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Confluences in quilombola education: literature, food, and territoriality

ARTICLE

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Abstract:
This article presents data and reports experiences of teaching Literature in the context of Quilombola school education, implemented at Escola Municipal Quilombola Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado, an institution that integrates the territory of the Quilombola community of Paratibe, in João Pessoa, Paraíba. Aligned with the principles of a decolonial education that promotes knowledge in confluence with the community and its socio-environmental dimensions, the proposed readings were part of a thematic project focused on healthy eating, which gave rise to debates on food sovereignty and territoriality. Among the pedagogical practices, we highlight a heuristic walk in the forest within the Quilombola territory, a thematic seminar, and various classroom debates. Readings included Braga (2003), Assaré (1999), Melo Neto (2009), and Ribeiro (2021). For the theoretical and pedagogical framework, Santos (2023), Rufino (2021), Gomes (2020), Nascimento (2019), Pereira (2007), Pinheiro (2023) were consulted.
Keywords: Quilombola Education. Decoloniality. Literature Teaching. Confluence. Territoriality.

Confluências na educação quilombola: literatura, alimentação e territorialidade

Resumo
Este artigo apresenta dados e relata experiências de ensino de Literatura no contexto da educação escolar quilombola, constituída na Escola Municipal Quilombola Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado, instituição que integra o território da comunidade quilombola de Paratibe, em João Pessoa-PB. Articulando-se aos princípios de uma educação decolonial promotora de saberes confluentes com a comunidade e suas dimensões socioambientais, as leituras propostas inseriram-se num projeto temático voltado à alimentação saudável, o que deu ensejo a debates sobre soberania alimentar e territorialidade. Entre as ações pedagógicas, destacaram-se caminhada heurística na mata que integra o território quilombola, um seminário temático e diversos debates em sala. Foram realizadas leituras de Braga (2003), Assaré (1999), Melo Neto (2009) e Ribeiro (2021). Para o debate teórico e pedagógico, recorre-se a Santos (2023), Rufino (2021), Gomes (2017, 2020), Nascimento (2019), Pereira (2007), Pinheiro (2023).
Palavras-chave: Educação Quilombola. Decolonialidade. Ensino de Literatura. Confluência. Territorialidade.

1 Introduction: *quilombola* education – contextualizing the experience of teaching literature

This article presents reflections and data collected through doctoral research and consists of a set of experiences in teaching literary reading carried out at the Escola Municipal Quilombola Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado. This school is an institution offering early childhood education, Elementary School, and youth and adult education, with more than fifty years of history. It is located in the *quilombola*[1] community of Paratibe, an urban *quilombo* situated on the southern outskirts of João Pessoa, in the state of Paraíba, Brazil. The community has been officially recognized by the Fundação Cultural Palmares since 2006. The school itself was formally designated as *quilombola* in 2019, as a result of a Conduct Adjustment Agreement established between the João Pessoa municipal government, the community, and the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Such a designation represents a process of curricular restructuring within the institution. This movement calls upon teachers and school management to undertake an important transition in their practices and theoretical foundations in order to comply with the National Curriculum Guidelines for *Educação Escolar Quilombola* (Brazil, 2012). In addition, it implies the gradual construction of the territory's sense of place and the promotion of Afro-Brazilian civilizational values, as well as confronting racist omissions embedded in the curriculum, which constitute genuine forms of epistemicide. For decades, this perspective has already been advocated by Abdias Nascimento:

> In our country, the dominant elite has always made efforts to prevent or hinder Black people, after the so-called abolition, from assuming their ethnic, historical, and cultural roots, thus severing them from their African family trunk. Except for the recent interests of industrial expansionism, Brazil, as a traditional norm, ignored the African continent. It turned its back on Africa as soon as it could no longer circumvent the ban on the trade in African flesh imposed by England around 1850 (Nascimento, 2019, p. 273).

[1] The term *quilombola* refers to communities formed by descendants of Africans who resisted enslavement and established autonomous settlements, known as *quilombos*, whose contemporary existence is legally recognized in Brazil as holding specific historical, cultural, and territorial rights.

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How to introduce and value knowledge that has historically been denied or silenced, if our initial teacher education was fundamentally colonialized? Between 2016 and 2020, the implementation of ongoing professional development at the school proved to be an important instrument for motivating various practices that, if not necessarily new, at least sought other voices and attempted to incorporate community relationships into pedagogical practices. Gradually, this strengthened an intuitive notion of *confluência* among the teaching staff. Here, we use the term *confluência*—borrowed from the category proposed by Nego Bispo—to convey a certain collective state of mind that leads to meaningful achievement in that place. The opposite of this concept, therefore, leads us to understand that not all events in our pedagogical collective reach this energy.

