

State “*Laïcité*,” Public Finances and Education in Brazil: In search of the religious roots of civil inequality^{1;2}

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Resumo: Este artigo é parte de um trabalho de longa duração em andamento, incluindo resultados de projetos de pesquisa desde o final dos anos 1980. Propõe a reflexão sobre as relações entre Estado e religião no Brasil, com ênfase nos temas relativos ao sistema público de educação e finanças públicas, considerando também impactos advindos ou havidos sobre a sociedade.

Palavras Chave: Estado laico, ensino religioso em escolas públicas, laicidade e direitos, relação Estado-religiões.

Laicidade do Estado, finanças públicas e educação no Brasil: em busca das raízes religiosas da desigualdade

Abstract: This paper is part of a long-range work in progress, including research results from a number of research projects since the late 1980s. It proposes a reflection on the relation between State and religion in Brazil, with emphasis on themes relating to the public school system and public finances, also considering impacts from and to society.

Keywords: Laïc State, religious education in public schools, *laïcité* and rights, relation State-religions.

Introduction

In 1995, I was amongst many secular Catholic leaders of São Paulo when I was living through yet another dramatic experience as a representative of the public universities in the State of São Paulo Special Commission for Religious Teaching in the Public Elementary Schools. They had met to discuss what should be the secular leadership’s attitude in face of strong public opinion mobilizing against the statements of the Brazilian Bishop National Conference - Southern Chapter in favor of religious

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² This paper is part of a long-range work in progress, including research results from the project, “Discrimination, prejudice, stigma: religious and ethnic minorities, culture and education,” conducted at the University of São Paulo, Brazil since the late 1980s and continuing after 2009 at the Methodist University of São Paulo, within the Research Group Public Policies of Education: the Right to Education, Human Rights and State *Laïcité*. It proposes a reflection on the relation between State and religion in Brazil, with emphasis on themes relating to the public school system and public finances. Here is a particular choice I make to use “State-Religion” and not “Church-State,” because in Brazil the word “Church” (“Igreja”) too often refers to the Roman Catholic Church.

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education in public schools in São Paulo conducted by the Roman Catholic Church and paid for by public finances. I was the only one of our commission who decided to accept the secular Catholic leaders' kind invitation on that cold and rainy Saturday afternoon.

I was meant to just listen and watch their debates, but I had to speak by the end, because it was then that I had to listen to them praying for the conversion of "those who don't believe in the true God, and for the enlightening of the State Commission members." Just after the meeting, they gently offered tea accompanied by conversation. Then, one of them, whom I had already met during a tense meeting with the governor, told me, "Listen, they will have to understand that they have to put up with it; they will have to accept – they must accept our point of view. We are the majority." And I kindly asked her, "Please, could you explain who 'they' are?" After a long and perplexed silence, she said: "They, the different." And again I argued with her, "Please, who are the different?" Even more tensely, after another silence, she responded, "They, the non-Christians!" Although I was aware that for her the word "Christian" was a synonym for "Catholic," this was not the point she tried to make. So I replied, "Sorry, my friend, the 'different' to you are us, but the 'different' to us, non-Christians, is you. But we are all equal citizens before a *laïc*⁴ State, as Brazil is. And that it is for you to accept."⁵

This short example shows the confused perception of a member of the religious majority in Brazil when needing to make different rights compatible under the principles of democracy, as well as how that mistaken perception, as a tendency, leads to human rights violations, even *unintended*. The counter-affirmation – "they, the different" – also signals an attitude pattern with a propensity to view national identity as inclusive of just one group of people while excluding others. Additionally, and especially, this majority view is an attitude averse to democracy because it simplifies the question, considering one group as better than and preferable to another, before the political order and the State, as if there were no need to make equal rights compatible. It also shows, particularly, the incapacity to accept the core issue: the fact that Brazil is a *laïc* State, under the Law, under the Federal Constitution. Such difficulty has deep roots in Brazilian culture and mentality, requiring special research attention, particularly relating to educational themes.

