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Dossier
Religion and Ethnicity

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Sociability in crime

Culture, form of life or ethos?

Alba Zaluar

Abstract

This article discusses how primary social bonds, which constitute sociability, or the lifeworld, or day-to-day experience of what is taken for granted, are influenced, dominated or even colonized by economic and politico-institutional systems. It focuses on how the theory of transnational network-organized crime is important to understand the lives of the poorest young inhabitants of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It explores the politico-economic associations and cultural interpenetrations between professionalized crime and local politics; the connections between illegal and legal commerce, the transitions between deviance and the conventional world; the links between the economic system, with the power structure that accompanies illicit activity, and the lifeworld of small vendors, their families and neighbours.

Keywords: reciprocity, sociability lifeworld, poor youth, favela, organized crime, violent socialization, dilemma of dispositions

Resumo

Este artigo discute como os laços sociais primários constituídos na sociabilidade ou no mundo da vida – o mundo da experiência cotidiana que faz parte do que é natural e esperável – pode ser dominado ou mesmo colonizado por sistemas econômicos e político-institucionais. Focaliza a importância da teoria do crime organizado em redes transnacionais para compreender os etos ou disposições para a guerra exibidos por jovens pobres e vulneráveis que vivem nas favelas do Rio de Janeiro. Explora as associações político-econômicas e as interpenetrações culturais entre a política local e o crime profissionalizado; as conexões dos empreendimentos ilegais com os legais, as passagens entre os desvios e o mundo convencional; as conexões entre

o sistema econômico do tráfico, com a estrutura de poder resultante de atividade ilícita, e o mundo da vida dos pequenos vendedores de drogas, suas famílias e seus vizinhos.

Palavras-chave: reciprocidade, sociabilidade, mundo da vida, jovem pobre, favela, crime organizado, socialização violenta, dilema de disposições

Sociability in crime

Culture, form of life or ethos?

Alba Zaluar

One of postmodern anthropology's most important assertions is that the ethnographic narrative not only represents the object/subject of study, it constitutes it: the ethnographic authority embedded in the claims of "I was there," "I observed there," "I wrote here" instils the idea of the narrative as a true account of the object (Gupta & Ferguson 1999). Scholars, with their agreements and divergences, many of them stemming from a resolute adherence to one major theory or other, become supporting references on specific topics for those discussing social issues at a political level. This is especially the case with those questions that stir public opinion by impinging on the rights or morality of the country's population. As in any other dialogue, social scientists have never reached any consensus and the hiatus has kept the debate alive, though the political ideology of participants may not always be made explicit.

Other important debates in the globalized world, driven by the speed of network communication enabled by the Internet and the predominance of neoliberalism and financial capital, centre on utilitarianism and the issue of open and transnational social networks. In the controversy over the market's economic rationalism or utilitarianism, the founders of the *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales* (MAUSS) emphasized how social links are created between people or groups through the three moments of the gift (giving, accepting, reciprocating), through the free obligation to reciprocate the accepted gift (Caillé 2000, Godbout 1998). This, they argue, is the social bond that has accompanied human beings from their primordial beginnings to the contemporary world, constituting what Simmel called 'sociability'¹ or play-form, where what matters is interaction – conversation, kindness and

¹ In this text, like the majority of authors, I shall follow the concept of sociability defined by Simmel as a form of association, also called a play-form, in which the individual's evaluation should not be expressed so that the interaction remains without motives, ends or interests. Hence the expression violent sociability is a contradiction in terms, since violence is a means to an end – material, political or symbolic – and is thus more adequate to the form of association labelled conflict.

the gift that accompanies them (Simmel 1971). Other authors like Habermas speak of the 'lifeworld,' the day-to-day experience that is taken for granted or considered a natural part of the world. Simmel differentiates sociability from other kinds of interaction (economic exchange, domination, conflict) by its lack of any attempt to obtain commercial gain or power. Here it is the interaction itself that matters.² These social forms unfold in the domain of the implicit, the moral taken as natural. We are dealing, then, with a sociology of social networks, constitutive of societies from the archaic to the post-industrial, but also a sociology of practical action, since the gift and sociability do not form part of the written norm. The theory of reciprocity and sociability is therefore a sociology of basic morality – not always conscious – of human relations learnt over the long process of socialization, either through verbal communication or through the direct observation of personal interactions. It is life, not a system (Ricoeur 1976), it is the world of common, primary, everyday experience (Arendt 1958).

However we still need to understand how economic and politico-institutional systems influence, dominate and eventually colonize these social spaces (Habermas 1991; Domingues 2013). The rising violence in various cities, for example, has made the theory of transnational network-organized crime increasingly important to our understanding of the lives of young people, especially the poorest among them. Many sociologists have studied the diverse ways in which illegal business activity is organized among impoverished youths. Such activities were, in fact, already present in the first decades of the twentieth century, including the prohibition era with its ban on alcohol sales in the United States, documented particularly in the urban areas studied by the Chicago School. Various sociologists have signalled the profound politico-economic associations and cultural interpenetrations between professionalized crime, local clientelist politics and uncontrolled capitalism. In other words, the connections between illegal and legal commerce, the transitions between deviance and the conventional world (Hannerz 1996; Matza 1969; Samuel 1981), the links between the economic system, with the power structure that accompanies illicit activity, and

² "Sociability is then a play-form of association... Since in its pure form has no ulterior end, no content, and no result outside itself, it is oriented completely about personalities. Since nothing but the impulse to sociability ... is to be gained, the process remains ... strictly limited to its personal bearers, the personal traits of amiability, breeding, cordiality..." (Simmel 1971: 130-1).

the lifeworld of small vendors, their families and neighbours, regulate both chance encounters and long-term sociability between these social actors. This is the dimension explored here.

As I have explored elsewhere, understanding the politico-economic system involved in organizing this kind of illegal business activity means keeping in mind the background context of the war against drugs, launched at the end of the 1970s. This policy coincided with the increase in violence across almost the entire American continent, which created the same paradoxical scenario of a commodity desired by many being banned. Despite the policies designed to repress the use and commercialization of these now illegal substances, lethal forms of violence broke out, a phenomenon linked by diverse authors to the growth of mafias or criminal business networks. New politico-economic configurations also appeared along with the latter. Among the banned drugs, cocaine in particular was commercialized through a highly lucrative market associated with a violent style of trafficking, imbued with the values of the financial market in general, ever appreciative of easy money, and colonized by the system of despotic power acquired in the conquest of territories, even inside the cities. In Central and South America, the illicit trade deeply affected political and social life across vast rural and urban spaces (Salama 1993, Schiray 1994, Thoumi 1994). The need to ensure that illegal activity remains clandestine invades and colonizes the lifeworld, demanding complete secrecy and absolute loyalty to the 'firm' and its bosses, ultimately punishing by death the failure to stick to those rules that are enforced as essential to survival of the business and its underlying power structure.

As usual, whenever police action is guided by stereotyped imagery of criminals, little or no investigation has been undertaken to discover and dismantle the closely intertwined drug and arms trafficking networks, or the other mafias who control commerce in illegal ways even when the goods themselves are legal. These networks cross class barriers, urban perimeters, states and national borders, infiltrating legal business, state institutions and governments. The close links between the State and illegal drug trafficking have been present from the outset, and they are regularly discussed by scholars. But these links mean there is insufficient information available to reconstruct the dynamics and flows of the various types of organized crime, including the illegal drug trade, which attracts so many vulnerable young people in more disadvantaged areas of the country. It also remains difficult,

therefore, to research major crime in Brazil since the biggest criminals are seldom investigated or registered, much less tried and convicted.

Scholars broadly agree that the everyday practices of poor young people situated at the end points of the organized crime networks in Brazil have their own specificity (Zaluar 1985, 1994, Misse 1995, Machado da Silva 2000, Feltran 2010, Grillo 2013). However the terms employed – warrior ethos, violent sociability, political commodities, form of life, consensus, world of crime – have provoked theoretical divergences, not always made explicit, that merit analysis. Is its specificity as a form of sociability due to its violence, or a type of power in the market, or a lifeworld, or is it a hybrid of local lifeworlds colonized by the market and by the power structure typical of illegal and secret enterprises?

We can begin by observing that these terms have different theoretical statuses, some originating exclusively from the everyday words used by offenders, others from more or less clearly defined theoretical frameworks. The term crime, used in diverse contexts, including the quotidian life of offenders, can undoubtedly be traced to the Brazilian Penal Code and constitutes a formal legal category, not an analytical one. When considered as something other than an ‘analytic category,’ though, the word crime refers to a classification of conduct that prompts (or is supposed to prompt) state repression and moral censure by citizens. Moreover, it highlights the crux of the relation between the market, institutions and social life.

Any expression, description or interpretation of the specific morality of groups living outside the law in Brazil must begin by observing that the morality involved is specific to the underground organization and that it operates in interaction or tension with the morality of residents in their neighbourhoods, and in conflict with the juridical-institutional apparatus of the Brazilian state. Put otherwise, this particular morality derives from the system of secret or outlawed societies, the morality of popular sectors and the morality of what, because of their illegal activities, is permeated by the legal system, which identifies and stigmatizes them as ‘criminals.’ In the everyday interactions that inform their practices, habitus or ethos, we find an overlapping of different kinds of rules and values of reciprocity in their families, neighbourhoods and social class, as well as the rules and values of the market governed by power relations, modified by the systemic requirements of complete adherence and loyalty to the factions and their leaders (Zaluar 2004).

There is also the problem of investigating which laws serve citizens, whatever their social class, and are thus legitimized, authenticated and accepted as fundamental for protecting the public interest in a democratic state based on the rule of law. This problem vanishes only when we set out from the premises of radical criminology theory, which states that the legal-penal apparatus – and thus all the criminal laws defining what is a crime – is created to protect the interests of the dominant class (Chambliss & Mankoff 1976).

According to the theory of the democratic state based on the rule of law, when acts are defined as transgressions but these concerns how a person lives without physically or personally harming anyone else (like prostitution, homosexuality, the use of illicit drugs and even their commercialization), the legitimacy and morality of the criminal imputation continues to be questioned, remaining within the political field of the dispute over the action's meaning. Excluding just wars – i.e. wars that are morally sanctioned – the same does not apply to those actions that cause personal, mental or physical harm to others, including the eventual loss of life of the victim in the perpetrator's action, as in the case of common crimes of theft, aggression and murder, especially when the assailant's use of force or arms leaves the victim defenceless and without freedom of response: that is, when it is qualified as cowardice. In Rio de Janeiro's favelas, it is not those who sell drugs who are morally condemned but the armed 'cowards' who impose their will on unarmed people in any situation and sometimes kill them (Zaluar 2004). In this case, the moral repulsion over transgressions is socially shared, legitimizing the demand for its perpetrators to be punished. Crime then becomes a common sense category and acquires another semantic field, one that is neither always internally coherent, even less consistent with the Penal Code. This does not prevent the work of moral justification, never completed, from being undertaken even by those who commit robbery and murder.

Any smaller or primitive grouping, villages, tribes, kinship groups, voluntary associations, non-state organizations, i.e. without a state structure or dominant class, has norms concerning serious transgressions to rules and expectations that are not fulfilled in interactions. Non-literate societies, like the Barotse and the Nuer studied by Max Gluckman and Evans Pritchard, had legal provisions to judge, mediate and set punishments for transgressions of the values and practices deemed important, especially in cases where the transgressive action caused harm to someone else. In these studies, the

translations of native terms reveal their proximity to the idea of crime, since they provoke mediations, judgments and retributions, even in the absence of a separate justice system functioning as an autonomous field. The factions of dealers and thieves have their own normative codes of conduct or *laws* and procedures for judging offenders, mimicking procedures of the state legal system. The question therefore becomes: to what point does radical cultural relativism allow us to consider all these codes to be acceptable not only to members of the groups, but also to those interacting with them on an everyday basis? Can a code of prescribed and written norms be considered an autonomous, consensual and single culture whose ontology can be understood?

These kind of theoretical questions posed by Anthropology have become even more complex today when cultures have ceased to exist in isolation, transformed into marbles that collide with each other continually. Contemporary cultures can no longer be studied as collectively shared universes of meanings, radically different or impermeable to others. Instead, Marcus and Fischer argue, cultures are no more than fictions, constructed by anthropologists rather than lived by natives in their encounters with the former. The ethnographic narrative creates more than it narrates these supposedly distinct, coherent and holistically comprehensible analytic objects. But cultures today are fragmented, lacking borders or any essential, immutable essence. The difference would be something akin to an ethnographic fiction (Marcus 1995; Fischer 2011; Clifford 1988), prompting another author to speak of an ethnography without the *ethno* (Appadurai 1991), a modality that has not only become possible but also necessary, especially in urban areas of the planet. We can no longer study cultures as distinct entities, as unique systems of meanings, practices and values: they have become hybrid, interconnected and without predefined physical borders, worlds that interpenetrate. The global forms of rapid and constant connection render the isolation of cultural units impossible and create the polyphony that, though always present, has changed the cultural dynamic into multiple reconfigurations. Cultures have always changed: now, though, they change more quickly than ever.

The transformation caused by globalization has diverse consequences for the association between place and culture, difference and identity. Anthropological theory has shifted away from the idea of totality to explore the relations between culture, place and power. Knowledge has ceased to be

considered merely local. Cultural difference is increasingly de-territorialized by the fluxes of migrations and transnational cultures in the post-industrial, post-colonial world. Ulf Hannerz and Arjun Appadurai even speak of an *ecumene* that is hybrid and creolized, just as Brazilian cultures have been considered since the first half of the twentieth century. A culture (or ethnic group or nation) may still become territorialized as a complex and contingent outcome of an ongoing historical process that still needs to be understood. Elsewhere, we might be faced by several kinds of ethos, habitus and social practices consigned to history in the rush of cultural change.

Hence the recourse of isolating and treating as a distinct culture the codes and social practices of those opting to engage in criminalizable actions and embarking on a criminal career, transgressing wider codes in the process, becomes merely a surgical device. In fact there are many points in common with systems external to where these young people live: acquiring power through arms, recognition or 'consideration' between peers, belonging to a group assembled in absolute secrecy and loyalty, and making easy money. If, as various studies have shown, juvenile delinquency is circumstantial, intermittent, transient and spread more or less evenly across all social classes (Matza 1969, Jankowski 1991), how can it be considered the 'culture' of just one group – drug traffickers – living in those areas inhabited by poorer workers, whether the latter are odd-jobbers, workers with formal contracts, or temporary workers? Drug dealers have families, neighbours and school colleagues; they frequent diverse social, leisure or religious groups that comprise the local sociocultural context. At the very least, we are dealing with a habitus or ethos, still with a relatively short history, linked to a ban imposed by powerful nations that transformed something accepted by many into a crime, generating a warrior ethos in response to the violent repression used in the war on drugs and the hunting down of traffickers.

Can we ignore the fact, for example, that when identifying someone as a criminal, the constant reference point is the state penal code and the moral evaluation of the people with whom they interact everyday in their neighbourhood, at school, in diverse kinds of associations and public spaces? Egos are constructed through numerous social relations in which each one becomes involved and individualized in the process (Burkitt 2008). Criminal subjection, a concept created by Michel Misse to name what Goffman called stigma, is inevitable though variable: criminals possess some awareness

that their actions are subject to the moral evaluation of common people and condemned by the state penal system, however 'revolting' they may appear, depending on their age and sex. This identity cannot be treated in isolation from the wider context. Even if national societies lack an established core set of values and beliefs that affect all the country's inhabitants, whether to be followed or transgressed, there will still be diverse wider forms of consensus concerning the type of actions that violate the rights of others.

Bourdieu and Elias (Bourdieu 1972, 1992; Elias 1998) both provided a theoretical model for exploring questions relating to male honour involved in wars between gangs, conceived as a habitus or ethos. The practical matrix – as a system of dispositions, values, and expectations acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life – leads men to make certain strategic choices to maximize their potential symbolic capital in response to the challenges they face. Nevertheless, this matrix is part of a plural lifeworld of the studied groups. In the case of drug traffickers in favelas, there was a clear disagreement over male morality in regards to obtaining an income – through work or easy money obtained in crime – and concerning the courage involved in clashes between unequal rivals where some had firearms and others did not. The revolver, a phallic symbol and instrument of violence, despite its association with virility, especially among youths, was seen negatively by mature and unarmed workers as a sign of cowardice and the mark of someone 'brainwashed' and 'manipulated,' lacking their own free will. Thus workers outside the world of crime did not value challenges and plots vital to the strategy of asserting virility. Instead of a system of dispositions, there was a dilemma of dispositions: to kill or to work (Zaluar 1997, 2004). Indeed even drug traffickers, dealing permanently and daily with illegal drugs, differentiate themselves from the 'slackers' who do nothing but rob occasionally. This is one more indication that moralities intermingle, just like cultures, languages and discourses. We therefore need to work with inter-textuality, inter-culturality and inter-morality: we cannot treat this context as a tribal culture or an independent form of life.

It is important to examine the multiple meanings of crime because any moral condemnation by poor workers of some criminal activities – albeit not all of them, nor with the same intensity – implies that the informal social control of such activities is present in intragenerational and intergenerational social relations. The world of work / world of crime dichotomy, ambiguous

and complex, continues to operate since socialization takes place between people from different generations and between those of the same age. Children and young people are socialized within the family, at school, as well as in religious, sporting and cultural groups. If they receive little attention and care from these agencies of socialization, however, they will primarily learn the violent social practices found predominantly on the street. In this case it is more appropriate to speak of violent socialization rather than a violent sociability, since trust, loyalty and reciprocity – the foundations of sociability – are only loosely present in the interaction between young people from drug gangs because of the systemic demands that colonize their social life.

Based on my own close monitoring of the transformations in drug trafficking using oral history techniques, I can state that the criminal factions formed in prison began to dominate trafficking from the mid 1980s onwards (Zaluar 1997, 2004). The habitus that they developed for their everyday activities, including the capacity for communication, cooperation and trust essential to any collective activity, cannot be realistically considered an entity separate from or opposed to the everyday activities of their neighbours. Its intermittent and interim nature is determined by the age of the participants, many of whom leave the world of crime as they mature (Pereira 2008), although the habitus or forms of association remain.

In such areas, intergenerational relations socialize children and young people, but sometimes fail to contain their impulsiveness, their engagement in risky or unconventional practices, their aggressiveness, and the importance that peer groups assume in identity formation. This identity process initiates precisely during the adolescence of human life (Wexler 2006). Such observations led to theories that explore ‘collective efficacy’ in the ecological approach to crime (Beato Filho, Alves & Tavares 2005) or criticize it (Zaluar & Ribeiro 2009). New discoveries in the area of neuroscience also show that adolescence is the period when the human brain is the most flexible and has its highest capacity for learning (Crone & Dahl 2012), as well as the desire to change the status quo.

Thus a huge divergence exists between interpretations that ignore or deny the forms of life, moralities or ethos predominant among poor workers in some neighbourhoods, opposing the sociability prevailing among some poor or favela-dwelling people either to bourgeois ideology – as a violent sociability – or to a conventional and formal kind of sociability found in

other parts of the city (Machado da Silva 2000). Misse (1995) suggests a dichotomy between the crimes of the rich and the crimes of the poor, arguing for the “association of a certain kind of criminality with ways of exerting power among the ‘marginalized’ subaltern classes,” as though it were not a development of recent history. Misse and Machado da Silva both appear to reject any notion of ongoing deep internal divisions within the urban proletariat (or within popular classes) in relation to morality and the forms of exerting power, emphasizing how the predominant mode takes shape among residents of such spaces, which comes to constitute the prevailing ethos among members of drug trafficking factions ruled by the violence demanded from outside by an organized crime system.

In using this hybrid concept, we can take Machado da Silva to assert that violent sociability is an autonomous culture in relation to what he calls the state organization or conventional organization of everyday activities, arguing that transgressors neither violate nor rebel against the latter since it does not form a significant element in their practices. He goes on to assert that violent sociability and conventional sociability are not in conflict, but coexist in the face of the inevitability of the former, already pervasive in the quotidian activities of the poor urban population. Hence it would be inappropriate to use the category ‘crime’ to describe, much less understand, what is ‘commonly’ called urban violence:

...as a category of understanding and reference to models of conduct, urban violence is at the centre of a discursive formation that expresses a form of life constituted by the use of force as an organizing principle of the social relations. [...] The dominant perspective defines the agents that threaten the public order through the legal-formal characteristics of their activities as criminals (that is, as practitioners of certain categories of criminal offences that constitute common violent crime). As a consequence, the conducts in question come to be comprehended in terms of the violated rules themselves, rather than in terms of the meaning constructed by the criminals for their practices. (Machado da Silva 2000: 54-59)

In personal conversation, the author explained to me that the term is deliberately hybrid since it aims to take into account what I understood as the inverse of Simmel’s concept of sociability in which interaction occurs without any instrumentality, that is, without any objective beyond

the interaction itself. In the case of violent sociation, the kind of violence employed without limits, without a specific target and without ulterior objectives amounts to what Hannah Arendt called violence for violence's sake, whose main protagonist is not the dealer but the '*bicho solto*'³ (uncaged animal) who acts alone, unconstrained by rules or morality. The use of the term is ambitious: it involves shifting beyond the three paradigms of the social sciences – holistic, individualist and relational (Caillé 2000, Elias 1970) – to a paradigm constructed through a form of sociation averse to any commitment, obligation or morality, which in fact also exists among traffickers and other forms of criminal association based on secrecy, loyalty and revenge, from which the '*bicho solto*' is excluded (Zaluar, 2004).

Misse, analysing the modes of exerting power supposedly typical of the subaltern classes, suggests that it amounts to an autonomous culture, a mark of social class, which resolutely ignores the legal/illegal opposition. His arguments equally suggest the blurring of the informal and the illegal, imputing to the popular classes the incapacity to make any moral distinction between informal and criminal practices such as murder and mugging.

The general indifference to tax regulations and commercial law (hundreds of small unlicensed bars, all kinds of different illegal informal work, the connection between the network of street vendors, contraband and theft, the fairs of stolen objects regularly held in Caxias, Acari, etc. [...] the semi-legal scrap metal merchants, the freight industry, gold sellers, gambling, drug dens, unlicensed taxis, the law-breaking patrons of samba schools, etc.): does this not all appear to be structurally connected to certain types of criminal practice, precisely those that provoke the greatest moral reaction? And likewise is this not all structurally connected to the so-called marginal populations, to their ways of exerting power in a context of subalternity, strong social hierarchization, the complete lack of money, and the effective absence of citizenship? (Misse 1995: 17)

Indeed, the two authors adhere to the critical theory that rejects the existence of crime as the leitmotif for understanding the issues relating to the abusive and cowardly use of violence, as well as activities that do not

3 One of the terms used to designate young people who 'barbarize' more: that is, the person who acts out of control without following local rules of sociability, without respecting anything or anyone, is precisely a *bicho solto*, a 'wild animal' or a 'loose animal'

constitute crimes, such as deregulation and informality, which, indeed, are not morally condemned by residents of the districts and favelas where the poor live. Cowardice is indeed a category used more often than crime to represent acts that force the submission of a weaker or unarmed person to a thug or a policeman.

Neither author considers the segmentations within these areas, nor the differences separating generations in terms of their interest in 'work,' another native category, or the differences between the transgressive actions that partially deconstruct the world of crime/world of work dichotomy. Still less do they consider the differences between the conceptions of masculinity among migrants from the Brazilian Northeast, based on the native category of the 'male subject' (*sujeito homem*), one which was developed in Rio de Janeiro's favelas, making it part of local culture (Zaluar 1998). The male subject covers a semantic field spanning from the ability to protect his wife, his football team and his local neighbourhood to his willingness to "never lose face" or be publicly humiliated, however small the slight. The latter meaning became widespread among youths with 'attitude,' that is, rebellious and armed, and their response to challenges that often become lethal due to the easy availability of firearms. The spectacular increase in homicide rates over recent decades attests to this fact.

In delimiting this new type of sociability as a 'mode of exerting power' or 'ethos,' are we not giving different names to phenomena that overlap considerably at empirical level? Violent sociability could be translated as violence for violence's sake; criminal subjection as stigma; political commodity as extortion; the social accumulation of violence as moral panic. Don't the semantic fields of the concepts of 'warrior ethos,' 'hyper-masculinity,' 'violent sociability,' and even that of 'political commodities,' despite their different theoretical contexts, also overlap empirically, given that they all refer to social practices that change a person's form of thought, feeling and action, recognizing the subjective dimension of the young men involved in the webs of illegal drug trafficking in Brazil, making them act in increasingly brutal form, insensitive to the other's suffering? All these concepts point to the dimension of power, or the search for absolute dominance over the other, as the basic motivation and objective of such practices.

But there is a paradox here. The existence of a complex symbolic web capable of generating a sense of belonging, solidarity and communication

between young drug dealers would seem to assure their form of life. Yet the persistence of this community is based on war and violence, implying a loss of material goods, the freedom to act and even ultimately their lives and those of their rivals. Indeed it is the failure of belonging, solidarity and communication that leads to the emergence of the instrumental action of agents who pursue only their own interests and use any means to impose their power over others (Habermas 1991), rescinding amicable sociability and the gift. A question arises, therefore: to what extent are the organized groups of those who live from crime and the need to take revenge based and reproduced through sociability and communication?

The concepts mentioned above relate – albeit not always explicitly – both to the codes of good manners governing the relations between individuals and groups in ‘informal’ or ‘marginalized’ areas of the city, and to personal psychic configurations: in other words, the way of controlling one’s emotions and relating to oneself (Elias 1998). In short, exploring the phenomena of crime and violence through local social relations also highlights the need to include the dimension of sociable sociability in any attempt to reach solutions. The difference resides in the scope, the negativity and the supposed irreversibility of this sociability. By taking a circumstantial and contingent ethos as a transcendental culture of crystallized tradition, we are left unable to contemplate how its transformation can be a means to reduce the extremely high homicide rate among young people – a desire of many residents, including a significant proportion of young people themselves.

Recently, some researchers have gone further and explored the practices adopted by drug gangs as an independent culture that, conceived in almost sacred isolation, possessed the same characteristics that functionalists once attributed to tribal cultures: consensus, indivisible solidarity, the unshakable belief of group members in the figure of the chief. The debate on violence in the trafficking of illegal drugs in Brazil emerges in an unexpected manner, therefore, in the terms used to describe and analyse those who opt to make money in long-term systemized activities like drug trafficking.

Based principally on her time spent with women who accompanied her to funk balls (*bailes funk*), one author declares that the *firma* (or *boca de fumo*, the drug selling point) is a gift system rather than a commercial enterprise, a spiritual entity rather than a power structure (Grillo 2013). The divergence shifted, then, to refer equally to the conceptualization of culture as a system

of clearly distinct and internalized meanings whereby the *firma* could receive the same treatment given to tribal and traditional cultures, involving all levels of social life, including the spiritual and transcendent. Can the world of crime be considered a culture radically different to other cultures with its own holistic logic? If so, it would be impossible to conceptualize the intermixing, juxtaposition and mimesis that occur between such proximate modes of acting and thinking. Moreover culture understood in its own terms moves in the direction reverse to ethnocentrism, as it romanticizes a conception of internally consensual and solidary pre-industrial communities, denying the existence of the international organized crime system that colonizes it.

Not always clearly or explicitly, various contemporary authors describe those groups of youths who make a living (or easily lose their life) through a variety of economic, political and symbolic activities – subject to diverse moral judgements by the wider population – as though these groups formed a culture based on a set of agreed rules and values, meaning that their analyses are inevitably imbued with a certain cultural relativism. A clear ‘nativization’ (Gupta & Ferguson 1999) of the groups of traffickers and thieves is evident with place, identity, solidarity, consensus-based order (Feltran 2010, Biondi 2010, Rui 2012) and belief (in the ‘owner’ or the ‘firm’) all taken to be harmoniously interwoven. In Biondi’s analysis (2010) the world of crime is “an ethics and a prescribed conduct,”⁴ but simultaneously an abstract, transcendent entity for the ‘natives’ concerned. For Grillo (2013), though agreeing that the activities revolve around an “illicit commerce of drug trafficking, robberies, assaults and thefts,” this does not constitute an internally conflictive power structure, but a spiritual, transcendent entity in which its participants believe and in which the exchange of gifts is not clearly distinguished from the trade of merchandise. Using the precepts of ethnographic research to understand native culture in its own terms, the author writes:

It is the faction that offers drug dealing a minimum basis of collective purpose insofar as it mobilizes a series of symbolic referents concerning the discourse

4 Here the author clearly grounds her analysis on the Foucault’s concept of ethics, which follows Hegel rather than Kant. For the latter philosopher, ethics is based on clear and prescriptive principles, while for the first two, members of the community know the approved ways of behaving collectively without the need to appeal to explicit principles. However in the factions there are norms and principles made explicit in a written code of prescriptions imposed on their members.

on its existence. The factional symbolism promotes affective bonds with an idea of belonging, constructed in opposition to an alterity and strengthened by extolling fraternity and loyalty, amid the images of war that it circulates. [...] In order for an act of giving to be interpreted as an act of generosity rather than self-interested, sufficient time needs to pass for it to be forgotten, before its repayment by a counter-gift. Consequently the difference between the exchange of gifts and mercantile exchange is a question of fitting into a network of relations, that is, which relations are considered and which are ignored [...] The *dono do morro* or 'owner of the favela' – whose name clearly denotes the ownership relation to the local space – 'gives out' responsibilities – a term emphasizing the relational aspect of the gift – to his 'employees' – another term that implicitly contains the idea of a labour relation to the boss. In return, the employee owes the 'owner of the favela' unconditional loyalty, which involves, of course, a relational counter-gift. (Grillo, 2013: 79; 85; 93)

The discursive strategy of transforming the ethos or habitus or form of life (and communication) of criminals into an integrated culture with its own terms and values, without comprehending that this form of life is affected by the exteriorities imposed by the system, is evident in the same author's surprising claim that robbery is an exchange, as it exists between free people who comply in it.

When something is robbed a circumstantial contract is established that regulates the terms in which exchanges are effected. In proposing that we think of robbery as a form of exchange, I draw from the formulations of Simmel. According to this author, exchanges do not necessarily produce equivalences, commonly leading to complaints that they are unfair. In cases of badly paid work, for instance, the decision to engage in the exchange indicates that it is valid in some form: that is, it is better to be poorly paid than die of hunger. The same applies to theft, since when a mugger seizes a person to steal their belongings, leaving them their life and physical integrity 'in exchange,' this exchange is worth it. (Grillo 2013: 170-1)

Obviously this formulation fails to consider the meaning given to this exchange by the other party to the relation (the person robbed), an exchange imposed on him or her, more than likely at gunpoint. The question is not the lack of equivalence but the threat to life, leaving the victim with no choice: in other words, he or she has none of the freedom essential to defining

reciprocity, in Marcel Mauss's formulation (1974), and thus the contract, which is not to be confused with the gift. Rather than an act of peace like the gift, the robbery involves an act of war from the very first moment of the transaction. From the victim's viewpoint, it may also be seen as the reverse of 'criminal subjection.' In a section referring to robbery, the only observation Mauss makes is that the thing robbed is inevitably imbued with a negative symbolic force since it weighs on the assailant's moral conscience. The act of robbing someone can be understood as the opposite of reciprocity as defined by Mauss: it is taking, refusing and accumulating, rather than giving, accepting and returning.

According to Mauss, the social bond is created between people or groups through the gift in its three moments (giving, accepting, returning), in which a free obligation impels the receiver to return the accepted gift. This, he argues, is the sociability that has accompanied human beings from their beginnings to the contemporary world. Its efficacy depends on the silence surrounding what was given, in other words, the absence of any demand for repayment to ensure it really is given freely. This is its secret, tacitly shared by giver and receiver alike. It is not registered in the written knowledge learnt from books or in school but in ethos: that is, in implicit knowledge, in culture embedded in the everyday practice of sociability. Even less is it restricted to the real or virtual threat of maximum punishment: that is, the death of anyone who fails to repay the presented gift. Different people make these bets in disparate situations, not always with predictable results, precisely because – at least in the idea of the gift game – each partner is free to act. The gift is not a coercive norm; it is a practice that impels a person to reciprocate for what is received from someone else, in the seesaw between freedom and obligation. Obligatory freedom and free obligation: this is the tension constituting the ethical paradox and dilemma of the gift in practical action. These characteristics mean that it conserves the ambiguities and ambivalences of what is neither a contract, or a law, or a political demand. It is not written, or coercive, nor is it merely obligatory, meaning that it can be positive or negative: in other words, the gift is paradoxical. Hence its ambiguous, ambivalent and unpredictable character.

While sociability occurs between people who create ties with each other, this does not remove the power dimension and its capacity to differentiate them. In fact the social always involves the interweaving of necessity and

gift, selfishness and selflessness, avarice and generosity, greed and solidarity, love and hate, despite the sometimes overly optimistic assertions made by critics of self-interest as the cement of society. Hence speaking merely of the reciprocity involved in the gift is not enough. We need to know what kind of reciprocity is involved, its social context, its limits, the meanings socially attributed to the actions characterizing it, and its socially perceived and criticized distortions. As occurs in political clientelism, in giving charity to the poor, in the Greek gift that is really an act of war, in gifts manipulated to subjugate others, and in deadly vengeance that amounts to a complete denial of any relation with other people. We need, therefore, to go beyond the interpersonal relations of the three moments of the gift to understand how and why a person offers or denies something to someone else, how and why something is accepted or refused, and how and why something is reciprocated. The analysis or interpretation will only be sufficiently complete when the sociocultural and politico-institutional contexts of the gift and counter-gift are included.

Much of what is narrated as though the bandits' specific culture or form of life echoes the tacit agreements found in favela dwellers' everyday life and their moral economy, where snitching or *caquetagem*, betrayal or *escama*, deceit or *volta* are all morally condemned, deemed wrong in any social transaction. However the unarmed residents lack the power to obtain redress and re-establish a balance in their relations in the same way as the armed *brothers*, enabled by the supply of arms and money from drug trafficking.

Discussing the changes that had occurred in the PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital, the largest criminal organization in Brazil) and based on a statement made by Marcola, leader of the faction in São Paulo, to the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee into Drug Trafficking (CPI do Narcotráfico), other authors claim that decisions such as the ban on selling crack in prisons are reached collectively – based on consensus – meaning that there is no command. These decisions are not orders but proposals discussed in all prisons by all prisoners. Biondi states: “the PCC is constituted by relations crafted personally in which everything is constantly negotiated, transformed and discussed” (cited in Rui, 2012). More importantly, consensuses and guidelines should not be mistaken for laws, rules, orders or judgments: they have to be observed in response to an unceasing debate on what is correct. This implies that while “nobody is forced to do anything” and no

punishments are stipulated for those who breach the supposed code, though, as people are well aware, “everything has a consequence”. But how to know the consequences and on whom they will be imposed? Sadly, this dimension is seldom if ever explored. Feltran (2010), who conducted long-term in-depth field research, argues that emergence of a *lei do crime* (crime law) as a form of social control has played a significant role in the drastic reduction in homicides on the periphery of São Paulo in recent years. This crime law advocates recourse to the *proceder* (to proceed, to behave), a native category for extra-legal rulings or *debates*, described as highly sophisticated. This, Feltran writes, comprised one of the four different *laws* (normative codes of conduct) considered legitimate that functioned at different levels of everyday life justice. The *lei do crime* was invoked whenever someone was robbed, mugged, coerced or killed, when the perpetrators were not the police. However Feltran narrates one of these debates as follows:

The course of action in the ‘debate’ that led to the decision to expel Lázaro provides a good insight into how this process works. The main dealer in the territory in question, José, who had known Ivete for 14 years ever since the family arrived in the favela, called Lázaro immediately for a serious talk. The ‘debate’ involved just José and one of his subordinates, who had heard the accusation that Lázaro was an informant from a police officer. José asked Lázaro directly whether he had been involved in any kind of schema of *caquetagem* [snitching] with the police, something he denied vehemently (Ivete told me this). The accusation was extremely serious, but no actual proof existed. Lázaro had been known since a child and, though the deviant deserved to be killed, José had too much respect for Ivete to order the death of one of her children without being sure. So José intervened directly in the case, asking Anísio to take Lázaro to the coach station so he could ‘vanish’ immediately. He was giving him a ‘chance of life,’ without the ‘debate’ reaching a definitive conclusion.

On the way to the coach station, though, Anísio’s phone rang. The news that Lázaro was a *caqueta* [snitch] had already reached the ‘brothers’ (from the PCC) and they had more power than José. Despite the numerous accounts I heard of how the PPC ‘controls’ the entire Sapopemba region, I also obtained information on other criminal factions in the district, as well as ‘independent’ dealers. The hypothesis I have been pursuing is that the ‘brothers’ (PCC) control just one segment of the illicit markets operating in the area, although they

comprise the final deliberative instance for any rulings concerning the local 'crime world' as a whole. In other words, although a lad is free to steal a car on his own and not hand it over to anyone from the PCC, his conduct vis-à-vis other members of the 'crime world' and the police is guided by the law dictated by the normative device of the 'Command.' In Sapopemba, therefore, as well as those individuals immersed 'in the crime world,' all the favela residents are guided by this 'law' irrespective of whether or not they participate in criminalized activities.

The 'brothers' telephoned José and asked Lázaro to return for a second 'debate,' this time in their presence. Anísio brought his brother back. Lázaro then had to submit to another discussion, only much tougher this time. Some of the 'brothers' wanted to execute him summarily – the *proceder* considers *correr com* [helping] the police and *caquetar* [snitching] capital sins, deserving the death penalty. However others taking part in the debate were unsure about the decision and a person is only executed when a consensus is reached. Perhaps because of their respect for José, an old and well-regarded drug trafficker in the region, or to avoid the unease of overturning a decision taken by him, the 'debate' decided to 'sneeze' Lázaro away from the favela forever...

Before returning to the coach station, however, Lázaro was beaten so hard that some of his bones were broken, his brother forced to take part in the beating too. Anísio dragged him back home and, an hour later, he was put in a coach heading for a state capital in Northeastern Brazil. Lázaro still ran the risk of being killed there if other 'brothers' were to disagree with the sentence.

Not by chance, the above case describes not the protection of a robbed or assaulted resident, but the maintenance of the faction's internal order and power. Even without reading Habermas and the other philosophers of communication, it is clearly evident that this *debate* and the *consensus* that emerges are founded on a very efficient system of repressive power, ultimately based on the use of armed force to impose justice on those who breach the rules set by this power. And that mere accusation, without concrete proof, is enough to condemn someone. The punishment, for its part, may be less severe when personal relations with relatives offer the chance to save the accused's life, albeit with no guarantee that the death penalty will not be executed sometime.

From being a community constituted through belief, consensus and solidarity, this form of normative power, as Feltran calls it, is a mode of exerting power repressively, one which cannot be considered uniform or consensual

across the subaltern classes. None of the ethnographies produced to date contain a study of the different cases taken to this kind of justice-deciding entity, only the description of them made by third parties, not always witnesses to the case, but who also heard the events described by others. This fact in itself reveals the secrecy and concealment surrounding the *proceder*, a 'legal procedure' that is seldom public.

Although the internal order or voluntary submission to the power structure that develops in clandestine form are internally sustained by the reciprocity between its members, the solidarity and loyalty always demanded from those who enter into these arenas in which gifts (in the two meanings of the word) are always present, the appeal to armed force is inevitable. The more it is organized, the more the criminal faction is able to control deadly confrontations between its members, forever vying for sales points and power. Numerous testimonies from youths involved in drug trafficking or from former dealers recount the problems of keeping friends in this world. This is especially the case during initial phases when factions have yet to obtain control of the territories as well as all the different stages and networks involved in drug trafficking. Connections are weak, trust is maintained under constant threat of deadly reprisals, and loyalty can be suddenly and completely overturned. After the power of the factions has been consolidated – as in the case of São Paulo where just one faction dominates most of the prisons and urban peripheries – new forms of regulating and curbing the lethal punishment inflicted on rivals and enemies may be established. In Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the twenty-first century such confrontations still occurred more often.

Interviewing former traffickers at length, I obtained a series of testimonies, including those transcribed below, that recount the impediments to solidarity, loyalty, friendship – in sum, the elements of the gift – mostly pursued without success against a background of disbelief. Loaned guns and cocaine have to be returned or repaid quickly in accordance with their market value. Meanwhile exchanges with the police occur through the medium of gunshots and *arregos* (pay-offs), not exactly alternatives since they go hand-in-hand:

After that I started to buy guns. Every gun that appeared before me, I'd buy. Sometimes when I invited someone to hang around with me I'd say: 'Hey dude, let's head off to Madureira, Penha, Rocha Miranda and get some cash!' We were

still young then, about 15 or 16 years old. When someone said: 'I went round with that guy, I lost some money, I lost a revolver!' I'd reply: 'No problem, I'll lend you another.' Today it's different, the cops from the PM [Military Police] shoot on sight. Back then, though, they'd capture and mug us. They'd rifle through everything, wave their revolvers, grab what was in our pockets and send us on our way: 'Clear off, clear off.' [...] Today the police are paid off, they start their shift and receive the *arrego* [pay-off]. At certain times, though, it works differently: they'll say that officers from the Supervisory Division or Inspectorate are going to make a tour there. [...] So they warn, 'today there'll be no *arrego*!' Then they don't want to know. When the PM comes, the shooting kicks off immediately. And the same cop who is shooting today, will be taking the money, his pay-off, tomorrow. That's how the whole thing works in the favelas nowadays. If he can't take money one day because there's going to be a patrol – either because there's a supervisor in the police vehicle or because they want to invade – then they're going to start firing. [...] In Jacarepaguá, for example, it's like that: the *arrego* has to arrive before two in the afternoon. If not the police enter and start shooting. [...] Today the pay-off is a better idea. Pay up so you don't get hassled!

Distrust always lurks behind the precarious trust and the payment for help received. It is still the market as pecuniary interest that predominates. Not even the *fiel*, the right-hand man who always accompanies the *dono da boca* (owner of the drug den) closely throughout the day, evades this logic. In an interview from 2009, a trafficker imprisoned for many years described the early years of cocaine trafficking in Rio de Janeiro as follows:

They would pack (*endolar*)⁵ the drug every day in a different place. People let their homes be used, you know, they took some cash to hand over their home for us to work in it. Then the neighbours would see, you know, so the next to time we'd find somewhere else. Otherwise we'd run the risk of being shopped by an anonymous phone call.

I just lived like that, suspicious. So much so that the luck of [name of another dealer] ran out because of that, right? Sometimes [name of the other dealer] would come up to me and would say, with 10 to 12 people close by, 'hey I'm

5 *Endolar* is a term used by dealers to describe the process of separating illegal drugs into small packets for sale to consumers.

with some friends from outside the area, come and let me present you to them.' I saw him from afar with two revolvers tucked under his arm, and these guys reaching out to shake my hand. I'd say: 'It's cool, you don't need to shake my hand.' He'd reply: 'Hey, aren't you going to shake hands with my friends or what?' I'd say: 'Not me lad, you're killing your friends.' Him: 'We're your friends, are you going to leave these friends with their hands dangling?' Me: 'Yes, there's no need to shake hands, it's fine as it is.' So if I hadn't dealt with him like that, I wouldn't be here now talking to you. And this happened various times, I'd see him from afar and he'd put his hand on his revolver. What happened? He'd grit his teeth, nervous with me, wanting to shoot, but if he did so would I... We'd both die... So it didn't go well for [name of the other dealer] because of that. He killed his friends, he'd be talking with a friend, eating, drinking and then suddenly 'boom' he'd shot the guy in the face. Then he'd take everything he had.

Sometimes too there's something wrong, you know, something amiss. If the guy goes around killing, people will soon be saying, "hey, that guy is killing everyone, he's killing friends." So they end up clearing the area that way, killing each other. And that way the guy obtains what he wants. In the end all those he wanted gone, he gets rid of... The first thing that enters the head of the guy involved is: if I don't kill that guy, he'll kill me. So people say, 'if my mother's going to cry, let his mother cry first.' Sometimes the guy thinks 'no, that poor guy, he's a friend' [...] When the guy does that, he's enraged. He is killing someone else so he doesn't get killed, you know? Sometimes the guy feels sorry: 'so-and-so is cool, I'll give him a chance.' He turns his back; he risks getting shot in the head. So the guy reacts already with this idea in mind: 'If I don't do this with that son of a bitch, he'll do it to me.' That's just how it happens. In the drug world lots of guys also say - nobody says it to the person's face mind, nobody - but they say that some guys are robots. The word was used a lot in prison: a robot is a guy who hears someone else say 'kill so-and-so' and he goes and does it. He isn't angry with [his victim]. It's something different: you kill a person without being angry with them, without the guy having done anything. That's the robot or remote-controlled guy. There's a lot of this in the *boca de fumo*. There are lots of guys who want to show their worth, who are trying to get a better position, right? These are the guys who don't have a *pátria* because in the drug world everyone is a friend, 'hey there little brother,' people just call each other brother, bro here, bro there, bro everywhere. [...] They embrace; they eat the guy's food. A while later, the *dono da boca* says: 'you

can 'break' (kill) so-and-so.' He has just eaten the guy's food and he goes and kills him.

There's the *fiel* (right-hand man) too, although that wasn't the word used back then. But whenever something exploded, it was the *fiel* who betrayed him, it was the *fiel* who was responsible. The guy is glued to him, but he's envious, he wants his place. I had these people who surrounded me too, but whenever they escorted me when I was going to sleep or hide in some place, I'd leave them behind at a certain point. Taking a path where I knew I could carry on ahead alone, I'd say to them: 'You can turn back here...' They're men you trust, but not entirely... If someone flatters me, it makes me feel uneasy, I can tell it's fake, you know.

In the case of Denis, the *dono* (owner) of the Rocinha favela at the end of the 1980s when the factions already controlled the drug trafficking network, the deadly reprisal for betrayed trust emerges as a tragedy in which deceit and lies are unable to mask the inversions (taking, refusing and accumulating) in the usual signs of the gift (giving, accepting, returning).

Then one time Denis travelled to Mexico with the idea of crossing from Mexico to the United States to do some business there [...] During his trip, these guys began to betray Denis in collusion with a group that had just escaped from Ilha Grande [...] He had a meeting with a Bolivian who brought in merchandise [...] He travelled to various places using false documents, you know? [...] He went and left the *boca* (selling point) with the guys there in charge, the two brothers, but then the two brothers became dominated by the guys who had arrived from Ilha Grande [...]. The guys wanted to take over the *boca* and were killing those of Denis's friends who came to Rocinha. So I was already suspicious about all this and left. [...] There was this woman who had belonged to this guy and was now Denis's woman. [...] So the girl's mother went to Rocinha to fetch some money after Denis had contacted them from the United States, but the guys just started laughing. I saw it all from afar and spotted the betrayal: 'These guys are betraying Denis, they're going to trick him.' The guys were out of their heads, snorting day and night, cocaine and whisky. So sometimes people would be chatting with these guys, sat together, they'd put the pistol to their ear and that was it. They'd kill them and stuff the body in the car boot. Locals would drive past on their way to work and would see a body on the ground. The guys would say: 'take that body over there.' The locals weren't used to that, you know, Denis didn't do that. The guys were terrorizing the favela.

The locals would be scared. They didn't want to take the body, but the gang would say: 'either you take the body or you'll be keeping it company...' They wandered around the favela with a bag of cocaine. They'd take out a straw and snort from the bag. And killing people day and night. It was like they were swatting flies.

Then, already safely outside the favela, I called Bolado. He was Denis's real trusted *fiel* (right-hand man). So I telephoned him and explained the situation. An old guy, a fugitive from Ilha Grande, was leading the overthrow against Denis. When I called there from (name of the favela) to tell them where I had left some of Denis's weapons, this old guy... he really was thick-skinned... answered the phone: 'Who is it?' I told him who I was. He replied: 'Hey, it's you mate, don't take this badly, but I take my hat off to you.' I asked: 'What do you mean by that?' 'You see fucking loads, eh?' What he really meant, then, was that they would try to take my life. So I said: 'I've no idea what you're on about.' Him: 'No, you know full well, you see loads.' So when Denis's *fiel* came, he explained to me 'Damn... you're right, they're plotting an overthrow, but I don't let my guard down when I'm near them, my hand is always on the trigger, they're fucked'... I think two days passed... On that day I went to resolve the situation of a guy there who had also asked me for help, he needed some cocaine that he didn't have. [...] So I seized the chance and asked Bolado to lend me 1 kg of powder... Then two days later Denis arrived back from his trip, met up on Rua Um [Road One] without anyone knowing, and his *fiel* and another group who he trusted went up into the favela, and then went down to Rua Dois [Road Two] and killed everyone. It was a massacre. He killed all those guys who had fled from Ilha Grande. [...] The old guy and a bunch of them there. He discovered a cellar where these guys had been stashing various machine guns. Just one guy escaped who ran the *boca* there. But how did he get away? The police invaded and he asked for protection.

[...] He [Denis] was travelling a lot. They really liked going to Florianópolis. They even raided a number of banks there. [...] At that time, Denis's right-hand man, him and a group of six, robbed about five banks, they made a lot of money. They had already arranged the right places to store the cash and leave empty-handed, the women would come back to Rio later, bringing the money. In one of these bank jobs Bolado got caught. He was a small white guy, short, like a playboy. He was from Rocinha, but anyone who didn't know him thought he was a *mauricinho* [rich kid] from the South Zone, but he was a responsible guy and everyone's friend. Denis liked him a lot. Well, he was the only one to

be caught in Florianópolis. Denis liked this guy so much that he assembled a group, spent a lot of money, sent these guys to Florianópolis and they rescued him from jail. I know that the favela's banditry changed after the slaughter... But who took over? Bolado was running everything... So Denis was talking to his right-hand man, and then he said, 'let me talk to so-and-so now.' Bolado passed the telephone to the guy next to him and Denis said to they guy on the telephone: 'Kill him, kill him: I want to hear the shot and take control of the *boca*.' Some friends who were there told me all this later, right? So the guy finished speaking to Denis and said: 'Take the phone, he wants another word with you.' So Bolado took the phone and the other guy killed him. He was a close friend, they'd grown up together. [...] A bought policeman said that Bolado had snitched Denis.⁶

I heard many accounts over the years and very recently about people who had been robbed or assaulted who went to the local drug bosses to recover their possessions or ask for the attacks to stop, without any need for a debate among the faction's leaders. In fact, according to the statements of residents interviewed over the last thirty years, many of them went to members of the drug faction because they would have to *prestar contas* (account for their actions) to them were they to go to the police to deal with small local disputes and losses. Doing the latter would imply bringing the police into the locality and jeopardizing the illegal trade. These cases that hinder business, threaten faction members or upset the faction's power mobilize the 'brothers' and inform the debate on punishments. In small cases of theft and assaults on residents, the deliberative body provides a means of preventing the police from arriving – the biggest problem to be avoided since it threatens the criminal's source of identity, his stigma or criminal subjection, as well as increasing the chance of being caught, tried and sentenced, or having to submit to the extortion of the expensive *arregos* (pay-offs) to the police. In other words, the decision-making bodies locally present and active are limited – and conform – to the practices utilized in them. Two questions become crucial then: how did the systemic need to maintain the secrecy of commercial activities and their lucrativeness develop; how the loyalty to bosses within the power hierarchy in which inertia and convention are

⁶ Denis was imprisoned in 1987; a bullet to his head killed Bolado in 1988, which the local press called 'accidental.' Denis was found hanged in his cell in 2001.

imposed on the more fragile minds; which young people join these clandestine societies, willing to die in armed conflicts? If evil is systemic, or banal, as Hannah Arendt suggested in the case of the extermination of Jews during the Holocaust, then it is inertia that leads young people to kill each other. But they are mostly vulnerable people, coming from poor and troubled families, who seek social recognition by offering their courage and sacrifice for the *firma*. We need to explain and analyse the secrecy involved in their decisions and transactions, as well as the appeal to those desperately seeking recognition, glory and fame.

Another flaw in the texts by the authors cited earlier is their failure to mention the conflicts that always occurred between residents and dealers over the control of resident associations, disputes over women, especially the ban on former girlfriends of dealers ever becoming the girlfriends of common residents, the disturbances caused by the excessive noise of the funk balls, even though residents are often too scared to complain about the din. Conflicts are not limited to pecuniary interests or class conflicts. To understand them it is imperative to consider the wider social, political and economic contexts, whether these relate to underground activity or to local politics.

In terms of the subjectivity of the young people involved, today some agreement exists among anthropologists who have studied the great diversity that emerged from the process of rapid globalization. After the critiques of consensualism, harmony and homogeneity, ethnographers also began to focus on the unexpected, the surprising, the deviant, what Malinowski himself called “the imponderabilia of actual life.” Those studying unending processes and conflicts inherent to never perfectly ordered systems do not look for the system *per se*, but explore what flesh and blood people do in different contexts, the subjects whose actions reveal how lived situations actually unfold. In hybrid, flexible or transitional cultures, the subject has various identifications to hand that he or she can adopt contextually, negotiating them but never taking them as an immutable and transcendent essence. In such cultures, subjects become Hamlet-like figures, forever unsure whether to be or not to be, who resolve the tragic conflict by choosing from a range of available alternatives those that can define a never complete and ever renewed identificatory project. In the many situations in which diverse actors interact we can observe an intermittence and intersection of places,

identifications, discourses and goods: these actors span from neighbourhood residents to institutional agents – police officers, doctors, teachers, social workers – as well as researchers and journalists who continually dispute the discourse on the locality and its social identity.

In the periods when more favelas were under the armed control of drug dealers, I continued to collect testimonies that indicated other forms of conceptualizing and organizing power within these areas. Community leaders not linked to drug trafficking continued their activities, albeit often in limited fashion, independent of the resident associations as the latter came under the control either of the paramilitaries who made up some of the ‘militias’ (Zaluar & Conceição 2007; Cano 2008) or the dealers (Zaluar 1994, 2004). Hence we need to emphasize both the error of generalizing this ethos, sociability or mode of exercising power to entire social classes, whether we call them the popular classes, the subaltern class or marginal populations, and of presuming its permanence and irreversibility. The social context is one of institutional crossovers, cultural hybridism and multiple social networks that intersect, divided and become reconstituted through complex and diverse processes.

Concomitantly to the differences in the moral evaluation of actions classified as *crime* by residents of Rio’s favelas, there were also shifts in sensibility in relation to the suffering of others involved in drug trafficking activities, which became increasingly cruel. The vast majority of residents, however, never accepted the horror, although they had to learn to live with the despotic forms of power so close to their homes.

This led to the spread of a *solta*⁷ (unfettered) first nature (Wouters 2004) among some poor young people living in these locations, combined with a ‘second nature’ against legality, albeit while complying with the despotic rules of local tyrants, developing a warrior ethos of mercilessness in the face of the other’s suffering, a pride in inflicting violence on the body of rivals – black, brown and poor like themselves – now seen as deadly enemies to be destroyed in an unending war. Among the many styles of masculinity identified by the various ethnographic studies conducted by the NUPEVI team (Cechetto 2004, Monteiro 2009) with migrants from other states, including second-generation black, brown, *mulato* (mixed) and white youths, we can

7 See footnote 3.

highlight the style most clearly linked to violent action against the others: the warrior ethos and hypermasculinity in which ostentatious consumption defines these new successful male identities and makes the possession of money essential in displaying assistance to friends, neighbours and kin, impressing them by wearing expensive jewellery and cloths, or holding parties and paying for drinks in public venues – all strategies used by youths seeking to dominate through the power of guns and bundles of cash in the pocket. These styles of intensified masculinity, the spectacular display of male rebellion, created the social context for the localized but unending armed conflict described by some as a ‘molecular war’ (Zaluar 2004), operating through the dehumanization of their enemies as a means to justify the atrocities committed against them. Finally, it undermined the ever fragile civility of Brazil’s urban inhabitants, a civility constructed over decades, principally in the various neighbourhood associations, including the recreational samba schools, carnival blocks, *maracatu* groups, *folia* revelries, etc. This led to a reversal of the internalization of a ‘third nature,’ more unconventional and less submissive to incontestable authority and more flexible in the negotiation with other people.

The biggest divergence was, therefore, in the role allocated to long-term processes in the attempts to interpret violence among young poor men in Brazil, more specifically in Rio de Janeiro. These processes, which Elias and Wouters studied in the social context of Europe from the Middle Ages onwards, more recently complemented by the work of Dunning, encompass the rules of ‘fair play’ and relationships between people of different social classes, genders and generations as part of the long process of order or discipline that substitute the physical destruction of rivals with the control of emotions in a regulated form of rivalry. This long process was observed in parliamentary politics, in sporting competition (Elias & Dunning 1993) or in the Rio de Janeiro samba school parades (Zaluar 1998), revealing other dimensions and segmentations of the social classes. Expressions of fair play and civility did not concern, therefore, the good manners that enabled access to the elites or to the closed groups of the well-born and well-bred: rather, they involved respect for the rules of the game that would apply to all those involved in public spaces, that is, outside the local neighbourhood. Sports events and competitive parades involved the application – under equal rules for everyone – of a sense of informal justice learnt over the course

of socialization, much more than the rush for upward social mobility. By uniting people from different families, generations and urban districts in public spaces, the process fostered the internalization of civility between fellow citizens. This also provided the basis for internal class solidarity and thus for their social movements.

The focus then has to be the process of pacifying customs or what we might call 'the culture of civility,' which transformed the relations between the State and society, divided into social classes, ethnic groups, races, age groups, genders and religious affiliations. By emphasizing civility instead of etiquette or the code of good manners, I interpreted the civilizing process through the politico-institutional dimension of the State's legitimized monopoly of violence and the changes in the formation of subjectivities through fair play and the control of emotions. Through this process, people learned to respect the rules of the game, including the aim of sparing other people's lives. I interpret it, therefore, as a vital part of the culture of civility and of association towards collective action, something closer to what Putnam (2006) called civic culture.

According to Wouters, the process of 'informalization' of etiquettes occurring in the 1960s and 70s, also termed 'collective emancipation,' rendered this opposition more flexible with the acceptance of what he calls 'lower impulses' and 'lower classes.' In terms of the relation between generations, this meant superseding the figure of absolute and incontestable authority whose orders had to be obeyed without discussion. Alternative patterns of conduct, principally merging from youth culture, became accessible, the object of negotiation between figures of authority and young people. In the psychic economy of individuals, responsibility and thus rationality vis-à-vis the choices made between alternatives increased, along with greater social egalitarianism as the social distance between those ranked as inferior and superior diminished.

Although the triumph of the market in the 1980s meant a return to the need to climb the social hierarchy, reflecting the increasing inequality with and conformity to the dominant elites, the emergence of a 'third nature' fostering the dialogue between repressed emotions (first nature) and approved social etiquette (second nature) did not just vanish. Greater moral flexibility and better understanding between conscience and impulses, Wouters argues, characterize this third nature, so that the successful are those who combine

firmness and flexibility, frankness and tact (Wouters 2004).

Indeed, it would be important to analyse how the capital of personality among young people in Brazil's cities is compromised by the interruption and incompleteness of the process of informalization/social egalitarianism, given that social democratization has not occurred at the same pace as political democratization. The persistence of social authoritarianism and social hierarchy in Brazil, especially the forms of despotic power that emerged from the 1970s onwards in more disadvantaged urban areas, has aborted the process of informality and better dialogue with authority figures, including to discuss the rules of the game, especially in the less schooled and more subaltern sectors of the population. Once again we are confronted by an incomplete, partial and excluding process of redemocratization that combines different stages in the consolidation of the rule of law. And again social inequality is evident, also appearing now in the process of socialization and the acquisition of dispositions and postures more in keeping with participation or inclusion in society.

The divergences in interpretations, even between those based on intensive ethnographic research, have kept alive the debate on the objects and subjects that, divided themselves by ethical dilemmas, ambiguities, inconsistencies and ceaseless quests for power and recognition, also continue immersed in this interminable process of disagreements and clashes, some of which, from deep-seated enmity and the desire for revenge, turn deadly.

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Respect, Dignity and Rights

Ethnographic registers about community
policing in Rio de Janeiro

Marcus Cardoso

Abstract

Why did a community-policing unit enjoy initial positive reception among the residents of two favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro? Based on an ethnographic study conducted from 2000 – 2007 I suggest that to respond to this question it is necessary to observe the meaning that the residents attribute to the presence and action of this police squad, and above all to the importance that certain local categories involving conceptions of rights and justice assume when they speak about the police. In this light, it is important to pay attention to the notion of dignity constructed and shared locally and the category respect, which they used repeatedly.

Keywords: demands for recognition, dignity, community policing, concepts of rights, favelas.

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Why did a community-policing unit enjoy an initial positive reception among residents of two favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro? Based on an ethnographic study conducted from 2000-2007 I suggest that to respond to this question it is necessary to observe the meaning that these residents attribute to the presence and action of the police unit, above all to the importance that certain local categories involving concepts of rights and justice assume when thinking and speaking about the police. It is essential to remain attentive to the locally constructed and shared concept of dignity and the category *respect*, which is repeatedly used by people in the community. I seek to demonstrate that the good evaluation given to the policing for a certain period of time is due to the local perception that the police came to recognize the moral dignity of the residents of the two favelas.

In response to a series of confrontations between the police and residents of the favelas of the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the second half of the year 2000, the state government, through the Secretariat for Public Safety, created a community-policing unit within the Military Police [as the state police are known in Brazil, although they are not related to the national armed forces]. It was baptized the Special Areas Police Group (GPAE). In practice, the use of the expression. “special areas” was used as a neologism to designate favelas, given that the unit would act exclusively in these areas.

As a researcher I accompanied the action of the GPAE in the favelas of Cantagalo and of Pavão-Pavãozinho beginning in 2001 until 2007. I was interested in the perception of its residents about the police operations. One possible synthesis of this period can be described as follows: For approximately one year after its implantation, the performance of the community-policing unit was considered to be satisfactory and positive by a significant part of the residents with whom I had a relationship in the field, but it gradually

came to be the target of more systematic criticisms and declarations of discontent, which finally made it the subject of indifference among residents of the two favelas.¹

The following analysis focuses on the first year of action of the community-policing unit and the question that guides this article is the following: Why did the GPAE initially have a positive response among the residents of the Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho favelas? To respond properly it is necessary to question the meaning that the interlocutors give to the presence and action of the GPAE, highlighting the importance that certain local notions of rights and justice have when thinking and speaking of the police.

An undertaking such as this requires careful attention to the accounts of my interlocutors. I believe that by proceeding in this way it is possible to find eventual similarities and recurrences in their narratives that can provide clues to the set of meanings that articulates their experiences. As the best anthropology teaches us, what interests me here are the reflections that the residents of the two favelas present about their relationship with the police and how the opinion that they have of it is articulated with their conceptions of justice and rights. This approach allows overcoming the risk of treating the statements of my interlocutors (about the police and about rights) abstractly, based on formulations and concepts that apply to all and any situation, and disregarding the particular contexts where they occur and the content that they express.

In recent years I have sought to contribute ethnographically to the discussion about citizenship in Brazil, based on an anthropological concept of the law, as was developed by Cardoso de Oliveira (2002, 2011a, 2011b, 2013). I have suggested that one of the keys to understanding the dilemmas that

¹ My initial interest in the two favelas arose in 2001. The Instituto Superior de Estudos sobre a Religião (ISER) [Institute of Higher Studies about Religion] – which wanted to accompany the implementation of a project of the state Secretariat for Public Safety, began a study coordinated by Regina Novaes (IFCS/UFRJ) and Clara Mafra (PPCIS/UERJ) entitled “Violence, Sociability and Public Space”, in which I took part. Since then, I became interested in the perception of the residents of the two favelas about the police. The narratives presented in this article were obtained between 2001 and 2007. In 2001, 2002 and 2004, the period that includes my undergraduate and master’s studies, I was in the field and always interested in how the residents signify and experience the police presence in the two favelas, as well as the impact of this on the functioning of the state government’s community police project. Later, in 2007, I returned to the field motivated by the memory of the residents about the project, and by the interpretations that they elaborated to explain its failure. During all these years, the focus of reflection was on the complaints about the police and demands for respect for rights. The narratives presented in the article were obtained in various ways, depending on the occasion and preference of the interlocutor. Some people allowed recording the encounters, while others preferred that the researcher only take written notes of the contents of the conversations and or interviews.

involve the theme is in the centrality of the notion of *respect*, shared among the residents of the two favelas. Despite differences about the possibilities for comparison or generalization that mark the theoretical history about the issue, it is new in anthropology that the set of norms designed to regulate the behavior of members of a society reflect concepts of the world where these members are inserted, as demonstrated by Malinowski (2003), Bohannan (1989), Nader (1997), Geertz (1997), Moore (2001), and others. Added to this is the fact that even within a society, the law and the concept of justice are subject to multiple significations (Cardoso de Oliveira 2011a). Even in cases where there is a single formal normative code, the way that it is lived and thought of varies (or can vary) according to the social group accompanied. Thus, to understand the demands for rights and the conflicts that emerge from the perception that they are not being respected – or in the opposite case, that they are being recognized – it is necessary to remain attentive to the universe of meanings of those involved. In other words, it is not possible properly to understand the demands and complaints that arise in combative relations without considering the social context where they are expressed and the set of meanings they trigger. The way that this study is presented is in keeping with this perspective.

The favelas

The first locations to receive the GPAE were the favelas of Pavão-Pavãozinho and Cantagalo,² located in the Zona Sul [Southern Zone] of the city, between the neighborhoods of Copacabana and Ipanema. These favelas are just a few minutes from the busy Avenidas Nossa Senhora de Copacabana and Vieira Souto, which run through the two most famous beachfront neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. Their residents coexist daily with the advantages and disadvantages related to the geographic location in which they are found. The fact that these avenues are close to the sea, surrounded by countless luxury hotels and circled by a population with strong purchasing power, makes them an important and lucrative point of sale for drugs that is frequented by tourists and residents of the nearby neighborhoods. It is not by chance that over the

2 Later, more units were installed in other favelas of the state (Souza da Silva 2006; Albernaz, Caruso and Patrício 2006).

years they have been the scene of various disputes among rival factions over the control of illicit drug sales in the region.³

The two favelas are neighbors and both occupy elevated hillsides. Cantagalo began to be settled in the early 1900s, with the construction of the first residences on the hillsides. Later, around 1920, with the increased population density, another part of the hillside was occupied, creating Pavão-Pavãozinho (Seth 1985). While the later originated from the migration of individuals from northeastern Brazil, the first was created from the movement of families from the interior of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais states. On another occasion I have discussed the similarities and differences with which the residents of the two favelas build their identities; at times insisting on a distinction from their neighbors, at others ignoring certain specificities that characterize them (Cardoso 2010, 2013). For what interests me here, it is sufficient to say that when speaking of certain themes, such as the police and rights, it is possible to identify shared worldviews, opinions and forms of organizing their narratives.

The GPAE Community-Policing Unit

As a rule, initiatives baptized as community policing are those that operate to some degree from the premise of the “coproduction” of public safety. In reality, it is an expression that encompasses various programs characterized by the adoption of a policing modality that involves the joint participation of civil society and the police in the production of safety, with the parties cooperating to find effective strategies for confronting disturbances of public order and preventing crime (Skolnick & Bayley 2002; Rosenbaum 2002; Brodeur 2002). Those who defend its implementation believe that this type of engagement enhances the quality of the service provided by police institutions and decreases the sense of insecurity among the population (Mesquita Neto 2004; Nev 2009). Unlike a traditional policing model, based on the paradigm of “professional application of the law” (focused on attending emergency situations), community policing gives priority to attending non-emergency situations and a concern for resolving problems in their initial stages, so that they do not reach critical proportions (Moore 2002). To comply

3 For more about the disputes between the rival factions in the two favelas see Cardoso (2005).

with these objectives some practices must be adopted: these are postures and procedures that are capable of constructing a reciprocal trust between police agents and the population; integrated actions between different social actors; an emphasis on non-emergency services; and a decentralization of police activity (Nev 2009).

The Special Areas Police Group (GPAE) was created in the year 2000 as a specialized unit for the patrol and occupation of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by the philosophical and operational principles of community policing, the GPAE would assume as its priority function guaranteeing the safety of the residents of these areas. It is interesting to note that the choice of the favelas as a stage of action of the GPAE was not made by chance. As is known, these locations were historically represented as spaces of poverty, degradation, marginality and violence (Perlman 1977; Valladares 2005). This stigma was reiterated in the 1980s, when organized drugs dealers began to act systematically, taking these neighborhoods as the base of their operations (Zaluar 1985). This phenomenon led to an increase in the sense of fear and insecurity among the Fluminense population [as residents of these neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro are known], influencing the public safety policies in the 1980s and 1990s. As indicated by Zaluar (2000) and Soares (1996), the reaction to fear was materialized through the demand for “more police”, by making explicit the desire for the police to adopt more repressive procedures. This was combined with advances against discourse and policies that emphasized human rights and citizenship.⁴ In this scenario, the universe of people who could (and can) have their rights ignored has a specific color and location; they are, mostly young black male residents of favelas (Zaluar 2010; Leite 2012). This appears to confirm the perception that the most common target of civil rights violations are those people who have already had their economic and social rights denied. It also appears to confirm that our police act in a selective manner, guided by an hierarchical classification of society (Kant de Lima 1995, 2001; Miranda & Pita 2010, among others). Projects for community policing in Rio de Janeiro, as was the case of GPAE, at least discursively, promise to modify this reality, giving priority to guaranteeing the civil and social rights of those who reside in favelas.

4 The outbreak against the discourses that defend the respect for human rights and an increased demand for greater repression was not restricted to the state of Rio de Janeiro. Similar reactions also took place in São Paulo, as demonstrated by Caldeira (2000) and Holston (2008).

The announcement of the creation of the GPA is closely related to a series of disturbances marked by the confrontation between favela residents and the police in a period of approximately thirty days. The first of these involved precisely the residents of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho. The demonstrations began in mid May 2000, when the normally busy daily life of Copacabana was interrupted by an extraordinary event involving the residents of the two favelas. Protesting against a supposed execution of five men in Cantagalo by the military police, streets were blocked, buses and private cars were stoned and some stores were looted. It was a riot.⁵ As can be imagined, the version presented by the Military Police about the development of the events does not coincide with the version presented by the residents. At the time, the police involved in the event alleged that they were caught by surprise, and received gunfire from a group of men belonging to *the movement*⁶ when they conducted a patrol around Cantagalo. The police say that they defended themselves, and as a result of the shoot-out five of their opponents were killed. On the other side, without denying that the victims belonged to *the movement*, the demonstrators questioned the allegation of legitimate defense, reaffirming their conviction that they had witnessed an execution.⁷ Soon after these events, the state government announced the creation of the community-policing unit.

Conceiving the GPAE as a type of community police meant establishing that its agents would act in way that would place in practice procedures that would favor crime-prevention strategies, encouraging the participation of residents in making decisions about the best way to act (coproduction of security). To do so, the community police unit operated 24 hours-a-day in the favelas and provided ostensive police services, inhibiting the occurrence of situations that would place lives at risk (Blanco 2003). To fulfill this proposal, in its daily actions, the police unit sought to limit the power of drug

5 This is how the media in general and the demonstrators usually refer to events of this nature, characterized by being collective demonstrations that call for demands that culminate with the deprecation of public and private property and by the confrontation with police, making explicit the dissatisfaction of a certain collectivity.

6 As will become clear in the article, “*“pessoa de bem”* [good person] and “*“movimento”* [the movement] are local categories that are broadly used, and that are usually used when comparing people and options within the favelas. They involve notions of dignity and morality. While “*“movimento”* refers to local organized crime, “*“good people”* can refer to all those who do not adhere to crime

7 The same scene was repeated in the favelas of Jacarezinho, Cidade de Deus, Praia da Rosa, Morro do Engenho, Pilares and Bateau Mouche, where the residents alleged that they were protesting against excessive violence and executions committed by the police.

traffickers and avoid creating situations that would provoke armed conflicts that would expose residents to risk of death. At the same time, they exercised a rigid internal control to discourage violent and or criminal procedures by their agents. In the words of their commander, the functions of the GPAE would be highlighted by procedures that promote:

Crime prevention, with an emphasis on situations of personal and social risk, which afflict children and adolescents; reduction of fear, through continual efforts (regular and interactive) undertaken by the action of ostensive policing in neutralizing the armed territorial command exteriorized by the dynamics of drug trafficking; the qualified repression of trafficking and of the use of drugs, in the hypotheses of flagrant crime or in compliance with a judicial order; prevention and repression of eventual irregular conduct practiced by the police, in the hypotheses of disciplinary transgression and crime (Blanco 2003: 108-109).

The Residents and the GPAE

Ruth,⁸ a resident of Pavão-Pavãozinho, had mixed feelings about the presence of the Community Police Post in front of her house. After living many years in the favela with her children, she had witnessed many arbitrary actions, excessive use of force and attacks committed by military and civil police. It was thus difficult to suddenly believe that everything would change. Experience indicated that she should not trust the police. And now the police were there, right in front of her house, 24 hours-a-day. Despite the lack of trust, she admitted that things began to get better in the favela. But why did they improve? Because the police presence limited the *movement*. Her experience had taught her that the drug dealers are also dangerous. Like the police, they kill, assault, humiliate and disrespect the *peessoas de bem*.⁹ In sum: she did not trust the police, but was satisfied with the consequences of their presence in Pavão-Pavãozinho. The unmentioned detail is that the

8 The names of the residents used in this article were changed.

9 As mentioned in note 6, “*peessoas de bem*” [good people] and “*movimento*” [the movement] are local categories that are broadly used, and that are usually used when comparing people and options within the favelas. They involve notions of dignity and morality. While “*movimento*” refers to local organized crime, “*good people*” can refer to all those who do not adhere to crime.

Community Police Post located in front of her house, occupied an important point in the dynamics and organization of the *movement*. It is precisely where drugs had previously been packaged and where some deals were closed. Ruth said that she had lost count of how many times she saw scenes of violence.

I do not like this police post here in front of my house because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. I walk by and don't say anything and don't look at the police that are here...**But with them here (the police) it is better than before.** Before I had to see everything, all the bad things that you can imagine I saw, So many beatings that I can't say how many, lots, really...Where the police are now. These kids would beat people, hit them in the face, make them get on their knees and plead (...) (Ruth, Pavão-Pavãozinho. GRIFO MEU).

At the time, Ruth was 45 years old and lived with her two children; Helen, 16, and Cleicy, 22. The youth emphasized the situation described by their mother, telling how the space in front of their house was used by the *movement*.

All the time! At night here there was lots of screaming. I would arrive from school and go up quickly, not stop to speak to anyone. I wouldn't let up my guard here in front because at any time there were shootings or bad stuff. People crying, people asking, but the kids here had no mercy. If you owed money you had to pay somehow...if they found you had a way to get money, they beat you into submission. Now, if you didn't pay and weren't going to pay, they beat you, they did lots of bad things, and then they would kill you (Helen, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

Less than a year had gone by since her ex-husband left home to live with another women in the favela of Rocinha. The fact that there were three women without a man was another reason for Ruth to be worried. She said that one day her daughters could easily be victims of abuse or harassment from those who belonged to the *movement*, precisely because there was no male figure to protect them. Meanwhile, for Cleicy and Helen the absence of a male figure did not represent a problem. The problem was in the fact that the *movement* did not respect anyone.

You know that I do not like these people here. I never liked them. I don't walk around, I don't speak, I don't want to know. But they are very aggressive. Very.

They harass, call out, say they want to talk... I don't let Ricardo (her boyfriend) come up here. He wants to walk me home, but I tell him to stay in the car and go away, because its pushing your luck (Cleicy, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

Seu Augusto, a retired widower and a resident of Pavão-Pavãozinho has an opinion similar to that of Ruth. He also did not trust the police, but was satisfied with the consequences of their presence and with the way that they were working in the favela.

The police is the police. You have to distrust them because they have vices and these things that do not change overnight. But, to answer your question, I think that it has improved here. It is not as great as they say on TV, but it is true that it is better. The shooting stopped... and there is this thing that they do not come up shooting (...) (Augusto, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

Débora, in turn was more explicit upon emphasizing how the arrival of the police unit generated a positive impact in daily life. Born and raised in Cantagalo, she met Carlos and married him. She is 29, and never lived anywhere else. She believed the arrival of the GPAE inhibited the action of the *movement*, reducing the episodes of abuse and violence.

Of course I prefer them here. You don't know what it's like to live in a place that at any moment you can get shot. That you see someone being beat to death or when you open the door of your house or are going down to work there is a body on the ground. Nothing, nothing at all guarantees that its not me there in the ditch. This thing that they say the resident of the favela likes drug dealers is a lie. We live in fear. So, of course I prefer how it is now (Débora, Cantagalo. EMPHASIS MINE).

For Débora the change mentioned is not limited to the inhibition of abusive practices committed by the members of the local criminal group. She also understands that there was a change in how the police related with the other residents.

What is important is that there are no more shoot outs... before, what would happen was that they would come here as they wanted, shooting, without knowing who was in their path, and later when someone died they would say it was a criminal... what's worse is that they didn't care, if you were in the way it was your problem (Débora, Cantagalo. EMPHASIS MINE).

She added:

I did go to the first meetings with the police. And what I liked was that the commander said (...) that the **concern was for us, for our safety**, that their concern is for us. That their work was to **protect the residents of the favela**. That's what they do down below every day. But here, in the favela, this is new (Idem. EMPHASIS MINE).

GPAE and its procedures

Until now, I have presented some local narratives about the GPAE. To complete the presentation, I will now present some procedures adopted by the police that, according to my interlocutors were responsible for containing the *movement* and for the indications that what was underway was a change in how the police act in the favelas and related with the residents.

Territorial control

As indicated earlier, the group was created to decrease the sensation of fear and the situations of personal risk of the favela residents. To do so, they would adopt measures that impeded the *movement* from controlling the physical spaces and the circulation of people within these areas through intimidation exercised by the exhibition and use of firearms. At first they would install a police post that contained an uninterrupted presence of police who, in turn, would conduct preventive patrols at various times of the day. In Pavão-Pavãozinho and Cantagalo, two of the four community police posts were installed at the locations of the former *bocas-de-fumo* [literally smoke-mouths. "Smoke" is slang for marijuana. This is how drug-dealing points are known]. The establishment of these locations had a strong symbolic content. The police group would take from the dealers their power to appropriate certain public spaces to conduct drug sales. In this way they indicated that from then on the *movement* could no longer act in the favelas as they were accustomed to.

As indicated in their guidelines, the repression of drug sales occupied a secondary space within their concerns. This was clear in the following statement, which I mentioned previously: "*qualified repression of traffic and use of drugs in the hypothesis of a flagrant violation*". In practice, this meant that the

movement could continue to sell drugs as long as it was done discretely and without threatening the safety of other favela residents.

They came and took control. So who is in control now is the police there and everyone had to adjust so there was no confusion. The way it is now there is no way for the kids to dominate like they did...they are still there, but at least there are no more killings or other things (Augusto, Pavão-Pavãozinho)

Limiting gun possession

Unlike the position in relation to drug sales, the use and or display of weapons by the *movement* was one of the central concerns of the police unit. The accusation or finding of the presence of weapons would lead to repressive measures that would impact the sales of drugs and the arrest of those who were caught carrying them. From then on the dealers had to conduct their operations, and relate with the other residents, without the explicit use of firearms, which had a positive repercussion, as perceived in the statement by Conceição.

Simply the fact that these kids are no longer walking around armed, for me it is much better. The weapon is scary, you know. It leaves you insecure, afraid. Without this they are only boys. They are not rotten...but with a gun in their hand it is very dangerous because we cannot do much (Conceição, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

The end of the incursions

Since the proposal of the GPAE was to act in a preventive and permanent manner by maintaining a 24 hour-a-day presence in the locations served, the so-called *batidas* [hits] – which are police operations to seize drugs, arms and issue court-ordered arrest warrants – were synonymous with shoot-outs and arbitrary police action. They generated apprehension and fear, placing the lives of residents in greater risk.¹⁰ With the permanent presence of the police group there were no more shootouts.

¹⁰ For more about the fear of shootouts in the favelas it is worth mentioning the articles by Cavalcante, 2008, *Tiroteios, legibilidade e espaço urbano*.

Listening

The GPAE brought a promise of a new form of interaction with the residents based on the adoption of procedures that indicated an interest in security and respect for people. From the perspective of the GPAE, the willingness to listen meant two things: considering the opinion of residents in making decisions about better strategies of action to decrease the problems and taking measures in response to any denunciations of arbitrary violence or criminal actions by the police. The incentive to participate in the decision making was guided by one of the main theoretical premises of community policing, which was mentioned above and can be synthesized as the principle of “coproduction of security.”

What I perceived during the field work was that for my interlocutors, the procedures adopted by the command of the police group in the face of charges of improper acts committed by the police were seen as more significant gestures than the realization of meetings at which residents could present their opinions for the best strategy to be adopted by the police group. That is, the act of listening practiced by the officials of the police group that resulted in the punishment of police officers accused of acting arbitrarily and of committing irregularities or crimes was the element signified as positive, because it demonstrated that their statements were taken seriously.¹¹ With these procedures, the command of the Community Police Unit sought to demonstrate that the willingness to listen, the incentives to collaborate with the residents in an attempt to change the course, was not just for show. The charges were investigated, and if there were indications of proof, those responsible would be punished.

Meeting Residents Demands

As seen until here, the momentary improvement in the daily life of the two favelas was attributed to the action of the GPAE. But improvement in relation to what? What were the police practices that generated dissatisfaction among the residents and what does this tell us about the parameters that, at the times of the study, supported the local perspective about the police and their agents?

¹¹ According to the commander of the community police unit, in one year, a significant portion of the police officers operating in the favelas had to be renewed as a result of proof of charges against them made by residents (Blanco 2003).

In general, the most common complaints against the police were the following: abusive practices with excessive and illegal use of force, executions, existence of corrupt accords that allowed the *moviment* to control the occupation of spaces and sociability in the favelas, in addition to operations that placed the lives of residents at risk.

The existence of a supposedly corrupt agreement represented a problem because it allowed the *moviment* to maintain coercive control over other residents without being concerned with possible police intervention. Researchers such as Das (2004) and Shapiro Anjaria (2011), each in his own way, would demonstrate that the approximation between criminals and agents of the state, more than representing a deviation, often composed a deeply consolidated alliance that took place in common spaces of negotiation between crime bosses and government actors. According to the residents of the two favelas presented here, corruption was a recurring practice among the police, appearing to confirm the argument of the researchers mentioned. A police presence was not associated to a guarantee of physical integrity or security, nor was it associated with repression of drug dealing or the search for individuals who committed crimes. It was seen as part of an agreement that would allow local control leaving the *good people* at the mercy of the *moviment*.¹²

The way that the police operations were conducted within the favelas was another source of complaints. As Zaluar (2010) has demonstrated, since the 1980s, with the consolidation of the groups that controlled drug sales, the Rio de Janeiro favelas became the scene of confrontations that involved the attempt to take control of points for selling drugs controlled by rivals, as well as confrontations between these groups and the police. For this reason, to live in these areas came to be an experience that would involve a significant amount of fear and tension. To make matters worse, the posture adopted by the police helped to strengthen these feelings. It is not by chance that the police operations and their consequences are one of the strongest sources of fear among residents and certainly, one of the main complaints against the police.

There was also the affirmation that the police behaved differently in the favelas and on the “asphalt.”

¹² Thus, cases of abuses, death threats and humiliations committed by dealers had shared responsibility with the police. In sum, the police were absent when they should have been protecting them.

(...) But when it is on Atlântica or in Vieira Souto, there it is different. They don't shoot because they can't place a doctor or a lady at risk. They only shoot when there is no option, right?! Then the police negotiate, call a lawyer, promise that they won't kill. Just to not put life at risk. Why does it have to be different with the residents of the hillsides? Aren't we human as well? Most of the people here work, wake up early, pay their bills and **want to be respected**. I also want for the police to not put my life at risk (Débora, Cantagalo. EMPHASIS MINE).

Another problem was the abusive violence committed by police. The practices classified in this way can be divided into two types: the abuses of authority with the use of excessive violence and the deaths, above all those in which there is suspicion of execution. As they understand, in the favelas, any person, without distinction, can become a target of police violence; either man or woman, child or adult, whether they are in the *movement* or not. And it was exactly this discriminatory character of police violence that generated greater discomfort.

(...) for the police there are just bandits here. In reality they know this is not true, that there are many working people who do nothing wrong, who are not involved with crime. But they do not care, they pretend they are all criminals. There is no one who lives on the hillsides who appears in the news saying that they were involved. So it's everyone (Ruth, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

This point reveals an important aspect of the local set of meanings. It involves a value distinction between those who adhere to the *movement* and those who do not, and how this distinction bases expectations by differentiated treatment. The construction of an identity that operates based on opposition (which is not static and absolute) between the categories of worker and bandit, addressed in a pioneer manner by Zaluar, remain deeply rooted among the residents of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho. Even if the use of abusive violence or assassinations committed by police were reproachable in any situation, regardless of the adhesion or not of an individual to organized crime, the negative repercussion, the sense of being offended was more intense when the victims did not belong to the *movement*. These kinds of situations unequivocally demonstrate the incapacity and or refusal of the police to recognize the distinction between *good people* and those involved with crime.

Me and my daughters work hard. We pay all our bills, electricity, cable [TV]. The difference, now, with the people of the street is that we live on the hill and the police do not respect our home or our life. We pay just like everyone, but we are still treated like animals. Like an animal no, like people of the worst type, because everyone treats animals well (Ruth, Pavão-Pavãozinho).

Beyond the procedures: respect, dignity and rights

The narratives presented until here appear to indicate a level of demand for moral recognition (Honneth 1996; Taylor 1994; Cardoso de Oliveira 2002). As understood, both the criticisms of the police as well as the positive narratives about the GPAAE were presented with a reference to a certain notion of dignity constructed and shared locally. In this context, the category *respect*, recurringly triggered among my interlocutors to define situations where it is understood that dignity had been recognized or disregarded, occupied a central place in the local discourse. The residents signified their experiences with the police and with drug dealers through this category. Considering this, I believe that without proper attention to this category, and the web of meaning in which it is inserted, it appears to me improbable that we can clearly understand the reasons for a good evaluation of the community-policing unit. For this reason I am assuming that the heart of the question is not the impact caused by the procedures adopted by the GPAAE, whether they modify local daily life or not, but how the residents of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho signify these procedures.

The complaints about the police posture in the favelas were constructed based upon an understanding that the agents do not represent the residents, as is evident, for example, in the statements by Débora and Ruth. The gestures of disrespect are materialized by the lack of care and omissions, and by arbitrary excessive and illegal use of force, lethal or not. All of these practices, some with greater intensity than others, provoke a sense of ignominy responsible for the negative image of the police. It is interesting to note the reflections about this issue by Simião (2013) in relation to East Timor, where he uses the correlation established by Cardoso de Oliveira (2002) between “indignation” and “insult” to affirm that in relation to a certain group that shares the same symbolic elements, a gesture of moral insult against an individual can generate a collective sense of indignation. In the case addressed

here, the supposed police corruption represented a problem because it left the residents at the mercy of the *movement*, and is perceived as a lack of care for their safety. The way that the police operations were conducted in the favela, often provoking shootings, were also seen as a lack of care that placed lives at risk. Whether by omission, whether by negligence, the lack of care was experienced as a demonstration of disrespect, as was physical aggression committed by the agents themselves. Episodes of this type were experienced as ignominious acts, deliberately perpetrated to humiliate a person. The tone adopted towards episodes of this type were that of collective indignation generated by the incapacity or lack of interest of the police in recognizing the moral condition of the *good people*, workers, those who meet their obligations, who are not directly involved with drug trafficking.

As I affirm, the perception about the police was directly related to the understanding that they had of the procedures adopted by its agents. If they were respectful or not, if they recognized or not the moral condition of the people. In the specific case of the complaints, when they felt they were disrespected, the structure of the narrative was composed of three parts: there was an indication of the complaint itself; the expression of a demand and the desire for the situation to be changed. Even if they were not necessarily expressed in this order, both the statements of Ruth and Débora are a good example of this. The two complained about how the agents conducted operations in the favelas, and about the treatment of the residents, identifying these practices as disrespectful and affirming that they would like to be treated differently. To make their dissatisfaction clear, they made comparisons to the procedures that they supposed were adopted by the same agents when they work on the “asphalt.”

The situation changed in relation to the GPAE. The experience is no longer signified as marked by disrespect. To interfere in the way that the drug dealers controlled the favelas was experienced as positive. As Augusto said, the police of the GPAE “*came and took control*” and with this the *movement* had to change how it acted in the favelas. Moreover, the police presence caused the episodes of violence, abuse and disrespect committed by the traffickers to become less frequent, as we can see from the statements of Ruth and her children. The repression to the exposure to guns was also seen as a demonstration of care for the security of those who do not belong to the *movement* as Conceição told me. The same was true in relation to

the shootings, the change in treatment issued by the police in their direct relation with the residents and the position of the command of the GPAAE in terms of the finding of the deviation in the conduct of its agents. These procedures were signified as a demonstration of deference, of respect. I imagine that it became clear that the respectful treatment was seen as a right of the *good people*. I understand that this indicates there was a direct relation between the meaning attributed to the category respect and the local concepts of rights and justice. But what is this that they called *respect* ?

As we can see, the complaints against the police that we see here find support in constitutional norms. After all, corruption, police violence, executions and adoption of procedures that place lives in risk are practices that are subject to legal sanctions. But this is certainly not what is in question when they are speaking of situations experienced as respectful or disrespectful. This is clear when we observe the recurring use of categories such as *good people* and *workers* the qualifiers that allow explaining the dissatisfaction with the arbitrary and violent treatment. The adhesion to work ethics appeared as a factor that allows the subject to have his or her rights respected and distinguishes those who adhere to the *movement* from those who are *good people*.

The problem is precisely in the non-recognition of this distinction (which should imply differential treatment) by the police. To the contrary, the way that the agents proceed indicates that the understanding that is found is that the only difference to be considered is that which opposes the residents of the favelas and those from the asphalt, when what should operate is the recognition of the opposition between “*workers, good people*” on one hand, and the “*traffickers/bandits*”, on the other. Statements like “*most people here work*”, and that associate this condition to an expectation of being respected and of having their safety considered, approximate the residents of Pavão-Pavãozinho with those of Vieira Souto, reaffirming that those who work and do not adhere to crime should, regardless of their socio-economic condition, have their rights guaranteed.

The prerogative to have their rights respected does not extend to all residents of the favela. In the local perception there are people who should be treated so that their rights are protected – and abuses against them were considered an attack on their dignity – and there are those who because of their involvement with the *movement* were subject to becoming targets of abuse. Thus, it is clear that the demand for respectful treatment and dissatisfaction

with actions that they consider to be disrespectful have no relation to an inobservance of constitutional precepts that guarantee the universal scope of the rights of citizenship. The much discussed respect does not correspond to respect for norms, but for people; people, who depending on their choices, deserve to have their dignity recognized by proper treatment. This involves a concept derived from the expectation for recognition of that which Cardoso de Oliveira (2011b) called “moral substance of dignified people.”

The reflections of Cardoso de Oliveira (2002, 2013) about recognition of Brazilian citizenship and dilemmas related to it are particularly helpful for understanding the centrality of the category *respect* as it appears in the narratives presented here. It suggests that although the notion of equality occupies a central space among the reflections about the effectuation of rights, constituting the principal measure for the evaluation of citizenship since the work of Marshall, the appreciation of its capillarity in the interior of a given society has not been capable of producing a satisfactory understanding of the contemporary demands for respect for rights (Cardoso de Oliveira 2011b). That is, the simple lack of consideration for the principle that all citizens are should be treated equally, and subject to the same rights and responsibilities, is not sufficient for understanding the demands and lack of satisfaction as presented in this article. According to Cardoso de Oliveira, to understand them, it is necessary to pay attention to how notions of equality, justice and dignity are articulated in the context of conflicting social relations (Cardoso de Oliveira 2011a). In a scenario such as this, the notion of dignity is essential even when it involves relations guided by hierarchical principles. Thus, what generates dissatisfaction or indignation is not the absence of sharing of a mutual perception of equality, but the perception that the moral condition is not recognized as being sufficient to have the subject become a target of a respectful treatment that considers his or her dignity.

The analysis of the statements presented here allows us to consider that these demands for recognition of dignity are materialized in the statements of my interlocutors by the expectation of respectful treatment. The police procedures indicated as problematic are those experienced as not recognizing the moral condition of the *good people* and *workers*. In turn, the way that the GPAE operated in the favelas caused the residents to believe that they were receiving decent treatment. In other words, the police group was able to have the residents feel respected.

