

# The Greek Theater Festival in the History Course at the University of Pernambuco – Mata Norte Campus: Recollection of a Living Time

*Recount of the Greek Theater Festival Project, which has been held since 2006 in the History Course at the University of Pernambuco – Mata Norte Campus: legal and institutional justification; plays presented; theoretical and methodological foundation; ethical principles and case analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Greek Theater; Ancient History Teaching; History and Literature*

Between late September and early October 2022, students from the third semester of the Bachelor's Degree in History at the University of Pernambuco – Mata Norte Campus participated in the Greek Theater Festival as part of the evaluation for the mandatory course "Education and Historical Culture". Divided into three groups, organizing themselves primarily independently (with the help of a student assistant and the supervision of the professor), they performed three plays by Euripides: *Medea*, *Helen*, and *The Trojan Women*. In doing so, they took part in an experience that has been ongoing for 19 consecutive years, since 2006, when the first of these festivals was held. Even during the Covid 19 pandemic, a way was found to keep this practice alive: with each student at home, reciting the verses of comedies and tragedies, two classes (2020 and 2021) managed to present their plays via Google Meet. This text aims to recount this history, present the theoretical and methodological foundations of this experience, and explore the relevance of Greek theater for the training of future history teachers at the University of Pernambuco.

The Mata Norte Campus is located about 60 km from Recife, the capital of the Brazilian state of Pernambuco, in the municipality of Nazaré da Mata<sup>1</sup>, situated in the Mata Norte Region. According to the 2010 Census, most municipalities in this region have a Human Development Index (HDI) between 0.600 and 0.699, considered medium and below the state average. Economically, the region is predominantly rural, with the sugarcane and ethanol sectors being particularly prominent, as sugarcane plantations occupy nearly half of the region's total area. This profile, however, has been changing in recent years, mainly due to the installation of factories in neighboring municipalities<sup>2</sup>.

Despite its economic fragility, that region is one of the most important cultural hubs in Pernambuco: sugar mills produce fine *cachaça* (distilled spirit) and rapadura (whole brown sugar blocks), there are beautiful beaches. Its intangible wealth is

---

<sup>1</sup>Available at [http://sit.mda.gov.br/download/caderno/caderno\\_territorial\\_153\\_Mata%20Norte%20-%20PE.pdf](http://sit.mda.gov.br/download/caderno/caderno_territorial_153_Mata%20Norte%20-%20PE.pdf) Accessed on: 08/01/2022.

<sup>2</sup>“(…) The municipality of Goiana, which now hosts the Pharmaceutical and Chemical Hub, with its main enterprise being the Brazilian Company of Hemoderivatives and Biotechnology (HEMOBRAS), a glass factory led by Vivix Vidros Planos, and an Automotive Hub, with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA). The surrounding municipalities have also seen new industrial ventures, including the Heineken factory in Igarassu, and the factories of AMBEV and Grupo Petrópolis, forming a hub in the Food and Beverage sector.” In CAVALCANTI, 2022.

1 reflected in the various forms: the municipality of Tracunhaém is home to a vigorous  
2 center of clay crafts with a style that cannot be found anywhere else; music and  
3 dance, that come from Indigenous and African origins, are performed by the  
4 population, specially the *maracatus* (a musical rhythm, dance and ritual of religious  
5 syncretism locally originated) (FUNDARPE, 2009, p. 7). In other words, is not a  
6 space without its own cultural references, where some new knowledge is merely  
7 introduced regardless of local traditions.

8 The guiding framework for structuring the Greek Theater Festival program has  
9 been, from the outset, the Political-Pedagogical Plan of the History Course. Based  
10 on principles stemming from the reforms in teacher education following the LDB  
11 9.394/96, the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education, and  
12 incorporating discussions proposed by the National Common Curricular Base  
13 (BNCC), it advocates for the “integration of Teaching, Research, and Extension”  
14 with an emphasis on the “conditions of initial teacher education,” explicitly  
15 manifested in the “conceptions of curriculum, learning development, methodology,  
16 and assessment,” in the “theoretical foundation of each subject, supported by recent  
17 discussions of existing conceptions, in line with the socio-interactionist approach,  
18 with the primary objective of ensuring the updating and contextualization of  
19 knowledge,” and in the importance given to “educators and students in the process  
20 of collective work towards the construction of a new social practice”.

21 When designing the curricular units (and their subsequent updates), the  
22 Political-Pedagogical Plan of the course aimed at fostering the “interrelation with  
23 the social context and the national common base, respecting the specificity and  
24 peculiarity that must be considered in each location, according to the needs and  
25 existing programs.” It also emphasized the “political-social dimension of didactics,  
26 understanding that teaching practice does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it develops  
27 within a concrete social environment, integrated into an educational policy that  
28 involves students from specific social strata.” This multidimensional educational  
29 action involves the convergence of several strands: humanistic, political-social,  
30 scientific, and technical.

