

The man and the institution: representations of Felipe Tiago Gomes and his trajectory on the National Campaign of Community Schools (1940-2000)

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ABSTRACT

This paper approaches some aspects of the life of Felipe Tiago Gomes, founder of the *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (CNEC) (National Campaign of Community Schools), a national sponsor created in 1943. The study aims at identifying his trajectory in the project of expansion CNEC and analyzing the representations about him and his work. The investigation's theoretical framework is based on cultural history, mainly on authors such as Dosse and Chartier. The historical period analyzed in this paper considers the fact that the representations of Felipe Tiago Gomes exceed the year of his death, 1996. The methodological procedures are centered on oral history and historical documentary analysis, developed from an ample archive compiled throughout the research. After analyzing these documents, it was possible to perceive a process of fusion between the image of the founder and the entity created by him, as well as a crystallization concerning memories of his trajectory.

KEYWORDS

CNEC; oral history; Felipe Tiago Gomes.

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O HOMEM E A INSTITUIÇÃO: REPRESENTAÇÕES SOBRE FELIPE TIAGO GOMES E SEU PERCURSO DIANTE DA CAMPANHA NACIONAL DE ESCOLAS DA COMUNIDADE (1940-2000)

RESUMO

Este artigo volta-se para aspectos da vida de Felipe Tiago Gomes, fundador da mantenedora educacional Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade (CNEC), criada em 1943. Os objetivos do estudo são identificar o percurso de Felipe no projeto de expansão da mantenedora e analisar as representações sobre o personagem e sua trajetória. A investigação encontra respaldo na história cultural, sobretudo em autores como Dosse e Chartier. O recorte temporal estabelecido considera o fato de que as representações sobre Felipe Tiago Gomes transcendem seu ano de falecimento, 1996. Os procedimentos metodológicos centram-se na história oral e na análise documental histórica, desenvolvida com base em amplo acervo constituído ao longo da pesquisa. Por meio do recorte realizado, foi possível perceber o processo de fusão entre a imagem do fundador e a rede por ele criada, bem como a cristalização das memórias sobre sua trajetória.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

CNEC; história oral; Felipe Tiago Gomes.

EL HOMBRE Y LA INSTITUCIÓN: REPRESENTACIONES SOBRE FELIPE TIAGO GOMES Y SU RECORRIDO FRENTE A LA CAMPAÑA NACIONAL DE ESCUELAS DE LA COMUNIDAD (1940-2000)

RESUMEN

Este artículo trata de aspectos de la vida de Felipe Tiago Gomes, fundador de la mantenedora educativa *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (CNEC) (Campaña Nacional de Escuelas de la Comunidad), creada en 1943. Los objetivos del estudio son identificar su recorrido en el proyecto de expansión de la mantenedora y analizar las representaciones sobre el fundador y su trayectoria. La investigación se respalda en la historia cultural, sobre todo en autores como Dosse y Chartier. El recorte temporal establecido considera el hecho de que las representaciones sobre Felipe Tiago Gomes trascienden su año de fallecimiento, 1996. Los procedimientos metodológicos se centran en la historia oral y en el análisis documental histórico, desarrollado a partir del amplio acervo constituido a lo largo de la investigación. A partir del recorte realizado, fue posible percibir el proceso de fusión entre la imagen del fundador y la red por él creada, así como la cristalización de las memorias sobre su trayectoria.

PALABRAS CLAVE

CNEC; historia oral; Felipe Tiago Gomes.

INTRODUCTION

The present article derives from a broader, ongoing study in the field of cultural history, more specifically within the scope of the biographical genre. Studies from this perspective have grown considerably in recent decades. That is not a chance return, but the result of a series of changes in the characteristics of History as a discipline: “biography has returned as an object of erudite history, reflecting on human meaning-bearing actions, intentionality, actor justification, memory traces” (Dosse, 2012, p. 140). Thinking about individual over structural logic has given the field of biography much relevance among historians. Thus, one no longer seeks to understand the life of a biography’s subject as “a postulated totality”, since it is a trajectory “questioned with regard to its inner oppositions, contradictions and diverse places of belonging” (Dosse, 2012, p. 142). The life of the subject of a biography is then thought of from a non-linear, coherent perspective, from its many possibilities.

In this respect, the text focuses on Felipe Tiago Gomes, the character examined in the ongoing study mentioned above, and it does not fit into what might be called a “classical historical biography”, as it seeks to narrate aspects of the individual’s life based on a broad document corpus. In the case at hand, the study focuses on Gomes’s relationship with the school sponsoring system he founded, the *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (CNEC) (National Campaign of Community Schools), and the representations about his history in its trajectory.