1. The confused and ambiguous relations of public-private/*laïcité*-religiosity in public finances in Brazil: early beginnings and beyond

The history of Brazil as it relates to western civilization begins in the so-called Great Navigations period, from the 15th century to the 16th, in the context of the

⁴ I prefer to use the term "*laïc*" rather than "secular" because "secular" still refers to a contraposition of "religious vs. secular," whereas "*laïc*" makes possible a more precise reference to the Western origins of the issue in the French Revolution. In addition, "*laïc*" allows for a more accurate approach to the idea of a *laïc* State, the meaning of which is referred to in etymology from Greek "*laikos*," "belonging to the people" (Houaiss, 2012); for more information see, e.g., "*OBSERVATÓRIO DA LAICIDADE DO ESTADO*" (2012). In English, the more commonly used term is "secularism," although there are conceptual differences; see, for instance, the website CONCORDAT WATCH (2012).

⁵ Indeed, I have a special gratitude to those people, because this experience led me to include in the curricular document *Cultural Pluralism*, which I was writing at that time for the Ministry of Education, the following sentence as part of the contents: "Who is the different? Different are all of us, depending on who is looking at whom. But at the same time we are all equal in rights, before the Law, and in human dignity." See BRASIL (1997 and 1998).

Reform and Counter-Reform. In Brazil, colonized by Portugal since 1500, the absolute union of the State and Roman Apostolic Catholic Church was present in many ways, lasting even after the National Independence proclamation in 1822, up to the proclamation of the Republic in 1889.

Relating particularly to education (the social and cultural activity directed essentially to maintaining societal cohesion as well as to introducing desirable transformations in the public space), the union of the Kingdom of Portugal and the Roman Catholic Church was manifested by the presence of the Jesuits as being responsible for the public schools, a fact that has been part of Brazilian life ever since, until the Jesuits' expulsion from Portugal and its colonies in 1759.

Regardless of their merits or demerits, which were not homogeneous or regular in the 210-year period under their responsibility, from 1549 to 1759, a significant issue of the Jesuits is the sources of the school-system budget as a way to define whether the schools owned by them were public or not. In this case, it is remarkable that a tenth of the taxes⁶ collected under the Right of "*Padroado*" by the Kingdom of Portugal in Brazil had a permanent destination, in that historical period, to the Company of Jesus, to be applied in the "school of first letters," or, in other words, grammar.

What was the meaning of the "*Padroado*," an expression from the ancient Portuguese? Such privilege, conceived by the popes for the kings of Portugal, began in January 8, 1454, when Nicolas V signed the sealed papal letter "*Cuncta Mundi*,"⁷ which was intended as an orientation to the exploratory commercial navigations of the southern hemisphere. In 1483, as King Dom Manuel was elected "Grand-Master of the Order of Christ,"⁸ some benefits and privileges were incorporated into the Portuguese Crown, and a new sealed papal letter granted the Crown, for instance, jurisdiction over any region or land, even should it be yet unknown.

Because the pope decided that the expedition should also have a missionary goal, the papal letter allowed the Portuguese kings to exercise spiritual jurisdiction within the discovered lands, installing dioceses, nominating bishops, sustaining the cults, assuming all matters of diffusion and observation of the Christian principles.

Thomas Bruneau synthesizes the meaning of such regime as "the granting, by the Church of Rome, of certain level of control over a local or national church, to a civil administrator, in appreciation of his zealotness, dedication and efforts to diffuse the religion and as stimuli to future 'good works'" (1974, p.31). Or, as summarized by Bruneau, this is "the spirit of the '*Padroado*': what is built by the administrator can be controlled by him" (1974, p.31).

So, under the "Right of "*Padroado*," the Portuguese Kingdom in Brazil also had the right conceived by the pope of collecting taxes, but with the intent to collect tithes from the believers, a contribution with religious meaning, to be used by the civil administrator. Therefore, it was money collected from the people, as with public taxes, generating a kind of public budget for the common good, under religious protection and meant to be in the name of the divinity.

Using the re-tithes of the tithes from the *Padroado* resources, the Jesuits were responsible for public education in Brazil from 1549 to 1759, so 210 of the 505 years of the inclusion of Brazil in western history.

⁶ It was called in Portuguese "*redizima dos dizimos*."

⁷ Vocabulário Prático de Tecnologia Jurídica (1991).

⁸ The Order of Christ was the substitute for the powerful former Order of Templarios since 1317. So, some sealed papal letters had previously conceded rights and privileges to that Order, with repercussion to the process of colonization abroad in Europe – one of them, the navigation to South America.