31 Since its conception, the central focus of this project has been providing  
32 students direct access to Greek sources translated into Portuguese. The pedagogical  
33 approach to the Ancient World, previously applied in the History Program at the  
34 Mata Norte Campus, centered on reading textbooks (many of which were designed  
35 for high school students) and learning through repetition. Such practices reflected a  
36 broader reality: since the officialization of History teaching in Brazil, Antiquity had  
37 been identified as an activity of mechanical memorization, both by students and  
38 teachers. Learning it meant knowing names, events, and dates by heart, merely  
39 repeating what was written in the book or copied into notebooks (BITTENCOURT,  
40 2008, p. 67). The proposal of the Greek Theatre Festival was explicitly opposed to  
41 this state of affairs<sup>3</sup> focusing instead on the development of what the BNCC would

---

<sup>3</sup> And in this sense, it has always placed itself in the field of innovation, understanding the latter as “introducing something that has been previously invented, discovered, or created into a certain environment. Its role consists of integrating, assimilating, and adapting new ideas imported from other places (...) a process of translation, of decoding pure novelty into something acceptable, applicable, with the aim of improving what already exists, of introducing an enhancement, better

1 later call a "historical attitude" meaning the ability to critically interpret the past  
2 rather than merely memorize it, that is:

3

4 (...) a set of competencies to be acquired through the teaching of history that enable a  
5 more systematic, well-grounded, and critical reading of history. The development of  
6 these competencies, in turn, stems from the experiences of both students and teachers.  
7 This experience is directly linked to the "social reality and the universe of the school  
8 community, as well as its historical, social, and cultural references" (BNCC, p. 351).  
9 In other words, the construction of knowledge is directly related to the sociocultural  
10 reality of the individual (SILVA, MORAIS, 2017, p. 116).

11

12 Instead of memorizing a certain (and inherently limited) amount of  
13 information, the students have access to a historical source that will be read, adapted,  
14 and performed before the class during the festival days. Throughout the course, it is  
15 the teacher's role to work with them on the historical context of these works'  
16 production, the intended audience, how they were received at the time of their  
17 performance, and how more recent periods have appropriated them. This approach  
18 allows the works to make sense not only for the period being studied but also for the  
19 students' lived experiences, thus establishing a dialogue between the past and the  
20 present<sup>4</sup>.

21

22 So that, as established in the Political-Pedagogical Plan, teaching practice  
23 develops in a concrete social environment, integrated into an educational policy that  
24 involves students from diverse social backgrounds, it is essential that these students  
25 understand the topics taught in class (in our specific case, Athenian classical theater)  
26 in relation to their own life experiences. Snell (2005, p. 97) quotes Aristotle when  
27 he says, "the historian narrates what has happened, the poet what could happen."  
28 This is a perspective that is always explored in the classroom. Myth, but also theater,  
29 are powerful social experiments (Buxton, 2019) that lead human experiences to  
30 realms where traveling in person would be difficult – if not fatal. During the  
31 performance, both the audience and the cast are exposed to a simple question: "what  
32 if?" What if such a tragedy happened to me, how would I react? What if I found  
33 myself in a similar dilemma, what would I do? What if my community acted this  
34 way, would I follow or stand against it? The questions multiply because theater  
35 imposes them, forcing us to confront ourselves, as "literature and the other arts stem  
36 from the human impulse to understand, represent, and thus control the meaning of  
life" (LUNA, 2012, p. 29).

---

knowledge, better practice, and a better way of being. (...) it carries within the notion of a strategy for action and is governed by practical objectives. Innovative action is in the realm of application, understood not as the result of a determined action, but as a process. It implies an intention for change within a project fostered by the actors involved, an intention expressed in an anticipatory vision in the form of defined objectives, or an intention that manifests as a reaction of protest against a given situation MITRULIS, 2002, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup>The historian's attitude is related to the process of reading the world. This term has already become a cliché in quotes from the master Paulo Freire - "The reading of the world precedes the reading of the word" - yet it remains a necessary reference in educational processes. A history teacher or any other discipline's teacher who intends to work from this perspective must understand how learning processes take place "SILVA, MORAIS, 2017, p. 118.

