

Disputed territory: the school in the struggle between republicanism and the Church in Portugal (19th and 20th centuries)¹

Território em disputa: a escola na luta entre o republicanismo e a Igreja em Portugal (séculos XIX e XX)

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RESUMO

O trabalho tem como objetivo discutir conceitos centrais aos processos de secularização e laicização do ensino em Portugal desde a Monarquia Constitucional até o início da Primeira República. A abordagem parte da compreensão dos espaços escolares públicos e privados como territórios, dos quais Estado e Igreja procuraram estrategicamente se apropriar a fim de conquistar e afirmar uma hegemonia política e cultural sobre a sociedade portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: Escola laica; Primeira República (Portugal); história da educação.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss some of the core concepts underlying the processes of the secularization and laicization of education in Portugal, between the Constitutional Monarchy and the beginning of the First Republic. I will consider public and private school spaces as territories, which both state and Church sought to strategically conquer and to establish political and cultural hegemony in Portuguese society.

Keywords: Secular School; First Republic (Portugal); History of Education.

Essential in the social and human sciences, the concept of *territory* should not be confused with the concept of space, nor restricted to it, in the same way that it is not a synonym of region, place, or locality. A dense, complex and polysemic concept, territory involves disputes and the exercise of power. In the words of Foucault: “territory is undoubtedly a geographic notion, but above all it is a judicial and political notion: that which is controlled by a certain type of power”.²

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It is in this sense that the concept of territory can be useful to think about the laicization of school spaces in Portugal, as a type of corollary to the radical process of secularization carried out by republicanism there.

It is widely known that the relations between Church and state in Portugal were troubled from the *Pombalina* Epoch, when the Marquis de Pombal carried out the famous reforms which culminated in the expulsion from the empire of the Jesuits, who had previously been the principal allies of the Portuguese monarch in the colonizing enterprise. According to Falcon, these reforms did not have an anticlerical nature, rather they were more linked to political than religious questions. They were part of the amalgam which the author called 'Enlightened Christianity.'³

The 1822 Constitution "in name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity,"⁴ which established the Constitutional Monarchy, and the 1826 Constitution granted by "Dom Pedro by the grace of God, King of Portugal and Algarves, etc." asserted the continuation of the "Apostolic Roman Catholic Religion." In 1822 it was stated to be the "Religion the Nation" and the "Religion of the Kingdom,"⁵ in 1826, although foreigners were allowed the "private exercise of their own religions" (1822), as long as they were "in houses meant for this without any exterior appearance of a place of worship" (1826). In the "general dispositions and guarantees of the civil and political rights of Portuguese citizens," the 1826 Constitution also guaranteed that "no one could be persecuted for religious reasons, once the state is respected and Public Morals are not offended."

However, constitutional texts still mirrored the contradictions of Portuguese liberalism in relation to the principles of freedom of conscience and expression. Examples of this were the fact that the oaths of the king, deputies, state councilors and others to "maintain the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church" had precedence over "safeguarding and protecting the Constitution." Furthermore, the organization of elections by parish priests, entrusted with the lists of electors and held in churches after masses, did not favor at all individual liberties. It should also be noted that the tolerance of other religions was only stipulated for 'foreigners,' with the result that Portuguese nationals did not seem to enjoy the right to choose their own religion. In other words, both the exercise of citizenship and national identity, in other words the belonging to a Portuguese "imagined political community,"⁶ were still inseparable not only from the Christian creed, but also the Roman Catholic Church.

It is no wonder, for this reason, that in relation to the education of citizens, the components of the socializing intention of primary school curricula,

according to Pintassilgo, “would follow each other in a curious continuity-rupture dialectic: Christian religion and morality, civility, the rights and duties of the citizen, and finally, civic (and moral) education, amongst other formulations.”⁷

However, notwithstanding the predominance of the idea of the importance of Christianity for civil, moral and ethical education, the positions of liberals in relation to the Church and to religion were not consensual in any form during the nineteenth century.

The most evident manifestations of conflicts of interests between liberals and the Church had the privileged target of the religious congregations, precisely the part of the clergy who ran schools, hospitals, welfare works, etc. As Vítor Neto stated, “the majority of deputies from our first liberalism were defenders of a reform of the religious orders which would reduce their weight in society, and after the Civil War of 1832-1834, parliamentarians supported measures which would extinguish male religious congregations and reform the female ones. Liberal anti-clericalism was more a form of anti-congregationalism than a struggle against the secular clergy.”⁸

The 1834 decree which extinguished the male religious orders did not prevent the congregations from ‘progressively and in a discreet form’ returning to Portugal during the nineteenth century. However, this would not be a pacific process as shown by the significant episode of the French Sisters of Charity belonging to the Order of St. Vicente de Paul who, having entered Portugal in 1857 under the pretext of providing welfare services, were obliged to leave the country five years later due to a new prohibition of the operation of religious congregations, and after having been the constant target during this time of a violent anticlerical campaign. The French sisters would be far from the only ones to try to set up in the country. According to Maria Cândida Proença, “from the 1850s onward, with the purpose of founding, schools, hospices and hospitals, Jesuits, Franciscans, Holy Ghost Fathers, Benedictines, Brothers of St. John, the Little Sisters of the Poor, Salesians and Lazarists, amongst many others, entered Portugal.”⁹

The case of the Sisters of Charity, however, strongly motivated discussion about the religious influence on teaching from the 1850s onwards. It was for this reason that the Ecclesiastical Commission’s proposal to parliament would be passed, preventing religious congregations from teaching in public establishments, even though the secular clergy could. However, the regular clergy could still teach in private colleges.

