

The historian's craft and the Indians: a fight during the Empire¹

Vânia Moreira*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of historiography as an organizing tool of indigenous rights during the structuring of the imperial regime in Brazil. Among other things, it was able to attest or deny the social, political and territorial gains obtained by the Indians during the colonial period. I stress the historiographical divergence between defenders and detractors of their presence in national history, the connection of this

intellectual debate with Imperial indigenist policy and finally the emergence of a nationalist trend in indigenist policy and historiography, a narrative which led to an artificial extinction of the Indian presence and identity in our society and in imperial history, considering them since then exclusively as Brazilians.

Keywords: Indians; Empire; national history.

Clients, Brazilians and co-citizens: it was with these words that Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães and Joaquim Norberto de Souza e Silva, respectively, referred to the Indians in the heated debate over the place they should occupy in 'national history'. Carried out under the auspices of the Brazilian Institute of History and Geography (*Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* - IHGB), one of the most respectable institutions of the Empire, the discussion soon turned into a quarrel, showing the prevalence of various projects about how the History of Brazil should be written, as well as the existence of divergent expectations about the rights of Indians and the ordering of imperial society.

The aim of this article is to highlight the importance of historiography as the organizing tool of indigenous rights during the structuring of the imperial regime, since, among other factors, it may or may not have been able to support the social, political and territorial conquests obtained by Indians during the colonial period. I will highlight the historiographic divergences between the

* Associate Professor, Post-Graduate Program of History, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ). Antiga Estrada Rio-São Paulo (BR-465), km 7 - 23890-000 Seropédica - RJ - Brazil. vania.vlosada@gmail.com

defenders and detractors of the presence of Indians in Brazilian History, the connection of this intellectual discussion with imperial indigenist policy and finally the emergence of a nationalist orientation in historiography and in indigenist policy, whose narrative operated an artificial erasing of indigenous identity in imperial history and society, by subsuming them exclusively in the category of ‘Brazilians’.

I will focus my analysis on three texts written under the auspices of IHGB and which determined the directions of the historiographic and political debate about Indians during the Second Empire: “Discurso preliminar: os índios perante a nacionalidade brasileira” [Preliminary discourse – The Indians and Brazilian nationality], part of the first edition of *História Geral do Brasil* by Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen; “Os indígenas do Brasil perante a história” [The indigenous peoples of Brazil and history] by Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães; and “Memória histórica e documentada das aldeias de índios da província do Rio de Janeiro” [Historical and documented memoir of the Indian villages in the province of Rio de Janeiro] by Joaquim Norberto de Souza e Silva.²

INDIANS, THE EMPIRE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The consolidation of national states during the nineteenth century was a phenomenon profoundly associated with the emergence of a historiography centered on the nation. The creation in 1838 of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (*Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* - IHGB) a few years after Independence, bringing together the political and intellectual elite of the period, and the award given by the institution to the work *Como se deve escrever a História do Brasil*, by Carl Friedrich Philippe von Martius, are clear witnesses of this. After all, according to von Martius, historians should be “at the service of the Patria”, writing a history that defended the “Constitutional Monarchy” and which could touch the “people”, with a language that was at the same time “noble” and “popular”.³

From the point of view of individuals and groups, being a part (or not) of the narrative histories of nations has become, since the ascension of nations and nationalism, a strategic question. For the indigenous population this was particularly true. After Independence the rights that the Indians had won in the colonial regime, such as liberty, ownership of their lands, and the condition of vassals of the Monarch, needed to be ratified and for this it was important

to create a historical vision of the *longue durée* about the relations constructed and agreed between them and the Portuguese conquerors.

Despite many advances in relation to the inclusion of Indians in History, they continue to be under-represented in national history, a phenomenon that began in the Empire. This is particularly evident in studies of nineteenth century Brazil, since in recent publications by various authors the absence of Indians in works about the formation of nationality, citizenship and politics during the Imperial period is notable.⁴ In contrast with the sparse insertion of Indians in the most recent historiography of the Empire are the testimonies left by contemporaries of the regime, which show that the 'indigenous question' was one of the central questions in the process of structuring Brazil as an independent nation.

Principally during the most stable phase of the regime, represented by the Second Empire, there occurred an intense and multifaceted debate about Indians, much of which took place in the *Revista do IHGB*, which started to circulate in 1839. Analyzing the production of this periodical using a thematic focus, Manuel Luís Salgado Guimarães, for example, showed that the indigenous question was the theme that took up most space in the journal. Alongside this question, two other themes were recurrent: scientific expeditions and exploration and the debate about regional history. According to this author this three questions accounted for 73% of the sources, articles or papers published in the journal.⁵

Interest in the Indians was not, however, purely scientific, nor can it be entirely explained by the poetic aestheticism of Indianism which, as is well known, enchanted the lettered romantics of the period. In addition to these factors, many contemporaries recognized that the Indians represented one of the most complex sectors of imperial geopolitics, which at that time was centered on the consolidation of Imperial territory. In international frontier regions, important parts of Brazilian territory were populated by relatively independent indigenous tribes. The sovereignty of the state in these places would only actually be assured if the Empire was capable of controlling these populations and making them submit, as well as effectively demonstrating possession of the territory. The creation of an indigenist policy capable of integrating Indians into the social and political system of the Empire was, thus, a strategic question which was also justified through the humanitarian and philanthropic ideas and principles of the period. Many of the new religious missions created during the Second Empire to bring 'catechism and civilization' to the 'wild' Indians,

were, for this reason, located in frontier regions, following the logic of *uti possidetis, ita possideatis*.⁶

