



TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES OF FUNDO DE PASTO AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify the form of organization and production in the communities of “Fundo de Pasto e Fecho” in the northeast part of Bahia, its similarities with the conservational current denominated environmentalism of the underprivileged people, famous ecologist or movement of Environmental Justice. To achieve this goal, we will be using reflections around the forms of existence, economic, social and cultural organization of these traditional communities, highlighting the strategies of struggle and survival, as well as the construction of new paradigms of development and coexistence with nature, allied to the concept, principles, and purposes of the environmentalism of the underprivileged people. This phenomenon of self-recognition as traditionally constituted communities and the acquisition of collective consciousness as rightful agents on their territories that also become in this paper objects of analysis and reflection seeking to insert themselves in the contemporary debate about territoriality, empowerment, and environment ecologically just and human.

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INTRODUCTION

The advent of the communities socially entitled “Fundo de Pasto” in the northern part of the state of Bahia dates back to the time of colonization of the backlands in Bahia, especially after the breakdown of the sugarcane cycle in the harsh climates in the state of Pernambuco and the migration of these activities to southeastern Brazil (ALCANTARA; GERMANI, 2010). The hinterlands of the Sao Francisco river had their settlements started from the 1600s, and it was the occupation of large livestock farms that originated from the propriety-*sesmaria* which characterized the pattern of the agrarian trade extremely concentrated in the area (PORTO, 1978). “Fundo de Pasto” can be understood as an experience of appropriation of the physical territory, characterized by the breeding of animals in the land of frequent use, articulated with areas denominated individual lots (SABOURIN; CARON; SILVA, 1999). The residents of these communities have their own collective identities and unification by bonds of cronyism and kinship that compose this modality of land use.

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In the territory of “Fundo de Pasto”, they create domestic animals in the communal area, cultivate subsistence crops in individual sections and practice plant extractivism in the regions of refreshment and common usage (ALCANTARA; GERMANI, 2009; 2010). Many representatives of these communities define “Fundo de Pasto” as a proper way of life, a specific territory, and a form of defense and a method of preserving the Caatinga system (CARVALHO 2014). It has been developed over generations between traditional peoples and communities in the areas of Caatinga and northeastern Cerrado; thus becoming a space essential to the reproduction of different forms of life and constituting a Cultural Heritage of the Brazilian people (MAGALHÃES-FILHO; DIAMANTINO, 2010). The collective consciousness that members of the traditional communities of “Fundo do Pasto” retain their territory on the collective forms of organization, production, and use of the land, gives support to the daily life of women and men in the country that establish with the Semiarid of a relation of respect and preservation (ALCANTARA; GERMANI 2010). It is worth mentioning that the occupation of the territory in the Semiarid northeast occurred mainly in handling with livestock and cultivation of crops for subsistence because the local people until then did

not have land or other means of production that resulted in large plantations (ALCANTARA; GERMANI, 2009). The herding loose in common areas by their descendants is understood as a necessity of socializing the little water available (ALCANTARA; GERMANI, 2009). In the wild, the animals would seek green foliage and natural reservoirs formed by rainwater. In many cases, the current groups of “Fundo de Pasto” are created by descendants of cowboys of the so-called Leather Civilization, a period that refers to the beginnings of the colonization of the hinterlands, when livestock was raised to provide work and draught animals for the sugar mills. They were free men who, for their services, received puppies as payment – a system that lasted until recent times among workers of few possessions and owners of larger herds (FERRARO-JÚNIOR, 2008). Since the colonial period, Brazil has espoused conservative and dependent modernization principles in a unique way in the northeast. The use and access to natural resources have always reproduced social inequality. The collectivities that had life strategies directly linked to natural resources began to be impacted by new dynamics of reformulations of their territories (ALIER, 2015). In the northeast part of Bahia, the upland areas which occupy most of the regions of the Sertão territory of São Francisco, is mostly characterized by farmers and breeders who have small pieces of land and collectively use open spaces for grazing livestock such as goats, sheep and veal, and are areas called “Fundo do Pasto” (FERRARO-JÚNIOR, 2008). Several scientific papers and researches (ALCANTARA; GERMANI, 2010; ALMEIDA, 2008; PORTO, 1982; GARCEZ, 1987; CARVALHO, 2014; FERRARO-JÚNIOR, 2008; MAGALHÃES-FILHO; DIAMANTINO, 2010) point out that the traditional communities of “Fundo do Pasto” have a harmonious relationship with nature, because their way of life is not limited to the unbridled search for the accumulation of riches, but in personal, community relations, in cultural production and preservation of traditions. Therefore, it is from these new social subjects, other forms of organization, production and coexistence with nature, which propose here to present some lines of reflection about this way of collective life, and the ideas contained in the current ecologist movement called environmentalism of the underprivileged people.