2. Educational exclusion through everyday school practices by neglecting public legal documents in favor of private interests

The Jesuits first went to Brazil on a mission by King Dom João I stating, in the Regiment for the first Governor General of Brazil, Tomé de Souza, their responsibility for the Indigenous Peoples in the new land and for education in general. It is easy to understand. The Company of Jesus was created by Ignácio de Loyola originally in Spain, when he converted to a religious life from his military career, joining both tendencies, the military and religious styles. His exact aim was to offer to the pope a tool in the struggle against the Lutheran Reform, somehow beginning the Counter-Reform while at the same time strengthening it. As is known, in addition to the regular three vows that Catholic priests and religious adepts take – to poverty, chastity and obedience – the Jesuits take another one, of absolute obedience to the pope, even in matters not strictly related to faith. That is the main reason for the unconditional papal confidence in the Company. Nevertheless, such confidence left a heritage in Brazil.

Here it is important to make a first point about the consequences of the relationship of religion and State in Brazil concerning education, because this is the broader scenario and the core question in the creation of the first system of public education in Brazil. In fact, public education was immersed in the idea of serving: with strict obedience, against innovation (Counter-Reform), in favor of the power; dogmatically, against discussion and debate, in favor of rigorous (could it be argued as rigid?) doctrine, as everlasting; against individuals or localities, in favor of centralization.⁹

The model of military-religious discipline, based in the “*Ratio Studiorum*,” (the Jesuitical rationale method for studies), created a national educational system all over the country, centralized, inspected by the Order, and controlled on a daily basis. Their system was opposed to most of the religious orders present at that time in Brazil, considering them as religiously feeble facing the conditions of the colony, creating animosity against the Jesuits themselves.

The first serious conflict having on one side the Jesuits and on the other the most powerful Portuguese colonists was over the question of school. In Brazil, the Jesuits had as first appointment the responsibility for the protection and guidance of the Indigenous Peoples, including their education. Some Jesuits were famous for their dedication in learning the natives’ languages because the first missions taught in those languages. As inferred from the letters written by the provincial supervisor in Brazil to the superior general and under the regiment of King Dom João I (1549), the primary intention of the Jesuits was to protect the Indigenous Peoples, dedicating to them all their efforts in Brazil, creating schools respecting their languages with the goal of converting them to Catholicism.¹⁰

⁹ In an article presented and published in 1996, I briefly make a comparison between the religious system of colonization in the United States and Brazil, stressing the deep differences between the developments of both national systems of education. For example, one difference was the relevance of reading: in the case of Protestants, each person individually has access to the Bible, while for the Catholics, listening to preaching made for the believers was much more important than expressing oneself. Not casually, one of the most remarkable Portuguese and Brazilian literary works of that time is Father Antonio Vieira’s collection of preaching.

¹⁰ As it is not the main scope of this paper, later this paper will present just a short mention of the problems referred to as the process of acculturation, combined with the genocide suffered by the Indigenous Peoples in Brazil. Another article is needed just for that theme concerning the relationship to religion.

Nevertheless, the Jesuits were responsible as well for the educational system in Portugal, including the University of Coimbra. The Portuguese population in Brazil soon began to claim the schools for their children, similar to the Portuguese systems conducted by the Jesuits. This “seed” indicates how those of higher income, usually throughout the history of Brazil, claim the best school choices and conditions for their children, which they call their right, even when doing so represents closing the door of achieving rights for the low-income population. At that time, in the 1500s, the Jesuits made such a claim, attending their new schools (if not completely, at least substantially), leaving the Indigenous education as a second-level concern. As a matter of politics, they created schools similar to those already existing in Portugal, allowing the Portuguese children to continue their studies in Coimbra. The Indigenous children were excluded under the label of their “incapacity” to attend a school planned for and aimed at European culture.

This is another lasting repercussion of problems planted from Brazil as a Portuguese colony, although the debate is quite recent about the curriculum taught at public schools and the cultural plurality of Brazilian society. The situation has been changing since before the State, beginning in 1997, when the document *Cultural Pluralism* was launched as part of the National Curriculum Parameters of the Ministry of Education, although researchers and social movements had previously pointed out such need.

