

**PORTUGUESE ANTHROPOLOGY:
POLITICAL CONTEXTS AND THE SCIENCE**

Berkley - 17 Novembro de 2000

My anthropological way

Nowadays, When I think back about my anthropological formation, I have the feeling that my career as anthropologist is a good example of the development of Portuguese Anthropology in the last twenty years.

As a student, my main influences is French structuralism, moreover Lévi-Strauss and his works about Kinship and myths, marxists and marxist-structuralists.

Of course, I learned about the great names of british anthropology like Malinowsky, Evans-Pritchard or Radcliff-Brown; and the americans like Boas, Margaret Mead or Ruth Benedict.

Somehow I' ve come to think that after these founding fathers, anthropology had vanished in England and in USA. For all I remember there were only french anthropologists alive since the fifties (50s.)

To me, it was only trough Raul Iturra (from ISCTE – INSTITUTE Of SOCIAL SCIENCES of Lisbon) a man from Cambridge University, that I came to know of a more comprehensive approach to the social facts, with the modern british anthropologists and sociologists, and also with Bourdieu, whom, among others has been developing a qualitative approach to education.

From here, I went on to Spindler, Bogdan and Birkin, Peter Woods (with his symbolic interactionism)... Geertz and Giddens.

I've come to think of myself, as an ethno-sociologist, as an ethnographer of the school, an anthropologist of education; no longer a follower of Durkheim's teachings, to whom social facts have an existence independent of the individual.

I realize that my anthropology has come closer to ethnomethodology: every society is locally produced (built). The society is continuously worked and thought of by its own members; and these ones are only concerned with the understanding of themselves and of their hermeneutics.

Portuguese anthropology: the beginning

In Portugal, anthropology had two failed attempts to affirm itself as a full grown science: the first by the end of last century with names like Leite de Vasconcelos, Adolfo Coelho, Teófilo Braga, whom we call the pioneers and worked like most anthropologists of their time: evolutionists and diffusionists, and a great variety of interests (archeology, ethnography, linguistics...). This effort had no continuity. We had several important ethnographers until the fifties, but no anthropology. For Salazar, the dictator, ethnography was a sound basis for the construction of a national ideology, used by the propaganda of the regime against the decadence of western culture in other parts of Europe and America. We have until the middle of the century, a political regime which doesn't favour the development of social sciences. The second attempt will be led by Jorge Dias, who introduces the modern anthropology in Portugal. But still, the political conditions didn't allow the continuity and the formation of

portuguese anthropologists. In the eighties, a number of anthropologists formed in France or in England, begins anthropology at the portuguese universities. A few years ago, Coimbra had not yet created a degree in anthropology.

Portuguese anthropology: The affirmation

Nowadays, we could say that portuguese anthropology has really affirmed itself as a respected science. Anthropology is part of a great variety of courses, like laws, economics, education, political sciences, social services. There are also degrees in anthropology in every university, and has its corporate associations like APA, SPAE, and is a founding member of the EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION of SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY born at the University of Coimbra in the early 90s (nineties).

As a member of APA – Association of Portuguese Anthropology – I’ ve been working in anthropology of education.

My main interest has focused on the identity management of teachers, studying life histories and their influence in their practices.

Anthropology of education: the cultural metamorphosis to be a Teacher in Portugal

For many Portuguese, to be seen as successful citizens within a globalized culture often means breaking out of the narrow confines of rural life and doing well at school which, being decontextualized from everyday life in the majority of cases, brings about a cultural metamorphosis or even a cultural transfusion in the life of the individual. Success at school provides access to the way of thinking of educated culture, of the written word, of uniformity, formality and abstraction, and at times leads to the abandonment of everyday culture in favor of scientific rationality.

Access to the dominant culture can lead to at least two types of transformation. One can ignore and forget the cultural past of one's origins, which produces a **cultural mind-set** able to comprehend life; or on the other hand, one can make use of the richness of the original culture as experience, as one among many types of everyday life, leading to teaching methods based on cultural relativism. By studying the different life histories of people who are now adults, teachers by profession, but who are obviously also individuals with varied social roles, I have tried to reconstruct the specific journeys and experiences that, from childhood through to adulthood, have contributed to the development of their attitudes towards human diversity (in some cases merely multicultural and in others intercultural), including of course their social behavior and habits.