

# GRACILIANO FONTINO LORDÃO: A BLACK TEACHER IN PARAHYBA DO NORTE/BRAZIL

GRACILIANO FONTINO LORDÃO: UM PROFESSOR 'DE CÔR' NA PARAHYBA DO NORTE  
GRACILIANO FONTINO LORDÃO: UN MAESTRO 'DE COLOR' EN PARAHYBA DO NORTE/BRAZIL

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**Abstract:** In light of the history of the education of the black population, we will reflect on the importance of 'color' in the nineteenth-century magisterium from the teaching trajectory of Graciliano Fontino Lordão, son of a black woman and a Catholic priest. Sources such as books of memorialists, press and documents of the administration with contributions of the social history of education and microhistory enables to approach his experiences, demonstrating they were permeated by his black origin, like other men who ascended socially and educationally in a society in which the slave order prevailed, informing about different possibilities of being black in Brazilian empire..

**Keywords:** history of education, black teacher, Paraíba, Empire of Brazil.

**Resumo:** À luz da história da educação da população negra, refletiremos sobre a importância da 'cor' no magistério oitocentista a partir da trajetória docente de Graciliano Fontino Lordão, filho de mulher negra e frei católico. Aluno de primeiras letras, estudante no Liceu, professor particular, mestre autorizado pelo governo, professor público, deputado, dirigente do Partido Liberal, funcionário público e 'coronel', a experiência será analisada em fontes como livros memorialistas, imprensa e documentos da instrução pública com aportes da história social da educação e da micro-história. Tal docência foi permeada pela origem negra, a exemplo de outros sujeitos que ascenderam social e educacionalmente numa sociedade em que imperava a ordem escravista, informando sobre possibilidades em ser 'de côr' no Brasil imperial.

**Palavras-chave:** história da educação, professor negro, Paraíba, Brasil Império.

**Resumen:** A la luz de la historia de la educación de la población negra, reflexionaremos sobre la importancia del "color" en el magisterio ochocentista a partir de la trayectoria docente del hijo de mujer negra y frey católico. Alumno de primeras letras, estudiante en el Liceo, maestro particular, maestro autorizado por el gobierno, maestro público, diputado, dirigente del Partido Liberal, funcionario público y "coronel", su experiencia será analizada en fuentes como libros de memorialistas, prensa y documentos de la instrucción pública con aportes de la historia social de la educación y de la micro-historia. Esta docencia fue impregnada por el origen negro, como otros sujetos que ascendieron social y educacionalmente en una sociedad donde imperaba el orden esclavista, informando sobre posibilidades en ser "de color" en Brasil imperial.

**Palabras clave:** Historia de la Educación; Maestro negro; Paraíba; Brasil Imperio.

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## INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the impact of color on the teaching trajectory of a teacher from the State of Paraíba in the second half of the 19th century is the main objective of this article, which is inserted in the debate about the black presence in Brazilian education. The absence of this portion of the population in the historiography of education has been reviewed in the last two decades. If by the end of the 1990s the research undertaken did not take into account the color-race variable, the situation is different today. For reasons widely debated (Fonseca, 2007; Barros, 2015), it is no longer necessary to justify the racial component as of crucial interest for the understanding of education in Brazil, since the area absorbed the issue. The rise of blacks as protagonists in the history of education can be observed in books, research projects, academic productions, reaching even a wider public through commercial journals and magazines. These works are from the colonial period to the 21st century, covering all Brazilian regions and being carried out at different levels of analysis. Within the spectrum 'history of education of the black population', the questions vary. Recurring in historiography, the themes of childhood, gender, teaching, institutions and legislations, for example, have been associated with the racial question. The research also seeks to show the possibilities implicit in the term 'black': slaves, free, freed, free Africans, blacks, pardos, maroons are analyzed in their specificities.

An emerging issue in these studies is the existence of people of black origin who stood out for their inclusion in the literate universe, reaching projection in areas such as literature, journalism, advocacy and teaching. Virtually all men, these protagonists were born and acted between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and participated in debates on issues such as politics, development of the country and abolitionism even in a period in which slavery prevailed. Among the experiences shared by these subjects, besides the racial origin, it is clear the proximity to the educational universe and the performance of the teaching profession. We intend to contribute to this debate, discussing the specificity of being black and a teacher in the 19th century. For this, we will follow the existence of a character who lived between 1844 and 1906 in the province of Parahyba do Norte: Graciliano Fontino Lordão. Called by the contemporaries of 'brown' or 'colored' to depend on the informant, the son of a black woman with a Catholic cleric, Lordão excelled in his time: he was professor, deputy, wrote in the local press, acted in the public administration, possessed lands and died with the title of 'colonel'.

We intend from Lordão to reflect on the presence of men and women of black origin as subjects of the history of the province's education and, more specifically, to think about how racial origin is one of the possible components for analyzing the 19th century teaching practice. We operate with diverse sources, especially the

Paraíba press, the documentation of the provincial administration regarding the instruction and literature produced by the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba. In addition, we take advantage of the contribution of research on black intellectuals in Brazil and the latest research on black scholars in the field of history of education. The concepts of experience and customs, in the sense of E. P. Thompson, function as theoretical contribution of the work. As a methodological procedure, we use the contributions of Italian micro-history, especially the formulations of Carlo Ginzburg and Edoardo Grendi. The string of the name as well as the indiciary paradigm were tools that allowed to follow the trajectory of Lordão by the company of Paraíba in the second half of 19th century and first years of the republican period.

The text will be developed in the following way: we will approach the category 'black scholars', referring to a group of men in the Parahyba do Norte in the second half of the 19th century; then we will present the trajectory of Graciliano Fontino Lordão, in order to show his insertion in that society; Finally, we will discuss episodes of Lordão's teaching life, emphasizing the racial belonging of the character as a component to analyze his teaching experience. As final considerations, we will discuss how this subject exemplifies different possibilities of being black in the Empire and that there are many ways of investigating instruction and literate culture in the period.

