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Debate

The Pentecostal War Against Afro-Brazilian 'Demons' – Politics, Selfhood and Shared Experience of Spiritual Work in Southeast Brazil[1]

La guerra pentecostal contra los "demonios" afrobrasileños: políticas, individualidad y experiencia compartida del trabajo espiritual en el sureste de Brasil

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Abstract: This article discusses the religious conflict between Afro-Brazilian and Pentecostal groups shedding light on the complex relations between cross-religious experiences and the official acknowledgement of 'religion' in Brazil. The study analyses devotees and clients' experiences in the rituals of *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* and *Umbanda* addressing fluid selfhoods and the multiple human and other-than-human agencies in the making of individual life trajectories through ritual participation. Thus, regarding religious conflict merely through bounded identities, institutions or dogma, the study shows that behind the fortifying religious conflict between Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religious groups relies a politically complex, colonially framed concept of 'religion' which leaves out of academic and political consideration a large part of effective ritual knowledge and agency, continuously re-producing the inferior position of 'Afro-Brazilian religions' within the Brazilian society. The analysis in this article is based on ethnographic field research carried out in Southeast Brazilian states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo during 2008-2015.

Keywords: religious intolerance, Afro-Brazilian religions, Neo-Pentecostalism, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, Umbanda.

Resumen: En este artículo se discuten los conflictos religiosos entre grupos afrobrasileños y pentecostales, arrojando luz sobre las complejas relaciones entre experiencias interreligiosas y el reconocimiento oficial de la "religión" en Brasil. El estudio analiza las experiencias de los devotos y de los clientes en los rituales de la *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* y de *Umbanda*, abordando el tema de individualidades fluidas y de múltiples agencias humanas y no humanas en la creación de trayectorias individuales de vida a través de la participación ritual. Como resultado, tomando en cuenta los conflictos religiosos sólo a través de identidades, instituciones o dogmas, el estudio demuestra que detrás del conflicto cada vez más fuerte entre grupos religiosos pentecostales y afrobrasileños hay un concepto de "religión" políticamente complejo y de carácter colonial que deja fuera de la discusión académica y política una gran parte de conocimiento y de agencia ritual, reproduciendo de manera continua la inferioridad de las "religiones afrobrasileñas" dentro de la sociedad brasileña. El análisis presentado en el artículo se basa en el trabajo de campo etnográfico realizado en los estados de Rio de Janeiro y São Paulo en el sureste de Brasil en los años 2008-2015.

Palabras clave: intolerancia religiosa, religiones afrobrasileñas, neopentecostalismo, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, Umbanda.

Introduction

Brazilian news report constantly about the increasing amount of discrimination acts towards Afro-Brazilian religions devotees [2]. Attacks and sabotage on ritual sites, as well as political and juridical discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religious institutions and the cultural heritage emerge as a result of the aggressive demonisation of Afro-Brazilian religions promoted by the Neo-Pentecostal churches such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* – IURD).

Previous studies on the different forms of religious intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions in the contemporary context (see e.g. Benedito, 2006; dos Santos et al., 2016; Mariano, 2005; Oro, 2003, 2005; Rocha et al., 2011; Silva, 2007a) have appointed that even though neo-Pentecostal actors are the main respondent for these events today, the process of religious intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions is on-going since the colonial times. Thus, during the colonial period in Brazil, African slaves were not given the right to cultivate their own traditions, but instead forced to accept the Portuguese language, European customs and Catholicism, which was the only officially accepted religion. All religious forms from different African origins were prohibited, yet cultivated, hidden under the Catholic veil. In 1890, two years after the abolition of slavery, Brazil was declared a secular state in the new constitution, however, Afro-Brazilian religious practices were still criminalised and persecuted by the police until the 1960s. Hence, the idea of Brazil as Catholic nation is in fact largely based on the negation and repression of other religions (Prandi, 2006, p. 95; Oliveira, 2014; Silva, 2014).

In the beginning of the 1920s the public attitudes towards other-than-catholic religions started to change along with the romanticized ideas of Brazilian nation as racial democracy. For a while, (Afro)Brazilian Umbanda, openly syncretistic religion consisting of elements from Allan Kardecs Spiritism, Catholicism, Afro-Brazilian and local indigenous religiosities, was acknowledged as "national religion", free from all kinds of discrimination related to race, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, already by the 1960s the positive image of Umbanda together with the ideology of Brazil as racial democracy began to crumble. The same cultural elite that since then had largely sympathized with the syncretistic Umbanda started to highlight the deep structural racism that was deliberately hidden under the national romantic project, claiming Umbanda as one of the main examples of the racist attempts to whiten the people, culture and religion in Brazil (Brown 1986, pp. 37-51). Simultaneously Afro-Brazilian Candomblé gained new followers and public visibility due its self-identification of purely "African" religion, distinguished from syncretistic Umbanda through the religio-political projects of re-africanization and de-syncretisation. (see also Prandi, 2006).

Meanwhile, Pentecostalism had found its way into the Brazilian religious scenario already during the first decade of the 20th century. However, a significant change regarding the socio-political impact of Pentecostalism in Brazil can be traced back to the so-called third wave of Pentecostalism, i.e. "neo-Pentecostalism" emerging in late 1970s and in the beginning of 1980s. [3] Neo-Pentecostalism is characterized by its emphasis on prosperity gospel, the use of mass media and an active role in political and economic fields. The Neo-Pentecostal message started to emphasize dogmatized and ritualized demonisation of Afro-Brazilian religions and their spirits, entities and Orixás, claiming them as origins of all misfortune and lack of prosperity in individual lives and society at large (Mariano, 2005, pp. 111–112). Thus, the exponentially growing amount of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal devotion forged not only a new form of Christian faith but also a considerable rupture for the Catholic hegemony in the Brazilian religious field. On one hand, practical divine interference promoted by new Pentecostal churches was attractive for those who urged for direct religious experience rather than rational theology provided by the Catholic church. On the other hand, the neo-Pentecostal message also reached many followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, for example those, confused by the rupture of national romantic Umbanda, giving people means to reevaluate their previous knowledge and experiences of the Afro-religious realm, indicating it now as backward and demonic. Moreover, neo-Pentecostalism and especially IURD has been seen as the main actor in a radical religious change taking place in Brazilian society, promoting simultaneously theological systematization of popular beliefs and ritual practices as well as anti hierarchical change through which people from low economic backgrounds may gain new socio-political agency (Birman, 2007).