3. Where the school system meets culture and land

When they arrived in Brazil, the Jesuits were regimentally responsible for protecting the Indigenous Peoples from slavery. As part of this task, they formed the “*aldeamentos*,”¹¹ where, if the Indigenous would stop practicing parts of their culture, they could receive Catholic education and learn practices of agricultural work and business. In some parts of the colony, the Jesuits developed farms and missions together, producing and trading their products and sending the money from that trade back to the missions.

These farms were a basis of conflict between farmers and the Jesuits. Portuguese farmers said that instead of protecting the Indigenous, the Jesuits were taking them as their own slaves in order to keep them from being captured and made into slaves at Portuguese farms.

By the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil by Marquise of Pombal, the “missions,” as they were then called particularly in southern Brazil, had been openly in favor of the Jesuits. On the other hand, the Jesuits also accompanied the “*entradas e bandeiras*” (enters and flags) expeditions responsible for expanding the Portuguese colony borders,¹² with a military and trade profile, many times enslaving Indigenous males, raping Indigenous females, and sending most of them from São Paulo.¹³

At the same time, the question of African slavery as a trade was not a problem for the Jesuits; they were set free of such concern with a papal document establishing that the black Africans do not have a soul. Therefore, despite being absurd regarding

¹¹ The meaning of “*aldeamento*” could be translated as “small *village*,” a planned and organized place central to Indigenous everyday life, neighboring a Portuguese village.

¹² The Tordesilhas Treaty had defined the limits between Spain and Portugal in Latin American colonies, and such movements as “*entradas e bandeiras*” aimed to expand beyond the agreement.

¹³ See among others Montero (1994).

human rights, that document seems to be part of the political and economical agreement of the Vatican with the kingdoms and nobles. This fact, which would be completely unacceptable in ethical terms, was made possible by a so-called theological intervention (perhaps better considered as an “invention”) to justify the brutality of slavery.¹⁴ However, once this was proclaimed, due to the moral and spiritual authority of religion, people’s consciences were released to practice all atrocities and violations. For the enslaved Africans, no initiative was taken to offer education, thus condemning them to an oral tradition, both as a strategy of protection, particularly in reference to the sacred core of their religious practices, and to make impossible other forms of expression, as well.

Many documents and newspaper editorials from the first decades of the 20th century¹⁵ clearly show some of the strongest roots of prejudice still alive within the Brazilian population, laid down by the religious construction of the past. Even the recurrent attitude of most of Brazilian schools and teachers points to a hidden but effective racism, having as a basis – even unconsciously – the non-recognition of the full humanity of African descendants.¹⁶

Returning to the theme of the Indigenous People: although it is internationally known and therefore unnecessary to mention the genocide they suffered in Brazil during the first centuries of colonization, we should also consider that there are presently in Brazil more than 230 different Indigenous groups, speaking about 180 different languages, although representing less than 1% of the population. Some of those groups are threatened to be extinguished; some are facing massive suicide of their youth due to cultural shock that puts them between assimilation and tradition, forcing them to face the lack of social and cultural recognition and the needs of their people and their own, as well as the deep gap between the opportunities in the majority society and those in their own. The issues of land and respect for their own cultures are basic, and both relate to education. As for culture, the comment is common: “Let them be like the others,” meaning assimilation. As for their land, the remarkable wealth of their territories leads the debate, and current practices favor much more the interest of private farms and mineral explorers than Indigenous cultural needs and historical rights.

So, the relationship between religion and cultural domination is strong, particularly for those involved in missionary work. Nowadays many religions, but mostly Christian denominations, still have traditional practices of missionary work strictly devoted to the conversion of the Indigenous. In addition to the struggles for guaranteeing their cultural identity – in which the theme of education has a main role – and assuring the property of their land, the Indigenous have to deal on a daily basis with a situation that has transformed them even to the extent of competition. The crisis is so that, in some cases, different denominations compete against each other, and, frequently after conversions, spread dissension and discord amongst the same group or even the same Indigenous village.¹⁷

As for the “blossoming” of such seeds from the Catholic Church, on one hand the actions of CIMI – Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Missionary Indigenous Council)¹⁸ – have a Christian ecumenical orientation but are attached originally and in organizational terms to the Catholic Church. The CIMI is frequently involved in issues

¹⁴ See LIRA (1983).

