

## OTHER TIMES OF LEARNING: HISTORY AND MEMORY OF THE MUNICIPAL HIGH SCHOOL OF PIRACURUCA-PI



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### ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to understand the History and Memory of the educational institution Ginásio Municipal de Piracuruca-PI, as a place of education for the student population of the municipality and surrounding regions; in addition, to analyze the institution as a space for the city's school memory. Methodologically, the research is centered on sources that refer to school culture, contemplating the documentation produced by the school and/or archived therein, such as the founding minutes, official journal, internal regulations, books and enrollment forms, photographs of teachers, students, employees, events (mostly civic). The theoretical-historiographical framework is based on the discussions proposed by Jureni Bitencourt (1989) and Maria do Carmo Brito (2002), which contribute to the understanding of the local history of Piracuruca; Jacques Le Goff (2012), which support the discussions regarding memory; and Márcio Cano (2012), Flavio Berutti and Adhemar Marques (2009), who address the relationship between history and education. Given the above, this research has academic and scientific relevance, since it is immersed in the field of History, Memory, and School Education, contributing to new studies in and of the historiography of Piauí. It also has social relevance, since it affects the construction of historical consciousness, especially about the valorization of the memory of school institutions, in the formation of citizenship.

**Keywords:** History of Education. School Memory. Municipal Gymnasium of Piracuruca -PI.

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## INTRODUCTION

Everything that man inhabits, touches, or transforms is a bearer of his experiences and desires. Thus, large buildings or simple brick that is part of them have a very important repertoire about urban spaces and their history. Schools can fit perfectly into this category of places in the city, as they participate in a process of change and evolution of society in its most dignified sense, which is to promote education. However, their significance for the history of the place does not end with this function alone. Thus, the study presented here makes a (re)visit to the history and memory of the former Municipal Gymnasium of Piracuruca-PI, a secondary education institution financed by the municipal government, officially founded in 1957 and which operated between 1958 and 1975. The aforementioned institution was one of the few secondary schools created in the State of Piauí in the mid-20th century, being responsible for the education of many Piracuruca residents and residents of neighboring cities, considering that before Piracuruca only Parnaíba had a secondary education institution in the north of Piauí. The study, within the applied methodology, makes a more in-depth investigation into the history of the Municipal Gymnasium, analyzing several aspects throughout its existence, aspects related to the city, and the individuals who consumed and experienced the Gymnasium space. The research, before contemplating the history of the educational institution, contributes to the writing of the local history of the municipality of Piracuruca with new perspectives and discussions about this moment in the history of the place. In addition, the study of the Gymnasium contributes greatly to the history of education in the municipality, since there are almost no texts that deal with this historiographical work. The city of Piracuruca, located in the north of Piauí, 196 kilometers from Teresina, is one of the oldest cities in the state. Its existence dates back to the 18th century, with extensive cattle ranches on the fertile plains that border the Piracuruca River<sup>3</sup>. It was a place of passage for cattle and tangerines, merchants with their troops loaded with goods, or even Jesuit priests heading to the coast or the mountains that border the neighboring state of Ceará. The town grew and soon gained the status of a parish and, later, a village. With the advent of the republic in Brazil in 1889, the old town became a city, thus gaining distinctly urban administrative characteristics. However, it was only in the 20th century that the city acquired facilities that

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<sup>3</sup> The Piracuruca River rises in the Serra da Ibiapaba, in the town of São Benedito-CE, at an elevation of 885 meters above sea level. It flows into the Longá River at Barra do Piracuruca in the municipality of São José do Divino, some 200 km from its source.



dignified it and adapted it to a republican city, and at that time, the central square, cobblestone streets, electric lighting in the few streets, and central houses appeared. In the 1930s, in the interwar period, with the export of carnauba wax, the local elites, due to their increased income, began to desire a city that had the social services that met their demands, leisure, entertainment, and consumption of more developed centers, such as cinemas, plays, radios, kerosene refrigerators, and automobiles. In addition, the city underwent very significant urban changes, such as the remodeling of squares, the opening of avenues and streets, tree planting, etc. It is worth noting that these ways of consuming the city were relegated only to the city's economic elite, while the rest of the less affluent population developed or adapted their notions and experiences of seeing and living in the city at the time. It is in this context of the modernization of the city in the decades that followed that the object to be studied in this research emerged in the 1950s, driven by new ways and desires of consuming and experiencing the city. The Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium<sup>4</sup> was founded in 1957, during the municipal government of José Mendes de Moraes, to meet the demand for secondary education in the city, since the closest cities where there were secondary education institutions at the time were Parnaíba and Teresina.

When observing the exhibition on the history of the city of Piracuruca, one sees that, over the centuries, the city underwent major transformations, which, at first glance, could be considered common to any settlements that emerged at that time, but what is clear from this is that little has been written about the history of the city of Piracuruca. Most texts on municipal history were written by memorialists who narrated their experiences and how they interacted with the city.