Today, Brazilian religious changes follow in many ways also what have been observed globally through religious market theories. Thus, the interconnections of religiosity and global capitalism have been giving way for novel forms of religious consumerism and 'diversified religious portfolios' in many parts of the world (Grassie, 2010, pp. 65–67). Simultaneously fundamentalist movements, especially Islam and Pentecostal movements, are globally on the rise and seen as indicators of a need for belonging in the fragmented, individualist realities of contemporary societies (ibid.). More precisely the Brazilian religious field has recently been characterized by two significant contextual tendencies: cultural continuity, understood as a typical form of fluid religious identities silently embraced by popular Catholicism, and cultural transformation now provoked by the expansion and socio-political effects of exclusive Pentecostal conversion (Mariz & Campos, 2011).

Based on my ethnographic research in Southeast Brazil, in this article I reflect on the phenomenon of religious intolerance in relation to the locus of religions and religiosities as part of people's contemporary lives and socio-political power-relations. The analysis concentrates especially on the research interlocutors' knowledge and experiences considering

the pragmatics and onto-epistemological dimensions of 'religions'. Thus, instead of understanding the religious conflict exclusively through a battle between people with bounded identities, and between religions with strict institutional borders and dogma, in this article I shall emphasize the experiential side of the conflict by paying attention to the cross-religious, individually and politically effective ritual knowledge and agency emerging especially in the local forms of religious consumerism. This onto-epistemological exploration of the religious conflict between Afro-Brazilian and Neo-Pentecostal groups aims at bringing forward a fresh view on the religious intolerance phenomenon in Brazil and on the power-relations related to the conceptual universe generating the politics of the Brazilian religious field in general.

I have carried out 17 months of fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo since 2008 and maintained contact with my research interlocutors. My research locations are known as breeding grounds of both Neo-Pentecostalism and the Umbanda religion, and also today as the primary locations of registered cases of religious intolerance carried out by Neo-Pentecostal actors attacking Afro-Brazilian religions and their followers. My sources were produced through extended periods of participant observation, semi-structured personal interviews, audiovisual recordings and media observation. The people who were interviewed for this article participated in the *descarrego* rituals as clients, devoted members [4] or pastors of IURD churches and as clients, mediums, leaders of Umbanda and Candomblé houses [5] . The majority of the research interlocutors came from the working class and lower middle class and were residents in sub-urban and favela neighbourhoods of Southeast Brazil's biggest cities.

For analysing the data, I have used a method called 'ontography', as sketched out by anthropologist Martin Holbraad (2012). The idea behind ontography is to work with the ontological concepts from the context where specific knowledge emerges. The ontographic approach emphasises the ontological status of 'things' (both human and other-than-human things) and looks at the effects of these things instead of primarily treating them as representations or symbols of the ideas behind them (see also Blanes & Espírito Santo, 2014; Goldman, 2011; Henare et al., 2007) In the same vein, my study traces the ontological modalities of agency as experienced by the people participating in religious rituals such as *descarrego* in IURD and *gira de Exú* in Umbanda. Thus, besides people, the study addresses agency and the effects of significant other-than-human agents, such as demons, God and *exú*s, as well as ritual objects, such as the arruda herb, sea salt, roses and money.

In order to fully grasp the ontological level of religious knowledge and ritual agency, I see that it is necessary to delve deeper into the lived experiences of people. With this approach the study indicates, that for many people who participate in IURD and Umbanda rituals, the significance of religion/religiosity on the experiential level is largely based on the ontological function of religious rituals as events of 'work' (*trabalho*). This domain of (spiritual) work aims at reconfiguring

people's life-conditions with the agency and companionship of (spirit) entities and material objects ontologically related to their religious selfhoods (see also Lundell, 2016) which is clearly perceivable within the inter-religious experiences of people attending to the ceremonies in both sides of the religious conflict in question. Here, the notion of 'work' refers to different ideas about subjectivity, materiality and time in relation to such dualisms as sacred-profane, subject-object and nature-culture, which largely ground conventional ideas about 'religion' both in academic studies about Brazil and in socio-political discourses in Brazil. Thus, the study contends that the coloniality of many concepts used in research and legislation regarding 'Afro-Brazilian religions' not only prevents an adequate understanding of experientially significant phenomena, such as ritual knowledge and agency, but also restricts the equal positioning of Afro-Brazilian religious identities and institutions, dismissing a large part of this field as socio-politically inferior and even non-existent.

Onto-Epistemological Perspective on The Brazilian Religious Field: Categories, Institutions and Agency

Statistically, the size of the two parties involved in the religious conflict differ drastically: in the 2010 national census Afro-Brazilian religions were nearly invisible (roughly 0.3 percent), while Pentecostal devotion (22% at present) is constantly growing (IBGE, 2012). However, in the Southeast Brazilian metropolitan area Afro-Brazilian religions are strongly present in many ways, especially in popular culture as well as in the form of numerous Umbanda and Candomblé houses that attract people from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Previously, Afro-Brazilian religions have become more visible also due to the increasing volume of public discussion about and manifestations of religious intolerance and racism.

Thus, the statistics are not very accurate with respect to measuring public perceptions of religions, especially in terms of the Afro-Brazilian religion's presence in the socio-cultural arena. In moving beyond statistics, such an observation is helpful for arriving at a deeper understanding of the agency and power-relations in the Brazilian religious field. Hence, the Brazilian national census (IBGE) gives people the choice to declare a particular religious identity or ethnic background. It has been noted that the reason people who regularly participate in Candomblé and Umbanda ceremonies do not identify themselves as devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions in the census originates from the above described colonially constructed, socio-historical circumstances in which Africa and blackness have been seen as inferior in comparison to Catholic Christianity, the officially recognised and approved 'religion' (see also M. G. Santos, 2014, p. 25).

On the other hand, the societal recognition of the category 'Afro-Brazilian religions' has largely been influenced and in fact produced by Brazilian and international anthropological studies. The anthropologically promoted image of orthodoxies and ethnicities within

the Afro-religious universe has even been described as a production of the 'holy alliance' between Afro-Brazilian religions and anthropology (Motta, 1999, 76–79). Simultaneously, the academic publications, especially on Candomblé, have become sources of valued religious knowledge among religious leaders adopting 'the criteria of African religious authenticity suggested by anthropologists' (Mariz & Campos, 2011, p. 114). Afro-Brazilian culture and religions have indeed been of considerable interest to scholars since the early 20th century. The Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, from the north-eastern state of Bahia, served as a reference point for many ethnographies and anthropological theories in prior decades, for instance in studies by Herskovits and later on Bastide (2001). Despite only a very few exceptions (Brown, 1986; Cardoso, 2014; Engler, 2012; Ferreira da Silva, 2005; Hale, 2009; Hayes, 2011; Jensen, 1998; Negra#o, 1993), religions of Afro-Brazilian origin in the south-eastern parts of the country (where I conducted my fieldwork), especially the different forms of Umbanda, have been seen as less orthodox in the sense of their 'Africanity', and consequently, less interesting for anthropological (re)search on blackness and African heritage in Brazil than the Candomblé religion found in Bahia (see also Engler, 2012).