The discussion which strongly distinguished the positions in relation to the regular and secular clergy was underpinned, on the one hand, by nationalist arguments, and on the other by opinion supported by liberal principles. An example of the former was the (defeated) bill from Deputy Vicente Ferrer for “the prohibition from teaching of all members of religious orders who had the audacity to illegally establish themselves after the decrees of 1834 ... He understood that the Sisters of Charity could not teach, as they were subordinated to a foreign prelacy and since they had an illegal existence, as they had been established without royal license.” (Neto, 2009, p.95). Defenders of the latter position, however, argued that parents should have the right to educate their children in religious schools, if they so desired.

The actual political and legal dynamics that determined extinctions, expulsions, restrictions, or, on the other hand, allowed the return and operation of religious orders, are extremely confused. In 1829 during the rule of D. Miguel, the Jesuits expelled by Pombal returned to Portugal; in 1833 a Ecclesiastic Reform Commission was created which determined the suppression of convents and monasteries with less than 12 members and prohibited all admissions to monastic sacred orders and novitiates; in 1834 the Jesuits were once again order to leave Portugal, male convents, monasteries and other religious houses are closed and their goods nationalized, with it being ordered that religious positions be filled by public examination, while D. Pedro was excommunicated by Gregory XVI;¹⁰ in 1841 Portugal reestablished relations with the Holy See; in 1848 a partnership between Portugal and the Holy See allowed the return of religious orders to Portugal; in 1862 religious congregations were prohibited again; in 1870 after the First Vatican Council, there was a new attempt to reintroduce religious orders; in 1880 the government ordered governors to provide information about the existence of teaching establishments belonging to religious congregations; in 1901 a decree by Hintze Ribeiro allowed the reconstitution of religious orders which were solely concerned with teaching, missionary work in the colonies, or charity.

Furthermore, whilst the majority of liberals did not appear to want to break with traditional beliefs, during the century the number who saw religious influence on education as an effective obstacle to the freedom of conscience would grow. At the same time there would also grow the number of those who denounced the association between Catholic influence and national backwardness or decadence.

In relation to the cleavage that this new conscience represented, it is worth noting as Fernando Catroga has shown, that while since the Middle Ages

various secularization movements in societies can be observed, the Enlightenment would provoke an intense accelerate and only the political and ideological conditions of the nineteenth century would allow this process to assume a laicizing direction, in other words, that there would emerge in it a “militant contestation that would question the institutional, cultural and symbolic force of Christianity and Catholicism.”¹¹ This also meant that “while all *laïcité* is secularization, not all secularization is *laïcité*.”¹²

Catroga, who is an essential reference for this question, emphasizes in various texts the differences between secularization and laicization, vocabulary frequently used as synonymous (cf. Catroga, 1988; 2004; 2010). It is worth noting that these specific meanings and differences only gained significance in determined historic contexts, as is the case of Portugal from the nineteenth century onwards, and that this distinction is fundamental for understanding the conditions of the debate that took part in relation to education. It is only after the emergence of this ‘militant contestation’ in favor of the laicization of Portuguese society and adopted by republicanism, that school space effectively assumed the character of a ‘disputed territory,’ as we will argue below.

Secularization, according to Catroga, referenced “the path that Modernity would come to follow, provoking the progressive autonomization of reason, nature, society and politics, as well as the immanentization of the fundamentals of ethics and liberty, and the gradual separation of the public and private spheres” (Catroga, 2004, p.52). This involved a wide-ranging concept which, as the same author suggests, originated in the middle of the sixteenth century in France, in reference to a very specific situation of the “expropriation of the goods of the Church by the Crown” (ibid., p.57). This meaning was still associated with secularization in the Portuguese nineteenth century, as h can be seen, for example, in the 1834 law which ordered the extinction of male religious houses and the nationalization of their property.

Laïcité and laicization, in turn, words whose prefix would initially be used in expressions opposed to the terms clerical and clericalism, assumed the more general meaning of opposition “to the entire universe with a confessional reference, or simply religious.” Gaining strength in the context of French republicanism at the end of the nineteenth century, the dictionary definitions of these terms would be associated from the beginning with the field of education and teaching.¹³ Also according to the same author, this application can be explained because it was “at the beginning of the 1870s that *laïcité* gained strength within the quarrel over the secularization of teaching” (ibid., p.98).

The semantic evolution of the concept as denounced by its use at the end of the nineteenth century, however, not only points to more positive action of the state in relation to laicizing the cultural, political, legal and social aspects of society, a condition for fulfilling the emancipatory promises based on the Enlightenment foundations of Reason, Science, Progress and Civilization, but also suggests that school is the privileged space, *par excellence*, for this action. This was the principal banner of Portuguese republicans to the extent that the movement gained strength in the 1870s.

