

**AFROCENTRIC PRINCIPLES AND THE MEMORY OF QUILOMBOS IN
ANTÔNIO BISPO DOS SANTOS'S "THE LAND GIVES, THE LAND WANTS": A
LEGACY OF POWER**

**PRINCÍPIOS AFROCÊNTRICOS E A MEMÓRIA DOS QUILOMBOS EM “A
TERRA DÁ, A TERRA QUER”, DE ANTÔNIO BISPO DOS SANTOS: UM
LEGADO DE PODER**

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TIERRA DA, LA TIERRA QUIERE”, DE ANTÔNIO BISPO DOS SANTOS: UN
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Duília de Jesus Lopes Melo¹, Maria Cecilia de Paula Silva²

ABSTRACT

This work is an exercise in analyzing how Afrocentric principles emerge as possible reflections in the memories and language contained in the work of Antônio Bispo. We also aim to highlight concepts presented that corroborate the writer's own life trajectory as a political actor, as well as to analyze how and whether the themes of education and racism are evoked in the work. The methodological approach is bibliographic and seeks to be consistent in conducting this qualitative work, where we also present contributions from other authors. The proposal of this work is an invitation to a counter-colonial education, as we are presented with concepts such as the confluence of knowledge, cosmophobia, colonialism of submission, among others. Furthermore, it approaches in a very particular way the central thought and principles of Afrocentrism proposed by Asante (2019). This work presented itself as a sophisticated framework for issues of memory, racism, and education, since it proposes strategies for an education that aims to be counter-colonial and Afrocentric.

Keywords: Afrocentricity. Quilombola Community. Memory. Racism. Education.

RESUMO

Este trabalho é um exercício de analisar como os princípios afrocêntricos surgem como possíveis reflexos nas memórias e na língua(gem) contidas na obra de Antônio Bispo. Ainda objetivamos evidenciar conceitos apresentados que corroborem com a própria trajetória de vida do escritor enquanto ator político, além de analisar como e se as temáticas educação e racismo são evocadas na obra. O caminho metodológico é bibliográfico e busca ser coerente para condução do referido trabalho, de cunho qualitativo, onde apresentamos também contribuições de outros autores. A proposta desta obra é um convite para uma educação contracolonizadora pois somos apresentados a conceitos como confluência de saberes, cosmofobia, colonialismo de submissão, entre outros. E mais, se aproxima de maneira muito particular do pensamento central e dos princípios do afrocentrismo proposto por Asante (2019). A referida obra se apresentou como sofisticado arcabouço para as questões de

¹ Doctorate in Education. Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA). E-mail: duilinhadejesus@yahoo.com.br

² Postdoctoral Fellow in Anthropology and Sociology. Universidade Strasbourg. France.
E-mail: ceciliadepaula.ufba@gmail.com

memória, racismo e educação, visto que propõe estratégias para uma educação que se proponha como contracolonizadora, afrocentrada.

Palavras-chave: Afrocentricidade. Comunidade Quilombola. Memória. Racismo. Educação.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza cómo los principios afrocéntricos emergen como posibles reflejos en las memorias y el lenguaje presentes en la obra de Antônio Bispo. También buscamos destacar los conceptos presentados que corroboran la propia trayectoria vital del escritor como actor político, además de analizar cómo, y si, los temas de educación y racismo se evocan en la obra. El enfoque metodológico es bibliográfico y busca ser consistente en la realización de este trabajo cualitativo, donde también presentamos contribuciones de otros autores. La propuesta de este trabajo es una invitación a una educación contracolonizadora, al introducir conceptos como la confluencia de saberes, la cosmovisión y el colonialismo de sumisión, entre otros. Además, se aproxima al pensamiento central y los principios del afrocentrismo propuestos por Asante (2019). Este trabajo se presenta como un marco sofisticado para las cuestiones de memoria, racismo y educación, al proponer estrategias para una educación que se propone como contracolonizadora y afrocéntrica.

