

# The practice of civism in dictatorships: commemorations and actions in Conselho Federal de Cultura (1966-1975)

*Os usos do civismo em tempos autoritários: as comemorações e ações do Conselho Federal de Cultura (1966-1975)*

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## RESUMO

O Conselho Federal de Cultura (CFC) foi o principal órgão responsável pelas políticas culturais entre 1967 e 1975. O CFC era formado por 24 intelectuais com o objetivo de organizar o setor cultural e elaborar o inédito Plano Nacional de Cultura. A criação do Conselho está integrada à participação desses intelectuais no campo político e cultural brasileiro desde a década de 1920. Além disso, seus discursos e projetos incorporaram o ideário cívico vigente na ditadura civil-militar (1964-1985). Dentre as ações do CFC, a criação de calendários culturais anuais destinados a instituições de ensino e cultura foi uma tentativa de valorizar os elementos cívicos que comporiam a cultura nacional. A associação entre memória e história aparece aqui traduzida na relação entre memória histórica e prática cívica, tão utilizada em períodos autoritários.

Palavras-chave: intelectuais; civismo; calendários culturais.

## ABSTRACT

The Conselho Federal de Cultura (CFC) was the main organ responsible for the cultural policies between 1967 and 1975. The CFC was formed by 24 intellectuals with the objective of organizing the cultural sector and elaborating an unprecedented Plano Nacional de Cultura. The creation of the Conselho was integrated to the participation of these intellectuals in the Brazilian political and cultural sectors since the decade of 1920. The speeches and projects organized by the Conselho incorporated the civic ideals elaborated by the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985). The creation of culture calendar annual for schools and cultural institutions was an attempt to value the civic elements that would compose the national culture. The association between memory and history appear here translated through the ideas of historical memory and civic practice, as used by dictatorships.

Keywords: intellectuals; civility; culture calendars.

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During the installation ceremony of the Federal Culture Council (CFC, acronym in Portuguese) held on 27th February 1967, the President of the Republic, marshal Humberto Castelo Branco, highlighted that culture was the “quietest” sector and caused less social convulsion than the unrest caused by the education sector. At the same time, the minister of Education and Culture, Tarso Dutra, commented that the installation of the CFC was a first step to filling the serious gaps in cultural infrastructure, emphasising that the country’s culture policy would be implemented in accordance with the democratic reality of the country in order to build a developed and harmonic nation. Thus, the CFC’s task was to develop policies in line with the military government’s development project, valuing those aspects of culture that were considered to represent the nation.

The Federal Culture Council was created by Decree (Law no.74, 12th November 1966) and headquarters were the *Palácio da Culture*, in Rio de Janeiro, from the beginning of activities in January 1967 until its extinction in 1990. The council was a rule-making body and advisory board to the Minister of State. The main objective of The Federal Culture Council was to institutionalise state action in the culture sector.

Initially the council acted in a rule-making, consultative and supervisory capacity, and played an advisory role to the minister, as well as being responsible for the distribution of funding to the cultural institutions linked to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). The council was comprised of 24 members, chosen by the minister himself and appointed by president of the republic. The length of mandate of each member varied between two and six years. Intellectuals such as Josué de Souza Montello, Adonias Aguiar Filho, Afonso Arinos de Mello Franco, Ariano Suassuna, Clarival do Prado Valladares, Cassiano Ricardo, Djacir Lima Menezes, Gilberto Freyre, Gustavo Corção, Pedro Calmon, Rachel de Queiroz and Rodrigo Mello Franco de Andrade were members of the council.

The objective of this article is to analyse the experiences of the Federal Culture Council in order to investigate the importance of civism in the design of culture policies between 1967 and 1975. We attempt to understand the manner in which the proposals made by these intellectuals embedded the cult of civism in government policies directed towards the protection and diffusion of national culture. The actions developed in this setting were idealised and organised by intellectuals who, apart from appraising and defining national culture, meant to intervene in its course by embodying the ideal of civism as a guiding principle for culture policies. The creation of representations anchored

in the formation of sentiments of civism, conceived as synonym for patriotism, was seen as fundamental by civil society and military groups operating within the state at the time. Thus, the civil-military dictatorship gave precedence the idea of civism over citizenship.

The construction of the ideology of civism was not exclusive to intellectuals, military members and political groups linked to the state during the civil-military dictatorship. This ideology had been present in Brazilian political and social thinking, albeit intermittently, since the first republic (1889-1930) that saw the organisation of movements such as the National Defence League founded by Olavo Bilac in 1915 (De Luca, 1999). In fact, Olavo Bilac became a symbol of civism during the *anos de chumbo*<sup>1</sup> and was revered as an exemplary citizen who was aware of his duties to the community.<sup>2</sup> The historian Angela de Castro Gomes suggests that republicans had been constructing a “culture of civic patriotism” since the end of the nineteenth century and that this process was linked to the formulation of a “patriotic history” which was seen as fundamental for the formation of citizens after the proclamation of the republic. For Gomes, the republicans’ need to create a new political discourse capable of forging the aspects that symbolised the nation would lead them to search taught history and geography for the artefacts that would be used to consolidate a new ideology of civism that was capable of generating “patriotic sentiment” in all Brazilians (Gomes, 2009).

