Religion as *social curriculum*: education, values and Islam in Europe

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Abstract

When religion is converted in an integral part of modern political debates, religious ideas influence the decisions and definitions of concepts such as education, the participation in the labor market, the structure and function of the family as a social unit, and the equality. Integration and immigration come to the forefront as the concept of citizenship acquires culturalist and moralizing dimensions. Finally, religion, politics and education begin to interfere in the areas of life that belong to the private and public spheres. From our pedagogical perspective we understand that the educational lines marked by religion influence remarkably the future of many citizens, and attach themselves to the social-political realm. We thus become aware of the fact that religion as a powerful instrument of socialization exerts a strong influence upon citizens' education and values, and presents itself as the – normally hidden – social curriculum of the context closer to many citizens. The presence of Islam and of Muslims in Europe, though not a new phenomenon, is questioned by the nation-states, confronting the official curriculum and the regulated education, with the social curriculum, strongly influenced by Islam among its followers. It therefore converts itself in an integral part of the struggle for individual and collective national identity, be it with respect to laity, to democracy or to citizenship. And, in this sense, we would like to present an up-to-date review of this question so present in Europe today.

Keywords

Religion − Education − Politics − Muslims − Immigration.

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La religión como currículo social: *educación, valores e Islam en Europa*

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Resumen

Cuando la religión se convierte en parte integrante de los debates políticos modernos, las ideas religiosas influyen en las decisiones y definiciones de conceptos como la educación, la participación en el mercado laboral, la estructura y función de la familia como unidad social y la igualdad. La integración y la inmigración pasan a primer plano a medida que el concepto de ciudadanía adquiere dimensiones culturalistas y moralizantes. Finalmente, religión, política y educación se interfieren en las áreas de la vida que pertenecen a la esfera privada y pública. Desde nuestra perspectiva pedagógica, entendemos que las líneas educativas marcadas por la religión influyen notablemente en el devenir de muchos ciudadanos y se incrustan en el foro político-social. Así nos encontramos que la religión como poderoso instrumento de socialización ejerce una gran influencia intencionada en la educación y valores de los ciudadanos y se configura como el currículo social, normalmente oculto, del contexto próximo de muchos ciudadanos. La presencia del Islam y los musulmanes en Europa, aunque no es un fenómeno nuevo, es cuestionada por los Estados-nación confrontando el currículo oficial, la educación reglada, con el currículo social, muy influido por el Islam entre sus fieles. De esta manera se convierte en parte integrante de la lucha por la identidad nacional individual y colectiva, ya sea en lo referente al laicismo, la democracia o ciudadanía. Y en este sentido, queremos aportar una revisión actualizada de esta cuestión tan presente en Europa.

Palabras Clave

Religión − Educación − Política − Musulmanes − Inmigración.

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Education and culture – as a given structure of institutions, means and ends – contribute strongly to guarantee the continuity and perpetuation of the ethnicity of a particular social group. Education can, in fact, afford an important line of continuity with the past which, so often, is kept alive through the practice of cultural traditions. Within one and the same society there exist, however, large inequalities, both in access to education and in cultural practices, which result in different impacts upon the children and the youngsters. While we can identify an official curriculum where, through laws and other legislative terms, the educational intentions of the State are represented, and certainly the anthropological model of each society, we have also to become aware that the education and culture of the social context of an individual presuppose a more subtle and unrevealed curriculum. We thus become aware of the fact that religion as a powerful instrument of socialization exerts a large influence upon the education and values of citizens, and that it presents itself as the – usually hidden – social curriculum of the context closer to many citizens (LLORENT; LLORENT, 2009).

The presence of Islam and of Muslims in Europe, although essentially not a new phenomenon, is therefore questioned by the nation-states, by confronting the official curriculum and the regulated education with the social curriculum, strongly influenced by Islam among its followers. It therefore becomes an integral part of the struggle for individual and collective national identity, be it with respect to laity, to democracy or to citizenship. The concern with the growing number of Muslims and the increasing importance of Islam in the nation-states of Western Europe has been strengthened by their presence for many decades now in the government of a small number of contemporary nation states. These problems took a sharp turn after the events of 9/11 (the terrorist attacks to the USA in 2001), those of 11-M (terrorist attack in Spain in 2004), those of 7/7 (terrorist attack in England in 2005) and the murder of Theo van Gogh, (TILLY, 2006; RAI, 2006; BURUMA, 2006; EYERMAN, 2008). The dynamics around the *new religion of the immigrants*, which is how Islam is seen, represent an opportunity to cast a look upon the complicated relation of the lay states of Western Europe with religion (IVANESCU, 2010).