The well known lack of labor to guarantee the economic development of the Empire also placed the Indians on the agenda of the political debate, since they continued being perceived as an immense source of labor. They were actually seen as a large contingent of badly administered and badly used contingent of workers. In 1823, shortly after independence, José Arouche de Toledo Rendon wrote “Memorial about the Indian villages in the province of São Paulo, according to the observations made in the year of 1798 – opinion of the author of their civilization”, with the essential objective of guiding the new regime in obtaining indigenous labor for agriculture and thereby minimizing the importation of African slaves. He insisted on the need to stop the “barbarous custom of attacking the Indians as enemies” and of transforming settlements into temporary establishments whose principal objective was to be ‘nurseries’ from where labor could be obtained for agriculture.⁷

Finally, Portuguese legal tradition recognized the original right of Indians to the lands they occupied. In addition, there existed many indigenous lands protected with by *sesmaria* (allotment) grants issued during the colonial regime. José Bonifácio, for example, in “Notes for the civilization of the fierce Indians of Brazil”, a document he originally wrote for the *Cortes de Lisboa*, and which after Independence he presented to the 1823 Constituent Assembly, was firm, stating that the first and most fundamental measure in relation to Indians was to act with “Justice, no longer dispossessing the Indians by force for the lands left to them, and of which they are the legitimate owners...”⁸ In other words the Independence generation recognized the need to define the rights of Indians to the lands they occupied. This imperative became even greater in following years with the expansion of the agricultural frontiers and the need for the state to create a new judicial ordering of the land holding and ownership, something which occurred with the approval of the 1850 Land Law.

The new law, however, only guaranteed the use of unoccupied lands for ‘indigenous colonization’ in districts where there existed ‘savage hordes’, omitting indigenous lands held under proper title. Thus, Indians residing on former mission or settlement lands, most of whom held *sesmaria* deeds in the name of these Indians, did not achieve the immediate recognition of their property rights. To the contrary, during the regime, the imperial state issued various notifications and decisions about the territorial property of Indians, arbitrating case by case the conflicts that emerged.⁹ Furthermore, in relation

to land Indians were frequently seen in the nineteenth century as 'hindrances' to development, since they were supposedly 'infesting' uncultivated land or blocking through the presence of their settlements and *sesmarias*, the expansion of agriculture and progress.

Moreover, in the principal reference works on Indians and indigenism in the nineteenth century, the imperial regime did not enjoy a good reputation. The most consolidated interpretative perspective has highlighted that the biggest and most dramatic consequence of the expansion of productive frontiers through lands occupied by tribal peoples or by assimilated indigenous communities, associated with an inefficient indigenist policy, was the decimation of the indigenous population during the Empire. Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto highlights, for example, that in this period Indians lost through spontaneous processes of integration into the dominant society, or thanks to official indigenist policy, "their place in National History, and fell back to a state of marginality and the progressive reduction of their population..."¹⁰ Manuela Carneiro da Cunha associates the process of the 'destruction' of Indians with the intense theft of indigenous lands during the Empire. She stated, in what has become a classic, that "to characterize the [nineteenth] century as a whole, it can be said that the indigenous question stopped being essentially a question of labor to become a question of land".¹¹

In relation to the 'destruction', 'decimation' and 'decline' of the indigenous population during the process of historical development of Brazil, even during the nineteenth century, it is always important to take into account the John Monteiro's criticism of what he defines as the 'chronicle of extinction' – in other words the tendency to resume the history of Indians in processes of decimation and extinction.¹² For Monteiro the problem of this type of approach is not making a chronicle of Indians who fell and died, but not demarcating the need to also to write the history of those who lived in the sphere of colonial society. As he explains, without this the risk is run of the historiography helping to reproduce and crystallize the image that Indians are only found in the forests and in the *sertão*, in remote place or temporalities, no longer perceiving them as sectors, which may or may not be subaltern, of colonial or Brazilian society.

In addition to extinction and territorial theft, another question is also quite present in the historiography about the Indians during the imperial regime. This was the conviction that in comparison with the colonial period the imperial indigenist debate was impoverished, both in terms of interlocutors,

due to the expulsion of the Jesuits in the 1750s, and in terms of principles and orientations. According to Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, for example, during the Empire the Indians were ‘destroyed’

by petty processes and without dissenting voices ... It is not strange, for this reason, that a large part of the debate until the 1860s was about not the ends of an indigenist policy, but rather its means: if the Indians should be summarily exterminated, distributing them among the other inhabitants, or if they should be captivated more lightly.¹³

There are no good empirical or theoretical reasons to agree that imperial indigenism was imprisoned by a weird utilitarian horizon, where the ‘means’ of indigenist policy were supposedly discussed without debating the ‘ends’. Moreover, more than a narrowing of the arena of political debate due to the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal and Brazil, what occurred was a change in ‘paradigm’, to use the expression of Ângela Barreto Xavier and António Manuel Hespanha.¹⁴ In other words, since the expulsion of the Jesuits, and especially since Independence, the conceptions of the world of the Ancien Regime and corporate society had little by little stopped presiding over the debate and organizing official indigenist policy. On the other hand, individualist orientations, both liberal and increasingly nationalist, began to drive expectations, as well as to direct state policy in relation to Indians.

