


Historicity of the Romani Peoples: the documentary as a historical record and a tool for the dissemination of culture

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This article aims to present the historical trajectory of the Romani people in Brazil and understand the relevance of using documentary films in high schools to build an education that aims to include knowledge about these people and their cultures in the school environment. To this end, we draw on authors such as Wanderley (2009), Durante (2022), Moonen (1996), and Teixeira (2008). Thus, this is a qualitative, interpretive study based on bibliographic and documentary research, using the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture*, available on YouTube, as a source of analysis. Thus, the research highlighted the presence of Romani people in different historical moments, demonstrating that documentary films are an important tool for educating high school students about the Romani people and their cultures, presenting themselves as a rich pedagogical proposition.

Keywords: Romani. Documentary. High School. Memory.

Historicidade dos povos ciganos: documentário como registro histórico e ferramenta para divulgação das culturas

Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo apresentar a trajetória histórica dos povos ciganos no Brasil e compreender a relevância a partir da utilização do documentário nas escolas de ensino médio, para construção de uma educação que vise à inclusão dos conhecimentos sobre estes povos e suas culturas no ambiente escolar. Para tanto, embasamo-nos em autores como Wanderley (2009), Durante (2022), Moonen (1996), Teixeira (2008). Dessa forma, trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa do tipo interpretativa, com base na pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, tendo como fonte de análise o documentário *Arte e cultura: cultura cigana* (UNIFASE, 2016), disponível no YouTube. Assim, a pesquisa evidenciou a presença cigana em diferentes momentos históricos, demonstrando que o documentário é uma importante ferramenta para formação das juventudes do ensino médio acerca dos povos ciganos e suas culturas, apresentando-se como uma rica propositura pedagógica.

Palavras-chave: Povos Ciganos. Documentário. Ensino Médio. Memória.

1 Introduction

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The Romani peoples play a fundamental role in understanding Brazil's social trajectory. However, throughout history, they have been and continue to be discriminated against, bearing the weight of a legacy of stereotypes. Their histories are marked by laws of expulsion and exile that have violated their dignity. Yet, even in the face of such violence, Romani peoples have resisted in the past and continue to resist in the present through their traditions, memories, cultures, and ways of life, demonstrating resilience in the face of centuries-old challenges.

Today, national laws seek to encompass and protect these populations from discrimination and violations of their rights. Decree No. 12.128, dated August 1, 2024, Article 3, item VI, recognizes “the historical presence and the economic, cultural, and social contribution of the Romani peoples to the construction of the country” (Brazil, 2024). In this regard, we acknowledge that legislation emphasizing the contribution and presence of Romani peoples is still relatively recent at the national level and, as a result, knowledge about the history and culture of the Romani within high school institutions remains scarce.

Thus, the segregation of knowledge about Romani populations is a persistent reality within the Brazilian educational context. The difficulty in understanding others and respecting the differences they express are remnants of segregating mindsets and notions of racial and cultural superiority developed and perpetuated in the nineteenth century. Consequently, we observe the perpetuation of a Eurocentric historical narrative in school curricula, which “construct or convey images of a common past forged to maintain or justify a certain order” (Wanderley, 2009, p. 3).

From this perspective, the present study seeks to uncover the truths about the life stories of Romani peoples as an attempt to overcome conceptions that legitimize

only the so-called official history and to highlight the forms of resistance these communities continue to embody in contemporary times.

Accordingly, this study aims to present the historical trajectory of Romani peoples in Brazil and to explore the relevance of using the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture* as a tool to promote an education that includes knowledge about the Romani peoples, respects their cultural differences, and fosters dialogue that recognizes their struggles for resistance throughout the history of humankind.

2 Methodology

This article consists of a qualitative, interpretative research study based on documentary and bibliographic sources, using as its main analytical instrument the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture* (UNIFASE, 2016), available on YouTube. It also draws on the works of several authors, namely Wanderley (2009), Durante (2022), Moonen (1996), and Teixeira (2008). The research was therefore developed using sources that discuss memory, Romani historicity, and the violations to which these communities have been subjected throughout various European and, especially, Brazilian historical contexts.