In fact, the weak point of the anti-Congregationalist measures of the liberals was always the role played by the religious orders in education, including the overseas missions, and, as will be seen, even the republicans had difficulties in totally banning the Church in the colonies. In summary, expulsions, extinctions, and prohibitions did not manage to neutralize its influence due to the importance given by society and to large extent by politicians, due to its work in education and welfare. This involved areas in the liberal state did not want to, nor was it able to, and perhaps it could not even conceive how to, occupy the place of the Church.

It was, thus, republicanism with its 'messianic' nature, its 'regenerating mission',¹⁴ its 'demopedic utopia' (Pintassilgo, 2010) which transformed the school space into a territory to be disputed with the Church¹⁵ and 'appropriated' for its secular project.¹⁶ A public space in which the fundamental values of the republican state should prevail.

The actual notion of 'demopedic utopia,' containing the idea of a (non) place, another society in which there existed laws, rules and values which allowed the formation of a 'new man,' is of great use in thinking of the school as a territory to be appropriated by the Republic. It is no coincidence that a significant part of the civic and pedagogical literature at the end of the nineteenth century in various countries, since it was strongly committed to the various processes of national formation, chose the school environment as the privileged scenario for educational narratives.

Taking as the best example *Coração* by Edmondo de Amicis, fictional literature frequently represented the school as the miniature of a perfect society, as if the future citizens educated in that environment were capable upon leaving school of constructing/reproducing social perfection on a national scale.¹⁷ (Utopian) school space, thus, became perhaps the principal metaphor of the nation imagined under the Republic.

Also emphasizing the question of the appropriation of school spaces as an axis of reflection to understand disputes between the Church and state, it

is worth noting, as Sérgio Campos Matos shows in a text on about private schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that there exist two criteria when talking about 'private schools' in Portugal: "1) the ownership of the school and 2) the type of teaching, involving autonomy in relation to the public education system."¹⁸ The difference between these two conceptions is at the core of the conflicts which on various occasions divided the republicans themselves.

Since its organization, the republican movement in Portugal, with the foundation of republican centers, emphasized the privileged place and strategy attributed to education in its political project. The centers were intended to carry out "predominantly pedagogical actions, together with political activism, determined by the needs of the electoral struggle. They were, thus, hybrid associations, a mixture of intellectual societies, electoral committees, school and proto-political party groups."¹⁹

Until the end of the monarchy 160 centers were created, almost half in Lisbon and Porto.²⁰ The existence of schools linked to centers, as well as the records of various educational actions undertaken by them, while they might not allow the more profound meaning of education in the republican ideal to be understood, are nonetheless undeniably witnesses of the relevance and the centrality of the subject for a large part of those who embraced the cause at that moment.

Moreover, other initiatives that were prior to the advent of the regime in 1910 and directly or indirectly linked to republicanism, such as *Escola Oficina nº 1*, founded in 1905 by an alliance between republicans and masons, the Popular University project, the "Mobile Schools Using John of God," created in 1882 and which remained in operation after 5 October, and the strong association between republican propaganda and the defense of lay schools as the only form of freeing society from clerical influence, are further evidence of how the problem seemed to delineate itself, especially as a question of territorial nature, in other words, it was as if the conquest and the subsequent republican dominion and appropriation of school territories/spaces were the primordial conditions for the freedom of conscience.

The Mobile Schools, in fact, are a good example of this. The decree of 29 March 1911 saw these schools as a valid alternative for permanent primary schools in places where these did not exist. According to Moura, the "trust that republicans had in these schools, where the spirit of activism appears to have greater weight than pedagogical and scientific preparation, offended teachers in the conventional teaching career, who saw the recruitment of these

‘missionaries’ – based on ideological trust and not academic preparation – as a threat to their own existence.”²¹ The ‘republicanization’ of school spaces, whether they were permanent or mobile, was what translated their territorialization.

We can think of the images created by the titles chosen by Moura for his book *A Guerra Religiosa na I República* and more specifically the chapter which deals with education: “Na frente do combate – a escola (At the line of combat – the school)” (Moura, 2004). Without developing in the body of the text the argument of territorial dispute, the titles suggest, almost intuitively the same hypothesis that is raised here.

This explains, in addition to the importance of (obligatory, free and lay) primary teaching as a place of excellence for the socialization of all Portuguese, why efforts to neutralize religious influence in education went at times beyond the limit between public and private, thereby contradicting one of the principles dear to liberalism.

The first and principal target of the contestations was clearly the ‘confessional school.’ While the closing down of the religious orders, enacted three days after the proclamation of the Republic on 8 October 1910, represented a strong blow to confessional teaching, a sequence of laws, decrees and diplomas continued these efforts. The decree of 22 October, for example, declared “the end of the teaching of Christian doctrine in primary schools and primary teacher training schools.”²² The decree of 31 December, seeking to hinder any resistance to compliance with the former decree, prohibited members of religious congregations from teaching or working in any teaching establishment, though those with Portuguese nationality could continue to reside as secularized clergy in the country, after the extinction of the religious orders.²³ The Law of Separation of State and Church, dated 20 April 1911, which finally stated that the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church was no longer the religion of the state and recognized and guaranteed “full freedom of conscience to all Portuguese citizens and also to foreigners living in Portuguese territory,” had little to say about teaching and schools. However, the few articles related to these questions deserve some analysis.