For Nego Bispo, in fact, *confluência* is synonymous with sharing. It consists of the sharing of actions and affections: “When I relate with affection to someone, I receive a reciprocal response of that affection. Affection goes back and forth. Sharing is something that produces results” (Santos, 2023, p. 36).

From this perspective, we gradually began to construct a curriculum that is not limited to a normative document meant to predetermine knowledge, skills, and competencies to be developed in students’ schooling—whether for reworking their community relationships, assuming citizenship roles, or entering the labor market at a given point in life. In this context, there was growing recognition that the curriculum is, above all, a materialization of the community’s sociocultural conceptions in everyday school life. Following Nilma Gomes (2020), we understand that the curriculum

> [...] is dynamic and alive. It is constructed not only in the selected content but in the daily life of the school’s subjects, in the unsaid, the unofficial, the hidden, the silenced, in relationships, narratives, discourses, life stories, in online and offline life. And here there is space for insurgencies and decolonial pedagogical reactions. Therefore, there is space for conflict (Gomes, 2020, p. 234).

In this way, we began to overcome the need to preestablish a curricular document with the limited purpose of shaping content. As everyday practices were woven together and the calendar was structured to value the knowledge of the community and Afro-Brazilian civilizational values, curricular concerns shifted to focus on the praxis of the daily

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life of a pedagogical collective. In this process, which involves practice, theoretical reflection, and renewed practice, we can adopt a different perspective on the curriculum, as Edmilson de Almeida Pereira (2012) affirms:

> The directions outlined for the school's actions only acquire full meaning when transformed into praxis, provided that this same praxis is also carried out through an ongoing debate about its effects on the lives of learners and educators in particular, and on society in general. In view of this, curricula become essential agents for assessing the 'temperature' of the relationships established in the school, whether by considering the negotiations between the systems of relevance it addresses or by analyzing the performance of teachers and students in teaching and learning activities. Therefore, the configuration of curricula is not limited to the enumeration of content; beyond that, it consists of a committed immersion that the school and its agents (both administrative and pedagogical) undertake into the sociocultural reality of their region, the country, and the world. From this perspective, curricula transcend their material content boundaries to present themselves as investigative procedures, being open both to maintaining certain content and to experimenting with the teaching of different knowledge (Pereira, 2012, p. 13).

The curricular path chosen by the *EMEIF Quilombola Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado* to establish its praxis has a strategic element in the calendar, as different actions, content, and community relationships are shaped and revitalized during specific events, which are reconsidered with the regularity of an academic term. This regularity enables the construction of multiple everyday lessons focused on projects.

A fundamental dimension of this approach to reading pedagogy, in this case, is establishing a sequence of texts that opens possibilities for dialogue through intertextuality and interdisciplinarity within these projects. By carrying out engaging approaches, questions, and activities, the teacher can guide new readers through perceptions that resonate with their way of living, transforming knowledge into self-knowledge and textual materiality into meaningful choices for new readings and actions in the world.

In this sense, for the school's pedagogical collective, one of the best opportunities during the academic year to enhance a *quilombola* curriculum is the Healthy Eating Seminar. Since it serves as an invitation to transcend the epistemological barriers of traditional teaching, this project opens pathways for the school itself to rethink its role within the community and for students to consider themselves as active subjects in the world. It

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is, first and foremost, about understanding teaching and research as spaces for the construction of knowledge rather than mere transmission.

2 Methodology: scenes of decolonial pedagogy

The Healthy Eating project at our school has two stages: in the first, the motivations for the theme are presented, and readings are conducted to provoke reflection; in the second, the seminar itself is prepared, focusing on foods that can be produced, harvested, and utilized in the students' daily lives. In this context, the research dimension is based on the principle that all knowledge matters and contributes to social growth. In other words, listening to elders about local plants, their properties, and ways to use them is as important—or even more important—than researching information online or in books. Mastering the cultivation of a plant, developing its medicinal or nutritional uses, addressing pests, devising strategies for its propagation and distribution, and experimenting with different recipes—all these actions are technological. They are in continuous practice within communities, yet many schools fail to value such knowledge.