The CNEC currently operates at all educational levels and is present in 18 Brazilian states. The system’s growth has always been linked to partnerships with the government at different levels, as can be seen in Silva (2003). According to her, during the 1960s, the share of public funds from federal and state governments assigned to the Campaign increased considerably (Silva, 2003, p. 113). The driving force behind this expansion was the system’s founder, who toured the country to promote the institution and call for the engagement of political and community figures in places where there was no access to the final years of primary education. For this reason, the focus of this paper was the life of this character, who despite having been the campaign’s main figure until his death in 1996, did not have his life trajectory researched. The sponsoring system, on the other hand, has a significant number of studies about its operation in different states in the country.¹

Preliminarily, it should be mentioned that Felipe Tiago Gomes did not practice teaching in the classroom, except in the first stages of existence of the sponsoring system he founded. However, various documents commonly use the word “teacher” to designate this character. This is possibly due to his connection to the educational cause, since he dedicated his life to lead the CNEC and, by means of that position, to advocate the access of underprivileged groups to

1 For the present study, we established a dialogue with the following studies about CNEC: Azevedo (2007); Ferrer (2010); Santos (2007); Silva (2010); Silva (2001), which was later published as a book that is mentioned in the present study.

education. Thus, given his performance in the educational field, one of the forms of appropriating and representing his image is through the “teacher” designation. Another element that corroborates calling him a teacher is the fact that many CNEC system schools lacked funds to pay their teachers, so they mobilized the community to find people who were willing to volunteer. To reinforce this request, the sponsor system used the story of its foundation, highlighting that several youths, including Gomes, taught groups of students without access to the final years of primary education without being paid. Thus, using the example of the Campaign’s founder, CNEC schools gradually managed to raise funds to exist and consolidate in the educational scene.

With these points clarified, the aim of this article was to understand the work of Felipe Tiago Gomes as head of the CNEC, as well as to analyze the representations about this founder and his trajectory. To that end, the article was divided into two sections: the first addresses aspects of his work in relation to the Campaign, while the second deals with representations about his trajectory during and after its existence.

LIFE AS THE OBJECT OF HISTORY: THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL PATHS

In writing this text, we used a document collection built over years of research on the CNEC and its founder, thus the empirical corpus is formed by memory narratives of people who were close to Gomes, as well as people who worked at the CNEC system. In addition to these accounts, we used newspaper stories, books on the CNEC — both by Gomes and by other people linked to the institution — as well as documents from the memorial built in honor of Gomes in his native town, Picuí, in the hinterland of the state of Paraíba, northeastern Brazil. Due to the limits on the extension of this article, it is not possible to detail the document collection process; however, it must be said that it is the result of a research process that took more than four years, involved a number of travels and negotiations and considered studies previously developed.

With regard to the methodological procedures adopted in this study, it is worth pointing out that oral history is a methodology that allows “expanding the possibilities of interpreting the past” (Alberti, 2015) and “gives us access to the historicity of private lives” (Portelli, 2016, p. 17). As Schmidt (2017) points out, in a biographical study, oral sources allow exploring facets that were unknown or inaccessible from written biographical documents. Generally speaking, the written documents found throughout the study allow considering a few points about Gomes; however, they reveal elements of a man whose public image was meticulously built. Thus, through the interviews conducted, we were able to see this character from other angles — not that our aim was to uncover elements of his private life or to bring up intimate issues; but since historical biography is an approach that understands the individual as a multifaceted being, studying it based on different sources may provide a possibility to escape an evolutionary, linear logic.

The memories of our interviewees crystallize certain aspects of Gomes's existence, such as his complete selflessness and humility. Such memories are not understood as a mere depository of information, but as an ongoing process of elaboration and (re-)signification (Portelli, 2016). Nevertheless, they allow seeing that the elements that formed his trajectory as a public man were not just random; rather, they were gradually built from the network of relationships in which Gomes circulated.

The Chart 1 presents some information about interviews and interviewees. Then, a short profile of each individual surveyed is outlined, since this allows understanding more clearly their relationships with each other and with the institution.

Chart 1 – Roll of interviewees.

Interviewee	Level of education	Date and place of the interview	Interview length	Transcription length
Antônio Carlos Fialho	Bachelor's degree in Philosophy	October 2014, at his house	54 min	11 pages
José Moacir Schreiber	Bachelor's degree in English	September 2013, at his work place	98 min	24 pages
Acácio Dantas	Bachelor's degree in Mining Engineering	July 2016, at his work place	50 min	15 pages
Maria de Lourdes Henriques	Bachelor's degree in Education, Master's degree in Education, PhD in Philosophy and Educational Sciences	July 2016, at her house	1h40min	26 pages

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Source: Research database.

From the perspective of cultural history, the memories that emerge in the narratives of individuals are understood as representations of the past. Representations are fragments crossed by forgetfulness and silences; they are “internalized intellectual schemes that create the figures through which the present can acquire meaning, the other can become intelligible, and space can be deciphered” (Chartier, 1990, p. 17). Representation is not reality, but rather what an individual signifies about the reality he has experienced.

Although Gomes is often remembered as a “teacher”, teaching was not exactly his occupation throughout his life. However, having built his trajectory in connection with the educational cause, one of the roles his image is associated with is that of a teacher. In a text entitled *O sonho do professor Felipe* [The Dream of Teacher Felipe], published in the *O Cruzeiro* magazine, writer Rachel de Queiroz emphasizes the actions and dedication of the man she calls a teacher: “he is the personification of the

inventor, the father of the CNEG² (“O sonho...”, 1962, p. 114). Among the factors that collaborated to building that image are the titles and honors he received, such as the “Medal of the National Order of Educational Merit” in recognition of his work for education and for expanding schooling. A note published in *CNEC in Revista* (a publication of the CNEC) celebrates the medal, which was given to the founder of the institution by the then president João Figueiredo (Figure 1).³



Figure 1 – Note about the homage to the founder of the institution.