In Article 53 of the Law of Separation it was stated that “children of a school age, whose qualifications in primary education were not proven, could not go to mass during lesson times”. The following article stipulated that the “infraction of the provisions of the preceding article will result in a simple penalty of disobedience for the father of the minor, or in his absence, for whoever exercised paternal power, and that of qualified disobedience for the

minister of respective religion, once it was proven that both had contributed by action or omission to the fact prohibited there” (cited in Proença, 2011, p.289). The law, therefore, not only confirmed the obligation of teaching but stressed the precedence of the state over religion.

These measures closely followed Jules Ferry’s actions years earlier in France, though not without provoking strong reactions among conservatives for whom “the recognition of the principal of obligation signified the intromission of state power into something which was a private forum, or, as the Duke of Broglie said, an ‘intolerable violation of the domestic sphere’” (in Catroga, 2010, p.240).

Nevertheless, intromissions such as this on the part of the state in questions belonging to the ‘domestic sphere,’ in other words, traditionally subject to the rule of *pater familiae*, were common to all the processes of the consolidation of modern states. In every state, however, these would be tinged with the colors belonging to the different national and ideological contexts of the state.

This advance in state power from the nineteenth century onwards also left strong marks on the history of childhood and the family which, as Michelle Perrot stresses, “saw its autonomy threatened by the growing intervention of the state, which, not being able to constantly act in its name, came to occupy its place, especially in the administration of childhood, the social being and the most precious capital.”²⁴ Much later the same author states that “the child does not belong only to the parents: he is the future of the nation and the race, producers, reproducer, citizen and soldier of tomorrow. Between the child and the family, especially when the latter is seen as poor and incapable, third parties are insinuated: philanthropists, doctors, statesmen who intend to protect, educate and discipline it” (1999, p.148).

Furthermore, the importance of this change in sensibilities cannot be overestimated, which, by transforming the child into a metaphor of the future, subverts strongly established scales of social values. While until then, what was most valued in the political and social dimensions was ancestrality, the old, experience and tradition, this subversion of values meant that gradually descendants, youth and promises of the future would be ever more valorized. As a result of this movement, childhood in various contexts came to be seen fundamentally as a ‘project.’²⁵

Also in relation to the education and the Law of Separation, article 189 is worth noting, this authorized “the government to reform the services of the college of overseas missions, in such a way that civilizing propaganda in Portuguese colonies, which still had to be done by ministers of religion, would

be exclusively confined to the Portuguese secular clergy, especially prepared for this purpose in state institutions” (cited in Proença, 2011, p.312).

In other words, in relation to colonial territories laicization (and the consequent republicanization) was not a state priority, with it being limited to seek, through religion, to reinforce the ties of loyalty overseas with the Portuguese patria, with this being based on the action of the ‘Portuguese secular clergy’ trained in ‘state institutions.’ This measure, while still coherent with the anti-congregationalism of the secularizing actions practiced since the Constitutional Monarchy, had nothing in common with the education policies implemented in Portugal under the Republic.

The 1911 Constitution would reinforce the advance of state power into the private sphere, stating in article 10 that the “teaching in public establishments and in private ones inspected by the state will be neutral in religious questions.” While this article intended to guarantee the neutrality or *laïcité* of teaching, the following article also stipulated that primary teaching would be ‘obligatory and free.’²⁶

The radical laicizing republican project, thus, promoted a strong inflection in the accelerated process of secularization experienced under the Constitutional Monarchy. This project, however, by trying to transform the lay school through a series of symbolic and ritual operations into a ‘temple’ of a new ‘civic religion’ ended up by turning its back on the idea of neutrality of teaching that it actually stated it defended.

In the 1911 reform of primary teaching, it was stated: “The Republic has freed Portuguese children, removing them from Jesuitical influence, but now they need to be definitively emancipated from all false dogmas, whether those of morality or of science, so that their spirit will flourish in the new autonomy, which is the force of civilizations.”

Later, the same text would express some of its contradictions:

Religion was banished from the school. Anyone who wanted could teach this to children in the home, because the state, respecting the liberty of all, had nothing to do with this. The morality of schools after the republic was founded was only based on the precepts which regulated justice among men and the dignity of citizens. Swept up in national pedagogy was the entire whirl of mysteries, miracles and phantasms which had regulated until then the mental destiny of children.

School will be neutral. Neither in favor of God, nor against. From it shall be banished all religions, except the religion of duty, which will be the eternal cult of this new civic church of the people.²⁷

Apparently the terminology used consecrated the ideal of the 'neutral school,' returning religious practices and beliefs to the terrain of the individual conscience and private life. While the terminology used apparently consecrated the ideal of the 'neutral school,' relating beliefs and religious practices to the terrain of individual conscience and of private life, what was verified in practice and in the debates in the educational field leaves it clear that the situation was much more complex and soon the adversaries of confessional schools would assume different and at times ambiguous positions.

The majority of opinions appear to have been in favor of the 'lay school,' strongly influenced by the experience of the Third Republic in France, in which the connection between positivism and republicanism ended up producing a model of republican pedagogy (diffused beyond formal teaching), which found adepts not only in Portugal but also in Brazil.