Final Considerations

Caldeira and Holston suggest that various Latin American countries, including Brazil, have characteristics of a “*disjunctive democracy*” (Holston 1999, 2008; Caldeira 2000). The expression serves to classify emerging democracies that have a healthy electoral system, but where formal institutions for social control, especially the public safety apparatus and the justice system are incapable of assuring the civil rights of their citizens in a universal manner. Brazil certainly fits this definition. Not only has the state shown itself to be incapable of guaranteeing the basic rights of the population, but it is one of the main violators of those rights. Despite the expectations generated by the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988 and of the adhesion of the Brazilian state to international human rights treaties (Adorno 1998; Kant de Lima 2001), in practice, the last thirty years have been marked by increased rates of crime, police violence and homicide (Caldeira 2000; Minayo 2009; Zaluar 2010). Whether due to selectivity, brutality and lethal police actions, or because of the violent dynamics of organized crime related to drug trafficking, the guarantee of civil rights is still presented as an complex challenge.

Part of the problem has historic roots and concerns the increasing poor reputation of the police, which had been organized to guarantee the interests of the eventual detainers of state power. As various researchers have indicated, it is up to the police to impose harmonic order that controls certain classes and social groups considered to be a threat to the *status quo* (Holloway 1997; Muniz 1999; Mesquita Neto 2004). Within this framework, it has been difficult to incorporate respect for the civil rights of society as a whole as a priority concern of public safety institutions. The other part of the problem involves the articulation begun in the 1980s, between the intensification of international arms dealing and the consolidation of groups of narco-traffickers, which, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, began to operate in the favelas and poor neighborhoods (Zaluar 1985, 1994, 2000). Since then, the so-called “war” against violence began to take place in the favelas and periphery of the state. The consequences of this were already discussed above; I emphasize the stigma about these areas and successive episodes of a lack of consideration of basic rights of their residents, with the justification that they were necessary to defeat the “enemy.”

Nevertheless, favela residents do not experience the assault on their rights passively, as victims relegated to silent suffering, made invisible by the

combination of oppression by institutions for social control and by the lack of interest of the communication media in recording the daily abuses that take place in these locations. They use the language and the means available to them to denounce the abuses and call for change in this situation. Various researchers, beginning with Durham (1997), point out that, since the 1970s, minority groups have been incorporating the discourse of individual rights and of citizenship to denounce inequalities. Even if with different meanings, progressively, the language of rights acquires legitimacy among the various segments of society (Machado 2003; Cardoso de Oliveira 2011a, 2011b; Cardoso 2013; 2014). This allows us to question if we are witnessing a modification, at least in the discursive field, of that situation described by DaMatta (2000), in which citizenship and the citizen were signified negatively.

In the case of favela residents, it is perceived that the demands for consideration of rights are not always revealed in the public space in the conventional manner that is conceived by political participation. When their narratives or charges are not sufficient to move governments and public opinion, their dissatisfaction can emerge in other forms, as is the case of the riots. It is not new for a dissatisfaction with the lack of consideration of rights to trigger collective violent manifestations (Tambiah 1996; Holston and Appadurai, 1999). These events are capable of simultaneously allowing discontent to find a channel to be revealed and for the responsible agencies become sensitized (to some degree) to the demands.

The perception that certain violent episodes are presented as a language that communicates discontent and desire for a transformation in social relations is supported in anthropological literature. In this sense, violent episodes like riots can be analyzed as “*critical events*”, which can simultaneously be mobilizers and transformers, as indicated by Das (1995), given that by acquiring a public dimension they acquire the potential to produce meanings and reorient practices. The riots that have at times erupted in Rio de Janeiro, as a rule, denounce abuses and reveal dissatisfaction with the treatment by the police. They are reactions to that which we can call “unsupportable insults.” At the same time they also have the potential to pressure the state government to make changes or to express that measures seeking the modification of this situation will be adopted. This is what took place in Cantagalo and in Pavão-Pavãozinho.

The riot that took place in Copacabana helps us to frame the situation

presented until now. We can consider that the riot revealed in the public sphere the dissatisfaction with the police's refusal to recognize the residents of Pavão-Pavãozinho and of Cantagalo as subjects that carry dignity and those who deserve to be treated with respect. This riot also expressed a demand for a change in this situation. After all, as one of the residents said, they also want to be treated with respect, which is a right of the *good people* and *workers*. The arrival of the GPAE and what took place since then is signified by the residents as this recognition.

To conclude, it should be questioned if the specific experience of the Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho can teach us something about the possibilities for success or failure of initiatives of this nature. I believe they can. As various authors demonstrate, for projects based on the premise of community policing to be successful, they must have the support of the population that will receive the service. For this to happen there must be a sharing of trust, side by side. Without this there is no possibility to establish a relationship capable of providing the "coproduction of security."

The lack of trust of the police among the residents of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro is historic and not without cause. To change this situation requires time and commitment that must go beyond conventional policies and electoral interests, in addition to a constant effort to change the police culture. If not, the means will not be found to bring the two sides together, which in most cases are seen as antagonistic. Overcoming this difficulty will only be possible if the residents of these areas see in the police action recognition of their moral condition as subjects who deserve to be treated with respect. For this to occur the police must pay attention to the residents' demands, complaints and notions of rights and justice.

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Anthropological perspectives on documents

Ethnographic dialogues on the trail of police papers

Laura Lowenkron

Letícia Ferreira

Abstract

This article discusses implications and potentialities of anthropologically thinking and researching with documents, arguing that they consist of ethnographic artifacts, which can be particularly fruitful in certain research contexts. In order to do that, it resumes some movements of distancing and rapprochement between anthropology and documents and places two recent ethnographic experiences in dialogue. One a research through police inquiries of Brazilian Federal Police concerning “human trafficking for sexual exploitation” crimes, and the other focused on administrative procedures related to “missing persons” cases investigated by Rio de Janeiro Civil Police. In addition to revealing the heuristic potential of “following the paper” and calling attention to the micro politics of the interactions among those that document and those who are documented, the paper aims to contribute to larger discussions about the challenges that dealing with documents in field-work situations poses to anthropology and its self-representations.

Keywords: documents, ethnographic artifacts, Federal Police, Civil Police, human trafficking, missing persons

Resumo

O artigo discute implicações e potencialidades analíticas de se pensar e pesquisar antropologicamente com documentos, argumentando que estes constituem artefatos etnográficos especialmente rentáveis em certos contextos de pesquisa. Para tanto, recupera alguns movimentos de distanciamento e aproximação entre a antropologia e os documentos e coloca em diálogo duas experiências etnográficas recentes: uma pesquisa em meio a inquéritos

da Polícia Federal brasileira relativos a crimes de “tráfico de pessoas para fim de exploração sexual”, e outra voltada para procedimentos administrativos em torno de casos de “desaparecimento de pessoa” investigados pela Polícia Civil do Rio de Janeiro. Além de revelar o potencial heurístico da escolha por “seguir o papel” e chamar atenção para a micropolítica das interações entre documentadores e documentados, o texto busca contribuir para reflexões mais amplas acerca dos desafios que a lida com documentos em situações de trabalho de campo aporta à antropologia e às suas autorrepresentações.

Palavras-chave: documentos, artefatos etnográficos, Polícia Federal, Polícia Civil, tráfico de pessoas, desaparecimento de pessoas

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Recent anthropological research dealing with documents has contributed to fundamental debates on classic conceptions of both ethnographic practice and ethnographic authority. This article seeks to discuss some theoretical and methodological dilemmas, implications and potentialities of anthropological thinking and researching with documents. In order to do that, it resumes some movements of distancing and rapprochement between anthropology and documents, and places two ethnographic experiences in dialogue. It departs from the assumption that one of the tasks that anthropology systematically faces is to rethink both the construction of its objects, and the selection of the artifacts from which ethnographies are built.

The “post-modern” view of ethnography as text has led anthropologists to turn their attention to other textual genres that had either been set aside or regarded as less important once anthropology moved away from the “armchair” and gained “scientific” authority and legitimacy through malinowskian fieldwork. On the one hand, “archives” came to be viewed as privileged spaces for understanding relationships between colonial governments and peoples traditionally studied by anthropologists (Stoler, 2002, 2009; Souza Lima, 1995). On the other, different modes of document production present in the so-called Western societies came to be analyzed as artifacts and/or knowledge practices that are crucial to understanding ethnographic universes that anthropologists have long been sharing with other disciplines, such as history, sociology and political science (cf. Riles, 2001; Latour and Woolgar, 1997).

Since documents are paradigmatic artifacts of modern knowledge practices (Riles, 2006), which define both ethnography and “native” knowledge

practices in some contexts, a large portion of anthropologists' activities during ethnographic fieldwork consists of reading documents produced by their interlocutors (about whom they also take notes). This has happened, as discussed throughout this article, in our own ethnographies (Ferreira 2011; Lowenkron 2012 e 2014). As Vianna (2014) suggests, working with documents, rather than raising questions about their content and reliability, involves questioning oneself about the very act of documenting. Our recent research experiences have contributed to a realization that ethnographic document analysis in the social space within which it is produced, circulated and archived offers a privileged look on the act of documenting. That is, a look on how it is accomplished, what it means and what effects it produces in different contexts.

Reading inquiries and other police documents was one of the central ethnographic activities of the research carried out by one of the authors of this article on "human trafficking for sexual exploitation"¹ (Lowenkron, 2014). Since a crucial part of police work is documenting investigations, "the interest our research subjects have shown in documents had become contagious" (Riles, 2006, p. 8). During fieldwork, the researcher not only looked up inquiries in Federal Police headquarters and produced ethnographic accounts about them, but was also able to personally follow the production of some of its documents by its agents, police commissioners and registrars during criminal investigations. Reading and directly observing the production of these artifacts highlighted how those who are regulated and constituted by these papers are not inert with regard to state documentation practices.

Contact with police reports and other documents pertaining to "missing persons" cases that were produced, circulated and/or archived by a sector of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police was a central element in making fieldwork possible in the research carried out by this article's other author (Ferreira, 2011;

1 This crime is defined in article 231 of the Brazilian criminal code: "to promote or facilitate the entry, into national territory, of someone who will engage in prostitution or other form of sexual exploitation within it, or the exit of someone who will engage in these activities abroad. Sentence - incarceration for three (3) to eight (8) years. § 1 The same sentence applies to anyone who obtains the services of, entices or buys a trafficked person, as well as, being aware of this condition, transports, transfers or harbors them. § 2 The sentence is increased by half if: I - the victim is under eighteen (18) years of age; II - if the victim, due to illness or mental disability, lacks the necessary judgment to engage in the act; III - if the perpetrator is the victim's parent, step-parent, sibling, step-child, spouse, partner, tutor or curator, preceptor or employer or if he assumed, by law or other form, an obligation to care, protect or watch over the victim; or IV - there is use of violence, grave threat or fraud. § 3 If the crime is committed with the purpose of gaining economic advantage, a fine is also applied" (BRASIL, 1940).

2013). On one level, the documents worked as an inescapable material support for affirming authorities and giving authorizations without which fieldwork would not have been possible. This reinforces the prevailing notarizing logic of Brazilian police units (Kant de Lima, 1995; Miranda et al, 2010). However, on a second level, the documents became the most crucial research object, both due to how they are viewed by the inspectors, investigators and commissioners who produce them and due to the crucial role they play in police management of “missing persons” cases in Rio de Janeiro.

Based on these ethnographic experiences, which show how documents, seen within their production, circulation and archiving contexts, are especially profitable ethnographic artifacts in certain research contexts, we seek to contribute to broader discussions not only on the dynamics, effects and powers mobilized by documentation practices, but also on the challenges that dealing with documents in ethnographic fieldwork brings to anthropology and its self-representations. In order to do so, we analyze how these challenges presented themselves in our researches, proposing a dialogue with some discussions that have weaved through contemporary anthropological debates of the theme.

Distancing and rapprochement between anthropology and documents

In the mid-20th century, Evans-Pritchard (1950) was already drawing attention to the a-critical use of document sources as one of the problems of the not only a-historical, but anti-historical approach adopted by structural-functional anthropologist, which established “participant observation” as its privileged method. If his warning “had little resonance at the time, it certainly has more today” (Stoler, 2002, p. 90). Over the past few years, several anthropologists have highlighted the need to go beyond documents’ informational and instrumental dimension, analyzing them as producers of knowledge, relations, effects and affective responses (Stoler, 2002 and 2009; Cunha, 2004; Navaro-Yashin, 2007; Gupta, 2012; Ferreira, 2013) or even as *artifacts* whose material, aesthetic and formal properties, as well as social life (or socio-technical processes) can no longer be easily ignored (Latour and Woolgar, 1997; Riles, 2006; Reed, 2006; Hull, 2012b).

Despite their recent rehabilitation as ethnographic artifacts,

anthropologists' relation to documents is still shot through with tensions, doubts and anxieties, no longer because it threatens the specificity of anthropology's knowledge practices (if we believe that these dilemmas have, or should have been, overcome), but because it produces new analytical challenges. Since ethnographic knowledge was historically represented as "diverse from, and even opposed to, that which results from documentary research" (Cunha, 2005, p.36), the task of *ethnographing documents* may still seem strange and obscure to most ethnographers, in contrast to the allegedly self-evidence of the expression "participant observation".

The epistemological devaluing of these objects, which delayed their ethnographic scrutiny, may be attributed to different reasons. On the one hand, *ethnographing documents* does not guarantee the same strategies of authority derived from the certainties (if not of objectivity, at least of controlled partiality) produced by the experiences of direct contact and dialogue with the persons who inhabit ethnographic narratives. On the other, it requires that the researcher establishes a dialogue with, and consider the agency of, those who are not immediately identified as *subjects* in the research: the persons being documented and the very papers or other material supports of graphic, textual, sound and/or audiovisual records. Furthermore, there are those who consider that bureaucratic writing was long neglected because it is a very similar knowledge practice to that of anthropologists (Riles, 2006b), because it is tedious and lacking the *symbolic richness* or *density of meaning* which make a geertzian ethnographic description possible (Graber, 2012), or because it is easy to see documents as simply giving immediate access to what they document, denying the role of mediation (Hull, 2012b).

The most classic way of dealing with documents is precisely to look *through* them, and not so much *at* them (Hull, 2012a, p.253), in order to produce ethnographic narratives about scenes, discourses and events that were not directly observed by the researchers. That is, that were not registered in their field notes firsthand, but rather came to them previously documented by others (Vianna, 2014). Starting with the "historical turn" of the 1980s, the idea of an ethnography of/in archives (Castro and Cunha, 2005; Cunha, 2004 e 2005; Castro, 2008; Zeitlyn, 2012), in its multiple modes and metaphorical extensions, became increasingly less exotic and more frequent.

Since then, new methodological strategies have emerged for dealing with documents. As Zeitlyn (2012) discusses, one of these strategies is reading

archives *against the grain*², that is, subverting the modes of understanding that were imagined and intended by the administrative rationalities that produced and maintained them. This epistemological posture led to the development of critical and imaginative approaches to traditional sources. Its main goals were to excavate subaltern and silenced voices, to rescue actions (or agencies), perceptions and small gestures of resistance from those situated at the margins of official records and, thus, to promote the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 1980, p. 81).

More recently, Stoler (2002, 2009) questioned how most colonial archive scholars could so quickly turn to readings *against the grain* without first moving *along the grain*. According to her, “assuming we know those scripts (...) diminishes our analytic possibilities” (Id, 2002, p. 100). By analyzing the archive as a cultural artifact, she seeks to understand the perspectives and concerns of its producers and administrators, giving particular attention to conventions that shape what can and cannot be recorded: repetitions, acts of forgetfulness, different modes of silencing and the credibility hierarchies that delimit qualified and disqualified knowledges.

By moving anthropological self-representations away from ethnography as “participant observation” or as writing, toward ethnography as modes of reading, these lessons from ethnographies *off/in archives* allow us to broaden the analytical possibilities of “current files”³ read during ethnographic fieldwork in contemporary bureaucratic organizations. As we will see, the combination of these two reading strategies (*against* and *along the grain*) in the ethnography of “human trafficking” inquiries seeks to render explicit the power relations that permeate the production of these documents and are fixated in these papers. At the same time, it seeks to turn documentary ethnography into a way to subvert the finality and logic of this administrative police procedure. In order to do so, we must remember that, as Hull (2012b) suggests, analytically restoring documents’ visibility means treating them as mediators, that is, things that “transform, translate, dislocate, distort and modify the meaning or elements that they supposedly carry” (Latour, 2005, p.39).

Restoring documents’ visibility and mediation role, especially of those documents produced in bureaucratic organizations, has led recent

2 See, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) and Hartman (1997).

3 “That is, not archives, but active file and other documents that are currently in use” (Hull, 2012b, p. 28).

ethnographies to explore the material dimension of this paperwork. These ethnographies, many of which are heirs to works that promoted important changes in the way that anthropology deals with objects (cf. Appadurai, 1986; Miller, 2013), pursue not only modes of *reading*, but also *carrying*, *handling* and *trading* documents to their ultimate analytical consequences. They draw attention to what makes papers similar, in terms of their effects, to other equally ordinary artifacts from these institutional spaces. From this perspective, “for many genres of documents, it is often less important what they stand for than, like tables and desks, how they arrange people around themselves” (Hull, 2012b, p.134). It is therefore up to the ethnographer to face them as more than recording instruments used by bureaucrats and to apprehend in what way they constitute, hierarchize, separate and connect people.

A paradigmatic example of this movement is Hull’s ethnography in Pakistani bureaucratic offices, which explores the centrality of documents and documentation forms in Islamabad’s governance (2012b). Working from the premise that the material qualities of governmental papers are not only elements mobilized in the production of meaning, but are also driving forces behind other types of processes, his work analyzes, among other issues, the relationships between carrying, signing and producing copies of documents and the diffusion of individual responsibilities in favor of a certain type of “collective agency”. Navaro-Yashin (2007), in turn, emphasizes the mutually constitutive relationship between producing, exchanging and transforming documents and the affects retained, transported and experimented by those who handle them. In Brazil, the pioneer and crucial works by Peirano (1986, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) have long drawn attention to the fact that the possession of documents has the capacity, in certain situations, to performatively *make* the citizen. For identification documents, according to the author, this capacity is largely derived from the redundancy between material elements found in them, such as the documented persons’ signature, 3X4 photo and fingerprint (cf. Peirano, 2006a, p. 36).

The growing attention to the materiality of documents in ethnographic works has thus shed light on the fact that papers and forms, as well as photos, signatures, seals, stamps and other graphic artifacts⁴ regularly used

4 The expression “graphic artifact” was coined by Hull (2012b) in order to designate the diverse documents and types of records produced in bureaucratic offices, such as maps, copies, cards, signatures and lists, indissociably drawing attention both to their material dimension and their role as crucial mediators in producing the persons

in bureaucratic organizations, play a role both in controlling and coordinating procedures, agents and administrative actions and in constructing subjectivities, affects, persons and relationships that extrapolate organizational universes. Thus, ethnographies that pay attention to these artifacts, and not only to what can be seen *through* them, have made clear that document production, circulation and archival must not be viewed as isomorphic to the organizational structures in which they take place. They have also illuminated the socialities and entanglements that these processes produce, as well as the borders they are able, at times, to cross and, at others, to reaffirm.

Following the trail established by these works and exploring the materiality of documents in a research on police reports of “missing persons”⁵ we are able to ascertain responsibilities, obligations and affects that are created by the production, circulation and archival of police reports and other papers brought together as inquiries within a sector of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police. In this context, boundaries between what would be police responsibilities and what are considered attributions of “families of missing persons” are both produced and traversed by the papers handled by police officers. Furthermore, in this context, documents covered by certain signatures and stamps function as conditions of possibility for establishing certain socialities, among which the one established between the researcher and her interlocutors.

We will now present the reasons for, and analytical profitability of, our choice to “follow the paper” (Hull, 2012b, p.22) inscribing them within the broader context of these theoretical-methodological discussions. This choice is presented for the two studies already discussed: the study in a Brazilian Federal Police precinct that sought to understand administrative practices and rationalities responsible for constructing and managing the crime of

to which they refer.

5 As a title given to police reports, “missing person” is not to be confused with the international criminal type “enforced disappearance”, known, in the common sense language, as “political disappearance”. “Missing person”, as discussed later in this article, is an administrative category attached in Brazilian police precincts to what has been called, in some occasions, “civil disappearance” (cf. Oliveira). “Enforced disappearance” is a crime against humanity, defined by the International Criminal Court in 1998 and regulated by the so-called Rome Statute. “Enforced disappearance” means “the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by a state or political organization, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of a state or political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of freedom or to give information about these persons’ fate or whereabouts, with the intention of keeping them outside the reach of legal protection for a prolonged period.” (Jardim 2011:14). For an anthropological analysis of the current incidence of “enforced disappearances” in Brazil, which also explores the possibility that this crime remains concealed by the administrative category “missing person”, see Araújo (2008, 2012).

“human trafficking for sexual exploitation”; and the study carried out in a sector of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police that sought to analyze how “missing person” cases are managed in Brazilian police units. Both ethnographies pay particular attention to the micro-politics of interactions between documenters and the documented subjects.

The art of “reducing to writing”: *along* and *against the grain* of a police inquiry

As some authors have pointed out, we cannot mistake the inquiry for the police investigation (Misse, 2011; Vidal, 2013). The inquiry’s main goal is to ascertain that a particular criminal action took place and to establish its authorship. It is a “piece composed of technical reports, accounts recorded by a notary public and a legally-oriented report, signed by a police commissioner with a degree in Law” (Misse, 2011, p.19). It is also, however, an instrument through which the police investigative work is formalized and officialized⁶. As legal jargon puts it, “what isn’t in the documents isn’t in the world”, so that an undocumented investigation is as if it had not existed.

If the inquiry is the artifact through which the Federal Police’s investigative and administrative actions become legible and real before their own artificers, ethnographing these practices requires that one *follows the paper*. The initial idea was to approach these documents as a means to understanding the administrative rationalities responsible for constructing and managing the “human trafficking” crime and its respective social characters (“traffickers” and “trafficked persons”). This meant reading them *along the grain*. However, it gradually became clear that the process of producing, dislocating and fixing official and unofficial conceptions of “human trafficking” in police inquiries did not only depend on the performances of their multiple documenters, but also of the people being documented. In order to understand how the alleged “victims” of this crime construct “spaces of agency” (Piscitelli, 2013) within certainly asymmetrical interactions with state apparatuses, one had to simultaneously read the inquiries *against the grain*.

In this sense, the ethnography of “human trafficking” inquiries

⁶ This formalization of investigations *on paper* is what guarantees that the prosecutor, judge and the target of the investigation are able to follow the legality of actions carried out in police headquarters (Vidal, 2013, p. 36).

establishes a dialogue with other works that, instead of a “victimizing” perspective, suggest giving voice to the experiences of people who participate in these mobilities, making it possible to confront their narratives with hegemonic accounts about them (Agustín, 2005; Piscitelli, 2008). Based on this confrontation, research has shown that these migrants’ trajectories generally do not fit the myths and stereotypes disseminated by the media and anti-trafficking campaigns (Piscitelli, 2008; Teixeira; 2008; Blanchette e Silva, 2010). This suggestion is in line with the police perception of the phenomenon, so much so that they most often characterized “human trafficking” less in terms of its legal definition than based on a contrast with what they assumed “outsider” interlocutors (including the researcher) expected of this crime.

Almost all federal police officers heard during the research began conversation by alerting the researcher that there were few inquiries on this crime. They seemed not to assign much relevance to the subject, partly because they considered the investigations fruitless. “Sometimes the investigation turns up nothing because, simply, there is nothing. Just because an inquiry was started does not mean that there is a crime”, one commissioner points out. “There’s plenty of revenge-hotline”, according to the agents, who claim that people use the Public Security Office’s “Crime-hotline” in order to harm someone because of some conflict or personal enmity. However, police officers were unanimous in considering that the biggest difficulty in “human trafficking” cases is that “victims” don’t see themselves as such, which reveals that authorities assign them the co-responsibility for elucidating (or not) the crime. As one of the agents put it: “usually the victims deny everything. They don’t deny it only when they are very badly harmed. Then they come clean. But usually they deny it, because they do well out of it.”

One commissioner claims not to like to work with this type of crime because no one wants to cooperate with the investigation. He says the “victims” are a sort of “accomplice to the crime”, that is, they collude with and protect the criminal. He states that the “victim” is almost always aware of the risks, chooses to engage in sex work and wants to go abroad where she has the opportunity to earn more. Thus, they seek to differentiate the reality of “human trafficking” found in police investigations from the idealized representations according to which “trafficked persons” would be deceived as to the purpose of their dislocation and/or forced into prostitution, emphasizing their *consent* and agency in order to deconstruct the idea of violence, even

when they acknowledge the “typical conduct”, that is, defined and criminalized in criminal law.

However, instead of discussing the agency of alleged “victims” in their migratory and mobility projects, as emphasized by some academic research on the subject and as noted by the police officers, we want to propose a different analytical focus and consider their agency in the face of state administrative apparatuses. This implies, on the one hand, taking into account the foucauldian suggestion that subjects are constituted (“subjectified”) amidst a multiplicity of correlations of force, through dynamics of subjection and resistance, both of which are equally important in thinking about the notion of agency (Mahmood, 2006). On the other hand, one must remember that, in state bureaucracies, documents are privileged means of diffusing responsibility and of producing collective agency (Hull, 2012b), or, in this case, an agency shared between documenting agents and documented persons.

Without losing sight of the asymmetrical nature of this relationship in analyzing individual performances, the possibility of observing interactions between individuals and the “State” (as an administrative apparatus) means that the Federal Police, as a field for research, is a productive space in which to further the reflection on the potentialities of the concept of agency. Agency here is never understood as free will and not necessarily viewed as resistance, but rather “in an anthropological sense, as the socially and culturally mediated capacity for action” (Piscitelli, 2013, p. 22). What is noticeable is that alleged “trafficked persons”, based on the relative authority they are given as privileged “witnesses” in these police inquiries, manipulate information according to their own interests. Thereby, they usually resist the criminalizing/victimizing process, since they rarely report on, or contribute to establishing the veracity of the offense of which they are, in theory, “victims”.

Based on the premise that writing is one of the most important state activities and government technologies (Gupta, 2012; Das, 2007), the ethnography of police documentation practices aims to observe how these persons’ statements are “reduced to writing”⁷ in police inquiries, as well as to render clear the regulating structures that govern these discursive formations and deformations. The so-called “Term of statements” is the main type of bureaucratic

7 The expression is used in article 9 of the Criminal Process Code (Brazil, 1941): “all pieces of police inquiry shall be, in a single process, reduced to writing or typed and, in this case, signed by the authority”.

writing that guarantees that discourses of alleged victims (converted into “witnesses”) “subsist and, at the same time, regularly change” (Foucault, 2014, p.159) throughout processes of document production and superposition.

Statements “reduced to a term”, which are enunciated amidst the embarrassment of police “interviews”, are registered in a formally rigorous document, marked by repeated narrative conventions and a legal form of its own. Converting oral speech into writing, in this case, means reducing and substituting answers given by questioned persons with the interrogator’s indirect discourse. The questions are silenced and only signaled through the generic formulation “when inquired about the facts, ANSWERED: THAT...”, situated at the beginning of the document, after the date, place, deponent’s complete “qualification”⁸ and the name of the police officer who presided over the interview. At the end, the term must be read and signed by all (deponent, police commissioner and registrar), attesting its trustworthiness and making it official.

Reading “Terms of statements” and their ramifications *along the grain* of “human trafficking” inquiries showed how the margin of agency of witnesses and suspects is only reduced in documentation procedures when their versions are confronted with the “social force” of other documents (Ferreira, 2013), such as transcripts of phone taps. Observing a police interview in person, in turn, enabled the researcher to follow the police art of “reducing to term”⁹ in action and, thus, to understand and subvert the discursive formations and deformations that this type of bureaucratic writing produces.

Furthermore, observing police interviews in persons also enabled the researcher to comprehend the micro-politics of interactions between documenting agents and documented persons. To present these micro-politics, we will now describe the production and the uses of some documents, part of one of the few inquiries included in the research that did establish that the “human trafficking” crime took place and who its authors were¹⁰. This

8 “Qualification” is the formal manner of identifying individuals in legal acts and documents, with at least some of the following information: full name, sex, date of birth, nationality, place of birth, marital status, parents’ names, educational level, occupation, number of documents, phone number and address.

9 The formal procedure through which the interview is “translated” and registered in a “term of statement”.

10 The research included 11 of the 14 “human trafficking for sexual exploitation” inquiries ongoing in the Rio de Janeiro Federal Police precinct chosen for the study. At the time, that precinct had the largest number of “human trafficking” cases of all Federal Police regional offices, which are situated in each Brazilian state. Only one inquiry (the one analyzed) led to an indictment. In addition to this inquiry, the veracity and authorship of the crime were established in only one other case that had been investigated by the Civil Police and whose criminals had already

inquiry was initiated based on a “letter rogatory” that formalized an international cooperation request, noting the participation of a Brazilian citizen in a criminal group that brought women from Brazil to Portugal to engage in sex work. Most members of the group had already been arrested and convicted in Europe, not for “human trafficking”, but for the crimes of “pimping” and “aiding illegal immigration” – which reveals that individuals who were defined as “victims” in Brazil were viewed and treated as “undocumented immigrants” in Portugal. However, this divergence of classifications is silenced over the course of the police inquiry, without damaging diplomatic relationships that were established and renewed by the international circulation of official documents.

The only accused who lived in Brazil was “indicted”¹¹ in the Federal Police based on copies of documents extracted from the Portuguese inquiry and from a “Term of statements” produced by the Federal Prosecutor who received the request for international legal cooperation. Initially interrogated at the Federal Prosecutor’s Office, the woman claimed to be a domestic worker and that she received financial assistance from a daughter who lived abroad, who was married to a Portuguese man and whose pay came from the beverages consumed by customers she accompanied at the nightclub where she worked. The document further notes that the woman claimed her daughter did not engage in sex work, but was unable to say whether or not there were any sex workers at the nightclub. She also assured the officer that she had never discussed any subject involving sending Brazilian women abroad for purposes of sex work over the phone with her son-in-law. The term closes with a description of the scene in which the suspect is emotionally destabilized by records of a phone call, followed by the bureaucratic demonstration that the Federal Prosecutor followed legal formalities:

After being confronted with the phone transcripts present in the inquiry, she became reticent and, instructed by the Federal Prosecutor that she was not obligated to answer and that she could ask for a lawyer’s guidance, she preferred to say that she did not have that conversation and to remain silent, stating

been prosecuted and convicted for state crimes, such as “sexual exploitation of children and adolescents” and “pimping”. Since this investigation also gathered evidence of “international human trafficking”, a copy of the inquiry was sent to the Federal Court and the Federal Police.

11 The “indictment” is the act of formalizing suspicion within the legal inquiry, usually at the end of investigations. For a more detailed explanation, see Vidal (2013).

that she would no longer answer any questions. Thus, it is determined that the interview be terminated and she is instructed to seek the Federal Public Defender's Office.

During the ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher also directly accompanied the process of producing the "Term of statements" of a "victim"/"witness" in the same police inquiry. Before beginning the "interview", the commissioner quickly analyzes the inquiry and marks the pages he considers most important to help him during questioning. The witness also appears carrying documents. Besides the copy of the summons, she brought along a folder with the lease of an apartment located in the city where she lived and the diploma of a beautician course she attended in Portugal. Since these papers did not contribute to establishing that the crime did (or did not) take place, only the personal identity documents required for making her presence in police headquarters official were examined and registered at the beginning of the "Term of statements".

The commissioner was convinced about the purpose of her trip based on the Portuguese police inquiry. Thus, he merely sought to confirm and document how and by whom the young woman had been invited to travel, as well as to obtain her confession about engaging in sex work, a necessary condition for establishing that the crime took place. The witness, in turn, sought to protect her own reputation. If, by selecting what will and will not be recorded, the police officers are responsible for "simultaneously rendering certain accounts visible and invisible – or audible and inaudible" (Vianna, 2014, p. 54), this does not mean that the documented person passively submits to the official documentation act. On the contrary, the deponent seeks to negotiate the choice of words and shape, up to a point, the architecture of the narrative that will be fixed on paper. Thus, the police inquiry can be read, *against the grain*, as a vehicle for her perspectives, experiences and aspirations, despite the evident deformations produced *along* the mediation process.

The young woman, who seven years before had twice traveled to Portugal to work at the same commercial establishment, recounted that, on the first time, her sister-in-law had told her that a friend had made a great deal of money at a "singles' bar", receiving 50% of the value of drinks offered to, and consumed by, customers. They decided to leave together for Portugal because it was "just drinking". They were then introduced to an older woman (towards whom she evidently still felt anger) who was responsible for

attracting women in Brazil and mediating the entire immigration process (obtaining a passport, buying plane tickets and contacting the club abroad). The commissioner interrupts her, stating that it is of no use if it is not *on paper*. He then reads aloud everything that was recorded and asks that the young woman confirm the story and that she continue more slowly.

The commissioner asks if there were “striptease” shows or rooms for sexual encounters at the bar, making explicit a suspicion that could have been previously ruled out had he read the inquiry documents more attentively. She denies, “no way, none of that! It was a *bar*”, stating that customers went there only to drink and talk. “But the Portuguese are really dumb if they go to a *nightclub* and pay more just to talk!”, the commissioner says, ironically. She corrects him, “it’s not a nightclub, it’s a *bar*”, and then counters that in Brazil things might be different, but Portuguese men went there after companionship, because they were “needy”, so much so that they would then want to have lunch, dinner, even marry the girls. She recounts that most of the Brazilian women married Portuguese men, including her sister-in-law, who was “happily married”, and that she also lived for four years with a man she met at the “singles’ bar” in Portugal. The dialog was translated by the police authority and thus “reduced to term” by the registrar:

THAT the work at the “singles’ bar” consisted of encouraging customers to consume alcoholic beverages and that they would get 50% of the value consumed, while the other 50% remained with the *nightclub*; THAT at the place there were only music and sale of alcoholic beverages, with no striptease shows or places for sexual encounters, being an actual *bar*. (researcher’s emphasis)

Despite the somewhat anxious and hurried tone, the woman seemed firm and sure of what she wanted to tell or not tell the police officers, trying to present the relationships’ dynamics in her own terms. The first time, she traveled by her own initiative and paid her own tickets. That way, if she did not like it, she could leave. The second time, she at first did not wish to go, but the recruiter insisted. She then accepted a loan in order to buy the plane tickets, but settled her debt in one month because she was smart and did not drink, but rather pretended to, avoiding losing control so as not to be “swindled” during payment, which happened to the women who got drunk. The first part of the information was registered, but the more detailed explanations regarding the possibility of being swindled and her strategies

of resistance were ignored and silenced. This does not mean that the commissioner wanted to erase the agency of so-called “trafficked women”. On the contrary, he was emphatic in underlying her consent, even if by law that is irrelevant in configuring the “human trafficking” crime. Contrasting the concrete case with the idealized version of the crime, the officer notes:

THAT during the entire period she worked at the nightclub she did so of her own volition, not having been held anywhere against her will; THAT her passport was not held by any person, because it was in her possession the entire time she was in Portugal.

Retaining passports for the purpose of collecting debts, despite also not being a legal requirement in formally characterizing the “human trafficking” crime, is one of the most common images in political and media representations of the phenomenon, symbolizing the curtailment of freedom. It is worth noting, however, that for immigrants in an irregular situation, possessing a passport with an expired or wrong visa (tourist instead of work visa) does not prevent them from being viewed and treated as “undocumented”. Stripped, after a few months, of its supposed power of performatively *making* the citizen (Peirano, 2006a), this document is converted, beyond national borders, into an “ephemeral object” (Navaro-Yashin, 2007), whose strength of materiality subsists only as a fetish of the Nation-state.

The young woman questioned at the Federal Police recounts that singles’ bar managers charged more or less double the value of the plane tickets, claiming this was done to cover other costs, such as free food and housing for the first weeks. The commissioner then interrupts her: “did they refrain from charging you if you arrived on time at the nightclub?”. She answers she does not remember exactly. The commissioner tells the registrar that she vaguely remembers that she had to arrive by 6pm. She says she does not remember that. “That’s why I said ‘vaguely remembers’”, the police officer offers as justification. He then reads a portion of the transcripts of a phone call that confirmed this information:

“... if I’m on time, like, if I arrive at six, I don’t have to pay rent, housing, or food, dinner”. “I have to arrive at six, half past six at the nightclub, so I don’t have to pay housing and food, get it?” (a recently-arrived employee explains to her Brazilian interlocutor how the work regime at the Portuguese club functions).

Still not satisfied, the commissioner makes one last attempt to extract from the alleged “victim” a confession capable of establishing that the crime took place, saying all the clients questioned during the Portuguese investigations, including her ex-boyfriend, claimed the girls at the “club” engaged in sex work. The witness defends herself from the accusations: “If they did it, it was when they went out with the customers, when they went out to lunch or have dinner with them, or accompanied them to a mall and then, I don’t know, maybe they went to a hotel... But I never did it and never knew of it”. Insisting on her argument, she says: “do you understand? The woman had to go out with the customer until she won him over and married him, that’s how I met my boyfriend and got together with him.” Complementing what the young woman said with other information recorded in the inquiry documents (in other witnesses’ “Terms of statements”, in phone transcripts and Portuguese police and court reports), her explanations were thusly “translated to term”:

THAT she is aware of girls who worked at the Club who engaged in sex work, but this was done during the day and outside the Club; THAT many of them dated and even married men they met at the place; THAT the DEPONENT herself dated a Portuguese man, for almost 4 years, whose qualifying data can be found in pages 580/581 of the inquiry; THAT she even lived with this Portuguese citizen, in Portugal.

If, on the one hand, the “deponent’s” answer denotes an effort to erase the more commercial dimension of sexual exchanges (prostitution), which was reintroduced by the commissioner through the decodification of her discourse fixed on paper, on the other, it reveals that relationships between singles’ bar employees and customers did not always fit the “prostitution” box, according to their own perspectives. The relationships established between men and women in these spaces were diverse and constituted a continuum of exchanges of sex, affection and money (Piscitelli *et al*, 2011) that ranged from commercial exchanges around the consumption of alcohol inside the club, included “going out” (which could involve actual prostitution or less formal and commercial meetings, such as an invitation to dinner), and went up to relationships and marriages.

Before signing the document, the deponent reads everything attentively. She corrects a misspelled word and the value charged for the plane tickets.

She confirms everything is “alright”. The registrar prints out the “Term” once more and hands it to her so that she signs it. She re-reads the whole content and complains about the word “nightclub”. The registrar argues that, in Brazil, “nightclub” is a place that sells alcoholic beverages... She says “okay” and, then, finally signs and receives a copy of the “Term of statements”. Before she leaves, she asks if she will be called again. The registrar says it is unlikely, “at least, not by the police”.

Going back to Ginsburg’s (1991) analogy between inquisitors and anthropologists, reading these documents *along* and *against the grain* enables us not only to critically view this form of state documentation and administration, but also to rethink similar artifacts in anthropological knowledge practices, since the same analytical operations could be carried out toward the anthropologist, who silently witnessed and recorded this interaction. Furthermore, the analysis sought to draw attention to the fact that neither the “inquisitorial” character of interviews in police headquarters, nor the re-shaping produced in the mediation process that converts witness speech into “Terms of statements” turn documented persons into inert objects of administrative documentation practices. It is not for nothing that these procedures rarely lead witnesses to report the crime of which they are supposedly “victims”.

To conclude this account we must highlight that, unlike the case chosen for analysis, most “human trafficking” inquiries initiated in this Federal Police precinct led not so much to the construction than the deconstruction of the *materiality* of the crime (evidence). Thus, instead of leading to a criminal report and a judicial process, they generally wind up being archived by the Federal Prosecutor’s Office. However, given that statistics are one of the main state narrative and administrative genres (Gupta, 2012), by moving from the documents’ qualitative dimension to their quantitative effects, we can observe that their supposedly inexpressive result does not mean they “go nowhere”, as the police officers used to say. In official reports about the phenomenon, the number of inquiries is more important than their content, serving as a support for policy formulation. Thus, the heterogeneity and “the messy details of cases are replaced by the precise factuality of numbers” (ibid, p. 156), which are the main criterion in measuring the productivity and effectiveness of this and other criminal policies.

In this sense, the police inquiries’ institutional ramifications, if evaluated beyond their criminal aspects, make clear how bureaucratic government is

exercised not only through the articulation between *knowledge* and *power* (Foucault, 1980), but also through the everyday production of ignorance and even stupidity, in Graeber's (2012) terms. The political strength of ignorance can be perceived in the way in which so-called "quantitative data" is used at the highest levels of the state administrative hierarchy, which are responsible for formulating national reports and maintaining a dialogue with supranational government agencies. In Brazil, the low number of "human trafficking" inquiries and their low "productivity" in terms of criminal convictions are converted into uncertain statistics and policies of confrontation that are reproduced and legitimize themselves less through what is actually documented by state organs (such as the police) acting in the operational front lines to combat this crime than by the proclaimed need to improve the regulation of something that is imagined not to be duly documented.

Inside and outside of drawers: relationships, feelings and commitments *on paper*

If we cannot mistake the police inquiry for the actual investigation, the same cannot be said about documents produced in "missing persons" cases reported to the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police. In the state's precincts, every "missing person" case is the object of a "Verification of the Merits of the Information" (*Verificação da Procedência da Informação – VPI*), which consists of an administrative set of documents endowed with a different status from the inquiry. Though it designates *documents*, the VPI was originally conceived and regulated by the Brazilian Criminal Code as a preliminary stage of all police investigation, which must precede the inquiry and determine whether or not it should be initiated. However, in the precincts' day-to-day routine, this expression came to name a set of papers, establishing, in practice, a coincidence between investigative procedures and documents (cf. Eilbaum, 2012).¹²

VPIs are not initiated only for "missing persons" cases, but for a variety of occurrences reported to the precincts. Nevertheless, the coincidence between procedures and documents implied in its name is emphasized here in order

12 Quoting Eilbaum (2012), "the VPI initials comes from article 5, paragraph 3 of the Brazilian Criminal Process Code. It refers to the fact that, when a criminal infraction is reported to the police, it must, after verifying the information, initiate a police inquiry. Based on the act of verifying information, the police created a bureaucratic administrative piece of their own, called VPI." (2012, p.414)

to introduce the reasons for, and effects of, the choice for dealing with documents in a research specifically concerned with “missing persons” cases. The research’s main objective was to understand, through ethnographic fieldwork, how cases classified as “missing persons” are administered in Brazilian police units, apprehending both practices and representations about this type of occurrence that are present in precincts. Initially, there was no predefined choice for the use of documents as artifacts based on which the ethnography would be constructed. Since the negotiations that made the research possible, however, it became imperative to deal with papers, given that, in that context, processes and documents maintain close and definitive relationships. Though extremely revealing, the implied coincidence found in the VPI initials is only one of these relationships.

“Missing persons” is, among so many others, a category used in Brazilian Civil Police precincts to name a specific type of occurrence. Cases of adults who leave their homes, jobs and routines without informing their whereabouts; public calamities, natural disasters and inclement weather episodes whose victims are not located; children and adolescents who run away from home, shelters or youth detention centers; elderly or mentally ill individuals who get lost in their own cities. Amongst many other, dramas, plots and characters like these constitute “missing persons” occurrences registered and investigated in VPIs. “Missing persons” cases are part of the universe of so-called “atypical facts” registered in precincts: events that are not established in Brazilian criminal law and, therefore, are not crimes (cf. Paes, 2008, p. 173).

Ethnographic reflections on Brazilian public security and criminal justice have long shown that police officers hierarchize occurrences with which they deal, adding to formal categories such as “occurrence”, “missing persons” and “atypical fact” a series of informal classifications, labels and stereotypes (cf. Kant de Lima, 1995; Kant de Lima, Pires and Eilbaum, 2008; Miranda et al, 2010). One of these informal classifications is the one separating the so-called “*feijoadá*”¹³, a set of occurrences considered to be of little relevance, such as threats, domestic disputes and thefts for which there is no evidence, from the so-called “actual crimes”, that is, homicides, kidnappings and robberies,

13 Reference to a traditional Brazilian dish made from beans and pork. (Translator’s note)

for example¹⁴. The research's initial objectives included the interest in understanding the place "missing persons" cases occupied in police officer's informal classifications.

In order to approach this issue ethnographically, the researcher sought access to a sector of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police that specializes in "missing persons" cases: the Sector for Discovering Whereabouts (*Setor de Descoberta de Paradeiros* – SDP), part of the state capital's current Homicide Unit. During her first visit to the SDP, the researcher was greeted by the sector's then-interim chief, inspector Fernando, and quickly instructed to formally request an authorization to carry out the study. The authorization should be addressed to the office of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police Chief. The researcher followed the instructions exactly and quickly, but the document only arrived at the office after passing through different sectors of the Civil Police and receiving more than a dozen stamps and small notes on its margins until, finally, being inscribed with the short sentence that allowed the work to be carried out: "There are no objections to the researcher's academic aspirations."

The need for not only a piece of paper, but one that circulated through several sectors of an organization at a pace independent of the anthropologist's wishes put her in contact with what is understood in Brazil to be the oppressive materialization of the ideals of formalism, impersonality and anonymity prevalent in bureaucracies: the inescapable need for records, letterheads and signatures in order to set a process in motion or to obtain all manner of rights (cf. Reis, 1998 e DaMatta, 2002). Furthermore, the need for explicit authorization also made clear a key aspect of the way in which bureaucratic organizations work: the imposition both of uncertainty and of waiting as an efficacious resource of power (cf. Hoag, 2011, p.86).

Additionally, *reading* the short sentence that, at last, authorized the research presented the anthropologist with "an ethnographic fact even before reaching the 'field'" (Peirano, 2009, p.54). *Reading* documents became not only a routine activity, but also an involving datum of the then-beginning

14 The consolidated interpretation of these hierarchizations, developed in reference anthropological studies on public security (cf. Kant de Lima, 1995; Kant de Lima, Pires and Eilbam, 2008; Miranda et al, 2010) is that police authority is constituted, in day-to-day routine, through the ways in which agents not only hierarchize but also criminalize (or not) events with which they deal. As Kant de Lima, Pires and Eilbaum (2008) put it, in police precincts "cases of theft for which there is no evidence, threats, domestic disputes, among others, are filtered, set aside, avoided. That is because "real" cases, cases that "resonate", that are relevant, are homicides, kidnappings, cargo robberies, drug trafficking, among others." (p. 166)

fieldwork. Though the request had been deposited in an SDP drawer, from which it was only removed for inspection once, other papers, organized as VPIs, were routinely removed from drawers and systematically *read*, *transcribed* and *handled* by the researcher. These acts, though very similar to what the police officers themselves did everyday, were seen by inspector Fernando and his colleagues as almost opposite tasks to what could be *seen* there, should the anthropologist have decided to observe the sector's day-to-day routine.

At the initial negotiation regarding the fieldwork routine, held between the researcher and inspector Fernando, the latter presented “observation” and “dealing with documents” as opposite options in terms of the effects they could produce on the SDP day-to-day routine. Immediately after the researcher stated that she intended to “observe the sector's day-to-day routine and talk with police officers”, the inspector warned her: “that word *observe* will cause you trouble”. According to Fernando, talking to police officers and observing their work would lead her to a crossroads: either they would tell her what they do and ought to do in an idealized way and she would write something “pretty, but unrealistic”, or she would write about what actually happens in a police unit, producing “realistic” work, but drawing the officers' animosity. He suggested, as a (in his words) “great alternative” to circumvent the crossroads, that she turn her attention to the papers received, produced and stored in the SDP's drawers and lockers, what he and his colleagues referred to as “our archives”. Research with documents, said Fernando, would be “easier”.

By referring to documentary research as a “great alternative”, “easier” because it was dissociated from what was “real” in the day-to-day SDP activities, inspector Fernando expressed a graphic ideology (cf. Hull, 2012b) common among bureaucrats and other documenters. These agents “much like scientists, claim to represent, engage with, or constitute realities ‘in the world’ independent from the processes that produce documents.” (Ib, 2012b, p.5). For Fernando, after all, while the researcher was dealing with documents produced and handled by himself and his colleagues, she would not be observing what they “really” do. Furthermore, if this graphic ideology is present among all kinds of documenters, for SDP police officers specifically it is reinforced by two characteristics of the papers with which they deal. First, their status as administrative procedures and the lack of importance

that follows from it. Second, the incongruence between material elements and narrative conventions present in these papers and the case plots registered therein.

The specific VPIs that circulate within the SDP are initiated in Rio de Janeiro city police precincts. The precincts are first reported of “missing persons” cases by people classified by police officers, often regardless of factual connections or blood ties, as “families of missing persons”. Once a “family of missing person” reports a case in a precinct, a police officer must open a VPI. Some time after this initial step, VPIs must be forwarded to the SDP for specialized investigations¹⁵. Unlike police inquiries, VPIs are administrative procedures initiated for non-criminal occurrences. The central issue, however, is not their distinct nature but rather the different status attributed by police officers to VPIs and inquiries. Police officers, reproducing the hierarchy implicit in the distinction between “real crimes” and “*feijoada*”, understand that inquiries are properly *police* documents and, thus, endowed with evident relevance, while VPIs are, in their words, “only administrative procedures”, unimportant, incapable of revealing the “reality” of police work and, for this very reason, liable to being touched, read and transcribed even by a researcher¹⁶.

Nonetheless, within the heterogeneous universe of VPIs, police officers understand that those initiated for “missing persons” cases are even less important than the rest. Using this other informal classification, that at times is added to the separation between “real crimes” and “*feijoada*”, SDP police officers often state that “missing persons” cases are “family affairs”, in opposition to “police matters”. While homicides, kidnappings and robberies, among others crimes, are “police matters” demanding street operations, team investigations and other activities part of “police work”, “missing persons” cases are, to sector agents, “family affairs” that should not be left up to police units. Police officers say that, when faced with these cases, they

15 As Ferreira details in the dissertation (2011) that resulted from the research, the SDP is responsible for investigating “missing persons” cases registered in a specific set of regular precincts (from the 1st to the 44th police precincts) of the Rio de Janeiro State capital. The precincts which first register these cases have fifteen days to carry out an investigation and close them. After that deadline, if the investigations have not solved the case, the SDP then takes responsibility for all “missing persons” cases registered in those precincts (Rio de Janeiro, 1991).

16 If, on the one hand, the status assigned to VPIs is not only distinct, but also inferior to that of police inquiries, Kant de Lima’s (1995, p.68-69) ethnography reveals that these administrative procedures offer a greater margin of autonomy to police officers than inquiries, since they do not require an authorization by a judge or prosecutor, but only a commissioner’s decision, in order to be archived.

have little to do but “to fill out pieces of paper” (cf. Ferreira, 2013) and to tend to the so-called “families of missing persons”, carrying out a type of service they classify as “social work”¹⁷.

Inspector Fernando usually bases the use of informal classifications such as “family affairs” and “social work” on one of the main state narrative and administrative genres: official statistics, in this case produced by the Rio de Janeiro Public Security Institute (*Instituto de Segurança Pública* – ISP). For some years, ISP has claimed, based on quantitative data that the majority of “missing persons” cases reported to the state’s precincts end with the return of the missing persons to their homes or at least with the discovery of their whereabouts¹⁸. For Fernando, that data prove what he sees everyday: that most occurrences are family conflicts leading to someone running away from home, to couples separating or to one of the persons involved in the conflict explicitly deciding to leave home. These conflicts would erroneously arrive at police units, leaving officers like himself and his colleagues to “merely fill out pieces of paper” – not *any* paper, but especially unimportant documents – and await their resolution. Nonetheless, for Fernando, these numbers also lead to SDP’s work being “an illusion”: while he and his colleagues “merely fill out pieces of paper”, most cases are solved and counted as such, which enables their superiors in the state hierarchy to use numbers suggesting the SDP is an efficient service for locating missing persons. What the numbers do not show, however, is that many cases are solved because the missing person voluntarily returns home, and not as a result of successful investigations.

A clear incongruence between the material elements of the VPI documents and the cases plots also accompany this “illusion” produced by quantitative data and the lack of importance attributed to the papers. This incongruence adds to the VPIs’ inferiority the idea that they are ineffective documents in terms of investigations, reinforcing the “illusory” character of SDP’s work. They both lead to the production of vague and imprecise records

17 The pioneer work by Oliveira (2007) also dealt with police officers’ questions and reflections in terms of their attributions and responsibilities when faced with “missing persons” cases.

18 In December 2009, the ISP, a state agency dedicated to research and to training public servants in the public security field, divulged a pioneer study on “missing persons” cases. Titled “Research on the Missing”, the study, which has been periodically updated since its release, sought to map out cases in the state in order to identify, on the one hand, the profile of “missing persons” and, on the other, the circumstances and possible causes of their disappearance. Among the results, there is one information frequently evoked at the SDP: both in the original study’s sample and in its follow-ups, over 70% of cases ended with the “missing persons” returning to their homes or at least with their whereabouts being identified.

of the cases and the choice, by many police officers, to leave fields blank or to fill them out with expressions such as “ignored”, “unknown”, “does not know”, among others.

Reports of occurrences, official correspondence, and “terms of statements”, among other documents included in VPIs, contain inscriptions and insignias of the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police and/or the precincts and sectors in which they are produced, as well as categories, fields for certain kinds of information and narrative conventions that are exhaustively repeated. Categories such as “author”, “victim”, “witness”, “location of occurrence”, “date and time of occurrence” and “goods involved”, for example, appear in the police reports, guiding the work of every police officer who fills out this documents when faced with a case – whether or not it is a “missing persons” case. In “terms of statements”, official correspondence, dispatches and subpoenas, as well as in some reports, some of these categories must be filled out, juxtaposed with fields where information about the “victim”, such as “name”, “parents’ name”, “occupation”, “race” and “age”, must be registered. If these categories appear repeatedly and even redundantly in the documents, at the same time there is no space for photos of those involved to be attached, nor for physical descriptions beyond the “race” attributed to them.

The inescapable presence of these categories and fields in the documents, as well as the lack of space for photos and physical descriptions of those involved, are material elements of VPIs that are incompatible with “missing persons” plots. “Missing persons” plots are not crimes and, therefore, it is not possible to speak of “authors”, “victims” and “witnesses”, at least not with the meaning assigned to these categories in criminal occurrences. Furthermore, a persons’ “disappearance” cannot be narratively treated as an “occurrence” that took place at a certain “place”, “date and time” and in front of certain people. What can be said about a “disappearance”, instead, is only the place where the “missing person” was last seen by others who came to view them as “missing” based on a moment or process that may have no connection with events situated in time and space.

For this reason, photos of “missing” persons, graphic artifacts that are usually taken by their “families” to the precincts where they report the cases, are frequently glued, in a manner at once improvised and already standardized, at the edges of papers included in the VPIs. In most cases, this is done at the upper right corner of police reports, where there are no

insignias or inscriptions that would be obscured by the images. Physical descriptions of the “missing persons”, including information about the clothes they were wearing when they were last seen, striking facial features and marks or tattoos they may have, are registered in fields meant not for information about persons, but rather for descriptions of the so-called “dynamics of the occurrence”.

As Paes (2008) exemplarily describes, the process of filling out documents in precincts is precisely characterized by improvisations, alterations and subversions of what categories and fields such as “dynamics of the occurrence” seem to presuppose, such as those employed in “missing persons” cases in order to include photos and physical descriptions of the “missing” in the VPIs. These improvisations and subversions often become fixed patterns of recording, as revealed, for example, by the practice of filling out the “dynamics of the occurrence” field not with information about the occurrence, but rather with accounts of activities carried out by the police officers since becoming aware of it.

This practice, just as other patterns of recording used in precincts, are interpreted by Paes (2008) and Miranda et al (2010) as effects of the not only inquisitorial, but also notary system that orients police actions in Brazil. As a result of this system, “the logic of the document that must be registered and filed precedes the logic of the record as a resource for the investigation” (Paes, 2008, p.175). In records about “missing persons”, this logic of documents that must be filled out, even despite incongruences between their material elements and the cases’ plots, ends up reinforcing the lack of importance attributed VPIs. Moreover, it also ends up endowing “missing persons” cases with an enigmatic character that results not from the cases themselves, but from the imprecision provoked by those incongruences¹⁹. Furthermore, it also reinforces the idea that “missing persons” cases are not “police matters”, since even the papers routinely filled out, which are the most trivial part of a precinct’s routine, are shown to be inadequate in the face of their characteristics, plots and characters.

Despite being considered unimportant, and despite the incongruence between their material elements and the plots of occurrences therein

19 In the dissertation that resulted from the research (Ferreira, 2011, p.94-112), there is a detailed reflection on this enigmatic character and its relationship with the documents’ material elements. For reasons of economy, the issue will not be explored here.

registered, documents on “missing persons” cases play a crucial role in the way police agents and units such as SDP manage these cases. By systematically *reading* the documents, the researcher was able to understand that much of the content recorded in these papers points not to what happened during the “disappearance”, but rather to a process of delegating responsibilities put in motion by the production and circulation of documents itself. If, for officers like inspector Fernando, “missing persons” cases are “family affairs”, in “merely filling out pieces of paper” about these cases those agents delegate responsibilities for managing and even solving them to the so-called “families of missing persons”.

Based on what they record, how they record it and the fact that what they record is set in police documents – despite their own conceptions regarding the “social work” nature of the activities demanded by “missing persons” cases –, police officers attribute tasks such as looking for those “missing”, controlling their movements and even stopping them from disappearing again to the very persons who went to precincts to request that they, the officers, would perform these tasks. As the three cases we will now present show, in filling out documents, the officers return to the “families” the responsibility for managing the cases, through advice and suggestions given both verbally and through the documents’ texts themselves. These suggestions and advice are responded by the “families” with commitments, feelings and obligations that are also registered in VPIs and, thus, deposited in the SDP’s so-called “archives”, to be known by anyone who dares open their drawers.

Let us then discuss the cases involving Arlete, Cinira and Melissa, three young women who were reported as “missing” and whose cases, all solved, are currently in the sector’s drawers. The excerpts of the cases reveal guidance, advice and suggestions given by police officers to the “families” of the three “missing” women, while also revealing commitments, feelings and obligations provoked both in these “families” and in the “missing” women themselves by the guidance, advice and suggestions fixed *on paper*. Let’s begin with Arlete.

On January 7, 2008, Regina, a domestic worker, left early for work, as usual. She returned at the usual time and found her 16-year-old daughter, Arlete, watching TV. The two had dinner together and then Regina went to bed, “leaving her daughter awake, and her daughter said she was going to her

friend Ana's house and would sleep there". The following day, she worked as usual, but, upon returning home, did not find Arlete.

In the next four days, Regina followed her routine, hoping to find Arlete every night. This did not happen. On January 12, she went to a precinct and obtained a record of her daughter's "disappearance". Almost a month later, she was once again at the precinct, this time to inform of the opposite: Arlete had returned home. Though already solved, in June 2008 the case was sent to the SDP. Before archiving it, the police officer who received it saw fit to call Regina and end the case with the following log:

Over the telephone the reporter declared that her daughter returned home, after spending some days in the company of classmates; she also said that, since then, she has sought to maintain a greater control over the minor and even punished her with a beating when she came home. The mother was instructed to provide the minor with an I.D.

Something similar happened with Melissa, a 14-year-old student who was used to spending a day or two away from home without informing anyone. In April 2008, she spent three days without contacting any family members and her mother decided to seek the police. At the time, a "missing person" report was made for Melissa. A week later, her mother returned to the unit and reported that she was already home. Based on her account, the officer who took her report registered:

That according to the information given by the reporter, her daughter Melissa was found in Quintino neighborhood at a friend's house and was taken home so that certain measures could be taken regarding her behavior.

The last case is somewhat richer in detail. Cinira was a 19-year-old college student who left the house where she lived with her mother and sister and returned ten days later. As soon as she returned, Cinira herself went to the police precinct where her "missing" had been first reported. The records of the "missing" person's visit to the police precinct are similar to those of Arlete and Melissa's cases: they fix *on paper* commitments with controlling behaviors. In Cinira's case, however, they are commitments to self-control and to what would be a good conduct toward herself, and not others, as in Arlete's and Melissa's cases.

What Cinira said to the police officer was thus recorded:

that in fact no crime related to her disappearance had occurred; that she left the house where she lives with her mother at approximately 10 pm, not giving anyone notice, not getting in touch in any way and reappearing 10 (ten) days later, saying she was upset with life, tired and at her limit; that the declarer regrets not having contacted her family, that when she goes out and takes somewhat longer to return in the future, she will call someone in her family to let them know where and with whom she is; the declarer said (...) that during the time when she was away she did not feel like talking to anyone, an attitude she regrets a great deal.

The “beating” in Arlete’s case, the guilt, the regret and the commitments to control her own desires, feelings and conduct in Cinira’s, and the obligation to punish her daughter for her behavior, in Melissa’s mother’s case are effects of advice, suggestions and guidance provided by police officers in their interactions with “families of missing persons” who seek precincts to report “missing persons” cases. An example of this kind of guidance is the suggestion to provide Arlete with an I.D., not only stated by the officer who took her mother’s report, but also registered in the case’s VPI.

It is precisely through the articulation between advice, suggestions and guidance such as this one and the commitments, feelings and obligations they provoke in the so-called “families” that police officers manage “missing persons” cases reported to Rio de Janeiro precincts. If, from these agents’ point of view, “missing persons” cases are “family affairs”, it is precisely the “families” that end up managing them, through “beatings”, guilt and commitments fixed on documents considered to be the least relevant in police units. Furthermore, what is particularly interesting is that this mode of management becomes effective because it finds its way *on paper*, starkly revealing that official documents “bear the double sign of the state’s distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday” (Das and Poole, 2004, p.15).

On the trail of police papers: ethnographic dialogues and final considerations

In this article, we sought less to compare our “fieldwork” data than to render clear the profitability of documents in anthropological research. We did so by proposing a dialogue between recent theoretical-methodological

discussions on the theme and two ethnographic accounts of studies carried out on the trail of police papers. Based on the option to deal with documents, our ethnographies addressed the notary character that is widely criticized in the literature about Brazilian police units (Kant de Lima, 1995; Miranda et al, 2010; Misse, 2011, Vidal, 2013) in its positivities. That is, instead of associating documentation practices with an alleged inefficiency that would prevent police investigations from being properly carried out, we sought to seriously consider the idea that writing is one of the most important activities and government technologies of state routines (Gupta, 2012; Das, 2007) and to explore its analytical potentiality. Thus, we argue that in order to understand police administration of “human trafficking for sexual exploitation” and “missing persons” cases we had to *follow the paper* and produce reflections that questioned the tediousness, lack of *symbolic richness* and *density of meaning* attributed to documents (cf. Graeber, 2012).

In following the paperwork routinely produced and handled by federal and state police officers, we could observe that they assign less importance to the documentation work they perform, whether by pointing out the inefficacy (or unimportance) of inquiries that “turn up nothing” or differentiating the activity of “merely filling out pieces of paper” from the investigative practices they should ideally privilege. Thus, they frequently delimit borders and hierarchies very similarly to how anthropologists traditionally conceived of and defined ethnographic practices: opposing dealing with documents with “real” police work, characterized by street investigations and geared toward “actual crimes”.

As we know, the legitimacy and authority of anthropology, anchored in the mythic model of the malinowskian fieldwork, were founded on an opposition between “armchair anthropology”, based on documentary research and considered distant and uninteresting, and an anthropology emanating from fieldwork, understood to be capable of apprehending the “reality” of native life. Considering this analogy’s potentialities, we note that if, on the one hand, our ethnographic accounts showed the central role of documentary artifacts in the everyday routine of police institutions, even when their importance is downplayed by their artificers, on the other, they revealed the little-debated distance between certain idealized self-representations about anthropological research and the activities we effectively carry out while “doing” anthropology (cf. Pacheco de Oliveira, 2009).

By following the trail of police papers and moving away from certain stereotypes about anthropology's knowledge practices and about the artifacts we ought to observe, handle and describe when carrying out fieldwork, both accounts made clear and were based on different analytical strategies. The first focused on the ethnographic description of the art of "reducing to writing" in the Federal Police. The second focused on exploring the materiality and the enactments produced by police reports and other documentary artifacts related to "missing persons" cases in the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police. Both works paid special attention to the micro-politics of interactions between documenting agents and documented persons, also enabling reflections about the interaction between documenting agents and one of the researchers.

By regarding documents as ethnographic artifacts, we were able to note that the resolution (or lack thereof) of the cases investigated in the institutions where we carried out our researches depends not only on the action (or inaction) of their artificers, but also on different modes of delegating responsibilities to the documented persons. This is due to the fact that police officers believe they do not have much to do when faced with these cases other than producing papers, acknowledging the agency of persons technically defined as "trafficked" or "missing" over managing their own lives and bodies. Both analyses also revealed that this delegation of responsibilities guarantees to documented persons the possibility of actively intervening in the bureaucratic fate of administrative procedures and/or in the inscriptions of part of their lives in state documents.

The diffusion of responsibility, which produces a kind of collective agency, as noted by Hull (2012b), or shared agency, as we suggest, occurs *through paper* – something that was prominent throughout the accounts. The main difference is that, in "human trafficking" cases, the documented persons' agency takes on the form of resistance, while in "missing persons" cases, the agency takes place through a logic of subjection. We highlight that both processes are crucial to understanding the notion of agency, as Mahmood (2006) suggests. In our studies, we were only able to understand and analyze these different modes of agency, that are given form and materiality *on paper* and whose effects can be perceived through the bureaucratic fates of these administrative procedures, once we decided to analytically pursue the mediations and enactments which follow the processes of producing, circulating and archiving police documents.

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Global Ruling

Intellectual Property and Development in the
United Nations Knowledge Economy

Ondina Fachel Leal

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Abstract

This paper firstly provides an ethnographic account of the dynamic of events in Geneva in 2004, when meetings of various multilateral agencies and global civil society organizations were held simultaneously to discuss the proposal to include the Development Agenda as a key element of intellectual property rights (IPR), seeking to insert some public policy aspects into the existing legal frameworks on IPR. Secondly we describe the historical context for the emergence of the intellectual property system as global legislation, explaining how it came into being and the ways in which it intertwines with international trade, examining the extent of its impact and its interfaces with various domains of social life, including culture and knowledge. Finally, based on interviews, documents and minutes from international agency meetings, we reconstruct the three-year process of negotiating the Development Agenda at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), describing the role of its main actors. Since Brazil, a member state of the organization, assumed a lead role in promoting the Agenda, we examine the disputes that occurred during this process as political actors veered back and forth in their support for the international system to protect and enforce intellectual property rights, and the tensions generated as IPRs become barriers to the trade and development of developing nations.

Keywords: trade regulation; global policy; WTO; Intellectual Property

Resumo

Este artigo, em primeiro lugar, relata em uma perspectiva etnográfica a dinâmica de eventos ocorridos em Genebra em 2004, encontros de agências

multilaterais e da sociedade civil global que ocorreram simultaneamente, com o objetivo de discutir uma proposta de inclusão de uma pauta de desenvolvimento em relação ao regime de propriedade intelectual, em uma tentativa de contemplar alguns aspectos de políticas públicas na legislação vigente de propriedade intelectual. Em segundo lugar, em uma perspectiva histórica, apresentamos o contexto da criação do regime de propriedade intelectual como uma legislação global, indicando como este se constitui e se vincula ao comércio internacional, sua extensão e interfaces com tudo aquilo que passa a regular, inclusive o conhecimento e cultura. Por último, a partir de dados advindos de entrevistas, documentos e atas de reuniões de agências internacionais, retomamos o processo de negociação, que teve a duração de três anos, da Agenda de Desenvolvimento junto à Organização Mundial da Propriedade Intelectual (OMPI), descrevendo o papel dos autores principais neste processo. Como o Brasil, país-membro da organização, assumiu uma posição de liderança propondo a Agenda, nós abordamos as disputas neste processo e a oscilação de atores políticos entre apoiar o sistema internacional de proteção de propriedade intelectual e suas tensões, à medida que esta legislação se transforma em barreiras ao comércio e ao desenvolvimento de países em desenvolvimento.

Palavras chaves: OMC; WIPO; Desenvolvimento; Política Global; Propriedade Intelectual

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We need to anthropologize the West: show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasize those domains most taken for granted as universal (this includes epistemology and economics); make them seem as historically peculiar as possible; show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world. (Rabinow 1996: 36)

Introduction

Over recent decades the notion of *Intellectual Property* has become indelibly linked to a legal regime responsible for implementing, regulating and scaling up intellectual property rights at global level: the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is in this context that the domain of what we call Intellectual Property has expanded and become redefined at global scale, subjecting new technologies and cultural productions to hegemonic property laws and market structures.

An Anthropology of the world economic system must inevitably address the legal frameworks that regulate the production of goods on the global market, as well as the production of ideas and knowledge, insofar as these too have been transformed into goods. The TRIPS Agreement has imposed a reorganization of the relations of production and trade at global level. Moreover it has induced a radical change *within* and *between* nations that produce science and technology and those that do not, but nevertheless require them. Since the agencies responsible for regulating global trade, which includes intellectual property law, form part of the United Nations system, one of the

most controversial topics when it comes to intellectual property issues have been the relations between Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and development. The main argument is that TRIPS-related patent laws and practices work against the interests of developing countries and need to be reformed.

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first we provide an ethnographic account of the events that took place in Geneva, Switzerland, during the months of September and October 2004, when a proposal for the establishment of a Development Agenda was first submitted to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 2004 General Assembly sessions. Reflecting the typical dynamic of these global assemblies of nation states, the meeting took place in parallel with other events: meetings of national and regional member state delegations, meetings of experts from specialized international agencies, and a wide-range of global civil society conferences and summits, all held simultaneously in Geneva. The Development Agenda proposed by Brazil, as a WIPO member state, emerged in direct response to the intellectual property legislation and sought to establish various public policy aspects as an integral part of the IPR framework.

In the second section of the work, we present the context of the global intellectual property regime, examining how it formed and became intertwined with international trade, as well as the range of its impact, indicating its interfaces with diverse areas of social life, including knowledge production and culture.

In the final section of the article – which is based on data from interviews, documents and the minutes of multilateral agency meetings – we shift back to the main topic of our study, focusing our attention on the conclusion to the negotiation process for the WIPO Development Agenda in 2007, and describing the role of the main actors, namely the member states of the United Nations organizations. As Brazil assumed a lead role in proposing the Agenda in 2004, we examine the disputes that occurred during the construction of this process as the political actors oscillated back and forth in their support for the international system designed to protect and enforce intellectual property rights and the tensions generated as these rights themselves became seen as barriers to the trade and development of developing nations.

We followed the three-year negotiation process as direct observers from October 2004, when the proposal for the Development Agenda was first presented at the WIPO General Assembly, to October 2007, when the

same Assembly finally adopted the consolidated Agenda unanimously. Our research included observation of events, interviewing key people, and collecting and analyzing the rich documentation available through the virtual libraries hosted on international agency websites. Needless to say, we take this production of discourses about intellectual property and development by this law-making agency not as a political breakthrough, but rather as an important moment in the reorganization of country alignments and the production of new realities within the global order. As Escobar (1995: 46) wrote concerning another context: “The invention of development necessarily involved the creation of an institutional field from which discourses are produced, recorded, stabilized, modified and put into circulation.” Escobar’s argument is that the development discourse creates the Third World as the *other* to be developed by the West. In the case analyzed here, though, we address the clash between two global discourses and their different mandates and constituencies: one about intellectual property, where ideas, knowledge and imagination are re-envisaged as privately-owned commodities to be commercialized within the global market; the other about development, rephrased in terms of public wealth and the right to access knowledge and technology.

The world in Geneva

The first proposal for the establishment of a WIPO Development Agenda was submitted by Argentina and Brazil at the 2004 WIPO General Assembly with the support of twelve other developing countries. This group of member states, coordinated by Brazil and naming itself the Group of Friends of Development, comprised South Africa, Bolivia, Cuba, Egypt, Ecuador, Iran, Peru, Kenya, the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uruguay and Venezuela. In order to reconstruct what we identify as a turning point in the dynamic – or rather the discourse – between North and South (or to use the language of the multilateral agencies: between developed and developing countries), we explore some of the tensions between these actors and power groups and the overarching bureaucratic framework of multilateral organizations. It is our view that – independent of the actual outcomes of the Agenda as a set of reform proposals, such as safeguarding public interest flexibilities in the international system of intellectual property rights and working towards more equitable trading conditions – the three-year process involved in negotiating the Agenda provides

us with a unique opportunity to observe the multiple roles and asymmetrical relationships of different actors within a scenario of supranational law-making agencies involved in producing globalization.

Globalization means that decisions of interest to a particular collectivity are no longer taken either locally or nationally, but internationally by global supranational entities – the multilateral agencies – that overlay localized actors. On one hand, this has led to the emergence of a new sphere of social life located above all of us – including the nation state – and belonging to a broader systemic order capable of imposing its own interests through law. On the other, it demands that local actors actively or passively adhere to this new legal regime. In the new global governance of production, which includes (especially) the ownership of ideas, the global and the local are reconfigured by a political economy of knowledge production. The context itself produces a narrative on the meanings of development, West, North and South, global and local. As various anthropologists – Abélès (2008), Appadurai (2001), Fischer (2011), among others – have pointed out, contemporary concerns in anthropology about translating and understanding cultural practices have abandoned traditional objects. Indeed, anthropological inquiry has shifted its attention to the global arena of policy making and to the conditions through which such political discourses or rituals of truth, to borrow Foucault's terminology, are produced.

By multilateral agencies we mean entities linked to the United Nations (UN) system, including the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Global Fund, to mention just a few among the similarly structured entities, specialized agencies and affiliated organizations headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Our focus here is WIPO and its 2004 General Assembly, composed of 186 member states, which follows a UN representational governance system of *one country, one vote*. In any of these multilateral organizations, holding an Assembly, their main deliberative policy-making forum, generates an important dynamic involving other events and meetings occurring simultaneous to the main event. Although long speeches and voting decisions take place on the main floor of the Assembly, a building and room guarded with the

highest security, everything else happens away from this space. Although the international rituals unfolding on the main stage are indeed very important, much of the decision-making process, disputes and consensus building very clearly unfolds elsewhere. Multiple formal and informal meetings are held in parallel to the main event: besides the sessions between member states and clusters of countries, these include celebrations, protests, media statements, sittings and civil society gatherings, all held simultaneously in the central space and its surroundings.

During these periods when the main agencies hold their assemblies, Geneva becomes a plethora of political rituals and the whole town is taken over by the thrill and expectation of the event, expressed in diverse languages and accents. Briefly, given the scope of this paper, we shall explore three *scenes* of events held in Geneva during September and October 2004: an international conference of civil society organizations called ‘The Future of the WIPO’; a meeting held to discuss intellectual property and public health at one of the Geneva-based intergovernmental technical agencies; and the main sessions of the WIPO General Assembly.

Prior to the WIPO Assembly meeting, a two-day meeting called ‘The Future of the WIPO’ was organized by Consumers International (TACD)¹, an international NGO. The meeting brought together stakeholders from academia, NGOs, government officials, IP experts and well-known scientists, including Nobel Prize laureates, and as a final document produced the ‘Geneva Declaration on the Future of WIPO,’ signed by hundreds of individuals and organizations.

This meeting took place in a venue across the street from the WIPO headquarters. A few members of the WIPO secretariat were also present at the civil society forum, invited to discuss “the future of the WIPO.” They gave short talks, stressing that the primary mission of WIPO, as a technical agency and law-making body functioning as the “leading global forum for the promotion of intellectual property as a force for innovation and creativity,” was to deliver capacity-building programs to help developing countries benefit from intellectual property legislation. The position of the WIPO officials was highly defensive given that the overall tone of the meeting – reiterated in all

¹ TACD Transatlantic Consumers Dialogue is a forum of European and North American consumer organizations, run by Consumers International, with the aim of developing policy recommendations to foster consumer interest in policy making (see www.tacd.org).

its sessions – was critical of the legitimacy of WIPO’s mandate as a UN agency. The argument was that WIPO only became part of United Nations system in 1974, and has sided with intellectual property rights, its original function prior to becoming a multilateral agency, to the exclusion of human rights.

To a strong round of applause, the representative from one intergovernmental organization of developing countries asserted: “WIPO does not appear to act according to the UN mandate, but according to its original mission to foster IP,” a reference to the fact that before obtaining its current agency status, WIPO had been the Office for the Protection of Industrial Property, a body established to administer services for the Paris and Berne Conventions on industrial property and copyright. “The king is naked!” someone in the audience joked, loud enough to be heard, labelling the fact an “inconvenient truth.” The accusation was that WIPO cares more for the rights of intellectual property owners than those of users, especially those in developing countries. The collective demand was for WIPO to “change its culture and direction.” It should be working in the public interest, giving emphasis to free and open source software, public domain assets like the human genome, and patent exceptions to allow access to medicines for the poor.

Lectures were given by leading figures from various civil society movements like Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Movement, John Sulston and Tim Hubbard, leaders of the Human Genome Project, and Helen ‘t Hoen from the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines. The conferences, discussions, documents and press releases all criticized WIPO’s course of action in protecting patents, stressing that WIPO practices at global level had led to unequal access to vital medicines and health, anti-competitive economic practices, concentration of ownership, technological measures such as digital rights management (DRM), and the hijacking of the public domain by private interests. Stallman asserted that IPRs restrict the public’s access to information and essential goods, and should not be termed ‘rights.’ Sir John Sulston, the Nobel laureate scientist, claimed that WIPO has pursued the agenda of those who “perverted the course of scientific discovery, instead its mission should be everyone’s interest.” He spoke against the present practices of gene patenting as an abuse, given that gene sequences are discoveries, not inventions.

The widespread claim against WIPO gradually became a social effervescence, in Durkheim’s sense, appearing on signs held by activists and taking

over discussions, rooms, blogs, buses and bus stops, post-conference gatherings, restaurants and café conversations. Manifesto statements quickly circulated, echoing MSF's statement: "We cannot accept a world in which the fruits of innovation can only be enjoyed by the wealthy." Meanwhile, a prominent group of people was drafting the Geneva Declaration, which criticized WIPO for embracing "a culture of creating and expanding monopoly privileges, often without regard to consequences," and called for the organization to shift its focus from intellectual property as an end in and of itself, to a means of benefiting humanity. The Declaration advocated a moratorium on the practice of harmonizing intellectual property legislation throughout the developing world with the laws currently existing in the United States and Europe.

The final document of the meeting held to debate the future of WIPO conveyed the urgent need for a change in WIPO's approach, expressed in strong language:

Humanity stands at a crossroads – a fork in our moral code and a test of our ability to adapt and grow. Will we evaluate, learn and profit from the best of these new ideas and opportunities, or will we respond to the most unimaginative pleas to suppress all of this in favor of intellectually weak, ideologically rigid, and sometimes brutally unfair and inefficient policies? Much will depend upon the future direction of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a global body setting standards that regulate the production, distribution and use of knowledge. (Geneva Declaration on the Future of WIPO 2004)

As at other events involving so-called *global civil society*, 'global' here clearly stands for Northern civil society, that is, a geopolitical configuration dominated by European and North American countries. The cognitive map of international politics divides the planet into North and South as an updated and politically correct version of the old division between First and Third Worlds. In terms of the institutional language used by multilateral agencies, however, the vocabulary still revolves around the Developed and Developing Worlds. The latter group, the Developing World, includes the LDCs, shorthand for Least Developed Countries, a designation apparently deemed unpronounceable in multilateral agency speeches and documents, cited only by the acronym.

At the same time as the WIPO Assembly, another event was taking place in another corner of Geneva to discuss the price of new drugs to combat HIV-AIDS, a cost that patent protection had made completely inaccessible for the majority of people in the world with the illness. On the agenda was the demand for access to healthcare and life-saving medications to be supported by public policies through a human rights approach. This was a meeting of experts working to define strategies capable of reversing a global epidemic. Conversations about what was happening at the WIPO Assembly took place at the sides, but never on the main floor of the Conference. Apparently there was no dialogue between the two agencies on the topic of HIV-AIDS drugs: each institution remained enclosed in its own set of norms, ruling bodies run by technical experts, office hierarchies and bureaucratic structures.

Summits and meetings in this world of multilateral agencies bring together an array of different nationalities and multidisciplinary academic consultancies. Ethnic, linguistic and gender diversity are highly cherished. Each meeting is a colorful and exotic display of diversity, or an illusion of it, that celebrates difference in a sea of swirl of turbans, saris, tunics and Western executive clothing. Each person bears a national identity in his or her own brand of expertise, garments, language, accent or emblematic embodied attitudes corporeality – reflecting, in this combination of *othernesses*, the intricate power games of the multilateral world where borders are symbolically and temporarily suspended for the time span of the sessions.

We return now to our main stage in this global policy-making negotiation process, the WIPO 2004 Assembly and the session held on the 30th of September. As we remarked above, Brazil co-sponsored a proposal to establish a Development Agenda for WIPO. In the dynamic of the UN system Assemblies, the decision-making process is based on the principle of one country, one vote. Each speaker takes the floor ‘on behalf of’ a country or groups of countries, such as “The Delegation of Egypt, speaking on behalf of the African group” or “The Delegation of Benin, speaking on behalf of the LDCs (Least Developed Countries).” Countries may be clustered by geographic location, or grouped under an umbrella political identity like “Least Developed Countries” or “Islamic Nations.” As we explore later in relation to the Agenda proposal, Brazil would speak on behalf of the newly created “Group of Friends of Development.” Hence the identities of the countries and the organization taxonomies are fluid and comprise important rhetorical

devices. Powerful political strategies in this arena include speakers shifting from one identity label to another during their discourse, which requires political skill and the ability to strategize efficiently as an interest group. In earlier Assembly sessions addressing other issues, Brazil's delegation had already made profuse reference to its participation in the "Group of Friends of the Chair." The rhetorical parallel drawn with the creation of a "Group of Friends of Development," critical of the course that WIPO was taking, cannot be overlooked in this discursive dispute.

As part of the dynamic of the Assembly, reference was seldom if ever made to someone's personal name. Only member states have seats at the conclave, meaning that individuals personify countries in a ritualized form to such a point that is extremely hard to discover the speaker's actual name. Neither is this information made readily available in the assembly reports. The country is the actor delivering the statements. Even backstage, people can be overheard referring directly to one another as a country or a country delegation. In a strongly bureaucratized transnational organization, the fact that the nation state mandate eclipses personhood is very much part of the symbolic repertoire of this unique form of institution, and also a symbolic indicator of its capacity to operate effectively in a wholly impersonal mode.

This dynamic of country decision-making power enables so-called global civil society to build links and strong alliances with country representatives, delegates or permanent mission representations in Geneva's forums or elsewhere. In this context, the interplay between a Northern NGO and a Southern country and the establishment of links are a recurrent and legitimized interest-oriented strategy. Alliances and networking among groups through formal or informal channels are part of the established practices, along with negotiating positions and votes when key issues are being debated on the main decision-making floor. The same dynamic occurs in relation to transnational companies and other non-governmental bodies representing diverse interests in the global market. The boundaries between lobbying and advocacy are blurred: political opportunity is perceived as an asset, or to put it in Bourdieu's terms, as political capital. The practices of power groups are recognized as a legitimate part of the game, a grammar of the multilateral organization culture.

Since its first session on September 27th when Argentina and Brazil included 'Item 12' as one of the items to be discussed on the Assembly agenda

(filed on September 22nd), a tension was palpable in the corridors: we could hear the words ‘Item 12’ spoken in small group conversations. It was clearly a surprise for the institution as a whole: it was as though a consensus had been shattered. At this early stage, Item 12 was merely proposing inclusion of a discussion of Development on the WIPO agenda for further debate. As a matter of protocol, not accepting inclusion of Item 12 could be seen as a mistake in the one country, one vote environment.

The Brazilian delegate’s speech at the Assembly began: “I take the floor on behalf of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Iran, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Venezuela...” This discursive strategy of presenting a proposal as the work of more than one country is used wherever possible, as is listing the partner countries in alphabetical order: as well as demonstrating good diplomacy, it is another example of depersonalization, used even when one country assumes the role of the main actor. It is hard to assess whether in the context of talking about 12 countries (from a total of 186 member states) it was indeed a symbolic asset. In this case, the retort overheard in the Assembly’s halls was: “Well, *those* countries!” and “Do you remember the movie *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*?” in a teasing reference to the epic Italian spaghetti western. Spoiled country identities are always the subject of jokes, also used teasingly as a label manipulated by national delegations themselves – for example, to impersonate countries closer to ‘The Axis of Evil,’ a sarcastic reference to Bush’s famous speech, a joke only made away from the main halls, and certainly not in English.

The statement presented by the Brazilian delegation at the 2004 Assembly refers to the position of civil society, directly citing the document “The Geneva Declaration on the Future of WIPO” launched in the parallel civil society forum. The latter argued for the incorporation of the development dimension into WIPO’s program, specifying four issues: WIPO’s mandate and governance; norm-setting; technical cooperation; and technology transfer to developing countries. Development was the main word, but what was at stake was WIPO’s position as a UN agency, as the delegate put it in an almost patronizing, if not daring, tone:

Because Development is a shared commitment of the international community, incorporating the ‘development dimension’ in all WIPO activities should be a major concern for us all. [...] This debate is necessary for the sake of WIPO,

for its legitimacy and credibility as an institution. We want to help it cater to the interests and concerns of all Member States and all relevant stakeholders, including, in particular, civil society. (Statement of the Delegation of Brazil, WIPO Assembly, Geneva, September 30, 2004)

Ruling global trade: the intellectual property regime

The term Intellectual Property designates a broad range of private, monopolistic rights. Two dimensions define Intellectual Property in its contemporary acceptance of rights and meanings: *rights to industrial property*, which refers to inventions (patents, trademarks, and industrial design) and geographical indications; and *copyright*, which includes artistic and literary production in all media. The contemporary intellectual property regime impinges directly and radically upon everything we call *culture*, the classic object of anthropological work.

The global intellectual property regime has implications for all areas of social life. The text of the TRIPS Agreement sets out its *raison d'être* and scope:

Ideas and knowledge are an increasingly important part of trade. Most of the value of new medicines and other high technology products lies in the amount of invention, innovation, research, design and testing involved. Films, music recordings, books, computer software and on-line services are bought and sold because of the information and creativity they contain, not usually because of the plastic, metal or paper used to make them. Many products that used to be traded as low-technology goods or commodities now contain a higher proportion of invention and design in their value – for example brandnamed clothing or new varieties of plants. [...] The WTO's TRIPS Agreement is an attempt to narrow the gaps in the way these rights are protected around the world, and to bring them under common international rules. It establishes minimum levels of protection that each government has to give to the intellectual property of fellow WTO members. (Agreement, 1994; World Trade Organization, 2012)

Today the term Intellectual Property refers to this new global regime, an umbrella system designed to protect the rights of patent holders (whether corporations or individuals). The processes through which these rights have been redefined have engendered new forms of social coercion and control, including private monopolies on genetic resources and biodiversity, the folk,

the local, and social spaces. In other words, the privatization of collective and cultural resources, as well as inventions of public interest, emerges as a powerful strategy for controlling global flows of knowledge and information, and, as a consequence, access to intangible cultural goods and new technologies.²

As many critics have pointed out, intellectual property is not just a regulatory structure defining the right to exploit knowledge and circumscribe creative work, but also a discourse legitimizing the power structures that found the emerging global knowledge economy. For Bourdieu (1998), the legal field is a site of competition over the monopoly of the right to tell what is right. He points to the fact that supposedly universal practices and discourses are self-referred, or legitimized, within the same legal field that produces them. The social space of producing international law also defines those actors who are allowed into the game, and those who are excluded:

Power is rapidly moving towards sharper hierarchies in the international division of knowledge ownership – ownership of the raw materials, the production cost of which increasingly determines the relative price of goods and services that are exchanged internationally. From now on, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets will be the actual subject of international negotiations. (Cocco 1999: 275)

The global knowledge economy, centered on notions of immaterial labor, human capital and intellectual property, establishes a new international division of competences between centers and peripheries, North and South, rich and poor, holders of technology and suppliers of raw materials: “This means that the position of each country will increasingly depend on its capacity to capitalize knowledge, on the possibility of converting knowledge costs into relative prices” (Cocco 1999: 275). Moreover, although this discussion is beyond our present scope, it is important to recall that the background for such a legal regime involves a philosophical conception of intellectual property that links authorship to ownership. This is a matter of significant debate in anthropology. As Strathern (1996) has put it, property is the legal connection between a being and an entity, which is regarded as the extension of a subject who, in the case of intellectual property, is conceived according

² Part of the analysis of the historical context of IPRs presented in this section has been addressed in Leal and Souza 2012. See also Leal, Deitos and Souza 2010 and Souza 2009 for further discussion of this topic.

to Western canons of the individual (rather than collective) subject.

We can identify three broad sets of knowledge on which intellectual property rights have impinged. These not only configure new markets, they also restructure the daily lives of social actors in relation to these objects: access to information and knowledge; traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage; and access to essential public health assets.

The shaping of the global intellectual property regime unfolds within this scenario of deep technical changes and the dominance of corporations that attempt to impose their agendas on everyone else, including those issues that directly affect public interest:

The international extension of patenting reflects both the geographical range of the operation of a company and the importance it attributes to the protection of its monopolistic positions, the rentier extraction of royalties, and the power to sterilize innovation if it so wishes. Large US corporate groups have always attributed paramount importance to this protection. They were the ones to impose the adoption of TRIPS on GATT at the end of the Uruguay Round. (Chesnais 1996: 164)

This form of domination, in which knowledge is privately appropriated by corporations, is based on an assumed scarcity of intangible goods and resources, including information, previously understood to be part of the commons. Drahos and Braithwaite (2004) refer to this as a logic of knowledge hegemony, which finds its fullest expression in the current global intellectual property regime. This regime may be understood as a set of institutional, juridical, philosophical and social strategies that enable the exclusive control of resources of virtually any kind. Anthropology, which takes the question of nature/culture as a central theoretical axis, becomes a spectator to how nature or *life* – to use the discursive terms deployed by intellectual property regulations – becomes culture and, as such, comes to entail authorship or becomes liable to commodification and thus patenting. Fischer (2009: 85-6) noted that “biology has been transformed from a republic of science in which the flow of information, at least in academic settings, was largely free to one in which the biologist always tries to patent before publishing and much data is closely held and no longer freely available.” This was exactly the same point made by the Nobel laureate geneticist at the Geneva Conference in 2004, narrated in the first part of this paper.

Intellectual property rights, whether copyright or industrial, are monopolistic strategies designed to secure control over certain objects by certain agents, especially corporations. They are a “dynamic instrument for accessing and controlling markets, to the benefit of industrial companies” that have “enough capital to direct the flow of research and invest in markets created by products and processes, the commercialization of which was made possible by such research” (Ost 1999:81).³

What is known today as the global intellectual property regime has its origins in the post-war period when multilateral governance strategies first emerged. From the second half of the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War, international directives on IPRs were regulated in compliance with the Berne and Paris Conventions.⁴ The 1883 Paris Convention responded to the interest of technology-supplying⁵ countries in “facilitating technology flows across contracting nations, thus creating common requirements for granting patents and guaranteeing national coverage for foreigners” (Gandelman 2004: 101). The 1886 Berne Convention, in turn, covered the protection of literary and artistic works. According to Gandelman (2004), the latter emerged from the concern of European countries to guarantee protection for their authors in foreign countries. Neither convention imposed the standardization of national laws, or the mandatory and unconditional adherence to minimal standards. Unions were also open to the entry and exit of their members without any obligation to adhere to subsidiary agreements. In 1893, the two conventions were unified under the International Unified Bureau for Intellectual Property Protection (BIRPI), whose headquarters were located in Berne, Switzerland, until 1960.

According to Halbert (2006), during the 1950s the power struggle over the regulation of intellectual property rights was manifested in the coexistence of various organizations arbitrating on similar issues. In this context, BIRPI

3 Referring to the production of science and knowledge in Brazil, Carlotto and Ortelado (2010) argue for a specifically peripheral agenda focused on the relationship between science and the market, and looking more closely at editorial activity in order to understand both the economic effects of the products of scientific activity, and the effects of the economy over scientific work.

4 Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a series of technical conventions or conferences were constituted to allow governments to exploit common interests without the obligation to adhere to a specific regime. This was the case of the 1865 International Telegraphic Union, the 1874 General Postal Union, and the 1875 International Weights and Measures Office (Almeida 2004).