Even in the texts of literate individuals who wrote about the historiography of the municipality<sup>5</sup>, the attachment to written documents was very recurrent, still in the positivist

<sup>4</sup> The school in question still exists today, but it has changed its name three times: Between 1957 and 1975, while it was subsidized by the municipal government, it was called Ginásio Municipal de Piracuruca (Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium). In 1976, when it was taken over by the state of Piauí, it was officially renamed Unidade Escolar Presidente Humberto Castelo Branco (President Humberto Castelo Branco School Unit). In 2019, by state law, it was renamed CETI Inês Maria de Sousa Rocha.

<sup>5</sup> As obras sobre a história e geografia do município tidas como referência, mas que carregam ainda características visíveis do positivismo foram produzidas para serem lançadas em datas comemorativas simbólicas. A primeira obra, intitulada O Município de Piracuruca escrita pelo dentista e professor de história Anísio Britto foi finalizada em setembro de 1922 e lançada na capital Estado (Teresina) em janeiro de 1923 nas comemorações alusivas ao Centenário da Independência do Piauí. Já a segunda obra de referência, intitulada Apontamentos Históricos da Piracuruca foi escrita pelo jornalista Jureni Machado Bittencourt sendo lançado em 28 de dezembro de 1989 nas comemorações do Centenário de Piracuruca. Além das obras mencionadas aqui podemos citar ainda as descrições sobre o município, de caráter oficial, muitas vezes fazendo parte de publicações vinculadas ao governo tais como: Notícias sobre as comarcas do Piauí (1886), de Francisco Augusto Pereira da Costa, Descrição do Município de Piracuruca (1881), do Tenente-



idea that the role relegated to the historian was to make the choice and selection of documents with authenticity, in an objective way and without value judgments, valuing observation first and leaving aside analysis and interpretation, thus: “The idea was that the sources spoke for themselves, and it was up to the historian to extract the facts from them and order them chronologically, without any critical relationship with the official documents”<sup>6</sup>.

It was only with the opening of a center at the State University of Piauí in 2002 and with the introduction of the Full Degree in History courses regularly in 2006 that the new methodologies and practices acquired in academia promoted a marked departure from the writing of the city's history about the positivist model. Based on the new cultural history, there was a renewal in the themes and objects addressed, in addition to a change in the view of documents and sources of history research. Furthermore, according to the New History<sup>7</sup>, history would be produced based on problematizations of the present. Thus, according to Berutti and Marques (2009), if before the document contained the past as it happened, today it only provides information if the historian asks it the appropriate “questions”. The above statements aim to show that, despite the many texts written about the history of the city in the history course monographs in Piracuruca, using the entire methodology of the New History, nothing has been written about the city's educational institutions, thus becoming a gap in the historiography of the place. Researching the history of educational institutions is strictly related to the most comprehensive aspects of the city's history, whether related to memory, culture, orality, thus:

The possibility of writing the history of Brazilian and regional education from a different perspective than that which gives space only to narratives emanating from official documents has been an important motivating element for research on educational institutions. It is a proposal that aims to value regional peculiarities, without disregarding the national dimensions. By analyzing the characteristics of a given institution, spatially and geographically determined, the possibility of knowing the historical-political and social context that created it arises.<sup>8</sup>

This study is based on the need to bring new objects and approaches that

Coronel Gervásio de Brito Passos, Monografias Estatístico-Descritivas Municipais (1939), Departamento de Estatística e Publicidade do Piauí e Piracuruca (1952), capítulo do Almanaque do Cariri.

<sup>6</sup> BERUTTI, Flávio; MARQUES, Adhemar. Ensinar e aprender história. Belo Horizonte: RHJ, 2009. P. 57

<sup>7</sup> A historiographical current that emerged in the 1970s, it rejects the composition of history solely as narrative and the valorization of documents as the only basic source of research.

<sup>8</sup> TOLEDO, César de Alencar Arnaut de; Andrade, Rodrigo Pinto de. História da Educação, instituições escolares, fontes e pesquisa em arquivos na região oeste do Paraná. Revista Linhas, Florianópolis, v.15, n. 28, p. 175-199, jan. / jun., 2014. Disponível em: file:///C:/Users/TIAGO/Downloads/4133-Texto%20do%20artigo-12420-1-10-20140623.pdf. Acesso em: 06 de julho de 2023.



contemplate the writing of the history of the municipal territory and also the history of education in Piracuruca. To this end, we sought to analyze and question the vast documentation produced by the institution in the time frame studied (1957 to 1975), such as minutes, regulations, books, registrations, photographs, and also the archives existing in the city that have documentation that allows for research, such as the City Council, the Casarão de Cultura Coronel Luiz de Brito Melo, and private archives of former students and teachers.