¹⁵ See, for instance, CAPELATO & PRADO (1980). See, also, AZEVEDO (1987). And also see among others Fischmann (2002).

¹⁶ See Cavalleiro, E. (2003).

¹⁷ Statement by an Indigenous leader in an interview, part of this research.

¹⁸ See <http://www.cimi.org.br>

regarding the defense of Indigenous lands and is one strong and traditional organization devoted to Indigenous education. Although their stance is ambiguous because, as they proclaim their respect for Native cultures and spirituality, they also stay deeply involved in evangelization. Yet, they have been proceeding with a statement from the Catholic Church regarding past apologies.

In the same direction, with some differences of approach, the “Instituto Socioambiental – ISA”¹⁹ (Social and Environmental Institute) – works together with Indigenous People, giving priority to institutional research. ISA, nowadays, is much more concerned with an anthropological approach than religious, which points to the remaining historical influences of its origins.

On the other hand, the issue of land still is a focus of attention in some sectors of the Catholic Church in Brazil, particularly those remaining from the Theology of Liberation. A very recent example is the assassination of Dorothy Stang, a Notre Dame Congregation sister, in Pará, north of Brazil and a contested terrain within the country. For many years she had been joining and supporting agricultural workers involved in sustainable development. It is important to remember that that geographic area contains impressive natural resources related to the Amazonian forest: minerals and so forth.

Stang was a member of the “Comissão Pastoral da Terra” – CPT (Pastoral of Land Commission) – the same branch of the Catholic Church involved in the Movimento dos Sem Terra (Landless Movement), yet not the only influence and support for this social movement and NGO.²⁰ This information brings some light to the theme developed in this paper concerning the change of attitude of some part of the Catholic Church over hundreds of years, yet not representing the overall contemporary opinion and political position of the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil.

Regarding the issue of African-Brazilians, there are repercussions for them as well in the matter of land. During slavery the Africans developed varied forms of resistance, one of them being organized escape from the masters’ farms and houses to the forest, organizing their lives in “*quilombos*.” The *quilombos* had represented a democratic experience with many people living together from different origins, not just Africa. The most famous is named Palmares, with its main leader being Zumbi, a national hero for the African-Brazilians and for most Brazilians involved in the struggle against racism.²¹ Currently the issue is land as well, because the lands of the “*quilombos* remainings”²² constitute a right stated in the Federal Constitution of 1988 as of “*quilombolas*” communities’ own. But as with much or most of the Indigenous territories, those lands are waiting for regularization, demarcation and official documenting.²³

Both cases reflect the structural difficulty that is present in Brazil of putting into actual practice what is more commonly a simple verbal recognition of the minority’s rights. Both cases are also related to education, because the communities involved as owners of those properties – Indigenous and African-Descendents – have

¹⁹ The ISA is one of the three institutional “inheritors” of the former CEDI – Center of Ecumenical Documentation and Information. See <http://www.facebook.com/institutosocioambiental>.

²⁰ Source: media in general, various websites. The missionary was assassinated on February 11, 2005. See, for instance http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia_imp.asp?cod=32959&lang=PT.

²¹ See, for instance, FISCHMANN (2001).

²² In Portuguese, “remanescentes de quilombos.”

²³ See among other documents <http://heiwww.unige.ch/humanrts/commission/country52/72-add1.htm>. See also Davis (1999). Also a good source for understanding the State point of view is the report Brazil presented to the UN in 1996: “Brasil, Ministério da Justiça/Ministério das Relações Exteriores – Décimo Relatório Periódico Relativo à Convenção sobre a Eliminação de Todas as Formas de Discriminação Racial.” Brasília, FUNAG/Ministério da Justiça, 1996.

been assured, in the Federal Constitution (1988) and in the Law of the National Education Basis and Guidelines²⁴ (1996), the right to develop their own systems of education that are integrated into the national educational system. But how to do it properly, when even the land is not assured? How to strongly establish the limits of their action and possibilities for spreading and practicing their cultures and so educating their children? How can they feel as though they are truly participating in Brazilian national society and identity?

4. Questions for present and future challenges

Even at the risk of oversimplifying, it is important to summarize the main points present in the theme of public-private/laïc-religious. What are the main aspects worthy of attention regarding the relations of religion and State, education and public finances in Brazil?