1 Students are required to reflect on the preparation process for the festival  
2 (reading the play, adapting it, rehearsing, creating costumes, etc.) from the  
3 perspective of the competencies and skills proposed by the BNCC. Among the  
4 general competencies, we highlight the following: "Valuing and enjoying diverse  
5 artistic and cultural expressions, from local to global, and also participating in varied  
6 practices of artistic-cultural production"; "Using different languages – verbal (oral  
7 or visual-motor, such as Brazilian sign language, and written), bodily, visual,  
8 auditory, and digital – as well as artistic language knowledge (...) to express and  
9 share information, experiences, ideas, and feelings in different contexts and produce  
10 meanings that lead to mutual understanding"; and "Exercising empathy, dialogue,  
11 conflict resolution, and cooperation, fostering respect and promoting respect for  
12 others and human rights, with openness and appreciation for the diversity of  
13 individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures, and potentia"  
14 (PERNAMBUCO, 2019, p. 24-25).

15 Among the specific competencies for History class, we emphasize the  
16 understanding of "historical events, power relations, and processes and mechanisms  
17 of transformation and maintenance of social, political, economic, and cultural  
18 structures over time and in different spaces to analyze, take a stance, and intervene  
19 in the contemporary world." It is not enough to simply perform the play; students  
20 must also understand the context in which it was created. This is equally relevant  
21 for the "questions, hypotheses, arguments, and propositions regarding documents,  
22 interpretations, and specific historical contexts, utilizing different languages and  
23 media" (PERNAMBUCO, 2019, p. 521-522). We stress to students that they are  
24 working with a historical document, open to analysis, moving away from seeing  
25 Antiquity as a merely mnemonic period and toward a problem-oriented history,  
26 "constructed around hypotheses and in-depth analysis, rather than a History that is  
27 merely factual or descriptive" (BARROS, 2009, p. 30).

28 Being an essentially practical proposal, it is fundamental that the Greek Theater  
29 Festival is also grounded in the skills proposed by the BNCC (2019, p. 536-538).  
30 Thus, we present the content for the sixth year of Elementary Education, discussing  
31 the three thematic units in which the proposal is framed ("The invention of the  
32 classical world and its contrast with other societies," "Logics of political  
33 organization," and "Work and forms of social and cultural organization") and  
34 identifying the knowledge objects involved. These include, for example,  
35 "Discussing the concept of Classical Antiquity, its reach and limitations within the  
36 Western tradition, as well as its impacts on other societies and cultures," "Explaining  
37 the formation of Ancient Greece, with an emphasis on the formation of the polis and  
38 the political, social, and cultural transformations of the period, highlighting the  
39 emergence of philosophy as a form of knowledge and the notions of democracy,  
40 citizenship, and politics, pointing out their changes and continuities over time and  
41 the various forms of appropriation by other societies and civilizations," or  
42 "Describing and analyzing the different social roles of women in the ancient world  
43 and medieval societies and the changes and continuities in the customs, habits,  
44 values, and ways of living, coexisting, and working characteristic of different groups  
45 of women in a given locality, discussing the forms of sexual, social, cultural,

1 religious, and gender discrimination exercised against women throughout those  
2 periods”).

3 All these skills are presented and discussed with the students, and each play  
4 chosen is selected with these elements in mind. For example, in a comedy like  
5 Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*<sup>5</sup> we highlight both the (skill) formation of the Athenian  
6 polis and the (competence) female participation within this political structure. In  
7 *The Persians* by Aeschylus, we emphasize the relations between Classical Antiquity  
8 and neighboring cultures (skill), criticizing the perspective of inherent superiority in  
9 the classical world and placing it within a broader Mediterranean context, marked  
10 by dialogue and ethno-cultural exchanges (competence).

11 The chosen plays come from the classical repertoire of Athenian theater  
12 (between the decades of 470 and 390 BCE), including works by the three great  
13 tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) and the comic playwright  
14 Aristophanes. Whenever possible, we compare Portuguese translations available in  
15 the editorial market and opt for those we deem most suited to the students'  
16 vocabulary - it is crucial to highlight that each cast must read the entire play, adapt  
17 it, and perform it, which is no small challenge. In this regard, we have noticed that  
18 the works of Brazilian translator Mário da Gama Kury have had the most positive  
19 connection with the groups, who have demonstrated a better ability to engage with  
20 his texts and memorize the lines more easily. Over the years, we have covered all  
21 the tragedies<sup>6</sup> (*Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*, *Agamemnon*, *The*  
22 *Libation Bearers*, *The Eumenides*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *The Trojan Women*, *The*  
23 *Persians*, *Electra* by Sophocles, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *The Phoenician*  
24 *Women*, *The Bacchae*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Ajax*, *Alcestis*) and all the comedies<sup>7</sup>  
25 (*The Clouds*, *Women Only*, *A God Called Money*, *The Wasps*, *The Birds*, *The Frogs*,  
26 *The Sex Strike*, and *The Women's Revolution*) translated by him. But the  
27 recommendations are not limited to Gama Kury's oeuvre. Particularly in the  
28 comedies, the choices made by this translator (with somewhat digressive updates)  
29 have led us to seek other versions of the plays, so we have already used Trajano  
30 Vieira's translation of *Lysistrata* and Junito Brandão's translations of *The Frogs* and  
31 *The Wasps*. In addition to all these translations mentioned, others have also been  
32 used: Trajano Vieira (*Heracles*, *Electra* by Euripides), José Ribeiro Ferreira (*The*  
33 *Suppliants* and *Helen*, the latter performed for the first time in 2022), Donaldo  
34 Schüler (*The Seven Against Thebes*), and Junito Brandão (*The Cyclops*, the only  
35 complete satirical drama of its kind that has survived to this day).

