

# PORTRAITS AND RECORDS OF SCHOOLS IN SÃO JOÃO DE MERITI COUNTY (RJ): population profile and teachers' career trajectory (1920-1943)

Retratos e registros de escolas de São João de Meriti (RJ):  
perfil populacional e trajetórias docentes (1920-1943)

Retratos y registros de escuelas de São João de Meriti (RJ):  
perfil poblacional y trayectorias docentes (1920-1943)

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**Abstract:** We have analyzed the racial and population profile of students and teachers from public elementary schools in São João do Meriti County, in light of the history on the presence of non-white populations in public education. Based on the theoretical reference of the territory adopted as analysis position, the documental research methodology compared 12 photographs of schools to their respective school attendance maps and to the search for teachers' names in the press. The ways and daily routines of the photographed schools, demands for applications and teachers' trajectories that disclose, among other aspects, the access and permanence conditions, and the range and limits of education experiences concerning peripheral non-white populations between 1920 and 1943, were presented as results.

**Keywords:** regional study on education; race; childhood; teaching.

**Resumo:** Analisamos o perfil racial e populacional de estudantes e docentes de escolas públicas primárias de São João de Meriti à luz da historiografia sobre a presença de populações não brancas na educação pública. A partir do referencial teórico do território como posição de análise, a metodologia de pesquisa documental operou o cotejamento de doze fotografias de escolas com os respectivos mapas de frequência escolar e com a busca do nome de docentes na imprensa. Como resultado são apresentados os modos e cotidianos de funcionamento das escolas fotografadas, as demandas por matrículas e as trajetórias docentes que descortinam, entre condições de acesso e permanência, as possibilidades, os alcances e os limites de experiências educativas de populações não brancas periféricas entre 1920 e 1943.

**Palavras-chave:** estudo regional sobre educação; raça; infância; magistério.

**Resumen:** Analizamos el perfil racial y poblacional de los alumnos y profesores de las escuelas primarias públicas de São João de Meriti a la luz de la historiografía sobre la presencia de población no blanca en la enseñanza pública. A partir del marco teórico del territorio como posición de análisis, la metodología de investigación documental operó la comparación de doce fotografías de escuelas con sus respectivos mapas de asistencia escolar y la búsqueda del nombre de los profesores en la prensa. Como resultado, se presentan los modos y la cotidianidad de las escuelas fotografiadas, las demandas de inscripción y las trayectorias de los maestros que revelan, entre las condiciones de acceso y permanencia, las posibilidades, los logros y los límites de las experiencias educativas de las poblaciones periféricas no blancas entre 1920 y 1943.

**Palabras clave:** estudio regional sobre educación; raza; infancia; magisterio.

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the current study was to contribute to designs and experiences of non-white children and teachers in Brazilian public schools during the republican period. Based on a set of 12 photographs of 6 schools in São João do Meriti County, which was a district of Iguaçú County, at that time, we introduced the analysis of these schools' institutionalization and routines, as well as teachers' career trajectory aspects. The population's racial profile depicted in the photographs is substantiated by the literature on this territory's history. Besides records about the presence of the black population in Meriti's formation, since the colonial period, studies on population profile carried out between 1920 and 1940 showed intense migration flow of non-white individuals to this region. By taking the territory as analysis position (Faria, 2009) and given the historiographic debate in the Education field about "whitening" processes in public schools in the country's capital, in the First Republic (Müller, 2016, p.395) and at the "Vargas" period (Müller, 2016, p.395), it was possible enquiring: what does the history of education in a peripheral district show about the history of non-white populations in Rio de Janeiro State, at that same time? From this perspective, sources and references on the local history disclose information about the major presence of the non-white population in this territory and in its schools. However, the investigation on their routines, demands and application flow highlight the barriers and limitations for access to and permanence in schools, a fact that also features the aforementioned experiences.

Photographs of schools in São João do Meriti County belong to "Arruda Negreiros Collection". Based on the gathered evidences – photographs taken in 1932<sup>1</sup> -, these pictures were ordered by Mayor Sebastião de Arruda Negreiros, as part of celebrations of Iguaçú County's 100 anniversary. This date was celebrated on January 1933, since Iguaçú Village was founded in 1883. The symbolic use of this celebration aimed at gathering long-lasting historical identities among populations, economic activities and territorial limits. However, the study of territorial and political landmarks set other less strict designs of permanence in the territory and labor occupations.

Celebrations for the 100 anniversary in Iguaçú honored the "progress" of "Nova" (new) Iguaçú (headquarter-district)<sup>2</sup> due to the agricultural economy, and to orange processing and exports. This agricultural activity was celebrated as the regions' "vocation"; however, back in the 1930s, soil partitioning for land sales - aimed at housing projects for popular classes - was the factor actually setting the history of Nilópolis, Caxias and São Joao de Meriti districts.

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<sup>1</sup> Among some clues one finds the fact that one of the pictures was published in August 10, 1932, in the newspaper "A Noite Ilustrada" (suplemento, ano III, n. 123, p. 28.)

<sup>2</sup> The Headquarter District of Iguaçú started being called Nova Iguaçú in 1916, and the whole municipality was named "Nova Iguaçú" in 1938.

São João do Meriti, or simply Meriti, was the second most populated district in the municipality in the 1930s, although it only covered a small fraction of the extensive territory in it. With respect to population, it only lost position for the headquarter district, Nova Iguaçu.

We selected 12 photographs with legends naming 6 schools located in 'São João do Meriti'. This term featured the 4<sup>th</sup> district of Iguaçu municipality between 1931 and 1943; however, this territory faced changes on its borders. Since 1947, São João do Meriti is a 'Baixada Fluminense' municipality; this region is labeled as metropolitan periphery of Rio de Janeiro State's capital. It records precarious social and economic development indices, besides high black and brown population density (Casa Fluminense, 2020).

