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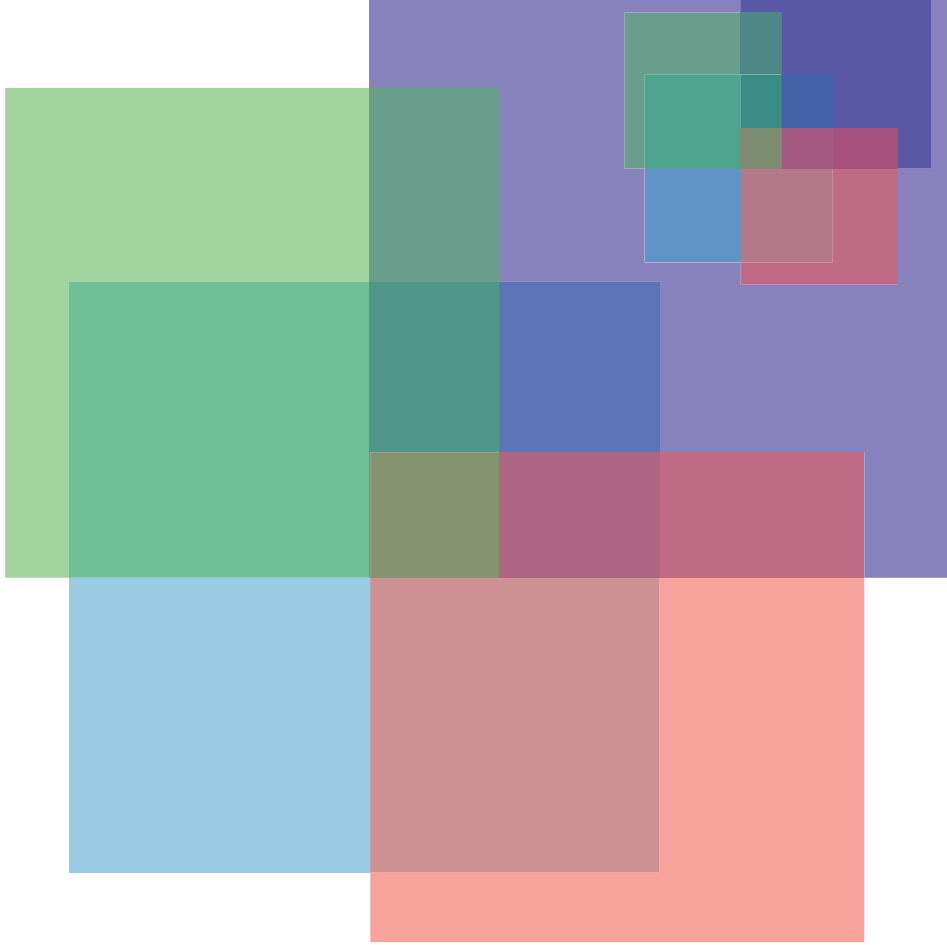
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CHAPTER 9

Intercultural translation and the afro-brazilian religions

*Saskya Miranda Lopes**

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse a certain type of dialogue that took place during the colonial and post-colonial periods in Brazil, particularly regarding Afro-Brazilian religion. It deals with an epistemological, Eurocentric form of colonialism in which the hegemony regarding culture and science of the global north has served as a homogenizing and universalizing force that is armed with a superiority and legitimacy and that has universalized culture in order to repudiate and delegitimize the knowledge of the global south. Over time, such measures encouraged an enormous deficit in the recognition, respect and enforcement of legal guarantees to the legal right to religious freedom that is inherent to human dignity and human rights.

