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[1]THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN BRAZIL: MULTIPLE PEOPLES, MULTIPLE FORMS

A LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA NO BRASIL: POVOS MÚLTIPLOS, FORMAS MÚLTIPLAS

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the role of African, Amerindian, and Portuguese peoples in shaping and spreading the Portuguese language in Brazil from an interdisciplinary approach. Drawing from secondary and primary sources – such as Antônio da Costa Peixoto's *New Book of the Mina General Language* (1741) and Friar Cannecattim's *Dictionary of the Bunda or Angolan Language* (1804) – it explores the interplay between language, power, and identity to historicise the process by which Portuguese became the primary language in Brazil, despite its multilingual landscape. In doing so, it challenges the idea that the spread of Portuguese and language shift was always a conscious product of the Portuguese Crown and a result of open violent imposition. On the contrary, the spread and consolidation of Portuguese deeply depended on the missionaries, the population, and symbolic colonial practices. Additionally, the fact that Portuguese prevailed as the main language spoken in Brazil has not precluded it from being profoundly intertwined with Amerindian and African languages. Such languages formed a multilingual society, being largely responsible for the differentiation between European and Brazilian Portuguese.

KEYWORDS: Portuguese; General Languages; Africans; Evangelisation; Brazil.

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RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o papel dos povos Ameríndios, Africanos e dos Portugueses na formação e disseminação da língua portuguesa no Brasil sob uma ótica interdisciplinar. A partir de fontes secundárias e primárias – tais como o livro *Obra Nova da Língua Geral Mina* (1741), do português Antônio da Costa Peixoto, e do *Dicionário da Língua Bunda ou Angolense*, escrito pelo missionário capuchinho Cannecattim em 1804 –, este artigo explora a conexão entre linguagem, poder, e identidade para historicizar o processo através do qual a língua portuguesa se tornou a principal língua falada no Brasil, apesar do cenário multilinguístico predominante nos primeiros trezentos anos de colonização. Assim, este texto questiona a ideia de que a consolidação da língua portuguesa e a sua adoção como língua materna foi sempre um produto consciente da coroa portuguesa e um resultado inevitável de imposições abertamente violentas. Ao contrário, a disseminação e a consolidação da língua portuguesa dependeram da ação de missionários, da população e de práticas coloniais simbólicas. Além disso, a predominância da língua portuguesa no Brasil não a impediu de estar profundamente interligada às línguas indígenas e africanas. Estas línguas formavam uma sociedade multilíngue, sendo amplamente responsáveis pela diferenciação entre o português europeu e o brasileiro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Língua Portuguesa; Línguas Gerais; Africanos; Evangelização; Brasil.

Introduction

In the dictionary *Vocabulario Portuguez e Latino*, Raphael Bluteau includes Portuguese in the group of the main languages in the world derived from Latin (Bluteau 1716). Bluteau lays bare the idea of Portuguese as an imperial language, one that the Europeans 'took' to Brazil, Africa, and Asia (BLUTEAU, 1716, p. 138).3 With this idea of Portuguese as an imperial language in mind, this paper examines the role of Portuguese, Amerindian, African, and 'Brazilian' people in spreading the Portuguese language. In other words, it reflects about the reasons that led certain groups choose Portuguese over other languages in different situations and on the long haul (Fasold 1987: p. 180). In doing so, it explores the interplay between language, power, and identity, in an effort to historicise the process by which Portuguese became the first language in Brazil, despite its multilingual heritage (MIGNOLO, 1989). How did language in Brazil evolve from societal multilingualism to an extensive use of general languages that led to the predominance of Portuguese (SCHMIDT-RIESE, 2000, p. 392)? Was Portuguese the only linguistic choice? Did the Portuguese Crown always impose the use of Portuguese? Why have virtually no creoles survived in Brazil? To answer these questions, comparison with Spanish America appears as a transversal cut that enlarges our understanding of the spread of Portuguese in Brazil.

3 "As linguas ainda que pareção innumeraveis, todas se podem reduzir a duas, a saber, linguas matrizes, & geraes, que se estènderão muito, & saõ usadas entre muitas nações diversa, em razão das Conquistas, Religião, commercio, que as introduzio; & linguas particulares, ou proprias de alguma nação, que por consequencia são menos dilatadas. Hoje as linguas matrizes & geraes saõ quatorze, a saber, a lingua Latina, que dividida, & como transformada em varios idiomas, corre todas as provincias da Italia, França, Portugal, & Castella, & pelos Europeos foy levada a muytas partes da America, à nova Hespanha, ou Indias de Castella, ao Canadá, ou nova França, ao Perû, ao Chili, ao Paraguay, ao Brasil, às Ilhas Antilhas, & finalmente a algûas costas, & Ilhas da Africa, da Asia, & do Continente Magellanico".

Considering how the Brazilian linguistic landscape compares with that of other Iberian colonies, Portuguese has practically disappeared from Asia as has Spanish from the Philippines; conversely, Portuguese is spoken by virtually the entire population of Brazil, as is Spanish in Latin America (MOYA, 2013). Language is, therefore, one of the most persistent aspects of Iberian culture in Latin America. Brazil presents an especially significant case for the study of linguistic development, as it is a unique example of "sustained territorial occupation of a colony by the Portuguese" between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries (BETHENCOURT, CURTO 2007, p. 4). Portuguese colonization of Brazil implied the construction of new memories for settlers, Amerindians, and Africans within cultural and territorial discontinuities (HENRIQUES, 2014). As Elizabeth Buettner puts it, large-scale migration created social and political changes that "provided the historical conditions for new groups and identities to take shape, with ideal conditions for the reconstitution of ethnic identities (BUETTNER, 2011, p. 252)". This process was already taking place in Europe – between late antiquity and the medieval period – but in the New World it gained characteristics that made the (re)constitution of identities even more complex (BUETTNER, 2011).