## **BLACK SCHOLARS IN THE EMPIRE OF BRAZIL AND IN THE PROVINCE OF PARAHYBA DO NORTE**

As we affirmed, between the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the historiography of education began to aggregate black people among subjects of educational practices, legislations and process agents involving instruction. The relatively late understanding of the importance of this part of the Brazilian population and its relation to education was the result of several questions that can be summarized as follows: a deepening of the discussion about racial relations and education, which took place at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the overcoming of the idea that the Brazilian school had incorporated popular layers only from its universalization, which occurred in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (in that sense, the poor would have been left out of school and among them, the blacks); gradual enrollment of black researchers in graduate studies, leveraging research in the area (Cruz, 2005); abandoning the idea that blacks would have been banned from enrolling and attending schools (Barros, 2016); and finally, overcoming the synonymy between black and slave (and its derivations: freed, naive, free, African) (Veiga, 2008).

The existence of prominent black men, acting since the period when slavery was still in force, is no longer seen as exceptional. Historiography incorporated

these subjects, under the category of black intellectuals, black lettered or black literates. The notoriety they obtained especially in the transition from the Empire to the Republic and in the first decades of the republican regime in Brazil has been gaining space in the concerns of researchers of the area. Pinto and Schueler (2012, p. 536) point out that

Working in abolitionist, beneficent, worker or mutual aid societies and associations, and with great repercussion in the press and in journalism, black intellectuals disputed and carried out social reform projects, including the education of blacks, slaves, free men and freedmen. They participated and contributed in the struggles for the elaboration of policies of insertion of the blacks in the process of abolition and post-abolition, in a context of reorganization of the work, of effervescence of the debates on republic, race, nation and citizenship. Moment in which the educational issue stood out as the flag present in several projects in Brazil in dispute.

These figures worked in the most diverse provinces of different regions of the country and were transformed into research subjects of the history of Brazilian education such as Philippe José Alberto Júnior (Villela, 2012), De Chocolat (Pinto, 2014), André Rebouças (Pinto & Schueler, 2012), Manuel Querino e José do Patrocínio (Schueler, 2013, 2014), Padre Vitor (Fonseca, 2015), Nascimento Moraes (Cruz, 2016), Israel Soares (Silva, 2017) among others. This set of experiences was also grouped under the denomination of black literati from the perspective of the social history of slavery and post-abolition (Pinto, 2014).

The recognition that black people occupied important spaces within the literate universe can also be referred to in the history of education about the province of Parahyba do Norte. A group of men born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stands out in the documentation and has been the subject of investigations. A source that allows access to its existence is the book *Homens do Brasil em todos os ramos da atividade e do saber - Paraíba*, by Manuel Liberato Bittencourt (1914), part of the Coleção de Obras Raras - Biblioteca Paraibana, at the Biblioteca Central da Universidade Federal da Paraíba. The compendium contains hundreds of small biographies of men and a few women (in numbers significantly smaller than the first) who have stood out throughout Paraíba's history, according to the understanding of the author (or his informants), who performed it at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with full names, birth and death dates, formations and more important deeds, the marks of the racial belonging of some of the characters stand out, and at the same time they do not exist in the others portrayed by the book (indicating that they are considered white by the contemporaries). We find few references to the production of the work, except the name and bibliography of the author of the book. There are no records on the conditions of production, just as the writer mutes about how he had access to the stories of those portrayed, his sources

of research or who would have provided the information so that he, of Santa Catarina origin and settled in Rio de Janeiro, would list the remarkable people of Paraíba who deserved to be included in the list of illustrious characters. Despite this, the work is a breach for the contact with the characters that interest us here because of their racial origin.

We begin by announcing Lordão, from the presentation of Bittencourt (1914, p. 139, emphasis added):

Graciliano Fontino Lordão: ‘Famous latinist and teacher’. He was born in the City of Parahyba on August 12, 1844. ‘Devoted to the teaching profession, he was a hardworking primary teacher for many years’. A man of good stature, ‘but of color, endowed with superior intelligence’, deep in latinities, he was several times ‘provincial deputy and held positions of responsibility in the collection offices’ of Parahyba. On March 13, 1906 he retired as administrator of the Receipt of incomes of the Capital of the State. In that same year he passed away. Organized the first law of stamps of the State. He was a member of the Instituto Histórico e Geographico da Parahyba.

Other black men make up the book. Besides a ‘man of good stature, but of color’, like Lordo, they were adjectivated by traces of origin. Cícero Brasiliense de Moura is portrayed as ‘blood mongrel’.

‘Professor, lawyer and journalist’. He was born in Parahyba around 1863. Blood mongrel, much modest, almost unknown, he is, however, superior in intelligence and ‘profound in illustration’. He lives in his nook, from where he only leaves forced by circumstances: ‘to teach at lyceus or in the normal school’, or to advocate some just cause. With a decisive thing to intellectual achievements, ‘he is a journalist, an influential lawyer’, and a man of concept to Parahyba (BITTENCOURT, 1914, p. 111, emphasis added).

José Manuel dos Anjos is described as “A turbulent ‘mulatto’ with amazing agility and poet of great inspiration and valor. He was born in Parahyba in 1874” (Bittencourt, 1914, p. 218, emphasis added). A character who stands out in the studies on social history (Rocha, 2012) and history of the education of Paraíba (Costa et al., 2012), Cardoso Vieira also appears in the work.

Manuel Pedro Cardoso Vieira: ‘Mulatto’ of superior intelligence and ‘of maximum erudition, great in legal culture, law, journalism and oratory’. He was born in Jacoca, ‘graduating in law in Recife’, after a brilliant course. He was of high stature and of unbridled pride, perhaps due to the ‘ingratitude of color’. But he had a talent in abundance and vast erudition, and this partly ‘attenuated this moral trait’ (Bittencourt, 1914, p. 259, emphasis added).