The moderate separation of religions and State in Brazil, as stated for specific juridical opinion,²⁵ is manifested in the possibilities of cooperation without mutual interference, particularly in the field of public finances. The State exempts religious institutions of taxes for activities in areas that grant them a “certificate of philanthropy” and as a “non-profit organization.” Particularly when serving in the areas of education, health and social services, as well as temples, it is implied in Brazil that such measure should promote freedom of religion, belief and, in the case of temples, worship.

Nevertheless, this measure was the center of controversy in 2003, resulting in the cancellation of “certificate of philanthropy” for many institutions, particularly for those offering educational services in higher education. The federal government alleged that such religious institutions ran for-profit schools that belonged to the religious communities or had not accomplished their commitment to offer grants to students, mainly from low-income families.²⁶

Besides, after many decades of revision, the Brazilian Civil Code was finally approved in 2003, raising many questions in the field of religious institutions, particularly but not exclusively regarding philanthropy and civil associations (wherein it is possible to include the religious association under the Brazilian law). This is a more structural theme regarding religion in the public sphere in Brazil, deserving attention and revealing new sources of possible controversies.

Public awareness of freedom of religion and worship is fairly recent among Brazilian citizens. While adepts of minority religions are certain of their civil rights, this is not the case for the majority of the population: followers of Catholicism connected to the Vatican. This matter was brought to public debate, where arguers stressed the instruction of religion in public schools, which is beyond the scope of this

²⁴ Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional n° 9394/96.

²⁵ It is related to a juridical opinion presented by Anna Candida da Cunha Ferraz, professor at USP Law School, by our request, to the State of São Paulo Special Commission on Religious Education at Public Schools in 1995. See: Relatório da Comissão Especial sobre Ensino Religioso nas Escolas Públicas, São Paulo, FEUSP/Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 1996.

²⁶ It is usual that such institutions establish fees at a certain level, then apply a general discount to all students, in the name of philanthropy, without any other particular concern other than the practices of offering full grants as a privilege to those chosen as “*clientelismo*” and “*fisiologismo*”: common bad political practice in Brazil.

discussion but is important to mention as one of the most sensitive themes currently on the issue of religion in the public sphere in Brazil.²⁷

The debate on religious prejudice and discrimination has been growing, gaining more exposure than ever. In some ways, discussing religion has always been a source of verbal discomfort in Brazil, given that by tradition the Brazilian is considered “the cordial man,” as mentioned by the historian Sergio Buarque de Holanda.²⁸ The difficulty of distinguishing between being “impolite” and being “assertive,” combined with a history of effective persecution of religions other than Catholicism, raised such an issue with impact in the population census. An example of the lack of public interest for the theme is revealed in the 2000 census in which only one in every 100 interviewed were asked about his or her religious preference. In other words, it was possible that minority religions disappeared from statistical records, but the responsible organ for collecting the data justified itself, alleging methodological questions.²⁹ The Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic launched in February 2005 the “*Cartilha* of Religious Diversity and Human Rights,” a booklet on “Religious Diversity.”³⁰

Within the theme of religious discrimination, it is important to stress that recently great strides have been made when an editor of anti-Semitic, Holocaust-revisionist books was condemned by the Brazilian Supreme Court, which considered the books a racist crime, and the condemnation was forbidden from being overturned and the condemned from being released on bail under the Federal constitution.³¹ Once more the issues of racism and religion in Brazil are interlaced, and, this is the first case of condemnation for the crime of racism in Brazil ever.

The notable growth of Evangelical Churches has been mobilizing reactions of the Catholic Church and political sectors that traditionally composed the Catholic hierarchy and represents one major case in the new relations between religions and State, strongly involving economical aspects as well. Such increase is presented as well in public manifestations by the concession of radio and television broadcasting, bringing a new, undocumented role to those churches. There is also an expansion of economical activities attached to those religious denominations, such as clothing, in

²⁷ Other aspects are attached to that awareness, as well as part of a movement that we are in search of nurturing in our everyday life, through academic research and by working with the media in general, for two decades or so.