The anthropologically formulated heritage and ethnicity-based categorisation of Afro-Brazilian religions is visible in politics, such as in the affirmative actions taken against religious discrimination and racism. The National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage–IPHAN has declared several Candomblé houses as well as acarajé (a traditional West African dish) and capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art) to be an intangible part of Afro-Brazilian national cultural heritage. These examples, and here I follow the critique offered by Giumbelli (2018), are processes of heritisation in which the Afro-Brazilian religious universe is deliberately produced as 'cultures', i.e. as a conjunction of ethnicities. They produce hierarchies (like the making of orthodoxies, such as Candomblé in Bahia) and help strengthen the general public's association of the Afro-religious universe with questions of racism and the black movement. Thus, these policies simultaneously reflect the somewhat essentialist search for origins in Afro-Brazilian religion. Roger Sansi refers to this phenomenon as 'an Afro-Brazilianist tradition', which still today is used as 'an important cultural asset in the politics and identity of multicultural Brazil' (Sansi & Pares, 2012, p. 77). These policies also reflect the perspective of social constructionist studies on Afro-Brazilian religions as a means of producing identities of resistance by the racially and socioeconomically oppressed in post-colonial society and later in the globalised cultural context of the 'black atlantique' (Sansi & Pares, 2012, p. 77).

Taking into account these considerations of the categorization of religions in the Brazilian context, the parallels emerging in the socio-political categorisation and association of Afro-Brazilian religions with African ethnicities and blackness, seem questionable, and in my view they even promote ignorance in terms of the ontological dimension of

religious selfhood and ritual agency lived especially within the Afro-religious universe, but also outside of it.

This kind of critical view on the category of Afro-Brazilian religions has led me to re-think the power-relations related to the epistemological acknowledgement of 'religion', or more precisely, to the coloniality and agency of the 'religion' concept in Brazilian society. Simultaneously, it is also important to acknowledge that besides structural racism, the statistical absence of Afro-Brazilian religious devotion in the census is connected to the global tendencies emerging in contemporary culture of religious clientelism and religious consumerism as a way of engaging with the spiritual realm without requiring exclusive devotion. Altogether, Afro-Brazilian religious services are consumed by a much greater number of people than the statistics indicate (see also M. G. Santos, 2014).

Hence, in this article I suggest an onto-epistemological approach to the religious conflict between Neo-Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religions addressing firstly, the colonially inherited epistemological incommensurability between experienced religion and institutionally acknowledged religion. Secondly, I contend that the epistemological challenge related to 'Afro-Brazilian religion' as an analytical and political concept is constructed in the socio-historical context of coloniality and which can be seen as a process linked to what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls 'abyssal thinking'. Sousa Santos claims that modernity has been divided into two parts: the epistemological South and the epistemological North. These locations exist geographically both in metropolitan and colonial territories and are divided by abyssal lines, which he describes as 'radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line". The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality, becomes non-existent and is indeed produced as non-existent. Non-existent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensive way of being' (Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 45).

I see that the abyssal lines are visible at many levels of colonially constituted Brazilian society and in the religious field, especially when it comes to knowledges and ways of knowing based on Afro-Brazilian and indigenous epistemologies. The epistemological incommensurability of the Afro-Brazilian religious universe in relation to legislation and the acknowledgement of religious institutions and religious knowledge can be seen as a product of 'abyssal thinking', hence an abyssal line divides the Christian-based, officially acknowledged religions from experienced, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous ways of (religious) knowing. Sousa Santos claims that 'modern law and modern knowledge represent the most accomplished manifestation of the abyssal thinking' (Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 118). This can be perceived in the academic, socio-political and juridical recognition of what can and cannot be officially recognised as 'religion' in general and 'Afro-Brazilian religion' in particular. Thus, the analytical challenge in this study is embedded in the situation of religious conflict in which only the other side (Pentecostal) is in fact officially considered as a proper 'religion'. Hence, to be able to understand religious intolerance

in Brazil today, it is important to keep in mind the colonial heritage: the long-standing historical prejudices in Brazil, legitimized by eugenics (the scientific racism) which positioned Catholic Christianity as the crown of religious evolution. Thus, consequently, this colonially naturalized superiority of Christian faith has certainly been taken as an advantage by the Neo-Pentecostal actors (such as IURD) in order to legitimize their discriminative religious dogma and ritual practice against Afro-Brazilian religions and their followers.

The Pentecostal Agenda and Religious Intolerance in Contemporary Brazil

In Brazil, the spiritual economy flourishes and is firmly embedded in the hereness and practicality of the everyday lives of many people since colonial times. Today in Southeast Brazil, the religious institutions, such as the Catholic and Pentecostal churches, Spiritist, Umbanda, and Candomblé houses, as well as individual ritual experts who work with God, spirits and Orixás, attract devotees and customers seeking solutions for everyday life problems often concerning love, money and health problems.

Despite the local culture of religious diversity, during previous decades sociologists of religion have demonstrated that Pentecostalism has transformed the ways religion, politics and economy intersect in Brazil (see Smiderle & Mesquita, 2016). Today, more than 22% of the Brazilian population declare themselves Protestant (IBGE, 2012), and more than 90 members of the Brazilian National Congress declare themselves members of Pentecostal block (FPE - *Frente Parlamentar Evangélica*) (Marini & Carvalho, 2018). The members of this block share very different theological ideas, but in most cases very similar conservative values in reference to the rights of sexual minorities and what they understand as the 'Brazilian family'. Thus, today 'everything that is strictly religious – and a part from the collective life, in post-Enlightenment terms, tends to emerge in political, economic, artistic and legal domains' (Smiderle & Mesquita, 2016, p. 87).

