

David N. Lorenzen
STUDIES ON ASIA
AND AFRICA
FROM LATIN AMERICA



El Colegio de México

STUDIES ON ASIA AND AFRICA
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CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE ASIA Y ÁFRICA

STUDIES ON ASIA
AND AFRICA
FROM LATIN
AMERICA

Edited by
David N. Lorenzen



EL COLEGIO DE MÉXICO

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PREFACE

The essays collected together in this volume represent a small selected sample of the academic work on Asia and Africa being done in Latin America, particularly in the Center of Asian and African Studies of El Colegio de México. Since it was founded in 1964, with the moral and financial assistance of UNESCO, this Center has been the principal academic institution dedicated to the study of Asia and Africa in all of Latin America. Although the Center is located in México, both its professors and student body have traditionally come from a variety of Latin American countries, as well as from various countries of Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America.

This multiply international character of the Center has meant that its intellectual output has been highly varied both in terms of the topics discussed and the points of view expressed. Accordingly, the present collection is more a celebration of this diversity than a study focussed on one particular geographical area or on one particular theme or discipline. Nonetheless, I think it is fair to say that taken as a whole this collection could only have been written in Latin America. The underlying world vision is neither that of the industrialized countries of Europe, Asia, and North America nor that of the less industrialized countries of Asia and Africa. Rather, the authors of the essays have consciously sought a voice independent of many of the thematic and disciplinary preoccupations of scholars from these other regions. What is perhaps most notable in a number of the essays of the present collection is an anti-imperialist identification with the problems of the ethnic minorities and the peoples of the Third World and at the same time an objective independence from the nationalist interests and ideologies often associated with scholars who themselves belong to these minorities and peoples. At their best, the essays are both impassioned and dispassionate.

Most of the essays included in this volume were previously

published in *Estudios de Asia y Africa*, an academic journal published by the Center of Asian and African Studies of El Colegio de México. This journal has been the principal publication in Latin America dedicated to Asia and Africa since it was first inaugurated in 1966.

The essays contained here that were previously published in *Estudios de Asia y Africa* include the following: Flora Botton, "Zhang Boling: educador y patriota" (EAA, 22[1987]: 46-61); Romer Cornejo Bustamante, "De la utopía y sus límites en China" (EAA, 21[1986]: 45-57); Marisela Connelly, "El levantamiento de Ping Liu Li" (EAA, 23[1988]: 59-92); Russell Maeth Ch., "El cuento de Zhou Chou: ¿un precursor sino-tibetano de la Edad Media temprana de *Beowulf*?" (EAA, 22[1987]: 535-46); Manuel Ruiz Figueroa, "Surgimiento y consolidación del Estado islámico" (EAA, 23[1988]: 59-92); Santiago Quintana Pali, "El discurso secularista como ideología étnica: un caso del Oriente árabe" (EAA, 19[1984]: 137-164); Sylvain Carreau, "Lengua, etnia y construcción nacional en Africa negra: el caso de Zaire" (EAA, 22[1987]: 195-230). The articles of Susana Devalle and Jorge Silva Castillo are published for the first time in the present collection. The article of Yarisse Zoctizoum was previously published in Spanish as "El Estado y la reproducción étnica en Africa", in *Estudios Sociológicos* 13[1987].

All the articles are in English except in the cases of the articles of Professors Carreau, Silva, and Zoctizoum, which were written in French before having been translated into Spanish. Their essays are here left in the original French. The articles of Professors Botton, Cornejo, Ruiz, and Quintana were translated into English by Jean McGuill. The English versions of the articles by Professors Connelly, Maeth, and Devalle were prepared by the authors themselves.

ZHANG BOLING: EDUCATOR AND PATRIOT

FLORA BOTTON
El Colegio de México

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The modernization process has not been easy for any nation. As M. Gasster points out: "It is easy now to forget how novel and how enormously revolutionary—in the West as well as in Asia—was the idea that rapid social change is both desirable and possible."¹ Nevertheless, for China at the beginning of the 20th Century this change was seen as the only means of survival. A century of internal crisis and pressure from outside had created a situation in which China's very existence was threatened.