5 Although it was not primarily a supplier of technology, Brazil was one of the ten original subscribers to the Convention.

progressively engaged in working relations with various multilateral agencies – specifically, those belonging to the United Nations (UN) system. This eventually resulted in the incorporation of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) into the UN system during the 1970s, an entity that had earlier replaced the Patent Office, BIRPI, in 1967. However, WIPO's functions were merely administrative and regulatory: it lacked the powers to impose adherence to multilateral norms on UN member countries.

This was not the only arena where disputes on the definition of IPRs unfolded. Ever since the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)⁶ in 1947, the United States had pushed for the inclusion of IPRs in the Agreement's remit. On this point it faced opposition from several countries, including Brazil.

During the 1980s, the United States established an explicit policy for linking intellectual property rights to trade, both multilaterally through GATT and bilaterally by means of sanctions imposed through Section 301.⁷ The question of intellectual property was progressively included in the Multilateral Trade System (MTS)⁸ as the WIPO gradually lost ground to GATT. Compared to the WIPO, GATT offered three advantages (for the United States): it established higher protection standards; it applied commercial sanctions to states that failed to adapt to the established protection standards; and it limited the leverage of developing countries in defining the GATT agenda, given their relatively weak position in international trade (Correa and Musungu 2002).

After a round of failed negotiations on GATT, the Uruguay Round was launched in 1986. It ended in 1994 with the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Despite strong opposition from developing countries, IPRs were incorporated to the organization by means of the Trade-Related

6 GATT was the outcome of negotiations led by the United States at the United Nations over the reduction of barriers to international trade.

7 Section 301 of the U.S. 1974 Trade and Tariffs Law authorizes the government to unilaterally adopt coercive (tariff and non-tariff) measures against countries whose practices are considered unfair to U.S. commercial interests. In the following decade, this Law was amended to include, among other changes, the application of Section 301 to intellectual property. During the same period, the United States framed Brazil since the legislation then in force did not cover patenting of pharmaceuticals – thus unleashing what became known as the pharmaceutical patents dispute.

8 “The MTS includes the ensemble of international agreements signed by states from 1947 onwards to regulate international trade” (Nasser 2003: 33). These agreements were consolidated with the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), together with the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.⁹

As the TRIPS Agreement has become incorporated into the multilateral trading system, considerable concern has been raised over its globally pervasive role. The Agreement represented a radical imbrication of intellectual property rights and trade, and thus the subjection of IPRs to market demands and the conversion of all tangible and intangible objects into commodities. The advent of TRIPS in 1994, together with the World Trade Organization (WTO), a multilateral agency with the power to impose global sanctions, marked the birth of an unprecedented era of commoditization, mercantilization and globalization.

This new, late twentieth/early twenty-first century expansionism in the intellectual property agenda has mostly been affected through bilateral and regional agreements that became known as TRIPS-plus. The intellectual property regime established by both the TRIPS Agreement and the series of agreements on IPRs of a TRIPS-plus kind globally regulates intangible goods, including: traditional knowledge; agriculture (whether through technological packages, including intellectual property protection clauses, or through the patenting of seeds and cultivars); health-related products, affecting the price of pharmaceuticals and essential inputs, for instance, as well as the direction taken by research into new drugs; education, through copyrights and their impact on the price of books and even their availability; and information and communication, through the executive regulation of their flows.

The current legal framework enforcing Intellectual Property Rights has shaped economic development, trade and market access. IPRs have become vectors in a profound shift in contemporary capitalism, inasmuch as the question of access to goods, products and services has become fundamental to understanding the dynamics of power relations at diverse levels (Rifkin 2000). These rights have also determined ownership and access to essential goods such as the pharmaceuticals necessary to contain endemics and epidemics, and have controlled the flux and content of information and creativity, not only by dictating what forms of human creativity and inventiveness are legally permitted (or not), but also by altering the ways in which they circulate and become expressed in societies.

The TRIPS-plus mechanisms reflect a new phase in the history of

9 For the TRIPS Agreement text, see Agreement 1994, World Trade Organization 2012.

corporative monopolies, characterized by an imperative to extend control over markets. As Silva (2009) argues, just as the patent system's demands, which culminated in the TRIPS Agreement, only became materialized in the aftermath of the consolidation of industrial parks in the pharmaceutical, electronic and entertainment sectors – and when these were ready for massive advances into the global market, so the new pressures for broadening IPRs and TRIPS are related to the dynamics of contemporary capitalism.

A Development Agenda for WIPO

One of the most controversial topics when it comes to intellectual property are the relations between IPRs and development. As far back as Queen Anne's England, privileges of invention and authorship were advocated as a way of bolstering local commerce. When WIPO entered the UN system in the 1970s, the good management of IPR agreements came to be linked, at least formally, to the promotion of creative intellectual activity and technology transfer to developing countries in order to speed up their economic, social, and cultural development. The TRIPS Agreement also incorporated a number of development-related issues, especially in its provisions concerning flexibilities¹⁰ and the timeline for implementation in different countries.¹¹

During the 1990s, it became increasingly evident that lengthier deadlines were not in themselves enough for developing countries to incorporate technology effectively and improve local productive capacities. Moreover, the obligations imposed by the TRIPS, even where minimal, proved to be at the limit or beyond the possibilities in some countries, turning them into obstacles to development. One of the solutions encountered by state and non-governmental actors alike was to advocate for deployment of the flexibilities already incorporated in the TRIPS Agreement as a means to secure the relative autonomy of the countries concerned, promote public interest, and press for an IPR regime less harmful to developing and less developed countries.

Critics of the Intellectual Property regime denounced the narrow and

¹⁰ Flexibilities refer, for instance, to the right's term (national frameworks may choose to lengthen the protection term beyond minimal standards), the right's scope (to extend or reduce the scope of patentable objects), and the adoption of specific, clear rules in the education and public health sectors.

¹¹ In articles 65 and 66, the Agreement established deadlines for adapting national legal frameworks according to development levels: one year for developed countries; five years for developing countries; and eleven years for less developed countries.

mechanistic conception of development informing official discussions of the relationships between development and intellectual property. The latter assumed that the provision of legal security to the rights of inventors and creators, along with strict punishment of violations, would be enough to foster an enabling environment for technological development and industrial activity. The economic development that was expected to ensue would, it was argued, logically and automatically produce developmental offshoots in sectors such as social welfare and environmental protection.¹²

Taking a stance against WIPO's practices of expanding the scope and level of intellectual property protection, the Development Agenda – sponsored by Brazil and Argentina, and described in the first part of this article – was first presented at the WIPO General Assembly in 2004. In a joint declaration issued one year later, in 2005, the Agenda's co-sponsors named themselves the Group of Friends of Development. In 2007, when the Agenda was finally approved at the WIPO Assembly, this group was composed of 14 member countries, including its original sponsors. It emerged in the wake of other initiatives aimed at redefining the meaning of development as it became coupled with IPRs, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, and the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health. The Doha Declaration is particularly forceful in its demonstration of how IPRs may hinder the advancement of the human development goals proposed by the United Nations. It became increasingly accepted that, despite its universality, the application of TRIPS might produce different effects, depending on each country's development level, including negative impacts on social, economic and technological development (CIPR 2002).

Besides these challenges to the assumption that the regime could, in and of itself, promote development, two other major lines of criticism have emerged, as we saw forcibly presented in civil society fora in Geneva in the Fall of 2004. The first argues that, regardless of the existence of internal

¹² An example of this kind of argument can be found in Sherwood (1992). The author claims that, especially for developing countries like Brazil, IPRs are an indispensable part of the infrastructure necessary for development. "The effective protection of intellectual property will help developing countries to move in two directions. One is towards participation in global technology networks. The other is towards encouraging human creativity within the national economy. The first step towards enjoying these benefits is to think of intellectual property protection as a vital part of the country's infrastructure. [...] Intellectual property protection, an inexpensive but powerful instrument, is available to any developing country wishing to benefit from it" (Sherwood 1992: 194-195).

efforts in this direction, WIPO must incorporate the specific needs of developing or least developed countries in its programs. The organization must acknowledge “more explicitly the fact that intellectual property protection brings both benefits and costs, and further emphasize the need for IP regimes properly adapted to the specific circumstances in developing countries” (CIPR 2002: 158). The second line of criticism suggests that the TRIPS-plus Agenda, whether in its traditional (bilateral and regional) versions or in WIPO’s recent efforts to adopt stricter criteria than TRIPS,¹³ poses obstacles to further development and, as such, should not automatically be taken as a necessary part of the system’s evolution.

A developmentalist perspective, whose discursive field includes the Development Agenda, therefore emerged to a large extent in opposition to the pro-IPR bias. This set of arguments stems from “a developmentalist view on Intellectual Property, which should function as a tool for capacity-building [...]” rather than being an end in itself (Jaguaribe and Brandelli 2007: 286).

The developmentalist argument was pursued along two paths simultaneously: on one hand, as a positive and proactive response to the TRIPS-plus negotiations, both at WIPO and through bilateral pressures in free-trade agreements; on the other, as a reaction to the way WIPO had directed negotiations by disregarding policies catering to the demands and needs of developing and least-developed countries. This double characteristic was fundamental during the Agenda negotiation process as a way of deflecting criticisms that the Brazilian Delegation was opposed to IPRs per se or WIPO itself.

In general terms, the developmentalist argument within IPR negotiations highlights the need to balance the benefits and costs of the intellectual property system to ensure the viability of the system itself (Jaguaribe and Brandelli 2007). From this perspective, intellectual property should be a means to development, attuned to each country’s policies for industry and technology.

This recognition of the need to adapt IPRs stemmed largely from an assessment of the experiences of developing and least-developed countries in the aftermath of the Uruguay Round, when the TRIPS Agreement was

13 Here we refer to the Digital and Patent agendas (Jaguaribe and Brandelli 2007). The Patent Agenda includes the Patent Law Treaty (PLT), reform of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), and the Substantive Patent Law Treaty (SPLT). The Digital Agenda includes the World Copyright Treaty (WCT), the World Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) and the Protection of Broadcasting Organizations Treaty.

brought into being. Emphasis was also given to the historical experience of developed countries and how they had deployed IPRs differentially and flexibly during various key periods of their own techno-scientific and industrial development. Also relevant here was the perception that the current configuration of the intellectual property system has failed to benefit developing and less-developed countries in implementing policies for economic, social, cultural and human development.

Care should be taken, however, not to take the processes involved in constructing the Agenda as peaceful and unilinear decision-making by the Brazilian actors involved in constructing the country's stance. An initial fault line can be traced to the scope of the IPRs to be included in the Agenda. While the INPI (Instituto Nacional de Propriedade Industrial) and other institutions working in the area of technological development emphasized industrial property rights, those involved in civil society movements, such as Creative Commons Brazil and the Ministry of Culture's copyrights department, advocated the importance of allowing significant space for the interests pertaining to their fields.

On the other hand, these two discursive fields share a common semantic field, which allowed them to collaborate in the construction of a Development Agenda. This includes, first of all, the idea that the social function of intellectual property is not exhausted by the availability of a technique or the creation of products offered to the public. In order for intellectual property to effectively perform its social function, it must be widely available to all social sectors in the form of appropriable knowledge and consumable goods (including culture, knowledge and information). This entails shifting the basic role of IPRs from guaranteeing inalienable individual rights to ensuring the social function of (intangible) property.

Secondly, it becomes imperative to reinstate what was, arguably, the original balance between the monopoly rights afforded by private IPRs and the public interest – the latter understood not only as a formal counterpart to these rights, but also as effective form of participation in the innovation and creativity encapsulated in the objects they protected. In this sense, the introduction of the developmental dimension as further leverage in IPR mechanisms is key to redressing the distortions of a system that has been “hijacked by private interest groups” (in the words of ambassador Roberto Jaguaribe, interviewed in 2008) and that “needs to be calibrated” (according

to Maria Beatriz Amorim Páscoa, also in an interview given in 2008).

These concerns lead to one of the Agenda's most controversial items: the scope of the public domain. As a common intermediary space, in Benkler's sense (2007), the public domain becomes fundamental: it implies a particular frame of governance, involving the use of resources that differ from the current system of private property and based on the impossibility of any kind of private appropriation.

Within the Development Agenda, public domain rules include the limitations on and exceptions to IPRs. These rules are defined by states at two levels: via multilateral agencies, such as WIPO, through the establishment of supranational regulations; and domestically through national public policies and regulatory bodies. In the Agenda's various versions, the issue of the public domain – always a sensitive topic at WIPO and in negotiations in other multilateral and intergovernmental fora – has been the subject of oscillations and controversies fomented by countries such as the United States.

According to the official records available and other kinds of field data, Brazilian diplomats putting forth the country's stances during negotiations have been extremely careful to defuse any idea that they are advocating the abolishment or delegitimization of the intellectual property system per se. Among the regime's supporters and opponents alike, there is a tacit agreement regarding its existence, legitimacy and importance: what varies is the content and objectives attributed to it.

As we looked to show in the first part of the article, the process of building the legitimacy of the Agenda proposal involved an intense dialogue with and support from non-governmental organizations campaigning in the public interest, many of which were present at its launch in 2004. However it also involved appealing to the UN itself and its founding mission, building support among other multilateral bodies, and receiving the endorsement of regional groups and individual countries.

The 2004 WIPO General Assembly decided to transfer the assessment of proposals to Inter-sessional Intergovernmental meetings, which would be responsible for preparing a report for presentation at the 2005 General Assembly. Thereafter the tone was set for a dispute between the WIPO Secretariat, which sought to maintain the Agenda within the existing forum, and the Friends of Development group of countries, which began to be referred to simply as 'The Friends,' who were working continually to reinvent

its systemic and horizontal profile of governance. At that time, the Group of Friends was developing the Agenda's structure through four thematic teams, whose composition would change during the negotiations until a final version was reached. These displacements, which will not be examined here, eventually led to four groups of propositions: the WIPO mandate and governance; norm-setting; technical cooperation; and technology transfer (Souza 2009).

Even though the proposal eventually presented to the 2005 General Assembly was not approved, it did allow the balance of forces around the dispute to be mapped, as well as an assessment of the Agenda's most sensitive items, including those relating to the public domain and alternative modalities of copyright licensing. Over 130 public-interest NGOs "from all corners of the globe" signed a statement in support of the Friends of Development proposal. The 2005 Assembly, following a dynamic similar to the 2004 Assembly, was closely observed by non-governmental and public interest organizations and, outside the WIPO headquarters, Geneva once again became a political forum for diverse power groups. In the WIPO session held on September 29th 2005, Brazil and an impressive number of developing and least developed countries took turns on the floor to stress "the need to adopt appropriate measures to overcome the technological gap between developed and developing countries and arrangements that would facilitate technology transfer," along with other points of the Agenda. After a long procession of country member speakers delivered their messages, the United States Delegation merely issued a laconic statement in the opposite direction, expressing full support for "WIPO's work in promoting IP worldwide, as strong IP stimulates creativity and local investments." An important public interest organization issued a critical commentary that circulated widely in the international media and social media networks:

The United States government and the European Commission should abandon efforts to use WIPO as an instrument of uncritically expanding intellectual property protection and the protection of their export industries. They should support a new dialogue within WIPO; a dialogue consistent with modern intellectual discourse about the reform of intellectual property regimes in order to promote the public interest, North and South. (CP Tech document, October 3, 2005)

The Provisional Committee on the Development Agenda set up by the 2005 Assembly met in 2006, and its support base was enlarged to include countries from the African Group, expanding on questions of technical assistance, which were already part of WIPO's scope. It succeeded, moreover, in avoiding a restrictive interpretation of these issues on the Agenda.

Also at that moment, keeping in mind that the meaning of the notion of a development agenda is fluid, other development-oriented proposals emerged as alternatives to be discussed by the Committee alongside those presented by the Group of Friends: the African Group proposal, which was a revised version of one discussed earlier, as well as proposals from Chile, Colombia and the United States of America. In order to study all the different proposals, the Committee's president prepared a list, organized to encompass all the recommendations on an equal basis.

Three years after the initial proposal, the Agenda was finally approved at the September 28th session of WIPO's 2007 General Assembly. At this meeting, a set of forty-five proposals relating to a Development Agenda was agreed upon by member states and unanimously approved. The final formulation of the proposal was presented by the Brazilian Delegation, led by Ambassador Roberto Jaguaribe, and maintained a conciliatory and moderate tone. It presented some introductory points that had already been included in the document and stressed WIPO's status as a specialized UN agency, as well as the horizontal organizational structure of the Agenda. The text highlighted the fact that the Agenda's set of proposals would allow developing countries to safeguard public interest flexibilities existing in the intellectual property international system; these countries would receive assistance to implement such flexibilities; and the proposals would ensure greater civil society participation in WIPO's activities.

As Bennerman (2008: 25) pointed out, "the Friends of the Development have already won what is perhaps the biggest contest of principles to have faced WIPO in the past forty years – the question of whether the WIPO mandate includes development." Furthermore:

One of most important battles of the Development Agenda – the battle over the inclusion of development in WIPO's mandate – has already been won. [...] [Although] Pessimists (or realists) might generally predict that more powerful states will ultimately prevail over weaker ones, with the international IP regime

maintaining its rights-centered focus. [...] one more extension of, and infused with, international power relations – a struggle through which developing countries are unlikely to achieve substantial gains. (Bannerman 2008:26)

Nevertheless, it cannot go unremarked that while the Agenda was able to unite discontent voices and make a strong claim for change within WIPO's structure, a major leadership crisis became public precisely during the same 2007 General Assembly. Some might say that the crisis even overshadowed the Agenda. Calls for the Director General of WIPO to step down, after a decade in office, following accusations of corruption captured the attention of the member states. This discussion divided the countries between 'Brothers' of the Director General, the African Group, a silenced country member group, and the United States and other developed countries who demanded his immediate resignation. However, as Musungu (2009:74) put it, the crisis may also have been a blessing in disguise for the Development Agenda since the reforms that it envisaged could not have happened with an embattled Director General and a divided Secretariat, nor proceeded with a sharply polarized membership.

WIPO's Director General resigned. Brazil submitted Graça Aranha's candidacy for the position. At the 2008 General Assembly, among several other candidates, the Australian candidate was eventually elected WIPO's Director General by a difference of just one vote from Brazil's candidate.

From our anthropological standpoint, the account of a four-year dynamic of how the Agenda was built, embedded in a discursive dispute between two sets of principles polarized around the notion of *property* – one aligned with the private sector, the other with public interest – within global regulatory institutions, entices us into a narrative of a process in which powers and meanings are reordered, crafting a tale about the imaginary global geography of North and South.

Trespassing lines and the anthropological endeavor

In exploring the proposal for the Development Agenda in this work, we also have tried to shed some light on two processes leading to the constitution of global law-making agencies regulating world trade. First, the World Intellectual Property Organization, which was transformed from a corporate patent office to a United Nations regulatory agency; and second, the advent

of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which came into being together with the World Trade Organization (WTO), with all its sanctioning power over global trade. Both events marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented commoditization and heightened regulatory barriers across the world. In this complex context, the Agenda could be seen as a mischievous attempt to challenge sanctified rules, routinized powers and homogeneous institutions. Our anthropological endeavor here has been to give an account of these tensions and the institutional context in which competing world visions are produced.

Intellectual property rights are a kind of legal fiction. The parameters defining this kind of relation, including relations between objects and active and passive subjects, are borrowed almost mechanically from a model that has been traditionally applied and historically constituted to protect objects of an altogether different nature. A straight, continuous line is traced linking the private property of immobile goods – land, for instance – to these completely different, intangible and mutable goods. It is in this sense that some critics, such as Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Movement, referred to the term ‘intellectual property’ as an oxymoron.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) may sound like a kind of legal fiction of hybrid realities. Their objects are largely immaterial, yet these rights are based on analogies with material and immobile goods. Subject to individual monopolies, they are justified by appeal to collective interests and a particular social function. Personalized and grounded in individual creativity, they may be inherited by those who contributed nothing to their production. Despite being legal fictions, IPRs are legal entities. It is on this strange character that we must dwell if we are to make sense of the possibility of bringing together two objects like property and intellectual activity that are, in principle, antagonistic.

In our final remarks, we seek to show how, in its very constitution, the Agenda straddles both sides of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010) calls the abyssal line. It has been argued that modern law is the most complete form of abyssal thinking: that is, the way through which Western modernity divides sensible and non-sensible objects into those belonging to “this side of the line” and those belonging to “the other side.” The Western side of this line is ruled by a dichotomy of regulation and emancipation, the other side by appropriation and violence (Santos 2010). IPRs, which belong to this side,

have been encroaching on an increasing number of objects, prompting a impassioned reanimation of the line. On one hand, it excludes and interdicts, precluding access to a wide range of goods and products located on the other side of the line (in the way, for instance, that public health programs are jeopardized by pharmaceutical patents). On the other hand, it nabs elements from the other side – traditional knowledge, material culture – which, when brought to this side, are subjected to the same rules, thus feeding into the interdiction cycle.

Abyssal thinking, a foundational matrix for thought and classification in Western modernity, is also characterized by the impossibility of existing simultaneously on both sides. To exist on ‘this side’ implies, necessarily and by definition, to negate, exclude and eliminate – if anything, to domesticate – whatever belongs to the other side.

In this sense, a multiplicity of legal systems and ways of defining which elements belong to the sphere of law not only escape the official framework, they are converted into non-legal or illicit acts, condemned to invisibility or illegality. The traditional cruelty of colonial regimes is revamped under the empire of Law, whether through the plundering of traditional knowledge and its transformation into a commodity, or by submitting groups to the official legal framework as the only viable means to safeguard their autonomy and protect their cultural particularities.

The proposal of a Development Agenda for WIPO is an endeavor to make this line more porous, albeit in a controlled manner. It is, in a sense, an attempt to render visible some elements from the other side, fostering the emergence of authorial, collaborative experiences that differ from the monopolistic-commercial logic of IPRs. The qualification ‘some’ is important here: not all elements from the other side are desirable, only those that can be domesticated and framed according to preexisting ways of distributing power and knowledge. This is manifested, for example, in the limitations imposed on the participation of non-governmental organizations in this process. Even if their presence is desired, their contributions regarded as fundamental, and their support deemed necessary, there is a clear separation between these actors, who are authorized to denounce and propose, and others, more authoritative and legitimate, who manage the contending interests and ultimately define the Agenda’s master guidelines.

From this stems the second process of approximation: the similarly

controlled attempt to recruit the dissident voices of historically silenced political minorities to this side of the line during the Agenda-building process. In a complex process that lies beyond our present scope, indigenous peoples, patient groups, academics, consumers groups, counter-cultural movements and anti-globalization movements are invited to participate in the construction of the new Agenda. They are recruited however on the basis not of their specificity, but their exoticism. As such, they must to some extent conform to the formal ritual acts that grant access to these instances – in particular, the idea of representation.

As stated above, the abyssal line is not a one-way process of incorporating elements from the other side. There are also increasingly qualified counter-movements: experiences of subaltern cosmopolitanism which press for a non-abyssal form of thinking, based “on the notion that the world’s diversity is inexhaustible” (Santos 2010: 51). In the case of IPRs, this means, for instance, seriously considering legal systems in which notions of property find no equivalent in our philosophy, or legal systems based on other logics of production, appropriation and distribution of (re)creative activity. These ‘others’ can be found not only on the ‘difference’ pole formed by indigenous peoples, peasants or traditional communities: they are also encountered at the center and margins of this side of the line, pushing for visibility and challenging the hegemony of abyssal thinking.

It is in this sense that the process for negotiating and approving a Development Agenda for WIPO – or, more precisely, *at* WIPO – is paradoxical. On one hand, it shows the political muscle of a heterogeneous group of social actors capable of tipping the balance of power in the international intellectual property regime. On the other, it points to the consolidation of the legal intellectual property regime as something to a greater or lesser extent ‘necessary’ for the countries’ development. In the first case, there is a counter-movement, an attempt to push and smooth the abyssal lines that constitute our world. On the other, there is a re-entrenchment of this line, since ultimately the existence of the regime itself is not at stake. Its content and pillars are questioned, but a consensus remains regarding its existence and reality – and what is more, its inevitability. Hence, even with the openings achieved by the Development Agenda, no substantial changes have been made to the configuration of forces. In fact, after the earlier moments of turmoil, the situation has settled in such a way that it has again become clear

who is on this side and who is on the other. And intellectual property continues to be, borrowing from Meneses (2010), one of the shadows that loom over our modernity.

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La Personne Catholique

Comment des catholiques brésiliens pensent l'être humain

Misia Lins Reesink

Résumé

Quelle est la conception de personne des catholiques du quartier de Casa Amarela (Recife – Brésil) ? Cet article s'interroge sur la façon dont ces catholiques construisent leur « moi », dans un contexte moderne et occidental. Il a été possible de dévoiler qu'ils s'inscrivent dans la tradition chrétienne de l'idée de personne tout en y ajoutant des réinterprétations créatives. Il en ressort que les composants « Dieu (divinité catholique) », « corps » et « âme », et leurs multiples combinaisons, y sont fondamentaux, mais aussi l'idée d'un être « dividual » et « individuel » et surtout extensif aux autres. En adoptant une perspective cosmologique du terrain, ce travail essaie ainsi de décrire comment ces catholiques se pensent et du même coup pensent leur monde et leur rapport aux autres.

Mots-clés : notion de personne, catholiques, cosmologie, Brésil, Recife

Abstract

What is the notion of the person among the Catholics of the Casa Amarela neighbourhood (Recife, Brazil)? This article discusses the way these Catholics conceive of their “self” in a modern Western context. In this case it is possible to show how this notion is both inscribed in the Christian tradition of the notion of the person and contains creative reinterpretations. It seems reasonable to conclude that it is founded upon the components “God” (catholic deity), “body”, and “soul”, and their multiple combinations, generating the idea of a “dividual” and “individual” being that also includes other others. The article adopts a cosmological perspective in order to initiate the description of the way these Catholics think about themselves, the world and their relations with others.

Keywords : notion of the person; Catholics; cosmology; Brazil; Recife

Resumo

Qual noção de pessoa elaboram os católicos do bairro de Casa Amarela (Recife-Brasil)? Este artigo procura compreender como esses católicos, em um contexto moderno e ocidental, constroem o seu “eu”. Esses católicos se inscrevem na tradição cristã da idéia de pessoa, ao mesmo tempo que realizam reinterpretações criativas. Disso resulta que os componentes “Deus (divindade católica)”, “corpo” e “alma”, e suas múltiplas combinações são fundamentais, mas também a idéia de um ser “dividual” e “individual” e sobretudo extensivo aos outros. Adotando uma perspectiva cosmológica do campo, este artigo tenta descrever como esses católicos se pensam e ao mesmo tempo pensam seu mun e suas relações com os outros.

Palavras-chave: noção de pessoa, católicos, cosmologia, Recife, Brasil.

La Personne Catholique

Comment des catholiques brésiliens pensent l'être humain

Misia Lins Reesink

Introduction

La catégorie de personne en anthropologie est devenue, depuis Mauss, un des thèmes les plus intéressants et importants dans la construction et la compréhension du savoir anthropologique¹. Cependant, l'analyse de la construction de la personne dans les sociétés étudiées s'est cantonnée, dans sa majeure partie, aux aires géographiques traditionnelles de l'anthropologie. En ce qui concerne les sociétés dites modernes et occidentales, elle est très marginale et réduite à une version plus « philosophique » qu'anthropologique : quand il s'agit de ces sociétés, la notion de personne est traitée comme une donnée *a priori* ; les analyses partent d'une idée préconçue et perçue en tant que truisme indéniable : l'individu ou l'individualisme. Néanmoins, lorsque l'on suit une démarche radicalement anthropologique sur le monde moderne et occidental, ce qui ressort, c'est l'esquisse d'une complexité et, surtout, d'une diversité de la notion de personne qui ne peut pas être réduite à l'*a priori* individu-individualisme, comme il a été possible de le noter chez les catholiques du quartier de Casa Amarela (Recife-PE). Donc, pour saisir cette pluralité et complexité, il faut s'affranchir des idées préconçues et maintes fois reprises sur la personne moderne et occidentale.

C'est ainsi que, en m'éloignant du paradigme établi, pour réfléchir sur la complexité de cette notion chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela, il m'a fallu *premièrement* adopter une approche cosmologique du terrain. Et ce parce que la religion catholique des enquêtés ne doit pas être vue comme un moment ou un espace *dans* le monde ou la société, mais comme un ensemble d'éléments constituant un monde, leur monde (Reesink 2003; 2012). Il s'ensuit que pour saisir leur compréhension et leur vision du catholicisme, et par conséquent leur notion de personne, il faut le faire à partir d'une perspective

¹ Elle attise aussi des tensions et débats. Voir, par exemple, Carrithers, Collins et Lukes (1996), et Viegas (2008).

cosmologique², car ils les pensent cosmologiquement. *Deuxièmement*, pour relativiser, approfondir et élargir l'analyse, il m'a encore fallu établir un dialogue (comparatif) avec la littérature sur le christianisme dans d'autres contextes et époques, mais surtout avec des analyses ethnographiques concernant des sociétés non chrétiennes.

Ainsi, ce que je propose ici, c'est de réfléchir ethnographiquement à la façon dont des catholiques habitant le quartier de Casa Amarela³, à Recife, dans le Nord-est du Brésil, construisent leur notion de personne. Dans ce contexte ethnographique, il m'a été possible d'accéder, à partir des analyses d'entretiens formels et informels, de l'observation du quotidien des sujets et de ce qu'ils disaient ou discutaient (soit chez eux, aux messes, pendant divers rituels, sur les trottoirs, etc.), à une meilleure compréhension de leur conception de personne⁴.

Cet article discutera, d'abord, le Catholicisme en tant qu'élément de l'Occident moderne et à chercher à relativiser la doxa établie de la personne

2 Ici, je suis la définition de cosmologie développée de Viveiros de Castro (1993). Appuyée sur elle, j'entends comprendre le « sens problématique » de la cosmologie des catholiques de Casa Amarela, sans pour autant avoir la présomption d'atteindre sa « fluidité » morphologique. Il est important de souligner que la presque totalité des travaux sur le catholicisme au Brésil, et surtout en milieu urbain, ne s'inquiètent pas de la cosmologie catholique. D'une façon générale, dans les travaux anthropologiques, tout se passe comme si seules les sociétés non « complexes » avaient des conceptions cosmologiques et qu'il serait inutile d'en chercher dans les sociétés « occidentales ». Pour une discussion sur la cosmologie catholique, voir M. Reesink 2003.

3 Casa Amarela est l'un des quartiers le plus intéressant de Recife, autant pour son histoire (la lutte des communautés pour la possession de leurs terres – aidées par l'aile progressiste de l'Église Catholique), que pour le fait qu'il s'agit d'un vaste quartier très peuplé ayant d'un côté ses tertres (où habitent les couches populaires) et, de l'autre, sa région plane (où habitent les couches moyennes), ce qui lui donne un statut ambigu (et plutôt stigmatisé) par rapport aux autres quartiers de la ville. Casa Amarela est aussi un quartier avec une infrastructure propre (commerce, marché, hôpital public, cimetière et pompes funèbres) et une « identité de lieu », laquelle mène certains habitants à souhaiter que le quartier devienne une ville à part entière. En outre, la patronne du quartier est Notre-Dame de la Conception, dont la fête, qui tombe le 8 décembre, est l'une des plus célèbres de la ville. Depuis 1994, j'y mène des recherches : 1994-1995 *mestrado* ; 1998-2003 doctorat et, depuis 2007, des recherches sur la période de *Finados* (Fête des morts). D'une manière générale, ces recherches ont essayé de comprendre la cosmologie catholique, conjuguée aux représentations et aux rituels de la mort. Mon intérêt pour la cosmologie catholique se doit au fait que le monde catholique a toujours représenté pour moi une altérité à connaître et à comprendre.

4 Il faut rappeler que dans certains contextes ethnographiques, par exemple dans le *Candomblé* (Goldman, 1987), c'est surtout à partir d'une analyse des rituels qu'il est possible de bien saisir leur conception de personne. Cependant, dans le cas du catholicisme, et des catholiques de Casa Amarela en particulier, c'est notamment à partir de leurs représentations, ou comme le dit Jacobson (1991) de leurs *modes of thoughts*, que j'ai pu mieux y accéder : c'est pendant la performance de la parole que la conception de personne de ces catholiques est (ré) élaborée, même s'il est possible de penser que c'est dans le rituel qu'elle s'actualise. Quoiqu'il en soit, dans ce cas spécifique, il me semble possible de bien connaître la notion de personne catholique discutée ici en ne prenant que les données des *modes of thoughts*, sans y ajouter une discussion sur les rituels de mort ; cependant, pour l'étudier à partir des *modes of actions* (Jacobson 1991), il faut toujours prendre en compte les *modes of thoughts*. Pour une analyse et description des rituels de mort, voir M. Reesink 2003.

moderne dans la littérature anthropologique. Il se penchera ensuite sur les liaisons possibles entre les hommes et la divinité catholique, pour faire surgir l'idée que pour les individus catholiques l'homme sans dieu est impensable. Puis, il proposera une réflexion sur le corps et la personne extensive à l'autre et introduira la question du « dividual » et de l'« individuel », en se demandant encore quelles sont les qualités de cette personne humaine. Finalement, il essaiera d'analyser les composants de la personne : corps, âme et esprit. Ces discussions seront suivies de la conclusion de ce travail.

Modernité-occidentale, catholicisme, anthropologie et notion de personne

Il ne faut pas se méprendre et penser que repérer et discuter la conception de personne chez les catholiques ne relèverait que d'une simple volonté de se relier à la tradition anthropologique. En fait, la dynamique même du terrain m'a convaincue que cette analyse peut se montrer fort stimulante pour comprendre la logique interne d'un groupe (Seeger, Matta, Viveiros de Castro 1979). Surtout, ce sont les individus de Casa Amarela eux-mêmes qui m'ont mise sur cette voie en me dévoilant, par leurs attitudes et discours, une multiplicité impérative de leur notion de personne, bouleversant ainsi la doxa établie sur la notion de personne dans la modernité-occidentale, qui repose sur la notion d'individu. En ce sens, l'approche adoptée ici part de l'idée que la modernité occidentale élabore plusieurs versions de la notion de personne, dont l'individualisme et celle établie par le catholicisme contemporain (*et moderne et occidentale*). Certes, comme elles sont inscrites dans le système culturel occidental, ces différentes conceptions de personne en partagent des caractéristiques, tout en le faisant autrement.

Néanmoins, en dépit de la diversité de la modernité occidentale, lorsqu'il est question de la notion de personne, la plupart des travaux anthropologiques adoptent une démarche monadique, dont le principe fondamental est l'individu et l'individualisme. J'avance que cela se doit surtout au fait que les anthropologues ne sont pas habitués (ou intéressés) à adopter une approche plus anthropologique : ils ne relativisent pas la doxa établie, car ils ne prennent pas vraiment en compte ce que les données ethnographiques

dévoilent⁵. Ils se contentent donc de suivre le paradigme de l'individu et de l'individualisme. Dans l'anthropologie, celui-ci est spécialement développé par deux ouvrages. Le premier est celui de Dumont, *Essai sur l'Individualisme* (1985) ; le deuxième, celui de Morin, *L'Homme et la Mort* (1970). Le modèle dumontien informe davantage les travaux anthropologiques sur la notion de personne dans la modernité occidentale⁶.

À partir de l'idée de la différence entre les sociétés individualistes (centrées sur l'individu comme valeur) et les sociétés holistes (centrées sur le groupe social), Dumont essaie de retracer de façon critique la transformation d'une société holiste en société individualiste aboutissant à la société moderne et occidentale. En fait, le préalable « individu, individualisme » n'est jamais contesté. Il part de cet axe et revient en arrière pour décrire la mutation historique qui a conduit l'homme occidental à se percevoir comme unité indivisible et bornée aux limites de son propre corps, et cette unité comme la valeur majeure et universelle, d'où tout part et vers où tout revient, la venue de la chrétienté ayant favorisé cette mutation⁷.

À la différence de Dumont, qui se limite au processus historique de l'individualisme occidental, Morin (1970) voit ce processus comme celui de l'humanité, c'est-à-dire, comme le processus même de l'humain, dans une perspective franchement évolutionniste. Partant de l'idée que c'est la mort, ou plutôt la conscience de la mort, qui permet la propre conscience de l'individu, il essaie d'allier des données bio-paléontologiques et des données ethnologiques pour illustrer et expliquer son hypothèse : l'homme régresse de plus en plus par rapport à l'espèce à mesure qu'il acquiert plus de conscience individuelle. Néanmoins, cette rupture, engendrée par le traumatisme de la mort, autrement dit, par la conscience de la mort, ne s'accomplit pas d'un coup, c'est le lent travail du processus évolutif. Ainsi, selon l'auteur, plus les hommes sont contraints par le groupe social, plus la conscience de la mort

5 Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y a pas de travaux radicalement anthropologiques dans des contextes modernes, comme celui de Goldman sur le *candomblé* (1987). Cependant, s'il est vrai que l'Occident va de pair avec modernité, l'inverse n'est pas vrai, car ce qui est moderne n'est pas toujours occidental dans le monde contemporain. En ce sens, ma critique repose sur les travaux analysant la notion de personne dans des contextes modernes et occidentaux. Encore une fois, il convient de souligner que je pars du principe que le catholicisme, et le catholicisme vécu par les catholiques de Casa Amarela, est moderne et occidental.

6 D'après mes recherches bibliographiques et mes participations à des séminaires scientifiques, rares sont les exceptions et elles sont citées ici.

7 Comme le système dumontien est déjà assez connu et traité dans d'autres travaux, je me suis permise de ne pas m'étendre et de renvoyer à ses commentateurs. Voir, par exemple, M. Peirano, 1995.

est refoulée, moins l'individualité est consciente ; en revanche, plus l'individu prend le dessus sur sa société ou son groupe social, plus il a conscience de la mort et, donc, de son individualité⁸. Dans les termes de Dumont, on pourrait dire que, pour Morin, il y a des sociétés holistes parce que la conscience de la mort, de l'individualité, a une force moindre, tandis que les sociétés individualistes ont la conscience aiguë de la mort pour épicerie.

Si, à l'encontre de la démarche de Morin, Dumont se détourne d'une perspective évolutionniste pour s'engager dans le processus historique d'une conception, ou idéologie, au sein d'une seule société, il n'empêche que ces deux auteurs adoptent la conception « classique » de l'individu/individualisme moderne comme point de départ vers les origines de ce concept. Il est évident que cette catégorie n'est pas une simple invention de leur part : il s'agit de la construction « idéal-typique » réalisée par des générations successives de savants et d'intellectuels occidentaux, surtout des philosophes, et reprise comme « formule » acquise par des chercheurs se souciant de comprendre les sociétés modernes⁹.

Toutefois, si, d'un côté, plusieurs études menées sur le terrain par des ethnologues cherchent à comprendre la personne dans les sociétés non occidentales, donnant ainsi toute la dimension de la multiplicité et de la richesse de ces différentes notions, de l'autre, à l'égard de l'Occident, il y a un déplorable manque d'intérêt à adopter la même démarche ethnographique¹⁰, presque toutes les considérations étant cantonnées au monde spéculatif, comme nous l'avons déjà évoqué : plus de philosophie que d'approche scientifique. Il s'ensuit qu'adopter une véritable démarche anthropologique s'avère d'autant plus urgent que, comme l'ont déjà rappelé maints anthropologues (Augé 1982; Bloch 1993; Goldman 1996; Mosko 2010), il faut remettre en cause

8 Pour une discussion plus approfondie des idées de Morin, voir Reesink 2003. J'y discute aussi l'influence de ce travail sur les formulations des études sur la mort dans l'Occident.

9 Cette conception est axée sur l'idée d'un individu adulte autonome/isolé par rapport à la société, accompli et pleinement conscient des limites de sa personne, qui ne dépasse pas son corps et sa pensée, constituant ainsi la si chère exceptionnalité moderne. C'est-à-dire que, tandis que, dans les autres sociétés, la personne individuelle est multiple et non limitée à son corps, dans la société occidentale elle est unique et définie d'emblée par son propre corps.

10 D'un point de vue ethnographique, il convient de dire que cette démarche anthropologique sur la personne occidentale surgit, quand c'est le cas, plutôt dans le domaine de l'anthropologie de la bio-médecine (par exemple Dumit 2010 [1997]), surtout quand il s'agit des nouvelles technologies de reproduction humaines (par exemple M. Strathern 1992). Cependant il me semble que la plupart de ces travaux s'occupent davantage du débat éthique et juridique qu'elles engendrent (par exemple Salem 1997; Luna 2004, 2005). Néanmoins, il semble que, récemment, un intérêt timide, par exemple, sur les rapports humains-animaux dans l'Occident ait conduit certains anthropologues à discuter la notion d'humanité dans l'Occident (Carrithers, Bracken, Emery 2011).

la conception absolue et univoque de l'individu occidental et moderne : confronté aux données de terrain, ce modèle idéal ne se tient pas. En effet, « la distribution de sens s'effectue [...] simultanément de l'individu sur la société et de la société sur l'individu. Si nous appliquions à l'étude de la notion de personne dans nos sociétés les procédures que nous utilisons dans les sociétés exotiques dont nous observons les pratiques, analysons les mythes et interrogeons les institutions, elle aurait toute chance de ne pas différer fondamentalement de ses homologues africaines, amérindiennes, orientales ou océaniques » (Augé, 1982: 204). Par conséquent, s'il va de soi que dans les sociétés occidentales l'individu et l'individualisme sont des valeurs idéales, il n'en demeure pas moins que : « À part quelques manifestations diffuses, présentes en général d'une vague façon dans certaines analyses sociologiques dans un sens ample, il n'est pas facile de cerner avec précision cet "individualisme" supposé du monde occidental moderne et contemporain. Aussi bien du côté du champ des savoirs – division du sujet dans la psychanalyse, dualismes philosophiques, épigénèse des sciences naturelles... – , que dans les visions du monde plus amples – corps et âme, émotion et intelligence... – , ce qui semble surgir, au contraire, c'est une conception de personne formellement semblable à celles des sociétés "primitives" et "traditionnelles", un être divisé en des éléments dont la "synthèse pose un problème" » (Goldman, 1996: 93). Il s'ensuit qu'entre l'idée qu'une certaine élite intellectuelle se fait de la personne occidentale et ce que les données empiriques dévoilent, il y a un large champ de possibilités de conceptions de l'homme occidental. Comme l'a affirmé Bloch, après l'analyse d'exemples tirés de sociétés dites modernes, « ce que ces cas nous enseignent, c'est que l'individualisme occidental demande à être grandement modéré. Car il relève plus d'une auto-description que d'une recherche sociologique, si bien que sa fragilité idéologique surgit à tout instant. Nous sommes sans doute beaucoup plus proches des Somalis ou des Tibétains que nous ne le pensons... » (1993: 20)¹¹. Néanmoins, rares sont les travaux anthropologiques tentant de bouleverser l'approche du sens commun académique, en avançant aussi la possibilité du caractère « multiple », « dividual » de la personne occidentale (M. Strathern 1999 ; Reesink 2003 ; Mosko 2010)¹².

11 Voir encore la critique de Pina Cabral 2007 sur l'idée répandue d'un Occident inéluctablement moderne, dont l'idée de la personne par excellence est l'individu.

12 Il est curieux que ce soit justement dans les travaux essayant de comprendre la conception de la personne

L'Homme et la divinité catholique : l'homme sans dieu – l'impensable

Nul ne doute que dans la pensée chrétienne la figure de l'homme est liée à celle de Dieu, où ce premier serait créé par ce dernier à sa propre image, cela étant une des idées les plus reprises dans la littérature chrétienne (Gisel 1993). C'est à partir de la Bible, le livre fondamental de la religion chrétienne, que cette réalité est posée d'emblée. Cette idée préalable est aisément repérable dans les discours de mes enquêtés : l'homme lié à Dieu. Cela dit, la notion de personne chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela ne suit pas une logique linéaire, mais plutôt des directions variées dont certains points et idées convergent.

Si la notion de personne chrétienne est en rapport avec celle de sa divinité (Reesink 2005), il faudrait se pencher sur le cas contraire, c'est-à-dire : l'homme sans Dieu. Parfois, c'est précisément lorsque l'on pose une question sur un thème que l'on obtient des réponses sur son contraire. Ainsi, c'est grâce à la question « Que pensez-vous des incroyants ? » que j'ai pu cerner plus clairement ce qu'est l'homme pour ces catholiques. D'après leurs réponses et réactions, il est possible d'élaborer analytiquement deux approches : la « tranchante », la « méfiante et paradoxale », bien qu'elles puissent être utilisées en même temps par un même enquêté.

La première approche ne mâche pas ses mots pour s'exprimer. Elle est très nette dans ce qu'elle veut dire.

– Ceux qui croient pas en Dieu ? Ils devraient pas exister ! Ce sont des gens nuls. (...) Ils sont venus pour se moquer de ceux qui croient en Dieu. Parce que la personne qui croit pas en Dieu n'est rien, tu vois ? Elle est juste là pour nuire. (...) C'est tout Dieu qui a donné l'intelligence à l'homme, et alors, en plus, la personne croit que Dieu n'existe pas ! C'est homme-là, c'est un animal, une bête. (Mauro).

– Pour moi, c'est pas une personne, c'est un athée [rire]. Pour moi, c'est un athée. Puisque, qui est celui qui vit dans le monde [s'il] n'y a pas Dieu ? Parce que si on vit, c'est grâce à qui ? À Dieu ! Et si Dieu le voulait pas, il y aurait personne, personne vivrait dans le monde ! Voilà ! Et ceux qui croient pas qu'il y a Dieu dans le ciel et sur terre, ce sont pas des gens, ce sont des bêtes, des athées. (S. Lemos¹³).

dans le champ religieux chrétien des catholiques brésiliens (Reesink 2003) et des chrétiens mélanésiens (Mosko 2010), que cette critique est la plus radicale.

13 « S. » (*Seu/Senhor*) et « D. » (*Dona*) sont les équivalents de « Mr » et « Mme », en français.

– C’est une aberration énorme, n’est-ce pas ? Parce que celui qui croit pas en Dieu, franchement, le mieux serait d’être pas venu au monde, ma fille. Puisque la vie n’est qu’en Dieu, tout n’est qu’en Dieu (...) Tout ce qu’on fait, c’est Dieu qui le fait à travers nous, tu vois ? (...). C’est une aberration énorme d’être athée, franchement. (S. Carlos).

– Je l’accepte pas. Pour moi, Dieu, c’est l’être supérieur à tout. Pas croire en Dieu, c’est pas croire à la vie, c’est pas croire à la nature, c’est croire à rien, c’est pas exister. À mon avis, quelqu’un qui croit pas en Dieu n’existe pas. C’est une chose. (...) Je crois qu’ils disent qu’ils y croient pas, mais au fond d’eux-mêmes, c’est pas possible qu’il reste rien. (...) Je crois pas qu’on soit totalement sans foi en Dieu, en un être supérieur, même si on l’appelle pas « dieu », un être supérieur. Je pense que [dire ça] c’est juste pour faire leur intéressant. (Teresa).

D’emblée, ces discours sont très surprenants par leur clarté et parce qu’ils disent autant de choses en si peu de mots. Ainsi, ces enquêtés affirment toute la supériorité et la suprématie de la divinité catholique à l’égard de l’homme et du monde. Puis, ils démontrent nettement la condition de l’homme et ce qu’est l’homme. Là, on s’aperçoit, quelque peu abasourdi, que la personne humaine est *en* Dieu. En ce sens, nous nous retrouvons loin d’une idée d’un soi fini en lui-même. Car l’homme n’existe ici que *par* et *en* Dieu. Donc, plus que « l’individu-en-relation-à-Dieu » de Troeltsch (in Duarte et Giumbelli 1995: 84) – qui conserverait tout de même la perspective d’une importante autonomie et une nette coupure (ou clivage) entre l’homme et la divinité catholique –, nous avons une personne humaine extensible au divin. Et ce, paradoxalement, parce que l’humanité n’est pas dans l’homme, mais dans la divinité catholique, et c’est elle qui procure cette humanité, et c’est à travers elle que l’homme s’accomplit. Cela revient à dire que c’est la figure de la divinité catholique, cet être tout-puissant, qui fait de l’homme un individu « entier ». C’est ainsi que l’homme, selon mes enquêtés, en niant la divinité catholique et son existence, établit une rupture avec la source de l’humanité, la possibilité même de son existence.

À ce titre, l’homme en rupture avec la divinité catholique de sa propre volonté, nie l’humanité même : il devient alors une bête, c’est-à-dire, un sauvage, comme les animaux, la nature pure et sans culture. On pourrait oser dire que l’humanité est foncièrement ancrée dans le culturel et que c’est la divinité catholique qui donne à l’homme ce *status*, alors que l’homme non

croisant demeure rattaché à la nature, donc c'est une bête, un non humain. L'athée est aussi une aberration, selon S. Carlos, c'est-à-dire un monstre apparu sur terre, étant donné que l'essence de l'homme passe par la divinité catholique, l'homme *est en Dieu*, il n'est rien sans lui. L'athée nie son essence humaine en niant la divinité catholique et, dans ce cas, il vaudrait mieux ne pas exister qu'être monstrueux. Pour Teresa, l'athée est une chose, autrement dit, il est moins qu'une bête, il est semblable à une pierre, il appartient à la nature inanimée : sans vie, sans existence. En outre, il peut même être rien, moins encore qu'une chose.

Cependant, si l'homme coupé de la divinité catholique ne devient pas une bête, une chose, un monstre ou un rien, tout court, c'est parce qu'il se situe dès lors, pour certains, dans une autre dimension, celle du mal.

- Ces personnes qui croient pas en Dieu, à mon avis elles sont déjà mortes, n'est-ce pas ? (...). Parce que, quelqu'un qui dit qu'il y croit pas, pour moi, c'est bien le fils du démon. Puisqu'il n'existe que lui [Dieu], et il ou elle dit qu'il croit pas en Dieu ! ? (Ana).

Donc, si l'homme nie la divinité catholique, il tombe inéluctablement dans les mains du démon, du mal. En rupture de Dieu, l'homme devient l'enfant du démon lui-même, car, ici, l'on est soit dans un royaume, soit dans l'autre. En outre, le non croyant est source de peur et de méfiance, puisqu'il sort du monde des hommes/de la divinité catholique pour tomber dans le monde animal/du démon, étant donné que cette entité est liée au monde sauvage, animal, et surtout au surnaturel non domestiqué¹⁴.

Si l'approche « tranchante » rejette l'athée dans la nature, c'est-à-dire hors de l'humanité, l'autre perçoit cela comme impossible, c'est l'approche « méfiante, paradoxale ».

- Je pense qu'ils ont absolument tort, qu'au fond d'eux-mêmes ils y croient, puisqu'il existe personne qui y croie pas, n'est-ce pas ? (Lucas).

- Je pense que ce sont des *coitados* [malheureux], c'est bien des malheureux. Parce que je pense que... Dieu, Dieu est une chose si merveilleuse, donc si on y pense bien, il n'y aurait pas de doutes. Parce que la nature, les animaux,

14 Selon R. Muchembled, dans le processus de construction de l'image de Satan, il y a eu un effort pour l'éloigner de plus en plus d'une ressemblance avec l'homme vers un « accent sur l'inhumanité fondamentale du démon » (2000: 49), en rapprochant fortement celui-ci de la bestialité, image inversée de l'humanité. Par ailleurs, il est intéressant de remarquer encore que le mot « athée » lui-même est chargé de négativité. Si certains enquêtés l'utilisent pour désigner un fait, d'autres l'utilisent pour exprimer le fait en lui-même. « Athée » devient alors un juron, un gros mot.

les enfants, la vie, tout est en Dieu, tout est lié à lui. Il est évident qu'il y a un pouvoir plus grand qui a tout fait, qu'il y a un Dieu. (Edite).

– Que pensez-vous de ceux qui ne croient pas en Dieu ?

– Je pense qu'ils y croient, ils font que dire ça.

– Et pourquoi ça, à votre avis ?

– Parce qu'on dit ... Il y a ceux qui disent : « Je suis athée, Dieu merci ! ». Alors, sans vouloir, n'est-ce pas ? Il y a toujours le moment où on sait que dans toute chose il y a le doigt de Dieu. ... Pourquoi je vais croire en quelqu'un qui nie l'existence de Dieu ? N'est-ce pas, Mísia ? Il y a toujours quelque chose ... (D. Hilda).

Ces récits expriment par-dessus tout une impossibilité : l'homme ne peut pas être non humain, toutefois, pour ne pas l'être, il faut croire à un être supérieur, puisqu'en fait c'est ce dernier qui donne l'humanité. Il s'ensuit que, tout en se maintenant dans la voie esquissée par l'approche « tranchante », l'approche « méfiante, paradoxale » énonce le fait que l'homme en lui-même ne peut pas se détacher de la divinité catholique, d'où l'affirmation « il faut y croire » ou, comme le dit très nettement Lucas, il n'y a pas de personne sans cette croyance : la croyance en la divinité catholique rend l'individu humain. En ce sens, celui qui avoue son incroyance est taxé de fou, de gêneur, de quelqu'un qui veut faire son intéressant ou se montrer différent des autres, un être perdu qui ne sait pas chercher la divinité catholique, un pauvre individu car c'est un niais, ou bien un menteur tout court. Tout cela parce qu'il est impossible, voire impensable, qu'existe une *personne* sans foi en Dieu. Tout d'un coup, surgit le paradoxe : un homme qui ne croit pas en la divinité catholique ; pourtant il faut y croire pour être humain. Il s'ensuit que l'existence d'un incroyant est source de méfiance, car c'est un homme, mais pour l'être il faut être/croire *en* Dieu. Voilà pourquoi la plupart de ces enquêtes avouent aussi une incrédulité, mais cette fois-ci dans la parole de ces hommes « soi-disant » incroyants : car, au fond d'eux-mêmes, leur humanité impose la croyance en la divinité catholique.

C'est ainsi que la position vis-à-vis d'un athée est de pure méfiance : c'est une sorte d'être auquel l'on ne saurait faire confiance, qui ne le mérite pas. Même chez eux qui ne montrent pas de méfiance à l'égard des athées, la possibilité de leur existence survient à cause d'un égarement, d'un aveuglement, ou bien d'une mauvaise quête de l'être supérieur. Cela revient à dire que, pour eux, comme pour les autres, l'homme sans divinité catholique est inimaginable.

En outre, à cette approche « méfiante, paradoxale » se mélange la perplexité. Celle-ci s'axe sur le constat de l'existence des athées en même temps qu'elle est ressentie comme une impossibilité.

– Ça c'est très complexe, tu vois ? Je sais pas vraiment si les gens croient pas en Dieu. Ils disent que non. (...) Mais, beaucoup de monde y croit pas, je ne sais pas comment. Et ils vivent, n'est-ce pas ? Ils vivent et parfois ils vivent bien heureux. (Iva).

Le plus frappant dans le discours d'Iva, c'est l'aveu de cette perplexité, révélée par la question implicite : comment est-il possible de se dire/sembler heureux quand on nie la divinité catholique, quand on vit sans la divinité catholique ? Cela révèle le constat, et même la surprise, de ce bonheur, de cette vie, tout en réaffirmant l'incrédulité face aux propos des athées, car on y revient : l'humanité, la vie et le bonheur, ne sont possibles qu'en la divinité catholique. L'athée est un paradoxe, une contradiction qu'elle ne comprend pas – incompréhension sous-jacente à tous ces discours –, il ne subsiste, en conséquence, que la méfiance envers la non-croyance de ces athées.

Ce que les propos des enquêtés catholiques de Casa Amarela montrent, avec plus ou moins de force, c'est que l'homme, l'humain sans la divinité catholique est en fait *impensable*. À ce titre, les individus de Casa Amarela rejoignent la perspective augustinienne : « Je n'existerais donc point, mon Dieu, je n'existerais point du tout, si vous n'étiez pas en moi. Ou plutôt je n'existerais point si je n'étais pas en vous, “de qui, par qui et en qui toutes choses ont l'être”. Oui, c'est ainsi, Seigneur, c'est ainsi. » (St. Augustin 1964 : 16) Il s'en dégage que la personne humaine est formée/complétée par celle de la divinité catholique. En outre, cette divinité catholique se dévoile aussi bien dans la nature que dans l'homme, fruits de son œuvre. Autrement dit, pour voir la divinité catholique il suffit de regarder le monde et l'homme, car ils contiennent aussi la divinité dans leur existence, d'où l'affirmation des enquêtés concernant l'aveuglement des athées. En ce sens, la personne humaine est ancrée dans le monde, donc, elle est cosmologiquement composée et pensée par ces individus, puisque selon eux l'homme fait partie d'un tout : la Création divine (Reesink 2003).

Parents et Dieu. Le corps extensif, la personne extensive

À partir des réflexions avancées ci-dessus, il est possible de penser que la conception de la personne humaine chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela est multi-composée, surtout par le couple corps et âme (Reesink 2003, 2012). À ce titre, affirmer que l'être humain est constitué de deux principes fondamentaux, corps et âme, c'est annoncer d'emblée l'appréhension d'une dualité qui va à l'encontre de la pensée sur « l'individu moderne », qui s'imagine être une « substance rationnelle indivisible, individuelle » (Cassidore, in Mauss 1968: 358). Cela dit, il est impossible de nier le fait que ces catholiques ont bien la représentation, à laquelle ils sont attachés, d'une âme et d'un corps individuels, de l'individu. Cependant, tout en étant conscients de leurs limites individuelles/corporelles, ces catholiques expriment une autre réalité : les individus sont en même temps « dividiuels » et « individuels » (A. Strathern 1998). Cette réalité est mieux saisie ethnographiquement, d'abord, par la question de la conception biologique d'une personne ; et, aussi, par la perception d'un corps extensif aux autres.

Dans l'introduction de leur ouvrage *La production du corps* (1998), Godelier et Panoff se demandent ce qu'il faut ajouter au corps pour faire un être humain et s'il suffit de deux êtres humains pour en faire un troisième. Leurs réponses ne se font pas attendre. À la première question, ils rétorquent que « (...) toutes [les cultures qu'ils ont analysées] nous disent d'une manière ou d'une autre qu'en plus de ces substances et de ces organes il faut ajouter une ou plusieurs choses au corps humain pour qu'il soit le corps d'un être humain. Il faut que quelque chose y pénètre, vienne s'y loger et mette l'individu en marche vers son destin » (1998: xiii). À la deuxième, ils répondent que « la réponse est claire. Aucune société analysée ici ne pense que la naissance d'un être humain soit le produit seulement d'êtres humains » (*ibid*, xvii). Ces réponses fonctionnent à merveille dans le contexte du quartier de Casa Amarela.

- Que pensez-vous de ceux qui ne croient pas en Dieu ?
- Ah ! Je trouve terrible ! J'admets pas ! J'aime pas, parce que, pour croire en Dieu, il suffit d'aimer la nature, l'admirer, n'est-ce pas ? Et on voit le sens des choses. Je pense qu'il faut... je pense que Dieu existe. Cette entité supérieure, je pense qu'elle existe vraiment. J'aime pas les gens qui y croient pas. Je pense qu'ils voient pas les choses avec amour. Car, par exemple, la gestation est une chose très forte ; je pense que seule une chose très... un être très supérieur pour créer ça..., la vie... J'aime pas ceux qui n'y croient pas. Je pense que tout le

monde doit y croire. (Raquel).

On accepte Jésus depuis le jour où il nous installe dans le ventre de notre mère, n'est-ce pas ? Alors Dieu a déjà planifié notre vie, il sait déjà qu'on existe, puisqu'il a dit ça. (Alice).

– Si Dieu y a mis l'esprit, il doit en sortir un jour, n'est-ce pas ? Car, que sommes-nous sans un esprit ? Un morceau de chair pourrie. (D. Zilda).

Il s'ensuit que l'acte créateur de l'homme se réinstaure et se réactualise à chaque fois qu'un être humain est conçu. Il n'y a pas un déni du rôle du père et de la mère dans cette conception, mais tout d'abord l'idée fortement ancrée qu'il faut un troisième partenaire pour constituer un nouvel être humain. Ce troisième partenaire est, évidemment, la divinité catholique. C'est elle qui permet cette conception physique, puisque créatrice du monde, mais surtout c'est elle qui fait pénétrer, qui « insuffle » l'âme, l'essence de la vie, dans le corps. Par conséquent, il est possible d'avancer que, chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela aussi, il faut trois partenaires pour faire un être humain¹⁵. « On aboutit donc non seulement à l'idée que ni “le corps” ni “l'âme” ne suffisent à faire un être humain, mais aussi à l'idée que les humains ne suffisent pas non plus à faire un autre être humain. Il faut que d'autres acteurs que leurs pères et mères, interviennent pour leur donner des descendants dont ils sont avec eux les co-auteurs » (Godelier et Panoff, 1998: xvii).

L'expérience de la « dividualité » et de l'« individualité » s'exprime aussi à travers l'idée d'un corps extensive à l'autre.

– On se sent comme ça, comme si on avait perdu un bras ou une jambe. (...) Plus la personne était proche, plus on lie cette personne, qui a été sa propre vie, c'est-à-dire, on relie son propre sens de vivre à cette personne, comme si sa vie n'était pas que sa vie, mais un complément de toutes les vies qui sont proches. (Marcos).

– J'ai perdu un morceau de moi-même, puisque moi aussi j'étais un morceau d'elle, puisque c'est elle qui m'a mise au monde. Alors, je sens comme un morceau de moi-même, je sens que je devrais partir avec elle. (D. Cícera).

Il est frappant de percevoir ici combien le corps, la partie de la personne la plus imaginée par certains comme finie dans ses propres dimensions,

¹⁵ Il importe d'observer que seules des femmes ont fait une mention explicite à la conception, la gestation et la maternité, ce qui n'est pas surprenant. Il n'empêche que ces idées se retrouvent dans tous les discours, bien qu'implicitement, parfois : il suffisait de bien y regarder pour les saisir.

peut être étendu à l'autre. Curieusement cette démarche « dividualle » et « individuelle » est très proche de celle des mélanésiens chrétiens décrits par Mosko (2012)¹⁶, ce qui mène l'auteur affirmer que « l'individualisme qui a été normalement associé à la chrétienté, est en soi-même la manifestation de la dividualité analogiquement très proche de la personne mélanésienne » (Mosko 2010: 219). Ce n'est que le contenu de cette dynamique, ou plutôt de ce qui est « dividualisé » ou « individualisé », qui peut varier. En ce sens, chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela, non seulement l'essence vitale, l'âme, est extensive – surtout à la divinité catholique –, mais aussi le corps, le plus matériel et le plus facile à individualiser. Cela devient plus clair lorsque l'on évoque le contexte de la mort (Reesink 2003, 2012).

Ainsi, il est facile de comprendre que le corps individuel ne s'arrête pas à lui-même, la personne ne se limite pas physiquement à son propre corps, car l'autre en est aussi un prolongement. La personne individuelle s'amplifie sur l'autre : elle se constitue d'elle-même, de son corps et des rapports affectifs établis avec d'autres corps, d'autres personnes. En ce sens, la mort d'un « bien-aimé » représente une perte de soi-même, pas seulement dans un sens purement abstrait ou émotionnel, mais franchement corporel. Cela revient à dire que les mots « arrachés », « perdus » utilisés à l'égard de parties du corps ne sont pas que des métaphores, car il s'agit bien d'une coupure physique que la mort d'une personne, qui complète l'autre, provoque, introduisant une relation métonymique (Fernandez 1991). Cette conception est inversement analogique à celle des Indiens Kaxinawá du Brésil, analysée par McCallum (1996), qui décrit comment l'un de ses enquêtés a expliqué que la mort d'un parent est triste, car une de ses âmes part avec le mort. En remplaçant le mot âme par « morceau du corps », on pourrait presque donner la même explication pour les catholiques de Casa Amarela.

Il s'ensuit que la construction de la personne humaine est aussi un enjeu social (Battaglia 1990), qui enchaîne « corporellement » les corps individuels, devenus extensions. Et ce au moyen de l'affectivité, de la vie ensemble, de la chair et du sang. Voilà pourquoi la mort d'un parent est plus déchirante, car

16 C'est dans les études sur les peuples de Mélanésie que l'on rencontre davantage de discussions sur le caractère dividual, séparable, relationnel constitutif de leurs notions de personne (par exemple, Battaglia 1990), en lui opposant l'individuel occidental ou chrétien. Ce n'est que récemment que l'on a commencé à critiquer cette perspective en faveur de l'idée d'une dynamique « dividualle » et « individuelle » chez les mélanésiens chrétiens (Mosko 2010).

la personne est l'ensemble et la continuité du sang et de la chair des parents, formant une chaîne. Plus qu'une question de continuité existentielle ou eschatologique (Déchaux 1997), on y retrouve l'appréhension d'une continuité physique. Comme l'a dit Marcos, l'autre est le complément de sa propre vie, qui subsiste dans la matière, dans le monde social, dans l'affectivité envers les parents et les amis. Le corps d'un catholique de Casa Amarela ne se contente pas de ses propres limites dimensionnelles, il s'étend aux autres.

Une fois établi que la personne humaine, dans la conception des catholiques de Casa Amarela, est fondée *en* et *par* Dieu, accomplie *en* lui, il nous reste encore à réfléchir sur d'autres éléments composant cette personne. D'une manière générale, l'idée courante de la tradition occidentale place les hommes séparés de la nature par des capacités supérieures au monde animal. Ainsi auraient-ils « une partie plongée dans la condition physique de l'animalité, et l'autre dans la condition morale de l'humanité. » (Ingold 1995: 45) Cette condition morale se révélerait surtout par la rationalité, par la production de la culture (Ingold, *ibid.*). Les individus de Casa Amarela s'inscrivent, eux aussi, dans cette tradition, d'autant qu'elle ne dément pas l'orthodoxie chrétienne, comme l'a bien remarqué Ingold. Néanmoins, trois aspects ressortent d'emblée de leurs discours, tous pensés *via* la divinité catholique : foi, raison/intelligence/sagesse, sentiments. Ainsi, la foi – ou la capacité d'avoir cette foi – est perçue comme un composant de la personne humaine. Cependant, il semble que la capacité d'avoir la foi peut augmenter ou diminuer au cours de la vie d'un individu : il faut donc la « pratiquer » pour conserver cette capacité et son humanité intactes.

La pratique de la foi, c'est une chose que l'être humain doit posséder. (Marcos, *Nobre*).

En outre, la foi en la divinité catholique est nécessaire car, sur terre, l'homme ne peut pas rendre compte de toutes choses, puisque le monde est plus « vaste », dépasse et transcende les facteurs qu'il peut manipuler.

Le deuxième aspect se réfère à la capacité exclusive de l'humanité à penser, à réfléchir ; à la possession d'une intelligence rationnelle et transformative du monde. D'emblée, on peut avancer que les enquêtés expriment une idée fortement ancrée au sujet de la puissance de l'intelligence du cerveau humain : il transforme, il bâtit, il crée, il guérit ; en plus l'homme possède la capacité de communication et de mémoire, de vivre ensemble en société.

– Parce qu'on vit ensemble dans ce monde, nous avons notre mémoire, notre intelligence, nous nous communiquons les uns avec les autres, tu vois ? Il y a cet instrument donné par Dieu, l'intelligence de l'homme, pour que l'homme fasse... Il y a le soleil, la lune, les étoiles, tu vois ? L'avion, cette chose énorme, lourde... C'est tout Dieu qui a donné l'intelligence à l'homme, et alors la personne, en plus, croit que Dieu n'existe pas ! ? C'est homme-là, c'est un animal, une bête. (Mauro, Alto do Reservatório)

En termes anthropologiques, ces catholiques remarquent la propriété humaine de générer de la culture, où «la culture souligne l'identité de l'être humain non comme organisme biologique, mais comme sujet moral» (*ibid*, 46). Toutefois, cette potentialité exclusive d'une humanité est perçue comme un don reçu de la divinité catholique. C'est le Tout-puissant qui offre l'essentiel pour l'expression de la personne humaine : la nature et l'intelligence qui la transforme, et encore la vie. C'est ainsi que certains enquêtés sont très explicites lorsqu'ils annoncent que la divinité catholique fournit les éléments naturels, la santé et la rationalité pour que l'homme puisse réaliser « la culture ». Et cette réalisation signifie presque une obligation de l'homme : il a des tâches à accomplir et, ce faisant, il révèle toutes les caractéristiques de la nature divine qui sont imprimées en lui, en tant que création du surnaturel. À ce titre, l'homme peut aussi faire de belles choses exceptionnelles, telles que la guérison, bien que moins que la divinité catholique. En outre, si la divinité catholique procure les « instruments » pour que l'homme accomplisse ses tâches, elle lui donne aussi la liberté d'accomplir ce qu'il faut et de se garder du mal, car en contrepartie de tant de choses reçues, l'homme doit conserver son humanité, et il le fait en étant toujours aux côtés du divin.

Le dernier aspect de la personne humaine repose sur la capacité à éprouver des sentiments, à ressentir des émotions. Le sentiment qui montre le plus nettement cette humanité est l'amour, le plus valorisé et, peut-être, perçu comme le plus humain. À côté de l'amour, la capacité d'être heureux annonce aussi ce qu'est l'homme.

– Je pense que Dieu a créé l'homme avec l'amour, n'est-ce pas ? ... Et la femme. (Renato).

– Il suffit de penser à tous ceux qui croient pas en Dieu, ça me rend tellement triste, j'ai une telle tristesse dans mon cœur. Parce que ce type de gens pense être heureux, mais la joie est juste apparente, tu vois ? (Júlio).

- Quand on croit en Dieu on peut vivre très bien. On peut être malade, on peut avoir faim, mais notre esprit possède une joie, on a un bonheur dedans, car on sait qu'un jour Dieu donnera notre récompense, quand on sera mort. (D. Zilda).

Ces récits évoquent des échos de ce qu'a dit St. Augustin il y a bien longtemps : « Comme notre être vient de Dieu, la vérité de notre science vient de son enseignement, et la vérité de notre bonheur, de l'intime effusion de son amour. » (1964: 45) Ainsi, l'amour et les autres sentiments sont aussi des composants de la personne humaine. Cependant, à l'instar de ce qui arrive à la foi, les sentiments peuvent être accrus ou diminués, selon que la personne est peu ou prou éloignée de la divinité catholique. Il s'ensuit que, encore une fois, c'est l'athée – qui s'est volontairement coupé de la divinité catholique – qui se révèle dépourvu d'amour, donc non humain, car c'est *par* la divinité catholique que l'on parvient à aimer. Sans elle on perd cette capacité – voilà encore pourquoi l'incroyant n'est rien. Dans cette perspective, l'être humain est à jamais attaché au divin et il actualise et construit sa personne humaine dans la divinité : l'homme s'étend à celle-ci.

Corps et âme : comment penser l'âme et le corps

Dieu et l'homme. Si l'on ne peut pas comprendre la conception de la personne chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela sans ce duo, un autre s'impose tout de suite à nos regards : il s'agit du couple, très classique dans la pensée chrétienne, corps et âme. Ces deux principes constitutifs de l'être humain chrétien sont pensés en tant qu'une part périssable, le corps, et l'autre impérissable, l'âme. Néanmoins, cette division n'est pas exclusive aux sociétés chrétiennes et, malgré toutes les différences entre les composants de la personne dans d'autres cultures, la question se pose de « savoir pourquoi l'humanité, dans toutes les cultures, semble avoir été amenée à se représenter l'être humain comme composé de deux parts, une part périssable et une part qui continue à exister et à agir bien au-delà de la mort, même si elle n'est pas immortelle » (Godelier et Panoff 1998 : xiv). Je n'entends pas répondre à cette question, mais il faut dire qu'il semble y avoir une « dualité » fondamentale dans toutes ces conceptions, le contenu et les rapports de cette « dualité » donnant toutes les multiplicités et différences culturelles. Toutefois, si dans les sociétés non chrétiennes ce principe dual n'est pas toujours observé comme une opposition nécessaire, lorsqu'il s'agit du christianisme la pensée traditionnelle établit une interprétation de ce

principe comme opposition (et même conflit) entre le corps et l'âme, le premier étant chargé de négativité et la seconde de positivité. Pourtant, si l'on suit l'analyse fort intéressante de Schmitt, dans l'histoire chrétienne, cette dualité comporte des nuances, car « le christianisme médiéval, même durant le Haut Moyen-âge, ne s'est jamais satisfait d'un dualisme rigoureux (...) ni le "corps" ni la "chair" ne pouvaient être pensés comme des principes entièrement négatifs. » (Schmitt 1998: 340-341)¹⁷ En outre, il ajoute qu'à côté d'une compréhension dualiste de la personne, il y en a aussi une triadique, déjà esquissée par St. Paul, où l'esprit entre comme un autre élément composant la personne. Il y aurait, alors, dans le christianisme une conception de l'homme plus complexe qu'une dualité absolue. Toujours est-il que cette version triadique est soumise au grand « couple fondamental ».

Les individus de Casa Amarela possèdent bien cette dualité en tant que principe et source importante de leur notion de la personne humaine. Il n'empêche que ce couple fondateur est fabriqué d'une façon plurielle, sous-divisée parfois en d'autres parts, sans jamais cesser de faire référence à la dualité structurante de la tradition chrétienne.

Le couple fondamental de la personne humaine est composé de qualités différentes, selon ce que l'on observe. Comme nous l'avons déjà dit, la différence principale est l'idée d'un élément mortel et d'un autre immortel, très présente dans l'imaginaire des catholiques.

- L'âme, c'est notre vie. Quand on meurt, alors notre vie... évidemment qu'elle en sort, voilà.
- Et que reste-t-il ?
- Reste le corps, la matière. Voilà ! (Lucas).
- L'âme, c'est l'esprit de la personne, n'est-ce pas ? C'est une chose qu'on voit pas. Juste Dieu. C'est ça qui sort de notre bouche. (Mauro).
- Notre esprit est bien plus fort que la matière, puisque la matière est faible, notre matière est un morceau de chair pourrie, n'est-ce pas ? Puisque toi et moi, on est vivant et d'un coup on est mort, c'est fini. Alors, l'esprit... s'il y a l'esprit, c'est pour le reste de la vie, il a pas de fin. (S. Joel).

D'emblée, il y a confirmation de cette différence fondamentale : corps mortel – corrompu, âme immortelle – vie. Néanmoins, d'autres qualités

17 L. F. Duarte et E. Giumbelli (1995) ont aussi signalé ailleurs une moindre rigidité par rapport au schéma corps-négativité/âme-positivité dans la pensée chrétienne, bien que de façon moins explicite.

s'ajoutent aux caractères particuliers du corps et de l'âme.

- La chair meurt, mais l'esprit est vivant. (...) Notre esprit, c'est l'âme.
- (...) L'âme ? On a une âme quand on est vivant ?
- ... On doit en avoir une, je pense qu'on en a une. Puisque quand on meurt elle sort.
- L'âme et le corps sont la même chose ici ?
- Ah, non ! (...)
- Si on meurt, on reste où : dans l'âme ou dans le corps ?
- ... Dans l'âme. Dans l'âme. (Edite).
- Nos besoins charnels à partir du moment qu'on est mort, quand l'âme se détache, sont tout à fait différents de ceux de l'âme, de l'esprit. Au moment où on meurt, on aura d'autres besoins. Non plus les besoins qu'on avait : ceux-ci seront laissés derrière nous.
- Pourquoi seront-ils laissés derrière nous ?
- Parce qu'il s'agit de besoins de la chair (...) Les besoins de manger, boire, tu sais ? On aura d'autres besoins : glorifier Dieu à tous moments, voilà ! (Júlio).
- La matière pourrit, mais pas l'âme. Je crois qu'elle monte [vers Dieu].
- (...) Vous pensez que c'est quoi l'âme ?
- Voilà. L'âme, c'est son souffle [de la matière], n'est-ce pas ? Au moment où elle sort de son dedans, alors l'âme ... la matière n'a plus de valeur. Alors, c'est [la matière] qui n'a plus de valeur, car elle est là et ne bouge, ne mange, ne boit plus. Et quand cet esprit, cette voix, ce soupir est dedans, alors il bouge, il marche, il parle, il mange, il boit. (D. Cícera).
- L'âme peut pas être comme le corps, puisque le corps est la chair. Cette chair pourrit, de dedans il ne sort que le souffle, qui est l'esprit, ce que Dieu y a mis. Si Dieu y a mis l'esprit, il doit en sortir un jour, n'est-ce pas ? Car, que sommes-nous sans esprit ? Un morceau de chair pourrie. (D. Zilda).

Deux idées frappent d'emblée le regard sur ces récits, plus précisément deux images décrites par deux verbes : sortir et rester. L'âme est le principe qui *sort* du corps, elle monte vers la divinité catholique ; alors que le corps *reste* sur terre. Il s'en dégage donc l'idée de deux éléments, faits l'un de mouvement, l'autre d'immobilité, le premier appartenant au ciel/à la divinité catholique, l'autre à la terre. Quand ils sont conjugués, le mouvement gagne l'immobilité, la rendant dynamique et capable de réaliser des choses. Autrement dit, on y retrouve « le couple de termes opposés *corpus* et *anima* » omniprésent, comme le dit Schmitt, « dans la tradition chrétienne écrite et orale » (1998 : 339). L'âme serait le principe vital, qui rendrait possible la « réalisation » du corps. En outre, chaque élément a ses propres besoins : le corps,

ceux qui se rapportent à la dimension de la nature, de la terre, du monde visible (boire, manger, marcher, etc.) ; l'âme, ceux qui relèvent de la dimension céleste, du monde invisible (glorifier la divinité catholique), comme le remarque Júlio. Cela renforce le rapport entre corps-terre et âme-ciel. Néanmoins, si l'âme peut descendre sur terre, le corps ne peut jamais monter au ciel, puisqu'il est profondément attaché au domaine terrestre.

Une autre image ressort de ces discours : celle du souffle. L'âme serait le souffle de la personne, reflétant ainsi l'image biblique du souffle de la divinité catholique qui a donné la vie à la terre sous la forme de l'homme. Cela revient à dire qu'un premier mouvement est accompli – celui d'entrer, le second étant la sortie de ce souffle. Il est important de noter que chez les catholiques de Casa Amarela souffle et âme sont en affinité, tandis que, en France ils sembleraient s'agir de deux principes différents. Ainsi, dans un article très suggestif, F. Rognon (1989) analyse, au moyen de l'ethnolinguistique, les principes fondamentaux de la conception de la personne en France. Il en distingue cinq : âme, corps, esprit, souffle et cœur, les trois premiers étant les plus essentiels. Toutefois, si l'auteur remarque que, dans ce contexte, le souffle est toujours lié au mouvement, il ne se confond jamais avec l'âme, car il possède d'autres caractères ou fonctions. On pourrait dire que, en ce qui concerne les catholiques du quartier étudié, il ne s'agit que d'une image pour représenter l'âme et, en ce sens, les deux éléments y seraient aussi bien distingués. Or, il va de soi que pour ces individus le souffle n'est pas toujours l'âme. L'important, ainsi, c'est de remarquer qu'il s'agit bien d'une métaphore, mais qui se rapproche de l'image biblique. À ce titre, la conception de corps-terre et âme-ciel (souffle) renvoie directement à cette culture biblique (Velho 1995), d'où aussi la dérive inévitable de l'âme synonyme de vie et du corps de la mort. Le corps est bien chair, et la chair est poussière, d'où il vient et où il retournera, et ce par le processus de sa décomposition, ou, comme l'a dit D. Janice, par la terre qui « le mange ».

Pourtant, c'est justement D. Janice qui avance une autre possibilité à l'égard du corps, un corps impérissable. Il y a bien celui du Christ qui est monté au ciel en chair et en os, il y a aussi ceux qui, pour certains, ressusciteront, mais il y a aussi les corps sanctifiés, ceux des saints qui possèderaient un statut différent. Il me semble qu'ils auraient la capacité, après la mort, de rester sur terre d'une certaine façon, selon cette perspective, parce que leurs corps ne se décomposent pas vraiment : ils conservent une intégrité,

peut-être parce qu'en tant que saints ils le sont aussi dans leur chair. C'est-à-dire que la sanctification s'obtient par le corps au moyen de la délivrance des péchés et que, par conséquent, ce serait le péché qui corromprait la chair. Quoi qu'il en soit, il semble y avoir une continuité corporelle. Mais, celle-ci serait une corporalité-image : d'après les corps (ou du corps) des saints les images/statues sont faites, où ceux-ci demeureraient et/ou reviendraient. Des échos lointains des reliques sanctifiées du Moyen-âge semblent y trouver une correspondance, « car les reliques, si petites soient-elles, sont appelées *corps saints* » (Albert 1992 : 45).

Suivons cette voie qui s'ouvre à nous. Les corps des saints sont apparemment incorruptibles, car ils se sont détachés des péchés¹⁸, propres de l'humain et du corps de l'homme. Néanmoins, les hommes du commun ne peuvent pas se délivrer de la décomposition, puisque leurs corps conservent toute leur capacité à pécher. On y retrouve, ainsi, « le lien étroit et tôt établi entre le principe corporel (ou charnel) et le *péché*.» (Schmitt 1998 : 340) D'une façon ou d'autre, les discours des enquêtés sont sous-tendus par cette perspective.

Toujours est-il que ces discours pendent plus vers une opposition entre le corps et l'âme. Pourtant, il n'est pas difficile de saisir une version complémentaire des deux principes.

– L'âme, c'est l'esprit. C'est une chose qui est venue ... On a un corps et une âme, n'est-ce pas ? Alors, on a besoin tantôt du corps, tantôt de l'âme, on a besoin des deux. Parce que rien dans ce monde peut être seulement un. Tout doit être deux, en tout il y a deux. Tout dans le monde doit avoir deux, tu vois ? (...) Alors, l'âme et le corps ... il faut les deux, puisque c'est pour que l'un édifie l'autre, tu comprends ? C'est notre corps qui édifie notre âme, tu sais ? Quand notre corps n'édifie pas notre âme, il devient notre plus grand ennemi.

– Mais, qu'est-ce qui est le plus important ?

– Le plus important c'est l'âme, ma fille ! Le plus important. Le corps..., le corps est temporairement [important] et l'âme définitivement. (S. Carlos).

L'idée fondamentale : la complémentarité entre le corps et l'âme, et ce pour que l'âme puisse accomplir ce qu'il faut. Cela revient à dire que le corps est le lieu où l'âme peut atteindre son but, surtout celui de se sauver, à l'instar du modèle de salut et de sanctification privilégié au Moyen-âge

¹⁸ Il faut noter que D. Janice m'a dit aussi que les saints ne le deviennent que s'ils en ont la permission de la divinité catholique.

(Albert 1992). Cependant, à l'encontre de ce modèle, S. Carlos introduit l'interprétation selon laquelle l'âme et le corps ont besoin l'une de l'autre, car l'un doit « édifier » l'autre. Soudain, il en ressort l'image d'une harmonie complémentaire et nécessaire entre les deux principes, le corps étant celui qui doit être apprivoisé, pour être en paix avec l'âme et permettre ainsi la non-souffrance sur terre¹⁹.

Mais, cette vision complémentaire des deux principes ouvre également la voie vers d'autres directions.

– Je pense que le corps, les deux, ils se complètent, puisque le corps sans l'âme ne vit pas et l'âme sans le corps. Elle vit, mais personne la voit pas, elle est invisible. Le corps, on le voit dans tous les coins et l'âme, personne la voit. (S. Dino).

– Mais tous les deux se complètent, n'est-ce pas ? Et si on s'occupe pas de notre corps, on tombe malade (...). Il faut en prendre soin, n'est-ce pas ? (D. Helena).

Sans pour autant nier la prévalence de l'âme sur le corps, ils insistent aussi sur cette complémentarité, surtout pour mettre l'accent sur l'importance du corps qui permet la vie sur terre, c'est-à-dire, la vie sensible et « naturelle ». De ce fait, il faut aussi s'occuper du corps, car il a son importance et sa valeur dans cette vie, puisque les deux principes sont complémentaires. Par ailleurs, ils mettent en lumière la complémentarité comme fondée sur l'opposition : âme immortelle/corps mortel, et notamment, âme invisible/corps visible. Par conséquent, l'âme a besoin du corps pour être sensible et tangible, car personne ne peut la voir. Il s'en dégage alors que, sur la dimension terrestre, il faut un instrument de la même nature pour rendre la vie possible : celle-ci implique la possibilité de communication passant surtout par le regard, d'où l'importance du corps. Toutefois, c'est là que la « magie » de la complémentarité s'opère : cette vie corporelle/terrestre n'est aussi possible qu'avec et par l'âme, sans elle le corps est « inanimé ».

Si l'on rassemble les discours analysés jusqu'ici, on pourrait prétendre, avec Albert, qu'« on ne saurait mieux signifier la double potentialité du corps, apte au seul péché selon sa nature et élevé par la douleur au statut d'instrument du salut » (1992 : 38), pourvu que l'on nuance le rôle de la

19 L'intéressant dans cette démarche de S. Carlos, c'est son idée d'un monde n'existant que par paires, dans une perspective très structuraliste, d'où sa conclusion de la complémentarité entre l'âme et le corps, laquelle ne signifie pas pour autant une équivalence des termes.

douleur. Il n'en demeure pas moins que tous les enquêtés soulignent la prépondérance de l'âme sur le corps, étant donné que l'âme est le principe qu'il faut sauver. Cela dit, il faut relativiser cette assertion, car cela ne veut pas dire pour autant une négation du corps. Comme cela ressort très nettement du récit de S. Carlos, l'âme est plus importante parce qu'elle touche à l'éternité, tandis que le corps n'est important que sur terre, autrement dit, dans un temps fini. Par conséquent, c'est la *durée* qui décide le degré d'importance des deux éléments.

Depuis le début de cette discussion, il a été possible de saisir quelques qualités qui sont associées à l'âme : souffle, ciel, sortie, invisibilité, lumière, immortalité, mouvement, vie, immatérialité, énergie et surtout esprit. Mais, selon Schmitt, dans la tradition chrétienne établie dès le Moyen-âge, il y aurait une première opposition : corps et âme ; mais aussi une autre : chair et esprit, « désignant moins les composants de la personne que des valeurs auxquelles celle-ci doit s'attacher ou dont elle doit se détourner. » (1998 : 340). En outre, dans un second moment, il y aurait l'élaboration d'une trilogie où le corps est la matière, l'âme le principe vital et l'esprit la pensée, l'intellect. Cette conception triadique rejoint à peu près les analyses de Rognon, pour qui, dans le langage français, l'esprit est le « siège de la pensée, [et] sa fonction serait intellectuelle », tandis que l'âme a un rapport avec « le fondement moral de la personne ; sa fonction serait donc plutôt religieuse » (1989 : 409). Il y aurait donc une différence relative ou totale entre âme et esprit.

Néanmoins, il est possible d'avancer que, d'une façon générale, nos enquêtés emploient âme et esprit plutôt comme des termes équivalents : « l'âme, c'est l'esprit », c'est quasiment la première définition qu'ils en donnent, et à la suite d'une question sur sa différence par rapport à l'esprit, ils la nient fréquemment. Cependant, cela ne signifie pas pour autant qu'il n'y ait pas de différences de *conditions* de l'âme, et, partant, de l'esprit. Certains catholiques suggèrent un rapport entre âme et fantôme (revenant), établissant une différence par rapport à l'esprit (celui qui est dans le corps et qui part vers l'au-delà). Cela est très net chez certains d'entre eux, tandis que c'est beaucoup plus ambigu chez d'autres : alors qu'il semble y avoir une claire distinction entre âme/revenant et esprit dans le premier groupe, il semblerait que, dans le second, l'âme possède des conditions différentes selon l'espace qu'elle occupe : dans le corps elle est simplement âme ; lorsqu'elle le quitte, elle devient esprit ; mais (si) elle revient sur terre après la mort, elle est

fantôme. À ce titre, en analysant les points de vue de l'ensemble catholique, l'âme peut posséder la condition de revenant, d'esprit ou bien, tout simplement, d'« âme ». En ce sens, le rapport qu'elle établit avec le corps est très important pour définir cette *condition*.

Tout mène à croire, alors, que l'esprit est l'âme délivrée du corps. De ce fait, l'âme peut atteindre sa plénitude et, du coup, se muer en esprit – complètement immatériel, car l'âme unie à la chair posséderait, possiblement, une quasi-matérialité donnée par le corps. Ainsi, l'âme serait plus lourde, à cause du corps, tandis que l'esprit serait « léger ». D'emblée, le rôle important du corps et du péché apparaît fortement. Car l'esprit peut émaner de la délivrance du péché, même dans cette vie, à condition que l'homme ne soit que bonté, ce qui se rapproche beaucoup du processus de « fabrication » des saints (Albert 1992). Il s'ensuit que seuls les individus saints peuvent atteindre la condition d'esprit sur terre, mais tous y parviendront lors de la séparation du corps et de l'âme. On pourrait ainsi suggérer que la « différence » ne repose pas sur le contenu de l'âme et de l'esprit, mais sur leur *condition d'être* et leur *rapport au corps*.

Conclusion

Si l'on prend au sérieux les discussions théoriques et les données de terrain présentées ici, il me semble qu'une nouvelle compréhension peut être établie : l'exceptionnalité de l'individualisme occidental et/ou chrétien est plus un désir élaboré pour expliquer/justifier la soi-disant évolution de cette société qu'un fait démontré par des recherches empiriques. Il ressort donc des critiques esquissées ici que loin d'être une unité, la personne moderne (et/ou chrétienne) garde une énorme pluralité en elle-même et que, en outre, elle est toujours en train de se faire, comme l'avait déjà remarqué Mauss (1968). Par ailleurs, je pousserai la réflexion encore plus loin en signalant que cette personne moderne (et/ou chrétienne) s'inscrit au pluriel, et qu'il n'y a donc pas une conception de personne moderne ou chrétienne, mais plusieurs, ce qui est d'autant plus vrai que cela se vérifie au sein d'une même société ou nation. Il faudrait, de ce fait, remettre en cause également cette habitude de penser l'Occident et la modernité comme un bloc homogène, où toutes les différences sont soumises à une seule « idéologie », au sens de Dumont (1985). Cela reviendrait à accepter *ethnographiquement*, j'ose le dire, toutes les complexités

et multiplicités existant dans ces sociétés, dont celles des conceptions de la personne, et particulièrement, celles des catholiques dévoilées ici.

Selon leur notion de personne, donc, les catholiques de Casa Amarela s'appréhendent profondément comme êtres individuels, mais, aussi, comme êtres « dividiuels », multiples et extensifs. Tous sont partis d'un même principe essentiel et fondamental de la conception de la personne humaine chrétienne, soit la divinité catholique (Dieu), corps et âme, à partir de laquelle ils ont engendré leurs propres interprétations et variations de ce qu'est l'être humain. Ainsi, ce que j'ai essayé de décrire et de comprendre, et ce que ces catholiques m'ont révélé et montré durant nos rapports, c'est que malgré leur propre individualité, ils ne sont pas finis en eux-mêmes, ils sont – en corps et en âme – *complétés par* et *extensifs* à la divinité catholique et aux autres. Donc, l'homme catholique est en rapport avec les autres et avec/dans la divinité catholique : la personne humaine chrétienne est à la fois une (individuelle) et multiple (dividiuelle). À partir de ce que j'ai déjà dit, il est possible d'inférer que ces catholiques se construisent comme « attachés à et détachés » en même temps de la divinité catholique, des autres et de la nature, en une démarche franchement cosmologique.

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The body of the Other: to treat well or mistreat?

Tensions and mistreatment at the end of life^{1*}

Clarice E. Peixoto

Resumo

Tendo como pano de fundo as políticas públicas brasileiras criadas para diminuir os maus-tratos às pessoas envelhecidas, este artigo aponta para uma ausência de controle e de fiscalização dos órgãos públicos nas instituições asilares, o que estimula a criação contínua dos estabelecimentos privados e o seu funcionamento precário. Trata-se, aqui, de analisar as condições de institucionalização e as relações entre os residentes e a equipe médica e técnica de uma casa geriátrica privada. Ao apontar para o (não) atendimento às necessidades básicas e cotidianas das pessoas que vivem nessas instituições e, conseqüentemente, para os (des) cuidados no final da vida, o artigo busca desmistificar a percepção de que, por serem privadas, elas dão maior atenção aos seus velhos residentes.

Palavras-chave: maus-tratos na velhice, institucionalização & asilamento, violência contra velhos.

