

A connected history of the Indian image in movies between Brazil and the United States

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ABSTRACT: *The text analyzed the conditions of historical emergence of the image of indigenous characters from the perspective of a connected history between Brazil and the United States. We resorted to a series comprised of movies such as Jivaro (1954), by Edward Ludwig; Raoni (1976), by Jean-Pierre Dutilleux and Luiz Saldanha; and Iracema, the Virgin with Honey Lips (1979), by Carlos Coimbra. The discussion was organized as follows: first, the problem of media culture from the perspective of a connected history between countries, mapping the interferences and asymmetry in the movie industry; second, a conceptual and methodological reflection over Global History and Connected Histories in dialogue with the selected movies; then, an analysis of a few selected scenes was made from the documentary series comprised of feature-length films, problematizing the racial, ethnic, and esthetic-political connotations found in the cinematographic composition of indigenous characters.*

KEY-WORDS: *Cinema. Connected histories. Brazil. the United States. Global history.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is the dawn of the day. The scene opens with the flag Odawa tribe fluttering, as we listen to sounds of drums and voices in a melody off-screen. An object rises in the center of the shot, in the next image, with white and black feathers in what looks like a standard. The shot opens to a crowd walking on the streets. The narrator announces, in a voice-over: "Today is July 15, 1978. Two thousand American Indians, representatives of more than 70 indigenous nations, are arriving in Washington after crossing the United States on foot." A new fluttering flag occupies the entire shot, which reads "the longest walk". The American Congress wanted to vote the "Native Americans Equal Opportunity Act", which meant, in practice, to abolish the treaties, close hospitals and schools, "anyway, to extinguish the identity of American Indians as a nation."

A few minutes later, the Mekronoti tribe appears. Located in the state of Mato Grosso it is, for the narrator, one of the last sanctuaries. As the tribe is introduced in aerial shots, the narrator announces: "These tribes took refuge in this region of the wilderness. The same wilderness which is being quickly butchered into little squares." Raoni is a 1976 documentary directed by Jean-Pierre Dutilleux and Luiz Carlos Saldanha which brings, among its issues, the problem of deforestation of the Amazon and claims for the demarcation of indigenous lands. The movie is a co-production between Brazil, France and Belgium, and some of its scenes were shot in the United States of America (USA) and in Brazil, where most of the scenes take place.

Movie images have their own historicity Both from the point of view of their institutional, financial, and technical production conditions and from the point of view of the esthetical and political references

throughout the movie. In order to tell a story through a set of sequence shots, choices and framings are made. Some characters are privileged, others are not, and so it is with colors, sounds, settings, and lighting strategies, etc. Movies produce images which aim to stir up affections, perceptions, and to link itself or not to some historical narratives that circulate in a society. This text aims to analyze how the relationship between Brazil and the United States made it possible to represent indigenous characters in movie productions. In this article, the focus will be on a few analyses of the above-mentioned movie, as well as the American feature-length movie *Jivaro*, originally released in 1954, directed by Edward Ludwig, and the Brazilian movie *Iracema – the Virgin with Honey Lips*, directed by Carlos Coimbra, released in 1979.

With no intention of establishing a time linearity, this paper mobilizes some of these comparative units as singular totalities, inherent to each country's own experiences but which are (inter) connected in ways which are worth being analyzed based on Global History.

Somehow, it is possible to say that the cinema was already born global. The multiple apparatuses of reproduction of moving images that started to appear in the late 19th century had reached almost everywhere on the planet by the 20th century, enhancing the technology, esthetic and narrative. With the European involvement in two worldwide conflicts (1914-1918 and 1939-1945), movie production went through a setback, gradually compensated by US movies (SILVA, 2018, p. 17) and would only return in the second half of the century, now claiming to be national cinemas. That was the case of the *Nouvelle Vague* in France, Neorealism in Italy, and *Cinema Novo*, in Brazil, which was also inspired by the two previous movements. In Brazil, US movies prevailed throughout the entire 20th century (ORTIZ, 1989). Such factor compromised the national production in many aspects, since it redefined the conditions for the formation of the Brazilian cinema, from audience formation to definition of themes, financial incentives, technical apparatuses, and esthetic propositions.