3 Recovering the forgotten: trajectories of the Romani peoples

The trajectories of Romani populations are marked by episodes of discrimination and massacres in different regions, and they have historically been regarded as peoples occupying subaltern and neglected positions within official History. This situation continues to be perpetuated in school curricula, as the silencing of these groups' presence in different historical periods persists.

Thus, it becomes clear that it is essential to approach history *against the grain*, bringing into the debate historical records such as the documentary mentioned above. In this way, pedagogical proposals can be developed to include the historical trajectory of the

Romani peoples both in Europe and in Brazil. As Wanderley notes: “One would thus be seeking, through the mediation of history, the recovery of that which, as a social practice, lies condemned to oblivion in contemporary societies” (Wanderley, 2009, p. 2). As an attempt to recover the history of the Romani peoples, we present their significance throughout different historical moments.

First and foremost, it is important to highlight the existence of historical silencing surrounding the repression and violence inflicted upon the Romani population by German Nazism. As we know, these persecutions were driven by notions of racial hygiene and the supposed superiority of the Aryan race. The Romani peoples were among those systematically exterminated in Germany during World War II, as Durante explains: “Five hundred thousand Roma were exterminated in concentration camps, mainly in Auschwitz-Birkenau” (Durante, 2022, p. 8).

Therefore, we understand that official History tends to emphasize only the repression suffered by the Jewish people. The Romani are almost never mentioned as victims of Nazism and of the violence it entailed. Consequently, the way history has long been taught in educational institutions has contributed to the erasure of the violations suffered by Romani peoples during this period and to the general ignorance, among both students and non-Romani society, of the massacres these populations endured.

Expulsions and repressive measures against the Romani assumed a systematic nature during the nineteenth century across several European countries, culminating in the most tragic episode for the Romani peoples: the rise of Nazism in Germany in 1933 and the *Porajmos*, the Romani Holocaust (Durante, 2022, p. 8).

In Portugal, Romani men and women were harshly persecuted. Legislation was enacted with the specific purpose of repressing these ethnic groups and their ways of life, revealing a pervasive anti-Romani sentiment within European Society – one that could not tolerate difference or coexistence with another culture, and that sought, through institutional means, to annihilate and/or expel Romani culture. Thus, Portuguese legislation was saturated with prejudice against Romani populations.

The laws enacted had as their main purpose the repression of differences and the forced assimilation of the Romani into the general population. The royal decree of March 13, 1526, issued during the reign of King João III, is the oldest document of this nature in Portugal. This document prohibited Romani groups from entering Portuguese territory and ordered that those already in the country be expelled (Durante, 2022, p. 3).

The ineffectiveness of anti-Romani laws in Portuguese territory led, from the sixteenth century onward, to the decision to deport Romani peoples to Portuguese colonies, particularly to Brazil. Thus, the Americas were used as places of exile for the Romani populations expelled by the Portuguese, revealing the disregard for Romani lives and showing that this social group has long been persecuted by white Europeans.

The failure of these repressive measures, combined with the colonizers' need to populate overseas territories, led to the formal establishment of deportation in 1592. It is noteworthy that Portugal was “[...] the first and only country to resort to deportation to its overseas colonies as a new method of expulsion (Durante, 2022, p. 4).

Therefore, it is evident that the Portuguese sought in various ways to oppress and expel Romani populations from the Iberian Peninsula, ultimately using overseas colonies that needed to be populated as a means to legitimize the power of the Portuguese Crown. For this reason, the Romani were used as part of early maritime expeditions, as their lives were considered expendable given the uncertainty of survival at sea. It is thus clear that the Portuguese aimed to eliminate the Romani peoples from Portuguese society.

Furthermore, archival studies indicate that the first documentation related to deportation to Brazilian territory corresponds to the case of João Torres, in 1574. He was sentenced for “frequently traveling between Montalvão (in Alentejo) and Castile, which was prohibited by law, and argued that it was impossible for him to serve the sentence because he was a weak and frail man” (Costa, 2005, p. 159).

Due to his physical inability to serve a five-year sentence as a galley slave, João Torres obtained a commutation of his sentence and was deported to Brazil to serve it,

accompanied by his wife and child. From this account, we see that the nomadic lifestyle of Romani peoples within Portuguese territory was criminalized and punishable by law.