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the Brazilian public policies designed to reduce the mistreatment of aged people, this article points to a lack of control and supervision of public agencies in geriatric houses and asylums, which stimulates the continuous creation of private establishments and their malfunction. The objective, here, is to analyze the conditions of institutionalization and the relations between the residents and the medical-technical staff of a private geriatric house. Pointing to the (non) response to basic needs and

¹ *The author would like to thank Michel Alcoforado, student assistant. State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ-Prociência) supported this research. I am also grateful to the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for Research of Rio de Janeiro State (FAPERJ), and the Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

daily life of people who live in these institutions and, consequently, to the (un) care at the end of life, the article aims to demystify the perception that, because they are private, they give greater attention to their old residents.

Keywords: mistreatment of the elderly, institutionalized care, violence against the elderly.

The body of the Other: to treat well or mistreat?

Tensions and mistreatment at the end of life^{2*}

Clarice E. Peixoto

Introduction

Following the example of European nations, Brazilian policy-makers have recently started paying attention to violence against the elderly. Taking as a background public policies implemented by the Brazilian government to reduce mistreatment of elderly people, this article analyses the living conditions and the relationships between residents and the medical-technical staff at a geriatric house³, located in Rio de Janeiro. The intention of this paper is to relativize the social construction that identifies public institutions to dramatic events of life asylums, and private institutions to the well-being of the end of life. Both are sent between cares and careless, between the good deal and a bad deal.

As in others European countries, since the 1980s, the French government, social planners and researchers have looked for solutions in response to what is termed the 'demographic shock', which in this case refers to the ballooning of the elderly population due to the aging of the 'baby boomer' generation, and the rapid growth of the population aged above 60 due to advancements in medical technology and increased quality of life. This has resulted in numerous imbalances in the economic and social structures of these countries.

In France⁴, public expenditure on social welfare for the elderly is not restricted to old age pensions and free medical care. It includes services to help them to stay living in their own homes because the costs are lower

2 The author would like to thank Michel Alcoforado, student assistant. State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ-Prociência) supported this research. I am also grateful to the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for Research of Rio de Janeiro State (FAPERJ), and the Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

3 Two terms are used in this article to name the institutions for the aged (ILPIs): a more general – geriatric house; and another more specific – asylum – still tied to the old system of institutionalization.

4 For many years I have developed comparative research between France and Brazil, they are countries with particular social policies for the family and for old age.

than the subsidies for their maintenance in a *maison de retraite* or a geriatric hospital. From the 1990s, the French Economic and Social Council encouraged greater involvement of people over the age of 65 in social activities, facilitated access to special training, implemented insurance plans to cover the risks of work accidents, and emphasized the treatment received in public institutions and, principally, guaranteeing financial support for activities proposed by individuals and associations to the elders. France's policy shift was in response to a study from the Council of Europe (1987) which revealed high rates of violence in the family directed towards elderly people. Then they realized that their country had not yet paid adequate attention to the 'abuses inflicted on the elderly', including disrespectful, aggressive and violent treatment (Hugonot 2000).

In 1992, the Council of Europe established seven categories of mistreatment, which acknowledges that violence against old people takes a multitude of forms involving 'any act or omission that harms another's life, physical or psychological integrity, or freedom, or seriously affects the development of the person's personality and/or impairs his or her financial security'.⁵

In Brazil, this concern materialized in 1994 with the *Política Nacional do Idoso* (National Policy for the Elderly)⁶, which established the national council for the elderly with the objective of assuring the social rights of people over the age of 60, and creating conditions to enhance their autonomy, integration and effective participation in society. This law sets out the principles, directives, organization, government actions and general provisions that should guide the policy in question. In 1999, this was strengthened by the creation of the *Plano Nacional de Saúde do Idoso* (National Health Plan for the Elderly, PNSI), which established directives and redefined programs, plans, projects and activities for the sector providing full-time care for the aging and the elderly.⁷ However it was only in 2001, following the creation of the Ministry of Health's national policy for reducing accidents and violence, that the categories of mistreatment were defined⁸. Seven categories were adopted to classify the various forms of violence inflicted on the elderly population. These are similar to those published by the Council of Europe in

5 See Council of Europe, 1992.

6 Law no. 8.842/1994.

7 Law no. 1.395/1999.

8 Law no. 737/2001, pp.51-3.

1992: the only difference is that the Brazilian policy explains the content of each in more details, as follows:

Physical abuse, physical mistreatment or physical violence: expressions referring to the use of physical force to compel elderly people to act against their will, to harm them, to cause them pain, incapacity or death.

Psychological abuse, psychological mistreatment or psychological violence: verbal or gestural aggression intended to terrify the elderly, humiliate them, restrict their freedom or isolate them from social interaction.

Sexual abuse, sexual violence: terms referring to the unwilling exposure of an elderly person to homosexual or heterosexual acts or play. These abuses aim to obtain sexual excitement, sexual intercourse or erotic practices through seduction, physical violence or threats.

Abandonment: a form of violence manifested by the absence or desertion of those responsible at government, institutional or family level for providing care to an elderly person in need of protection.

Neglect: refers to the omission or the refusal to provide due and necessary care to elderly people by members of the family or institution responsible for such care. Frequently occurs in association with other forms of abuse that inflict physical, emotional and social scars and traumas, especially on those who have multiple dependencies or disabilities.

Financial and economic abuse: involves the improper or illegal exploitation of the elderly, or the use of their financial resources and property without consent. This type of violence occurs primarily in the family context.

Self-neglect: conduct of the elderly person that threatens their own health or safety, when he or she refuses the necessary care of his or herself.

Over the years, the definition of mistreatment has been broadened to include 'everything contrary to good treatment'. In other words, the lack of attention and improper ways of speaking to and treating old people have become perceived as mistreatment. In France, instruments for greater control and inspection of care institutions were created to help prevent mistreatment, making supervision more systematic and less irregular⁹. Over the

9 Even so the president of Allô Maltraitance Personnes Âgées (ALMA), a Parisian NGO that works to combat mistreatment of the elderly, emphasizes the difficulty of obtaining information on the aggressions suffered in geriatric institutions. The reasons for this are manifold: "old people do not complain out of fear of reprisals, staff do not warn management out of corporatism, families out of fear of losing the place [of their elderly relative], and managers out of fear of the image of harming the establishment's image". (*Le Monde* 17/10/2008).

last thirty years or more, the French efforts to implant a geriatric policy help prolong the length of time citizens can live in their homes, and has created numerous social programs that Brazil is still far from attaining (Peixoto & Clavairolle 2005)¹⁰.

Brazil has 3,548 geriatric institutions, according to the survey of Applied Economic Research (IPEA)¹¹. The majority of them is philanthropic (65.2%), the private ones are approximately 28.2%, and the public are only 6.6%. An interesting factor is that 25.4% of these institutions were created in the last decade of the 20th century (Camarano 2010). This enquiry also shows that there has been a marked growth of private institutions, and it is unknown whether they comply with the legal requirements for operation. Thus, considering these data, we can deduce that Brazilian families are increasingly transferring the care of their older relatives to these institutions, a consequence of changes in family arrangements and the absence of public policies supporting the family and the elderly (Peixoto 2007, 2009).

Another study, conducted by the Order of Lawyers of Brazil (OAB) and by the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP), in twenty four Brazilian institutions (six public, eight private and eight charities or NGOs), shows that a large proportion of them work with insufficient number of professionals and skilled technicians, while inadequate facilities put the health of old people at risk. "Many of these situations transit between negligence and criminal practices". (CFP-OAB 2008).

The Brazilian institutions for elders involve a greater emotional distance with more impersonal care, and a fairly strict disciplinary regime that very often fails to meet the needs of the people in the institution. The situation is worsened by the failure of public authorities to control and inspect geriatric houses, whether public or private, which encourages their poor functioning. The state's lack of interest in the welfare of residents is reflected in the inadequate training for caring for the elderly, the poor physical conditions of

10 I will mention only some social services offered to remain old people in their homes: a) the home care service to help with the cleaning and clothing, follow on purchases and exits, and whose home attendants (*aides ménagères*) are trained for this role and have a Certificate of Fitness to Help Functions Household/CAFAD; b) the service of nursing care (*aide-soignante*), which offers technical care and hygiene at home; c) the family associations and/or NGOs, supported by the State, and created to help families with young children or aged persons, serving at home or in own local help; d) the delivery meals at home, which are prepared by industrial kitchens subsidized by the State, and responsible for distribution in schools, *maisons de retraite* and hospitals.

11 See Camarano, Ana Amélia. "Condições de funcionamento e de infraestrutura das Instituições de Longa Permanência para Idosos do Brasil, 2007-2009", 2010.

the establishments and the subsequent low quality of the services provided. These forms of mistreatment are also taken to be forms of violence against the life of the elderly person (Faleiros2007). This also contributes to a certain degree of consensus in Brazilian society over the institutions for the elderly. They are still perceived as the old asylums that housed those who had no family, or whose families could not care for them. Thus, there are many prejudices and stereotypes surrounding these institutions, in particular the public ones that house those who cannot afford to live in private institutions, where, it is believed, they would have better accommodation and receive better care.

The research I conducted in the geriatric house in Rio de Janeiro (public and private)¹² showed that the concerns and priorities with the treatment of old people can be very different. The largest public institution of Rio de Janeiro has based its management on a proposal to ‘humanize’ the relations between the people there, as well as improving the physical space (repairs, repainting, gardening improvements, etc.) and renewing the healthcare team (hiring doctors, geriatrician, physiotherapists, nutritionists, psychologists, speech therapists, dentists, nurses, cares and social workers). The aim is to turn this institution into a model establishment for Rio de Janeiro, a place where residents will be afforded treatment that respects their citizenship and human rights. Although this is the broader objective, the institution is faced with the ‘bad habits’ in treatment derived from the old asylum system, and with the precarious state of public funding¹³.

In the private institution where research was conducted, the prevalence of commercial and financial interests is revealed by the small group of employees, by the lack of health staff, unsatisfactory living spaces, poor food and the disrespectful treatment accorded to residents.

12 The data in this article comes from a wide-ranging anthropological study of family and institutional violence, conducted in the period 2004-2011. The research analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on mistreatment of old people in Rio de Janeiro. Statistics were obtained from the Institute of Public Security/ISP, referring to complaints registered at police stations (2002-2006; 2011), the Senior Citizen’s Office/Delegacia do Idoso (2004-2006), the Senior Helpline (Ligue-Idoso) and the Ombudsman of the Social Welfare and Human Rights Office/SEASDH(2007-2008). The qualitative study, involving participant observation over an eight-month period, has conducted in two institutions for elderly, one public and the other private. The ethnography was also supplemented with semi-structured interviews in three others institutions: a public, a private and one philanthropic. A study in a French public geriatric hospital in the Parisian region, undertaken during an eight-month period in 2006, served as a point of comparison. This article looks at just one of the private geriatric house, which data derives from a long period of observation and interviews with the residents.

13 See Peixoto (2011) on the analysis of public institutions.

Home, Sweet Home...

It is not surprising that many geriatric houses and asylums adopt the word 'Lar' (home) in the institution's name. The term suggests a new institutionalized life not so different from their original home. Other terms are used that also transmit this notion of family coziness: *casa* (house); *recanto* (nook); *solar* (manor house); *vivenda* (villa); *abrigo* (shelter). In other words, a reference to family conviviality, the same habits and everyday surroundings of the previous life. Other institutions adopt terms like hotel, hostel, guesthouse, resort, grove (*hotel*, *pensionato*, *pousada*, *estância*, *bosque*) and so on, all transmitting the idea of leisure, pleasure and temporary stay as during travel, interrupting the daily pace of life and allowing residents to forget the problems of domestic life. This image also implies that services are provided to a temporary guest and allude to the possibility of returning to one's previous life.

The Brazilian private institution for the elderly analyzed here adopts 'home' in its administrative name to reinforce the idea of a family environment, but also uses the word 'hotel' to suggest temporary and comfortable accommodation free of everyday concerns/tasks.

The *Hotel-Lar*¹⁴ is a private geriatric institution which was founded in 1980, and acquired by its current owner ten years ago. It can accommodate up to 45 residents. At the time of the research, 43 people over the age of 60 were living there, 32 women and 11 men. According to the director and owner Dr. Maria, 22 of the residents present some kind of psychological problem, and Alzheimer's disease, the others are independents and autonomous. The average age of the residents is approximately 76 and there is an enormous disparity between the average female and male ages: the women average 82 years and the men 65, a greater disparity than among the population as a whole, where the life expectancy of women is 78.3 years and of men 71 years.

The rite of entry into the institution requires candidates to undergo various exams to assess their degree of autonomy and independence (ADL and IADL). They also determine the cost of residence. The most infirm pay more with monthly rates varying between U\$ 567,53 and U\$ 851,30 (2009 values). These exams are carried out by the director herself who classifies a resident according to their degree of independence and autonomy.¹⁵ So, for

14 All the names in this paper are fictitious, including the elderly institution analyzed. It should be noted that first names are used regularly in Brazil without any connotation of lack of respect.

15 The scales ADL (activities of daily living) and IADL (instrumental activities of daily living) are created by

Dr. Maria,

Being independent means not requiring help to take a bath, defecate and urinate, as well as getting in and out of bed unaided. The independent elderly person can use money, make phone calls, catch a bus, and so on... However, many of these who are more independent are not autonomous.

Dr. Maria certifies the mental conditions of the candidate to discover the *patient's degree of dementia*: this involves exercises of localization (where he or she is) and dates (day of the interview, his or her birthday, etc.), repetition of phrases, and memorization of words, subtraction, reading and writing exercises. This information is contained, along with personal data on age, civil status, income, family relations, etc., on a form filed in the consultation room.

The director also claims other reasons for the institutionalization of those old people: “José did not know how to deal with money, he spends too much”; “Antonio, he is an alcoholic”; “Madalena was lost in the street, she could not find her way back home”. But Antonio himself said that he had a house and a car, but one day his son took him to visit a place that was ‘wonderful’. He found a strange place with many old people, and while someone showed him the house, his son fled. Madalena said that she sold her apartment to renovate her son’s home, so she could live with him. They did not adapt and he took her to the geriatric institution. Already Hercília, aged 87, says she was interned by her daughter who thought she was too old to live alone, even being independent and autonomous¹⁶. The case of Aparecida is a good example. She said:

I lived in a very nice and spacious apartment. It was mine, and I gave it to my niece when my husband died, because I have no inheritors, and this niece was the most needy. She moved in with me and brought her children. But it did not work because I was too prissy, I wanted all the things in place. So I divided the place up with her; each one with her things, each one cooking their own food.

geriatric medicine. They are used to assess the degree of independence of individuals. Completing the tables is very simple, just a yes or no answer is required. Positive answers receive one point and the total points obtained define the individual’s degree of independence/autonomy.

16 Only three residents stated that opted for geriatric institution. They are all men and independents, they don’t receive visits because they haven’t relatives. Only 12 people are frequently visited by children or family members, among them only one man.

One day, in a discussion, she told me to go out, out of her home because I had given it to her, and now it was hers!

The transition from a world of individual freedom to one of institutionalization is linked to aging, the appearance of diseases of varying degrees of seriousness, and family and social conditions. Adaptation to the new way of life is related to the capacity to accept aging and its vulnerabilities, but also and especially to preserving family ties. For those who are accustomed to family reciprocity and solidarity, the absence of the family at this stage of life may be perceived as abandonment, and tends to be felt much more severely than by those who always lived alone. For the latter, institutionalization tends only to be felt when they lose contact with the outside world. Studies on forced institutionalization have shown that old people suffer in silence, and perceive this act as a rejection and a violence that is reflected in the increase of infections, falls, depression, and more severely, mortality (Mallon 2004; Van Rompaey 2003; Plamondon 2000).

The institutionalization, thus, is the result of multiple factors, of which a significant part of which have little to do with the motivations of each one. While some enter into an institution to maintain their independence and autonomy that could be threatened by their children, others were interned by their families, often against their wishes.

Living Conditions at the Hotel-Lar

Located on a busy avenue of a wealthy district of the city, the *Hotel-Lar* looks like a pleasant place from the outside. It is formed by two residential houses –which I shall designate as wings I and II. There is just a single, narrow entrance, which leads directly to the reception and the director's consultation room: this is spacious with a washbasin and soberly decorated in green and white, with a well-kept winter garden at the rear. The location of the consultation room on the ground floor of wing I is strategic: the residents cannot see it. This facilitates the interviews with the relatives (and the payments) without necessarily having to enter into direct contact with the residents. For example, children and grandchildren come and go without being seen by their resident parent or grandparent.

One of the wings with individual rooms is reserved for wealthier residents. At the time of the research, only seven people lived in these rooms, which are very small (1.8m x2m) and simply furnished. Some have a small

refrigerator. The rooms are separated by thin wooden dividing walls that do not block noises from passing between them. There is no electric bell, night light or alarm in the rooms, meaning that the residents have to shout to the nurses when they require assistance with using the bathroom, taking their medicines and so on. Sometimes, when the residents insist, they receive rude replies or yells of 'shut up'! The beds have no protective barriers, which leads to frequent falls during sleep. João, for example, sleeps the whole time tied to his bed so that he does not fall out.

The less wealthy residents occupy rooms for three or four people, which are poorly lit and are fitted with old furniture. These collective rooms are a little wider to accommodate more beds. The distribution of the residents by room does not follow any medical criteria to accommodate them according to health conditions and/or according to ADL and IADL scales, with no separation between the most independent or autonomous and the most dependent and infirm. Hence, residents with serious infirmities share a room with others with less severe or no physical or mental deficiency. As a result, some people with Alzheimer's disease moan and shout in the day and night and disturb their room companions. In other words, the preliminary entrance examinations conducted by the doctor-owner have no medical criteria to ensure a better quality of life for the residents.

The corridors are very narrow, hindering access to trolleys and wheelchairs. A narrow ramp with a sweeping curve and no rooftop covering links the two wings; crossing this area becomes treacherous on rainy days. At the end of the corridor leading to these rooms in wing I is the bathroom used by the residents of this wing and, on its right, the staff bathroom. In fact, the *Hotel-Lar* has just two bathrooms for the 43 residents, one in each wing. The third bathroom is exclusively for staff use. The bathrooms are not gender specific, they are unsanitary and smell badly. Each bathroom contains one toilet. The bathroom in wing I is small and windowless. Decorated with brown tiles, it is dark and stuffy, and lacks any kind of safety adaptation for elderly people. Furthermore, the narrow door prevents access by wheelchairs. The solitary toilet is positioned between a high, old sink and an enormous waste bin (mixing every day waste and medical waste), brooms and floor cloths.

Wing II has two floors with seven collective and three individual rooms on the ground floor and one double and four individual rooms on the second floor. Wing II is even more rundown than Wing I. The access stairway is very

narrow and poorly maintained with a small, badly lit hall decorated with old furniture: a cupboard with a door falling off its hinges and one chair with a broken back. The bathroom has no lock on the door, which causes embarrassment for the women, and again is inadequately cleaned. Lourdes (63 years old) declares that she has to purchase toilet paper because the director says she 'shits a lot', and the *Hotel-Lar* cannot afford the extra expense. She suffers frequently from diarrhoea for which she receives no medication.

The canteen is equipped with enormous tables and flimsy plastic chairs. Four meals are served every day. The residents complain intensely about the food and the repetitive menu and Antônio complains that it is 'always badly cooked rice, pasta, minced meat and a cabbage salad'. Dessert is rarely served and no fruit, yoghurt nor biscuits are offered as snacks between meals. In addition, there are no alternative menu options: if the person dislikes a particular food, their only choice is to eat nothing. Ilda, for example, dislikes pea soup. Therefore, on the day the soup is served she goes hungry. Antônio says,

Life here is rubbish! We pay a fortune and get nothing in return. Breakfast, as you can see, is the same thing every day: milky coffee, bread and butter.

There is no specific room exists for recreational activities, which, when they occur, have to take place on the veranda or in the canteen. The veranda is large with a garden, caged birds and railings onto the street. This is where the residents prefer to spend most of their time.

Relations between Residents and Staff... (Lack of) Staff Care

The ratio of staff to residents is small if we take into account all the activities needed to run a geriatric house with approximately 43 residents: there are a total of twenty-one employees (just five men) divided into two shifts. Only ten employees per shift are available for the 43 elderly people. Of this total, three are cooks and the rest are nursing assistants whose duties range from providing baths and food, giving injections and medicines, and cleaning the establishment.

All the employees thus perform a multitude of activities, many of which go beyond their specific duties. For instance, the men act as nursing assistants and are responsible for transporting dependent residents (in their arms or on wheelchairs), and are also responsible for maintaining the building

(painting, small repair jobs), washing the rooms and cleaning the yard. Similarly, the female nursing assistants are responsible for washing clothes and cleaning the bathrooms. These employees thus have no time to give more attention to the residents. One resident, Alice falls frequently: she fell twice in one week, yet the staff considered this 'normal.' In her last fall, she broke her arms, felt pain, cried and complained, but nobody took her seriously. She was only given medicine two days later when, unable to stand the pain any longer, the director examined her and discovered the fracture.

The *Hotel-Lar* has just one doctor, the psychiatrist-owner, no paramedic and only one nurse who works during the morning shift. The director's son is a physiotherapist and organizes a weekly activity for the residents. The lack of a medical team is the residents' biggest concern and source of anguish. As Antônio said:

If you want a doctor, you have to pay. I myself had stomach ache the other day: I asked for medicine but nobody gave me anything. I told them to buy the medicine and put it on my monthly bill, but they said they could not. We pay a lot of money here but if you want a physiotherapist, a doctor, you have to pay extra. I could be living at home with money, spending it, but no, I have to pay a little over R\$ 900, ooevery month here. There are people here who have nothing and pretend that they have. Her there (Miriam) has nothing and her son makes a deal with the director pretending that she needs to stay here. I've already told her to run away.

The lack of attention and adequate treatment for each person's infirmities are the biggest source of complaint. Dora, for example, says that the staff 'are impatient and rude'. The residents are often labeled by the staff as 'grumblers' and 'complainers' and frequently called 'pig', 'filthy', and 'crazy'. The residents feel neglected and state that the nursing assistants or the institution's administration do not take their aches and pains seriously. Antônio asked us one day, 'Can you hear those cries?[of two old women with Alzheimer's].They cry like that all day and nobody does anything. It's always the same thing'.

Various residents complain of intestinal problems (constipation or diarrhea) but are not given medication. In other example, Liliana, whose room is on the second floor of wing II, further away and without easy access to the administration, told how she had fallen in her room and waited six hours to

be treated: 'The staff here are really bad; they leave us suffering from pain'. The same applies to Flora, who moans with pain all day. Her room companion says:

I don't know what's wrong with her. She was taken to the hospital, and when she arrived back she spent more than half an hour in the wheelchair with her head thrown back, there in the corridor. Stuck there, waiting.

Amélia, who has difficulty speaking, is another resident who cries for help all day without receiving attention.

But José's experiences is one of the most serious cases of neglect, verging on total social abandonment. He eats the plants from the garden, the rubbish from the bathroom, and licks the toilet. José dislikes bathing and therefore does not wash every day. Nor is he convinced of the need to do so to avoid infections. We observed that this prompts discrimination and stigmatization not only by the other residents, but also especially by the staff who call him 'disgusting' and 'pig'.

The Institutionalization of Old Age and Living Conditions

Many studies have been made of care institutions, beginning with the classic works of Foucault (1975) and Goffman (1961). These scholars stimulated countless studies of the institutionalization of old age all over the world. In Brazil, while the institutionalization of children, mental patients and criminals has received considerable attention from our social sciences researchers, Institutionalized old age is yet to be widely investigated. The works of Groisman (1999, 1999a, 2002) are probably the most widely referenced in studies of institutional aging.

I do not intend to summarize the history of geriatric houses in Brazil, Groisman and others have already done this, nor analyze Long-Stay Institutions for the Elderly (ILPIs) in the Brazilian context. I highlight the living and care conditions in the *Hotel-Lar* and compare them with the categories used to classify mistreatment of old people proposed by Health Surveillance Agency (Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária/ANVISA) for running this kind of establishment. They reveal that the institutionalization of elderly people remains invisible to the wider public.

Since 1999, the National Plan for the Health of the Aged (PNSI) has set out rules for the operation of geriatric institutions and similar

establishments, as well as geriatric hospital services, delegating responsibility for assessing their compliance with regulations to the states and municipalities. However, the regulations are only effective when accompanied by public policies for the health of the aged and careful monitoring of public and private establishments.

Based on PNSI, ANVISA established specifications for the operation of long-stay institutions, specifically with regards to space. I present a comparison with the conditions observed in the *Hotel-Lar*. The regulations state that:

There must be at least two external entrances, one to be used exclusively by services. [the *Hotel-Lar* has just one entrance used by people, deliveries and waste].

Stairs and ramps must be at least 1.2m wide to allow trolleys and wheelchairs to pass. [in the *Hotel-Lar* the access stairway to the first floor of wing II is very narrow and the steps smooth and slippery, while the ramp is less than 1.2m wide making the use of trolleys and wheelchairs difficult].

Dormitories must hold four people at most and have a minimum area of 5.50m² per bed, should not be mixed and must be equipped with a bathroom, night light and alarm bell.

[in the *Hotel-Lar* the rooms are separated by gender but lack private bathrooms and the residents are forced to use the shared bathroom. None of the dormitories has a night-light or alarm bell].

Individual sleeping quarters must have a minimum area of 7.50m², including space for a wardrobe and the resident's belongings.

[in the *Hotel-Lar* the individual rooms are approximately 4m² in size].

Shared bathrooms must be separated by gender and have toilet closets wide enough to allow front and side access by a wheelchair user.

[the *Hotel-Lar* has just two bathrooms for residents, without separation by gender and lacking any support or safety equipment (bars and alarm). The bathrooms contain cleaning materials and a large waste bin for every kind of rubbish (quotidian and medical)].

Should have rooms for collective activities with a minimum area of one square meter per person.

- [the *Hotel-Lar* does not have an activities room, so the residents have to use the veranda or the canteen].
- Should have its own transport service for residents.

- [the home lacks its own transport; in emergencies residents are transported in the institution director's car. At night, this means waiting for the director to drive from her home to the *Hotel-Lar*].
- Laundry: personal clothing and institutional laundry (bed linen, towels, etc.) should be washed separately in washing machines, and specially dried.
- [the *Hotel-Lar* laundry is not separated in any way, and there are no washing machines or tumble driers. Everything is washed in cement basins and dried on clothes lines].

An individual's basic needs can be defined as the set of bio-psychosocial requirements that allow him or her to live healthily and maintain his or her identity (tastes, culture, behaviors...) in a communal space provided with security and healthcare or well-being (Malo 2000). Life in an institution is a microcosm apart, which modifies social rules and distorts the relations between people, restricting the freedom of residents and their capacity to choose and attain their wishes. Institutional rules thus appear to have the force of law (Mallon 2004).

The human and physical facilities provided by a care institution cannot ignore the risks of mistreatment. Rundown facilities and poor quality care are institutional forms of violence. If the institutions are to avoid banalizing everyday violence they must value the human dimension, offering comfort and respecting the individual's pace of life or, at the very least, introducing less rigid schedules of daily activities. It is not the case of *Hotel-Lar* where the few staff members have to perform many different tasks, and respect individual rhythms is almost impossible.

The description of the physical and psychological living conditions in the *Hotel-Lar* already indicates the highly vulnerable – and unlawful – state in which the 43 residents live. The total absence of control and inspection by public authorities allows this private establishment to operate. The state's inertia led to the scandal of Santa Genoveva Clinic, a case analyzed by Groisman (1999), where the death of 99 elders shocked Brazilian society by revealing abuse, lack of hygiene and illicit enrichment. This attests to the need for systematic supervision to curb the forms of violence that can take root within geriatric institutions: it is imperative to break the silence as it results in mistreatment.

To finish

In recent decades, laws have called for respect of the ethical principles related to vulnerable elderly people, both in terms of recognizing their rights and of regulating their domestic and institutional protection. To implement these policies, social programs were created to disseminate the idea of good treatment as an individual and collective responsibility. For instance, France created a new regulation for institutionalized people: the *bienveillance* (well-treated) instead of *malveillance* (abuse). The National Committee for Preventing the Mistreatment of Elderly, created in 2002, has the objective of making the population aware: ‘the fight against the mistreatment of elderly people is a responsibility of everyone, given that in everyday life anyone may come across situations and/or risks of mistreatment in the family or professional setting’¹⁷. To turn *malveillance* into *bienveillance*, the same Committee issued a guide¹⁸ designed to develop *bienveillance* and to reinforce the policy of preventing mistreatment in medical-hospital and geriatric institutions. The plan’s aim is to question the taboo surrounding mistreatment, informing the public and training professionals, denouncing those responsible for the abuses and protecting the victims. Hence ‘to combat mistreatment it is necessary above all to change the way in which elderly people are seen, recognizing their role in society and considering them as individuals with rights and responsibilities, but also needs and expectations: being recognized, heard and understood’. That same year, a new national plan was created for ‘Aging Well’ and ‘Treating well and combating mistreatment’. (Bilé& Martz 2010).

The Brazilian legislation recommends that the family has the principal responsibility for the care of their elders. Only in the absence or failure of the relatives, the State is responsible¹⁹. The notion of the *bienveillance* was regulated with the creation of the Statute of the Elderly (Estatuto do Idoso, 2003) considered to provide better protection for people over the age of 60, regulating their rights and responsibilities and, principally, assigning the responsibilities of the state and the family in the care of old people. The

17 Gouvernement of France, ‘Prévenir et lutter contre la malveillance des personnes âgées’, Comité National de Vigilance contre la Malveillance des Personnes Agées, Ministère de la Santé et de la Protection Sociale, 2002.

18 Gestion des risques de malveillance en établissement. France, Ministère de la Santé et de la Protection Sociale, 2007.

19 Constitution of 1998, art. 230. The responsibility for the elderly are from “the family, the society and the state have a duty to assist the elderly, ensuring their participation in the community, defending their dignity and well-being, guaranteeing them the right to life”.

new statute established the framework for creating a “senior helpline” and “senior citizen’s” offices in almost all Brazil’s states, as well as numerous social programs targeted at this age group. Two years later, in 2005, a plan for combating violence against elderly people was created, and the outcome of a joint endeavor by the National Council for the Rights of the Elderly/CNDI (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos do Idoso), of the Federal government, and social movements. Its objective is to establish systematic action strategies based on the planning, organization, coordination, control, monitoring and evaluation of all the stages of execution of the actions for preventing and confronting violence against the elderly.

The State, however, lacks adequate inspection and supervision to curb the growth in family and institutional violence against the elderly, as revealed by statistics compiled by Brazilian institutes and researchers (Minayo 2003; Faleiros 2007; Camarano 2010; Peixoto 2011). These sociological and anthropological studies have also pointed to an increase in accusations of domestic violence against the elderly, and all show that the aggressor is always a family member. However, if for acts of domestic violence against the aged, there are specific channels for complaints and monitoring (see above), in the case of institutional violence, there is only the Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA). But, as this agency is also responsible for the regulation, control and monitoring the relations of production and consumption of all goods and services related to health (food, drugs, cosmetics, labs, clinics and hospitals, ports, airports, and other more), it can hardly be expected to be diligent in monitoring geriatric institutions as well.

The analysis of living conditions in a private geriatric institution, which has never been surveyed by any Committees nor ANVISA, reveals that the welfare of the elderly is in theory guaranteed by Brazilian law, it still has a long way to break the wall of silence and indifference to the mistreatment of elderly people. In other words, it is necessary to create specific instances for the control and supervision of the basic needs and daily life of people who live in these institutions and, consequently, to the care at the end of life.

My research, of a qualitative nature, involved studying five geriatric houses; two of them publics and two privates, one philanthropic. The objective was to compare the living conditions of the older institutionalized. Although this article presents an analysis of only one private institution, the studies of Groisman on geriatric institutions (e.g. Santa Genoveva), and what

we observed in the others private institutions, questions the idea that private geriatric institutions give more and better attention to their residents than public. This is, perhaps, largely due to the neglect of government agencies that are supposed to control and supervise these institutions. Without such control the situation there is little chance that change will occur.

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Presentation

Lorenzo Macagno @ Cristina Pompa

“Religion” and “ethnicity” occupy a central place in the history of anthropological thought. Brazilian anthropology is no exception. In recent years, the political use of the concept of “culture” has led us to rethink our use of these terms and concepts; once comfortably distinct, they have now become blurred genres (Geertz, 1983). One symptom of this change is the fact that the essentialist idea of culture has become an instrument of identity self-affirmation, and has become part of the legal language of rights. Thus, various actors – social movements, nation spokespersons, activists, government officials and intellectuals in general – constitute a complex arena of debates. The categories of “religion” and “ethnicity” take on new meanings in the languages of interculturality, codes, and disputes over identity present in the most diverse arenas: the “natives” – and the State – can now, more than ever before, deal with the “things” of anthropology.

In Brazil, particularly since the new constitution of 1988, religion and ethnicity have assumed, as an indissoluble pair, the form of a new grammar in which multiple agents intervene. The key to this grammar lies in its imminent “generative” power – to use here a Chomskyan and Barthian evocation – capable of creating worlds of new meaning. The articles gathered in this dossier condense some of the main concerns shown by Brazilian anthropology after this kind of “identity” turn; a turn, it should be remembered, that was inaugurated in 1988, and that has become more evident over the last fifteen years.

The most outstanding evidence of the renewed importance of religion and ethnicity can be adduced from the research agendas of anthropologists and the State; demarcation of indigenous lands and *Quilombola* (maroon) territories, policies on quotas for Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples in universities and the state apparatus, patrimonialization of material and immaterial goods, the definition and recognition of “traditional” peoples and knowledge, and so on. Alongside this agenda, a series of tensions lead to the mobilization – often unpredictably – of ethno-religious languages. A good example of these tensions – addressed by some articles in this dossier – is the conflict between the so-called Afro-Brazilian neo-Pentecostal religions.

The dossier is divided into two parts, based more on thematic criteria than on their content or “substance”. However. The predominance of articles focussing on the Afro-Brazilian religions is, in itself, an almost inevitable symptom of the history of research on religion and ethnicity in Brazil. To a considerable extent, studies on the Afro-Brazilian religions is identified, from the very outset, with the wealth of Brazilian anthropology as a whole. However, in addition to this apparent preeminence, the concern that mobilizes the authors of this dossier is an eminently “relational” one: today, for example, it would be almost impossible to think about the identity dynamics of the Afro-Brazilian religions without thinking, contrastively, about the Pentecostal religions, and vice-versa.

The first part of the dossier begins with an article by Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, who focuses on some trends in the debate between the Afro-Brazilian religious field, the black Catholic movement, and the evangelical movement. He asks how, in recent years, various religious groups have positioned themselves in relation to “black identity” and religion. The article provides us with one of the most important keys for understanding these relations, namely public policies geared towards the patrimonialization of the symbols of African heritage in Brazil.

In “The City and the African-Brazilian Religions”, Marcia Contins proposes a focused, self-reflexive commentary based on her fieldwork experiences with Afro-Brazilian religions in Rio de Janeiro. But she also incorporates data on the history of “black Pentecostals” and charismatic Catholicism. The “city”, as a space of flows and transits, invites the researcher to investigate a plurality of actors and new meanings that often appear to transcend the wider labels of “ethnic” and “religious”. In this case, one of the most revealing facets of these studies is the effort to map the construction of subjectivities and specific individual trajectories.

In the third article of this first section, Daniela Cordovil discusses “public policies” on African-Brazilian religions in Brazil. The work reflects the growing protagonism of a series of actors and activists who now occupy leading positions in civil associations, and various ministerial councils and committees. As a result of these policies, the State has devised a broad classification system: the “Afro-Brazilian” religions and their followers are labeled as “povos tradicionais de terreiro” (traditional *terreiro* peoples), and more recently, as “*povos e comunidades tradicionais de matriz Africana* (people and

traditional communities of African origin. The article therefore highlights an important dimension of the relationship between social movements and State officials, redefining Afro-Brazilian religions as representatives and voices of a “black cultural heritage” in Brazil.

The first part of the dossier ends – almost by way of conclusion – with an article by Paula Montero that helps us to think of some of the dynamics that permeate the whole of this dossier by discussing the importance of the concepts of “religion” and “ethnicity” for the political system. The author shows that these two concepts enter into a tense relationship with the “secular world”. An important element of her analysis is the uniqueness of the “Republican state” in Brazil, whose bureaucratic structure was dependent upon the autonomous state apparatus of the ecclesiastical administration. In the first part of her essay, Montero shows that the Catholic Church, through its control of social welfare, maintained its influence over a significant part of the dynamics of construction of citizenship. A substantial change appears to emerge with the 1988 Constitution, which “widened”, so to speak, the notion of religion, allowing both Spiritist and Afro-Brazilian groups to acquire full rights to public expression. The article shows that in recent years, the turn towards a kind of “pluralist normativism” has paved the way for processes of “juridification” of ethnic and religious demands. The conflict between the neo-Pentecostals and the religions that have a privileged relationship with the “national” (especially Catholicism and the “Afro-Brazilian” religions) poses new ethical and political challenges.

In the second part of the dossier, the mapping of the pair “religion-ethnicity” is extended to other ethnographic territories. A sensitive dimension of this extension is condensed in the complex relationship between the “local” and the “global”, or rather – to evoke the well-known formula of Arjun Appadurai (1996:192) – in the dynamics of production of “new localities”.

In “Under the Berlin sky: *Candomblé* on German shores”, Joana Bahia focuses on the relationship between migration and the production of new ethnicities and religiosities among Brazilian immigrants in Germany in particular in the *Candomblé terreiro* of *Ilê Obá Silekê*, located in the city of Berlin. She discusses the local resignifications of symbols related to “Brazilian culture” and the new identity arrangements created by the “flow” of immigration.

Marcos Silva da Silveira then inquires about ramifications of identity

among a members of a Hare Krishna group. This time the counterpoint is Brazil and India. Inspired by the contributions of Victor Turner on the Bhakti Yoga of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and its universalization, the article also focuses on the trajectory of a Brazilian follower of the Hare Krishna movement who, in 1996, took part in the Centenary Festival of the founder of the group, in West Bengal. The author seeks, always in dialog with Turner, to identify the unique factors that enabled a series of “spiritual masters” all over the world successfully to create a vast movement both in India and beyond.

Fabio Mura compares two ethnographically distinct situations: the Guarani-Kaiowa of Mato Grosso do Sul, and the Tabajara of the State of Paraíba. Both cases help us to think contrastively about two types of political developments of the relationship between religion and ethnicity. The author remains alert to a series of recent anthropological debates on the (false) dichotomy of “nature-culture” (inspired by the Works of Tim Ingold, Phillipe Descola, and Bruno Latour, among others) and at the same time, while maintaining part of the theoretical arsenal of Fredrik Barth. Mura concludes that despite the colonial and neocolonial domination imposed by the State, the Kaiowa were successful in maintaining an “organizational autonomy” at local level. The Tabajara of Paraíba, by contrast, followed a different path. The increasing conversion of the Tabajaras to Pentecostalism – while other Tabajaras remained faithful to the use of other religious and ethnic diacritics, such as the *tore* – became a source of internal tensions. One of the interpretative devices for this comparison is the notion of “local traditions of knowledge”.

The dossier ends with an article by Emerson Giumbelli on the effects of the processes of patrimonialization in the field of religion, based on analysis of a survey on the recent designation of historical landmarks as listed buildings by the IPHAN - *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (Institution for National Historical and Artistic Heritage). The actors involved in this process produce a new state grammar as they provide “official recognition” of a series of Catholic and Afro-Brazilian places of worship (temples, churches, territories). The article poses the challenge of thinking of the new languages for the construction of “nationality” that emerge in these processes of patrimonialization.

The articles presented here are situated, in addition to the various ethnographic contexts on which they focus, at a particular moment in the construction of anthropological knowledge about the self-conscious and

reflexive actors who give life to the complex drama of ethno-religious creativity. They come from the most diverse segments of the public sphere: spokespersons of the State (like the IPHAN and other ministerial agents), intellectuals, social movements, activists, religious leaders, anthropologists, and various “interpreters” of the nation. We are therefore faced with a plurality of voices that compete, each in their own way, for the meaning of “culture”. This “dual hermeneutic” – or reflexivity – has substantially changed the conditions in which we conduct our own research. Now, a series of actors challenge the *docto* knowledge of anthropology, i.e. the science that reflects with particular emphasis on the cultural and symbolic dimensions of human experience. The contributions of this dossier therefore propose new itineraries and cartographies, in order to deal with those dilemmas. Part of this effort is the need to renew our theoretical imagination, so that we can dialog with interlocutors who, while not specialists, incorporate an anthropological language into their political demands. Evoking the well-known reflections of Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2009), we are therefore faced with a tension between culture and “culture” (in inverted commas), in other words, we see that the line that separates culture (analyzed by the anthropologists) and “culture” (as a political-activist construction) no longer seems to be clearly-defined. This is a slippery slope that often passes by the uncertainties of political life, or as Max Weber would say, by the “momentum” in which specific disputes are capable of generating new micro-universes of meaning. The chapters of this dossier enquire, with the same anthropological perplexity, about the polysemic effects produced by these tensions.

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Religion and black cultural identity

Roman Catholics, Afro-Brazilians and Neopentecostalism

Vagner Gonçalves da Silva

Abstract

Over the last decade, a number of religious groups have assumed differing positions on the relationship between 'black identity' and religion. In this article, I intend to present some of the tendencies in the current debate between the Afro-Brazilian religions and the black Roman Catholic and Evangelical movements. I suggest that this debate be constructed from positions engendered from the interrelationships of these groups and from the policies for promoting the legacy of African symbols as a part of Brazil's national heritage.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian religions, Catholicism, evangelicals, black movement, Afro-Brazilian Ministry, black identity, ethnicity.

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Rita Amaral

Introduction

During the last few years I have been working on a research project, the object of which is to analyze the role that the Afro-Brazilian religions and their symbols have played in the construction of Brazil's national identity in general, and of black groups in particular¹. However, considering that during the last few decades a number of religious movements, in addition to the Afro-Brazilian ones, including the Black Catholic and Evangelical movements, have assumed certain positions on the relationship between 'black identity' and religion, this article intends to present some of the tendencies of the contemporary debate between these three religious fields. I suggest that this debate be constructed from positions that arise from within these fields and from the dialogs between them and their interrelationships with the policies for promoting the legacy of African symbols as a part of Brazil's national heritage. I identify at least three logical approaches to this debate: 1) the emphasis placed on the centrality of the Afro-Brazilian religions in the construction of black identity promoted by public agencies, whether religious or non-religious, by what is known as the Movement of 'People of African origin'; 2) the appropriation of aspects of Afro-Brazilian religiosity by the Black Catholic Movement, reinterpreting them in the context of the inculturization of theology and the liturgy, and 3) the denial (or minimization) of these religions as the only paradigmatic axis for the construction of

¹ The research was conceived by Vagner Gonçalves da Silva and Rita Amaral and the project initially received financial support from FAPESP, and currently from CNPq. For an overview of the project see Amaral e Silva, 2006, and the website: <http://www.doafroabrasileiro.org/>.

this identity on the part of black evangelical ministers. In these three fields Afro-Brazilian religiosity goes through a process of ‘culturalization’, but with meanings that differ according to the approach of each of the camps.

I will start by indicating some of the characteristics of these groups and the dialogs (be they pacific or conflicting) between them.

From the “Afro-Brazilian *terreiros*” to the “traditional people and communities of African origin”.

We do not need to revisit the long history of the development of the Afro-Brazilian religions in order to demonstrate the ambiguous position that they occupied in the public and private lives of the various social classes and ethnic groups in Brazil. During the period of Portuguese domination, non-Catholic religious practices ran the risk of being punished by the Tribunal of the Holy Office (the Inquisition). Many Africans and their descendents were punished for dissident religious practices. In the Constitution of the Brazilian Empire (that was founded after Independence in 1822), Catholicism remained the official religion and the presence of other religions was restricted to the private domestic space of people’s homes, or to buildings that did not have the external appearance of a temple. The first newspaper reports of the repression of *terreiros* installed in urban spaces date from this period. In the Republican Constitution (passed in 1889 after the overthrow of the monarchy), the separation between State and Church was established, but in practice there was no religious freedom for the adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions. The Republican Penal Code, by including spiritism, magic and its spells as crimes (art. 157), as well as the activities of witch doctors (art.158) created legal instruments through the use of which many of these adepts were accused, judged and condemned. During the period referred to as the Second Republic (established in 1930 by the populist dictator Getúlio Vargas), although still repressed, the *terreiros* were nevertheless fundamental elements in constituting the socialization of blacks and people of mixed race that spread throughout Brazilian society. Amusements and festivals were organized from inside the *terreiros*, like the carnival blocks, cordons and samba schools in Rio de Janeiro, the *maracatus* in Pernambuco and *afoxés* in Bahia, among countless other festivities and celebrations all over the country, such as the *jongo*, open air religious *festas* and pilgrimages.

Some of these manifestations even became to be seen as positive characteristics of the singularity of Brazilian culture, both within and outside the country. To give a few of the better-known examples: the sambistas João da Baiana and Pixinguinha popularized sambas with words that referred to magic and Candomblé. Carmem Miranda, dressed as a *Baiana* or *Mãe de Santo*, took her songs overseas, and with them elements of these religions. Jorge Amado, one of the greatest Brazilian writers, from his earliest works in the 1930s chose Baiano adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions as inspirations for his heroes, heroines and mythical characters like Antonio Balduino, Jubiabá, Pedro Archanjo, Dona Flor and Vadinho. Thus the Afro-Brazilian religions, situated in this ambivalent position between partial recognition due to their ‘cultural legacy’ (promoted by Vargas’ policies of cultural integration) and the de facto repression as ‘practicing religions’ (due to their lack of legitimacy under Catholic hegemony), established themselves through alliances, dialogs and conflicts between the originally black world of the *terreiros* and the outside world which, at least publicly, maintained a ‘strategic distance’ from this African legacy. A good example of this ‘national schizophrenia’ in relation to manifestations of black origin was the Mission of Folklore Research, idealized by Mario de Andrade, at the time director of the Culture Department of São Paulo. The objective of the mission, in 1938, was to film and record scenes and songs from Afro-Brazilian religious rituals and popular *festas* in the North and Northeast of the country. However, in order to be able to film and record these examples of ‘Brazilian culture’ the Mission needed to apply for a license from the police, as many of the religious activities that it intended to observe were subject to state control and inspection, like the *catimbós* and *xangôs* of the Northeast.

This stigma stemmed from the social relationships established under slavery, and also, once slavery had been abolished, continued under the impact of the ‘scientific’ theories of racism that pervaded society at the turn of the last century and were divulged by authors like Nina Rodrigues. This doctor was the first ethnographer of Candomblé to use the Afro-Brazilian religions as an empirical demonstration linking the supposed racial inferiority of the blacks with the nature of their cultural life. By the time these theories were officially abandoned they had already caused as much damage as the socioeconomic hardships that these people had suffered.

In the context of the black political movements of this time, neither Candomblé nor similar practices enjoyed much prestige.

The Black Brazilian Front (1931-1937), the first movement of its kind to be organized nationwide, thought that the integration of black people into society would be easier if they distanced themselves from anything that was seen as culturally backward: 'exotic' dances, samba, drum beating and Capoeira etc. (Hofbauer, 2006:359). Thus, elements from the African past were not considered strategic for the affirmation of contrasting identities nor for the political fight of black people for social and cultural recognition.

Similar positions were also defended by militants of the left. Jorge Amado, who was a member of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) from 1933 to 1954, advocated in a number of novels that people should move away from the alleged limitations imposed by popular beliefs in favor of the political fight that would transform their standard of living. Antonio Balduino, a character in the short novel *Jubiabá* (1935), is an excellent example of this attitude. A poor boy who was born on the hillsides of Salvador, the determining influence on his childhood was the community run by the *pai-de-santo* Jubiabá. As a grown man, after experiencing a number of rejections and cases of racial discrimination, he becomes a defender of the fight of the trade unions and the right to strike as a way of confronting the abuses of the ruling classes. He interrupts a ritual in the honor of Oxossi at the *terreiro* of Pai Jubiabá to encourage those present to join the strike:

“My people, you know nothing... I'm thinking inside my head that you don't know anything... You have to see the strike. Blacks go on strike, they're not slaves anymore. What good is it for blacks to pray, to come and sing for Oxossi? The rich give orders for the feast of Oxossi to be cancelled. Once the police closed down the feast, when Oxossi appeared as Oxalufã, the old man. And they took Pai Jubiabá with them, to prison. Oh yes, you remember. What is it that black people can do? Nothing, not even dance for the Orisha. So you don't understand anything. Black people are on strike, bringing everything to a halt: cranes, trams, electricity. Where's the light? Only from the stars. Blacks are the light and the trams. Blacks and poor whites, they're all slaves. All you have to do is to want not to be a slave anymore. My people, let's join the strike; the strike is like a bead necklace – everyone together is (a) beautiful (thing). If (the chord breaks and) one bead falls, all the others fall too. My people, let's go!” (Amado, 1935:299)

I would stress that this political position of the author's, transferred to many of his fictional characters, does not exactly disqualify the *terreiro* as a legitimate space for the production of social values. Jorge Amado himself was greatly responsible for the propagation of popular culture and was also a defender of religious freedom. As a deputy for the Brazilian Communist Party he presented an amendment to the constitution of 1946 guaranteeing religious freedom in Brazil.

Continuing in the artistic field, Glauber Rocha's *Barravento* (1962) is another example of this viewpoint of the relationship between Afro-Brazilian religions, identity and politics. It was filmed under the aegis of the *Cinema Novo*, which very willingly incorporated elements of popular culture, but also criticized the submission of blacks and the poorer classes to what it considered the ideology of the ruling classes. Right at the beginning of the film the following message appears on the screen:

“On the coast of Bahia live blacks who pull in the ‘xereu’, whose ancestors came to Brazil as slaves. Worship of the African gods continues to this day and this entire people is dominated by a tragic and fatalistic mysticism. They accept poverty, illiteracy and exploitation with a passivity characteristic of those who await the coming of God's kingdom. Iemanjá is the Queen of the Waters and the old mother of Irecê, the Dame of the Sea, who both loves and punishes fishermen. *Barravento* is the moment when things of the earth and the sea are transformed and sudden changes occur in their love and social lives.”

Glauber Rocha explains his motives for this view when narrating his conception of the film:

“One [Luís Paulino] told me [the plot] in my room and I fell asleep. Candomblé. Mysticism. Alienation. (...) The mediocrity of Protestantism, the hypocrisy of Catholicism, the unconscious servility of Candomblé. In Faulkner I found blacks who rebelled. And the Cuban Revolution shook up all the lyrical pretensions of the petty bourgeoisie (...) I abandoned the plot and engaged in arbitrary materializations. I reorganized the black mythology in line with a religion/economic dialectic. Religion opium of the people. Down with the Father. Down with folklore. Down with *Macumba*. Long live the man who fishes with a casting net, with his hands. Down with prayer. Down with mysticism. I attacked God and the Devil. *Macumbeiro de Buraquinho*, without ever

having been initiated. I began filming according to the real laws of materialist anthropology. *Cinema Novo*.” (Rocha, 2004:335)

In fact, at this time the field of religion and the political concepts of the left were in disagreement, above all when it was a question of religions which constituted a series of rituals associated with mysticism and trances (or ‘unconsciousness’). However, it is not hard to understand this disagreement, or antagonism, between a political outlook based on historical materialism that denounced the bourgeois strategies for creating economic and social relations based on ‘alienation’ of the working classes and on the fetishism of merchandise, and a fetishist religious ideology like that of the Afro-Brazilian cults. It should be noted, however, that this antagonism (between religion and left wing politics) was not entirely insuperable, at least for a few organized Catholic groups that were part of the Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEB) which became more prevalent from the 1970s onwards. This movement, strongly influenced by the Theology of Liberation, interpreted the Christian mission as including the need to fight for social and economic justice. The ‘option for the poor’ chosen by these groups brought them into close contact both with militant organizations that were resisting the military dictatorship and other popular religious groups such as the *terreiro* communities. In the 1990s, after the redemocratization of the country, the CEBs lost their influence, both within and outside the Catholic church. But in a certain sense they opened the way for the development for the Social and Black People’s Ministries.

The Afro-Brazilian religions continued to be seen as relatively irrelevant, as elements of political mobilization or identity, until at least the 1970s. From then on at least three factors determined a change in direction:

The first of these was the internal struggle of religious leaders for visibility, rights and respect. Utilizing the greater degree of social prestige due to their presence in cultural and academic areas, and in the media, these religions (above all Candomblé and Umbanda) began to be seen as legitimate possibilities of mass conversion, not only for black people, but also for people of mixed race, whites, artists, intellectuals and members of the urban middle class, including the cosmopolitan inhabitants of the metropolises in the Southeast of Brazil. Curiously, this tendency to elevate the universal conversion to the Afro-Brazilian religions damaged the ethnic character of their traditions of African origin.

The second factor is the diversification of ideological tendencies and political parties which made it possible for these religions to be gradually incorporated into the black social movements and government policy. It was within this context that the *terreiros* began to be seen as spaces in which important cultural elements of the country's African heritage had been preserved, as ritualistic languages, philosophical values, traditional cuisine and styles of dress.

The emergence of the Unified Black Movement (MNU) at the end of the 1970s² and of the redemocratization process in the following decade were essential for this new approach.

The activities and the agenda of this Movement, which included a significant number of denunciations and demands that questioned the living conditions of the black population and the limitations of Brazil's much vaunted 'racial democracy', resuscitated previous arguments, including '*quilombismo*'. *Quilombismo*, in which the activities of Afro-Brazilian communities that were resisting the current situation were seen as comparable to the struggles of their ancestors, was presented by Abdias do Nascimento, The *quilombos*, as spaces for socio-political action, and one of their most famous leaders, Zumbi dos Palmares, reemerged as symbols of the struggle and of the requirement for an effective transformation of Brazilian society that guaranteed the rights of the country's Afro-descendent people. This decade also saw the beginning of a series of steps taken by the black movement and national heritage government entities that resulted in the preservation of the Serra da Barriga (in Alagoas), where the Quilombo de Palmares had been located, as a National Monument. It was thus no surprise that the Abolition Centenary March organized by the black social movements in Rio de Janeiro in 1988 demanding greater state participation in the fight against racism, was also called the "Zumbi March Against Discrimination". Another politically and symbolically significant event was the change of the date for the celebration of emancipation from May 13 (the date that the abolition law was signed by Princess Isabel) to November 20 (the alleged date of Zumbi's death).

With the redemocratization of the country a new stage of the relationship between civil society and government began, with the state and the

2 For an overview of the formation of this see, among others: Barbosa, 1994; Nascimento e Nascimento, 2000; Hanchard, 2001; Silva, 2003; Contins, 2005; Hafbauer, 2006; Alberti e Pereira, 2007; Pereira, 2008; Silva e Pereira, 2009; Pereira, 2013.

1988 Constitution at least partially conceding to the demands of the black movement. The creation, in this same year, of the Palmares Foundation (under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture) with the objective of '*promoting the preservation of cultural, social and economic values, originating from the influence of black people, in the formation of Brazilian society*' opened the door for a series of actions that moved towards meeting these demands. The status of the *quilombos*, for example, now officially established as areas inhabited by the remaining Afro-descendants who had the right of ownership, extended to urban areas, including the *terreiros*. During Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (1995-2002) racism in Brazil was officially recognized, and in the government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) that followed a series of actions were taken directed at the black population, including the creation of the Secretariat for Policies and the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR), affirmative action and Law 10639 that made the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture mandatory in schools.

The third factor was the cultural-artistic movements that emerged, above all in Bahia, led by the 'Afro blocks' that initially proposed a street carnival as an alternative to the file past of the carioca samba schools, and even to Salvador's carnival, characterized as it was by an 'apartheid' of ethnicities and spaces. These blocks, with their references to rhythms, colors, aesthetics and dances, in which the quest for Africa is highly valued as a form of expression and construction of identity, emphasized their cultural connections with the Afro-Baiano religions. They offered a more current (and globalized) version of the carnival blocks (such as *afoxés* and *maracatus*) than that of their predecessors, who had also been linked to the *terreiros*. The Ilê Aiyê block, created in 1974, serves as a benchmark for this movement. Founded by the family of the *mãe-de-santo* Hilda Jitolu, the block emphasized both its connection to religion (by starting its procession with ceremonial rituals asking for the blessing and protection of the Orishas) and its commitment to black activism. Other blocks that were formed later also emphasized, to a greater or lesser extent, these connections, including Olodum (1979), Araketu (1980), Muzenza (1980) and others³.

As a consequence of this process, the prestige that Afro-Brazilian culture began to enjoy led to the government creating public policies through its

3 See, among others, Risério, 1981; Sansone e Santos, 1997; Guerreiro, 1981; Agier, 2000.

heritage entities, and beginning to establish official recognition and protection strategies. These initially took the form of conservation orders for the *terreiros* as material legacy and, more recently, the inclusion of *festas*, culinary items, musical styles and dances as the immaterial heritage of black culture in Brazil; the corollary of this process is still underway.

These public policies and social and artistic movements have created an impact in the Afro-Brazilian religious field, above all in the dispute for prestige and visibility between the different traditions and models of rites, also known as the ‘nations of Candomblé’. The first of these was to strengthen the recognition of the nations of Jeje-Nagô origin (such as *Queto Candomblé*, *Tambor de Mina*, *Batuque*, etc.) in the Candomblé ‘segment’, to the detriment of other forms of rites such as the *Candomblé de Angola*, *de Caboclo*, and *Jurema*, among others that are considered to be more ‘permeable’ to non-black influences. The second was the greater appreciation of Candomblé compared to Umbanda. In a list of 22 *terreiros* compiled between 1985 and 2013⁴ by municipal, state and federal bodies, seventeen belong to the Jeje-Nagô tradition. Only 4 belong to the Angola nation and just 1 to the Jurema tradition. As far as I know, not a single Umbanda *terreiro* has received a preservation order until now. This is without doubt a consequence of the idea that Umbanda is considered ‘syncretic’ or ‘white’ and consequently without the symbolic potential to preserve ‘standards of Africanism’. In fact, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the use by pastors, militants and academics of terms such as ‘temples or religions of African origin’ or even ‘traditional *terreiro* communities’ when referring to practicing *terreiros* of the Jeje-Nagô or Angola nations. It is a curious fact that these expressions are generally used to distinguish these *terreiros* from those that practice other Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Umbanda and Jurema. It is not necessary to revisit the long historical process, that began in the 19th century, during which the Jeje-Nagô (or Yoruba) nation gained supremacy as a result of the combined action of religious leaders, politicians, academics and artists. I would only like to mention that the process of reafrikanization and desyncretization that a number of Candomblé *terreiros* have undergone during recent decades, at least in the political discourse, is a consequence of this development.

4 See Annex 1 – *Afro-Brazilian religions and public space – a Chronology*.

This tendency to measure and appreciate these religions in terms of a ‘tradition and culture of the Orishas’ was already present in countless discussions within the field of Afro-Brazilian religions, as well as in the international sphere, and was articulated during the various editions of the World Conference on the Traditions of the Orishas and Culture, held from the early 80s at the initiative of Yoruba leaders from Nigeria, such as Wande Abimbola, in association with religious leaders from the Yoruba diaspora in the Americas. After these conferences an increasing move in the direction of elevating the reaffricanization of Candomblé in Brazil was observed. In the 1980s I met a few priests in São Paulo who were actively participating in this movement for which they preferred to use the term ‘tradition of the Orishas’ to designate the type of rite they used in their *terreiros* (called “egbes”⁵) rather than ‘Candomblé’, considered to be a term that referred to a ‘distorted’ model of the cult, as it brought together traditions that were not strictly of devotion to the Yoruba gods (Silva, 1995). Now a reaffricanized *pai-de-santo* prefers the term ‘Ibilê’ (cult of the divinities of nature or the earth). In this context the idea of an ‘African origin’ of the cult prevailed, and coming acquainted with it was considered a form of regaining the ‘authenticity’ and ‘purity’ or the ritual, while the need for promoting the ‘deatholicization’ and ‘desynchronization’ of the sacred practice consecrated in the *terreiros* was emphasized.

Thus, distinctions generated from within the religious field are now being reproduced in the sphere of public policies for reasons that are both strategic and conceptual – at times it is impossible to separate the two. From the strategic point of view, the traditions that supposedly have not succumbed to Catholicism or ‘syncretism’ are more effective as a means of government action directed at the identification (and incorporation into Brazilian heritage) of elements that belong to ‘civilizing African values’⁶. The nationwide visibility that leaders and adepts of the *terreiros* of this tradition, like the Terreiros do Gantois and Ilê Opô Afonjá, among others, have

5 A Yoruba word which designates a family, religious, or territorial community.

6 The expression “civilizing values” has the purpose of attributing an important status to African societies that the terms ‘civilization’ and ‘civilized’ have acquired in academic circles and in general. These terms were applied to European societies during the period of social evolutionism in the 19th century, in contrast to the terms that were used to describe non-European societies, such as barbarous, primitive and uncivilized. In my view, the use of this expression to classify societies that were not ‘civilized’ (in the commonly used sense) is justified as a method of combating a hierarchy-oriented view of the different models of society. However, its use is not a criticism of the usual classification, and may be revoked as a parameter.

acquired, has contributed to the articulation of the required support from society and the implementation of these policies.

From the conceptual point of view, this is a redefinition based on the idea that the *terreiros* are 'traditional communities' (not that they are not), in the same way as the indigenous communities, which opens up opportunities for receiving support from the government, which, in an officially lay state, could not on principle support groups that were defined exclusively by their religious practices. Not being only defined by these practices, however, these groups have become potential beneficiaries of these policies, without attracting the hostility of religious groups who feel their interests have been damaged, such as the Neopentacostals.

The movement for the valorization of Africa expressed itself in innumerable ways, both among academics and political militants. Pan-Africanism, defended by important figures like Abdias do Nascimento, had the effect of valorizing the experience of blacks in Brazil as being similar to that of the African experience. The titles of the 4 volumes of the Sankofa series, published between 1994 and 2008, based on further education courses given at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), serve as good examples of this new approach: "The African Origin of the World" (vol. 1) and 'Culture and Movement; African origins and black activism in Brazil' (vol. 2)⁷. Another more recent example can be found in the text of the 'National Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Traditional Peoples and Communities of African Origin – 2013-2015', distributed by the Secretariat of Policies for Racial Integration and the Secretariat of Policies for Traditional Communities, of the Federal Government; the cover of the document reads: 'In defense of African Ancestry' and 'For a Brazil without Racism'. One can see that the strategic and conceptual dimensions are interconnected. One often notices that care is taken to avoid the word *terreiro* in this material as, for example, in the subtitle of a photo of adepts of the Bate Folha *terreiro*, which reads "Traditional Territory of the Bate Folha Manso Banduquenqué" (Plano, 2013:19).

Curiously many ideas included in this discourse, in which the term 'religion' tends to be substituted for 'culture' (and the corresponding terms: '*terreiro*' for 'territory' or '*egbê*'; 'Afro-Brazilian' for 'of African origin' etc.), are contrary to other tendencies also found in the religious field, in the Catholicism of

7 Nascimento, 2008a and 2008 b

the Agents of the Black Ministry and the Afro-Brazilian Ministry, that have adopted the concept of ‘inculturalization’.

The people of the saint and the saints of the people: the clamor heard by the Catholic church.

The Second Vatican Council (1962) was a landmark in terms of the Catholic Church’s theology opening up to the world. One of these transformations, in the area of the liturgy, was the permission for Mass to be conducted in the vernacular, as well as the incorporation of the traditional local symbols of a variety of peoples. A new idea emerged of a church with a mission of universal conversion, of cultural differences (including religious ones) that no longer separated people. Specific beliefs were now seen as manifestations of the presence of God, conferring flexibility on the church’s pastoral action (Oliveira, 2011).

The application of the directives of the Second Vatican Council in Latin America led to the strengthening of the Theology of Liberation, a movement of religions practitioners who were sympathetic to Marxism and committed to the fight against social injustice. The Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs), formed in the 1970s and 80s, were working class community groups generally located in districts in the outskirts, whose work was directed at the transformation of the socio-economic conditions of poor communities. It was within this context that the Agents of the Black Ministry (APNs) emerged, made up of priests, religious practitioners, clerics and laymen, whose objective was to denounce the social exclusion of the blacks, even in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church itself⁸. The group was not entirely made up of Catholics, it also included blacks from other religions, including Afro-Brazilian ones. An important landmark in the activities of this group was the Campaign for Fraternity in 1988, that adopted the slogan ‘Listen to the clamor of this people’ and questioned the position of blacks (and poor people in general) in Brazilian society. The Afro-Brazilian Ministry (PAB), officially created by the National Congress of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), emerged as a result of the APNs

8 For further information on APNs, Afro Ministry and characteristics of the incultured liturgies, consult, among others, Damasceno, 1990, Valente, 1994, Borges, 2001, Pereira, 2001, Souza Jr, 2001, Sanchis, 2001, Bina, 2002, Burdick, 2004 and Oliveira, 2011.

These entities were decisive in the questioning of the place of blacks inside the Church, and its relation to their place in society at large. Inside the Catholic church a reevaluation of the century-old manifestations of 'black Catholicism' occurred, which had in general been marginalized, such as the *festas* of the black brotherhoods (of Our Lady of the Rosary, among others), the *congadas*, *moçambiques*, *ternos*, etc. These were now seen as expressions of an 'authentic black theology'. It should be remembered that in 1980 the first 'Seminary of Black theology' was held, which substantially brought the church and the black movements closer together. They also turned their attention to the well-known 'Afro-Catholic syncretism' (which associated the gods of African origin with the Catholic saints), not to attack it, but rather to affirm its vitality as the expression of 'a genuine faith of the black people'. In it they recognized Christian, community and ancestral values. Thus aspects of the Afro-Brazilian religions, usually designated generically as 'African elements', were introduced into the liturgy of the *incultured* Mass, with drum beating, music, dance, offerings of food, clothes with bright colored patterns etc.⁹. In some of these celebrations the ritual is directed at the same time at a Catholic saint and his or her equivalent in the Afro-Brazilian religions. An example of this is the *Festa* of Santa Barbara-Iansã, which takes place along with the Mass at the Church of the Rosary of the Blacks in Pelourinho in Salvador, bringing together Catholics, Afro-Brazilians and the public in general. During the *feira*, priests and the congregation greet the saint and invoke the Orisha by shouting *Eparrei Oya!* It is not uncommon for initiates to go into the Orisha's state of trance during the street celebrations.

This combined activity, along with the use of a common lexicon by the black movement and *incultured* Catholicism, forms a semantic field in which it is possible to identify the elements that most frequently combine to create a frame of reference.

The marking of territory is one of them. The lack of access to space (land, dwellings etc.) is denounced as one of the greatest deprivations imposed on rural populations, blacks and Indians. The Earth-without-wrongs Mass

9 In communion, in addition to the bread and wine that represent the body and blood of Christ, the food traditionally offered to the Orishas is placed at the foot of the altar, there is drum beating and the faithful dance, and even the presence of priests from Afro-Brazilian religions. A recent analysis of these liturgies has been conducted by Rosenilton Oliveira (2011).

(1978)¹⁰ and the Quilombos' Mass (1981)¹¹, by paying tribute to Indians and black people respectively, celebrated them as martyrs and victims of social injustice, emphasizing the need for transformation and reparation. This *mea culpa* of the Catholic Church¹², or at least a part of it, indicated the need to include a message in the liturgy itself indicating the type of transformation that their evangelical work aimed to achieve.

It is no coincidence, then, that the APNs chose the term *quilombo* when appointing their state directories, which in turn were made up of smaller nuclei called *mocambos*. The headquarters of this organization in São Paulo is called the *Quilombo Central* (Oliveira, 2011:39). The ecumenical vigil organized by the APNs at the top of the Serra da Barriga in 1995, in tribute to Zumbi dos Palmares, showed the potential of the *quilombo* for both political action and as a symbol of resistance.

The convergence of activities of the APN and PAB also included other traditional spaces of black culture, religious or otherwise, including *terreiros* and samba schools. For example, celebrations that were infrequent, such as the holding of Catholic Masses to celebrate the anniversaries of these institutions or their members, took on a different connotation when they were conducted by black priests or adopted the incultured liturgy. In one of these Masses for the anniversary of the Unidos do Peruche samba school in São Paulo, held in 2000, at the end of the Catholic celebration I was able to witness a spiritual cleansing of the samba school's main hall conducted by the priest and the school's *Baiana* women (many of whom were initiates of Afro-Brazilian religions) who sprinkled water using leaves that are sacred to the Orishas.

Another important item for reflection is the interpretation of the image of Our Lady of the Appearance, Brazil's black patron saint, celebrated in the incultured Masses as *Senhora* or *Mãe Quilombola*. (*Our Lady* or *Mother Quilombola*)

10 Celebrated by D. Pedro Casaldáglia, Bishop of São Félix do Araguaia, in Goiânia, in 1978, as a tribute to three martyred Jesuit missionaries and to the Indian people themselves (Oliveira, 2011:97)

11 Tribute for the 350th anniversary of Zumbi's death, celebrated on November 29, 1981 in Praça Campos, in Recife, a location of great symbolism as it was there that Zumbi's head, decapitated in Palmares, was displayed. The statue of Zumbi's head placed in his honor in Praça Onze, Rio de Janeiro, also assumed iconic significance. The area has traditional ties with black culture.

12 It should never be forgotten that during colonial times the Catholic Church was one of the powers that contributed to the submission and destruction of the Indians and gave its support to slavery.

The statue of the saint, originally an Our Lady of the Conception, was supposedly found in 1717 in the Paraíba River in the state of São Paulo, with the head detached from the body. The parts were stuck together and a rosary was placed around the neck to conceal the severance, so that the image appeared very similar to Our Lady of the Rosary, the saint worshiped by the black population. There are two representations here: Our Lady of the Conception, patron saint of the Portuguese Empire, and Our Lady of the Rosary, patron saint of the oppressed, including the black population. It is as if the head of the saint is the State and her body the People. Since then, and due to the fact that the statue is 'blackened', very probably due to the effect of river water, a part of the Brazilian population has seen the statue as the Black Patron Saint of Brazil¹³.

Thus, the idea of a gentle, pacific black mother gradually gave way to images of resistance, like that of Anastácia, a blue-eyed slave who supposedly resisted the sexual harassment of her owner, thus rejecting the role of being forced into being a mixed-race mother. Her statue only depicts the head of a muzzled woman, as if the strength that allowed her not to submit her body to the sexual abuse of her owner was concentrated in the head. Curiously, this cult seems to create a similarity with the decapitated head of another hero, Zumbi, indicating as they do the reversal of the treatment of Our Lady of the Appearance's head which was stuck back on. In Anastácia's case, the absence of her body permitted the people to symbolically create one. In fact, such black bodies, even today, are threatened by their social invisibility. In the afro Masses Anastácia has been invoked as a saint, a new version of the black mother. Her martyrdom has been associated to that of Jesus, for each carries the instruments of their own torture: the crown of thorns in the former case, the muzzle and captive's chain in the latter.¹⁴.

As I have shown, today the black Catholic movement, through its innumerable associations, moves between icons of war and resistance, like Zumbi and the slave Anastácia, without abandoning the conciliating and gentle image of the Virgin Mary, that had been transformed into the Great Black Mother and the *Quilombola* of the Appearance.

13 For further details on this 'blackening' process of the image, see Santos, 2007

14 For further information on the *Escrava Anastácia*, see, among others, Souza, 2007.

What is the color of “Brazil’s blackest religion”?

The Black Evangelical Movement

The discussion of the subject of black cultural identity has always been a thorny one inside the evangelical churches (whether missionary or Pentecostal, according to the distinction made by the Brazilian Statistics Bureau (IBGE) in its demographic censuses) and has become even more tense over recent years with the systematic attack by the Neopentecostals (as well as by churches of other denominations) on the Afro-Brazilian religions and their symbols. If in the United States the black Protestant Churches were an important catalyzer for ethnic awareness and mobilization for the fight for civil rights, in Brazil their profile is entirely different¹⁵. Firstly, this is due to the smokescreen that confuses the question of social inequalities in Brazil when based on race, and to the difficulties in identifying what can effectively be defined as the ‘black or African legacy’ within Brazil’s mixed-race culture. Secondly, it is due to the type of evangelizing mission of these churches which emphasizes the universality of access to the grace of the Holy Spirit and the practice of its faith (including manifestations such as speaking in tongues). This access is an individual experience of conversion which transforms the converted from a ‘creature of the world’ into a ‘child of God’. And not permitting, within the brotherhood of the converted, hatred, difference, discrimination for any reason, including skin color, the mission of conversion becomes the main objective of the proselytizing work of which the natural consequence would be a juster social order. However, these churches, even having lived under the military dictatorship, remained impermeable to the influence of leftwing political ideologies, in contrast to the Catholic Church with the Theology of Liberation and the CEBs. The truth is the Evangelical Churches feared and fought against communism due to its materialist and anti-religious preaching. And even recently, after redemocratization, the election of conservative evangelical politicians shows that this trend has remained unaltered in the majority of the churches which support them.

But the absence of a black movement in the evangelical field does not mean that the problems relating to black identity do not have a place within

15 For a comparison between black Pentecostals in Brazil and the United States, see Contins (1995, 2002, 2003)

the context of Pentecostal faith¹⁶ and that initiatives are not taken by black leaders and ministers aimed at its organization.

Indications of these initiatives can be identified, as pointed out by Burdick (2011:189), in the case of Benedita da Silva, a black evangelical leader who was elected and participated in the National Constituent Assembly of 1988, in the ‘Sub commission of Blacks, Indian populations and Minorities’, as well as in the occasional denunciations of racism through the propagation and proselytizing channels provided by the Pentecostal Churches. They can also be identified, in a more systematic form, in the creation of groups for reflection and black militancy which emerged at the end of the 1980s with the centenary of the abolition of slavery. It was at this time that the black movement tried to bring together the various groups that focused on the black population, including those for religious confession. This resulted in the emergence of the ‘Ecumenical National Committee for Combating Racism’ (CENACORA), linked to the ‘National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil’ (CONIC) as well as to many other institutions, including the *Missão Quilombo* (of the Pentecostal Church ‘Brazil for Christ’), the *Comunidade Martin Luther King Jr* (of the Pentecostal Church ‘Christ in God’), *Pentecostais Negros do Rio de Janeiro* and *Capoeiristas de Cristo*, among others. Today the Black Evangelical Movement¹⁷ is composed of groups of this nature, discussion forums, promotional websites and other initiatives. However, talking at cross-purposes and a lack of consensus between the various denominations present considerable challenges.

One of the topics of dissension is precisely the place attributed to the African legacy, including the Afro-Brazilian religions, in the construction of black evangelical identity.

The title and content of a book by Pastor Marco Davi Oliveira, one of the leaders of this movement, is suggestive, permitting reflection about these challenges: *The blackest religion in Brazil. Why are more than eight million blacks Pentecostal?*

The aim of the book is to understand the meanings of the changes that have occurred in the religious field in Brazil over the past decades, during which the demographic censuses have shown a reduction in the number

16 Even because since its first appearance at the beginning of the 19th century and throughout its various phases of development, Pentecostalism’s greatest supporters have been from black and poor communities.

17 For further information on this movement, see Silva, 2011.

of Roman Catholics and an increase in the number of Evangelicals, above all Pentecostals¹⁸. Oliveira argues that the large contingent of blacks in the Pentecostal Church shows that it has become an option for the poor and excluded and therefore ‘*the blackest religion in Brazil*’. The author certainly knows that Catholicism is the largest religion in Brazil, with 73.7% of Brazilians declaring their adherence to it, 44% of whom are either black or of mixed race, almost the same as their percentage in Brazil’s total population (44.7%). Among the 15.4% that declare themselves evangelicals, the proportion of blacks and people of mixed race (45.6%) is slightly higher than the percentage of these groups in the population as a whole. And among those who declared themselves adherents of the Afro-Brazilian religions (0.3%) the proportion of blacks and people of mixed race (48%) is higher than their percentage in the population as a whole. In other words, Catholicism is the ‘blackest religion in Brazil’ in absolute numbers and the Afro-Brazilian religions, especially Candomblé, are the ‘blackest’ in proportional terms.¹⁹ However, Oliveira’s argument is not quantitative, but qualitative, as he argues that the majority of blacks who profess Catholicism do not actually practice it, in contrast to the ‘religious Pentecostal blacks’ who effectively engage with their churches and behave accordingly. In addition, in terms of the liturgy, singing, ecclesiastical posture and language, it is Pentecostalism that reaches out the most to the black community (Oliveira, 2004:20). This argument is based on the concept that Pentecostalism, since it first appeared in the United States, appropriated the ‘spirituality’ of the Africans, which also led to the development of a different style in its cult, based on effusive religious songs, invigorating experiences of dancing and expressions of joy. The presence of the Holy Spirit supposedly gave black people access to a spiritual rebirth based on their experience in the body. In the same way, the black Pentecostal cult in Brazil expresses a ‘more evident Brazilianness’, due to the ‘more relaxed manner and irreverence of Afro descendent culture’ (Oliveira 2004:68).

However, at this point things become more complicated. If, on the one hand, the use of the body, the musicality (expressed in rhythms like samba,

18 The book, published in 2004, discusses the 2000 IBGE census; however, the data for 2010 reinforces the general trends of 2000. In the following references I will be using information from the 2000 census.

19 The 2010 census presents some transformations in this data which it is not possible to deal with in this article. However, Candomblé continues to be the religion with the most adepts who declare themselves black (21.1%).

blues, soul, rap, negro spirituals, jazz and many others (Oliveira, 2004:69), and the importance of the ancestral legacy, are ‘reminiscences’ of an African religiosity that are valorized by the evangelical churches, they also relate to the negative image of Africa that is combated by these churches (as a place of pagan practices and idolatry) and to the Afro-Brazilian religions (supposedly dedicated to the worship of ‘devils’ of African origin, such as the Orishas and other guides)

Oliveira thus seeks to question the ‘Candomblé myth’ (the religion which is best known as a synthesizer of these ‘reminiscences’ and currently greatly incentivized by the black movement) as the most appropriate religious choice for Brazilian blacks. Firstly, he affirms that the religious diversity of the Africans who came to Brazil goes far beyond Candomblé, including Islam, for example. Secondly, because the Afro-Brazilian religions have increasingly distanced themselves from black people and poor people due to the high cost of their offerings and the lack of a committed community as a result of the disputes and competition between their members. Finally, the individualism in ethical questions and the exclusivity of these entities have led to a lack of a proselytizing strategy that has compromised their growth, as demonstrated by the low number of people who declared themselves adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions in the last census (0.3%). (Oliveira, 2004:101).

Oliveira, however, does not intend to argue in favor of Neopentecostal religious intolerance which ‘demonizes everything that comes from Africa’. The author even denounces such intolerance as a form of racism within the evangelical movement. And he goes further, doubting that this segment is really that inclusive in relation to black membership. He finds that the participation of blacks in the organization and hierarchies of evangelical institutions is not proportional to the size of this population. The low number of marriages between black evangelicals is also an indication that they have sought partners outside their ethnic group due to the lack of racial awareness, a problem overlooked by these churches. The ideology of ‘whitening’ also resonates through the pews of the evangelical churches. On this point John Burdick (2002) is more optimistic, affirming that in Pentecostalism, although black consciousness is not expressed in the discourse, it can be found in the daily religious experience. Blacks in this environment tend to rise above being ashamed of their color, improve their self esteem and acquire a greater awareness of the prejudice that exists outside the church as

a result of their participation in a religious community where they are seen as equals rather than inferiors. The higher rate of marriages between black women and white men demonstrates that within this context women are less victim to the stereotype that exists outside the church that tends to 'sexualize' them and diminish their chance of finding a partner who is interested in a serious relationship (Burdick, 2002:193).

At any rate, the paradoxes of the black evangelical movement are directly related to the question of organizing Brazil's national culture. How can 'black Brazilianness' be defined without including Africa and without mentioning the values of the Afro-Brazilian religions? I suggest that we now have some proposals for alternatives that confront this paradox.

One of them is called Black Theology, a variation of the Theology of Liberation which emerged in the 1960s from within the black Protestant churches in the United States and which seeks elements in the bible which legitimize the struggle of the people of God for liberation from all forms of submission. The Exodus from Egypt, a biblical narrative that recounts the liberation of the Jewish people, is one of the most quoted passages as it refers to this experience of liberation on African soil. Currently this alternative does not, however, appear, like the Theology of Liberation itself, to be a very effective as a tool for action, although it remains an inspiration.

Another alternative has been the reappropriation of symbols associated with the African legacy in the Pentecostal context, but in a form that is disassociated from their relationship to the Afro-Brazilian religions. One example is the *Capoeira de Cristo*, also known as 'Evangelical Capoeira' or 'Gospel Capoeira', where the words contain no references to the Orishas or Catholic saints. The first National Encounter of Evangelical Capoeiristas took place in Goiânia in 2005, and the theme that was chosen was *God - the true ancestor of capoeira*²⁰. In this context there is a refutation of the contribution of African spirituality to the formation of capoeira, as is indicated in the title 'God' is the 'true ancestor' of the practice, whose origin, however, was in fact intimately connected with Candomblé.

Another example is the 'acarajé of the Lord' or 'The Lord' fritter', created by evangelical women who want to disassociate this traditional food from Bahia from the Afro-Brazilian religions (the *acarajé* is offered by devotees

20 www.capoeira.jex.com.br/

to the Orisha Iansã) and from the image of the *baianas* who traditionally sell *acarajés* wearing a white turban, wide white skirts and bead necklaces ('guides'), recognized nationwide as the typical dress of the *terreiros*. This process began with the general demonization of all the food made by the *baianas* in their traditional costumes of Candomblé *mães de santo*. According to Bishop Edir Macedo (1996:48), founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God:

Everyone who eats the dishes sold by the famous *baianas* is subject, sooner or later, to suffer stomach problems. Almost all of these *baianas* are 'filhas de santo' or 'mães de santo' who put spells on the food to make it sell. Some people even vomit up what they have eaten, even when it was a long time before. It may seem like a joke, or a children's tale, but those who have frequented our services have seen close up the deeds of Satan and his angels, even in routine things like this.

Next they began to produce these dishes for evangelicals, who sold them in front of Neopentecostal churches without using the traditional costumes worn by the *baianas*, alleging that their *acarajés* were blessed by God²¹.

Alongside this project of denial of Afro religiosity there is also an effort to define the 'contours of Brazilianness'. As Edir Macedo affirmed in 1996, the 'Exu tradition' must be expelled as it has turned Brazil into one 'vast *terreiro*'. The problem is to discover how not to throw away the baby with the bathwater...

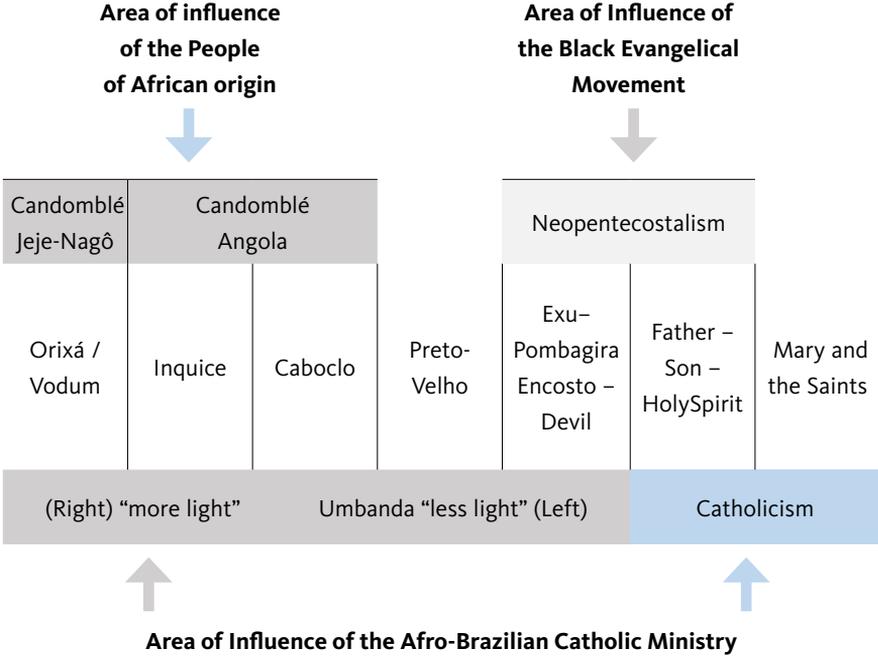
Some final considerations

Religion, color, cultural identity and political action do not always walk side by side. The 2010 census conducted by the IBGE showed that Catholicism, although it has lost adepts, continues to be the declared religion of the majority of the Brazilian population (64.6%); the evangelicals continue to grow (22%), with the Pentecostal churches showing the greatest growth in this segment. Only a minority (0.3%) declare that they belong to one of the Afro-Brazilian religions. In relation to color, and if we take blacks and people of mixed race together, the evangelical churches have the largest population in proportional terms (57.4%), followed by Candomblé and Umbanda (51.9%)

21 I broached this subject in Silva, 2007 e 2013.

and Catholicism (50.9%). If we take only the black population into account, Candomblé and Umbanda are the ‘blackest’ religions (21.1%), followed at a distance by the Pentecostal evangelicals (8.5%) and black Catholics (7.5%) In absolute terms the majority of the black and mixed race populations of Brazil officially profess the Catholic faith, which probably explains the strength that the association between the Afro-Brazilian religions and Catholicism still enjoys, and the option of the black Catholic movement to return to this Christian *and* Afro-Brazilian identity as a method for conducting their missionary activities and racial politics.

The graph below shows the range of religions discussed in this article (with their main spiritual entities) and the range of influence of the black movements:



Without intending to be conclusive, but rather indicating some of the trends that appear to permeate the contemporary debate, it can be affirmed that, as far as the active use of the symbols of the African legacy are concerned, the role of the Afro-Brazilian religions has been the most significant. However, there is a considerable difference between the roles played by the various denominations. Thus the references closest to the Jeje-Nagô traditions

(which basically cultivate the Orishas and Voduns, the first of which are better known due to the internationalization of the Yoruba traditions by the African diaspora) are seen as closer to the 'origin' which is considered to be 'pure' or 'authentic'. The Angola Candomblé, which worships the *Inquices* (divinities of the Bantu peoples) and *Caboclos* (entities that represent the spirits of the indigenous peoples of Brazil) enjoy less prestige in relation to Yoruba traditions. And Umbanda even less. This religion associates the African gods and Catholic saints with Kardecist spiritualism. It absorbed the Candomblé entities and redefined its cosmology using a hierarchical method in which the Orishas and Saints occupy the highest level and are considered 'spirits of light'. In this religion, the *caboclos* and *pretos velhos* (the spirits of African slaves) are considered intermediaries. *Exus* and *pombagiras*, on the other hand, are considered to be on the left side, and thus 'spirits of darkness'. They are situated on the lowest rung of this ladder, as, due to Catholic influence, they are associated with the devil. Catholicism, on the other hand, basically cultivates the Holy Trinity (made up of the figures of God the father, God the son and the Holy Spirit) and many intermediaries, such as Mary (mother of God the son), the saints and angels. Neopentecostalism inserts itself between these two systems and articulates them as if it were a sort of doorway that permits or prevents the passage from one system to the other. Of course the aim of Neopentecostalism is to eliminate all the intermediaries of the other systems by promoting the war against evil, which is seen as Jesus' war against the *Exus* (a synonym for manifestations of the Devil).

In the recent policies of ethno-racial affirmation that emphasize the right to difference and the struggle for social equality, the work of denouncing the hardships experienced by the black population also takes the form of attacking ideologies that see Brazil and a mixed-race and syncretic country. Thus there is a convergence towards the Yoruba-based traditions (seen as 'pieces of Africa planted in the heart of Brazil'²²), which have become the chosen field of political action, both of the black movements interested in the 'recuperation' of the African legacy, and by the State, which wants to promote programs that compensate these populations, such as establishing cultural aspects of black African origin as part of the national legacy. Thus one perceives articulation between the State, the religious movements and

22 Bastide, 1978:67.

politicians (black politicians and their allies) for the 'black' religions, or the 'African Origin' to be seen as a cultural option and not just a personal conversion. A good example was the controversy surrounding the statues of the Orishas installed by the town council of Salvador in the Dique do Tororó as part of the restoration of the area. There was opposition from the evangelicals who argued that a public body could not promote the symbols of a particular religion. In reply, the mayor's office stated that the statues were not a reference to a religion, but to a culture of which the religion was a part: the culture of Bahia, in which the Orishas were consecrated icons (Sansi, 2007).

These dialogs also result in transformations of the rituals inside the *terreiros*. The denominations that are positioned at (or tend towards) the pole of the most 'syncretic' traditions, like Angola Candomblé, Caboclo Candomblé and Umbanda, have much less visibility in the sphere of the black political movements. These traditions are now beginning to react. Today, for example, it is possible to perceive a reafrikanization process of the Bantu traditions and an organization of the *terreiros* that is directed at a wider catchment area. There are also indications of the same transformations occurring in Umbanda. The substitution of May 13 for November 20 has generated changes in the cult of the *pretos velhos*, who were traditionally celebrated on the former date, when they manifested in the form of generous, conciliating and wise slave spirits, á la Pai Tomas. However, recently it has been possible to meet the spirits of *pretos velhos* who manifest as *ex-quilombolas*, having died in rebellions and while escaping, indicating a move in the direction of the figure of Zumbi (who died on November 20). (Souza, 2007). It should also be mentioned that, in the same way, warrior Orishas (Ogum and Iansã), and those that represent Justice (Xangô) and the inversion of order (Exu), are seen as icons for the struggle of the black movement and are associated with the resistance movement of the *terreiros* against religious intolerance.

In the context of the 'place' of the Afro-Brazilian religions in the Catholic Afro-Brazilian Ministry, we know that the Christian catechism developed in Brazil as a complex systems of relationships between the Catholic experience and the religions of African origin, leading to the presence of Catholicism, in some of its aspects, inside the *terreiros*. Now it is a question of bringing the *terreiro* to the churches, so that the evangelizing mission can begin to exchange 'liturgical experiences', but also engage in the struggle for equality and ethno-social justice. In this context, Orishas and Catholic saints reaffirm

their 'closeness', this time in a way legitimized by the church, or at least by a part of it. In other words, seeing Our Lady of the Appearance as *Mãe Quilombola* and sanctifying the power of resistance of the slave Anastácia (or of Zumbi) reveals the force of these symbols for less-privileged Catholics and adepts of the Afro-Brazilian religions.

To close, if we reflect on the 'place' of the Afro-Brazilian religions in Neopentecostalism, we see that their religious, or even 'cultural' symbols, are considered a result of demonic activity. In this 'segment' they profess the need to break with the 'tradition' of Brazil as 'a vast *terreiro*' (Macedo, 1996) or with the 'myth of Candomblé' (Oliveira, 2004). From the point of view of public policies involving ethnicity, some evangelical leaders affirm that there are more blacks (in absolute terms) in evangelical religions than in the Afro-Brazilian ones. This, in their view, means that these churches would be the best partners for government in their policies for the area. They emphasize 'Pentecostalism as an option for the poor, the blacks and the excluded' (Oliveira, 2004). In this context there is now a potential field of action for black groups and movements concerned in renewing their discourses and activities, making a break with some of the moral and public conduct values of the Afro-Brazilian religions in favor of ethical values that are considered more morally 'rigid'.

At any rate, it seems that Brazil today is experiencing a dilemma between religious and political convictions with ethical and ethnic appeal. If, on the one hand, a wing of the Catholic church wants to open its doors to the Orishas, on the other there are *terreiros* that want to distance themselves from the Catholic church, mostly as a consequence of the discourse repudiating syncretism and the mixing of races that has been adopted by certain segments of reaffricanized Candomblé and the black movement. But this is also against the wishes of large numbers of Afro-Brazilian adepts who belong to less Yoruba-influenced cults, such as those with indigenous influences (Caboclo and Jurema Candomblés) or Kardecist ones (Umbanda of the *preto velhos* and a large number of other entities). If the evangelicals say that neither the saints, nor the Orishas, *caboclos* and *guias* offer a path to heaven or to justice on earth, at least for many black (and white) adepts these gods continue to participated in their lives as heroes or villains, responsible for the joys and woes of everyday life.

The ways in which these theologies, liturgies, pantheons, values and practices relate to these social and political agents seems to have led to the

emergence of novel attitudes towards the real meaning of syncretism, mixed races, African legacy, Brazilian culture, political participation and social justice. This is an extremely interesting field of observation which deserves research that associates religion, culture, politics and the public sphere from the perspective of these entities that manifest in the form of trances – Orishas, the Holy Spirit and Exus – these conceptions of what Brazil is, or what it should be.

