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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE VATICAN AND THE PORTUGUESE STATE IN OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

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#### ABSTRACT

Portuguese State relations with the Vatican during the colonial period under the presidency of Oliveira Salazar. How was it possible to preserve a multi-continental imperial space, which evolved into the conception of a "one and indivisible Portugal" as the design of one's own national identity and the preservation of Salazar in power. The difficult relationship with the Holy See even though it was a government that supported Catholic electorates in Portugal and was supported by these same elites. The difficult period of the Second Vatican Council. The period in which the Church was represented in the legislative councils of the Colonies, based on the Organic Law of the Portuguese Overseas Territory of 1953. It included, along with vowels elected by the contributors, others appointed by corporate bodies and economic, cultural and spiritual and moral interest, in which the Church chose the latter category. The revision of the Organic Law of 1963 maintained this representation of the Church in the provinces of general government and created an Economic and Social Council comparable to the Portuguese Corporate Chamber in which the Church was also represented.

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## INTRODUCTION

From the twenties to the thirties the consecration of autochthonous bishops in Africa and Asia was observed, and what was initially punctual as indignation has accelerated in the fifties, becoming, after the Vatican Council II, in exigency of authenticity of the catholic experience (1). In the successive overseas policies of the Republic and the New State, the preservation of a multi-continental imperial space was developed, which evolved towards the conception of a 'One and indivisible Portugal', as a quest for its own national identity and form of resistance to the processes of decolonization encouraged in the 1950s. To a large extent, this identity had established a link between Christianization and the expansion of the empire, based on a very strong ideological conviction of the relationship between being Catholic and national as a social and political order. Despite the laicizing policy of the Republic's early years, with particular emphasis on Catholic missions, there was a progressive inflection of this policy, whether pressured by the international colonial context associated with the 1914-1918 conflict or by the pressures of various Christian Churches. It was with the Organic Statute of the Portuguese Catholic Missions of Africa and Timor (Decree 12 485, dated October 13, 1926) that the Catholic missions acquired legal personality, at the same time that they were

confirmed the right to receive subsidies for the formation of personnel and for the support of missionary work. Also during the period of the military dictatorship, a Missionary Statute was signed (1926), followed by missionary agreements (1928 and 1929) regarding the Eastern Patronage. The orientation of this missionary policy had been integrated into the Constitution of 1933, in recognition of these rights and support for Catholic missions and their training houses.

**The Difficult Relationship:** The insistence on the valorization of local populations, which corresponded in a certain way to the priorities established by the Holy See for Catholic missionary, did not fail to arouse reservations and suspicions on some sectors of the political power, as well as fear and discomfort among the population of European origin resident in the territory, above all by the possible intentions regarding the autonomy of the territory that such valorization could raise to natives (2). The legal framework of religious freedom defined by 1933 Constitution, if it did not favor the Protestant mission, did not prevent it. There was a persistence of Protestant penetration, that was also favored by the difficulties of Catholic missions during the Republican period. For the Protestant missions, valuing a Bible-centered religious experience, the issue of language had its consequences, because it made the relationship between the Scriptures and the religious communities of the populations harder, transposed by orality and associated in a very profound way to their ethnic language.

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In the Portuguese imperial system, Protestantism was marginal, although consented, namely by the international conjuncture (3). This dynamics provoked by Catholicism has tended to be associated with a 'portugalization' of the populations with Protestantism such identification was not evident, by the opposite. Also because there was still a distrust, that behind it there would be interests leading to a certain denationalization of the populations. This mistrust was a constant challenge for the Protestant communities in the Portuguese overseas territory, and in the following decades causing serious difficulties for the survival of some of these communities (3). In the encyclical *Saeculo Exeunte Octavo*, 13 June 1940, addressed to the Portuguese Episcopate about the eighth centenary of the Nationality Foundation as well as the third of the Restoration of its Independence, recalling the glorious past of Portugal, Pius XII addressed the most important missionary questions and called for the commitment of Portuguese Catholics to these tasks. In the meantime, a Missionary Agreement had been established between the Holy See and the Portuguese State, signed in the Vatican City, on 7 May 1940, and understood as an explanation of articles 26 to 28 of the Concordat celebrated on that same occasion (4).