The nation-states, between the norms and the values

The modern nation-state is conceived as a lay or otherwise non-confessional political unit where power is distributed among people in an independent state controlled by the mechanism of citizenship (GELLNER, 1983; ANDERSON, 1991; HOBSBAWM, 1990). This unit is conceived as culturally homogeneous (ANDERSON, 1991; CALHOUN, 1994). From the perspective of the State as agent, the ethnic origin, the cultural specificity and the religion are "rejected as a characteristic of 'simple' and 'pre-political' societies or of marginal groups that must be integrated into the nation-state" (HUTCHINSON, 2000, p. 653).

As a legacy from the philosophy of the Enlightenment, and from the specific agreements on laity at a national level, religion is considered as opposed to reason and rationality; it is regarded as something separate from the political sphere and it is situated within peoples' private lives. The principal paradigm through which social science has studied religion is the theory of secularization. Casanova (1994) distinguished three different directions that the theory of secularization has taken: the differentiation of the lay sphere from religion, secularization as a decline of religion (practices and beliefs), and secularization as the privatization of religion into its own sphere. It accepts the differentiation within Western society, but it shows that the religious institutions keep playing an important role, above all within the civil society. This role is not necessarily opposed to the process of secularization. Sengers (2005) says that

secularization and the transformation of religion can be simultaneous processes. The secularization in all aspects of society, and the transformation of religion evident in the number of religious associations and in their form of dealing with society, and in the number and form of work of non-Western organizations, may go hand in hand (DOBBELAERE, 2002).

The construction of European nation-states assumed in many cases the attribution, perhaps even imposed, of a national language, of a national culture and of some national institutions. In this context the migrants, by definition, were seen as the others, which by the fact of crossing the borders of the nation-state reinforced the meaning of those borders. The others from the nation-state are seen as guests with a purpose (work, leisure etc.) and it is expected that they return, unless they ask for *naturalization*. But even when they do get *naturalized*, if they are part of a nation, the issue of the difference is still painful. The same difference found at the root of identity is also at the root of difference (CONNOLLY, 1991). One should not forget that citizens are usually inhabitants, the members of universal and particular power associations, among which the nation-state is nothing more than one of them (HAMMAR, 1986). Other associations could very well be defined in terms of religion, which can be national or of a transnational character (ROY, 2004). The dilemma of the difference, the dilemma of denying or affirming the difference with respect to the equality and plurality in the concept of citizenship, is far from being solved (YOUNG, 1990).

The migration and the formation of minorities represent challenges for the nation-state. In the case of immigrants/minorities of Muslim origin, the tensions can be identified at various levels, from which we would like to highlight two: the socio-economic inequalities that are characteristic of the process of labor migration, and the challenge that the resurgence of religion represents for the lay State. These tensions are produced within the context of more

general changes in the policy of integration in Europe, namely, the localization of the formulation of policies, the transformation of complacent cities into demanding cities, the combination of integration with immigration and, finally, the important role of the agenda of integration for the party spirit (GUIRAUDON; LAHAV, 2006).

From the point of view of the lay State, migration poses a challenge because of the possibility of a religious resurgence that may accompany it. The religious presence can be seen as a double threat: in the first place, as cultural pluralism, and in the second place, as a threat to the lay State. However, the question is still more complicated. At the root of this double tension we find the construction of the modern State in all process of secularization. There is a strong link between the theory of secularization, the ideological discourse of the formation of the State and the rationalist discourses about modernity (HADDEN, 1987; STARK; FINKE, 2000). Laicism needs a substitute for the ideological basis of religion, and it finds it in nationalism (ANDERSON, 1991).

The interaction between politics and religion leaves no one intact. Indeed, the two have never been completely apart. Even if today we think about laicism as the separation of powers between the State and the religious institutions in detriment of the latter (WILSON; SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY, 1996), as pointed out by Asad, the lay and the religious are interdependent. Asad calls our attention to the historical facts that lie behind the connection between the two concepts, namely, that while the *lay* was initially a part of the theological discourse (*saeculum*), the religious was constructed in the political and scientific discourses as the differentiation through the performance of the organism of the lay and of the religious (ASAD, 2003).