The comparison of schools' photographs belonging to Arruda Negreiros Collection, also known as CAN, to school attendance maps, also known as MFE, from the Education Department Fund (FDE) of Rio de Janeiro State Public Archive (APERJ), allowed gathering information on both schools and on part of their teachers. We carried out analyses to assess the selected schools and their teaching routines between 1929 and 1943 (period of APERJ's documentation) based on the photographic records from 1932 to 1933. Data on teachers' individual trajectories were found in the newspaper library of the National Library; it was done through search in the official actions taken by the government, which were available in newspapers such as *O Fluminense*, *Jornal do Comércio* and *O Imparcial*. Thus, the time limits reached the early 1920s, given the discovery of female students from 'Escola Normal' in Niterói, who acted as public teachers in São João do Meriti, from the 1920s to the 40s. Therefore, the district ranks an important position for analyses of studies on the presence of non-white populations in public schools. The aim of the current study was to investigate what the selected cut provides on the education history by defining the local history as observation scale and by adopting an epistemological position featured by the researcher (Faria, 2009).

Surya Barros (2018) shows how the racial issue was missing in the Brazilian education history until late 1990s in her article '*História da educação da população negra: entre silenciamento e resistência*' – History of black population education: between silencing and resistance. The historical reference to the black population's access to education in Brazil took place through general citations in the legislation, at most – by the way, the legislation forbade enslaved individuals to enroll in public schools, at that time. Thus, this topic was featured by both interdiction and an understanding that limited the different ways of living of the black population, to the legal condition of enslaved or to the condition set for a population living outside the rule of rights, during the republican period.

Marcus Vinícius Fonseca (2016) assessed the handbooks on History of Education used in teachers' training in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as similar works from the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to state the permanence of a writing model set by the education history that still keeps the interdict-discourse narrative in schools for black populations in Brazil. Even after changes in the approach set for this topic in the last decades, silencing or statements that echo interpretations of slavery and blacks still observe that

[...] they were disregarded as subjects, mainly through the permanent denial of their relationship with school environments. The most rigorous formulation of this reformulation lies on the idea widely spread by the education history, in Brazil, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely: 'blacks did not go to school' (Fonseca, 2016, p. 24, author's emphasis).

Myths that the Brazilian public school was elitist, even in the republican period, and that popular classes only accessed schools from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century on, have reinforced the narratives based on the perspective of black population's interdiction and exclusion from formal education (Barros, 2018).

Blacks' invisibility in the Education History field would only be revised from the 1990s onwards, given changes in the historiography about slavery, which have broadened the understanding on the historical experience of black individuals. Changes in sources' amplification and new enquires about how the racial issue started struggling for space in the public debate in the country amplified black researchers' entry in the university (Barros, 2015, 2016, 2018).

Dialogues between the education field and theoretical-methodological references in social history studies, in labor history and after slavery abolition, gave birth to the social production of knowledge on the education history of the non-white population. Historicity of the race and skin color debate in Brazil, as well as the plurality of nomenclatures for 'non-white' individuals in study sources, have broadened research techniques. From the 2000s onwards, research has been covering different periods and territories in Brazil, and it proves the consolidation of the education history trend, namely: "[...] incorporation of the racial dimension to the analysis" (Barros, 2018, p. 7).

Besides the presence of non-white populations in public school environment, other experiences and mobilizations of them for instruction were disclosed in different studies. Blacks' participation in the literate universe, be it in the literature, press, in the political debate or as teachers (Silva, 2019), has been occupying the education history that, nowadays, still ignores the racial issue:

With respect to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fields such as education history, educational policies, popular education, among others, have concluded that the idea of a school exclusive for rich, urban, white [individuals] is much more of a myth of origin in the Brazilian public school than something moored in real data. Given these changes in the way to take education into consideration, and in the very development of this field, the history of education started to comprise black individuals (Barros, 2018, p. 6).

The pioneer research by Maria Lúcia Müller about the presence of black teachers in public schools in the Federal District during the republican period is quite relevant. This researcher stated the presence of these black subjects based on the analysis of school's photo albums (Müller, 1999, 2008); however, she points out the criteria for entering the Education Institute - that promoted eugenic thoughts - in the 1920s and 30s (Müller, 2010). Accordingly, there may have been an effort to "whiten" the racial profile of future public teachers who should spread the race concepts determined for the Brazilian nation (Müller, 2016).

Similarly, Jerry Dávila (2006), in his '*Diploma de brancura: política social e racial no Brasil - 1917-1945*' - Whitening Diploma: social and racial policy in Brazil - 1917-1945 -, argued that education managers and reformers in the 1920s, and in post-1930s, supported eugenic concepts about race; these concepts have substantiated public-education spreading policies. Its idea was to mitigate the so-called social delays caused by miscegenation in Brazil: "The black profile still conserved all its pejorative connotations, but individuals could escape the social category of being black by improving their health, schooling and culture, or social class" (Dávila, 2006, p. 26).

Thus, if the topic on the education history of the non-white population is path in the education historiography, we can question what the images of students and teachers who joined public elementary schools in São João do Meriti, Iguazu District, in 1932, actually disclose. Besides children, the photographs have captured non-white female teachers. Thus, what does the history of public schools and teaching in a 'peripheral' territory of the Federal District tell about the access and permanence of non-white populations in public schools in the 1930s and 40s? What can we get to know about the history of education of non-white populations from a peripheral district in a municipality in Rio de Janeiro State?

We have adopted the expression "non-white" to break with eugenic meanings indicating blacks, browns, mulattos, mestizos and *caboclos* within a wide racial debate, as well as to state that the non-white condition set different experiences of entering and remaining in the school culture.

We set the history of Meriti's territory in the first section, based on the racial composition of its population and on its peripheral position in the political history of Rio de Janeiro State. Subsequently, we introduce isolated municipal and state school

experiences recorded in photographs that were used to amplify comparisons to corresponding school frequency maps. The process to provide school is compared not just based on experiences by the assessed subjects; it also includes students and teachers' career trajectories, as well as the subject/standardization intersection. Finally, the final consideration shows how the history of non-white individuals' presence in public schools led to the reasoning that the history of education must lean over the association between schooling and race, gender and social inequality persistence in Brazil.

## TERRITORY AS ANALYSIS POSITION

According to Mariana Souza (2021), the region we have adopted as analysis unit and position belonged to 'Freguesia' de São João Batista do Trairaponga back in 1647 (Faria, 2009), when this region still belonged to Freguesia de São João Batista do Trairaponga. After the chapel was transferred to a location closer to Meriti River, in 1660, it became Freguesia de São João de Meriti (Torres, 2004). After Iguaçú Village was founded, in 1833, it was integrated to this same territory for a while, because the closing of the Village in 1835 marked the attachment of Freguesia de São João de Meriti to Niterói City. After the Village's restoration in 1836, Freguesia de São João de Meriti remained under the influence of Iguaçú's policies.