As the experience of the Seminar evolved over the years, we began to realize that teaching about healthy food in the classroom involves much more than encouraging the selection of natural or organic products over the many industrialized options. Gradually, we came to understand that the Brazilian agrarian model is designed for industrial consumption, negating natural/organic foods and ancestral knowledge related to the land, which also implicates the very notion of territoriality—a fundamental aspect of *quilombola* culture.

Here, it is important to understand that teachers fundamentally need the attitudes of a decolonial researcher, as referenced by Lécia Melo and Edmacy Souza (2025):

> The application of communal contemplation allows for a moment of closeness among participants, in which all can express their emotions without embarrassment. Alternative conversation reflects the exchange of experiences, where everyone can feel free to discuss the proposed topic, sharing their experiences, including the researcher. Configurative reflection

> involves the analysis of previous processes, based on reflection and openness to participants' realities, welcoming them without determinative judgments. The entire process represents a change in the researcher's way of acting, which entails a decolonial way of positioning oneself in research, engaging while also placing oneself as a participant (Melo; Souza, 2025, p. 5).

Entering this topic from a *quilombola* perspective is fundamentally an epistemological issue. Here, Nego Bispo serves as a provocateur: "Universities are factories that transform knowledge into commodities, and *quilombola* agriculture is not a commodity. But the knowledge considered valid is that which the university converts into a commodity" (Santos, 2023, p. 100). It is precisely in problematizing which *quilombola* knowledges are appropriated—including by universities—that we are motivated to strengthen *quilombola* youth to learn from their own community and question the standards of pre-given knowledge. For example, Nego Bispo questions the very concept of "organic" and frames it within a politically charged epistemic issue:

> Today, they have changed the name of our roots: they call them 'unconventional food plants.' What they call cherry tomatoes used to be little sour, tasty tomatoes that grew anywhere we walked. We made rice with *vinagreira cuxá*, which today they call hibiscus. They invented "organic food." Now, what you buy in the supermarket with the "organic" label is a product, sometimes without poison, but it is not something organic. It is not produced with organic knowledge; it is not aimed at life. If a kilo of organic meat is very expensive, the poor cannot buy it; and if the poor cannot eat it, it is not organic. Organic is what all lives can access. What lives cannot access is not organic; it is a commodity, with or without poison (Santos, 2023, p, 101).

It is in this spirit of questioning productive and consumptive food cultures that we began the first phase of the project, using debates and readings to rethink the subjects and their knowledge. Initially, a series of discussion questions were raised, which we considered essential as problematizing tools: *What is the value of food? What is the value of those who produce food? What is the value of the knowledge applied in producing food? What is the value of the land from which we obtain food?* At this stage, responses to these questions are not necessarily expected; rather, the goal is to open space to emphasize that the teaching staff did not intend to approach healthy eating merely as an encouragement

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to choose more nutritious food, but as an invitation to understand the societal factors driving unhealthy consumption. This includes the model of ownership, labor, production, and utilization.

Subsequently, literary work began with the poems *O Retirante* by João Cabral de Melo Neto—which introduces the character and explicates his trajectory in the play *Morte e Vida Severina*—and *A Terra é Naturá* by Patativa do Assaré. These poetic texts strongly highlight the perspective of the lyrical subject and their identity: they depict rural workers suffering from poverty and lack of access to land, and consequently, to work. The aim, therefore, is to initiate this thematic project with reading that fosters identity formation and provokes reflection on the condition of these subjects.

Since these are long poems that invite rereading and the imagination of scenes and situations, the experience focused on different ways of reading the texts, with multiple readers. In this type of lesson, an initial silent reading can be proposed, as it provides vocabulary recognition and awakens interest in the sound patterns of the language. Indeed, in one class, we gradually noticed with the opening poem of *Morte e Vida Severina*, through the alternation between first-person singular and first-person plural, a play between a solitary voice and a collectivized voice:

> O meu nome é Severino,
> não tenho outro de pia.
> Como há muitos Severinos,
> que é santo de romaria,
> deram então de me chamar
> Severino de Maria;
> [...]
> Somos muitos Severinos
> iguais em tudo na vida:
> na mesma cabeça grande
> que a custo é que se equilibra
> (Melo Neto, 2009, p. 99-101)

The play within the text emerged when the verses began to be read collectively. This activity had to be experienced repeatedly, as many students read at different rhythms, which initially generated noise during the joint reading. Therefore, we devoted an entire lesson to this exercise—a practice that, for some, can create a sense of unproductivity and

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impatience. Additionally, since the two poems were provided on the same sheet, some students in different classes opted to read only one of them.