If on the level of national culture Afro-Brazilian values have had an important role in establishing a ‘mixed race’ identity (Brazil as the ‘country of the mulattas, of carnival, samba, football, *macumba*, *feijoada* and syncretism), the groups that generated them continue in a situation of social and economic disadvantage and are asking themselves which is the best path forward through this jumble of religious values and political action.

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Annex 1 – Afro-Brazilian religions and public space – a Chronology

1591-95 1618-21 1763-69	Visits from the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition: practitioners of Afro and Afro-Brazilian religions persecuted.
1824	Constitution of the Empire: Catholicism is the official religion. Prohibition of non-Catholic temples (other religions restricted to people's homes or to buildings that do not look like temples). First newspaper reports on <i>terreiros</i> installed in urban spaces.
séc. XIX	Foundation of the oldest <i>terreiros</i> still operating: Casa das Minas and Casa de Nagô (São Luis), Sítio do Pai Adão (Recife), Casa Branca do Engenho Velho (Salvador).
1890	Republican Penal Code. Spiritism, magic and spells become a crime (art. 157) as well as witch doctors (art. 158), for which many participants of Afro-Brazilian religions are accused and put on trial.
1891	Republican Constitution. Establishes the separation of Church and State and freedom of worship. Conditions for the organization of <i>terreiros</i> improve.
c.1890	Casa de Tia Ciata (Hilária Batista de Almeida) and of other “tias baianas”, in the area around Praça Onze, become centers for spreading <i>carioca</i> samba, with singer/composers such as Donga, Sinhô, João da Baiana and others..
1900	Publication of <i>O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos</i> , by Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. The first ethnography of Afro-Brazilian religions
1908	Zélio de Moraes founds the Tenda Espírita Nossa Senhora da Piedade, traditionally considered to be the first to practice Umbanda
1910	Foundation of the Terreiro do Axé Opô Afonjá, by Mãe Aninha (Eugênia Anna dos Santos) in Salvador
1912	“Operation Xangô”: invasion and destruction of the main <i>terreiros</i> in Maceió and surrounding areas, accused of being allied to the deposed governor Euclides Malta
1930-45	Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship. <i>Terreiros</i> operated under strict vigilance from the Secretariats of Public Safety and Mental Hygiene Services
1934	Publication of <i>O Negro Brasileiro</i> , by Arthur Ramos, first volume of the Bibliotheca de Divulgação Científica series, the main information source for works about Afro-Brazilian religions
	Publication of <i>Jubiabá</i> , by Jorge Amado. Candomblé themes become a characteristic of Brazil's widest read writer of the time.
	I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro (Recife), organized by Gilberto Freire
1937	II Congresso Afro-Brasileiro (Salvador), organized by Édison Carneiro and Aydano do Couto Ferraz

1938	Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas, idealized by Mário de Andrade, records scenes and music from Afro-Brazilian religious rituals and popular <i>festas</i> in the North and Northeast
1939	Foundation, in Rio de Janeiro, of the União Espírita de Umbanda do Brasil, the first federation of this religion in the country. Carmen Miranda sings “ <i>O que é que a baiana tem?</i> ”, in the film “ <i>Banana da Terra</i> ”, dressed as a <i>baiana</i> , a stylized version of the typical dress of the Candomblé <i>mães-de-santo</i> .
1940	Charlatanism (art. 283) and the activities of witch doctors (art. 284) continue to be offences in the Penal Code, of which participants of Afro-Brazilian religions continue to be accused.
1941	I Brazilian Congress of Umbanda Spiritism
1946	The Frenchman Pierre Verger lands in Salvador where he settles, becoming one of the main photographers and ethnographers of Candomblé and its African origins
1961	II Brazilian Congress of Umbanda Publication of <i>O candomblé da Bahia – rito nagô</i> , by Roger Bastide.
1964	Afro-Brazilian religious festivals (like the Festa de Iemanjá) become part of the tourism calendar in the region December 31 officially declared <i>Dia do Umbandista</i>
1971	Joãozinho da Goméia, one of the most popular <i>pais-de-santo</i> in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo dies Publication of <i>As religiões africanas no Brasil</i> , by Roger Bastide
1976	Inauguration of the statue of Iemanjá on Praia Grande, São Paulo, and the inclusion of her <i>feira</i> , on December 8, in the city's official tourism calendar
1982	Foundation of the Museu Afro-brasileiro in Salvador with a collection of photos and ethnographic documents by Pierre Verger and panels of the Orishas sculpted in wood by Carybé
1983	Clara Nunes, the singer who sold most records with Afro-Brazilian themes, dies
1984	Creation of the Conselho Estadual de Participação e Desenvolvimento da Comunidade Negra in São Paulo with the participation of members of the Afro-Brazilian religions
1985	Serra da Barriga, where the Quilombo de Palmares was located, is preserved by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN)

1985-2013	<p><i>Terreiros</i> are declared as African heritage by government institutions:</p> <p>(1985) Sítio de Pai Adão (Recife, FUNDARPE)</p> <p>(1986) Casa Branca do Engenho Velho (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(1988) Terreiro Filhos de Oba (Laranjeiras, IPC)</p> <p>(1990) Axé Ilê Obá (São Paulo, CONDEPHAT)</p> <p>(1995) Terreiro Ilê Wopo Olojukan (Belo Horizonte, CMP)</p> <p>(1999) Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2002) Ilê Axé Omim Iyá Yamassê – Gantois (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2002) Casa das Minas (São Luís, Maranhão, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2003) Inzo Manzo Bandukenké – Bate Folha (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2004) Terreiro Pilão de Prata (Salvador, IPAC)</p> <p>(2004) Ilê Axé Oxumaré (Salvador, IPAC)</p> <p>(2004) Terreiro São Jorge Filho da Goméia – Terreiro do Portão (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Mariolaje – Olga do Alaketu (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2005) Zoogodô Bogum Malê Rundó (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Axé Ajagunã (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Axé Opô Aganju (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Terreiro de Santa Barbara de Mãe Manodê (São Paulo, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2006) Ilê Axé Alabaxê (Maragojipe, IPAC)</p> <p>(2006) Terreiro de Jauá (Camaçari, IPAC)</p> <p>(2008) Seja Hundé – Roça do Ventura (Cachoeira, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2009) Sítio do Acais (Alhandra, IPHAEP)</p> <p>(2013) Ilê Axé Oxumaré (Salvador, IPHAN)</p>
1986	Menininha do Gantois, the most popular mãe-de-santo in Brazil, dies.
1988	<p>March of Zumbi against Discrimination (<i>the Centenary of Abolition March</i>, RJ).</p> <p>Foundation of the Fundação Palmares (under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture)</p>
1995	<i>Zumbi dos Palmares March against Racism, for Citizenship and for Life</i> , (Brasília, MNU), celebrating the 300th anniversary of the death of Zumbi dos Palmares. Document drawn up demanding policies of protection for the Afro-Brazilian religions by government authorities.
2000	The IBGE Census (2000) shows that 0.3 % of the Brazilian population professes to belong to an Afro-Brazilian religion and that, in proportional terms, these include the largest number of blacks and people of mixed race.
	Statute of Racial Equality instituted under Law 3198
	Institution of the Register of Cultural Property of an Immaterial Nature (Programa Nacional do Patrimônio Nacional)

2001	I World Conference on Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Connected Forms of Intolerance, Durban, South Africa. President Fernando Henrique recognizes the existence of racism in Brazil.
2003	Teaching of African culture and history and Afro-Brazilian culture in schools becomes mandatory under Federal Law 10639
	Foundation of SEPPPIR (Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial)
2004	Salvador institutes the World Day for the Combat of Religious Intolerance (January 21) as a tribute to the death of Mãe Gilda, a victim of religious persecution
2005	Foundation of the Museu Afro Brasil in São Paulo, bringing together the largest national collection of works and documents about Afro-Brazilian culture.
2007	National Policy for Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples instituted.
	Municipal Law 7216/07 regulates the historical and cultural preservation of the African and Afro-Brazilian legacy and creates the General Registry of Religious Communities of Afro-Brazilian culture in the municipality of Salvador, Bahia
2009	Candomblé and Umbanda are declared as immaterial heritage of the State of Rio de Janeiro
2010	Statute of Racial Equality instituted under Law 12288
2013	National Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Traditional People and Communities of African Origin.

The City and African-Brazilian Religions

Marcia Contins

Abstract

In this article, I discuss the relationships between ethnicity and religion, based on anthropological studies of religions in the urban context. I also discuss the transformations of these studies since the 1970s. Since I have myself contributed to this field of studies, my own experience as a researcher must be taken into account. I focus on the uses of the categories of ethnicity and religion during two distinct periods in the history of Brazilian anthropology. In each of these periods, I point out significant transformations in the way Brazilian researchers describe themselves and how they conceive the relationship between their research topics and the city.

Keywords: Ethnicity and Religion; Anthropology of African-Brazilian Populations; Religion and the City; Fieldwork; Pentecostalism; Candomblé

Resumo

Neste artigo discuto as transformações no campo de estudo das religiões afrobrasileiras desde a década de setenta. Exploro os usos das categorias etnicidade e religião em dois momentos distintos da história da antropologia no Brasil. Em cada um desses momentos aponto transformações significativas no modo como pesquisadores brasileiros descrevem a si mesmos e como concebem a relação entre a cidade e os temas de suas pesquisas. Minha própria experiência, enquanto pesquisadora, foi incorporada nessas reflexões.

Palavras-chave: Etnicidade e Religião; Antropologia das Populações Afrobrasileiras; Religião e Cidade; Etnografia e Religião; Pesquisadores e Religiões Afrobrasileiras

The City and African-Brazilian Religions

Marcia Contins

Religions in the city

This article discusses the relationships between ethnicity and religion from the perspective of the field studies produced on religions in cities located in Brazil and the United States. Before focusing on these issues through my current fieldwork, I would like to explain my background as a researcher and how I came to work on this subject. I shall also explore the transformations in this field of study. This discussion of my perspective as a researcher should be situated in to the context of the perspectives of others who have researched religions in major cities since the 1970s.

My present-day research seeks to describe the diverse forms of religious frameworks and their transformations in urban areas, especially those related to African-Brazilian religions.

While reflecting on the categories of ethnicity and religion indifferent research contexts and their changes over time I suggest that the mode of description and anthropological analysis has also been modified. In carrying out my research on such diverse religious experiences as the Umbanda and Candomblé *terreiros*,¹ African-Brazilian Pentecostals, Charismatic Catholicism, and immigrants from the Azores participating in the festival of the Divine Holy Ghost, in contexts as distinct as the United States and Brazil, I did not imagine uniform and homogeneous cultures and identities. According to Geertz, in an increasingly globalized yet also compartmentalized world, the different countries and diverse religious and ethnic identities cannot be seen as ‘seamless unities’ or ‘unbroken wholes’ (Geertz 2000: 246). The relationship between religion and ethnicity is not immediately obvious.

¹ Umbanda: one of the denominations of African-Brazilian possession religions, the temples of which are known as *terreiros*. Candomblé: an African-Brazilian denomination originating in Bahia, the term is also used in Rio de Janeiro to refer to one variety of the rituals adopted in *terreiros*.

It requires an understanding of the mediations between them. In fact, this relationship is part of a process of the “invention of culture” (Wagner 1981), a process mediated in this case, sometimes by the religious code, at other times by the ethnic code, without either performing an all-determining role.

What I wish to explore more specifically here are the relationships between religion and the urban context, analyzing how particular religious groups distinguish themselves through their mode of insertion within the space of the large modern city, particularly Rio de Janeiro, as conceived from the viewpoints of informants themselves (Contins 2005, 2009, Contins & Gomes 2007, 2008).

One important aspect to be considered is the comparison between the experiences of followers of African-Brazilian religions and the opposition that they face from Pentecostal and Charismatic Catholic churches.

The discussions about the relationships and experiences of these religious groups necessarily include their constant circulation through the space of the large city and a deepening of the notion of ‘urban circuits.’²

The relationship with the large metropolis has repercussions for the process of constructing subjectivity, as several authors have already highlighted, notably Simmel (1987) and the tradition of studies in so-called urban anthropology in Brazil (Velho 1980, 1994; Oliven 1985; Magnani 2003). In the past the research locations – the *terreiros*, the *casas de santo*, the churches – were perceived as points of stability. To borrow Tim Ingold’s formulation, the group was perceived as a kind of dotted line; today, they are more like continuous lines that interweave with one another (Ingold 2007).

The constant movements of incorporation and differentiation of distinct life styles and worldviews is typical of the large city (Simmel 1971, 1987; Velho 1980, 1994, 2010). Cosmopolitan life thus offers possibilities and alternatives to the individual through networks of belonging, exchange systems, mediations and continuous exchanges inscribed in the context of the city. The flow between religious and ethnic borders and the re-interpretations of institutional guidelines permit new representations of spatial and social categories.

The ways in which the space of the city are used by different religions afford new forms of perception of religious phenomenon, redefining the

² I link the definition of ‘urban circuits’ to the notion of ‘flows’ in Hannerz (1997), thereby seeking to highlight the constant mobility and circulation of these individuals and groups.

diverse forms in which this space is appropriated by religious experience. The social actors establish multiple bonds and develop different and creative collective arrangements in their uses of the city. *Terreiros* that once appeared very distant now seem remarkably close. Fieldwork undertaken in the 1970s and 80s was grounded in the perception of a considerable physical and social distance between researchers and researched. Today, though, when visiting a *terreiro* in Baixada Fluminense, the distance travelled seems much shorter.

The city back then was highly diverse and its points of interconnection less numerous. The question of authenticity³ was projected onto an other at a physical and social distance, whereas today it does not appear to be situated anywhere stable. While ‘authenticity’ on one hand can be connected to restoration projects and their transformation of places into ‘heritage sites,’ on the other, it may also be constructed by the religious participants themselves.

In this article, I discuss these urban religious frameworks from the viewpoint of both the development of my own fieldwork and the work of various other anthropologists from the 1970s onwards. In so far as I focus on my experience in the field and the process involved in producing an ethnography, I am questioning the conventional forms of understanding such practices. Ethnographic observation is decomposed into an endless series of practical and commonplace activities: moving about in the field, forms of mobility, ways of staying in the field, where to sleep, where to eat, how to dress and so on.

Religions and the space of the city in the 1970s and 80s: fieldwork

During the 1970s and 80s, I carried out research on the Umbanda and Candomblé religions in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, specifically in Baixada Fluminense. At that time, few Pentecostal churches were found in the region but there were countless Umbanda and Candomblé *terreiros*. These were all local: in other words, they had a clientele basically formed by people from the neighborhood, though visitors from other localities were welcomed.

The role of these Umbanda centers in neighborhood life was analyzed in an article written by myself and a colleague, entitled “Gueto cultural ou a umbanda como modo de vida” (Cultural ghetto or umbanda as a way of life;

3 For a discussion of the notion of authenticity in the cultural history of the West, see Trilling 1973 and Sapir 2012.

Maggie & Contins 1980). The fieldwork informing this study was undertaken in locations that felt a long way from the city center. For us researchers, the greater the social and geographic distance, the more ‘authentic’ the field.

Generally speaking, these were less urbanized locations, with unpaved roads and little public transport available for the local population. The route to these areas of Baixada Fluminense necessarily involved taking the Via Dutra highway and then a series of narrow roads, generally dirt tracks, until we finally arrived at the houses in which the *terreiros* were located.

We frequently slept at the research sites since the Umbanda and Candomblé sessions would last the whole night, only ending in the morning. At that time, a significant social and psychological distance seemed to separate ourselves from the group we were studying. The return to the city of Rio de Janeiro after the ritual ceremonies were over was very difficult and hazardous due to the dark roads and the lack of security.

The field experiment made a significant impression on the researchers since all the interpretations we developed subsequently only seemed to diminish and simplify the reality lived by these people. It was important to work from the native point of view, trying to comprehend the significance of the religion for their lives as a whole. It became clear to us that in this type of religious situation, especially in the case of Umbanda, a very closely intertwined relationship existed between everyday practices and the religious domain.

These *terreiros* operated, therefore, as the creative epicenter of a web of symbolic, ethnic, social and economic relationships. To treat Umbanda solely as a religion would entail failing to perceive the wider dimension of this phenomenon where the entire life of the people from the neighborhood was related to what happened within the *terreiros* and developed out of them. We called this specific type of social, economic and ideological relationship generated by the *terreiros* the ‘Umbanda lifestyle’ (Maggie & Contins 1980).

At that time, Baixada Fluminense – particularly the neighborhood where we were studying – was both socially and spatially isolated. We started from a case study involving a description of the local neighborhood, the background history to the *terreiro*, and its social and economic organization. The *terreiro* studied in this case was the center where many of the social, ethnic, economic and symbolic relationships experienced by the group unfolded. As ‘cultural ghettos,’ these *terreiros* were distant from the centers of decision-making, employment and governance, for example, meaning that they

inevitably centralized the cultural production of these groups. Today these areas of the city seem much closer compared to the period when my research was conducted in the 1970s and 80s.

The fieldwork and the analyses pursued in specific situations, whether a single *terreiro* or a group, over these decades were a marked contrast to the analyses of development conducted earlier by studies adopting more generalizing approaches.⁴ During this period a debate also took place with those authors who treated Umbanda as part of the urbanization process of the city. In Chapter 5 of his book *As religiões africanas no Brasil* (1971), Roger Bastide discussed the urbanization of Brazilian cities and highlighted the differences between ‘rural Candomblé’ and ‘urban Macumba.’ In 1974, Diana Brown, in her doctoral thesis in anthropology, discussed the relationship between religion and politics in urban Brazil. It is also worth highlighting the works linking studies of Umbanda, Macumba and Candomblé to their urban and regional contexts. These are numerous and I limit myself here to picking out a few classic examples – Rodrigues 1935, Carneiro 1978, Ribeiro 1952, Ramos 1932, Rio 1906, Bastide 2001 and Landes 1967 – as well as a few contemporary studies: Prandi 1991, Carvalho 1984, Segato 1995, Motta 1988, Lima 1977, Fry 1971, Oro 1994 and Santos 1995.

Maggie’s book *Guerra de Orixá: um estudo de ritual and conflito* inaugurated this anthropological shift. According to the author herself, this was a book written “amid a whirlwind of changes in the country and in Brazilian anthropology” (Maggie 2001: 7). She explained how her generation had been prevented from expressing itself politically in the 1960s and 70s, leading her to pursue less orthodox methods in the attempt to provide an alternative description of the country.

In terms of the anthropology of African-Brazilian religions, the approaches remained centered on specific fields and case studies, implying a rupture with earlier studies into the origin of these religions, which were mostly related to the search for an African authenticity. Africa was now located in the *terreiros* themselves. Extensive fieldwork, obligatory for

4 There were many studies that focused their research on a single Umbanda or Candomblé *terreiro* or that produced dense ethnographies, establishing personal long-term relationships in the field: Beatriz Góis Dantas 1988, Juanna Elbein dos Santos 1986, Yvonne Maggie 2001, Zélia Seiblitiz 1979, Anaiza V. Silva 1976, Renato Ortiz 1978, D. dos Santos 1988, Marcio Goldman 1984, Sérgio Ferreti 1985, Patrícia Birman 1995, Paula Monteiro 1983 and Marcia Contins 2009. Also see the extensive bibliography regarding these studies in Maggie 2001.

any anthropologist intending to produce a worthwhile monograph, was still essential.

In the 1980s, various authors came to discuss the role of ethnographic authority. Anthropological research sought to work with the narratives of the actual ‘informants,’ now considered authors in their own right. In my doctoral thesis, based on comparative research on African-American Pentecostals and African-Brazilian Pentecostals and followers of Umbanda in the 1980s and the start of the 1990s (today various Brazilian anthropologists conduct their fieldwork outside Brazil), I not only tried to foreground my interpretation and analysis of the studied groups, I also sought to emphasize the fact that my voice was only one of many to appear in the research (Contins 1995).

The fieldwork in the USA and the relationships established with my main informants began with periodical visits to the neo-Pentecostal Bible Way churches. During this period, I realized that my involvement with the group demanded the use of a specific ethnographic approach, one elicited by the questions being asked by the informants themselves. My interpretations only became possible when I recognized how these informants constructed and made explicit diverse interpretations of their own lives and religious beliefs. The ‘natives’ were not there just to be observed and analyzed: they were present as active participants who spoke about themselves and were, to a certain point, co-authors of the final text.⁵ These questions had been raised by various US anthropologists (and historians of anthropology) in the 1980s (Geertz 1973, 2002; Clifford 2008; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Crapranzano 1977). They foregrounded the intersubjective dimensions involved in collecting field data, focusing on the power relations that became established between anthropologists and the groups under study that proceeded to affect the interpretations presented in the resulting ethnographic text.

The idea for this comparative study had been stimulated by my experience of carrying out fieldwork in the United States from 1984 to 1989, when I lived in Charlottesville, Virginia. During this time, I began to study an

5 I say “to a certain point” because ultimately the anthropologist has to accept responsibility for authorship. Clifford Geertz (1988), for example, suggests that the author needs to assume greater responsibility for the text and the interpretations made therein. He writes: “Once ethnographic texts begin to be looked at as well as through, once they are seen to be made, and made to persuade, those who make them have rather more to answer for” (Geertz 1988: 138).

African-American community in the South of the United States: more specifically, a religious group calling itself the Bible Way, an African-American Pentecostal church also active in other US states. Flourishing in social and cultural contexts as distinct as the United States and Brazil, and obviously other national contexts beyond, the Pentecostal religions presented a challenge for comparison. In the US case that I researched, the Pentecostals were clearly associated with African-Americans. In Brazil, however, any identification between color and religion appeared much less evident. Even in the case of the African-American Pentecostals, though, where ethnicity and religion are to some extent conjoined, the idea that Pentecostal cults derive from an 'African-American culture' must be treated with considerable caution.

The religious group studied by myself specifically belonged to a Pentecostal sector of African-Americans. To some extent, therefore, the religious group in question could be said to possess an 'ethnic narrative.' Members of this community created and recreated a 'religious culture,' including, for example, a common language, a way of dress, a moral code, a very intense relationship among its members, and a very pronounced appreciation of the economic aspect of both the individual and the religious group. What the research suggested, then, was that 'religious symbols' and 'ethnic symbols' had to be treated as parts of narratives continually being renewed by differences. The Pentecostal believers projected these differences beyond themselves in order to construct their own subjectivity. This was a ceaseless project of constructing a simultaneously African-American and Pentecostal subjectivity.

My objective was to pursue an ethnographic comparison of the expressly ethnic and religious dimensions of the discourse of African-Brazilian Pentecostals in Brazil and their oppositional relationship with African-Brazilian religions. Comparing with the American Pentecostals, the construction of a 'Pentecostal' and 'African-Brazilian' identity can also be seen as an important process in the case of some of the Pentecostal cults in Rio de Janeiro. These identities are confirmed dialogically through the differences continually established in relation to other religions, particularly in relation to Umbanda and Candomblé.

My doubts concerning traditional method of ethnographic interpretation originated from my growing dissatisfaction with the anthropological discussion on the perception of the 'native' as an 'other,' a debate separated from

ethnography and supposedly invested with an intrinsic truth that needed to be uncovered by myself or other researchers. Interpretation only became possible when my informants were transformed into more than objects of study: they became interlocutors in a dialogue that allowed diverse interpretations of their lives and religious beliefs to emerge.

Vagner da Silva in *O antropólogo e sua magia* (2000) points to what he calls an “ethnographic dialogue.” Based on his own field experience as a researcher and a Candomblé adept, as well as interviews with other researchers, he recounts the dialogic relationship maintained with the people being observed. Hence, he shows, the understanding involved in participant observation goes far beyond a simple technique or a methodological procedure adopted by the researcher to learn about the studied community.

In his book Silva sets out from this ethnographic dialogue in order to discuss the active participation of anthropologists in the initiation rituals of African-Brazilian religions and, in more extreme cases, their actual conversion to these religions. From the anthropologist’s point of view, is it possible to gain access to the religious group by merely being an observer, or does he or she need to observe from the inside, turning native? Rather than engage in a naive discussion of the problematics of fieldwork, the author places this debate within the dialogue that ethnography maintains with the people it studies.

African-Brazilian religions and social movements: a dialogue between the academic world and the African-Brazilian movement

Since the 1970s, and principally from 1988 onwards, the relationship between African-Brazilian religions and national society intensified and diversified with the emergence of numerous social movements and networks. Various researchers analyzed the effects of these networks in articles produced for a series of events held in recognition of the centenary of the official abolition of slavery in Brazil (*100 Anos da Abolição da Escravatura*, Contins 1997).

In 1988, a study was conducted at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Cultural Studies (ECO/UFRJ) in conjunction with the Nucleus of Color at UFRJ, with financial support from the Ford Foundation. This research aimed to map the many different visions of abolition with the idea of producing a surprising angle on racial relations in Brazil one hundred years after slavery had been abolished.

One of the results of this survey was the production of a valuable collection of documents concerning everything undertaken during this centenary year. The interesting part of this work was the dialogue that unfolded between the discourses produced by the academic world and those produced by militants from the African-Brazilian movements and also by people not involved in either of these two universes.

Militants and academics, despite adopting distinct positions in terms of their engagement in the fight against discrimination, talked among themselves and shared similar views of the nation, the individual and citizenship.

Also exploring the commemorations for the one hundred years since abolition in 1888, the book *Lideranças Negras* ('Black Leaders,' Contins 2005) turned to examine those responsible for promoting many of these events. Its proposal was to hear from the female and male leaders of African-Brazilian movements in Rio de Janeiro. The interviewees' accounts of their experiences of activism expressed the positions that they occupied – and in some cases still occupy – in the African-Brazilian movements, reflecting their personal knowledge of distinct forms of militancy. This political activism from the 1960s, 70s and 80s – sometimes dating back even further – gave them a senior vantage point onto the history of the movements.

It is also worth emphasizing that the testimonies assembled in this study revealed aspects that went beyond the political or doctrinal dimensions of the African-Brazilian movements concerned. The interviews displayed a remarkable existential richness, perceptible in the diverse narratives framing the biographical and political experiences of the interviewees. They amount to life histories of individuals, families, kinship relationships, religious experiences and neighborliness in various places in Brazil, mainly within the city of Rio de Janeiro. These narratives perform a fundamental role in constructing the images of the experience of being African-Brazilian in Brazil during a particular era.

Other studies were also carried out during the 1990s and 2000s (Fry 1991, Contins 1997, 2004, Contins & Sant'Ana 1996, Fry & Maggie 2002, Strozenberg 1996, Pacheco 2003, Paiva (ed.) 2004) on the circulation and effects of concepts such as 'affirmative action.' Various activists from African-Brazilian movements, as well as African-Brazilian religions, took part in academic seminars on these issues. Some went on to study on postgraduate courses in anthropology and sociology, researching themes related to their militant and religious lives.

Restoring and listing the Umbanda terreiros: the relationship with other religions in the city

At the end of the 1990s and in the 2000s, researchers and official government bodies sought out groups related to African-Brazilian religions in order to restore their *terreiros*. This work of listing the *terreiros* as ‘intangible heritage’ elicited a closer dialogue between researchers and the African-Brazilian religious groups under study. For the latter, the experience of ‘becoming heritage’ was already part of their expectations and did not freeze them in time as elements of the past. Instead it allowed them to become recognized as groups active in the present and open to the possibility of change. The listing of the *terreiros* and the discussion regarding their authenticity is now undertaken too by the worshippers of these religions themselves. Today various *terreiros* have been surveyed in Rio de Janeiro’s metropolitan region, demarcating their location and religious affiliation, and including interviews with the *mães-de-santo* and *pais-de-santo*.

It was within this new configuration of studies in African-Brazilian religions that research emerged concerning the relationship between religion and the city. In recent decades, as various authors have remarked, the religious space in Brazil’s larger cities has been undergoing profound changes (Maggie & Contins 1980, Silva, V. 1992, 2000, Mariz & Machado 1998, Contins 2003, Contins & Gomes 2007, 2008). One of the factors in this process has been the growth and visibility attained by Evangelical Pentecostal denominations, especially the so-called neo-Pentecostals, along with the increase in Catholic churches adopting elements of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

It is worth emphasizing that these changes did not just occur externally, in the relationships established with and through public space, but also internally, within the religious denominations involved. The Umbanda and Candomblé *terreiros* have been obliged to share their space in these urban areas with Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches. The point I wish to stress is how these African-Brazilian groups now position themselves in response to the growth of other religions in the city’s metropolitan area. African-Brazilian groups, for example, make their presence felt in schools and on religious courses, and hold large show-like events in their *terreiros*, similar to the neo-Pentecostals.

While the older Evangelical churches already operated in localities where the Catholic Church and Candomblé and Umbanda *terreiros* were

predominant (such as Baixada Fluminense) and prioritized religious activities intended for the congregation and the local population, the neo-Pentecostal churches took another approach. These are churches, like the *Assembléia de Deus*, that basically appeal to the general public, very different from the more traditional Pentecostal churches. As well as their fixed public, they invest in attracting a diffuse and mobile clientele. Their architecture also distinguishes them from the smaller neighborhood churches still found in the 1970s and early 80s. One of the important characteristics is their location, generally at the intersection of large avenues, where they are highly visible to the constantly mobile population.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, despite operating within the limits of the Catholic Church, also holds masses and events aimed at the general public. This characteristic is reflected in the choice of the locations used for holding such events and in the relationship established with the space of the city.

Following the increase in the number of neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, the African-Brazilian groups have also had to coexist with the former's enormous architectural scale, allowing them to hold an enormous quantity of worshippers at any one time.

The space of the city involves a context of plurality in which religious practice has become more transient and the search for new experiences has gone beyond their original spaces. One of the important points that we perceived concerning this new religious configuration of urban space was the positioning and visibility of African-Brazilian religions.

The terreiros turning to the general public

In more recent research (Contins 2013, 2014), I observed various initiatives pursued by Candomblé houses with the aim of attracting a wider public. Significant attempts were made to work with the media through local radio and television programs. Courses were made available on the history of Africa in some Candomblé houses in Baixada Fluminense, along with African language courses, and the production and distribution of CDs and videos of their rituals, focusing on different Candomblé entities. The type of dialogue involved looks to connect with the general public and avoid being confined to the small houses or *terreiros* situated in Baixada Fluminense. What we

find today are different Candomblé and Umbanda houses in Rio de Janeiro that prioritize the relationship with the market, the university and African-Brazilian movements. The participation and recognition of researchers in these *terreiros* also contribute to their visibility.

As an example of different African-Brazilian groups that have developed innovative versions of their rituals, I pick out some groups from Rio de Janeiro's suburbs and West Zone that have built larger *terreiros* or have modified them in order to increase their accessibility to the general public. One Candomblé house, for example, is located in Vila Valqueire, another in Irajá, and a third in Anchieta. Informed by the discussion on ritual and performance, I analyzed the importance of these houses for the local community and for populations beyond these neighborhoods. Comparing the first two *terreiros*, which had a significant local influence – during their rituals there is an enormous exchange and participation of several *terreiros* from the region – with the house in Anchieta, it became clear that the difference compared to the first two resided precisely in the 'show' that the latter put on during its rituals. The first two houses were smaller and had a public that came mainly from nearby neighborhoods. The festivities performed in Anchieta for the Candomblé entities took place in a large house with the participation of a large audience from outside the neighborhood. The rituals were filmed and recorded onto DVDs to be sold later in the Madureira Market.

The *pai-de-santo* in Alcântara hosts a weekly radio program and presents various television programs. At the same time, though, I realized that the internal rituals – intended only for people from the Candomblé house itself – retain a fundamental importance for the house's continuity. The ritual as a spectacle, however, is part of this relationship with the general public. Its architectural form is also quite significant in terms of the relationship established between the African-Brazilian religions and others, since the type of architecture employed is more reminiscent of the neo-Pentecostal churches.

The house in which the *terreiro* operates is similar to a three-storied church. On the first floor is the hall where the ritual for the entities is performed. People from different neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro and Baixada Fluminense frequent this hall to see the spectacle. One member of the *terreiro* films the event and the CD is later sold at the Madureira Market. Next to the house is an entrance to the lower part of the *terreiro* where the obligations to the saints are performed. This is also where the *terreiro* members dress and get ready for the

rituals. It functions in effect as a 'backstage' area to the house for use by religious members only. The guests watch everything in the hall, which is shaped like a theater with seating around the stage. The Anchieta *pai-de-santo* has produced more than 20 CDs of his festivals, each dedicated to a specific entity. This religious material, which is not limited to CDs and videos, can be found displayed on the shelves of various stores in the Madureira Market.

The question of the authenticity of the Africanness of Bahian *terreiros* (in studies that have already been discussed by various anthropologists) is constructed, in this case, through the images distributed in the market by the author himself. The *pai-de-santo* and some other members of the *terreiro* prepare a specific ritual for an audience, rehearse the participants, film it on a CD, and then distribute the work for sale at the market.

The Procession of São Miguel Arcanjo

The religious processions performed by Umbanda followers from the São Miguel Arcanjo Spiritual Centre (CESMA) in Magé, Baixada Fluminense, also express the growing importance of African-Brazilian religions and their relationship with the city. CESMA is located in an area comprised by three plots, each approximately 360 m² in size. The *terreiro* takes the name of the religious leader's patron saint, São Miguel Arcanjo or Ogum-Megê, the head Orixá of the House. The mediumistic group composed by the *filhos-de-santo* and *filhas-de-santo* contains approximately three hundred members. However, if we add those who have already passed through the house of worship and now run their own spiritual centers, or those who have already concluded their obligations to the Orixás, the number is even higher: around three thousand members. Some seventy *terreiros* are estimated to be affiliated to this center, including *filhos-*, *filhas-*, *netos-*, *netas-*, *bisnetos* – and *bisnetas-de-santo*, all ritualistically and hierarchically subordinated to the center. The large majority of the affiliated *terreiros* are located in Rio de Janeiro state, with one in Brasília and another in São Vicente, São Paulo, and one more due to open in Rio Grande do Sul. The mediums, or *filhos-de-santo* and *filhas-de-santo*, regular visitors and clients come from various neighborhoods, cities and even other states, as well as diverse social classes and different ethnic groups. They range from housemaids, housewives and street cleaners to district attorneys, mayors and local politicians.

The Procession of São Miguel Arcanjo, or Ogum Megê, is always held in September. All the *filhos-de-santo* participate, in addition to the affiliated *terreiros* with their *filhos-*, *filhas-*, *netos* – and *netas-de-santo*. Dressed in white and carrying the ‘guides’ of their entities, each affiliated *terreiro* brings its ‘flag’ with the emblem and insignias of each *casa de santo*. Everybody carries a ‘lantern’ with a lit candle.

The procession passes through the center of the municipality of Magé, leaving from and returning to the center, alternately singing songs in honor of their patron saint and the Hymn of Umbanda. In the streets where the procession passes, people wait at their gates or windows with candles and cups of water. In the main square, a crowd of people awaits. The procession is at once a religious act, transporting the religion’s belief beyond the limits of the *terreiro*, and a social act. A fixture on the religious calendar, it also forms part of the secular calendar since each year the city anticipates the procession and greets it when it goes by. There is a direct relationship between the religious calendar of the *terreiro* and the Catholic religious calendar.

The people who watch the procession are not necessarily followers of Umbanda and the procession is not restricted in any way when it passes in front of the Pentecostal churches and even the Catholic churches, at least not in recent years. According to the *pai-de-santo*, when they first held the procession it was not well received by the Catholic Church, much less by the Pentecostal Church. At the end of each procession, after touring the entire city and being seen by everyone waiting for it to pass by, the participants return to the spiritual center. In the procession, the spiritual center displays its ritual objects and beliefs in the street, while the relationship with the city becomes more visible and closer.

In an interview, the *pai-de-santo* described the change in behavior of the other religions in response to the procession. In the past there were frequent complaints and disputes, and the neo-Pentecostal churches closed their doors and declared their opposition to the procession. The local Catholic church also kept its doors shut on the day in question. Today, though, there is a clear receptiveness from the Catholic Church and the Pentecostals make no protest.

This does not mean, however that there are no disputes about the efficacy of each religion and the administration of each of their spaces at a day-to-day level. One interviewee, also a *filha-de-santo* from the center with her own *terreiro* located very close by, explained how she set up a *terreiro* in

her own house. In front of her house was a neo-Pentecostal church whose pastor would frequently vow that he was going to buy her property one day. Every time they met, the pastor said that she was “working for evil.” After a few months, this same *mãe-de-santo* was able to buy the pastor’s church and annex it to her own *terreiro*.

In Baixada Fluminense, there is also a substantial religious movement among the members of various religions. On another occasion, this same *filha-de-santo*, following sickness and death in her family, left the Umbanda spiritual center and converted to Evangelicalism. She began to frequent a neo-Pentecostal Church but after two years went back to the *pai-de-santo* of Magé. She has now built her own *terreiro*. She says that the relationships she maintained and still maintains with her Orixá entities are so close that she could become a medium, even though she converted to another religion at one stage of her spiritual life.

Conclusion

Through the fieldwork that I undertook with these different religious groups, I was able to perceive the significant social, cultural and ethnic proximity between them. A large flux of people are leaving the African-Brazilian religions to become Pentecostals, generally joining churches close to their original *terreiro* or localities close to home with which they are familiar. The contemporary city allows more mediations between researchers and those researched, turning into a vast mixture of fragments. The possibilities for moving around are much greater and the urban space, from the native viewpoint, has expanded considerably. People are exposed to a huge variety of mediators: lawyers, journalists, social movements and the media. We can say that the religious narratives are inevitably interconnected with the conceptions of the city.

Likewise, there is also a religious movement of people returning to the African-Brazilian religions. The biographical accounts of the interviewees concerning their personal life and religious backgrounds proved essential in terms of revealing their own interpretations of their religious experiences and their religious objects and rituals, as well as how they deal with distinct interpretations of the same, sometimes through Umbanda and Candomblé, other times through Pentecostalism.

Moments of crisis in people's religious and personal lives allow them to change religion. In this sense, insofar as this access to the sacred takes place in the universe of a large modern metropolis, Rio de Janeiro, these practices tend to assume, beyond their ritual form, the aspect of a 'spectacle,' in order to meet the demands of the clientele living in this heavily populated city.

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On the border between culture and religion

Public policies for Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil

Daniela Cordovil

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss some of the recent questions concerning the promotion of public policies for Afro-Brazilian religions. To access to these policies, these groups have organized over the last few decades in the form of civil society associations and their leaders have attended many ministerial board meetings and committees. Because of this engagement, Afro-Brazilian religions were classified as “traditional *terreiro* peoples” and more recently received the label of “traditional peoples and communities of African origin.” The paper analyses the various arguments underpinning the discursive construction of Afro-Brazilian religions as representatives of a black cultural heritage in Brazil.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian Religions. Religions of African Origin. Public Policies. Black People.

Resumo

Este texto tem como objetivo problematizar algumas questões recentes a respeito da promoção de políticas públicas para afroreligiosos no Brasil. Para obter acesso a estas políticas, os afro-religiosos tem se organizado nas últimas décadas sob a forma de associações civis e suas lideranças participam de diversos conselhos e comitês ministeriais. Por conta deste engajamento, os afro-religiosos foram classificados como “povos tradicionais de terreiro” e, mais recentemente, receberam o rótulo de “povos e comunidades tradicionais de matriz africana”. O texto analisa os diferentes argumentos que embasam a construção discursiva das religiões de matriz africana como representantes de uma herança cultural negra no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Religiões de matriz africana. Religiões afro-brasileiras. Políticas públicas. Negro.

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Introduction

The first decade of the twentieth century marked a unique historical moment for people in Brazil practicing religions whose wisdom was brought by black Africans. These religions – which today appear in ministerial decrees under the rubric of *Povos Tradicionais de Matriz Africana*¹ – had been considered a problem for Brazilian society for many decades. Persecuted by the police, they appeared on the police pages of newspapers throughout Brazil accused of sorcery, magic and charlatanism. After more than a century of such persecutions, the practitioners of this religious form are today considered holders of rights, based on their role as bearers of traditional knowledge. The present text explores the political trajectory and the semantic shifts necessary to this transformation.

The persecution of Afro-Brazilian religions, documented from the First Republic onwards, contrasts with the treatment of Protestant Churches during this same period when they began to arrive in Brazil. The first republican constitution, promulgated in 1891, formally established the secular State, granting freedom of worship to non-Catholic religions as long as these were practiced in the domestic sphere.

However, this guarantee was not extended to those who practiced religions influenced by African and indigenous knowledge. In Bahia at the end of the nineteenth century, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906) was the first researcher to become interested in the religiosity and culture of black people. He documented newspaper reports from the era telling of police persecutions and raids on *terreiros*:²

¹ Traditional People and Communities of African Origin.

² *Terreiro*, literally yard or grounds, is the term used for the religious spaces used in candomblé, also sometimes referred to as temples or houses.

In Africa, these cults comprise a veritable State religion, in whose name the chiefs govern. Hence they are guaranteed by government and custom alike. In Brazil, in Bahia, on the contrary, they are deemed sorcery practices, unprotected by laws, condemned by the dominant religion and by the disdain, very often only apparent, it's true to say, of the influential classes, who despite everything fear them [...] Today, with the end of slavery, they have become subject to the tyranny and whim of the police, no more enlightened than the former masters, and to the remonstrations of the general public, which, though believing itself to possess a strong and cultured spirit, constantly reveals its supine ignorance of sociological phenomenon. (Rodrigues 2004: 269).

It was not only in Bahia that Afro-Brazilian religions suffered the persecutions and incomprehension of government leaders and intellectuals. In Pará during this same period reports about charlatanism and false shamans also filled the local newspapers and intrigued intellectuals of the day, as the historian Aldrin Figueiredo documents:

These stories – which shed light on both the relentless persecution of shamans and the no less untiring action of the healers in maintaining and defending their religious practices – constitute just one corner of the issue, towards which many other stories converge. The persecution of shamans was not confined to the police: it involved newspaper offices, the city health committee, journalistic opinion, and medical discourse. (Figueiredo 2008: 130).

As well as the stigma propagated by the press, public administrators and social elites, everything of African and indigenous origin aroused fears among intellectuals concerned with elaborating an ideology of national identity. Based on an ideological interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution, black and aboriginal peoples were believed to be among the least evolved, a kind of living fossil, images of humanity's pre-history (Scwarcz 1993). In Brazil intellectuals became increasingly concerned with how to transform a territory largely populated by black slaves and wild Indians into a modern nation along European lines.

The *terreiros* and Africa in Brazil

Despite the police persecutions, some scholars made contacts with the *terreiros*, initially in order to civilize the people and improve their health,

and later to explore a scientific perspective. The first such scholar was Nina Rodrigues, who at the end of the nineteenth century became the first researcher to observe rituals *in situ* in the Gantois *terreiro* in Salvador. The author published a vast opus, re-examined in the 1930s by Arthur Ramos, his self-proclaimed intellectual heir (Corrêa 1998). In parallel to the research of Arthur Ramos and his disciple Edson Carneiro, both of whom studied in Bahia, Gilberto Freyre was also interested in Afro-Brazilian religions, seeking to give them political and academic legitimacy through the realization of Afro-Brazilian Congresses.

As part of this process of accepting Afro-Brazilian religions, which began in the Northeast in the 1930s, there was a selective appropriation by intellectuals of particular cult houses and types of liturgy, classifying those that did not fit into the created models as 'degenerate' or 'impure.' For decades those researchers contributed with their works and political activism to creating the myth of 'Brazilian Africa,' legitimately represented by the *terreiros* considered 'pure,' where traditions were supposedly better preserved.

The candomblé *terreiros* were perceived as pieces of Africa in Brazil, where the black and impoverished population made up of descendants of slaves living on the outskirts of cities could once again experience their African identity. Or, as Roger Bastide put it, describing the moment of trance:

They are no longer seamstresses, cooks, washerwomen who whirl to the sound of drums in the Bahian nights; there is Omolu covered in straw, Xangô dressed in red and white; Iemanjá combing her seaweed hair. Their faces transform into masks, losing the wrinkles of everyday work, the stigmas of day-to-day life full of worry and misery vanishing; warrior Ogun fights in the heat of fury, Oxum is all carnal voluptuousness. For a moment Africa and Brazil merged, the Ocean abolished, the time of slavery erased. (Bastide 2001: 39).

Beatriz Góis Dantas (1987) deconstructed this idea of Nago purity, supposedly linked to the idea of Sudanese or Yoruban cultural heritage. The author shows the ideological biases and political interests behind the construction of some cults to be more traditional than others within the Afro-Brazilian religions. The author shows how the notion of 'African purity,' normally associated with the 'Nago' candomblé cults of Bahia, is a native category, utilized by the religious leaders themselves as a form of legitimizing their practices, and how its assimilation by the anthropological literature contributed to this

use insofar as the *terreiros* considered ‘pure’ by anthropologists (who in some cases supported them publicly by acting as *ogãs*) obtained more recognition from society as a legitimate religion, in contrast to the caboclo candomblé, seen as ‘magic’ or ‘witchcraft.’ The author presents an interesting interpretation for the excessive valorisation of Africa by Brazilian intellectuals:

In fact it is the passage of the African, a foreigner of different and exotic customs, the Negro, a black-skinned Brazilian, that creates problems. Perhaps it was the difficulty of making this passage, with the ideological premises underlying it, that led authors like Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos to use an apparently contradictory double schema: the evolutionist perspective, which demanded the simultaneous dilution of the black in the white as a condition of progress – and the exaltation of primitive African purity. (Dantas 1988:149).

As a critique of the proposal of Dantas and of other studies based on the work *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1992), Matory (1999) argues that the African nations recreated in the New World are part of a transnational process of discourse production whose main protagonist is a black literate elite constituted in a transnational flux:

The Africa that lives in the black Americas should not be measured in terms of a more or less pure survival of a primordial ‘elsewhere.’ The Africa that lives in the Americas is a strategic mobilization of a circum-Atlantic cultural repertoire spanning five hundred years. In sum, much of what is called cultural or collective ‘memory’ in the African diaspora, and in every nation, occurs in contexts of power, negotiation and recreation. This point is usually neglected by the discourse of the ‘invention of tradition,’ negating the agency of the oppressed. (Matory 1999: 68)

In parallel to the search for Africa and the African purity that took place in the Northeast, Umbanda emerged in the Southeast of Brazil, an Afro-Brazilian religion created through the syncretism between Banto traditions, Catholicism and Kardecist spiritism. In Umbanda, elements taken to be authentically African, such as animal sacrifice and long periods of initiatory reclusion, were minimized as part of the religion’s adaptation to the modern context (Ortiz 1978).

In the 1970s, after the remarkable expansion of Umbanda in Brazil’s Central-South region, this variant of Afro-Brazilian religiosity entered into

decline in relation to *candomblé*, previously considered savage or barbaric. Reginaldo Prandi (2005) points to the expansion of *tropicália* and the Bahian counter-culture in the Central-South of Brazil as a factor that unleashed the movement of a return to origins among Umbanda's religious leaders.

This period saw the emergence of major names in Brazilian popular music, who found a source of inspiration in the Afro-Brazilian religions for composing their image of Brazilianness. Through Brazilian popular music and the work of singers like Clara Nunes, Afro-Brazilian religions began to be seen positively by the country (Bakke 2007). Orishas populated the national imagination, even though in practice the vast majority of *terreiros* found themselves under suspicion and surveillance during the military dictatorship.

In the 1980s and 90s, Afro-Brazilian religions began to expand geographically beyond the national borders, reaching Europe and the Southern Cone countries (Oro 1995). This expansion was accompanied by their transition from ethnic to universalist religions, whose presence in the urban environment closely accompanied social and technological changes, incorporating academic writing and research as forms of transmitting religious knowledge and developing a variety of strategies to adapt their liturgies to the everyday life of metropolitan areas:

It is in this game of representations between *candomblé*, a religion of ethnic origin, and the metropolis, increasingly multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural, that the former, curiously, would extol its vocation as a religion of universal conversion, although it remains a polytheist religion strongly influenced by magical thought. (Silva 1995: 290)

Researchers also observed that these religions did not just expand rapidly among black-skinned people:

The social base of *candomblé* changed and changed hugely. A large number, perhaps the majority, are poor people who find it very difficult to meet the financial expenses incurred by the exuberance and complexity of the rites [...] But the middle class, white and schooled, is very often competing with poor black people, who obviously, as Afro-Descendants, frequently believe themselves to be the legitimate owners of the tradition of the Orishas. (Prandi 2005: 246-7).

For the scholars cited above, the expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions

through the metropolises of the Central-South of Brazil and abroad distanced them from their ethnic character as family-based religions, worshipped by descendants of African populations brought to Brazil during slavery. In parallel to the expansion of these Afro-Brazilian religions to a public beyond the black descendants of slaves, the political movement of strengthening minorities gained strength in Brazil, from which Afro-Brazilian religions would benefit politically.

Debate on the race issue and public policies for terreiros

After the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which took place in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, the Brazilian State developed an institutional policy for fighting racism (Lima 2010). Projects appeared initially, followed later by public bodies responsible for the implementation of coordinated reparation policies targeted at Afro-Descendants.

The main impacts of the Durban Conference can be felt in strategic sectors like healthcare and education. In 2003 SEPPIR (Special Secretariat for Racial Equality Promotion Policies) was created and Law 10.639 promulgated, which made teaching Afro-Brazilian History and Culture compulsory in schools. In the following years the discussions in the health field progressed and in 2009 the National Health Policy for the Black Population was implemented, increasingly recognizing the healthcare and care practices realized in *terreiros* as a legitimate form of knowledge (Alves & Seminoti 2009, Silva 2007). The population covered by these policies includes all those declaring themselves *preto* and *pardo* (black and brown) in the IBGE census, 45% of the Brazilian population according to data from 2000. Among the policy proposals are:

Promoting recognition of popular healthcare knowledge and practices, including those preserved by religions of African origin. (Brazil 2010).

In 2010, also through the mediation of SEPPIR and the black movement, the Racial Equality Statute was promulgated (Law 12.288), with Chapter 3 dedicated to combatting the religious intolerance shown against Afro-Brazilian religions, under the title of “Freedom of conscience and belief and the free practice of religious worship.”

The main changes in how the Brazilian state responds to the issue of racism can be linked to three factors: the pressure of the black movement at local level, the inclusion of these themes on the international agenda and the greater participation of leaders from the black movement within the government during the Lula presidencies (2002-2010).

The contemporary political activism of leaders of Afro-Brazilian religions involves an appropriation of the discourse of multiculturalism and the new social movements in order to found a basis for strategic action in search of power and legitimacy that forms part of the very trajectory of Afro-Brazilian religions.

Thus the ideals that ground the political demands of leaders of Afro-Brazilian religions, like religious freedom, gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights and the human right to health, food and territory, pervade a global political discourse guided by the logic of universal human rights.

Although these guarantees of rights for Afro-Brazilian religions emerged in direct connection to the race issue, a debate specific to Afro-Brazilian religions has developed in recent years in the field of food security. The inclusion of Afro-Brazilian religions in this debate has involved a *sui generis* political trajectory.

Over recent decades minority groups have become increasingly politicized, engaging in various fights for public policies. In Brazil many historically marginalized populations first started to mobilize in the rural world through the fight for land and the defence of the environment. It was primarily through these rural campaigns that the political category of 'traditional peoples' emerged in which Afro-Brazilian religions would later be included.

From the 1980s, fights for land regularization revealed the existence of groups in Brazilian society that make collective usage of land through uses and customs that evade market logic, insofar as they are based on criteria of belonging like kinship, culture and religiosity (Almeida 2002). Among these groups we can cite indigenous and quilombola peoples, whose right to land is guaranteed in the text of the 1988 Constitution, and a series of populations who also make collective use of land, but whose right is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. It was these populations that began to be referred to by the encompassing label of "traditional populations". As Barreto Filho writes:

The notion of ‘traditional population’ expresses a set of collective cultural values related to the environment – perceptions, values and structures of meaning that guide and lie at the origin of certain environmental policies. A term embodied in our current dialogue with the natural world and in the lexicon of government agencies responsible for the environment, the notion produces effects in the symbolic disputes constituting the micropolitics of the campaigns pursued by rural workers for access to the means of production and in the political processes that influence territorial rights (Barreto Filho 2006: 110)

The demands of traditional peoples for their territories to be guaranteed by law had a direct impact on the construction of Brazilian environmental legislation in terms of human occupation of environmental conservation areas. It is impossible to understand the historical trajectory of the populations that formed the groups marginalized in the formation of the Brazilian State without paying attention to their political struggles, constructed through traditional relations with the territory, as part of what Little (2010) calls political ecology.

With the beginning of debates and construction of public policies relating to the Zero Hunger program run by the Ministry of Social Development and Combatting Hunger (MDS), the category of traditional peoples dilated further, providing space for a range of groups characterized by a distinct occupation of space and by cultural practices different from the rest of national society. The majority of the groups today labelled traditional populations share in common the demand for their territories to be recognized by the Brazilian State. These claims began with indigenous societies (Oliveira 1998) and currently extend to quilombola peoples (O’Dwier 2005) and the so-called extractivist populations of Amazonia, like the river dwellers (*ribeirinhos*), andiroba extractors (*andirobeiras*) and others (Barreto Filho 2006).

These discussions eventually resulted in the promulgation of Decree 6.040/2007, which established the National Policy for Traditional Peoples and Communities. The policy was created through workshops with representatives of associations from these communities. In the first workshop held to debate the policy, hosted in the town of Luiziana, Distrito Federal, in 2006, the leaders attending classified themselves into 15 categories of identity: sertão dwellers (*sertanejos*), rubber tappers, Bahian collective pasture (*fundo de pasto*) communities, quilombolas, Amazonian agroextractivists,

rural inhabitants of Paraná (*faxinais*), artisanal fishing communities, *terreiro* peoples, Roma, Pomeranians, indigenous peoples, pantanal dwellers (*pantaneiros*), coconut breakers, rural coastal populations (*caiçaras*) and inhabitants of the cerrado (*geraizeiros*) (Brazil 2006).

Using the results of this and other workshops held over the course of the year, the ministerial team elaborated the National Sustainable Development Policy for Traditional Peoples and Communities, with an emphasis on issues such as sustainable development, territory, food security, and the right to maintain cultural and religious specificity. Religion is explicitly mentioned in three of the plan's articles, including the guarantee to combat religious intolerance.

In Decree 6.040/2007, traditional populations are conceived as follows:

Culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, which possess their own forms of social organization, occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, utilizing knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition.

Following implementation of the policy, which included the participation of leaders of Afro-Brazilian religions and specialists in Afro-Brazilian religion linked to the academy, the MDS, in partnership with Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, mapped the *terreiros*, firstly in Salvador, and later implemented the Socioeconomic and Cultural Survey of Terreiro Peoples and Communities, which encompassed four Brazilian state capitals – Belém, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Recife – and the results of which were published under the title *Alimento: Direito Sagrado* (Food: a Sacred Right, Brazil 2011). The book contains articles written by researchers along with *pais de santo* and *mães de santo*³, in which the Afro-Brazilian Religion background to the food security issue is debated. The mapping work has already registered more than 5,000 *terreiros* across the national territory. This register is used in the distribution of food baskets to the *terreiros*, organized in civil associations.

The inclusion of the *Povos e Comunidades de Terreiro* ⁴ in the National Policy for Traditional Peoples and Communities, created by Decree 6.070 of

³ Father or Mother of Saint is the name used to call the priests and priestesses of Afro-Brazilian religion.

⁴ People and Communities of *terreiros*, was the name used by leaders of Afro-Brazilian religion to classify themselves in the policy.

2007, signified their addition to the list of sectors of national society with non-hegemonic forms of social organization and territorial occupation. Through this decree, these peoples are legally defined as culturally differentiated groups whose traditional forms of occupying their territory through cultural, social and religious practices must be respected and supported by the Brazilian State.

The vast majority of groups included in this category are situated outside the environment of the big cities – indigenous and quilombola peoples, rubber tappers, andiroba extractors (*andirobeiras*), babassu coconut breakers, etc. – and whose main axis of identity construction is the occupation of a territory and a particular form of social and economic reproduction of the group. In the case of Afro-Brazilian religions, whose *terreiros* are geographically situated on the periphery of the big cities, distinct cultural and religious practices exist and the fight for land is not the main demand.

Located on the private properties of their leaders, only a small portion of the *terreiros* were registered by IPHAN (National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage), assuring the religious community definitive ownership of the property. The reality faced by most *terreiros* in Brazil is the fragile legal basis for ownership of the property where the community is based. Many communities of Afro-Brazilian religions disperse after the death of their leader since the latter's biological family inherits the property rather than the religious community.

Some *terreiros* were founded in properties located in devalorised peripheral areas of cities. After decades of urban expansion, these *terreiros* became embedded in an urban zone whose land value is continually increasing. In some cases priests acquire properties in more distant areas, leaving the previous locations merely as their residence and the base of operations for the *terreiro's* civil association. Religious intolerance is also identified as one of the motives for the search for locations further away. As *terreiro* leaders recount in the book *Alimento, Direito Sagrado*:

The difficulties in access to these communities were reinforced by the process of ethnic/religious cleansing pursued by Neo-Pentecostals, who ended up forcing various communities based on the urban outskirts of Belém to relocate to even more outlying regions (Nalva & Tayandô 2011: 76)

Terreiros that were previously located in Belo Horizonte moved to more precarious locations, either to escape urban violence and religious prejudice, or because they had no alternative since the price of the property in the capital had become extremely expensive due to land speculation (Arabomi & Silva 2011: 84)

Traditional use of the territory derives from a particular form of spirituality, yet even without a territory this spirituality can continue to be practiced. The foundation of a *terreiro* sacralizes space through specific liturgical processes. However, this process is not irreversible: the reality of the urban environment reveals a large number of *terreiros* that constantly shift location due to economic pressures, political questions linked to the transmission of leadership or to escape from religious persecutions.

Pais and *Mães de Santo* are comfortable with the label of “traditional populations” since they recognize that religion promotes a distinct form of social organization and spatial occupation. Indeed some leaders have shown a need for their religious communities to increasingly adopt the old candomblé concept of the *roça* (plantation/field). *Roças* are large spaces, far from the city centres, where many *filhos de santo* settle to live and sometimes breed animals for use in the liturgies.

The food security policy promoted by the MDS in the *terreiros* emphasizes the redistribution practiced by religious communities. One characteristic of *terreiro* communities is that they always function as a space for the distribution and redistribution of goods and services. To enable the operation of a set of liturgical obligations, the *povo do santo*⁵ need to develop various forms of knowledge and a series of techniques towards this organization. These skills include embroiderers, tailors, specialists in leatherwork and woodwork to make the musical and percussion instruments, and specialists in metalwork who produce liturgical objects. This network of products and forms of knowledge is what José Jorge Carvalho (2011) has called an economy of ashe:

The objects and foods with ashe – in other words, objects imbued with a vital positive energy that will be offered to the entities with which the initiates will enter into contact – are only encountered in the economic and social network surrounding the *povo de santo*. It is this living network, interpersonalized and currently expanding, that I denominate the economy of ashe (Carvalho 2011: 38)

5 People of Saint was a name used to call all those belongs of Afro-Brazilian religions.

The form of producing and consuming foods in the *terreiros* has indicated a more sustainable economy than the goods produced within the capitalist framework. The animals offered to the gods and that are also consumed by human beings in festivals and rituals cannot be obtained via the large-scale food distribution network: they must be created in open spaces close to nature.

On the other hand, the urban expansion that also negatively affects *terreiro* communities has made it impossible for these groups to practice their traditional forms of economic reproduction. The debate stimulated by the MDS's food security policy has allowed Afro-Brazilian religions to reflect on their demands, leading them to pressurize the State for land regularization policies relating to their spaces of worship, including incentives for small-scale food production.

Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Matriz Africana

The specificity of Afro-Brazilian religions within the list of groups targeted by public policies for traditional peoples and the engagement of their leaders led to the policy for these groups becoming independent from the other groups.

In 2012, the change of name from *Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Terreiro* to *Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Matriz Africana* was debated. Officials from SEPPPIR explained this decision to *Pais* and *Mães de Santo* with the argument that the change would facilitate the advance of the policies. With the consent of the leaders of Afro-Brazilian religions, a meeting was held in Brasília, in August 2012, to propose the setting up of a workgroup to elaborate a specific policy for Afro-Brazilian religions, or traditional people and communities of African origin as they are now called.

In the text publicizing this meeting, found on the MDS website, the words 'religion' and '*terreiro*' are not mentioned once. The only elements revealing the religious affiliation of those present are the turbans and white clothing, which can be seen in the photos of the meeting. Concerning the *Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Matriz Africana*, the National Secretariat of Food Security and Combatting Hunger emphasized:

Diet is one of the biggest problems. These are vulnerable low-income communities. This is the target public for the public policies. (Ministry of Social Development and Combatting Hunger 2012).

January 29th 2013 saw the launch of the National Sustainable Development Plan for Peoples and Communities of African Origin, with an emphasis on development, including in the area of production, and on guaranteeing rights. The plan is intended to enable the access Afro-Brazilian religions organized in civil associations to projects and initiatives funded by public money coming from various ministries, something already happening at a smaller scale. The plan defines *Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Matriz Africana* as:

Population groups that are organized on the basis of the civilizatory values and the cosmovision brought to the country in the context of the slave system, and which enables the continuation of African civilization in Brazil, forming their own territories characterized by community living, care and provision of services to the community (Brazil 2013).

The public policies for Afro-Brazilian religions are an important form of social inclusion of these groups and have the effect of a historical compensation for the violence perpetrated against Africans sold as slaves in Brazil and against their religious beliefs. These policies reach Afro-Brazilian religions through the recognition of their practices as a cultural heritage distinct from national society.

This political concept demonstrates that those planning public policies see the *terreiros* as locations frequented by impoverished black people, who practice an ethnic religion. The distancing of the religious dimension and the valorisation of the ethnic characteristics of the Afro-Brazilian religions complexifies the boundaries of ethnicity, colour and class. For public policy managers, the affinity between *terreiros*, negritude and poverty is the element generating the public policy.

In the photos illustrating the official document, strategic use of a sepia tone masks the real skin colour of the people photographed. In the photos we see women, most middle-aged and older, wearing liturgical clothing from Afro-Brazilian religions, while the captions contain no mention of *terreiro*, referring instead to ‘traditional territory.’ The text of the document informs:

According to the research, 72% of *lideranças tradicionais de matriz Africana*⁶ declared themselves to be black, while 55.6% are women. These figures confirm

6 Traditional leaders of African Origin is the name utilized to refer to *Pais* and *Mães de Santo* in the document.

the active role played by black women in traditional African-origin communities in Brazil. At the same time, in Brazilian history from the sixteenth century to the present, black women have experienced the highest degree of social vulnerability. (Brazil 2013)

The notion of ethnicity in discussions of Afro-Brazilian religions was always perceived as a reference to Africa, almost invariably related to the skin colour of the worshippers concerned, who, mostly black, would explain all the discrimination suffered due to the racism permeating Brazilian society. Recent studies of the theme have shown that the equation Afro-Brazilian religions = negritude = discrimination contains a number of variables that cannot be so easily simplified.

The main such variable is the fluidity of the colour and class of those practicing this religion. Encountering followers of Afro-Brazilian religions among members of the São Paulo middle class (Prandi 2005: 247) or in the Southern Cone countries (Oro 1995) demonstrates the religion's potential to be incorporated into modernity as one more of the many religious alternatives to fragmentation and individualism.

Observing the expansion of Pentecostalism in Brazil over recent decades, some researchers have gone as far as to predict that the days of Afro-Brazilian religions are numbered:

Fragmented into small groups, weakened by the absence of a broader type of organization, having to carry the burden of racial prejudice which is transferred from the black person to black culture, the religion of the Orishas has little chance of beating the (unequal) competition with other religions. Silently, we are today witness to a true massacre of Afro-Brazilian religions. (Prandi 2005: 236).

While phenomena like the transnationalization of Afro-Brazilian religions seemed to deconstruct once and for all the link between *terreiros*, ethnicity and social marginality, the elaboration of a series of public reparation policies aimed at these groups has once again rebuilt connections between categories previously taken as disparate.

For these priests, the deterritorialization of Afro-Brazilian religion (Oro 2010) and of the circuits of activism themselves does not imply any loss of awareness of the ethnic dimension of their religiosity: on the contrary, it reinforces it. When they frequent forums and discussions on public policies

for Afro-Brazilian religions, these religious leaders dialogue with intellectuals and high-ranking government officials, appropriating a discourse that they later reproduce among their peers: in this discourse terms like territoriality and ethnicity comprise key elements in the construction of a new identity.

In this process, skin colour is not the most important diacritical factor in the construction of a black identity. Traditional forms of organization, belonging to an ethnic territory, memory and ancestrality, are all mobilized. Black identity is constructed in reference to Africa and negritude, something acquired from the moment of initiation into an Afro-Brazilian religion. By submitting to the criteria of hierarchy and ancestrality existing in the religion, the adherent becomes an African, irrespective of his or her colour, class or social background. It is through this connection that the adherent of Afro-Brazilian religions fights for rights in public spaces.

Final Considerations

The relation between religion and ethnicity in the context of Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil can be traced to the transformations undergone by these religions on Brazilian soil. When they arrived in Brazil, brought by enslaved Africans, these religions were a space of ethnic and cultural survival for these groups as distinct sectors of national society. After expanding greatly in the twentieth century, they adapted to urban ways of life, surpassing the boundaries of ethnicity, colour and social class.

For decades Afro-Brazilian religions were victims of intolerance on the part of public authorities and civil society. Today they benefit from the discourse of social inclusion present in modern Brazilian democracy in order to receive from the State public policies that assist in their survival and social reproduction. These public policies are based on the discursive construction of African-origin religions as spaces for maintaining civilizational values distinct from national society, brought from Africa by enslaved black people and kept alive by *pais* and *mães de santo* in contemporary Brazil.

The category *Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais de Matriz Africana* – elaborated in the dialogue between activists of Afro-Brazilian religions, academics and public policy managers – reaffirms the fundamental role played by religiosity in the construction of forms of resistance among Brazil's black population. The construction of public policies for this population by the

federal government created a public grammar of social inclusion where the criteria of ethnic belonging that establishes a connection between *terreiros*, negritude and poverty is a fundamental part of the group's inclusion in the list of those ideally benefitting from these policies. Consequently the leaders of *terreiros* are broadening their notion of ethnic affiliation, claiming their own notions of ethnicity and territoriality as the main focal point of their identity construction.

Those who belong to Afro-Brazilian religions construct an ethnic identity containing religious and cultural values that are themselves based on a symbolic and discursive connection with Africa. One does not need to be an Afro-descendent to enter this symbolic universe: rather, the initiatory connection with the religion inserts the adherent within the circuit of African memory transmitted in conjunction with the ashe.

Afro-Brazilian religions today face persecution from neo-Pentecostals and, even though misunderstood and stigmatized by Brazilian society, are recognized as the legitimate heirs of traditional African knowledge by academics and public policy managers. It is in this intersection of discourses constructed in a political minefield that public policies for Afro-Brazilian religions are produced in contemporary Brazil.

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Religion, ethnicity, and the secular world

Paula Montero

Abstract

This paper explores the contrastive, or even contradictory, relations established between ‘religions’ and ‘ethnicities’ and what is by convention called the secular world in the conception of contemporary multicultural and post-secular democracies. When and why are ‘religions’ and ‘ethnicities’ perceived as a challenge to the political system? We draw on the literature that addresses the challenges posed by the growing presence of Muslim populations in Europe in order to analyze the confrontation in Brazil between Neo-Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian groups. Our purpose is to understand why, differently from the European conflict, in which Muslim minorities are perceived as a simultaneously ethnic and religious challenge, conflict in Brazil occurs in a doubly inverted relation. Afro-Brazilian religions have built a positive relation to Brazilian nationality and have been acknowledged as religions by the State. In contrast, Neo-Pentecostal religions, although legally recognized, are weakly connected to Brazilian nationality.

Key-words: tolerance, multiculturalism, secularism, ethnicity.

Resumo

Este trabalho explora as relações contrastivas e até mesmo contraditórias que, na concepção das democracias multiculturais e pós-seculares contemporâneas, as ‘religiões’ e ‘etnias’ mantêm com o que se convencionou chamar de mundo secular. Interessa-nos compreender quando e por que ‘religiões’ e ‘etnias’ são percebidas como um desafio ao sistema político. Inspirados na literatura que enfrenta os desafios colocados pela crescente presença de populações islâmica na Europa, tomaremos como referência empírica de nossa análise alguns confrontos entre grupos neopentecostais e afrobrasileiros

de modo a compreender por que, ao contrário do conflito europeu, no qual as minorias islâmicas são tomadas ao mesmo tempo como desafios étnicos e religiosos, no caso brasileiro o conflito se estabelece em uma relação duplamente invertida. As religiões afrobrasileiras conquistaram uma relação positiva com a nacionalidade e assim foram reconhecidas como religião pelo Estado. Em contrapartida os neopentecostais, embora legalmente reconhecidos, mantêm uma relação frágil com a nacionalidade.

Palavras-chave: tolerância, multiculturalismo, secularismo, etnicidade.

Religion, ethnicity, and the secular world

Paula Montero

1. Introduction

Although ethnic and religious minorities can be perceived as presenting very similar social and political issues, they pose different challenges for liberal democratic thinking in that they interpellate public opinion and the actions of nation States in very different ways. Although particular historical contexts give this problem specific configurations, it is usually possible to affirm that while ethnic minorities put into practice grammars that concern the relations between racial conflicts, recognition, and citizenship, religious minorities put into play grammars that concern the relation between freedom (of speech and belief) and the sovereignty of State power. The political agendas of multiculturalism and secularism thus seem to have followed parallel routes in their political formation and implications. Some recent phenomena, such as the growing presence of Muslim groups in Europe and the expansion of Neo-Pentecostal Protestantism in Brazil seem, however, to cause these two agendas to converge, and thus make it necessary to rethink the consensus that has already emerged regarding secularism and the rights to difference.¹ In effect, one of the characteristics that has made the Muslim issue so prickly for European liberal thought is that it seems to lead to an inconvenient convergence between multicultural demands for recognition and demands for religious freedom, thus generalizing the perception that Muslims interpellate the national States with demands for exception that,

¹ Although the Muslim presence in Brazil is not insignificant (roughly one million people organized in religious institutions in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Iguazu Falls), its efficient integration into commercial activities and liberal professions, as well as its relative invisibility and discretion in religious celebrations associated with a non-national ethnic imagination are contextual characteristics that cause Islam not to be an important political and legal challenge in Brazil, at least until now. Cf. Rocha Pinto 2005.

according to the Anglo-Pakistani sociologist Tariq Modood, are criticized for being politically unbearable, culturally considerably unreasonable and theologically foreign (Modood 2009: 164). As far as the Brazilian scenario is concerned, we would like to demonstrate that part of the discomfort caused by Neo-Pentecostal Protestant groups in the Brazilian public sphere also concerns the way in which their leaders connect the categories of ethnicity and religion from a political and ideological perspective. We shall draw on the dilemma posed by Modood in order quickly to revise the trajectory of these two currents of thought with the purpose of understanding the controversies² that emerge when the agenda for recognition confronts the agendas for secularism and freedom of faith.

But before focusing on the contemporary Brazilian scenario, let us briefly go back in time to understand better how the categories of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘religion’ have been associated with the modern construction of national and secular States.

2. Ethnicity and religion in the construction of modern States

a. ‘Nation,’ ‘race,’ ‘ethnicity’

It can be generally affirmed that contemporary debate on multiculturalism represents an important unfolding of the anti-racial agendas of the 1960s and 1970s. The historical relation between the constitution of the concepts of religion and race and the formation of state nationalities in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe exceeds the scope of this paper. However, it is important to keep in mind that, as observed by Françoise Gaspard, every form of nationality is “a **political** construction that is established as a **legal** rule” (Gaspard 1993: 158, our emphases). Thus, ‘nationality’ defines who the ‘nationals’ are and, consequently, who is to have access to public and civil rights. In this play of forces, the production of conflicts of nationality generally operates through the elaboration of ascriptive categories such as land, blood, filiation,

2 We use the analytical notion of ‘controversy’ as elaborated within the project “Public Religions and Controversies: Experiences, Social Practices, and Discourse”, funded by Fapesp (Nr. 2011/02948-6). Although public debate is the empirical referent for this approach, it intends to propose an analytical model focusing mainly on a network of arguments that relates different agents and fields of knowledge. I am indebted to Eduardo Dullo and Andrea Peres for their comments, which have helped make the thread of my arguments clearer to me and the reader.

race, religion, gender, etc. Such categories condition, on the one hand, the distribution of a set of civil rights (public employment, State benefits, etc.) and, on the other hand, the possibilities for certain social interactions. The literature on the subject observes that in 19th century Europe basically two different models of nationality prevailed: the French model, which was based on the principle of universalizing citizenship that did not take ethnicity and religion into account, and the German model, based on the ideas of ethnic and cultural belonging. However, Gaspard observes that the right of blood has always been present, to a greater or lesser extent, in the legislations of all European national States. In this sense, they all contain a potential racializing dimension that might be mobilized in different circumstances.

The expansion of European States into other continents in the 19th century made the political construction of nationalities even more complex. In effect, the different models of colonialism affected the way in which nationalities were distributed among extraterritorial populations. According to Gaspard, a law passed in France in 1865, for example, excluded from the common law everyone who was designated as native [*indigène*]; thus, for over one century “it was possible to be French in Algeria without having access to all the attributes of nationality” (idem: 156). Similar processes of ascription occurred in the Portuguese colonial world, in which the indigenous African population was divided into ‘natives’ [*indígenas*] and ‘assimilated’ [*assimilados*] according to degree of ‘civilization’ and not color (Dulley 2013). In the British case, law distinguished between different categories of British citizens based on criteria of racial belonging; in the process, the name ‘colored’ was assigned to a very diverse set of ‘racial’ and ‘inter-racial’ possibilities.³

Although legal processes resort to historically available categories to assign nationality, the relations between the way in which law circumscribes categorizations and the way in which social life is organized in practice

3 Jack D. Forbes (1993:247-263) argues that although colonial agents tried to register the racial characteristics of individuals in both Iberian and British colonies, phenotype (white, mixed, brown, black) and social status (Christian, free, detribalized, taxpayer, etc.) were more determining in describing people than biological ancestry (which was difficult to recognize in colonial conditions). For the author, scientific thinking in the beginning of the 19th century had natural history as its model and strived to transform the myriad of terms describing people and families based on their appearance and reputation into racial categories that could be organized into a systematic catalog of ancestries. The term ‘colored’ started to be used in local censuses in the early 19th century in order to distinguish the free white population from the non-white population (including Indians) for taxpaying purposes. The pre-Civil War American society was, therefore, much more diverse from an ethnic and cultural perspective than the polarized society that was to emerge after the war, in which ‘colored’ was identified with ‘black’ with the dissemination of racism.

are neither direct nor mechanical. In effect, ‘nationals’ are not produced by means of decrees. If the legal recognition of racial, ethnic or religious categories defines the scope of possibilities for social interactions, civil life is permeated by struggles for the rejection and/or recognition as well as redefinition of ascribed categories. The long tradition of the ‘race’ category, for example, in spite of the scientific criticism to which it was submitted already in the 19th century, remained operative in European thought at least until the emergence of fascism even among those who opposed the idea of racial inequality. The concept of racism emerged in the debate that followed the disclosure of Nazi crimes and was originally used to fight the scientific claim related to the use of racial categories in order to differentiate people (Robert Miles 1993: 161). The ideology of the ‘final solution’ and its consequences, in addition to the struggles for decolonization that disclosed the violence perpetrated in the name of racial differences, contributed to accelerate the political and ideological disrepute of racial theories. UNESCO played an important role in the post-war period regarding the ultimate disappearance of race as a political category for naming differences based on biology.⁴

Michael Banton (1975) suggests that anti-racist civil movements were everywhere the precursors of the displacement of the category of ‘race’ by that of ‘ethnicity.’ However, it seems that such displacement became possible only when the ‘race’ issue started to be perceived as related to problems concerning the construction of nationality. In the American case studied by Banton, the alternative views of black nationality offered by the emergence of African States and the spectacular performance of their statesmen and diplomats in the international scene was fundamental for American blacks to be able to consider their own condition from a new perspective. For this author, even if discourses of nationality did not transform black Americans into a nation, at least it made them “more conscious of their difference” and thus allowed for their “ethnogenesis”⁵ as a people or ethnicity. However, although the author is right in affirming that the relations between “ethnogenesis and

4 Although ‘race’ has progressively disappeared as a descriptive category, the notion of racism gained a new sense in the late 1970s, when it was disconnected from the notion of theory or ideology and started to designate institutional or personal practices of exclusion which do not present themselves as such. Robert Miles (1993: 163) considers the Black Power movement in the United States as a reference for the redefinition of the concept of racism.

5 This has been a current expression in France since the 19th century. According to the author, it was recovered by Lester Singer in 1962 in reference to the American context.

nationalism demand further investigation” (1975:158-159), it seems important to stress that it was only in the context of the weakening of classical nationalisms—a legal mark of reference for the entire 20th century⁶—that the concept of ‘ethnicity’ started to be outlined as a political force. But this cannot be affirmed of modern nationalisms in which conflicts become part of the way in which the logics of the State operate.

It is interesting to note that in the Brazilian case, in contrast with the examples provided above, the categories of race and ethnicity have followed parallel routes: The political problem of blacks with regard to the production of nationality was dealt with based on the grammar of race and culture, while the indigenous issue was formulated in the field of ethnicity. Understanding why, differently from the United States, Indians were not classed as a race in Brazil and blacks were not ethnicized (except for the most recent cases of *quilombolas*) would deserve a separate investigation. What can be affirmed based on the available literature (Carneiro da Cunha 1986, 1987, 2009; Cardoso de Oliveira 1976; Farage 1991; Oliveira 1999; Monteiro 1994; Arruti 2006) is that the processes through which blacks and Indians were constructed as ‘populations’ in the Foucaultian sense (Foucault 2008)⁷ are historically to be distinguished regarding the way in which these collectives were incorporated into the Brazilian nation.

Besides having been used as labor during colonialism, Indians were, as is known, a key element in settlement policies as well as in the production and control of the Brazilian colonial territory.⁸ Upon the organization of the imperial independent State and of the ensuing Republican State, these populations, while relatively autonomous, challenged the sovereignty of the political apparatus that was in the process of establishing itself. A significant part of 19th century constitutional provisions focused on territorial issues and

6 According to Banton, the First World War consolidated nationalism as one of the principles of world peace and led to the creation of the League of Nations. The Second World War strengthened this consensus and it eventually became the only political alternative for colonial independences (1975: 160-161).

7 For Foucault (2008), the ‘population’ issue emerged in the late 18th century as the object of a new way of governing which conceives the ‘population’ as a State’s main wealth and source of power.

8 Gabriel Aldren observes that the integration of indigenous populations to Luso-Brazilian armies was frequent during the colonial period. The alliance with the Portuguese guaranteed indigenous chiefs the possibility of maintaining autochthonous groups while ensuring some degree of participation in the hierarchical system of the colonial government. Blacks who participated in military conflicts were also granted the possibility of freedom as well as social insertion and mobility (2010: 146-148). The condition of being a slave was actually very complex and varied widely in terms of degree of autonomy and possibility of buying freedom according to the region and type of activity people engaged in (see Schwarcz 1996).

tried to limit the occupation of the territory by indigenous peoples in order to retain a reserve of ‘public lands’ (Mares de Souza Filho 1992). In practice, the establishment of rights concerning public lands also produced rights over the natives’ original lands. Indigenist models, either in the Christian missionary version or in Rondon’s positivist view, always implied some form of preservation, limitation or modelling of territories perceived as pertaining to these people who had been originally born in Brazil. These populations were therefore not racialized in the 19th century. The polarity that constituted them as national entities concerned their civilizational stage. Although their ‘savagery’ was supposed ultimately to give way to integration into the normativity of the State through the legal status of tutelage, indigenous “ancestry” in using the territory that connoted it was positively taken up and indelibly marked the imagination of the Brazilian nation. Brazil thus became imbued with a historical depth that preceded colonization by a foreign power.

Blacks, in contrast, emerged as a population within the political system: They interpellated the Republican State not because of their origin, but because of their condition, which was then perceived as contradictory: they were simultaneously ‘free men’ and ‘men of color’.⁹ Brazilian slave-holding society had indelibly associated the condition of captivity to the black color and freedom to the white color. But, as noted by Gabriel Aladren (2010: 128-129), the existence and expansion of social groups with both the attributes that were in principle conceived of as exclusive and extreme led to miscegenation. Miscegenation was more than a biological process whose ancestry it was no longer possible to determine; it was above all a social process through which a new intermediary and uncomfortable place was produced in the social hierarchy. In contrast with the United States, the idea of freedom began to be outlined in Brazil with the abolitionist movement, and not in the religious field. It might be for this reason that, as suggested by Jose Murilo de Carvalho, “the values of individual freedom, which lie at the base of the civil rights that are so dear to European modernity and to the founders of North America, did not have a prominent role in Brazil” (2008:49). With the proclamation of the Republic, the abolitionist movement

9 Some population maps from the late 18th century oppose the category of ‘white’ to that of ‘slave.’ According to Silvia Lara (2007), between these two categories were *pardos* (brown) and freed blacks. For her, this mass was perceived as a growing danger to the social order by the authorities because it was neither under the private authority of slave masters nor well-integrated into the social hierarchy.

was weakened and replaced by a dispute for control over the practices that might be considered acceptable by courts, medical and public hygiene discourses, the press and public opinion, the Catholic hierarchy, etc. Many scholars have demonstrated how, in a slow and contradictory process of criminalization/assimilation/remodeling, popular practices associated with blacks during slavery, such as capoeira,¹⁰ certain rhythms and dances, cults and rites, were progressively modeled, reinvented, and incorporated by their practitioners, intellectuals, and scientific societies, as well as the political forces of the State, as constitutive indexes of nationality (Ortiz 1985, 1991; Dantas 1982; Souza Reis 1993, 1996, 1997).

This excursion into very complex and widely studied subjects such as slavery and miscegenation allows us to point out elements that are important for our argument: During almost 400 years the black 'color was intimately associated with the condition of slavery, even if not exclusively so.¹¹ 'Intermediary colors' were classified based on the basis of phenotype rather than 'blood.' As has rightly been observed by Jack D. Forbes (1993), censuses of various Brazilian provinces during the 19th century used the categories of *pardo* (brown), *mestiço* (mestizo), *caboclo* (of mixed Indian and black ancestry), and *mulato* (mulatto) in various ways. They did so primarily on subjective perceptions of possible tonalities in a relatively arbitrary way. It was only in the second half of the 19th century that these tonalities were associated to the idea of 'race,' even if in a very impressionistic way because the ancestry of particular individuals was hardly retrievable.¹² According to Lilia Schwarcz (1993: 14), racial theories arrived late in Brazil, but were then welcomed with great enthusiasm by a scientific community marked by positivist and

10 Leticia Reis (1996: 42-43) observes that in Rio de Janeiro, capoeira, until the mid-19th century a phenomenon that was essentially associated to black slaves, eventually incorporated freed slaves, Portuguese and even whites of higher social standing. During the Second Empire its practitioners supported the monarchy, which caused them to be implacably persecuted by the Republicans. Efforts for the criminalization of capoeira date from this period, and it was finally criminalized in the 1890 Penal Code. Treating capoeira as a *gymnastica*, a legacy of miscegenation, and a sign of nationality were the arguments which, throughout the 20th century, repeatedly served as a foundation for the process that transformed it into a national sport in the 1930s and 1940s (Reis 1997).

11 However, the black color could also be assigned different qualifications according to the slave's condition: *crioulo* (a black person born in Africa who could speak Portuguese well), *ladino* (a black person born in Brazil) or *boçal* (a black person born in Africa who could not speak Portuguese) (Schwarcz 1996: 19).

12 In *O espetáculo das raças* [The Spectacle of Races], Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (1993) provides a panoramic view of the trajectory of the concept of race from its arrival in the Brazilian scientific milieu in the late 19th century to its decline in the 1930s.

evolutionist ideas. But if the Brazilian nation chose social Darwinism as the foundation of social progress, its mixed nature did not favor adherence to the theoretical determinism implicit in these models. The biological theories on which the concept of racial superiority was grounded associated 'blood mixture' with all manner of degeneration, and did not provide any clear and widely acceptable ideological route for the political construction of a popular sovereignty grounded in the idea of race in a society that was marked by centuries of miscegenation.

Thus, in contrast with the United States and more recent States such as South Africa, which had race as the central element of their political and legal system as well as their national consciousness, part of the Brazilian men and women of letters drew on a tradition through which skin tonality designated a social condition marked by the free slave and possibilities of social mobility. They soon abandoned the excessively divisive ideology of 'race' or racial supremacy as a substratum for nationality and legal marker of difference. In effect, the acceptance of racial models started to decline already in the 1930s, and the experience of miscegenation became, as in Gilberto Freyre's paradigmatic work, the main reference for the cultural standard that formed the nation.¹³ As has rightly been observed by many scholars investigating the subject, among whom Antonio Sergio Guimaraes, Brazil developed a cultural politics that was explicitly based on miscegenation that lasted for at least three decades (2011: 265).

Half a century later, the constituent process initiated in the 1980s led to a new and intense mobilization around racial issues in which color was again associated with the condition of social inequality. Inspired by the conquests of multicultural and ethnic movements, black leaders organized themselves to strengthen anti-racist legislation.

13 Of course this does not imply that the category has vanished from the national vocabulary. The idea of "racial types" was used in the scholarly literature, for example, in descriptions of regional characteristics, such as the qualification of Sao Paulo's *bandeirantes* (slave and fortune hunters who penetrated and colonized the Brazilian interior in the 17th century) as "the race of giants," an expression coined by Saint-Hilaire in the early 19th century. It also became generalized in common language as an expression denoting criticism of difficult temperament/behavior, such as in "*ô raça!*", for which an imperfect gloss would be "oh race!" After the anti-racist consensus built in the post-war period, race was declared a "biological myth" and started to be predominantly studied as a sociological issue. As a field of knowledge in the human sciences, the concept of race gave way to the field of studies of "racial relations," which would not be based on the concept of race, but would seek to examine the relation between skin color and unfavorable social positions in the social structure. In Brazil, the black presence was, from the perspective of race, color, culture, religion, and class, a recurring item in the vast literature obsessed with the problem of how to transform a population into a people since the late 19th century.

b. State, religion, civil society

Differently from the relations between race, ethnicities, and the formation of nationality, the relations between religions and modern States have more historical depth. Before the formation of nation-states in the 19th century, it is known that European populations were aggregated or divided according to their sovereigns' language, religion, region or kinship ties. There is relative consensus in the literature on the subject regarding the importance of the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. It put an end to the wars between Catholics and Protestants in Europe and thus contributed to the consolidation of the idea that to each State corresponds a Church, consecrating the principle of territorial and cult unity. Although the Thirty Years' War (1616-1648) momentarily interrupted this consensus, the Treaty of Westphalia ratified the principle according to which a State, a territory and an exclusive and dominant religion guaranteed by the power of the State would coincide. After this arrangement was made, in many cases, such as that of Henry VIII's England, the state power apparatus began to coincide with the religious apparatus and heresy was treated as political treason (Lecler 1955; Laursen 1998; Bauberot 1993). In the case of France, although the Edict of Nantes (1598)¹⁴ established the co-existence of two confessions under the same State, its revocation by Louis XIV in 1685 made Catholicism once again the exclusive religion of a State territory at a moment in which political reforms weakened the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church over the French territory.¹⁵

The complexities and nuances of a process that lasted four centuries have already been described and analyzed by a vast literature that we do not intend to cover here. For the purposes of our argument, however, it is important to stress that the conflictive and/or harmonious relations between religions and the administrative powers of States contributed to demarcate the new space of civil society—that is, a space that concerns private subjects—and circumscribe relative rights, such as eligibility for public office, requirements for professional regulations, legal capacities, the registration of birth, marriage

¹⁴ Although the dispositions of the Edict of Nantes approved by Henry IV maintained Catholicism as the official religion of the kingdom as well as its ancient rights, properties, and incomes, it allowed Protestants to practice domestic worship and granted them certain civil rights, such as the guarantee of having their own courts and eligibility to public office. It also granted them political rights with the institution of protectorates guarded by Huguenots in 200 fortified places, among which were La Rochelle and Montpellier.

¹⁵ The Declaration of the Clergy of France, proclaimed in 1682, granted the king vast legal powers over the clergy and the property of the Church in France.

and death, and, of course, freedom of worship. Thus, while the most recent ideas of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ have been associated with the constitution of ‘nationality’ in somewhat well-established States, issues concerning religions have been historically associated with the very edification of the structures of modern secular States and their counterpart, civil society, as an entity of rights that was relatively separate from both the State and the religious apparatus. As has been well-observed by Geoffrey Levey, religion had a formative role in the development of liberal societies because it was the only idiom available. Thus, other cultural forms could only be distinguished from religious forms as time went on (2009: 5). This difference of historical depth seems to be fundamental for us to understand the distinctive way in which “religions” and “ethnicities” politically interpellate the power of the State.

In a previous paper (Montero 2013) that examines the strategic role of the Catholic Church in the construction of Republican secularism in Brazil, we argued that Christian culture also had a key role in the formation of the Brazilian public sphere. Thus, although the religious model and the model of the nation State obey distinct logics, the construction of secularism went hand in hand with the construction of nationality. In contrast to Protestantism, perceived as an imported religiosity, and to magical practices, associated principally with slavery, only Catholicism allowed for the celebration of the supposedly primordial bonds uniting the different members of the Brazilian nation. From an institutional perspective, the construction of the modern Republican State depended on the legal institution of a state apparatus that was separate from the ecclesiastical administration. However, in spite of the tensions brought about by the reform of the State undertaken by Republicanism and the accommodation of the goods and interests of the Catholic Church in civil legal associations, there was no war against religion in Brazil. On the contrary, many authors have already demonstrated that given the inception of a state bureaucracy that lacked technical and human resources, civil life remained for a long time under the aegis of religious administration (Beozzo 2000; Mainwaring 1989; Giumbelli 2000; Mariano 2002, Montero 2006, 2009). Forty years after the establishment of the new regime, the alliance between the Church and the State was to be further strengthened by the first term of Getulio Vargas’s administration, which actively collaborated to establish the Catholic Church as the moral tutor of the Brazilian nation. By granting it privileges and subsidies in exchange for

political and ideological support, Vargas's administration consolidated the material bases for the religious monopoly of Catholicism for a long time. The intimate relations between the Catholic Church and the State endured until their relative rupture during the military regime from 1964 onwards. As has been well-observed by Ken Serbin (1999: 7), this moral agreement made it possible for the Catholic Church to become "the social extension of the State by means of the construction of hospitals, churches, and other projects."

For these reasons, the naturalization of Catholicism as a moral value of the Brazilian nation permeated all spheres of social life for more than half a century. It was in its name that Catholic priests, with the connivance of sectors of the Judiciary, colonized the institutions, laws, powers of the State, and public celebrations, persecuting pastors and popular practice, which, they believed, threatened the social and moral order. In practice, the State depended on Christian culture and ecclesiastical institutions to formulate a unifying ideology of Brazilian nationality, a process that continued over various decades. Politically, the Catholic Church maintained its influence over an expressive part of the dynamics related to the construction of citizenship by maintaining control over social welfare and expanding its hegemony over civil rights.

The moral agreement with the Catholic Church eventually became the model of legal reference for the creation, organization, and recognition of new civil religious associations that disputed the adherence of popular classes. In effect, categories such as 'magic,' 'sorcery,' and 'macumba' were organized in a generic way within the classification of 'low Spiritism' and understood as the reverse of religion. They were typified as crimes until the 1940s (Giumbelli 1997). Giumbelli argues that it is in the realm of debate with the agents of the law that Spiritism and Umbanda were constructed as religions by banning from their practices elements such as animal sacrifice, economic exploitation, and magical healing, which were legally framed as charlatanism and quackery.¹⁶ One might also add that the fact that such practices were considered as crimes in the penal code indicates how the legal semiology of Christianity regarding possession and sorcery was, side by side with medicine, able to keep part of its legal powers until a relatively recent period.

¹⁶ The author observes that in the Northeast, differently from what happened in the South, the concept of 'African religions' was constructed through dialogue with intellectuals (1997: 272-273).