Communities of “fundo do pasto”: forms of constitution, organization and coexistence with the environment: Since the colonization the Semiárid, it was understood from the viewpoint of the colonizers, which complied with external interests. Sometimes the interests of the Portuguese crown, sometimes to meet the demands of the vast plantations of sugarcane in the Brazilian coastline, which forced the settlement in the Semiárid regions of cattle farms which were used to provide meat, leather, and traction power for these plantations. Furthermore, the establishment of vast estate, starting with the colonization, led off the disastrous land distribution, still in force today, which excluded men and women who effectively work the land and care for the animals (CÂMARA, 1949). In Brazil, the occupation and mercantile use of the land have always generated many socio-environmental conflicts and affected the environment and the lives of thousands of people. In Bahia, the semiárid region comprises an area corresponding to 68% of the territory of the State and 48% of its population (SEI, 2010). From the colonization to the present day, they experience development projects predominantly focused on the interests of capital and large companies and penalize the small ones. In the Eurocentric model, the peoples originating in the semiárid

were transformed into forced workers of the colonial system, either by domestic servitude or by African black enslavement. From the years 70 onwards, economic intensification due to market integration, increasing inflation with the transfer of investments to real estate and the implementation of the first irrigation projects in the São Francisco Valley accentuated the pressure on the territory (GERMANI, 2005; 2010). Along with the irrigation projects came the system of rural credit and tax incentives, especially the Superintendence of Development of the Northeast-SUDENE, which allocated enormous appropriations of subsidizing resources, directed to large owners or transforming into large owners entrepreneurs from outside the region. This process of productive restructuring profoundly altered the production relations in agriculture and the valuation of land, jeopardizing several forms of traditional exploitation in the area such as the “Fundo de Pasto” and Quilombolas. The valued lands became the object of covetousness and conflict (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2004). Nevertheless, the hinterland has presented itself, more recently, as a diversified space from social and cultural identities and of steady flow and regional dynamics (ALMEIDA, 2008). The transformations of the northeastern rural area marked up to 1988, fundamentally, by the tensions involving the peasantry and the land structure profoundly influenced by the large-estate owners and the ruling oligarchy of the colonels. The recognition of the presence of traditional peoples and communities in northeastern backlands leads us to consider in the logic of this rurality, the incorporation of a pluralist and multicultural perspective (ALMEIDA, 2008).