In one of the classes, the period of greatest concentration occurred around the poem *A Terra é Naturá*, a text fundamental for triggering debate about social inequality based on land ownership:

Não invejo o seu tesoro,
Sua mala de dinhêro
A sua prata, o seu ôro
o seu boi, o seu carnêro
Seu repôso, seu recreio,
Seu bom carro de passeio,
Sua casa de morá
E a sua loja surtida,
O que quero nesta vida
É terra pra trabaiá.
Iscute o que tô dizendo,
Seu dotô, seu coroné:
De fome tão padecendo
Meus fio e minha muié.
Sem briga, questão nem guerra,
Meça desta grande terra
Umas tarefa pra eu!
Tenha pena do agregado
Não me dêxe deserdado
Da terra que deus me deu
(Assaré, 1999, p. 154)

Patativa do Assaré's poetic voice positions itself in favor of food production and stands against the landowner model, which prioritizes possessions but generates hunger. Patativa's perspective, when addressing food, reflects on the conditions under which it is produced. In this sense, the poem allows for critical examination of both the industrialized food model—marked by nutritional precarity and food insecurity—and the production system that excludes workers from the land and produces profound social injustices, particularly through monoculture and large estates. Here we see a dichotomy of contemporary Brazilian society: the agribusiness model versus the family farming model.

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How could we be a *quilombola* and anti-racist school if we did not address this debate? In the words of researcher Bárbara Carine Pinheiro (2023):

> [...] [in terms of] the individualism present in the constitution of human beings from the Western worldview, we end up doing very unintelligent things, even from the standpoint of our personal survival. For example, due to the alienation present in our society, we believe that the world is not humanized, that there is no human labor embodied in the pasta, the beans, or the tomatoes you buy at the market (Pinheiro, 2023, p. 57).

This alienation from food consequently produces an alienation from knowledge about food production. This presents a problem for the school. Were we a school that did not challenge traditional pedagogical approaches, this issue would be left to the geography teacher in a content-focused stance, following the sequence of topics presented in textbooks. However, the curricular intention is precisely to foreground the nature of knowledge and technologies involved in the fundamental action of nourishing oneself, addressing hunger and food insecurity. Therefore, this project is also shaped by another critical question: *how is it possible that one of the world's largest food-producing countries records that tens of millions of people go hungry or live without a minimum number of daily meals, according to the World Health Organization?*[2]

To advance this debate while also providing another aesthetic-identity experience, we turn to the chronicle *Um Pé de Milho* by Rubem Braga. The narrative begins with a singular comparison and choice: between a news story about a technological advancement (communication via satellite) and a humble event (a corn plant bearing fruit in the narrator's backyard). The chronicler expresses his interest in the second occurrence:

> The Americans, through radar, made contact with the Moon, which is no small feat and is exciting. But the most important event of the week happened with my corn plant.
> It happened that, in my backyard, in a pile of soil brought by the gardener, something grew that could have been a blade of grass—but I discovered it was a corn plant. I transplanted it into the narrow garden bed of the house. The small leaves dried; I thought it would die. But it reacted. When it reached the size of a

[2] The report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (SOFI) indicates a worsening of hunger and food insecurity indicators in Brazil in recent years (FAO, 2023).

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> handspan, a friend came and disdainfully declared that it was grass. When it was two handspans high, another friend said it was sugarcane.
> I am an ignorant, poor man from the city. But I was right. It grew, now stands two meters tall, extends its leaves beyond the wall, and is a splendid corn plant. Have you ever seen a corn plant? I had never seen one. I had seen hundreds of cornfields—but it is different (Braga, 2003, p. 49).

Opening the chronicle with a reference to technological advancement and then undermining its importance throughout the text was an interesting argumentative strategy[3], based on comparison, which is a very powerful literary trait. We asked the students: "*Why did the narrator consider it more important to talk about a simple corn plant than communication through space?*" "*Because the corn plant is his*," a student replied. "*And why does he think we, the readers, might also consider his corn plant more important than the space achievement?*" In fact, this question arose during the discussion, but one student redirected it: "*Professor, it's not that he wants us to give more importance to his corn plant, but simply that he is giving importance to what is his*." Thus, we began to develop the understanding that the writer's literary action is to turn attention to particular, subjective things. I then asked them to consider the fact that the narrator didn't even know exactly what a corn plant looked like. When asked if they had ever seen a corn plant, most replied, "*Yes, of course*." And this "of course" would not be as strong if I had asked this question elsewhere in the city.