The IURD has been a pioneer in terms of new religious participation in political and economic fields (Oro, 2003; Smiderle & Mesquita, 2016, pp. 85–86). This process started in the 1960s, when a Canadian missionary named W. R McAlister founded a new church in Brazil called *Nova Vida* (Mariano, 2005, p. 51). The church represented a new theological and ritual orientation in the Pentecostal field and gave way to the birth of several neo-Pentecostal churches that emphasised the prosperity gospel and exorcism of demons instead of the ascetics and puritanism of the historical Pentecostal churches. Due to the growing number of devotees, and to the resulting increase in economic and political power, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus soon became the most prominent representative of Neo-Pentecostalism (Ferrari, 2007, pp. 9–11, 102–103; Mariano, 2005, pp. 28–49). Today, the leader of the IURD, Edir Macedo, is one of the richest men in Brazil and owner of the second largest TV

station (*RecordTV*). In 2016, he inaugurated one of the world's largest Christian temples (*Templo do Salomão*) in the commercial centre of São Paulo.

According to the neo-Pentecostal theology preached by the IURD, all misfortune faced by people – including poverty, homosexuality, mental and physical illness, betrayal in marriage, and so forth – are caused by demons of which most are identified as Afro-Brazilian entities. In his bestselling work *Orixás, Caboclos e Guias: Deuses ou Demônios?,* Bishop Macedo describes demons using the following phrases:

> Many seek out the demons and open their lives to them, because they think they are 'angels of light'. With beautiful names and full of equipment, demons deceive people with diabolical doctrines. They are called orixás, caboclos, pretos velhos, guides, familiar spirits, spirits of light, etc. They say they are exus, erés, children's spirits, famous doctors, famous poets, etc., but they are actually fallen angels, in the devilish mission of alienating the man from God and destroying him, and, in the meanwhile, taking advantage of them. (Macedo, 2006, p. 26)

In practice IURD's war against demons has been especially targeted towards Exús and Pomba Giras [6], the entities from the 'left side' of Umbanda socio-cosmology. In Umbanda the right-side entities are known as entities of light while the left side is seen as the realm of entities of the shadows, fallen angels and/or people of the streets (povo de rua). Moreover, the notion of this existential left-right dualism in Umbanda has without a doubt facilitated the Pentecostal demonization. In the same vein, the symbolic universe of Exús and Pomba Giras in Umbanda has been influenced by the Christian imaginary, for instance, Exús in Umbanda ritual songs are sometimes called as Satan (Satanas) or residents of hell (inferno), furthermore the Exú Mirim (child exús) are often portrayed with horns growing in their heads according to the Catholic imaginary of demons (see also Hayes, 2011, pp. 49–53; Silva, 2007b, pp. 191–260). Thus, it seems that it is precisely in the figure of Exús and Pomba Giras, where the two historically present religious epistemologies (the euro-Christian religious epistemology of the colonizers and the Afro-Brazilian religious epistemology of the colonized) collide and merge.

The ideas about the interconnection between demons (i.e. demonized Afro-Brazilian entities) and prosperity show up implicitly and explicitly in the contemporary neo-Pentecostal political discourse. Smiderle & Mesquita (2016) showed that the voting activity of Pentecostal devotees is crucially linked to the candidate´s mission to combat the evil of Afro-Brazilian demon worship. Their study concluded that in order to understand the intersections between religion and politics in Brazil, it is necessary to understand the neo-Pentecostal theological idea about territorial spirits. I follow their argument and assert that besides theological ideas, it is necessary to understand the ontological status and effects of these entities at the experiential level (which I will discuss in the next section).

First, however, I will shed light on the political and economic dimension of religious intolerance, which echoes the dogmatic and ritualistic demonisation of Afro-Brazilian religions at the societal level.

Thus, the growing number of criminal actions against Afro-Brazilian religions and their devotees carried out by radical Pentecostals are, in my view, the most visible outcomes of this theological agenda.

After carrying out fieldwork in IURD churches and Umbanda houses in my previous fieldwork periods, in 2015 I wanted to get a closer look at the Afro-Brazilian religious side of the 'pentecostalisation' of the Brazilian religious field and society at large. In addition to Pentecostal actors, I talked with followers of the Afro-Brazilian religions. One of my key interlocutors was Pai Cássio Ribeiro, a well-known Diadema-based Umbanda leader and Afro-Brazilian religious activist with a long career working against religious intolerance and promoting the visibility and societal rights of Afro-Brazilian religions in the area of metropolitan São Paulo. Once over lunch at a restaurant near Pai Cássio's shop selling ritual paraphernalia in Diadema, I started our recorded interview/conversation by asking what nowadays made the Pentecostal influence so strong in his opinion. Pai Cássio did not hesitate and gave an immediate answer: television. According to him, media, especially television, is the key instrument in what he called the neo-Pentecostal brainwashing. More precisely, he clarified that the Pentecostal dominance in its contemporary context only became possible because of its presence on and ownership of the media channels. Indeed, television has a large, if not the most, significant role as a source of information for the vast majority of the Brazilian population. Moreover, television, according to Pai Cássio, enables the Pentecostals to attract more devotees; with more devotees, they gain more political votes, and with more votes they again receive more time on television. That, according to Pai Cássio, is the contemporary interplay between the religious, political and economic realms in Brazil.

Another site of combat against demons that I encountered during my fieldwork had to do with the practices of exorcism performed in Afro-Brazilian religious temples. In May 2015, I visited the Candomblé temple Kwe Cejá Gbé de Nação Djeje Mahin, led by Mãe de Santo Conceição d'Lissa, in Baixada Fluminense, which finally burned down in 2014 after being attacked eight times by local criminals known as 'Pentecostal drug dealers' (*traficante evangélico*). This is a common example, one that constantly appears on the local news, of how religious-economic power relations are negotiated today in the sub-urban areas of Southeast Brazil. Thus, there are constant news reports about cases in which Afro-Brazilian rituals have been disturbed in public locations, such as in cemeteries or sites along the beach. The attackers have also circulated videos in the social media showing, for example, how Afro-Brazilian religious leaders have been forced to destroy their own religious objects and whole temples in the name of Jesus (see also dos Santos et al., 2016; Miranda, 2014, pp. 104–117).

Religious discrimination is also an issue of debate in the field of education policy. In 2003, the Ministry of Education passed a law stipulating the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian culture and religiosity as part of the national education plan (see Paiva de Carvalho & Silva, 2018). One

of my research interlocutors, Pai Dú D'Oxossi, leader of an Umbanda house in São Paulo and a public primary school teacher, affirmed that even with regulation and access to the study material, most teachers do not include the material in their curricula because of their own religious attitudes, attitudes shared by the children's families or the children themselves. A growing number of cases have recently emerged in the local media in which teachers and fellow students have bullied children with an Afro-Brazilian religious background. Moreover, Pentecostal teachers, parents and students have boycotted the mandatory courses in Afro-Brazilian and African cultures on the grounds of religious freedom. Some states have even excluded these courses from their educational plan based on the Pentecostals reclaiming their constitutional right to 'religious freedom'. These events demonstrate a very complicated situation in legal terms concerning, simultaneously, the issues of religious intolerance and religious freedom, thus it is very difficult to condemn dogmatic demonization (see for example da Silva e Silva & Mendes Serejo, 2017).