At the end of the decade of 1980, in Brazil, the ideas surrounding these new territorialities are developed with higher intensity, affirmed from the policies of recognition that begin to be established, having plurality and multiculturalism as principles. Thus, the Federal Constitution of 1988; the ILO Convention # 169 of 1989; the Federal Decree # 4887 of 2003; and the Federal Decree # 6040 of 2007, represented true innovations and new paradigms in relation to the recognition of new rights and new subjects of the law in the Brazilian context, such as the traditional peoples and communities (SANTOS, 2005). It is worth mentioning that, in the face of the contemporary scenario of post-modernity, where complexity and cultural plurality are growing and full of new and unexpected conflicts, new rights emerge due to the recognition and emergence of new actors and subjects of law because of the evolution of an unequal and excluded society. (WOLKMER, 2003). New subjects of laws such as those treated by Dussel (2002) are presented to the ethics of liberation or the praxis of freedom, a theory that deals with the actual subject, inserted in a given place, time and context. A question whose identity constructed from a collective recognition. In the context of an immense socio-cultural and economic diversity that is expressed in a multiplicity of behaviors, knowledge, languages, beliefs, ways of life, people and communities are found that have developed lifestyles related to environments specific natural resources and established distinct links with the situations prevailing in urban-industrial settings (ARRUDA, 1999). Apart from contributing to socio-cultural diversity, these groups, besides helping to sociocultural diversity, play a fundamental role in maintaining biodiversity and managing agro-ecosystems. They are among the traditional peoples and communities the communities socially called “Fundo do Pasto, which consists in a conventional way of creating, living and doing in which the management of land and other natural resources occur

collectively and sustainably (SILVA, 2008). Remnant of traditional practices of collective exploitation of the environment by the family communities of the backlands of São Francisco, the "Fundo do Pasto" has a varied legal reality: joint exploitation of vacant lands by a significant owner, agreement between neighboring owners or even the exploitation by the members of a community descendants of the first owner (GARCEZ, 1987). In addition to involving different productive activities performed by family work units, such as extractive activities, agriculture, fishing, hunting, crafts, and livestock (ALMEIDA, 2006). The document entitled "The 'Fundo do Pasto' That We Want" (A STATE ORGANIZED ARTICULATION OF THE "FUNDO E FECHO DE PASTO) describes that the "Fundo do Pasto" constitute a system of joint occupation of land, which is to be used by communities in extensive grazing and today semi-extensive. The area freely used by condominium members, absence of delimitation with fences, typical residences of the hinterland in the areas of individual possessions, individual subsistence lots of land of each family, healthy degree of kinship and crony amongst members of the communities, cultural characteristics of each population: festivals, crafts, prayers and the care of the Caatinga and animals. The traditional system of common land use in "Fundo do Pasto" is a system recognized in the Constitution of the State of Bahia of 1989, in its article 178. The National Policy for Sustainable Development of Peoples and Traditional Communities was launched on February 7, 2007, through the State Decree # 6040. The new policy defines traditional peoples and communities as:

Culturally differentiated groups recognized as such, which have their forms of social organization, which occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their reproduction cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economical, applying knowledge, innovations, and practices generated and transmitted by tradition (Brazil, 2007).

The traditional territories, in turn, are defined, in this same Decree, as:

[...] The necessary spaces for the cultural, social and economic reproduction of the traditional peoples and communities, whether they are used permanently or temporarily, observed, Concerning indigenous peoples and Quilombolas, respectively, the article 231 of the Constitution and 68 of the Act of the Transitional Constitutional provisions and other regulations (BRASIL, 2007).

According to data from the government of Bahia, there are currently 487 communities of "Fundo do Pasto" identified, which enable the livelihood of about 16,000 families, spread across dozens of northeastern municipalities (SEPROMI, 2017). They are families that have a simple way of life and live in harmony with nature, and they possess an awareness of protection and environmental preservation presented in the manner they are related to themselves and the Caatinga. Also in the way, they raise the animals and how they plant what they need, without pesticides and in favor of the maintenance of biodiversity, especially in the form of developing sustainably (SILVA, 2008). They who live in a territory marked by old struggling and popular resistance that established the right of widespread use among members of the same community, on soils and their natural resources (WEBER *et al.*, 1998). In these boundaries, farmers and