36 What does it mean to embody this Greek heritage? We follow the Spanish  
37 pedagogue Jorge Larrossa, who says:

38  
39 The reconstruction and interpretation of the past is making the past count for the present,  
40 turning the past into an event of the present. Only in this way is the experience real. The  
41 experience of the past (...) is not a pastime, a mechanism of escape from the real world  
42 and the real self. Nor is it merely a means to acquire knowledge about what happened.

<sup>5</sup>One of the most frequently performed plays in the Festival: 2007, 2008, 2010, e 2012.

<sup>6</sup>Plays compiled in the *Greek Tragedy* collection, published in six volumes by Jorge Zahar Editor.

<sup>7</sup>Plays compiled in the *Greek Comedy* collection, published in three volumes by Jorge Zahar Editor.

1 (...) The interpretation of the past is only an experience when we take the past as  
2 something to which we must attribute meaning in relation to ourselves (2010, 135).

3  
4 Larrossa contrasts this experience with indifference, which renders the  
5 experience of the past “harmless.” In the case of tragedies, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*,  
6 becomes a theoretical guide for the experience, as one of the first literary critics of  
7 drama in the Greek world. He asserts that tragedy stages ethical questions by  
8 opposing character and thought. The catastrophes and their unpredictability -  
9 although tragedies are derived from myths already familiar to the Greeks, the  
10 unfolding of actions through opposing effects is what grants them beauty - suggest  
11 a rupture between the real and the imaginary. This leads to catharsis through fear  
12 and pity, making the philosopher regard tragic mimesis as an experience that can  
13 only be empirical, involving imagination and representation, placing actions into  
14 perspective.:

15  
16 (...) just as it is necessary in other mimetic arts that the imitation be of a single unified  
17 object, so too must the myth, because it imitates actions, imitate those that are unified  
18 and complete (...) For what does not alter the whole is not part of that whole. (ARIST.  
19 1451a, 49.29).

20  
21 The representation of a tragedy thus proposes a dual exercise by provoking  
22 reflections on both the past and the future, producing what Aristotle considered a  
23 practical effect, which makes Greek drama a classic in world literature.

24 During the three nights marking the culmination of the project, the class, both  
25 audience and cast at the same time, is invited to engage in the 'powerful social  
26 experiment,' daring to venture, in the controlled space of the classroom, into places  
27 and emotions they likely avoid in real life. Classical Athens ceases to be a mere page  
28 in a book or a Wikipedia article and becomes a lived, shared, embodied time. This  
29 is the kind of risk that Brazilian actress Fernanda Montenegro described during a  
30 lecture at the Brazilian Academy of Letters on September 20, 2016:

31  
32 (...) The actor becomes confused with another absurd figure, the traveler, and like the  
33 traveler, the actor exhausts something that he endlessly traverses; he is the traveler of  
34 time (...) he is going to die within two or three hours under a face that is not his own.  
35 During those two or three hours, he must feel and express an entire exceptional destiny  
36 – and this has a certain name: it is to lose oneself in order to find oneself.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>MONTENEGRO, Fernanda. The actress as an interpreter of herself. Academia Brasileira de Letras Channel. Youtube, September 20, 2016. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oltEzCkKbo&list=WL&index=9&ab\\_channel=AcademiaBrasileiradeLetras](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oltEzCkKbo&list=WL&index=9&ab_channel=AcademiaBrasileiradeLetras) Accessed on August 12, 2022.

<sup>9</sup>"(...) the teacher (historian) must never, under any circumstances, be a mere reproducer/transmitter, depositing knowledge in students, but must establish, in their professionalization, an organic relationship between teaching and research. This relationship does not mean turning teaching into research, but rather understanding that the articulation between how each one conceives of themselves as a teacher and the experience of living the teaching profession is historically produced (...) the purpose of history education is the formation of the learner's historical consciousness, and that this subject is in a dynamic relationship with the historical culture of the society in which they live". SCHMIDT, 2014, p. 54

1           Fernanda continues, "theater is a miracle of creation itself upon your body (...)  
2 it comes at the cost of your breath (...) we do not see ourselves, we only perceive  
3 ourselves. [It is] a sacred art because it is definitively carnified: it is not you watching  
4 and doing (...) you do all of this with yourself." In an era where cell phones and  
5 smartphones are progressively present in students' hands, the practice of theater  
6 proposes another form of interaction and knowledge, one not mediated by a screen  
7 and written characters but rather through the living skin and spoken word, both alive,  
8 strumming the strings of *logos* (reason) and *páthos* (emotion). As travelers in a  
9 foreign land, throughout this process, future history teachers come to understand  
10 that teaching is more than merely transmitting knowledge; it is the formation of an  
11 active historical consciousness, one that approaches the past with the lens of lived  
12 time<sup>9</sup>, deeply intertwined with the present.