This chapter is therefore divided into four parts. First, the manner in which a modern hegemonic rationale is instituted is discussed, who is subject to this power and to what ends. Arguments are put forth in favour of an epistemic rationality relative to the global south. The second part analyses a sort of “translation” that is

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performed in this colonization process and its current decolonization perspective. The third part looks specifically at how, in the sleight of hand between two global south territories (Brazil and Africa), the distortions, generalizations and hierarchies promoted by the lack of a true intercultural translation from the colonial period until today have impeded and continue to impede the recognition of the originality of Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil. These practices are seen as a negative reflection of the traditional religions from the African continent and, even today, violently racist reactions to these religions are still seen. The fourth part, entitled Final Considerations, summarizes the importance of a truly intercultural translation regarding the recognition and implementation process of a grammar for human dignity so that the ethnic diversity of a people might be recognized as well as the positive worth of its cultures and knowledge.

1 Modern rationality and colonization

Before speaking of translation as a form of interpretation, we must ask ourselves about the conditions that precede the act of interpretation: and the principal issue here appears to be which basis of rationality serves as the foundation for this action? This is the question that has been raised by scholars such as Boaventura Santos, Walter Dignolo and Enrique Dussel: which form of rationality has been superimposed over all others throughout the past two hundred years? Why is this, and how is it that one single form of experiencing and understanding the world has become more valid than all other forms of experience?

In this process, Quijano (2005) is particularly categorical when he points out that modern rationality emerged with Descartes, and refers the extent to which the Cartesian reason has contributed, in its scientific and secular mission, to return the power of decision to humankind under the light of reason so as to find a way of producing

knowledge that responded to the demands of the capitalistic system. Thus, that which is knowable has become objectified. A relationship has been set up between the individual and nature, with the resources of the means of production and of property.

Dussel (1994) pointed out another pillar supporting the emergence of this modern rationality when he concluded that it arose together with the globalization of rationality of the great medieval European cities, “when Europe managed to face “the Others” and control them, conquer them and do violence to them, when it could define itself as a colonizer of the Others, it formed its own modernity” (Dussel, 1994: 8). The same point of view is shared by Mignolo (2008) and Quijano (2005) working from the thesis that colonialism and modernity cannot exist in isolation from each other. They are two faces of the same coin. Colonialism is the dark and invisible face of modernity that boosts and legitimizes racism and the exploitation/appropriation of Latin America.

Santos (2009), in particular, in defending the argument that all social experience produces and reproduces knowledge and that epistemology, just like all ideas about the conditions weighed in when validating a certain type of knowledge, concludes that the horizontality of the diversity of experience in the world encourages countless ways of building up knowledge.

However, Santos stated in 2002 that modern rationality is a “lazy reason” that reinforces its own visibility by way of the invisibility of knowledge and non-Eurocentric knowledge. Modern rationality is established as the only legitimate way to produce knowledge and all experiences that are distinct from the usual patterns are wasted in a true Epistemicide.

For Santos, the act of recuperating the validity of these forms of knowledge presupposes a shift from the paradigm of lazy rationality to a cosmopolitan one that is based on the sociology of absences, on the sociology of emergences and intercultural translation. For the

present work, I will concentrate on how the absences are produced in the sociology of absences, as well as on intercultural translation.

In order to understand this invisibility process, one must understand how this lazy reason takes on the four forms that are both defensive and imposing of themselves. They are: (1) the impotent reason believes that nothing can be done relative to the necessities conceived as being external to itself: (2) the arrogant reason defends its unconditional liberty to the extent of being free from the need to exercise itself. These two reasons (Santos 2002) are seen as anchoring in a lazy fashion the discussions about determinism and free will, realism and constructivism throughout history. In order to complete the quartet of lazy reasons, the author calls attention (3) to the metonymic reason that claims that authority is the only form of rationality, a reason that establishes the inferiority of all other forms of thought that, at the most, merely serve as raw material. Finally, there is (4) the proleptic reason, which sees the future as something linear, an automatic consequence of the present and which makes it unnecessary for us to worry about the future.