I reread with the class a passage from the chronicle indicating the size of the garden bed where the plant was: "A single corn plant, in a cramped garden bed, by the gate, on a street corner—it is not a number in a field; it is a living, independent being" (Braga, 2003, p. 50). Amid the reminder that many people in the city do not even have a garden or backyard, this seems to be a determining factor in their ways of being, living, and learning. Another question: "*At what point in the text does the chronicler imply that not having space in the city limits people's knowledge?*" After searching and rereading, one boy answered: "*It's in the sentence 'I am an ignorant, poor man from the city*.'"

[3] In parallel with the reading work, in the fields of orality, writing, and textual production, argumentative content had been addressed with those classes.

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There was also the possibility of addressing and interpreting the metaphorical images Rubem Braga uses to describe the corn plant, but there was neither time nor sufficient engagement from the classes to explore further approaches. After all, the discussion recorded above took place alongside parallel conversations, requests to participate, and untimely cellphone distractions. Due to these interruptions, many contributions were lost because the recordings were of poor quality.

In the following lesson, we advanced from an argumentative perspective regarding the agrarian models in Brazil. We comparatively analyzed two songs in class, each representing a worldview around land use. The works presented were *Doce Erva* by Livardo Alves and *Respeita o Agro* by Loubet in partnership with several composers.

Doce Erva

Eu plantaria um pé de erva-doce
Se dono dessa terra eu fosse.
Eu plantaria um pé de agrião,
Se dono eu fosse desse chão.

E plantaria majeriroba,
E plantaria manjericão,
Pimenta-d'água eu plantaria,
Eu plantaria pinha e pinhão

E plantaria pro meu consumo
Flores e frutos e erva-cidreira,
E capim-santo por todo canto,
Por todo canto erva-cidreira

Uma doce, outra amarga,
Quebra-pedra e arruda,
Hortelã da folha larga,
Hortelã da folha miúda
(Alves, s.d.)

Respeita o Agro

Quem conta os copo que a gente bebe
Não tem base e nem mede as sementes que a gente plantou
Quem se incomoda com o som da minha camionete
É que não viu o barulho que faz meu trator

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Aqui o engarrafamento é de boi
O arroba da internet, aqui é de gado
Agora eu tô tranquilo, então partiu, já foi
A soja desse ano deixou nós folgado

Nós é brabo
Nós é mato
Quer falar, fala de mim
Mas tem que respeitar o AGRO

Pode falar de nós
Mas não bate de frente
Nós é colheitadeira por riba de semente

É da farra pra lida, é da lida pra farra
Pode parar tudo, mas o AGRO nunca para!
(Targino *et al.*, s.d.)

We listened to the two songs in sequence, playing each twice, and even sang along together, since both have melodies that were very enjoyable for the young people. At this point, a boy immediately asked about the style of both songs. Someone responded that *Respeita o Agro* is *sertanejo* but did not understand the classification for *Doce Erva*. In this context, it was explained that Livardo's song resembles what, until the 1980s, was called *música caipira*, a musical form that preceded the *sertanejo* style. Life in the countryside is depicted differently in the two styles and, consequently, in the two songs.

From there, we proceeded with the approach by constructing a comparative framework:

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Box 1 – Comparison of rural life representations in the songs *Doce Erva* and *Respeita o Agro*

Category	*Doce Erva*	*Respeita o Agro*
Land production	Fennel, watercress, majeriroba, basil, chili pepper, pine nuts, capim-santo, lemongrass, quebra-pedra, flowers, and fruits	Cattle, soy
Requirement to produce food	Owning the land	Having technology: tractor, harvester, internet
Production model	Family farming	"Nóis é colheitadeira pra riba de semente"; "A soja desse ano deixou nóis folgado"
Countryside way of life	"I would plant for my own consumption"	"Quem se incomoda com o som da minha camionete / É que não viu o barulho que faz meu trator"; "É da farra pra lida, é da lida pra farra / Pode parar tudo, mas o AGRO nunca para!"