Once deported to Brazil, Romani populations continued to face repression and discrimination, as deportation orders included Portuguese sanctions that forbade the perpetuation of their ways of life and cultural values, such as the use of their own Romani language. This shows that the Portuguese government aimed to suppress linguistic and cultural diversity, seeking to homogenize the differences that existed within Brazilian society at the time.

Nevertheless, in Brazilian territory, the Romani peoples resisted Portuguese repression and developed profitable commercial activities as early as the colonial period. Some Romani communities appear in Brazilian history as traders of enslaved Africans – a crucial activity for sustaining the slave-based agrarian economy of colonial and imperial Brazil.

According to Moonen, “at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there are accounts of Romani in Brazil from European travelers, all of whom refer to the Romani also as slave traders, mainly in Rio de Janeiro” (Moonen, 1996, p. 129). Therefore, we understand that official History conceals such narratives, obscuring the significant role of Romani peoples in Brazil’s colonial past. Moreover, this evidence offers a different portrayal of the Romani – one not shaped by stereotypes or Eurocentric perspectives, but rather one that emphasizes their strategies for survival and economic advancement across different historical periods.

Additionally, in their involvement in slave trading, Romani peoples were subjected to stereotypes such as being labeled thieves. This reflects how society at the time reinforced the belief that the Romani were incapable of generating wealth through honest means, assuming that they had to steal from Africans to have goods to trade. Simply because they were Romani, the stereotype of the “thief” was produced and accepted by the local population.

It is evident that even D’Oliveira China did not escape anti-Romani prejudice: to him, if the Romani sold enslaved people, these could only have been stolen,

just as any horse in a Romani's possession could only be a stolen horse. No one ever considered that these horses or enslaved people might have been acquired honestly (Moonen, 1996, p. 127).

Conversely, we can observe that the trade of enslaved people conducted by the Romani was in fact significant during that period, and, as Moonen clarifies, “these were not stolen slaves, since his companion Gabert (1818) reports that wealthy traders sold ‘entire shipments of Black people to Romani resellers, who then negotiated the captives with private individuals’” (Moonen, 1996, pp. 129–130). In this way, the author sought to demonstrate that the acquisition of enslaved Africans occurred through purchase rather than theft, thereby evidencing the economic prosperity the Romani achieved through the volume of enslaved people they traded.

Following the abolition of slavery in Brazil, the Romani peoples who had relied on the slave trade as their main source of income were forced to reorganize their economic practices to adapt to a new social order that no longer permitted the commodification of Africans. Thus, the Romani transitioned into horse and mule trading.

According to Teixeira (2008), after the abolition of slavery in 1888, the Romani who had been slave traders lost their primary means of livelihood and became impoverished in the urban centers of Rio de Janeiro. Having lost their source of wealth, they were expelled from urban areas as part of the modernization projects that sought to reshape Brazilian cities. The Romani did not conform to the new standards of civility and modernity due to their cultural differences and their condition of poverty.

As a result, some Romani groups migrated from Rio de Janeiro to Minas Gerais. However, due to the long-standing policy of keeping Romani people constantly in motion – a practice that began in the colonial period and was maintained by republican authorities – they were never allowed to remain in one place for long, being repeatedly displaced by continuous expulsions. The state sought to render the Romani invisible within Brazil by forcing them ever farther from its territorial centers. Teixeira describes this policy of expulsion as follows:

In other words, it was the old 'keep them moving' policy: Minas Gerais expels its Romani to São Paulo, which expels them to Rio de Janeiro, which expels them to Espírito Santo, which expels them to Bahia, from where they are expelled to Minas Gerais again, and so on. In short, the best place for the Romani is always in the neighboring neighborhood, municipality, or state—or else in the neighboring country, or one even farther away (Teixeira, 2008, p. 19).

It is also worth noting that the Romani peoples sought various means of livelihood in Brazil, such as dance and music performances, including those held at the wedding of Dom Pedro and Dona Leopoldina. This highlights the Romani presence within elite social circles and their importance in the history of prominent figures in Brazilian historiography. However, their significance was silenced by the historiographical production of the time, and as a result, these narratives have not been made accessible to high school educators.

And a few years later, during the wedding of Dom Pedro and Princess Dona Leopoldina, in 1818, once again the Romani were invited to enliven the celebration, and, by all accounts, with great success: the dancers were showered with flowers, ribbons, and applause; they captivated the audience through the plaintive magic of their instruments and the grace of their dances (Moonen, 1996, p. 133).