This quick digression through the notions of race and ethnicity in their relation to issues of nationality as well as through the category of religion in its relation to the formation of secularism allow us to perceive how the categories of 'religion' and 'ethnicity' have followed parallel trajectories in their relation to the construction of modern nation States. While race/ethnicity are categories that, each in its own way, aim to include cultural differences within the idea of the nation, secularism has since the 17th century been considered a legal solution for conflicts involving religious differences. In the Brazilian case, in which religious diversity had not yet constituted itself as such, secularism had much more the role of legally guaranteeing the effective separation of the bureaucratic and political interests of the Republican State and the Catholic Church than it had, for lack of actual religious competition, the role of exerting pressure for the withdrawal of religion from the public sphere.

However, the notions of secularism and race return to the core of the present political dispute, in which the secular national State, submitted to the double scrutiny of internal and external pressure, becomes the object of intense criticism, which is aimed at bringing about greater equality and the recognition of differences. In effect, pressure for more participation and political influence on the part of movements centered on religious and ethnic demands affect the contemporary understanding of secularism, on the one hand, and nationality, on the other..

Thus, let us consider the contemporary scenario in order to understand how 'secularism' and 'pluralism' have, in locating 'religions' and 'ethnicities' within the realm of political struggles, given rise to new challenges for what we could call 'post-secular' and 'post-national' States, as defined by J. Habermas.¹⁷

3. New challenges to the sovereignty of post-secular States

In a previous article in which we examined the issues of religious pluralism and ethnographic translation in the light of the Habermasian concepts of

17 In the 2008 seminar organized by Reset Dialogue on Civilization in Istanbul, J. Habermas describes the affluent societies in Europe and America as 'post-secular.' The term has both a descriptive dimension, in that it refers to the affluent societies in Europe and America in which religions demand an active role in public controversies, and a normative dimension. The author tries to respond to the challenge of thinking of how it is possible for democratic institutions to guarantee the construction of a political community based on the ethical pluralism of various religions. See "A post-secular society. What does that mean?" In: <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/0000000926>. (Accessed on November 3, 2013). As for the issue of post-national states dealt with by Habermas in the context of immigration, see *The Post-National Constellation. Political Essays*. Littera-Mundi, 2001.

publicity and reflexivity, we faced the contemporary theoretical and political challenge of the necessary co-existence of cultural and religious differences within a common legal framework (Montero 2009). In *Law and Democracy*, Habermas (1992) suggests that in post-World War II secular societies, law took on the function of mediating between the communicative power that lies at the foundation of the society and the administrative power, in this way removing a prerogative maintained by the Catholic Church for many centuries. However, the dramatic events that occurred on September 11 in the United States challenge secularism as a model and have led thinkers and philosophers to reformulate the question of the ‘resurgence of religion’ in the secular world. According to Habermas (2008), a strictly secular model that associates accelerated modernization with the vanishing of religion cannot confront the problem posed by post-secular societies, in which religions demand the right to influence the public sphere.

a. Secularism and religious pluralism

The secularism of the Brazilian state has been guaranteed by its Constitution for over one century. However, secularism has never been as threatened as in the last decade, during which various sectors of civil society have invoked the principle of secularism to demand respect for difference of faith and freedom of worship. Some have mobilized opinion to enforce the removal of religious symbols from public places, while Neo-Pentecostal leaders have initiated an aggressive campaign against Afro-Brazilian religious manifestations.¹⁸ How could one explain the present visibility and intensity of the public controversy over secularism and religious intolerance?

Since the Republican Constitution of 1891, Brazil has recognized freedom of worship and prohibited any State interference in religious affairs.

¹⁸ In 2007 the Committee for Combating Religious Intolerance in Brazil was founded in Rio de Janeiro Legislative Assembly to mediate conflicts between Evangelicals and Afro-Brazilians. In December 2009 the National Human Rights Program presented by the federal government proposed, among other measures, to “prevent the ostensible display of religious symbols in the Union’s public bodies.” In 2013, the Federal Attorney’s Office demanded, in the name of State secularism, that the expression “May God be praised” be removed from the new Real bills. Also in March 2013 the Committee for the Constitution, Justice, and Citizenship judged as admissible the proposal for a constitutional amendment by deputy João Campos (PSDB) from Goiás, which includes national religious organizations (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, Supreme Council of the Presbyterian Church in Brazil and Baptist Convention) among the ones that can propose Direct Unconstitutionality Actions, a prerogative that had been restricted to political organizations and labor unions. The same year witnessed intense mobilization against the appointment of Evangelical deputy Marco Feliciano (PSC) as the president of the Human Rights and Minorities Committee for the sake of State secularism.

However, its purpose at that time was practically to guarantee civil autonomy to Catholicism and freedom of worship to Protestants. As has already been argued (Montero 2009), while the civil code aimed at consolidating secularism by separating civil acts (birth, marriage, education, health, etc.) from the civil effects until then guaranteed by the Christian sacraments (baptism, marriage, last rites), the penal code, in contrast, regulated practices that challenged 'order,' 'public morality,' and 'civility.' In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the historical process of the construction of secularism in Brazil developed more rapidly than the production of a religious pluralism that simultaneously recognized the existence of different religions and the effective right to freedom of faith and worship. In effect, as we shall see below, in the Brazilian case, religious diversity was very slowly transformed into political pluralism due to the Catholic hegemony that until very recently delayed the emergence of conflicts over secularism in Brazil.

As far as secularism is concerned, the 1988 Constitution basically limited itself to what had already been foreseen in the previous Constitutions (Leite 2012:158). However, it did include a small but significant change to the article concerning the protection of 'free external manifestation of faith' (Art. 5, VI). It suppressed the references to 'public order' and 'good morals' as limits to the practice of religious worship. We believe that this suppression expresses the understanding that Spiritism and Afro-Brazilian practices had become, over the previous fifty years, widely accepted as unequivocally religious activities that should therefore have the full right of public expression. We could therefore conclude that the 1988 Constitution represents a milestone concerning the widening of the notion of religion on the part of the State by recognizing practices that were previously subject to criminalization as fully religious, and by accepting religious pluralism as a right that demands respect for differences of belief and the defense of freedom of worship. (Leite 2012:61). Paradoxically, the dispute over the very concept of secularism was exacerbated exactly when religious pluralism and its rights were recognized. Increase in the competition between possible creeds and the incorporation of the idea of the free manifestation of opinions as an individual right multiply the different positions regarding practices that may be considered acceptable or not within a secular State.

As far as religious pluralism is concerned, Evangelical growth has increased the perception of religious diversity, as has already been mentioned,

and the conflict between Neo-Pentecostals and Afro-Brazilian religions has placed the right to the manifestation of worship at the core of the dispute. In reality, it seems that the institutionalization of religious pluralism as a legal issue and social practice has been paradoxically stimulated by the very expansion of Pentecostalism. The latter, in its strategy of confronting other religions, has displaced religious conflict from the State—which has suspended its penal restrictions—to civil society, which now disputes individual religious choices on behalf of the freedom of conscience and manifestation.

In fact, by publicly demonizing other forms of worship in the name of ‘truth’ and ‘sin,’¹⁹ some sectors of the Neo-Pentecostal movement resort to a dogmatic language similar to the language of Catholic priests in their campaigns against Umbanda in the 1950s in order to circumscribe religious frontiers and expand their symbolic domain over Afro-Spiritist manifestations. But what was then accepted by public opinion without much scandal now causes a profound confrontation of opinions. In fact, as is shown by Milton Bortoleto’s investigation in progress, organized religious leaders have drawn on the 1989 anti-racist law that actions undertaken in the name of the ‘true religion’ should be understood as prejudiced and typified as criminal.²⁰ It is now no longer possible to “not recognize what is practiced by some churches as religion,” as intended by pastor Tupirani, the mentor of Afonso Henrique, the youth who destroyed images in a Spiritist center in Rio de Janeiro.

b. Secularism and the ethical foundation of the State

While there have been no significant changes in the law on secularism, the Executive has produced new policy directives, particularly in the 2009 version of the federal government’s National Program for Human Rights. The document expressed demands from both secular and religious sectors and included a measure that aimed to develop actions “to preclude the

19 Declaration posted on You Tube in 2009 by one of the youths who invaded the Spiritist Center Cruz de Oxala according to the narrative published in Milton Bortoleto’s work (2013). In the narrative by Afonso Henrique, who attends the Imperio Geração de Jesus Cristo church, he affirms that he felt “challenged” by the attendants of the Spiritist Center, and therefore entered it and asked for the demons: “Where are they so that I can stamp over their heads and prove that Jesus Christ is greater and sovereign”? *Mutatis mutandi* this narrative is not very different from Catholic missionaries’ narratives on the magical forces mobilized by the indigenous chiefs they intended to convince of the greater power of God. See <http://frecab.com.br/2012/07/condenados-fanaticos-religiosos/>

20 Typification was facilitated by the new wording of the anti-racism law (L7716) passed by President Sarney in 1989. In 1997 prejudice against ethnicity and religion was added to prejudice against race and color as crimes liable to be punished in accordance with the law.

ostensive display of religious symbols in the Union's public buildings as a way of promoting the secularism of the State as well as respect for differences of faith and worship" (Giumbelli 2012: 45). The proposal did not last long: it was removed from the document in a new decree less than one year later. It revealed the distinction between secularism understood as the legal separation of State and Church and secularism understood as the secular self-representation of nationality, a distinction that is deeply ingrained in the imagination of various sectors of the Brazilian society.

In the reverse direction of the National Human Rights Program, the growth of Evangelical churches challenges the Catholic imagination for greater influence in public life. Protestants, and especially Neo-Pentecostals, compete in various fields—in Parliament, in the media, on the streets—for the monopoly over religion and against Catholic hegemony as a mediating force, together with law, between society and the State apparatus.

The episode in which sculptures were broken by a Neo-Pentecostal youth at a Spiritist center described in the press in 2009 provides a good illustration of the dispute for the mediating role between society and State (Bortoleto 2013). In Afonso Henrique's narrative of how he was arrested and taken to the police station, he affirms that policemen "think they are an authority, but they are not," and reiterates that "for the Church they are no authority." Pastor Tupirani, his mentor at the Igreja Geração de Jesus Cristo church goes even further by heading a campaign called "Yes, Bible! No Constitution!"²¹ Such propositions seem to challenge the legal sovereignty of the State itself in that they reignite the subject of secularism as a dispute between the State and Religion.

Although this position might be considered very marginal in the field of religious controversies in Brazil today, it still makes us face the sensitive issue of the ethical foundation of our legal system. The political utopias related to the construction of Brazilian democracy—equality, freedom, citizenship—no longer seem to be able (if they have ever been) to fulfill the set of ideas that uphold the ethical foundations of the judicial order. The debate

21 Demonstration on the waterfront of Copacabana in June 19th, 2012. The pastor affirms in his speech: "Geração de Jesus Cristo church does not bow to men's law! Their sentence has no value. I spit and tear, just as I have torn various documents and symbols of documents. I can tear law. And I could easily tear the Constitution itself. Because I have the right to follow the law I want." See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_Lq8q5JhTY. Consulted on December 5th, 2013.

on the removal of crucifixes and their persistent permanence in courts and public buildings suggest the continuity of Catholicism as a cornerstone of civic life.²² Thus, the process of its denaturalization (and consequently of its persuasive power) as an ethical foundation began at the very moment in which its presence became the object of fierce dispute. The data collected by Ranquetat Jr. (2012: 70-75) in his work on the presence of religious symbols in public spaces seem however to indicate that it is easier for law operators to accept the introduction of competing religious symbols, such as the Bible, in public spaces than to support their complete removal, as demanded by atheist movements. The Resolution Project Nr. 49 of 1988 approved an amendment authorizing the placing of Bibles on the plenary table of the Chamber of Deputies “as a source of inspiration and spiritual subsidy for the task of elaborating rules and laws.” Of course this is not the same as to affirm the intention of “tearing up the Constitution.” Although Christianity disputes within itself the privilege of being the moral foundation of Brazilian society, the data seem to indicate that this justification can only present itself publicly as non-religious: “The Bible is not to be confused with religion,” affirmed Antonio de Jesus, the Evangelical constituent deputy who proposed the amendment.

Thus, if the conflict between religions has led to a normative reinforcement of pluralism, as stated above, how may one understand the affirmation of the autonomy of religious law over civil jurisdiction? How shall one understand this persistent permanence of religion as a civil bond despite the acceptance of the diversity of faith as a principle? Why does it seem to be more difficult to practice tolerance regarding different faiths than regarding different cultures? Is it possible to deal with religious pluralism at the same legal level as that which regulates ethnic pluralism?

In reality, the problem of religious pluralism seems to be far more complex. Differently from cultural pluralism, which questions civil and collective rights, campaigns such as “Yes, Bible! No Constitution!” led by pastor Tupirani of the Igreja Geração de Jesus Cristo church seem to challenge the very democratic foundation of the liberal model of the State that supposes freedom of expression to be the ethical foundation of modern society, as

22 In an interview to Ranquetat Jr., Wambert Di Lorenzo, professor of Law at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, affirms that “when a crucifix is found in a public building, the first thing it reminds us of is that that State or that state environment is at the service of society” (2012: 66).

suggested by Binoche (2012). What is thus reintroduced in its place is religious consensus or the primacy of a hegemonic religion.

In view of these ways of expressing religious convictions, some Neo-Pentecostal currents might be compared to certain Muslim movements in Europe, which, as in the case of the cartoon controversy, take the sharia as the legal foundation for violent reactions against journalists and the press. In the case of Neo-Pentecostalism, the pastor who affirms that “the law of his God is the noblest of all” in the name of the right to the freedom of public expression of faith also places religious law above civil law. He thus seems to question the very legal foundation of the secular State. From our perspective, this view has not been adequately assessed by Modood (2009) in his critique of the secularist ideology of multiculturalism and his demand for the introduction of anti-blasphemy laws in England. Now, according to the example cited here, the pastor’s enunciation combines respect for difference of belief—which is at the level of individual freedom—not with respect for difference of opinion, but with the right to “follow the law I want”—which is located at the level of the ethical foundation of normativity. Thus affirmed, this demand places us before the aporia that consists of demanding respect for the right of individual freedom (of expression) while questioning the legal foundation of all democratic rights.

The challenges posed by the recognition of religious minorities are not, therefore, of the same nature as those posed by the recognition of ethnic minorities. Let us take a quick glance at the challenges that the recognition of minorities as ethnic groups poses to the political field.

4. Challenges to the sovereignty of post-national States

In a previous paper (Montero 2012), I developed the idea, already hinted at by authors such as Costa (2006), Arruti (2005), and French (2002), that the phenomena of ethnic identities, having taken the field of culture (as the emanation of a group’s way of being) as a starting point, have projected themselves into the field of politics by means of an appropriation of the grammar of law. By so doing, they have resulted in the legalization of ethnic groups. For this to become possible it was historically necessary for a set of agents to emerge—anthropologists, missionaries, journalists, lawyers, activists, ethnic leaders, etc. These agents were responsible for doing the creative work of mediation

that transforms memories, accounts, and ways of living into a legal cause. This process of legalization of ethnic identities is related to a broader debate in the contemporary world context, which opposes *multiculturalism* to the classical idea of nation States.

According to Charles Taylor (2009), the original notion of multiculturalism alluded, at least in the Canadian case, to a procedure of integration. However, according to him, it became in many countries a suspicious and misunderstood term because it was supposed that it implied an unlimited expansion of different forms of living in a national society, thus fragmenting it into different ghettos and threatening its fundamental values. For Taylor this fear is absurd in view of the enormous assimilating force of liberal societies; this force would compel communities willing to keep their way of life fully original to isolation (2009: xiv). Anyway, although we do not wish to take sides on this debate, it seems that by about the end of the 20th century it was already clear that international conditions—economic and migration flows, the consolidation of political blocks, environmental issues, etc.—had weakened the classical idea of nation States and their regulatory framework. A legal understanding of the positive discrimination of differences eventually became crystalized in this international political context, which started to promote anti-assimilationist policies.

In the Brazilian case, the new legal and political framework inaugurated with the 1988 Constitution partly anticipated the concerns related to the revision of the international norms on indigenous peoples defined in the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples OIT Convention 169 of 1989, which recognized “the Indians’ social organization, customs, languages, believes and traditions as well as their original rights over the lands where they have traditionally lived; the Union shall demarcate the land, protect them and provide for the respect of all their goods” (Montero 2012). This transformation affects the very formulation of nationality. The Brazilian State, until very recently imbued with the national ideology of assimilationism as a model of social coherence, began to see itself as a State made up of parallel and pluriethnic heritages. Ethnic pluralism started to use the language of the ‘recognition of the right to cultural difference’ and to establish a fourth generation of rights to citizenship besides civil, political, and social rights: collective rights such as the recognition of traditional territories, social diversity, respect towards the environment and biodiversity, etc. (Arruda 2005: 100). The conviction

that indigenous populations—and also traditional communities—protect the forests in which their territories have been partly recognized and delimited was then established.²³ In the case of the Brazilian Northeast, Arruti (2002) has shown that after democratization in the 1980s, the historical “struggle for land” reappeared in the political scenario in the garments of an ethnic language that introduced cultural differences as a mobilizing force, following the indigenist movement of the previous decade.

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the Brazilian version of ‘multi-culturalism’ re-substantializes the idea of race and ethnicizes cultures which syncretism had mixed. This ethnicization process is developed mainly in relation to the struggle for land. This eventually re-elaborates the idea of inclusion and social cohesion, which is here associated with the creation of specific territories delimited by the State. The latter become a relatively autonomous political and administrative unit regarding natural resources and the management of daily life, but remain connected to the State apparatus that continues to be the main channel of access to external resources (Arruti 2002: 9). This notion of “ethnic territories” was adopted by Catholic missionaries linked to the Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI). Allied with sectors of the academic and political fields, they began training indigenous leaders and creating civil organizations. Thus, the legacy of the connection between territory and indigenous populations that marked colonial history was taken as a reference and “rural workers” and “*caboclos*” started to be treated as descendants of Indians (“*índios remanescentes*”) who progressively gained collective rights to the ownership of land through the medium of a culturalist vocabulary. In the 1990s, this same process was extended to black rural populations, which were ethnically recognized as communities descending from fugitive slaves (*remanescentes de quilombos*), that is, no longer individuals pertaining to a race, but bearers of a collective way of life associated with a particular territory.

In spite of the resistances and tensions that are still part of the dispute for the recognition of this new class of rights, one could argue that it was once more through the maintenance of the grammar of the construction of nationality, that is, through the association of an idea of “culture” as a

23 I have tried to demonstrate the importance of environmentalist causes for the success of the legal legitimation of territorial demands on ethnic grounds in the Amazon region elsewhere (Montero 2012: 91).

collective way of life to a national (or subnational) territory that racial and ethnic differences were accommodated within the very legal framework of the State. Although the Brazilian State has assumed “ethnicity” as an indicator for the recognition of minorities, it has never abandoned its prerogatives to define the national territory as well as its collective purposes, as has been well demonstrated by Pacheco de Oliveira (1999).

It is noteworthy that in the debates that characterize the final decades of the last century, the category of “indigenous nations” then mobilized by various leaders and movements progressively disappeared and was replaced by “peoples” and “communities,” categories stabilized in the 1988 Constitution. Such categories express the understanding widespread at various levels of Brazilian society that the possibility for the recognition of parallel and autonomous legal and political apparatuses for indigenous populations was not on the agenda. In fact, the oxymoron “federal ethnicities,” coined by the Federal Attorney when solving a conflict between the Xocó Indians and the Mocambo village (Arruti 2006), illustrates well how national territoriality has provided the mental framework that guides the Brazilian legal and political system in the assimilation of the international public consensus that ethnic minorities should be protected and granted rights. In this political construction, the conjunction between ethnicity and territory has provided the normative framework within which differences can be incorporated into nationality. In this way, public and private civil rights are accommodated without threatening governance, territorial unity, and the sovereignty of the judicial apparatus.

Final considerations

The differences in historical depth and political implications greatly explain the persistent difficulties in granting religious minorities the same collective rights and forms of legal protection that have already been granted ethnic minorities. Modood (2009: 169-73) observes that until very recently it was impossible to penalize discrimination against Muslims in England because they were not considered to be an ethnic group. It was necessary for the English legal framework, which has always incorporated the concept of “race,” to be expanded in the 1960s so that “ethnic” groups such as the Pakistanis might be allowed citizenship and legal protection. This extension

eventually displaced the idea of the equality of individuals with the notion of the equality of collectivities. Still, the author observes that Muslim activists do not fit well into the category of “ethnicity” and demand equality and public recognition in terms of their religious practices. Therefore, according to the author, there is a gap between the advances in the field of ethnic equality and those concerning religious equality. Religious Muslims are thus not authorized to represent themselves collectively as such.

In the course of our argument, we have tried to elucidate the main elements that contribute to this gap. In the first place, one has to consider the differences of nature and temporality between the construction of civil and collective rights. This distinction allows one to understand why, in contrast to the rights of ethnic minorities that have been granted the right to express themselves collectively in respect for their traditions, the rights of religious minorities fall into the purview of civil rights and individual freedoms regarding issues of opinion and consciousness that supposedly belong to the private sphere.

In the Brazilian case, we have seen that the 1988 Constitution redefined the legal framework of the nation State by recognizing ethnic identities and granting them particular rights. However, although this ethnicization of color differences has been constructed in contrast to the language of syncretism and reinstated the concept of ‘race’ at least as a language of rights, it did not abandon the integrating principle of nationality. At the same time, as has been well-observed by authors such as Antonio Sergio Guimaraes (2011)²⁴ and Peter Fry (1995, 1996), the category of “race” has been reinstated in the political and academic language as well as in governmental censuses as a social classifier and a language of rights. Thus, differently from what happened in the field of ethnicity, “race” and “culture” seem to be separated once more in the religious field. Religions of “African” origin become closer to anti-racist political movements.²⁵ In the past, some practices perceived as having an

24 For Antonio Sergio Guimaraes, the term “race” has been reinstated in the language of activists and social scientists who consider the notion of “ethnic identity” to be insufficient to deal with a social discourse that resorts to physical markers of classification (2011:266). In contrast, Peter Fry (1995, 1996) considers the growing racialization of popular practices to be an effect of political engagement and of the practices of an academic sector that tends to consider the black/white polarization a more efficient instrument to combat racism.

25 The bill which instituted November 15th as the National Day of Umbanda and was signed by President Dilma Rouseff in 2012 bases its justification on the constitutional right to the freedom of belief and the free practice of religious worship, according to subsection VI of art 5 of the Brazilian Constitution, and emphasizes the Brazilian character of this religion (which has been granted a celebrative date in the national calendar).

“African” origin were recognized as religions because they were considered part of the Brazilian national tradition. They have therefore been conceived of within the framework of collective rights. In this case, it is noteworthy that the dispute arose not in the religious field, as respect for ‘freedom of conscience’ and pluralism, at an individual and private level, but in the cultural field, in which the notion of ‘national tradition’ that interpellates the collective and public level presided over the process in which the legitimacy of such practices was recognized.

Still, as far as the long duration is concerned, we have mentioned that non-Christian practices were constituted as legitimate religions. Once constituted, however, religious diversity was not immediately converted into the political language of religious pluralism. On the contrary, Catholicism had a long historical hegemony and campaigned against Spiritism, Umbanda, and Candomblé until the late 1960s. The fact that Catholicism was deeply ingrained in the self-representation of Brazilian national culture prevented it from confronting State secularism. Respect for religious pluralism was also restricted, except for a few exceptions involving Protestantism. Thus, it was possible to build a historical consensus regarding a pact for secularism—which implied the separation of State jurisdiction from the Catholic legal apparatus—and to simultaneously attribute a considerable part of the leadership in the secularization processes to Catholic agency: that is, the separation of civil society from the State. In effect, the Catholic grammar is so deeply ingrained in the secularization process that of its referents, such as crucifixes, images, and churches, became part of the language of civil society and cultural heritage. In this sense, it might be affirmed that the social and political dynamics that stimulated the advance of secularism in Brazilian society did not immediately lead to religious pluralism as a political language, that is, to the recognition of religious choice as a fact of opinion and, consequently, to the respect for equality between the different religions as legitimate mediators of society before the State. For this same reason, it was never possible for Afro-Brazilian practices to dispute the field of ethical normativity of the State

However, the institutionalization of the date published on the website of the Secretary for Politics Promoting Racial Equality in Brazil, an agency created in 2003 whose delegate is the black minister and activist Luiza Helena de Barros, points out its African roots and tries to converge the defense of religious freedom with the “protection of the rights of individuals and ethnic groups, especially those of the black population, affected by racial discrimination and other forms of intolerance.”

as religions. On the contrary, when their rights to the freedom of manifesting their faith were attacked by Neo-Pentecostal action, it was in the field of anti-racial struggles that they found the most effective way of defending their civil rights and denouncing what they saw as the crime committed against them. Thus, pluralism inaugurates religious disputes that paradoxically send “African traditions” back to the field of racial grammar.

If we now turn to the issue of “religious minorities,” it becomes clearer why the challenges pluralism poses to the Brazilian State could not be solved by accommodating differences within nationality, as in the case of multiculturalism. Although the secularism of the State was defined early in the Brazilian case, it took time for religious pluralism to become a political language. As has been observed, it has been closely associated to the deterritorialization and, as a consequence, the denationalization of religion in order to allow differences to co-exist. This was guaranteed by the neutrality of the State in relation to different faiths. The denationalization of Catholicism has only recently taken shape, and religious controversies are a fundamental instrument in this process. Neo-Pentecostals play a significant role by pointing to the fact that Brazil’s identification with Catholicism is due to historical accident.

Jose Murilo de Carvalho (2008:10-13) rightly suggests that rights have been granted especially on the initiative of the State in Brazil and that this has been one of the most distinctive characteristics of Brazilian citizenship. In particular, greater emphasis has been placed on social rights than civil and political rights. These characteristics might explain why the multiculturalist agenda may be more rapidly absorbed even before the clearly consolidated institution of a pluralist society in the religious field, a field that interpellates individual rights. In effect, as has already been mentioned, due to the way in which religion and culture have been historically articulated in Brazil, the idea of “freedom” has been related to anti-slavery struggles, and not to the religious disputes that, in the European case, led religious freedom to antecede other rights.

In the context of the forces and interests described above, we would affirm that the expansion of Neo-Pentecostal Protestantism causes new tensions to emerge at two different levels in contemporary Brazil: the legal acceptance of religious pluralism as a recognition of the regulated disagreement of publicly expressed opinions; and a reaffirmation of secularism that implies the privatization of religion, that is, the total suppression of religious

symbols from public places. However, as the classical liberal model of democracy—for which the idea of “public opinion” is an effect of the idea of “private religion,” as suggested by Binoche (2012)—has been otherwise reconfigured in Brazil, where Catholicism constitutes what is public in the form of civil society, nationality, and/or tradition, pluralism reintroduces religious conflict as a dispute for the consensus on “true religion” as an ethical foundation for social life.

Thus, by rejecting the ethnic condition of Afro-Brazilians and confronting their religion as “false” in the religious field, Neo-Pentecostals seem to introduce a “holy war” into the political agenda, sending the issue of the individual rights of blacks back into the religious field. For this reason, in recent episodes of confrontation with Afro-Brazilian religiosity, Neo-Pentecostals reinserted a controversy over secularism in the political agenda of the last two decades, which seemed to have already been duly dealt with. Their recurring and aggressive presence in the public sphere cannot be explained, as has been frequently affirmed in the literature, by the weakness of Brazilian secularism, which is characterized by the way State and civil society allow themselves to be ‘invaded’ by religion. To us, these issues do not concern the relations between society and the State, as was the case in the past, when crimes against ‘public credulity’ and ‘sorcery’ were formulated regarding ‘false religions.’ Since then, ‘false religions’ have been recognized and have organized themselves into various civil institutions. As mentioned above, the Brazilian constitutions have granted them freedom of worship and the neutrality of the State.

Thus, although the debate on secularism is old, the present context of the secularization of Brazilian society leads us to affirm that we are actually in the presence of a new phenomenon. In the past, the dispute over secularism concerned the autonomy of the State apparatus in relation to the Catholic ecclesiastical apparatus and the authorization, in the name of ‘freedom of worship’, for the creation of schools and foundation of churches by Protestants. It does not seem that these are exactly the questions that motivate disputes around secularism today. Therefore, Brazil faces a very paradoxical situation, in which the dynamics of religious pluralism advance by means of public actions which, in the case of the Neo-Pentecostals, do not recognize as religious practices many of those that have been historically recognized as such. The agenda of freedom of consciousness becomes an issue

through its confrontation with the agenda of collective rights for the respect of differences. Secularism advances in that it makes the ethical foundation of the State a little more plural, even if still in debt to Christian culture.

However, it seems clear to us that one issue remains open: on the one hand, to respond to the dilemma posed by Charles Taylor regarding the non-self-sufficiency of the secular and, on the other hand, to define the type of respect deserved by those who live under the jurisdiction of religious laws (Modood 2009: 220). The religious controversies activated by Neo-Pentecostal movements partly concern the dispute between Afro-Brazilian and Catholic religions for the ethical foundation of Brazilian nationality. Upon observation of the constant manifestations of Neo-Pentecostal churches, especially the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, one might notice why, in a way that is very similar to the European reaction to Muslims, Neo-Pentecostal pastors revive in Brazil the old controversy over the secularism of the State. While Muslims in Europe seem to challenge the founding parameters of European secularism by demanding to publicly use religious insignia or by demanding that ‘blasphemy’ be recognized as a crime (Modood 2009), the Brazilian neo-Pentecostals do so by encouraging their adherents to invade Spiritist and/or Umbandist centers and break their images (Bortoleto 2013), by legislating in their own interest, for example when ordering Bibles to be placed in public spaces (Ranquetat Jr. 2012), or by supporting proposals for the criminalization of animal sacrifice (Bortoleto 2013). The cases analyzed here allow us to propose that as religious ethics remains the foundation for civil life in Brazilian society, even if in a diffuse way, the less positive the relation between religion and nationality is, the greater will be the chance that its normativity be perceived as theocratic, and therefore a threat to the collective normativity of the State. On the other hand, we have observed that the racial issue was partially subsumed and accommodated at the level of collective rights in Brazil—either as tradition, as in the case of Afro-Brazilian religions, or at the level of territory, as in the case of the quilombo movement. Placing African religions in the field of individual rights by classifying them as “religious minorities” would mean reinserting them into the dispute for the ethical foundation of nationality and collective morality, a context in which they would certainly lose. In contrast, reinserting them into the field of individual rights by classing them as “racial minorities” has been relatively more successful due to the implementation of affirmative policies. Yet, debate on

the political and social effects of this legal interference with the classification system remains intense.

The examples above help us to demonstrate that the political relations implied by religious pluralism as a political language are different from and frequently contradictory with those implied by multiculturalism. If the law is able to successfully carry out its role as a mediator between social dynamics and the administrative apparatus by legalizing ethnic identities, religious pluralism tends to dispute this mediating role with the law by multiplying the available ethical references.

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Under the Berlin sky

Candomblé on German shores

Joana Bahia

Abstract

Migratory phenomena produce ethnicities, and a number of migratory studies consider the representation of identities created by individuals and groups by their cultural symbols. This study analyzes the cultural and religious dimension of migration, using as an example the Brazilian community in Germany, and the way in which it reconfigures the local religious field. In this study we look at the ethnic symbols in the religious field, based upon fieldwork begun in 2009, which analyses the importance of the Candomblé terreiro or temple, Ilê Obá Silekê in the city of Berlin. I seek to understand how the construction of the terreiro is important in the production of symbols related to Brazilian culture, and how these are perceived by local society.

Keywords: Ethnicity and religion, expansion of Afro-Brazilian religiousness in Europe, Brazilian migration, religious field in Germany.

Resumo

O fenômeno migratório produz etnicidades, e alguns dos estudos migratórios contemplam a representação da identidade construída por indivíduos e grupos por meio de seus símbolos culturais. Analisamos a dimensão cultural e religiosa da migração tomando como exemplo a presença de brasileiros na Alemanha e o modo como reconfiguram o campo religioso local. Neste artigo, tratamos da circulação de símbolos étnicos no campo religioso, abordando, com base no trabalho de campo iniciado em 2009, a importância do terreiro de candomblé Ilê Obá Silekê, localizado na cidade de Berlim. Buscamos compreender de que modo a construção do terreiro é importante para a produção de símbolos relacionados com a cultura brasileira e de que modo estes são percebidos na sociedade local.

Palavras chaves: etnicidade e religião, expansão da religiosidade afro brasileira na Europa, migração brasileira, campo religioso na Alemanha.

Under the Berlin sky

Candomblé on German shores

Joana Bahia

Introduction

A century ago, Brazil was a country that received many more immigrants than it exported. But since the 1980s, it has become a country that exports more workers than it receives.¹ This change isn't solely demographic, but denotes a complex social and political scenario that has diverse implications.

Brazilian emigration took on significant proportions since the mid-1980s, according to Teresa Sales (1999: 20-21). Since the first half of that decade, Brazil has constantly experienced a negative migratory balance, and because of this, it is currently considered an "emigration country". The presence of Brazilians in Europe has grown due to international socio-economic changes, particularly the tougher U.S. immigration policies as a consequence of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

Recent statistics from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and recent studies on Brazilians in the United States and Europe, indicate that most Brazilians emigrate to the USA, followed by Europe (Povoá Neto 2007; Oliveira Assis 2013; and Siqueira 2014). In general, these studies are based upon migration networks that already exist in the destination country. Immigrants are increasingly associated with criminalization, particularly women (Pontes 2004), a phenomenon that intensified after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA. This fact was highlighted by the European media (Oliveira Assis and Martins 2010a and 2010b). Within Europe, most Brazilians go to Portugal, followed by Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland and Belgium.

I would like to highlight the case of Germany, because along with Great

¹ Notwithstanding the current situation in which many Brazilians are returning to Brazil, and many qualified professional Portuguese citizens are emigrating from Portugal to Brazil and Africa. This movement of people and symbols is also worthy of analysis. To what extent does the insertion of Brazilians not only occur in the marketplace, but also in the symbolic reconstructions of Portuguese and European religious fields as a whole? And in what way will new symbolic circuits be created? Many Brazilians and Portuguese are now migrating to Switzerland, and since 2011, there has been a slight increase in Brazilians migrating to Germany.

Britain, Ireland and Italy, Germany was the European country with the highest emigration rates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This emigration declined with the rise of National Socialism and World War II. At the peak of European industrialization, Germany experienced labor immigration from Italy, Portugal, Eastern Europe and Asia, becoming the country with the highest immigration levels in Europe (Birsl and Solé 2004: 44).

Germany, has 216,285 officially registered residents from Latin America, of which 32,445 are Brazilian, with a predominance of women. According to official statistics, 2,532 Brazilians live in Berlin. It is estimated that there are 8 thousand Brazilians in Berlin if illegal immigrants or those with European citizenship are considered. It is important to note that many Brazilians, particularly professionals or those who emigrate to study, establish their right to remain with a European passport, whether issued in Germany or another country. This makes it difficult to precisely ascertain the number of Brazilians in Germany's capital cities (Berlin, Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich). According to 2012 data obtained from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are 95,150 Brazilians in Germany, making it the fourth leading recipient of Brazilians.

Gradual changes have occurred in Germany's migration patterns since the 1980s, with the inflow of groups from Asia, Africa and Latin America, particularly Brazilians. The fall of the Berlin Wall changed relationships, not only among Germans but also between Germans and foreigners. To complicate this cultural chessboard even more, large numbers of Germans who had migrated to other regions in Europe, returned after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We must also consider the presence of migrants and refugees from Eastern Europe after geopolitical changes in the Balkans, USSR and other countries of the former Soviet block.

Brazilian immigrants have not only inserted themselves in global labor markets, but also participate in a symbolic recreation of the religious field. The practice and expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions in Latin America (particularly in Uruguay and Argentina) since the 1960s have been studied by Frigério (1999), Segato (1991, 1994 and 1997) and Oro (1998). In the 1970s, they crossed the Atlantic and expanded into Portugal (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009). They can now be found in Spain, Belgium, Italy, France (Capone and Teisenhoffer 2002), Germany (Bahia 2012), Austria, Switzerland, and the United States of America.

Brazilians don't have a close linguistic proximity to Germany, nor a strong colonial relationship as they do with Portugal, because Brazil was not colonized by Germany.

Meanwhile, Brazil is perceived as "exotic" by Germans, many of whom have a highly romanticized view of Brazil. An image of Brazil as a beautiful country, with lush forests has been propagated by travelers, naturalists and German emigrants since the 19th century (Neumann 2005). Certain ideas come to the minds of Germans when someone says "I am Brazilian". Positive images are associated to Brazilian nationality, which are converted into an intermediate category. In other words they support dominant discourses about the belonging of the other and not judging, upon viewing people for the first time with a previously developed position. (Said 1990). Brazil is also a place where many Germans settled colonies where they rebuilt an idea of Germany in the tropics, reinventing the European map on Brazilian soil, because the essence of being German is based upon a concept of *jus sanguinis*, which is understood to mean, I am German in any part of the world.

The same concept can be used to classify Brazilian emigrants. Notwithstanding changes in migrant rights, and variables in German policies with regard to this issue, the concept of *jus sanguinis* remains intact in German legislation (ever since the German Constitution of 1913). In other words, only children born of German parents are considered German. The term *Ausländer* is used for a person who isn't in his or her country, literally a foreigner.² Regardless of their legal standing, this category is widely used for people who are defined as non-white, according to the definition of "being white" as it is understood by members of the dominant society (Thränhardt 1984).

The idea of a nation as a cultural construct is based on the concept of *jus sanguinis* (Brubaker 1984), and clearly affirms what it means to be German or not German. There are other defining concepts such as *Mischlingskinder*, which is used to describe children of mixed race and *Schutzbefohlene*,³ which is to describe the status of a population colonized by Germany (such as

2 There are variations on the idea and term *Ausländer*, which may be used to refer to foreign migrant workers or even a worker who was invited to the country, under German policies.

3 Blacks in German colonies were commonly called *Eingeborener* (native) in public German discourse. When these people go to Germany to work or study, they become *Ausländer*, a term that doesn't denote skin color the same way as expressions such as *Mohr* and *Neger* do. There are derogatory expressions such as *Bimbo* which are not mentioned here. Many authors affirm that black immigrants have less rights than white foreigners in Germany (Nagl 2007).

Nigerians). The latter term has a racial connotation and is strongly based on physical appearance. In 1998, a new term was introduced into the official discourse to avoid or smooth over the negative tone of *Ausländer*: a *mit Migrationshintergrund*⁴ (person from a migratory background).

Culture is objectified in the body, musicality and religiosity. These are spaces occupied by Brazilians. Brazilian bodies have a cultural representation for Germans, who exoticize Brazilians and expect them to use their bodies and senses artistically.

Stereotypes related to corporality, are created by tourist propaganda, in particular by The Brazilian Tourist Board, Embratur. Since the 1980s, a feminized imagery of Brazil has been emphasized that incites sexual tourism in Europe (Piscitelli 2007).⁵

Changes in the German religious field

The German religious field is undergoing a transformation due mainly to migration from Turkey, Africa and other Arab countries, and more recently because of Cuban and Brazilian emigration. Many Turks migrated in the 1960s when Germany had temporary work programs to supply industrial labor. At the time, the aim was for these workers – recruited from countries such as Italy, Yugoslavia, Portugal and Turkey – to remain in the country for a limited period of time, but return to their countries when their work contracts terminate. But controlling immigration proved to be a challenge, given that it involves professional and family ties, and those who were meant to only be temporary workers, became permanent residents.⁶

There have been various forms of Brazilian immigration to Germany, the importance of which can be recognized in the internal differentiation

4 According to the Statistisches Bundesamt (2009: 6), this term refers to: “all those people who migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, and all foreigners born in Germany who have at least one parent who migrated or was born as a foreign national in Germany”.

5 Although this specific topic will not be discussed in detail in this article. I would like to highlight the exoticism of gender. If on one hand it offers an illusion of admiration and fascination, on the other it also encourages a policy that converts the other into something inferior, an object of domination hidden by a mystification, something that oscillates between the extremes of strangeness and familiarity. On this subject, see Kempadoo (2004). Lidola (2011), based on studies by Kahrsch (1996) and Engel (1998), which depict the way in which Brazilian women have been perceived by Germans as an exotic object of desire, from a perspective of hyperfeminisation. This opposes ideas held by German women who may be considered to have lost this characteristic (femininity) in virtue of their emancipation.

6 I will not delve further into this issue in this article. Suffice to mention the bibliography on this subject.



Picture 1. Cuban pai de santo Joaquin La Havana representing Oxum in afoxés parade at Karneval des Kuturen, in Berlin. Photo by Joana Bahia.

within the group. During the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964 to 1985), many intellectuals moved to Germany for political reasons, some of Jewish origin. Some emigration is related to German companies with business interests in Brazil. There is also emigration related to studies of the German language and insertion into the academic world, particularly for technical professions (engineering and industries that use state-of-the-art technology), because of the well known German exchange services, the Daad (Deutsch Akademischer Austauschdienst), in Latin America. There are also middle class Brazilians seeking better working conditions, who left Brazil between 1985 and 1994 due to the economic crisis. The large majority of Brazilian immigrants have married Germans, which is the most recent migrant profile (becoming important since 2000) and relies upon existing migration networks. There are also those who migrate to work in the sex industry, and who may continue in this profession or take a different direction, . they may marry or change their profession. Recent studies of Italian and German descendants in the southern Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul found that in the mid-1990s, some emigrated to Italy and Germany, either to study or to work in services (Oliveira Assis 2013). As I have stated, the reasons for many of these migration patterns are not always clear. In many cases, family and work ties and motivations are entwined and difficult to isolate. The field work carried out in Berlin encountered this migratory diversity. The terreiro of Candomblé studied include Brazilians ranging from middle-class workers, to those married to lower-class German men and women, although there is a predominance of artists, musicians, capoeiristas and dancers, including the pai de santo himself. There are also many Brazilians working in body waxing, at some 45 beauty salons in the city of Berlin (Lidola 2014).

According to German statistics, it is possible to note a feminization of Brazilian emigration in Germany (and also in Berlin) (Lidola 2011), most frequently illustrated by marriages between black – or dark-skinned women from the lower-classes to German men. However, the field work also found black or dark-skinned Brazilian men married to German women.

In addition to an expectation of hard work, what do the Brazilians take with them? Various studies indicate the importance of relationship networks, sociability and changes in the social and religious fields where migrants settle (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009; Beserra 2006; Dias 2006; Martes 1999).

Among the religions practiced by Brazilians in Germany over the past 10 years, we highlight Kardecist centres, Umbanda (a Brazilian religion that blends African religions with Catholicism, Spiritism, and considerable indigenous lore), Candomblé temples, and Santo Daime,⁷ which were all founded by Brazilians in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and other German cities (Spliesgart 2011). The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), and other evangelical denominations also exist. Although the religions of Brazilian immigrants in Germany has not been the focus of considerable study, information is found from the “Conference on Brazilian Communities Abroad”. Although there are pais de santo and mães de santo⁸, without terreiros or temples and various practitioners who don’t have ties to any casa de santo (saint house), there are currently two ilês [temples]⁹ registered in Germany, these religious practices are found throughout Germany. This serves as an indicator of the presence of practitioners.

Mãe Dalva (Mother Dalva) and the Berlin Wall and Mãe Habiba (Mother Habiba) in Appenzellerland

One of the first Brazilians to arrive and work with Afro-Brazilian religions was Mãe Dalva.¹⁰ As she herself states: “Today you log on to the Internet and see that it is full of *Dalva de Exu*, *Dalva de Pombagira*. In the past, there were no *Dalva*’s, I was the only *Dalva* in Germany. Now there are many.”

She arrived in Germany in 1979. She was born in 1945 in the village of Capanema, Vilaguaí, in the municipality of Maragogipe in Bahia state. She went to Germany to get married, and worked cleaning houses until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Thus in 2009, she celebrated 30 years of living in Germany. Her personal story is intertwined with references to

7 A syncretic spiritual practice founded in the 1930’s in the Brazilian Amazonian state of Acre. Santo Daime is syncretic in that it incorporates elements of several religious or spiritual traditions including Folk Catholicism, Kardecist Spiritism, African animism and indigenous South American shamanism, including *vegetalismo*.

8 A high priestess in a terreiro or temple; meaning mother-of-saint, where saint is the synonym of *Orixá*, as a consequence of the Afro-Brazilian syncretism in Candomblé.

9 “Casa de santo e ilê are other terms used to refer to Candomblé temples.

10 Brazilians in Germany have differing opinions about Mãe Dalva. Many state that her religious practices have no credibility. Many of her *filhos de santo* (children-of-saints) don’t give interviews about her. Some mentioned a lawsuit filed against her by Brazilians, but I was unable to obtain more information about this. The information I have comes from a one-hour interview she granted me, and a documentary about her called “Mutter Dalva”, but this has little biographical information

Germany, the Berlin Wall and Europe. She speaks of the Wall in a very interesting way, and mentioned an incident in which she felt German hatred for foreigners. She sensed that during a discussion her neighbor was going to slap her. She reacted and both ended up at the police station.

Notwithstanding accounts in academic studies that indicate there was little prejudice against foreigners before the Wall fell (Behrends 2003), the period which followed the fall of the Berlin Wall is not considered that in which the most hatred was felt against foreigners (namely those in Eastern Germany). The period prior to The Fall was, according to various Brazilians, a difficult time for emigrants because Berlin was a very racist and discriminatory city (studies show this changed after Germany was united). Many Brazilians circulated very little around the city, and avoided being seen. The period is described as one of restricted mobility.¹¹ In Mãe Dalva's opinion, the Wall was considered something of a liminal space, in part because of the energy of the place, where in the past she made offerings to the souls (Exus¹²), because it is believed that many people died when crossing the Wall, making it a place of death, equivalent to a cemetery. According to her, The Wall was and still is a place for *eguns* (the dead).

According to Mãe Dalva's account, the destruction of the Wall also symbolizes the arrival of Brazilians to the city of Berlin and Germany. She believes that those who arrived before the Fall were a different class of Brazilians, they were "better" than the generations that arrived from 1990 onwards. As she stated:

I helped many Brazilians before the Wall opened up [sic]. There were many good Brazilians here. We still have an influx of good ones, but it used to be better, they weren't jealous of what you had or didn't have. It was very difficult for a Brazilian to enter Germany. They needed papers. And you couldn't enter without a visa. So, after the Wall opened up, many people entered the country.

11 I believe that among the Brazilians who arrived at this time, few spoke the language or were familiar with German culture. This was compounded by the fact that they were also not familiar with the spaces of circulation in the city, and practiced a religion that at times conducted practices in public spaces. The fact that some had suffered instances of discrimination, led them to have this opinion of the Wall. Since 2000, the number of Brazilians in Berlin and Germany as a whole has increased (Lidola 2011), resulting in a greater diversification of this type of emigration. I believe this is what Mãe Dalva meant when she stated that the "good Brazilians" arrived before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

12 Exu in candomblé is an orixá, though whose intercession communication takes place between the other gods and human beings. In Umbanda, exu is a disincarnated spirit (exu-egun).

They thought that what I had, what I brought with me, that I earned it through *macumba* (a pejorative term meaning “witchcraft”).

It was only on the 24th July 2003 that she received official registration for her store and work from the German government. Her store *Casa de Oxum* was closed in 2009 due to non payment of taxes. In her working papers, she is listed as a *Lebensberatung* (advisor) who practices the following activities: *massage an bekleideten Personen* (massage with clothes on/spiritual healing channeled through ones hands), *Unterricht Tanz Ritual Candomblé* (teaching of ritual dances), *Ausübung Von Candomblé* (*Candomblé* practice), *Karton legen* (card reading), *Muschel* (cowrie shell divination), *Lebensberatung* (advisory services), *Verkaut Von Figuren* (sale of images), *Blumen Kleidung* (clothes adorned with flowers), *Glücksbringern amuleten* (and lucky charms). On the door a sign had read: “*Hilfe bei Problemen. In Liebe, Partnerschaft und Arbeitsuche. Immer Mittwochs. Meditationen mit Tanzt und Orakel*” (I can help you with relationship problems, partnerships and job searches. Every Wednesday. Meditation with dancing and oracle readings).

In addition to Brazilians who took their religion to Germany and neighboring countries such as Austria and Switzerland, Germans also seek these practices in Brazil.

Mãe Habiba de Oxum Abalô is of Austrian origin, she is the mother-of-saint responsible for the expansion of Umbanda (known by many as Omolocô because it mixes elements of Umbanda with Candomblé) in Berlin and Landsberg in Germany, Graz and Vienna in Austria, and Trogen and Zurich in Switzerland. The Terra Sagrada temple is used for giras, or Umbanda sessions, and is the central space of her spiritual work. It was created in 2006 and is located in Appenzellerland, Switzerland. Most of the participants are Swiss and German, while some of the “filhos” or children of the “casa” or temple are Brazilian. Most of the public is comprised of Brazilians and Portuguese due to the increased migratory flows of both nationalities to Switzerland. A Brazilian leads the co-ordination of the gira in Vienna, and for this reason there is a strong presence of Brazilians in the audience because he has many contacts.

She became acquainted with the religion when she first met Pai Buby (father Buby), leader of the Templo Guaracy which was founded in 1973 in São Paulo. Father Buby is largely responsible for the expansion of Umbanda throughout the world and regularly hosts activities in Geneva (Switzerland), Paris and Strasburg (France), Graz (Austria), Quebec (Canada), Washington,

California and New York (USA) and Sintra (Portugal). The Templo Guaracy is in Cotia, 30 minutes from the center of São Paulo, and its initiation rituals take place in a small forested area recently incorporated to the temple known as the Mataganza.

Due to her interest in combining non-European traditional knowledge with his work in psychotherapy, and also because of her pursuit of traditions that dialog with nature, Mãe Habiba had already had contact with Asian beliefs, but nothing that related to Brazilian traditions. New age elements also stand out in this type of Umbanda, which doesn't conduct animal sacrifices, and places strong emphasis on spiritual healing. The practice can be transmitted easily in German (which is not the case with Candomblé), because many songs have already been translated from Portuguese into German and CDs have been produced in German. It must be noted that most of the Umbanda mediums are German speakers, who have great difficulty speaking and understanding Portuguese. These factors have helped the religion proliferate through Germany and Austria. The Terra Sagrada in Switzerland is the center of the movement.

Habiba met with Father Buby at a congress of shamans in Marrakech in 1992, and was invited to attend an initiation into the religion in São Paulo. This initiation took place two years later. According to Habiba's testimony: "The Templo Guaracy is well organized in the European sense of the word. Father Buby always had contact with Europeans, and to a certain extent the Temple is marked by this mixture from São Paulo, which is different from the culture of Rio and Bahia."

It has somewhat of a "European style" organization, and one of Umbanda's syncretic principles – universalism – stands out at the temple's site¹³

The philosophical principles of Umbanda are by nature universal and are independent of any culture or tradition. Nevertheless, each Umbandista Temple has the right to interpret them and practice them in accordance with its foundations. Thankfully it is like this because otherwise we would have yet another religion stagnated in dogmatic codifications, rather than being dynamic like life.

Another aspect that finds resonance in the European perception is the

13 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

idea of nature, as indicated in this excerpt that describes the community philosophy of the Templo:¹⁴

The elements of nature, its laws and processes, are the basic components for the creation of the Xirê. Consistent with its cosmogonic principles, Templo Guaracy recognizes Nature as its Sacred Scripture. The Xirê of Templo Guaracy recognizes in the four Elements (Fire – Earth – Water – Air) and in the combination of their sixteen qualities (Elegbara-Ogum-Oxumarê-Xangô-Obaluãe-Oxossi-Ossãe-Oba-Nanã-Oxum-Iemanjá-Ewa-Iansa-Tempo-Ifa-Oxalá) the forces and basic energies responsible for the composition of life and its dynamic in the world of form. From the perspective of Templo Guaracy, both the elements and their sixteen qualities are forces and energies of nature which, through the effects of anthropomorphism, are transformed into Orixás.

The cosmogony and ritualism are also not limited to the so-called historical aspects that mark Umbanda in Brazil, this is seen in this description of the ritualistic tradition.

Nevertheless, one of the aims of the Templo is to eradicate religious syncretism from the representative context. The relationships established between the African Orixás and the Catholic Saints during the period of slavery, are perceived by the Templo Guaracy as historical data, not as liturgical foundations. Because it is a spiritual institution, and not a dogmatic religion, the Templo Guaracy supports its rites in the spiritual light contained in the philosophy of all masters. All notions of wisdom, whether Western or Eastern, are welcome. Umbanda, as a ritualistic revival, is considered Brazilian, and like Brazil itself, it is still in the process of being formed.¹⁵

The Portuguese language began to be used as the language of incorporation. The body is also an important theme in the production of meanings in the ways the religion is adapted to a European reality, because Orixás move the bodies.

While Brazilians are found in Zurich and Vienna, there is a difference in the giras or ceremonies. Some are open to the public and some are closed (because they still not completely organized). Brazilians have strong

14 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

15 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

difficulty accepting the presence of Germans and Swiss in the religion:

But this is normal, because first of all there is a structure of giras before opening up to the Brazilians[the public]. Brazilians have an idea of how it ought to work. They always have some kind of experience, even if they don't. They are Brazilian, and know how it works. The Brazilians are quite prejudiced against the Germans. It is something like...for example a white girl, a foreigner, doesn't have this connection with the entities, much more in Candomblé than in Umbanda. There is also prejudice between Candomblé and Umbanda. In the same way that there is prejudice against the Umbanda done here, and I understand it is something people want to defend as their roots, their treasure.¹⁶

Despite the separation of what Mãe Habiba considers different work, the spiritual research into other traditions has always been a part of her routine at congresses and meetings in the field of psychotherapy (which is quite popular among the Swiss and German followers of her *ilê*). This spiritual choice does not exclude other philosophies or traditions, as is the case when one converts to Pentecostal religions. The possibility of aggregating or diversifying in Umbanda allows the spirits to speak in German or in Portuguese with an accent, and gives rise to the recreation of entities that have a more direct relationship with the locations and character that is similar to the pagan pantheon present in the European imagination, and which through this movement is renovated using a verb that is not commonly heard in German and Swiss on a regular basis: *improvisieren*.

This improvisation also applies to the use and adaptation of materials (handmade pottery for instance), to the planting and use of herbs that are rarely found growing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, in the purchase of food from Asian stores in Zurich and to the importing in various ways of products that cannot be adapted, such as *azeite de dendê*, which is an edible Brazilian palm oil.

It is also worth highlighting the presence of Afro-Cuban religions, which are important in the expansion of the Afro-religions. According to Gruner-Domic (1996) and Rossbach de Olmos (2009), faith in Orixás arrived in Germany in the 1970s, brought by Cuban students and young workers. The Orixás first port of call was on the communist side of the two German

16 Interview with Mãe Habiba in October 2011 in the city of Berlin.

states, in the German Democratic Republic, with its Prussian brand of socialism, characterized as atheist. Rossbach de Olmos (2009: 485) states that the Cubans who arrived in the 1970's were benefitted

with the framework of a bilateral agreement between Cuba and the GDR about the exchange of professional workers, satisfying at the same time the high demand for manpower in socialist Germany. Within approximately one decade between 1978, when the agreement was signed, and the unification of the two German states in 1990, it is calculated that between 20,000 and 30,000 Cubans came to the GDR for the period of four or eight years.

The author states that many Cubans brought religious objects with them to the German Democratic Republic, particularly after returning to Cuba on holiday, because German control upon arrival was less strict. Following the unification of Germany in 1990, a large number of Cubans remained in the country. According to the 2001 *Statistisches Bundesamt*, the number of Cuban immigrants increased from 295 in 1989 to 3,361 in 1991.

The number of Cubans continued to grow strongly until 2004 when it stabilized at about 9 thousand people. There are now some 12 thousand Cubans residing in Germany, of which 3 thousand are considered illegal immigrants.

Rossbach de Olmos (2009: 484-485) shows that the reasons for the diffusion of Santería have changed. In the past few years, mixed marriages, vacation travel to Cuba and an increasing interest in Afro-Cuban music have provided Germans more contact with the religion. The same motivations have increased German interest in Brazilian culture and *Candomblé*.¹⁷

There are also many afro-brazilian religious specialists of Brazilian origin (those who practice *Umbanda*, *Candomblé* and other religions) who work in German cities promoting services such as: "I will bring you your loved one in three days", disease healing, solving work problems and others. These services are also easily found in large Portuguese cities, and are generally offered by Africans who call themselves "masters", following in the footsteps of master Fati, who is well-known thanks to leaflets distributed at the main

17 I would like to point out that Cubans and Brazilians collaborated in the maintenance and support of the *ilê* analyzed in this study. Cuban priests and initiates take part in public events (such as the parade of *afoxés* at the *Karneval des Kuturen*, in Berlin). They also participate in Brazilian *Candomblé* rituals, and circulate among artists, because there are many artists in the Cuban community. The difficulties encountered by Europeans in adapting to Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban religions, namely those in which rituals are carried out, are very similar and will be treated throughout this study.

subway stations in Portugal and in the advertising section of the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper.¹⁸

Scholarly texts about the expansion of Candomblé in Latin America (Frigério 1999, Oro 1998 and Segato 1991, 1994 and 1997) and Portugal (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009, Saraiva 2010), highlight the malleability and flexibility of the religion in adapting to different contexts and societies. Authors such as Saraiva (2010) believe that this expansion transforms Brazil into a “Mecca” for the religion, and doesn’t relate it to Africa as the center of production of Afro-religious symbols.

Orixás open up the doors to Frankfurt airport

How did the first temple in Berlin come to exist? How does its leader manage the ethnic symbols as an ethnic broker? And in what way does he attract the German public?

To answer these questions we will focus on the Ilê Obá Silekê temple and the *Forum Brasil Interkulturelle Zentrum* (Forum Brasil, Intercultural Center), both located in Berlin and run by the pai de santo Murah. They were officially founded in 2003 and 2005 respectively, and are frequented by Brazilians (most of whom are participants), Germans and people from other nationalities such as Americans and Italians. Murah is well-known in the city and throughout the country because he was one of the first to institutionalize Candomblé in

¹⁸ Although the Portuguese religious field isn’t the focus of this study, I am quite familiar with it because of the post-doctoral studies that I conducted at the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon in 2011 and 2012, and from three months of field work financed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (from April to June 2013). During both periods, I analysed the expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal.

Although it is also not the focus of my study, it is worth noting that many musical practices of traditional African religions are incorporated in neo-Pentecostal churches in South America, in particular the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), with its expressive plasticity and capacity to adapt to local demands. And even though there is an Evangelical and Muslim presence on the African continent, sorcery in parallel as a contemporary and urban element in various African countries and the urban context in Portugal. In this sense, the idea of Brazil as a Mecca, a producer of African symbols, ought to be reconsidered, and we should look deeper into the way in which the Portuguese learn about their relationship with Africa, noting that African presence and contacts are often not preserved in Portuguese historiography. This was visible at the exhibition “African heritage in Portugal”, which looked at the African neighborhood of Mocambo. Held between 2011 and 2012 at the Belém Tower, the exhibit was organized by historian Isabel Henriques. It is also worth noting that the persistence of this presence is currently recreated at sorcerer-led by Africans, and attended by Portuguese and Brazilians in Portuguese cities. Many Brazilians and Portuguese who feel they were harmed by African sorcerers (because they did not solve their problems, or performed evil on their clients or who lost large amounts of money), resort to Brazilian Candomblé. It is also worth noting the production of racial theories in Portuguese social thinking, such as the work of Oliveira Martins “*As raças humanas e a civilização primitiva, 1881*” (Human races and primitive civilization, 1881).



Picture 2. Iansã's party in November. Photo by Fernando Miceli.



Picture 3. Ekeji and *pai de santo* Murah . Photo by Fernando Miceli.

Germany, and because of his work as an Afro-Brazilian dancer for the past 20 years, which has taken him all over Europe.

Although the Forum Brasil and the temple are based at the same location, they are not the same institution, but they are related. Many of the capoeira and Portuguese language teachers, as well as teachers of other activities, also participate in the rituals and the religious life of the *ilê*, and symbols circulate from one side to the other.

The temple is open everyday, but most of the rituals are closed to the public, and take place when there are no other activities at the cultural Forum. Sessions with the *caboclo Ventania*¹⁹ take place once a month.

There is a schedule of festivities and rituals, some of which are public and others private. The private rituals are: the *ebó* for the new year (in January), waters of Oxalá (January), Obaluaiê celebrations (August) and the monthly sessions with *caboclo Ventania*. The *caboclo* festivities only take place in September. In accordance with German law, the festivities can only be held every two months, and the beating of the *atabaque* drums can last only four hours. The public festivities are those for *Iemanjá* (in February at the peak of winter), Oxóssi and Ogum (April), Xangô (in June, because July is a holiday period and many *filhos de santo* – or saint children²⁰ – travel at this time), Cosmas and Damian (when the *ilê* is well organized, this ritual takes place in September, as in Rio de Janeiro, or at the beginning of October and *Iansã* (December). In the homages to Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian, some activities for children are carried out, but there is no drumming. The winter festivities draw the largest crowds and have a strong presence of Germans. The period with the least public (when most are Brazilians and are associated to the *ilê*) are the Xangô festivities, because they take place close to the

19 *Caboclo Ventania* is incorporated by the father of saint (who is related to *Iansã* — *Orixá* of the wind, storms, wars and thunder, is one of Xangô's wives). These are the spirits of the old Indians who settled on Brazilian territory, and were chosen by the Bantu slaves as the real "owners of the land". In *Candomblé*, *caboclos* and *Orixás* are treated as different entities, although there is a correlation between *caboclos* and *caboclas* and their respective *Orixás*. 126). The *Umbanda* spirits do not require an initiation process as in *Candomblé*, and the *caboclo* can be baptized and take part in the confirmation ritual. Many of the *Candomblé* followers cultivate their spirits and prepare celebrations for them, because they are part of their life history. The rituals follow the *Umbanda* format in *Candomblé* temples. *Iansã* is the head *Orixá* of the *pai de santo* and also the *Orixá* chosen when the topic of discussion at the temple is Germany, because it is considered a country of war, and he is the best one to represent it. In Portugal, it is *Iemanjá* (translator's note: *Iemanjá* is the Queen of the Ocean, the patron deity of fishermen and the survivors of shipwrecks) an *orixá* associated with the country's past of colonial conquests.

20 They are part of the family of the saint. It signifies religious kinship within the cult group. Complex ritual genealogies link the initiate to different *terreiros* from the same *axé*.



Picture 4. Caboclo Ventania -material representation of an indigenous spirit (which is revered in Umbanda as well as in Candomblé) . Photo by Joana Bahia.

German holiday season.

Even at celebrations which in Brazilian *candomblé* would be public, because of the limits on playing the *atabaque* drums, the *pai de santo* seeks to make them a more private affair, and only the *filhos de santo*, or *abiãs* are permitted to participate.

The Forum Brazil is a company registered under German law that focuses on cultural activities connected to Brazil, in particular those that value black culture. It is also a entity for propagating *Candomblé* in a country in which it cannot be regulated as a religion, and where the practices of animal sacrifices are prohibited by law (Rossbach de Olmos 2009).

The Forum's events include talks on religion, on *Ifá* (Religion, Philosophy and Oracle Divination, given by Babalawo Olayinka Babatunde Adewuyi, who lives in Rio de Janeiro). There are also Afro-Brazilian dance courses given by the *pai de santo* Murah. In these courses he passes on the *modus operandi* of *Candomblé* by means of body movements and its connection with the *Orixás*.²¹

In mid-September and early October Murah organizes what is called "Die Spirits Von Brasilien. Studienreise nach Salvador und Rio de Janeiro". These are trips to Brazil on which he takes Germans who are interested in religion on tours that includes tourist attractions (the beaches of Praia do Forte, Ipanema etc.), and sessions with intellectuals who study the history of religion in Salvador. They also visit the Mãe Beata temple, and other places in the city, and he gives lessons on how to pick herbs and their therapeutic and religious properties. The later activities illustrate not only how Germans view Brazil, but also that they are attracted by a religion in which "nature is found everywhere". This issue will be discussed at greater length further on. It is also important to recognize that Salvador plays an important role on the global black cultural scene as a producer and exporter of symbols. In this sense, Salvador has established itself as a model of Africanity for the black populations of various countries of the African Diaspora, (Pinho 2004: 49), for example the North-American black population. But Murah's excursions also include German tourists who are interested in tradition. Bahia plays a double role in this sense. It presents black cultural objects in the

21 I deal with this subject in my presentation "Dancing with the African gods. The recreation of Africa in *Candomblé* in Germany", which was presented at the 5th European Conference on African Studies, between 27th and 29th June 2013 at ISCTE in Lisbon.

international market and produces and sells tradition (Pinho 2004).²²

In addition to evoking a tradition related to a sense of Africaness through Candomblé, when the pai de santo created the Forum Brasil the German state advised him to create something related to his culture of origin – Brazilian culture. To help him mount his business, its offices and the temple activities, he took a culture management course, in which he learned how to “represent” Brazil and how to deal with aspects of Brazilian culture that could be sold²³ by a company.²⁴ The Forum Brasil has become a place of reference in the city, and is closely identified with Candomblé in Germany

The following activities are carried out at the Forum: Salon für brasilianische Künste (a “Trans-art Salon”, considered the first showcase for Brazilian art /a theatrical show that presents music and cinema), Kinder-Capoeira-Kurs für 3-6-Jährige (capoeira courses for children from 3 – 6), Ferienprogramm Kinder-Villa-Brasil für 6-11-Jährige-Entdecke Brasilien in Kreuzberg (a summer camp with capoeira, sports, games, music and Brazilian cuisine), Brasilianische-Kochkultur (Brazilian culture and cuisine programs) and yoga. Courses in the Brazilian Portuguese language are also offered.

The frequency of these activities highlights the importance of music, dance and the arts and the various ways of using one’s body as elements emphasized by the Forum, as markers of Brazilianity. Two types of cultural content are presented according to categories used by Okamura (1981: 458).

22 “Almost traditional” products such as Black music from Bahia, world music, art by popular artisans, the Candomblé temples, and the “new traditional objects”, such as items created for the Carnival in Bahia such as clothes, musical instruments etc. (Sansone 2000: 102). The author also quotes the Bahian Acarajé Women presented as part of the construction process to represent Black Bahian culture, the purest symbol of “Africanism” in public life (Sansone 2000: 91-92).

23 In this sense, we treat the idea of ethnic trade as something that is very complex, because it isn’t solely limited to ethnic symbols per se, but the way in which they are imagined by the society that receives them and by those who consume them (Machado 2010: 13). The way in which the market receives them will depend on the deep relationship they have with peoples’ imagination (that we can term social, racial and ethnic classifications) within the society that receives the immigrants. According to the Machado, in the city of Porto in 2000, the way in which a Brazilian belonged didn’t depend solely on their behavior as an “ethnic group”, but on a connection with the place that the Portuguese powers that be delegated to the Brazilians at the time. On the other hand, these processes are very flexible and can mutate, depending upon various factors.

24 In everyday language, among Brazilians, when they discuss the notion of what it is like to think or resemble a German way of being, two images are associated. In the German language there are “verbs for everything”. It is a society which is strongly controlled by the State, and there are courses and professions “for everything”. In this sense, they discuss the flexibility of professional options and study opportunities that society offers, and on the other hand, the rigid control of the German state, which provides information and necessary data on how to fit into a “*genau*” society, in other words what is considered correct, with lots of rules. To create a company, depending on the type of business, there are numerous courses available to learn about how to deal with the state bureaucracy. The same course was taken by a group of Brazilian dancers, who also referred to it in interviews.

The first offers signs and signals, diacritic traces that people exhibit to present their identity, such as clothes, language, home decor and lifestyle. The second covers basic values such as standards for morals and excellence, upon which behavior is judged.

In this sense, the Forum is conceived for Brazilians and Germans as a place for Brazilians that offers courses concerning aspects that establish an identity in contrast to that of German identity, and generally based on the Portuguese language (from Brazil). It also offers courses on Brazilian cuisine and religion, in the case of Candomblé rituals. This identity is also expressed in a form of moving the body that does not maintain the corporal distance or control between bodies that Brazilians perceive in German interpersonal relations.

Jenkins (1997) affirms that ethnicity is a collective and individual social identity, which is externalized in social interaction and personal self-identification. It is created through a selection of cultural elements that best express identity. Jenkins criticizes conceptual reifications and an over emphasis on a primordial anthropological model of analysis, which tends to consider cultural elements as immutable essences in the construction of identity.

We thus realize the way in which the endowed corporeality of a religion is activated as an element of identity construction. To get closer to the religion, one “should sing, dance and feel the culture in their body”. Brazilians believe that “the Germans should Brazilianize”, “speak more Portuguese” and be more corporally receptive, incorporating the nature of the Orixás through corporal practices. A certain “incorporation of the other culture”, is demanded of them especially by the pai de santo.

The spirits also make these demands, in particular caboclo Ventania who speaks Portuguese and demands that the Germans do so as well. The German language is imitated mockingly, to show that the language of Candomblé should be Portuguese.

Murah often gives classes at the Forum on “The strength of the Orixás” (*die Kraft*, which can also mean “energy”), which are based on Afro-Brazilian dances. Not only does this course cover aspects of Afro-Brazilian culture, but it also provides information about Candomblé’s *modus operandi*. Many participants were attracted to Candomblé because of the course. The dance courses and bloco de afoxé Loni (also known as street Candomblé, which are



Picture 5. German filha de santo in afoxé. Photo by Joana Bahia.



Picture 6. Ekedí (woman consecrated to a divinity but who does not experience trance) and dofono (first spiritual son) oriented by pai de santo Murah who starts the offerings to Exu, to Oxum and Obaluaie to bring luck, good health and open the ways in Hermannplatz, Kreuzberg, Berlin. Photo by Joana Bahia.



Picture 7. People await the offerings before the Afoxé starts. Photo by Joana Bahia.

street parties organized during carnival)²⁵ at the Karneval des Kulturs are the means by which Germans are seduced to enter Candomblé. The bloco de afoxé has been going on for 14 years and its 300 participants include Brazilians, Germans and Africans. Many Brazilians travel from other countries and other parts of Germany to participate in the bloco.

Relationships of domination exist between cultural practices, and are recognized by the cultural epithet hybridity (Ha 2005). It is important to note that identities are instrumental (Okamura 1981 and Jenkins 1997), because at some times it may seem interesting to be exotic and ethnic, but not at others. This depends on with whom, when and how people interact. Germany has constantly failed in making a transition into a modern society that is accepting of immigration. Yet it is now obsessed by its new immigrants, while Berlin seems to be increasingly multicultural (see *The Culture Carnivals*). From a transnational perspective, this is what makes nations more palatable., Hybridization becomes the concept of a more colorful and more attractive nation (Ha 2005), and a central element in the creation of circuits of production and consumption in modern capitalism.

Is it possible that Brazilians have an interest in being exotic at times? There are ways to transform a stereotype into a strategy to convert forms of subordination into affirmation (Irigaray 1985). Different from the Turkish and African Islamic cultures, Brazilian emigration is not visible in German society, which is notoriously afraid of the presence of Islam in the other groups. Brazilians are “exotic and their culture is not threatening”. They can make their offerings during the afoxé as they wish, and prepare for the religious initiations that are part of the future plans of the *ilê*.

In this sense, if a perspective is found in German society that sees the other as exotic, it is also true that Brazilians are interested in being exotic to attract Germans, because at least in principle, what is exotic is also fascinating. Yet these qualities are organized almost to perfection. At times they attempt to appear “less ethnic and almost German” when necessary, and to

25 According to Souza (2010: 8), afoxés are artistic-cultural groups based on religious doctrines of Afro-Brazilian cults. Through their relationship with the temples, the groups pay their devotion to Orixás who are their guides, and receive religious care from a babalorixá and/or ialorixá (translators note: the highest rank, for the male and female caretakers respectively of the Orixás). In its cycle of presentations, Carnival is an opportunity to give visibility to the social aspects and values that are the foundation of African culture in Brazil, and the afoxés are part of this. Particular reference is made to music, dance, vocabulary, symbols, gestures, clothing and other elements that circumscribe these groups and make of them a representation of street Candomblé.

stand-out from other Brazilians who do not migrate (those who live in countries considered less organized or economically unstable). The Candomblé terreiros in Germany also seek to distinguish themselves from the terreiros in Brazil (in Bahia or Rio de Janeiro), that they consider to be “not very well organized, never on-time and their Candomblé is sort of improvised”.

Brazilians often find it necessary to act according to an interpretation to avoid discrimination and prejudice. Given that they identify Germans as being “perfectionists,” many Brazilians seek to be even more “organized” than the Germans themselves, and this is clear from the website for the terreiro and the invitations in German explaining ritual procedures.

Bahia is a reference of negritude and legitimacy of Candomblé in a transnational sense, but Brazilians in Germany don't necessarily identify with Candomblé from Bahia. On many occasions, particularly when they need to justify the changes they make to the religion to adapt it to Germany, they affirm that they do Candomblé in Germany. To add Brazilian and Bahian epithets, or even alaketu is important in transnational religious markets and bestows an idea of tradition (although a distinct one). This is interesting, especially in terms of the construction of an ethnic identity that is pure, almost monolithic, but that obviously doesn't exist in practice. There are nuances in this identity construction (Okamura 1981). Demonstrating the fluidity and circumstances of an ethnic construction, we can see how these nuances occur in beauty salons run by Brazilians in Germany.

Ethnicity is also constructed in the beauty salons in Berlin, so much so that ethnicity is a requirement, and the body waxing technique – originally Spanish – has been transformed into a Brazilian brand. To do so names and symbols are used that allude to Brazil and Rio de Janeiro in particular. The salons also present themselves as being organized and aseptic and use a discourse that emphasizes health and cleanliness, to comply with the German imaginery. Entering these spaces it is clear when they must be ethnic, artisan and even exotic and when they should not. Turkish women opened beauty salons, but they were not successful because they were considered too ethnic, appearing to be “Islamicised” according to German women (Lidola 2014).²⁶

²⁶ This fine line between expressing ethnicity in waxing salons or not, also occurs in samba classes. The classes consist of more than just learning how to samba. One must become acquainted with learning the gestures and how to move one's body in a sensual way so as to define the limit between sensuality and sexuality. Brazilians have to manage these boundaries very well so as not to scare off the Germans.

We want to gauge the the importance of the production, not only of the religious sphere, but also of the symbolic and cultural spheres by the participants of the religious field in the city of Berlin. This process reveals the relations between this production and the construction of references for the process of ethnic self-identification, particularly for some types of Brazilians.

The importance of these producers of religious symbols is also highlighted in their participation at cultural and political events that go beyond the religious field, at places and events considered Brazilian. For example, some people who frequent the Ilê Obá Silekê terreiro participate in the bloco de afoxé during the Carnival of Cultures, and at the exhibit on African Orixás (entitled Candomblé Altars) during Black Culture month in February 2012, organized by the Berlin city government.

In this sense, a pai de santo may be considered as an ethnic broker, or someone who constructs stories and ideologies about a group, because he chooses cultural elements to establish a positive valuation of the reconstructed ethnic identity.

We recall that Candomblé essentially combines body, music and dance, elements through which ethnic brokers define the concept of being Brazilian.

The Ilê Obá Silekê terreiro (the house of King Xangô Aganju²⁷), which means the Center of the Volcano, has existed ever since Murah migrated. He was born in 1961 in São Paulo, and moved to Salvador when he was six. He was initiated into the religion when he was nine and was raised by his biological grandmother, Coleta de Oxóssi who was born in Kenya. She fell in love with a Frenchman and was expelled from the family (the family normally choose a woman's husband and did not approve of marriage to foreigners). His French grandfather had land in Salvador, where he raised his family. He spent his childhood on the outskirts of Salvador, in Beiru, which is now known as Tancredo Neves. He and his grandmother were both initiated by Badu de Oxóssi. Murah moved between Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Bahia and Rio de Janeiro were important to his personal religious journey and he visits them on the trips he organizes for Germans who want to know the places that best represent the "production and sale" of the image of African tradition (Pinho 2004 and Sansone 2000): which are in Bahia.

27 Xangô Aganju is a quality of Xangô (God of Justice), a warrior, sorcerer, who has a direct link to Iemanjá and the Ogbonis and wears the color brown .

His relationship with the religion is thus an essential part of his life, and the idealization of the terreiro is related to his history as an emigrant. When telling his life story, he associates it to Candomblé and the Orixás are presented as forces that led him to migrate. As he stated: “If the Orixá opened the doors of Frankfurt airport for me, it is because he wanted me to stay in Germany and take with me his teachings.” His narrative is infused with and inseparable from religion. As a result, his charisma makes it impossible to separate the ilê from the Forum Brasil. It must be noted that Candomblé in Germany began with Murah’s arrival in the country, and the Forum Brasil has been in existence for 10 years. In fact, Candomblé began in Neukölln, in the basement of the apartment where the pai de santo lived for many years. At the time, he still worked at dance schools. The ilê was founded over 12 years ago, it began as the Ilê Axé Oya, because it was devoted to Iansã.

He began to lose energy, because when the pai de santo dies, it is necessary to remove the hand of the deceased, (the vumbe’s hand) from the head of the filho de santo.

Shortly afterwards, he met Mãe Beata,²⁸ she consulted to see which name should be given to the ilê (Xangô) and he delivered his head to Beata. [...] The Orixá placed Mãe Beata in his path twelve years ago to remove the vumbe’s hand ²⁹so that the axê would be reborn and circulate.

Mãe Beata’s presence is important for two reasons: in addition to settling Xangô in the terreiro and causing axê to circulate, institutionalizing the ilê, her presence guarantees Afro-Brazilian legitimacy, having Brazil as a place to exchange knowledge, being a country of Afro-Brazilian cults. The proximity between the pai de santo and Brazil can be noted by the frequency with which he and his filhos de santo travel to the country, and by the presence of other

28 Mãe Beata de Iemanjá. The ilê is located in Miguel Couto, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro. Murah’s filhos de santo are initiated here, and Beata isn’t considered solely as a mãe de santo, but also as avó de santo [grandmother of the saint]. She was initiated into Candomblé on 26 June 1956 by Mãe Olga do Alaketu for the orixá Iemanjá. The following were present at the initiation: Mãe Regina Bangboshê, Dona Pombinha de Oxóssi, Dona Bia de Omolu, Arsênia de Nzazi do Terreiro Bate Folha, Irene de Xangô Bangboshê and Maria Joana do Alaketu de Iansã.

29 Pai de santo, Badu de Oxóssi, passed away, and for this reason a new spiritual guide had to be defined (it is now Mãe Beata), but before this, a ritual must take place to “remove the vumbe’s hand (the hand of the deceased)”. According to Cossard (2008: 199), the deceased pai de santo, had placed his hand on the head of the initiate, and for this reason, the fact that he passed away had left a negative mark on her. Despite the strong ties that most surely existed with her ialorixás [or mãe de santo], the initiate could not maintain this negative factor looming over her. After the grieving period, one must free themselves from this weight, and seek a more elderly person, who may or may not be from his or her house, for this person to remove the hand of *vumbe* (death).

pais and mães de santos at the services that take place in his temple. His connections with other terreiros throughout the world indicate his prestige as a leader in the religious market. Mãe Beata's 80th birthday, and her presence in Germany, was and is still broadcast by German radio stations, and in videos of rituals that are available on social networks. The way that Candomblé is considered in these broadcasts can be noted. Not only as a religion that is tolerant of women, homosexuals and blacks, but mainly as an important symbol of Brazilian identity and as a symbol of negritude. More than a mãe de santo, Mãe Beata is presented as a human rights activist and distinguished personality of the Brazilian feminist movement. She is remembered for her role in "nourishing with faith oppressed blacks and all underprivileged people in Brazilian society".

Another aspect is that all of the candidates for filhos de santo would be initiated in Brazil, under Murah's orientation at Mãe Beata's temple in Nova Iguaçu, in Rio de Janeiro state. The temple in Berlin does not have the infrastructure needed to initiate newcomers. Outside of Brazil, the terreiros have a certain degree of freedom that distinguishes them in terms of organization and performance. This tendency is also found in Brazil, indicating that each temple has its specificities and adapts according to the new social reality (Capone and Teisenhoffer 2002; Capone 2004).

These ties mean that the trips made to and from Brazil by Murah and the future filhos de santo keep them connected. In some cases, they remain connected with the country of origin, while the Germans become connected to a new language, a new culture, which has a special connection with the realm of the senses. Maintaining contact with Brazil is very important for the legitimacy of these cults in a broader religious context.

The Germans turn to Candomblé for a number of reasons. One is that the powers of the religion are elements of nature. The energy of nature is the true power. In Candomblé, the interconnection between sacred and profane establishes the idea that the Orixá is a person with power, a human who is also a god. Orixás feel jealousy, anger and love. This allows Germans to reinterpret the idea of Kraft (strength). In this sense, in addition to speaking fluent German the pai de santo uses metaphors that adapt to his teachings. The metaphors allow him to approximate the Orixás to the gods from Greek mythology, and he often highlights their contrasts with the saints and devil

of the Catholic Church. The Orixás are not defined by an opposition of good and evil, but instead are considered ambiguous figures, such as the gods in the Greek pantheon. They possess an “almost human” personality, with flaws and virtues. The pai de santo reminds his filhos de santo that they must care for their Orixás, and must participate in the celebrations that pay homage to their ancestral Orixás. In this case, they may benefit or punish their children. Another idea of Candomblé that is attractive to the German public is related to the idea that the power of nature can be experienced through movements of the body. The body gains a dimension closer to nature, and moves in accordance. Moreover, it is sexualized. This is very different from the concept of the body of the German identity construction. Sexuality and happiness are fundamental elements in the Orixás dance, and also an opportunity to bring Brazilians and Germans closer together. Many participate in the classes not only with the intention of learning more about Brazilian culture, but also because they have relationships with Brazilians or are looking for a romantic relationship.³⁰

Many African descendants born in Germany, the so-called *afrodeutsch*, are also attracted by the search for Africa as a mark of identity. Many blacks living in German society don't identify with it.³¹ Others feel they are excluded from German society in daily life (Egger et al. 2005; Steyerl and Rodriguez 2003). They thus seek Candomblé as a place where they feel more black, and closer to an original African culture. When asked about Africa itself, they state that it is now largely Christianized and Islamicised, and that little is left from the original culture. In this sense, Brazil is a country that re-Africanized

30 We encountered this issue throughout the fieldwork. Many people reach out to the Forum and its courses, as they do the terreiro, because they are already familiar with the Brazilian culture through friends or even ex-lovers. Another interesting issue of Brazilian immigration in Germany is sexual preferences. Although homosexuality was not identified as a reason for migration, to live freely as a homosexual in a country that legally punishes racism and homophobia is something highly valued in the discourse of the interviews. This issue was often raised by the informers as a parameter for viewing Brazil as a racist country. In addition, there is a strong presence of black men and women in the migration flows to Germany.

31 In Portugal, there is the example of the “returnees”. These are Portuguese who were born in Africa and “returned”, particularly from Angola and Mozambique after the Wars for Independence. Many join Candomblé not only for its healing practices (Saraiva, 2010: 279), but in their quest for a land of origin, which they call the “calling of the land”, in other words, the construction of elements that mark the sense of an ethnic community (Weber). Many claim they come from “sorcerer lands” (as did one interviewee who was born in Quelimane, in Africa), and that through Candomblé they experience a closer tie to their family history and place of origin. The interpretations of disease and healing practices take them back to an African universe and a religion that has its own means of classifying the body and its diseases (Barros and Teixeira 2000), which for many resemble the African mythical universe.

Candomblé (Capone 2004), and keeps it more alive than many African cultures, or those that received African immigrants. Many Africans and their descendants that were born and live in Berlin seek an Africa that they do not find in their everyday lives. They feel the need to have elements to build an ethnic identity. In other words, “to feel black and African”. Nevertheless, even though they want to feel “more African”, the everyday life of the terreiro, is dominated by an idea of Africa from Bahia and of blacks from the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. In other words, there are various manifestations of negritude competing for the same space. It must be noted that to be white is almost the norm in German culture. “Whitening” strategies used by black Brazilians do not work in Germany, because German society does not recognize gradations of being more or less black or brown-skinned (Thränhardt 1984 and Nogueira 2006). In general, blacks are sexualized by Germans, in particular Brazilians. At times, the stereotype is used to gain advantages, but the use of this stereotype reaffirms it even more. To speak the German language very well³² or to do things “almost to perfection” are efforts made by Brazilians to reduce discrimination.

The exotic element is what attracts Germans to Candomblé, particularly the relationship of the body with nature. When the ritual practices are initiated, there is a turning point. The dances, the rituals, the use of herbs are not striking until one confronts the use of blood as part of the sacrifice. Many give up the religion at this point. It is in moments of disagreements between the pai de santo and those who give up on the religion that contrasting elements become clear, the identity markers, when they are accused of thinking like “Germans” and wanting a “vegetarian Candomblé that only exists in their minds”. Or when they become upset about receiving orders from a black pai de santo (who is half Bahian, half *Paulista* [from São Paulo state]), “constructed” in a conception of the familia de santo [family of the saint] that maintains ties not based on blood. These aspects are often difficult for Germans to understand. Although this does not prevent them from establishing emotional ties, the Germans do not consider them family ties, and they don’t understand the religion’s concepts of authority and hierarchy.

32 Many Brazilians state that for those who have every day contact with Germans, they make an effort to speak in English to Americans and other Anglo-Saxon groups. To speak a different language is something hierarchical based upon a geopolitical situation and interests at play, but among Africans and Latinos, no effort is made to speak a different language. German is in fact the language demanded among them on a everyday basis.

Germans who enter the religion (particularly those who are *filhos de santo* of the temple), undergo a strong process of deconstructing their rational approach to life. They must learn to deal with the senses and values that are strongly related to an idea of mystery that isn't verbalized, but literally "incorporated", expressed in the relationship between nature and body. To overcome the difficulties, many begin to write, they use notebooks to write down foods and spells, and they gradually translate the religion, which must generate processes of "resemantization".

When they incorporate music simultaneously to dance, is when they can be initiated, because this indicates that they are ready to understand the meaning of the religion. Dance and a sense of corporal movements are present at Murah's workshops. Changes in the body denote a change in attitude. The exoticism, tropical exuberance, the idea of an "essentialist primitiveness", combined with a rereading of environmental issues are recodified from the standpoint of a certain romantic culture, promoting new meanings in the idea of Afro-Brazilian religiousness.

Therefore, more than a relationship between identity and memory, memories are investigated. In the case of the Brazilians, they preserve the mark of their migration experience and a new perception of their original identity. It has been noted that many of the religious choices made by the Brazilians were made in conjunction with their migration process. In other words, many joined the religion, not in Brazil, but under the condition of emigrant.

Many of the followers and initiates of the *terreiro* are lower middle-class blacks, who perceive the religion as a place to experience their black and Brazilian identities simultaneously. It is a place where they can be a black Brazilian. In this sense, for some people "Candomblé is a black thing". They are black and come from the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. Many have already experienced or had contact with the saint (some are *ebomis*)³³, and have lived in the Baixada Fluminense region (on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro) or in Rio de Janeiro favelas. This distinguishes them from African Germans and from Brazilians from other regions (these origins are also often triggered as markers of differences). They could not maintain their obligations to their original *terreiros*, and seek out Murah so they do not lose their relationship with the religion. Moreover, the Forum and *ilê* are places

33 A *terreiro* elder, initiated for more than seven years

where they feel “Brazilian”. Nevertheless, their references are the stories from the terreiros in the Baixada Fluminense region, where they still circulate. Knowing how to circulate between the place they came from, and knowing how to live between the Central do Brasil [Rio de Janeiro’s main railroad station] and the periphery of the city, gives them a “certain street sense that allows them to circulate in German society”. They construct a different type of identity that links them to all of these aspects. It is how they see themselves, and how they feel re-experiencing their negritude outside of Brazil. They do this by reaffirming their identity ties with a religion that dates back to former slaves and black Brazilians, in other words, affirming the idea that Candomblé is something Brazilian that kept its “African roots”. All of these images are triggered in different ways.

Other Brazilians not only experience the idea of being black, but also a proximity to a family heritage marked by Afro-Brazilian religiousness. They revive a spiritual destiny in their family history: “my aunt had an ilê in the Baixada, but she had to close it because she was getting old”. Or: “my mother would pray, but my father didn’t allow it”. The ethnic and family origins are triggered when they explain their entry into the religion.

Others resume their relationship with popular religiousness present in the every day lives in the cities where they lived in Brazil. These can only be felt by being close to things in Brazil, represented by the role the Forum has acquired for many of those who attend events there. Or because they work with elements that define Brazilian culture such as the rhythms of Brazilian music such as forró, afoxé and capoeira.

Others manifest their spiritual side when they get sick, normally shortly after they migrate, because to a certain extent, migration is felt as suffering. As is the case of the dofono (the first one to be initiated in the terreiro), who had wounds on his leg until he found out that he had a spiritual problem and had to be initiated. He was aware of Candomblé practice in Brazil, but only grew close to the religion when he migrated.

It is also worth highlighting the importance of family and friendship networks in constructing the migration process. In this case, we must consider the idea of the família de santo and symbolic kinship. Many authors demonstrate the charisma and tolerance of Afro-Brazilian cults in relation to other religious practices that are not excluded from the new daily religious routines.



Picture 8. Brazilian filho de santo who was initiated in a traditional candomblé house Ilê Axé Opó Afonjá , in Coelho da Rocha , Rio de Janeiro. Later he migrated to Germany. He is carrying one food prepared for Iansã's party. Photo by Fernando Miceli.

Many Brazilians initiated in the saint³⁴, state that the religion, aside from permitting an individual expression of emotions, gives them a sense of belonging to a community, or better still, a saint family. Some are attracted by the tolerance of Afro-Brazilian religions towards homosexuals, particularly in countries where the majority of the Evangelical Churches condemn this sexual preference.

By means of religious socialization and symbolic parenthood, there is the projection phenomena, or that of identification with a certain past that is so strong it can be considered an inherited memory. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the importance of Afro-Brazilian cults, not only as ethnic institutions but also as places of memory.

It has been demonstrated that memories are constructed by Brazilians in their process of identifying with Candomblé, and by the Germans and other groups in the process of becoming “foreigners” who seek in this rite to belong to something new, a filiation (a new “Verein”).

The work of those who practice and run these services as “guardians of memory” is also worth highlighting. In other words, they control the image of the ethnic association and its power to “transmit an oral, mystical account” that reconfigures itself as an idea of ethnic and religious belonging.

³⁴ Initiated in Candomblé refers to giving birth to a new orixá in the initiate's body, seating his energy in the head of the novice.

Conclusions

How is this plastic and hybrid capacity realized in the German context? Who practices and attends Candomblé? And in what way will Candomblé bring the Germans who frequent it closer to a romantic ideal?

Currently, Candomblé in Brazil and the world focuses on a romantic appropriation of the idea of nature, to respond to current ecological and environmental discourse (Machado and Sobreira 2008). In what way does this discourse approach the present and shall we say modern European discussion about environmentalism? The forces of nature in Candomblé are represented by Orixás which are as imperfect as mortal men and women.

This concept of magic that correlates the sacred and the profane and connects them to nature becomes interesting to an imaginary, which in the German case was built around influences of the so-called *Lebensreformbewegung* (the Life Reform movement). *Lebensreformbewegung*³⁵ is a term used for various types of reform movements in Germany and Switzerland, which began in the mid 19th-century, arising from German Romanticism and which influenced a number communities at the turn of the

35 A number of academic papers show that many Nazi's adopted some aspects of the life reform, but we cannot reduce such a complex movement to this episode. Historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper and Laqueur are largely responsible for the dissemination of this interpretation. Many discuss this issue stating that although there are certain cultural affinities, it cannot be stated that sociopolitical alliances between occultists and the state were more effective. Treitel (2004: 26 and 210-242) quotes the work of Helmut Zander (*Anthroposophie in Deutschland. Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884-1945*) and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke about National Socialism's hidden roots, because both show that there are limits and fragile interpretations in the construction of this relationship. As quoted by the author (2004: 26): "Aiming to provide new answers to old questions, Goodrick-Clarke drew on an impressive range of novel primary sources to expose the myths, symbols and fantasies (bearing) on the development of reactionary, authoritarian, and Nazi styles of thinking. He established that the occult figured in Ariosophical thought primarily to legitimate previously conceived notions appealed to Hitler as much as Ariosophical occultism repelled him. All of this led Goodrick-Clarke to conclude, rather anticlimactically, that Hitler and most of his colleagues were not occultists and that their infamous crimes were only loosely connected with occult doctrines." Traditional habits intensified along with the organization of youth groups in cities, in particular everything that concerns *Wanderung* — hiking in the mountains, through meadows, through forests, where it is possible to exercise the body in the midst of natural beauty, making it stronger and healthier. Nazism took hold of this old German habit, connecting it to training its youth and deifying it *Wandervogel*. Hitler was a naturist, admirer of Gaspar D. Friedrich, promoter of *Wandervogel*, who encouraged many of the aspects found in the movement. Many were banned, including nudism. But the whole progressive, psychological, libertarian part of this movement was banned from the daily activities and discussions until the end of World War II. Nazism used some of the characteristics, and this made it a real taboo in the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, the exhibition *Mathildenhöhe* which was held in Darmstadt in 2001 was prepared over the course of years. It wanted to highlight cultural aspects of fundamental importance for understanding Germany and its survival over time, regardless of ideologies. Treitel (2004: 7) German occultism grew rapidly, and in 1900 it brought together a number of beliefs – just to mention a few they include theosophy, astrology, guessing, physics research, graphology and spiritual healing. In the 1940s, when the Nazi regime condemned the movement, hundreds of clubs, associations, institutions, publications and millions of devotee's and consumers of occultist merchandise and products spread throughout Germany.

century. The movement criticizes excesses of industrialization and urbanization and the harm they cause to health and the human body. It supports a certain return to natural life, expanding its meaning to refer to movements of the body and soul (Buchholz, Latocha, Peckmann and Wolbert 2001: 71).