The historian, when seeking the history of school institutions and through the analysis made through the sources provided about the object, ends up with not only a historical narrative about the object itself but, above all, the construction of a moment in local history. Here, places of school education are mentioned as a link with local history. However, any place where there is human interaction can be considered a device for reading local history. Therefore, these devices mentioned are an integral part of cities, which in themselves are already of great interest as research objects.

Cities, seen as objects to be researched, are interesting because, based on the interactions of subjects within their territory, we can understand diverse scenarios, such as social, economic, cultural, and urban structure, thus allowing a critical reflection on the transformations that have occurred in spaces through the impressions of city dwellers. In addition, studies of urban spaces also allow a reflection on the practices regarding the role of subjects who transform and are transformed by the city.

This interaction is possible because it is in cities that we carry out our experiences, and personal interactions, and where we develop our social relationships. Thus, when studying them, we verify how they were constituted, we follow their evolution and the impact of the transformations on the lives of their inhabitants, the places within the city that separate social groups, the existing borders and barriers (imaginary or not), and the symbolic places for their inhabitants.<sup>9</sup>

Given the exhibition, the study of the history of the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium is configured as an analysis of these places of experience in the city, mainly of the experiences regarding education and school culture. The aforementioned study, in addition to contemplating aspects of the spatiality of the city, is also inscribed in the line of research of local history, however, not the local history written by memorialists who did not follow research methodology. The way of writing local history produced by people from different

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<sup>9</sup> CANO, Márcio Rogério de Oliveira (Org.). História. Coleção: A reflexão e a prática no ensino. Vol. 6. São Paulo: Blucher, 2012. P. 104.



segments of society and who, in most cases, were not historians, valuing mainly the great names of the place, their heroic deeds, and their families, has already generated many discussions and even a demeaning view of the content and writings on local history.

Therefore, when researching the history of the Municipal Gymnasium, it was also expected that identity ties would be strengthened with the place and the object of research, mainly by the subjects who consume these spaces, since, in the municipality, there are no programs, whether linked to education or public power, that promote the history of the city<sup>10</sup>, with knowledge and proximity to this history (of the municipality) often being relegated to festive moments. From the above, it is clear that local history can be seen and used as a pedagogical strategy, as it is a constituent element of the didactic transposition of historical knowledge into school knowledge, and it is up to the teacher to combine aspects of local history with the contents of the curriculum. Given this,

It is a way of approaching learning, construction, and understanding of historical knowledge with propositions that can be articulated with the interests of the student, their cognitive approaches, their cultural experiences, and the possibility of developing activities directly linked to daily life. As a learning strategy, local history can ensure better appropriation of historical knowledge based on selected excerpts of the content, which will be integrated into the body of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

When we look at the quote above, we also realize that local history is always linked to other contexts, such as regional, global, etc., and it is up to the researcher to make cuts that make the research viable, since local history cannot be explained within its limits, so that some issues can only be understood when analyzed in light of other spaces, contexts or locations.

Another point glimpsed with the research on the mentioned object is to understand it through the interfaces of historical heritage. The aspects of immateriality were analyzed, seeing the school in question as an instrument of instructive training related to the provision of a secondary school for a small town in the interior of Piauí in the 1950s and its current function, since the school continues to be a reference in the city's educational structure. Thus, according to Oliveira (2010), heritage can point to the constitution of memory about other social practices or even practices that unfold about the natural environment and was also analyzed in its material form, since the building where the

<sup>10</sup> The only known attempt is the textbook Piracuruca: Iniciando Geografia e História, published by the Piracuruca Department of Education in 2004. The book was revised and had its second edition in 2008.

<sup>11</sup> SCHIMIDT, Maria Auxiliadora; CAINELLI, Marlene. Ensinar História. 1ª ed. São Paulo: Scipione, 2009. P. 105.



school operates is located in the historical complex listed by IPHAN in 2012<sup>12</sup>.

In this context, the school building, in addition to being inserted into the idea of architectural changes that occurred in the dynamics of the city's urban space, takes up the idea of the new vision of a document that emerged with the new history. In this conception, the construction can be read and analyzed through the idea of disputes over it, since heritage is the result of a series of choices by individuals in the present who act based on different notions. Thus, by promoting this discussion about a school institution as part of the city's heritage both in material aspects and in identity relations, one can perceive the value attributed by city subjects, since, above all, heritage is a place of dispute. When revisiting the historicity of the Municipal Gymnasium, we focused on the documentation still existing in the institution, such as photographs of events, parades, and teachers, principals and students, student registration sheets and books from the period studied, class diaries, internal regulations from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and other material sources that could be problematized and questioned by the researcher, since they could not be used objectively. Thus, "it is necessary to consider the subjective elements that make up the documents themselves, as well as the work of the researcher in the analysis process"<sup>13</sup>. Thus, the study carried out used documentary research as one of the bases for its support, since throughout the study the educational institution and its agents produced a considerable amount of primary sources, essential for promoting a dialogue with the historian through their organization, analysis, and subjectivities, because according to Prado (2010), research work requires extensive attention to the material to be analyzed, to capture all the nuances that surround it. This collection is not very different from other archives of school institutions in the rest of the country, since there has been no concern over the years with storing, collecting, and organizing school documentation. Thus:

In school institutions, documentary collections are essential for accessing sources. Many of these can be found in the institution itself. The documents that can be found in the school, which deal with its daily life, present fundamental information about the life of the institution. However, the precarious conditions of maintenance

<sup>12</sup> In 2012, in addition to the listing of the Piracuruca Historical and Landscape Complex, the Oeiras Historical and Landscape Complex was also listed. It is worth remembering that the two municipalities had already had their own properties listed by IPHAN (National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute) since the 1940s, namely the Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora do Carmo in Piracuruca and the Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora da Vitória in Oeiras.