The debate about Indians and National History, so dear to IHGB, is the most eloquent witness to the birth and consolidation of what can be described as the nationalist approach to the indigenous question.

‘NATIONAL HISTORY’ AND THE INDIANS: VARNHAGEN AND THE CREATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHY SECTION OF IHGB

The first identified record of the indigenist debate in IHGB dates from the year of the creation of the institution, when in the session on 15 December 1838, members discussed the proposition of Canon Januário da Cunha Barbosa, then its president, about the ‘epochs of Brazilian history’. Out of these reflections there emerged “Dissertation on the system of writing the ancient and modern history of the Brazilian Empire”, by Marshall Raimundo José da Cunha Matos, published a few years later in the *Revista do IHGB*, in which the author concludes that the History of Brazil should be divided into three periods: the

first, corresponding to the time of the autochton; the second, the time of the colonial administration; and the third, the strictly national episodes that occurred after independence. As emphasized by Kaori Kodama, this text witnessed the appearance of the word 'ethnography' in the terminology of IHGB, defined as an "area of knowledge – together with archeology – linked to the first epoch of the history of Brazil, related to the indigenous peoples, the primitive inhabitants of what came to the territory of the Empire".¹⁵

A short while later Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen became interested in the indigenous question, also becoming one of the principal articulators of the creation of the Ethnography Section of HGB. In his "Memorial on the need to study and teach indigenous languages in Brazil", read on 1 August 1840, he proposed the creation of a section on 'indigenous ethnography', which he said should devote its efforts to researching the names of indigenous nations, their languages and their dialects, their migrations, beliefs, archeology, uses and customs and the ways of civilizing them.¹⁶ He thus defined in a precise manner the object of the ethnography (the Indians), its aims (studying languages, beliefs and customs) and its social relevance (guiding the indigenist policy of the imperial state), condensing some, but not all, of the orientations and aspirations of the indigenism which was then based in the institution.

In 1847 the Ethnography and Archeology section was approved. However, it is important to stress that the 'ethnographic' material produced or organized by IHGB varied considerably. It included letters, memorials, reports, studies of vocabulary and a vast collection of colonial sources on Indians. Furthermore, to the annoyance of Varnhagen, who imagined the Indians as peoples without history and as the sole objects of ethnography, many members of IHGB, in addition to researching the languages and customs of the Indians, also included them in a visible and premeditated manner in the History of Brazil, in evident opposition to the former's program for a 'national history' based on strictly Luso-European people, values and contributions. The articles of José Joaquim Machado de Oliveira – "Reasoned reports about the Indian villages in the province of São Paulo" – and that of Joaquim Norberto de Souza e Silva – "Historical and documented memorial of the Indian villages in the province of Rio de Janeiro" – are good examples of this orientation.¹⁷ Furthermore, this involved a tendency that effectively disputed with Varnhagen the position of being able to guide the writing of national history, since, among other factors, they achieved prestige and institutional recognition, proved by the fact that both papers were awarded the Imperial Prize in 1852.

Moreover, this period also saw the intensification of the dispute between Varnhagen and certain other intellectuals – described by him as ‘philo-tapauiss’, ‘romantics’ and ‘historians of Indians’ – who argued that Indians were one of the fundamental elements of Brazilian nationality and even according to some ‘co-citizens’. In the conjuncture of the discussion and approval of the Land Law, for example, Varnhagen defined himself as the spokesperson of the political movements with seats in Parliament and defended in *Memorial Orgânico*, first published in 1849-1850 that the Indians were not ‘Brazilian citizens’, did not fulfill ‘any of the obligations of law,’ and even worse went ‘idling around with their ears and lips pierced, instead of being national guards and wearing a uniform, etc.” For this reason they had no rights and were actually foreign to ‘the social pact.’ It would be better for the nation, the historian said, if the “*bandeiras* who had hunted them” restarted their work.¹⁸

His positions on the Indians and ‘national history’ were systematized better in the following years. In 1852 he wrote “Como se deve entender a nacionalidade na História do Brasil?” [How to understand nationality in the history of Brazil?], read in two sessions in the Academy of History of Madrid. Afterwards the article was reworked and became part of the first edition of his main work, *História Geral do Brasil*, under the title “Discurso preliminar: os índios perante a nacionalidade brasileira”. In this text he returned to his concept of Indians, presenting them as savage individuals, without history and capable of perfectibility only when externally induced by the use of force. Through these arguments he defended the political point of view that Indians were not either citizens of the Empire or Brazilians.