The idea of change is not foreign to Chinese tradition. Throughout its history in moments of crisis, there were reformers who advocated changes that would help solve the problems of the times. However, these changes were conceived within the framework of an accepted tradition, and the past, rich in "correct" standards, now abandoned, was usually the model. New ideas could thus be introduced according to the interpretation of what was 'correct' in the past. Although it is true that practical reformers existed in China, the most deeply rooted idea was that of inner change achieved through education. Education has a double purpose: to provide the information necessary to train people to carry out a certain task in society and also to shape their character. The latter concept was closely tied to the ideal

¹ Michael Gasster, *China's Struggle to Modernize*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1972, p. 21.

of Confucian tradition which considers learning to be the way to virtue.²

The first reaction of Chinese intellectuals to the necessity of considering once again reforms and changes was to propose that Western technology be adopted as a way of confronting foreign intrusion. Western science, as the Chinese had come to know it through the Jesuits, took on a much deeper meaning. What had been seen before as an amusement and an object of curiosity, especially in the field of astronomy, was now a means of understanding how the machines and weapons which gave Westerners so much power were operated.³ In the middle of the XIX century, shipyards, arsenals, military and naval schools, and schools for translators and interpreters were created. During its initial phase, modernization was a defense against the foreigners, a "self-strengthening" that did not affect the foundations of Chinese society.

As Zhang Zhidong said, in what would later become a slogan: *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*, the idea being to use Chinese knowledge as the substance and foreign knowledge as the function (practical application). The problem which developed as a result of this dichotomy soon became apparent. When there was too much interference from the external "function," the roots of the "substance" were affected. In 1872, one hundred and twenty young Chinese were sent to the United States to study for 15 years. In 1881, they were asked to return to China, with the excuse that they had neglected their Chinese studies, compulsory when in a foreign country, and that they were adopting foreign customs.

Each crisis seemed to be the cause for a new impulse and a new direction. When China suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1895, pressure was exerted on the Guang Xu Emperor for this government to put concrete measures into practice. The group behind this action was made up of capable and prestigious men: Kang Yuwei, Sun Jianai, Zhang Zhidong,

² Flora Botton, "Educational Reforms at the End of the Ch'ing Dynasty." *Proceedings of the 30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa*, China, vol. 2, El Colegio de México, México, p. 324.

³ Charlotte Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang: Science and China's New Culture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970, p. 11.

and Liang Qichao. The young emperor stated in a decree supporting reforms: "Changes must be made according to the necessities of the times... Let us, keeping in mind the morals of our sages and wise men, make them the basis on which to build new and more advantageous foundations."⁴ The "Hundred Days" reform, in 1898, was a failure, and its participants were either executed or forced to flee. Nevertheless, in 1900, another crisis, the Boxer Rebellion and its consequences, forced the government to consider adopting much more drastic and decisive measures that would lead China towards modernization. Thus "the government tried to modernize the economic system, renovate the law codes, improve transportation and develop an adequate educational system."⁵

It was in the last item, reform of the educational system, that the greatest hopes were harbored and most of the experiments carried out. In traditional China, despite the enormous importance of education and the fact that it was the vehicle for ascending the social ladder by means of the examination system, the government did not directly control the schools, at least not at elementary and secondary levels. Dr. Martin, an American missionary, wrote in a report sent to Washington in 1875:

China has nothing approaching to a system of common schools designed to diffuse among the masses the blessings of a popular education. Indeed, education is systematically left to private enterprise and public charity; the government contenting itself with gathering the choicest fruits and encouraging production by suitable rewards.⁶

In spite of this, education was dominated by the State since the goal of study was to take the examinations. All schools and private tutors taught the Confucian classics in order to prepare their students for this competition. Actually the barrenness of this

⁴ Harry Edwin King, "The Educational System of China as Recently Reconstructed", *Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Education*, 1911, núm. 15, p. 11.

⁵ Shirley Garret, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese YMCA 1895-1926*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1970, p. 72.

⁶ W.A. Martin, "Education in China" in *Circulars of Information of the Bureau of Education*, núm. 1, 1877, pp. 19-20.

kind of teaching and the enormous amount of learning by rote made education more an exercise in willpower rather than a preparation for any specific purpose.

The first official efforts followed the pattern established by people like Zhang Zhidong, Zhang Jian and Yuang Shikai, untiring educators whose efforts had led to the opening of many schools (in Jiansu by Zhang Jian; in Shandong and Zhili by Yuan Shikai; and in almost all of China by Zhang Zhidong). These schools attempted combining the study of modern subjects with that of the Chinese classics. In their search for a remedy to the ills of their country, these men saw in education the tool to overcome China's weakness in the face of other nations, as well as the basis for developing civic virtues in young people. Zhang Zhidong denounced "selfishness" and "weakness" as "diseases"⁷ suffered by China. The commission which in 1903 established the principles for a modern educational system, did so with the intention to "give to the children above seven years of age the knowledge necessary for life, to establish in them the foundation of morality and patriotism and to promote their physical welfare."⁸

A decisive step towards the modernization of education was the abolition of the examination system in 1905. For years the court had been asked to take this liberating step since, as long as the examinations existed, there would be little incentive to attend the new schools.⁹ From this moment on, the establishment of new schools at all levels increased daily; thousands of students went to Japan, and cultural clubs and groups sprang up everywhere.