The fact that Brazil is home to most of the Portuguese-speakers in the world reveals the longevity of Atlantic exchanges (ARMITAGE, BRADDICK 2002; BAKEWELL, 2004). Looking at individual mobility across the ocean is vital to understand not only economy but also political structures, social organization, and culture (BETHENCOURT, 2013; FERREIRA, 2007). Therefore, connecting language practices in Portugal with those in Brazil, modified and adapted to the colonial context, is one of the most effective ways of assessing language. As Anthony Russell-Wood notes in his work on the Portuguese expansion overseas, when it comes to language, "what is truly amazing is the manner in which the Portuguese language was carried beyond the bounds of the confined area of Portugal to the uttermost ends of the earth and the sheer endurance to our own days of its linguistic legacy (RUSSELL-WOOD, 1992: 191)". Along the same lines, Luís Rebelo argues that Portuguese went from being spoken in a few areas along coastal Africa and the Indian Ocean, to being the primary means of communication in areas touched by intercontinental maritime trade in Asia, Africa, and the Americas in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (REBELO, 2007). In the same vein, Joseph Clements states that "Portugal's linguistic legacy was essentially established around 1550, about 135 years after Portugal began its maritime expansion to Africa, Asia, and the Americas (CLEMENTS, 2009, p. 42)". In Brazil, this was particularly significant when taking into consideration the immense territory of the colony, combined with the numerous Amerindian and African languages.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are, therefore, of paramount importance to understand what happened in the following two centuries in terms of language in Brazil, as doing so challenges the idea that the Portuguese language was homogenous, or the first and only linguistic alternative. As Kittya Lee observes, Portuguese was not impermeable to change or outside influences and it could have been surpassed by other languages (LEE, 2005). The

fact that Portuguese prevailed does not preclude it from being profoundly intertwined with Amerindian and African languages. On the contrary, such languages formed a multilingual society, being largely responsible for the differentiation between European and Brazilian Portuguese. Against this background, this paper is organised into three sections that will look at the main points raised in this introduction. Firstly, the connection between language, power, and identity. Secondly, it will examine lay and religious linguistic policies in the colonies, particularly regarding Portuguese and Amerindian languages. Finally, it will analyse African languages and the role of Africans in spreading Portuguese as a lingua franca. In the end, it hopes to contribute to the broader debate about linguistic practices in the Portuguese speaking world.

Language, Power, and Identity

Two reasons contributed to the predominance of Portuguese over other languages, both related to power. Firstly, and most notoriously, Portuguese was the language of coercive power. Power is implicated in culture because its signs and habits are internalised in everyday life and used as mechanisms of power (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 1991). In this sense, power and language should be studied at its extremities, in regional and local forms, at a subjective, unconscious level (FOUCAULT, GORDON, 1980). As Michel Foucault puts it, "we need to see how these mechanisms of power at a given moment, in a precise conjecture and by means of transformation, have begun to become economically advantageous and politically useful (FOUCAULT, GORDON, 1980, pp. 100-101)". Myriad uses of Portuguese and other languages worked as mechanisms of power; the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil was the moment; and the transformation of European vernaculars was the conjecture that shaped the linguistic landscape in Brazil.

A second, less cited reason for the spread of Portuguese in Brazil is connected to symbolic or 'soft' power and identity. Portuguese represented power in a way that, when incorporated into local cultures, brought the geographically distant Portugal closer to the colony (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 1993). Portuguese colonisers created an illusion of cultural hegemony and greater numbers over the Amerindians and Africans that encouraged these peoples to adopt Portuguese instead of retaining their mother tongues, although they kept a degree of linguistic autonomy (RAFAEL, 2012; RUSSELL-WOOD, 1992). This 'Lusitanian atmosphere' rarely occurred in the Portuguese colonies in Asia – for example, in Goa, Malaysia, and China where Portuguese was segregated (SUBRAHMANYAM, 1993). The Portuguese in these areas were separated in other environments and did not build a colonial society from scratch as they did in Brazil (BETHENCOURT, 2015). Portuguese hegemony in colonial Brazil – understood as the few urban settlements and the hinterlands surrounding them – allowed no substantial pidgins or creoles to survive in Brazil, in contrast with Malacca and Asia, where Portuguese creoles continued into the twentieth century (BONVINI, 2008; BOXER, 1963;

COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 1991; FASOLD, 1990; MIGNOLO, 2000; MUFWENE, 2014).[4]

In Portuguese America, as colonisation progressed and indigenous peoples encountered Portuguese and Africans, they became familiar with other languages. As a result, a varied linguistic knowledge prevailed wherever they went (LEE, 2005). Migration from other parts of the colony also brought together speakers of Amerindian languages who communicated in Portuguese out of necessity in order to better understand each other, which introduced variations to European Portuguese (MELLO, 2014). On balance, Luso-Brazilians carried Portuguese with them, or at least the variety of Portuguese they spoke (DISNEY, 2009).[5] At a more formal and local level, the mestizos and missionaries who worked in the colonial administration contributed to the spread of Portuguese too, particularly with the creation of *línguas gerais* (MUFWENE, 2014; SILVA NETO, 1950). The *línguas gerais* (general languages) were not the *línguas francas* that the Amerindians used before the arrival of the Europeans, but a product of the missionaries' activities, a construction based on common features between various Amerindian languages (ZWARTJES, 2011, p. 145). The concept of general languages was established in parallel with a negative discourse of multilingualism – an obstacle to evangelisation and colonisation (BARROS, 2015). In this sense, the *línguas gerais* were part of the colonial apparatus, used to evangelise and civilise the native populations (ESTENSSORO, ITIER, 2015). The next section will further look at religious and lay language policies in the Portuguese Empire.

Portuguese and Amerindian Languages Between the Sword and the Cross

European colonisation, in addition to territorial and cultural discontinuities, demanded articulation between economy, administrative structures, and social rearrangements (HENRIQUES, 2014). Colonisation implied the maintenance of power in a broader sense, not only by coercion, but also by creating legitimacy (SWARTZ *et al*. 1966). Rites and symbols played, therefore, a key role in legitimising power (SWARTZ *et al*. 1966). In the legitimising process of colonisation, language was one of the most powerful symbols and contributed to the Portuguese prevalence in Brazil since it was a key component of culture that the colonial project relied on – whether consciously or not (EDWARDS, 1985; SWARTZ *et al.* 1966).

Although the Portuguese language was used in colonial government and education, the colonization in Brazil also relied on general languages with Portuguese only later rising in prominence (EDWARDS, 1985; SWARTZ *et al.* 1966). However, the fact that Portuguese was the imperial language, the decline of Amerindian populations, and the subjugation of the African populations are insufficient to explain this language shift (ABULAFIA, 2008;

4 Pidgin: a language whose vocabulary comes from another tongue. Creole: a pidgin that becomes a mother tongue.

5 Variety is a way of speaking that a community applies Burke, Peter. *The Art of Conversation.* Cambridge: Polity, 1993.