Paradoxically, regarding regulations for the secular state, in the Brazilian National Congress many politicians of the Pentecostal coalition (*bancada evangélica*) have announced openly that their mission in politics is to give the people an opportunity to know God and defend the rights of the Pentecostal believers and their values. Today, the Pentecostal politicians constantly organise religious services inside the premises of the National Congress promoting explicit Godly interference in the political processes (T. D. Santos, 2012).

Selfhood and Shared Experience of 'Spiritual Work' (*trabalho*)

During my fieldwork I attended several *descarrego* ('unload') and *libertação* ('liberation') rituals in IURD churches [7] and Exú consultation rituals in Afro-Brazilian Umbanda houses, which according to the devotees were the most popular ceremonies in these places. In Umbanda the diverse group of entities (such as the Exús) are called into the ceremonies so that they can provide help and advices for people with their myriad problems. In neo-Pentecostal ceremonies the Afro-Brazilian entities are treated as demons. In both ritual contexts the entities are incorporated in human bodies. However, unlike in Umbanda, in IURD the entities are publicly interviewed, humiliated and finally expulsed. As demonstrated in the previous part of the article, according to the Church's teachings these entities are sources of illness, misfortune and moral rupture touching individual lives and the society as a whole. (Almeida, 2009; Birman, 2007, p. 123; Lundell, 2010, pp. 91–92; Oro, 2005) and thus only getting rid of them will lead to the divine prosperity in individual and societal levels. These exorcism ceremonies are also broadcast on television, radio and social media channels.

I noted that the holy war promoted by IURD among other Brazilian neo-Pentecostal churches seems to be primarily a battle over authority

and dominance in the field of Brazilian spiritual economy, that is, one of the biggest fields of consumption in Brazil. Therefore, I found it intriguing that, besides the colonially legitimized oppression of African epistemological and cultural heritage in Brazil, the Afro-Brazilian religious entities still hold such a powerful position and effective agency touching individual lives and socio-political power-relations. Moreover, behind the massive exorcism agenda enacted in religious ceremonies, national politics and media, relies a religious ideology of the Pentecostal God as the only source of goodness and success in life.

In the beginning of my first fieldwork period in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, I tried to find out what at the level of their personal lives caused people to attend neo-Pentecostal churches. More precisely, my intention was to study religious conversion to the IURD faith based on the acknowledged increasing numbers of Pentecostal devotees in the Brazilian census. I started by visiting IURD churches located around the city of Rio de Janeiro and conducting interviews among people attending the ceremonies. Basically, the intention at this stage was to sketch out the religious and socio-cultural patterns behind (what I then assumed as) conversions (cf. Cleary & Steigenga, 2007).

In the interviews that I conducted, the IURD pastors and *obreiros* often underlined the churches' coherence and efficacy at solving the problems experienced by people in present times. The Catholic Church had provided many people with their first experience of 'religion', however some also had prior experiences with Spiritism, Umbanda and Candomblé, but now considered them backward. IURD devotees often simply explained that God was no longer present in Catholic churches but had moved into the Pentecostal ones. Many times, people had found their way to the IURD faith since the churches worked directly with people's economic, social and health problems, offering support for their spiritual emergencies several days of the week.

The interviewees saw the Afro-Brazilian religions as backward not because of the absence of divine agency, but because of their connection with 'demonic' powers originating from Africa. Thus, in contrast to Catholicism, the powers (Orixás and other entities) enacted in Afro-Brazilian religions were seen as a real threat: active demons. Thus, in fighting the demons, which according to the pastors had controlled the pasts of individuals and society at large, the Pentecostal universe now provided an opportunity to break the bonds with such former relations, thereby enabling a shift towards demon-free prosperity in all spiritual and material aspects of life. Neo-Pentecostal churches have also played an important role for many people in other aspects of their daily lives, thus providing assistance activities including vocational courses, emotional support, music, theater and sports (see also Reis, 2018; Scheliga, 2010). For many people in Brazil, becoming a neo-Pentecostal pastor has also become a pathway to considerable socio-economic improvement, serving as an example of the neo-Pentecostal engagement with progress and the move from poverty towards divine prosperity (see also Birman, 2007).

The following quote describes the kinds of transitions often described by IURD devotees:

> My dad was sick. He had serious health problems and he was stuck in the hospital. He had to have heart surgery. We had financial problems, our family had problems, and my sister was getting caught up in a vicious life. I saw 'spirit figures' (vultos)... I had siblings who also had the same problems. They [the entities] forced us to use drugs and beg. [...]
>
> [...] There, [in descarrego ritual in the IURD] God's power manifested itself and I heard who were the guilty ones for all these problems. They were these entities that are actually demons, and I recognised this reality and truth. I knew these entities from Macumba.
>
> During the strong prayer, one of the people who manifested herself was my youngest, only 15 years old, sister. When she manifested herself, the demon smiled and the pastor asked: 'What are you doing in this young person's life?' The demon replied: 'I'm going to bring his family to misery; his father is in the hospital due to heart problems: I'll kill him. There is nothing wrong with his heart, I caused this problem for him'... so the demon spoke, using the body of my sister.
>
> Then the pastor offered a prayer. He ordered the spirit to depart from her body, to release my family from his control in the name of Jesus. He said that some bad magic had been done to make this demon come and complicate our lives, and that its actions would now become null and void. That is why God manifested himself, in order to deny the work of the demon.
>
> [...] and he [Pastor Ronaldo] said to me: 'I want you to attend church worship every day this week and I want you to take this oil to bless your dad in the hospital...' [...] He used the word of God so that the demons would be subjugated in the name of Jesus. [...] (Pastor Marcelo[8], personal communication, April 27, 2008)

The *descarrego* and *libertação* rituals were organised on Tuesdays and Fridays, five times a day, and they attracted more people than any other rituals offered by the church (rituals were organised under different topics, from family life to employment from Monday to Sunday). The atmosphere in the rituals was always intense, accompanied by ritual songs (*louvor*) played on a keyboard and passionately sung by the pastors and the attendees. During 'the strong prayer' (*oracão forte*), the pastors shouted into the microphones, calling for the entities, addressing them as demons (*demônios*), evil spirits (*encostos*) or general evil (*o mal*), and, like in Marcelo´s example, ordering them to leave the bodies and lives of the people who seemed to be under their control.