At the same time government schools began to appear, missionary schools, which had existed in China since the beginning of the XIX century, took on greater importance. Toward the end

⁷ Shu Xincheng, *Jundai Zhongguo Jiaoyu Shibiao*, Shanghai, 1928, vol. I, p. 99.

⁸ Theodore Hsiao, *The History of Modern Education in China*, Shanghai, The Commercial Press, 1935, p. 35.

⁹ Only families of limited financial resources sent their children to modern schools or missionary schools. This was the case of Yan Fun, who attended the Naval School and, after a time in Japan and England, translated dozens of important Western books, such as the works of Huxley, Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, etc.

of the XIX century, enthusiasm for learning Western science and reforming the schools gave missionaries a magnificent opportunity to participate in this modernizing effort and to spread their doctrine. Among these missionaries were some who considered themselves evangelists rather than educators. They saw no need to open schools that went beyond the elementary level. Others, like Mateer, Williamson, etc., emphasized the importance of schools at all levels and were fully conscious of the role that Western Christianity had to play at this crucial moment in China.

In 1895 the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of China was founded and, "although its roots lay in evangelical Christianity ... it soon built a self-supporting and secular constituency among urban Chinese of the student and business classes. Within fifteen years it was a powerful organizing force among young Chinese on the mainland and in Tokyo, and began to play a constructive role in the long epic of Chinese reform."¹⁰ One of the YMCA's greatest accomplishments was the introduction of sports and a new concept concerning physical education. Prior to this time, sports had not been accepted to any great extent by the privileged classes who looked on them as wasted effort. There were a great variety of martial arts in China that were still practiced by specialists, but from the Ming Dynasty on they were no longer popular amongst the gentry. A story is told about a Chinese man who, upon seeing two Americans playing tennis in Shanghai, and getting very tired in the process, asked in great surprise why they didn't pay someone to do it for them.¹¹

"Treaty ports" appeared in China in the 1840's, that is, port cities open to foreign commerce. In them groups of foreigners were allowed to live according to their own customs and under their own laws. This was not a new phenomenon in China. During the Tang Dynasty there were foreign merchants in several Chinese cities who maintained their own customs and life styles. However, these cities were not opened up by cannon fire and unequal treaties, and the influence they had on a China that was self-assured was not of great consequence. The "treaty ports" became instrumental in the contact between China and the outside world. Through them new ideas were introduced, but also,

¹⁰ Garret, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

because of their very nature, they became a source of national shame where humiliation was an everyday fact.¹² Moreover, the most important ports — Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou (Canton) and Hankow — were industrial and commercial, as well as intellectual and political centers. Newspapers, both in English and Chinese, were published in them, and a great number of traditional and modern schools, technical colleges and universities prospered in them as well.

One of the outstanding "treaty ports" was the northern city of Tianjin. Its importance was both strategic and commercial since it was located only one hundred and fifty kilometers from Beijing and was connected to it by land and navigable canals; it was one hundred kilometers from the port of Daku on China's Northern sea and was a necessary passage in the access to the capital. Because of its importance as a trade center for the northern provinces, in 1860 it became the administrative headquarters for the Viceroy of Zhili.

In 1895 Tianjin had one million inhabitants that lived within the walled Chinese city as well as in the international section. It was a center of progressive education where various secondary and technical schools and universities had been established. When the YMCA was first looking for a place to initiate its activities, Tianjin seemed ideal and, indeed, the Association was successful from the start, especially after 1897 when the spirit of reform began to prevail, the spirit which was to culminate in the "Hundred Days" reform.¹³

Nevertheless, Tianjin's participation in the Boxer Rebellion had unfortunate consequences for the city's progressive impulses. It was burned, plundered and invaded by the soldiers of various nations. Education was paralyzed due to a five year prohibition against taking the imperial examinations imposed on the people of Tianjin.

The YMCA, which was also in ruins, was one of the few Western organizations the Chinese did not totally distrust. In 1901

¹² The role of "treaty ports" in the modernization of China is examined in depth by Rhoads Murphey. "The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization" in Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner (eds.), *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1984.

¹³ Garret, *op. cit.*, p. 93-94.

a group of Chinese gentry sought advice from the YMCA on organizing a private high school. Science, the Chinese classics and an optional Bible course were taught there. In 1903, when Yuan Shikai was Viceroy of Zhili, the government became active in opening state schools, and by 1905, 50 schools were in operation, most of them with free tuition.¹⁴

Zhang Boling, educator and patriot, founder of a complex of excellent schools and of the still famous Nankai University where many of those who shaped present day China were educated, was raised in this atmosphere. The story of Nankai and Zhang Boling are so closely linked that it is impossible to speak of one without mentioning the other: both are exemplary histories of the emergence of modern education in China.