Vicente Gomes Jardim is another ‘illustrious paraibano’ referred to as ‘colored man’:

Vicente Gomes Jardim – Skilled bricklayer. He was born in Parahyba on September 16, 1841. With a knack for the art of the stone, even considered same skilled and distinguished artist, ‘he published in 1891, in Recife, the *Manual do architecto brasileiro*, considered by the daily newspaper of Recife ‘to be a work great utility to those who dedicate themselves to the art of masonry and constructions’. ‘*Revista do Instituto*’ published his work - ‘*Monographia da cidade da Parahyba*’ (vol. 2, pag. 85 and vol. 3, pag. 83). He was a surveyor of the lands of the navy and also’ devoted himself to literature’. He was a ‘man of color’, but very neat, polished and sturdy. He died in advanced age, on September 16, 1905 (Bittencourt, 1914, p. 307, emphasis added).

In addition to these, the Paraíba historiography has been focusing on the figure of Elyseu Elias César (1871-1923), who was not portrayed by Liberato Bittencourt, but appears as an important black person in the period of transition from the Empire to the Republic (Rocha & Flores, 2015), and which has features similar to those mentioned.

As Liberato Bittencourt’s work shows, these subjects played different roles in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society in Paraíba, as well as crossing provincial boundaries: ‘teacher, lawyer and journalist’, ‘famous latinist and teacher’, ‘poet of great inspiration’, ‘great in legal culture, law, journalism and oratory’, ‘land surveyor of the navy and also devoted himself to literature’ (Bittencourt, 1914). The writing reveals traces of racial belonging of the subjects: ‘ingratitude of color’, ‘mestizo’, ‘of color’, ‘mulatto’ indicate that such attributions were in the public domain. Born between 1840 and 1870, some of them were still alive at the time of writing, they achieved projection in their areas of activity, dominating writing, acting as writers, poets, authors of technical works, teachers, lawyers, journalists, public officials, politicians (provincial and general deputies) and participants in public debates.

The existence of this set of literate black men does not mean that there were no differences between them and the members of the economic and intellectual elite, socially considered white. The lack of terms signaling racial belonging in most of the biographies presented by Liberato Bittencourt, as well as the silencing of colors or origins in other documents used to study the history of education in Parahyba do Norte in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Barros, 2017) allows us to defend this argument. However, even if it constitutes a minority, the group highlights a possibility of ‘being black’ in the Province, and deserves close scrutiny on each one

or the group. Next, we present the life of Graciliano Fontino Lordão, elected as object of this study.

## FROM A NATURAL SON TO A COLONEL: LORDÃO'S TRAJECTORY

Our protagonist was born in the capital of Parahyba do Norte in 1844, and after circulating through different regions of the Province, he died in the same city in 1906. Lyra Tavares, author of *Traços biographicos do Coronel Graciliano Fontino Lordão*, published in 1907, soon after the death of the character in question, is quite vague in relation to the subject, only stating that he was born “[...] in the property that today, completely rebuilt, has the number 22 at the 7 September Street, in the suburb – Tambiá” (Tavares, 1907, p. 3).

There is no reference to Lordão's mother. In the search for the ‘string of the name’ (Ginzburg, Castelnuevo & Poni, 1989), at the Newspaper Library of the National Library and in other research repositories such as the ‘My Heritage’ and ‘Family Search’ databases, and the documents of the Paraíba Public Instruction, we searched for the full name, surname and separately the terms Graciliano, Fontino and Lordão, but we found no records about his parents or other relatives. Lyra Tavares claims only that he was the son of “Frei Fructuoso da Soledade Sigismundo, one of the most famous tribunes of his time” (Tavares, 1907, p. 3). The name of the mother appears in document of 1862, a request of matriculation for the Lyceum of Paraíba.

On the first day of the month of February, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, in the Secretariat of the Lycee of this Province of Parahyba do Norte, Graciliano Fontino Lordão, the ‘natural son of Agueda Inocência dos Martírios’, native to this city, eighteen years of age ; and presented an order of the Director directing that he be enrolled in the Class of Philosophia, as required in his petition, accompanying; in which was inscribed the sum of having paid a tax of thirteen thousand and two hundred réis, and to record I have drawn up the present term, which goes signed by him with me Secretary of Public Instruction (Paraíba, 1862, emphasis added).

We did not find other references to Agueda Inocência dos Martírios in the different consulted sources, which made it impossible to know about her history, whether she was free, freed or slave, what profession she performed, whether she had contact with the literate universe or other information that could help to compose picture about the remarkable son.

Although presented by the biographer without further ado, the attachment to a Catholic friar, prominent personage in the local society, deserves prominence in view of the relations between the catholic religion and the Imperial State. Black

intellectuals from other provinces also had relations of kinship and protection inherited from clerical fathers, like José do Patrocínio, the son of a woman of slave origin with a white religious (Souza, 2015). In addition to friar, Lordão's father occupied important places in Paraíba education: an English and French teacher at the Liceu of Paraíba, the most prestigious institution in the province (Ferronato, 2012), he became director of Public Instruction between 1865 and 1866. Parenting is also an important aspect in the transmission of the teaching profession in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as research on imperial teachers shows (Munhoz & Vidal, 2016), and can be seen in relation to other black men of the period, such as Philippe José Alberto Junior (1824-1887), a court-settled man from Bahia, a prestigious teacher, married a woman who was also a teacher and whose children inherited the profession of their parents (Villela, 2012).

There are few elements about the relationship between Graciliano and his father. The biographer affirms that “[...] at the age of 7 he enrolled in the private school of the Cap. José Pereira Dourado, which operated on the street of S. Francisco, behind the Cathedral” (Tavares, 1907, p. 3), without revealing the adult responsible for the child's school life. The lack of enrollment records among the available sources does not allow us to identify who was responsible for the costs of the classes. It could have been Friar Fructuoso or Agueda, a black woman of whom one does not know the profession and involved in an illegitimate relation - the document of enrollment in the lyceum defined Graciliano like ‘natural son’, that is to say, the son of a relation not recognized by the church - or some another character who might have godfathered Lordão. The author goes on to say: “[...] in 1859 he took French test, and showed himself already with admirable dedication to the study of Latin, being such an achievement that he performed in the classes the functions of second master” (Tavares, 1907, p. 3). The following year, he would pass the examination of that language. However, “[...] not being valid in the Academy or in the Seminary of Pernambuco the examinations made here, it has requested with others the General Assembly its validity [...]. Hopeless to obtain that his request was granted, he continued to study preparatory courses, enabling himself to opportunely take further examinations (Tavares, 1907, p. 4). According to the biographer, “[...] in 1861 he took examinations of English and Geography” (Tavares, 1907, p. 5). During this period, there would have been a gap between father and son.

