

Gaicho Clothing: An Ethnographical Analysis of the Traditionalist Pedagogy of the 'pilchas'

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In this research I wish to propose a reflection about the Gaicho clothing and especially about the *prenda dress* in Rio Grande do Sul. I intend to show a little of its history, relating it to the other Traditionalist outfits, presented by some historians of clothing and folklorists. I want to situate the creation of the *prenda dress* in the context of elaboration of the Gaicho Traditionalist Movement (MTG), in the 1950's.

The creation of the *pilchas* is inside of this process. *Pilcha* is a valuable object such as an adornment, jewel, money. In the language of the Gaicho Traditionalist Movement this means is the typical gaicho clothing. The *prenda dress* is called *pilcha*.

The research is inserted in the reflections of the project *The Gaicho Traditionalist Movement and the School. Educational and Pedagogical Perspectives. An Anthropological Analysis on the (Re)configurations of the Plural Identities*, that I have been developing in the Education Center of the Federal University of Santa Maria since 2006.

Besides the issue of the relation school/Traditionalist, in general lines, the project aims at characterizing the Gaicho Traditionalist Movement or the Traditionalism as a cultural movement that worships the historical and mythical figure of the gaicho in the present. For such endeavor the Traditionalists represent it in various ways, producing a complex cultural universe that includes, among other elements: clothing, language, dance, food, animals, songs, work. These representations are characterized as gaicho traditions and related to the typical gaicho, diacritics that potentialize collective and individual identifications related to the affirmation of the "regional" in the Rio Grande do Sul.

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Left, Gaucho clothing, right, *prenda* dress

<http://www.materialworldblog.com>

~~Pictures taken from the book *Typical Gaucho Clothing from Vera Zattera*.~~

My objective is, on one side, to perform a reflection about the set of circumstances that led the Traditionalists to produce the *prenda* dress as a typical feminine outfit, to be used by women (called *prendas*) in the Gaucho Tradition Centers (CTGs).

The Center of Gaucho Traditions (or just CTG) is a space where the gaucho is venerated, a kind of social club where *fandangos* (balls) and other Traditionalist activities are organized. The CTG, in its structure, appropriates and re-signifies the names of ancient farms. Its president is designated as “*patrão*”, the comptroller is the “*agregado das patacas*”, etc. The man that frequents the place receives the designation of *peão*, and the woman, of *prenda*.

On the other side, I want to show in this research that the *prenda* dress and the other pieces of the Traditionalist clothing can be understood as artifacts that possess multiple meanings and agency. They constitute elements responsible by the production of the gaucho region and traditions, becoming a passport to penetrate the past and live it in the present.

This way, reflecting about the gaucho clothing, its uses and multiple significations implies revisiting a series of questions that refer to individual and collective identities, the living of the typical and its consumption in current days. Questions intersected by the ideas of nation and region, folklore and history, education, pedagogy, imaginary and representation, closely related to the outfits and their history.

The Tradicionalist Prendas