According to Varnhagen, the indigenous population before the conquest was diminutive and had never been the legitimate owner of the lands of Brazil. Instead of inhabiting the territory, cultivating it through agriculture, the Indians only wandered through it as nomads. As nomads they had no right to the land. In fact, they were nothing but invaders of the land which at that time belonged to the Empire. Nor did the Indians deserve the name of barbarians, since they were actually savages. In other words they lived in the natural state of the family or tribe, without law, slaves of their own liberty and furthermore never respected natural law, which some philosophers thought was the law that ruled primitive peoples.

Without the external coercive action of civilized peoples, Varnhagen argued, the Indians would have remained in the state of savagery forever, since they

were populations incapable of evolving through endogenous stimuli. Therefore, for the Indians history did not apply, but only ethnography. For these reasons the civilization of the savage Indians who lived in the territory of the Empire required harsh and rigorous methods, such as the old *bandeiras* and coercion through force to subject them and to overcome them, forcing them to work in different trades and also distributing them “as clients, among the houses of honest citizens in the large settlements”.¹⁹

It was not out of sympathy to the Indians that Varnhagen defended the creation of the Ethnography Section. To the contrary, his support for a section devoted to ‘indigenous ethnography’ was directly associated with his radical refusal to include them as historic and social agents in the plots of the formation and development of national society. In relation to those who thought otherwise, he said:

The foreign and non-Christian writer flaunts, though falsely, all the luxury of pseudo-philanthropy that quenches his philo-savage Rousseauian; a national and Christian historian has other duties to fulfill... (Varnhagen, 2005, p.333)

For Varnhagen, the European element constituted at that moment the essence of Brazilian nationality and needed to continue in the same way in the future, through the encouragement of the immigration of new colonists from Europe. For him, moreover, anyone who embraced Africans and their causes was only a ‘historian of captivation’, while those, such as the “crazy Fr. Las Casas”, embraced the Indians and their questions were “historians of the Indians” (Varnhagen, 2005, p.330). However, he was a “national and Christian” historian and for this reason had other duties to fulfill.

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER OF INDIANS: GONÇALVES DE MAGALHÃES’ RESPONSE

Taking as a reference the nomenclature of Varnhagen, Gonçalves de Magalhães can be considered the ideal type of ‘romantic’ intellectual, a ‘philo-tapuia’ and a little ‘crazy’ to see the Indians, as Rousseau had done, from the viewpoint of the good savage. After all he wrote the epic poem “A Confederação dos Tamoios” [The Confederation of the Tamoios] (1857) and was one of those most responsible for the introduction of the themes of romantic poetry in Brazil, which, as observed by Afrânio Coutinho, transformed the Indian and

nature into the symbols of “spiritual, political, social and literary independence” of the recently emancipated nation.²⁰

Nevertheless, Gonçalves de Magalhães preferred to define himself as a ‘son of civilization’: “neither for thought, nor for mockery”, he wrote, “would I intend to imitate the philosopher from Geneva in his discourse in favor of the savage state, a real joke of a capricious imagination, like the praise of madness made by Erasmus” (Magalhães, 1860, p.31).

As well as thinking and writing about history, he emphasizes that he is not a ‘romantic’, since he possesses a critical point of view and does not blindly accept the theories nor the documents of the past. He was aware that the theories and the historical images produced about Indians were deformed by interests that were not always confessed and by value judgments that today are called cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. For him, historians are seduced by *a priori* theories and by the ‘spirit of faction’ and for this reason ‘defames’ the customs of the Indians, believing that only their customs and traditions are reasonable.

These ideas were expressed in “The indigenous peoples of Brazil and history” in which Gonçalves de Magalhães openly disputed with Varnhagen and in an elegant tone made a none too flattering profile of that historian. Since, despite stating that Varnhagen was the author of a ‘notable’ work, in a reference to *História Geral do Brasil*, he also left it clear that he was dealing with a historian who wrote under the impulse of the spirit of faction, and who showed himself to be incapable or uninterested in the rigorous critique of sources and also who ended up representing Indians in a prejudiced and caricatured manner.

“The indigenous peoples of Brazil and history” was also one of the most systematized and contentious of the anti-indigenous arguments expressed in *História Geral do Brasil*. For example, theories and axioms dear to Varnhagen were used, and usually also mobilized, in a political discourse to justify a series of actions openly contrary to the rights of liberty, property and citizenship of Indians. Theories, for example, that preached that Indians lived in a natural state, without any notion of God or religion, without laws, notions of justice or any type of political organization. To the contrary of these theories constructed *a priori*, Magalhães emphasized the existence of documentation, including sources handled by Varnhagen himself, which demonstrated that the Indians “lived in a regular social state” (Magalhães, 1860, p.15). The same documentation also demonstrated the ‘savage’ was as rational and moral as civilized man and possessed all the attributes inherent to him. Nevertheless,

he gave a warning: even the 'respectable' John Locke, since he had blindly accepted Léry's narrative, concluded that the savages of Brazil had no notion of God or religion.