Metonymic reason is that which is responsible for the search for homogenization of the ways of understanding the world. Its totalizing perspective is exemplified in dichotomies in which the theoretically symmetrical parts make up the whole, masking the hierarchization of these dichotomies that always sets up a superiority of one part with regard to the others: men and women, black and white, capital and work, primitive and civilized. Thus, this reason has served as the foundation on which the world thinks in a totalizing thorough and complete fashion, on the one hand. On the other hand, this view depends on seeing one of the parts of the dichotomy as based on the other. It deepens its understanding of the world in a selective and partial manner. Reducing the multiplicity of realities in the world, and the conceptions of how one understands them, takes place with the secularization of this understanding that is based on authority and the imposition of modern Cartesian

thinking. This form of thought, however, has yet to prove its superiority by logical arguments when faced with diversity.

So, this modern reason will reduce diversity in different ways. Quijano explains how the concept of race is used as a category of modernity that is linked to identity. The phenotypes of the conquerors and the conquered serve as a hierarchy of social roles that justifies domination based on classifications and social hierarchies. In Europe, theories have been devised to explain the inferiority of the conquered peoples based on their physical characteristics in order to establish universal criteria that justify domination, slavery, exploitation and race-based divisions of labour. In this way, Western Europe places itself as the exclusive holder of rationality, of the valid experiences of modernity, and it carries out a reading/translation of all the other world experiences according to the metonymic hierarchy between primitive and civilized, traditional and modern, rational and irrational.

Dussel (1994) has demonstrated that the eclipse of the other takes place together with the construction of the “myth of modernity”. This process is based on the supposed goodness of the colonizer who was committed to sharing civilization but, in fact, a universalist rationality acts in an irrationally violent fashion upon the “other”, demanding of them that they sacrifice their own culture, their gods and cosmography in the name of that which has been determined by this modern rationality. Moreover, the myth of modernity is also an imposition of the incorporation of the new capitalist system of trade, since this is how domination is justified, as are the exploitation and eclipse of the other. Thus, violence, war and domination are to be understood as emancipation, something good that is done for the barbarians in favour of their modernization, their development. Victims are made responsible for their victimization, as all suffering was justifiable by modernization; it is an attitude that still persists today. When nature itself is at play, as are the environment, traditional communities and the advance

of modernity, the same colonizing logic of modernity is repeated in the name of civilization, as is that of capital, for the countries which are “underdeveloped” according to the standards of capitalistic globalization.

Santos (2002) reaffirms that, within the logic of modern rationality, there are many ways of translating these readings of the Others in the world as being inexistent, void or made invisible. He lists five. The first is the monoculture of knowledge, in which modern science and high culture are the only valid forms of knowledge. Everything that is not legitimized by these criteria of truth is a non-existence that will be defined as ignorance or a lack of culture. The second is the monoculture of linear time, which is to say, the belief that history has one direction and a known meaning. It sees history as inevitable and as being translated by the ideas of progress, modernization, development and globalization. It believes that the countries which have command over knowledge, whose institutions validate modern rationality, declare themselves to be the centre of the world system. These are the countries that are supposedly ahead of their time. Non-existence may well be translated into everything that is defined as backward, not modern, simple, traditional, underdeveloped. The third rationale is social classification by categories (such as racial or of gender) which are intended to make the hierarchy appear natural, and to hide its intentionality.

According to Quijano (2005), the hierarchy between the dominators and the dominated that was carried out in favour of the development of modern capitalism was mostly deeply and forcefully based on racial classifications. Santos properly emphasizes that this is crueller than the produced forms of inexistence as it carries the notion of being “an inferiority that is insurmountable because it is natural” (2002: 13). The fourth form of producing non-existence results from the logic of the dominant scale, which take precedence over all the others. Large scales have been built during

modernity: one is universality, which ignores all the specificities; and the other is globalization, which eclipses all the local realities and turns them into a non-existence that is peculiar to the location. The fifth rationale is the productive one, the monoculture of the criteria of capitalistic production, by way of which economic growth is thought of as an unquestionable goal and all productivity ought to be leveraged in order to achieve profit, whether through nature, work or human beings. Within the capitalistic logic, non-existence applies to anything that corresponds to that which is unproductive, sterile or unqualified.