Thus, nature inspires a lifestyle and culture that values alcohol abstinence, vegetarianism (this coincides with the growth of cities and rise in the consumption of alcohol, sugar and meat), sports, certain ways of living and dressing, nudism, natural healing and the idea of bringing nature into the city, as found in the Schreber gardens (*Gartenkolonie*, which is still common).

These ideas that value the individual as a motor of transformation, come from a life reform movement (Krabbe 1998), which influenced the new age movements,³⁶ hippies, the creation of alternative communities and various forms of mysticism. Many aspects of life reform, such as the idea of holism, vitalism and the understanding that individuals create their own vital energy were revised in the new age movement. Many of the ideas from this movement are currently reappearing in ecological discourses, in organic agriculture and a self-sustainable way of life.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the city of Darmstadt was particularly important for the movement. It was here that a colony of artists was founded, architecture was developed and a modern dance school was created by Isadora and Elizabeth Ducan at Mathildenhöhe. Elizabeth directed the school, which sought a break with the highly formal aspects of ballet and to approach the natural movements of the body. The city became a polarizing centre for life reform.

Among the most relevant influences of this movement in Germany, the most representative is the recent ecological discourse (Buchholz, Latocha, Peckmann and Wolbert 2001: 13-21), which Castells (1999: 113-133) calls “the greening of the *self*”. According to the author, what unifies the environmental movements is an alternative temporality that asks society and institutions to accept the reality of the slow evolutionary process of our species in its

36 Authors such as Lewis and Melton (1992: 19) and Ferreux (2000: 9) affirm the difficulty in defining new age, a movement that is diffused, multiple, difficult to grasp. It calls for a return to nature, the qualitative, authenticity, personal development, spirituality symbolizing the pursuit for the creation of an alternative and holistic world. Although it involves old practices such as astrology, and tarot card reading, the sentiment that exists in the new age movement is different. That is, it isn't about divination practices, but of resources that promote self-knowledge and serve to “transform the individual into a better person”.

environment with no purpose for our cosmological being, as the universe expands from the time and place of its/our common origin.

Aside from the limitations created by our submission to time as defined by the clock, still experienced by most people in the world, a historical dispute over a new temporality is taking place between the annulment of time on computer networks and the realization of glacial time by becoming aware of our cosmological dimension (cosmological self). Through this dispute over the appropriation of science, space and time, ecologists induce the creation of a new identity – a biological identity, a culture of the human species as a component of nature. This socio-biological identity does not imply denying historical culture. The ecologists respect folk cultures and the cultural authenticity of various traditions.

These possible correlations don't mean that the hybridization and transnationalization of Candomblé doesn't involve problems or impasses in their new national contexts. These problems are found in the various religious adaptation processes: in linguistic differences (especially for Germans who need to master the logic of Portuguese and Yoruba), in the objects used in the rituals, which are not easily found, and the concept of sacrifice present in these religious practices, involving the death of animals.

There are laws in Germany that prohibit animal sacrifice, and various regulations about conducting other rituals. Many of them thus take place outside of urban Berlin. Similar difficulties are described by Rossbach de Olmos (2009) concerning Cuban Santería. Not only in the search for finding a place for the initiations, but in particular with regard to sacrificing four-legged animals. According to the author (2009: 486),

the sacrifices would be an offense against the German legal regulations for animal protection, as long as they are not protected by the legal guarantee of free religious worship. Since Santería is not a recognized form of religious worship. Since Santería is not recognized as an official religion, it is not protected by this law.

Some of the difficulties described by most followers of the religion include the many trips needed to get objects for the rituals (the ceramic objects are expensive and made in an artisan process that makes them fragile and they don't last very long); that purchasing the objects in Europe is expensive; and the planting and caring for the herbs, particularly those

used in certain rituals and celebrations for an Orixá that occur in winter. It is also difficult to conduct the offerings in public areas, mainly because of the attitudes of the Germans about these religious practices. People often call the police or demand explanations about the use of public space and the intervention in nature. These are compounded by the natural conditions of the country, which has lots of snow and ice that make it difficult to perform many offerings and rituals that require the use of natural elements (how can one make an offering on a frozen lake?).

Brazilians also mention the initial difficulties felt by the Germans, which is influenced by the Brazilian idea of German culture. As one of the *filhos de santo* said: “Their culture is closed, and the geographical location means that they spend a lot of time in cold weather, and this makes them closed-off and less exposed to something that deals with the senses”.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in learning the corporal techniques, many Germans reach out to the religion, seeking to understand their own body. Many experience life-changing processes via changes in their bodies such as tremors, trances, headaches and other signs understood to denote a proximity to their Orixás.

Thus, many conversions among Germans are preceded by existential crises, some with strong bodily experiences such as premonitions. Conversion becomes a spiritual mission aimed at achieving balance and a new meaning for life. The adoption of new values and adaptation to a new experience of the sacred (especially the trance), the search for an explanation of the new order and a new normative framework are elements that serve to organize the mediums’ life. The importance of a fact that initially had no explanation (for example bodily tremors since childhood, frequent headaches and feeling of well being in the religion when entering a temple for the first time, having been taken there by a Brazilian girlfriend) gain meaning when individual life stories are considered.

Conversion is not an automatic transition from one belief system to another, but is thought of as a constant effort to reinterpret life experiences from the internal logic of a new belief system. For example, Halloy studied (2000: 85-86) a *terreiro* in Belgium, and described a forest deity of Slavic or Welsh origin, which is embodied by the *pai de santo* from the Candomblé *terreiro* at Carnières, as well as attempts to adapt the entities from this *terreiro* to Welsh and Roman deities.



Picture 9. Ilé Obá Silekê temple belongs to Xangô Aganju. He is the orisha who protects the temple. People revere him. Photo by Fernando Miceli.

To what extent do Afro-Brazilian cults become a rereading and resemantization of the idea of nature and primitivism found in the German and European imagery? And in what way will this rereading compete with other religions that follow a Brazilian cultural pattern that may come to be appropriated by Germans and other groups as a resemantization? And what if in the expansion and consequent hybridisation of oral religions, in this case of the Afro-Brazilian cults, they incorporate a vernacular culture?

One can see indications of answers to some of these questions in future resemantization processes, but they will also give rise to new questions.

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The Universalization of the Bhakti Yoga of Chaytania Mahaprabhu

Ethnographic and Historic Considerations

Marcos Silva da Silveira

Abstract

Inspired by Victor Turner's concepts of structure and *communitas*, this article commences with an analysis of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas – worshipers of Radha, and Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu followers. Secondly, we present data from ethnographic research conducted with South American devotees on pilgrimage to the ceremonial center ISCKON in Mayapur, West Bengal, during the year 1996, for a resumption of those initial considerations. The article seeks to demonstrate that the ritual injunction characteristic of Hindu sects, only makes sense from the individual experience of each devotee.

Keywords: religion, Hinduism, New Age, Hare Krishna, ritual process

Resumo

Este artigo trata de revisitar o conceito consagrado de Victor Turner *Estrutura – Communitas*, tendo, como ponto de partida, uma análise de seus estudos de caso do Leste da Índia, em particular, entre os Gaudiya Vaishnavas – adoradores de Radha e Krishna, seguidores de Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Em segundo lugar, apresentamos dados de uma pesquisa etnográfica realizada com devotos da América do Sul em peregrinação ao centro cerimonial da ISCKON em Mayapur, Bengala Ocidental, durante o ano de 1996, para a retomada destas considerações iniciais. Este artigo procura demonstrar que a característica liminar ritual de seitas hindus, só faz sentido a partir da experiência individual de cada devoto, retomando a discussão de Max Weber sobre o conceito de Individualismo místico, a partir desse tipo de seita.

Palavras chave: religião, Hinduismo, Nova Era, Hare Krishna, processo ritual

The Universalization of the Bhakti Yoga of Chaytania Mahaprabhu

Ethnographic and Historic Considerations

Marcos Silva da Silveira

Introduction

The global expansion of the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra, since the 1960s, with the opening of temples dedicated to this cult in various countries outside of India, allow a series of considerations about contemporary religious movements. One important question is, has this cult expanded through an “ethnic” appeal, or because of its exoticism as an “Indian” cult, with its clothes, chanting, dances, food and incense, or is it the universalist appeal of its philosophy, of its union with the divine, through the ecstatic singing of the Hare Krishna mantra, which inspires devotees outside of India?

This article will first consider Victor Turner’s studies about the Bhakti Yoga of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and its universalization, to then analyze the trajectory of a Brazilian adept of the Hare Krishna movement during the 100th anniversary celebration of its founder, in 1996 in West Bengal, as an example of the realization of the mystic individualism characteristic of these Hindu sects. The article will then present historical considerations, based on studies of this cult in its original Indian context, which indicate its importance in the construction of the cultural identity of West Bengal. These authors allow a return to the dialog with Victor Turner and his considerations about these sects, which, thanks to their quite unique dynamic nature, allow its spiritual masters to have successfully created a new movement with foreign devotees inside and outside of India.

The central issue, presented through the trajectory of the Brazilian adept, is that the conversion to this type of cult only makes sense from an anthropological perspective when analyzed based on an individual trajectory and

not from that of the organization of the movement, the cult, the sect, etc., given that the universalist appeal of Bhakti Yoga is realized for individuals, as is its entire ritual language and philosophy. The social effects that this appeal has deserve greater study, as well as the organizational problems of these movements, in the various contexts in which they have been presenting themselves, with their organization limited by the very universalism that allows their expansion.

Victor Turner and Bhakti Yoga

British anthropologist Victor Turner (1974) discussed the Bhakti movement of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu during India's medieval¹ period, based on the work of Edward Dimock Jr, producing a reflection about Hari nama sankirtana, based on the Sahajyas modality of bhakti yoga. This movement is the tantric line of Vaishnavism, which is characteristic of the lower castes of Bengal and presents a clear opposition to the structural hierarchies of the Vaishnava orthodoxy. The Smartas, which were made popular in the West by Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami, through his International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISCKON), or simply, the Hare Krishna movement. Turner(1974:187) used this movement to illustrate his dialectical concept, structure:anti-structure considering India and its religiosity to have better examples of these social processes than Christianity.²

Unfortunately, Turner(1974:193) did not deeply explore the unique characteristics of the Bhakti movement of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, which rose in the early 16th century in eastern India. He conducted a reading of the movement within a general scheme, which was a bit forced in certain points. Bhakti Yoga operates a series of social transitions, that allow discussing Turner's considerations in a satisfactory manner, because they keep alive the strength of this anti-structural spirit of India and make it universal.

1 The notion of "medieval India" is problematic. According to Chattopadhyaya(1996:135), the idea of a "feudalism" in India has Marxist origin. The term is also used to designate Muslim India, and distinguish it from "ancient Hindu India" and from "modern British India." Covering a period that ranges from the 7th to the 15th centuries, this notion locates the period that Weber(1958) denominated the "orthodox restoration of Hinduism", from Shankaracharya to Chaitanya. The term can be used to denominate the period of flourishing of the Indian sects that are considered here. It is important to register that "medieval India" culminates and terminates in the movement of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

2 His Christian example is St. Francis de Assisi, a European ascetic similar to others in the east.

Turner (1974:199) illustrated his concept of “spontaneous communitas” with the Baules, a sahajia sect, and one of its songs of sankirtana, which he affirmed “clearly indicates how the Vaishnava spirit of ‘communitas’ has persisted in the world today”. All of the sankirtana songs praise the equality of all before Krishna. This is the essence of the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Baules intend to live in a permanent sankirtana, and for this reason are looked down on by the smartas. It is a liminal lifestyle, even among the sahajia, but one with a deep structure, like the other Sankirtana movements.

The issue that will be discussed here, instigated by these movements, is that from the perspective of a ritual theory, the notion of spontaneity does not make sense. From Van Gennep, Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown to Malinowski and more recently Stanley Tambiah, ritual processes were always perceived as the most formal dimension of the social life of any culture, although characterized by intense emotional expression. They generate these emotions, which could never be discussed, based on a notion such as “spontaneous”.

The concept of **structure**, as consecrated by British social anthropologist, Victor Turner (1974:176), considered another dimension of social life which he denominated Communitas or Anti:structure. The social liminality of tribal rites establish a great simplification of social structure, accompanied by a rich proliferation of symbolic structure, Turner affirmed. The liberation from the routine established by social rules liberates the force of the symbol, the myth and the rite. He denominated this effect of the ritual processes normative Communitas, because it was structured as a cultural tradition.

Turner (1974:240) believed that the institutionalized religions of the great civilizations, in particular, had an affinity with the rites for change of status, found in various tribal societies. Some religions have an ideal of permanently establishing the type of liminality found in rites of passage, proposing a universal ideal egalitarianism. Others offer a religious reversal of the secular social positions, accentuating a characteristic found in rites of reversal of status.

In the genesis of the religious movements characteristic of the “great religions,” this social dimension assumes other characteristics. These movements arise in epochs of radical social transition, when a society passes from one fixed social structure to another. They are movements that propose egalitarian social utopias and formulate ideological Communitas. It is this type of movement that is at the base of what Weber calls “Religions of Salvation.”

The problems of the utopias is that they must face the need to renounce the pleasures of the spirit of *communitas* that unite individuals around a common ideal, through the suffering needed for the structuring of a permanent social movement. There is something enchanting about this spirit of the original spontaneous *Communitas*, from the sense of freedom and power that it triggers. For this reason, this feeling will always be a transitory and unexpected phase, rising from the undefined limits of the social structure. Without this restorative power of the *Communitas*, the structured social life becomes too heavy.

In the complex civilizations where these movements take place, the realization of the spirit of *Communitas* becomes problematic, it loses the normative character found in the tribal rites. Situations of structured *Communitas*, as in the case of the sects, also allow speaking of social processes experienced in a quite intense manner, in which social tensions inherent to situations of social change are dramatized. All societies must find a way to balance their structural tensions with interventions of *Communitas*.

Turner argues that the egalitarian ideal of the modern world, as formulated by Rousseau, Marx, Henry Morgan, Durkheim and Mauss, tend to define tribal societies based on the spirit of *communitas* of their rites, and oppose to this dimension the differentiated problems of social structure of modern civilization. For this reason, Emile Durkheim, for example, studied the rites of primitive Australians in search of social harmony lost by the West, while Marx spoke of a “primitive communism”, and Rousseau of the “good savage”.

By addressing this theme, Turner(1974:201) had difficulty in formulating, in the same terms, that the modern world does not know the value of this ritual reversibility. Modernity breaks this dialectic, separating and making autonomous its social dimensions so much, that religion and rite come to be one more aspect subordinated to routine social life. This is why the protest movements in the West, such as the social movements of the 1960s, were so quickly reabsorbed. Turner uses the term spontaneous *Communitas* to consider the spirit that animated these movements at their origins. The concept appears to have been influenced by the atmosphere of the time.

In a certain sense, Turner “reinvented the wheel”, because he did not return to a dialog with sociological theory, to the point of perceiving that he was facing one of its most sensitive problems, as Sennet(1998:332) formulated:

A person does not need to believe in God to analyze a religious society, of course; but the reluctance of Freud and Weber to consider religion on its own terms created in both a completely unique illusion. This illusion is found in that the charismatic figure was someone who dealt with his subjective feelings in a vigorous manner, and who was a figure of domination who acted amid great passions. Given that religious Grace was, in reality, an illusion, the charismatic person was in contact with the “irrational” in society. Therefore, both made a fatal exclusion: they eliminated from the rational and routine matrix of the society the desires for a charismatic figure. Both could imagine the intense power of charisma creating order, or losing its strength and becoming routine; neither of them imagined that charisma could be a force for trivialization, and not for the intensification of feeling, and in this way, the lubricant of a rational and ordered world.

What is significant, in the case of Srila Prabhupada, is that his Hare Krishna movement is born in this same anti-structural atmosphere of the 1960s, which allows a new look at Turner’s theoretical considerations, within its development outside of India. In this paper we will analyze the trajectory of a devotee Brazilian at the festival for the commemoration of the 100th birthday of Srila Prabhupada, which was held at some sacred sites of the Bhakti Yoga of Chaitanya, in West Bengal, and in Vrndavanam, UP, in early 1996. I accompanied a South American delegation – composed mostly of Brazilians – of some sixty devotees and sympathizers, who were present at this event in the months of February and March of that year, associating myself permanently to the devotee in question, which provided me a quite specific research position in this field. This devotee, who was not initiated, was the only member of this excursion who would make his spiritual initiation before a Guru of the ISCKON, in that centennial year.

What will be discussed is how, based on the unique trajectory of one devotee in that time and space, the Hare Krishna movement presented itself before the specific demands of this new adept, at the moment in which he organized his devotional life according to his understanding of these new religious premises. The universalization of this religious movement, although it is a movement on a global scale, in various distinct locations, can also be understood based on an ethnographic study of a single case.

Brahmacharis, Brahmanas, Bhaktas

Thus, the evident universalization of the Chaitanya Bhakti, based on the efforts of Srila Prabhupada and of other Vaishnava Swamis close to him, as well as his first disciples, brings us to the following question: What is the meaning that this religious symbolism and its ritual practices establish for their new adepts and frequenters? The theme can be related to the celebrated discussion of Colin Campbell(1997), about “The orientalizacion of the West” and the problem of the substitution of the theodicy of Christian predestination for the theodicy of Karma, in Weberian terms. Without wanting to enter into his terms of the ideal types of the “West” and “East”, I prefer to look at Campbell’s brief comment on the ISCKON of Prabhupada:

Although it is clear that the Eastern religions, together with the quasi-religious movements with inspiration from the East, such as Transcendental Meditation and the Hare Krishna Movement (ISKCON), have been penetrating the West, their impact has been small and on their own do not justify this affirmation. Evidence of a change in the beliefs of the population as a whole is required, more than the enthusiasm of a minority that is still seen by the majority of the population as “exotic” movements. (1997:09/10)

The question that this commentary raises, in the first place, is once again, what is the influence and the meaning that these movements come to have, not in the “West”, or in “modern society”, as a whole, but for those individuals who adhere to their appeals, in a process that is in some way comparable to the individual adhesion to Indian sects in their original context. On the other hand, as Otávio Velho(1997:23) indicates in his comments on Campbell’s text, Brazil – as a fertile ground for religious heterodoxies in relation to the historic religions – allows taking a look – in two directions I would add – at the place of Bhakti Yoga in our combinations and syncretisms, through deeply individualized and individualistic religious experiences, characteristic of the New Age, in which the Hare Krishna movement wound up being located.

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The central research moment of this article were two weeks spent at the ISCKON complex in Mayapur, in West Bengal. Located some 100 km from Calcutta, Mayapur is neither a village or a city, but a group of temples and

centers of religious institutions – mathas – set along the Bhaktisiddantha Saraswati Road, the highway baptized with the name of the spiritual master of Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami, which links the port of Krishnanagara – the district center – to Mayapur, located at the end of its two kilometer stretch. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born here, and in the 19th and 20th centuries a series of Vaishnava Swamis would transform it into the pilgrimage site that it is today, the spiritual heart of West Bengal.

It was possible to accompany the most important ceremony to worship Srila Prabhupada, the installation of his memorial, denominated the Puspa samadhi (The Mausoleum of Flowers). This ceremony, focused on Hari Nama Sankirtana, revealed fundamental aspects of the meaning of this ritual for the Hare Krishna movement and took place after the 10 days of the parikrama of Nawadeep. This parikrama consists in a pilgrimage through the countless sacred places of the nine islands – Nawa deep – that compose the sacred land of Mayapur. The nine islands are considered a micro cosmos, a small replica of the entire Earth, and contain, in some form, all the main sacred places of Hinduism. At the end of this pilgrimage, a series of ceremonies, events, talks and shows are held around the installation of the Mausoleum of Prabhupada, in the best style of contemporary Indian religiousness and with the artistic sensibility characteristic of the Bengalis.

Below we will describe how the Brazilian devotees are lodged in the ceremonial complex of ISCKON at Sri Mayapur Dhama, during this period. At first there were three lodging options. One could sleep at the provisional encampments of the Parikrama, divided only into a male and female wing, which combined devotees from India and all parts of the world, in an anti-structural movement of realization of the ideal of Chaitanya and of the Vaishnava swamis: devotees from the entire world chanting Hare Krishna in sacred places.

The other two options consisted in staying at the fixed encampment of the ceremonial complex of ISCKON, going directly to the parikrama by bus and returning in the late afternoon. There were two prices for accommodations at the Festival. For US\$200 it was possible to have lodging in traditional Bengali straw tents with woven jute floors, bare electric lighting, toilets dug into the ground and a bath with a pump handle. For US\$400 one could stay in canvas tents, with brick floors, in military type cots, with porcelain bathrooms and piped showers.

The first option proved to be a visible test of the theme of Srila Prabhupada: “Simple life and high thinking”. These tents were incredibly cool during the day and pleasant at night, while the canvas tents were insupportably hot during the day and cold at night. In addition, a strong storm at night knocked over many of them, on the night following the return from parikrama (27.02.96), leaving the devotees exposed to the elements. The devotees commented that these were “Krsna’s doings”, so that they would all realize the importance of austerity to spiritual life, the devotees commented.

The style of the Hare Krishna movement in Brazil is clearly observable in the encampment where we stayed in the Mayapur complex. When we arrived, some twenty-four devotees – all men – were placed in three tents. We received from the festival organizers, along with an identification bracelet and the inscription receipt, a card with the number of the tent site. A selection was made of the members of the Brazilian delegation. My tent, for example, was for initiates and devotees who were returning to spiritual life.

One young bramachari from Maranhão, recently-initiated, was accompanying the pilgrimage of his spiritual master, Iswara Swami. Another bramachari practicing renunciation, still a bhakta, also accompanying Iswara Swami, had recently left from a three-month stay at the temple in Belo Horizonte for India. An “external devotee”³ from Belém, Pará, an architecture student, interested in traditional Indian architecture, had no guru. He had been visiting all the ISCKON temples in Brazil before going to India. There was a Uruguayan Brahmana, who was living in Porto Alegre, who had abandoned the Vaishnava standard of worship and was using the trip to try to return to the devotional platform; an initiated devotee, from Argentina, a former Marine, who was living in Assuncion, Paraguay, where he was a Yoga teacher; and there was a psychologist from Pernambuco, in his forties, known to some devotees in Recife, but who did not chant japa, or accompany the spiritual programs of the Temple. The devotee whose trajectory we will examine, was another Bhakta, a disciple of Iswara Swami. He was born in Campina Grande, Paraiba, where he is a high school teacher and actively participates in the local cultural center.

In the next tent, some 14 Brahmanas, disciples of Hridayananda Goswami Acharya Deva, simply left their bags and all went to the Parikrama

3 “devote externo” é uma categoria da ISCKON e referia-se aos devotos que não viviam no templo.

encampment. They were the older devotees, some leaders of the Temple, part of the Brazilian elite of the movement, who were between 30-40 years old. When they returned from parikrama, they decided to stay together in that tent, which was very crowded. In the last tent there were four bramacharis, all disciples of Iswara Swami, who took turns serving him and participating in the parikrama. The Swami stayed in the building of ISKCON's book distributor (BBT) in Mayapur, together with an older disciple.

There was one tent with Brazilians in the US\$400 section. In it was one Brahmana from Minas Gerais who was returning to the standard of the devotional life, which he had abandoned in his daily life as a hair dresser in Belo Horizonte. One young bramachari, who was not initiated, had just moved to the temple in Rio de Janeiro. One sympathizer of the movement, a native of Cascavel, Paraná, sang japa at times. The female Brazilian devotees stayed in a hall in one of the buildings of the complex, together with female Russian devotees.

We had a problem in our tent. On the first day of the parikrama, when the devotees got back at about 16:30, they found the tent locked. The psychologist from Pernambuco, who had not gone to the parikrama, had left for an excursion and only got back at 18:30. The next day, we agreed that the key would remain with us. The situation was inverted and he had to wait. On the third day, we decided to leave the key under the bamboo floor, inside the tent.

On the fourth day however, one devotee who was in the encampment, returned to the tent, because he would not continue the pilgrimage on the fifth day. He left for the early morning worship and locked the man from Pernambuco sleeping in the tent. At 8 am, at the end of the ceremony, by chance I asked if the first man had the key. He said yes. I ran to the tent and was able to open it as the other man woke up. He was quite upset, because he was having problems with the younger devotees, who criticized him for not participating in the Parikrama. He felt that the near incident was a form of aggression.

When the parikrama was over, the crisis exploded. The psychologist from Pernambuco appeared at the tent with an apple from the morning meal, inside a small clay pot in which juice was served in the cafeteria. These clay utensils are supposed to be broken after use. In the eyes of the devotees, that small pot with fruit inside looked like an offering...to the ghosts! To take food, even ceremonially consecrated food, to the place for sleeping is an impure habit that is condemned at the temples. It is seen as a stimulus to the

beings that are in the subtle body, the shadows condemned to not reincarnate a human body who accompany the great god Shiva. Since that man threw runes and did readings for other non-devotees, one of the Brahmana bramacharis from Rio de Janeiro, in the third tent, upon seeing his little clay pot quickly retorted: – “Is that where you leave your “Exu?” in a syncretic allusion to the Afro-Brazilian cults.

The psychologist obviously did not feel comfortable. He wound up moving to the US\$400 tent. In addition to moving his tent, he decided, together with some other non-devotees, to go to Calcutta to visit the works of Mother Teresa. They stayed there nearly the entire week, only returning on the day we left. This type of incident was also interpreted by the devotees as an “Krsna’s doing”. The psychologist was seen by the others not only as a non-devotee, but as an impure person, who was not interested in the spiritual life of the others. This created tension. On one hand, he should be respected, because he was associated to the Festival and was not required to accompany the official program. On the other, the younger devotees, who were still not initiated, did not resist criticizing him according to the principles of discipline in which they were being socialized. They treated him with clear disdain. From their point of view, he placed himself in the lowest of positions, because he did not follow the devotional lifestyle that they made an effort to place themselves in.

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Another incident, involving the teacher from Campina Grande, became a good example of how the ideal of spiritual self-realization could be experienced by an initiating devotee, allowing the visualization of immersion in the Vaishnava communitas, from the perspective of this individual. Upon returning from the parikrama, my tent companions began to speak a lot with each other about each one’s situation in relation to the ideals of the spiritual life and of their positions in the movement as a whole. It was a collective process of evaluation of spiritual self-realization before their sacred sources in India, not the Hare Krishna movement in Brazil, but of the individual limits of “becoming a devotee”. With the departure of the man from Pernambuco, the atmosphere calmed down and the seven others sought to be cordial to each other.

On February 27, when the man from Pernambuco left the tent, they were all concerned about organizing their things, washing clothes, counting their money, and mainly, keeping the tent clean. The next day, the 28th, that Bhakta from Campina Grande continued to clean and organize his things. He began a process of self-evaluation speaking out loud to himself, while he looked for a list of orders that the members of the Hare Krishna Cultural Center of Campina Grande had given to him:

- Where did I leave that piece of paper? I never know where I put things! My mother always told me that I don't lose my head because it's attached to my neck! It must be here in this bag, I did not take it to the parikrama! My mother was shocked by the modes of the devotees: - "Son, will you eat with your hands? Don't lose your good manners"! Where is the paper, my God, I am not good for anything!...

He had a utility knapsack with lots of small pockets and zippers. He was becoming a bit hysterical, and deprecated himself while he continuously asked for Krishna to help him. I wound up asking him to keep calm, that he would soon find the paper. His concern, however, was in buying in Mayapur some worship objects for his Cultural Center, because these articles are of better quality in India. He wanted to do this with his free time on those days. In his agitation, however, he vented his tensions, including the values of his original family rearing, and his devotional lifestyle. He was "passing", from one lifestyle to another. I would discover, later, however, that this was not an "hysterical attack", but one of the most authentic processes that a Vaishnava could make from the perspective of Bhakti Yoga.

On the next day, I found him when he left the inauguration of the Pushpa Samadhi, at about 13:30. He had a big problem. He had gone back to the tent soon after the morning meal and found the paper he had been looking for, in a bag with his money, and not in one with the money from his companions, where he thought he had left it. Getting the paper bag, with all his money, he went to the shop in front of the Memorial de Prabhupada, to buy batteries for his flashlight.

He could not explain what happened, but he left the bag with the money on the shop counter. Since he did not speak English, he wanted me to go there to know what had happened. The store, which was owned by ISCKON and run by Bengali devotees, sold a bit of everything, batteries, candles,

medicine, towels, cups. For this reason, it was a very busy place. I asked the salesperson if he had found a bag that the devotee had forgotten. He did not say anything, simply gave me the bag, with the shopping list and without the money, US\$500 and 2,000 rupees. There was obviously nothing more that could be done about the money.

The devotee was quite depressed at first. He did not want to say anything to Iswara Swami, but the next morning his Guru called him to talk about the issue. He said that these things happen, since there are thousands of people at the Festival and not everyone could be trusted. The Guru wanted to know if the devotee would be able to continue his trip without that money. In fact, the devotee's expenses for food and lodging were paid for. If he saved the money from the Cultural Center, he could buy all the things they asked for and still have a bit for an emergency, because things in India were quite cheap. I agreed to lend him something when we got to New Delhi.

We became close and he told me a bit about his history in the movement. The Cultural Center in Campina Grande is quite active. They receive support from the Indian merchants who live there and have a regular program of free distribution of vegetarian food. The Hare Krishna presence is composed of groups in Campina Grande, João Pessoa, Recife and Caruaru, where there is another rural community, Nova Vrajadama. Due to the local climate and ecology⁴ it is similar to some places that we visited in India, a fact that was very pleasing to the devotees from the Northeast, who felt "at home".

He lived in a small city close to Campina Grande, where he worked, dedicating Sundays to activities at the Cultural Center. Campina Grande is the capital of forró dancing and of large and important festivals known as "festas juninas" because they are held in June of each year. The local lifestyle is marked by these manifestations, with lots of drinking and licentious behavior. He believed the Hare Krishna movement would "save him", because he was "sinking", into that lifestyle marked by "intoxication and illicit sex", "contaminating" activities that the movement condemned.

In the year of the 100th anniversary, a series of activities was being held, with considerable success in those four cities and he was quite involved in all

4 This municipality is located in a "small mountain range, with streams and forest. Like most of India, it is semi-arid with a rainy season in the middle of the year. The largest temple in the Northeast, however, is the one in Salvador, which also helps to administer Nova Vrajadama.

the programs. He met his guru on a visit that the guru had made to Recife, during a festival. The Swami had asked for a cup of water and the man from Campina Grande wanted to take it to him, but another Bhakta did so first. This other devotee tripped, falling on the floor and scraping his knee. This man went back to him and said; – “I’m sorry, you should have taken the water, Iswara Swami is your guru.” The man from Campina Grande went to the Swami with the water. The swami asked: – “Are you afraid?” he said no, and asked if the Swami would accept him as a disciple. On that, his first trip to India, he was having the opportunity to have a personal association with the Guru, and serve him, although he did not accompany him constantly like the bramacharis.

He was chanting sixty-four daily rounds of the Hare Krishna mantra on his rosary beads that every devotee uses, while the others would chant only the 16 rounds prescribed by Srila Prabhupada. He had made this vow on the day we left for India. He was firmly determined to purify himself on the trip. His attitude changed completely after the incident. He began to serve prashadam in the large hall in the mornings, and to participate in the Hari Nama at midnight, which took place in the small hut where Srila Prabhupada had lived in the 1970s. These are voluntary activities, considered very purifying, but few Brazilian devotees participated.

My association with this Bhakta was very fruitful. Since I also had little money, we stayed far from the shopping activities of various devotees. I began to see that he was realizing one of the ideals most dear to Vaishnavism. Involuntarily, he “gave up everything for Krishna”, and now truly delivered himself, accompanying the development of the events. According to the other devotees, he had offered his impurities to Krishna, who was purifying him. The incident was proof of Krishna’s mercy, it was a special blessing from Srila Prabhupada.

This incident allowed him to access the principal dimension of spiritual life, which is the personal relationship of each devotee with Krishna, through the Guru, the japa mal, the Aratiks, the pujas. The entire Hare Krishna ritual life is understood as a means for the individual to attain this tie with the Supreme Being, connecting his individual soul to the Supreme Soul. Although this is one of the most common themes in the talks of the swamis, the devotees speak little about it, discussing their own experiences. The redundancy of the solemn words of the Swamis creates a false impression

that everyone is joined in the same perpetual rite whose meaning and objectives are reduced to themselves.

Thanks to the affliction of the Bhakta, due to the loss of money, he wound up sharing with me a bit of his transcendental emotions. When he ended the trip, he sent me a letter, in which he demonstrated he was already in command of the evangelical discourse of the movement, an expression of his spiritual realization, or in the terms considered here, an expression of the normatization of his mystical experience:

All glory to the 100th Anniversary of Srila Prabhupada!

I was very happy to get your letter and the other objects. I was waiting for this moment, mainly to reveal our paths to each other. It's really impossible to forget the trip to India. I always thank Krishna and Prabhupada for this wonderful opportunity. My mind and the photographs are constantly revealing the auspicious moments that I lived and witnessed and I miss those days...

This June here in Campina Grande there was a week of the walk, a Padayatra, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Prabhupada. We were graced through the satsanga of Maharaja Iswara and Maharaja Purushatraya, which deeply illuminated us. It was the day of Corpus Christi and there was an initiation ceremony, two male devotees and one woman devotee received their spiritual names, together with the presentation of the Brahmama thread to each of them. I was one of the initiates and received the spiritual name of Markandeya Rishi das.

The commitments and responsibilities become more evident. I am still strongly contaminated and have many desires in my mind, but, nevertheless, I am convinced that I need to make an effort to be worthy of the mercy of the Guru and of Krishna, and in this determination I seek refuge in the Maha Mantra Hare Krishna (japa), in the devotees (Sadhusanga) and in the books of Prabhupada. I found a spiritual master who gave me Krishna and I pray to Krishna to overcome the obstacles.

Come to visit the farm,⁵ in terms of lodging, the devotees always stay with the bramacharis in their asrhamas, they don't have to pay, but we must always be courteous and make a donation to the temple. Usually, when people visit the temple they make donations, we saw this a lot in India.

Keep working on the environmental week, it is very important that we idealize or organize events to promote Krishna consciousness (this was always Prabhupada's objective). People today are increasingly plunged in materialism, and thus distant from God, we have a very important mission which is to expand Krishna consciousness, taking people back to the Supreme. A

5 In this case, Nova Vrajadhama, in Caruaru, Pernambuco state.

priori, we conduct a program at the school where I teach (Padayatra Week). The devotees captivate the students singing the Maha Mantra with karatalas, drums, harmonium. Everyone sings, dances, jumps, it was incredible, soon afterwards, we distributed the prashadam (a natural snack with juice.)

Krishna is constantly calling us: surrender to me, do not be afraid, I will illuminate you, I will protect you. Isn't that what he said? What are we waiting for? Please, accept to be the most beloved son of the Master and live a more pure life. For this reason, the first step is to accept the spiritual master and move forward. "Making an effort to learn, simply by approaching a spiritual master, inquire submissively and serve him. The self-realized soul can give you knowledge because it knows the truth...and when you have thus learned the truth, you will never again fall into illusion".

It is worthwhile to be initiated and accept the guru as our master, father, teacher, friend. Which is also to say to assume more responsibilities and sacrifices. We live quite austerely to have education, food, clothing, etc...when we know that all these things are mere material effects, and moreover, temporary. To invest in transcendental knowledge, in love and service to the Supreme Personality of God, Sri Krishna, is the most intelligent route, because it will give us the discernment to finally end the cycle of birth, aging and death, our own and of our brothers.

We will remain perseverant in the Krishna Consciousness and spread the message of Srila Prabhupada!

* * *

There is no generic devotee among the adepts of the Hare Krishna Movement, because to become a devotee and maintain a devotional life is a process in permanent construction, through the ritually constructed positions. On the other hand, the most characteristic rite of the movement, the Hari Nama Sankirtana, aims to have all the participants feel united in a single generic category, the Bhakta, the devotee of Lord Krishna. It is even possible to interpret the idea of this religious option, prema bhakti, the pure devotion, as the search for the realization of a state of permanent liminality, free of any structural social reference, such as family origins or other social positions. This ideal is only achieved by the "pure devotees", who should even transcend the specifically spiritual positions of this culture, like that of the Swami.

Those three tents in encampment N^o 08, in particular, wound up being organized according to the large internal categories of the Hare Krishna movement. The first was characterized by those who do not have a defined spiritual

discipline, like the bhaktas, those aspiring to a spiritual life. The second was the tent of the Brahmanas, who were firm in their austere practice. In the third, were the devotees located in a very special position, that of the “servants” of the spiritual master. All of them were living in renunciation as young bramacharis, Brahamanas, dedicated to cooking and washing the clothes for the Guru, in addition to being responsible for the inexperienced disciples. They were in the **purest** tent of all, while mine was the most contaminated.

The living standard of the bramacharis, based on renunciation, is as they say, “very austere”. It involves waking up at four in the morning, taking cold baths, cleanliness, humility, prayer hours and serving the advanced devotees. The initiated and adult devotees make demands on the younger ones and the neophytes, until they introject the standard. The bramacharis are the best known devotees, the bald young men, dressed in saffron robes, who distribute the books of Prabhupada in the streets.

No one can be a bramachari alone, in their home, but there is no rite of entrance into the Bramacharya ashrama. To the contrary, the passage takes place through the change of residence, clothes and other daily habits, associated to an intensive process of introjection of the values of the movement. If the devotee leaves the community of the ashram, he must stop using the saffron robes. The Bramachari “sankirtanas”, who distribute the books of Srila Prabhupada through the streets, is considered the one who incarnates the spirit of renunciation of the devotee. He is glorified, and there is a periodic journal, the “carta de sankirtana”, in which all the book sales are registered, as well as the performance of each one. The annual champions earn prizes, like a free trip to India.⁶ They are the personification of the anti-structural character of the movement, which takes the contagious joy of the Hari Nama to the streets.

Only after the moment of the first initiation, which for the bramacharis can take place in less than one year, what until then was a liminal process, marked by the spirit of spontaneous communitas, with the candidate to become a devotee, the bhakta, adapting to this new lifestyle, the focus of the new devotional lifestyle becomes transformed into an essential obligation. The naive spontaneity of the sympathizers is worked with through spiritual

⁶ The champions that year were there, but they were not bramacharis. They were important devotees. The unbeatable champion of the temple in Belo Horizonte is a Brahamana from Recife.

discipline, in a totally ritualized lifestyle. Bramacharya is certainly an anti-structural social category, and it is certainly in it that the normatization of the spirit of *communitas* of Vaishnavism is established.

* * *

The Vaishnava Brahmanas, meanwhile, are devotees par excellence. They are the “twice borns”, in ritual terms. They receive the distinct mantra of the Gaudya Vaishnava sampradaya and the Gayatri mantra, a privilege of the Brahmanas. These devotees complete the process of spiritual formation, they can provide direct service to the deities placed on the altars and they are the commanders of the movement. To be a Brahmana means to belong to a formally recognized social position of people based on a platform of ritual purity, with individual life totally guided and subordinated to the demands of devotional service. The devotees of the second tent, behaved, in Mayapur, as a single body, closed unto itself. They all went to the parikrama together, in a single group. They took prashada together, at the same time. They even took baths in the Ganges together. Mature devotees, already properly normatized, they lived an anti-structural condition that was possible for them, gathered in a single tent. In that liminality, they shared their spiritual realizations.

Spiritual realization, self-realization, which are key concepts within the Hare Krishna movement, are entirely aimed at the devotee as an individual. What is at play, in the first place, is his relationship with Krishna, through devotional service realized under the instruction of his spiritual master. This sociability, in the first place, is explicitly aimed at the good progress of the mission of Srila Prabhupada, the obligations to the maintenance of the deities and service to the guru. At the encampment, these responsibilities were fully realized by the devotees in the third tent. They were Brahmanas, definite devotees, they were bramacharis, devotees who had accepted renunciation. As the Iswara Swami served Prabhupada, they serve him, revising the basic tie of the succession of disciples.

In the case of the future Markandeya Rishi dasa, however, he would realize something else. The entire Vaishnava spiritual discipline, the entire “devotional service”, has a structural social effect. They construct this person who is the Hare Krishna devotee. This should have been clear in the previous pages. The anti-structural value, however, that the devotees truly seek to

realize, is expressed in the category Krishna lila, the transcendental pastime of Krishna. That devotee attained this position, in the eyes of the others, upon losing everything that he had in Mayapur. He became an example of resignation for all the others.

On the day after the installation of the Puspa Samadhi, the prashadam was distributed in Shatipur. This ceremony, conducted in the Samadhi of Adwaita Acharya, allows the participants to receive a special blessing from Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He had promised to personally bless those who distributed prashadam at the location, on that day. This Bhakta from Campina Grande went there, participated in the Hari Nama, in the bhajans and distributed prashadam in a unique state of spirit, because only he had such an intense and unique experience at the Festival, on that important day.

“Lila” literally means “play” and serves to designate practically the entire symbolic universe of the Krishna cult, the bhajans, the pujas, the Aratiks, the daily domestic rites and the big annual rites. This term has been addressed by scholars of ritual such as Tambiah (1985:126), Turner (1982:35) and Singer (1972:148). Not only are Krishna’s pastimes dramatized, but the dramatization, the rite, and the myth, simultaneously, are “Lila”. It is all very festive. They are all playing with Krishna and Krishna is playing with everyone, like the young and innocent pastors of Vrndavanam, 5,000 years ago.

All of this revelry, however, are expressions of the human soul and of its pleasure in encountering the Divine. This is its true transcendental meaning, the objective that the devotees seek. To feel pleasure within that entire life guided by rituals and informed by mythic narratives. Tambiah emphasized that lila does not mean something ordinary, but an effective communication with the divine plane and its extra-worldliness. The realization of this plane is understood as the realization of the spiritual Soul, a theme that also deserves to be discussed, on another plane, not without difficulties in the case of Vaishnava.

A lesson from Narayana Swami, the spiritual brother of Srila Prabhupada, was recently published in Brazil, in which he explained this dimension that is characteristic of devotional life – intimacy:

None of the associates of Sri Krishna speak about their nocturnal experiences. They may enjoy them, but they would never say something about these experiences. Radha would never say how she met with Krishna. We must always pray like the gopis, for whose mercy and by the mercy of Srimati Radhika

we can realize all these things. With our prayers Srimati Radhika grants us understanding. Once she is satisfied with our prayers, she grants us all the teachings, if not, it would be a mere mental exercise.

In the case of the Brazilian devotees, with whom I spoke and who I interviewed afterwards, I realized that they spoke little about themselves as devotees, indicating this dimension. They spoke of the need for spiritual life, of the importance of purification, of the realization of the sankirtana and of the role of the guru. These issues are basically technical, in the sense that Mauss(1974:217) gave to the concept of the Corporal Technique, to the effective traditional acts that constitute the symbolic life of the spirit, as a symbol of assemblages. Mauss(1974:233) came to affirm that India and China developed corporal techniques, mainly respiratory ones, as routes of their mysticism, which can be studied socially.

The teachings of Srila Prabhupada and his disciples, are, in these terms, effective techniques of purification, which are socially available to those who want to try them. Their result, however, the spiritual feelings that it induces, are a delicate theme. The maximum that I attained was the statement below, made by a devotee who was also at the Indian Festival, and with whom I had considerable contact during all the fieldwork:

My relation with the movement is quite mystical. There is no explanation for how I entered the movement. It's not that I went there to the temple and read the books and thought that's it, Prabhupada is right. It was Krishna who brought me. I came here in 86 in Nova Gokula, to get to know it. I stayed for six months. I did not become a devotee. I chanted japa, used the kanti, did devotional service, but I did not understand very much. Someone can come here, but in principle, you are not able to conceive the deities, the mantra. You are very identified with the body. I came to see how it was, I continued to practice devotional service, but since I was contaminated, I was not able to understand many things. I had many doubts. I had an experience to come here and leave. I had to pass through another place, because it wasn't the time for me to awake the Krishna consciousness. But Krishna made a deal for me to become quite strong after this. Now I have no difficulties. I was not realized. You need realization, if not, you don't understand. It's something artificial and you go away. So, Krishna sent me away, because I needed to take a trip to understand something. I felt that something was missing, a gap in my heart,

life was meaningless. Even with material realization, life was without meaning. I decided to come back. The moment I stepped back here I said: it's now! And I gave myself to Krishna, with great austerity, and was able to realize a bit of philosophy in me, to experiment the realization, thanks to the guru.

In relation to the Centennial Festival in particular the other devotee, also a disciple of Iswara Swami, commented in a short and slow interview in 1997:

It was a very special year because of the Festival. We participated in a very beautiful festival in India, you must remember. Mayapur, Vrndavanam. Any devotional service that is given in an ephemeral way like that has a special value, it has a transcendental strength, according to the scriptures. This is a reality, At the time we don't realize it, we will only realize it many years later. It was something very important. 1996 was the year that I was initiated. It was the year that I had the opportunity to travel with my Guru Maharaja, to conduct the excursion to the sacred places of India and spend quite a bit of time there. In addition, there were many important changes in my life. I began to live alone. I took *vanaprastha*, I abandoned the family. That is, the family abandoned me. It was a year of memorable changes in my personal life.

In the case of Markandeya Rishi dasa, however, the apparent misfortune would end up being interpreted as a very special relationship with Krishna. By luck I saw him praying, on that hot afternoon in our tent in Mayapur. Since our association became quite intense after that incident, I was able to speak with him about it and perceive a bit of his parakya realization. All the devotees feel that they are part, in some way, of the Krishna lila. They speak generically about this issue, because, the spiritual life is described as such. No one speaks, however, about the realization of the parakya feeling. It is a secret common to all, paradoxically, the sentiment that individualizes them among each other and makes them feel like a group of people with something very significant in common.

In fact, it involves the most classic theme of the entire cult to Radha Krishna, as narrated in chapters 29 – 33 of the tenth song of the Bhagavata Purana: dance of the Rasa, the apotheosis of the Krishna lila. Krishna enchants all the gopis, the young female pastors of Vrndavanam and has them abandon their homes, to dance with him at the margins of the Yamuna River, on a moonlit night. He dances with all of them, expanding into countless forms, but each gopi believes that Krishna is dancing only with him.

Upon perceiving their pride, he disappears, going to hide with Radha. She also winds up manifesting the same presumptuous sentiment of the favorite, causing him to escape from her as well. Enraged, the gopis look for him in the forest, until they realize that they all enjoyed his company and lost him for the same reason. By being released of this false prestige, of the ahankara, he reappears, for all, justifying his disappearance. His desire was to intensify all of their feelings for him. Then, the Rasa lila continues, for an entire life of Brahma.

The themes of spiritual self-realization are better expressed on the plane of myth. If there is a plane where anti-structural ideas and values, which are transcendent to the plane of social organization, are expressed, it is that of myth. Purification, purity, spiritual realization, liberation, are conceptual expressions of this strength. The myth of the rasa lila, which is chanted, dramatized, painted, sculpted and remembered by all of India, appears to contain the key of the devotional sentiments, and to serve to interpret the behavior of the Hare Krishna. Although everyone evidently has in common the option to worship Krishna, which makes them equivalent, it is simultaneously where their peculiar individualism resides. Each devotee relates with Krishna in a unique manner, this is the heart of their individuality, revised by a ritual structure shared by all.

Historic and Sociological Aspects

Victor Turner produced a substantial reflection about the movement of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in West Bengal, and of the ritual aspect of his Hari nama sankirtana, the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra, in streets, squares and temples, which is the registered mark of the religious movement and its Yoga.

The movement of Chaitanya, which Prabhupada propagated, was codified by the Six Goswamis, Bengali disciples of Chaitanya, in his ashram in Vrndavanam, in the 16th century. In Bengal, the preaching of Bhakti yoga is divided among two intimates associated to Sri Chaitanya, Nitiananda Prabhu and Advaita Acharya. Turner presents them as rivals, the first, as an outcast who normatizes the communitas spirit of Bhakti, while the other as a Brahmana who would incarnate the structural values of the caste system.

Baskar Chatterjee (1989:321), locates both in relation to the plans of Sri

Chaitanya, within the scope of his movement:

The noblest achievement in Chaitanya's life was an extending of the right to the love of God to all including the backward sections of the society. He charged Nityananda with this noble task by saying(.7), while he was residing at Nilacala. He also asked Adwaita Acharya to make the gift of krshna-bhakti to all including the Candalas. He himself embraced Raya Ramananda, Sanatana and Yavana Haridasa with out caring to consider their caste or community. Residing at the residence of Vacaspati Misra, he liberated the invalid, the blind and the deaf. His mission was to reconstruct an egalitarian society under the banner of the name Hari, where there would be no distinction between the ruler and the ruled, the learned and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the Bramana and the Sudra, the Hindu and the Muslim.

Sanyal(1996:183)⁸ expresses how the religiosity associated to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu became the religious spirit of Bengal since the 18th century. His Bhakti Yoga, which is deeply syncretic, is at the base of a wide variety of local sects, including tantric sects, primarily influenced by the Buddhism from the region. Sri Chaitanya has his life divided into two phases. The first, in Nadia, is marked by the democratic preaching of the Hari Nama Sankirtana, through the interior of Bengal. At 24 years of age he took sannnyasa and went to live in Jaganatha Puri, in the neighboring state of Orissa, while Nityananda Prabhu continues his Sankirtana movement, preaching to the Bengali people. In this second phase, Sri Chaitanya did not constitute a sect around himself, to the contrary. He was the living example of Krishna Bhakti self-realized. In his person, he combined the enthusiasm of the Bengali masses, with which he also captured interest in Orissa, a neighboring state to the South, with the theoretical and literary principles of Vaishnavism.

Majumdar(1989:337) discusses a more delicate aspect. Many of the sahajiya sects related to Sri Chaitanya did not have historic ties with his movement, but many, including Indian authors, had prejudices against them. Nityananda Prabhu, for example, also wound up being described in these terms:

7 In this portion there is a verse in Bengali that was not translated, about the importance of Bhakti for spiritual salvation.

8 Sanyal's text is in the collection organized by D.N. Jha, *Society and Ideology in India: Essays in Honour of Prof^o R.S. Sharma*.

Sri Chaitanya, the founder of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, made Nilacala (Puri) the centre of his activities and directed his followers to propagate his ideals at different parts of India. Nityānanda, who had a special charisma owing to his long association with the Master, was sent in Bengal. But according to a few Vaishnava authors, Nityānanda deviated from the high ideal of Sri Chaitanya and plunged into a life of comfort and luxury. “In his hands he wore gold bangles and his arms were adorned with gold armlets. His fingers contained costly rings and various necklaces set with pearls, jewels and corals adorned his neck.” According to most historians of the earlier generation, to which even R.C. Majumdar was included, the activities of Nityānanda created an atmosphere of anarchy and confusion among the poor and grass-root level followers of Bengal Vaisnavism. The spiritual ideal of non-duality in the idyllic love of Radhā and Kṛṣṇa was not understood. They took it in vulgar sense. Being confused they were divided into so many splinter groups like the Āul, Sāin, Bāul, Darvesh, Nedā, Kartābhajā, Spastadāyaka, Sakhibhāvaka, Kisoribhajani, Rānavallabhi, Jagānmohini, Gauravādi, Sāhebdhani, Pāgalanāthi, etc.

Turner, however, affirms that: “But, once again, a devotional movement is predestined to capsize in the choices of doctrinal formulation”, without considering that he was facing, not one movement, but various movements, which have in common the same symbolic universe. Thus, it is not an issue of an internal distinction that is directly interpretable in terms of structure-anti-structure. All of these sects are anti-structural in relation to the caste system characteristic of northern India, because people are affiliated regardless of their birth, and all reinterpret the same symbolic universe, each one according to distinct options. As Turner emphasized, equality in one social dimension supposes inequality in another. Here, to the same cult corresponds two large socially distinct modalities, smartas and sahajias, which illustrate well the limits of egalitarianism and of social transit, which the Indian sects construct in their original context.

Prabhupada taught the “upercast” version of the Gaudya Vaishnavism, in which the people of Chaitanya, Nityananda, Adwaita and Gadadhara, are considered divine incarnations, and Nityananda is as adored as Chaitanya. They are Goura&Nitai, a deity that is extremely popular, chanted and celebrated by all the Gaudyas. The relations between them, including the tensions between Nityananda and Adwaita, are considered to be based on an elaborate manipulation of the symbolic Vaishnava structure, which it is

not appropriate to present here, but which instead of shaping oppositions, establishes a plane of symbolic mediations between true social oppositions. These social distinctions are manifest in mythic and biographical versions of these personalities who are considered sacred, differing according to the particular sect.

Turner (1974:163) was more interested in illustrating the thesis that there is a “regular connection between liminality, structural inferiority, low social position and structural foreignness, on one hand, and of universal human values peace, health, justice, fraternity, equality, formulated in a utopian manner”.⁹

In general, this consideration makes sense for gaudya Vaishnavism, and is appropriate for considering the new adepts, like the Brazilians, given the universalization of this religious movement. On the specifically symbolic plane of myth, however, we find another dimension. The great anti:structural theme of the Vaishnavism, on the symbolic plane, is common to both groups of sects, but with radically distinct reinterpretations. There is a strong consensus among the Bengali sects about the sacredness of Sri Chaitanya, the young Brahmana of Nadia and the Swami of Puri. He is adored by all as a simultaneous incarnation of the supreme couple Radha-Krishna, through the mantra Hare Krishna. The symbolic link of Vaishnavism is the ecstasy of the love between Radha and Krishna. Radha is a married youth, but has a youthful love for Krishna. In this story, all are pastors – gopas and gopis – living on the banks of the Yamuna River, in Vrndavanam, in the district of Mathura, about 100 km from Delhi.

According to Chatterjee(1993:181) in the sahajya sects, men and women can realize the spiritual form of Radha and Krishna in their own beings, through their own ritual practices. The sahajias incorporate this mythological theme in a doctrine that is realized in extra-conjugal ceremonial practices. These sects are seen as impure or disrespectful to good conduct, causing the Sahajya to survive as peripheral movements in Gaudya Vaishnavism. The orthodox Vaishnavas would never think of conducting

⁹ Peirano(1995:50) warns of the difference between Turner writing about the Ndembu people, where deep analyses are developed about a first-hand ethnographic material, and Turner using other ethnographic materials for his more general theoretical considerations. In the second case, as I discuss in relation to Sri Chaitanya, the diversity of cases addressed implies a superficiality in the intellectual treatment. The data becomes illustration, instead of discussion.

among themselves the ecstasy of Radha Krishna and of the gopis. For the lower castes, however, spiritual life allows a recourse to symbolic protest against social injustices, in the form of a “revolt of the spirit”, against the excessive social obligations.

Both practices, sahajyas and smartas, therefore, are anti-structural in relation to routine social obligations. Both establish particular forms of mystic contemplation. There is a voluntary and conscious option for ecstasy, for the liminal transcendence of Bhakti yoga. Sahajyas are impure in relation to the smartas within the Gaudya Vaishnavism, in an hierarchy that considers levels of realization of the ideals of Sri Chaitanya, within quite specific social interests.

The meetings of Krishna and the gopis are simultaneously routine and ecstatic, transcendental to any code of conduct, symbolizing that there are no limits to spiritual life, qualitatively distinct from material life. Here is the paradox: it is through an apparent impurity, conjugal infidelity, taken as a symbol, that the spiritual purity is completely expressed. The specifically karma-free, liberated platform is represented in terms of a break with the specifically karma-ethic values, of the social conventions. It is this innocent illicit union, parakya, which allows the establishment of prema, love of God. As Swakya, the licit and sacramental union of marriage, leads to kama, enjoys material life. This difference expresses the difference between spiritual life and material life, as Gaudya Vaishnavism indicates.

There is only one common question to all of Indian philosophy, which is: How can souls escape the ties of causality that keep them bonded to the wheel of the world? It is this liberation, “Moksa”, that consists of the salvation in the Indian sense. It is the realization of this ideal that leads to the “religious individualism” that is characteristic of Indian mysticism. There is nothing comparable here to the idea of “predestination” or divine selection. It is the responsibility of each “individual soul” (to use Max Weber’s term) to work to resolve their own destiny. In the final analysis, each individual can only save him or herself.

In this sense, Weber(1958:170) defines that: “Indian philosophy essentially represents a theory of the metaphysical structure of the soul as the vehicle of individuation.” Later he concludes that: “from such mysticism no ethic for life within the world could be deduced”.

Weber defines the hierarchy of spiritual roles that results from this

belief system, as well as the extra – and intra-worldly dimensions of the doctrine of salvation:

Corresponding to the organically graded holy statuses there were: redeemed ones (*jivanmukta*); other-worldly aspirants to salvations by means of asceticism or contemplation; the ritually correct and Veda-educated Brahmans; and, further, the simple laity. In accord with this attempt was naturally made to bring the steps of extra-worldly, soteriological, karma-free holy seeking and the inner-worldly *karma*-ethic together into organic relation. (1958:179)

In these terms, karma-ethic means that good actions have good results, while karma-free means that actions taken within a spirit of “detachment”, do not result in karma, good or bad. The passage from one plane to another can be understood by the term spiritual self-realization. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and the other Gaudya Vaishnava saints are celebrated with such enthusiasm by the adepts of his movement, because they completely realized this passage. This is the great theme of the Bhagavad-Gita, the most popular Hindu literary work, which Weber considered afterwards.

The doctrine of the Gita exposes the importance of a state of spirit in which actions are conducted without an “attachment” to their results but guided only by Krishna, the Supreme Lord. Any action can have sacred value as long as it is taken with complete indifference, as a manifestation of devotion to Krishna. It was this knowledge that Srila Prabhupada came to teach in the West, exhaustively discussing the theme that Weber denominated as karma-free, the liberation of the individual from the cycle of births and deaths, through detached action.

This is the plane where the distinction between structure-anti-structure as discussed by Turner (1974:195) makes sense. It is possible to locate the values of karma ethic /karma free of Chaitanya bhakti based on this dialectical concept of structure-anti-structure. Krishna Bhakti consists in a profound and intimate contemplation of this mystery, personified by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Turner’s mistake was to interpret the symbolism present in the largest religious movement of Western Bengal as an expression of this social system, without considering it in its broader historic context. Turner had access to more information and studies about Indian religion, such as Marriot, which he used in his fifth and final chapter in O Processo Ritual [The Ritual

Process].¹⁰ Marriot analyzed the Holi, the Indian new year festival, in a village in Vrndavanam, as a rite of status reversal, where the socially weak become aggressive and the socially dominant, humble, amid countless ecstatic experiences of *Communitas*.

What Marriot shows is that Krishna is the soul of Holi, the personification of the spirit that transcends all the social rules. According to him, (in Turner-1974:226):

Krishna does not put off the settling of accounts of the powerful until the final judgment day, but programs them regularly in the form of a dance with masks, to be conducted on the full moon each March. The Holi of Krishna is not a simple doctrine of love, it is primarily the text of a drama that should be played out by all the devotees, with passion and joy.

The reversal of status liberates the participants from the social positions that they occupy. They are all devotees, playing the pastimes of Krishna, the cow herd of Vrndavanam, who inundates all with *prema*, divine love, liberated in the atmosphere of the *communitas* of the ritual. The final result, on the other hand, is the accentuation of the principle of individually purified social hierarchy, thanks to ritual reversal.

Turner (1974:240) discusses that the notion of individual liberty, by means of rituals and religious beliefs, has one meaning for the dominant and others for the subordinated. The social liminality of the strong is weakness, manifest in attitudes of humility, renunciation and resignation, as found in the religious teachings of the spiritual leaders of high social origin. The social liminality of the subordinated, however, is symbolic strength, liberated by the playful dramatizations of the ceremonies of status reversal. The religious beliefs and practices dominated by structurally subordinated individuals also appeals to this force. Bourdieu (1987:87), commenting on Weber, saw in this type of relationship the essence of the religions of salvation. He affirmed:

The religious demands tend to be organized around two large types that correspond to two large types of social situations, that is, the *demands for legitimation* of the established order particular to the privileged classes, and the *demands for*

¹⁰ Singer(1966), edited a collection entitled "Krishna: rites, myths and attitudes, with some of his own articles and those by Dimock Jr, Marriot, and others, which summarizes the discussion about *Bhakti yoga* at that time. The article by Edward Dimock Jr. in this collection has a detailed discussion about *swakiya/parakiya* among *sahajiyas* and *smartas*.

compensation particular to the disfavored classes (religions of salvation). (Italics by the author)

Given these perspectives, the social situation of Vaishnavism in West Bengal becomes clearer. High and low castes find and reinforce their distinctions around the same symbolic universe in which is constituted the Bengali identity. Purity/impurity in this context are values related to that type of demand. It is possible to infer that the high castes are required to confer their purity before the impurity of the lower castes. They, in turn, have symbolic mechanisms for demanding social compensation, within this same idiom.

The issue in question, that is, what can be understood of this Vaishnava social configuration, in terms of structure-anti-structure, must consider the other social agents involved. This observation reinforces the need for a study that seeks to consider the religiosity of the Vaishnava sects in their specificity, in a sociology of spiritual self-realization, which these Indian movements allow discussing, whose object is constituted around the social effects derived from their mystic individualism in their specific contexts.

Madan(1994:204), upon describing the development of Islam in Bengal, leads us to believe that Islam was promoted in East Bengal within this social dynamic. Muslim missionaries and kings reached Bengal after the 13th century, when the Brahmin order was being restored,¹¹ taking the place of a socio-political order of Buddhist orientation. The Islamization took place primarily in the lower rural castes, in opposition to the Hindu high castes, in a dynamic and syncretic movement that gave origin to Bengali Islam itself. Many of those converted were sahajyas.

When Islam finally organized a new Bengali society in the 16th century, within Islamic India, Sri Chaitanya and the Hari nama sankirtana arose, which was anti-structural in relation to the new order. The Bengali Muslim dynasty, which at the time of Sri Chaitanya governed Bengal, remained independent from the Sultanate of Delhi, and gave great impulse to cultural development, translating to the local idiom both the Koran and Sanskrit texts, allowing Sri Chaitanya to popularize them.

For some time, the Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya was also seen with reserves by the high castes, which accused him of being sentimentalist and

¹¹ In the sense of the historic orthodox restoration of Hinduism, as presented by Weber(1958) in the ninth chapter.

naive, a promoter of a religion suitable for the uncultured masses that he attracted. This dynamic between structure-anti-structure, in this Indian case allows considering the Indian social universe operating within the plane represented by this dialect, with much less restraint than in the West. For this reason its examples are better.¹²

To understand them, however, it is necessary to recognize, as does Dumont(1992:323), that in this case, nothing exists outside of the relational universe. Since no institution, in particular, is defined based on its own essence, no religious movement can be exclusively anti-structural, because no social category is only essentially structural. What can be perceived is a dialectic between social categories and social dimensions, operated symbolically and ritually.

Turner, in his manner, also “returned to the West”, in his theoretical considerations. Based on a deep analysis of the rites of the Ndembu people of Central Africa, he discusses the spirit of *communitas* of the religious movements to reach the questions particular to the modern utopias. Turner’s final conclusion (1974:244) is substantial. He observes that in modern societies, which are highly specialized and have strong intergroup ties, individuals make efforts to feel the spirit of *communitas* by participating in supposedly universalist ideological movements or in small groups of “outsiders” such as hippies. The modern world offers many opportunities for the rise of scenes of “spontaneous *communitas*”, whose effects are reabsorbed in their characteristic dynamic.

What Turner does not discuss extensively is that the value and position of these situations of *communitas* in the modern world are highly displaced, compared to their presence in traditional situations. A good example that he uses is Halloween in the United States. An entire “mythic fauna” is incarnated in threatening costumes for children, who are the ages of Krishna and his gopis of the Holi. Both ceremonies establish an indubitable spirit of *communitas*. Both are youthful games, but Holi has a symbolic importance that Halloween does not have.

There is no city of witches in the United States where Halloween is “taken

12 It is important to recall that Weber(1986:145) characterized the universality of the Indian doctrine of karma/samsara as the more rational formulation of another worldly contemplative mysticism. For Weber, the Brahmanas organized the only doctrine of salvation and of society that exists with complete logical coherence. That is, a formulation of humanity in structural and anti-structural terms.

seriously”, comparable to Vrndavanam, Mathura and Mayapur, the sacred sties of the Vaishnavas. These locations are marked by an anti-structural spirituality within their context of origin, which constitute a very well-defined symbolic structure. They are important pilgrimage centers, they are essential centers of reference for the Hindu ethos. It is questionable to speak of spontaneous *communitas* in social contexts such as Vrndavanam and Mayapur, given that the lifestyle of these locations is completely structured around Hari Nama Sankirtana.

When Turner (1976:199) uses the Baules as an example of spontaneous *communitas*, which is a *sahajia* sect, and one of its songs of *sankirtana*, he comments that the pop singer Bob Dylan placed his photo among Baules on one of his records, approximating the two groups. This image is very important, because at the same time in which Turner released the first edition of his “O Processo Ritual” in 1969, Srila Prabhupada and his U.S. adepts made a record with the Beatles, which was very successful. The Maha Mantra was also included on the sound track of the musical Hair, definitively associating itself to the New York hippie culture. The *sankirtana* simultaneously reached the pop world, in its most expressive *smarta* version and in its more characteristic *sahajya* version.

For this reason it is necessary to reflect on the difference between the Indian *Swami* and his Western disciples,¹³ to be able to consider the relevance of the concept of *communitas*, considering this type of social process. It is evident that Srila Prabhupada was in the first place seeking to realize his guru’s plan by distributing Vaishnava books and promoting festivals outside of India. From his point of view, to create a community of followers of Chaitanya Bhakti, can be understood progressively from a perspective of structured or normative *communitas*. He was resocializing those people within a lifestyle that only he knew, a set of organizational norms of Indian origin.

From the perspective of his followers, everything is new, everything is spontaneous. The notion of spontaneous *communitas* makes sense for interpreting the relationship between these people, from the hippie environment, and the world that Srila Prabhupada offers them, in those improvised

13 This theme was the subject of another article I wrote: “New Age & Neo hinduísmo: uma via de mão dupla nas relações culturais entre Ocidente e Oriente” published in *Ciências Sociais e Religião* Nº 07, Ano 7, setembro de 2005. Porto Alegre: ACSRM. Pp. 73-101.

environments. Seen in this way, we have three dimensions to consider: that of the Swami, that of the disciples and that of the temple. The organization of the guru-disciple relationship was being constructed around a temple and a ceremonial life developed for them. This needs to be properly considered.

At another moment, Turner(1988:272) himself reconsiders his concepts, in a dialog with Indian authors, around fundamental aspects of the symbolic universe of the sects. The title of the work is quite explanatory.¹⁴ If we are facing another social plane, the expression of its organization would also be on the connotative and analogical plane. The Indian examples illustrate the type of normative *communitas* found in periodical rituals of the status reversal.

Based on a Sikh example and the criticisms of J.S. Uberoi, Turner admits that the caste system is only one part of the Hindu universe. Social anthropologists always work with the castes, excluding the ashramas, which compose the “*varnashradharma*”. The social system of the castes has been subordinated to an anti-caste dimension, manifested in the religious orders of those who have taken to a life of renunciation, whose principles do not consider birth status and caste, as we have seen.

The total social structure of medieval India was composed of three levels: the governing class; the real caste system, which is the world of heads of family; and the orders that adopt renunciation. The inter-relations between these dimensions define the social field at the time. The anti-structural dimension of these sects, personified by their *swamis*, located permanently at the limits and passages of social life, are opposed to the person of the prince, the center of socio-political life. The life of renunciation, and family life, on the other hand, form a cycle, not an opposition.¹⁵

In the *Sikh* case there was a social process comparable to Protestant reform. The Sikhs created their intra-worldly asceticism, combining the principles of royalty, renunciation and of family life in a single set of faith and renunciation. Turner(1988:286) would finally discuss how processes of structure, anti-structure, counter-structure¹⁶ and re-structuring coexist and

14 Metaphors of Anti-structure in Religious Culture, in *Dramas, fields and metaphors*, Cornell, 1974. London.

15 As Madan(1988) discusses in depth. It should not be forgotten, however, that, according to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, both *Rajah* as well as a *Bhaktah* (understood as one who lives in renunciation) are representatives of Krishna, on distinct planes.

16 Turner discusses that anti-structure does not mean opposition to social structure. As the Indian cases

modify each other in a single ritual field. Their influences are expressed in metaphors, through the properties of reversibility of this field, which is characteristic of the Indian sects.

* * *

Turner uses one more example, Lingayat,¹⁷ analyzing its modality of Bhakti yoga. Lingayat began as a movement of oppressed peoples, but not a movement of low castes against high castes, but of illiterate against literate. A symbolic protest in name of direct, original and individual religious experience, against the temple hierarchies and their ritualism. Here we also had the production of translations of Sanskrit literature to Karnak, producing the first distinct regional expressions, including with saints originating from all the castes. In the place of the ancient hierarchy by birth, the movement proposed a mystical hierarchy by experience, an hierarchy based on the experience of self-realization.

In the specifically symbolic field, as Dumont (op.cit.) observed, the fundamental trinity of the virasaivas is composed of the guru, linga and jangama, the spiritual master, the symbolic emblem of Shiva and the ascetic saint, considered the living representative of the temple by the linga. This relationship is expressed in terms of an opposition, because the characteristic movement of the wandering jangama is opposed to the evident fixedness of the linga of the temple, sthavara.¹⁸

Turner(1974:291) proposes that the distinction between the characteristics of sthavara and jangama can be interpreted in terms of structure-anti-structure. To the first term, corresponds, in the first place, the temple and everything that it represents, the state, property, the positions of status. The second, to the contrary, is the mystical individual in constant movement, a man in permanent liminality, moving from village to village.

Both are approximate, they become one, in the following terms: to the temple of the linga corresponds the body of the ascetic. The first term is

show, the egalitarianism of the sects complement the hierarchy of the castes. But there are counter-structural situations, which establish passages between structural planes.

17 A.K.Ramanujam, Structure and Anti-estructure: The Virasaiva example.

18 As Dumont(op.cit) described, the *Lingayat* carry with them a small stone known as a *linga*, which is a symbolic tie between their individual bodies and the body of the sect, the temple.

fixed, the devotees go to the temple. The second term is in movement, the jangama goes to the devotees. Within this symbolic field, society moves, taking advantage of the passages between the planes that these symbolic distinctions allow.

Turner concludes that complex societies, like India's, have a multiplicity of structural subsystems that form a field that is propitious for the growth of counter structures, by which individuals pass through subsystems. The Indian sects, in this case, arise breaking with the established values of the Hindu tradition, but then give them structure, assuming some of its values. Here, Turner, by looking only at Indian cases, is finally able to think conceptually about the movements of symbolic reversibility of this spiritual culture, as "castification." This fundamental characteristic points to the importance of considering the specificity of each modality of cult, within the common symbolic universe of the Hindus. Each sect creates a quite *sui generis* movement that serves the very particular dimensions of each regional context.

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Beyond nature and the supernatural

Some reflections on religion, ethnicity and traditions of knowledge¹

Fabio Mura

Abstract

Most studies of religion are founded on the relationship between nature and the supernatural. This dichotomy allows a supposedly mystical dimension to be distinguished from a politically pragmatic dimension of human behaviour. In this view, therefore, religious conduct differs in nature from the political. Taking an opposite tack, this paper proposes to overcome this dichotomy by seeing the connections in this universe as primarily technical-political in kind, a result of the social organization of relations and interactions of individuals, considering religion as an *organizational type*. Thus, taking as examples the ethnographic Guarani-Kaiowa of Mato Grosso do Sul and Tabajara of Paraíba, I shall try to show how these indigenous people, each in their own way, establish connections in the universe, setting political communities, defining domestic and ethnic identities and drawing traditions of knowledge.

Keywords: religion, ethnicity, tradition of knowledge, politics, cosmology.

Resumo

A maior parte dos estudos sobre religião se funda na relação entre o natural e o sobrenatural. Essa dicotomia sustenta uma suposta dimensão mística, a ser distinguida de uma pragmática do comportamento humano. Nesses termos, a conduta religiosa difere, em natureza, do político. Indo na direção oposta, o presente artigo propõe superar tal dicotomia, vendo as conexões no universo

¹ My thanks to Alexandra Barbosa da Silva, my colleague and companion, for her comments, which proved extremely valuable in formulating this article, as well as her careful revision.

primariamente como tecnopolíticas, resultado da organização social das interações e relações entre os indivíduos, e considerando, portanto, a religião como um *tipo organizacional*. Assim, tomando como exemplos etnográficos os Guarani-Kaiowa de Mato Grosso do Sul e os Tabajara da Paraíba, buscarei mostrar como esses povos indígenas, cada um a seu modo, estabelecem conexões no universo, configurando comunidades políticas, definindo identidades domésticas e étnicas e delineando tradições de conhecimento.

Palavras chave: religião, etnicidade, tradição de conhecimento, política, cosmologia.

Introduction

In the introduction to the book *Political Anthropology* (1966), Swartz, Turner and Tuden define the political act as a phenomenon on the basis of three characteristics: being public, possessing specific aims, and implying power relations. Through this minimal definition, the authors look to delineate a specific field of analysis, attempting to distinguish political behaviour from other kinds. Referring, for example, to a ritual context where they admit that the aforementioned characteristics may be applicable, they are still reluctant to consider the ceremony part of a political field since it is located within the domain of religion:

If we look at the religious ceremony from the point the view of the processes by which the group goals are determinate and implemented (how it was decided that a ceremony was to be held, how the time and place were determined, how the things to be used in the ceremony were obtained, etc.) we are studying politics. If, however, we look at the ritual from the perspective, say, **of the way it relates the group to the supernatural and the way this relationship affects the relations among the constituent part of the group, we are studying religion – or at least we are studying something other than politics** (1966: 7, my emphasis)

Relating a human group to the supernatural appears to be sufficient to distinguish a religious act from the political. Indeed the authors feel no need to consider or explore the issue further, or to illustrate the specific effects of two supposedly different behaviours. This decision appears prompted by an axiom founded on a latent ethnocentric acceptance of the Nature/Culture dichotomy, which thus also presumes the existence of the Supernatural.

Over the last few decades, though, what could be described as a form of ontological ethnocentrism has been subjected to significant critiques, each looking to highlight the many possible ontologies manifested by different peoples. Authors like Latour (1994), Ingold (1988, 2000) and Descola (1992) have shown how numerous indigenous peoples make no distinction between nature and culture, a dichotomy emergent from the western tradition that over recent centuries has assumed the role of a base epistemology, dividing the scientific field between the natural sciences and the humanities (Latour 1994, Ingold 1988).

Descola (1992) in particular, analysing the viewpoint of the indigenous peoples of the South American lowlands, highlights a specific mode of relation he calls 'animist.' He observes that for these peoples many of the species we Westerners categorize as 'animals' or 'plants' possess typically human attributes, such as language, social organization, desires, etc., and are therefore treated as subjects. Seen in these terms, the Nature/Culture distinction appears inapplicable to Amerindian ontologies, thus confirming our own ethnocentrism in relativistic form. Exploring this animist phenomenon as a revised form of Tylorian animism, though, Descola argues that this kind of ontology involves the socialization of Nature, making it the symmetric opposite to totemism as the naturalization of Society. Approaching the material in this way, Descola only partially accepts the relativistic challenge posed by the Amerindian context: indeed he prefers to retain the Nature/Culture dichotomy for analytic purposes, a way of attributing meaning to "myths, rituals, systems of classification, food and body symbolism, and many other aspects of social" – as he states in a work co-authored with Pálsson (Descola & Pálsson 1996: 2).

This methodological stance becomes even more audacious and systematic in a wide-ranging work (Descola 2005) in which the author defines various modes of identification and modes of relation, delineating four possible ontologies: animism, totemism, naturalism and analogism. All these are defined, the author argues, through the dichotomous interplay of physicality and interiority: thus animism establishes the similarity of interiorities and the difference of physicalities, totemism the similarity of interiorities and the similarity of physicalities, naturalism the difference of interiorities and the similarity of physicalities, and analogism the difference of interiorities and the difference of physicalities. Descola explicitly constructs these

four ontologies through a binarism revolving around a symmetrical axis, which orders the relations between the terms in strict compliance with the primary dichotomy, Nature/Culture, insofar as the internal/external opposition itself reproduces specifically western metaphysical dilemmas. Rather than observing the existence of different points of view onto the reality of the cosmos, considering them a challenge to the western analytic framework itself, therefore, Descola, pursuing a classic heuristic exercise, continues to base his analysis on old parallel dichotomies.

My argument here is that comparing different ontologies is not perhaps the ideal response to contemporary anthropological challenges, as George Marcus (2013) recently emphasized in warning of the risk of reproducing past analytic concerns, considering it more productive to engage in epistemological ruptures. This appears to be the path taken by Ingold (1995, 2000), for example, who for some time has warned of the risks of dichotomous thinking and the need for our analyses to move beyond the nature/culture distinction, encouraging an approximation between the natural and social sciences. The very overcoming of the distinction between mind, body and environment, pulverizing the difference between interior and exterior, reveals a perspective opposite to that proposed by Descola. His ideas concerning life in the cosmos as an entanglement of vital lines that circumscribe things (Ingold 2007 and 2012) are highly promising, principally in terms of an analysis of technical concatenations (operational chains). On the other hand, in pursuing this approach, Ingold highlights some aspects while, in my view, failing to pay due attention to others. For example, the symbolic dimension, power and political behaviour, as well as other manifestations specifically derived from the social and the cultural – factors typically addressed by Anthropology – are little explored by the English author. This arises, perhaps, from the emphasis given to the need to develop closer connections with the natural sciences. However this approach leads Ingold to envisage the entanglement of vital lines in a somewhat unspontaneous form: the notion of a ‘thing,’ as something open and in continuity with the threads forming it, is contrasted with the notion of an ‘object,’ the latter considered of little use value by Ingold, related to the consideration of boundaries, sharply marked lines that delimit closed figures (2012). And this brings me to the point I wish to stress. Is the act of closure really any less significant than that of release in terms of comprehending the flows that form the universe? What roles do the

social and the culture perform in defining this movement?

On the question of culture as a concrete entity, authors like Schwartz (1978), Barth (1969, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1993, 2005) and Hannerz (1992) have already developed extremely important analyses into how information, images, concepts, things, materials and so on can be distributed between individuals and groups, forming specific patterns. These authors have provided a detailed exploration of the idea of culture as a continuous open flux that tends to leak and distribute information and things uniformly. The production of cultural diversity, however, requires an unequal form of sharing the contents transmitted by this flow: this is achieved through the social organization of these contents. Barth (2005) specifies that the properties of the social include forming boundaries and allocating cultural positions and contents in a differentiated form, enabling specific cultural forms to be generated through an interactive process, while also enabling the effects of the experiences of individuals to be silenced or even erased through the exercise of power.

In the classic introduction to his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, first published in 1969, Barth already displayed a concern with the effects of social organization on the cultural flux. Approaching the problem naturalistically, the Norwegian author compared the reproduction of a species with that of an ethnic group, observing that this is made possible in the former case through the isolation of genetic material, while in the latter case this is rendered unviable by the variability of cultural material. The reproduction of the ethnic group involves the maintenance of a boundary whose characteristics become extolled over time by valorising just a few select cultural traits (diacritic signals). Hence the ethnic group amounts to an 'organizational type' combining a specific form of social organization and specific cultural traits in a singular way in each context. What links one ethnic group with another here is the fact that both maintain boundaries and through them regulate cultural materials derived from flows at larger social and territorial scales.

Over the course of his research into the different modalities of channeling cultural flows, Barth perceived that the most inclusive in terms of scale is the formation of traditions of knowledge.² He began, therefore, to studying

² The Norwegian author does not provide an axiomatic definition of 'tradition of knowledge.' He mainly looks to understand how cultural currents are channelled, forming traditions that show a certain degree of coherence, maintained over time. This aim in mind, he states: "So we must go into each of the streams we identify, as a universe of discourse and (i) characterize its salient patterns; (ii) depict its production and reproduction, and its

these traditions, focusing attention on the modes of knowledge transaction and how they lead to distinct effects in terms of how concepts, ideas and models are propagated, depending on whether the codification and transmission of information occurred through writing, verbalization or performance. This resulted in the potential to map the mass of information and materials, their density and the distribution in time and space. Since the ethnographic material gathered by the author referred to Southeast Asia and Melanesia, Barth worked both with Hinduism and Islamism, traditions centred on the figure of the guru, and with those traditions focused on shamanic practices developed in initiation rituals. Hence he was able to observe and analyse, in comparative form, how cosmologies are constructed and how meaning is given through them to the experiences of individuals in the universe concerned, as well as how the modalities of mobilizing the forces and materials circulating in this universe are engendered.

Since they are focused on attributing meaning to cosmic movement, traditions of knowledge, as analysed by Barth, allow us to re-examine the question of the specificity or otherwise of religious behaviour. Gurus, sacerdotes and shamans all manipulate the forces of the universe in some form and by so doing attempt to maintain or increase their prestige vis-à-vis its beings. Seen in these terms, their acts are clearly political in nature, like any other act that pursues specific aims and implies power differentials. In what way, then, could we consider religion to be something specific? In my view, just like the formation of ethnic groups, the construction of a religion implies the generation and maintenance of boundaries. While in the former case interethnic interactions and relations are regulated through boundaries, in the latter cosmic interactions and relations are administered through multiple dimensions. I argue that what allows us to define religious specificity is precisely the modality of relation and interaction that occurs through the dimensional boundaries in the universe, expressed in cosmologies. In effect,

boundary maintenance; (iii) in this depiction discover what makes it cohere, and leave it as an open, empirical question how and to what extent its ideational contents achieve logical closure as a tradition of knowledge. We likewise must identify the social processes whereby these streams intermesh, sometimes with interference, distortion and even fusion. Moreover, we may find each stream to be characterized by a different essential dynamics. For example, the fundamentalism of Islam – where all scholarship inevitably gravitates back to the one shared, finite text of the Koran – is impossible to produce in a world where Durga steps down into a congregation and speaks. This is a sociological, not a purely logical, assertion; and it represents a plea for a broad sociology of knowledge that shows how the traditions and their parts are constituted by showing the processes that generate them” (Barth 1989: 133).

this division enables an unequal distribution of beings and modes of relating and interacting, something that requires the institution of specific social roles (of sacerdotes, gurus, shamans, moral authorities, and so on) and specific values that legitimize the actions and interpretations of these figures. The interdimensional boundaries therefore become primarily responsible for constructing differences of degree between elements and forces, and so for producing hierarchies in the universe, whose organization and peculiarity have to be apprehended empirically, analysing the characteristics of each tradition of knowledge and its inculcation of a particular cosmovision. For this reason I believe it is useful to approach religion as an organizational type. In some cases it may be possible to observe that some traditions, as well as producing relational hierarchies, can construct organizational types across interdimensional boundaries that include ontological provinces taken to differ from each other in terms of nature. I believe, however, that in no circumstances are we authorized to generalize this distinction to all cosmologies, taking it – as the majority of phenomenological approaches do – as an *a priori* definitive of religious facts. This kind of ontological ethnocentrism keeps alive the distinction between nature and the supernatural, contrasting the domain of the sacred with profane behaviour, considering mystical experience as something rooted in human psychology. This approach has already been subject to various critiques by exponents of the so-called ‘Roman School of the History of Religions’ (Brelich 2005, Sabbatucci 1976, 1978 and 1991). As an alternative, they emphasize the importance of the historical formation of each religious fact and thus of its singularity. Approached in these terms, the very formation of the Western tradition, along with the ontologies promoted by it, must be considered something entirely singular too, indicating the need to avoid extending its categories, including analytic ones, to other contexts without effectively relativizing the distinct points of view involved.

Having freed ourselves from the analytic distinction between nature, culture and the supernatural, therefore, and recognized ethnic identity and religion as forms of socially organizing relations, interactions and mobilizations of forces across boundaries, we can turn to the specific concern of the present article: what relation is established between ethnicity, religion and tradition of knowledge?

Barth, for example, was more interested in the intersection of these social formations than with their concatenations and interconnections. As

I explored in a paper co-authored with Barbosa da Silva (Mura and Barbosa da Silva 2012), this results from the Norwegian author's premise that cultural pluralism is determined by flows channelled by distinct traditions of knowledge traversing different ethnic groups (Barth 1984). However in his analysis of cosmologies in the making in the Ok River Valley in the New Guinea Highlands (Barth 1987), the author identifies what he defines as sub-traditions of knowledge through the ethnonyms of local communities (such as Baktaman, Bolovip, Telefolmin, Telefolquin, Tifalmin and so on), generating a certain ambiguity concerning the role of the ethnic and the local in this process. Indeed the local situation and the specific experiences of individual members of the communities are shown to be essential to how concrete symbols (like tubers, blood and bones) are manipulated, and to how performances are interpreted during initiation rites. So although Barth strove to delineate a specific tradition of knowledge in the Ok River region, this takes shape through sub-traditions that are in fact revealed as themselves "local traditions of knowledge" (Ingold and Kurttila 2000). In the latter, the local dimension and ethnic factor seem to play a significant role in the formation and diversification of the tradition as a whole, requiring, therefore, a deeper analysis.

Barth conducted his studies in New Guinea in a region where the colonial conditioning factors were fairly limited. What does this mean, therefore, for the relation between cosmological constructs and ethnicity in those contexts where colonial activities have been implemented for centuries? In this article I explore precisely the latter kind of situation, focusing on two indigenous contexts in Brazil: the Guarani Kaiowa and the Tabajara, in Mato Grosso do Sul and Paraíba states respectively. This choice was defined not only by my ethnographic familiarity with both contexts, but primarily by the fact that they exhibit fairly distinct characteristics in terms of colonial impact and the effects of the latter at local level, resulting in specific forms of concatenation between ethnic identity, tradition of knowledge, domestic ecology and community organization.

The rest of the work is divided into two sections. In the first I provide a description of their historical trajectories, cosmological constructs and ethnic manifestations, while in the second I develop an analysis of the presented data, showing how the factors indicated above are mutually interconnected, defining singular religious forms in equally singular

Historical processes, cosmological constructs and ethnic identity among the Kaiowa of Mato Grosso do Sul and the Tabajara of Paraíba

The Guarani Kaiowa⁴ – or Paî-Tavyterã, to use their autonym⁵ – are currently located in the far south of the modern-day state of Mato Grosso do Sul and in Western Paraguay. Over the last four centuries they have experienced significant transformations in terms of their modalities of access to the geographic spaces in which they undertake their everyday activities, as well as the configuration of interethnic relations, largely characterized by armed conflicts and specific forms of distributing forces and power.

At least five centuries ago, the ancestors of the Kaiowa, denominated Itatim during the colonial era, were located in a region north of their present location and extending between the Serra da Bodoquena and the Pantanal (Melià 1986, Melià et al. 1976, Gadelha 1980, Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Mura 2006). The Itatim were assailed by a number of different actions, some of them confined to missions by the Jesuits and raided by *bandeirantes* in search of slaves, as well as being attacked by the Mbaya-Guaycuru, their principal enemies in the region. The military imbalances caused by the Europeans through their introduction of completely new weapons and warfare techniques allowed the Mbaya-Guaycuru, equipped with horses, as well as the *bandeirantes* themselves, to obtain military supremacy over the Itatim, leading to significant defeats for the latter. The Jesuit missions were destroyed, many indigenous people were enslaved, others died in battles, and others still succumbed to the diseases brought by the Whites (Susnik 1979-80, Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Mura 2006). The end result of this process was a sizeable reduction in the Itatim population with indigenous families moving to settle in the territory today occupied by the Kaiowa (Mura 2006).

3 For a definition of *socio-ecologico-territorial context*, see Mura 2006 and 2011, as well as the second section of this article below.

4 Here I shall adhere to the rules for transcribing Guarani terms most widely used in Paraguay, omitting the acute accent on oxytonic words, since these comprise the majority in the indigenous language.

5 The term is a composite of “Paî (man) – táva (abode) – yvy (earth) – ete (true) – rã (future suffix),” which can be translated as “the men who will be destined to live (in relation to the time-space of origins) in the true abode of the earth.” However it should be noted that the term ‘Kaiowa’ is today widely accepted in Brazil and the name most used by individuals from the population concerned, which is why I shall refer to them by this term here.

After gold was discovered in Minas Gerais during the first decades of the seventeenth century, the interests of the Portuguese colony shifted. Raids by *bandeirantes* became less frequent and the indigenous population was able to remain in these new spaces (Thomaz de Almeida 1991). Although precise information is unavailable, we can suppose that the populations concerned maintained relations with the colonial world, principally with the Jesuit missions of Guairá, either directly or through the intermediation of other Guarani groups,⁶ inhabitants of a region bordering the area occupied by descendants of the Itatim (Barbosa & Mura 2011). This supposition is primarily based on information provided by explorers of the region like Eliot and Lopes. The latter, working in the service of the Baron of Antonina a little less than a century after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Americas, in the mid-nineteenth century, came into contact with Kaiowa groups and reported the presence of fabrics and metal objects obtained through trading activities (Mura 2006, Barbosa & Mura 2011).

Until that moment, relations with the colonial world, or with its post-colonial State forms, would almost certainly have been intermittent. The second half of the nineteenth century represented a major change, though, including a steady intensification of the relations between the Kaiowa and the Whites that continues until the present day. First were the activities of the Baron of Antonina, who, looking for a channel of communication between Mato Grosso and Paraná, promoted contact with indigenous families in order to settle them in villages. This aim in mind, he turned to Capuchin priests for assistance in creating a reservoir of labour to work in transporting merchandise (Barbosa & Mura 2011). This period was succeeded by the War of the Triple Alliance (1865-70), which resulted in Paraguay's defeat and redefinition of the borders. This territorial redefinition between the nation states was followed by the implantation on both sides of the border of large yerba mate harvesting companies – like Industrial Paraguaia in Paraguay and Matte Larangeiras in Brazil – which were responsible for employing thousands of indigenous people and peasants on the plantations (Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Brand 1997, Mura 2006). The Guarani-Kaiowa, along with the Guarani-Ñandéva, their neighbours, worked on the yerba

⁶ Today known, among other denominations, by the ethnonym Guarani-Ñandéva, located to the south of the Kaiowa territories.

mate plantations on a flexible basis, with the indigenous families involved in periodical but systematic work, which they called *changa* (Melià et al. 1976, Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Mura 2006). Through this activity – an updated form of the *conchavo libre* operating during the period of Spanish rule with the aim of allocating workforces to the *encomiendas* (Susnik 1979-80) – the indigenous groups were able to obtain goods not produced by themselves, such as tools, metal containers and blades, fabrics, salt, soap and so on. This dynamic provoked a redefinition of the mobility of families and how their dwelling spaces were allocated (Mura 2006).