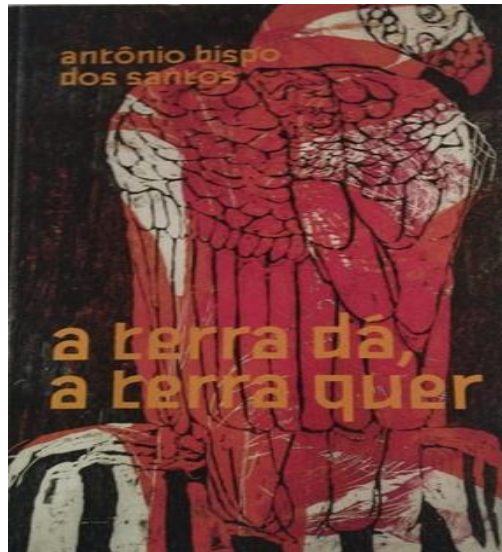
Palabras clave: Afrocentrismo. Comunidad Quilombola. Memoria. Racismo. Educación.

1 AFROCENTRICITY AND EDUCATION

This text is based on the exercise of analyzing how the principles of Afrocentrism emerge as possible reflections in the memories and narrative of Antônio Bispo dos Santos.

Figure 1

Cover photo of Antônio Bispo's Book



Source: Authored by Duília de Jesus Lopes Melo, 2025

For this purpose, we sought the presence of this theme in the work "The land gives, the land wants³", by the writer Antônio Bispo dos Santos, we also intend to highlight concepts presented that corroborate with the writer's own life trajectory as a political actor, member of a quilombola community and who seeks to strengthen the orality of his people.

This text is conceived from the reading of several African and Afro-Brazilian critics who understand that Eurocentrism is not a cultural parameter for all humanity. We started from the assumptions formulated by Asante, Diop and others so that the "epistemological relevance of Afrocentricity would be materialized in the ideal of transformation in/for Brazilian philosophical-educational thought" (Benedicto, 2016).

Also according to this same author,

Afrocentrists are definitely committed to a new narrative of African History, since the study of the history of the African continent in recent centuries has been marked by

³ The work "The Land Wants, the Land Wants" (2023) is another account by the author in his willingness to face the challenges of the colonial foundation imposed on the Brazilian people and especially on the members of quilombola communities in Brazil.

the Eurocentrism of scholars who have transformed their prejudices into absolute truths (Benedicto, 2026).

We understand that this work by Bispo presents concepts that from an Afrocentric perspective because it awakens us to realize how dear they are to the Afro-Brazilian people and to society as a whole. Like Bispo (2023), Cheikh Anta Diop's thesis presents principles that argue the importance of values and beliefs that contribute to the "process of a cultural identity", (Benedicto, 2016). And the principle that we will stick to here is the linguistic principle, since,

" linguistic factor that allows peoples to communicate their values, beliefs, knowledge and experiences. Thus, the author argues that Africans should seek an African linguistic unity despite the apparent linguistic variety spoken on the continent (pg.22)

In view of the above, we start from the central question of this text: Can the concepts listed and discussed in the work contribute to the strengthening of the Brazilian educational reality? How has research focused on the memory of members of Brazilian quilombola communities?

2 THE METHODOLOGICAL PATH

The choice for this methodological approach is bibliographic and seeks to be coherent to conduct this work, of a qualitative nature. Here, we start from the thought that bibliographic research is a type of study that analyzes documents of scientific competence such as books, periodicals, essays and scientific articles. In addition, with this type of study, we have the privilege of developing the study directly in the chosen scientific source (Oliveira, 2018).

3 DISCUSSIONS ABOUT MEMORIES

The exercise in which we sought to develop, led us to know the nature of a place in all sorts of details through the writer's memoristic memories. Here, we approach the concept of memory as the African idea of reconstructing an event or narrative. Not only the memory, but the thought of displacing the past to the present (Hampâté Bâ, 2010). The same conception as Halbwachs (1990) because he understands that memory "is, at the same time, a knowledge and a memory".