All of these forms of non-existence and denial of experience are a subtraction from the world. They are the epistemicides that arise from the contraction of the present and that make up a series of wasted experiences and ways of translating the world. With the sociology of absences, Santos (2002) is dilating this present, broadening experience by freeing up the metonymic reasonings, imbuing them with credibility, other possibilities of understanding and experiencing the world by way of increasing the value of that which had earlier been classified as inferior, unproductive, obsolete, local or obscure.

Such changes presuppose a change of paradigm: the replacement of lazy reason with cosmopolitan reason, which encompasses the many forms of understanding the world that surpass the limitations of modern Eurocentric logic. The cosmopolitan reason understands that social power interacts with many divergent concepts of time and temporalities. The exchange of a totalizing concept of the modern world, which condenses the present into a mere instant and expands the future in a linear fashion, as if it were a certainty, independent of any worries. The idea of the cosmopolitan rationality is that of an expanding present that prizes the differing visions of the world, which stands in stark contrast to the waste of experience and the careful compacting of the future that is based on present action.

The visibility and credit presented by the Sociology of Absences (Santos, 2002) takes place by way of proposals to overcome the five totalizing dichotomies of metonymic reason. (1) There is a monoculture of knowledge by way of the ecology of knowledge where non-scientific knowledge is a form of knowing that is as alternative and valid as scientific knowledge. (2) The monoculture of linear time for an ecology of temporalities starts from the idea of progress that is formed by globalization as the only direction of time. It sees that time is able to encompass the many social practises in a non-residual way. Thus, traditional religious practices are not seen as anachronistic but are recognized as a way of seeing life that is as contemporary as any other, religious or not. Overcoming (3) social classification by way of an ecology of recognition, with the coloniality of power in modern western capitalism is explained by Quijano (2005). He sets up an ethnic/racial social classification that is internal to nation-states and is intrinsic to colonialism, which it has used on a global scale to disqualify those who are different, to subject them to a hierarchy as those which are inferior and to validate inequality. The proposal is delightfully simple and revolutionary: to begin recognizing equal differences, since “the differences that continue when hierarchy disappears become a strong criticism of the differences that the hierarchy demands so that it does not disappear (Santos, 2002: 19). (4) From the logic of the global scale to be replaced by a trans-scales ecology in which the goal is deglobalization of the local, as is a counterhegemonic globalization which broadens the practices and possibilities that are alternative to globalization, in which the goal is that which has not yet been integrated into localized globalism. (5) The fifth logic to overcome is that of productivity which should be replaced with an ecology of productivity. This concept values alternative systems and organizations that are popular, collective, practice solidarity and are self-managed. The said institutions would have

their credibility rescued from the productive paradigms of capitalism in which accumulation is more important than distribution.

The manner suggested in which to overcome this totalitarian and homogenizing lazy reason force and, particularly the metonymic one, far from setting up a general theory on how to do so — as this would be equally totalizing and the world has many more experiences of knowledge and ways of seeing itself than any one theory could encompass — would be a cultural translation that might serve as a tool capable of conferring reciprocal intelligibility between the global north and global south. It would distance itself from any attempt towards totalizing homogenization or hierarchization.

2 Intercultural translation

The limited translation model known for limiting itself to interlinguistic transfer, where the translator is neutral with limited autonomy, has witnessed a huge conceptual evolution in recent decades with this concept shifting from the field of linguistics to the sphere of cultural studies and taking on a more interdisciplinary connotation.

It fell to post-colonialists to broaden the scope of the activity of translation. They re-analysed the “original” and the “translated” and the implications of these concepts for the cultures of identity. Wolf (2008) posits that the concept of translation becomes a central category to cultural theory and policy, seen as a reinterpretation where the subjects are studies based on the historical situational contexts and open up a range of different possible contextualizations.