Magalhães positioned himself as favorable to the theory of the unity of the human species, further recognizing that this was a personal choice, since ethnography was not capable at that time of proving either the unity or the plurality of the human race. He disagreed with the theories that stated that the Indians were nomads, without agriculture and for this reason were few in number at the time of the conquest, not surpassing one million individuals in the entire territory, as supposed by Varnhagen. For him the idea that sustained both the idea of nomadism and the diminutive estimative of the pre-Cabral indigenous population was a false axiom: the absence of agriculture among the Amerindians who inhabited Brazil at the time of the conquest.

Solid historical witnesses showed that the Indians practiced agriculture and manufactured not just what was necessary for subsistence, but also an excess to give or sell. The records also provided evidence of "large *tabas* or cities" with "opened and well-used roads", which proved that Indians "lived in society", with "large centers of fixed residence." And, to the contrary of Varnhagen, he estimated that Brazil had four or five million "sober inhabitants" at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. This text of Gonçalves de Magalhães is very important. It provided a new parameter to think about Indians, their history and their rights, and can be considered the first consequent attempt in Brazilian historiography to problematize what Pierre Clastres called the "arch-fallacy" of the representation of "an America of hunter-nomads, to make what was admitted to be a weak demographic evaluation".²¹

Furthermore, the proposition that Indians was agricultural peoples rekindled the debate over the (natural and political) rights that they had over the lands that they cultivated in the past or still cultivated. Since, in accordance with John Locke – a philosopher known and cited by Gonçalves de Magalhães and for whom the principal function of the state was to be the guarantor of individuals' property rights –, the right to ownership of land that was conquered, primarily through agricultural work:

God and reason itself ordered them [i.e., men] to dominate the earth, in other words to improve it to the benefit of life and to dispose of it as if it belonged to them, their own labor. Those who in obedience to this order of God, dominated, worked and sowed part of the earth, annexing it through this something which

belonged to them, to which no one else had the right, nor could they without causing damage, take it from them.²²

In summary, Gonçalves de Magalhães constructed a perspective of the history of the Indians very different from that of Varnhagen, asserting that they lived in a social state and in their fashion had agriculture, commerce, cities, religion, justice, politics and science, since they were rational and moral individuals like any civilized man. Furthermore, he defended the presence of an indigenous 'element' in the History of Brazil, in the composition of nationality and the future of the Nation, not as 'Indians', but as 'Brazilians', thickening the population and working in the navy, on the plantations, in agriculture, and in the cities and towns.

THE CRAFT OF THE HISTORIAN AND HIS DUTIES:
JOAQUIM NORBERTO AND THE HISTORY OF
TERRITORIALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS TERRITORIALITY

While in the semantic field of Varnhagen, Gonçalves de Magalhães was the prototype of the lettered 'romantic' and 'philo-tapuia', Joaquim Norberto corresponded to the best example of what Varnhagen provocatively described as the 'historian of Indians'. Not because he defined himself in this way, since the indications found in his text suggest that he essentially classified himself as a methodic historian at the service of the construction of national history, who was well aware of the duties of his office and the prevailing disputes about the writing of history in Brazil:

The more conscientious people will see, those who judge upon examination, that I did not adventure a single expression without this being based on documents, so that I would not call romantic what is merely historic, and in the absence of these, I fastened myself on the testimony of printed works, which I never trusted without the most miniscule examination and confrontation: if I am wrong, I had the best desires, I used all my efforts to be correct. (Silva, 1854, p.110)

Removing the execrable and prejudicial from the expression invented by Varnhagen, the fact is that the label of the 'historian of the Indians' suited (and continues to do so) Joaquim Norberto very well. After all, it is difficult to

ignore the fact the “Historical and documented memoir of the Indian villages in the province of Rio de Janeiro” brings together three fundamental attributes which at that time were not always present in the same work: historical method, erudition and the Indian as the object. Furthermore, this article represents one of the best historical studies produced by IHGB during the Empire, since it is based on rigorous and breathtaking research, whose results are registered in its 446 pages. It is, thus, an erudite study, well written and rigorously historical, anchored on the strongest standards of methodical professionalism that gained force in Brazil and in various European countries.

The first 192 pages were dedicated to the historical part in strict sense, which in 12 chapters explained the foundation and the development of various villages and missions in Rio de Janeiro between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The documentary part, which finalized the work, presents a very important set of sources, covering the same time range. In total, he localized, transcribed and gathered together one hundred documents, including *sesmaria* charters, reports of different civil, religious and military authorities and requirements and representations made by the Indians themselves. He also cited or transcribed in his text other sources researched.

In the first chapter, ‘General Considerations’, Joaquim Norberto embarked on the ‘ethnographic agenda’ of the Historical Institute, discussing themes of importance to the institution: the origins of Indians in Rio de Janeiro, their languages and customs, their beliefs and traditions. Other important questions are also dealt with, including the struggle between missionaries and conquistadores over the liberty or captivity of Indians and the indigenist legislation in force during the colonial period. In the other chapters, he looks at one by one the missions and settlements in Rio de Janeiro, analyzing them from their foundation to the most recent reports that could be obtained about them in the contemporaneity of the imperial regime.

