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The publication of the dossier entitled **Themes in Contemporary Anthropology** contributes to fostering the debate on contemporary cultural dynamics and the theoretical and methodological challenges pertinent to its approach. Most of the texts were chosen from among the best final essays presented to the same subject taught in the second semester of 2018 at the Faculty of Sciences and Letters (UNESP, campus of Araraquara, São Paulo, Brazil).

The texts that compose this dossier show topics related to contemporary everyday life (rap, consumption, gender conflicts, violence and human rights) and all are based on the contemporary debate of anthropology, marked by the theoretical and methodological discussion provoked by American anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Marshall Sahlins. This discussion consists of an unfolding of the movement that became known as the linguistic turn, which brings a new understanding to the language, provoking a revision of the sign conception.

Sahlins formulates the notion of cultural schemas as constituting distinctions of principles between signs, which have their meanings and values arbitrarily defined. The sign, therefore, has its conceptual value fixed in contrast with other signs in the cultural scheme. Being culture constituted by symbolic systems and being the nature of the arbitrary and relational sign, culture is, therefore, a historical object. As the sign is put into action, it will be subject to another type of determination: the processes of consciousness, which are triggered in this symbolic dialogue between categories received and the contexts perceived, between the cultural sense and the practical reference.

In this way, Sahlins calls into question a whole series of calcified oppositions, by which we usually understand both history and the cultural order: structure and history, stability and change, past and present, system and event, infrastructure and superstructure. In

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the author's words: “What is in question is the existence of structure in history and as history” (SAHLINS, 1997, p.181).

Sahlins reflections intend to contribute to a theory of history that considers a non-excluding conception of the relationship between stability and change, structure and history, or structure and event. In this sense, he proposes a way of operating thought that does not oppose continuities and permanences, since the transformation of a culture is also a mode of its reproduction (SAHLINS, 1997, 174). The cultural meanings are thus altered and as a result, if the relations between the categories change, therefore, the structure is transformed.

Clifford Geertz defines anthropology not as a science in search of laws, but as an interpretive science, searching for meanings, emphasizing the importance of being situated in the ethnographic context and the recognition that the ethnographic text results from one, among many others, interpretation possible.

Ethnography is defined by Geertz not as techniques or procedures, but as a kind of intellectual endeavor that seeks a *dense description*, expression borrowed from the philosopher linguist Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976), follower of Wittgenstein. The anthropologist, in this perspective, is a kind of coder of codes, and the field situation demands that one deal with several "languages, the object of ethnography being a stratified hierarchy of significant structures.

This debate, stemming from the linguistic turn - which presupposes culture as symbolic systems and, therefore, in constant process of (re) constitution - guides all the texts that compose this dossier. The opening text, entitled **The Anthropological Turn: the return of the subject and history**, by Letícia Chamma, places this theoretical methodological debate, starting from the linguistic turn, emphasizing the discussion about the contraposition between history and structure - that finds important reference in the thought of Levi-Strauss and unfolds in the reflections of M. Sahlins - as well as the author's role in the ethnographic text, triggered from the propositions of hermeneutic anthropology, represented by C. Geertz and deepened in the postmodern dimension.

Human rights and culture: the fragility of universalist discourse in the French context, by Giovanna Lopes Souza, invites us to reflect on the viability of the principles that underpin universalist discourse, especially in the face of cultural conflicts in contexts in which the correlation of forces is asymmetric. The author conducts this debate in the light of the cultural conflicts caused by the discrimination of goods - mobilized by French legislation in relation to Islam, by sanctioning Law 1192/2010 - specifically, restricting the use of the full veil by Muslim women in French public spaces.

The article by Vinícius Seravo, titled **Beyond a simple rolex: the legitimacy within high watchmaking and its maximum expression of value among the elites of São Paulo** proposes a reflection on the way in which the luxury watch - inserted in the hierarchical symbolic system that marks the contemporary culture - is instrumented as a strategy of social distinction by the elites of São Paulo, when they position themselves as consumers and appreciators of this good. The author demonstrates how this object forms an expressive icon of bourgeois taste, as well as of the conservatism characteristic of the constitutive ethos of the wealthy classes of the city of São Paulo.

The article **Rap and its forms of consumption: an analysis of the social and mental implications in the individual**, by André Giglio, seeks to analyze the diffusion of rap as a musical style that extrapolates its place of origin and has its consumption crossing the social classes, penetrating , including in the upper-middle classes. It discusses how this phenomenon impacts the processes of identity construction of peripheral residents, especially blacks and young people.

In **Racism as a “virtual social identity”**, Vanessa Oliveira proposes an analysis of how racist theories developed during the second half of the nineteenth century contributed to the corporal, moral and tribal stigmatization of black people. The stigma concept of the American sociologist Erving Goffman is extremely pertinent to understanding how black aesthetics (mouth, skin color, and hair type) encompasses the three dimensions of stigma (bodily, moral, and tribal) in the imaginary of Brazilian society, contributing to the construction of what the author called virtual social identity in opposition to the real social identity.

In the text **Lynching: the punishment as restitution of the order**, from a case of lynching occurred in the country and reported by the press, Flávio E. de Andrade proposes a reflection on the practice of lynching as a collective behavior present in Brazilian society. The author emphasizes the symbolic dimension of lynching, seeking the historical-cultural roots that sustain aspects of our cosmology, propitiating the cultivation of violence as a natural way of resolving conflicts.

We hope that the reading of the texts gathered here will instigate new reflections, especially in the scope of graduation, about contemporary cultural dynamics, strongly marked by the culture of consumption and the global flow of images, references of styles and symbolic repertoires.

GOOD READING!

REFERENCES

WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig. **Philosophical Investigations**. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1980.

SAHLINS, Marshall. **Islands of History**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1997.

GEERTZ, Clifford. **The interpretation of cultures**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora LTC, 1989.