Thus, the assumptions of the conceptual definition of translation, of the unity of the starting language regarding the target languages are broadened, particularly in the rupture of a Eurocentric paradigmatic unity. According to Toury (*apud* Ribeiro, 2004), a definition is applied *a posteriori* and is not dependent on a preconceived model and prescribed in a biased fashion.

Translation surpasses the scope of the text when it is applied within the field of cultural studies, of anthropology, sociology, political science and other fields. This is because every instance where one would attribute meaning when faced with difference can be interpreted as an act of translation and, when seen from the perspective of difference, cultures, social patterns and political activity would all be subject to translation.

The case of English as the lingua franca of globalization, as the dominant language, according to Ribeiro (2004), reflects the encompassing empire which advocated undivided, monological and monolingual assimilation. In such a unifying and homogenizing manner where difference is of little importance, little is said and a “homogenization without translation process” is set up, a “process by which a hegemonic country is able to promote its own localism in the shape of the universal or the global” (Ribeiro, 2004: 39). In the same manner, Santos (2014) defines hegemonic globalism in order to problematize the paradigm of Human Rights as a universal grammar of human dignity, taking into consideration their constitution under the logic of a modern and homogenizing rationality and serving the liberal political and capitalist interests throughout their historic development.

The first major document on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was written while those who wrote it were ignorant of racial, sexual and class based inequalities that subjected peoples and nations to colonial power. It was only much later that the movement to recognize certain groups as a whole — women, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, gays, lesbians, transgenders and religious minorities — was recognized as a violation of human rights.

It is in this sense that Santos (2002) proposed that translation be a way of overcoming the monocultures of lazy reason and of supporting the ecologies of knowledge, of acknowledging the many ways of understanding the world, of the sociology of absences. Thus,

the potential that the alterations in the concept of translation bring challenge human rights to serve as transcultural, political action.

Sally Merry (2006) aptly illustrated this discussion when she proposed the concept of vernacularization: a type of translation applied to the concepts of human rights by non-Western cultures. It seeks to carry out the translation from within, based on the social and cultural context of the people at the receiving end as intercultural translation works dynamically based not only on external forms of heterogeneity but also on the internal forms within each group. There are two forms of vernacularization: replication and hybridization.

In order to distance oneself from the mistake of transforming the different into the familiar with the subsumption of the new into preconceived terms and with the subsequent imposition of values, ideologies and patterns of the colonial central powers, vernacularization by replication is similar to the traditional model of translation. It distinguishes itself by seeking out more familiar means to understand human rights based on experiences that already exist in the context. On the other hand, hybridization takes as a starting point a process of blending local symbols, ideas and values and the production of a new hybrid element in order to translate human rights in a manner that respects the local point of view. This hybridization is, to a certain extent, similar to Wolf's position (2008) when he states that every translation process is hybridization, since no culture is pure. This claim of purity and homogeneity has served to justify the superiority of aristocracies for centuries. It represents patriarchal dominance between the sexes as well as racial hierarchy.

The colonization processes beginning in the sixteenth century in the American continent are a classic example of how atypical knowledge of the "Eurocentric rationalism is not recognized and valued in its otherness at the time of translation. Instead, it is merely cast in the mould of western modernity, and implicitly assumed

as the only valid reason” (Ribeiro, 2004: 41). Indigenous peoples, African slaves and the readings of the world built by American peoples are examples of the cruelty of a colonizing discourse, of the absence of horizontality, of a true intercultural translation.

Thus, Santos (2002) challenges intercultural translation as a means of learning about, validating and legitimizing reading, narrative and the experience about other cultures as a distinct way of seeing the world. He proposes the institution of diatopical hermeneutics, a translation which deals with the knowledge and practices of different cultures, and that studies the common concerns within different cultures and their differing ways of dealing with them. Going back to the deconstruction of modern rationality totalitarianism, the translation of knowledge and practices starts from the assumption that all cultures are incomplete and that intercultural dialogue can only enrich them in terms of what is different among them, neither better nor worse, just different.