13           One of the central topics in the current debate on history teaching focuses on  
14 playful elements and how school practices outside of the usual disciplinary rigidity  
15 can enhance learning and develop competencies. In this context, two authors were  
16 fundamental to the initial structuring of the project. Hélder Pinheiro (2007, p. 47)  
17 argues that "it is necessary to seek alternative approaches that avoid, above all,  
18 purely cognitive/informative schemes," and dramatic games offer creative responses  
19 to this need. These games are not intended for "virtuoso actors," but rather to "form  
20 players more concerned with mastering their discourse than creating an illusion"  
21 (2007, p. 48). Such games can take the form of full plays performed in a festival,  
22 but they may also consist of dramatized readings or choral performances, depending  
23 on the specific conditions of each school.

24           Portuguese author Terezinha Fialho believes that the primary goal of education  
25 "should be to help a growing human being to bring out the best in themselves and  
26 make them capable of using their aptitudes and potential" (1998, p. 15). To achieve  
27 this, elements like freedom and creativity must be ever-present and few  
28 environments are as conducive to exercising these qualities as the classroom theater,  
29 a didactic resource and teaching strategy that can be used by educators in any field  
30 (in our case, History). In this space of freedom and reinterpretation of one's limits,  
31 the "need to create, innovate, renew, embracing the unpredictability and natural risk  
32 of those who venture forth" is manifest. "There is no right or wrong in these games;  
33 it is all experience, living" (1998, p. 39). At a time when the very presence of  
34 Ancient History in Brazilian school curricula is under scrutiny, and much of its  
35 content particularly the classical heritage is seen as linked to imperialist white  
36 domination, it becomes crucial that its teaching serves as a bridge over troubled

---

<sup>10</sup>"To compare Greeks and Africans is, certainly, an academic heresy. After all, on one side, we have those who are seen as the true creators of Western civilization, the inventors of philosophy, theater, and democracy. On the other hand, Africans are traditionally viewed as savage and irrational, particularly in Brazil, a country with a long history of slavery, which for a long time rejected the legacy of the various Black cultures that arrived here. The ideal of the progressive whitening of the Brazilian population was considered the solution to our 'racial problem' until the 1930s". ALVITO, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>"(...) Ancient history is gradually withdrawing as a definitive explanation of who we are". FRANCISCO, 2017, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Transcription of the prologue adapted by Andréa Beltrão for the film *Antígona 442 B.C.* (2021), directed by Maurício Farias.

1 waters, connecting ancient experiences to modern ones, reenacting “past thought  
2 encapsulated in a context of present thought that, by contradicting it, confines it to  
3 a different plane from their own” (FERGUSON, 2012, p. 15).

4 The years of the Greek Theater Festival have shown us that this bridge is  
5 frequently established with each new performance. In the distant year of 2007,  
6 during the second edition of the festival, electronic music set the pace for  
7 *Prometheus Bound*. In the 2018 performance of *Electra* by Sophocles, Clytemnestra  
8 entered the stage adorned as a queen of *Maracatu* (a cultural manifestation from  
9 Pernambuco with African origins that includes musical and dance elements),  
10 accompanied by servants dressed accordingly, holding a ceremonial canopy (*pálio*).  
11 A fundamental element of Brazilian Portuguese is a sort of hierarchy of dialects:  
12 accents from wealthier states (such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo) are often  
13 considered superior to those from poorer, peripheral regions like the Northeast  
14 (where the state of Pernambuco is located). The student-actors, however, infused  
15 the comedies with their Northeastern prosody, challenging the supposed inferiority  
16 so often imposed upon it. Moreover, due to the rituals, oracles, numerous gods, and  
17 ceremonies, students often recognize the similarities between Hellenic, Afro-  
18 Brazilian, and Indigenous<sup>10</sup> polytheisms. This awareness can also manifest  
19 negatively: In an increasingly evangelical country a recurring issue at the Festival is  
20 students claiming they cannot participate in the plays due to religious restrictions.  
21 This was notably the case during the performance of *The Eumenides* by Sophocles,  
22 when a student argued she could not participate because “her mother had forbidden  
23 it” (even though she was of legal age) and especially because the main characters  
24 were “demons.” She was, of course, referring to the Erinyes, deities “immediately  
25 summoned to action whenever a murder was committed, particularly when the  
26 victim had family ties with their murderer” (Buxton, 2019, p. 87). In this case, the  
27 “satanism” was entirely a projection of her own perception. The Festival creates  
28 opportunities for reflections on alterity, identities, and cultural exchanges urgent  
29 issues reflected in the agonistic struggles of the comedies and the terror of the  
30 tragedies performed at the Greek Theater Festival. These experiences echo the  
31 ancient Greek theatrical knowledge, especially in the democratic polis of Athens,  
32 where the public sphere converged in the celebration of the city-state's unity,  
33 encompassing political, religious, economic, and social aspects as a whole.