Nelson Bezerra highlights that, along with Estrela Village, Iguaçú Village was very important "[...] for the regional organization of Rio de Janeiro's economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Bezerra, 2008, p. 21) and it must be understood as "[...] holding the so-called rural and urban features, all at once" (Bezerra, 2008, p. 21). It is so, because of Recôncavo da Guanabara's location between the coast and Rio de Janeiro's hinterlands; this feature has given a particular profile to this region's development.

Freguesia de São João de Meriti was a territory encompassing agricultural production, and services and trade sectors that have acted in food production, and in flow and transport activities, in the harbors of Sarapuí and Meriti rivers. Harbor activities included storage, slaves' renting, shipping services, pubs and inns (Bezerra, 2008). Meriti was the smallest "freguesia" in Recôncavo da Guanabara, with 1,616 inhabitants. However, it counted on the largest ratios of slaves in its population, 978 captives – 330 of them were distributed among 11 farms engaged in sugar, brandy, flour, corn, beans and rice production (Bezerra, 2008).

Nielson Bezerra listed the occupations of the enslaved population from Meriti based on data from the 1872 census, namely: seamstresses (3), carpenters (6), bricklayers (10), wage earners and day laborers (34), domestic service (164), farm workers (391), without a profession (168); it totaled 776 occupied people, within the same territory, who were in charge of urban and rural occupations (Bezerra, 2008).



Mariana Sousa also introduced data from the 1872 census about the racial profile of Freguesia de São João de Meriti:

It was observed, at that time, that there were 2,524 ‘souls’, in total, in the ‘freguesia’, they were divided among ‘white, brown, black and caboclo’ [individuals], the total of white [individuals] was 1,053; 358 brown, 127 free and 231 enslaved [individuals]; 1,005 black [individuals], 460 free ones and 545 enslaved [individuals]; and 108 free caboclo [individuals]. Most of the total population in the ‘freguesia’ was illiterate, only 70 of [the total of] people in the age group 6 to 15 years attended to schools in the locality. The census also made it possible observing that there were 336 houses [in there], in 1872 (Sousa, 2021, p. 18, author’s emphasis).

Thus, since the colonial past, the presence of black, brown and *caboclo* individuals under free and slavery conditions was always observed in Meriti’s region. From the change of Iguaçú Village headquarters to Maxambomba, in 1891, another demarcation turned Freguesia de São Joao de Meriti, in Meriti, into the 4<sup>th</sup> district of Iguaçú, in 1892 (Torres, 2004). According to Maia Forte, the ‘freguesias’ became districts 1891 (Forte, 1933).

It was from Nilo Peçanha’s state administration on that the region was benefited by basic sanitation projects set for ‘Baixada Fluminense’, and it led to the partition of large properties into pieces in order to be sold for urban allotments, mainly in sites by the railroad. These changes echoed on territorial limits. In 1916, the headquarters of Iguaçú municipality, Maxambomba, was named Nova Iguaçú. In 1931, the 8<sup>th</sup> district was created, it was called Caxias, and its headquarter was in Meriti station’s settlement (Forte, 1933). In 1933, after losing part of its territory to Caxias and Nilópolis districts, São João de Meriti joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Iguaçú district, which is composed of São João de Meriti, Berford, São Mateus, Thomazinho, Itinga and Rocha Sobrinho neighborhoods (at the auxiliary railroad line), and of Villa Rosaly, Coqueiros, Coelho da Rocha, and Estrada de Ferro Rio d’Ouro (Forte, 1933).

The constant changes in names and in the territorial and political designs observed between 1920 and 1940 followed the intense changes that have taken place in ‘Baixada Fluminense’ region. The urban and agricultural uses of the territory had impact on economic activities, as well as on railroads and roads – a fact that fitted the intense migration of workers to this region.

Besides changes in territory boundaries, impacts on São João de Meriti were also observed in population data comparisons between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the 1920s and 40s.

Data from the 1892 state census inform that Meriti’s population comprised 2,761 inhabitants. Even after losing part of its territory for the formation of other

districts in Iguaçú, 1940 data showed population growth to 39,569 inhabitants: 38,194 as urban population and 1,375 as rural population (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 1948a, p. 17). Meriti district recorded significant population growth between 1892 and 1920. In 1940, Meriti was the most populous district in Iguaçú municipality. The headquarter district ranked the second position in this ranking, with total population of 34,680 inhabitants: 20,598 as urban and suburban population, and 14,082 as population living in the countryside (IBGE, 1948a).

Thus, it is important taking into consideration that population growth in the aforementioned municipality is significant at the time to reason about the demand for schools in the region. In 1892, the population reached 24,226 inhabitants; 33,396 people in 1920 and 140,606 inhabitants in 1940 (Forte, 1933; Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 1948b). These historical and geographic studies about Iguaçú municipality draw the panorama of significant population growth, which was mobilized based on the district, due to workers' inflow to rural and urban activities. Soares (1962) does not disregard the importance of the most urbanized districts, such as Meriti, by focusing on the importance of the citrus agriculture to the local economy:

Between 1920 and 1940, the population in the municipality grew from 33,396 to 105,809 inhabitants. This increase in the population by 72,413 inhabitants was quite influenced by the suburbanization of Iguaçú districts around the metropolis - 'São João de Meriti' and Nilópolis; however, the designed growth was at the order of 24,467 inhabitants, only in the four essentially agricultural districts (Nova Iguaçú, Cava, Queimados and Bonfim) (from 18,707 in 1920, to 43,167 in 1940) (Soares, 1962, p. 54-55, author's emphasis).

Carlos Eduardo Costa assessed civil registrations in Iguaçú municipality between 1930 and 1940 and observed the migration process of black and brown families, ascending from captivity, from Vale do Paraíba region to 'Baixada Fluminense'. This author has observed parents' local of origin, records about grandparents and information on skin color, in an accurate analysis about birth certificates in Iguaçú: "In civil registration, between 1924 and 1939, in total 176 children who were born outside the municipality were registered. Of this total, 106 were born in Vale do Paraíba, i.e., 60% of children registered as black or brown" (Costa, 2008, p. 118).