Zhang Boling, his life and ideas

Zhang Boling was born in 1876 in Tianjin.¹⁵ He was from a scholarly family, but his father, who was orphaned at the age of nine, was incapable of preserving the family fortune: he was good-natured and a "bon vivant" who liked music and never had much money. When Zhang Boling turned 13, his father decided he should be given a modern education and sent him to the Naval Academy in Beiyang. At this school, the young Zhang Boling became a good student and had the opportunity to meet people with enlightened ideas and knowledge of the West like Yan Fu (the untiring translator and introducer of Western culture in China).

When China was defeated by Japan, Zhang Boling was in his last year at the Academy. This event and also the humiliation he witnessed when China was forced to cede the port of Wei-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Information on the life of Zhang Boling was taken from the following sources: Howard L. Boorman and Richard Howard (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. I, Richard Howards, New York-London, 1967, pp. 100-105; Wang Wentian, "Zhang Boling xiansheng yu Nankai," in *Chuanji Wenxue*, vol. 12, núm. 5, May 1968, pp. 32-4, vol. 12, núm. 6, June 1968, pp. 18-22; Wang Wentian and others *Zhang Boling xiansheng yu Nankai*, Zhuanji Wenxue Chubanshe, Taibei, 1968; Sun Yanmin, ed. *Zhang Boling Xiansheng zhuan*, Taiwan, Zhonghua Shuju, Taibei, 1971 and *Nankai liushinian*, Nankaidaxue, Tianjin, 1979.

haiwei to the British drove the young man, already inspired by the spirit of reform and change prevailing in this period, to abandon the navy in order to devote himself to education which he considered to be the only hope for saving China.

Upon returning to Tianjin in 1898, he taught science, mathematics, English and physical education in a small private school with five students organized by Yan Fansun (1860-1929, also known as Yan Xiu) in his own home. Yan, a prominent and wealthy citizen of Tianjin, well educated, patriotic and with advanced ideas, was instrumental in promoting modern education in Tianjin, and Zhang Boling found in him a kindred spirit and unconditional support. In 1901, after the Boxers' defeat, another distinguished citizen, Wang Guichang, invited Zhang Boling to teach in his home where another small private school was operating. In February of 1904, Zhang and Yan traveled to Japan, a country that had been capable of carrying out the changes necessary for modernization, thus becoming an example for all the Asian nations. There they learned new educational methods and obtained educational materials. When they returned to China in August of the same year, they opened a secondary school: the "First Private Secondary School" with seventy students and classes still meeting on Yan Fansun's property. Two years later they moved to a place called Nankai and changed the name of the school to "Nankai Secondary School."

Zhang Boling was unrelenting in his efforts to acquire new knowledge on education and for this reason took his first trip to the United States and Europe. In the meantime, he met the members of the YMCA and began a long relationship with the association. When he founded the secondary school, Zhang looked to the association for help in finding Western teachers and establishing a good sports program.¹⁶ He also collaborated with the YMCA in preparing the Far Eastern Olympic Games, sponsored by the association, encouraging a competitive spirit amongst the students and appealing to their national pride. In 1909, Zhang Boling converted to Christianity which he considered a renovating force, and his participation in the association was even more active.

¹⁶ Garret, *op. cit.*, p. 95-101.

The success of the secondary school made Zhang Boling think about establishing a university which would continue with his educational work at a higher level. In 1917 he traveled again to the United States where he studied for a year at the Normal School of Columbia University. Yan Fansun joined him and they returned together to Tianjin in 1918 to make preparations for the opening of the university which finally began to function in 1919. The same year St. John's University in Shanghai awarded Zhang Boling a doctorate *honoris causa* in recognition of his educational endeavors.

Nankai University soon acquired the reputation of being the best private university in China. Zhang maintained his enthusiasm for expansion and in 1923, at the request of several young women, established a secondary school for girls. In 1928 he founded an experimental primary school; in 1931 an Institute of Economics for post-graduate research; and in 1932 the Institute of Chemistry.

Since his student days, Zhang Boling had been aware of the problem that Japan's power would someday represent for the future of China. Despite his educational endeavors, he could not overlook certain political aspects that influenced his country's integrity. In 1927 he visited Manchuria, and upon his return he founded the "Pacific Studies Association" where topics related to Northeastern China were studied: population, economy, resources, agriculture, emigration, etc. He also urged students from that region to return to it. From 1931 on, as Japanese pressure became greater everyday, Nankai students held numerous demonstrations against Japanese imperialism, provoking the ire of Japanese military garrisons in Tianjin. In July, 1937, a short time after Japan attacked northern China, Nankai was the victim of a fierce bombing which completely destroyed it. Zhang Boling learned of the bombing while in Nanjing. When he informed Chiang Kaishek, the latter said that Nankai had been sacrificed but that "as long as there is a China there will be a Nankai University." The same year Zhang suffered another tragedy when the plane of his youngest son, a pilot, crashed during air combat.