34 As an experienced reality, the performance expands the known horizon.  
35 Performing Greek tragedies and comedies in the classroom, much like in the ancient  
36 world, is both an individual and collective activity a correlation between all subjects,  
37 objects, and spaces involved. This process helps to put into perspective the  
38 sociopolitical and cultural reality of the ancient Greeks, but it also fosters self-  
39 awareness in relation to oneself and to others, as well as the world and the ideas both  
40 inside and outside the classroom. The classroom, in this sense, opens up like a grand  
41 theater of experiences, where the student is no longer confined to merely sitting at a  
42 desk, passively observing their surroundings.

43  
44  
45



## 1 Conclusion

2  
3 At this moment, when the demands for teaching History are a topic of  
4 discussion, one of the rare points of agreement among History professionals is the  
5 use of sources in the classroom as a means to enhance learning. Many resources are  
6 mentioned (games, cinema, memes, and so on), but we must not forget the  
7 fundamental role that literature plays in this context, especially in the formation of  
8 the History professional. In the words of Alfredo Bosi,

9  
10 As a verbal adjective, *cultus* was attributed to the field that had already been plowed  
11 and planted by successive generations of farmers. *Cultus* carries within itself not only  
12 the action, always repeated, of *colo*, the cultivation through the centuries, but primarily  
13 the quality resulting from this work, now incorporated into the land that was tilled [...] something cumulative: the act itself of cultivating and the effect of countless tasks,  
14 which makes the participle *cultus*, this name that is a verb, a significantly denser and  
15 more lived form than the simple naming of present labor. [...] *Cultus* is a sign that the  
16 society that produced its food already has memory” (1992, p. 13).  
17  
18

19 It is the historian's task to till this field. It is our responsibility to present the  
20 harvest to our students, making them masters of this cultivated heritage—not as an  
21 untouchable treasure to be revered (and therefore inert), but rather as a living  
22 reservoir of experiences and customs with which they can interact. However, and  
23 just as importantly, in this process, the historian is not only the tiller but also the  
24 field to be tilled. The lack of literary foundation – in other words, the absence of  
25 participation in the memory of *cultus* – is detrimental to their development. As  
26 Hayden White asserts, the historian must "draw from the reservoir of *mythoi*  
27 provided by culture in order to construct facts and shape a particular kind of story,  
28 just as they must draw upon the same reservoir of *mythoi* present in the minds of  
29 their readers to imbue their account of the past with the scent of meaning or  
30 significance” (*apud* SOUZA Neto, 2014, p. 9).

31 The original proposal of the Greek Theater Festival was based on this premise  
32 of presenting primary Greek sources to future teachers, not only to enhance their  
33 knowledge of the subject but also to ensure that this contact would significantly  
34 contribute to their cultural formation (Lopes, 2025). It was not just another reading  
35 among the many undertaken throughout a higher education course, but rather the  
36 experience ("carnification") of a remnant from Antiquity, shared with all classmates  
37 in that subject, either on stage or in the audience a process of experimentation that  
38 will accompany them from that point onward.

39 However, as a living and ongoing project, the Greek Theater Festival has  
40 gradually incorporated new theoretical perspectives and faced challenges related to  
41 the evolving situation of teaching Ancient History in the national context. As  
42 Brazilian historian Gilberto da Silva Francisco (2017, p. 50) aptly stated, "if  
43 previously it was widely necessary, and its presence did not require justification,  
44 today, in many contexts, its existence is tied to a series of justifications." Tradition  
45 alone is no longer sufficient to sustain the teaching of Ancient History in Brazilian  
46 schools<sup>11</sup> We no longer look at Greece or Rome as sacred sources of our own  
47 identity, but rather cast a critical gaze upon these times and spaces, allowing us not