Economic growth in Iguaçú made it possible diversifying the occupation types. The use of families in agricultural activities in the headquarter district was followed by permanence in houses, in sites closer to districts where there were urban allotments (Costa, 2020).

Thus, it is also important observing studies about schooling processes in this region if we take into account that information on the significant presence of slaves, freed or free ones, between the 19<sup>th</sup> century population and population growth between the 1920s and 40s, and the influence of black and brown families in the post-

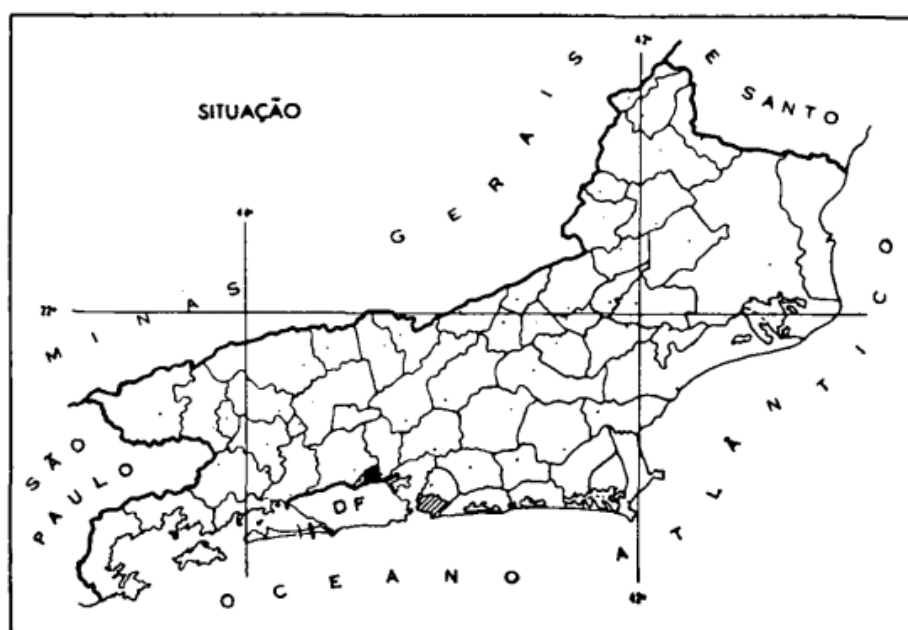


abolition period. Did the availability of public schools follow the population growth? Did the racial profile informed by historical records reflect on the social composition of enrolled students?

We aim at answering these enquiries based on the analysis of photographs and school maps in São João de Meriti, which is known as the most populous district in Iguazu, in the past. We inform that we will keep using São João de Meriti, as landmark in the name of the 4<sup>th</sup> district, between 1931 and 1943, even if there was exchange between São João de Meriti and Meriti names, at that period.

The Statistical Summary of Iguazu Municipality, published in 1948, informs that, based on territory partitions from 1936 and 1937, Iguazu municipality encompassed 9 districts: “Nova Iguazu, Bonfim, Cava, Caxias, Estrela, ‘Meriti (former São João de Meriti)’, Pilar, Nilópolis and Queimados” (IBGE, 1948b, p. 6, author’s emphasis). These very same districts remained the same in 1938, when the whole Iguazu municipality became Nova Iguazu (IBGE, 1948b, p. 6).

São João de Meriti remained as the 4<sup>th</sup> district of Nova Iguazu until 1943, when Caxias district emancipated itself from Iguazu and added the old São João de Meriti district to its borders – it became the second district of Duque de Caxias. Two years later, in 1947, São João de Meriti emancipated itself from Duque de Caxias and formed a new district, along with São Joao de Meriti, São Mateus and Coelho da Rocha. The new municipality was on the border of Nova Iguazu, Nilópolis, Duque de Caxias and of the Federal District, at that time. Map 1 locates São João de Meriti municipality in Rio de Janeiro State and its border with the Federal District (at that time), in 1959 – when it covered 36Km<sup>2</sup> (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 1959).



Map 1 - São João de Meriti Municipality in 1959.

Source: IBGE (1959, p. 145). Município destacado em negrito, limítrofe ao DF.

## STUDENTS' POPULATION AND RACIAL PROFILE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

We adopted Meriti district as analysis position to investigate the history of non-white populations' education in order to get to know how the process to create schools and how their functioning took place, be it based on availability of different school grades or teachers. This investigation introduced the designs of educational opportunity experiences between access and permanence conditions.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rio de Janeiro State governments seek to adopt school 'freguesias'. A province decree from 1869 stated that all 'freguesias' should have at least one school for each sex, and it had set the number of schools (Borges & Dias, 2021).

Mariana Sousa (2021) addresses the creation of a school for boys in 1851, in her research about schools created in Freguesia de São João de Meriti, between 1833 and 1889, and of a school for girls in 1856, as well as of another school created in 1873. Eleven (11) people held positions in public teaching in this location at that time; furthermore, there was one private school in it (Sousa, 2021).

The idea of implementing schools in the entire province and of adopting population-density criteria to set their locations was the very core of the process to capitalize public schools. From the republican process to late 1940s, school location analyses in Iguaçu district evidences the greatest concentration of public elementary schools in the headquarter district, be them state or municipal schools. The total number of schools in the other districts was smaller than that of schools in the headquarter district. Therefore, there is correlation between the number of schools per district and population density.

The action of Iguaçu City Hall stood out due to the creation of elementary public and subsidized schools; moreover, the association between territory and population density echoed on the number of students' applications. Applications in the 29 municipal schools in 1931 show that Iguaçu (1<sup>st</sup>) and Meriti (4<sup>th</sup>) districts corresponded to 29.87% and 25.85% of the 1,466 applications, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Applications for Municipal Public Schools, 1931.

District	Applications
1st	438
2nd	234
3rd	116
4th	379
5th	34
6th	100
7th	156
8th	09

Source: Prefeitura... (1932, p. 11).

