indigenous children were taught to wear shoes and clothes, to know the Brazilian map and sing its patriotic hymns. They were also taught Swedish gymnastics. This specific part of the “pacification” stands out in the archives. Among the various methods employed in the project of nationalizing the índio, Swedish physical education seems to be the only one bearing the name of *another* nation-state project. This article takes the archival testimonies of this gymnastic practice as a starting point for a reflection on colonial continuities over vast geographical distances. Is there something in the specific technique of body discipline that was codified in Pehr Henrik Ling’s programme that resonates with the colonial efforts of nationalizing the índio at the Brazilian frontier of colonial expansion? And if so, what?

THE ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTATION

The findings I present here are preliminary, and based on archives that have been digitalized. These findings therefore also open windows for further research. Some of the cases referred to are mentioned in passing by other scholars whose works have also informed my own. None of these scholars, however, have analysed the specific case of Swedish gymnastics.

The photo of the Paresí children described in the previous section is found in the photo collections of the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro. It is also included in the volume in which the quote above by Rondon appears. Published in 1946, this volume was the first in a series of three, under the title *Índios do Brasil*. The three volumes aimed to present the work of SPI to the public in a series of photo albums. They covered both the telegraphic expeditions from 1890 onward and the pacification expeditions of SPI after 1910. The photo of the Paresí children has number 156 and is accompanied by a short text:

Contemplating photo no. 156, one can well appreciate the development we have given to the exercises of Swedish gymnastics and, therefore, also the systematization of physical education of the children enrolled in our schools (RONDON, 1946, p. 73).

Immediately below this photo there is another photograph, which shows a music class; boys playing brass under a map of South America. Lima (1995, p. 309) notices this map, and points out that the station school maps were one of the elements through which the nation, and the ways of performing the nation, was brought to the station schools. Through the image of the map, as in the rituals of hoisting the flag and singing the national anthem, the pupils were taught how to relate to *national* space, and to space as a *national* concern, and thus also to overwrite their already existing local knowledge of space and history. As regards Rondon's text accompanying photo 156, it implies that the exercises of the Paresí children is part of a more extensive program for physical education in the SPI schools. The classes of Swedish gymnastics at Utiariti are also mentioned in an SPI inspector's report on Mato Grosso from 1923. By then, it seems, the classes of gymnastics were run by an indigenous teacher, Caxinaná Vicente Sombra (GUIMARÃES, 2011, P. 144).

In her doctoral dissertation *Ritos de civilização e cultura: A escola bakairi*, Celia Letícia Gouvêa Collet (2003) approaches the history of the Bakairi school, also in Mato Grosso, both through interviewing former pupils and by examining archives from the SPI era. The first school built by the SPI for the Bakairi opened in 1922, but was closed already in 1933. After this period, the SPI station was moved to another location, and a new school was opened in 1942. Collet observes the emphasis on physical education; in the monthly summaries by the schoolteacher classes of Swedish gymnastics are mentioned two to three times every week (p. 206).

There are also a couple of mentions from Paraná. When inspector José Maria de Paulo in 1916 journeys to the SPI station Pinhalzinho – inhabited by Guarani and Guarani Nandeva – and reports back to his superiors, he includes a couple of photographs showing boys doing Swedish gymnastics outside a wooden building, probably the school building.² Unlike the Paresí boys, the boys in Pinhalzinho seem to be of mixed background. They are dressed in simple trousers, jackets and hats, and are shown stretching their arms and flexing their legs. Not very far from Pinhalzinho was the *Povoação Indígena* São Jerônimo da Serra, inhabited by Guarani, Guarani Nandeva and Kaingang. Lima (1995, p. 222) briefly refers to an inspector's report from 1920 that includes photos of pupils exercising Swedish gymnastics.

In another inspector's report, this one from Amazonas, Torquato Faria e Souza relates how he reaches the Ipixuna station, part of the "pacification" of the Parintintin, and is introduced to the local school activities. Enthusiastically, he tells his superiors how

without embarrassment, all the pupils sing the national anthem, the hymn to the flag and several patriotic songs, with admirable precision they exercise Swedish gymnastics and also practices the sport of football.