We understand this exercise of Bishop when he remembered his early days,

In the first steps of my life, the elders guided me to listen to the songs of the birds and the chirping of the forest. I understand the environment where I took my first steps as one of the launching bases of my career. A wonderful memory that still pulsates is waking up hearing the song of the birds informing them of the weather conditions of the day (Santos, 2023, P.10).

When, at the age of eighteen, I went out to see a city, I realized that there was another world besides the one where I was born and raised. The city was another world. In the cities, people did not know how to make their own houses, as we knew how to do in the place where we came from. They didn't know and were depending on others to do them for them. Where I was born and raised, everyone had a house. Only those who did not want to have a home and lived with their parents, relatives or friends. Or those who were wandering around, those who thought it was good not to have a home because it was too much work to take care of. But in the city it was not like that. People depended on houses they didn't know how to make. Where I was born and raised, since I was a child, we were observing, we found a beautiful place, we created a relationship, a communication with the place. And we marked: "I'm going to make my house here". I didn't have to pay to build my house. On the contrary, there was a great collective effort, everyone came! It was a party, and we made a house very quickly (Santos, 2023, P.20).

Such a memorable moment teaches us that "pure remembrance brings to the surface of consciousness a unique, singular, irreversible moment of life... Memory is indeed a work about time, but about lived time, connoted by culture and by the individual" (Bosi, 1994).

Thus, the critical bias contained in the work allows us a conjecture from/for an ecology of ancestral knowledge with the concepts of cosmology, cosmoperception and afroconfluence through a detailed presentation of its relationship with the environment, and more, the text manifests itself with a critical and conscious language that denounces racism and the effects of this colonial rancidity imputed to the black Brazilian people.

For Antônio Bispo dos Santos, also known as Nego Bispo, the word confluence or sharing said around the world, was a reason for celebration, because among his own, there were people who shared and were Afroconfluent. Confluence and sharing for Bispo are equated in the thought of a reciprocal relationship, of sharing and not of exchange or division and this concept is evidenced in another of his memoirs, such as the one presented below:

I was born and raised at a crossroads of biomes, where the semi-arid, the cocais, the pre-Amazon and, from time to time, also some signs of what is called the Atlantic Forest. When I was born, there was a large territorial occupation of Afroconfluent people there. Most of these people made up my family. The other families were also Afroconfluent. There were more than eighteen animal-drawn wood mills for the manufacture of rapadura that belonged to the Afroconfluent people. There is no evidence that the people of this territory were enslaved.

We don't have this memory of our grandmother, great-grandmother or great-great-grandmother generations. This means that my great-grandfather was born before the Golden Law and that my great-great-grandfather was born long before the Golden Law. We have never heard of slave labor in our family. And we didn't have bosses either.

Our relations with the people, with the non-Afro-confluent and non-indigenous people in that territory, were relations of respect, correlations of balanced forces. When there was some imbalance, they were favorable to us, because we had a great confluence of knowledge. We knew everything that was necessary to live in that environment. Our family planted what they needed, was a master in agriculture and mastered processing. He knew how to make equipment for the processing of cassava, sugarcane and alcohol. A people who knew all this were probably not enslaved or had their memory erased as the colonialist Eurochristians intended and intend to this day (Santos, 2023, p.39).

From this perspective, the proposal of this work is an invitation to a countercolonizing education because we are introduced to concepts such as confluence of knowledge, cosmophobia, colonialism of submission, among others. Moreover, it is very close to the central thought, the principles and the importance of the Afrocentric educational idea proposed by Asante (2019).

According to Noguera (2010), Afrocentric thought is "what translates into the field of education through the emphasis on the point of view that situates African peoples and the Afro-descendant population as agents and not supporting actors".