Islam allows a personal and collective identification alternative to the State and, paraphrasing Mahmood (2005), through the possibility of a politics of piety that presents a possible challenge to the forms of action

proposed by the principle of citizenship. At the same time, the Islamic ideals and values proposed as guidelines for a good citizenship, and therefore for the belonging to the nation-state, offer an alternative, and perhaps a radically different vision of the values considered as universal by the nation-state.

In the present article, the term *religionalization* has been used to describe the types of phenomena related to religion. In the first place, it has to do with the lack of a clear border between the political and religious spheres (see also MARTIN, 1978 for the objectives common to both), and in the second place, it is used as a deconstruction of the objectivity and universality of politically nationalized values. By using the term religionalization, we would like to signal that the beliefs and values perceived as something natural and universal are just as socially constructed, and are just as a matter both of convention and social belief, as religion itself. Also, the discourses of the unification of the nation use the mechanism of sacralization with the purpose of gaining authority. As nationalist feelings increase amidst the population and in the political discourse, the values that promote the nation-state acquire, through ritualistic acts of belonging, an aura of sanctity, essential to the individual and collective identity of the citizens.

Religion in the *social curriculum*:
Islam in the Netherlands

In this section, we will refer to the form in which religion, helped by the preoccupation with immigration, becomes politicized in the articulation of a social curriculum. *The multicultural tragedy*, a phrase coined by the publicist Scheffer (2000) in his influential article that appeared in national communication media, is probably the best description of how the Muslim and the theme of Islam are perceived and dealt with. The basic assumption is that of an incompatibility between Western and Islamic values.

However, that was not something new in Dutch national politics. The same stance was freely adopted by influential politicians such as Bolkenstein, the leader of the Popular Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD), of a liberal streak, already in the early 1990s. By the end of the 1990s, the relation between the incompatibility of cultures and a sociocultural drama was predicted, and perhaps up to a point it was created as a possibility in the conference by Paul Schnabel, the director of the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau*, SCP), a national research agency, who was of the opinion that the integration of immigrants might not work.

The more important is perhaps the essentialist vision of culture, which is seen as a monolithic body of norms and values that determine the (presumably homogeneous) way of life of certain groups and/or individuals. This way of seeing culture is polarized right from the outset, since it assumes that there are an immutable Dutch culture and a Muslim culture that oppose each other, that do not communicate and do not influence one another (DUYVENDAK; PELS; RIJKSCHROEFF, 2009).

Islam as a theme of open controversy and political debate came to light with Pim Fortuyn, the charismatic leader of Livable Rotterdam (*Leefbaar Rotterdam*, LR), the populist right wing party. This discoursed was based on the polarization between native Dutch and immigrants, and on the active promotion of Islam as the main problem, since Islam was a backward culture. The main hypothesis was that (nonintegrated) Muslim immigrants were the chief problem of the Netherlands, their presence and attitude posed a danger to the achievements and pleasures of the West. The achievement of the LR was to become the most important party in the city of Rotterdam in the period between 2002 and 2006. After Fortuyn's assassination in 2002, the LR continue to advance a political agenda with the central theme of Islam.

The problem of Islam is defined as the existing tension between its values and norms and those of the West, and the tension between the cultures steeped in tradition and the cultures steeped in modernity. However, the distinction between tradition and modernity is not a naïve one, but is deeply immersed in the struggle for power and supremacy. The debate means that Western countries are unquestionably modern and the Netherlands present themselves as individualistic and lay (GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, 2004). Muslims represent the permanence of their roots in religion and tradition, and therefore they are shown to be incapable of moving into modernity, which requires a distancing from religion, as dictated by the principles of laicism, and the relativization of traditional norms and values as promoted by the democratic-liberal ideals.

The political debate started with the experts invited and representatives of the Muslim population who, according with the democratic practices, were brought into the discussion. The form assumed by the meetings of experts only reinforced the perception that Islam is the cause of the integration problems. Religion, alongside culture, received all the blame for the uneasy state of integration. The internal debates were ultimately full of *advices* and of the definition of the problem. On the other hand, for signaling the importance of the public debates over and above the internal ones, it was the scenario of action that was considered more important – the public interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, or autochthonous Rotterdammers.