João de Barros and Tomás da Fonseca clearly positioned themselves in favor of 'lay schools.' For the former, 'moral education in the primary school' had to be 'lay,' 'clearly affirmative,' although not 'authoritarian.'²⁸ In other words, the 'lay school' needed to mold the conscience of children based on a set of clearly explicated values.

For Tomás da Fonseca the neutrality of the school was impossible, since, in light of different or opposing currents, the teacher had to assume determined options and demarcate himself from others. In this sense, he concludes: "Only in laicism can the sole rational, scientific, emancipatory and progressive school be founded."²⁹

The main dissonant voice was that of the libertarian Adolfo Lima, who defended with vehemence the 'neutral school.' According to Lima, the 'lay school' inevitably transmitted the political and philosophical principles of the state. "It is the means for the state to prepare and form generations, molding them to their mode of being," offering "a new lay creed"³⁰ in the place of the Catholic creed. Nonetheless, even Lima would question the possibility of a real neutrality of teaching.

In summary, we can state, using the words of Pintassilgo, that what in essence appear to separate the 'neutral school' from the 'lay school' is that:

[while the] 'neutral school' only sought to separate the fields of education and religion, accepting the free existence of beliefs and religious worship, with the objective being the formation of a free and autonomous conscience, the 'lay school,' characterized by the attribution of a more active and militant role to the school, with the aim of contributing to the gradual extinction of Catholic, reli-

gious, beliefs, which passed for a more severe restriction of the public diffusion of the religious practices and symbols of Catholicism.³¹

In practice the vacuum left by the eradication of the symbols and rituals associated with the Catholicism of school, as well as other public spaces would be filled by a set of symbols and rituals with lay inspiration, while these elements would constitute fundamental aspects of republican pedagogy.

The cult of the patria, commemorations and civic processions, national symbols such as the flag and the national anthem, the new lay holidays and other symbolic representations were the weapons mobilized by the republicans in the battle for the heart and the soul of the Portuguese. Inspired by the doctrine of Comte, the Portuguese Republic constituted its own ‘civic religion.’

Within the auspices of the school, laicization and republicanization occurred in the formal curriculum through the attribution of importance to moral and civic education. Equally (or principally) this was done through an ‘informal curriculum,’ in which the cult of the patria, heroes, the flag and the national anthem were not restricted to the classroom.

Festivities and representations, such as festivals of the tree and school parades, went beyond the walls of the school, proceeding from the school space to an occupation of other secularized public spaces such as roads, squares, and parks, where the Law of Separation had banished processions and other religious manifestations.

Civil republican religion was in this way fundamentally a ‘religion of the patria.’ The patria invested with sacredness was assumed to be the unifying entity of republican civism.

In the words of Mona Ozouf: “Ainsi la patrie joue, dans l’école laïque, le rôle réservé à Dieu dans l’école congréganiste”.³² Or, as the republican Ana de Castro Osório said when explaining to children why Portugal had entered the First World War: “What is needed is that within Portugal there be just one faith and one ideal, one ideal which corresponds to the great religion: – the Patria above everything.”³³

An interesting and singular figure in Portuguese republicanism, Ana de Castro Osório included in one of her books which was widely used in school a small play entitled *Um sermão do Senhor Cura* (A Sermon of the Curate), which didactically and stereotypically ‘translates’ for children, from the republican point of view obviously, the conflict between lay and Catholic values and visions of the world as presented in Portuguese society of her time and which was strongly expressed in educational and laicizing legislation.³⁴

The play consists of a dialogue between two characters, Guilherme and Filipe, who were supposed to be played by '10 to 12 year old boys' according to the author. At the beginning the contrast is established between the two characters: "By the side of the path, Filipe is lying in the shadow of a tree. Dirty and slovenly like a small tramp, he glimpsed at the net he set up for the birds within the property, which is marked by a small wall. Guilherme enters, clean and happy, whistling or humming, with a school bag full of books" (Osório, 1922, p.185).

During the conversation between the student Guilherme and the ignorant Filipe, the former knows about scientific explanations for natural phenomena, the latter contradicts these explanations with a series of superstitions, while the figure of the school teacher is contrasted with the village curate.

The text is fertile in binary oppositions: dirt/cleanliness (hygiene); goodness/evil (with animals); knowledge/ignorance; study/truancy; work/social parasitism; science/superstition; reason/religion; teacher/curate; women/priest; school/Church.

Obviously the oppositions summarize the conflict between the values with which republicans sought to associate themselves and those which they identified with religion. However, more than this, was the play not also an interesting instrument of legitimization of the inroads the state was making into the private sphere, in accordance with the articles of the Law of Separation and the 1911 Constitution?

Coincidence or not, according to Maria Lúcia de Brito Moura, after the laicizing legislation of the Republic newspapers registered much more frequently resistance to compliance with the law in schools, as well as local conflicts between clergy and teachers. It was not rare for accusations from republican publications to lead to the closing of schools in various locations. This was the case of the Gondomar weekly which published a report that the school in the local 'Catholic Circle' using books from the mass and Marian novenas to teach reading. In Figueira da Foz, the Colégio Liceu-Figueirense was accused by *O Mundo* and *A Voz da Justiça* newspapers of having organized a banquet in honor of the Immaculate Conception in which the room was decorated with the colors of the monarchy, blue and white, under the pretext that these were the colors of the Virgin. At dinner time, "in the presence of the children, the headmaster had toasted the integrity of faith of the dinners, lamenting that the government of the Republic had attacked religion."³⁵

Arguing that the college followed "a pedagogical and religious orientation in accordance with the will of the parents, who entrusted the school with their

children,” the headmaster was forced to close the *lycée* and moved to Belgium, where he opened a primary and secondary school for Portuguese students “guaranteeing that the cost of this teaching establishment would not be more than in Portugal. The travelling was paid for by the college” (Moura, 2004, p.439).