<sup>13</sup> TOLEDO, Cézar de Alencar Arnaut de; Andrade, Rodrigo Pinto de. História da Educação, instituições escolares, fontes e pesquisa em arquivos na região oeste do Paraná. Revista Linhas, Florianópolis, v.15, n. 28, p. 175-199, jan. / jun., 2014. Disponível em: file:///C:/Users/TIAGO/Downloads/4133-Texto%20do%20artigo-12420-1-10-20140623.pdf. Acesso em: 06 de julho de 2023.



represent an additional obstacle in the process of its analysis and interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

In this way, memory, and educational institutions are also instruments that link and are part of the memory of a civilization, a social group, or a city. Thus, “memory, as the property of preserving certain information, refers us first of all to a set of psychic functions, thanks to which man can update past impressions or information, or that he represents as past.”<sup>15</sup>

### **IN THE SCHOOL BENCHES: HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PIRACURUCA THAT PRECEDED THE CREATION OF THE GYMNASIUM**

The implementation of secondary education in Piracuruca-PI took place in the context of the expansion of this specific type of education throughout Brazil, between the 1940s and 1960s, to serve mainly the population of the cities, satisfying, mainly, the desires of the urban sectors in the creation of an intellectual elite, which, in addition to promoting the State in its schooling policy, would meet the need for literate professionals in the public positions available in the city, such as teachers for secondary school classes. However, before we delve into the discussions related to our research object, it is interesting to make a brief retrospective of the schools that were part of the educational process of the population in the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century, when the Municipal Gymnasium was created.

Even before becoming a city in the late 19th century, Piracuruca already had primary schools, maintained by the government, as well as private schools. Thus, according to Nunes (1975), “We can, however, state that until then the government had not taken care of education. Hence the emergence, in greater numbers, of private schools, under the protection of wealthy farmers, to teach their families the first letters” (Nunes, 1975). According to the author, we can see that since the implementation of public or private school education, it has been aimed at the elite, regardless of whether they were urban or rural. The same author also provides us with information that in 1844, Piracuruca had 3

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<sup>14</sup> TOLEDO, C  zar de Alencar Arnaut de; Andrade, Rodrigo Pinto de. Hist  ria da Educa  o, institui  es escolares, fontes e pesquisa em arquivos na regi  o oeste do Paran  . Revista Linhas, Florian  polis, v.15, n. 28, p. 175-199, jan. / jun., 2014. Dispon  vel em: file:///C:/Users/TIAGO/Downloads/4133-Texto%20do%20artigo-12420-1-10-20140623.pdf. Acesso em: 06 de julho de 2023.

<sup>15</sup> LE GOFF, Jacques. Hist  ria e Mem  ria. 6. ed. Campinas, SP: EDUNICAMP, 2012. P. 324.



private rural schools distributed throughout its territory. With the birth of the Brazilian Republic, and the idea of distancing the state from everything that reminded them of the times of the monarchy, this often chaotic scenario changed with the priority and obligation of primary education. In Piracuruca, as well as other cities in the interior of Piauí, official schools were created in the early years of the Republic. According to Brito (2018), when writing in 1922 about the city of Piracuruca, in the context of the centennial of Piauí:

Instruction - The state maintains two schools: one for boys and one for girls, run, respectively, by teacher Félix Amaral, appointed on September 4, 1894, and by teacher Raimunda de Barros Cavalcante, appointed on October 6, 1921. The state school for boys has an enrollment of 48 students and an average attendance of 28.<sup>16</sup>

When observing all the considerations about the existence of schools in the municipality of Piracuruca during the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century so far, it is clear that all of them were maintained by the state government. Municipal schools only began to emerge in the 1920s, a decade seen as a period of early transformations in the city's structure and in the cultural and consumer habits of the wealthy population, provided by the income from carnauba wax, which had been fetching high prices on the international market since the middle of the previous decade. Thus, according to Brito (2018), "the municipality, ex-vi of clause III of the Congress of Municipalities, created a school for boys on February 1, 1921, headed by Professor Josias de Moraes Mello". It can be seen from the highlighted excerpt and from what has already been shown previously that in the schooling process in the municipality, the male sex has always been a majority. This predominance can be explained, in part, by the social role attributed to women at the time, which considered basic reading and writing skills to be sufficient for them. By the end of that same decade, Bitencourt (1989) shows us that the number of public schools in Piracuruca was practically the same and that there were also mentions of private schools and teachers who taught girls at their homes:

In 1927, there were three public schools, two private schools, and some teachers who dedicated themselves exclusively to teaching girls and boys in their homes. The main school was called Grupo Escolar Fernando Bacellar, later called Escola Anísio Brito; the other schools were located in the villages of Tetéus and Sucuruju. The private schools belonged to teachers Eugenilino Bosen and Bite Pereira, the latter operating in the Guaraní neighborhood, popularly known as the other side of the river. Dona Carminda Carvalho was the teacher who taught reading, writing, and arithmetic to the girls and young women of the city whose parents could afford

<sup>16</sup> BRITO, Anísio; Miranda, Reginaldo (Org.). Obra reunida de Anísio Brito. Teresina: Academia Piauiense de Letras / casa Anísio Brito (Arquivo Público), 2018. p. 28.



to hire them for exclusive education.<sup>17</sup>

When we analyze the excerpt cited above, we realize that the process of educating children and young people in the city was distributed across a significant number of schools. However, the school group mentioned by the author was created in the early 1930s, in the policy of structuring primary education in the interior of Piauí during the government of federal interventor Landry Sales, appointed by then president Getúlio Vargas. The school group in question, initially named after Fernando Bacellar<sup>18</sup>, was the first school structure built for educational purposes in the city, in addition to having its school furniture<sup>19</sup>. Before that time, the schools in the municipality operated in houses borrowed or rented by the city government or the state, which were adapted for classes, and almost all of them did not have the structure, furniture, or materials to meet educational demands.

In this sense, when we observe that the structure of the schools begins to improve in the municipality, it is also noted that the children of the elite no longer exclusively occupy these educational spaces. In a speech given by the mayor of Piracuruca, Raimundo Ney Bawman<sup>20</sup>, on November 10, 1939, in celebration of the second year of the Estado Novo, he highlights the actions of the municipal government related to students without financial means enrolled in two urban schools in the municipality, saying: "I gave seventy uniforms to the poor students of the school group, I gave books, notebooks, pens, pens and pencils to the poor students of the "Presidente Getúlio Vargas" school.

According to Raimundo Ney Bawmam, it is clear that although the children of the poor population began to occupy educational spaces previously dominated by the city's economic elite, basic assistance from the municipality was necessary so that they would not stop attending classes. With this idea of assisting the children of needy families in terms of educational training, the city's parish priest at the time, Monsignor Benedito Cantuária de Almeida e Sousa, founded a school called Patronato Irmãos Dantas in 1951.

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<sup>17</sup> BITENCOURT, Jurenir Machado. *Apontamento Histórico da Piracuruca*. Teresina: Comepi, 1989. p. 83.

<sup>18</sup> He was born in Valença, PI, on an uncertain date. In 1844, he was appointed public teacher in the town of Piracuruca and also held other positions there, such as clerk of the general and provincial collectorates, secretary of the town council, notary public, justice of the peace, accountant, curator of orphans, police chief, municipal judge, councillor and public prosecutor. He died on May 26, 1915.

<sup>19</sup> Original copies of the first school desks from the Fernando Bacellar School Group still exist and are part of the collection at Casarão Luiz de Britto Mello, in Piracuruca-Piauí.

<sup>20</sup> Raimundo Ney Bauman was mayor of Piracuruca by military intervention in 1939. His most visible actions in the city were: the refurbishment and urbanization of the Irmãos Dantas Square, refurbishment of the public chair, refurbishment of the Municipal Warehouse, urbanization of the Getúlio Vargas Square.



The school's teaching staff was composed of "Olinda Santos, the first director, with the following collaborators: Aluízia Sousa, Maria Consuelo Coutinho, Rita Amaral, Jesuína Sousa and Maria do Socorro Resende". Since it was a school founded by a member of the church, religious morals were present in all aspects of the institution's functioning. Thus, the Patronato Irmãos Dantas served the population, according to Diva Alves Fortes Moraes, "in terms of intellectual and Christian education". The school only remained under the administration of the parish until 1952, because

The mission of teaching encouraged teachers and excited students. However, much more needed to be done, and urgently, for a school along the planned lines to emerge. The great vicar's battle was not over. After many contacts with religious orders, many doubts, and the choice fell on a new order, created by a bishop from the Northeast: The Daughters of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

Thus, the structure of the school, which operated in an adapted house on the outskirts of the city, underwent a series of renovations to accommodate the new administrators of the institution, with accommodations being built for the nuns and a small chapel for prayers. Thus, in February 1953, the sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Teresa of Jesus, who came from the Cariri region of Ceará, arrived in Piracuruca to take on the administrative, educational, religious and moral leadership of the Patronato Irmãos Dantas.