4 MEMORY IN QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES

In his thesis entitled "The Environment and Good Living in the Quilombola Communities of Cruz das Almas and Muritiba, Bahia: A Look at the Present Time", in progress, Melo (2025) proposes, as part of his writings, to enunciate memories of members of the Quilombola Communities⁴ of the Recôncavo Baiano, namely: the Quilombola Community of Baixa Grande, inserted in the Rural District of São José do Itaporã, municipality of Muritiba and the Quilombola Community of Vila Guaxinim, municipality of Cruz das Almas. Such research dialogues in the discussions of this text because it elects the exposure of experiences, experiences and memories in the bodily practices of these communities, bringing them closer to unique themes that demonstrate tradition, culture and resistance that are: environment, leisure relationships and how the philosophy of Good Living are inserted in them. For Melo (2024,2025), as well as Bispo (2023), Lourenço and Ribeiro

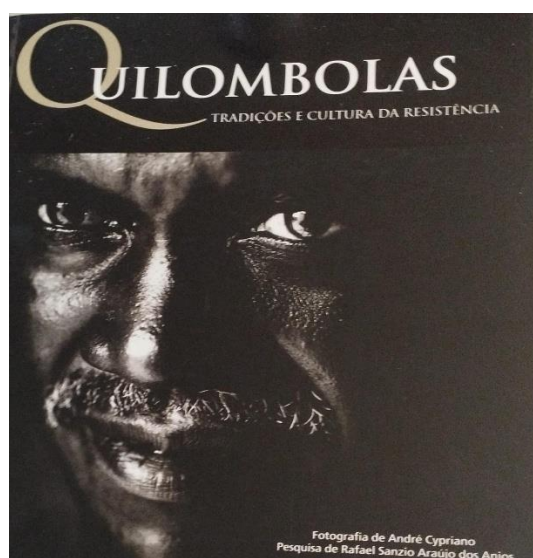
⁴ Quilombola Communities is in capital letters to demarcate the object of study.

(2024), Anjos (2006) and Gomes (2015) "the history of quilombos, quilombola communities and their developments – past and present" – is a theme of the present time.

In his work "Quilombolas",⁵ professor and researcher Rafael Sanzio Araújo dos Anjos, PhD in Geography, presents a long cartographic and photographic research of quilombola communities in Brazil. Here, Anjos (2006) discusses the maximum African expression in the Brazilian population and how the identity, history, culture and memory of these communities are part of Brazilian society.

Figure 2

Photo of the cover of the book by Rafael Sanzio dos Anjos



Source: Authored by Duília de Jesus Lopes Melo, 2025

It is worth mentioning that the themes discussed in the research and in the work of Professor Rafael Sanzio and the reports of the research participants, dialogue in the lines and between the lines of Bispo's work.

The awareness of his relationship with the land and his personal relations with the land can be evidenced in the words of Bispo: "our grandmother generation said that we plant what we want, what we need and what we like, and the land gives what it can and what we deserve" (Bispo, p.90), as well as in the report of a participant in the research, from Conceição dos Caetanos, Tururu, Ceará "the flour house, where the cassava is processed, remains alive in the quilombos, being a symbol of walking together, the example that both the day-to-day life

⁵ QUILOMBOLAS TRADITIONS AND CULTURE OF RESISTANCE, Angels ,2006

and the future of the community will always be based on the survival of this space" (Anjos, p.69).

Let us also see in the table below the themes highlighted and their reverberations:

Table 1

Propositions of the work of Anjos

African expression in the Brazilian population	Africa, the Diaspora, Brazil Africa and education
Territoriality and resistance	Quilombola cartography Contemporary quilombos The land issue
Ethnic and cultural identity	Community area Dance Religion Kalunga Mocambo
Challenges for the future	
Communities in the national territory	
Quilombolas, Traditions and Resistance	

Source: Authored by Duília de Jesus Lopes Melo, 2025

Anjos (2006), arouses our interest in this work because, according to the author himself,

The warm reception of informants, residents and leaders to the project of this book offered clear signs of the need to get in touch with the quilombolas, with their stories transmitted orally, with their traditional dances, their songs, their blessings and their prayers, their diverse speeches, wide smiles, eyes attentive to the space in which they often live in very precarious conditions; rescue all this memory and give importance to the dialogue on the main issues that involve them.