The significant number of cases denounced by republican newspapers shows that families resisted government measures and sent their children to schools where they would receive religious education. Even under adverse conditions, members of the clergy continued founding schools in their parishes.

Something else that has to be considered is the resistance of republicans who diverged from the radicalness of the laicizing measures in the field of teaching.

A July 1912 technical opinion from the Central Commission for the Execution of the Law of Separation stated that there could not exist in the country “any college or teaching or education institute” where religious or confessional education was taught. Thus, “catechism and the celebration of any acts of Catholic worship were not permitted in any teaching establishments” (ibid., p.442).

In relation to the prohibition of religious education in a women’s college in which apparently there were many daughters of republicans, Alfredo Pimenta argued in the *República* newspaper “that it was violating the Constitution. [And] asked: ‘is it or is it not legal to teach in Portugal the creed of any religion? Is the teaching of Catholicism legal or not in Portugal? Is there anyone who can clarify the case?’” (ibid., p.443).

In relation to the conflicts between parish priests and teachers, considering the strong republican representations of the figure of the teacher as the apostle of free thought and reason (as Osório’s text mentioned above demonstrates well), as well as the relevance that the Republican state attributed to these professionals in making its national project a reality, it is no wonder that often the families resistant to laicization of teaching would direct their hatred and resentment at teachers.

However, it is also certain that the new regime, and all the legislation which followed its establishment, very quickly altered the existing relations of forces, which was principally felt by the populations of smaller localities.

Once again drawing on the research and analysis of Brito Moura, in December 1910 the parish priest of Vila de Ala, in the council (*concelho*) of Mogadouro, “was summonsed to appear in the council administration, as he

had been denounced by a teacher. The teacher in question was accused of having censured this teacher in the conventual mass, even threatening her with dismissal, for not teaching religion to the children” (ibid., p.452). While in this case the priest was held accountable to the government – and there were many accusations against priests and laypeople, highlighting attempts to mislead schoolchildren –, most of the cases collected by this researcher in contemporary periodicals were about the hostility of the populations to teachers.

A teacher from Monsanto complained in a letter to the periodical *Educação Nacional* that in his village there had been a petition to transfer him, ‘since he had offended with his irreligiosity’ the Catholic sentiment of the local population.

A teacher from Vila Nova da Rainha, in the *concelho* of Tondela, wrote to another periodical saying that the parish priest had incited the faithful against him so much that that he had received death threats.

In 1914 in a village in the *concelho* of Mação, the civil marriage of a teacher triggered a campaign of the parish priest who was accused of “doing everything to make the teacher’s students stop going to school. It was spread in the village that the children who continued to go to school, and their parents, would be condemned to eternal punishments” (ibid., p.453).

Finally, as in Osório’s republican dialogue, Catholics also resorted to fiction to represent their values in a didactic manner, as demonstrated by the weekly publication *A Guarda*, which published the following dialogue to illustrate the evils of a school ‘without God’ and ‘without religion’:

One of the interveners was an honored peasant, worried because one of his children, who went to the school had confessed to him, after much insistence – since he and his companions were forbidden from telling the outside world what went on in the classroom –, that God did not exist, religion only served to trick the ignorant, and heaven and hell were inventions of priests. The peasant was of the opinion that school only made his children disobedient. He even thought of removing them from school, since he knew that “children without religion are always the executioners and the torments of their parents.” His interlocutor did not advise this – perhaps out of prudence. However, he did advise him that he should send his children to catechism to compensate the pernicious influence of the school. (ibid., p.456)

Resistance to lay teaching, and perhaps even more to persecutions of confessional education, lasted throughout the First Republic. Gradually, however,

the republican government had to give in, or at least close its eyes, to the illegalities. In the case of certain private schools, according to Moura, “there seemed to be a consensus that the state should not intervene. It is clear that there continued to exist schools where religion was taught and about which only the most intolerant dared to raise criticisms, at least in an audible manner. There existed schools directed by foreign congregations, protected by legations from their own countries, and in relation to which the government was forced to contemporize” (ibid., p.460).

Some remained clandestine, while others created strategies to escape inspection, such as the Anglo-Portuguese Institute linked to the Sisters of St. Dorothy. Finally, there were schools which having been forced to close down in Portugal set up in other countries assured that their students would continue with them. A curious case is Santa Clara College in Valença do Minho, which after being closed down reopened very nearby, in Tuy, on the Spanish side of the border.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the initial years of the Republic were a time of open confrontation with the Church, though after Portugal entered the First World War the situation began to change.

Above all, this was not the time to dissipate forces by insisting on questions which divided society, while the war obviously diverted the attention of even the bitterest defenders of laicization to more pressing subjects.