The idea of civism as the building block of the relationship between the state and civil society during the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) will be investigated. This will be done primarily by analysing documents and discourse produced in settings occupied by the political and intellectual figures that belonged to the CFC, or that had links to the body due to their position within the federal bureaucracy, between 1967 and 1975. We believe that the discourse on civism constructed during the civil-military dictatorship had its own particular specificities, and was often distinct from the discourse produced during the periods before the coup d'état. Thus, special emphasis will be placed on the speeches made by the minister of Education and Culture and council members and documents produced by the council. This statement does not mean to suggest that the promotion of ideals of civism was restricted to the CFC or the cultural sector of the MEC; to the contrary, we observed that the notion of civism present in the speeches analysed here is also conveyed by the actions of other government sectors, especially during the period after the creation of the National Committee on Morality and Civism (CNMC, acronym in Portuguese) and the inclusion of

the subjects “Moral and Civic Education” and “the Study of Brazilian Problems” in the national school curriculum in 1969.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDEOLOGY OF CIVISM DURING THE CIVIL-MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

The notion of civism is irremediably linked to the phenomenon of citizenship. It is impossible to investigate the political project that comprises civism without comparing it to the ideals of citizenship. Indeed, the notion of civism adopted during the civil-military dictatorship investigated here dialogues with the general conception of citizenship, but sacrifices some of its rights in name of the preservation of the nation. The ideology of civism during the civil-military dictatorship gestated in the standards established under the phenomenon of citizenship which however were radicalised by conservative and nationalistic thinking, which ultimately took precedence over the “original” phenomenon. For the purposes of this article we therefore adopt the notion of citizenship presented by José Murilo de Carvalho, without wishing to exhaust the debate on this phenomenon. The concept of citizenship comprises a series of civil, political and social rights and emerged in Western Europe between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the advent of modernity and the development of capitalism. For José Murilo de Carvalho, different levels of citizenship were experienced by Western countries whose political-economic model of social organisation was modernity and capitalism. That is why the “the construction of citizenship is conditioned by the manner in which nation-states are formed”.<sup>3</sup> José Murilo de Carvalho describes each one of these rights and the regularity with which they appear disconnected within different societies throughout specific periods of history, thus creating ‘incomplete citizens’, even when the ideal of ‘full citizenship’ is widely desired. In the definition of each right the author proposes:

Civil rights are the fundamental rights to life, freedom, prosperity, equality before the law. Its cornerstone is individual freedom. It is possible to have civil rights without political rights, meaning the participation of citizens in a society’s government. The exercise of citizenship is limited to the population and comprises the ability to hold political demonstrations, to organize parties, to vote and be voted. Finally, there are the social rights ... They include the right to education, to work, to a fair wage, to health, to retirement ... Social rights permit politically organised

societies to reduce the excessive inequality produced by capitalism and guarantee minimum well-being for all. (Carvalho, 2007, p.10)

In the civism reworked by the civil-military dictatorship, the citizens' political, civil and social rights may be restricted in favour of social harmony and "national security". The concept was skilfully used to redefine the relationship between the state and citizens in a period marked by the issue of institutional acts that were perfectly adjusted to the principles of civism but damaged the principles of citizenship. Since during this period the idea of civism took precedence over the ideal of citizenship, emphasising citizens' duties, any action of the state in defence of the nation was legitimate. Civism, the key ideology behind the civil-military dictatorship, was embodied in the political discourse and actions of the intellectuals of the CFC who associated the notion of civism, political ideology *par excellence*, to the notion of culture. For the intellectuals of the CFC, the creation of systematic culture policies was vital to the preservation and divulcation of cultural patrimony and national memory, while for military governments this conservative and optimistic vision of culture provided the foundations for the construction of civism. Thus, the role of culture would be to enhance the aspects that make up a nation. The defence of culture was seen as vital to the formation of citizens that were aware both of their role of devotion to the nation and the need for social solidarity, thus widening the gamut of artefacts used to create discourse on civism since the times of the first republic. Apart from history, geography and nationalist literature taught in the classroom, the display of these artefacts, for example by way of monuments, public commemorations of important dates, the preservation of major building complexes, and manifestations of folklore, was vital.

The book *The citizen and civism: the objectives of moral and civic education*, organised by Adonias Aguiar Filho in 1982, with funding from the CNMC and INL, was entirely dedicated to civism, and detailed citizens' duties, the functions of the state and civil society with respect to the teaching of civic practices to future generations and, principally, the ideological structure of the concept. The work was divided into eight chapters written by Adonias Filho, Manoel Gonçalves Ferreira Filho, Arthur Machado Paupério, Américo Jacobina Lacombe, Pedro Calmon, Padre Estevão Bittencourt, Manuel Diégues Júnior and Don Luciano José Cabral Duarte, and introduction was written by Ruy Vieira da Cunha.<sup>4</sup>

For Adonias Aguiar Filho, a hierarchy of societal values exists in which the most important values are higher absolute values, be they ethical or civic.