1 only to see other world(s) beyond our own but also to place ourselves within a  
 2 broader historical whole, to which we belong not as a distant periphery but as an  
 3 essential part of it. The 'European modern project,' which 'forged a civilizational  
 4 trajectory starting from Ancient History' (FRANCISCO, 2017, p. 55), would not  
 5 have existed without the colonization of the Americas and the transatlantic slave  
 6 trade. Thus, this belonging is ours by right, with all the particularities that our  
 7 historical formation has afforded us. Moreover, performing Greek plays does not  
 8 mean venerating our supposed first origin, but rather appropriating their content  
 9 with our accents, historical heritages, and specific understandings. Tragedies,  
 10 comedies, and satires take on our colors, voices, and references." As Brazilian  
 11 historian Guilherme Moerbeck aptly noted,

12  
 13 (...). There is no antinomy between the teaching of Ancient History and some of the  
 14 most urgent political and social issues in Brazil; on the contrary, there can be synergy  
 15 between these distant themes and space-times. Critical teaching of Ancient History,  
 16 rather than stifling voices made invisible by the ideological use of a distant and  
 17 transcontinental past, can help us think of ways to understand issues relevant to Latin  
 18 American countries, Indigenous populations, and many other social groups. The  
 19 relevance of studying Ancient History in schools also lies in what exists beyond their  
 20 walls, in the profound sociocultural dialogues it fosters. Whether through the multiple  
 21 ways of disseminating knowledge in the realm of Public History (digital) or the various  
 22 forms of entertainment and contemporary uses of the past, ancient histories and  
 23 cultures are far more present in how we engage with our lifeworld than one might  
 24 naively imagine (2021, p. 62-63).

25  
 26 Ancient History is not something distant from us, something that neither  
 27 belongs to nor affects us. On the contrary, it is the stage for fierce disputes. In 2018,  
 28 during the presidential campaign that would lead the far-right candidate Jair  
 29 Bolsonaro to the presidency (2018–2022), an anonymous letter was posted on  
 30 campus buildings by the politician's followers. In the letter, several history  
 31 professors were individually named and accused of spreading "lies" in their classes,  
 32 and warned that, with the candidate's victory, things would change. The letter ended  
 33 with the ominous words: "There will be no theater. There will be class." The festival  
 34 did not stop during Bolsonaro's presidency; it did not bow to the cowardly,  
 35 philofascist threat. Today Bolsonaro is no longer presidente (although the threaten  
 36 he embodies is far from dead) but I'm very proud to say that, years after that dreadful  
 37 letter, we do have classes and we still have theatre. In the words of Steven M.  
 38 Oberhelman (2024, pp. 7), "we need the Arts and Humanities major just as we need  
 39 the STEM major. Yes, the world may be better off, if there were more engineers,  
 40 scientists, and technologists; but it would be for the worse without the musician,  
 41 writer, film director, and historian".

42 It is fundamental that the teaching of Ancient History be aligned with the values  
 43 that guide the teaching of History as a whole, promoting an "open dialogue with  
 44 different mythologies, cultures, and beliefs to foster, among many other urgent  
 45 demands of Brazilian society, religious tolerance" (MOERBECK, 2021, p. 71) –  
 46 something we have already described along the previous pages of this article. This  
 47 is the spirit of the Greek Theater Festival, the celebration of the apprehension of

1 Antiquity by today's History students and tomorrow's History teachers of the state  
 2 of Pernambuco. We hope that, after such experience, they will have the same  
 3 freedom with the classic text that Brazilian author Millôr Fernandes had when,  
 4 enveloped by the darkness of the Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964-85), wrote  
 5 his prologue to Sophocles' *Antigone*:

6  
 7 To the Greek citizen in the audience / what mattered to him / as he sat again to hear the  
 8 same story again / was not the old legend: / it was the poet's new word. By placing  
 9 today's citizen / attentive and waiting, / on equal footing with the Athenian / from so  
 10 many centuries ago, / we provide a summary of the astounding story: / Creon, king of  
 11 Thebes, avenges himself on Polynices, his nephew and enemy. / Antigone, Polynices'  
 12 sister, / defies the king and is sentenced to death. / Haemon, the king's son and  
 13 Antigone's fiancé, breaks with his father.

14 And so history advances, through fratricidal conflict, / mortal hatred, collective  
 15 violence. / All paid for in the end, naturally, / with the people's enslavement, / in the  
 16 final defeat. / We know well / that no one learned much / from this story by Sophocles.  
 17 / Today's newspapers show / that even the Greeks themselves didn't learn. / And,  
 18 tiresomely, it repeated itself / over the 2,400 years that followed: / Brutus' yearning,  
 19 Christ's Cross, / Byzantium prostituted, Heil Hitler!, / Lumumba dismembered, Che in  
 20 the mountains.