The decline in the yerba mate trade from the third decade of the twentieth century led to the large companies losing their monopoly and an increase in occupation by colonists, mostly arriving from the south of Brazil, helping consolidate control of the national borders (Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Brand 1997). This gradual occupation was also stimulated by initiatives from the Brazilian State. The latter, through the recently created indigenist agency, the Indian Protection Service,⁷ backed the creation of eight small reservations between 1915 and 1928, aimed at the ‘village settlement’ of the Kaiowa and the Nandéva populations living in what was then still the state of Mato Grosso (Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Brand 1997, Mura 2006). At first only a few indigenous families settled in these reserves, the majority continuing to occupy the region in capillary form. However the installation of cattle ranches, implementation of the Dourados Agricultural Colony under the Vargas government, and the waves of deforestation brought by the introduction of mechanized agriculture all led to the progressive and compulsory expulsion of indigenous peoples from where they were living (Thomaz de Almeida 1991, Brand 1997, Mura 2006). This resulted in a swelling of the population in the reservations between the 1960s and 70s, along with the development of power structures promoted by FUNAI, which had replaced the SPI, and by the work of the Presbyterian church through the Caiuá Evangelical Mission. In these reservation spaces, enemy families were forced to live side-by-side, shamans were persecuted by indigenist agents and missionaries, their ritual instruments burnt in public and they themselves submitted to various forms of humiliation (Thomaz de Almeida 2001). The situation quickly become

7 Until 1917 the agency was called SPILT, the ‘Indian Protection and National Workers Localization Service,’ a name clearly expressing the agency’s double task of stimulating colonization while broad geographic spaces were liberated through the establishment of miniscule reserves for the indigenous population (see Lima 1995).

unsustainable: indeed at the end of the 1970s indigenous families had already begun to campaign to return to their places of origin. This was the start of a struggle that has swelled in size over the years since and that continues to the present, with ups and downs in terms of recognition of their territories (Thomaz de Almeida 2001).

The historical facts recounted above form an experiential base that marked Kaiowa life. I turn now to describing the Kaiowa cosmivision and consequently the interpretation that they give to the events taking place in the universe, including how they explain and define interethnic relations and other modalities of interaction between the beings and elements of the cosmos.

According to the Kaiowa, the universe is defined by three main stages of cosmic development: *Áry Ypy*, the space-time of origins; *Áry Ypyrã*, the current space-time,⁸ and *Ararapire*, the space-time of the end of living well, or the end of the world. The first stage itself divides into three distinct moments. The first moment, cosmogonic and theogonic, involves the creation of the cosmos itself by Ñane Ramõi (Our Grandfather) who constituted himself through *Jasuka*, an originary, vital substance with creative and generative qualities. Afterwards he gave rise to Ñande Jari (Our Grandmother) from his feather diadem and then created the first gods, with whom he also made the spaces of the universe. Some divinities also created the Earth, which at first was the size of a small disc about ten centimetres in diameter. Following a quarrel with his wife, Ñane Ramõi ascended, without dying, to his current abode in the highest level (*yváyú*) of the universe (Thomaz de Almeida & Mura 2003).⁹ The second moment of this cosmic era is defined by the activities of Ñande Ru (Our Father), the son of Ñane Ramõi and Ñande Jari. This figure created the forest trails and expanded the Earth by adding his own level. The third moment centres on the epic of Ñande Ru's children: Ñande Rykey Pa'i Kuara (Our Older Brother, the Sun) and his twin brother (but understood to be younger than Pa'i Kuara), Jasy (the Moon). Searching for their father, both are involved in episodes in which they establish the most important institutions in existence today (Mura 2006).

Áry Ypy is singularized by the fact that all the individuals populating the universe possessed shamanic powers, were immortal and communicated

8 Understood as the future indicated by the suffix 'rã' in relation to the time of reference, which here would be the past.

9 For more details on this phase of the cosmos, see Cadogan 1962, Melià et al. 1976, Chamorro 1995.

with the same language. In this period the universe was unstable, all beings able to manifest feelings like anger, hate, cowardice and so on, as well as illicit behaviours like infidelity, violence and betrayal. In this unstable context, which twice led to the destruction of the Earth surface, Ñande Ru became angered and upset by the bad behaviour shown by most of its beings. In response he closed the passage allowing communication between the nearby spaces of the Earth and those found beyond *Yvy Rendy* (the shining aura of the Earth), sealing it with *Jasuka*. This event and its associated transformations inaugurated *Áry Ypyrã*, the present space-time (Mura 2006).

One of the first actions was the transformation of the originary subjects as they became attributed with their present-day forms and behaviours, such as crawling, fleeing in fear, being solitary, qualities characteristic of those beings we Westerners would identify as animal species. This transformation is taken as a decline, since the separation between the regions beneath and beyond *Yvy Rendy* implies the division of beings between the impure and unstable spaces of the former and the pure and stable spaces of the latter. This separation is hierarchical rather than symmetrical, since the levels are arranged vertically, beginning with the lowest and most degrading on the Earth's surface, or below, to those where the perfect and most powerful beings live, close to the firmament. The *járy* (owner-beings or guardians) were also distributed according to the same principle. For example, So'ó Járy (owner of the game 'animals') and Kagui Járy (owner of the forest) reside beneath *Yvy Rendy* and comprise potentially malevolent beings (Mura 2006).

Another kind of transformation is represented by the division of the cosmos into two dimensions: the dimension of the sensible world in which all beings communicate and interact through the five senses, and a parallel dimension, perceived by most only in partial form, through signals, principally acoustic and visual. This division between dimensions allocates fundamentally mortal and immortal elements to each respectively. In the sensible world, bodies, through which the five senses are manifested, are inhabited and animated by elements that control them. For example, the Kaiowa individual is composed of at least three active subjects that vie for control of the body (*tetê*), including the *ayvu* (the soul-person, or kin), which is embodied after baptism and proceeds to one of the levels beyond *Yvy Rendy* after the body's death (or removal of its control), reuniting with kin on the terrestrial plane and then returning to its level of origin; the *ã*, the carnal soul that

grows in the body and becomes *ãnguê* after the latter's death, establishing its dwelling in the *Kururuy*, the lake of toads, which is situated beneath *Yvy Rendy*; and finally *tupichúa*, the 'animal' soul, which determines the individual's temperament. Other malevolent agents may also become embodied or may control the body at a distance – such as the *ãnguê* of other dead people, the *ayvu* of those killed violently, or by sorcery, malevolent substances and so on (Mura 2006).

Finally we have another division of the universe into what we can define as two cosmological spheres, focused on regulating interethnic relations. Technical skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours were not all divided up equally among the different human groups. Hundreds of years of interaction with White people means that the Kaiowa have focused special attention on elaborating concepts and explanations for the former's powers and resources and on how to deal with them. To understand this concern better, it is worth presenting, albeit in summarized form, the narrative telling of the emergence of the first White person (*karai*) and the consequences.¹⁰

In *Áry Ypy*, the time of origins, a daughter of Pa'i Tani – another name for Ñane Ramõi – called Tupã Sy Ka'acupe married a man by the name of San José. The children of Pa'i Tani treated him as a brother-in-law, expecting him to act reciprocally towards them. However San José failed to do so. One time his brothers-in-law went to warn him that a certain place would be struck by bolts of lightning to purify the environment. He ignored the advice, however, and was fatally struck by one of the bolts, turning him to ashes. His wife begged her father to revive him and he agreed, but since ashes are white, San José, re-emerged, acquired the same colouring. After this time San José began to accumulate different objects and materials all for himself. This was the 'beginning' of the White Man, and since the couple had many children, all of them this same colour – including Jesus Christ – White people are conceived today as the heirs of these characteristics. Another important factor is that while the other descendants of Pa'i Tani (likewise divinities) who kept the colouring of the Kaiowa also inherited the capacity to transform beings into other beings, Jesus Christ, who is the *járy* (owner) of the Whites, lacks this power, making him hierarchically inferior to the other divinities (Mura 2006).

¹⁰ Here I present the version given by Atanásio Teixeira, a renowned Kaiowa shaman. For a more complete version of this episode, which forms part of a longer and more complex narrative, see Mura 2006.

The third space-time, represented by the end of living well (*Ararapire*), is not conceived by the Kaiowa to be posterior to *Áry Ypyrã*, but partially overlapping. Indeed they do not think of the apocalypse as an instantaneous event but as something already under way, which can be deduced from the negative aspects that increasingly affect the everyday life of the Kaiowa. This process is inexorable and will eventually lead to the destruction of the Earth surface for the final time. Nonetheless the *Ararapire* does not have a constant pace and can be sped up or slowed down at the will of the gods in response to the actions of humans and in particular the Kaiowa.

We can turn now to consider the situation of the Tabajara. As elsewhere in the Brazilian Northeast, Paraíba was subject to heavy colonization making intensive use of indigenous workforces and slaves from Africa. At the start of the seventeenth century the Portuguese crown granted two *sesmarias* (land concessions) on the south coast of the state where the village settlements of Jacoca and Aratagui were founded to be run by the Jesuit order (Mura et al. 2010). Most of the families located there were taken to belong to the Tabajara group, but, as was commonplace during the period, these spaces are also likely to have been the destination for families resulting from the *descimentos* (relocations) of indigenous peoples from the dry inland sertão region. Following the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Americas in the mid-eighteenth century and the promulgation of the Pombaline Edict,¹¹ these village settlements became secularized and transformed into small towns in 1762 (Conde and Alhandra), enforcing the compulsory use of Portuguese by the indigenous population and abandonment of their native languages, as well as encouraging marriage to non-indigenous spouses (Mura et al. 2010). Almost a century later, by now in the Imperial period, the implementation of the Lands Law (issued in 1850) meant that the two *sesmarias* – which, despite the process of miscegenation and administrative rule, had effectively remained under indigenous control and their leaders recognized – became subject to wide-ranging reforms. These eventually led to the indigenous population losing control of most of their spaces with the political status of indigenous territories. They began to receive small family lots, totalling less than 5% of the spaces previously at their disposal. The rest of the region became

¹¹ In 1757 the Marquis de Pombal, a government minister in Portugal, introduced legislation (the 'Diretório') that regulated life in the colony (Brazil) with a pronounced effect on its indigenous peoples.

the destination for a new wave of colonization, forming smallholdings and enabling the creation of local powerful figures, who gradually created large estates, and who over the course of the first half of the twentieth century forced the indigenous population to abandon the already meagre spaces to which they had been confined (Mura et al. 2010).

Hence, as we reach the mid-twentieth century, the indigenous peoples, along with other social sectors associated with them following the Pombaline Edict (like the black and poor white populations) no longer had exclusive possession of the places they inhabited, nor any political and ethnic unity. But this did not necessarily mean their departure from the geographic spaces they had occupied for centuries. Most families remained for decades within what had once been the *sesmarias*, this time as small *posseiros* or *moradores de condição* ('conditional residents') paying what in this region is called a *dormida* (for the right to have a house and a space to grow crops within a much larger property controlled by a landowner) in exchange for working one or two days per week for the patron. This type of relation undoubtedly gave birth to a system of domination typical of the plantation (Wolf 2003, Palmeira 1977, Garcia 1989) – in this case subjecting individuals mainly through coconut production. However the schema left room for the development of other activities during the rest of the week, like hunting, gathering and fishing in the rivers and the mangrove swamps along the coast. A degree of mobility was possible, therefore, which meant people could continue to explore and use the territories in capillary fashion, despite no longer having exclusive possession over them. Consequently the members of domestic groups that lived in coastal localities, whose activities were primarily fishing-based, would travel to visit relatives who lived within the former *sesmarias*, taking fish and obtaining root crops in return, and vice-versa (Mura et al. 2010).

Over the decades the power relations generated significant tensions, which resulted in the political campaigns of the 'peasant leagues' and the movements fighting for agrarian reform. In the wake of these actions, 22 rural settlements were formed on the south coast of Paraíba from the 1970s onwards, most of them populated by families whose domestic groups had lived in this region for centuries (Mura et al. 2010). Another significant phenomenon was that the diversity of the land ownership situation in the former *sesmarias*, which included areas of vacant lands, led to the formation of small local communities, with a concentrated black population, today in

a process of regularization as quilombola territories.¹² Finally in very recent times – that is, over just the last eight years – territories have been claimed by approximately 1,000 indigenous people, who recognize themselves as descendants of some of the original domestic groups from a locality within the old *sesmaria* of Jacoca. This region is denominated Sítio dos Caboclos de Pau Ferro, and coincides with a significant portion of the lots distributed to indigenous peoples in the second half of the nineteenth century. These *caboclos*, as some of the elders still describe themselves, today use the name Tabajara as the ethnonym attributed to their remote ancestors. Hence they are not only claiming land, they are engendering a process of political reorganization, reviving family ties, constructing community discussion mechanisms and promoting ritual activities, among other modalities of constructing collectivities (Mura et al. 2010).

This centuries-long process of colonial and postcolonial domination had significant consequences for community politics, as well as the definition of ethnicity on Paraíba's southern coast, producing discontinuities in local organizational forms, a topic to which we return in the next section. However it is worth emphasizing that from the viewpoint of family reproduction and a specific way of life, we can encounter a significant number of experiences focused primarily on regulating domestic ecology through a specific moral and cosmological framework that forms the common heritage of most inhabitants from the south coast of Paraíba, not just the Tabajara. This framework is related to dealing with well-defined environments, like rivers, mangrove swamps, the sea and the forest, where human activities are conditioned by the relation with owner-beings such as the Mangrove Father (owner of the rivers and their surrounding areas), Comadre Fulozinha (owner of the forest), Zé Pelintra (owner of the paths and the intersections) and the Mermaid (owner of the sea), as well as the punished souls wandering through the region.

The relation with these beings is conditioned by the person's moral posture, depending on whether his or her body is 'open' or 'closed,' which implies displaying an illicit or licit form of behaviour, respectively, to the

12 Anthropological discussion of the concept of *quilombo* and *quilombola* was later reflected in a Presidential Decree (4887/2003) which states: "For the purposes of this decree, quilombo-origin communities are considered ethnic-racial groups, based on self-definition, with their own historical trajectory and specific territorial relations, presumed to have a black ancestry linked to the resistance to historical oppression."

owner-being in question while carrying out techno-economic activities in the environment concerned. In the case of the relation with the Mangrove Father, a man attempting to catch fish will prove unsuccessful if he has committed adultery or gone with prostitutes since his body will be 'open' to impurities as a result of this behaviour. In this case the punishment may be days or even weeks of unsuccessful fishing, a period during which the individual must abstain from sex in order to purify himself. If the man comes face-to-face with the Mangrove Father – a being who may appear in the guise of a fisherman with a canoe – he cannot stare at him, since this would indicate a show of envy or interference in another's fishing secrets. This kind of behaviour would also lead to a complete failure of any activities pursued in the region's rivers. The Mermaid, meanwhile, is a being that inhabits the coastal waters and is feared for the storms that she can provoke, although she can also help fishing. In the case of Comadre Fulozinha, any hunter or gatherer who intends to delve into the forest first needs to present its owner-being with tobacco and perhaps sweets, since the being in question typically displays an attitude similar to that of a child. If this ritual is not respected, Comadre may punish the infractor, making him lose his sense of direction and become lost in the woods, or entangled in vines, unable to extricate himself, in extreme cases even losing his life. Zé Pelintra, for his part, is an easily offended and highly irritable being, capable of provoking disease and even killing, though he may also be a powerful ally in the curing process, depending on how he is treated. Someone seeking his help or company should offer rum and tobacco. Finally the punished souls are the spirits of the dead whose punishment is linked to deeply inadequate behaviour when they were alive.

As well as the perambulations and activities of the aforementioned beings, there are also the enchanted cities, located in the territory that once contained the two *sesmarias* cited earlier, in another dimension, but whose presence is indicated by geographic features, rocks and plants (like the jurema tree). Vandezande (1975) recounts the presence of a dozen such cities in the 1970s, among which we can highlight Tambaba City, located on the beach of the same name, which was swallowed by the sea, the visible signs of which are the stones emerging from its waters. This location, identified by the Tabajara as highly important, was still until the mid-twentieth century a space of rituals in which the jurema tree cult was performed along with the *toré*, a dance widespread among indigenous peoples of the Northeast.

Contexts, dynamics and connections

The historical processes and the cosmological information relating to the Kaiowa and Tabajara show significant differences, which result from the formation of distinct socio-ecologico-territorial contexts over time. Making use of this notion of contexts, in another work I sought to understand “how human and non-human elements, in the position of subjects or objects, in a particular place, are related and interact with each other, forming socio-technical systems and mobilizing the forces of the cosmos at their disposal” (Mura 2011: 114). In the configuration of these contexts, the territorial dimension proves extremely significant since the dispute for spaces can combine distinct modalities of accessing and using the resources found within them: not only those deriving from the location itself, but also those directed there by flows of all kinds of materials (including information, concepts, ideas, etc.). Constructing territories on the basis of the trajectories and historical experiences of individuals and groups implies the formation of cultural models of conceptualizing space, which can be understood as territorialities. Hence it is the intersection of these actions and conceptualizations that gives life to a territorial dynamic, resulting in the configuration of the kind of context described above, where the formation of cosmologies and moralities has a significant influence on the evaluation and attribution of meaning to individual and collective experiences, comparing them with each other. This comparison is seldom undertaken in symmetrical situations: instead the differential power interactions influence and condition the individuals and groups disputing the right to access and use a particular geographic space, as well as understand and situate this region within the universe as a whole.

Bohannan (1960), studying the impact of European colonization in Africa, had already emphasized the implications that Western conceptions of land may have on people who manifest a very different view. Based on an idea of the division of space into delimited, measurable and commercializable parts, these conceptions contrast with a geographic perception defined more by landmarks in the territory (with a strong symbolic value) that are ritually and cosmologically constructed. Oliveira (1998) in turn proposes the notion of a *process of territorialization* as a way of comprehending the effects on specific populations of the attribution of delimited and invariable spaces by administrative powers, such as those found under colonial rule or linked to the policies of nation states. The author observes that this process is far

from one-way, however, eliciting responses from the affected populations that include cultural elaborations and the redefinition of their relations with space and its resources.

Using this framework of proposals, therefore, I shall look to analyse how the Kaiowa and the Tabajara give meaning to these contexts (deriving from colonial, neo-colonial and territorial processes), thereby contributing to their construction.

The socio-ecologico-territorial context that took shape in the southern cone of Mato Grosso do Sul resulted from the asymmetric relations established between the White and indigenous populations, in accordance with the historical process described briefly in the previous item. Such asymmetries produced tensions from the first decades after European conquest, provoking rebellions among various Guarani groups and stimulating the development of millenarist movements and other responses to the colonial power over the ensuing centuries (Susnik 1979-80, Melià 1988, Pompa 2003). At the same time, these indigenous populations also had diverse experiences of economic cooperation over this period of time, generally occupying a subordinate position as suppliers of labour (Susnik 1979-80, Barbosa & Mura 2011). It was this experiential legacy of conflicts and technical and economic involvement over the course of time (becoming more intense during the twentieth century) that enabled the Kaiowa to conceptualize the different materials and attitudes brought by the Whites and establish various forms of cooperation with them. The presence of the White population significantly transformed the repertoire of elements available within known geographical spaces, though it also led to the compulsory introduction of rules for accessing the same, linked to trade and private property. The few lands still solely in the possession of indigenous peoples became surrounded by rural warehouses, urban centres and highways, which, combined with the region's rivers, woods and fields – the latter ceasing to be sources of sustenance exclusive to the Kaiowa – configured a range of diverse environments in terms of access and use (Barbosa da Silva 2007 and 2009). To ensure access to these environments and regulate the experiences and uses of resources arising from these experiences, a cosmology, along with a moral framework derived from the latter, were constructed and refined over time, adapting to the demands of each moment. In the previous section I provided a schematic description of the essential factors of the cosmology: now I turn to analyse

its peculiarities and consequences in terms of administrating relations and interactions in the universe.

The first consideration to be made concerning the Kaiowa cosmological constructs is the absence of any substantial distinction between gods and humans; the distinction between beings in the universe is one of degrees not types, establishing hierarchies of powers and behavioural forms. The absence of any distinction between divinities and men becomes even clearer when the former are united with the latter through kinship ties. The Kaiowa refer to the gods generically as *ñánde rykey*, 'our older brothers.' The three-generation family, the basis of the social organization of this indigenous people, becomes a mirror of the original families, today living in celestial levels and the centre of gravity for all indigenous activities and behaviours. Obviously, as is common in indigenous cosmologies, this formulation becomes an axis around which the people's relations and interactions in the universe are articulated, with an emphasis on those formed by kinship lines. Hence the relations with divinities can clearly be understood as connections by descent within a maximal lineage, centrally located in the cosmos.

Another function of descent is to establish originary ties with the collateral lineages through which interethnic relations are defined, among which we can highlight those maintained with the White population. As we saw in the narrative on the origin of White people, the latter are consanguine kin of the Kaiowa, descendants on the female line of the same common ancestor. However the ties of affinity that gave rise to the marriage of Pa'i Tani's daughter established a failed relation in terms of the obligations between brothers-in-law, manifested as the divergent behavioural models of San José and Tupasy's older brothers. This behavioural divergence founds the contrast between *ñande reko* ('our way of being and living') and *karai reko* ('the White way of being and living'), attributing different skills to each group of descendants in a hierarchical rather than symmetrical form. Hence the White population inherited the strength and capacity to multiply plastic, glass, metallic and electronic materials, and so on, as well as the power to produce and administer large quantities of agricultural and livestock produce. They also made negative use of their wealth, occupying geographical spaces where indigenous peoples lived and acting against the latter in extremely violent forms. On the other hand, Jesus, the ancestor to whom White people can trace a relation, is unable to transform beings into other beings, or guide

the fate of the universe, speeding up or slowing down the 'space-time of the end of the world' (the *Ararapire*): these are the prerogatives of the gods from whom the Kaiowa directly descend, and it is the latter's task, through their shamans, to give impetus to these actions.

The shaman plays a central role in determining cosmic relations and interpreting individual and collective experiences. His effectiveness is always under evaluation, though, usually through a close assessment of his powers to cure (people and the environment), as well as identify sources of sorcery attacks and communicate the *tekorã*, the behavioural rules periodically sent to the Kaiowa by the gods. The efficacy and powers of the shamans derive from their training and their acquisition of *ñengáry* from powerful beings. These prayers are specific to each shaman, allowing him to move through the universe, traversing the different dimensions created during the final stages of the 'space-time of origins.' In this way he enhances his senses, obtaining powers that enable him to hear and see beings that other Kaiowa can only glimpse and sense at most. The powers obtained are amplified and perfected throughout his life, in constant dialogue with the gods, seeking to reach increasingly higher levels of the universe with the aim of attaining the firmament where the supreme divinities abide. This dialogue involves a double recognition: on one hand, the gods must recognize their Kaiowa kin and his moral capacity to receive the *ñengáry*; on the other, the neophyte must recognize during the training phase that he is indeed dialoguing with his *Ñande Rykey* (older brothers – the gods). The danger is one of being tricked by beings from beyond *Yvy Rendy* (the shining aura of the Earth) who can give the shaman powers but who are malignant, meaning the shaman runs the risk of turning into a sorcerer. To avoid this happening, the shaman apprentice must maintain an adequate moral posture, attempting to imitate the behaviour shown by the gods in the present. Indeed the latter live, body and soul, in part of the universe that is stable, pure and perfect, while the Kaiowa are bound to a body whose impurities bind it to the surface of the Earth. Imitating the behaviour of the gods perfectly can lead to a level of purification of the body so high that the shaman can ascend to beyond *Yvy Rendy* in life (with his body) and turn into a *kandire* (immortal). These are exceptional cases, however, with few examples existing over the course of history. It is more usual for shamans to live with the contradictions of the present, looking to limit their effects, on one hand conditioning those who trust in

him to give meaning to their actions, while, on the other, trying to persuade the divinities to be benevolent with their younger brothers, the Kaiowa. The shamans therefore construct moral frameworks that serve as a reference point for judging cases of failure in individual and collective behaviour – such as, for example, when they are unable to breed large numbers of cattle or accumulate many goods, claiming that this is an attitude of White people rather than the Kaiowa, who should adhere to the principle of reciprocity (*teko joja*) and foster a way of being and living based on good cooperation and mutual support (*teko mbo jeko porã*).¹³

In similar fashion to what the Kaiowa do with the behaviour of other beings (like jaguars, maned wolves, snakes, monkeys and other beings, and their respective owner-spirits), the comparison with White people engenders processes that allow flows of materials (cultural and otherwise) to be channelled, simultaneously defining a specific and interwoven tradition of knowledge and ethnic identity. In this process, it does not matter that these materials have been produced in distant places – whether industrial goods or items coming from the region's forests and fields. Impelled by their curiosity and using imitation as a cognitive instrument (cosmologically founded as a property of the 'space-time of origins'), the Kaiowa pursue multiple experiences, some highly successful, others less so. It is precisely the shamans' evaluation of these successes and failures that shapes the construction of the indigenous tradition of knowledge, imposing their own principles for using the acquired objects and their mutual obligations in opposition to others. In sum, they must reproduce, refine and propagate *ñande reko* ('our way of being and living'), always in a quest for living well (*tekove porã*). This aim requires them to fight, since White people are continually attacking this system of life, removing its vital supports such as the spaces from where the families originated. The fight for land has therefore become central to the cosmology itself, just as, at this historical moment, it is essential to persuade the divinities that now is not the ideal time to accelerate the destruction of the world.¹⁴

13 The interplay of the sequences of *jekoha* (supports) enables the Kaiowa to relate to, interact with and connect subjects in the universe: so individuals are supported by their near kin, who are supported in turn by grandparents (as leaders of the extended families). The latter, for their part, are supported by a particular physical space, from which they originate: these places are supported by the Earth, which is supported by the main cross, which is itself supported by the universe.

14 Among the Guarani during the colonial period, various attempts were made by shamans to assemble a retinue of indigenous people to dance and sing non-stop with the aim of joining the divinities in life (see Melià

since Kaiowa still exist on the Earth and, since the latter are their younger brothers, it would be unjust, and indeed an immoral act, to kill them.¹⁵

We can conclude, therefore, that in the case of the Kaiowa, religion, ethnic identity and tradition of knowledge are heavily interwoven. The historical process of colonial and neo-colonial domination were insufficient to wipe out the political organization of the local communities, still less the experiences derived from the domestic ecology of the three-generation extended families. Although from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards the indigenous population had been subject to processes of territorialization intended to restrict the spaces of indigenous life and to public policies designed to implement power structures within the few, tiny indigenous lands allocated to them, and even despite seeing their shamans being humiliated by Presbyterian missionaries, they paradoxically reproduced and refined their tradition of knowledge, adapting it at each moment. This tradition has, for example, included the appropriation of objects from the Jesuit era that symbolize power, such as crosses and the ceremonial rods of the *cabildantes* (the councillors of the Spanish colony). However, it has completely altered these objects, transforming them into *chiru*, object-subjects with other meanings in the universe and used by shamans and the leaders of extended families. In response to attacks by Presbyterian missionaries, people have also sought to ritually reunite the *chiru* scattered or abandoned following pressures from the former (Mura 2010). Finally, this tradition enables the entire universe to be comprehended as one vast political arena in

1986, Susnik 1979-80), thereby accelerating the end of the world. Reports from the 1970s tell of cases among the Pai-Tavyterã of Paraguay of entire communities that began to dance with this same objective (Wicker 1996), their hopes frustrated, or rather their perspectives realigned. In Mato Grosso do Sul, the renowned shaman Pa'i Chiquinho, from the Panambizinho area, one of Egon Schaden's most important informants, headed a similar movement that lasted for more than two decades, between the 1950s and 1970s, according to the present-day indigenous population. In terms of future events, the declarations made by the leading shaman Paulito Aquino, Chiquinho's successor, reveal the expectation that this world order will end one day with the collective ascension of the Kaiowa to the *karopyy*, the celestial level (*yvãy*) located near to the dwellings of the gods (Chamorro 1995).

15 Here it is worth citing key statements made by Atanásio Teixeira, one of the most renowned Kaiowa shamans living today, at the height of the land conflict in the Nãnde Ru Marangatu encampment in Mato Grosso do Sul, August 2000: "...we shall always be brothers of the Nãnde Rykey [gods]. Although today we use different clothing and adornments to the Nãnde Rykey, they will recognize us by the necklace, voice, *ñembo'e*, *jeguaka* and so on. They'll recognize us by these adornments. Even though we've gone astray because we no longer behave like them, even though we live differently to them now, since we get drunk, violent, play around a lot, even though our clothes, food, attitudes and way of being are different to Our Brothers, even though we want to be different to them, it's impossible because they are our legitimate Brothers, they are our beginning, they always like us! They accept us, they don't exclude us because of our new behaviours. They have the mission and obligation to care for their little brothers whatever the situation" (Mura 2006: 6).

which a variety of human and non-human subjects relate and interact with each other, defining strategies, searching for advantages, looking to persuade or even trick the interlocutor, and so on. Hence it creates a dynamic focused on a constant search for 'living well' and, consequently, for averting the end of the world (Mura 2006).

I turn now to consider the socio-ecologico-territorial context that emerged on the south coast of Paraíba. The fate of the indigenous peoples in these spaces was very different to that of the Kaiowa. As we saw in the previous section, they were forced to mix with other populations over time, abandoning their native languages and finally losing control over the *sesmarias* in which they had been settled. These colonial and postcolonial policies have been identified by Oliveira as the first process of territorialization experienced by indigenous populations of the Brazilian Northeast, involving a slow pulverization of collective indigenous identities until they become unviable (Oliveira 1998). From the first decades of the twentieth century, this process was followed by another implemented by the Brazilian state through its indigenist agency, the SPI, whose effects proved to be the contrary of the earlier process. For the State, an indigenous population's right to land was dependent on proving that they were Amerindian through the manifestation of a specific form of social organization and typical ritual practices. Families and groups organized themselves precisely around these demands in order to obtain recognition of the trajectories and forms of violence suffered by themselves, demanding compensation of the same through territorial rights and assistance from the State.

It should be said that for the Tabajara the effects of this second process of territorialization have been fairly recent. As we have seen, they began to manifest their ethnicity just eight years ago. This, however, did not provoke a radical change in lifestyle, since the families were able to reproduce their domestic groups and main activities. The changes took place more at the level of local political organization, resulting in the weakening of community ties and a consequent diversification of family trajectories – with many families forced to join the diaspora or move further apart from each other over the last few decades. This type of experiential diversification also resulted in an array of different religious choices among the contemporary Tabajara adhering to Pentecostalism. Despite these organizational weaknesses, from the viewpoint of a domestic ecology and the moral framework associated

with it, all the families managed to reproduce principles and memories associated with *caboclos* (as the elder members typically describe themselves). It was precisely the memory of these families and the moral principles associated with them, as well as the violent attacks experienced over more than a century of history, that formed the basis for the identity claim of the present-day Tabajara, leading to a reversal of the drifting apart of families and the construction of a new political community. This process has emerged as the fulfilment of a prophecy made by the late Antônio Francisco 'Piaba,' a man with special abilities, possessing magical qualities that made him physically vigorous, powerful and brave, as well as a curer of animals and a prophet (Mura et al. 2010). The content of this prophecy was passed on to his grandson, Carlinhos, today the leader of the Tabajara, claiming that one day a brave, unselfish youth would appear, ready to sacrifice his personal ambitions to fight for his people. This youth would unite the dispersed kin and lead them in demanding from the powerful their rights to lands taken from them by force, an endeavour that the prophecy said would prove successful. This young man was identified in the figure of Ednaldo, who sacrificed his career as a footballer to devote himself precisely to uniting the Tabajara people and claiming their territorial rights alongside Carlinhos and other leaders, all belonging to lines descending from original families of the 'Sítio dos Caboclos' (Mura et al 2010, Farias & Barcellos 2012).

The reconstruction of community ties and the definition of narratives referring to the family trajectories became ritualized through periodical meetings of dozens of Tabajara. These meetings were later held in an *oca*, built in Barra de Gramame, in the rural settlement where the leader Carlinhos lives, and the population also began to hold the *toré* dance, a ritual performance that ensured them greater recognition from other indigenous peoples of the Northeast and the various public bodies, including FUNAI (the National Indian Foundation). Initially, however, this dance provoked concerns among the Pentecostal Tabajara who considered it contrary to their own religious practices, leading to tensions between members of the indigenous community. These tensions were manifested precisely via the public and community dimension of the *toré*, since the behaviour of the Pentecostals in relation to the beings populating the region differed from where religious interaction between these beings and the human subject is private or familiar in kind. Here it is worth citing the statements made

by João Boinho, a fervently Evangelical Tabajara elder from the Assembly of God Church, during a visit to the places from which he originally came. There he recalled an episode that had happened to him when he was young. João was walking from Jacumã to Sítio dos Caboclos when suddenly a figure approached him very quickly with something flashing in his hand, a blue light so intense it shone as far as the neighbouring town of Conde. Startled, João thought it was someone who wanted to rob him, but as they drew close, the being jumped and disappeared, and the Tabajara man hurried away as quickly as possible.

This account – rich in details which I summarize here for reasons of space – was told in the presence of Tabajara leaders and other elderly informants, most of them Pentecostal. Everyone wanted to give their opinions on the event and comment on this figure, all of them agreeing that it was a spirit called João Gala Foice. João Boinho described this creature as having a protuberant belly and very thin legs, always carrying a kind of lamp. He wanders throughout the region, though his home lies in the enchanted city (called Piranguinha), located near to Gurugi, a region in the municipality of Conde. João Gala Foice is a spirit paying a penitence after killing his own wife and child with a scythe.

João Boinho says that since he became an Evangelical, he no longer sees this being and, in a broader context, relating to fishing activities, he claims that Gala Foice does not interfere in these activities, which are under the sway of the ‘Mermaid’ (in the sea) and the ‘Mangrove Father’ (in the rivers). Furthermore, comparing these two beings with João Gala Foice, he says that the former are not being punished: “*The Mangrove Father and the Mermaid are natural things, they derive from the nature of God,*” adding: “*Doesn’t everything have an owner? With nature it’s the same*” (Mura et al. 2010: 170).

Hence the conversion to Pentecostalism has not lead these Tabajara to reject the existence of certain beings as mere superstition. On the contrary, the memory of them, along with the details of their characteristics and their actions in the cosmos, are very clear. What is claimed, however, is that Pentecostal practices help people to stop seeing them and thus avoid being haunted or punished, revealing a technique of protection and cure similar to other kinds undertaken by shamans.

On the south coast of Paraíba the relevance and fear of these aforementioned beings is evident, as well as their connections to the techno-economic

practices of the Tabajara. These connections play a fundamental role in the ongoing formation and adaptation of a moral framework that serves as a reference point in the development of the domestic ecology, implemented and interpreted by experienced people, the most important of which are the male and female healers (*rezadores*) involved in curing practices in the domestic environment. From the cosmological viewpoint, these beings are extremely active and people have to interact with them on an everyday basis, configuring a very particular form of religious interaction. However here we also have to examine the effects of colonial domination and the process of territorialization experienced by the indigenous population concerned. The main outcome of these processes was the loss of any political unity, as well as making it impossible to build a cosmological framework over time that situates them genealogically as a central element in the history of the universe and the relation with the divinities – as we have seen in the case of the Kaiowa. In fact, the present-day Tabajara, along with other social groups populating the south coast of Paraíba, reproduce their cosmologies primarily in the domain of everyday life, for now detached from an ethnic dimension that allows the comparison of attitudes, channelling ideas and concepts and organizing them in a way that defines group exclusivities.

As becomes clear, the domestic dimension has proved the most enduring, its activities enabling the reproduction of local moralities over time, while also favouring diverse forms of associating these beings, their attitudes and the events related to them with others that are more spatially and temporally distant. Hence through a local tradition of knowledge, the families today identifying themselves as Tabajara, but also others who form part of social networks from the south coast of Paraíba, immerse themselves in broader cultural flows, selecting concepts, ideas, figures and events from them that match the demands of their domestic life, establishing various degrees of activities with the beings making up the pantheon, which itself is continually being transformed. Biblical beings and events relating to distant places and times, for example, have become absorbed – sometimes in a fairly nebulous fashion – into a spatiotemporal background that, compared to present-day life, presents a certain degree of passivity. Many of these figures acquire the characteristics of a *deus otiosus* or ‘idle god,’ who in some cosmologies gives life to the world and the different human groups (Brelich 2003), but who performs no active role afterwards. These figures enabled a universalist

vision to be introduced, an *oikoumene* in which these diverse human groups are to a certain extent equivalent. However in this case the role of the ‘space-time of origins’ in defining the moral framework of reference is heavily reduced: instead the families more often take elements from their everyday experiences to shape the principles and moralities guiding individual action. The unification of the social network in terms of a moral community is defined primarily through such experiences, centred on specific techno-economic activities and a family lifestyle. We can also observe – and this is an essential point – that it is through these experiences, along with the knowledge arising from them, that an ethnic identity can be formed in the terms under which the Tabajara presently define it. In fact, the second process of territorialization described by Oliveira (1998) allows indigenous populations to organize these contents in a more comprehensive and public form, to the point of provoking reflections not only on their own origins, but also on how to connect these to the beings with they interact everyday.

It is impossible to predict the future of these cultural elaborations without running the risk of producing a futurology. However it is worth recounting, by way of comparison, the case of the Pankararu who have felt the effects of the second process of territorialization for more than seventy years. This indigenous people became engaged in cosmological relations that they today define as ‘tradition,’ centred on the worship of the *encantados*, ‘enchanted ones,’ in parallel with the penitence practices related to the ‘spirits of the light,’ whose effects mainly derive from the first process of territorialization. The latter practices also have a Pankararu connotation given that the indigenous families attribute their own meaning to them (relative to the way in which they are understood by non-indigenous penitents). However ‘tradition’ has increased in influence by manifesting and promoting ethnic exclusivity at collective and political levels (Mura 2012).

The Tabajara are still in a very early phase of community organization. However, one important leader – who represents an influential lineage and is simultaneously a Presbyterian from a Pentecostal church – is already taking part in performances of the *toré* dance after some initial hesitation. Such attitudes show how political processes of community organization are simultaneously forms of connecting ethnic identity with family identity and, in turn, with the modalities of relationship in the cosmos, configuring specific religious interactions.

Conclusions

The ethnographic examples presented here allow us to perceive how politics, as a technique that enables connections and the diversification of power relations, plays a fundamental role in the formation of cosmologies, the definition of group identities (not just ethnic), the construction of territories and the formulation of traditions of knowledge. In both examined cases – each characterized by a striking asymmetry in social relations as a consequence of colonial and postcolonial domination – religion, as a specific modality of the social organization of roles, relations and interactions in the universe, proved important to defining local responses to what were considered negative conditions of existence by formulating cosmic architectures and dynamics, along with moral frameworks that afford an active role to the indigenous groups considered.

As we have seen, religious acts are defined through specific socio-ecologico-territorial contexts, implying equally specific modes of relating these acts to other acts and concepts that define the local political organization and group identity. The most striking differences, from the viewpoint of the contextual configurations, are those relating to the conditions that family groups have at their disposal for becoming organized in local and ethnic communities, as well as for defining public and comprehensive ritual praxes. These conditions are what allow the construction of particular ways of linking group identity to a much broader organization of the universe, defining a particular cosmological framework.

In the case of the Kaiowa, we could observe that, despite centuries of colonial and neo-colonial domination, they have managed to maintain some degree of organizational autonomy. Even in adverse situations they were able to configure their local political communities, organizing rituals and maintaining the figure of the shaman central to the administration and interpretation of the relations and interactions in the universe. This allows the indigenous people concerned to construct, over time, a cosmovision that situates them in a prominent position in the interaction with the gods with whom they maintain kinship relations, as well as ensure themselves a central role in defining the times and modalities in which the end of the world will take place. Hence religion is closely linked to the definition of ethnicity, where the interethnic comparison of principles and behaviours becomes a constitutive part of the formation of a tradition of knowledge,

strongly centred on local experiences. The Tabajara, for their part, never had this opportunity having progressively lost their local political autonomy. However the families managed to reproduce behaviours and modalities of constructing meanings to the actions of their members through a domestic ecology. This led to a diversification in the cosmological relations established both with those beings related to everyday activities, which allow the formation of a moral framework from which behaviours can be judged, and with other beings and levels of the universe, which end up being less exclusive. In this case religion is not intimately linked to ethnicity. However in this situation too there is a tradition of knowledge becomes apparent, one constructed primarily through local experiences – a tradition that, with a change in the contextual conditions, can form the basis for constructing group identities and consequently for redefining the cosmological framework of reference.

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Recomposing the Nation

Conceptions and effects of heritage preservation in religious universes¹

Emerson Giumbelli

Abstract

This article seeks to contribute to the field of studies that, inspired in debates about ethnicity, discusses the forms and components of the notion of nationality. How and with what elements is “Brazilian culture” constituted? This question guides the study of landmark designation processes conducted by the National Artistic and Historical Heritage Institute, a federal agency operating since 1937. Considering landmark designation as a form of official recognition of a site as “cultural heritage”, the article reflects on the impact of this policy on two religious universes: Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions. The conclusions point to distinct forms of recognition of religious universes and to transformations in ways of conceiving nationality.

Keywords: Catholicism, AfroBrazilian religions, Brazilian culture, cultural heritage

Resumo

O texto procura contribuir para a linha de estudos que, inspirada em debates sobre etnicidade, problematiza as formas e os componentes da noção de nacionalidade. De que maneira e com que elementos se constitui a “cultura brasileira”? Tal indagação orienta a pesquisa de processos de tombamento conduzidos pelo Instituto de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, órgão federal que existe desde 1937. Tomando o tombamento como uma forma de reconhecimento oficial de um objeto como “patrimônio cultural”, procura-se refletir sobre a incidência dessa política sobre dois universos religiosos: o catolicismo e as religiões afrobrasileiras. As conclusões da pesquisa apontam

¹ This text presents research results related to the project “Religion and public space in three fields” (Religião e espaço público em três âmbitos), which is supported by a grant from CNPq (The National Council for Scientific and Technological Development).

para formas distintas de reconhecimento do religioso e para mutações nos modos de conceber a nacionalidade.

Palavras chave: catolicismo, religiões afrobrasileiras, cultura brasileira, patrimônio cultural

Recomposing the Nation

Conceptions and effects of heritage preservation in religious universes²

Emerson Giumbelli

On 31 May 1984, a meeting of the Advisory Board of the National Artistic and Historical Heritage Institute (IPHAN) was held. IPHAN is the federal agency responsible for “heritage” protection policies and measures (Gonçalves 1996, 2007; Choay 2001; Chuva 2009). The Advisory Board is its decision-making body, which acts on the basis of advice from IPHAN’s own technicians and at times outside consultants. Exceptionally, the meeting took place in Salvador, in the great hall of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia, a Catholic institution devoted to healthcare services. At the beginning of the meeting, the Primate Cardinal entered the hall only to praise the “action of [I]PHAN in the preservation of the country’s monuments of art, culture and faith” and to thank the institution for providing the resources necessary for the conclusion of the restoration of the Basilica Cathedral of Salvador.³ Having been greeted by everyone present, the Cardinal left the room, without participating in the main discussion on the agenda. The Board was evaluating a proposal for protection for the Casa Grande, or the Ilê Axé Iyá Nassô Oká, a Candomblé *terreiro* with the prestige of being “one of the oldest and most traditional” in Salvador and Brazil. In a tense meeting, the proposal was approved. For the first time, a temple of an Afro-Brazilian religion gained landmark status, some 46 years after the Cathedral mentioned by the Cardinal had been similarly designated, which is included in the list of the first buildings granted landmark status by IPHAN.

This event – which will be the object of other observations below – seemed emblematic to me for the purposes of this article. The simultaneous presence and distinct positions of Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions constitute a privileged situation for the questions I would like to raise in relation to

2 This text presents research results related to the project “Religion and public space in three fields” (Religião e espaço público em três âmbitos), which is supported by a grant from CNPq (The National Council for Scientific and Technological Development).

3 The account mentions the minutes of the meeting, which form part of File 1067-T-82, Archive of IPHAN.

the landmark designation processes undertaken by IPHAN, a federal body in continuous operation since its creation in 1937.⁴ My questions involve the relationship between cultural policies and religious universes, which force us to consider transformations over time of the distinct ways in which religion is recognized by the state. The framework within which these questions are posed – and which they contribute to modify – is composed of the historical and social ways in which “national culture” is conceived in Brazil.

I do not intend to present general or theoretical considerations about the notion of ethnicity. I begin with the understanding that the conception and imagination of nationality, linked to specific practices and institutions, may be studied recognizing the notion of ethnicity as a reference. This involves considering the elements that constitute nationality according to certain visions, discourses and procedures. What constitutes the Brazilian nation? This question raises the issue of the link between ethnicity and nation.⁵ In this article, this question leads to the field of religious diversity and the asymmetries it contains. I analyze the universes of Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions, in their relation to heritage protection policies. I thus pose my key question: What are the ways in which Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions are recognized as a synonym or part of national culture?

There is no doubt that this question has already been posed from other points of view. Many authors have demonstrated the close relationships between Roman Catholicism and Brazilianness (*brasilidade*),⁶ because of its fundamental importance to the entire colonization process; as the religion of the majority of the contemporary Brazilian population, as shown by statistical surveys about religious affiliations; and as a basis on which social relationships are established. In the case of Afro-Brazilian religions, we have a different picture, to the extent that their participation in national culture takes place through other channels: artistic expressions in various genres, specific

4 The name of the agency has changed during its history. It was created as the National Service of Historical and Artistic Heritage. IPHAN is the acronym of its current name, which I use in the text. Landmark designation (*tombamento*) refers to the classification of an object, building or place as part of the “national heritage”. Owners of these designated objects, buildings and places are responsible for their preservation, with some public resources at their disposal to that end. For more details, visit <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/portal/montarPaginaSecao.do?id=17738&sigla=Institucional&retorno=paginaInstitucional> (Access on 07/10/2014)

5 As inspiration for this type of problematization, I can point to a set of broad and collective discussions, among which I highlight: Fry (2005), Maio and Santos (1996), Schwarcz (1993, 1999), Sansone and Pinho (2008). For other contexts, see: Handler (1988), Van der Veer (1994) and Comaroff and Comaroff (2009).

6 Some examples can be mentioned: Sanchis (1994), Novaes (2002), Brandão (1988), Fernandes (1994), Montero (2012).

cuisines, and, mainly, their association with Negritude or Africanness that are also understood as constituents of the nation, including in historical terms. These forms of participation in a national culture coexist with the minority status of these religions.⁷ Meanwhile, the recent rise of Evangelical churches threatens both Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions, but more the latter than the former. There is as yet no consensus on the position of the Evangelical religions vis-à-vis Brazilian nationality or culture.⁸

The object of this text, has as reference a more specific, but also privileged, field. IPHAN, is one of the main places where conceptions are articulated about “national culture” and practices that have an effect on different social spheres, including the religious ones. I will first consider the relationship between cultural protection policies and Catholicism. This exploration is not based on specific cases, but on data and analyses – developed by other researchers – that demonstrate how the link between Catholicism and national heritage is conceived. I pay special attention to the formative first decade of IPHAN’s activity. But I also go back to the previous years that established the context in which the protection policies were conceived. I then focus on the Afro-Brazilian universe, analyzing seven landmark designation processes of *terreiros* carried out by IPHAN, since the 1980s, highlighting the arguments that justify the consideration of these new heritage sites. Finally, I analyze the landmark designation process in 2006 of the Christ the Redeemer monument in Rio de Janeiro. In this way, by returning to Catholicism I explain how the relationship between nation and religion has been reconfigured in recent times.

Catholic Churches

It is difficult to ignore the importance of the Catholic religion on Brazil’s official heritage policy. From the creation of IPHAN, in 1937, until 1946, over 50% of the landmarks registered were Catholic churches (Chuva 2009: 128). The Catholic Church was also the main beneficiary of restoration works, almost always financed by public resources, according to Chuva. The period in question – 1937 to 1946, which accounts for over 40% of all landmark designations

7 For analyses about the position of Afro-Brazilian religions see: Birman (1997) and Silva (2006).

8 While the classic analysis made by Sanchis (1994) emphasizes a counter position, recent works like that carried out by Cunha (2008) suggest proximities.

in Brazil until 1997 – was one of the most active in the history of IPHAN, for a reason that is easy to understand: the intention was to realize, through administrative decisions, the project that gave birth to the body itself, which was simultaneously committed to the preservation of buildings and the construction of a national memory.

The city of Ouro Preto was paradigmatic at the moment of the creation of Brazil's heritage policy. Even before the creation of IPHAN, a governmental order of 1933 declared the city a "National Monument", along with other historical cities in Minas Gerais state, where entire districts with distinctive architecture were designated as landmarks, Catholic temples stand out among the objects for which protection measures were approved. They also benefited from restorations during the following years. Ouro Preto had two attributes. On one hand, it was appreciated by those who admired its past and legacies for the present, and it served as a sort of 18th century reliquary. On the other hand, it attracted the fascination of the modernists, who in the 1920s chose it as a favorite destination for their cultural trips; they also perceived convergences between the past and the modern, constituted by the construction of a hotel designed by Oscar Niemeyer. For these reasons, the city received special attention and acted as a modern model of an historical city (Chuva 2009).⁹

According to Chuva (2009), turning the Colonial style of 18th century Minas Gerais into an architectural model contributed significantly to the origins of the federal heritage protection policy. But Bahia and Pernambuco also had important locations, and not only those considered precursors of the Baroque style that was consolidated in Minas Gerais. In any case, this Baroque was established as a paradigm and model, mainly incarnated in Catholic churches. The churches were considered from two perspectives, according to Chuva. Firstly, as incarnations of the ideals of the "fine arts", which identified that which was most valued by IPHAN; secondly, as historical reminiscences, with antiquity as the determinant criterion. The importance of the three aforementioned states and also of the former national capital (Rio de Janeiro) is clearly shown in the statistics: "Seventy-five per cent of the landmark designations of the period took place in the states of Bahia (28%), Rio de Janeiro (22%), and Minas Gerais (15%), whose historical cities are

9 For another historical city in Minas Gerais, see Camurça and Giovannini (2003).

counted individually in this percentage, but in fact there were hundreds of buildings designated in all, and Pernambuco (10%)” (Chuva 2009: 189).

The concentration of actions in these three states cannot be considered separately from initiatives and structures that were engaged in similar questions even before the creation of IPHAN. State Agencies for the Inspection of National Monuments were created in Bahia and Pernambuco in 1927 and 1928 respectively. In Pernambuco, according to Medeiros (2005), the agency’s photographic archive and inventory of buildings, furniture and other objects, was already dominated by “the presence of religious architecture, considering that the history of Pernambuco combines to a great extent with the history of the Catholic Church” (:6). In Minas Gerais, there existed a committee whose report was presented in 1925, together with a proposed law. Other laws came at the federal level, which not by accident were presented by congressional representatives from Bahia and Pernambuco. The leading role of these three states was accompanied by another characteristic: the action of people linked to Catholicism. Luiz Cedro Carneiro Leão, a Catholic intellectual, was a congressman from Pernambuco who presented the pioneering proposal for national heritage legislation in 1923. Another Catholic intellectual, Gustavo Barroso, director of the National Historical Museum in Rio de Janeiro founded in 1922, was involved in the initiatives in Bahia and Minas Gerais. One of the members of the Minas Gerais congressional delegation was, in turn, D. Helvécio, Bishop of Mariana (Chuva 2009; Iphan 1980).

The importance of these Catholics in the government apparatus in charge of heritage protection should not be exaggerated. In the case of IPHAN, at least, it was conducted by people with no links with the Catholic Church. Moreover, as Chuva (2009) shows, there were several situations of tension with ecclesiastical authorities, when they opposed the proposals for designating certain temples as landmarks. On the other hand, a bill presented by Congressman Araújo Pinho, in 1930, proposed the presence of a representative of the clergy on the council responsible for landmark designations (IPHAN 1980). And in the internal regulations of the federal apparatus in force in 1961, the expression “ecclesiastical authority” appeared, indicating it was an instance recognized by IPHAN. “Very close relationships, but not always harmonious” ones (Chuva 2009: 181), therefore, marked the proximity between the state and the Catholic Church. Why was this possible?

To answer this question, we can turn to the historian Ribeiro (2009) who

sought to identify the factors that allowed a certain Catholic vision regarding the national formation gain legitimacy among Brazilian intellectuals in the early 20th century – that is, exactly in the period in which heritage protection projects were forged. This is partially related to the positions achieved by Catholic intellectuals in historical institutes and arts and science academies. The best example may be Affonso Celso, who was president of the Brazilian Geographical and Historical Institute (IHGB) and author of educational books. While as an official he affirmed the benevolence of Portuguese colonialism, as a writer he praised the role of Jesuits in Brazilian history (Ribeiro 2009: 210ff).

A certain convergence of interests is observed in two records presented by Ribeiro (2009: 214): ecclesiastics used the inaugural address at IHGB to attack the separation between the Church and the State; inversely, lay members from the IHGB recognized the role of the Catholic religion in the historical formation of the nation. Inside the Catholic universe, this historic vision had been developed from at least the early 20th century, achieving in the 1920s its most consolidated formulations, in the interventions of important intellectuals, such as Jackson Figueiredo and Alceu Amoroso Lima. A key idea of that vision is that it is absurd to conceive of the Brazilian homeland without the Catholic faith (Oliveira 1990).

It is interesting to cite the explanations accompanying the law proposed by the representative of Pernambuco Luiz Cedro: “ ... I have just sent the board a bill that would place under the protection of the State all buildings that are in the national interest from the point of view of history or art. (...) Old churches ... old colonial houses ... They represent to us the living tradition, the accumulated work of our predecessors ... and they constitute, for these reasons, a mirror that we must preserve to transmit it to Brazil’s future generations” (*apud* Medeiros 2005: 5). In the report of the commission of Minas Gerais, the Church is recognized as one of the most interested parties in the preservation of historical heritage, and should be considered, thus, as an ally of the official policy (Iphan 1980). It is worth mentioning a 1938 text that requested that IPHAN designate the church ‘Igreja de Nossa Senhora das Dores’, located in Porto Alegre, as a landmark .¹⁰ It is limited to an account of the history of the church, , whose foundation dates back to the early 19th

¹⁰ File 0096-T-38, Archive of IPHAN.

century, based on several documentary sources. The need to preserve religious architecture as testimony of a national past was one basic premise of those who worked with IPHAN, even if they did not have any direct relation with the Catholic Church.

Chuva (2006) summarizes the highlighted role of Catholic churches in the origins of IPHAN initiatives in this way: “the religious aspect of the colonial period was given excess importance– attributing an artistic value to the manifestations of power of the Catholic Church and to the material representation of Christian faith (...). The State also promoted the monumentalization of faith, from its own material structure” (217-8). This encouragement of monumentalization may be understood literally, to the extent that the churches, formally sites of worship, were transformed into national monuments. Unlike other countries, particularly in Europe, where a significant portion of religious buildings are no longer used as sites of devotion, in Brazil such a transfer of ownership and function is much more an exception than a rule. That is, many buildings were monumentalized while still functioning as places of worship.

The idea of giving excessive importance to the religious aspect also deserves comment. After all, it was not exactly because of their “religious” importance that churches and other Catholic objects were granted landmark status. This is possible, as we have seen, because they were seen to have historical and or architectural values. It was a vision that privileged the Baroque and the resistance of these buildings to the assaults of time that led to the protection of the churches and assimilated them into the formation of the nation. In a period in which criteria involving material culture prevailed, little is said about Catholicism and the Catholics who built and maintained these buildings. In fact, these Catholics sometimes become a hindrance to state policies. On the other hand, those same architectural and historical criteria gave rise to assumptions that exclude other possibilities, considering the Brazilian religious field, from becoming beneficiaries of protection and intervention policies. It is in this sense that the republican state recognized Catholicism as the national religion.

These conceptions, forged in the first half the 20th century, are still found in the present. This can be verified by examining one of the articles in the Agreement between Brazil and the Holy See related to the legal statute of the Catholic Church in the country. This document was negotiated between

Vatican authorities and the Brazilian government, and approved by the national Congress in 2010.¹¹ Article 6 determines:

The High Parties recognize that the historical, artistic and cultural heritage of the Catholic Church, as well as the documents kept in its archives and libraries, constitute a significant part of Brazilian cultural heritage, and shall continue cooperating in the protection, appreciation and promotion of the enjoyment of the properties, movable and immovable, owned by the Catholic Church or by other ecclesiastical entities, that are considered by Brazil as part of its cultural and artistic heritage (apud Giumbelli 2011: 140)

We observe the expression “Brazilian cultural heritage”, which confirms the association between Catholicism and nation. The document also indicates the form of administration of this heritage: it is still owned by the Catholic Church, while the state has certain rights of access to places and documents. Finally, we can also note an ambiguity in the formulation “owned by the Catholic Church or by other ecclesiastical juristic persons”. Is the document recognizing the possibility that other religions be covered by the cultural and artistic heritage protection policies? Considering this possibility, we now return to the Afro-Brazilian religious universe.

Candomblé Terreiros

The landmark designation of the Casa Branca *terreiro*, concluded in 1984, by the decision made in the meeting mentioned at the beginning of this article, was a pioneer act. After an interregnum of approximately 15 years, other *terreiros* were designated as landmarks. A survey carried out in the IPHAN archives in September 2012, identified 21 processes. Most of them refer to houses located in Bahia. The remaining seven cases are distributed as follows: two in Pernambuco, two in Rio de Janeiro, one in Goiás, one in Sergipe and one in Maranhão. Except for the process of Casa Branca, the remaining took place between 1998 and 2009. We can conclude that there has been a proliferation of landmark designations of *terreiros* since the last years of the last century, in a wave that began in Bahia and reached other Brazilian states.¹²

¹¹ For more details about this document, see Giumbelli (2011)

¹² Some actions and projects with impact on Bahia created the conditions to enable the landmark designations (see Serra 2005). In the recent scenario, IPHAN has been promoting open debates about how to treat Afro-Brazilian

Despite gathering basic information about the 21 cases, I only had access to the complete contents of seven of these designation processes.¹³ Considered as a whole, they took place between the years 1998 and 2004; except for one case, which occurred between 2008 and 2010. Five out of the seven *terreiros* are located in Salvador; one in Cachoeira, a municipality in Bahia's Recôncavo region; and the last one was in São Luis do Maranhão. The sample therefore reflects the predominance of the temples of Bahia. Below, I present an analysis of the seven processes I had access to. My intention is not to analyze the entire universe of the *terreiros* that were designated as landmarks, which would require access to the complete documentation for all of the cases. I will not analyze the seven cases in depth. My objective is to identify the points that support the proposals for landmark designation of *terreiros*. To this end, the presentation has two stages, first emphasizing the case of Casa Branca and then considering the remaining cases as a whole.

Casa Branca's designation process is distinguished from the others by more than its temporal situation. It was a difficult decision. Whereas in all the other six cases the designation was approved by unanimity or by a large majority of votes, the vote over Casa Branca was tight. At least two commentators (Serra 2005; Velho 2006) point out some resistance among the council members, a resistance that represented conservative visions about the notion of heritage and showed some discomfort in extending landmark designation to Afro-Brazilian religions. This type of resistance was clearly present. But I would like to call attention to some common points raised by those discussing the designation measure. In other words, while doubts and dilemmas were raised, they were not considered to be sufficient to reject the designation of Casa Branca.

The justifications for the landmark designation of the Casa Branca *terreiro* can be found in several parts of the process.¹⁴ I will emphasize the written contribution made by an anthropologist, which served as a legal opinion in favor of the designation, even though it is not technically so. In this text, Casa Branca is presented as one of the first *terreiros* of Ketu-Nagô origin in

religions. I could follow part of the III Forum of Candomblé Terreiros of Rio de Janeiro, held on 21 September 2012. See IPHAN (2012).

13 Files 1067-T-82, 1432-T-98, 1464-T-00, 1471-T-00, 1486-T-01, 1481-T-01, 1627-T-11, Archive of IPHAN. I thank the officers of the Archive of IPHAN for attending to my inquiries.

14 File 1067-T-82, Archive of IPHAN. See also França (2012).

Brazil, from which many others arose. It has a double cultural significance: as the original impulse of a religious-cultural complex and as a symbol of the continuity of this complex. For this reason, it is important to recognize what this complex represents about the role Africans and their descendants played in the formation of Brazilian culture. Once its cultural significance was established, the protection of the *terreiro* was justified by an official measure. In the letter requesting the designation of Casa Branca, the president of the association that represents the *terreiro* asked why monuments of the black population would not deserve the same respect as that given to monuments of people of other origins.

It is interesting to observe that the responses to these arguments – which certainly existed – are not recorded in the documentation of the designation process. The objections raised by one or another board member at the meeting where the landmark designation of Casa Branca was approved touched on different points. One of them is the question of the ownership of the site where the Candomblé temple was located. The owner of the lands where the *terreiro* was located had already sold (or rented) part of them, and a gas station had been installed close to the entrance of Casa Branca. There was news that the *terreiro* would be evicted. The letter from the president of the religious association, one of the elements that serves as a basis for the request of the landmark designation of the *terreiro*, does not mention this measure; it prefers to request the expropriation of the site and the assignment of its permanent use. At the time of the IPHAN board meeting, the issue of ownership had not been resolved. Those in favor of the designation supported, expressly or implicitly, that the measure would be the most suitable way of solving the ownership question – and not the opposite. The de-facto solution came some months after the meeting that granted landmark status to the Casa Branca. This points to a common situation in the Afro-Brazilian religious universe: requesting landmark designation to confront threats or insecurity regarding the ownership of *terreiros*.

Another point raised at the same meeting was the adequacy of the designation measure to recognize the importance of a Candomblé *terreiro*. Since landmark designation affects material objects and implies the preservation of their forms, it would spark the question: Is it possible to designate sites whose material elements are constantly transformed? If, for some, this questioning is linked to an affirmation that the constructions constituting a

Candomblé *terreiro* lack architectural value, other questions would come into play. An architect from IPHAN, while admitting the need to add new types of cultural manifestations to the national heritage, suggested the creation of specific legislation for *terreiros* or similar sites. Two of the anthropologists that were more directly involved in the process also expressed their doubts. One of them considered other instruments more suitable than landmark designation and affirmed that the latter could only be applied if accompanied by a flexible interpretation of the legislation in force, so that the preservation measures do not become an obstacle for changes (in the spatial organization and the material domain) inherent to religious manifestations. The other even questioned the pertinence of the landmark designation, which would create a risk of immobilizing something that is essentially dynamic. Eventually, both gave their decided and decisive support to the petition for landmark designation, arguing that the measure should not prevent modifications to the architectural heritage and should not interfere in the internal organization of the community. In this way, the support given to the designation did not imply an absence of doubts about its adequacy, but a commitment to a kind of combination between preservation and transformation, between state recognition and religious autonomy.

Finally, another aspect allows joining two arguments presented at the IPHAN board meeting in objection to the designation of Casa Branca as landmark. Consulting the meeting minutes, we find that one of the council members affirmed that “the proposal for landmark designation was made with the assumption that this would guarantee the continuity of worship”; another, that, “since Candomblé is a ceremony, a religion, the temple is not a fundamental part of the doctrine”. Both arguments seem to have Catholicism as unstated contraposition. To the extent that they point to a different application of heritage status, they identify a common field of perceptions from which a divergence is established between the exclusivity or non-exclusivity of the parameter constructed by reference to Catholicism. In the case of Catholic churches, the guaranty of continuity of the mass and other services or the intrinsic link between church and doctrine were not in question. As previously mentioned, a conception was formed that allowed the dissociation between religion and architectural or historical value. What we see in the case of the designation of Afro-Brazilian temples is the impossibility of establishing that distinction. If, it is possible to consider Catholic churches

without the activities performed inside them, the processes related to Candomblé *terreiros* reject this separation. It is the link between the site and a specific group that forms the motive for a landmark designation. As the report of the rapporteur of the process affirms: “The landmark designation must be a guarantee of the continuity of the cultural expression that has in Casa Branca a holy space”, with Candomblé understood as a religious system that is fundamental to the constitution of the identity of significant portions of Brazilian society.

From this set of considerations, we are now able to examine the remaining designations. As mentioned, we are not going to analyze specific cases but consider the six processes as a whole. It is worth repeating that in all these processes the approval of the designations was unanimous or attained a large majority of votes, indicating a change of sensibilities when compared to the situation surrounding the previous case. This unanimity in the decision may find some correspondence with the involvement of public personalities in the indication of the designation and the occurrence of previous recognitions. The process for the Gantois *terreiro* indicate designation was suggested by by the Minister of Culture; in another *terreiro*, the request came from the Mayor of Salvador; another, from a former employee of IPHAN. The municipal authorities of Salvador had already established protection measures for almost all the four *terreiros* of the municipality. The São Luis *terreiro* was the object of a proposal for landmark designation submitted by the Maranhão state agency responsible for heritage protection. Moreover, recognitions of a federal nature already benefited most of the *terreiros* located in Salvador. So here we have a series of signs that support the creation of a favorable atmosphere for the appreciation of *terreiros*.

I will divide my analytical remarks into three blocks. Each of them exhibit *continuities in relation to the process with the Casa Branca process*.

Form the point of view of the reasons and grounds for a designation, the issue of antiquity still plays a crucial role. This was true in all the cases. The Gantois and Axé Opô Afonjá *terreiros* are linked to Casa Branca by a common history that dates to the 19th century. With a development parallel to them, Alaketo reiterates its condition as “one of the oldest of all known *terreiros* in Bahia”. Casa das Minas is considered “the oldest Afro-Brazilian religious house of Maranhão”. Zogbodo Male Bogun Seja Unde, located in Cachoeira, affirms it is the first Candomblé *terreiro* founded by Africans of Jeje origin. In fact, there

is a clear predominance, among the seven designation processes, of *terreiros* with a Jeje-Nagô reference. The exception is the Bate Folha *terreiro*, which is identified as “Angolan”. The aspect of antiquity is also considered in the case of the later, as well as the prestige among other exponents of other “nations”. In all the processes, the requests, reports, and reviews point to the historical connections with Africa, always referring to the epic of the slave trade and slavery in the colonial and imperial periods. The connections are either drawn in a generic way, or tracked in the course of specific individuals transported between America and Africa. The antiquity criterion, no longer related to an exclusive or specific lineage or “nation”, seems to open a way for other cases in which landmark designation of *terreiros* is requested. Notice that all the *terreiros* in question were registered in IPHAN’s Historical Record Book.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that none of the *terreiros* were registered in the Fine Arts Book, but they were also registered in the Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Book. This gives rise to an important discussion related to other grounds raised to support the protection measure. Because the material dimension expressed in architectural terms is crucial in the determination of landmark designation or *tombamento*, the way these dimensions are considered is questioned in the case of Candomblé *terreiros*. The report of an architect included in the designation process for the Alaketo *terreiro* of Salvador offers a good observation. It is not possible, the report affirms, to appreciate the architecture of a *terreiro* without considering “mythical and ethnic values”, in which not the reproduction but the representation of Africa comes into play. The report mentions as a distinctive feature of the buildings found in the *terreiros* their simplicity and the direct relationship established between the spaces and their functions. In the eyes of European culture, it would not be a temple; but Afro-Brazilian values produce another perspective. The architect concluded: “This cultural symbiosis results in the vernacular civil architecture present in Alaketo, both typical and unique, in its urban externality as well as in its cultural role.” The adoption of other parameters, therefore, would allow the production of the appropriate references to appreciate the material elements present in *terreiros*.

Nevertheless, the lack of registration in the Fine Arts Book – where many Catholic churches are registered – points to a tension in the reasoning used in the appreciation of the architecture of the *terreiros*. The intrinsic

relationship between spaces and functions thus reveals the path that leads from esthetics to use, privileging the latter. A report in the process for the designation of the Casa das Minas provides another example of this reasoning, by confirming the close connection between the physical structure and the worship activities – as shown by the preservation of dirt floors. Its simple constructions house a “holy temple”, which can be disguised by a type of “social mimicry”, necessary in a society with prejudice. The process of the Zogbodó *terreiro* affirms something similar: the simplicity of the architecture and the materials is based on religious orientations, its construction takes place through rituals. The relation between spaces and uses, which were analyzed to help understand the internal configurations of *terreiros*, can be extended to encompass aspects of another order. I refer to the links established between, on the one hand, the long-term existence of Afro-Brazilian *terreiros* and, on the other, the consolidation of subaltern models of residence and the urbanization of peripheral regions. On another plane, the same may be verified when the contribution of *terreiros* to the preservation of green spaces in big cities is affirmed. The Bate Folha *terreiro*, in Salvador, is praised as a “center of ecology and culture”.

The emphasis on use or function for the suitable appreciation of the material elements that constitute the *terreiros* reiterates the idea that the recognition of these places is strongly connected with the communities that bring them to life. It is significant that in two of the processes analyzed, the possibility of protecting *terreiros* as examples of “immaterial heritage” is raised.¹⁵ In the process concerning the Gantois *terreiro* a council member proposes that *terreiros* should be registered as protected places, since they represent a “spiritual value”. This value is materialized in the richness of Catholic constructions yet is more difficult to perceive in the case of *terreiros* due to their material modesty. The report in the case of the Bate Folha *terreiro* confirms that it is a designation process inserted “in a still restricted and very peculiar series of monuments”. In them, there is a bridge between material and immaterial references; in the latter dimension, a cultural aura is established in the sense that it broadens previous uses, enabling the recognition of a “subaltern authenticity”. Spiritual value and subaltern authenticity can be

¹⁵ This is another modality of official protection, in force since 2000, which does not consist in a landmark designation, but in the registration of objects and the ways they are made. See IPHAN’s website: <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/portal/montarPaginaSecao.do?id=10852&retorno=paginaIphan> (Access on 07/10/2014)

seen as operators of this passage that goes from the material dimensions to the social organization of a group that supports a temple. It is significant that one of the participants in the meeting of IPHAN's advisory board in which the registration of *terreiros* as immaterial heritage was proposed raised a warning: it would be necessary to consider the secrecy that preserves some aspects of the worship and which would be put at risk with the state registration.

One specific opinion report prepared in the process involving designation of the Axé Apô Afonjá *terreiro* is worth analyzing to see how some of the issues mentioned are articulated. The person who prepared the report also issued an opinion in three other processes, thus becoming a key actor in these cases. The situation of this *terreiro* is interesting due to the fact that it does not suffer from problems of a material order or related to land. After an introduction, in which it was affirmed that the doubts about the adequacy of designating *terreiros* as landmarks no longer existed, the report addresses the "reorganization of African rituals in Brazil", pointing to the Jeje-Nagô cultural hegemony established in the 19th century in Bahia as being strongly influential in the general structure of Candomblé *terreiros*. The following item concerned the "space model of Jeje-Nagô *terreiro*", which was described on the basis of an anthropological bibliography. Finally, the report specifically addresses the *terreiro* in question, presenting its history and assessing its correspondence with the model described in the previous item. It notes that the small forest at the *terreiro* is a landscape reference in the part of the city where it is located. The *terreiro* should still be seen as a driver of to urbanization, testimony of the non-exclusivity of European architectural and urbanistic models. One passage from the opinion clearly illustrates and summarizes some points discussed:

"The relationship of the cult community with the space of the *terreiro* is of an extremely holy nature. Orixás can only be worshipped there, (...) because the *axé* (spiritual force) of the house is planted at its symbolic center and without it, nothing exists or can exist. This is why the preservation of the space is essentially important for the continuity of the religious manifestation. In this way, the space of and the architectural transformations suffered by a *terreiro* are always inherent to the dynamics of the ritual or the desire for its exaltation. In the case of Axé Opô Afonjá, the concern for its preservation has always been present, as demonstrated by the conservation of the *terreiro* area, the buildings and the initiatives carried out for the social development of the community. Without people and without a *terreiro*, there is no Candomblé".

We can note how transformation and preservation combine, in this narrative, as part of the existence of the *terreiro*. In another line of thinking, the place and its materiality are presented as the base where the rituals occur; but this is only possible because it is simultaneously affirmed that the ritual activities guide and support the material references. It could be said that without Candomblé, there is no *terreiro*. Another interesting aspect in this report is how two seemingly opposite ideas are interlaced. The report affirms that a *terreiro* recreates African religious geography and, at the same time, reflects the conditions of creation of a Brazilian religion. It also states that as the result of the cultural resistance of black slaves, the *terreiro* is a Brazilian invention. This means that the *terreiro* is at the same time African and Brazilian. This formulation reiterates points that had already appeared in the Casa Branca designation process. However, if we recognize that this is something that has been ratified and disseminated in the most recent cases, we observe a reinforcement of the connection between Afro-Brazilian religion and national culture. The Afro-Brazilian religion is not only the testimony or legacy of a portion of the population – an “affirmation of the Afro-Brazilian ethnic identity” and a “document of the history and cultural resistance of black people” – but it is also a vector composing the entire national culture, one that is now seen as necessarily plural and multifaceted.¹⁶

In another text (Giumbelli 2008), I sought to demonstrate that the recognition of Afro-Brazilian religions often depended on an argument that emphasized the specificity of these religions. This specificity, in turn, is based on the use of the notion of culture in the ethnic sense, associating Candomblé and other religious variations with expressions of Africanness. However, the arguments supporting requests for landmark designation, while reiterating these associations, seek to emphasize another vector, which forces us to reconsider the conception of Brazilian culture itself. In other words: it is not only a question of defending the specificity of these religions, but about emphasizing how they affect the way that the entirety of

16 The same articulation of vectors can be seen in another report, related to the Gantois *terreiro*: “It serves as a unique reference in the chronicle of a population that had a distinctive importance in the formation of the richness of Brazil, in the construction of its identity and culture. It is an expressive monument of the city of Salvador, a reason of pride for Bahia and for Brazil; it evokes the heroic deeds of Africans and Afro-descendants in this country, the memory of great black priests and priestesses who gained the respect of all and won the love of their population; it evokes a history that Brazilians of all origins appreciate, a legacy of great civilizations, a testimony of our precious African inheritance”.

the Brazilian nation itself is conceived. Similarly, the notion of culture used, apart from reiterating an ethnicized reading, is based on a more general understanding. There is thus a transformation of the concepts of culture and nation used to defend the designations between the cases of the Catholic churches and the *terreiros*..., a point to which I will return in the conclusions.

These reconfigurations are reflected in manifestations that establish a specific proximity between state and religion. Many occurrences of this can be found in the landmark designation processes. In the meeting of the IPHAN Advisory Board related to the designation of the Axé Apô Afonjá *terreiro*, one director of IPHAN spoke about Xangô. Another reference was made to Xangô in the meeting when the case of Gantois was discussed. In the meeting that approved the designation of Alaketo, the main leaders of the *terreiro* were present and were greeted by the Minister of Culture himself, whose argument praised a synergy between Greece and Africa. The report on the designation process for Casa das Minas mentions that, according to the leaders of the *terreiro*, the *voduns* (entities similar to orixas) *had given their agreement to the designation proposal*. Finally, in the meeting related to the Bate Folha *terreiro*, an official from the Ministry of Culture affirmed that in the mid 1980s he was protected by an amulet he received at Casa Branca. He was the person who presided over the meeting that evaluated the designation of Casa Branca. After the tense meeting, he and other council members went to the *terreiro*, joining the devotees that were there waiting. Would these expressions correspond to the recognition of “ecclesiastic power” in normatives of the state body and to the presence of ecclesiastical authorities in meetings? They are at least the product of a reconfiguration that enables the recognition of *terreiros* as cultural heritage.

Christ the Redeemer Monument¹⁷

In this section, I examine IPHAN’s landmark designation process for the Christ the Redeemer monument, which took place between May 2001 and August 2006. It is an element, among others, in the recent representations

¹⁷ This material was first presented at an event of the Laboratory of Symbolic Analysis, Graduate Program in Sociology and Anthropology (Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia e Antropologia), Federal University at Rio de Janeiro, 03.24.2009. The citations were extracted from File n. 1478-T-01, from the IPHAN archives, with the assistance of Izabella Bosisio.

and interventions about this monument that was conceived in the 1920s and inaugurated in 1931. With no intention of being exhaustive, it is possible to mention: the 75th anniversary celebration in 2006 and the 80th in 2011; its election to be included among “the new wonders of the world” in 2007; and its transformation into a sanctuary by the Archdiocese of the City of Rio de Janeiro in 2006.¹⁸ My analysis considers some of the components of the process, from the document of 2000 that originated the designation process to the decision by the IPHAN advisory board in 2005. The objective is to show how religion and nation are articulated in the elements of the process, which can only be done when we consider how this articulation was produced at the moment the statute was conceived and constructed.

There is a question that runs through the whole designation process, appearing several times: in the initial memorandum, in the legal reports, and in the expression of surprise of a council member at the meeting where the decision was made: How is it possible that the monument had not been designated earlier? An essential answer to the question is found in the technical report issued in 2002 by an architect from IPHAN. “It is interesting to note how the report presents the importance of the monument and its designation as self-evident. The report states that it seeks to demonstrate “the reasons why it became the most important symbol of this city”, and, more widely, a “national symbol”. The references to the statue include postcards, airline advertisements, songs, souvenirs, popular opinions and newspaper columns. In this way, the most specific arguments – to which I will return below – are contained in the idea of “recognition” of the “value” of this monument. Similar terms are present in other statements: which identify the monument as a “mark of Rio de Janeiro and a national symbol”; with “symbolic relevance” (which settles a debt with the history and memory of the city of Rio); as having “symbolic importance and magnificence”; and which has “cultural importance at a national level”.

A report issued by one council member takes the same direction, invoking “the popular imaginary of the Christ, as well as the personal impressions and remembrances of each person” in regard to the monument, which the report refers to as a “symbol of redemption and freedom”. Its value, it

¹⁸ Analyses about the past and present of the Christ the Redeemer statute appear in an abridged way in this text; for details and sources, see Giumbelli (2014).

continues, is “special and flagrant”: “I want to propose the recognition of an Emblematic Value for the Christ statue of the Corcovado. A value that I see as historical and universal. A value that adheres to, to cite few and strong examples [an approach that was already suggested in the technical report], the Pyramids of Egypt, The Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Statue of Liberty in New York (...), the columns of Niemeyer’s Palácio da Alvorada in Brasilia”.

I will continue to highlight the convergences and divergences of the technical report in relation to the opinion report of the council member. The technical report proposes the registration of the monument in three of the four IPHAN books: the Historical Book, the Landscape, Ethnographic and Archaeological Book, and the Fine Arts Book. It is an engineering milestone of its time, the largest monument in reinforced concrete constructed until that date. The report affirmed that the statue is the “most important symbol of this city and of the country”, and is perfectly integrated to the landscape. It is, finally, a successful example of Art Deco; or, more simply, there is an appeal to its evident and “explicit” beauty, the “unquestionable harmony of its lines”.

But the registration as an artistic monument generated controversy: Is Art Deco a style worthy of tribute? Does the Deco statue have any significance for the memory of art in Brazil? The report of the council member proposed that the statute should be attributed “an emblematic value” adding: “the power of symbolization is not always proportional to the artistic beauty. And it does not necessarily derive from the landscape interest”. It thus suggested that the Christ the Redeemer should only be registered in IPHAN’s Historical Book, which was what finally occurred.

According to the report of the council member, the historical value interacts mainly with the present that validates the monument symbolism as an emblem of the city or country. However, the technical report there is a line that emphasizes a strictly historical analysis, focusing on the technology and esthetics of reinforced concrete, and especially on the reconstruction of a “context” that dates back to the period between the wars. I would like to examine the report’s position concerning two vectors that permeate the image of the monument: religious discourses and uses, and non-religious discourses and uses.

When referring to the context, the report emphasizes two topics: modernity and nation. After World War I, the world was in a crisis characterized

by a break with the past, innovation, it was a time when being modern was imperative. In Brazil, this situation was accompanied by a debate about the national identity, which mobilized an ideological dispute. The Christ the Redeemer monument, in that context, is the symbol and conquest of a crusade launched by the Catholic Church and its militants for the restoration and Christianization of society. The report of the council member, however, attributes the realization of the monument to a specific ideological current, while confirming the importance of a broader dimension. Mentioning the success of the campaigns to raise funds – which made “each Brazilian a contributor in the sense of making its construction feasible” – the report concludes: “the Christ the Redeemer monument was born, as it was intended to be, as a national monument”.

However, it is possible to affirm that, for those who conceived the monument, the nation was less a support than the target public of the Christ statue. The Christ, as a strictly Catholic reference, should rule over Brazil, showing Brazilians the most adequate path to redemption. In the reading of the report, the nation, independent of religious marks, is always the subject of the process. The monument is presented as an expression of the “conjunction of political and ideological forces that composed Brazilian society at the end of the Old Republic (República Velha, 1889-1930)”. In this sense, the future would simply illuminate the original moment: “This image (of the national monument) will be consolidated over the years and will end up becoming the spoken portrait of the country”.

This understanding leaves the opinion report with a paradoxical quality: on one hand, it recognizes a religious dimension in the monument; on the other hand, it contributes to the process that bypasses this dimension. The report states for example: “It never became a pilgrimage site and few people visit it for its Catholic symbolism. The monument has gradually become unsacred and was incorporated to the image of Rio de Janeiro, thus becoming the trademark of the city.” “Independent of the religious connotation...”, it is seen as “a friend of the city”. The observations contained in the report regarding the Corcovado before the existence of the Christ there can be seen in the same sense: the touristic importance of the site existed since the 19th century (as the most visited belvedere of the country and one of the most photographed landscapes). The landmark designation is thus based on the operations that turned the statue into part of the landscape, natural and human, that surrounds it.

In sum, if it is history that is seen as the foundation for recognizing the heritage value of the Christ the Redeemer monument, the protagonists in the process are, more than religion, the city and the nation. Unlike the supporting arguments that saw the persistence of the past in the present, emphasizing the importance of Catholicism, here it is the present that projects to the past. City and nation, containing the marks of present conceptions, are taken to the moment the monument was conceived and constructed. This way of referring to and appreciating the monument interacts with the preponderant ways of relating with the Christ the Redeemer, characterized by the accumulation of meanings, far beyond a specifically religious one. In this way, the monument acquires the nature of a tourist site, in detriment to its artistic or architectural dimension. Therefore, the place is connected not with a specific group, but with an essentially varied set of uses and appropriations. This variety also colors the way of conceiving city and nation.

Conclusions

The three sections of this text present different articulations between state initiatives for heritage protection state and religious universes. In reference to Catholicism, the cases considered here cannot be considered a synthesis of those in which the relationship between landmark designation policies and religion is present. It would at least be necessary to consider situations in which Catholic temples are part of larger architectural complexes, as in the case of “historical cities”. In these cases, what is the importance and meaning of the “religious” aspect in the appreciation of the “architecture” and the “history”? Even if we recognize this limitation, the material analyzed here allows comprehending the outlines and dislocations that mark the impact of heritage protection policies on religion. With respect to *Candoblé terreiros*, I think that the elements of the documents to which I had access offer a sufficient vision about the questions surrounding the opening of heritage protection policies in the universe of Afro-Brazilian religions. If this is correct, we find solid grounds to accompany the consequences of this opening, whose existence is indicated by the significant amount of ongoing designation processes.

Two points guide my final considerations. The first concerns what I call regulation of the religious (Giumbelli 2013). It may be considered that the

heritage protection policies reconfigure the outlines, statutes and meanings of the religious by having an impact on so-called or so-claimed “religious institutions”. In the case of Catholicism, it seems to me that this effect is produced in at least two senses. The recognition of churches for their architectural or historical value supports the argument of the social or cultural importance of Catholicism. In this sense, it can provide elements that contribute to having Catholicism justify its presence in non-religious spheres through its leaders, spokespersons and advocates. On the other hand, the same cultural appreciation can work in the inverse sense, as the report of the council member in the process of the Christ the Redeemer clearly shows, by reiterating the statement of the technical report: “With the designation, IPHAN participates in the public management of a private property – originally characterized by a religious vision, and which then gradually acquired a cultural sense”. In this case, the cultural recognition seems to occur in detriment to the religious. It is worth recalling that landmark designation always attributes authority to another agent in the administration of a temple or sanctuary.

In relation to the Afro-Brazilian religious universe, I would like to call attention to other processes that can be understood with the help of the concept of regulation. A first point has to do with the demand for designation measures itself or to the appeal to the state agencies responsible for cultural policies. Even though this demand or appeal always involves agents and mediators of various natures, we can note that the religious agents themselves tend to make these appeals. The requests for landmark designation are thus within the horizon of possibilities of a significant number of *terreiros*. In one of the cases analyzed, that of the Zogbodo Male Bogun Seja Unde *terreiro*, in Cachoeira, Bahia, there are divergences within the religious group about requesting the landmark designation request, but they decided to do so. Moreover, the bylaws of the association representing the *terreiro*, drafted in 2003, include the idea of “heritage preservation”. The existence and foundation of “museums” connected with *terreiros*¹⁹ can also be associated with this incorporation by the Afro-religious universe of a cultural dimension, not only in an ethnic sense, but also in line with the interpretations that

19 For a case in Recife, see Campos et al (2012). There are also cases in the inverse direction, related to the creation of museums with Afro-Brazilian elements that wind up encompassing religious objects and dimensions (Sansone 2012).

guide the vision and actions of state bodies involved with the “promotion of culture” in a universalist sense.

The second point of my final considerations seeks to summarize two movements. The arguments supporting the proposals for landmark designation of *terreiros* question a certain narrative that focuses on an issue of nationality. While making us reconsider the notions of heritage, architecture, history, and culture, these arguments indicate the Eurocentrism that presides over the hegemonic narrative of nationality.²⁰ Instead of the common story by which Europeans facilitated their encounter with Africans and Amerindians, what is suggested is a story told from the point of view of those who came from Africa and in which alternative references were produced in terms of religiosity and architecture. In this conception, the nation gains new points of view, helping in the perception of its diversity. Catholicism no longer corresponds to the entire social and cultural formation that is a synonym of nation, and it becomes a part at whose side other parts may be placed. It is the conception of Brazilian culture itself that is open for reconsideration.

The other movement I think it is possible to identify in the material analyzed here concerns a certain interplay between nation and religion. The process related to the designation of the Christ the Redeemer monument shows an encompassing of the religious by the national. This encompassing is different from that operated in the past, regarding Catholic temples and references, to the extent that it is opened to other recognitions, as shown by the cases involving Afro-Brazilian *terreiros*. For this reason, the most interesting question seems to be not the one related to the possible stabilization effects of what is designated, but how the processes of redefinition of what is national and what is religious are developed in a mutual and involving way. The application of the “immaterial heritage” instrument seems to give even more dynamism to these processes. In terms of Afro-Brazilian religions, the process involves the recognition of these religions – and not of specific temples. In terms of Catholicism, it favors the recognition of feasts, discourses and places linked to folk practices (as opposed to the ecclesiastical).²¹ The conjunction

20 I consider this effect more important than the risks pointed out by Johnson (2005) of “loss of cultural autonomy” of Afro-Brazilian religions due to their state recognition.

21 Regarding Umbanda and Candomblé as immaterial heritage, this occurred in 2009 in Rio de Janeiro, cf. news: http://www.alerj.rj.gov.br/common/noticia_corpo.asp?num=30901 (Access on 07/10/2014). In the case of Catholicism, several celebrations have already been registered in IPHAN as immaterial heritage, cf. list: <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/portal/montarPaginaSecao.do?sessionId=C281DEF854B2B72D22D76454CoB127DF?id=12456&>

of these measures aimed at defending heritage, in whose name conceptions about the nation are developed, establishes a panorama with many situations that certainly deserve to be accompanied by our research.

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Giumbelli, Emerson (2014), *Símbolos Religiosos em Controvérsia*. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome.

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In a time when the concept of ‘symbol’ seems to be falling into the margins of anthropological debate, the book *Símbolos Religiosos em Controvérsias* (Religious Symbols in Controversies), by Emerson Giumbelli, offers us an important reminder that symbols *still do* matter. Decades after the contributions of Keesing, Geertz, Turner, Douglas and others, we realize that matters of representation, iconicity and metaphor still seem to play an important role in the way we relate to each other and engage in political activity. The viewpoint that supports this argument stems from a field plagued with symbols, symbolisms and symbolistics: religion. When we observe the public display of religious affairs in contemporary politics, we can easily identify the role notoriously played by symbols in them: a scarf, a mosque, a crucifix, a book, a legislative act, a statue, a painting, etc.

Giumbelli’s book, however, is not so much interested in a conceptual (theological or anthropological) debate on symbol and representation, but instead works on top of the operative-ness and effectiveness of symbols in social life, how symbols become active markers in our daily lives, acquiring social and political significance. The hinge here is thus ‘controversy’, or the recognition of sites and spaces of dispute among several actors in what is often referred to as the ‘public sphere’. In this point, Giumbelli is cautious in his refusal to configure a normative conception of the public sphere, preferring to work with processes through which religion “becomes public” (p.13), builds its audiences and becomes politically agent through diverse mechanisms, devices and protagonists. In conclusion, ‘controversy’ interestingly appears here not so much as a topic, but rather as a Latourian heuristic device that allows for the understanding of contemporary religion and politics through processes that are necessarily dialectical and inherently controversial. This strikes me as a particularly attractive methodology, as it counteracts the tendency towards self-containment and coherence that accounts of religious movements often muster, analyzing phenomena “in

their own terms”, in a similar monolithic fashion as the worldviews produced by such movements.

From this perspective, this is a book that emerges from Giumbelli’s longstanding research agenda of intersecting anthropology, history, religious studies, political theory and philosophy, in which questions of modernity, pluralism, secularism, regulation, iconoclasm, blasphemy and heresy have become linchpin and contributed to an already extremely rich field of inquiry (the anthropology of religion in Brazil and South America). In this particular sense, it works as a digest of the author’s arguments and reflections on the intersection of religion and politics throughout his (already exceedingly productive) career, and more particularly over the past six years.

The book therefore displays (or, should I say, locates) the argument in ten different places, sites or objects. The first chapter, for instance, begins with a painting (*A Pátria*, by Pedro Bruno), which acts as a pretext for a reflection on the role of religious symbols in the process of determination of laic governance and nationhood in the First Brazilian República (1889-1930). Here, civic and religious (Christian) pantheons, instead of competing, actually blend in the process of emblemization that occurred in the period of Brazilian nationbuilding. Chapter 6, on the other hand, looks at crucifixes and their protagonism in contemporary Brazilian state buildings—notably, Dilma Roussef’s own cabinet—, roughly one hundred years after the processes described in the first chapter of the book. In a similar process as observed in southern European countries, the presence of crucifixes in public architecture became, in the turn of the twenty-first century, a matter of juridical dispute, political strategy and historical debate. In such dialectics, the main question was in fact, the identification of crucifixes as explicitly religious symbols, and subsequently the acknowledgment of their political agency as objectifications, visible materializations of ideological precepts. Chapter 9, in turn, focuses on the work of evangelical and Pentecostal movements towards creating a public venue in which their message is able to circulate. Here, Giumbelli speaks about a specific “evangelical public culture” (p.193) that counteracts (and competes with) two other poles: Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions. We can observe this public culture in specific media and channels, from television to sports (and soccer in particular), music (the so-called *gospel brasileiro*) and, finally, favelas and prisons. One particular episode, the *vagões de culto* (loosely translated here as “church wagon”) movement, in which the

trains of the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro became spontaneous spaces of preaching and evangelization in recent years, illustrates the process of ‘occupation’ performed by evangelical and Pentecostal movements in urban Brazil, ultimately unfolding into architectural statements contesting the ‘Catholic tradition’, with the emergence of cathedrals and monuments.

But the central set of chapters focuses on the Brazilian iconic *supra summum*, at least in what comes to touristic flyers, selfies and what not: the Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) statue in the Corcovado mountain of Rio de Janeiro. For Giumbelli, the Cristo Redentor is indeed iconic, but also because of how it turns manifest, makes visible, attracts spotlight. From this perspective, through a genealogical, historical approach, he identifies the multiplicity of intersections that the construction and public implantation of the Cristo Rei summoned: between the religious and the secular, the state and the individual, conservatism and modernity, materiality and representation, the sacred and the commodified, etc. It illustrates, perhaps as no other monument in Brazil, the power of symbolism, to the point that we reach an interesting conundrum: stripped of the political, historical and cultural appropriations and envelopings, the Cristo Redentor is in fact a religious monument, a representation of Jesus Christ; however, if we zoom out and observe it within the wider context, it becomes an example of transcendence of the religious and invitation into the secular.

Giumbelli’s analysis of the Cristo Redentor—and all the other elements that populate the religious and political public sphere of Brazil and beyond—makes this book a particularly timely contribution to the anthropology and sociology of religion in Brazil, as an ‘itinerary of religious controversy’ through which we acknowledge the complex politics behind contemporary religious phenomena. Although the book is not framed in such a fashion, it is also an invitation towards a comparative reflection. Even considering the problem of historiographical incomparability, as famously addressed by Marcel Detienne in his book *Comparing the Incomparable* (2008, Stanford University Press), Giumbelli opens the door, through his brief comparisons with the French context, to an interrogation of the multiple connections that allow for the emergence of a public space within and beyond the apparent determinacy of nation and national politics. After all, is the Cristo Redentor a Brazilian, Carioca, Christian or touristic symbol?