In his essay, the council member concentrates on the analysis of civic values without detailing the aspects of ethical values. Civism, defined as higher absolute social values, is responsible for the self-defence of the nation from an “inevitable process of change that always presents an uncalculated historical risk” (Aguiar Filho, 1982, p.37). These higher absolute social values were founded in those national elements shaped by the “nation’s cultural products”. The nation-culture relationship was built by a structuralist interpretation of culture that defined it, in the long-term, as a series of costumes, norms, traditions, beliefs, territory and language. Within this perspective, culture is the scenario in which the national character is forged: “the cultural complex can be thought of as the fundamental building blocks of a juridically organised nation” (ibid, p.37). The civic practices of citizens who are aware of their duties to maintain the nation are supported by cultural structures. Since it is a higher absolute value, civism builds an equally absolute symbolic apparatus including anthems, heroes, important dates and origin myths.

Manuel Diéguas Júnior suggests that civism is made up of three elements that are also essential to social harmony: national consciousness, national unity, and national tradition, and clearly shows the interdependence between these elements. The conscientization of citizens as major social agents depends on them assimilating “authentic nationalist values” expressed in culture. These values forge a “sense of national unity”, since they reflect the spirit of nationalism embedded in society since the beginning of social formation in Brazil. National tradition, on the other hand, is the sum of the belief in the existence of national unity associated with a common historical trajectory. Tradition plays a fundamental role in preserving the cultural record; those records considered by intellectuals as structuring elements of Brazilian society are part of the national tradition category and reinforce the feeling of unity.

It should be highlighted that a true policy for the defence of cultural and social values will not happen unless it rests on tradition – on that which is preserved and conserved as an inheritance from our ancestors, notwithstanding the possible original modifications of each epoch in which a respective society lives. (Diéguas Júnior, 1982, p.116)

The idea of civism as a key element in the construction of national consciousness was anchored in organizing a policy for the protection of a past understood as memory and considered the synthesizing element of national tradition – and primarily responsible for providing records of nationality

Therefore, the past should be adored by way of teaching culture. This cult was seen as the patriotism required to construct social imaginary, establish bonds of solidarity, and generate the necessary reciprocity between the state and civil society.

The Law of the preservation of memory based on social identification is unchanging in time and space... The bond which holds a people together comes from the language they express; but, to make the people aware of their being, it is necessary to provide the tools required to generate common reminiscence. Its solidness is derived from remembrance. All those within this environment... will feel solidarity as they get to know and recognise the past, the miraculous force of origin that unravelled the dynamics of evolution, the prodigious deed (the source of future epopees) and the poetic complex of the providential hero (an object of civic cult) in which the emotion, fidelity, enthusiasm, and pride which, in its amplitude and abstraction, we call patriotism, vibrate. (Calmon, 1982, p.87)

The function of history-memory would be to conscientize the citizen with regard to the feeling of belonging to a “people”, by valuing the past, and creating a shared trajectory “in time and space”, and inventing heroes. The construction of historical narratives associated with national memory imbued feelings of belonging in citizens that promoted patriotism and depended on the development of an optimistic discourse on the trajectory of Brazilian society. After all, as Pedro Calmon poses, citizens needed to positively identify themselves with the nation and create bonds of solidarity through a “poetic complex” created by a narrative that highlighted “the dynamics of evolution”, “the prodigious deed” and the “providential hero”. Only a truly patriotic past would ensure Brazil’s inevitable ascent to the select group of great world powers.

The intellectuals of the CFC were part of a school of thought that, save the differences between groups and degree of involvement in the political apparatus, stretched across diverse sectors that directed culture and education policies during the civil-military dictatorship: “optimism” (Fico, 1997). This optimistic discourse was skilfully embodied in state policy and can be observed in political propaganda, culture policies and works used in education in an attempt to reinforce a social imaginary of Brazil as a “an orderly country”, “a peaceful people” and developing: “political propaganda at the time sought to consolidate an already strong tendency in the impression of Brazil: the bond between

Brazilians, unity and identity would be made by a Brazilian culture mixed with a promising vision of the future” (Fico, 1997, p.24).

The development of a discourse that built the nation’s common past turned national culture into a commanding tool for demonstrating our development and permeated various state sectors. Thus, the civil-military dictatorship developed a series of images whose objective was to characterise the nation, using key ideas such as culture, memory and identity. As Carlos Fico confirms, the civil-military dictatorship sought to create a long term image of Brazil that that promoted “hope and optimism” (Fico, 1997, p.74).