DISNEY, 2009; FREIRE, 2011; MELLO, 2014; MONTEIRO, 2000; MOORE, 2014; MUFWENE, 2014; RONCARATI *et al*., 2003). As Gabriela Ramos observes about the indigenous elite in colonial Peru, "the process by which different individuals *became* part of an indigenous elite, as a consequence of acquiring a specific type of knowledge, has been overlooked (RAMOS 2014)". It is thus necessary to look at both intentional and indirect language policies in colonial Brazil.

The language policy that predominated in the colony at the beginning of colonisation was haphazard: as elsewhere in Europe during the early modern period, there was no coherent language imposition program (COHEN, 2001). Although there was no clear pro-Amerindian language policy from the Portuguese Crown, between 1686 and 1727 authorities declared the *Brasílica* – the term preferred by K. Lee to designate the general language most spoken in Brazil – to be the official language of "contact, education, colonization, and catechesis" in the Amazon (LEE, 2005). On the other hand, the Crown also made intermittent attempts to impose Portuguese (1681, 1701, 1717, 1722, 1727), commanding missionaries to teach Portuguese to the Amerindians (ALDEN, 1996; SILVA NETO, 1950). In some areas such as São Paulo and the Amazon, the population spoke general languages until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (RODRIGUES, 1985). In Grão Pará and Maranhão, most of the population did not speak Portuguese until the nineteenth century, despite the Portuguese administration prohibited and often violently prevented their use from the 1750's (FREIRE, 2008, pp. 135-140; MARIANI, 2004, pp. 103-104).[6] This occurred after the *Diretório dos* Índios (The Law of the Directorate) prohibited and often punished indigenous children from using general languages and officially institutionalised Portuguese in the colony (BURKE, 2004; MARIANI, 2004; MAXWELL, 1995).[7]

In comparison, Spanish language policies towards native tongues were more forceful than those of the Portuguese (FÁVERO, 2008). From the early stages of colonization, Spain created more material conditions and infrastructure for institutionalising the teaching and reproduction of general languages in its domains (LAGORIO, 2003). Colonisers considered Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs more civilised than the Amerindians in Portuguese America, which certainly contributed to such policy. For example, in sixteenth-century Peru, colonial authorities ordered Quechua to be the main language in indigenous groups to facilitate the teaching of the doctrine; the colonial administration also advised priests to spend longer periods of time in the same parish in order to learn local languages (DURSTON, 2007). The fact that the University of Lima offered Standard Colonial Quechua lessons is another sign of the efforts that the Spanish administration made to consolidate general languages (DURSTON, 2007). Similarly, in Guatemala, there were classes

6 Grão-Pará and Maranhão was a Portuguese colony separated from the south. It was created in 1621 and its capital city, São Luís, was transferred to Belém in 1737.

7 The Treatise of Madrid played a fundamental role in this language policy change, as one of the main criteria to define whether an area belonged to the Portuguese or to Spanish was the main local spoken language.

of Nahuatl for judges, notaries, and other Spaniards (MATTHEW, ROMERO, 2012). In Brazil, Portuguese authorities only founded the first universities at the beginning of the nineteenth century, without offering any indigenous language subjects until the twentieth century, three centuries after Mexico and Peru (BAKEWELL, 2004; FÁVERO, 2008).

The adoption of the printing press also explains the difference between language policies in Spanish and Portuguese America. According to Sylvain Auroux, both the printing press and standardisation were part of the same revolution: printing had consequences for the writing and publishing of grammar books, not only because it increased the number of copies in circulation, but also because printing itself demanded standardisation (AUROUX, 1994). To organize a vernacular, standardise it and "endow it with a grammar", was to legitimise it as a language (RAFAEL, 2012, p. 24). At the same time, a 'translation fever' occurred in Europe as language started to be seen as a human creation and a global means of communication (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 1991). The printing press was present in Spanish America from the sixteenth century, whereas in Brazil – despite earlier attempts to establish one occurred in 1705 and 1745 – printing only officially started in 1808, when the Portuguese royal family relocated to the colony (ABREU, 2010; BRAGANÇA, 2010; CAVALCANTI, 2004; ELLIOTT 1984; MORAES 1979; RUSSELL-WOOD, 2002). Although the importance of the printing press cannot be overrated, the high numbers of Amerindian grammar books published in Spanish America contributed to the greater consolidation of native tongues in their colonies when compared to Brazil (DURSTON, 2007).

Given the Crown's haphazard language policies, missionary work was crucial for their organisation in Brazil. In both Portuguese and Spanish empires, the Crown was in charge of ecclesiastical affairs, a prerogative known as *padroado régio* – royal patronage (SÁ, 2007). The kings were responsible for nominating bishops and creating bishoprics, later subject to papal confirmation (BOXER, 2002). The Crown also controlled the missions overseas and the missionaries, as even if they were not Portuguese, they had to abide by Portuguese rules (SCHWALLER, 2011). The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540 and, contrary to the mendicant orders such as the Benedictines and Franciscans (that supported their activities through alms and gifts) the Jesuits accumulated wealth (MULLETT, 1999; SCHWALLER, 2011). They played a pivotal role in evangelisation and in the education of the elites as, in spite of the presence of Carmelites, Benedictines, and Franciscans, the Society of Jesus was the first to establish a mission in Brazil (1549), becoming the most active religious order in the fields of both evangelisation and education (ALDEN, 1996; BAKEWELL, 2004; CASTELNAU -L'ESTOILE, 2000; DELUMEAU, 1977; DISNEY, 2009; MOORE, 2014; WORCESTER, 2008; ZWARTJES, 2011).

The Society of Jesus controlled a considerably large portion of indigenous labour, grouped in village settlements called *aldeias* (ALDEN, 1996; BETHENCOURT and CURTO, 2007). The establishment of *aldeias* constituted a significant part of colonisation, as they were places where

the Amerindians learned the doctrine and the necessary skills to supply the colonial project with workforce (ALMEIDA, 2010; BETHENCOURT and CURTO, 2007). Traditionally seen as coercive spaces where the Amerindians were deprived of agency and subject to colonial interests, the *aldeias* were environments where the indigenous peoples had to construct new relations and cultural habits (ALMEIDA, 2010). The Crown supported the *aldeias*, but they were founded and administered by missionaries (LMEIDA, 2010; BETHENCOURT and CURTO, 2007) . The *aldeias* were constant involved in disputes between settlers and missionaries, as the former were avid to explore the Amerindians as workforce outside the *aldeias*, while the latter were protective of them (CUNHA, 1992).