Foreign missionaries were allowed to attend the missions on condition that they agreed to 'submit to Portuguese laws and courts', thus accepting the authority of the Portuguese State, and foreign congregations having the obligation to open training houses in mainland Portugal or its adjacent islands. However, the governing authority of the dioceses or missionary circumscriptions should be exercised by the national ecclesiastics, and it was for the Government to express its opinion on possible 'objections of a general political nature'. The Agreement also referred to aspects related to the economic support of missionary activity, establishing the granting of subsidies by the Governments of the metropolis and its respective colony: the payment of missionary personnel as well as their retirement pensions; in the free concession of land available to Catholic missions, for their development and to new foundations; in travel allowances inside and outside colonies. Another fundamental aspect of the text was the scope of activities in the missions, with emphasis on teaching, stating that, though the Portuguese language was mandatory in indigenous schools, the Catholic Church was free to use indigenous languages in teaching Catholic religion. It was also established that the Government had to be annually informed of the missionary activity (4).

After a year, with the publication of the Missionary Statute (Decree 31 207 of April 5, 1941), the Government intended to establish a detailed interpretation of the Agreement. This new diploma had eighty-two articles on the: autonomy and financing of the missionary activity; the attribution of responsibility for teaching, particularly for the indigenous people, to Catholic missionaries and auxiliaries; as well as the obligation of the prelates of the dioceses and missionary districts to annually submit a report on missionary activity, which was considered as 'sufficient justification of the subsidies received' from the colonies or the Metropolis (4). By committing itself to subsidize the 'Catholic action accordingly to its national and civilizing purpose', the Government implied a character of 'nationalization of the missionary activity', which would later be a constant source of friction with the Catholic Church. Inscribed within a more general framework of legal recognition of Catholic Church by the State, the Missionary Agreement and the Statute were, however, in some

way conditioned her to the Portuguese colonial interests. If this situation did not give rise to relevant objections in the 1940s, the same did not happen in the following decades. In Mozambique, the existing prelacy gave rise to an ecclesiastical province with three dioceses: Lourenço Marques, as metropolitan archbishopric, Beira and Nampula. The ambivalence of this missionary presence has brought about important friction points, namely on the social status of the natives, as well as on the extent of teaching in the missions. There were problems, among others, with Mons. Manuel Alves da Cunha, Vicar General of the Diocese of Luanda, accused by the Governor General of being involved in a political activity aimed to separate the territory of Angola from the metropolis, which forced the archbishop of Luanda, D. Moisés Alves de Pinho, to take up the defense of his collaborator. Nevertheless, this latent tension towards native populations and the training of local religious personnel, as well as the application of social doctrine to the Portuguese colonial reality, was the central nerve of the orientations and pastoral action of the first bishop of Beira, D. Sebastião Soares de Resende (1906-1967), a person of great prestige and missionary commitment, though marginalized and regarded with suspicion, from an early age, by the Government and by the nationalist sectors of Portuguese Catholicism (5). Since the 1930s, the 'Propaganda Fide' guidelines had insisted on the need for greater indigenous incorporation into the Catholic mission, where emulation with the Protestant mission was a constant goal (6).

D. Sebastião Soares de Resende, sought, through the Catholic doctrine, to alert to the error and injustice of racial discrimination which, for him, called into question the development of an inclusive project (7). In Angola, the dioceses of Sa da Bandeira (1955) and Malanje (1957) emerged, and in Mozambique, Quelimane (1954) and Porto Amélia (1957). However, this missionary dynamism is associated with the increase of members of existing national and foreign congregations, or the coming of new religious institutes, such as the Comboni Missionaries to Mozambique, in 1954. In the period practically until the sixties, the missionary work was almost unanimously associated with the idea of colonization, a convergence between the true Portugal and Christianity that looked at the evangelizing mission of the Church as inseparable from Portugal's civilizing action. However, the problem of Catholic expectations about the possibility of Catholic implantation and Christianization of populations also required a progressive reformulation of the missionary paradigms (8). Moreover, the concern for the formation of an indigenous clergy and the formation of local churches (territorialisation of the Church) favored, in an environment of competition with the Protestant mission, the emergence of elites that fed a perspective of autonomy that would lead to the problem of decolonization. Not that Catholic missionary would directly power this sense of autonomy, though the emulation between different missions contributed to generate different levels of perception and differentiation. The processes of colonial autonomy and decolonization have also accelerated the need for an indigenization of the local Churches, resulting in their growing territorialization (8). In the sixties there has been a crisis, of the concept of mission under the sign of the true Portugal, due to the impact of the renewal operated by the Second Vatican Council and the internal problematization of the future of the overseas territories, due to the outbreak of independence wars. Insisting on the mission of the Church, the Council opened the way to more consistent experiences of enculturation (9).