Taking movie images as a starting point to reflect upon an issue with political-institutional, ethnical, esthetic, and ethical connotations made us wonder about the values and power relations concerning the social production of images. Effectively, media culture consists of

systems of radio and the reproduction of sound (albums, cassettes, CDs, and their instruments of dissemination such as radios, cassette recorders, and so on); of film and its modes of distribution (theatrical playing, video-cassette rental, TV showings); of print media ranging from newspapers to magazines; and to the system of television which stands at the center of media culture. Media culture is a culture of the image and often deploys sight and sound (KELLNER, 2001, p. 9).

In his studies about the emergency of culture studies and media culture, American academic Douglas Kellner used the critical theory of the Frankfurt School to map the tensions, issues and procedures which are necessary to carry on a critical investigation of media focused on the United States. Understanding how the media participates in the production of society, spreading values, beliefs, information and disinformation, behavior patterns, and consumption modes is indeed relevant to understand the media's reach. Stating that images are formed within a culture does not mean that the media is a mere reflection of an ideology but that, even having their own preferentiality and unique historicity, images can only emerge from a set of shared concepts in which certain values and patterns were defined in order to guide the production of knowledge. It is about situating the image in the network that made it possible, since "there is a culture conveyed through the media in which images, sounds and shows help weaving the fabric of daily life, dominating leisure time, shaping political opinions and social behaviors, and offering the matter with which people forget their identities" (KELLNER, 2001, p. 9).

Therefore, in the period marked by so many transformations related to private and public life, the emergence of new media such as the TV and the radio, expanding the possibilities to socially create and circulate a series of versions about national histories, that is when cinema dwelled on the question of presence. However, how was the ethnical and racial issue mobilized in movies in order to make it possible to read the national identities? How can such element help us understand the visibility regimes of the Indians as characters

who are part of the national formation? And which boundaries are found when we interlace images produced and spread under the sign of the Nation?

II. THE PATHWAY OF IMAGES

Having movie images as a starting point to connect the histories of the United States and Brazil means thinking about the visual productions of the countries. At the same time, however, it is also important to say that making a connected history or a Global History does not mean to use “Nation” as an evaluation criterion of the historical sources and the approach used because “the nation is something to be studied; it is not the frame around the study a non-historical and unavoidable category” (BARROS, 2014, p. 282). It is about taking the Nation as a problematic category in order to understand the different processes which were interconnected to constitute it in this or that territory. Unlike certain traditional scales in the field of Compared History such as Region, Nation-State or Civilization, a connected history allows us to think about intersections, imbrications, and mutual influences. As José de Assunção Barros highlights, such exercise assumes “considering the interactive nature of its relation, avoiding the perspective that one pole linearly influences the other or simply transfers something from itself to the other”, but recognizing the different “instances of reciprocity” (KELLNER, 2001, p. 294-295).

The approaches related to the field of Global History and the Connected Histories provide us with tools to avoid “methodological internalism” and “methodological nationalism”, as put forth by Alex Degan and Lindener Pareto Júnior in the presentation of the dossier entitled *História Global, Histórias Conectadas: debates contemporâneos* in the journal *Esboços: histórias em contextos globais*, by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). If, on the one hand, this critical exercise has movies as a starting point to connect cultural projects in the US and in Brazil, on the other hand, it is possible to say that, in this approach “the boundaries, no longer assumed, are no longer a foundation of historicity to also become components of the problematic, discussed due to concrete processes that surpass them, at the same time being their vectors” (DEGAN & PARETO JÚNIOR, 2019, p. 230). As Pamela Kyle Crossley says in her book *What is Global History?*, the challenge presented by this approach was “to tell a story without a center” (CROSSLEY, 2015). As we understand that States are not supra-historical entities, but the result of power relations, the Connected Histories approach may help understand the formation of such nations from objects which are “apparently” strange when we talk about culture.

The critique on the constitution of national and regional boundaries has become increasingly relevant in historiography since the emergence of the World Wide Web and virtual social media. Therefore, cinema may be a starting point to make connected histories, as it “extends its complex fabric beyond its localized systems of production” (BARROS, 2014, p. 283). The flow of images provided by the cinema helps to better understand the political uses of the past and the esthetic-political constructions as power practices.

