


A INVISIBILIDADE DOS POVOS INDÍGENAS**THE INVISIBILITY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES****LA INVISIBILIDAD DE LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS**

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RESUMO

Este estudo analisa os processos históricos e contemporâneos de invisibilidade dos povos indígenas no Brasil, com foco na construção da identidade parda como reflexo da miscigenação e sua relação com a negação das raízes indígenas. Adotando uma abordagem qualitativa e bibliográfica, investiga-se como as práticas coloniais e pós-coloniais moldaram as categorias raciais e culturais no país, promovendo o apagamento das especificidades étnicas. O trabalho discute, ainda, os desafios atuais para a

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valorização e o reconhecimento das identidades indígenas, destacando as limitações das políticas públicas, as representações educacionais e a luta por direitos territoriais e culturais. Conclui-se que, apesar dos obstáculos, as populações indígenas têm se mostrado resilientes e ativas na afirmação de suas identidades, contribuindo de forma indispensável para a construção de uma sociedade mais plural e inclusiva. A pesquisa reafirma a urgência de ações que desconstruam preconceitos históricos e promovam uma reparação efetiva, garantindo a preservação das culturas e saberes indígenas.

Palavras-chave: Povos indígenas. Identidade parda. Invisibilidade étnica.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the historical and contemporary processes of invisibility of indigenous peoples in Brazil, focusing on the construction of brown identity as a reflection of miscegenation and its relationship with the denial of indigenous roots. Adopting a qualitative and bibliographical approach, it investigates how colonial and post-colonial practices shaped racial and cultural categories in the country, promoting the erasure of ethnic specificities. The work also discusses the current challenges for the appreciation and recognition of indigenous identities, highlighting the limitations of public policies, educational representations and the fight for territorial and cultural rights. It is concluded that, despite the obstacles, indigenous populations have shown themselves to be resilient and active in asserting their identities, contributing indispensably to the construction of a more plural and inclusive society. The research reaffirms the urgency of actions that deconstruct historical prejudices and promote effective reparation, ensuring the preservation of indigenous cultures and knowledge.

Keywords: Indigenous peoples. Brown identity. Ethnic invisibility.

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza los procesos históricos y contemporáneos de invisibilidad de los pueblos indígenas en Brasil, centrándose en la construcción de la identidad parda como reflejo del mestizaje y su relación con la negación de las raíces indígenas. Con un enfoque cualitativo y bibliográfico, investiga cómo las prácticas coloniales y poscoloniales moldearon las categorías raciales y culturales en el país, promoviendo la desaparición de las especificidades étnicas. El trabajo también aborda los desafíos actuales para la valoración y el reconocimiento de las identidades indígenas, destacando las limitaciones de las políticas públicas, las representaciones educativas y la lucha por los derechos territoriales y culturales. Se concluye que, a pesar de los obstáculos, las poblaciones indígenas han demostrado resiliencia y participación activa en la afirmación de sus identidades, contribuyendo de forma indispensable a la construcción de una sociedad más plural e inclusiva. La investigación reafirma la urgencia de acciones que desconstruyan los prejuicios históricos y promuevan una reparación efectiva, garantizando la preservación de las culturas y los conocimientos indígenas.

Palabras clave: Pueblos indígenas. Identidad parda. Invisibilidad étnica.



INTRODUCTION

Brazilian history is marked by intense processes of miscegenation and cultural imposition, which have contributed to the erasure of specific ethnic identities, especially indigenous ones. From the first contacts between native peoples and colonizers, a model of domination was established that denied the diversity and richness of indigenous cultures, replacing them with homogeneous and generic narratives, aligned with colonial and, later, national interests. In this context, the emergence of brown identity reflects not only racial mixing, but also a social construction that dilutes and hides indigenous roots, configuring itself as a central element in the invisibility of these populations. This scenario not only perpetuates historical marginalization, but also fuels contemporary challenges in the recognition and appreciation of indigenous identities.