Zhang Boling, foreseeing the Japanese aggression, years before had acquired a piece of land in Zhongqing, in Sichuan province, and established a secondary school there called Nanyu. In 1938 it took on the name "Nankai Secondary School in

Zhongqing." In the meantime, Nankai University had to move, first to Changsha, in Hunan, where it was united with two other large northern Chinese universities, Beijing University and Chinghua University, to form the Provisional University of Changsha. Within a few months they had to move again. This time they went to Kunming, in Yunnan, where the union of the three universities was known as the Associated University of the Southeast." This University acquired the reputation of being the staunchest stronghold of anti-Japanese resistance and was also known as the place where many revolutionaries were nurtured.

Zhang Boling avoided political positions, but during the war he accepted a government post and was loyal to Chiang Kaishek whom he considered to be a unifying element. He first acted as vice-president of the People's Political Council, a multi-party organization which was used as a forum for discussion by public opinion. After the war, he was president of the Examination Yuan (one of the five powers of the Chinese constitution drawn up by Sun Yatsen). When the war was over, he returned to Tianjin, and in 1946 the nationalist government took over Nankai University, naming Zhang Boling president. That same year Columbia University awarded him a doctorate *honoris causa* for his merits as "educator; founder and president of Nankai University; of nation-wide influence and world-wide recognition as builder of educational institutions and builder of men; a personality dedicated through nearly fifty years of unshatterable faith and unwavering devotion to the regeneration of China through the education of her youth; a symbol of national confidence," as Frank Fackenthal expressed it. To celebrate Zhang Boling's fifty years of work in education in China, various friends and admirers, both Chinese and Americans, published a book of essays titled *There is Another China*¹⁷ in 1948.

When communist forces occupied Tianjin in 1948, Zhang Boling remained in the city. In February, 1951, he died of a heart attack at the age of seventy five. He is admired in both Taiwan and China, and his merits as a patriot, educator and untiring worker for the spread of modern education in his country are widely recognized.

¹⁷ *There is Another China. Essays and Articles for Chang Boling of Nankai*, Columbia University Press, 1948.

Zhang Boling was a tall, well built man full of vitality. All who knew him¹⁸ extoll his integrity and honesty. He demanded order and discipline from his pupils and was somewhat puritanical. He was also strict with himself. Once he was about to expel a secondary student whom he had found smoking (which was against regulations). The student, with a courage that could only be inspired by Zhang Boling's open personality, replied that he understood that the principal also smoked. Zhang accepted his observation and decided to make a pact with the boy, each promising to smoke no more.

He was an excellent speaker and knew how to listen; he delegated functions, but accepted responsibility. On many occasions he had to be flexible, but he never gave in to any difficulty. "We must break, shatter, reduce to pieces our difficulties," he used to say.¹⁹ He was an untiring fund raiser and had a genius for winning over possible donors. Nevertheless, he lived a frugal, even spartan, life. He constructed buildings for his school, but he never built a residence for himself. Nankai's books were open to the public, and he never accepted payment for expenses incurred by him which were not directly related to the school.²⁰ For years he received a very low salary and he himself bore the expenses of poor relatives that studied at Nankai, though he gave scholarships to the relatives of other teachers and administrators.

Despite his progressive ideas, Zhang Boling married the girl chosen for him by his parents, as was the traditional custom. When his wife died after only a few months of marriage, he remarried a woman also picked out by his family. He was always respectful and affectionate with his wife whose feet were bound according to tradition.

Zhang Boling was not a great theoretician, nor did he have an original philosophy behind his concept of education. He pub-

¹⁸ There are biographical sketches of Zhang Boling in the books mentioned in note 15 and also in Chih Meng, "Recollections of Chinese-American Cultural Persons: a Sampling," lecture given at the *Harvard Faculty Club* on February 18, 1976; "Autobiographies" by Franlin Li Ho and Ting-fu F. Tsiang, manuscripts of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University, prepared for *The Chinese Oral History Project*; and also in the article "Nankai yu wo" by Peng Shancheng in *Zhongyang Ribao*, Taiwan, April 5, 1975.