To connect histories and analyze culture, four words may help think in a global way: connect, compare, conceptualize, and contextualize (SANTOS JÚNIOR, 2017, p. 290). Such exercise allows historians to “be conducted creatively through its theme, which – apart from being occasionally able to lead to the transcendence of traditional national or regional boundaries – may move through different social groups, ethical identities, and definitions of gender, minorities, classes or professional categories” (BARROS, 2014, p. 280).

Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam in his inaugural class at Collège de France in 2013 presented a genealogy of Global History and made a series of methodological considerations about how to conduct a study of connected histories. He said:

To my mind it is important, from the outset, to rule out the idea that it is largely a field where synthesis always prevails, rather than first-hand research on archives and texts. This means that it is impossible to write a global history from nowhere or – as some have proposed – by adopting an “extraterrestrial” perspective. Like any historian, I remain attached to particular places and spaces, and my knowledge is the direct product of training in the reading of texts, archives and images (SUBRAHMANYAM, 2017, p. 236).

That does not summarize a consensus in the debates of Global History, since, according to Crossley, “Though they [global historians] necessarily work from historical scholarship and not from original historical documents or art effects, they have more in common with other social scientists than with philosophers” (CROSSLEY, 2015, p. 7). If, for Crossley, research on Global History could be compared to investigations in the area of History of Historiography, Subrahmanyam resumes the importance of the research in archives and empiric study. We think, however, that the empiric and archivist dimension can be preserved in both fields, since both in historiographic studies and in those of a global nature, the possibilities will always be presented in a specific way from periodization and the peculiar conditions of each investigation.

According to this historian, there is no point in identifying oneself as a researcher in India, Portugal, or the British or Dutch empires because the images studied were not limited to a national space. Thus, as we think about the flows of movie images as narratives that shaped cultural practices and mediated the uses of the historical past, it seems relevant to us that we analyzed the USA-Brazil relationship.

In the early 20th century, US cinema looked for content for its movies in Brazil and other Latin American countries. Sham and Conde (2018) highlight titles such as *The Brazilian's Ring* (1909), produced by Pathe, or even *I am the Amazon Jungle* (1915), by Selig, that presented images of “Brazilian jungles” and those who were stigmatized as “merciless savages”. Movies of such types were observed until the mid-1940s and other issues may be underlined as geographic and ethical misunderstandings or even linguistic confusion as they portray Brazilian characters speaking Spanish (SHAM & CONDE, 2017, p. 17).

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, some other American movies were produced in Brazil displaying indigenous representations, such as of *Urubu* (1948), by George Breakston and Yorke Coplen, *Jivaro* (1954) by Edward Ludwig, or even *Love Slaves of the Amazons* (1957), by Curt Siodmark. The first movie tells the story of an expedition to Mato Grosso undertaken by characters who leave Los Angeles towards Brazil. In the movie, the Brazilian guide is the explorer Mike Roginsky. The script is about the search for an English explorer who went missing a few years before.

Love Slave of the Amazons (1957), written and directed by Curt Siodmark and starred by Don Taylor, Gianna Segale and Eduardo Cianelli is an adventure movie that tells the story of a group of American explorers captured by a tribe of indigenous women. After being captured, they realize they will become sex slaves of those women.

Jivaro, on the other hand, tells the story of Rio Galdez and Jerry Russel, two escapees who migrate to Brazil. They both look for the treasures of the *Jivaro* Indians [with the subtitle *The lost treasure of the Amazon*], who are known for shrinking their enemies' heads. Jerry decides to look for this treasure along with his girlfriend Maroa while he is still in touch with her fiancée, Alice Parker, in California, through letters and lies. One day, Parker decides to find Jerry expecting to find him rich so that they can at last get married. However, she is disappointed with this turn of events and, as Jerry disappears in the jungle, she sees herself closer and closer to Rio Galdez³.