²⁸ See HOLANDA (1989). In a new preface after some editions, Holanda explains the meaning of “cordial man” as he who reacts with the heart (“*cordis*” in Latin). Nevertheless, many times the question of affection is relevant and so is the way of interlocution, particularly the tone of voice, the words said, even the mere impression of a friendly behavior, even when one is disagreeing with the interlocutor, or at least when one uses silence instead of a direct response, straight to the point, when bothered by others. This is one of the most sensitive cultural points to consider in any program of human rights education in Brazil because it is one of the most subtle, yet effective, obstacles to achieving a better development of citizenship in everyday life in Brazil and a point to deal with in education in general.

²⁹ As for the real problems to obtaining reliable quantitative data on population and the historical role played by the Brazilian census, see NOBLES (2000).

³⁰ See the “*Cartilha*” in: <http://www.mj.gov.br/sedh/ct/cartilha.pdf> (the best translation to “*cartilha*” would be spelling book). It is a 37-page booklet, also published on the Internet, regarding exhortations of many different religions. It is not something new for the Brazilian State, since in 1998 the book *Manual Direitos Humanos no Cotidiano* had already covered the topic, but in more extensive way of participation and reflection. See *Brasil - Manual Direitos Humanos no Cotidiano* (Roseli Fischmann, ed.), Brasília, Secretaria Nacional de Direitos Humanos/USP/UNESCO, 1998 (reprinted in 2001). Previously, in 1975, in the military dictatorship era, CONIC – National Council of Christian Churches had published this booklet sponsored by CNBB – National Chapter for the Brazilian Bishops – an ecumenical reading of the Gospels under the light of the Human Rights Universal Declaration.

³¹ The judgment had the academic support as *amicus curiae* from Dr. Celso Lafer, Professor of USP Law School and former Ministry of External Relations of Brazil, in addition to other international positions. It is an impressive document to be explored for a deeper discussion in the area.

addition to the “exportation” of systems of such faith to Brazilian migrants (the regions of New England and Florida are good examples in the United States) and to Portuguese-speaking countries such as in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, for example). That expansion is surrounded by tension for the fight for political power by elective posts.³²

Also recent and gradual is the recognition of the right to religious assistance in the Army, hospitals and prisons for the adepts of all religions, with repercussions for issues of employment. This is another point to be explored in academic investigations.

Another point is that finally the public is recognizing the African and African-Brazilian traditions, with all the inherent rights to that *status*. As mentioned before, the Brazilian public sphere had suffered a sort of “blindness” to religious diversity, but this statement is particularly true for the African tradition, even throughout the 20th century. Those traditions were considered a crime and legally forbidden as a practice in the first half of that century, with open police persecution.³³ Nowadays they are one of the most powerful sources of strengthening African-Brazilians’ identity, although not for all; many are adepts of other religions.

Note that even after the revocation of such laws, fear deriving from the trauma and discriminatory attitude of the majority of the population regarding the African religious traditions led the believers to practice a kind of double identity: in private, African tradition; in public, Catholic.³⁴ It is important to not confuse such protective practice with syncretism, which is different. That is a typical case of resistance and resilience and is known as being much more effective as the person practicing it is more flexible. So, the African and African-descendant traditions’ recognition and the possibility of affirmation of identity in the public space are in favor of democracy, also with repercussions in the work place regarding the everyday life of co-workers and in a better acceptance of the real identity of candidates to employment vacancies.

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³² The case of Rio de Janeiro is an example where the previous governor Mrs. Rosinha Garotinho – and in the previous mandate, her husband, then also governor of Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Anthony Garotinho – are Evangelical; even before them Rio de Janeiro had as governor Mrs. Benedita da Silva, the first African Brazilian and also the first Evangelical to achieve that important position. For instance, the issue of religious teaching in public schools in that Brazilian state has been receiving angrier reactions than ever, in a recent public polemic on the issue of teaching creationism versus evolutionism. There is even a judicial action of unconstitutionality proposed by institutions that were not worrying about the same issue when they belonged to the Catholic Church, pushing for the adoption of a kind of “ecumenism,” which is also understood by some sectors as a threat to the right of freedom of belief. The Presidential election in 2010 also was an example of the religious social forces pushing their agendas in the final phase of the campaigns, facts that were new in Brazilian political culture given their unexpected dimension.

³³ See PRANDI, Reginaldo (2003).

³⁴ See FISCHMANN (1996).

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