In *Mocambos and Quilombos* (2015), Gomes exposes a vast panorama of the vicissitudes of the quilombola peasantry in Brazil. Gomes introduces us to quilombola culture without losing sight of the influence of African cosmologies, their experiences in the slave quarters and their environments. The author went further by getting to know different types of quilombo in each region of Brazil and how the new forms of aquilombar acquired meanings for the Brazilian context and approaching memories from a travel diary.

Finally, we have the "Grito dos Quilombos",⁶ by Lourenço and Ribeiro (2024) where they address a historical-cultural and memoristic perspective of many quilombola communities around Brazil. The entire work is composed of stories told or lived by members of quilombos from various regions of Brazil and in its scope, many memories were revisited, bringing records of/about the African and Afro-Brazilian presence in various contexts of life of this part of the population. In its 17 texts, most of them present many memories referring to the process of certification of communities, about acceptance, racism and prejudice, culture and identity, fear, freedom and finally, consciousness.

About consciousness, we present the report of Manoel, a remnant and teacher at the Quilombo Aldeia school, in Garopaba, Santa Catarina,

"One of our tripods is ancestral knowledge... The act of educating is ancestral. We, the youngest, drink from the oldest. I, for example, teach a quilombola pedagogy. I teach math. So, it's not that I'm going to despise modern mathematics, but I'm also going to work on ethnic-mathematics.

5 MEMORY, LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Beyond the conceptual issues, the author seems to confabulate with bell hooks in "The language: teaching new worlds/new words" when he proposes the insertion of language(gem) "of his own" to propose the breaking of the paradigms of what is posed by the globalized, Eurocentric and hegemonic imposition that makes the colonizer not understand what is being said.

Such an allusion is in Adrienne Rich's poem "The Burning of Paper Instead of Children." The poem talks about "domination, racism and class oppression", The verse "This is the language of the oppressor, but I need it to speak to you" was the most touching in hooks' memory, because for her these words transmitted "the way" to understand that they would be instruments that consciously awakened her to the link between language and domination (hooks, 2013).

With his mastery of words, Santos teaches us:

Because I had mastered the training technique, I soon realized that, in order to face the colonialist society, at times "we need to transform the weapons of the enemies into defense", as one of my great defense agents said. So, to transform the art of naming into an art of defense, we decided to name it as well.

⁶ THE CRY OF THE QUILOMBOS, STORIES OF RESISTANCE OF A SILENCED BRAZIL by Marina Lourenço and Tayguara Ribeiro, 2024

Among other writings in which I translated the ancestral knowledge of our grandmother generation from orality to writing, we brought some denominations that people in academia call concepts. From then on, we continued in the practice of the denominations of modes and speeches, to counteract colonialism. This is what we call the war of denominations: the game of contradicting colonial words as a way of weakening them.

I was once asked by a researcher from Cape Verde: "How can we countercolonize by speaking the language of the enemy? And I replied: "Let's take the enemy's words that are potent and let's weaken them. And let's take our words that are weakened and let's enhance them.

Such issues, very dear to the Brazilian people, are also discussed and based on the words of Melo (2024), which are intrinsically related in some perspective to the propositions of/for Afrocentric thought that is proposed as a possible and necessary path for an Afrocentric and, for us, anti-racist education.

6 WHAT CONCLUSION HAVE WE REACHED...

In view of the advertisements, some considerations are presented, as we understand that the initial exercise proposed by the activity was achieved in the perspective of approaching the objective of analyzing how the principles of Afrocentrism emerge as possible reflections in the memories and narrative contained in the work.

We also show that the work "The land gives, the land wants" presented itself as a sophisticated critical framework for the issues of language, racism and education, since it proposes compatible strategies for an education that proposes itself as countercolonizing, Afro-centered, and that meets the questioning raised. And finally, the concepts listed in the work presented here are consistent with the life trajectory and memories of the writer Antônio Bispo, since they permeate throughout the text so that they are presented, explained and exemplified of how they happen in the community.

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