The synopses allow us to think beforehand how the representation of indigenous and Brazilians was constructed through the lenses of the cinema based on adventure, mystery and exotism. Right in the first scenes, it is possible to see a Brazilian, employed by Rio, whose moral integrity is questioned. Rio speculates that, while he was out, the Brazilian could have stolen something from his store. The Brazilian answers: “Boss, why would I steal from you? I may have snatched a bottle but not more than that” as the image shows an embarrassed and baffled individual. As the scene goes on, Rio gets off the boat with a bag in which he brings many toys and he goes on handing them out to the children who are waiting for him. Brazilians are represented as humble, naïve, of questionable morals. Women look disheveled and sexually deceived by the foreigners.

And when Rio negotiates with the Jivaros, once again the tone of the scene looks like the relationship between colonizer/colonized, only this time Brazil wood is replaced by rubber. The trade is carried on through

³Information taken from the Brazilian Movie Library. Available in: <http://bases.cinamateca.gov.br/cgi-bin/wxis.exe/iah/?IsisScript=iah/iah.xis&base=FILMOGRAFIA&lang=p&nextAction=Ink&exprSearch=ID=017647E&format=detailed.pft>. Accessed on January 21, 2021.

barter when Rio offers the Jivaros fabric and imitation jewelry. By using visuals which are really close to the western genre, the plot takes place in a small village in the middle of the Amazon forest, the only access to which is by river, where foreign escapees try to get rich with the mineral resources. As in western movies, it looks like a lawless land in which conflicts are settled by force. Besides the conflicts with the natives for land tenure or for exploitation of its goods and wealth. In addition to that, a love relationship is set around the sex appeal of Fernando Lamas and Rhonda Fleming.

Among Brazilian movies, we can highlight two productions, intersemiotic translations Plaza (2013) adapted from the literary work *Iracema* (1865), a novel written by José de Alencar. Iracema is the native character who falls in love with a Portuguese colonizer and from this bond, the first Brazilian is born. In such symbolism, Iracema had to die to let the Brazilian nation — made of Portuguese and half-breeds — be born. These images, however, were contested by other writers, contemporaries of José de Alencar, who said there was it was not important to deal with the Indians. Machado de Assis (1873) said that the “Brazilian civilization” was not connected to the “Indian” element (ASSIS, 1959, p. 28-34).

One of the first historians related to the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1916-1878) and his main work was to compile the first manuals of national history and produce the monumental *General History of Brazil* between 1854 and 1857⁴. He showed an ambivalent posture towards the indigenous and African participation in the social formation of Brazil, as he considered this presence to be have a lower status in the hierarchy previously put forth by the Bavarian Karl Friedrich von Martius in his text *How should Brazilian history be written*, selected in a contest held by IGBH in 1847⁵. In such scenario, the Indians emerge in the arts and literature as a mythical but important element to reflect upon the national identity set as a myth of the origin of Brazility⁶. These forged symbols often come back throughout the 20th century and are (re)visited and (re)affirmed now also through the cinema of the 1940s and 1970s. Several movie productions were released, adapted from the book *Iracema*, by José de Alencar: *Iracema* (1919), scripted by Luiz de Barros; *Iracema* (1931) by Isaac Saindemberg; *Iracema* (1949), directed by Henrique Ferrari. Apart from those, two other works are worth mentioning: *Iracema – An Amazonian Transaction*, directed by Jorge Bodansky and Orlando Sennawas screened and awarded in France in 1974 but it was censored by the Division of Censorship of Public Entertainment⁷ (DCDP) and, because of that, it was only released in 1981. And the aforementioned *Iracema – the Virgin with Honey Lips*. The first movie is a translation in which time and space are transposed for the 1970s, in the Amazonian region. Iracema is a wandering young Indian who went through a process of identity erasure as she does not recognize herself as an indigenous woman. Her *Martim Soares Moreno* is called *Tiãõ*, a white southern man who explores timber. From this bond, no “son of pain” is born because, metaphorically, the project of the Brazilian nation appears to have been aborted⁸.

However, *Iracema – the Virgin with the Honey Lips* received one of the biggest investments by the state funding board Embrafilme according to a 1979 official report. In the same year, its premiere packed movie theaters and, according to the Embrafilme report, it was one of the largest box offices among national⁹ productions.¹⁰ In a translation that follows the space and time defined by literature, this movie is one of the

⁴ Checks: Reis (2007); Cezar (2018).