Source: *A chama...* (1983, p. 7).

In a reflection about the social processes involving characters and institutions, one can relate the construction of representations about the founder and the entity to the process of inventing a tradition. The invention of traditions is “[...] a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawn 1997, p. 12). It, therefore, indicates important symptoms about forms of appropriation of facts and discourses that must be analyzed in the context that produced them. The representations about Felipe Tiago Gomes, his relationship with the CNEC and the communitarian slogans that characterize the institution constitute the creation of a tradition that crossed the trajectory of both. Thus, their trajectories

2 Over the years, the campaign has undergone changes in its denomination, as can be seen in the course of this text.

3 João Batista de Oliveira Figueiredo was the last president of the military regime which ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. His term in office was from 1979 to 1985, a period characterized by gradual political opening. Available in: <http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-biografico/joao-batista-de-oliveira-figueiredo>. Accessed on: Feb. 14, 2018.

are interconnected and cannot be dissociated from the historical context in which that tradition was built. This argument underlies the discussion that follows.

THE MAN AND THE INSTITUTION: THE EARLY STAGES OF FELIPE TIAGO GOMES'S TRAJECTORY AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CNEC

Felipe Tiago Gomes was born in Picuí, in the state of Paraíba. Of humble origin and having received a heavily Catholic education, he was still young when he moved to Recife, in the state of Pernambuco, to complete his education. In 1941, he went to Ginásio Pernambucano and, in the following year, he was appointed Secretary of Social Affairs at the Student Residence. In 1944, he entered the Law School of Recife, from which he graduated in 1948. During this period, Felipe Tiago Gomes was appointed mayor of his native town. In parallel with these and other activities, Gomes started to mobilize his fellow students in a campaign for the literacy of underprivileged people with no access to the final years of primary education.

The *Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* (National Campaign for Community Schools) therefore emerged in Recife, Pernambuco, in 1943, during a period in Brazilian history known as Estado Novo — a regime imposed by the then president Getúlio Vargas — and while the world experienced the horrors of World War II. Initially, it was called *Campanha para o Ginásiano Pobre* (CGP) (Campaign for the Poor Primary Student) and was aimed at enabling the operation of schools in poor areas without public schools. The institution came into existence when Felipe Tiago Gomes, after reading the book *Inside Latin America*, by the American writer John Gunther,⁴ learned about the experience of Haya de La Torre, in Peru, and thus mobilized a group of friends to create schools for the underprivileged:

4 John Gunther, an American journalist, traveled to more than 20 Latin American countries. His observations are described in the book mentioned above. Throughout his journey, the author interviewed a number of people and recorded his perceptions on what he heard from them. Each country he visited was addressed in the book, in which the author discusses their political and social organization. In the case of Peru, Gunther focuses on Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, who, according to him, “became a revolutionary leader overnight” (Gunther, 1943, p. 216). The author dedicates a few pages to talk about Haya de La Torre, whom he describes as “an idealist with wide-reaching aspirations” (Gunther, 1943, p. 227). In 1921, this character, then a student, founded in Lima the Popular Universities, in which young students gave free classes for those who could not attend schools. The project’s motto was “Up with Culture! Up with the School!”, and it expanded rapidly. At different times, Felipe declares his admiration for the actions of La Torre, who later became president of Peru. On these occasions, Haya de La Torre appears as one of the great influences on his life. In 1962, he arranged a reception in honor of the politician and took him to see the headquarters of the educational sponsor entity in Rio de Janeiro. At the time, Haya de La Torre would have said that “this measure should be adopted in all Latin American countries and in other nations in the so-called underdeveloped group”. Information as published in the *Diário do Paraná* newspaper on September 29th, 1962 (n.p.), with the title *Haya de La Torre foi homenageado pelo CNEC e <Associados> de Minas*.

The founders of the Campaign didn't have easy money to study. Some went without food to complete primary education... And they were outraged to see so many youths with a desire for wider cultural horizons and forbidden to reach them due to lack of means! Philosophers, sociologists and other men of culture said that such an inequality was really unfair: the children of the rich could free themselves from ignorance; the poor were doomed to remain in the social infrastructure. (Gomes, 1980, p. 12)

It was clear that, for the man who devised the Campaign, the initiative represented an attempt to break with the authoritarian scenario of the time. Liberation from authoritarian regimes and the social ascension of the less privileged would be achieved through the dissemination of schools. Once the idea was accepted by the group of students, a series of movements was carried out to launch the Campaign. The first of these was the publication of a newsletter in which the young founders expounded their ideas about the uprising. Below is an excerpt from the account of Joel Pontes, one of the creators of the Campaign:

Our ideal is to collaborate in the formation of a national consciousness, helping the arousal of perhaps brilliant personalities and intellects that are lost due to a lack of our solidarity. We want poor primary students — low-skilled, factory workers and other laborers — to become aware of their duties to this society and of their own duties. We want people who cannot only see newspaper stories — but who can also express their opinions, who can understand their influence on everyone's lives and what they represent as an evolution of the world, as a victory for good and as a reason to live. More rewarding for us than receiving money is finding peers who are encouraged by our ideal. (Gomes, 1980, p. 19).