He goes on to mention that the school also possesses a map, a blackboard, books, ink, pens and paper.³

In addition to the sources quoted above there are numerous other sources that although they do not mention the physical education in the schools as "Swedish gymnastics" still indicate a strong inspiration from Ling gymnastics. Photos from SPI stations Duque de Caxias in Santa Catarina (1940) and Faxinal in Paraná (w/d) show groups of Xokleng and Kaingang children respectively, boys and girls mixed, exercising gymnastics outside their school buildings (Freire, 2011, p. 62-63). Duque de Caxias was founded by Eduardo de Lima e Silva Hoerhann who as a functionary of the SPI in 1914 initiated the "pacification" of the Xokleng. In a situation of settler colonialism and increasing violence, he convinced the Xokleng to give up political and cultural autonomy in return for protection on a small shard of their original land. Eduardo Hoerhann's father, Miguel Hoerhann, had been teaching fencing and Swedish gymnastics at the naval school in Rio de Janeiro (Hoerhann, 2012, p. 20).

A future more systematic archival survey would probably give more findings. In the material from the Bakairi school of the SPI period, Collet (2006) points out how the indigenous body from its first day of arrival at school was subjected to a civilizing narrative. The arrival of the naked pupil, she argues, symbolised "a matter without form (from the colonizer's point of view) ready to be moulded in accordance with the new subject that was in making" (p. 205). In a similar way we can understand the physical-education programme as working on a body perceived of as empty and amorphous, ready to be trimmed and drilled through a disciplined learning of rational movement patterns, all in the effort to shape a nationalized indigenous subject.

MASCULINITY, COLONIALITY AND TRAVELLING IDEAS AND TECHNIQUES

In her *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* Mary Louise Pratt (1992) uses the concept of colonial *contact zone* to talk

about the "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" that take place in colonial encounters often marked by radical power asymmetries. The contact zone is often, but not necessarily, synonymous to the colonial frontier. However, with the concept of the contact zone rather than the frontier, Pratt underlines the interactive dimensions of colonial encounters (p. 6-7). Even if marked by asymmetrical relations of power, the contact zone always also implies interaction, improvisation and dislocations.

If the contact zone is a place of power negotiations and struggle, the school in the SPI station is one of the central nodes of that struggle – a place where young bodies and souls were to be shaped within the project of nationalization. Ling gymnastics was a technique that had been made to travel over large distances. When it was brought to the contact zones where a modern Brazil was manufactured, it came with a rationale that stressed its specific *Swedish* character. What is this particular character, and why did it fit so well into the setting of the colonial SPI school?

The gymnastic program of Pehr Henrik Ling was created in a specific historical and political context. It responded to needs and anxieties experienced by a Swedish bourgeoisie, increasingly concerned with the negative sides of life styles introduced by industrialization and urbanization. Ling's gymnastic programme thus addressed a perceived loss of physical strength and virility brought on by the sedentary life of the bourgeoisie, as well as a distorted physical strength resulting from monotonous labour of the working class. As Jens Ljunggren (1999) notes in his study of Ling and the development of Swedish gymnastics between 1790 and 1914, the function of Ling gymnastics was above all *corrective*, addressing bad posture and what was seen as disharmonious and asymmetric movement patterns. The harmonious body was one in which muscular strength was equally distributed along its whole (p. 11). In its early days, Ling gymnastics was promoted for the physical education of boys and men. Although girls and women would eventually be included, the physical exercises and movements of the programme always kept the male body as its reference (ch. 4).

Ljunggren stresses the importance of the Swedish loss of Finland in the "Finnish war" against Russia (1808-1809) for understanding the context in which Ling's method was born. The loss of Finland, which had been under Swedish rule since the time of the crusades, finally put Sweden's aspirations to being a great regional power in the northern hemisphere to rest. According to Ljungberg, this defeat triggered a crisis of masculinity and a perceived need to

restore both the Swedish man and an injured nationhood (p. 84-85). On Ling's initiative the Central Gymnastics Institute (*Gymnastiska Centralinstitutet*, CGI) was established, with royal license, in 1813, and Ling functioned as its director for almost a quarter of a century. The school would become not only a national, but also an international centre for a method that to many carried a promise of national and bodily rejuvenation and renaissance that had an appeal far outside the Swedish context. As Andrea Moreno (2015) notes, Ling's gymnastic movement had missionary ambition. The institute willingly welcomed foreign guests and also sent its representatives abroad to promote Ling gymnastics throughout the world (p. 132).