The objective of the internal debates was to eradicate as much as possible the "erroneous ideas and ignorance" in the Muslim community (GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, 2004, p.9). The internal debates were a series of seminars and meetings aimed solely at the Muslim community, with the objective of clarifying the position, objectives and ambitions of the Muslims in the society, and their point of view about civil contribution and participation.

At the same time, the debates were focused directly on the *delicate* themes, presenting also the viewpoint of the municipality about what the problem was and how it would have to be solved. Among the delicate themes was the position of religious institutions in society, that is to say, that mosques, the work of the imams, and the self-organizations presented obstacles to integration, giving rise to social separatism. In other words, religious organizations were perceived as possible places for religious or ethnic communitarianism. As a solution, it was argued that religious institutions should be open to society in general and that they should also become social centers, in addition to religious ones. Part of the solution was to oppose the gender inequality within religious institutions and to change the fact that mosques were an exclusive realm for men in terms of visits and power of decision (GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, 2005). In this case, we see the intention of intervening in the social functions of religious institutions and in the social hierarchy of religious beliefs and organizations.

The interventionist policy of the State at a local level can also be followed with respect to the theme of emancipation. The declaration that "Muslims have to emancipate themselves by forsaking their religion" (GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, 2004, p. 13) incited a heated discussion. The discourse of emancipation related with the theme of religion was not something new in the Netherlands. As we shall describe in the following sections, one of the factors that contributed to the decrease in pillarization[1] is the successful implementation of the process of emancipation that made isolation and differentiation redundant. In the emancipation process, differences are erased, differences that are important from the point of view of social equality. From the point of view of the lay State, the important difference

[1] In Dutch *verzuiling*, a phrase coined in Holland and Belgium that makes reference to the concentration of power as in a *pillar*, a social construct that brings together groups that share the same values or beliefs, such as Protestants, Catholics, social Democrats; and that have their own parties, associations, places, newspapers, schools, hospitals.

that must be destroyed is that of beliefs, norms and values that differ from those promoted by the State.

The renewed interest and concern with religion does not emerge in a vacuum. In order to understand the dynamics that allowed the success of Pim Fortuyn, of LR and of its program centered on Islam, it is fundamental that we acquire a deeper comprehension of the ways in which the Dutch State has dealt with religion and immigration. For that, it is important to follow the intersection between the tradition of pillarization specific to that area and its special commitment to laicism through the public institutionalization of religion, and the form that the approach to inequality and difference through the principle of citizenship assumed in time.

Immigration, education, multiculturalism and religious diversity

Although the history of immigration in the Netherlands started in the postcolonial era, the discourse about it is dominated by a narrative that began with the wave of labor immigration, the arrival of immigrants without professional qualification in the late 1950s, firstly from Spain and Italy, and then from Muslim countries such as Turkey and Morocco (WILTERDINK, 1998). At that point, immigration was a short-term economic solution for the struggle against the consequences of the Second World War. When that problem was dealt with, measures were taken to ensure that the immigrant groups maintained their own culture as a legacy that would avoid problems when they returned to their countries of origin (ENTZINGER, 1984). The immigrants were seen as temporary guests, and as such their integration was not an issue. The culture was not seen as a problem, the groups in question were seen as transitory for the State. In that period, the accommodation of the (ethnic) groups meant the recognition of the self-identification and of processes of self-organization.

This form of self-organization is based on the existing structure of accommodation, known as *pillarization* (LIJPHART, 1968). In the Netherlands, multiculturalism was based on the existing institutional mechanisms of subsidizing political or religious organizations. The tolerance towards religious practices had little to do with national strategies for integration (KOOPMANS, 2005).

In their condition as guests, the migrant workforce had rights, and they were even stimulated to preserve their social, cultural and religious identity, with the purpose of facilitating their movement when necessary. This pragmatic approach allowed a kind of cultural pluralism to be developed, in which different ethnic groups achieved a system of self-institutionalization through the cultural and religious groups, associations and organizations. These efforts were fostered and sustained by the so-called multicultural policies. Although researchers may think that pluralism is a consequence of the intention of multiculturalism of protecting the identity of immigrant workers (SNIDERMANY; HAGENDOORN, 2007; KOOPMANS, 2005) the result was not a defense line for Muslims or other immigrants. When separated from the Dutch population, the immigrants organized themselves into ethnic groups, with specific cultural, social and religious organizations, giving rise to a large number of fragmented social formations (JOPPKE, 2004).