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

The comparative approach to the representations in the two musical works allows for a full discussion on the relationship between what is produced, how it is produced, and, consequently, how people live. The song *Respeita o Agro* clearly shows that the defender of the agribusiness model—based on concentrated, extensive property and mechanized agricultural production for export—causes discomfort and deserves criticism. However, as often happens in many public debates, it diverts attention from what truly deserves critique: "who counts the cups we drink"; "who complains about the sound of my truck"; "we are tough"; "you can talk about me." In this way, the subject positions himself as someone who deserves censure, but the cause of his wealth remains untouched in the discussion: "you have to respect AGRO."

In contrast, in *Doce Erva*, there is an extensive list of crops that cannot be reproduced without land ownership. The reminder that access to land is the primary condition for food—a point already raised with the reading of Patativa do Assaré—opens the way to perceiving biodiversity. We asked students whether they had any of those plants at home. Few could answer, mentioning only the most common in the region, such as

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fennel and lemongrass. Since participation was limited at this point, a walk through the forest nearest to the school and community was proposed, which was enthusiastically received by the classes, generating great anticipation for leaving the classroom walls and the school gates.

The teachers' expectation was to sharpen perceptions of biodiversity in order to stimulate a new perspective on food and its sharing. As Mia Couto writes in *Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra*: "Our kitchen distinguished us from the others. Throughout the island, kitchens were outside, in the middle of the yards, separate from the rest of the house. We lived in the European way, cooking inside, eating enclosed" (Couto, 2003, p. 145). Walking through the community, passing in front of several houses, this literary account reinforced a conviction Nego Bispo planted: that colonization decisively passes through architecture (Santos, 2023).

Although it was possible to conduct the walk with all the classes, this activity was fundamental in preparing the second phase of the project. After all, the school's curricular proposal directs each teacher to follow a class in a bimonthly project. We walked for about two hours, including the round trip and pauses, along a trail leading to the edge of the so-called Rio do Padre. This is a space where the community used to bathe and fish—practices gradually avoided after the discovery of sewage being discharged into the stream. Added to this was the occupation of surrounding areas by poultry farms, which made access to the river more difficult. Despite this sense of restriction, three students insisted on jumping into the water fully clothed as soon as they reached the riverbank.

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Figure 1 – Students bathing in the river during the walk along the forest trail by the Rio do Padre

Source: Personal collection.

Returning to the central objective of the activity, we wanted to observe which plants could serve for our research on foods directly from nature that people can use in their daily lives. To guide this learning, we were led by an elder from the community, Dona Neide, who introduced us to various plants and their medicinal and nutritional uses available in the area: "*This one is pinhão roxo. It's used to bless a child, with an eye gesture. You don't make tea with it*."

The teacher commented that they had once been told to use pinhão roxo in a ritual bath, which she did not confirm, but she continued sharing her knowledge: *"this one is Tamiarana. Be careful with it, it can burn"; "The sap of the mangaba is for healing. It's*

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good—it heals slowly, but it's natural"; "This is aroeira, we make a garrafada*: peel it, put it in water, barbatenon*[4], *purple cashew, put it in a container and drink it"; "This one is a panam plant [...] this one you can eat. And the root we use to make* rolha*"; "Canela de velho is anti-inflammatory. Mild. You make tea with it. Let it dry and it turns into a powder, then mix it in water"; "We can prepare oil from dendê, it's one of the best oils.*"

This entire diversity of products, discussed alongside the wisdom accumulated over generations, helped us perceive that there exists a specific technology here—a way of living in harmony with nature. At one point, a student became quite startled by a bee that landed on his head, and laughing, Dona Neide explained: "*this is an arapuá, it doesn't sting*". Others laughed as the bee fussed in the boy's hair, although many of the young people showed natural composure in the situation. At times, listening to our guide*, Dona Neide*, was difficult due to the activity's energy, but the highest excitement occurred when we stopped in the shade of an olive tree at the start of the trail.

3 Results: Seminar on the olive tree and confluences in food

At the beginning of the walk along the trail, we asked the group to form a circle to present two initial guidelines. The first was to highlight the importance of ancestry, reminding that many *confluentes*—term used by Nego Bispo to refer to Indigenous and *quilombola* people, holders of Afro-diasporic and Amerindian worldviews—often ask permission from the forest spirits before entering these spaces, a practice that should at least be respected and welcomed without surprise by those who do not share these religious traditions. The second guideline concerned the fact that this is a forested area, where all forms of life maintain a balance that needs to be preserved; therefore, no pollution was allowed, whether waste or noise.

Even so, forming the circle took some time, as the young people were more interested in eating the olives directly from the tree. It was also necessary to reconsider the

[4] She is probably referring to the plant *barbatimão*.