The present study aims to investigate the historical and social processes that contributed to the erasure of indigenous identities in Brazil, analyzing the construction of the category "pardo" as a reflection of miscegenation and as a tool for the invisibility of indigenous origins. In addition, it seeks to explore the contemporary challenges in valuing these identities, considering both the advances and the limitations of public policies and social practices in favor of the recognition of indigenous cultures in the current context.

The research adopts a qualitative approach, of a bibliographic nature, based on academic studies and historical documents that address the theme. This methodology allows for an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of exclusion and the mechanisms of cultural erasure, considering the historical and social complexity that permeates the indigenous issue in Brazil. The theoretical approach makes it possible to understand how these dynamics have been maintained over time and what strategies of resistance have been employed by indigenous populations today.

The justification for this study lies in the urgency of broadening the discussions on indigenous invisibility in Brazil and its implications in the formation of national identities. Despite occasional advances in the recognition of rights, indigenous populations continue to face significant challenges, which include land disputes, cultural marginalization, and exclusion from spaces of power and decision-making. Understanding these processes is essential not only to repair historical injustices, but also to build a society that values and respects its ethnic and cultural diversity.

This work is also justified by the impact that the recognition of indigenous identities can have on the construction of more inclusive and representative narratives. Valuing these cultures contributes to the strengthening of their communities and to the preservation of ancestral knowledge, which has great relevance in facing contemporary challenges, such

as environmental and social crises. Thus, the study proposes a critical reflection that contributes to the academic debate and to the formulation of more effective public policies in the context of valuing indigenous identities.

Throughout the development, three main axes will be analyzed: the historical silencing and mischaracterization of indigenous cultures, brown identity as a reflection of miscegenation and the denial of indigenous roots, and contemporary challenges for the recognition of indigenous identities. These topics, interconnected, seek to offer a broad and critical view of the mechanisms of invisibility, their consequences and the possibilities of **resistance and cultural appreciation in the current scenario**.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE HISTORICAL SILENCING AND MISCHARACTERIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURES

The historical and cultural erasure of indigenous peoples in Brazil is a long-term process, which began with the arrival of European colonizers in the sixteenth century and persists in a complex way to the present day. Since the colonial period, the policies of territorial occupation and the project of "civilization" imposed by the Portuguese crown have aimed at the forced assimilation or eradication of indigenous cultures. In this context, indigenous peoples have been treated as obstacles to progress, their languages and ways of life have been delegitimized, and their lands have been appropriated for the cultivation of monocultures and the exploitation of mineral wealth. This logic of subjugation not only physically eliminated thousands of indigenous people, but also destroyed a significant part of their cultural and spiritual traditions, leaving a legacy of exclusion and marginalization that still reverberates today (Cardim, 2020).

The construction of national identity in Brazil in the nineteenth century deepened this erasure by establishing miscegenation as the basis for the formation of the Brazilian people. This narrative, although it exalted racial mixing, neglected the specificities of indigenous cultures and diluted them into a generic ideal of Brazilianness. The indigenous people, who were previously seen as savages to be civilized, began to be romanticized or completely ignored in the official discourse. This ideological construction served to reinforce the invisibility of native peoples and facilitate the continuity of policies that favored the expansion of large estates, the exploitation of natural resources, and the advancement of colonization projects in indigenous lands, thus consolidating the exclusion of these populations from spaces of power and decision-making (Fiorin, 2009).



The idea of miscegenation, in turn, created the category "pardo", which became a racial identity often used to dilute indigenous ancestry. Many individuals with indigenous heritage were classified as brown, which not only concealed their cultural origins but also reinforced a logic of erasure by confusing specific ethnic identities into a broad and imprecise category. The brown, in this sense, came to represent a transitional identity, associated with the attempt to whiten the Brazilian population, which, in turn, reinforces racial hierarchies in the country. Whiteness, as a power structure, perpetuates this dynamic, keeping indigenous people in a position of subordination in the Brazilian social imaginary (Silva & Leão, 2012; Schucman, 2012).