In 1914 the possibility of the reform of the Law of Separation began to be discussed in parliament, however, this only actually occurred at the initiative of the executive in 1918.

In this period, however, the government’s relations with the Church became easier. Diplomatic relations with the Holy See, which had been broken off in 1913, were reestablished and the republic governments were obliged to reverse their positions on the colonial missions and the *Padroado* (patronage). Furthermore, the political alliance between Catholics and monarchists began to unravel.

In 1922 the 2nd National Catholic Congress approved the decision of the Catholic Center group not to make any further alliances with any political parties, rather it was only to obey the instituted powers and the Church.

Before this, the great public impact in 1917 of the ‘apparitions’ of Fátima gave a new impulse to popular faith, resulting in pilgrimages which, alongside the reappearance of traditional ceremonies such as the processions and other rituals of Holy Week in 1919, created discussion about the return of acts of public worship. All of this fed the increasing demand of Catholics for the

reintroduction of religious teaching in private schools, which was proposed in 1922 by the Minister of Education. The intense controversy that resulted, led to the resignation of the minister.

The Church would have to wait until the end of the First Republic in 1926 to have the physical and symbolic territories which it had lost to the lay state partially restored.

Prodigious in the creation of lay symbols and rituals intended to promote the interiorization of republican values by future citizens and to create affective adhesion to the Republic through civic religiosity and the construction of a consensus through patriotism, the First Republic left its marks carved into school territory. The inheritance of that civic and laicizing educational project remained in many school traditions which inevitably assumed new meanings. With the reintroduction of religion, the new patriotism would inevitably be the product of a syncretism achieved especially in the school.

NOTES

¹ This text was used for my part of the communication “A laicização da sociedade e da escola em Portugal,” presented jointly with Prof. Joaquim Pintassilgo at the V International Colloquium of the SPICAE Network (Inter-University Group for the Investigation of the Comparative History of the School in Southern Europe) held in the Institute of Education of the University of Lisbon on 3-5 May 202. I would like to thank Prof. Pintassilgo for the invitation and for the trust which motivated the writing of this paper, as well as the generous reading of its first version.

² FOUCAULT, M. *Microfísica do poder*. 11.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1995. p.157. There is a very broad academic bibliography about the concept of territory, in which there exist a number of distinct approaches. For a brief and accessible overview, cf. HAESBAERT, R. Da desterritorialização à multiterritorialidade. ENCONTRO DE GEÓGRAFOS DA AMÉRICA LATINA, X., 20 a 26 mar. 2005, Universidade de São Paulo. *Anais...* Available at: www.planificacion.geoamerica.org/textos/haesbaert_multi.pdf.

³ FALCON, F. J. C. *A Época Pombalina*. São Paulo: Ática, 1993. p.97.

⁴ CONSTITUIÇÃO de 23 set. 1822. Available at: debates.parlamento.pt/Constituicoes_PDF/CRP-1822.pdf; Accessed on 22 March 2012.

⁵ CARTA CONSTITUCIONAL de 26 abr. 1826. Available at: debates.parlamento.pt/Constituicoes_PDF/II%20Carta%20Constitucional.pdf; Accessed on 22 March 2012.

⁶ ANDERSON, B. *Comunidades imaginadas: reflexões sobre a origem e a difusão do nacionalismo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008.

⁷ PINTASSILGO, J. A componente socializadora do currículo escolar oitocentista. In: *O*

particular e o global no virar do milénio: cruzar saberes em educação. Lisboa: Colibri; Sociedade Portuguesa de Ciências da Educação, 2002. p.549. A list prepared by this author with the reforms between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century and the respective disciplines with a socializing character that are foreseen them is very eloquent of the importance given by Portuguese liberalism to Catholicism in relation to the education of citizens. The disciplines introduced in the following reforms can be noted: Pombaline Reform (1772): Catechism ad Rules of Civility; 1836 Reform: Christian Morality and Doctrine, Civility and Brief Notions of the Constitution; 1844 Reform: General Principles of Christian Morality and Doctrine and Civility; 1870 Reform: Religious and Moral Education / Christian Doctrine and Notions of the Constitution and Rights and Duties of the Citizen; 1878 Reform: Moral and Christian Doctrine (elementary), Moral and Sacred History (complementary) and Rights and Duties of the Citizen (complementary); 1894 Reform: Christian Doctrine and Precepts of Morality (elementary), Morality (elementary- Second Level), Rights and Duties of the Citizen (complementary) and Morality and Sacred History (complementary); 1901 Reform: Christian Doctrine and Precepts of Morality and First Notions of Civic Education (Second Level). (Ibid., p.550).

⁸ NETO, V. *A Questão Religiosa no Parlamento*. v.I (1821-1910). Lisboa: Divisão de Edições da Assembleia da República; Texto Editores, 2009. p.91.

⁹ PROENÇA, M. C. *A Questão Religiosa no Parlamento*. v.II (1910-1926). Lisboa: Divisão de Edições da Assembleia da República; Texto Editores, 2011. p.235.

¹⁰ According to Oliveira Marques this decree affected 401 religious houses, including colleges, hospices and female monasteries in Portugal and its colonies. (PROENÇA, 2011, 235).