The optimist school, “reinvented” during the civil-military dictatorship, provided the ideological substratum of civism, sustained by symbolic production designed by a diverse range of agents and agencies that operated during the civil-military dictatorship. The key ideas of tradition, Brazilianness, miscegenation, a continental country and cultural pluralism tied to a developmentalist impression of a glorious, capitalistic and Western future produced by an optimist discourse were embodied in the civic discourse. The author considers civism to be an exacerbation of this optimism which enabled the systemisation of a concept that had so far been vague. By embodying optimism, civism organised the nationalist-conservative ideology and discursive apparatus to serve the authoritarian plans of the military governments. As such, civism took over from modern citizenship, disregarding the legitimacy of existing conflicting political interests, limiting the capacity of collective political organisation, and undermining freedom of speech and individual rights in name of supposedly higher national values. The defence of these higher absolute values, which in principle are immutable and responsible for the existence of society, legitimised coercive actions that limited individual freedom, the latter being sacrificed in the name of a common good considered greater than that of the citizens: the nation. The social function of a citizen was in fact well defined: he or she was the agent responsible for the protection of these values; by not fulfilling this duty he or she would also lose their political and social rights and was no longer a citizen, thus becoming subversive.

## THE FORMATION OF THE CIVIC CONSCIENCE AND CITIZEN’S DUTIES

The relationship between citizen and the civil society established throughout the process of civic conscientization assumes that this patriot actively participates in the conduction of the nation’s destiny and assigns him or her the ultimate duty of defending higher values in face of the threats posed by social



change. The inevitable transformations lived by modern societies brought with them risks to national unity and an orderly and stable Brazilian society – factors which are founded on national tradition. To save the nation from the possible turmoil caused by social change that, given the high degree of unpredictability could shake the forming structures of society, citizens should identify the dangers of new ideas by protecting the higher absolute values – civic and ethical values. By preserving these values over and above all conjunctural transformations, the social structures would remain intact and social change would bring only the possible benefits of the modernisation process without threatening society. Thus, citizens were social agents responsible *par excellence* for preserving the nation, “And all because the citizen, understood as such, is the agent around which the foundations of society are laid. We should not underestimate the citizen as a vital requirement for a functionally organised society” (Aguiar Filho, 1982, p.33).

For Adonias Filho, carrying out the administrative function of the state, the existence political parties representing collective interests, and supervision of the justice system depended on citizen awareness regarding their duties. The threat of totalitarian ideologies proclaimed by Nazi leaders and communists would only be refuted by democratic societies with citizens formed through state investment in education (Aguiar Filho, 1982, p.36). The full exercise of civic practices, and the overriding social function of a citizen considered a conservative agent responsible for preserving social structures by protecting higher human values, depended on an adequate grounding provided by the state through education:

Society cannot ignore (citizens’) education precisely because it depends on the citizen ... However, it is civic activities, based on the cult of the nation – whose origins lie in the same valorisation of national character – that stand out among the duties of this citizen educated to serve society and the family... It is the cultural complex that must motivate the civic activities of a citizen since it encompasses all the values that comprise the national character. (Aguiar Filho, 1982, p.36)

On 12th September 1969, the government promulgated decree N° 869, making the subject “Moral and Civic Education” obligatory in the education system. Articles 5 and 6 of the same decree created the National Committee on Morality and Civism in primary education and “The Study of Brazilian Problems” in higher education. Article 2 says that the subjects should ensure: “Moral character development based on dedication to the community and to the family, aiming

to strengthen the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society, and preparation for marriage and preservation of the bond that it represents”.<sup>5</sup>

On 11 February 1971, the CFC received a visit from the National Committee on Morality and Civism (CNMC, acronym in Portuguese), presided by admiral Benjamin Sodré accompanied by three members of the CNMC: Humberto Grande, Eloywaldo Chagas de Oliveira and Álvaro Neiva. The visit reflected the friendly nature of the relationship between the two rule-making agencies. Admiral Benjamin Sodré reminded the members of the bonds of friendship that united the members of the committee and various council members. The committee showed its gratitude for “the Federal Culture Council’s collaboration that had created a “work of civism” by defending national culture”.<sup>6</sup> The council member Pedro Calmon thanked the visit, extolling the character of the president of the committee admiral Benjamin Sodré. His thanks were not just a mere formality. The members of the CFC dedicated themselves to the task of divulging the ideology of civism, either by their incursions into the education sector, promoting courses and proposing civic projects, or by guiding culture policies.

The role education on all levels played in the construction of a civil conscience associated with the value of tradition appeared in official council documents, in the discourse of the ministers of Education and Culture and, of course, in the discourse of the council members. As Angela de Castro Gomes suggests, a “nationalist pedagogy” had been in force since the first republic which was necessary for “consolidating a republican political culture” (Gomes, 2009, p.1).

The role of education in the formation of national consciousness is evident in two parts of the *Compromisso de Brasília* (the “Brasília Commitment”):

9. Since the cult of the past is a basic element in the formation of national consciousness, subjects that describe the knowledge and preservation of the nation’s historic and artistic archive, archaeological and prehistoric finds, natural riches and popular culture should be included in the school curriculum... 12. The establishment of regional museums that document historical formation considering civic education and respect for tradition is recommended. (*Compromisso...*, 1970, p.113)

Apart from legislation that met the preservationists’ needs it was vital to conscientize the population of the importance of patrimony through education. This task would be covered by the subjects “Moral and Civic Education”, in primary schools, and “The Study of Brazilian Problems” in higher education. The country’s cultural patrimony was considered indispensable for the

formation of national civism. For Renato Soeiro, development was perfectly reconcilable with the protection and valorisation of patrimony; after all, the historical memory of social formation in Brazil resides in patrimony.