Besides public elementary schools, the municipality subsidized 402 students' applications in other two schools - it totaled 1,968 applications. However, although Iguaçu stood out in the ranking of municipal schools in Rio de Janeiro's scene in the 1930s (Borges & Dias, 2021), actions were much farther from the schools' promotion carried out by the state government in this region. While municipal schools worked in single shifts, under the supervision of a single teacher, state schools worked in three shifts, as 'grupos escolares', which had a large number of teachers and students. It is also observed in the comparison of schools' photographs. All the photos from the original inventory of *Instituto de Pesquisas Históricas e Análises Sociais da Baixada Fluminense [IPAHB]* – Institute of Historical Research and Social Analysis of Baixada Fluminense -, were digitalized when the institute was still operational, back in 2009.

The number of municipal schools in Iguaçu between 1920 and 1933 grew from 09 to 29 units. We could observe that all municipal schools had a name, and it was not common among state schools, which were identified by numbers and by the names of the locations they were implemented at.

Tavares Guerra municipal school was mentioned in the 1931 reorganization (City Hall..., 1931). Mariana Souza mentioned "Tavares Guerra" as one of the names usually found in the list of farmers in the region, in the analysis she carried out in *Almanak Laemmert* about schooling processes in Meriti, between 1847 and 1867 (Sousa, 2021) - Tavares Guerra and Telles de Menezes families started building São João Batista Church in 1875 (Sousa, 2021). Assumably, such an outstanding act justified the name given to the municipal school (Photograph 1).



Photograph 1 - Tavares Guerra Municipal School.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.

Besides the racial profile observed in the photo, school attendance maps recorded the school type children and adolescents had experienced. Although there are no maps from the same year of the photo (1932), we have assessed the functioning of this school in the following years.

We assessed the municipal elementary coeducational school from São João de Meriti, named Tavares Guerra School, between 1933 and 1935 (APERJ, FDE, 02744). The school was classified as elementary co-educational school - it means that it taught boys and girls, and provided up to 2 freshmen classes. In 1929, the public instruction reform kept the distinction between isolated elementary schools and isolated high schools. The elementary degree was taught in elementary schools, in two grades; high school was taught in high schools, in three grades; 'grupos escolares' were in charge of providing complete elementary teaching, in five grades (Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 1929).

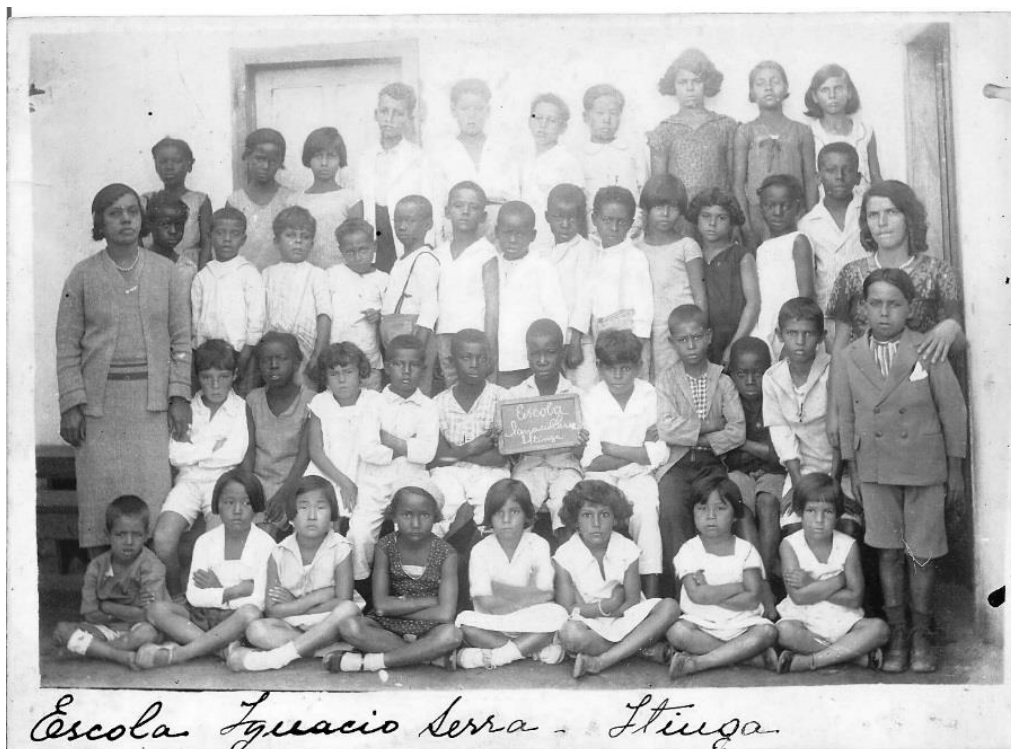
The universe of students' applications in this school reinforces observations in Photograph 1. This school worked in one shift, in 1933 and 1935. In October, the number of applications dropped to 45 students divided into three classes. In July 1933, the school was visited by the municipal instruction inspector, Jarbas Cordeiro, who found 27 of the 61 enrolled students. Inspection records were listed in the "present students" field, within the chart known as "Authorities who have visited the schools". The school was visited by mayor Arruda Negreiros in the following month, when 40 of 59 enrolled students were present. Thus, we could observe that the number of students' applications changed throughout the year.

In 1933, teacher Alda de Almeida Corrêa was in charge of teaching in the school; she informed in the attendance maps that the school did not have an assistant teacher. In April 1935, Dogelina Acir Caldas signed the school attendance maps as "associated municipal teacher". At that same year, the school was still working in one shift, with freshmen and sophomore classes, and 55 enrolled students (APERJ, FDE, 02744).

Information crossing between the school functioning and Photograph 1 allowed inferring that most of the enrolled students attended the freshmen year, which was organized in different classes, in the same shift - they were taught by the same teacher (whose name was not identified). Furthermore, the school also provided two elementary school freshmen classes.

Pictures (Photographs 2 and 3) and school maps from other municipal schools in the 4<sup>th</sup> district (São João de Meriti), more specifically in Coelho da Rocha and Itinga, repeated the offer of an elementary school with two grades (elementary isolated school), which recorded the largest number of classes in the freshmen year and of non-white children and adolescents in its students' application matrix (APERJ, FDE, 02667; 02651).





Photograph 2 - Ignacio Serra Municipal School.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.



Photograph 3 - Rangel Pestana Municipal School.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.