The difficulties in defining the borders between Portuguese and Spanish America in the south of Brazil complicated the Jesuits situation from mid-eighteenth century (ALMEIDA, 2010; BETHENCOURT and CURTO, 2007). As the Jesuits had controlled the *aldeias* in the south outside the Portuguese Crown jurisdiction, they posed a problem for the expansionist purposes of the Crown (BETHENCOURT and CURTO, 2007). This, combined with the fact that the Society of Jesus had achieved a greater power than the Portuguese Crown expected, culminated in the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1759 (ALDEN, 1996; BOXER, 1962; DISNEY, 2009). The Marquis of Pombal – Secretary of State from 1750 to 1777 – banned the Jesuits from all Portuguese domains. The conflict with the Jesuits did not mean a rupture with the Catholic Church (MONTEIRO, 2008). On the contrary, the separation between the state and religion occurred much later, gradually, and not completely (ASAD, 1993). Initially supported by the Jesuits, Pombal turned them into a universal enemy in order to fulfil his regalist intentions (Monteiro 2008)[8].

The haphazard language policy of the Portuguese Crown allowed Amerindian and African languages to influence the Portuguese spoken in Brazil in spite of its late 'victory' (RODRIGUES, 1985). By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, language contact had already changed Portuguese to such an extent that it gained the attention of intellectuals of the time. Early modern Portuguese sources mention *fala da Guiné* (the chatter of Guinea) or *fala dos negros* (the chatter of the blacks), a pidgin formed in West Africa through contact between African languages and Portuguese (RODRIGUES, 1985). It was usually an object of ridicule in written sources, depicted as 'bastardised' and 'miscellaneous'. With time, the Portuguese spoken by Africans became part of popular culture and was usually regarded as a variant of Portuguese and not a creole (HAVIK, 2007).

Playwright Gil Vicente observed different ways of speaking Portuguese in Portugal under Spanish and African influence, considering it a 'half-language' due to the prevalence of grammatical slips and mispronunciation (LEE, 2005; REBELO, 2007; TEYSSIER, 1959). One of the most important Portuguese intellectuals of his time, the Jesuit António Vieira also noted different forms of the Portuguese language (DISNEY, 2009; GONÇALVES and JONATHAN

8 Regalism: a sovereign's supremacy in ecclesiastical matters.

DE FRANÇA, 2012; LÚCIO D'AZEVEDO, 1918; RUSSEL-WOOD, 1992)[9]. Since Vieira was an educated man who was familiar with a number of languages, his observation of differences between European Portuguese and its colonial variants is significant. António Vieira made his awareness explicit in the sermon *Xavier Dormindo e Xavier Acordado* (Sleeping Xavier, Awaken Xavier) written in the seventeenth century in which he also employed the term 'half-language' in reference to the Portuguese spoken in different colonies such as Brazil, Angola, Malaysia, and Japan.

Vieira elaborated on why these languages were 'half' or 'broken': they were half European, half indigenous; half political, half barbarous; half Portuguese, half the property of the nations which 'chewed' and pronounced them in their own way (VIEIRA, 1694, p. 165)[10]. The comparison reflects the meaning of the term barbarian, derived from the Greek: to utter unintelligible sounds – to babble (GRILLO, 1989). By establishing a dichotomy between being European/political and indigenous/barbaric, the Jesuit (whether consciously or not) placed the Amerindians in an inferior, subordinated position that could lead either to war or truce (HERZOG, 2015). Father Vieira shared the same views with contemporaries in other parts of the world, including France and England: subordinate languages and dialects were barbarous and the peoples who spoke them were savages (GRILLO, 1989). This comparison mirrors the power dynamics that existed between colonizers and colonised, where the latter were not civilized, their 'half-language' standing as a proof of barbarism (GRILLO, 1989). Therefore, if the indigenous peoples were barbarian, they did not have God, law or justice. As barbarians, they were incapable of speaking Portuguese or pronouncing it 'entirely', as the verb 'to chew' might mean either 'to omit certain words or sounds', or 'to speak in a different rhythm and intonation'.

According to Vieira, all Eastern nations, as well as the Angolans and the Amerindians in Brazil, spoke Portuguese but each in their own 'style' including 'barbarisms' – mistakes (VIEIRA, 1694, p. 164). He claimed that there were two kinds of Portuguese: the 'right' language and the 'inside out'. In his view, the native peoples throughout the Portuguese Empire spoke a distorted version, while those born in Portugal communicated in the correct way (ROSA, 2003). Despite making negative observations about the differences between the Portuguese spoken in various colonies and European Portuguese, António Vieira perceived them all as Portuguese, not as a creole or as a 'chat' (*fala*), highlighting the importance of learning them. In doing so, Vieira addressed another trait associated with the missionary work of the Jesuits: the importance of an effective communication for the success of evangelisation.

9 Vieira was born in Lisbon, but he lived in Brazil for most of his life. The missions under his control in the north of Brazil (1659) converted around 200,000 Amerindians.

10 "Meyas linguas, porque eram meyo Europèias, & meyo Indianas: meyas-linguas, porque eraõ meio politicas, & meyo barbaras: meyas linguas, porque eram meio portuguesas, & meio de todas as outras Naçoẽs que as pronunciavaõ ou mastigavaõ a seu modo".

The Jesuits early reflected on native languages and did everything on their power to give adequate training to missionaries, which included learning native languages (SÁ, 2007). They had printing presses in Goa, Macao, and Japan to print doctrinal material, in Portuguese or in local languages (SÁ, 2007). Other religious orders had similar strategies, but not on the same scale as the Jesuits (SÁ, 2007). Whether the Portuguese spoken in Brazil was 'right' or 'wrong', it served both lay and clerical powers. Once they had become Christians, the Amerindians would have God, law, and justice, which would facilitate their subjugation and colonization (GANDAVO, 2008). The connection between religion and colonisation was the motto of Iberian colonization. As Vicente Rafael concludes about the Spanish presence in the Philippines, "Catholicism not only provided Spain's colonial enterprise with its ideological frame; it also embedded the structure of colonial rule within the practice of religious conversion (RAFAEL, 2012)".