The members of the Federal Culture Council were very dedicated to diffusing the ideology of civism and promoting the protection and valorisation of national culture. Between 1971 and 1980, the Science and Culture Forum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, acronym in Portuguese), held the training course “Update of Brazilian Problems”, teachers of the subject “The Study of Brazilian Problems”. The course was proposed by Pedro Calmon as a provisional solution to the inexistence of a degree course Brazilian Studies. The course was organised in thematic conferences and given by intellectuals, state ministers and military members occupying high ranking positions in the federal government. The council members Afonso Arinos de Mello Franco, Arthur César Ferreira Reis, Clarival do Prado Valladares, Djacir Menezes, Gilberto Freyre, José Candido de Melo Carvalho, Manuel Diégues Júnior, Raymundo Moniz de Aragão and Pedro Calmon also gave conferences throughout the existence of the course. The course was coordinated by the council member Raymundo Moniz de Aragão and the full version of these conferences were published in the *Cadernos de Estudos Brasileiros*, edited by UFRJ from 1972. In this first year of the course 25 conferences were given and 65 professors graduated. The editorial of the first edition of *Cadernos de Estudos Brasileiros* published in 1972, written by the chancellor of UFRJ, Djacir Menezes, and reproduced in its entirety in each of the 20 editions of the journal, emphasises the importance of conscientizing Brazil’s intellectual elite regarding the national challenges: “The coordinator of the program, which could be called the ‘updating’ of the awareness of the intellectual elite regarding our problems, can say with the utmost conviction that they are working towards the institutional consolidation of Brazil” (Menezes, 1972).

The involvement of the main intellectuals from the CFC in this project demonstrates the concern and participation of these council members with regard to the diffusion of the idea of civism through teaching. The constant presence of the council members on the course, including the design and coordination of the course, is evidence of the effort made by these intellectuals to propagate the idea of civism as the mainstay of nationalism.

Apart from the subjects taught in schools and universities across the country, civic projects were intended to motivate university students to participate in social actions in order to develop social solidarity and love for ones country. It is worth noting that conservative sectors of society

organised themselves at the beginning of the 1960s in civic associations to demand defence of the patrimony and preservation of national traditions. Nationalistic and optimistic projects such as *Operação Rondon* and *Operação Mauá* envisaged that “assistencialist” activities carried out by university students in more isolated parts of the country would ease the daily misery lived by the less privileged sectors of society. Furthermore, these patriotic activities were to motivate devotion to the country and defence of the state, promote higher absolute values in youth by avoiding contact with pernicious ideologies, such as communism, that were invading Brazilian secondary schools and universities. Know “national reality” and promote social cooperation through assistencialist interventions, would dissolve the action of left-wing movements that were attracting younger citizens to their ranks and threatening social order. It was expected that the actions of solidarity carried out under the Rondon and Mauá projects would replace discussions between younger people about inequalities in land ownership and income distribution and lack of social investment that led to the maintenance of poverty among the underprivileged classes of society.

One of the many projects undertaken by the CFC, *projeto Capistrano de Abreu*, draws our attention due to its direct link to the civic projects *Operação Rondon* and *Operação Mauá*, both organised by the National Committee on Morality and Civism. In 1971, Rachel de Queirós, based upon the suggestion of the then director of the National Archives Raul Lima, proposed the creation of *projeto Capistrano de Abreu* together with University the federal universities. The project would give access to the Brazil’s history archives to students in order to carry out supervised research, with the aim of “engaging the youth in projects of national interest”.<sup>7</sup> Throughout 1972, state culture councils from the states of Amazonas, Pará, Espírito Santo and Santa Catarina were enthusiastic about the project; the councils of Amazonas, Espírito Santo and Santa Catarina even presented concrete initiatives. The Federal Rural University of Pernambuco, the Federal University of Ceará, the Federal University of Santa Catarina and the Catholic University of Pernambuco also sent telegrams in support of the project.<sup>8</sup> The Army Ministry sent an official memorandum to the Department of Cultural Affairs congratulating the CFC for *Operação Capistrano de Abreu*. It was not possible for the author to analyse the extent of the project’s activities in the university or whether it was actually carried out. However, the CFC made concrete efforts to carry out the project as some state councils universities were partners of the council in this task. During a visit of the minister Jarbas Passarinho to the CFC in 1973 to install the new

president and vice president, the council member Arthur Reis, underlined that the project was responsible for a “real inventory of our past”.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, the attempt to implement the project, although minimal, suffices to demonstrate the interrelationship between civic projects presented by the CNMC and CFC.