Until 1860, he lived under the protection of Friar Fructuoso, the Father Master, as he was commonly known. In that year, however, having been disabled in a strong vessel of water, a pair of buttons which he possessed, presented by Friar Fructuoso, suffered severe reprehension which he considered demeaning and unjust, and decided to no longer receive benefits from his protector (Tavares, 1907, p. 4).

There is no explanation for what happened besides the broken buttons, an apparently banal motive. What kind of rebuke would be so “demeaning and unjust” to the point of bringing about the rupture between father and son? Some kind that would refer to Graciliano’s slavery or black origin? We have no answer, but after the disagreement, he

[...] began to teach Latin to a son of Francisco das Chagas Galvão, farm employee and brother of Conselheiro Raphael Galvão, realizing 4\$ 000 monthly! With this insignificant importance he bought the farm and himself sewed the clothes he wore, without ever again appealing to Friar Frutuoso [...] (Tavares, 1907, p. 4).

In the same period devoted to teaching Latin, a subject in which he graduated, Lordão studied philosophy and rhetoric in the Lyceum of Paraíba. Friar Frutuoso taught at the institution and was appointed director of Public Instruction in the same period. The questions concerning the first letters are valid for Lordão’s access to the secondary. Had the father interceded in his application for enrollment? Could the ‘insignificant importance’<sup>1</sup> that the teacher gathered in private classes pay school fees, or would he need father’s help? Despite the breakup in 1860, the biographer comments that Latin classes allowed him to “[...] never resort to Friar Frutuoso, in whose home he did his meals only, to obey his will, and not to become public the resentment he held against his own father” (Tavares, 1907, p. 4). In other words, the bond between father and son had been maintained, and it was possible to raise the hypothesis of paternal support for Lordão’s secondary studies at the Lyceum of Paraíba, a place where the wealthy families of the region were trained (Miranda, 2017).

Unlike many contemporaries, including black men like Cardoso Vieira and Elyseu Cezar, Lordão did not attend the Law Faculty of Recife, a pole of formation of the intellectual and economic elites of the Northern region. Fragile health was the justification found by the biographer to explain this gap: “[...] in 1863, when he was prepared to enroll in higher education, he suffered with cerebral congestion and was treated by Dr. Antonio da Cruz Cordeiro, who convinced him to change his residence to the interior” (Tavares, 1907, p. 5). We found no evidence of the immediate transfer, or possible record of “congestion” in other sources. However, in the following years, Lordão would initiate a movement of comings and goings

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<sup>1</sup> For comparison, Heloísa Villela (2012, p. 163) comments that Philippe José Alberto Junior, from 1859 to 1869, taught in primary education at the Monastery of São Bento, in Rio de Janeiro, where he “[...] received an order of 200\$000 réis having at the end of the year received a gift for the work carried out during the academic year in the amount of 50\$000 réis”. Although the author does not mention whether the value of 200\$000 was monthly, quarterly, or annually, and the changes over the ten years of school dedication, it is a significant difference from how much Lordão earned at the beginning of his career in the same period.

between different cities of the interior and the capital, having as motivation for the changes the action like teacher and, later, the politics.

Even before that, still a student of rhetoric and philosophy in the Lyceum, Graciliano engaged in the teaching career, looking for another placement besides that of a private tutor in Latin. In August 1864, he applied to the director of the Public Instruction in order to “[...] be admitted to the contest of the Latin chair of Pombal” (O Publicador, 1864a). The request was deferred and Lordão participated in the contest, but did not reach the vacancy (O Publicador, 1864b). In the same month, he again addressed the provincial government “[...] asking for permission to teach first letters, Latin, French and English in any part of the province” (O Publicador, 1864c). The request was granted and the order published: “The president of the province, at the request of Graciliano Fontino Lordão, grants him a license to teach Portuguese, Latin, French and English languages anywhere in the province. The director of public instruction was informed” (O Publicador, 1864d).

On the same day, and in the subsequent days, an advertisement framed by overturned drawings was published in the journal: “Graciliano F. Lordão has just obtained a license from the presidency to teach Portuguese, Latin, French and English, and has an open class in the alley of the Company, 2, where he can be sought” (O Publicador, 1864d). The emphasis on the permission of the presidency legitimized the teacher, serving as a decoy for families interested in private teachers. As in the other Brazilian provinces (Limeira, 2010) and in the same way as other masters from Paraíba (Miranda, 2012), Lordão turned to the press in order to increase the number of students and consequently their income and influence in society. The announcement repeated itself for a few days, but we did not find records of the classes, not being able to know if he would have achieved the desired students or if he had continued to teach only Latin.

As was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lordão performed different activities besides studies and teaching. At the age of 20, a student of the Lyceum of Paraíba, a private teacher and committed to entering the branch of public education, he participated in the brotherhood of brown people Nossa Senhora das Mercês. Part of a set of similar associations existing in different cities of Parahyba do Norte (Lima, 2010) since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the brotherhoods were directed to the different groups that made up the society, divided into spaces for whites, blacks and browns. They were still segmented between those of slaves and those of free men (Alves, 2006). For Lordão, a free brown man, a member of the Province’s elite, known for his devotion to the Catholic faith, participation in such an association must have been natural. For a few weeks, he signed notes as an association secretary, published in the press.

On Sunday, 18 of the current, at 10 o’clock in the morning, the election of the officers and members who shall serve in the commissary from 1864 to 1865,

by order of the judge of the respective brotherhood, shall be held in the church of Mercez of this city, all the brothers shall be generally invited to attend the said church by the day and time set forth above. The registrar, Graciliano F. Lordão (O Publicador, 1864e).