It is interesting to reflect on this translation within the field of religions and their common proposals for a better world. This topic requires a major intercultural translation effort and to the extent that human rights become the right of the State, exercising a monopoly over them, the guarantee of religious freedom within secular State becomes the required assumption needed in order to carry out an intercultural translation about religions and among them. Obviously, this translation requires areas of contact along the borders between cultures, such areas being fields of translation. Santos pointed out (2002) a few questions that are true reflections on the importance of intercultural translation; I shall highlight some in order to set up a fair dialogue within the field of religions:

When to translate? At the time in which the areas of contact converge at their rhythm and opportunity and open up for a contemporary dialogue of equals, overcoming the hierarchization imposed by the lazy reason’s time linearity, where one follows the other. **Who should translate?** Merry (2006), as mentioned

above, proposes that translation is ideally carried out from within, by those who hold the knowledge and the practices that represent such knowledge, people capable of defending both realities deeply and critically. **How to translate?** It is an argumentative process based on a cosmopolitan reason and emotion, in other words, it shares different knowledge and experiences of knowing the world, starting from the contact areas which have been created between cultures and regardless of their differences. **Why translate?** So that intercultural translation might contribute towards overcoming the absences, the silencing, so that apparent conflicts might be replaced with the construction of equalities, the valuing of difference and the formation of a “constellation of knowledge and practices that is strong enough to provide credible alternatives to what is known as neoliberal globalization” (Santos, 2002: 279).

3 Translation and Afro-Brazilian religions

It is impossible to speak of Brazil and the African continent without mentioning the type of “translation” that took place in shaping these identities, whether in terms of imposed visibility or invisibility. The “determinant role played by translation in redefining the meanings of culture and ethnic identity” leads Salguiero to point out the extent to which the history of the translation of the Americas is confused with the story of how the identity of this continent was formed, of how native Americans and African slaves from many different regions and ethnic groups across the continent were forced to give up their beliefs, cultures and languages in order to submit to the civilizing gesture of the European colonizer.

The possibility of a dialogue between colonizers and colonized was never considered, nor have the dominant epistemological references been questioned. Thus, the “translation” of the other was never an intercultural translation but a translation of the subsumption

of the other, of that which is different into previously known and familiar categories, an exercise of authority and reductionism.

there cannot be a mere contrast between “their” cultural order and “ours”, since the former is the product of a knowable object coming from the inside of “our” cultural order. The separation between “us” and “them” works like a mirror image — an inversion that tells us only what we want to know about ourselves. (Frow *apud* Ribeiro, 2004: 42)

Thus, there has never been dialogue because there has never been an encounter. As Dussel argues, after the conquest of the earth and the bodies, it was necessary to conquer the imagination because everything that was linked to indigenous and African culture was demonic, backward and primitive. The religious dimension of life in the world needed to be controlled according to the religious and scientific hegemony of modernity. Therefore, there has never been a meeting of cultures because there has never been a meeting of equals. Instead, the “other” has been exterminated for not having a rationality nor religious validity, an opinion which has justified the theological eclipse of the other by the superiority of European Christianity over all of the indigenous religions that existed in Brazil as well as African traditions brought by black slaves.

This eclipse of the traditional indigenous and African religions consisted of repressing any kind of worship and translating these traditions as being demonic and inferior. It was based as much on the racial logic that permitted the capture and enslavement of the African peoples as on the religiosity that sought to impose a submission to Christianity. The resistance in the *senzalas*, or slaves’ quarters, were examples of a true intercultural translation where groups of differing cultural traditions, called the nations of Candomblé — *bantos*, *iorubas* and *ewê-fons* — came together in their similarities to maintain the rites alive, the ancestry and the forces of nature which had been turned into divinities.