It was hence fundamental to speak to the colonised population in their languages, imitating their accent and, if necessary, their mistakes (VIEIRA, 1694, p. 164). The Jesuits preferred using general languages, as native peoples had to understand the doctrine in order to legitimise their conversion and the sacraments, particularly baptism, marriage, confession, and the anointing of the sick. One of the most important points in the anointing of the sick was that Indians who were on the verge of dying had to abjure their ancestors' practices under the threat of eternal damnation. In this case, conversion meant more than accepting a new faith: it meant forgetting their ancestors' costumes and rituals once and for all (BETTENDORF, 1800; CASTELANAU-L'ESTOILE, 2011; MAMIANI, 1698). António Vieira urged the missionaries in Brazil to do as the missionary Francis Xavier did in Japan, where he spoke the 'low language' of 'vile peoples' in order to instruct them (VIEIRA, 1694, p. 164)[11]. Low language here is not Japanese, as Xavier never spoke it, but probably a general language, that was considered inferior. At the same time, Vieira criticized slave owners in Brazil for making their captives pray in Portuguese without verifying that they understood what they were saying, because as a result the captives repeated the prayers like 'parrots' and remained as pagan as they were from the start (KARASCH, 1987; VIEIRA, 1694)[12]. This is evidence that Portuguese was spread and it also lays bare the missionaries' obsession: the converts ought to understand the doctrine.

11 "No Japão ha huma lingua baixa, de que só usa a gente vil, & de nenhum modo os nobres; & desta maneira ensinava o Santo a estes, fallando-lhe na língua baixa, ou no baixo da língua: *Sub língua tua*". Saint Francisco Xavier was a Jesuit missionary in Asia during the sixteenth century. He used Portuguese pidgins and composed jingles to spread the Gospel. See: Mullett, Michael A. *The Catholic Reformation.* London: Routledge, 1999; Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: a political and economic history.* London: Longman, 1993.

12 "Agora pergunto eu: E he este o modo com que no Brasil ensinaõ aos escravos os seus Senhores, ou os seus Feitores, ou os seus Capelaens, ou os seus filhos? Os menos negligentes fazem quando muyto, que os escravos, & escravas buçaes saibaõ as Orações na lingua Portugueza, nam entendendo mais o que dizẽ, que os Papagayos pardos de Angola, ou verdes do Brasil. E assim vivem, & morrem tam Gentios como dantes eraõ," *[...]*.

Adaptation to the native languages was therefore a strategic and useful move. This is striking because in terms of power relations, if the dominant group expects to remain dominant, it usually carries on with its language, unless they rule through local leaders, using pre-existing power structures, as in Asia, for example (FASOLD, 1987). However, new situations require new strategies and colonial society required other forms of exercising power – the adoption of local languages was essential for this. Administrative authorities also saw the importance of interpreters for colonisation. In the early stages of Brazilian colonisation, Pero Vaz de Caminha suggested a solution that would allow them to establish better communication between the Portuguese and the Amerindians: that of leaving two convicts in Brazil instead of taking a few natives to Portugal because the Indians 'were people that no one understood' and captured Amerindians would probably say yes to whatever they were asked (CASTELANAU-L'ESTOILE, 2015; CORTESÃO AND CAMINHA, 1994, p. 164)[13]. The practice of sending convicts (*degredados*) to Brazil reached its peak in the sixteenth century; the Portuguese Crown purposefully left them on the shores of nearly all the recently discovered areas with the aim of creating intermediaries who would acquire linguistic and cultural skills in order to become interpreters (COATES, 2001). There were around twenty convicts in Cabral's ship: two of them remained in the newly discovered land to learn the indigenous languages and mediate future contacts with the Portuguese; the captain also took two natives to Portugal (METCALF, 2005).

The Portuguese were not alone in using interpreters to facilitate communications with the people they subdued. Early European explorers took natives to Europe in order to learn their languages and return as interpreters (COHEN, 2008). As Paul Cohen notes, "in virtually every context, the success of European settlement, campaigns of conquest, and commercial enterprises was predicated on effectively soliciting Amerindian partners or intermediaries (COHEN, 2008, p. 399)". The Spaniards soon recognized that language and empire (stately power) were interwoven and worked on keeping both under control: Nebrija expressed this idea in the first Castilian dictionary published in 1492 (TODOROV, 1999). The first interpreters were Indians, as the colonised in general learned the language of the colonizer first (TODOROV, 1999). In his work on Spanish America, T. Todorov highlights the importance that interpreters, particularly of the Aztec La Malinche (Doña Marina) – offered as gift to the Spaniards during the first contacts – in the success of Hernán Cortés's enterprise in America (METCALF, 2005; TODOROV, 1999). In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Lima, General Interpreter was a prestigious position held by Indians in Peru (RAMOS, 2014). The General Interpreter acted as a link between the indigenous population and the Spanish authorities in the second most important colonial body in Spanish America: the *Real Audiencia*

13 "Sobre isto acordaram que não era necessário tomar por força homens, porque costume era dos que assim levavam por força para alguma parte dizerem que há de tudo quanto lhes perguntam; e que melhor e muito melhor informação da terra dariam dois homens desses degredados que aqui deixássemos do que eles dariam se os levassem, por ser gente que ninguém entende".

(RAMOS, 2014). Despite the inferior position occupied by the indigenous people, facilitating communication could work in their favour, as there was no guarantee that the interpreters were translating accurately and not manipulating the discourse as they pleased. The following section will build on go-betweens within African languages.

African Interpreters and African languages, a Two-Pronged Sword

The introduction of African slavery to the Americas meant that European colonisers, particularly the missionaries, resorted to African interpreters in addition to Amerindians, usually accompanied by the same suspicion mentioned above. Alonso de Sandoval, a Spanish Jesuit living in Cartagena (Colombia) during the seventeenth century, dedicated a significant number of pages of his *Treatise on Slavery* (1627) to the importance of "multilingual and faithful" mediators for the teaching of the doctrine, repeatedly warning other missionaries of its limitations (SANDOVAL, 2008, p. 102-105)[14].

According to Sandoval, a missionary ought to walk all day long if necessary to find interpreters; otherwise, "the entire structure of his work [would] collapse (SANDOVAL, 2008: 102-103)". Sandoval assured the missionaries that it was not "undignified for a priest to go from home to home looking for translators," claiming that the use of interpreters was not new in evangelisation since the Apostles had also resorted to them. Furthermore, in his instructions, the Jesuit warned that some interpreters said whatever they pleased in their own language (SANDOVAL, 2008, p. 104). According to Sandoval, it was difficult to find interpreters of "good nature" and who were "religious enough to clearly state the truth (SANDOVAL, 2008, p. 132)". On the contrary, they often did not translate what missionaries said or put it in a simpler way when they felt like doing it (SANDOVAL, 2008).