It was clear that these students' intention was to get the society to accept and recognize the initiative, and they spared no efforts or arguments in order to emphasize the movement's importance and nobility of purpose. They saw the education of the underprivileged as the only alternative for changing reality — a view shared by various groups of society which advocated that building a more democratic and fair society could only be achieved through education. Thus, the creation of the Campaign accompanied a series of mass movements that saw in universal education for children and adults a rupture with the problems faced by society:

These mass campaigns developed through extensive publicity for universal education and the creation of schools for adults and children, supported by contributions from members, stamp sales, festivals and donations. They had a philanthropic and humanitarian conception of education, and were based on the view that education was the cause of all problems. (Silva, 2001, p. 98)

The CGP's publicity was carried out through newsletters and a series of articles published in newspapers in the region throughout 1943. Gradually, the Campaign expanded into other states in northeastern Brazil. Such publicity

was supported by donations from collaborators, the staging of drama plays with amateur casts and requests for government funds. In 1947, Felipe Tiago Gomes managed to approach the then minister of education who served in the administration of Eurico Gaspar Dutra, president of Brazil from 1946 to 1950, to request support for the cause. Based on this type of networking, the Campaign was publicized and became known, which in turn facilitated the raising of funds (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Notes about the expansion of the campaign lead by Felipe Tiago Gomes. Source: *Campanha...* (1948a); *Campanha...* (1948b).

In 1948, under the name of *Campanha dos Educandários Gratuitos* (Campaign for Free Schools), the organization's first congress was held: "I launched the idea of holding a congress with the organization's state representatives to give national scope to our movement, as recommended by teacher Lourenço Filho" (Gomes, 1980, p. 64). These congresses would come to be periodically held in order to reinforce the ideals of the Campaign and its relationship with schools. It is also worth mentioning that Lourenço Filho,⁵ a precursor of Escola Nova and a supporter of adult education, stood out for his encouragement of the Campaign.

Among other publications, Gomes's book *História da Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade* [The Story of the National Campaign for Community

5 Lourenço Filho was a teacher who held different positions at education-related agencies in Brazil. He was one of the people behind the dissemination of the movement called Escola Nova, which, inspired by philosopher John Dewey's thoughts, advocated reforms in the concept of education to be applied in schools.

Schools] helped organize his biography as it lists the motives behind the creation of the CNEC. Records like this can help understand the representations about Gomes and his trajectory. In his writings, when mentioning the reasons that led him to create the Campaign, Gomes (1980) refers to his poor childhood, the obstacles to attend school and the historical context in which the country and the world were:

[...] We were in the middle of World War II. The students shouted for freedom, taking advantage of rallies against Germany, Japan, and Italy. Recife, which was going through blackouts as a security measure, was the city that suffered the most the consequences of dictatorship. These young people witnessed the clash of ideas and also participated in it. But out of the anguish that tormented the group, a light of hope was lit. What use was liberating the world if Brazil remained a slave? Hence the resolution of those young men to seek freedom that did not spring from material trenches, but from the operation of thousands of schools. (Gomes, 1980, p. 12)

Thus, in that conjuncture, education seemed like a means for liberation from the authoritarian regimes in force in Brazil and in some countries around the world.

Felipe Tiago Gomes never married or had children, and he dedicated his entire life to CNEC. According to teachers Antônio Carlos Fialho and Moacir Schreiber, the CNEC under the administration of Gomes was pervaded by an idealistic attitude towards education, thus following the profile of its founder:

When he was alive, the CNEC, let's put it this way, it had a profile, a philosophy, a strong philosophy I'd say – me being the oldest man in the organization — a sort of “idealistic” philosophy of keeping schools at all costs. [...] The founder, as far as I know, never got married, at least I've never heard of teacher Felipe having a wife, I suppose he embraced that cause and married the cause. Then it spread across Brazil, there was a CNEC in each Brazilian state, schools as small as ours. While he was alive it was like that, a more idealistic thing, “let's keep them going...” (Schreiber, interview, 2013)

Teacher Antônio Carlos Fialho (2013) also mentioned the idealistic attitude of CNEC's founder: “Felipe Tiago Gomes was a great idealist. I think he was a lawyer in Pernambuco, and he thought, with a group of young people, about founding a school for the poor. He even wanted a completely free school, a community school” (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Felipe Tiago Gomes.⁶

Source: *Você conhece...* (2008).