Thus, it becomes clear that official history rarely presents narratives that mention the Romani peoples, relegating them to the role of mere bystanders in Brazilian history. Yet, as shown, they played a significant role in important historical moments in Brazil. Moreover, the Romani enjoyed a period of prominence, as many Romani artists were invited to perform at the Portuguese court's celebrations in Rio de Janeiro – some of these events even sponsored by wealthy Romani patrons. This demonstrates their participation in the urban life of Rio de Janeiro and their integration into the everyday experiences of the Portuguese colonizers.

However, following Brazil's political independence in 1822 and the modernization projects envisioned to serve the interests of the colonial elite, the Romani did not fit into the social model desired by this elite and were consequently expelled from major urban centers. Under the *hygienist* movement, impoverished

Romani populations were deemed incompatible with the new ideals of order and progress and were thus segregated to marginalized areas of large cities and/or to Brazil's hinterlands. As Fraga Filho (1994, p. 224) explains, "[...] the intention was to cleanse the cities of elements that threatened or failed to conform to this new order."

Furthermore, during the rise of the republican period in Brazil and the efforts to construct a national identity, the Romani peoples were silenced and excluded from Brazilian society. This project exalted certain cultural symbols – especially white European culture and the romanticized figure of the Indigenous peoples – while consigning the Romani presence to oblivion, despite their contributions to Brazil's economic, cultural, and social formation. There was a prevailing notion that groups expressing distinct cultures and ways of life needed to be eliminated, as they were perceived to jeopardize social order. Thus, it is clear that the construction of Brazil's national identity was designed to legitimize the power of white European colonizers and was deeply marked by prejudice against the Romani population.

The formation of Brazilian historiography forged a selective past, constructing narratives that privileged certain social groups to the detriment of others. Due to pervasive anti-Romani prejudice, the trajectories of Romani peoples across the various historical contexts discussed have been relegated to the margins of Brazilian history. Consequently, the Romani presence remains little known and scarcely studied in school curricula – a reality that constitutes a form of violation, as these peoples have been subjected to deliberate erasure, misrepresentation, and ethnocentric portrayals rooted in prejudice and misunderstanding.

Thus, the Romani presence remains scarcely known and studied within school curricula. This can be understood as a form of violation, for the Romani have been subjected to deliberate erasure, ignorance, and representations shaped solely by an ethnocentric perspective – laden with prejudice and misconceptions.

As has already been demonstrated, the violations are numerous, and one of the most significant is undoubtedly the fact that the Romani have never been granted the right to their own history in Brazil—one told from their own

perspective, free of ethnocentrism, prejudice, and discrimination. Such a history has never been written in Brazil, and even less so in Paraíba: “nothing, absolutely nothing, is known about the history of the Romani in Paraíba (Moonen, 1996, p. 137-138).

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the importance of historiographical choices in legitimizing certain social orders – particularly that of the white elite. In light of this, we note the persistence of curricula that continue to perpetuate the silencing of Romani trajectories and cultures. Hence, we interpret as urgent the need to develop new pedagogical perspectives that foster the inclusion of Romani knowledge within high school History classes, aiming to dismantle exclusionary teaching practices that serve the interests of the dominant elite.

In 2006, President Lula signed the decree that established the National Romani Day. It is important to acknowledge the institutionalization of a commemorative date dedicated to the Romani peoples, as it encourages public institutions, educational systems, media spaces, and civil society to promote activities that celebrate the traditions and struggles of Romani communities in a country still deeply marked by prejudice and discrimination. Consequently, Brazilian schools can begin constructing new narratives about the Romani, fostering an understanding of the hardships and exclusions they face in contemporary Brazilian society, as well as their historical struggles and ongoing resistance.

Moreover, Romani culture has long demonstrated resilience against white persecution, preserving its traditions and singularities by keeping certain aspects secret. In this way, collective memories are transmitted within the community itself.

These collective memories, passed down in the family environment, often go unnoticed by non-Romani society. Thus, we can conclude that there is a general lack of understanding about Romani peoples among broader social groups.