However, what most characterizes and distinguishes “Historical and documented memoir of the Indian villages in the province of Rio de Janeiro” is the central problem dealt with by the author: the territorialization of the Indians – in other words the colonial policy of the *descimento* (capture) and settlement of various tribes, with the objective of re-socializing them in the colonial world – and indigenous territoriality – the growing identification of these Indians with colonial society and with the lands of their new villages, which they came to defend against the frequent invasion of Luso-Brazilians. Furthermore, the ‘Indian’ who emerged from the research of Joaquim Norberto

is not the tribal Indian, in other words the 'savage', who supposedly lived 'without law', 'without a king' and 'without God' in the forest and in the *sertão*. His text deals with 'co-citizen' Indians (Silva, 1854, p.110) of individuals and communities who were re-socialized after the conquest and for this reason they were part of society, conquering through different trajectories and historical experiences, land and other political and social rights.

The 'decadent' state of various Indians and indigenous communities was for him the result of the historical action of the conquistadores. He gave special attention to the deleterious effect that the theft of indigenous lands had on the population affected and by the fact that a large part of the stolen lands had *sesmaria* charters or other official documents, such as records of the donation or purchase of land in their favor. Furthermore, he demonstrated that the capture of settlement Indians to work for the state was another motive for the ruin of establishments and the degradation of the social condition of Indians. Referring to the Notification of 29 May 1837, for example, which recommended the enlistment of Indians in the navy, and the fact that the vice-president of the province of Rio de Janeiro had complied with this recommendation, ordering justices of the peace and of orphans to look for Indians in villages in the province, he stated:

As if this measurement, if implemented, would not result in the total depopulation of villages, and the contentment of the intruding lords of their lands who impatiently awaited their extinction, at the same time that it deprived them of their villages to employ them in the maritime life for some years, it also stopped assuring them a better future. (Silva, 1854, pp.157-158)

Analyzed from the perspective of the social context of its production, Joaquim Norberto's text represented an annoying obstacle to the ambitions of some sectors interested in the lands and in the labor of indigenous peoples, for whose ideas and value judgments about the Indians and their rights Varnhagen nominated himself as spokesman and guarantor. While the Land Law ordered the reservation of lands for 'indigenous colonization' in districts where 'savage hordes' existed, Joaquim Norberto's text demarcated another problem and another need: the problem of 'co-citizen' Indians, in other words the indigenous population that was part of society and imperial political order, and the need to regularize the lands of these indigenous communities, obtained over time, both during the colonial regime and the first decades of the Empire.

In other words, by looking at a long inhabited region, such as Rio de Janeiro, “Historical and documented memoir of the Indian villages in the province of Rio de Janeiro” clarified that the question of indigenous territoriality was not a problem restricted to frontier regions and the expansion of imperial society and economy. It was also a pressing question in prosperous and inhabited regions. Between the reduction of the Indians to the category of ‘savages’ used by Varnhagen, with his defense of ethnography as a field distinct from historiography, and the Indians of Joaquim Norberto, classified as ‘co-citizens’ whose history he not only wrote but also meticulously documented thanks to Herculean work involving the research, location and transcription of documents, there exist some substantive differences: in relation to history as a disciplinary field, about what the Brazilian ‘nation’ was and what it should be, and about Indians in history and society. In one point, however, the two historians agreed: both were writing the history of the Nation, aware of their importance for the ordering of imperial society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The differences between Varnhagen, Magalhães and Joaquim Norberto prevent the nationalist perspective of the Indians, constructed during the imperial period, from being interpreted and classified as a body of univocal principles. After all, the words ‘clients’, ‘Brazilians’ and ‘co-citizens’ are witnesses of the various semantic and political fields through which interpretations of the past, visions of the world and social projects were configured. The refusal of Varnhagen to share ‘National history’ with the Indians and the ‘rights’ inherent to the condition of being a member of the imperial political pact are thus not to be confused with the positions of Joaquim Norberto and Gonçalves de Magalhães. Nor should the projects of these two historians be seen as identical, despite the fact that both tended to defend the Indians against the chauvinistic nationalism of Varnhagen which offered Indians either physical death through the *bandeiras*, or the position of vassals of the potentates of the Empire.

Joaquim Norberto’s tonic was the defense of indigenous territoriality, according to the argument that they were co-citizens given rights by the state. It is not indifferent to note that in his text ‘Indians’ and ‘citizens’ did not appear as exclusive categories. Furthermore, the recognition of Indians as co-citizens presupposes the acknowledgment of their ancient rights, especially the right to the lands they occupied and to the territorial property acquired

during the old colonial regime. Magalhães' concern was different. For him the Indians were an important 'element' in the development of nationality, since they could contribute to an increase in the national population and benefit the navy and agriculture with their labor. In other words, the 'Indians' were thus ontologically transitory: they had to die culturally to be born as Brazilians.

Under the auspices of the official indigenist policy of the Empire, the point of view of Gonçalves de Magalhães prevailed, since the government recruited Indians for the navy, the army and even for the National Guard, at the same time that it dissolved settlements, distributed 'lots' of land to the 'remnants' found there, generally taken to be '*mestiços*', or Indians who were strongly mixed with the population in general.²³ In the logical of the individualist, liberal and nationalist thought of both Gonçalves de Magalhães and the Imperial government, the biological Indian would survive, but not their communities and their cultures. Furthermore, the only 'community' that was really welcome was the 'national'. Therefore, the settlements, which allowed them to reproduce themselves socially as Indians of village X, Y or Z, had to be extinguished and the remnants were to be given individual lots, testifying the complete transition from 'indigenous remnants' to the condition of 'Brazilians.'