In the work of Felipe Tiago Gomes, one can see his intent to perpetuate his work and deeds. In this respect, there is an attempt at *fling his own life*⁷ (Artiéres, 1998). In the book cited below, where the founder narrates the story of the Campaign, one can see the emphasis on his personal trajectory in relation to it, since Gomes talks about his own selflessness and determination, and emphasizes the importance of passing these values to the next generations:

It is necessary for the thousands of young Cnecist students to know how the National Campaign for Community Schools came about. The institution's struggles, its founders' self-sacrifices, and its leaders' selflessness, must all be a source of pride for the youths attending our schools. It is also necessary that the spirit of combativeness of those days do not fall down to the level of ordinary things, of easy accommodation. Our past struggles and victories cannot be replaced by a routine so comfortable to individuals of an unadventurous nature [...] I hope that my contribution to the STORY OF THE CNEC will be viewed by readers as an unpretentious narration... I just wanted to narrate the events, many of which are entirely related to me. Hence the personalism that appears frequently in these pages. (Gomes, 1980, p. 11)

6 According to teacher Moacir Schreiber, every CNEC school had a portrait of the sponsor organization's founder.

7 Artiéres (1998, p. 11) says that “[...] we do not file our lives, we do not put our lives in a conserve of any sort; we do not keep all the apples in our personal basket; we compromise with reality, we manipulate existence: we omit, erase, scratch, underline, highlight certain passages... In an autobiography — the most finished-out filing practice —, not only do we choose certain events, but we also arrange them in a narration; the choice and classification of events will determine the meaning we want to give to our lives”.

In the book *CNEC: a força de um ideal* (1986), Felipe Tiago Gomes compiles the speeches he gave at CNEC annual meetings in different states. The events featured speeches by the founder of the Campaign and also by local politicians. All the speeches address the work of Felipe Tiago Gomes, his selflessness and perseverance and also the importance of the CNEC system for Brazilian education. Below is an excerpt from a speech by congressman Severino Otávio, from the state of Pernambuco, about the founder:

I have a deep admiration for those who dedicate the best part of their lives to the noble task of educating generations. I can tell you that Felipe Tiago Gomes, with the fearlessness of the visionaries and the persistence of an apostle, has put his name in the hall of the great Brazilian educators. (Gomes, 1986, p. 81)

Over the years, the Campaign continued to expand and came to play an important role in the educational scene at that time, where illiteracy rates were high and schools were insufficient. Throughout this period, Felipe Tiago Gomes continued to travel to promote the Campaign and try to establish partnerships with the government. In the late 1950s, during Juscelino Kubitschek's term in presidency, the Campaign became part of the government's developmentalist plan — Sarah Luisa Lemos Kubitschek, the country's first lady, served as president of the Campaign for several years. In this context, Law n. 3,557, of May 1959, established that the Campaign was to receive funds from the Ministry of Education. The amount was established according to the number of classes in the school units sponsored by the entity, which in turn should send reports to the Ministry of Education informing the number of classes, students and grades. These documents should be certified by state education agencies. Thus, as Silva (2001, p. 113) explains,

The Campaign gradually developed its activities in line with the State's discourse. The connection between CNEC's purposes and actions and the developmentalist policy can be considered as a factor for its expansion, with funds provided by the State. Since its foundation, 1959 is the year of its greatest expansion, with the creation of 120 schools.

Thus, the system's expansion took place through partnerships with personalities, among which, as mentioned earlier: Sara Kubitschek; Benjamin Sodré, a navy admiral; and Marly Macieira Sarney, the wife of former Brazilian President José Sarney; among other characters who occupied positions of prominence in the political scene at the time. These people were linked for many years to the CNEC through the institution's honorary presidency, and they acted as intermediaries with the government to raise funds for the sponsor entity. Therefore, we can see the power relations established between these individuals: from the Foucaultian perspective, "power relations are a set of actions that deal with other possible actions and operate on a field of possibilities: they can induce or separate. They can facilitate, hinder, extend, limit, impede" (Castro, 2016, p. 327). So, by exercising their influence, the people involved strengthened the cause and their own image as public figures.

As for the institution's hierarchical structure, it was organized as follows: a National Presidency, a National Board, and the Members, who constituted a sort of committee. As can be seen in Silva (2001), in general, all these positions were

occupied by members of congress or teachers. At regional level, there were the “state sector” and the “local sector”; the latter was formed by members of the community where the CNEC was situated, and membership was voluntarily exercised. It is worth noting that the hierarchical structure of the institution has undergone several changes over the years, so these are general characteristics.

In the 1960s, the Campaign continued to expand and, as a result, it reviewed issues relating to its own rules. According to Silva (2001), from 1960 to 1961, the sponsor entity created 105 new schools, totaling 39,000 students. In that stage, still according to the author, the entity reinforced its communitarian character. During that period, the sponsor adopted an anti-individualistic stance, thus advocating the mobilization of local communities on issues involving the schools. In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that the Campaign did not take the initiative to open schools: the process had to be launched by the community; from then on, the entity provided assistance with the bureaucratic issues involved in the opening process and, later, it provided support with management issues. Thus, in order for this movement to flow, it was necessary to reinforce the entity’s idealist, communitarian mottos, which were based in the actions of its founder.

Among the documents that show the dissemination of CNEC ideals, it is worth highlighting the contents of the anthems of the entity: *Canção Cenequista* [Cneclist Song], *o Hino Cenequista* [Cneclist Anthem] e *Lindo é* [It Is Beautiful]. In the content of the compositions, we can find the Campaign’s conceptions with regard to education. The songs have a certain constructive tone that affirms transformation through the association between idealism and work. The Chart 2 presents excerpts of the compositions:

Chart 2 – Excerpts from the CNEC hymns.