The presence of professors in religious brotherhoods was commonplace in the imperial period, being an important element of teacher sociability: “From the house to the street, we can observe public and adjunct professors participating in various social circles. They were part of societies, institutes, associations and congregations” (Borges, 2014, p. 184). For Angelica Borges, this shows “[...] different dimensions of the activities of the public teacher at the Court in line with the issues under discussion at the time” (2014, p. 185). Not only did Lordão engage in such activity, he would gradually join partisan politics and carry out other activities concomitant with teaching.

At the end of 1865, Lordão left the capital after being appointed primary public teacher in Cuité, a city near the border with the province of Rio Grande do Norte (O Publicador, 1865a). It would be the beginning of his displacements, due to vacancies as a teacher in public education or, in old age, because of the position he held in the state administration, in the Republican period. Despite the attempts to move to other cities such as Pombal and Areia, where he wanted to teach Latin, the following year he remained in Cuité, obtaining the grant of a license to teach in any part of the province: “Application by Graciliano Fontino Lordão requesting by certificate the contents of the order, which granted him a license to teach, Latin, French, English, in any part of the province. - As required” (O Publicador, 1866a).

If he had not been nominated for the Latin chair in Areia, as he had tried, at least he was removed to Pombal (O Publicador, 1867a), where he had wanted to go since the end of 1865. Less than two months later he would be transferred to the capital, occupying the second chair of primary school in the neighborhood Alto (O Publicador, 1867b). In the following year, he would lose it, when, “[...] with the accession to power of the conservative party, he was discharged from the commission and returned to his place of life as the effective official” (Tavares, 1907, p. 5). This is the biographer’s first mention of Graciliano’s partisan stances, which would intensify in the following years.

In November 1868, Lordão was considered qualified for a contest for first letter teacher of the cities of Areia, Souza, Villa de Bananeiras, Ingá and Catolé do Rocha (O Publicador, 1868a), and Cajazeiras e Cuité (O Publicador, 1868b), being named for Cajazeiras, in the extreme west of the Province.

In the chairmanship of Conselheiro Theodoro Machado were placed in competition the chairs not provided, and despite the political adversary of the dominant situation, was appointed to Cajazeiras, after having made a

brilliant contest. It did not suit him because of the distance, he obtained to be removed to Fagundes, from where he was later transferred to Campina Grande (Tavares, 1907, p. 5).

A few months later, he would be removed from Cajazeiras to Fagundes, at his request (*O Publicador*, 1869). A month earlier, he had married Francisca de Lima Lordão, with whom he had two children. We did not identify any other spouse references in the documentation consulted. Information about his family, origin and age, if exercised any profession or 'color' or 'quality' were not found. We do not yet know which networks of relations would have been accessed by Lordão in order to achieve removal to Fagundes, or the motive of interest in the region. The near political environment may have justified the choice, or perhaps the availability of the vacancy. The next transfer to Campina Grande, a municipality to which Fagundes belonged, did not leave any calls. There are few records about his life in Fagundes, and about the transfer to Campina Grande. But the period lived in Campina Grande and his role as a teacher were recorded in "official" works of the city such as that of Elpídio de Almeida (1962, p. 323, emphasis added), which, when dealing with teaching in the municipality, states: "There was in the last century teachers deeply versed in the subjects they taught. 'The history was made by Graciliano Fontino Lordão', João Gomes do Barbosa e Almeida, Maximiano Lopes Machado". His presence at a night school in the municipality, which will be highlighted in the next topic, is another important fact.

The approximation of partisan activity was expressed explicitly when he took up residence in Pedra Lavrada and "[...] began there to develop his political capacity" (Tavares, 1907, p. 6). Perhaps the option for the transfer from Campina Grande to that city in 1875 was deliberate. According to Tavares (1907, p. 6), "[...] crippled by his age and constant labors, Cap. Antonio Gomes had in Colonel Lordão a most valuable auxiliary in the conduct of local political affairs, and in 1878, with the death of the liberal leader, the ardent Democrat was forced to succeed". The image that the author of the biography wishes to immortalize is that of a skilled and honest politician. According to him, "[...] conciliator and skilled, the new chief sought to bring together the adherents of his party, gaining the esteem of all for the preoccupation that soon denoted to dedicate himself mainly to the material development of the locality" (Tavares, 1907, p. 6). In the region of Pedra Lavrada, the teacher began to build fame and renown, which would consolidate in the following decade, a range marked by recognition as a 'colonel'.

In 1881, Lordão would be elected state deputy for the Liberal Party. The biographer further informs that "[...] when the Assembly was convened in 1882, he was chosen for the commission of public instruction" (Tavares, 1907, p. 7), perhaps in recognition of the years devoted to teaching. Reelected in the next legislature, he

would continue as provincial deputy in subsequent biennia, serving four terms in office (Almanak do Estado da Parahiba, 1899).

The political career was developed concurrently with the teaching profession, which Graciliano would carry out until 1888. The profession imprinted a definitive mark on the life of Lordão. In August of 1889, for example, when named for the commission to combat the drought, he had been identified like professor (O Liberal Parahybano, 1889).

The teaching identity was mixed with another qualification that accompanied the mentions to Lordão, also representing prestige: that of ‘colonel’. We did not find records of his participation in the National Guard, but in 1891 he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel<sup>2</sup>.

The President of the Republic of the United States of Brazil

Makes known to those that see this letters patent that he resolves to appoint Graciliano Fontino Lordão to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel Commander of the 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the National Guard of the counties of Borborema and Soledade of the State of Parahyba do Norte [...] (Brasil, 1891).