⁵ Checks: Guimarães (2010); Schwarcz (1993).

⁶ Checks, for example: Bosi (2012); Sommer (2004).

⁷ The Division of Censorship of Public Entertainment was created in the year 1972 through the decree-law 70.665 with the responsibility of monitoring cultural productions, the emission of technical opinions and grant censorship certificates – a document which was necessary for public propagation of cultural program.

⁸ In literature, Iracema falls in love with Martim, a Portuguese colonizer, and from this bond Moacir is born and his name means “son of pain” because of the pain and sadness during his birth. Moacir is born from the pain to become the first Brazilian.

⁹ The document was digitalized and accessed through the National Archive. Link: <https://sian.an.gov.br/sianex/consulta/login.asp>. Accessed on January 21, 2021.

¹⁰ The document was digitalized and accessed through the National Archive. Link: <https://sian.an.gov.br/sianex/consulta/login.asp>. Accessed on January 21, 2021.

examples of reaffirmation — with government support — of the foundation myth that was built around Alencar's literature and the 1800s historiography. The images of the Tabajara and Tupiniquim ethnical groups are taken away from their physical symbolisms, ceremonies and day-to-day practices. Conflict scenes between the two tribes are represented by didactic illustrations that appear to have been taken from an early 20th century textbook.

In this movie, elements of a Hollywood cinematographic syntax are intertwined with the peculiar elements of Brazilian reality. The movie is built over a linear narrative, although the first scene is actually the last one and it follows a rhythm towards the climax. The scene of the couple rolling on the sand while kissing should be emphasized as a symbolic significance related to the movie *From here to Eternity* (1953) directed by Fred Zinnemann. Martim (Tony Correia) and Iracema (Helena Ramos) are close to the *sex appeal* models featured by Hollywood which made and projected stars who could become bigger than their roles in a specific movie. However, Helena Ramos, an actress made her name in *pornochanchada* movies had her success taken advantage of by Coimbra¹¹. In addition, the words in Tupi language which are present in the book appear in the movie whenever possible, said and explained by some of the characters.

Thus, this series of movies produced under different circumstances, specific directions and also singular scripts allows us to understand a certain recurrence from the esthetic and thematic point of view of how a collective imagination was created about Brazil and about the image of indigenous people in movies which set an imprint of a cultural exchange.

III. CONNECTED IMAGES, TERRITORIES THAT MEET

By choosing to start from a set of movies to make an exercise of connected histories involving Brazil and the USA, we understand it is necessary to think of how the media participates both in the production of reality in the present time and also in the mediation of the past through narratives which select facts, characters and the set the time of historical events. Cinema works as an important discourse machinery to establish parameters about what is the national past and what are the tensions and contradictions in the projects of national identity. It also helps to understand the idiosyncrasies, ambivalences, asymmetries and appropriation of such process.

Thinking of the relationship between Brazil and the USA with this focus forces us to consider the different means of production and diffusion of cinema. Brazilian audiences became familiar with the elements of Hollywood cinematographic syntax while, at the same time, they would consider their national production strange and even reject it. American cinema would thus be one of the influences on how Brazil would make its national cinema. Throughout the 20th century, Brazilian audiences experienced a process of cultural pedagogy (KELLNER, 2001, p. 61) that worked as a symbolic imperialism or a "seducing imperialism" (TOTA, 2000). Thus, is it possible to speak of a Brazilian national cinema? Which Brazilian aspects were typical of Brazilian cinema throughout the 20th century? Some historical events can be identified in the history of national cinema: an ideological and educative cinema as professed by Getúlio Vargas's Estado Novo (1937-1945); a realistic and multicultural cinema as the *cinemanovistas* from the 1960's and 1970's announced; a cultural industry project, as the post-1964 military coup state authorities intended.