In opposition to the most legitimate of collective memories – the national memory – these [subterranean, forbidden] memories are transmitted within the family, in associations, and in networks of emotional and/or political sociability. These forbidden [...], unspeakable [...] or shameful memories [...]

re carefully preserved within informal structures of communication and remain unnoticed by the encompassing society” (Pollak, 1989, p. 8).

Therefore, contemporary Brazilian historiography does not fully recognize the singularities of each Romani ethnicity. It is thus crucial to understand the distinctions between each group to avoid constructing an overly generalized and erroneous history of Romani cultures.

4 The documentary as a pedagogical tool for inclusion in high school education

The documentary is a genre whose origins date back to the nineteenth century, created as a tool for historical reporting, with the purpose of preserving knowledge and disseminating it throughout society. With the advent of digital technology, documentaries distributed through digital communication platforms can be classified as part of the digital media landscape, enabling easy access to diverse forms of knowledge. This contributes to the development of an education that acknowledges the various social groups within the Brazilian population and, consequently, to the formation of a more just and less prejudiced society.

Thus, we may consider the documentary to have significant pedagogical potential, as it fosters new knowledge through direct contact with the voices of Romani peoples, granting them greater reach in the digital sphere and ensuring that they are portrayed with respect. Furthermore, it serves as a pedagogical instrument that grants access to knowledge often absent from high school curricula. In this way, the documentary functions as a tool capable of broadening students’ understanding by presenting a glimpse into the reality, culture, and ways of life of the Romani peoples, reaffirming their alterity.

As such, “the documentary film, through its recording of what exists and occurs, constitutes a source of information for historians and for all who wish to know how things were and how they happened” (Penafria, 1999, p. 20). Therefore, within high school History classes, the documentary serves as an instrument capable of

supporting the development of historical understanding, the formation of critical consciousness, and the promotion of reflection on the cultures represented.

Based on these premises, we analyze the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture*. This documentary was produced by the University of the Mountain Region of Rio de Janeiro (UNIFASE) and released on YouTube in 2016. It aims to showcase the unique characteristics of Romani culture, their origins, their struggles throughout various historical moments, their ways of life, passions, and expressions of joy. Through the voices of Romani individuals, we witness their desire to resist and reinvent themselves while preserving their cultural distinctiveness.

The film begins by presenting the diversity of Romani ethnicities, highlighting the most well-known clans: Calon, Roma, Kalderash, Moldowaia, Sibiaia, Sinti, Mathiwa, Lovaria, and Horahano, distributed across Europe and Brazil. The documentary clarifies that the Calon ethnicity arrived in Brazil at the beginning of the colonial period, in the sixteenth century, while the Roma migrated to Brazil during the European immigration movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Art and Culture: Romani Culture serves as a critical source for rethinking the writing of History, presenting moments in which the Romani actively shaped historical processes. The historiographical construction of the twentieth century promoted the narrative that Brazil's ethnic formation resulted from the miscegenation of three races, the Black, the Indigenous, and the white, thereby relegating the Romani peoples to historical oblivion. In doing so, their presence and contribution to colonization and to Brazil's ethnocultural formation were denied:

I have seen several interviews with teachers, and something that deeply disturbs me is when they affirm that Brazil's population, according to the geographic census of the 1800s, during the Proclamation of the Republic, to cleanse Brazil's name, listed the races that formed the population as Indigenous, white, and Black. And what about the Romani who came on the ships? According to some historians, it would have been impossible to colonize Brazil without the presence of the Romani (UNIFASE, 2016).

In addition, the documentary highlights the importance of the Duque Estrada family during the period of the Brazilian Empire, showing that Romani individuals also held prestigious positions as judges within elite circles. Thus, it becomes clear that the Romani who arrived in Brazil occupied various privileged roles.

There are Romani families, for instance, the Duque Estrada family. It is a Romani family that has been in Brazil for centuries and held power in government positions, such as judges. They worked closely with the Brazilian Empire. In fact, many people today do not know that they have Romani origins, and many Brazilians are descendants of the Romani without knowing it (UNIFASE, 2016).

Given the above, it is evident that the narrative presented in the documentary develops a new perspective on the Romani peoples. Through its use, students can come to understand that the Romani were not confined to marginalized roles, thereby breaking with long-standing stereotypes and stigmas. Moreover, the testimonies reveal that many Romani individuals have had to conceal their origins as a means of protection from persecution and prejudice, and that some have even lost connection with their ancestral identities and cultural specificities.