Until the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lordão was quoted in the sources only by his name, eventually called a ‘teacher’, and after 1883, the occasion of the first term, began to be designated ‘deputy’. The first qualification as ‘lieutenant colonel’ found in the documentation was in December of 1895, when the newspaper *A União* published a “[...] list of the state deputies [...]” and among those listed one finds: “Lieutenant Colonel Graciliano Fontino Lordão” (*A União*, 1895). In the following years, different designations anticipated the name of Graciliano, interspersed with the one of ‘professor’ in the news of the press, culminating with ‘colonel’. The Almanak do Estado da Parahyba of 1899 had the list of the Paraíba state deputies of that decade, characterizing him “Professor Graciliano Fontino Lordão” (Almanak do Estado da Parahyba, 1899, p. 68). But when the fourth term

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<sup>2</sup> The research done during the doctorate was fruitless in relation to obtaining the title of colonel. In our thesis (Barros, 2017), we have hypothesized that the Lordão title was given by acclamation, a public acknowledgment of his importance in the Province, as mentioned by Maria Izaura Pereira de Queiroz (1975, p. 173, author’s emphasis): “Extinct the National Guard shortly after the Proclamation of the Republic, however, the name of ‘colonel’, spontaneously granted by the population persisted to those who seemed to hold in their hands large parcels of economic and political power”. A few months after the thesis came to the public, a great grandson of Professor Lordão came in contact, sending copies of documents and photographs concerning Graciliano. Among this material, it is the mentioned appointment signed by Deodoro da Fonseca. I thank Thales Lordão for his kindness in sharing this document and other records about his relative.

was mentioned, he appeared as “Lieutenant Colonel Graciliano Fontino Lordão” (Almanak do Estado da Parahyba, 1899, p. 74).

After his retirement, Lordão continued to work in the public sphere as a politician and ‘colonel’ who was involved in pressing issues in Paraíba society, such as combating the effects of drought. The teaching profession remained a crucial element in his biography. One of the obituaries testified to the role of teaching in the life of the honoree.

Very young, he had devoted himself to the teaching profession, rendering important services to various localities of the interior, and he had an extraordinary pleasure in communicating to all and the disciples all that he knew, which was enough to live with glow in society.

During the pedagogical training, as if endowed with fine political qualities, Graciliano Lordão acquired enormous popular prestige and these elements provided him with excellent position in the field of the old partisan fights of the imperial regime (O Commercio, 1906 apud Tavares, 1907, p. 19).

Lordão began his ‘pedagogical training’ in the early 1860s and retired as a teacher in 1888, making almost three decades of teaching. In addition to the ‘enormous popular prestige’ of the role that this position gave him in the ‘field of the old partisan struggles in favor of the imperial regime’, and of the importance of these questions in the construction of his image, what impact Graciliano Fontino Lordão would have caused in the different regions of Paraíba where he lived, being a black teacher? On the other hand, by changing the focus of the question, would the black origin have impacted in what way in the teaching trajectory of this subject?

## THE ‘COLOR’ OF THE TEACHER

The black origin of Graciliano Fontino Lordão is not evident in most of the documents used as sources for the study of Paraíba education. As was commonplace in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian society, racial identification was absent from official production, there being no allusions to color or race in the trades and news about provincial teachers. The biographer does not refer to Lordão membership, not even mentioning his mother’s name or the condition of ‘natural son’ (son of a single woman), which is understandable in view of the laudatory character of the work and the period in which it was written. However, an attentive reading gives indications of this origin, as in the text published on the occasion of the death of the character: “The obscurity of his birth gave greater prominence to the strength of his will, to the value of his merits, to the uncommon power of his great ability” (A União, 1906 apud Tavares, 1907, p. 21). Would ‘obscurity’ be a metaphor for its origin? The author of the biography maintained the use of the term.

The notable parahyban and skillful politician who lived in the ‘obscurity of his incomparable modesty’ and died in the tranquility of his great virtues, was one of those men who appeared disambiguously and spontaneously in the social environment in which had to exercise his activity, in accentuated prominence, without moments of dizziness or moments of decline. Anyone who has known the incessant struggle of the old liberal, who ‘has traveled with expertise the scales of social positions’, and who has been left homeless by strange support, attaining the honorable position in which he died, must show in his most insignificant peculiarities, undeniable traits of a resilient spirit and unusual insight (Tavares, 1907, p. 1, emphasis added).

The ‘scales of social positions’ also seems to allude to the success that the biographed had, in spite of his origin. A few years later, in naming the ‘illustrious Parahybans’, Liberato Bittencourt discovered the obscurity, stating with regret - denounced by the use of the ‘but’ - that among the characteristics of the ‘man of good stature’ was the fact that he was ‘of color’.

Nowadays, in the perspective of the history of education of the black population, this characteristic is of great interest. How could Lordão’s trajectory have been affected by it? That is to say, what is the meaning of the existence of a black teacher, who transited through different public environments, in the context of the expansion of Paraíba schooling? And for Lordão’s performance, did the color interfere with the daily teaching? How was its circulation in the literate circles of the province? Had he maintained any kind of relationship with other contemporary illustrious black men? Would there be any impact for students in having a black teacher? Especially for black students, what would that represent? It is worth remembering that Parahyba do Norte had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with an expressive black presence among the population<sup>3</sup>.

Although the sources hitherto located do not allow answering most of the previous questions, it is possible to raise hypotheses. An important moment is Lordão’s first move to the interior of the province, depending on the result of the teacher contest. He had tried the vacancy for the Latin chair of the city of Pombal, and ranked second. “In 1865, Dr. João Leite Ferreira, who was the Director of Public Instruction, son-in-law of the then President of the Province Dr. Felizardo Toscano de Britto [...] asked for and obtained his appointment to teacher of Cuité” (Tavares, 1907, p. 5). It is important to look at the fact that he had been approved for Latin,

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<sup>3</sup>According to the historian Solange Rocha (2009, p 112). “[...] in 1811 the population of Paraíba was composed mainly of blacks (73,794 of a total of 122,407), 61,458 brown and 12,336 black. As far as legal status was concerned, a majority of blacks were free (56,161) and a minority of slaves (17,633); the group of browns continued to grow, with 61,458 individuals, corresponding to 50.2% of the total population and 83.2% of the black population” (2009, p. 112). In 1872, “of the total population (376,226), the majority was black, that is, they numbered 221,938; of these, 188,241 were brown and 33,697 black (...). A smaller part of this population was slave, 21,526 captives, and the vast majority of free, 354,700 people”.

but was appointed as a first letter teacher. Less than two months later, Lordão required the director of Public Instruction to place in the Latin chair available in the city of Areia (O Publicador, 1865b). The request was not answered, because a year later he continued as a teacher in Cuité.