In Brazilian cinema memory, which also revisited symbols of a nationality, symbols, techniques, codes, signs and technological apparatus coming from other nations were intertwined. Because, as Conrad (2020, p. 142) affirms, "the debates about the past carry traces of a globalized world which are profoundly carved in what is still seen exclusively as the reign of the national, with peculiar mentality and reasoning. Therefore, in order to understand and analyze how these various projects of Brazilian national cinema were imagined, it is important to trace some transnational interweaving between Brazil and the USA.

¹¹ Independent and low budgeted productions which were constantly referred to as trash can cinema (?) due to the fact that the meetings and recordings were done at Rua do Triunfo and its proximities, in São Paulo, a region which was considered as part of the underground scene. To see: Sthernheim (2005).

Brazilian productions could not compete on equal terms with American ones. There were no laws at the time to ensure more screening time to national productions in the movie theaters. Consequently, national cinema had scarce financial incentives and the equipment was almost always obsolete for both movie production and projection. It may be important to think about these relations established between Brazil and the US in a comparative manner, as put forth by Kocka (2014). According to him, the comparison helps to clarify profiles of specific cases by contrasting them with other cases that allow us to support or modify particular notions. This comparative approach does not intend to establish continuities, but to abstract and decontextualize to some extent in order to observe its nuances, approximations and singularities.

Firstly, one can see that the US where the cradle of the advent of technological apparatus which allowed the birth of the cinema. This means that these visual experiences were first and most intensely lived by them so that, only afterwards, they could extrapolate to other territories towards Latin America. When they arrived in Brazil, their reach remained limited to major cities, while the countryside awaits the passage of the “itinerant cinema” (LEITE, 2011, p. 15). Its penetration into the countryside would only happen along with the renovation of production and exhibition structures found in these big cities, in a movie theater configuration which resembles that in the movie *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), directed by Giuseppe Tornatore.

Secondly, during the first decades of US cinematographic productions, the comedy genre can be highlighted. Charles Chaplin’s (1889-1977) productions and the influence of his character, for instance, mark the trajectory of Brazilian actor Oscarito (1906-1970).¹² Such convergences indicate not only the procedure of copying and pasting a certain syntax and communicative strategy but also the level of US interference in Brazilian cinematography coming from the way it tried to form an audience to watch some movie genres over others.

Thirdly, this dialogue between Brazilian *chanchadas* and US comedies allowed for a prevalence/imperialism of the latter over the former in the international market. Such dynamics indicates the foundations — so to speak — of the type of material the cinematographic industry would reiterate after World War II. These movies would arrive in Brazilian movie theaters and expose a reading of Brazil from a foreign standpoint, sometimes assimilated and, to a lesser degree, promoting some resistance. This can be seen in movies like *Jivaro*, as mentioned before or yet in the character *Zé Carioca*, created by Walt Disney in the 1940s while during the Good Neighbor Policy implemented by Franklin Delano Roosevelt towards Brazil and Latin America. The movie *Saludos Amigos* (1942) can be seen as an expression of this type of cultural policy which aimed to establish international relationships on new bases. We are aware of the emergence of the USA as an economic power in the XX century capitalism came from their interference in the two world wars and from the global economic dynamics, expressing itself in the promotion of the war industry and through the “support” to Europe’s restoration through the Marshall Plan (KARNAL, 2018).

The fourth element would be related to the construction of a particular genre – Western – which, associated with the cinematographic industry, exported their national history, ideals and values.¹³ In this way, we understand that the USA and Brazil had unique experiences with their cinemas but they would also come close in some moments. Both cinemas experienced huge box office successes when it came to the screening of a Chaplin movie or, to a lesser extent, an Oscarito’s, for instance. However, in the economic aspect, the USA boosted the biggest figures and widest distribution of their films, guaranteed by legislation and financial incentives while Brazil would suffer with technical issues, with the lack of clear legislation on the matter, and few investments in the cultural sector.

These elements seen and sometimes experienced in Brazilian cinematography practices were associated with the discussions about identity and nation. As they were revisited and (re)affirmed from time to time, they became a necessary conceptual pair in order to understand the movement of construction and selection of content to compose the projects of national cinema. According to Conrad, memory studies are still

¹² As an example, check the parody *Mata ou corer* (1954, de Carlos Manga), featuring Oscarito.