21 There are always two faces to the same coin: / One side, a hero; / the other, a tyrant.  
 22 Something has changed, I know: ambition has changed its attire, / war, its vehicle, /  
 23 power, its method. / The world has turned much, / but man has changed little. /  
 24 However, repeating a story is our profession, our way of fighting. / So, we will tell it  
 25 again, / very clearly. / And here is our reason: / we still don't believe that, in the end, /  
 26 good always triumphs. / But we have begun to believe, moved, / that, in the end, evil  
 27 doesn't always win either. / The hardest part of the fight / is figuring out which side to  
 28 fight on.<sup>12</sup>

## 31 Bibliography

- 32  
 33 Barros, J. D'A. (2009). *O Projeto de Pesquisa em História*. Vozes.  
 34 Bezerra, V. L. (2018). *Tracunhaém, uma panela de formigas*: a modelagem de santos e  
 35 painéis de barro na zona da mata pernambucana. Thesis (Masters in Artes) –  
 36 Universidade Estadual Paulista “Julio de Mesquita Filho”, Instituto de Artes.  
 37 Bittencourt, C. M. F. (2008). *Ensino de História*: Fundamentos e Métodos. Cortez.  
 38 Bosi, A. (1992). *Dialética da Colonização*. Companhia das Letras.  
 39 Buxton, R. (2019). *O Mundo Completo da Mitologia Grega*. Vozes.  
 40 Cavalcanti, P. R. C. (2022). *A Recente Industrialização na Zona da Mata Norte de Pernambuco*:  
 41 as novas dinâmicas no mercado de trabalho promovidas pela industrialização recente da  
 42 Mata Norte e a reconfiguração das relações de trabalho. In: XXXI CIC – Congresso de  
 43 Iniciação Científica – UFRPE.  
 44 Ferguson, N. (2012). *Civilização*. Planeta.  
 45 Fialho, T. (1998). *Teatro na Educação*: um Desafio. Editora Universitária.  
 46 Francisco, G. da S. (2017). *O lugar da História Antiga No Brasil*. Revista Mare Nostrum,  
 47 nº. 8, pp. 30-61.  
 48 Fundarpe (Fundação do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico de Pernambuco). (2009). *1º*  
 49 *Festival Pernambuco Nação Cultural – Educação Patrimonial para a Mata Norte*.  
 50 Larrossa, J. (2010). *Profana: Danças, Piruetas e Mascaradas*. Autêntica.

- 1 Lopes, M. J. F. (2025). A New Take on the Wrath of the Aeacids in a 21st Century  
2 Portuguese Rewriting of Trojan Women. *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts*, vol.  
3 12, issue 1, January, pp. 9-34.
- 4 Luna, S. (2012). *Arqueologia da Ação Trágica: o Legado Grego*. Ideia/ Editora Universitária.  
5 Meira, É. R. (2017). O português brasileiro e suas variantes. In \_\_. *Lisístrata: no dialeto do*  
6 *Sul da Bahia e no dialeto de Pernambuco*. Via Litterarum.
- 7 Moerbeck, G. (2021). *Em Defesa do Ensino da História Antiga nas Escolas Contemporâneas:*  
8 *Base Nacional Curricular Comum, Usos do Passado e Pedagogia Decolonial*. Brathair  
9 – Revista de Estudos Celtas e Germânicos, v. 21 n.º 1, pp. 50-91.
- 10 Montenegro, F. (2016). *A atriz como intérprete de si mesma*. Canal da Academia Brasileira  
11 de Letras at Youtube.
- 12 Oberhelman S. M. (2024). *The Arts and Humanities Degree: Value and Benefits*. *Athens*  
13 *Journal of Humanities & Arts*, vol. 11, issue 4, October, pp. 355-366.
- 14 Pinheiro, H. (2007). *Poesia na Sala de Aula*. Bagagem.
- 15 Pompeu, A. M. C. (2018). *Acrópole Agora! Mulher, Dentro! Homem, Fora! Introdução à*  
16 *Lisístrata de Aristófanes*. Substância.
- 17 Schmidt, M. A. M. dos S. (2014). Cultura História, Ensino e Aprendizagem de História:  
18 questões e possibilidades. In Oliveira, C. M. S.; Mariano, S. R. C. (eds.). *Cultura*  
19 *Histórica e Ensino de História*. Editora da UFPB.
- 20 Silva, M. A.; Morais, S. M. de. (2017). *Atitude Historiadora na Leitura dos não Lugares*.  
21 e-hum Revista Científica das áreas de História, Letras, Educação e Serviço Social do  
22 Centro Universitário de Belo Horizonte, v. 10, n.º 2, July/December.
- 23 Snell, B. (2005). *A Cultura Grega e as Origens do Pensamento Europeu*. Perspectiva.
- 24 Souza Neto, J. M. G. de. (2014). *O Teatro Ateniense na Formação do Historiador*. *Boletim*  
25 *Historiar*, n. 04, July/August, pp. 3-19.
- 26