Following Ljunggren's careful study of Ling not only as a gymnastic reformer, but also as a poet and intellectual, we can understand Ling gymnastics as taking shape in reaction to, and as a way of processing colonial defeats, that is, the Swedish loss of Finland. The humiliated male Swedish body needed to be restored. In other colonial settings, the same method would be oriented towards the moulding of colonised bodies. If Ling gymnastics presented an element of resurrecting the strength of "natural" man, the non-white bodies which were exposed to the programme might have retained this "naturalness" but they still lacked in civilised posture, restraint and self-control. As Ljunggren (1999) points out, Ling was far from alone in regarding gymnastics as a method to create a synthesis between man as a creature of nature and man as a creature of culture (p. 88). His specific answer was that in order to achieve such a synthesis, a technique was needed that could work on the body with precision and that was based on scientific laws of nature and the human organism (Moreno, 2015, p. 132). This is also the image with which Ling gymnastics was promoted, and received, in the rest of the world.

Historical documentation is there to support this impression of how Swedish gymnastics traveled with the promise of contributing to the civilization of non-white bodies. Roger Vanmeerbeek and Pascal Delheye (2013) writes that Belgium was a "Mecca of Swedish Gymnastics" from 1908 and onward, in particular within military physical education. However, this education did not only, or even mainly, concern itself with white European bodies. Ling gymnastics was the preferred model of military physical training of Congolese soldiers (p.1934). Vanmeerbeek and Delheye quote a *Revue des Diplômes* from the *Institut Militaire d'Education Physique* from 1929, stating that

The aim of gymnastics is first of all to contend with physical and physiological shortcomings of the coloured. As a matter of fact, he has no good chest, has an exaggerated lumbar-vertebral curve, and poor arms (p. 1934).

Interestingly, according to Françoise Martinez (1999) it was also from Belgium that Swedish gymnastics reached early 20th century Bolivia. It did so with a promise of national regeneration and to turn the indigenous population, which made up the country's majority, into "little Swedes". The concern of the ruling white and mestizo minority was with the incorporation of the Aymara and the Quechua into the project of the nation. Paradoxically, to make them into "little Swedes" was perceived as a method for the "nationalization" of a population that although it made up the majority, still was perceived as standing outside the nation to be defined (p. 372-375).

The two examples above also tell us something else: when applied on non-white colonised bodies, the image of natural man, present in Ling's tributes to the Vikings of the old, gives way to an image of an enfeebled savage incapable of reaching the racial norm of the ideal European. Ling gymnastics was introduced as directly working on these bodies with a scientifically based method. Congolese soldiers and Bolivian workers were to be trained in how to pen their chests, to breathe, to flex their arms at correct angles, et cetera.

Andrea Moreno (2015) has studied how Ling gymnastics reached Brazil at the turn of the 19th century, through the intervention of both national and foreign teachers as well as the circulation of printed manuals. Influential public figures, such as Rui Barbosa, advocated the introduction of classes of Swedish gymnastics in public schools. Here too, the Swedish method was seen as rational and scientific, addressing crucial issues of both hygiene, morality, aesthetics and economics (Moreno 2003, p. 56-57). And here too, the method offered a possible response to anxieties related to the population in the modern state. Different to Sweden, however, the population was not seen as a pre-existing, if problematic, given. Rather, the "Brazilian character" was very much still in the making, was just starting to emerge out of the layers of migrational and colonial histories – and needed to realize itself fully on the national territory.