The documentary also brings to light important discussions developed through participants' testimonies. The lack of acceptance of cultural and linguistic differences has historically produced moments of segregation and violence among social groups. The Romani peoples have long been targets of persecution because many individuals and societies have struggled to coexist with difference and to accept diversity, often seeking to eliminate cultural distinctions or those who deviate from the dominant, "legitimate" narrative:

[...] Our issue, as a society, is being different from other societies. Everything that's different generates prejudice, right? Unfortunately, people, societies around the world, have this difficulty, right? Human beings struggle to accept difference, whether it's physical, behavioral, or related to sexuality. Everything that's different seems to threaten people somehow [...] (UNIFASE, 2016).

Thus, we can conclude that Brazilian democracy remains fragile due to the racial and cultural inequalities that persist in daily life. The many forms of violence

against difference and the silencing of minority cultural representations within schools constitute a continuing policy aimed at maintaining cultural superiority over other traditions present in Brazil.

Therefore, Brazil must pursue the inclusion of Romani peoples within school practices to build a consolidated democracy that integrates Romani individuals into positions of influence and simultaneously dismantles the prejudice, discrimination, and persecution that continue to affect them.

Finally, the following excerpt from the documentary highlights the symbolic importance of the anthem *Gelem Gelem* for the Romani peoples and the historical context in which it was created. Through this account, we can better understand the persecution endured by the Romani during World War II, motivated by notions of Aryan racial superiority and racial hygiene in Europe. At the same time, the creation of a Romani anthem symbolizes a form of resistance, expressing their determination to preserve their roots despite the violence and oppression inflicted upon them by white Europeans.

[...] This anthem was remarkable because it was composed after the massacre during World War II. The Romani who were killed in the gas chambers... it was a very sad time for our people, and this anthem was composed in honor of our Romani community, in remembrance of our pain and our strength to keep walking, to move forward, and to never forget our roots (UNIFASE, 2016).

It is also important to emphasize the origins and motivations that led the Romani peoples to migrate from India, their homeland, to Europe and Egypt. The following excerpt reveals the persecutions carried out by the Persians against the Romani, showing that violence and discrimination have marked their trajectory since the fifth century BCE. In this sense, we can argue that Romani cultural resistance has persisted for centuries, constantly reinventing itself, preserving its singularities, and maintaining its collective memory. Furthermore, it is evident that the Romani, by nature, could not endure the oppression and lack of freedom imposed by a dominant culture. As a result,

they were compelled to migrate in order to express their particularities and live according to their own values.

Because the Romani are originally from India. When the Persians invaded and conquered India, they divided society into castes. The Romani were classified as impure people – I do not know why, but that is what happened. They were left with the jobs of gravediggers and garbage collectors, and no one could approach them, as they would also become impure. So, you can see the incredible level of segregation. They endured it for a while, but the Romani condition is one of freedom, and they could not bear such oppression. They began to leave – many went to Egypt, and many to Europe [...] (UNIFASE, 2016).

In light of these considerations, as Silva Júnior (2009, p. 51), a contemporary Brazilian researcher of the Calon Romani ethnicity, observes, it is essential to reconstruct the history of the Romani peoples from perspectives free of prejudice. Therefore, it is necessary to create spaces that encourage the Romani themselves to present their customs and cultures.

The documentary can thus be regarded as a powerful tool for building both education and historical understanding about the Romani peoples, grounded in their own voices and distanced from the historiographical constructions of non-Romani scholars that are often shaped by stereotypes.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that classroom methodologies must be reconsidered to capture students' attention and interest, creating new ways of learning about different historical and cultural contexts. Teachers, therefore, must dedicate themselves to learning how to use documentaries critically, analyzing the ideologies present within them and emphasizing their valuable informational content. In this way, the methodology can be applied collaboratively between teachers and students, fostering classroom debate and encouraging diverse interpretations of the source material.