At the beginning of conflicts in Angola, there were coercive measures in relation to several missionary sectors, especially members of the young Catholic clergy of African origin. For the central or provincial Government, the activity of some of these members of the clergy was suspicious. If, on the one hand, political power valued the action of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, it feared the consequences of that influence by what it entailed for the development of autochthonous elites and to stimulate its prominence. Since the end of the fifties that the Holy See, within the general framework of the priorities of its universal dynamics, insisted on the need of choosing a black bishop for the Portuguese colonial possessions (9). The ecclesiastical leaders did not see that solution as adequate due to the conjuncture of the Catholic Church in the Continent.

The non-inclusion of the reference to God in the Constitution in the 1959 revision, if on the one hand, corresponded to the coherence of a non-confessional State, on the other, the separation, even if canonical, also meant that the overseas reality, assumed as part of the national whole, weighed on such decisions, insofar as it was implicitly recognized that this national whole had within it an important religious plurality, not only by the Protestant presence, but as well as by the presence of Islam and Hinduism, which, apart from Guinea and Angola, was reinforced in Mozambique with the migration of populations from the Portuguese India, a situation that was accentuated with the invasion of Goa by the Indian Union. For the Government, it was especially important to consider the Catholic reality as a factor of cohesion, for what the Roman Catholic Church meant for the continental populations and because it embodied the missionary deed as the mainstay of Portugal's 'civilizing purpose' (9).

The death of D. Sebastião Resende in 1967 highlighted again the difficulties surrounding Episcopal appointments. The Holy See initially intended that the new bishop would be D. António Ribeiro, close to the intellectual movements of the Catholic Action of the Metropolis and known for having suspended in 1964 his collaboration on television when his religious program was censored, for having mentioned in it the visit of Paul VI to Bombay. The refusal, which was then expressed, by the Government was accepted with some counterparts by the Holy See, and the priest was designated auxiliary bishop of Braga, while D. Manuel Ferreira Cabral, the then auxiliary of this continental archdiocese was transferred to the diocese of Beira. But the conditions of his designation and subsequent action in the diocese, considered as contradictory to the priorities of the action previously developed by D. Sebastião Resende, have caused a serious friction with priests and missionaries, introducing fractures that became unavoidable, leading to the abandonment of the diocese and to its resignation in 1971. However, three new dioceses had been created in Mozambique: in 1962, Tete and Inhambane, and in 1963, Vila Cabral. Continuing the implementation effort, the Catholic Church in Mozambique gained a greater responsiveness to local pastoral needs, taking into account the vastness of the territory and its development (9). One of the emblematic figures in this process was Fr. Manuel Vieira Pinto, bishop of Nampula, since 1967. He had been the main promoter of the Movement for 'A Better World', having kept significant contacts since the mid-fifties with the Catholic elite, especially urban and intellectual, strongly marked by the conciliar renewal, which conferred him prestige, influence and, consequently, audience.