Writings from the era give witness to the enthusiasm that could surround this specific program for physical education. In an issue of *Revista Marítima Brasileira* from 1910, lieutenant Alfredo Colonia exclaims:

Currently a transformative movement is going through the navy, a movement of *regenerating* methods and processes until now adopted for the physical education of our garrisons. A movement well oriented and in perfect accordance with the *most modern* and most accepted teachings on the physical education of the organism. [--] Swedish gymnastics has [...] *a scientific base, an intelligent end, its movements in perfect*

accordance with the necessary development of the body. [...] Meticulous studies have been made in Sweden, and spirometry has demonstrated victoriously the notable effect of Ling's method in the respiratory function. Swedish gymnastics has its movements executed in a perfectly rational manner [... italics are mine] (Colonia, 1910, p. 7-9)

The enthusiasm, in this case from within the military where Swedish gymnastics had a relatively strong impact, can be contrasted to the lack of popular reception. Looking specifically at the context of then capital Rio de Janeiro, Moreno (2003) points out that while leading intellectuals and public figures embraced the promises of Swedish gymnastics to transform the population, the method never achieved any popular impact (p. 57). The body of the Rio inhabitant, she argues, was a "non-place" for Swedish gymnastics. In order to explain why the method never took hold, she turns to existing body practices of the Rio population, in particular the popular art of capoeira, characterised by a fluid hybridity and dialogical interactiveness. Here, there was little resonance and little place for the rationalistic and highly individualistic model of Ling (p. 59).

In comparison to this, the colonial contact zones where the SPI was operating could, from nation-building perspective, appear as a privileged setting for the shaping and moulding of bodies and souls. Fantasies of "virgin land" both legitimized colonial conquest and served to overwrite local knowledges with colonial and national ones. As Collet argues, the índio subjected to nationalisation was conceptualised as an empty space to be filled with civilized customs, just as the land was conceptualised as empty and ready to be filled with national society. In the albums of *Índios do Brasil* we can, through series of photographs, follow a narrative of this gradual filling out of an empty space. Pictures are organized in a certain order, marking different stations on the way towards national civilization: the first contact, traditional village life, the receiving of gifts – clothes in particular – the gradual dressing of the people, the move to the newly built station, children playing brass, schoolchildren at desks, Swedish gymnastics, portraits of young girls in dresses and with ribbons in their hair, young men in shirts and jackets at work with the telegraph, boys from the station in uniform having arrived for studies in Rio de Janeiro, now the national índio. Generally, there is a strong emphasis on women and children throughout these series.⁴ Taken together, these images narrate a story of erasure – another possible term for what is elsewhere called "civilizing", "nationalizing" or "integration".

REPUBLICAN POSITIVISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

If Ling gymnastic – as the rational and scientific model for bodily education *par excellence* – had a specific appeal in the contact zone of the frontier,⁵ this appeal also connects to the influence of positivist ideas in the creation of Brazilian state indigenism. Positivism in Brazil was a wide and variegated program, ranging from Auguste Comte's general ideas of progress and development of knowledge to the full embracement of the "Religion of Humanity" and its devotional and liturgical practices. Comte had been one of the more influential articulators within European philosophy of a universal theory of stages, stating that all societies went through similar stages of development. Those who were further advanced thus had the competence – and the responsibility – to guide those that were still behind.

Although one need not to over-emphasize the importance of orthodox positivism as practiced in the Temple of Humanity, there is a clear continuity between "weaker" currents of positivism and the orthodox one in that both embrace teleological linearity and put emphasis on universal humanity. In particular, the redemptive promise of universal development gives a strong missionary quality to the colonial official.

Among the political and military elite that worked to shape the First Republic, proclaimed in 1889, positivist ideas were salient. This elite struggled with the immediate past of the country as a monarchic empire and slave economy. Striving to transform it into a modern republic, the territory as well as the population were major concerns. From the perspective of this elite, the territory needed to be integrated and filled out, and a national population needed to find – or had to be given – its form.

The national flag adopted by the young republicans reflected the importance of Comte's ideas. The *ordem e progresso* of the flag is a reference to the motto Comte set for the Religion of Humanity: *L'amour pour principe et l'ordre pour base; le progrès pour but* – "love as a principle and order as the base; progress as the goal". The disappearance of "love" from the motto has inspired many comments (Ramos, 1998, p. 154). In a study of the station in Utiariti, Heitor Velasco Fernandes Guimarães (2011) suggests a reading from the discrepancy between positivist theory and practice:

where one reads love, we can read "the idea of superiority"; where one reads order, one can read "authoritarianism"; where one reads progress, we can read "positivist State" (p. 124).