However, Afro-Brazilian religions had to hide for many centuries under a syncretism with Catholic religion, considered superior, in order to maintain their worship and ceremonies which were masqueraded as Christian rites and ceremonies. In this process, we can say that Afro-Brazilian religions were born of diatopic hermeneutics with the creation of hybrid translation that focused on genuinely Brazilian formations:

the rites brought by the Africans gave rise to a variety of manifestations that here found a specific formation, by way of a multitudinous syncretism that arose from the contact of the black religions with the Catholicism of the whites that was mediated or encouraged by the asymmetric relations between them. The same thing happened with the indigenous religions and much later, but not less significantly, with Kardecist Spiritism. (Prandi, 1995: 115)

However, the demonizing view of the missionaries is reinforced by the religious racist rhetoric of inferiority that is specifically orientated toward the African continent and its culture. This “other” is as outside/foreign to the law of humankind as it is of/to divine law, a fact which justifies, as we have discussed above, domination and the exploitation of labour, as much as extermination in the face of any resistance to conversion or to the process of being “civilized”. Barriendos (2011) goes even further as to state that it was not only the racialized epistemologies but also the visual representation and all of the other narratives that reinforced the understanding of the indigenous peoples and their practices — and here I include the enslaved Africans as well — as well as all their practices as being savage and primitive within a universalist and totalizing modern, lazy reason.

This construction of identity based on the beliefs and values of Amerindian and African peoples, and which is founded on a primitive and inferior racial perspective, reinforced the monoculture

of knowledge, the linearity of time and the social classification as permanent states in Africa and Latin America. Their continental geographies are not taken into consideration nor are their cultural and religious diversity, considering that the largest religious groups in Africa today are the Coptic Christians and Islam but, according to lazy reason, Africa continues to be colonized and a prisoner of the “translation” that maintains the continuous century-old view that it is backward, primitive, unproductive, ignorant and inferior.

This perspective regarding Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples supports the racism within the Brazilian social structure denying everything that is related to the memory of the black Africans that were enslaved, rejecting their own recognition as Afro-descendants and continuing even today to persecute and demonize Afro-Brazilian religions. They deny their national origins and are submitted to a crystalized view of an Africa that has been denied because it was translated as being far less than all of the experiences and views of the world that it holds.

The wide range of Afro-Brazilian religions is the result of a true intercultural translation, of resistance and the maintenance of beliefs and values when faced with the explicit prohibition by the State of any worship that differed from the official Catholic religion. Even after freedom of worship was legally recognized, these practices have continued to be associated with charlatanism, witch doctoring and are still considered crimes under the Brazilian Penal Code. Nevertheless, the manners in which the world and Afro-Brazilian religions are interpreted persist and now focus on forms of worship with greater emphasis on African traditions. For example, *Candomblé* is also known as *Xangô* in the Northeast, *Batuque* in Rio Grande do Sul, or *Tambor de Mina*, depending on where it takes place in Brazil. Nowadays, worship is more focused on indigenous divinities or even those blended with African divinities as both traditions venerate elements of nature. Examples include *Jurema*, *Pajelança*, and *Jarê* (Prandi, 1995).

The dialogue between these different cultures has been taking on the form of vernacularization by replication more and more frequently. At other times, the syncretism brought on by the dominant religion imposed is so strong that today you can find sculptures and paintings of African divinities with white, European features. And thus, Umbanda — a type of hybridization as a means of resistance and less prejudiced — emerges from the blend of indigenous and African divinities, with Catholic prayers and Kardecist Spiritism, representing a religion for all.

However, racism currently hinders the dialogue between the Afro-Brazilian and Christians with occasional exceptions in Bahia Catholicism. Moreover, there are few areas of contact that might promote a true intercultural translation between the religions in the search for common ground and this absence has resulted in people being assaulted and even killed as a result of hate crimes. Fruit of religious intolerance, violence has arisen in a widespread series of attacks: against property, people, and the moral and spiritual integrity of many followers of Afro-Brazilian religions. Their temples have been broken into and people have been killed, such as in the cases of Ialorixás Gildásia dos Santos and Deda de Iansã:

The crime took place in October 1999 when the newspaper *Folha Universal* published a photo on its cover of Mãe Gilda dressed in her sacerdotal robes to illustrate an article with the title: “Macumba charlatans swindle the pockets and the lives of their clients”. Her house was invaded, her husband was verbally and physically assaulted and her *terreiro* (house of worship, or yard) was vandalized by Evangelicals. Ialorixá was unable to tolerate the attacks and died of a heart attack on 21 January 2000.