The analysis of the photographs from Arruda Negreiros Collection, and their comparison to data on school's organization, triggered the debate about the history of black population education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The photographs keep phenotypic aspects that are not recorded in other documental sources - it can be a barrier for studies focused on the history of the black population:

The combination of possibilities provided by Photographic sources, based on their features and peculiarities, and on the amplitude of the topic allowed by the education field, make it possible observing the opening of a rich and significant object of investigation. The photograph 'shines light' on topics that, given the limitations of written sources, could not be assessed, or at least perceived (Abdala, 2016, p. 264, authors' emphasis).

Research on the History of Education based on photographs use these resources either as object or as investigation source, in an articulated way (Abdala, 2016). At present times, Rachel Abdala states that there was the "[...] consolidation of this epistemological space as research source/object in the History of Education field" (Abdala, 2016, p. 262). Photos of São João School were used as source to capture the presence of non-white students and teachers in public schools by following such a theoretical and methodological recommendation; they also show other source types and the appropriate bibliography. They are questioned about the intentions of their population context as research objects. After all, it regards a set of photographs found by Iguaçu's mayor at the time to celebrate the municipality's 100 anniversary.

Thus, we have observed that the photographs open room for history studies about the access of non-white boys and girls to schooling, and for studies who lead to research on teaching practices performed by non-white women. However, it is necessary to go beyond the images. The comparison of legends in the photographs to other documental sources, mainly to school attendance maps, allowed identifying and assessing schools, students and teachers, as well as perceiving the design of elementary school experiences available in this peripheral territory.

The maps do not register students' names, only sex and grade classifications. Nevertheless, the comparison between photos and post-abolition historiography in "Baixada Fluminense" (Bezerra, 2012; Costa, 2020) enabled drawing the population's profile in this region. As we have already seen, there is knowledge about a population of captivity ascendants and of a free black population settled in this region since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bezerra, 2012). There are other studies about the significant migration of free and former captive individuals to 'Baixada' after the abolition (Costa, 2020), and it allowed inferring that several students in the photographs came from worker families hired for rural and urban occupations. Therefore, the dialogue with slavery,



post-abolition and labor sphere historiography encourages research on the education history of the non-white population.

The fact that the school photographs from a peripheral region, from Baixada Fluminense, and the racial issues depicted in students' images, show some jammed students, triggers the debate about students' access to public schools featured as elitist in the first republican decades. It is worth analyzing the public teaching and enrollment experience, and attendance in post-abolition public schools, based on the analysis position of a peripheral place where one finds great inflow of worker families.

## **DEMAND FOR STUDENTS' APPLICATIONS AND TEACHER'S ALLOCATIONS**

The hybrid ways of school organizations and the large number of students' applications informed in the school attendance maps of state schools, are also depicted in the photographs, since they highlight the significant diversity in comparison to images of municipal schools. All photographs show the school's racial profile (which is not mentioned in the attendance maps); this finding justifies the relevance of this source for the historiographic debate about the access of non-white populations to elementary public schools and about the public-teacher occupation.

We have found five photographs of the Co-educational high school from São João de Meriti (# 15), and they show the history of this school for decades. In other words, a large amount of students and teachers who, based on the institution's attendance maps (from 1929 to 1943), report the complex structure of class organizations in shifts and grades.

The two next photographs show the amount of children taught by more than one teacher; it is interesting observing that there are only girls in the first one (Photograph 4), although it was a co-educational school, as depicted in the second photograph (Photograph 5). Would this separation have only been a resource to capture, or have it also informed about the daily routine of boys' and girls' classes, that worked in separate, even at different shifts? This assumption is not actually clarified through the analysis applied to attendance maps.



Photograph 4 – State Schhol no. 15.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.



Photograph 5 – State School no. 15.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.

The school's attendance maps allowed assessing and comparing changes in the number of students based on grades and classes, as well as teachers' flow in it. We have noticed that it was usual having changes in shifts, classes and grades' organization, and changes in teachers' allocations, over the year.

In 1932, teacher Alvarina Teixeira de Carvalho signed the maps and informed that School # 15 worked in two shifts, in the first half of March, with 05 assistant teachers, but, only 03 of them remained in the school in the second half of the month.

In April 1932, students' applications to the freshmen year reached the total number of 175 girls and 114 boys (organized into three classes), whereas 14 boys and 06 girls were attending the sophomore class, and 07 boys and 05 girls were attending the junior class. The total number of enrolled students was 321 (APERJ, FDE, 02740).

The visit by school inspector José Neves Paula Leite, in July 1932, recorded 71 boys and 27 girls in the first shift; the second shift counted on 62 boys and 34 girls, in the visitation day. In other words, the inspector found 194 of the 340 enrolled students, at the time.

The mentioned lack of proportion between the number of enrolled students in the freshmen year and that in the sophomore and junior years highlights the elementary school type experienced at those decades in São João de Meriti. There were isolated schools, with three teaching grades, and with the concentration and permanence of students' applications in the freshmen year. We have inferred that Photographs 6, 7 and 8 regard the most advanced classes at co-educational high school no. 15:



Photograph 6 - State School no. 15.

Source: Acervo IPAHB.





Photograph 6 - State School no. 15.

Source: Acervo IPAHB.



Photograph 7 - State School no. 15.

Source: Acervo IPAHB.

The comparison of School # 15's images to attendance maps reinforced the formation of the isolated school, with a large population of students. Records of students' applications and the chart of assistant teachers between 1929 and 1943, and the time lapse corresponding to the school's documents when it was located in Iguaçú<sup>3</sup> municipality, showed the constant large number of students' applications (APERJ, FDE, 02740). In 1941, the school started working in three shifts. Teacher Alvarina Teixeira de Carvalho was in the school charts, between 1931 and 1939. However, it was not possible identifying her among teachers in the pictures.

Teacher Sylvia Martins Rosas was the one who lasted longer in the school, she signed the attendance maps of the co-education high school from São João de Meriti # 31 (APERJ, FDE, 02742), between 1929 and 1943 (she started signing the maps as Sylvia Rosas Machado from 1935 on).