Although the missionaries could not entirely trust interpreters, they knew that without them the evangelising mission would be impossible. According to Alonso de Sandoval, the first thing missionaries looked for in a group of new arrivals was a *ladino* interpreter (SANDOVAL, 2008). He uses the term ladino when referring to multilingual slaves who spoke Spanish in addition to other African languages (SANDOVAL, 2008). The first slaves forced into the Americas were Christianised and 'Europeanised' Africans that had lived in the Iberian Peninsula (Lisbon and Seville, for example) and spoke either Portuguese or Spanish (KLEIN and VINSON, III 2007; MAESTRI, 2011). Conversely, the slaves called *bozales* only spoke their mother tongues and were unbaptised (KLEIN and LUNA, 2010; KLEIN and VINSON III 2007).

The ladinos had a crucial role even before arriving in the New World: they were

14 Alonso de Sandoval was a Spaniard and he was sent to Cartagena in 1605 to evangelise Africans.

responsible for "guarding and protecting the *bozales*" on the ships and they also explained work in the plantations and mines to the newcomers (FREYRE, 1946; MAESTRI, 2011; SANDOVAL, 2008, p. 126-127). A ladino slave was usually baptised and had lived among Christians for a while, hence their relative ease in moving between both cultures (SANDOVAL, 2008; CASTELANAU-L'ESTOILE, 2000). It is interesting to note that Sandoval did not agree that the *bozales* were less intelligent than the ladinos; they simply did not understand Spanish. When spoken in their languages, however, they were perfectly capable of understanding the catechism: "when they speak in their own language, they seem as intelligent as if they were ladino. *[...]* It seems they are not capable of receiving the sacraments because they are thought to be *bozales*. Because they do not understand our language, they are left to die without the sacraments, as if they were beasts. I know one black *bozal* man who is certainly not a beast (SANDOVAL, p. 107-109)".

Sandoval also insisted in his *Treatise* that missionaries ensured that African slaves fully understood the catechism in order to be baptised, otherwise they would remain pagans. He argued that when the missionaries instructed the captives, they had to consider the nation they came from and how much Spanish they understood (SANDOVAL, 2008). He admitted that some slaves did not want to be baptised even if they comprehended the doctrine but that usually they simply did not understand the missionaries (SANDOVAL, 2008). The Jesuit advised missionaries to ask slaves if they had had water poured on them and to carefully enquire if they had been spoken to in a language they understood (SANDOVAL, 2008). It is evident from Sandoval's observations that language was fundamental for religious instruction and that it was not enough to ask future converts to repeat the catechism; they had to understand it. As the colonisation of language was an important step towards the process of symbolic domination of the colony, it was better for missionaries to learn the local languages though they usually relied on intermediaries and interpreters (CASTELANAU-L'ESTOILE, 2000; COMAROFF and COMAROFF, 1991).

Centuries later, Friar Bernardo Maria de Cannecattim, a Capuchin missionary in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Congo, wrote about the same subject in his *Dicionário da Língua Bunda ou Angolese* (Dictionary of the Bunda or Angolan Language, 1804). Cannecattim stressed the importance of establishing effective communication with the natives; however, as missionaries and administrative authorities did not speak the local languages, they had to yield to interpreters who spoke whatever pleased them most, deceiving both sides (CANNECATIM, 1804). For Cannecattim, ignorance of the local languages compromised both the success of evangelization and of the political and commercial enterprises. This posed a particularly serious problem for evangelisation because the preaching of the Gospel and the ministering of the Sacraments could not be completed unless the interpreter accurately translated everything that the missionaries said.

It is possible to infer from Sandoval and Cannecattim's remarks that the use of interme-

diaries cut two ways: despite being essential for a successful conversation, there was no guarantee that they would accurately convey the message. Sandoval did not necessarily attribute such discrepancy to mischievous behaviour, as the interpreters could simply become tired of translating (SANDOVAL, 2008). Cannecatim, on the other hand, had a more biased view and blamed the Africans' lack of knowledge of their own language and their inability to find an accurate corresponding term in their mother tongues for the poor translation (CANNECATIM,1804, p. II)[15].

The first ladinos in Brazil spoke Bantu languages such as Kikongo, Kimbundu, and Umbundu, being from Angola and Congo (CASTRO, 1980). Other languages from the Bantu family were spoken in Mozambique, such as Xironga, Cishona, and Zulu (CASTRO, 2002). As a ladino, a slave was able to switch between Portuguese to creoles and to African languages, increasing their opportunities for social category change, as they were able to act as intermediaries in commercial and political transactions (HAVIK, 2007; RIBEIRO, 2000). As Herbert Klein and Francisco Luna argue, autonomy and knowledge (of the African culture of the past, or of the European culture of the present) played an important role in slaves' lives (KLEIN and LUNA, 2010). Ladinos could have a number of occupations such as being in charge of discipline in slave dwellings or, if manumitted, working as bush captains to capture runaway slaves (CASTGRO, 1980; HIGGINS, 1999). Occupations such as these became available to some Africans along with opportunities for individual social category change (CASTRO, 1980; HIGGINS, 1999). It is important to highlight that these social changes were individual, not collective and, therefore, they did not go against slavery. On the contrary, ladinos blended into an unequal system by emulating and adapting to the colonial environment (GOOTENBERG, 2010, pp. 22; 28;31-32). This, however, depended not only on coercion but also on captives' agency in assessing their condition and making choices within restrictions.

In the linguistic landscape, the 'Africanisation' of Brazilian Portuguese by ladinos played a crucial role in shaping the language (CASTRO, 1980). Some scholars argue that it was impossible for Africans to communicate in their mother tongues, as slave owners mixed ethnicities to avoid rebellions and mutinies (LUCCHESI, 2008, pp. 160-161). Others claim that, although the Africans taken to Brazil came from different areas, they could understand each other without much difficulty, either because their languages belonged to the same family, or because they knew a pidgin or a creole (HEYWOOD and THORNTON, 2007, p. 56). A range of opportunities available for ladinos may have encouraged Africans to renounce their multilingual abilities – forcefully acquired or not – over Portuguese. As almost 5 million African slaves were taken to Brazil – against half million Portuguese from 1500 to 1760 – their role in

15 "Os interpretes são Negros do Paiz, gente bruta, que ignora da sua propria lingua huma grande parte, e que da Portugueza apenas sabe os termo mais vulgares, e usuaes. *[...]* mas succede, frequentemente, que huns taes interpretes, ou não percebem a força, e o verdadeiro espirito das palavras Portuguezas, ou não sabem achar, e escolher na sua Lingua termos, que propriamente lhes correspondão," *[...]*.

spreading the Portuguese language is undeniable (GODINHO, 1992, pp. 17-18)[16].