Fifteen years after the tragic death of Mãe Gilda, the story repeated itself and in Camaçari, Bahia, Mãe Dede de Iansã

also died of a heart attack after being verbally attacked all night by an evangelistic group at the door to her yard.¹

The 21st January, the day when Mãe Gilda died in Salvador of Bahia, has thus been declared the National Day against Religious Intolerance in Brazil. And there is no doubt that the concept of religious intolerance is identified with the concept of hate crimes studied in the human rights field. Studies on this issue find it hard to define all facets of this crime, pointing out its illegal and selective bias, as it is defined as violence directed at a group of people who suffer discrimination for having values at odds with most of society (Nathan, 2005).

Evangelical Christianity in Brazil has grown around 20% (Freston, 2008) and the Neo-pentecostal movement, in particular, has encouraged a discourse of hatred towards the Afro-Brazilian religions, inciting moral and psychological violence and threats, vandalism, unlawful entry and even physical violence under the auspices of the traditional demonic arguments of missionaries and inquisitors. The pre-eminence of white, European models is equally the pre-eminence of Christianity relative to all the other religions, which are regarded (or disregarded) to be of minor or primitive gods. Thus, the same colonization process that would oblige the infidel to accept “civilizing conversion”, for better or for worse, continues.

Despite the fact that Afro-Brazilian religions are constantly the target of prejudice and constant public attack, especially in the last two decades, with the rise of evangelical Christianity, the former religions have resisted, organized themselves and defended their rights more and more.

¹ National Day against Religious Intolerance. Geledés. Consulted on 20.04.2016, at <http://www.geledes.org.br/dia-nacional-de-combate-a-intolerancia-religiosa/#ix-zz480z1qA4M>

Final consideration

If one takes the process described as the denial of otherness, of the identity and the dignity of those who are different, then we can think of the grammar of human rights, which is based on the concept of human dignity, as one of the potential frontiers/places where it is possible to construct a dialogue between different cultures in the field of religious representation which, based on a post-colonial translation, challenges human rights to surpass their universalist institutionalization which has resulted from imperialism and cultural secularism in order to realize the guaranteed implementation of a wide range of cultural values.

Thus, just as intercultural translation, in order to be transparent, must be able to recognize itself as a “minor” text that is unable to contemplate the full diversity that exists in the world — the different ways of being taken on by the innumerable cultures worldwide —, human rights cannot be understood as universal and homogenizing. The fairest translation is that which repudiates hierarchy and assimilation and accentuates the differences. It confronts incompleteness in order to maintain the healthy tension that the world is made up of a wide spectrum of cultural wealth and there is not always a correspondence between the source and target contexts.

Religious intolerance that results from a subsumption translation of the Eurocentric model of colonial capitalism at the same time supports a reading that is inferiorizing and racist in relation to itself and to the other and in relation to the very Brazilian religious culture and that of the African continent. It is a sad south-south sleight of hand. Dialectally speaking, the grammar of human rights also shapes possible spaces to opening up alternative paths, to the extent to which the defence of secularization and the freedom of worship have made it possible to expose the violence that has taken place in the media, in the courts and in the organization of municipal,

state and federal conferences in 2009, 2011 and 2013, conferences which have counted with the participation of representatives of many segments of Afro-Brazilian religious in a discussion of public policy and the defence of their rights, and which have permitted Afro-descendants and some *Candomblé* practitioners to recover and value their roots and African traditions as well as the language and the rites and to turn the sleight of hand into a positive movement.

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