¹⁹ Peng Shancheng, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Sun Yanmin, *op. cit.*, p. 43-47.

lished few articles and lacked the wit and sharpness of his friend and rival Hu Shi and the acute political consciousness of his colleague Cai Yuanpei, president of Beijing University. On many occasions he was criticized for his naive intellect which made him ask questions like, "What are statistics good for?" (addressing himself to Franklin Ho the economist) or "How can anthropology be of use to us?" (addressed to the eminent archeologist Li Zhi).²¹ The goal of Zhang Boling was not to develop liberal education, but rather to encourage more practical and technical studies, which sometimes resulted in the University of Nankai's obtaining, unjustly, the reputation of being a "technical school." Zhang himself said modestly: "I have no talent or special ability, but through the efforts of an entire lifetime, I will achieve some small success. This will be due to my faith and my interest in education."²²

What motivated this interest? Zhang Boling tells how he witnessed China's humiliation at the end of the Sino-Japanese War when the Western powers, under the pretext of preventing Japan from interfering in China, obtained territorial concessions. He was also indignant about the failure of his countrymen to react. "When Japan occupied the port of Weihaiwei, Admiral Ding Ruchang committed suicide. But many insensitive merchants, taking advantage of the Japanese victory, got together there to argue over the sale of their merchandise as though they were at a fair, and with no feeling of shame."²³ He then comments that the war was lost not only due to military weakness, but because of the weakness of character of the Chinese and their lack of training and education:

I immediately realized that the national situation was very serious and that this was due to the people's lack of education. I believe that if a nation wants to survive in the modern world, its citizens must be healthy and sound, and to prepare people with these characteristics, modern schools must be established... I decided to devote myself to the teaching cause in order to save my country.²⁴

²¹ Ting-fu F. Tsiang, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

²² Wang Wentian and others, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Following his theory of the necessity for education, Zhang brought together traditional as well as modern concepts, the latter containing Christian elements. He said that the Chinese had five shortcomings: 1) *Physical weakness and bad health*. The cause could be traced to the contempt for physical exercise and manual labor, and also the opium habit and early marriages which undermined the health of the Chinese. 2) *Superstition and the lack of scientific knowledge*. This was caused by the insistence upon the sterile study of the Confucian classics and their conservative influence. 3) *Poverty*. The low scientific and technological level and political corruption had been the ruin of the Chinese economy, and the people suffered the consequences. 4) *Lack of unity and a sense of the collective*. The Chinese had never understood the motto "in unity there is strength." 5) *Selfishness*. This was the greatest defect of the Chinese who were absorbed by small and petty interests and worried only about their own well-being and not about the people as a collective whole. This selfishness prevented development and decreased nationalism.

These shortcomings were the basis for Zhang Boling's proposal for education, in which he put forward the following: 1) *Stress physical education* to develop the body, to improve health and to create a strong nation. Both the Secondary School and Nankai University were famous for their athletic activities which were begun with the YMCA's help. It was not a question of creating champions, but of having everyone participate and develop their physical abilities. Zhang Boling yearned to free his countrymen of the appellation "starved orientals."²⁵ This desire of Zhang Boling was shared years later by Mao Zedong. 2) *Promote the development of science*, key to material development and well-being. There was always great emphasis on science at Nankai, and in 1932 a special department was created for chemical studies; this department's research had an important practical side. In the field of social sciences, the Institute of Economics, created in 1927, contributed in modernizing the study of economics in China and in directing it towards an application that would be practical for Chinese reality. 3) *Promote social organization and collective activities* so that students would learn the value of uni-

²⁵ Sun Yanmin, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

ty and collective work. Zhang Boling would often give the example of Chinese chopsticks which are so easy to break individually, but so strong when several are put together. Political and recreational clubs were abundant in Nankai, and among other student activities were photography, music, sports, journalism and theater. Theater brought great fame first to the Secondary School and then to the University. In 1916, both teachers and students wrote modern plays and acted in them. Zhang Boling's younger brother, Zhang Penzhun, was director and teacher of everything that had to do with the theater. The young Zhou En-lai (Chou En-lai), delicate and good-looking, played women's roles. In the twenties, Nankai introduced such Western playwrights as Ibsen, Galsworthy, Oscar Wilde and Molière.²⁶

4) *Provide moral education.* Education for Zhang Boling, as for his ancestors since Confucius, was not a mere accumulation of knowledge but a way to shape character and reach virtue. For Confucius, education makes a man a *junzi* (gentleman); for Zhang Boling it forms patriotic and healthy citizens. Mencius had already spoken of conduct moved by inner rectitude (*yi*) and Xunzi had insisted that the outward manifestations of conduct (*li*) were important. Zhang Boling also emphasized honor. He wanted the young people to have correct health habits, wear clean clothes, have short hair and walk erect. He demanded patience, seriousness and serenity.²⁷

Knowledge should be practical above all. Although practicality would seem to contradict Chinese tradition, Confucianism was always essentially practical (more a moral practicality than a utilitarian one), and in the history of Chinese philosophy there is a branch that advocates practical knowledge, or knowledge as an impulse for action. As the XVI century philosopher Wang Yangming says:

When one has true knowledge, there is action; when one acts with perspicacity, there is knowledge.

We cannot separate the end from knowledge and from action.

²⁶ The following plays were presented: *Doll House*, *Enemy of the People*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Miser*, etc.