We found three photographs from School # 31. The search for Sylvia Rosas' name in the newspaper library of the National Library entwines her trajectory and the creation of School # 31. Sylvia Rosas was a student at 'Escola Normal de Niterói' between 1920 and 1923 (Escola Normal..., 1920a; Directoria Geral..., 1923a). The requirement for the payment of her wage as assistant teacher in girls' school 'Escola Feminina da Vila' was issued in September 1923 (Directoria Geral..., 1923b). However, in 1926, both the teacher and the school she was allocated in were transferred to São João de Meriti:

The associated teacher, D. Sylvia Martins Rosa, was transferred from the girls' school in Mangaratiba to the co-educational school Caçador, Itaguahy municipality. Co-educational School Caçador was transferred from Itaguahy municipality, along with its teacher, D. Sylvia Martins Rosas, to S. João de Merity, Iguassú municipality (Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 1926, p. 1).

In 1925, the newspaper *Correio da Lavoura* informed that the new regulation for elementary teaching (Decree n. 2,105 from March 02, 1925) gave new classification to 25 state schools in Iguaçú. There was a boys' high school in São João de Meriti and a girls' high school, as well (Classificação de escolas, 1925). Thus, assumingly, it was from 1926 on that teacher Sylvia Rosas' co-educational school was created in São João de Meriti.

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<sup>3</sup> The Education Department Fund organizes the dossier of schools based on municipality names. Thus, the document from 1920 and 1943 corresponds to the time when the school belonged to Iguaçú. After Duque de Caxias' emancipation, the school integrated the limits of the new municipality, and the documentation migrated to the dossiers of schools in Duque de Caxias municipality (APERJ, FDE, 01352). The same happened with documentation of School # 31 (APERJ, FDE, 01351) and # 16 (APERJ, FDE, 01350).

We do not know whether her transfer was issued by her own request, but it is worth pointing out that Sylvia Martins was the daughter of Major Antonio Gonçalves Rosas, the director of Trianon Theater. Her name was found in social news reports in the press, because of her birthday or because of coverages about her marriage, in 1926, with Sergio Domingues Machado, director of the National Department of Peopling (Casamentos..., 1926, p. 5). The description of the wedding party mentioned the presence of guests who were hosted by the couple. This repercussion in the press points towards a sociability network that could be mobilized for teachers' allocation. After all, a school was transferred so that a teacher could be allocated in São Joao de Meriti, in the year of her marriage.

Besides the teachers' likely interest in the allocation to São João de Meriti, it is relevant observing that, although there were girls' and boys' state and municipal schools in São Joao de Meriti, there was demand for new students' applications. In 1932, girls and boys were photographed in separate, although state school # 31 was of the co-educational type; a third image shows boys and girls in the same photo, as it can be seen in Photographs 9, 10 and 11.



Photograph 8 – State School no. 31.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.





Photograph 10 – State School no. 31.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.



Photograph 11 – State School no. 31.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.

Teachers' attendance records in co-educational high school # 31 from São João de Merit reported that the school year of 1932 started without any assistant teacher (APERJ, FDE, 02742). Teacher Sylvia Martins Rosas informed the allocation of "two temporary undergraduates" from April onwards. Actually, we could observe the presence of three teachers in the pictures, so it is reasonable imagining that this teacher is the one seating on a chair, while the others were standing still.

The school worked in two shifts. Only 140 students of the total of 151 ones were in the freshmen years, 87 were boys and 43 were girls. The sophomore year counted on 7 boys and 2 girls, and the junior year had 7 boys and 5 girls (APERJ, FDE, 02742). This observational scale on the number of students' applications and distributions per grade shows the permanent concentration of students' application for the freshmen year in comparison to the other grades, or when grades were compared between schools, as observed in other schools in Meriti.

As aforementioned, the school's attendance maps did not present students' names, and it made it impossible to know whether they regarded the same students over the years, the same students who were enrolled in the freshmen year, or whether new groups of children entered the school. Traces of school evasion were recorded in justifications for "low attendance", which were issued by teachers and explained by illnesses, epidemics, floods and, yet, by children's occupation in work shifts with their parents.

Yet, requests for teachers' nominations in São João de Meriti point towards new children applying to the schools. Teacher Sylvia Rosas informed, in March 1935: "Eighty (80) students are enrolled and they wait for the nomination of the assistant teachers"; March 1939; "82 students are waiting for the nomination of assistant teachers"; April 1943: "84 freshmen students are waiting for the nomination of assistant teachers" (APERJ, FDE, 02742). The repetition of these reports at the beginning of each new school year pinpoints her commitment in getting new nominations for teachers in order to fulfil the needs of the enrolled students. The school worked with official teachers and with teachers hired for the documentation period, as a whole (1929-1943).

Records on "students present" in occasions when the school would be visited by the inspector show attendance compatible to data on the total number of students' applications. Region inspector Neves Paula Leite found 91 students and 129 enrolled students in his visit to the school, in 1931. In July 1932, there were 126 students in the universe of 161 enrolled ones, 79 were boys and 47 were girls. In May 1933, 124 of the total of 155 students were in the school during the visit by inspector Milton Fontenelle. In October of the same year, there were 109 students of the total of 144 enrolled in the school during the visitation by assistant inspector Venina Correa. In July 1935, the assistant inspector and inspector Paschoal Leme found 105 of the 135 students enrolled in School # 31 (APERJ, FDE, 02742).

Similar to Co-educational school # 15, co-educational school # 31 is one more case of school accounting for a large number of students' applications, and it is in compliance with data on the significant inflow of migrants to Meriti district between the 1920s and 40s.

The analysis of attendance maps either in School # 15 or in School # 31 showed the largest number of boys' applications. But the documentation of School # 16 (APERJ, FDE, 02741) stops the possibility of interpreting that girls were less frequent at school (Photograph 12). Assumingly, families would prefer to enroll girls in girls' schools.



Photograph 12 – State School no. 16.  
Source: Acervo IPAHB.

Although legend in Photograph 12 states that State School # 16 was of the co-educational type, attendance maps highlight the existence of a girls' high school in São João de Meriti no. 16, between 1929 and late 1932. In March and April 1933, the school was classified as girls' school and, based on the following map, it became a co-educational school (APERJ, FDE, 02741).

In April 1932, the school worked in two shifts. The three grades counted on 111 girls enrolled in the freshmen year, whereas 11 girls were enrolled in the two sophomore year, and 4 girls were in the junior year. When inspector José Neves de Paula Leite visited the school in June, he found 94 of the 129 enrolled girls; and, in October, he found 85 girls of the 117 enrolled ones. As for the following year, 117 girls were in the three classes of the freshmen year and 10 were in the two classes of the

sophomore year of elementary school. Just as observed in other schools, the largest number of students' applications was concentrated in the freshmen year.