On the twenty-fourth day of February of the current year of one thousand nine hundred and fifty-three, in the city of Piracuruca, in the state of Piauí, seven nuns of the Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Teresa of Jesus were received with Christian enthusiasm, accompanied by their honorable Superior General, Mother Teresa Machado. This soul of tireless zeal for the Glory of God undertook this foundation, entrusting her daughters with the destiny of a new house in this city, thus accepting an invitation from the zealous vicar, Rev. Monsignor Benedito Cantuária de Almeida e Sousa, who under difficult circumstances had addressed the Diocesan Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Teresa of Jesus, founded in the city of Crato, in the state of Ceará, by the first Bishop of the Diocese of the same name – D. Quintino de Oliveira e Silva. The nuns were expected by a regular number of faithful, led by the tireless vicar who, in a gesture of paternal kindness, welcomed them affectionately, taking them first to the Main Church, to visit the Blessed Sacrament, in a gesture of gratitude for the great benefit granted to his parish. Then On the way, he took them to the parish house, where they were offered a comfortable meal. After a brief rest, the reverend Monsignor explained to the nuns the problems of his parish, which



could be solved with the cooperation of the Sisters, emphasizing the main point: that they should continue the movement of intellectual and professional education, as it had been operating for two years, independent of any public assistance, thus complementing other purposes specific to the aforementioned Congregation. Finally, without any formality, the vicar handed over the aforementioned institution to the religious “Daughters of Saint Teresa”. Afterwards, the sisters, accompanied by the children and religious associations of the parish and prominent members of local society, who had been previously invited, went to the Patronage. Upon arrival, a ceremony was held, with the blessing of the temporary chapel and the other renovated apartments in the memorable house, concluding with the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament.

Looking at the Historical Minutes of the Foundation of the Patronato Irmãos Dantas, one can see that what was planned was a project of continuity based on regular primary education and also on teaching professions to the city's young people. Thus, "The school offered several courses such as painting, typing, and embroidery, in partnership with the Serviço Social da Indústria - SESI, and this was the first place at the time to offer professional training courses to students. Furthermore, in the minutes of the inauguration of the board of directors, this prerogative of assisting the population in addition to educational practices is made very clear, since the school was a "religious, charitable, educational, cultural and social assistance institution, whose purpose is to teach, at its various levels, and to support the youth".

The school in question, initially maintained by the parish, began to operate exclusively by the Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Teresa in the 1950s, charging monthly fees to the parents of students who had the financial resources to do so. Thus, at the end of 1953, “there were approximately 197 students enrolled, of which 77 were taxpayers and 120 were non-taxpayers”. It can be seen from the information about the students who paid monthly fees that they were all girls, and some of them were not residents of the municipality. Thus, shortly after the Congregation took over the management of the Patronato Irmãos Dantas, a boarding school was set up for students who had nowhere to stay in the city. According to information from Diva Alves Fortes de Moraes, the first boarding students were: “Maria José Meneses, Savina, Salete, Francisca Brito and Maria do Carmo Moraes”

Given what has been exposed so far about the schools created in the municipality of Piracuruca, we have tried to show that even before it became a town, and years later



became a city, Piracuruca has always been provided with educational institutions, whether public or private, and despite its difficulties, they served the population in some way. However, it is also clear, according to what has been exposed, that all the schools mentioned were primary schools, education aimed at “unwinding” the student, teaching the rudiments of literacy, mainly for writing their name, basic math operations, and also the basics related to the history or formation of the country. Secondary education was sometimes unthinkable for cities with small populations or located in the interior of the country. Thus, Piracuruca remained for a long time without this “level” of education. The closest cities that had institutions of this type were the places where the children of an economic elite flocked to continue their studies and later become professionals: the state capital or the coastal city of Parnaíba.

The secondary education institution that is the subject of this study is part of the context of the expansion of this educational stage throughout the interior of Piauí and was founded in the city of Piracuruca in late 1957. However, before this, there was another school created to prepare students to enter secondary education. The institution called *Gymnasio Municipal Piracuruquense* was created by Law No. 07, of July 17, 1936, during the administration of Mayor Luiz de Moraes Meneses, and its function regarding the educational process in the municipality is already set out in Article I:

Art. 1 - The *Ginasio Municipal Piracuruquense* is hereby created in this city, a complementary education institution, to qualify candidates of both sexes for secondary and normal courses. Observing the programs established by Federal and State laws that regulate preparatory education, the standard.

From what is stated in the text of the law, it is clear that although there is not yet a secondary education institution in the municipality, the government already encourages the population to continue the educational training process, providing small subsidies to those who cannot afford the tuition fees for preparatory courses offered by the *Piracuruquense Municipal Gymnasium*, but taking into account their intellectual and cognitive capacity, by Article 4 of the aforementioned law:

Twenty percent (20%) of the number of students enrolled in the *Gymnasium* will have free tuition, exempt from paying any fees, from among those recognized as poor and suitable for their intelligence and conduct, whose choice will be at the discretion of the school's management.