The book *Obra Nova da Língua Geral Mina* (New Book of the Mina General language - 1741), by the Portuguese settler Antônio da Costa Peixoto, lends weight to this assumption. Peixoto had written a short version of this work before (1731) under the name of *Alguns Apontamentos da Língua Mina* (Some Notes on the Mina Language). The main version used in this paper was edited and analysed by ethnolinguistic Yeda Pessoa de Castro in 2002. Olaby Yai analyses another edition, published in 1944 by Luís Silveira (YAI, 2009; Peixoto 1944). As Castro claims, this text has relevant information not only for linguistics, but also for the history and sociology of African people in colonial Brazil (CASTRO, 2002, p. 25). In this work, Peixoto depicts the contexts in which he believed that using the Mina language was important in the form of dialogues and lists of words or expressions. The dialogues between freemen and captives in Costa Peixoto's text can be divided into three main subjects: slavery, commerce, and sexuality. The manuscript is revealing of the power relations between settlers and African captives and, for this reason, it is important to examine the social background of its author.

Costa Peixoto was, as most of the Portuguese who went to Brazil, from Entre-Douro and Minho, north Portugal, and he lived in Vila Rica, in the gold mining district (SCOTT, 1999, p. 36; MONTEIRO, 2009, pp. 63-65; BOXER, 1962, p. 49; 164; CASTRO, 2002, p. 26). The great numbers of slaves newly arrived in the district propitiated the development of an African general language, as the captives came from various places (Maestri 2011, p. 200). Peixoto was a 'white ladino', although the current term used by scholarship for a European that spoke native tongues is lançado (CASTRO, 2002, p. 26; DISNEY, 2009, pp. 251-372; p. 318; CURTO, 2007). The lançados were profoundly integrated into the culture they lived in, although they never completely abandoned European habits (GAMES, 2006, p. 172). Costa Peixoto was probably highly proficient in the Mina-Jeje dialect, but not a highly educated man, as his Portuguese had less polished features (YAI, 2009, p. 104). For example, he wrote 'pregunto' (I ask) instead of the standard Portuguese form 'pergunto' (YAI, 2009, p. 104). Peixoto acknowledges his low education and 'limited discourse' in the prologue, explaining that he did not have proper instruction when he could have been able to dedicate time to studying. From this statement, one can infer that instruction was supposed to happen during childhood, before the beginning of adult life when people were expected to work. It also reveals that Peixoto was aware of the 'rhetoric of modesty' expected from modern authors, according to which they noted their own weaknesses (BOUZA-ALVAREZ, 2004, p. 43). Costa Peixoto was not highly educated but he certainly underwent some basic education since, in spite of the spelling mistakes (mostly marks of orality), he was not illiterate.

Costa Peixoto organises his manuscript principally in the form of dialogues and there are

16 The Trans-Atlantic slave Trade Database (1801-1825): http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/H8gDhZNt.

a few explanations for his choice. Teaching in dialogues was a common method at the time, particularly in catechisms. Considering that Peixoto had basic education, his main model was probably a catechism. Therefore, consciously or not, he organised his manuscript in dialogues, as he would not have known how to write in a more scholarly way. Another possibility is that the dialogues recorded in his work were extremely common in everyday life and Costa Peixoto witnessed them, taking notes on the spot. Dialogues also facilitated memorisation and appealed to a larger audience more accustomed to oral traditions, revealing the connection that the written world maintained with orality, despite the spread of printing (CHARTIER, 2004, p. xiii).

Costa Peixoto considered the Mina language useful and important enough to be recorded in written form despite writing from the perspective of a coloniser. As stated in the prologue, his main objective was to help other Portuguese settlers avoid becoming victims of crimes such as robbery and murder because they did not understand the Mina dialect (CASTRO, 2002, p. 26). Colonial authorities and settlers nurtured a generalised fear of rebellions and runaway slaves in the colony as whole, particularly in the gold mining district (BOXER, 1962, p. 177; SOUZA, 1999, pp. 94; 178-179). Count Assumar, governor of the captaincies of São Paulo and Minas Gerais between 1717 and 1721, was obsessed with slaves' rebellion (HIGGINS, 1999, p. 176; SOUZA, 1982, pp. 108-109). The situation continued into the eighteenth century and epistolary administrative communication pays testimony to the issue, particularly focusing on the activity of *calhambolas* (runaway slaves grouped into isolated communities called *quilombos*) that allegedly committed a series of crimes against freemen, mainly on the district's roads (GUIMARÃES, 2007, pp. 440-442; 446-447; 452; SCARATO, 2014, pp. 100-105). The formation of *quilombos* (maroons) was a form of resistance and rebellion to the slave regime (MELLO, 2014, p. 176; BAKEWELL, 2004, pp. 165; 176-177; KLEIN and VINSON III, 2007)[17].

According to Costa Peixoto all of these problems that led to insult, ruin, robbery, death, atrocities, and damages could be avoided if the slave owners and inhabitants of the gold mining district were 'less lazy' and 'more curious' (PEIXOTO, 1944, p. 12)[18]. Peixoto's audience may have been limited but he expected his manuscript to be published: at the end of the book he asks readers not to lend out their copies or reproduce them so as to encourage more people

17 The most famous quilombo in Brazil was seventeenth-century Quilombo dos Palmares, in the state of Alagoas, in the northeast. The main language spoken in Palmares is unknown, but there is one document attesting that, when a Portuguese tried to negotiate with the *palmarinhos* (members of Palmares), he had to resort to an interpreter to understand each other Freitas, Décio. *República de Palmares: pesquisa e comentários em documentos históricos do século XVII.* Maceió: EdUFA: Ideário Comunicação e Cultura, 2004.

18 "Pois é certo e afirmo, que se todos os senhores de escravos, e inda os que não têm, soubessem esta linguagem não sucederiam tantos insultos, ruínas, estragos, roubos, mortes, e finalmente casos atrozes, como muitos miseráveis têm experimentado: de que me parece de alguma sorte se poderiam evitar alguns destes desconcertos, se houvesse maior curiosidade e menos preguiça, nos moradores e habitants destes países".

to buy his work when it came out (PEIXOTO, 1944, p. 36)[19]. The production of grammar books and dictionaries of general languages reflects a deeper European interest in native peoples. The importance of recording an African dialect on paper cannot, therefore, be glossed over, even if it was for colonising purposes, to restore settlers back in power, as it entailed the acknowledgement that it was important and needed to be recorded, fixed, and learned (AUROUX, 1994, pp. 48; 158).