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teacher's own feelings in response to the difficulty of forming the circle and gaining the group's attention. There was restlessness and a desire for the activity to stop immediately. However, with patience, it became possible to perceive that the learning process was already underway at that moment; when the teacher fails to recognize this, they risk positioning themselves outside the experience and reproducing a colonizing posture.

We then needed to choose a topic for the Healthy Eating Week seminar. The initial idea was to focus on dendê (*palm oil*), due to the abundance of the palm trees in the region and the relevance of this product for African history, the economy, and Brazilian cuisine. However, upon observing the intense excitement around consuming olives directly from the tree, the choice became clear: we decided to work with this fruit—a decision that proved to be the right one.

Figure 2 – Students from the school eating olives directly from the tree

Source: Personal collection.

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For this project, every year we seek to consider the students' ideas for the seminar, and they are guided on the importance of addressing products that are locally and seasonally accessible. During the walk, we came across several fruit trees—such as mango, plum (a local variant), mangaba, and cashew—which could have become the focus of the work. However, it was the first time, within the scope of the school project, that the olive tree—also known as *azeitona-roxa* or *jamelão*—would be studied.

Students were instructed to research various aspects of the plant: its nature and life cycle (reproduction, development, and fruiting, as well as suitable soil, climate, and weather conditions); production data (amount produced per tree and per harvest, market value of the fruit, and annual economic impact in Brazil); nutritional benefits (biological factors); its history and cultural significance (origin, narratives, poems, myths, and legends); alternative uses (use of leaves and seeds, as well as possibilities for extracting essences); and finally, culinary uses, including recipes, flavor combinations, and both sweet and savory experiences.

A fundamental aspect of this experience is the integration of knowledge from diverse sources, ranging from conversations with family members to online research. As this knowledge is shared orally and the plant is explored across different fields of study, student involvement generates a process-oriented grade that applies to all subjects.

In this way, important motivators for learning converge in a single pedagogical activity: knowledge exchange, hands-on processing and sensory experimentation, understanding research and technology integrated with nature, reading and situating the food in culture, public speaking, and the tasting activity at the culmination—where one class presents its topic and offers samples to another class, which reciprocates with its own tasting. For all these reasons, this project is considered one of the highlights of the school year.

Specifically regarding the olive tree, our research uncovered a literary work that made an interesting contribution to the final presentation: *Rê Tinta e o Pé de Jamelão*, by Estêvão Ribeiro, which tells, for children, the story of an olive tree that becomes a point of

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dispute among neighbors because it drops so many fruits between January and May. The fruits stain the clothes of passersby and cars parked under its shade.

In the story, a man mobilizes several people to cut down the tree, but he meets the opposition of *Senhora Neusa*, Rê Tinta's grandmother and the narrator. One of the reasons for defending the tree is the memory of childhood moments: "Mom remembered the games everyone played there. And she remembered that, after the play, the jameloeiro fed each child on the street with its fruits" (Ribeiro, 2021, p. 24-5). Presenting this work led us to reflect on memory and the emotional bonds people can create with each living being. In her presentation of the book, Elisa Lucinda takes this perception further and applies it to the agrarian model we aim to promote here:

> When one plants, the affection is there, active. Digging, renewing, turning over the grains of the soil. Planting has the consistency of hope, desire for fertility, longing for conception. When a human being plants a seed, they are recreating life. And one cannot measure the extent of their harvest. We need to understand that a society in which all live well collectively is worth more than a society where most work for the well-being of a few (Ribeiro, 2021, p. 5).

Thus, in the confluence of knowledge that this project mobilizes, the literary work introduced a motivator that had not yet been addressed: the *confluence of affections*. On the page reproduced below, memory and affectivity materialize in this multimodal narrative, reinforcing that conflict itself becomes a driving force for dialogue.