Canção Cenequista	Hino Cenequista	Lindo é
<p>É uma ideia que marcha E que se espalha no nosso Brasil, É uma semente lançada e frutificada a se expandir Gente ajudando a gente, Todos a construir Amplas estradas, para os caminhos de um mundo melhor Isto é C-N-E-C Trabalho, idealismo, Isto é C-N-E-C É todo um país a despertar Venha também participar E muito obrigado, amigo.</p>	<p>Tu que tens mais riso e menos pranto. Tu que tens mais paz e menos luta. Fica em silêncio um minuto só; Para e escuta: Uma luz que a Escola Irradia. E afugenta da treva o pavor. Há-de o povo lutar e vencer Sem temor! Sem temor! Amigo, avante! Na falange Cenequista Ocupa o teu lugar Pelo Brasil, Com fervor de idealista: TRABALHAR!</p>	<p>Lindo é, Lutarmos por um mundo bem melhor É fazer Uma canção feliz em tom maior Lindo é estudar Tendo no peito a fibra de sempre vencer É ter na alma a satisfação de ser Cenequista de coração.</p>

Source: Hinos... (2009).
Elaboration of the authors.

One can easily find references to the act of working for the expansion of the Campaign and making it a cause worth a daily fight. Likewise, the anthems reinforce the idea that the union between school members was necessary to disseminate and consolidate the movement. Also noteworthy is the excerpt of the *Cneclist Anthem*

in which the author refers to the school as an entity that radiates light and “scares away from darkness the dread”. In this passage, the author seems to refer to CNEC schools as though they had a certain sacred character and were thus an option for a better world. Moreover, all three compositions expressly say that the dedication to the cause and the workforce employed in it would build a “better world”. Being a Cnecist would be tantamount to fighting for a better world. Thus, for the interviewee Maria de Lourdes Henriques, who taught at CNEC and worked with Gomes, Cnecism

it is the doctrine that guides the lives of Cnecists. Being a Cnecist is participating actively in CNEC activities with joy and solidarity. In my view, the CNEC is an educational philosophy that is actually transmitted by Felipe Tiago Gomes and, as you receive it in homoeopathic doses, it becomes stronger and you become a member [...] That’s what Cnecism is about: a doctrine you receive in homoeopathic doses and when it penetrates your body, you’ll forever be a Cnecist. You’ll suffer if bad things happen to CNEC, the injustices and everything.” (Henriques, interview, 2016)

Therefore, we can see that the byword “Cnecism” finds corroboration in the man who was one of its creators. Gomes’s selflessness and dedication were the ingredients that drove the actions in benefit of the Campaign and served as an example to those who approached the movement. Thus, the institution began to assume the benevolent characteristics of its founder, and, as it expanded through a number of schools, the dissemination and recognition of his deeds also grew in such a way that one thing could not dissociate from the other.

For all the discourse, according to Silva (2001), the Campaign has always sought to conform to the principles of the federal government in order to continue, with the period investigated in this study being the one with greatest growth in the number of schools and students in the Cnecist system. In this context, public authorities lent buildings and/or provided scholarships in places where there were no public schools for all. Therefore, the CNEC dedicated efforts to implement vocational programs and workshops in schools, thus aligning their actions with the military regime (Figure 4).



Figure 4 – Felipe Tiago Gomes (on the left), the military president Ernesto Geisel (center) and the Navy admiral Benjamin Sodré (right), decade of 1970.

Source: *Felipe...* (2009).

Subsidies from the relationship with the government — at federal level and, from the 1960s, also at state level — accounted for a good part of the Campaign's revenue. At the same time, the monthly financial contributions given by the community in which the schools were built became institutionalized. Thus, members of the community, through an internal body called the Local Sector, should contribute a predefined amount. In addition, the community was responsible for the school's plot of land and building maintenance. As a result of these changes, at CNEC congresses held in the late 1960s, the Campaign changed its name to CNEC, which remains to date.

According to Silva (2003), in the 1940s, the Brazilian government adopted a work methodology called community development, through which adult and youth literacy and education campaigns were planned.⁸ The methodology was aimed at preventing the contact of the population with communism, as well as encouraging lower classes to engage both in services for their welfare and in government programs. This methodology was institutionalized by the United Nations (UN) through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1950s⁹ to prevent the spread of communism and keep peripheral countries aligned and under some degree of dependence.

In Brazil, although community work emerged in the 1940's, its dissemination as a practice only occurred in the 1950's in connection with the perspective of solving social problems and boosting the community as a development unit. Adult education and the problem of rural underdevelopment are the main issues that DC strategies aimed to address [...]. (Silva, 2003, p. 24)

We believe that the campaign initiated by Gomes incorporates this DC by associating it with the selflessness of its founder; thus, the CNEC resorted to communities to consolidate the educational spaces it sponsored. In community development's view, progress and social reform would come from integration and

8 The *Campanha de Educação de Adolescentes e Adultos* (CEAA) (Youth and Adult Education Campaign) was created in 1947 during president Eurico Gaspar Dutra's administration, focusing on rural areas. Later, from 1958 to 1961, the *Campanha Nacional do Analfabetismo* (CNEA) (National Campaign on Illiteracy) takes place. This campaign focused on expanding the primary school system, increasing the education level and promoting community actions.