The individual integration, the new approach, allowed the weight of responsibility that rested upon the shoulders of the State to be transferred to each person. From the viewpoint of the State, the individual could be classified for management purposes as a non-integrated system or unit. One of the main factors that triggered the change of approach from one centered on groups to one centered on individuals was the criticism that the former approach stimulated the separation of the immigrants (ENTZINGER, 1984), which in extreme cases led to isolation and to the lack of social cohesion in society. The individualization

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of the discourse went hand-in-hand with the culturalization. The discourse was related to the low education level, and to unemployment and delinquency among specific ethnic groups, generating a strong polarization and the moralization of the different agents of the discussion, reinforced by the unbalance of power between them. Now, the immigrants, *the citizens of a marginalized class within the Dutch society*, according to Ghorashi (2003), were to blame for the problems with which society struggled at that point.

The changes in the discourse about immigration and the combination of immigration and integration had an effect upon the concept of citizenship. The concern with cultural aspects led to the culturalist discourse (VAN DEN BERG; SCHINKEL, 2009) or to the culturalization of citizenship (DUYVENDAK; TONKENS; HURENKAMP, 2008). Such change had as a consequence that the economic differences were regarded as cultural. Integration was seen as an individual issue, while culture is defined as problematic and considered to be the root of other problems (SCHINKEL, 2008). As the concern with culture progressively focused on the knowledge of the norms and values of the Dutch culture and Dutch language as a pre-requisite for the process of integration, citizenship acquired a moral dimension (HOUDT; SCHINKELY, 2009).

The category of the Muslim which is used in the political discourse and in politics is closely related to the professed laicism of the State. Speaking about the national adaptations of the concept of laicism, Martin (1978) defines the Netherlands as the 60:40 model, in a reference to the model of social organization in general, and to laicism in particular.[2] He sees the pillars as the social structures that have the double function of, on the one hand, defining

and maintaining people inside the religious organizations (churches) and, on the other hand, defining the world as lay outside the pillars. In this way, "there is a polarization at the level of the culture and of its system of meanings that complements the lack of polarization at the political level" (MARTIN, 1978, p. 199). This balance could only tend towards a religious rebirth. In his document about the historic and geographical dimension of secularization in the Netherlands, Knippenberg (1998) puts forward that the increase in Muslim and Hindu populations as a consequence of migration and of their high rates of birth will pose a challenge to the process of secularization.

However, as pointed out here, the challenge to laicism posed by the Muslim population emerges through the gap opened by the culturalization and moralization of the principle of citizenship, and by its later interest in the private lives of people. The reactions to the Muslims in the debate clearly refute the universality of the Western liberal democratic values.

Politics, education and Islamic religion

The debate about Islam and integration introduced religion into the public and political debate in Holland. Through this initiative, temporal and partial, religion acquires a platform, a voice in the democratic conversation and an opportunity to participate in the political process. This program is not only put in motion to define and to solve culture and a problem, but it is constructed in the opposition between them (the Muslims) and us (the autochthonous Dutch). Still, this opportunity allows Muslims to present an argument in the name of religion within the political sphere, which diminishes the distance between politics and religion proposed by laicism.

Muslims deplore the excessive attention given to cultural and religious differences. Contrary to Martin (1978), the immigrants of the diaspora, instead of equating religion with

2- The plurality of confessions makes it possible the adaptation of different political attitudes and levels of state. In the intermediate or "mixed" standard there appear the quasi-monopolies (Protestants against Catholics in a 60:40 proportion) trying to dominate the scene. This structure forces everyone to compromise with the aim of keeping unity and, thereby, a model of tolerance emerges.

culture, make a point of differentiating them, leaving it clear that they speak from a religious standpoint. Muslims define themselves against tradition, culture and against memory – thereby producing the rupture between the first and second generations of immigrants (HERVIEU-LE'GER, 2002). Some people argue that if there is a problem with the Muslim minority, its origin should not be pursued in the cultural or religious spheres, but in the socioeconomic level that is not being dealt with. The realities of immigration: the lower socioeconomic position and discrimination are justified by their current situation, but not by religion. While the category of religion has been used in the public discourse through the frequent reference to Islam, there is a clear fusion of culture, of ethnic origin and of religion.