Concluding Remarks

This paper has examined the varieties of Portuguese spoken in colonial Brazil, where Amerindian languages played a central role in colonisation for more than two hundred years. In some areas such as Grão-Pará and Maranhão, they continued into the nineteenth century as the first language of the largest proportion of the population. Nevertheless, general languages in Brazil never acquired the same status of those in Spanish America, perhaps because the Amerindian populations in Brazil were nomadic or semi nomadic, differently from the settled Nahua, Maia, and Quechua(ABULAFIA, 2008, pp. 263; 303; FAUSTO, 2000, pp. 13-14).

The Jesuits preferred to use Amerindian tongues when converting the Indians, only occasionally resorting to Portuguese (FÁVERO, 2008). They had a 'translation policy' in Asia, the Americas, and Europe which was linked to the missionary work (BURKE, 2005, p. 13). In the sixteenth century, religious orders required new missionaries to study Amerindian languages, where they were to preach preferably in the local vernaculars (FÁVERO, 2008, p. 141; CASTELNAU-L'ESTOILE, 2000, pp. 144-152; 217). Grammar books and dictionaries contributed to the task of learning such languages, while in Brazil missionaries also counted on multilingual intermediaries, translators between two distinct worlds (METCALF, 2005, pp. 1-15). However, unlike Amerindian general languages, when Europeans produced works on African languages, they hardly ever recognised complexity in them or acknowledged their contributors (DISNEY, 2009, p. 250; YAI, 2009, p. 105). This is significant in showing the place that African slaves occupied in the Brazilian colonial society: lower than Amerindians despite their numbers becoming higher (RUSSEL-WOOD, 1992, p. 110).

In spite of the large numbers of African slaves taken to Brazil, few African general languages emerged – the most remarkable examples occurred in places such as in Bahia, Minas Gerais, and Maranhão (CASTRO, 2005, p. 58; CASTRO, 2002, p. 27; BONVINI, 2008, pp. 20-21). These discrepancies expose the power relations in colonial Brazil that determined which stories were to be told and which should be silenced (TROUILLOT, 1995). Silence is not neutral, it reveals inequalities that existed among

19 "E que não o empreste, nem treslade, nem dê a tresladar a ninguém, e finalmente me enculque curioso para que me comprem outros volumes, que com ansia e fervor, fico dando ao prelo e breve me sairão".

individuals and led to unbalanced power in the production of historical evidence (TROUILLOT, 1995, p. 48). Despite great numbers, African slaves occupied the bottom of the society and, therefore, written testimonies of their activities are scarce.

Amerindians, Africans, and mestizos gradually shifted from their mother tongues to *línguas gerais*, creoles or pidgins and, on the following, to Portuguese. Many cultural, economic, and political factors contributed to this language shift and to spread Portuguese as a symbol of power. Portuguese settlers succeeded in creating an illusion of cultural superiority and of having greater numbers than Amerindians and Africans. This was particularly strong in the case of Brazil, where from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, the Portuguese presence went from being purely commercial to an effective settlement process involving a high degree of miscegenation (MELLO, 2014, p. 102).

Evangelisation, combined with demographic changes might also explain why the Amerindians, Africans, and their descendants shifted to Portuguese (RAFAEL, 2012, pp. 208-212; KLEIN and LUNA 2010, pp. 215-216). At the beginning of colonisation, the missionaries, outnumbered by the Amerindians, learned and codified their languages. The process was then inverted: the Amerindians and, later, the Africans, continued using the Portuguese language in order to participate more actively in the colonial society. In Spanish America, Castilian was not always forcibly imposed, but stimulated by the desire to attain status and to participate in the colonial dynamics (FIRBAS, 2013, p. 139). A similar situation occurred in Brazil, where Amerindians and Africans took advantage of their situation, and used Portuguese as a tool to participate in colonial society. For example, belonging to an aldeia could be an advantage for the Amerindians, and so they identified themselves by their Christian names when sending a petition to the king (ALMEIDA, 2010, p. 79). Knowledge of the language became an effective tool for social category changing, since speaking Portuguese could open doors that would remain shut if they did not adopt the language (MELLO, 2014, pp. 182-183). The Jesuit linguistic policy was, therefore, a two-pronged sword: the general languages were an evangelisation tool, used to level up different ethnic groups, but the Amerindians later appropriated and used them accordingly to their interests and needs (ALMEIDA, 2010).

As soon as Portugal achieved control over the indigenous peoples, the administration felt the need to introduce more aggressive linguistic policies in order to maintain the dominance of the Portuguese in the colony. What was at stake was not only political authority, but also cultural, with the Portuguese language increasingly occupying a central role. The need to assert political authority and to expand the borders culminated in the expulsion of the Jesuits and the subsequent prohibition of general languages. This change was also related to the importance that Brazil had acquired following the discovery of gold in the late seventeenth century, although Brazil's emergence in the Portuguese empire dates to the first half of the seventeenth century, concomitantly to the decline of Portuguese India (BETHENCOURT, 1998, pp. 318-319).

This paper has challenged the idea that the spread of Portuguese and language shift was always a conscious product of the Portuguese Crown. On the contrary, it often depended on the missionaries, the population, and the colonial dynamic (COHEN, 2001, p. 20). The typical mobility of Brazilian colonial society, particularly in the gold mining district, created a sense of belonging among the captives and native peoples, as they gradually identified more with the colonisers than their peers (PIERSON, 1942, p. 162).

Multilingual African slaves, mestizos, and Amerindians contributed to the spread of Portuguese as a symbol and tool of power. As Portuguese presence in Africa had been established much earlier than the discovery of Brazil, the Portuguese were used to African dialects, whereas the Amerindian languages represented an entirely new linguistic world. Africans too were familiar with Portuguese as it had been used as a lingua franca in Africa (KLEIN and LUNA, 2010, p. 385; REBELO, 2007). As with Spanish America, Portuguese became an alternative to linguistic multiplicity after many years of contact (RAMOS, 2014, pp. 28-29). However, the Portuguese language was not one, but many, as a result of multiple linguistic interactions between diverse actors.

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