The *Piracuruquense Municipal Gymnasium*, as a preparatory school, according to its internal regulations, was composed of two structures: the Admission Course, which



prepared students aged 10 or older to participate in the entrance exams for the first year of an elementary school in secondary schools in the country, with classes held from Monday to Saturday from 7 am to 11 am, and the Adaptation School, which prepared candidates aged 11 or older to enroll in the State's Normal Schools, also held from Monday to Saturday in the afternoon, from 1 pm to 5 pm.

## **AND A SCHOOL IS BORN: THE CREATION OF THE PIRACURUCA MUNICIPAL GYMNASIUM**

Even though Piracuruca had a preparatory school since the late 1930s, since it did not have a secondary school, young people were forced to look for cities where they could further their studies and later achieve higher education. It is worth noting that many families could not afford to pay for their children's education and accommodation expenses while they were studying in other cities. As a result, many students did not continue their studies and did not even envision higher education. It was in this context that, in mid-1957, projects for the creation of a high school for the city emerged in the municipal legislature. Analyzing the minutes book for the sessions of the City Council for the year 1957, it is possible to see the urgency of the process for the approval of projects 12/57 and 13/57 on the creation of the Municipal High School and its Statute, as stated in the minutes of the 2nd extraordinary session of the City Council, in 1957:

Initially, the president declared that the call for this session was related to the following: to take cognizance of and deliberate on the bills sent by the executive for consideration, voting, and approval. The aforementioned Bills were received by the secretariat of this Chamber, numbers 12 and 13/57, and provide for the creation of the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium and approve the Statute of the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium, respectively. He then stated that the mayor requested, through his official letter, which was read as a matter of procedure, that the aforementioned matters were urgent and that he expected the Legislature to make its pronouncement as soon as possible [...]. Once the request was approved, the Finance and Administration and Education Committees declared their support for the approval of the Bills [...]. The president then put the aforementioned Bills to the first vote, which received unanimous approval. Based on the excerpts from the minutes of the meeting, it can be seen that the need for a secondary education institution to operate shortly, in addition to its urgent nature, did not require specific discussions related to the financial viability of the municipality to pay for, by its revenues and demands, a structure that required physical space (building), equipment, furniture and personnel, mainly teachers and employees. Thus, the day after the approval of the aforementioned Projects, Law No. 298 of July 20, 1957, was sanctioned by Mayor José Mendes de Moraes. This law, in its art. 1, creates "with headquarters in this city, an educational institution called Piracuruca Municipal High School, to provide secondary education, in daytime and evening shifts, to both sexes." Later, in early August 1957, a new law was sanctioned, approving the Internal Regulations of the Piracuruca Municipal High School. This regulation provides all the guidance regarding the purpose, organization, board of directors,



secretariat, administrative staff, discipline assistants, teaching staff, educational guidance, student body, and penalties, in addition to the transitional provisions.

The document, in its Article IV, makes it clear that the educational institution would operate as a day school, offering classes to a mixed audience and operating in day and night shifts, and that about the disciplines and the entire organization, it would comply with the legislation of the agencies of the Ministry of Education and Culture. About teachers, the same document states in Article XIV that the institution's teaching staff would be made up of teachers hired by the City Hall, in compliance with Federal Legislation. About the teachers who would teach classes at the Municipal Gymnasium, the minutes of the Solemn Session of the Foundation of the secondary education institution held on November 3, 1957, make it clear that At the meeting, candidates for teaching positions decided on the subjects to be taught. In addition, other professionals or those with the necessary qualifications would be invited to join the teaching staff of the Gymnasium (Piracuruca, 1957). Thus, it can be seen that not only the teaching staff but also the board of directors would be made up of people of some renown in society, whether professionals or people linked to ecclesiastical functions. This choice was possibly made due to the credibility that the teachers would convey to the students and their parents, based on the requirements of morality and strictness. Thus, Monsignor Benedito Cantuária de Almeida e Sousa was chosen for the position of director. He had previously been the director of the preparatory school for the entrance course to the gymnasium, the Ateneu Piracuruquense. As previously mentioned, the remuneration of these professionals who would work at the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium would be paid by the municipal government. Thus, in March 1958, Mayor José Mendes de Moraes submitted a Bill on the remuneration of teachers at the Municipal Gymnasium, a bill approved by the councilors in a regular session on March 12, 1958.