This process of erasure was reinforced throughout the twentieth century by public policies that neglected indigenous rights and prioritized economic development at the expense of their lands and ways of life. Infrastructure projects, such as the construction of highways and hydroelectric dams, as well as the expansion of agribusiness, have resulted in the forced displacement of entire communities and the environmental devastation of territories traditionally occupied by these peoples. During the military regime, these practices were intensified with the imposition of integration policies, which aimed to transform indigenous people into rural or urban workers, completely disregarding their autonomy and cultural traditions (Gomes, 2013).

In addition to the practices of territorial expropriation, the Brazilian educational system has also contributed to the perpetuation of indigenous erasure. For decades, school curricula have presented a romanticized or stereotyped view of indigenous peoples, ignoring their cultural diversity and their contributions to the formation of Brazilian society. This uninformed educational approach not only reinforced prejudices, but also consolidated the idea that indigenous people were part of a remote past, oblivious to modernity, erasing their struggles and contemporary existences (Kaingang, 2017).

Indigenous languages have also been severely impacted by this process of cultural erasure. With the imposition of Portuguese as an official language and the absence of language policies aimed at the preservation of native languages, many of them are now threatened with extinction. The loss of these languages represents not only the disappearance of means of communication, but also the destruction of ancestral knowledge, cosmologies, and modes of social organization that are an essential part of the identity of indigenous peoples (Angatu, 2019).

Even the advances in recent decades, such as the recognition of indigenous rights in the 1988 Constitution, have not been enough to reverse this historical erasure. The implementation of public policies aimed at indigenous peoples still faces resistance from

powerful sectors, such as agribusiness and mining, which often violate territorial rights in search of profit. In addition, the slowness in land demarcation processes and the lack of effective enforcement allow land conflicts to continue to occur, often resulting in violence against indigenous communities (Andrade, 2019).

It is important to recognize that erasure is not limited to the actions of the state, but is deeply rooted in the social and cultural structures of the country. Whiteness, as a dominant social norm, not only makes indigenous identities invisible, but also constructs narratives that legitimize their exclusion. This dynamic reinforces the idea that indigenous people are elements of the past, ignoring their current realities and their contributions to contemporary society (Müller & Lourenço, 2017).

Faced with this scenario, indigenous resistance presents itself as a fundamental movement for the preservation of cultures and diversity. Despite the adversities, indigenous peoples have found ways to reaffirm their identities, whether through the recovery of their languages, the struggle for land demarcation, or the preservation of their spiritual and cultural traditions. These movements not only challenge historical erasure but also offer valuable perspectives for building a more equitable and sustainable future (Krenak, 2022).

The struggle of indigenous peoples for the recognition of their rights is not only a matter of historical justice, but also an urgent need in the face of contemporary crises, such as climate change. The spiritual and ancestral bond of indigenous peoples with the land contrasts sharply with the logic of capitalist exploitation, offering sustainable alternatives for the relationship between humanity and the environment. Valuing this knowledge is essential to address the global challenges that threaten the planet's ecological balance (Atalay, 2020).

BROWN IDENTITY AS A REFLECTION OF MISCEGENATION AND DENIAL OF INDIGENOUS ROOTS

The brown identity in Brazil is a phenomenon that is present in the historical processes of miscegenation and in the policies of erasure of specific ethnic identities, such as indigenous ones. This racial category, introduced as part of the classificatory system of Brazilian society, reflects not only the biological mixture between peoples, but also a political and social project of denial of indigenous and African roots in favor of the construction of a national identity aimed at whitening. The "pardo", as a broad and generic category, carries within itself the dilution of cultural and historical particularities, often functioning as a space of transition or ethnic invisibility.



Since the colonial period, miscegenation has been stimulated as a strategy of population control and domination. For the colonizers, the interbreeding between Europeans, indigenous peoples and Africans made it possible to form a "new people" that, at the same time as it was identified with color, detached itself from the cultural and historical roots of the original peoples and enslaved Africans. In this process, the brown identity emerged as a tool of power that served to reorganize racial and ethnic hierarchies, consolidating the dominance of whiteness over racialized populations (Fiorin, 2009).