This dynamic was repeated: the attempt to teach Latin and the permanence in first letter chairs. Would being brown have influenced the perpetuation of the less prestigious position? There is no objective answer, but some clues help to uncover these relationships. In a long article published in December 1866, an anonymous author praised the performance of Lordão as teacher of first letters in Cuité.

- By request.

It will not be indifferent to Most Excellent President of the province, and the sensible public, the fact that we will mention; this fact proves to the first, that it was not unnecessary to trust, that he deposited in his government and testifies to the second that our friend Graciliano Fontino Lordão, 'interim professor of first letters' of the village of Cuité, makes even more creditor of the esteem and consideration, with whom has always appreciated it, 'despite the misfortunes of the literate fools' .....

[...] On November 20, it was presented to the 'examination of Latin art' by our friend, a boy of nine years old, the son of Captain Antonio Gomes Barretto; the act took place in the palace of the city hall of that village.

[...] The act was quite solemn, by the great contest of 'people of all classes and categories', who from many parts came to attend an act, hitherto never seen in that village, despite the creation of that chair in 1836.

The boy's young age, the assurance with which he answered, and the conscience, of what he knew, moved everyone to an admiration.

At the door of the building was a martial music band, coming from Rio Grande do Norte.

When the exam was finished, the procession was followed, preceded by the music to the house of the examined, where his father offered a well-prepared cup of water to the entourage.

Several toasts to the most prominent people of this and that locality were frantically applauded, always playing the music band.

'It is thus that our friend provokes the detractors', who intended to 'tarnish' his merit, that is how our friend corresponds to the trust, which deposited in him the Most Excellent President of the province; it is thus at last that our friend corresponds to the sympathies of the sensible public, who has always

appreciated him, and is made more recommendable to the most useful parents of his province, most necessary to his country.

There will be no examinations of first letters, by the delay in which the students were found; but to silence some malicious people, it is important to say that the students, whom our friend found only by summing, and mechanically reciting some rules of arithmetic, leaves them, after nine academic months, teaching Portuguese grammar and very advanced in accounting.

Honor the Most Excellent President of this province, that there was so much discernment in the choice of our friend; honor our friend for the good performance with which he has been in the functions of his teaching. For our part, we congratulate the inhabitants of Cuité, for their happiness, which they encountered with such an excellent teacher, so sincere friend and so useful citizen (O Publicador, 1866b, emphasis added).

We found no clues as to who the ‘literate fools’ who would have uttered insults against Lordão, and to whom he would have proved his worth with the ‘Latin art’ of the nine-year-old boy. Another instigating clue is the indication that the event had a ‘great contest of people of all classes and categories, who from many parts came to attend an act, hitherto never seen in that village, despite the creation of that chair in 1836’. The mention of ‘all classes and categories’ may be an allusion to colors and juridical belongings (slaves, freedmen, free). And what would be the novelty of the ‘act never seen in that village’, even if the chair had already been three decades? Maybe the color of the master?

According to the apocryphal author, with the success of the examination, “[...] our friend provokes the detractors, who intend to ‘tarnish’ his merit [...]”, without naming the detractors or exposing the motivations behind the insults. Would the black origin of the teacher troubled part of the inhabitants of the region? We did not find any references in other newspapers consulted. In spite of success as a master, since according to the anonymous author, he would have found the students “[...] only by summing, and mechanically reciting some rules of arithmetic, he leaves them, after nine academic months, teaching Portuguese grammar and very advanced in accounting [...]”, perhaps the ‘malicious’ had taken part of the responsibility for Lordão successive attempts to move to Cuité, which was soon followed.

In July 1868, Lordão name again appeared in the press, this time responding to a complaint. The reason was a situation in his class, involving a student identified as ‘son of the slave’. If in Cuité, an anonymous had produced the note in reparation, responding to the detractors, on that occasion the professor defended himself from the ‘public censure’ made by a so-called ‘announcer’ in the Parahyba newspaper. By

means of a long text, Lordão answered the accusation of exaggerated rigor and, at the same time, of 'relaxation' with the disciples. He summed it up.

I must also declare to the Mr. announcer whose name he has done very well to conceal that he lacked the truth when he said that the poor slave mother of the 'poor child' was rigorously 'punished', disallowing me in my own class for the excessive punishment of her son, she did not do anything else than ask me if the son was also involved in the disorder, whose inquiry I had just made, and I replied that - yes -; but the contrary of this must be confessed that it is manifest slander; because (I do not mean slaves) if someone had the courage to disallow me in my performance, I would have the strength and energy necessary, in the form of the law, to provoke my degrading dignity and to show those who take so much their thought, that a teacher has superiors to whom they should resort to those who think of him offended, in matters of his profession (O Publicador, 1868c, author's emphasis).

The text is an important breach for Lordão's teaching practice. In addition to highlighting the presence of black (or slave's children) among public education students, the teacher's speech was overwhelming in relation to what he understood as an attempt to 'disallow him'. He argued that regardless of the person who accused him ('I do not mean slaves'), he should be respected, his dignity maintained and that complaints about his office should be referred to the correct (*superior*) authorities. Would the effort to position himself in this episode have as a background the fact that the teacher was a 'brown man', according to his own definition (since he belonged to a brotherhood of browns)? His color would have a predominant role in criticism or political positioning (at that time he was already linked to the Liberal Party) would be enough for the newspaper, linked to the Conservative Party to have manifested? It is striking to think of a 'color' teacher with a student 'son of the slave', in an official public school in a period in which the current regulation prohibited the enrollment and attendance in these spaces (Barros, 2016)

Another key moment to reflect on the role of black origin in Lordão's performance is his performance in night teaching in Campina Grande. In 1873, he appeared in the *Falla* of the provincial president to the Legislative Assembly, when this dealt with the private education in the province. Some examples of private establishments in the interior of the province, "[...] for the humanitarian purpose of collecting and educating abandoned orphans [...]", Francisco Teixeira de Sá stated that

Also in the city of Campina Grande was founded a night school, governed gratuitously by professor Graciliano Fontino Lordão, and sustained at the expense of particulars for these associate purposes. - It has 35 enrolled and

assiduous students (Falla to Legislative Assembly of Parahyba do Norte..., 1873, p. 23).