Civic actions directed towards youth promoted by the army were also acclaimed by council members. Gilberto Freyre showed his enthusiasm to the CFC with respect to the “National Army Olympics”, held in Recife in 1973. Sharing the same spirit of enthusiasm, Raymundo Moniz de Aragão de Freyre claimed that the games were not only military, but also national; after all, it was the same Young called to honourably serve their country that participated. The CFC decided to send an official memorandum to the Army Ministry, Education Ministry and The Chief of Staff of the Presidency of the Republic, congratulating them for the civic initiative. Gilberto Freyre even mentioned his best impressions of the president of the Republic Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974), saying that he was impressed with a “serious man, but who always welcomed with affection by the population”.<sup>10</sup>

The principal goals of the CFC since its institutionalisation were to define the civic function of culture and state actions to ensure the exercise of this function. The projects presented by the council were understood as instruments for civic formation and protection of national traditions. The members of the CFC proposed a number of initiatives to valorise spaces of national memory including: cultural calendars and centenary celebrations, including the CFC’s participation in sesquicentennial celebration of Brazil’s Independence in 1972; stimulating the publication of complete works in the “Centenary Collection”; the preservation of colonial building complexes, including the refurbishment of the National Library; culture centres; and the definition of guidelines for culture policies. Through such actions they believed that they were promoting a diversity of civic actions.

#### THE CULTURAL CALENDARS INSTITUTED BY THE MEC: SPACES OF MEMORY?

According to Nora, spaces of memory act as guardians of the fragments of the collective memory selected by socially legitimised agents chosen for the task of preserving singular elements that identify modern society. These spaces, which can be either material or metaphorical, emerge from the necessity to

keep memories, threatened by the overwhelming processes of modernisation and social differentiation, alive. Thus, memories captured by historic construction are forged and inserted into the political clashes of diverse social groups. If “collective memories” transmitted through traditional social rites prevailed in modern society, we would not create “spaces” in order to remember the records of the past.

Thus, spaces of memory, constructed by the inability to ensure that collective memories are wholly transmitted, act as political spaces in the formation of social identity. We will analyse one of these various symbolic spaces that may be classified as “spaces of memory”: The cultural calendars produced by the Federal Culture Council that, given their function and constitution, represent a type of space of memory.

The cultural calendar acted as a space of memory by selecting historical occurrences, events and figures that were considered to represent nationality. The annual production of the cultural calendar was a matter that generated a number of divergences between the council members and its chambers; after all, the council would pay homage to the names and institutions selected for the cultural calendar during its plenary meetings. The minutes of these meetings provided a full record of the commemorations of the important dates in history indicated by the calendar. Josué Montello suggested that the calendar played an educational role since its objective was to provide information to cultural institutions and to the country about important dates for the nation and also international dates considered important for “humanity”. Andrade Muricy, representative of the Chamber of Arts, criticised the initial version of the 1968 calendar for the excessive valorisation of important dates in history and the absence of contemporary cultural events. In his attempt to include other items, he requested a longer deadline to present the proposal.<sup>11</sup> The rules relating to the calendar were debated during the 101th plenary meeting held on 25 September 1968. Each chamber presented its proposals for defining criteria for organizing the calendar: the Chamber of Literature suggested that it should be exclusively dedicated to Brazilian cultural life, and that civic dates and scientific events should be excluded. This proposal was supported by the chamber of Arts and Human Sciences. The Chamber of Literature also proposed that events that had happened less than 100 years before should not be included. The Chamber of Arts suggested that the calendar should be divided into two parts, the first of which included the proposals related the sector and the second that dealt with the commemoration of important dates in history. Ariano Suassuna supported this proposal and suggested the creation of a

cultural diary with the dates marking annual events, while maintaining the calendar with a description of only important dates in history. The suggestion that the calendar would deal preferentially with themes related to culture through the commemoration of important dates in history was also approved. A suggestion by Pedro Calmon that the criteria for including commemorative dates should not be strictly defined was approved. The debate was then concluded with the approval of Montello's proposal to include the "Great Universal Dates" next to the calendar. Although some of these dates were included, this did not happen. This study looked at the calendars from the 1969, 1970, 1973 and 1974 which adopted the parameters defined by the 101th plenary meeting: "The Federal Culture Council, that elaborates and divulges the Annual Culture Calendar throughout the country, aims to celebrate the main dates set out in the said diary in the most dignified manner and at the right time as it has up to now, be it in ordinary sessions, or in special ceremonies..." (O Conselho..., 1969, p.17).

The calendar was organised based on the suggestions of council members, cultural institutions and state secretaries or councils. The development of the annual calendar project was the responsibility of a specific intellectual chosen by the council who presented the project for approval, alteration or inclusion of the dates at the plenary meeting. The four calendars were mainly composed of important dates in history of events that had happened more than 100 years before. Only 14 of the 112 commemorative dates (12,5%) broke this pattern and generally marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of an important figure. The calendars did not necessarily mark celebrations every month. The closing section of the 1969 and 1970 calendars were dedicated to "international dates". The 1969 began its agenda in September, while the 1970 calendar began in May. The calendars paid homage to renowned literary scholars, cultural institutions, political figures and historical events. The diaries of the 1973 and 1974 calendars began in January.

In order to identify the main characteristics of the important dates in history chosen for the calendars, we investigated the features that guided their selection. The methodology used to analyse the composition of each calendar consisted of defining five thematic categories: political figures; educational/cultural institutions; literary scholars/journalists/teachers/musicians; historic figures/events; doctors/scientists/engineers.