Although the bill for the creation of the Municipal Gymnasium had been approved by the Finance and Administration Committee, what was expected was that the municipality would have the financial means to cover maintenance costs with materials and pay the staff. However, when we analyze Article XXI of the gymnasium's internal regulations, we see that "Students are subject to the payment of an annual fee of Cr\$ 720.00 (seven hundred and twenty cruzeiros). The same document also mentions that this amount could be divided into up to ten installments. The idea of paying for classes did not please the parents of future students, since in February 1958, Bill No. 1, presented by the then mayor,



was discussed in the City Council, which proposed free education at the Gymnasium. This bill was unanimously approved in the 2nd and 3rd votes of the 8th ordinary session of 1958. However, the approval of the bill for free education was criticized by the president of the session, the then vice-mayor Dr. Cícero Fortes de Cerqueira, because according to the secretary who drew up the minutes, the president

He stated that he was surprised by the legislature's attitude in approving the Bill that created free education at the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium since a proposal by Councilman Antônio Rodrigues Magalhães regarding free education for admittedly poor students enrolled in the aforementioned establishment had been rejected (Piracuruca, 1958).

Despite criticism and suspicions from the vice-mayor, the city government supported the idea of not charging students an annual fee during the first few days of the Municipal Gymnasium's operation, which does not mean that the educational establishment did not represent a large expense for the city's coffers. We can confirm this statement by looking at the text of the minutes of the 29th regular session of the City Council in 1958 when Bill No. 12/58 requested the "opening of a credit of Cr\$ 80,000,000 (eighty thousand cruzeiros) for the payment of office supplies for the Municipal Gymnasium". Still regarding the annual fee, it was charged again in 1973, in the last years of operation of the Municipal Gymnasium.

Observing what has already been discussed previously, about the creation of the Municipal Gymnasium and the adjustments in the public coffers of the municipality that made its operation possible, it is clear that unlike many schools created previously, which did not have their building, which rented by the municipality, the aforementioned educational institution began its operations in its headquarters located at Avenida Coronel Pedro de Brito, nº 934, in the city center. At the time it was built, it was considered the largest school structure in the city, very similar, at least in terms of its layout and external appearance, to the building of the old Faculty of Law of Piauí. The documentation related to the construction of the building is scanty, but it is possible that it began in the early 1950s, since Law No. 71 of July 4, 1950, opens a special credit of Cr\$ 3,500.00 (three thousand and five hundred cruzeiros) to acquire land for the construction of a school, as follows:

Art. 1- The government of the Municipality is authorized to acquire from Mr. Olegário de Moraes Machado, the land owned by him, with dimensions of one hundred and four and a half meters (104.50) on the East and West sides and twenty-four meters and sixty centimeters (24m.60) on the North and South sides, located between "Pedro de Brito" Avenue, "João Facundo" and "Abdias Neves" streets and leasehold land, for the amount of Cr\$ 3,500.00 (three thousand and five hundred cruzeiros), to be used for the construction of the Institute Municipality



Piracuruca Education Institute (Piracuruca, 1950).

Although it is a space to build the building of the Municipal Education Institute, it is possible to observe that by the dimensions given and the location of the land between the streets mentioned, it is the land where the building of the old Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium is located today. In the 1950s, the location of the property indicated in Law No. 71 was on the urban limit of the city center, where the streets and the power grid ended. Beyond this urban limit, the city was made up of a periphery with housing mostly made of low-quality materials, such as adobe (bricks made of raw clay), irregular wood taken from the nearby forests and without minimal treatment (roundwood), and roofing made of tiles or straw scattered across large plots of land accessed by winding paths, since many of the streets were not yet laid out or opened. Furthermore, the population of this part of the city did not have access to electricity.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research carried out to write this paper, so far, gives us a positive dimension about the purposes and objectives thought out when envisioning a (re)visit to the history of the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium, in the period from 1957 to 1975. What until a certain time was seen as something impossible, is now shown to be necessary to fill in the gaps that were missing in the local history and education of Piracuruca. The contributions of the studies on the educational institution do not end only in the history of the Gymnasium, but bring broader meanings for us to understand Piracuruca society in the present time.

This understanding occurs when the students realize that their attitudes as active, participatory, and critical subjects in society happen when they analyze and contextualize the process of formation of their place and their people. The activities designed and produced so far so that students can understand their space through various interfaces, in addition to the use of cognition, also enable the development of creativity when participating in the execution of the activities in the manual.

The objective of this study, which seeks to investigate issues that affect or bother us in the region where we live and in the school environment, is being achieved. The lack of teaching materials that allow, through creative and dynamic activities, understanding the world around us and its transformations becomes evident.

In the study carried out so far, it is observed that, at no time, was the history of the Piracuruca Municipal Gymnasium, even in only 17 years, analyzed in isolation. It is always



intertwined with aspects of local history, its subjects, its practices, and ways of living and acting. Interfaces such as heritage, temporalities (past and present), and the promotion of an investigative and analytical stance on the part of students regarding their society are fundamental for them to recognize themselves as historical subjects who act and transform. By participating in one's history and the history of one's place, the aspects of civic education that value democracy, solidarity, and participation in collective life are strengthened.

For the historiography of the city of Piracuruca, the study on the Municipal Gymnasium will be the first systematic study on a school in the city, without intending to cover its entire history, but rather aspects that are also related to local history and that can contribute to writing about education in Piracuruca.



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