¹¹ CATROGA, F. *A militância laica e a descristianização da morte em Portugal*. v.1. Coimbra: Faculdade de Letras, 1988. p.33.

¹² CATROGA, Fernando. Secularização e laicidade: uma perspectiva histórica e conceptual. *Revista de História das Ideias*, v.25, p.51-128, 2004. p.91.

¹³ Telmo Verdelho apud CATROGA, 2006, p.27.

¹⁴ The importance of the conceptual binomial of decadence/regeneration is of great importance in Portuguese political culture during the nineteenth century. For a discussion of these concepts and their relevance as political and ideological vectors in the context of the question being discussed, see PROENÇA, M. C. *A Primeira Regeneração: o conceito e a experiência nacional (1820-1823)*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1990.

¹⁵ Rather than ‘dominated,’ the school space needed to be ‘appropriated’ by Portuguese Republicanism. The concept of the ‘appropriation’ of space was developed in: LEFEBVRE, Henri. *La production de l’espace*. Paris: Anthropos, 1986.

¹⁶ In relation to the “foundations and expectations which guided *laïcité* as a project,” Catroga states: “It seems evident that these promises to create the conditions for the individual to be able to enjoy their rights in freedom (of conscience, of thought, of religion). According to what was demanded by the effects of secularization: the separation between the political and religious sphere, the public and private; the privatization of beliefs; and the

affirmation of human autonomy of in relation to the transcendent justification of ethics, knowledge and human expectations” CATROGA, F. Secularização e laicidade: a separação das Igrejas e da Escola. In: PINTASSILGO, J. [et al.] (Org.). *História da escola em Portugal e no Brasil: circulação e apropriação de modelos culturais*. Lisboa: Colibri, 2006. p.35.

¹⁷ HANSEN, P. S. América: uma utopia republicana para crianças brasileiras. *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, v.22, n.44, p.504-521, jul.-dez. 2009.

¹⁸ MATOS, S. C. Para uma história da escola privada em Portugal: da Regeneração ao Estado Novo. In: PINTASSILGO (Org.), 2006, p.262.

¹⁹ CATROGA, F. *O republicanismo em Portugal: da formação ao 5 de outubro de 1910*. 3.ed. Lisboa: Casa das Letras, 2010. p.19.

²⁰ PROENÇA, M. C. A republicanização da educação e da escola. In: PEDAGOGIA E EDUCAÇÃO (séculos XX e XXI). Actas dos Encontros de Outono, 25 e 26 nov. 2005. Vila Nova de Famalicão, 2008. p.168.

²¹ MOURA, M. L. B. *A guerra religiosa na 1ª República*. Cruz Quebrada: Ed. Notícias, 2004. p.435-436.

²² *Diário do Governo*, 24 out. 1910.

²³ *Diário do Governo*, 3 jan. 1911.

²⁴ PERROT, Michelle (Org.). *História da vida privada*. v.4: da Revolução Francesa à Primeira Guerra. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999. p.91.

²⁵ Cf. HANSEN, P. S. Infância como projeto. Nacionalismo, sensibilidades e etapas da vida em Olavo Bilac. In: SIMPÓSIO NACIONAL DE HISTÓRIA, 26. Anpuh, São Paulo, jul. 2011. *Anais...* Available at: www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1300631786_ARQUIVO_Infanciacomoprojeto.pdf.

²⁶ CONSTITUIÇÃO de 21 ago. 1911. Available at: debates.parlamento.pt/Constituicoes_PDF/CRP-1911.pdf.

²⁷ *Diário do Governo*, n.73, 30 mar. 1911.

²⁸ BARROS, João de. *A educação moral na escola primária*. Paris-Lisboa: Livr. Aillaud e Bertrand; Rio de Janeiro: Livr. Francisco Alves, 1914. p.19-22.

²⁹ FONSECA, Tomás da. *Ensino laico: educação racionalista e acção confessional*. Lisboa-Coimbra: Lúmen, 1923. p.37.

³⁰ LIMA, Adolfo. *Pedagogia sociológica*. Lisboa-Porto: Couto Martins-Livraria Progredior, 1936. v.1, p.127.

³¹ PINTASSILGO, J. O projecto educativo do republicanismo: o caso português numa perspectiva comparada. *Ler História*, v.59, p.183-203, 2010. p.187.

³² OZOUF, Mona. *L'École, l'Église et la République: 1871-1914*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1963. p.125.

³³ OSÓRIO, Ana de Castro. *De como Portugal foi chamado à guerra: História para crianças*. Lisboa: Casa Ed. “Para as Crianças”, 1918. p.73.

³⁴ OSÓRIO, A. C. *Os nossos amigos*. (Livro de leitura para a 3ª classe da Escola Primária). 4.ed. rev. e completada. Lisboa: Lusitânia, 1922. At the beginning of the book there is an author’s note explaining that the first edition of the work was part of the book *A Boa Mãe*, approved for school prizes in 1908. However, it was not possible to discover if the above mentioned play was already in this book, or if it was included in later editions, for which reasons it is not possible to precisely know, in relation to the Republic and republicanism, with what context the text most specifically dialogues.

³⁵ MOURA, M. L. B. *A guerra religiosa na 1ª República*. Cruz Quebrada: Ed. Notícias, 2004. p.438.