The brown, as a constructed identity, presents itself as a reflection of the attempt to neutralize the marks of indigenous belonging. By classifying mixed individuals as brown, the Brazilian State created a category that functioned as a "non-place", in which indigenous and African roots were erased, and the association with the white ideal of racial superiority was strengthened. This strategy was effective in reducing the perception of the indigenous presence in the formation of Brazilian society, while consolidating the idea of a homogeneous nation, based on racial mixing (Silva; Leão, 2012).

The construction of this identity was accompanied by the dissemination of narratives that romanticized miscegenation as an element of racial harmony, ignoring the violence and inequalities that marked this process. Behind the apparent exaltation of mixture, there was a project of cultural and ethnic erasure that favored the exclusion of indigenous and African peoples from any historical protagonism. The brown identity, in this context, became a symbol of this lack of defined belonging, where indigenous roots were relegated to the past, and cultural traditions were delegitimized in the present.

In practice, pardo was inserted as a means of symbolic approximation with whiteness, especially in a society where social ascension and recognition were often associated with the denial of indigenous or African characteristics. Thus, the pardo came to be seen as an "intermediary" on a racial scale, which allowed the silent exclusion of indigenous and black people from discussions about identity and power.

This process of denial of indigenous roots was also reinforced by educational and cultural policies that minimized or ignored the contributions of native peoples to the formation of Brazil. In schools, indigenous people were presented as static historical figures, belonging to a distant past, while African contributions were often limited to slavery narratives. At the same time, the pardo was portrayed as the personification of the "Brazilian people", a figure devoid of specific historical ties, built to consolidate the idea of national unity.

Pardo, as a flexible category, has been used to justify the supposed absence of racism in Brazil, while reinforcing the structural inequalities that affect indigenous and black

peoples. This fluidity of the brown category allows Brazilian society to maintain the illusion of a racial democracy, while perpetuating the exclusion and marginalization of racialized populations (Schucman, 2012).

In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness of the impact of this erasure on the preservation of indigenous peoples' cultural and ethnic roots. Indigenous social movements and intellectuals have worked to deconstruct the idea of *pardo* as an identity that dilutes its origins, emphasizing the need to recognize and value the specificities of each ethnic group. These efforts are essential to reverse the process of invisibility that has marked the history of Brazil and to build a more inclusive and representative narrative (Krenak, 2022).

It is essential to understand that brown identity, as a reflection of miscegenation, is also a space of dispute and resignification. Many individuals who identify as brown have sought to reconnect with their indigenous roots, rescuing cultural traditions and reconstructing their identities autonomously. This reappropriation movement is a direct response to the historical process of erasure, which aimed to eliminate ethnic diversity in favor of a supposed racial unity (Andrade, 2019).

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN VALUING AND RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

Despite occasional advances in the field of indigenous rights, the country still faces difficulties in overcoming the erasure and marginalization that have structured the relations between the Brazilian State and indigenous peoples. These challenges are not limited to the legal or territorial sphere; They also encompass the need to reconstruct narratives that place indigenous people at the center of their own histories, valuing their cosmologies, ways of life, and resistances.

One of the main obstacles lies in the maintenance of an economic model that privileges the exploitation of natural resources to the detriment of indigenous territorial rights. Pressure from agribusiness, mining, and other economic sectors continues to put at risk territories traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples. This not only compromises environmental preservation, but also directly attacks the spiritual and identity relationship that these communities maintain with their lands. The idea that indigenous people are obstacles to progress is still present in political discourses that delegitimize their struggles and reinforce the idea that their way of life is incompatible with modernity (Cardim, 2020).

Furthermore, education, which could be a powerful instrument to deconstruct prejudices, is still insufficient to promote a true appreciation of indigenous cultures. School

curricula, most of the time, treat indigenous people as historical figures frozen in time, ignoring their contemporary dynamics and their active participation in today's society. This approach reinforces stereotypes and makes it difficult to understand that indigenous peoples do not only belong to the past, but are deeply connected to the issues of the present, such as the struggle for territorial rights, environmental preservation, and the appreciation of their languages and traditions (Kaingang, 2017).