9 During the Cold War period, the superpowers at the head of the conflict, i.e., the United States and the Soviet Union, mobilized a series of actions to strengthen their domains and ideological views. Therefore, a series of interventions were promoted to contain the threat represented by the rival superpower. However, theorists such as Hobsbawm (1995, p. 224) and Chomsky (1996) point out that the conflict was used by both parties to justify their actions on their own population and on aligned countries. For Chomsky (1996, p. 104), the Cold War "was a kind of tacit arrangement between the Soviet Union and the United States under which the US conducted its wars against the Third World and controlled its allies in Europe, while the Soviet rulers kept an iron grip on their own internal empire and their satellites in Eastern Europe — each side using the other to justify repression and violence in its own domains". Thus, to some extent, segments of society such as education were affected by such movements.

voluntary cooperation and “the agents of this process would be the leaders who should stimulate change through their own examples, their accomplishments and the relationships they would establish with others” (Silva, 2003, p. 23). Like CNEC, the DC’s perspective consisted in focusing on the strength of social groups to make repairs to their reality, rather than aiming at structural reforms.

From the mid 1970s, the CNEC faced difficulties to support itself as funds from the federal government were insufficient, communities had difficulties maintaining schools and state governments began to purchase less scholarships. The sponsor entity then began a process of diversifying activities, thus creating vocational education programs in different areas, as well as adult education programs. From the 1980s, the number of CNEC schools declined due to the expansion of public education schools during a period in which the country experienced redemocratization after the end of the civil-military dictatorship. The decline in the number of CNEC schools continued throughout the 1990s.

By analyzing the Campaign’s trajectory according to documents studied and comparing it with the narratives of the interviewees, we can see that the discourse based on idealism and communitarianism is constructed from its founder. Throughout his life, he made a point of emphasizing his dedication and selflessness, using them as drivers of actions to support the schools, which needed subsidies to continue operating. To disseminate such principles, the sponsor organized annual congresses, which included members of CNEC schools across the country, authorities and the founder himself. The communitarian and idealist discourse of the CNEC is at odds with the fact that, over the decades, it adapted its ideals to the measures of the federal government as it aimed to increase the number of schools in premises built by communities, since both land and buildings would eventually be owned by the sponsor entity. In other words, while the institution preached power to the community to make up for the absence of the state, it operated along with the state to guarantee its own existence.

IDEALIST AND VISIONARY: REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF FELIPE TIAGO GOMES

In this section, we will deal with the representations on and forms of appropriation of Felipe Tiago Gomes’ image. In this case, we selected narratives of memories of people who were close to the character, who worked with him during the period he was chairman of the CNEC.

One of the interviewees, Acácio Dantas, was one of Gomes’s “chosen ones”, that is, someone selected by the founder of the Campaign to carry his projects forward. For Acácio, the founder had a “sharp eye” and was able to detect individuals with a potential for managing projects linked to the CNEC system. With a degree in Mining Engineering, shortly after graduating he was invited by Gomes to coordinate the mining project, which was linked to another, larger project, the *Fundo para o Desenvolvimento de Picuí* (FUNDEPI) (Fund for the Development of Picuí). To perform his role, he began to circulate around Brasília, at meetings with ministers and other authorities, in order to raise funds:

I was young when I graduated at 23, 24 years old, so at the age of 25 I was at the Ministries, meeting with the Minister of Mines and Energy, and in parallel with this project, while it was being processed in there, we did a very beautiful job here in Picuí [...] the Federal University of Paraíba set up here in Picuí a center for the training of lapidaries and mineral artisans, precisely because here we have some minerals that can be turned into mineral handicrafts to make gems, aquamarine, tourmaline, onyx, amethyst. And then, we set up infrastructure and, by using this basis provided by the Federal University of Paraíba here in Picuí, we expanded and trained many lapidaries, it was a very beautiful thing. (Dantas, interview, 2016)

According to Acácio, the project faced many problems, from opposition by the owners of the lands to be exploited to lack of funds. Although many areas were requested for the project, the conflicts this movement generated and the lack of funds prevented its continuation:

It was a mining project, but with a view to valuing the worker, the miners, the small prospector. And we know that's where you face reality, since it's an activity that big players take over, that they'll pay the price and then it gets kind of difficult for you to change that logic of extraction and to beat the market. So it was, I had to leave it, because the whole thing started, not really, we couldn't see any prospects, there was no prospect of funds, really, to do this project the way we planned, the way we conceived it and saw, it would be very important for the region. (Dantas, interview, 2016)

The mention of internal conflicts in the city pervades Acácio's memories — not only with regard to FUNDEPI projects, but also with regard to political issues. This patronage brought about controversy in the city and caused Felipe to find groups who resisted his plans for Picuí:

[...] we had a mayor, he'd been many years in office, and it's not that I'm trying to incriminate, not at all... Culture itself leads to it. It was a local chief kind of thing, a really backward town, someone without a vision, without much expectation of that prospect of developing the city, surely he felt really anguished about it, wanting to make the city... Imagine, the potential he had, it's not like a representative proposing a bill to bring funds to the city, it was his capacity to mobilize and go there, in power, and he saw all the potential he had developed here, his city, only the political heads here, very archaic, very backwards, so he'd hold it back. (Dantas, interview, 2016)