In *Catedral mundial de fé*, the largest IURD church at the time of my fieldwork, I saw several pastors dressed up in white clothes working on a huge stage in front for an audience of thousands of people in what was an outstanding exorcism performance. During the strong prayer, pastors dragged the manifested entities incorporating people's bodies from the audience onto the stage, forcing them to their knee in front of them and demanding that the entities obey their orders, accompanied by verbal humiliations and making fun of them. The pastors were making evident the fact that their power was coming straight from God and that it was stronger than the power of the entities, such as Exú Tranca Rua, Maria Padilha, Lucifer and Satan himself, physically present in that session. Before the strong prayer (practice of exorcism), ritual assistants (*obreiros*) dressed in church uniforms walked around scattering water onto the

audience and handing over envelopes filled with the arruda herb and sea salt together with bank transfer forms addressed to the church's bank account.

The material aspects of these unloading rituals are familiar to those who have experience with Afro-Brazilian religions, especially Umbanda. Like the pastor, Umbanda mediums use white clothes in the gira-rituals in order to attract light energies (instead of the heavy ones attracted by dark clothes). Blessed water, the arruda herb, roses and sea salt are commonly used as attributes of spiritual baths and for the cleaning of spaces both in Umbanda houses and in IURD churches. In the place of the ritual offerings (*oferenda*) central to umbanda healing practices, the church encouraged people to make different ritualised forms of money offerings (*votos*), which would fortify the effects of the work done to eliminate the demons. This can be interpreted, as Benedito (2006) puts it, as a kind of ritual symbiosis in which Afro-Brazilian ritual elements are implemented into a neo-Pentecostal context.

Thus, the objects used in ritual work — e.g. specific propositions (*propósito*) in IURD churches or the Exús work (*trabalho de Exú)* done in Umbanda houses — function according to their contextually acknowledged agency. For instance, the roses that are typical ritual objects in the work of Pomba Gira entities in the Umbanda faith are also often distributed in the IURD descarrego rituals. In the Umbanda faith, Pomba Gira entities use the roses to resolve issues related to love and marital life. In the same vein, in IURD churches roses are distributed among the congregation and people are told to place them in the location charged by bad energy (*carregado*), such as in the bedroom of a couple having marital problems or near the hospital bed of a sick person. In these locations, according to the pastors, the rose absorbs the bad energy. If the rose dies quickly in the charged location, it is an indication of a very heavy and negative (demonic) spiritual contamination of people and things related to that place.

When devoting attention to the significance of religious participation in these rituals in IURD churches, I began to realise that the 'conversion' was not in fact the best conceptual tool with which to approach lived religiosities I encountered. I found that looking at the religious phenomena through this type of concept that is, by its origins, deeply based in religious epistemology from the euro-Christian universe, in fact complicated rather than helped me to understand the religious consumerism and flexible attitudes towards multi-religious participation in the field. Therefore, instead of trying to find my analytical locus within the great variety of conversion theories presented around Brazilian and Latin American religious change regarding the Pentecostal influence (see for example Cleary & Steigenga, 2007), I chose to switch the epistemological focus of my analysis towards the ontographic perspective, giving emphasis on my research interlocutors experiences in which subjective experiences on ritual pragmatics and other-than-human agency were more addressed than concerns about religious identity and/or belonging [9]. Like the pastors often stated, a radical conversion was quite

rare; the majority of people coming to the churches were looking for help in the case of a spiritual 'emergency' (*pronto socorro,* or first aid). These people, according to the pastors, had experienced, for instance, a betrayal in marriage or other problems in their social relations, mental and physical illness, money problems or drug and alcohol addiction. More precisely, many IURD pastors emphasised the speciality of IURD services in *working* effectively to eliminate the *work* of demons – which they addressed as Afro-Brazilian entities, and who, according to them, through these *works* were responsible for making people's lives miserable. Thus, attending the full packed 'descarrego' and 'libertação' ceremonies in Rio de Janeiro, I observed two different types of ritual engagement: consumerism (participation as clients) and religious devotion (dedication to ritual work as pastors, *evangelistas, obreiros*).

Moreover, during my fieldwork it became clear for me that both Umbanda houses and IURD churches offered solutions for the same problems, and the people attending their rituals came from the same socio-economic backgrounds. In both places, the 'workers' (including people, Afro-Brazilian entities, 'demons', god and ritual objects) facilitated significant transformations for the clients, who for their part constituted the majority of the clientele attending Umbanda and IURD ceremonies. The common Brazilian saying about religions 'for love or pain' (*pelo amor ou pela dor*) summarises quite well the functionality of religion for both groups of people.

The idea of religiosity as work (*trabalho*) was reflected in many ways by the people I encountered in the field. For example, in IURD churches, Umbanda houses and other religious contexts I often began my interviews with people by asking about the trajectory of their religious life. The majority of the answers, such as the following quote from an interview with a woman named Sheila, explicitly indicated the flexible and practical engagement with different religions on the part of many of my interlocutors.

> In My childhood my family was Catholic, but we also visited Espiritismo and Umbanda [houses]. I myself went to Umbanda, but less often. ... Occasionally, I also attended a Catholic mass, and with my grandmother I went to a Baptist church. Today, I mostly attend the Assembly of God church [...] I attend churches because I'm looking for a place where it feels good and where the Holy Spirit touches me. I often go to different churches if people invite me to join them. If I feel good, I will go again. (Edneia[10], personal communication, April 17, 2008)

Sheila was also my colleague in the community centre based in a Baptist church in the Rio de Janeiro favela of Babilônia. She was in charge of the second-hand shop, and she told me about one occasion when she had been unemployed for a long period of time and went to an IURD church hoping to find a new job. There, she carried out the required ritual procedures and soon was working again. Sheila explained that the prayers offered in the IURD churches are very powerful and efficient, but since the rituals were quite heavy and required lots of money, she only visited the churches in case of serious illness or unemployment. In the meantime, she preferred to attend 'calmer' churches. I find that this kind

of religious consumerism reflects the fluidity of religious selfhoods, which I consider quite common across different social classes in the area. In other words, people's religiosities are often lived and practiced through the use of different, co-existent religious institutions and overlapping socio-cosmological ideas.