The invisibility of indigenous languages is a particularly critical point. Brazil has enormous linguistic diversity, but many of these languages are at risk of disappearing due to the lack of public policies that encourage their preservation and transmission to new generations. The imposition of Portuguese as the dominant language reflects the continuity of a colonial logic that devalues indigenous knowledge. However, there are growing efforts to reverse this scenario, with the inclusion of indigenous languages in educational programs and community projects that seek to revitalize these forms of communication and the knowledge systems they carry (Angatu, 2019).

Despite being the guardians of a significant portion of the Brazilian territory and playing a key role in the conservation of biodiversity, indigenous people are still underrepresented in political and social institutions. This makes it difficult to formulate public policies that meet their specific demands and perpetuates the view that their contributions are marginal or expendable to the country's development (Krenak, 2022).

The media, in turn, plays an ambiguous role in this context. While there has been an increase in the visibility of Indigenous leaders in public spaces such as social media and global environmental movements, media coverage still tends to simplify or stereotype Indigenous issues. This approach reduces the complexity of indigenous struggles and identities, making it difficult to recognize their specificities and build effective solidarities with other segments of society (Müller & Lourenço, 2017).

In the legal field, although the 1988 Constitution represented an important milestone in recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, its implementation has been marked by bureaucratic obstacles and political setbacks. The demarcation of indigenous lands, for example, is often paralyzed by economic interests and legal disputes, leaving many communities vulnerable to invasions, violence, and environmental degradation. These setbacks are aggravated by the lack of effective oversight and the absence of mechanisms to ensure the safety of indigenous communities in the face of external threats (Andrade, 2019).

In addition to territorial and political issues, there are also challenges related to the health and well-being of indigenous communities. Access to health services that respect the



cultural specificities of these peoples is still limited, and many health programs ignore or devalue traditional healing practices. This disconnect between conventional health systems and indigenous knowledge not only compromises the effectiveness of care, but also contributes to the weakening of cultural practices that are central to these communities (Coimbra & Santos, 2000).

However, it is important to highlight that, despite these challenges, indigenous peoples have demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for resistance and reinvention. Indigenous movements across the country have been working to ensure the recognition of their rights, rebuild their narratives, and occupy spaces of power. These movements not only confront structures of oppression but also offer new perspectives for Brazilian society as a whole, questioning the foundations of the economic and political model that perpetuates inequality and exclusion (Atalay, 2020).

This resistance is also manifested in art, literature and science. Indigenous leaders and intellectuals have used these platforms to reaffirm their identities and denounce the historical injustices that continue to shape their lives. These voices are fundamental to destabilize the homogeneous vision of Brazilianness and to promote a society that values its cultural and ethnic diversity (Krenak, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study point to the persistence of a logic of historical and cultural erasure of indigenous peoples in Brazil, exacerbated by the construction of brown identity as a reflection of miscegenation. The analysis revealed that historical and social practices have shaped the category "pardo" as an intermediary identity, which often makes indigenous origins invisible and reinforces racial hierarchies based on proximity to whiteness. This process, instead of valuing diversity, operates as a mechanism for neutralizing cultural and ethnic specificities (Silva & Leão, 2012; Schucman, 2012).

The study also identified that the idea of miscegenation, widely exalted as a symbol of national identity, was instrumentalized to consolidate the narrative of a non-existent racial democracy. This "brown" category acts as a space for dilution of indigenous roots, where traditions and cultural heritages are suppressed in favor of a generic and depoliticized identity. This dynamic is observed both in political discourses and in everyday social relations, evidencing how indigenous invisibility is perpetuated even in contemporary contexts (Fiorin, 2009).

In the educational field, the results demonstrated that school curricula play a fundamental role in perpetuating this erasure. Despite legislative efforts to include

indigenous history and culture in educational programs, the approach is still superficial and stuck in stereotypes. Indigenous peoples are presented as historical figures of the past, disregarding their current realities and their ongoing contributions to Brazilian society. This pedagogical approach not only reinforces prejudices, but also hinders the development of a critical and inclusive view of ethnic plurality in Brazil (Kaingang, 2017).