Primitivo Moacyr (1939, p. 462, emphasis added), also mentioned the experience, transcribing the provincial report:

1873. 'In Campina Grande, there is a night school ruled by Professor Graciliano Fontino Lordão and maintained at the expense of an association. It has 55 students. The spirit of association is appearing, though on a small scale and as if to fear. I hope, says the president, that these powerful promoters of large companies will develop and produce all the good fruits of which they are capable'.

Despite the discrepancy in the number of enrolled students, both stressed the importance of the initiative. The administration's eyes focused on Professor Lordão and his commitment to an issue that was beginning to become expensive throughout the Empire: night education. In addition to the teacher, others would have participated in the initiative, since, according to the report, the school was maintained by an association. It is worth noting that the school was 'governed for free', which indicates that Lordão would be an enthusiast of the initiative. But it could also be an opportunity to increase salaries. We did not find testimonials about the associates who would have contributed to the project or documents with information about the students. We know that the action continued, because the following year the professor received from the provincial government the grant of an annual bonus of 450\$000, due to his activities in the night class (Paraíba, 1873).

Although brief, it is interesting to look at the period in which Lordão lived between Campina Grande and the district of Fagundes. The early 1870s was of extreme popular upheaval in the region. Fagundes was the epicenter of *Quebra-quilos*, a movement composed of the poor, white and black, free and slaves, which spread through other villages and cities of Parahyba do Norte and three other provinces (Rio Grande do Norte, Pernambuco e Alagoas)<sup>4</sup>. It is intriguing to note that Lordão's night class happened in this context. Among his students, would anyone has participated in the *Quebra-quilos*? Had the teacher become involved with the movement? We found no reference to him in the work of Luciano Mendonça Lima on sedition or in sources consulted. The difficulty of identifying the members of the *Quebra-quilos* is inherent in the type of movement and the sources

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<sup>4</sup> The fist were the imperial measures in the name of defending the 'modernization' of the country: the Recruitment Law (which aimed to create a 'modern and efficient army') and the standardization of weights and measures, with the adoption of the French metric system (replacing the usual weights and measures system). The poor population, which felt threatened, fearing to be led into slavery (Lima, 2001), and rebelled, burning papers, burning registry offices, breaking weights and measures (Hoffnagel, 1990).

produced by the repression. But it was a revolt made up of “[...] farmers, aggregates, cowboys, blacksmiths, bricklayers, dealers, bakers, etc.” It was these poor workers who formed the social base of *Quebra-quilos*” (Lima, 2001, p. 64). Probably categories that attended the night classes in the period.

These elements indicate that Lordão’s origin was a crucial component in his role as a teacher in different moments and educational models in the province of Paraíba.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We tried to explore the trajectory of Graciliano Fontino Lordão, a man ‘of color’ working in Parahyba do Norte of the 1860s until the early years of the republican period. By means of the theoretical-methodological tools provided by Italian micro-history, in search of Lordão’s name and traces, indications and signs of his role in documentation (Ginzburg et al., 1989), we sought to build his presence in provincial education. The shortage of sources was met with the evidence method, an “[...] interpretive method centered on residuals, on marginal data, considered revealing” (Ginzburg et al., 1989, p. 149). The cross-linking of sources and the constant possible inquiries allowed the accomplishment of such.

The difficulty of being a teacher of Latin, the rejection by some members of the community of Cuité on the occasion of his acting as teacher of first letters, the episode of having as student a ‘son of slave’, the involvement in the initiative of night classes that had black workers as public are indicative that the fact that the teacher is black cannot be ignored. In this sense, the ‘experience’ of this subject is inserted in that of other characters of similar origin. The current order defined limits, but it did not fully determine the actions of these subjects who were reactive and reflective ‘social beings’ capable of reacting to “[...] interrelated events or many repetitions of the same event” (Thompson, 1981, p. 15).

Like Lordão, other black men achieved intellectual projection in Paraíba in the Empire and the first years of the Republic, a period in which the participation of black intellectuals was of extreme relevance to the country. Hebe Mattos (2009, p. 33) argues that “[...] they were, in a way, the most democratic fruit of Brazilian slave modernity - with its end, contradictorily, they would lose their former visibility”. The early Republican years produced the erasure of these figures.

From the point of view of most reformist intellectuals, it was necessary to democratize land, education and popular suffrage, not necessarily in that order. Perhaps because of this, the plans for reform and mobilization of freedmen remained unrecorded - separated by the predominant colonial *ethos* among literate Brazilians, regardless of color, and by the resulting strangeness, which would become increasingly susceptible to racial readings

in the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The melancholic trajectories of José do Patrocínio and André Rebouças in the first republican decade are paradigmatic of the frustrations produced by this mismatch (Mattos, 2009, p. 30).

This process reinforces the importance of highlighting the trajectories of literate blacks, teachers, civil servants and politicians who had local prominence and visibility in the provincial scenario. The presence of these subjects in school spaces and the domain of symbols linked to the literacy at the end of the imperial period are subsidies for denouncing the later situation. Like them, Lordão represents one of the varied possibilities of 'being black' in Brazil in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His trajectory illustrates the tensions experienced by a black minority who, despite the interdictions of racial belonging, achieved notoriety, demonstrating the complexity of 'racial' relations in Imperial Brazil.

Despite the obstacles faced by the black population in relation to education, it is feasible to think about the history of education of the black population in Brazil, not only because of exclusion or precariousness. The existence of black literate men such as Graciliano Fontino Lordão demonstrates that there are many ways of investigating instruction and written culture in the period. Not without cost, Lordão in spite of the origin, managed to impose himself in the society, collaborating for the development of the instruction in Paraíba, disputing respect and recognition. Despite the scarcity of sources, it is possible to raise the hypothesis that he contributed to the formation of other subjects, part of the numerous anonymous blacks that related to the literate environment that was being forged in Parahyba do Norte.

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