The 1969 calendar had only six commemorative dates which were dedicated to three literary scholars/journalists; two political figures, and one intellectual. The 1970 calendar was made up of 23 commemorative dates dedicated

to 10 literary scholars/journalists; Five political figures, four historic figures/events, two institutions, and one commemoration of a contemporary event of the Ministry. In 1973 there were 31 commemorations of important dates in history dedicated to nine literary scholars/journalists; four political figures, 15 historic figures/events, and three doctors/scientists/engineers. In 1974 there were 52 commemorations dedicated to 30 literary scholars/journalists, three political figures, nine historic figures/events, two institutions, and 10 doctors/scientists/engineers.

The selection of the commemorations seemed to follow a certain pattern: all figures were deceased; the important dates in history were dedicated to the date of birth or death of the figure, historic event or establishment of an institution; the dates were considered milestones and served to emphasise the importance of a specific work or figure in the sociocultural formation of Brazil. Regarding the four institutions included in the calendars, each were national and founded in capital cities. The political figures had important positions in the empire and early years of the republic, while the literary scholars and journalists who were honoured participated in a variety of organisations such as the Academy of Literature and institutes of history and geography. The figures honoured were from different states of the federation, showing the intellectual and political pluralism in Brazil.

The habit of honouring great literary scholars was not a tradition invented by the council members, since it had already been practiced by the Brazilian Academy of Literature (ABL, acronym in Portuguese) since its foundation in 1897. The symbolic and financial investment in remembering these men that occupied those seats, and were therefore considered the “harbingers” of nationalism, fostered the production of a series of initiatives such as events, papers, biographies, monuments, and personal archives (Far, 2000). The practice of honouring historic figures was embodied by the council members, many of whom were ABL “immortals”, who did not apply it only to literary luminaries, but to all those that could be part of the national memory.

The cult of the past among council members by valorising various kinds of spaces of memory was considered essential to constructing “a dignifying state of civic consciousness”. The notion presented by Arthur Reis in his article “The Cult of the Past in a World in Transformation”, published in the second edition of the Brazilian Journal of Culture in 1969, debated the importance of historical knowledge to national sovereignty and the development of modern countries, where the priority function of the past is to provide the elements of “sustenance of political ideology” which are necessary for all independent states:



It is important not to forget that in the most difficult moments in the life of different peoples, the cult of the past, the traditionalism which today is distorted, served to maintain hope and as the holy fire required for the energy that was lost or interrupted and was in need of replenishment and rejuvenation strived for within that which it represented, that is, in the values of the distant or close past as an eternal lesson to guide the past. (Reis, 1969, p.59)

For Arthur Reis, the main function of the council and therefore of culture policies, was to guarantee the maintenance of spaces of memory, be they material or symbolic, which he believed was being arduously accomplished. These spaces of memory guarded records of the past, a civic expression of the greatness of the nation. The sources of national history, still waiting to be investigated, needed to be protected by policies dedicated at preserving documents, archives, museums etc. On the other hand, it was the task of historians to carry out a deep investigation of the documents in order to reach “authentic history”. Thus, the priority investment of funds in spaces of memory was justified by the civic need to promote policies that protected monuments, fostered research that unveiled national history, and guaranteed the regular functioning of institutions involved with culture.

The intellectual production of the council expressed by the calendars, collective works and official journals acted like public policies in defence of patrimony and national culture. Such strategies, shared throughout other places of sociability, demonstrate the importance of the state in divulging the projects of specific intellectual groups and restored the tradition of the intellectual as a promoting agent of civism from 1920. The institutionalisation of the culture sector was only possible thanks to the interrelationship between the state and the intellectual camp. Although the weaknesses of the Brazilian intellectual camp may have pushed them to join the ranks of the state, the presence of these figure in the state consolidated the culture sector as an area of government action in Brazil, even if the frugal resources available presented an obstacle to wider ranging political actions.

## CONCLUSION

Between 1967 and 1975, the intellectuals of the Federal Culture Council were responsible for guiding culture policies, mainly directed towards the protection and divulgation of the country’s cultural patrimony. They invested available funds in the following activities: structural reforms and projects

developed by the national institutions that were involved in culture; defence of building complexes; recuperation of documentary archives and libraries; the creation of cultural centres in small and medium-sized municipalities; commemorations of important dates in history; and publication of literary works and historical works that unveiled the “essence” of national culture. These investments envisaged the valorisation of patriotic history, the ultimate symbol of nationality, promoting a civic experience in which all citizens should take part.

Having acting within the ranks of the state since the 1930s, these intellectuals, whose ideas were rooted in conservative modernist thinking, rescued part of the project developed by many of them in the first Vargas government (1930-1945). They brought “the spirit of nationality” so widely propagated by the new state to the centre of the culture policy stage through valorising folklore, the historic past, national literature, and historic architecture, forging, from then on, “national consciousness”. This set of items formed the cultural patrimony that conveyed the experience of “being Brazilian”.