²⁷ Sun Yanmin, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31.

It is in this way that knowledge exists for action and, without action, knowledge cannot be considered as such.

(CHUANXILU 2, 5)

Zhang Boling never gave up pragmatism, and he always insisted that knowledge should be applied to the society in which we live (another of the ideas that Mao later adopted). To achieve this, he even sent secondary school students to do research in factories, banks, enterprises, etc. After, they discussed their findings in class, analyzed their experiences and wrote reports. This same tendency towards practical application was found in all the research institutes at Nankai. "If one wishes to be true to his life, he should have the ability to absorb much knowledge, to develop it and to apply it."²⁸

Despite his Christianity and his faith in Western science, Zhang Boling was never tempted to advocate the total Westernization of China. When arguing with Hu Shi who advocated the total destruction of everything old and traditional, he would tell him that this was like throwing away all the old clothes in the winter and telling the naked children to imagine beautiful Western clothing as they shivered with cold.²⁹ Hu Shi felt that it was necessary to change the way of thinking, the methods and the intellectual instruments. An intellectual reform was not enough for Zhang Boling, who wanted to reform education in such a way that it would create new habits. This sometimes caused Hu Shi to make fun of him, saying he was a puritan, lover of good deeds and member of the YMCA clique.

Zhang Boling, despite his indifference towards political posts, was not totally withdrawn from political action. Hu Shi made social criticisms, but was never an activist nor did he have commitments to any organization. Zhang Boling rightly said: "It is necessary to concern yourself with politics. If you do not concern yourself with politics, it will concern itself with you."³⁰ When students from the May 4th Movement held demonstrations,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁹ Chih Meng, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Sun Yanmin, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Zhang Boling approved them; when he became aware of the danger of the Japanese, he actively manifested his repudiation and encouraged the students to do the same. It is no coincidence that an activist like Zhou Enlai was Zhang Boling's favorite student and that Nankai nurtured many future revolutionaries.

Zhang Boling was a man who looked to the future, but who also had deep roots in the past. His pragmatism, emphasis on action and faith in education as the way to change his countrymen made him the heir of certain aspects of Chinese tradition. If we add to this his conviction that a sound mind is found only in a sound body and his commitment to change, then we realize that he heralded some of the ideas that would shape the revolutionaries whose triumph he would barely live to see.

ON UTOPIA AND ITS LIMITS IN CHINA

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Utopias have a long history in China. Traditional Chinese society produced several purely indigenous models of utopia. In the more modern era the Chinese have received, adapted and recreated a number of foreign utopias. China has also been a source of utopian creations beyond its own boundaries. Influences from the ideology of Confucian State can be observed in European "enlightened" despotism, and Maoist influences can be found in some sectors of the European and Latin American left, especially during the 1960's.

A quick glance at the history of Chinese thought reveals the recurring presence of models of ideal states and ideal lives, which differ in the writings of each school of philosophy and which are meant to indicate the goal toward which men should aspire. These models range from the ideal of states which are at the same time hierarchical and harmonious, the models to which all the imperial dynasties aspired and which they thought they had achieved in their moments of maximum splendor, to the dissident alternatives, found outside of the Confucian framework, that included harsh criticisms of the existing political and social system. These propositions accord perfectly with what Western culture knows as utopia, though its denomination in China was not as clear as in the West. Two words are used in a generalized way today to express utopias; one is *kongxiang*, the word used in the phrase "utopian socialism"¹ which has an unattractive connotation in China. *Kong* means empty, unoccupied, and *xiang* means to think,

¹ *Cihai*, Shanghai, 1979, vol. I, pp. 170-171.

thought. Originally the combination of the two characters was translated as "to wish for something in vain" or as "fantasy."² The other word is *wutuobang*, a phonetic transcription which, in addition, gives an idea of the concept it wants to name, and which literally means "place that does not exist." In addition to these words, which are relatively new and which have been used to translate ideas into Chinese, there are other expressions taken from philosophical texts which can be used to describe unrealistic situations or people. For example, the expression *wuheyong zhi xiang*, which means "field where there is nothing," has been taken from the last part of the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.³ Another expression comes from a work of the poet and ex-official, Tao Yuanming, or Tao Qian (365-427), as he is also known, in which an ideal world is described. The name of the work, *Shiwai taoyuan* (Peach orchard outside the world), is used in the Chinese language to denominate situations considered unreal or improbable.