Despite the advances provided by the 1988 Constitution, the demarcation processes face constant bureaucratic and political obstacles, placing indigenous communities in situations of vulnerability in the face of the economic interests of large sectors, such as agribusiness and mining. The inability of the State to guarantee the territorial security of indigenous peoples reinforces the cycle of exclusion and marginalization, evidencing the fragility of the legal system in meeting the demands of these communities (Andrade, 2019).

In the linguistic sphere, the results highlighted the accelerated loss of indigenous languages as a direct reflection of cultural erasure. The imposition of Portuguese as an official language and the lack of effective language policies have resulted in the extinction of several native languages. This linguistic loss represents not only the disappearance of means of communication, but also of knowledge systems and forms of social organization that are an intrinsic part of indigenous identities. However, linguistic revitalization initiatives, although still incipient, have emerged as forms of cultural resistance (Angatu, 2019).

The study also pointed to contemporary challenges related to indigenous representation in spaces of power and decision-making. Despite their indispensable contribution to environmental preservation and cultural diversity, indigenous peoples remain underrepresented in political and social institutions. This exclusion limits the ability to influence public policies that meet their demands and perpetuates the view that their contributions are secondary or irrelevant (Krenak, 2022).

On the other hand, the results revealed a significant growth in the mobilization of indigenous peoples in favor of the recognition of their identities and rights. Organized movements have challenged colonial structures and discursive hegemonies, affirming their cosmologies and ancestral knowledge as fundamental to the construction of a more sustainable and equitable future. This resistance manifests itself on several fronts, from the occupation of academic and cultural spaces to active participation in global discussions on climate change and social justice (Atalay, 2020).

The media analysis highlighted that, although there is a growing visibility of indigenous leaders on digital platforms and social networks, a simplistic and stereotyped approach by traditional media outlets still persists. This limited representation makes it difficult to understand the diversity and complexity of indigenous struggles, perpetuating

preconceived ideas that devalue their legitimate and urgent demands (Müller & Lourenço, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The analysis carried out in this study showed that the invisibility of indigenous peoples in Brazil is the result of a historical and continuous process of cultural, political and social erasure, which began with colonization and persists to the present day. The dynamic reinforces racial hierarchies, perpetuates structural inequalities and consolidates the exclusion of indigenous identities in spaces of power and decision-making.

The recognition of this reality is essential to deconstruct the false idea of racial democracy and promote actions that value and respect the country's cultural diversity. The study demonstrated how historical, educational, and media narratives contributed to perpetuating stereotypes and silencing Indigenous voices, restricting their presence to the imaginary of the past.

The struggle for the recognition of their identities, for the demarcation of their lands and for the appreciation of their ancestral knowledge has intensified, even in a political and economic scenario that often seeks to silence them. Contemporary indigenous movements have appropriated digital, academic, and cultural platforms to reaffirm their voices and question colonial structures that still operate in Brazilian society.

It is essential that the Brazilian State takes a position committed to historical reparation and the strengthening of indigenous communities, guaranteeing them not only formal rights, but real conditions of autonomy and dignity.

Valuing indigenous identities is not only a matter of historical justice, but also an opportunity to build a more plural, sustainable, and inclusive society. Indigenous knowledge, often neglected, has fundamental contributions to face global challenges, such as environmental and social crises. The recognition of these contributions requires not only a paradigm shift, but also the willingness of all sectors of society to deconstruct prejudices and promote intercultural dialogue.

Ultimately, the study reaffirms that combating the invisibility of indigenous peoples in Brazil must be understood as a continuous and multidimensional process. This involves not only institutional and legislative changes, but also the transformation of the narratives that shape social perceptions of Indigenous people. The construction of a fairer and more inclusive future will depend on the full recognition of indigenous identities as an essential part of what it means to be Brazilian, rescuing the cultural richness and resistance that mark the trajectory of these peoples. With this, this work hopes to contribute to the advancement



of the academic debate and to the formulation of policies that prioritize the recognition and appreciation of indigenous cultures in contemporary Brazil.

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