Nationalism, even in its philanthropic versions, was very intolerant of indigenous communities re-socialized in settlements. In this aspect, it differed profoundly from the corporate orientation that prevailed during the colonial period. Since the principle of self-government applied to local and daily life, something so dear to corporate thought, it ended up authenticating the singularity and legitimacy of the settlements, classifying them as one more group within the Monarchy, with the trades and privileges of the Indians who lived in settled communities.

The nationalist approach to the Indians created profound roots in national policy, which not only prevailed in indigenist imperial policy, but also became the dominant matrix in the twentieth century. Moreover, it is not indifferent to note that this orientation also created roots in professional historiography, since the representation of the nineteenth century as a period practically without Indians, or one in which they did not have the least importance for the 'nation' is still in force, based on the argument that at that time they had already been largely exterminated or acculturated, with the exception of the odd marginal group on the periphery of the Empire.²⁴ It is true that the past cannot be

changed. However, with other foci, other perspectives and further historic research, we can change the comprehension we have of the past, of society, of the Indians and their history in the unfolding of the history of the Empire.

NOTES

¹ This article is the fruit of research supported and funded by the Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro (*Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro - Faperj*).

² Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de. Discurso preliminar: os índios perante a nacionalidade brasileira. In: Moreira Neto, Carlos de Araújo. *Os índios e a ordem imperial*. Brasília: CG-DOC/Funai, 2005, pp.320-333; Magalhães, Domingos José Gonçalves de. Os indígenas do Brasil perante a história. *Revista Trimestral do Instituto Histórico, Geográfico e Etnográfico do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. de Domingos Luiz dos Santos, t.XXIII, pp.3-66, 1860; Silva, Joaquim Norberto de Souza e. Memória histórica e documentada das aldeias de índios da província do Rio de Janeiro. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Universal de Laemmert, pp.107-552, 1854.

³ Martius, Karl Friedrich Philipp von. *Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: IHGB, 1991, p.67. The same occurred in other countries. Referring to France between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, François Dosse highlighted that historians exercised positions of power, embraced a 'patriotic mission' and subordinated organization to the discipline of 'national identity'. Cf. Dosse, François. *A história à prova do tempo*. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp, 2001, p.11. Therefore, Anthony Smith was correct when he recently affirmed that nationalism is a profoundly historical phenomenon, both in the sense of being anchored in time and in space and because historians have been its principal creators and critics. Cf. Smith, Anthony D. O nacionalismo e os historiadores. In: Balakrishnan, Gopal. *Um mapa da questão nacional*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2000, pp.185-208, p.186.

⁴ Cf. Carvalho, José Murilo de. *Nação e cidadania no Império: novos horizontes*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007; Ribeiro, Gladys Sabino (Org.). *Brasileiros e cidadãos*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2008; Carvalho, José Murilo de; Neves, Lúcia Maria B. P. (Org.). *Repensando o Brasil dos Oitocentos: cidadania, política e liberdade*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009. An exception that deserves to be highlighted is the recent publication *O Brasil Imperial*, which, in the first volume at least, contained on chapter to the Indians. Cf. Sampaio, Patrícia Melo. Política indigenista no Brasil imperial. In: Grinberg, Keila; Salles, Ricardo (Org.). *O Brasil Imperial – 1808-1831*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009, pp.175-206. Moreover, it is important to register the interest of indigenous organizations in the inclusion of Indians in national history. For example, during the commemorations of 500 years of Brazil in 2000 the inclusion of Indians in the history of the country was presented as one of the principal demands of the indigenous peoples, alongside other

demands, such as the demarcation of their lands and greater justice and speed in the investigation of the murder of Indians and indigenous leaders. Cf. Conferência Dos Povos Indígenas. *Brasil 500 anos – Documento final*. Available at: <http://www.uepg.br/anpuh>. Accessed on 21 July 2000.

⁵ Guimarães, Manoel Luiz Salgado. Nação e civilização nos trópicos: o Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro e o projeto de uma História Nacional. *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro: Ed. FGV, no. I, pp.5-27, 1988, p.18. As John Monteiro correctly stated, the *Revista do IHGB* represented a “type of barometer through which the intensity of the indigenist debate at the time could be measured”. Cf. Monteiro, John Manuel. *Tupis, tapuias e historiadores: estudos de história indígena e do indigenismo*. Dissertation (*Livre Docência Qualification*) – Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Campinas (SP), 2001, p.147. Available at: www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/estudos/htm. Accessed on 12 Jan. 2006.

⁶ Beozzo, José Oscar. A Igreja e os índios (1875-1888). In: Hauck, João Fagundes et al. *História da Igreja no Brasil: ensaio de interpretação a partir do povo*. Segunda época – século XIX. 4.ed., Petrópolis (RJ): Vozes, 2008, p.300.