As we have already pointed out in the previous examples, during the debates the representatives of the Muslim community accepted easily the collective that was assigned to them. Furthermore, they defended religion from the confusion with tradition and culture, and highlighted the common values of religion and citizenship. However, apart from the discussion about values, the absolute truth was also mentioned once: "we are responsible before Allah and not before the others" (GEEMENTE ROTTERDAM, 2004, p. 15). This declaration opens space for the reflection about the ultimate end of the orientation towards a harmonious society adhering to certain norms and values. If, for the religious person, the struggle with the problems of the here and now has sense in the perspective of the dialogue with the Creator, how could he/she take into account the values of the democratic liberal State and its way of dealing with the here and now?

The politicization of religion – despite the reasons, allowed and of temporal character, that were given in the name of religion by people who were representing or seen to represent a religious group – began to be heard in the public and political spheres through a wide range of themes, from which only a few were under the lay jurisdiction of religion. Through this process, facilitated by the democratic practices supported by the nation-state at a local level and by the changes in the understanding of the concept of citizenship, religion became politicized. The politicization of religion allowed the interpenetration between the spheres of religion and politics that are understood in laicism as necessarily separated.

Final reflections

The religionalization of politics, the effect of religion upon politics, can be observed at different levels. Once religion is brought to the center of the political debate, the institutions and agents that speak in the name of Islam are thereby turned into participants of the debate. Since religion is combined with culture and with ethnic origin, the religious arguments come into discussions that are no longer necessarily within the realm of religion, but that are of social, economic or political nature. By taking part in discussions about themes that are not necessarily under their jurisdiction, arguments on a wide range of themes are given or perceived as being in the name of religion, such as the objectives and means for (religious) education, the participation in the labor market, the family structure and gender roles, to name just a few (IVANESCU, 2010).

On the other hand, it is likely that the values and norms that are presented in these arguments differ from the norms and values that are promoted by Western liberal democracies, and which are at the root of the formation of the European nation-state. These alternative reference systems pose a challenge for the relativization of liberal norms and values that are taken for granted, and offer a critical view of their application in practice. The religious arguments and ideas are present in the political sphere and have the opportunity to produce an impact in the decisions of political nature.

Finally, the culturalization and moralization of citizenship and the interference of politics in areas of life that belong to the

private sphere or to the social curriculum, like the family, the children and education, the beliefs and the loyalty, blur still further the separation between the private and the public, and that between politics and religion. This ad hoc influence politicizes every religion while religionalizing the politics, because the differentiation of the spheres is not as clear-cut as the theory of laicism might wish.

Religion is returning to the public sphere through the opportunities offered by the changes in the regulation of immigration and by the process of integration, and because of the reshaping of the models of citizenship. As a consequence of the public interaction between religion and politics, the parts are being influenced by one another. While religion is politicized, politics is also religionalized. Religion is protecting its rights and thus restructuring the discussion about the hegemony of the State, opposing the universality of the democratic values of the liberal West.

Religion, according to the theory of secularization, is increasingly marginalized to the private sphere and losing its social relevance. However, through its presence in the political arena, it receives public and political attention and is positioned at the center of the public stage once again. This attention is due to the change in attitude by the State and city of Rotterdam towards the population of immigrant origin and/ or of a different religious experience. This can be easily observed as an inversion of the *pillar of stability*, of the *center of gravity* of a given historic moment (TAMBIAH, 1990). As most rules and agreements in religion are totally mixed with the principle of citizenship and the problems of agreements with minorities, the process of revitalization of religion can be understood as a strategy to build a national, cultural and religious *other*. Through polarization, the other helps to build a national identity and the corresponding concept of citizenship.

The integration and the immigration come to the forefront as the concept of citizenship acquires a culturalist and moralizing dimension where the norms and values are compared with one another. The lay State is concerned above all with those aspects of culture that seem to contradict in some way its paradigms and its balance of power. Islam is seen by the state-nation as a possible threat, especially because being visible and public it contradicts one of its basic principles, namely, secularism. However, the democratic principles which are also at the heart of the liberal nation-state and the importance of the integration of immigrants/minorities into the political agenda, offer the possibility that religion may be made visible in the public and political sphere. In this process, religion is politicized; it acquires a public aura and is converted in subject and object of the political processes and discourses, contracting the social curriculum that transmits to the generations the education and culture associated to the current context.

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