Moreover, through engagement with new teaching technologies and encouragement of classroom debate, the knowledge developed allows students to view themselves as active participants in the teaching-learning process. Consequently,

learning about Romani peoples can take place through dialogue. According to Behrens, “learning must be meaningful, challenging, problem-posing, and stimulating enough to mobilize the student and the group to seek possible solutions to be discussed and implemented in light of theoretical and practical references” (Behrens, 2005, p. 76). Recognizing the documentary as an inclusive pedagogical tool enables students to envision new ways of understanding education.

However, we understand that educational challenges will not be completely resolved through this new approach to teaching. Even so, it can serve as an important aid in constructing a decolonial history of the Romani peoples, for “it is not technology that will resolve or solve the educational problem in Brazil. It may, however, contribute if used appropriately to foster the educational development of our students” (Masetto, 2000, p. 139).

Furthermore, through the incorporation of digital technologies, it becomes possible to develop an education that aims to include knowledge originating from subalternized groups within Brazilian society. As Behrens explains, “the challenge faced by teachers is to shift the focus from teaching to learning. In practice, it is essential that teachers and students engage in a continuous process of learning how to learn” (Behrens, 2000, p. 73).

Therefore, it is essential that educators become familiar with the range of methodologies now available for classroom use as a result of technological advances that have made access to knowledge easier and more dynamic. Teachers must also recognize the importance of using these tools to amplify the voices of Romani peoples, who have been silenced for centuries within our education system.

In addition, when developing arguments for the use of documentaries as historical records and pedagogical resources, it is necessary to highlight the importance of adequate school infrastructure for their exhibition and discussion in classrooms. Both the professional training of educators to work with documentaries in a critical and engaging way and government investments in providing the digital

equipment required for their presentation are crucial for this tool to be effectively incorporated into the educational context.

With the emergence of digital media, we can observe the reconfiguration of the role of educators, who must now introduce new teaching approaches aimed at building a high school education that aligns with the evolving forms of sociability among young people.

The teacher will be more important than ever, for they must take ownership of this technology and bring it into the classroom, into their daily practice, just as a teacher once introduced the first book into a school and had to begin dealing with knowledge in a new way, without abandoning other forms of communication. We will continue to teach and learn through the spoken word, through gestures, emotions, affection, reading and writing, through television, but now also through the computer, through real-time information, through layered screens, through windows that unfold before our eyes (Gouvêa, 1999, p. 6).

Furthermore, the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture*, when used in the classroom, provides students with direct contact with the history of the Romani peoples across different historical moments, highlighting their struggles and their resilience in maintaining their cultural uniqueness amid the violations and persecutions that have marked human history.

In this way, the documentary can serve education by fostering knowledge about diverse social groups, thus contributing to the deconstruction of negative stereotypes and the removal of Romani peoples from a position of silence within educational projects. Bringing into high school classes discussions and reflections on Romani history and culture allows basic education to become a space of historical and educational inclusion for cultures that have long been denied and erased from the academic debate.

5 Final considerations

The history of the Romani peoples is marked by rights violations and segregation in both social and educational contexts. Education must be rethought to develop pedagogical practices that embrace Romani communities in the teaching-learning process, incorporating their worldviews, cultures, and historical trajectories through different periods, and using pedagogical tools that allow the Romani themselves to share their lived experiences. This enables the creation of an education that values historiography produced through the voices of those who live and embody Romani culture.

Moreover, it is essential to envision an education that ensures both the inclusion and the permanence of Romani peoples within the school environment, respecting their specificities and nomadic way of life. Through such practices, education can foster the participation of Romani individuals in higher education, contributing to the reconfiguration of their social and economic realities, broadening access to quality employment opportunities, and, consequently, improving living conditions and social integration.

Thus, this study emphasizes that the use of the documentary *Art and Culture: Romani Culture* within basic education, particularly in high school History classes, allows students to engage in dialogue with peoples and cultures excluded from the school curriculum. It enables the creation of History lessons that integrate the historical trajectories of Romani peoples into the broader educational narrative.

From this, an inclusive and respectful perspective of History can be developed – one that does not focus solely on the “great names” traditionally emphasized in Brazilian historiography but instead promotes the understanding of diverse cultures and social groups. In doing so, the possibilities of overcoming prejudice, discrimination, and misunderstanding toward the Romani peoples increase considerably. Therefore, making cultural differences an enriching element of History education can be seen as one of the most important steps toward achieving a truly inclusive and high-quality education.

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