family agriculturists, indigenous, river communities, amongst so many workers and laborers do a daily exercise of resistance to an imposed system that generates great devastations, conflicts, negligence, diseases and deaths (SILVA, 2008). A particular aspect that deserves prominence, especially for the discussion on the form of production of the "Fundo do Pasto", is that, still today, they have exercised much of the family farming. Family farming is concentrated in small rural municipalities and is equivalent to 90% of the total number of cities in Bahia (IRPA, 2009). In addition to the animal raising and caring for the subsistence pieces of land, there are other forms of economic exploitation in the "Fundo do Pasto": the production of bee honey and the extractive activity are two vivid examples potential to be exploited (GERMANI; OLIVEIRA, 2006). Moreover, it is observed in the way of life of these communities the importance of the place as a place of encounter, coexistence, construction of identity, a location of survival and struggle especially for these actors, which are classes excluded from the fluid, competitive, vertical and homogeneous spaces (CARLOS, 2007). From the place, you can think and understand the living and socialization, the dwelling, the habits and customs, the culture, the differences and inequalities, the processes of appropriation of space; finally, it is from the place that one seeks to construct the meaning of existence and its changing. It is understood the world that figures out as well as through the place (CARLOS, 2007).

Macedo (2004) points out that the locality goes beyond the significance of the site-place, or soil, or ground. It defines the place with meaning that can be both the geographic place and the political place, such as the historical place, as the place of administration. Thus, the word locality can say about a projected circumscription of the place, or about the place of daily meeting, of everyday life, or specificities of a place as to its natural and cultural aspects that are scenic. For Bourdin (2001) the site is seen as the place of social truth, the privileged place of the manifestation of the essential base, indispensable to the social. It is seen as a refuge of humankind, as resistance to capitalist society, constituting a place of refusal to the standards and values that this corporate organization develops in a disaggregating way. According to Dowbor (2010), the local space must be preserved to the detriment of the relentless process of globalization. Moreover, he adds that the more globalization develops, the more people are rescuing the local space and seeking to improve the living conditions in their immediate surroundings. The subject belongs to the place like this to him because the production of the site binds itself inextricably to the creation of life. It is in the area emerges life, because that is where the unity of social life is given, with each of its members known to have a concrete and real space Where it is recognized or lost, enjoys and modifies, since the place has uses and senses in itself (CARLOS, 2007).

Environmental justice and the environmentalism of the underprivileged people: Among current themes that significantly interfere with human existence in the present and the future, there is the ecological question. There will be increasingly constant environmental conflicts due, among others, to the increase of tensions through access to natural resources, which are finite and limited (LITTLE, 2006). In the capitalist economy, the logic of compulsive consumption has become the necessary element for the expansion and dominance of capital in the face of society. Several environmentalist currents emerge in search of explaining and

understanding such conflicts (ALIER, 2015). According to ALIER (2015), there are in the present three main currents belonging to the environmentalist movement. The first, according to the author, is the so-called "Cult to the Wild", which is based on the defense of untouched nature, in love of beautiful landscapes and deep values, without interest in material issues. Conservation biology is the scientific basis that undergraduates such a current. The main political proposal of this current of environmentalism is to maintain natural reserves, denominated national or natural parks free of human interference (ALIER, 2015). They are representatives of this preservationist chain John Muir and the Sierra Club of the United States. Members of this chain receive support from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Worldwide Fund of Nature (WWF) and The Nature Conservancy (ALIER, 2015). The second chain of conservationist concerns is called "the Creed or Gospel of Eco-efficiency" adopted in honor of Samuel Hays' Description (1890) regarding the "Progressive Conservation Movement" of the United States, between the years of 1890 and 1920.