¹³ The movies starred by John Wayne constructed a setting which would bring them closer to the Brazilian reality, both due to the conflicts between the “civilized” and the natives, the relations of a few regions with the legal discourses or yet because the weather conditions were alike.

very much related to the nation. This past forged in “imagined communities” (ANDERSON, 2015) by means of visits to places of memory, public discourses, among others, is a product of memory as a collective addressed, interested construction, capable of forming certain versions and visions of the historical past. The interpretation of the past today makes it a familiar image which produces “a matter of national culture” (CONRAD, 2020, p. 132) to the extent that it happens through strategies of persuasion of the people about certain achievements, utterances and personalities.

The problem of production and social diffusion of memory was put forth by Hall (2006, p. 51) in order to reflect upon the matter of national identity and the procedures that intertwine it in the social field. Such production would be related to senses imagined to create a mutual identification between people through “stories told about a nation, memories which connect their present with their past and images which are them built from them”. That was how Brazilian movie productions throughout the 20th century became the keepers of a national identity – also seen by Conrad as a process of transnational interaction, interchange and entanglement – by continually revisiting the narratives around the native ethnical groups as an essential part of the development of the Brazilian nation, entangling itself with American productions and narratives.

It was also in the bulge of these national narratives that, according to Conrad (2020), historiographic productions were suddenly limited and compartmentalized. This new global history, which has nothing to do with universal history, has to take into account the observation of documents produced beyond the national territory, as Subrahmanyam identified. In cinema, the concern of drawing a national identity made the analysis of the participation of other countries somehow reductionist, as it views them more like a one-way influence – the American cinema more of a model industry to be followed by Brazil, for instance — than as a mutual relationship.

Therefore, the statement that these Indian-themed productions revisited only the place of the native ethnical groups in Brazilian cinematography now looks somewhat limiting. It is worth extrapolating these boundaries to understand how national productions interacted with foreign ones. What is the level of interference in the creation of this “agenda” to movie production? And in what is the place reserved for ethnical Brazilian groups in the cinematography of these countries? According to their time and their peculiar way, each of these movies produced an understanding of the autochthons of the current Brazilian territory. By highlighting the documentary *Raoni* (1978), it is possible to trace some considerations about both cinema and the political disputes and narratives that took place throughout the 1970s.

When it comes to the cinema, it is worth distinguishing between documentaries and fictional movies, since the former constructs “a different quality of relationship between filmmaker and subject, and they prompt different sorts of expectations from audiences” (NICHOLS, 2012, p. 17). Even if fictional images, essays or acting are associated with their theme, a documentary will nevertheless convey a strong impression of authenticity, since, unlike fictional genres, it invites us to look at the world that we already occupy. In *Raoni*, the camera tries, for some time, to keep itself as silent as possible, as if it intended to be an invisible observer, in order to avoid interfering in their day-to-day practices. It fails to do that, as it interferes and captures wide-opened eyes, or someone pointing to the camera, or even those who walk around during a ceremony without taking their eyes off the camera.

Documentaries allow themselves to be some sort of denunciation by highlighting a wide shot with a tractor deforesting a huge area. The speeches that follow announce even bigger advances than the ones portrayed, and involve large landowners. The tractor driver calculates he can deforest around 30 hectares a day and he says: “[the deforestation] makes us sad but, if we want to make money, we got to knock down these trees, right?” while the image frames him sitting down, a thin old man, holding his hat. These images are interspersed with scenes of falling trees and of *Raoni* with a restless, sad face. After the tractor driver’s lines, *Raoni* speaks in defense of the demarcation of indigenous lands.

However, the conflicts presented in the documentary date back to more distant times. Since the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, the idea was constructed in popular imagination that indigenous tribes had been decimated. Almeida (2017, p. 29) notes that, by the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century, disputes over the land of the villages had started to become more serious and, due to these conflicts,

a number of contradictions arose over the ethnical classifications of these village people. Therefore, according to Almeida:

On the whole, it was a process of extinguishing the ancient villages (...). Presented as civilized or extinct, many Indians, while still in the villages, ended up losing their lands and villages and many of these assumed the identity of *caboclo* or half-breed among the adverse conjecture of the 19th century when there was no place for ethnical plurality. Thus, instead of having in fact disappeared as historiography used to state, Indians from ancient villages were made invisible by political discourses and intellectuals who were aligned to the 19th century Indian policy in order to assimilate them, and turning them into productive citizens of the Brazilian Empire (Almeida, 2008).