This modernist project would turn into a process of radicalisation of nationalism by embodying the ideology of civism propagated during civil-military dictatorship. The intellectuals of the CFC adopted a number of programmes which had already been implemented during the Vargas dictatorship (1937-1945), incorporating new discursive practices and adapting the programs to suit the optimism preached by the government, under the aegis of a value considered essential to the maintenance of the nation – civism.

Civism took shape as an absolute higher value, taking precedence over the “original” idea – modern citizenship – justified by the defence of national interests which were considered to be above the individual’s rights. Since it was absolute and higher, civism was incontestable. Civic values became the mediator in the relationship between citizens and the state. However, the main figure in the defence of national values was the citizen. He or she was considered the main propagating agent of civic values. Thus, the investment in policies that taught citizens their duties before the nation, promoting “civic national consciousness”, was an urgent task of education. Defend the nation against foreign ideologies, above all communism, and combat the inside enemy and contribute to social order were essential functions of the good citizen. It was also necessary to conscientize citizens through programmes developed by the culture sector that emphasised the uniqueness of the nation, its structural aspects, and its organicity. The historic past would provide the necessary symbolic elements to structure a nation. Such elements were selected from works of literature, the

life of great exemplary figures, the roots of folkloric manifestations, documentary archives, and national assets. The embodiment of civism as the ultimate value in the exercise of citizenship would guarantee national security, strengthen the state, and allow access to the benefits of a traditional pacific, orderly and harmonic society. Citizens' rights would be guaranteed as long as they did not threaten state balance; any contestation or criticism would break with the desired civic standard and therefore affect social structure.

The state had the ultimate task of guaranteeing state balance and conferred itself the authority to reprimand those that abandoned their civic duties, undermining their political rights and individual freedom. The state used necessary justified force before the constant threat of the inside enemy. Civil, political and social rights propagated by citizenship could be infringed, since the preservation of the nation was a priority objective, overtaking even the preservation of citizen well-being. Repression, torture sessions, and arbitrary detention could all be justified within the process of the radicalisation of civism. After all, these victims did not fulfil their civic duties and became subversive, and had their rights as citizens abolished by an authoritarian state.

The intellectuals of the CFC showed themselves to be against the excesses committed by the censorship agencies and sometimes shocked by the actions of the law enforcement apparatus. However, they favoured the exacerbation of nationalism and the political authority of the government by contributing to the ideological apparatus promoted by the civil-military dictatorship, embodying civism in their discourse and in their projects. On the other hand, the council defended access to culture, valorisation of regional aspects, attention to libraries and archives, and investment in the production and diffusion of culture. The ambivalent relationship between the intellectuals of the CFC and highest ranks of the government resulted in silence, timid protests and negotiations that contributed to the vitality of an authoritarian regime that lasted for more than 20 years.

Thus, the CFC strived to respond to modernist plans to protect cultural patrimony in Brazil under the aegis of civism where culture played the role of generator of "civic national consciousness".

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The expression *anos de chumbo* (“years of lead”) refer to the most repressive period of the military dictatorship in Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> For works produced during the civil-military dictatorship about Olavo Bilac's patriotism see: BRANDÃO, 1969; LOPES, 1968; MAGALHÃES JÚNIOR, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the concept of citizenship and its various levels in the trajectory of Brazilian politics see: CARVALHO, 2007, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> AGUIAR FILHO, 1982. This work is used as a documentary source as it was organised by a council member with the participation of two other members of the council. Although this document was made after the period under study, I believe that this work belongs to the same political and ideological scenario.

<sup>5</sup> BRASIL. Decree N<sup>o</sup>.869, 12 September 1969, Art. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the 246<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 11 February 1971. *Boletim do Federal Culture Council*, Rio de Janeiro: Federal Culture Council, Jan-Mar 1971, pp.166-170. p.170.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the 266<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1971. *Boletim do Federal Culture Council*, Rio de Janeiro: MEC/Federal Culture Council, Year I, n.2, Apr-Jun 1971.

<sup>8</sup> See the minutes of the sessions: 298, 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1972. *Boletim do Federal Culture Council*, Rio de Janeiro: MEC/Federal Culture Council, year II, n.5, Jan-Mar. 1972; 303, 2nd Feb 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.5, Jan-Mar. 1972; 317, 3 Apr 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.6, Apr-Jun. 1972; 315, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.6, Apr-Jun. 1972; 319, 6 Jun 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.6, Apr-Jun 1972; 321 8 Jun 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.6, Apr-Jun 1972; 343, 5 Dec. 1972. *Boletim...*, year II, n.8, Oct-Dec 1972.

<sup>9</sup> Prayer offered by Arthur Reis during the installation of Raymundo Moniz de Aragão as president and Manuel Diégues Júnior as vice-president of the CFC during the biennial of 1973/1974. *Boletim do Federal Culture Council*, Rio de Janeiro: MEC/Federal Culture Council, year III, Jan-Mar. 1973, pp.11-25. p.14.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the 359<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 10 Apr 1973. *Boletim do Federal Culture Council*, Rio de Janeiro: MEC/Federal Culture Council, year II, n.10, Apr-Jun 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> plenary session 13 Dec 1967. *Cultura*, year I, n.6, pp.154-158, Dec 1967. p.155.