Indeed, the stations in the hinterlands can be seen as laboratories in which the principles of positivism could be applied in a limited and controlled setting. The national flag of order and progress was the most important symbol that was literally carried out, together with maps and phonograms for the playing of the national anthem (Diacon, 2004). Already in the narratives from the earliest expeditions, a photographic motif that would continue to be reproduced in different versions throughout the years started to become popularized: indigenous people draped in the national flag. This iconography points forward to the republic, but also resonates with the motif central do the romantic *indianism* of imperial art and literature. The índio in this romantic art plays a decisive part in the birth of the Brazilian people, as the unique component distinguishing the Brazilian from the Portuguese. However, the role played by the índio also require her or his sacrificial death (Graça, 1998; Ramos, 1998, ch. 2). The iconography of indigenous people draped in flags, thus, was born out of a colonial fantasy ultimately signalling the death of the índio. However, important to notice is how indigenous people mobilizing for among other things the right to land, have not failed to use the many possible readings of this motif in their own favour (Ramos, 2003, p. 411).

When SPI was founded in 1910, it was strongly influenced by positivist ideas and ideals (Ramos, 1998, p. 154-158). In the name of "pacification" and "protection", an enterprise was carried out that from indigenous perspective was rather a history of colonial conquest and loss of land, means of subsistence and cultural autonomy. Due to colonial expansion in the inlands, options to joining SPI stations almost always meant escalating violence. From this situation, the SPI could construct the image of the "voluntary" conversion of the indigenous into civilized subjects.⁶

I follow Lima in his Foucauldian argument that the activity of SPI is to be regarded as a continuation of the war of conquest with other means. SPI founder Rondon developed a pacifist militarism of sorts; his motto was articulated as "to be killed if necessary, to kill, never!" Yet, the movements of Rondon's expeditions over the territory followed the logic of military occupation, bringing the national flag, the national hymn on phonogram and an unshakable confidence in the obvious legitimacy in converting nomadic savages – which is how the indigenous inhabitants of the land where perceived – into "national" rural workers. The first step was to convince this populations to *settle*, concentrated in and around the SPI station. By restricting the movements of the indigenous populations, land was

liberated for the purpose of colonial settling. And while liberating land, the station also became a place where one definition of what it could mean to be Brazilian, could be chiselled out.

Lima (1995) emphasizes the operations of the SPI as a war on the alterity of indigenous people (p. 308). From a positivist perspective, however, this war does not have the nation as its ultimate end. Rather, the nation is a necessary step towards a fulfilment of a universal humanity that will eventually unfold. The nationalizing of the índio thus does not only increase the coincidence and correspondence between territory and people. More importantly, it guarantees a place for indigenous people in universal humanity, but only insofar as s/he is ready to give up her/his indigeneity.

COLONIAL CONQUEST AND THE PRODUCTION OF INNOCENCE

Lima (1995) discusses how the ways in which the history of Brazil has been narrated covers up colonial violence already on the level of language (44-63). Brazil was *discovered* rather than *invaded*, indigenous people were *pacified* rather than *conquered*, the SPI actions are described as *protection* rather than *colonization*. In the very terminology used by the SPI and reproduced in historical narrative, there is a shunning away from the violence that forms the very conditions of possibility for this history. Here, we can recognize the strategies of the "anti-conquest", in Pratt's (1992) sense. The "anti-conquest", according to Pratt,

refers to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony (p. 7).

Pratt uses the concept in her reading of European travel narratives. Transferring the concept to the colonial contact zone in which the SPI operated, we can swap the term "European bourgeoisie" into "republican bourgeoisie" and "European hegemony" into "national hegemony". Imbedded in the practices of conquest is a production of innocence in regard to this conquest.