⁷ Rendon, José Arouche de Toledo. Memória sobre as aldeias de índios da província de São Paulo, segundo as observações feitas no ano de 1798 – opinião do autor sobre a sua civilização. *Revista Trimestral do Instituto Geográfico Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. De João Ignacio da Silva, t.4, pp.295-317, 1863, p.317. See also AMOROSO, Marta Rosa. Mudança de hábito. Catequese e educação para índios nos aldeamentos capuchinhos. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, São Paulo, vol. 13, no.37, pp.1-9, 1998, p.3.

⁸ Silva, José Bonifácio de Andrada e. Apontamentos para a civilização dos índios bravos do Império do Brasil, In: Caldeira, Jorge (Org.). *José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva*. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2002, pp.183-199, p.190.

⁹ Morera, Vânia Maria Losada. Terras indígenas do Espírito Santo sob o regime territorial de 1850. *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, vol. 22, no. 43, pp.153-169, 2002.

¹⁰ Moreira NETO, Carlos de Araújo. *Os índios e a ordem imperial*. Brasília: CGDOC/Funai, 2005, p.21.

¹¹ Cunha, Manuela Carneiro da. Política indigenista no século XIX. In: _____. (Org.). *História dos índios no Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; Secretaria Municipal de Cultura; Fapesp, 1992, pp.115-174, p.133.

¹² He is referring, for example, to the books *Red Gold* by John Hemming, and *Índios da Amazônia: de maioria a minoria*, by Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto. Monteiro, 2001, p.4.

¹³ Cunha, Manuela Carneiro da (Org.). *Legislação indigenista no século XIX: uma compilação (1808-1889)*. São Paulo: Edusp, 1992, p.5.

¹⁴ Hespanha, António Manuel; Xavier, Ângela Barreto. A representação da sociedade e do poder. In: Mattoso, José (Dir.). *História de Portugal: o antigo regime (1620-1807)*. Lisboa: Ed. Estampa, s.d., pp.121-156. Sobre o pensamento liberal e os índios, cf. Silva, Cristina Nogueira da. Liberalismo, progresso e civilização: povos não europeus no discurso liberal

oitocentista. In: Estudos Comemorativos Dos 10 Anos Da Faculdade De Direito Da Universidade Nova De Lisboa. Lisboa: Almedina, 2008.

¹⁵ Kodama, Kaori. *Os índios no Império do Brasil: a etnografia do IHGB entre as décadas de 1840 e 1860*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2009, p.66.

¹⁶ Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de. Memória sobre a necessidade do estudo e ensino das línguas indígenas do Brasil. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Universal de Laemmert, t.3, pp.53-62, 1854, pp.61-62.

¹⁷ Oliveira, José Joaquim Machado de. Notícia raciocinada sobre as aldeias de índios da província de São Paulo desde seu começo até a atualidade. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. De João Ignacio da Silva, t.VIII, pp.204-250, 1867; Silva, 1854.

¹⁸ Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de. Memorial orgânico. In: Moreira Neto, Carlos de Araújo. *Os índios e a Ordem Imperial*. Brasília: CGDOC/Funai, 2005, p.338. See also Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de. *Os índios bravos e o Sr. Lisboa. Timon 3º*. Lima: Imprensa Lib-eral, 1867, p.52.

¹⁹ Varnhagen, 2005, p.327. Sobre os índios como povos invasores, cf. p.321 e 323. Varnhagen later defended in another paper the hypothesis that the Indians had actually come from some place in Asia. Cf. Cezar, Temístocles. A retórica da nacionalidade de Varnhagen e o mundo antigo: o caso da origem dos tupis. In: Guimarães, Manoel Luiz Salgado (Org.). *Estudos sobre a escrita da história*. Rio de Janeiro: Sete Letras, 2006, pp.29-41.

²⁰ Coutinho, Afrânio. *A literatura no Brasil: Era romântica*. 6.ed. São Paulo: Global, 2002, p.24.

²¹ Clastres, Pierre. Elementos de demografia ameríndia. In: _____. *A sociedade contra o Estado*. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2003, pp.95-116, p.102. Sobre as estimativas de Gonçalves de Magalhães sobre a população indígena no Brasil, cf. MGALHÃES, 1860, p.50.

²² Locke, John. Segundo tratado sobre o governo. In: *Locke*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1983 (Os pensadores), p.47.

²³ Cunha, 1992; Moreira, Vânia Maria Losada. Caboclisto, vadiagem e recrutamento militar entre as populações indígenas do Espírito Santo (1822-1875). *Diálogos Latino-americanos*, Denmark, no. 11, pp.94-120, 2005; Moreira, Vânia Maria Losada. Os índios e o Império: história, direitos sociais e agenciamento indígena. Paper presented at: Simpósio Nacional De História, 25, Anpuh. Simpósio Temático 36 – Os índios na história, 2009. Available at: www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/ST36-Prog.htm. Accessed on 29 March 2010.

²⁴ Moreira, Vânia Maria Losada. História, etnia e nação: o índio e a formação nacional sob a ótica de Caio Prado Júnior. *Memória Americana*, Buenos Aires, vol. 16, no. 1, pp.63-84, 2008.

Article submitted in May 2010. Approved in July 2010.