Thus, besides conversion, what seems to be at stake at the level of religious experiences of my research interlocutors was an acknowledgement of religiosity as some sort of spiritual technology through which different situations in life are resolved. For example, in addition to the above-mentioned appropriation of Afro-Brazilian religious ideas in IURD rituals, I witnessed many other occasions where elements apparently originating from different religions were innovatively enacted in the ritual services provided by other religious actors and institutions. For instance, I visited Umbanda houses that performed ritual services known to belong 'originally' to Candomblé and Espiritimo. This, according to Mãe pequena Deise (the second leader of one such Umbanda house), enabled them to work with different aspects of their members' spirituality. Yet another Afro-Brazilian religious leader known as 'Mãe Nega' had officiated in both Candomblé and Umbanda houses, since, according to her, the spirits and Orixás from both religious universes simply required work and manifested themselves through her person. In this light, the explicit usage of Afro-Brazilian religious elements in IURD churches would also indicate a certain continuity between the Pentecostal and Afro-religious (especially Umbanda) universes, not only in terms of the appropriation of socio-cosmological ideas, but in the form of technologies and materialities epistemologically engaged with religious subjectivity and selfhoods. These selfhoods in this Brazilian context, as I have argued elsewhere (Lundell 2016), are ontologically divided into material and spiritual sides, which do not correspond with the Cartesian dichotomy of matter and spirit, but refer instead to a material-immaterial composition of all things, one connecting people and things through ontological attributes (or potentialities).

Perhaps the most striking of the declarations about the fluidity of religious selfhoods and the technology of spiritual work that I encountered was the life-story of one well-known spirit medium from Rio de Janeiro, who worked full-time with Maria Padilha (Umbanda spirit) at her household attending several politically and culturally important clients for more than three decades. Besides conducting spiritual work within an Afro-Brazilian religious framework, she used the IURD *descarrego* ritual for self-cleaning purposes after the work had been completed. Her sister (who identified herself as a devoted catholic) claimed that the rituals were energetically so taxing that the IURD ritual offered her the only possibility to clean her spiritual side and avoid being caught by shadowy energies (bad spirits, envy, greediness, bad intentions, etc.) that the clients might have transmitted to her. It happened that Maria Padilha was the source of success for countless politicians, actors and businessmen ruling the socio-economic power relations in the Southeast Brazilian area. The medium's niece remembered

that as a child, she always wondered why her aunt's house was full of gold, only later understanding that it was the aunt's spirit guide, Maria Padilha, who had gained all that in return for the work she did for the wealthy clients. This example, besides exemplifying the religiosity as work (trabalho) i.e. a process of making, also provides another context for understanding the cognitive patterns underpinning the money offerings (*voto*) in IURD, echoing the cross-religious acknowledgement of ritual services as a trade in goods. Moreover, the local news constantly reports on politicians or celebrities visiting religious institutions, churches or Afro-Brazilian temples. Thus, besides individual lives, spiritual work is part of political and economic power relations in the region. The religious authorities — priests, pastors, Afro-Brazilian religious leaders, spiritist mediums and astrologists — have significant positions in the Brazilian public sphere.

Finally, despite the increasing number of attacks identified as instances of Pentecostal religious intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions, I also encountered families consisting of followers of Pentecostal churches, Kardec´s Spiritism and Umbanda. I became familiar with a number of Afro-Brazilian religious artefacts where Pentecostal, catholic and umbandistas worked together. I visited the home of one Ialorixá from Candomblé, where we sat down to have lunch with her and her two sisters: one declared herself to be a devoted evangélico (follower of Assembleia de Deus) and other a Catholic. I interviewed an Umbanda medium whose 8-year-old daughter was affiliated with the same temple as the medium, while her other daughter had been exclusively attending a Pentecostal *Deus é Amor* church. Like Marcelo, a shopkeeper selling religious artefacts in São Paulo, stated: 'They (the Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religious activists) are shouting and fighting in the media with each other, and at the end of the day you see them laughing, drinking and having pizza together in the local pub'. This is, unfortunately, not always the case, but it describes quite well the culture of religious flexibility in the area.

Conclusions

The central questions emerging in the previous studies concerning the Brazilian religious field have discussed the simultaneous tendencies toward religious change and continuity with respect to Pentecostal influences. These approaches largely echo the ideas of religion as identity, ideas which have been strongly present in many academic approaches to religion in Brazil (see for example Mariz & Campos, 2011). In contrast, in this article the analysis treated religiosity as a process of 'making', which for its part seems to correlate more accurately with the experiential knowledge and efficacy of ritual agency within the lived realities of my research interlocutors.

Thus, the results of the ontographic analysis on religious experiences among Afro-Brazilian and Pentecostal religious followers participating in descarrego and libertação IURD ceremonies as well as in Exú rituals

in Umbanda houses, show that the personal significance of ritual participation is many times essentially embedded in the notion of religiosity as 'spiritual work' (*trabalho*). Spiritual work is understood here as a cross-institutional, politico-religious domain of religious agency based on a contextual acknowledgement of the ontological efficiency of ritual technologies. Spiritual work aims at transformations at the individual and societal levels via ontological reconfigurations of the spiritual-material balance in and among people and things (see also Lundell, 2016). What becomes central in this kind of pragmatic religious engagement is the onto-epistemology embedded in the contextual forms of religious clientelism and the constitution of religious selfhoods. Thus, in the same vein as Blanes & Espiríto Santo (2014), Goldman (2011), Holbraad (2012) and Sansi (2013), my study has addressed religiosity through efficacy rather than representation, thereby, following Sousa Santos decolonial critique and ideas about abyssal thinking (Sousa Santos 2007), enabling a deeper understanding of the significant agency relying beyond and in between institutional, dogmatic and/or political categories.

From the onto-epistemological perspective on religious experience, the IURD churches' most attended religious ceremonies of '*descarrego*' and '*libertação'* can be seen as events in which the technology of spiritual work has been systemised and applied as the central tool in the politico-religious war against Afro-Brazilian 'demons'. Moreover, neo-Pentecostalism and the IURD in particular has promoted significant changes in the ways in which religion has become intertwined with the public sphere. It seems that IURD has officialised and merchandised the knowledge and technology of spiritual work using the modern media, especially television, as the channel for its distribution. In practice, the spiritual work carried out by the IURD attempts to invalidate the agency of Afro-Brazilian entities such as Exú, substituting them with the Pentecostal God, which nonetheless functions according to a logic based on a shared cross-religious knowledge and experience of spiritual work (cf. Lara, 2006). From this perspective, the societal transformations promoted through the novel politico-religious engagement of the Pentecostal actors in Brazilian society are deeply immersed in the ontology of religious continuities, especially regarding the agency and efficacy of 'demons' as socio-political actors.