Through these historical conflicts and the narrative in the documentary, it is possible to notice the resemblance of the way the US and Brazil dealt with their “past crimes” (Rousso (2014, p. 269)). Both countries were responsible for the genocide of millions of natives and the groups who resisted were forced to take refuge in distant places in the countryside. Until globalization, economic and natural exploitation forced these groups to react. This moment started and systematized the movement of fight for indigenous people’s rights and it made it possible for them to acquire the legal right over their lands in the form of Indian reservations. As Rousso discusses the desire of reconciliation of the past and not turning the page, the dialogs promoted encouraged between the National Indian Foundation (*FUNAI*), founded in 1967, indigenous movements and the government make it possible for the country attempt to reconcile its memory. However, this was not enough to repair the physical, moral and historical damages of the past. Currently, these struggles are for multiple issues that intersect in various ways between the categories of race, social class, ethnicity, and gender.

Speaking of a national cinema history from the standpoint of global conditions may enable internal historical narratives of each country, even if they are integrated with those of other countries, in a methodological proposition put forth by Conrad as the most promising among the three analyzing views. It allows us to clarify that we do not mean we are producing a mechanistic comparative history, in which the poles are previously defined and the range of observations may seem naturalized. On the contrary, the flow of cinematographic images produced within a mass consumption strategy allows us to think of how the relationship between Brazil and the US reinforces an initially economic asymmetry but that, with no determinism whatsoever, expressed itself in the political economy of images. According to Kocka (2014, p. 280), “it would be necessary to see them as one, as one web of entanglements, one ‘*Zusammenhang*’ of *Verflechtungen* and relations.” But, to escape from the failures or limitations of Compared History, Conrad (2019, p. 46) suggests observing the history of their entanglements.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

When we chose a set of moving images as our starting point to make a historical analysis of the connections between Brazil and the USA from the point of view of the indigenous representation in the cinema, our purpose was to encourage a study agenda which may stress and expand the analyses from different historical selections and methodological procedures.

Based on some selections and choices, this text constructed a reflection about the asymmetries and distinct processes which describe the formation of the cinematographic industry of these countries and the contents which supported such process. If the current context imposes the need to analyze the different processes of construction and deconstruction of national identities and the inclusion and exclusion policies of certain social groups divided by regional, racial and ethnical characteristics, it clearly shows the relevance to problematize the flow of movie images as mainly political interconnections which were related with the affirmation or questioning of social and economic privileges.

As for the cinema, since the 1950s there have been attempts to support a national cinema project through *Cinema Novo*, the establishment of authorities such as the National Institute of Cinema (INC) in 1996, and the Division of Censorship of Public Entertainment (DCDP) in 1972, and Embrafilme, also in 1972, have designed another project and forced their “authors” to follow different paths. This institutional aspect of cultural public management of the time is another aspect over which future research may better problematize from sources that may allow an approach that connects the interferences of countries like the USA and France, for instance.

In a Global History perspective, we mapped a few connections in order to understand how identity processes were made of the integration and relationship between the forces of distinct cultures. The movies presented herein highlight residues of these relations over time which now form the day-to-day life of the communities and are sometimes appropriated in movie images. This more intense presence of the American cinema through the exhibition of their content and, to a lesser extent, these productions made in Brazil, are a sign not only of an economic interest but also a political one. The Good Neighbor Policy made the interchange between these two nations possible, from the interchange of intellectuals to the definition of education and health policies in Brazil. Such level of integration took place between governments but also between businessmen and the government, which allows us to map other institutional relationships that this text fails to cover, such as the participation of the Rockefeller Foundation in the public Brazilian health policy of the 1940s. Such relations can be seen from the standpoint of the new epistemological and political colonialisms because they reinforce the patterns and dynamics that subordinate knowledge's and reinvigorate hierarchies.

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