In Acácio's memories, Gomes is seen as a visionary, someone who could see beyond his reality and who, by doing so, wanted to take action to change it. However, he did not enter the political game in person, but through his chosen ones, as an attempt to dodge resistance and organize the scenario to his benefit. Acácio himself became a councilor in Picuí by influence of Gomes. He was elected through the support of the CNEC and, as a result, he was the third most voted

for councilor. He says he immediately felt the resistance surrounding the actions promoted by Gomes's projects, because, according to him, they believed that "Mr. Gomes wants to take over...". The plans of the CNEC founder included getting the interviewee to run for mayor of Picuí, and so they had to work for that goal. However, according to Acácio, the political class did not accept that possibility. In his lifetime, Gomes failed to get one of his chosen ones elected mayor of the city. However, years after his death, both became mayors.

Elements such as these allow us to think about the context of individual actions, more specifically that even after his death, the figure of Gomes continues to influence the acts of those who were part of his life. We are not attributing this to the exceptionality of Gomes, of his trajectory or of his followers; rather, we are saying that the representations created around this individual mobilized the actions of those who knew him, and that is what must be understood.

In the case of teacher Maria de Lourdes Henriques, the relationship with Gomes was a closer one, and they spent more time together. Maria de Lourdes Henriques's grandfather was the brother of Ana Maria Gomes, Felipe Tiago's mother. In addition to their kinship, the teacher worked at the CNEC for many years and in different functions; therefore, her contact with Gomes spanned over a longer period, in different circumstances. Because of their kinship, Gomes would often visit the teacher, and these family ties are significant in her recollections.

Her memories emphasize the devotion and humility of the founder, who, according to her, made no distinction between people from different social strata among whom he circulated, but he would adopt different behaviors according to his various interlocutors:

He wasn't a proud man, he was very humble, very devoted to St. Francis of Assisi, that's why you saw there [at the memorial in Picuí] the image of St. Francis. He was really humble. The driver ate at the same table as he. That's what he was like, he didn't care much for etiquette. He made no restrictions. Now, when he was hosting congressmen, senators, he'd treat everyone very well and more formally. (Henriques, interview, 2016)

In the narratives, we can see admiration for the character and the work he dedicated his life to. In addition, by carefully reading the content of the narratives we can see the tactics employed by Gomes throughout his career: he made public speeches on several occasions, had connections with politicians, and carefully chose those who would serve his purposes. That does not mean he built his trajectory linearly and coherently: on the contrary, it reveals the human characteristics of a character who, both during and after his existence, is treated as a myth, and an example to be followed and admired.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to understand the possibility of creating a school system with the characteristics of the CNEC and the dimensions it reached, it is undoubtedly important to delve into the political and social scenario of Brazil from the 1940s to

the 1990s. However, taking only the historical context into account would prevent another type of in-depth reflection about the scope of CNEC and its network of meanings at the national level. Beyond a judgment about social class or oppressors and oppressed, there are power relationships at the micro-level, the tactics used to undertake the creation of the Campaign, the multifaceted character of this process that links Felipe Tiago Gomes to his home community and his idealistic and ideological view of education.

This biographical study builds a memory — one among many that could emerge through written, iconographic, personal or official documents, as well as through memories of those who were part of the life of Gomes. This set of sources allowed an immersion in a specific facet of the history of education in Brazil, in which an individual and his actions are indelibly connected within the story of an institution. It is the trajectory of a life imbricated to the trajectory of what had been called an “ideal”, as defined by Gomes in one of his publications (Gomes, 1986). That ideal, combined with various networks of relationships and interests, contributes to building an educational sponsor entity that is present in nearly the whole country, whose founder, sometimes called “the man who created 2,000 schools”, was regarded as a model of success, determination and selflessness.

Gomes’s selflessness is one of the characteristics that stand out in the representations about the character. This aspect is manifested not only when his personal life is mentioned — such as the fact of never having married or having children — but also in relation to his political connections. Throughout his life, Gomes networked with different political personalities in relationships that were considered strictly professional as they did not correspond to ideological or partisan positions on the side of the founder. Thus, his selflessness lied in transcending any displays of his own individuality — *i.e.*, for CNEC’s sake, he established connections with anyone who would contribute to the Campaign. However, we have not been able to find elements that indicated the absence of a political position in our character. On the contrary, all the relationships we could find so far have pointed to the same parties and their respective representatives. Therefore, we believe that this coherence and linearity are part of the representations involved in the mythology associated to the founder of the Campaign.

One of the goals of this study is to analyze the representations about the subject of our biography; in this respect, one of the aspects that caught our attention was the construction of a character who became known as a teacher, since the memories verbalize and reinforce that title. In this context, teacher seems to designate something beyond the profession of one who gives classes, something that takes on a broader dimension to be understood as one who teaches about life, one who becomes an example to be followed. In this respect, the CNEC slogans have their starting point in representations about the figure of its founder, since its contents use passages of Felipe’s life that characterize him as a visionary, selfless man who was committed to communities that lacked investments in education.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the study on the character presented here is still in progress, therefore the notes discussed here will be part of a broader study, which will delve further into these and other facets of the life of Felipe Tiago Gomes.

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