The best-known denominations of this movement in the United States was that of the conservationist Gifford Pinchot (DIEGUES, 2008). It has its attention focused on the effects of economic growth, not only in the areas of original nature but also in the industrial, agricultural and urban economy. It believes in sustainable development, ecological modernization and proper use of resources. Nowadays, this creed constitutes a movement of engineers and economists, a religion of utility and technical efficiency devoid of the notion of the sacred. Eco-efficiency has been described as a business bond with sustainable development (ALIER, 2015). For Alier (2015), the third chain that gains notoriety is the so-called environmentalism of the impoverished, popular ecologism or movement of environmental justice. According to this, the central axis of this third chain is not a sacred reverence to nature, but rather a physical interest in the environment as a source of condition for subsistence, not due to a concern related to the rights of other species and future generations, but rather by the impoverished humans of today (ALIER, 2015). It can be admitted that the ethics of this current is derived born from a demand for contemporary social justice among human beings. The ecology of survival makes the poor aware of the need to conserve resources. They do not use the language of scientific ecology, but they use other local political words, sometimes religious (LITTLE, 2006). The environmentalism of the underprivileged people is pointed out as a necessary perspective to the environmental struggle in the Third World (ROCHA, 2015). The author reflects about the law, ethnic groups, and ethnicity: through the normative concept of traditional peoples and communities. The social struggles of the poor people to maintain the use of natural resources outside the mercantile economy (or outside the State administration) relate to their daily efforts for survival, as they are at the same time struggles for the conservation of nature (ACSELRAD; MELLO BEZERRA, 2009).

This flow brings the poor to the place of actors, people who build their history and value it. In this sense, men and women belonging to the "Fundo do Pasto" communities have been the main actors of this struggle for preservation and conservation of the environment. Furthermore, from the peasant struggles and the social movements of the field and the consequent disruption with old forms of development, the collective construction of the process of coexistence with the semiarid is

initiated, based on new conceptions, principles, and paradigms, still grounded in environmental justice and respecting all forms of life (ACSELRAD; MELLO BEZERRA, 2009).

Final Considerations

Given the accelerated economic growth, the contradictions, the worsening of the economic and social problems that are disaggregating and excluded the environmental conflicts are increasingly constant, among others, of the increase in tensions for access to natural resources, which are finite and limited. The models of State and development adopted were always focused on the protection of the subjects belonging to the dominant elite and tutored values, principles and rules about the traditional, monolithic, conservative and liberal society. Especially in the hinterland of Bahia, from the occupation of its territory to the present day, the models of development based on agribusiness and the large ventures that try to impose themselves as hegemonic conflict, permanently, as new paradigms and Social Subjects. Although still invisible, have been placed as promoters of a new development that is sustained in principles and values aimed at preserving the environment, ecological coexistence and, mainly, that is based on principles of the complexity paradigm, which values the site, cultural diversity and the construction and affirmation of identities of the social subjects. In the aftermath of the great contradictions of problems accumulated, the "sertanejos" resist and, in their daily struggle for survival, they also learn to live with the semiarid, discovering, through their riches and diversities, other ways of living, more dignified and fair. It is evidently necessary that the support of a new model of development be centered on man and nature.

By seeking to learn to live with nature and its adversities, it becomes indispensable to know how to live with one another, to share with him his history, doubts, joys, pains, hopes, his uniqueness. Thus, coexistence acquires another meaning. The coexistence with the semiarid is a new culture, built from a relationship of closeness between human and nature. It is through the observation of natural phenomena, the "behaviors" of plants and animals, in different moments or climatic cycles in the region, that farmers broaden their knowledge and formulate experimentations. The traditional communities of the "Fundo do Pasto" have developed strategies of struggle and survival, construction of new paradigms of development and new knowledge of coexistence with the semiarid, as an essential tool in defense of the environment and, therefore, as an affirmation of emancipatory human rights. They are families that have a simple way of life, and in harmony with the real nature thus, it can be concluded that the traditional communities of Pasto fund, which have singular forms of social organization and that make their territory a place of empowerment and cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction. This way, the usage, knowledge, innovations and practices transmitted, by tradition, are those who genuinely seek to maintain the use of natural resources outside the mercantile economy, because instilled in the logic of survival and conservation of nature, becoming legitimate actors of the Environmentalism of the Impoverished, or of Environmental Justice.

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