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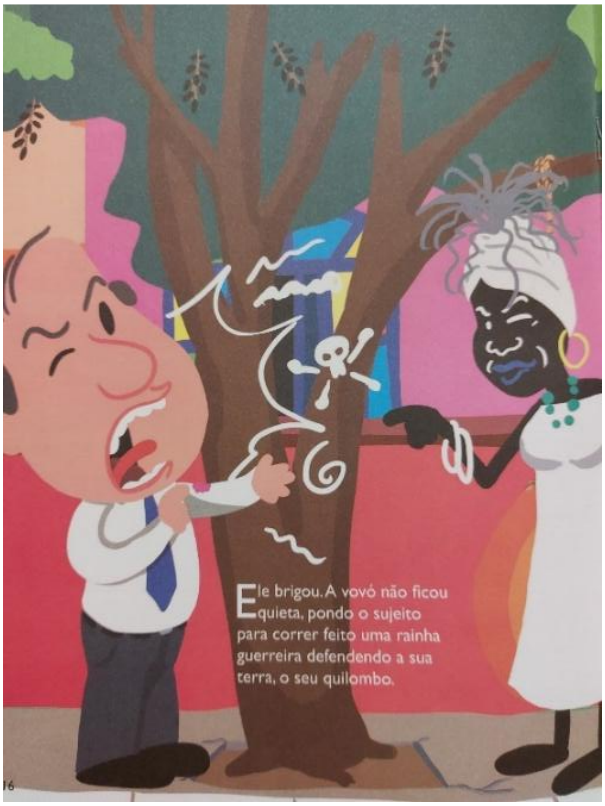
Figure 3 – Children's literature page, *Rê Tinta e o Pé de Jamelão*



Source: Ribeiro, 2021, p. 16.

Observing both the verbal and visual elements, the author/illustrator gives the Black female body a series of traits that positively affirm an Afro-referenced and *confluente* being: textually, the grandmother is comparable to a warrior queen, a leader defending her quilombo. Visually, she is depicted as a dark-skinned Black woman wearing a turban, standing her ground to protect the tree, unflinching in the face of a white, suited man who speaks aggressively and, within the narrative context, seeks at all costs to cut it down. Although he succeeds in felling the tree, this action ultimately motivates the replanting of even more individuals of that species, mobilizing, in the story, the dimension highlighted earlier by Lucinda: the desire for fertility.

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For this reason, Luiz Rufino's message closes this experience: "decolonizing is an educational act that stems from the capacity to fight tirelessly for the existential dignity of living beings, for diversity, and for the unfinished nature of thing" (Rufino, 2021, p. 36-7). In this way, the readings gradually weave learning together, reinforcing attitudes, inviting a reassessment of values, and embedding beautiful scenes and new stories in the collective memory.

4 Final Considerations

Throughout this report, we have sought to advocate a decolonial pedagogical agenda, grounded in the constant dialogue between educators and students in daily school life. The emergence of *quilombola* education at EMEIEF Quilombola Antônia do Socorro Silva Machado has been a key motivator for transforming both teaching practice and teacher training.

The curation of texts presented, as well as the methodology centered on oral approaches, were crucial points in a process of problematizing reality. In turn, as Paulo Freire wisely points out, these literary readings became readings of the world, inspiring other integrative pedagogical practices, such as heuristic and socio-environmental walks. Guided by a local community elder, it was possible to value traditional knowledge, develop environmental integration, and cultivate *confluência*, an important concept developed by the *quilombola* thinker Nego Bispo.

The confluence of beings within and beyond the school space, of the school with the community, of traditional knowledge with academic knowledge from different fields, of authors from diverse origins and backgrounds, and even the confluence of affections, is arguably the greatest pedagogical gain from the experience reported. Yet, an epistemological gain can also be highlighted.

Social knowledge entails broad reflections on how academia engages with the populations it should serve. From this perspective, it subverts not only the entrenched idea that universities hold knowledge and must transmit it to those without access, but also

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challenges the notion that knowledge cannot be produced outside academic means. Learning from diverse segments of the population and participating in their learning are equally important stances for educators reconsidering epistemology.

In other words, rethinking epistemologies by respecting popular knowledge and languages is a key aspect of what is today understood as decoloniality. This perspective has, however, dialogued for decades with Freire's thought (1996), for whom knowledge taught in schools must be contextualized within the knowledge of popular classes. According to Gomes (2017), modern science has been instrumentalized as a form of knowledge with a regulatory function, shaping social hierarchies that preexist the researcher, who must distance themselves from reality to describe it. Conversely, we can advocate for *knowledge-emancipation*, an approach that investigates the processes—including political and ideological—that create gaps between experiential knowledge and theoretical knowledge, and proposes ways to overcome the hierarchization of knowledge (Gomes, 2017, p. 59), which also reflects hierarchies in the productive field and social segregation.

For all these reasons, we consider that pedagogical practices embedded within a decolonial horizon belong to a new societal paradigm and are essential for the 21st century.

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