In 1971 he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Beira (June 29), which was in a delicate moment due to the difficulties caused by the government and the consequent step down of D. Manuel Ferreira Cabral, as well as the abandonment of the White Fathers, as a sign to denounce the situation of injustice they considered unbearable in the Mozambican reality. The situation has worsened in early 1972 with the arrest of the Fathers of Burgos - the Spaniards Martin and Alfonso - on 3 January, and the priests of the parish of Macúti, the Portuguese Sampaio and Fernando Mendes, on 13 January. Designated a new bishop for the Diocese of Beira D. Altino Ribeiro de Santana would die shortly thereafter, victim of a heart attack, at a time when public insults and strong pressure from European sectors against him were expressed, hence they considered that he gave his support to the positions of priests who maintained seditious attitudes towards the Portuguese sovereignty in the Overseas (9). At the beginning of the 1970s, the Catholic Church in Mozambique was suffering from a profound internal fracture, expressing different perceptions about the priorities of its actions, aggravated by the war environment that affected the missionary personnel in a wide variety of ways the various pastoral agents, such as missionary catechists, with successive expulsions or arrests by the police and political authorities, who eventually reached the bishop of Nampula in March 1974 (10). In Angola, similar problems have arisen regarding the activity of the Catholic Church, yet the situation evolved differently (10). The progressive Catholic involvement in the contestation to Colonial War was also boosted by the pastoral dynamics of the Pontificate of Paul VI, namely with the World Day of Peace (1968). The audience granted by the Pope to the main leaders of the pro-independence movements of the overseas territories in 1970 was a defining moment in this process. These facts created a distrust environment between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese Government, as well as of tensions unprecedented since the republican period. For all Christian Churches, one of the greatest difficulties that war placed had to do with the situation of catechists due to military recruitment, or because many of them were suspected of activities considered subversive, falling under the umbrella of the authorities, in particular the political police.

**From a synthetic and global perspective:** The Church, in Angola and Mozambique, had, from the sociological point of view, a dual structure. Roughly there was an urban church, organized in parishes, led by diocesan priests frequented by 'civilized', who were mostly European and, to a lesser extent, mulattoes and blacks. There was another in the bush, structured in missions, integrating the 'uncivilized', led by clergy of some institutes many of them foreigners. There was tension between parishes and missions. Many settlers, especially in Mozambique, censured the missionaries for over-defending the Africans, saying that this was stealing labor force (11). The attack of the white settlers against the Comboni missionaries and the bishop of Nampula at the beginning of 1974 was part of this general attitude. The missions, which went further and were closer to the population than the state, served the Africans, while the state did little more for them than to collect or try to collect taxes. The missionaries, in addition to religion, taught reading, provided minimal health care and provided some technical and vocational education. The number of inhabitants per priest reached a reasonable level, especially in Angola, about 11,000, however, Mozambique's figures were somewhat less favorable, almost 14,000.

Foreign missionaries were presented by the Church in Portugal as a threat to national sovereignty, which also applied to Protestants, almost all foreigners, and did not exclude Catholics who were not Portuguese. In Angola, the number of Catholics increased almost six times between 1930 and 1940, from 147,720 to 906,611. In Mozambique, during the same period that growth was slower, but considerable, hence the Catholic Christian staff tripled, rising from 40,000 to 60,031. State religious statistics had several purposes. The inflation in the number of Christians was intended to show the progress in the civilizing work of the New State, and in Africa, the religion was generally accepted as an indicator of settling efficacy. The recognition of the juridical personality of the Church in the colonies was identical to that of the Metropolis in its direct modality, but it had substantial differences with respect to the indirect one. The State accepted as head of mission the ecclesiastical superior designated by the bishop, or equivalent, and automatically conferred on him a position of the public official. Was made the link that recognized the personality of the Church since it was it who designated the director of the missions (12). Missions were treated as State departments and missionaries as civil servants, and there was no legal remnant of recognition of Church's legal personality.