Between 1929 and 1943, teacher Alzira dos Santos Soares was in charge of the school. In 1929, it had 154 enrolled girls, and the aforementioned teacher was assisted by two undergraduate temporary teachers: Jesuína dos Santos Lima and Aracy Vieira Borges. Although their names were not mentioned, the 1931 maps showed the permanence of two temporary undergraduate teachers in the school. In 1932, Alzira dos Santos Soares informed that the school counted on two 'contracted' assistant teachers. Therefore, they can be in the same teams of previous years.

The analysis of teachers' chart in School # 16 has quite common features of routines also found in other state schools in São João de Meriti. There are records of graduated and undergraduate assistant and temporary teachers' allocations. It is likely observing the permanence of teachers and turnover of assistant teachers over the years, be them hired or approved in public contests. Moreover, teachers had to attend to the schools to take over their positions, but they did not remain in them. In 1937, Judith Teixeira Lima was allocated as graduated temporary teacher; however, "she took office of her position but she did not show up"; In March 1940, the temporary teacher was allocated but she "did not show up". In 1942, the graduated temporary teacher Clotilde da Costa Borges de Carvalho "was allocated to Niterói's City Hall" and graduated temporary teacher Hilma Corrêa e Castro "Took office but was allocated to Nova Iguaçu" (APERJ, FDE, 02741). This dynamics points out certain instability in the process to allocate teachers, as well as the difficulty in keeping schools with the right number of teachers and to fulfill the demand for new students' applications, given the lack of teachers. In addition to it, one finds São João de Meriti's context, a populous location in Meriti district in the 1930s and 40s.

Furthermore, the documental inventory of photographs and attendance maps allowed assessing the history of the teaching profession in the region.

The search for the name of the teacher in School # 16 at the newspaper library of the National Library allowed us to get to know a professional trajectory similar to that of Sylvia Rosas. Alzira dos Santos Soares attended 'Escola Normal' and graduated in 1920 (Escola Normal, 1920b). In 1923, her payment for teaching at the co-educational school in Rio Douro was requested (Directoria Geral..., 1923c). This region belongs to Iguaçu's territory; it is close to São João's girls school, where both the school and the teacher were transferred to, in October of this same year, through an act issued by the director of this public institution, "[...] due to teaching convenience" (Revistas..., 1923, p. 6). The teacher's name, who was bond to the girls' school in São João do Meriti, was also identified in the local newspaper "Correio da Lavoura", in 1925 (Classificação..., 1925).



The search on teachers' trajectory extended the study to decades prior to that of the photographs, because we have located the presence of these teachers as students from their time at "Escola Normal" to their search for schools to teach at. Thus, we also found data previous to the photographs about the history of schools in Meriti's territory.

We have inferred that Alzira dos Santos Torres was the teacher seating still in Photograph 12. The permanence of her name in all 1932 maps, when the photos were taken, allowed us to make such a statement. She started working in the region since 1929 and signed the maps up to 1943.

Even in photographs from Municipal School Rangel Pestana (photographs 02 and 03), which did not help accurately knowing the name of the teacher, it is clear that non-white women were teaching at this time. Therefore, São João de Meriti was a territory for black women to experience teaching in public schools. This is recent information that has been assessed by the historiography of education.

## FINAL REMARKS

Maria Lúcia Muller (2008, 2010) highlights the adoption of mechanisms and criteria that would result in "obstacles for the obtainment of intellectual acknowledgement" by "non-white" teachers in the Federal District, from the education reforms in the 1920s. Moreover, the behaviors, expectations and sex relationships of black women were nurtured by viewpoints that underestimated their intellectual skills, as highlighted by Luara Silva:

Throughout the post-abolition period, mainly at its early times, countless stereotyped and 'racialized' images bond to pseudo-scientific theories about the black population were launched. A whole set of ideas that, from female experiences, gathered racial and sex stereotypes, by investing in the construction of perspectives that denied black women's moral and intellectual skills in a strict way (Silva, 2019, p. 43).

The historiography on this period is vivid in acknowledging thoughts and policies that, between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, 'racialized' and prejudiced individuals based on their skin color (Schwarcz, 1993; Maio & Santos; 1996).

Jerry Dávila places the public policies on education and health in the 1920s and 30s as vectors of the eugenic discourse that, based on the assumption of degradation caused by miscegenation, was the prognosis of this population's immersion in an environment where it could promote its "whitening" process:

These policies not just reflect the views of the elite about degradation; they project these views in such ways that oftentimes contribute to disadvantages faced by poor and non-white Brazilians by denying them equitable access to programs, institutions and social awards provided by education policies (Dávila, 2006, p. 22).

In other words, schools willing to promote the “Whitening Diploma” kept operations aimed at submitting the non-white population due to their own concepts of race and eugenics:

Thus, by having the task of forging a more European Brazil, still tight to a sense of modernity linked to “whitening”, these educators built schools where almost all actions and practices established ‘racialized’ standards, and granted or denied awards based on them (Dávila, 2006, p. 25).

This historical context must be observed when one investigates the conditions set for entering public schools and for the exercise of teaching in Meriti. So, can such a comparison allow inferring that the concept of race also reflects on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade school’s availability and on the constant maintenance of students’ applications only for the freshmen year in elementary schools in a territory like that of São João de Meriti? Does the racial profile of the population leave traces of the fraction of instruction individuals were destined to experience?

Based on the herein presented results, and in compliance with Maria Müller and Jerry Dávila’s research, it is possible stating that the presence of non-white populations in schools in Iguazu territory in the 1930s can prove the access to school since the first republican decades; it also points out a school experience limited to the freshmen year in elementary school, as well as lack of teachers’ allocation for the enrollment of more students, and the professional situations of temporary, undergraduate teachers prone to transferences and long-term allocations. These aspects leave traces of difficulties faced at the time to institutionalize public school and the right to school, as well as the permanence of these populations in the school culture. Accordingly, knowing the rudimentary schooling conditions provided for a mostly non-white population in a peripheral territory in Rio de Janeiro State draws the designs, ambivalences and margins of historical associations among concepts of race, social inequalities and public policies on education, in Brazil.



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