What is the place of a technique such as Ling gymnastics in this conquest that is denying its own name? For Ling, gymnastics carried a promise of rebirth, both of man and of the nation (Ljunggren, 1999, p. 80). Transferred to the contact zone of Brazil – where a major indigenous concern was surviving in a situation of intensified colonisation, while a major colonial concern was the discrepancy between territory and nation – the promise takes on

a slightly different character. If, as Moreno stresses, the project of reshaping the Brazilian body according to the model of Swedish physical education did not find resonance among the Rio population, the colonial population offered a very different set of possibilities for its promoters. Looking at the colonial contact zone specifically *at the frontier*, it is the place where the nation is in the moment of realizing itself on the territory. As such, it is also to be seen as a spatialized moment of national birth (MARTINS, 2009). And where is a population more mouldable than at the very moment of birth?

To the celebratory colonial gaze, such as the positivist one so eloquently represented by Rondon himself, the frontier contact zone appears as the privileged starting line for an organized and enlightened progress, free from the vices otherwise occurring in modern civilization.

Martinez (1999) notes how Sweden, by Bolivian promoters of Swedish gymnastics in the beginning of the 20th century, was seen as a pacifist nation, and its gymnastics thus untainted by the bellicose nationalism of other European nations (p. 371). Similarly, even writing from within the context of a navy school, Lieutenant Colonia contrast the "scientific" Swedish gymnastics to the "violent" German one (Colonia, 1910, p. 7). As a purely scientific technique, in addition a pacifist one, Swedish gymnastics appears to be free from particularistic chauvinism and indeed particularly apt to care for these bodies that are to be moulded into national bodies.

In a sense, what we have is an anti-nationalist method of radically shaping and moulding the body, in the service of an anti-conquest enterprise for nationalizing the territory. And, with Pratt, the "anti" of the first part is here simultaneously a negation and a confirmation, working on two levels in respect to the par after the hyphen. On one level the "anti" negates the second part, be it chauvinistic nationalism or violent conquest. On another, however, this negation is what makes the adherence to the second part, *with preserved innocence*, possible.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This article is based on preliminary archival research, resting on archives that have been digitalised. More extensive archival research on the use of Swedish gymnastics within the SPI could both broaden and deepen the picture. The argument I have made is that Swedish gymnastics resonated particularly well with the SPI program of "nationalizing" indigenous populations, and that this resonance is connected to the production of innocence – what Pratt calls the

”anti-conquest”. Thereby we can explain how a method originating within a specific Swedish nationalist project, and intimately associated with notions of a specific ”Swedish” character (rational, scientific, modern) could find its place in a larger project strongly directed to another nationalist project, the Brazilian.

For further research it would be relevant not only to make a more systematic archival inquiry, but also to collect the narratives of those who may still remember the classes of physical education at SPI schools. Collet’s doctoral thesis deals with how the Bakairi would appropriate the school established by the SPI, and how past and present come together in the continuing life of this school. The memories of pupils from the SPI period give important insights as to how the institution of the SPI school was experienced from the indigenous children frequenting it – those who held a key position in the contradictory project of nationalizing the hinterlands, but where themselves never asked if this national society was one they wished to be a part of.

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NOTAS

- 1 On the creation of SPILTN and SPI, se Lima 1995, in particular ch. 5 & 8.
- 2 Archive of Museo do Índio, Rio de Janeiro, microfilm 075, sheet 846, document 16. One of the two photos is also published in Freire 2011, p. 72.
- 3 Relatório apresentado pelo auxiliar Torquato Faria e Souza em 28 de Novembro de 1928, Archive do Museo do Índio, Rio de Janeiro, the SPI collection, 012 Ipixuna, box 52, sheet 350.
- 4 This description is based on the photo series of the Paresí/Arití in Rondon 1946, p.83-114. For a closer analysis of this photo series, see Barbio, 2011.
- 5 Pratt (1992, p. 6-7) chooses the term contact zone rather than the frontier. However, I use frontier as a qualification of the contact zone, and in this follow the emphasis put by José de Souza Martins (2009) on the frontier as constitutive for the concept of nation in Brazil.
- 6 For a thorough discussion of the relation between pacification and violence, see Lima, 1995.

Submission: 24/12/2018

Approbation: 17/04/2019

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