The Church in Portugal began with the aim of Christianizing the peoples of Africa by 'nationalizing' them. In the first half of the twentieth century the Portuguese missionaries unanimously shared a patriotic and nationalizing mentality. For them the colonies, successively referred to as 'empire', 'overseas provinces' and 'states', were the result of maritime discoveries; faith and empire had always gone hand in hand (12). The issue of language was a point of conflict between Church and State, this one wanted the missionaries to teach Portuguese and the Church wanted them to use the indigenous languages to increase the effectiveness of the mission. Foreign missionaries have always found strange the organic structure of the Portuguese missionary system. In the missions at other territories, they were used to receive orders from their superiors, generally from the religious institutes to which they belonged, and these depended on the apostolic legacy, of papal designation, which was a distant entity and very distinct from the colonizing power. The Church' schools, which were only an aid to evangelization, provided catechesis; hence the colonial State ensured classes by its own means. They arrived to the Portuguese colonies and everything was different. They began by having to learn Portuguese, which seemed to them to be useless, because they wanted to evangelize natives who did not speak that language; arrived at the mission, religious authority was not the superior nor the apostolic legacy but the bishop, an entity that for them existed only in lands already Christianized, and for more, that bishop was Portuguese. They were then sent to schools in order to be teachers of a language and history that were not theirs, and to teach students who also had them for others (13). Conflicts between the nineteenth-century missionary and conciliar missionary concessions contributed to explain the division of the missionary Church, which was particularly strong in Mozambique. The Mozambican episcopate was the only one to be divided publicly, unlike that of Angola. The first signs arose when the bishops of Mozambique, apparently unanimously, condemned the White Fathers in 1971. Nevertheless, the division of the Church then began to come to public (13). The division has worsened when D. Manuel Vieira Pinto and the Comboni Missionaries of Nampula were expelled from the colony in March 1974.

A statement from the Secretariat of the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique accused them of having issued the document: 'Imperative of Conscience' and at the same time rejecting their accusation of having delivered a document to the Government, which would be equivalent to being expelled, stresses the '*disloyalty of a process that is sacrificing the Church of Mozambique*' and accuses the diocese of Nampula of having sent his Vicar General to meet the Nuncio in Beira to deliver the documentation that '*is another accusatory libel to the Episcopate of Mozambique.*' (13). At the opposite pole opposite to Vieira Pinto were those who, like D. Custódio Alvim Pereira, advocated Lisbon's policy. The prelate of Nampula proposed itself to denounce it, opening the crisis with the State and his colleagues, the majority of them directed by D. Francisco Nunes Teixeira, who sought to maintain unity and avoid taking an explicit position on the Colonial War, or tried to limit it to the minimum required by circumstances. Apparently, it was the work of the apostolic nuncio, D. Guiosepe Maria Sensi, then visiting Mozambique, who allowed the bishops in the territory to meet again in Quelimane and to declare: '*They accept as an uplifting probation the painful events of disintegration and division that, although interestedly exaggerated from the outside, have been lived.*' (13)

Until the middle of the sixties, the Catholic Church had the main factor in the educational effort, both the main nationalizing factor and the sanitary one, but the Catholic missionaries functioned in some aspects as auxiliary agents of the civil registry. After the beginning of the war in Africa, the State rapidly increased its own school network, although church activity remained very significant in this area until the end of colonialism (13). The extension of the administrative collaboration from the Church to the State in the colonies and the specificity of the constitutional structure of them explain the ecclesial representation in its legislative bodies. In fact, the Church was represented in the legislative councils of the Colonies, following the 1953 Organic Law of the Portuguese Overseas. It included, along with vowels elected by the contributors, others appointed by corporate bodies and economic, cultural and interest associations spiritual and moral, in which the Church chose them from the last category. The revision of the Organic Law of 1963 kept this representation of the Church in the provinces of general government and created an Economic and Social Council comparable to the Portuguese Corporate Chamber in which the Church was also represented. The political and administrative statutes of each colony, similar to each other, fulfilled those norms. The revision of that organic law, operated during the Government of Marcelo Caetano, kept the same system. Church representatives in these bodies had to be Portuguese, for nationality was a condition for their belonging. The ecclesiastical vowels generally limited their participation to the defense of the economic and social interests of the Church, especially in the fields of marriage, health and education (13). The administrative collaboration provided by the Church to the State in the colonies was mainly in educational, health and civil status activities.

## Conclusion

In the mid-1960s, the Catholic Church in Mozambique marked a deep internal division, where a number of priorities were observed in relation to its actions and relations with the Portuguese Government. In this period, the Portuguese

authorities no longer hesitate to take public action against some priests and missionaries. Being successive, the expulsions and arrests of elements of the Catholic Church. The progressive Catholic involvement in the contestation of the Colonial War was heightened by the content of Pope Paul VI's pastoral work, namely on World Day of Peace in 1968, with the consequent audience of this Pope to the main leaders of the African independence movements in 1970. These facts created an irreversible environment of distrust between a part of the Catholic Church and the Portuguese Government.

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