The fact that demons in the neo-Pentecostal context are many times identified in the form of Afro-Brazilian entities indicates both societal and spiritual levels of racism and socio-historical discrimination against the Afro-Brazilian religious and cultural legacy. Thus, the politico-religious demonisation of Afro-Brazilian religions is a colonially framed socio-historical process reflecting the onto-epistemological power relations in the Brazilian religious field and society at large. The epistemological incommensurability between Afro-Brazilian religions and Christian-based religions is implicitly present in the making of Afro-Brazilian religions, i.e. in the concepts of 'religion' and 'culture', that are colonially framed and thus drastically limit the onto-

epistemological possibilities of existence for a large part of the Afro-Brazilian religiosities practiced in contemporary society. In other words, the religious conflict in question emerges in a context in which the concepts of research and legislation are based on colonially determined knowledge regarding what can and cannot be understood as 'culture' and/or 'religion'. Thus, in the same vein as Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2007) ideas about abyssal thinking in post-colonial societies, I see that religious identities, orthodoxies and religious institutions in contemporary Brazil are produced and made existent according to epistemological presuppositions, i.e. the colonially established abyssal line. This epistemological division places a considerable amount of Afro-Brazilian religious knowledge and agency beyond official recognition. (c.f. Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 45).

Thus, when paying attention to analytical challenges regarding the coloniality of the 'religion' concept in the Brazilian context, as well as the ontographic account of religious experiences, it seems that what remains on 'this side' of the abyssal line (regarding the so-called Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazilian society) are the ethnicized, traditionalised and Africanized institutions, which have been made visible within the colonially flavoured process of heritisation. Instead of legitimising Candomblé, Umbanda and other Afro-Brazilian religions as 'religions' within modern society, similarly as Christian churches, they are on many occasions politically produced and acknowledged as ethnicity-based 'cultures' – and as such, 'traces from the past' (cf. Giumbelli, 2018).

By discussing the mechanisms of dogmatic demonisation in a religious context, this study showed that ritual efficacy in neo-Pentecostal IURD churches and Umbanda houses is based on the application of the same material and immaterial objects (such as roses, sea salt, bodies and money) connected to people and their life situations through ontological attributes/potentialities. In their studies on Brazilian Pentecostalism, Benedito (2006) and Silva (2007c) have also argued that IURD rituals are in fact events in which the Afro-Brazilian religious symbols have been appropriated for neo-Pentecostal exorcism purposes. I see, however, that besides the symbolic value of this kind of 'ritual symbiosis', what is at stake in ceremonies of *descarrego* and *libertação* as well as in the instances of religious intolerance performed by neo-Pentecostal actors in the socio-political realms, is the authority over knowledge and agency embedded in the technology of 'spiritual work': a significant political and socio-cultural domain of power.

From this perspective, people's engagement with the religious domain cannot be seen exclusively through bounded identities, but also through religious selfhoods constituted by the ontological relations between different actors (people, demons, entities, ritual objects) embedded in social networks. Within the onto-epistemology of spiritual work, materiality, such as the human body incorporated by demons/entities in the Afro-Brazilian and Neo-Pentecostal socio-cosmology, becomes one ritual object among others, that is, connected to the ontological continuum of material-immaterial relations and transformative agency.

Thus, based on my research results, experiential knowledge and ontological modalities of other-than-human agency have significant efficacy in the processes where persons, individual life trajectories and societal conditions are produced and re-configured — both in Brazilian neo-Pentecostal and Afro-religious contexts.

Finally, besides the similarities regarding ritual techniques which echo a shared notion of religious selfhood and pragmatic aspects of religiosity as spiritual work (trabalho), it is important to acknowledge that Neo-Pentecostal and Afro-Brazilian religious cosmologies differ from each other fundamentally in several ontological and epistemological aspects. The Pentecostal demonisation of Afro-Brazilian entities is in fact a result of these type of epistemological differences (see also Silva 2007b), a process in which phenomena that do not fit into the official conceptualisations of religion undergo a process of epistemic domestication, legitimized by the colonial heritage in the form of concepts and religious agenda.

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Notes

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[2] Already, in 2016 BBC Brazil reported that according to 'the Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance' (CCIR–Comissão de Combate à Intolerância Religiosa), 70% of the registered cases of religious intolerance (which included insults, abuse and violence)

in Rio de Janeiro were suffered by practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, between 2012 and 2015 (Puff, 2016).

[**3**] Paul Freston has divided Brazilian Pentecostalism in three waves which Mariano (2005) addresses as "Classic Pentecostalism" (Freston's first wave in 1910), "Deutero Pentecostalism" (Freston´s second wave) during 1950-1960 and Neo-Pentecostalism emerging in late 1970s. (Mariano, 2005, pp. 28-31)

[**4**] *Evangelistas*, *obreiros* are voluntary workers in the IURD who take care of the practical arrangements of ceremonies and other church events.

[**5**] In Umbanda houses visited for this research religious leaders were called Mãe (female) Pai (male), short versions of Mãe-de-Santo and Pai-de-Santo, also used in reference to religious leadership in Afro-Brazilian religious context more generally. In Candomblé houses religious leaders were more often referred to in Yoruba names *Babalorixá* (male) and *Ialorixá* (female).

[**6**] According to my research interlocutors attending Umbanda houses, exús and pomba giras are seen as entities that once lived in the earth as people, and after turning into exús they are known from their misfortunate life-conditions (prostitution, crime, gambling etc.), and for their abilities to solve the most complicated situations related to love, health and money. Sometimes these entities are also feared of being harmful and even deadly, thus when treated properly, they may accompany people in their missions without making moral judgements.

[**7**] Although I focused in my fieldwork in IURD on the liberation and exorcism cults, it must be acknowledged that there is also significant number of engaged and committed members of IURD who do not attend these ceremonies but go to churches on Wednesdays and Sundays attending services of the Holy Spirit which are much calmer and less focused in demons (see for example L. R. Santos, 2018; Teixeira, 2016).

[**8**] The interviewee is referred to by pseudonym.

[**9**] I acknowledge that religious identity both in Pentecostal side (evangélicos) and in Afro-Brazilian side as well have fundamental roles in Brazilian socio-political scenario. However, I will not go deeper on the discussions about religious identities in this article, since my field research in IURD and Umbanda was focused on religious consumerism, central in Exú rituals of Umbanda and cultos de libertação and descarrego in IURD.

[**10**] The interviewee is referred to by pseudonym.