In China, Confucianism, which became the dominant and official ideology from the Han Dynasty on, impregnated almost all of the other schools of philosophy with its concepts because the classic Confucian texts were made sacred and because of the value placed on the study and memorization of these texts in the education of the governing lettered elite which embodied the so-called great tradition in China. Confucian realism, its materialism and also the belief in the historical veracity of the existence of an ancient epoch to which all the qualities of perfection are attributed (equalitarianism, absence of property, peace, harmony) probably contributed to the fact that in traditional China no word came into general use that was the equivalent of utopia or was used to denominate the models of ideal societies that appeared in the Chinese language to denominate situations considered unbased on the actual conditions of ancient times, whose historicity nobody doubted. Thus, underlying the Chinese idea of historical progress was a return to the remote past. This idea was

² Mathews, R.H. *Chinese-English Dictionary*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963 (first published in Shanghai in 1931) pp. 547-380.

³ See Mathews, R.H. *op. cit.*, p. 1066; *Cihai*, Shanghai, 1947, p. 851 and *Chuang-tzu*, Caracas, Monte Avila Editores, 1972, bilingual edition, translated by Carmelo Elorduy, p. 10.

contained within a particular concept of progress as a cyclical historical process.

Although Confucianism was the official ideology, its utopian contents never disappeared and were a source of expectation with each change of dynasty. The *Liji*, one of the Confucian classics, explicitly presents a description of a golden, equalitarian age, in which a public spirit predominated and where men loved not only their own parents nor treated as sons and daughters only their own offspring.⁴ In this ancient description of an ideal society, a separation according to sexual spheres can already be observed, a separation that was to be criticized in the utopias that were not strictly Confucian. Confucianism also offered an equitable utopian system of relationship between the peasant and the land, the *jingtian* system. Under this system, the land was to be divided into nine equal squares (like the *jing* character) where the peasants cultivated eight for themselves and the ninth for the public good, within a system of mutual help.⁵ This idea was present in many of the peasant uprisings which plagued Chinese history and which were mainly caused by problems with agricultural production, due to bad climate and/or elevated tribute. These ideas taken from the Confucian classics were considered to be feasible models of actual conduct.

Taoism, the other great Chinese philosophical school proposed utopias that were outside any scheme of political organization, utopias with more individual objectives. The *wuwei* (nonintervention) principle for reaching the *dao* was presented as a goal attainable through an individual method of communion with nature. Daoism also developed a complete formula for attaining immortality, another of its utopias, based on practical exercises and certain life styles.

As was the case with the utopian goals of popular rebellions, as well as with the utopias created by intellectuals critical of the Confucian system, there was always a syncretic characteristic present which combined Daoism, Buddhism (especially the rein-

⁴ See James Legge's translation in Müller, F. Max (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XXVII, *The Sacred Books of China*, vol. III, "The Li Ki," Book VII, Section 1, pp. 364-366.

⁵ See Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. II, *The Works of Mencius*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1960, pp. 243-244.

carnation principle) and elements of Confucianism itself. In many instances, the intellectuals who criticized Confucianism took this position because they had failed the imperial exams, resisted taking them, or had been expelled from civil service; thus, their utopias were a caricature of Confucian ideals which they reverted to in their writings. An interesting example of this is found in the work of Li Ruzhen (1763-1830), *Jinghuayuan* (Flowers in the Mirror). Li Ruzhen had failed the imperial exams, and his work is classified as popular Daoism. The story takes place during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian (who governed from 684 to 705) during the Tang dynasty. According to the story, one night the Empress decided that she wanted to see her garden in bloom the following morning. The flower spirits consulted the Fairy of the Hundred Flowers and when she refused to go against the laws of nature, she was sent, along with her ninety-nine subordinates, into the world as punishment. The fairy was reincarnated as the daughter of Tang Ao, whom the empress had demoted as a public official on suspicion of rebellion and who had decided to seek immorality and cultivate the dao. Tang Ao, on a long journey taken in search of the dao, visited more than thirty islands and places where imaginary situations are described based on old Daoist legends combined with Buddhist elements. These imaginary places are used to criticize the imperial society of China with its sexual prejudices, hypocrisy, rigid authoritarian principles, etc. Tang Ao visited the Land of Women, where the sexual roles of Chinese society are reversed, the Land of the Sexless People, the Land of the Giants, the Land of Superior Men, the Land of the Two-Faced People, etc. The girls that had accompanied the Flower Fairy, and who had been incarnated in the flowers gathered by Tang Ao on the journey, got together and participated in the imperial exams for women. With their husbands and brothers, they defeated the Empress Wu Zetian and finally restored the Emperor to the throne.⁶ One of the most interesting aspects of

⁶ See Li Ju-chen, *Flowers in the Mirror*, translated and edited by Lin Tai-yi, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1965. Some parts of this version have been summarized. See also a short reference in Bauer, Wolfgang, *China and the Search for Happiness*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1976, pp. 263-268. Also of interest is Frederick P. Brandauer's article "Women in the Ching-hua yuan: Emancipation Toward a Confucian Ideal", *The Journal*

Li Ruzhen's work is that at the same time it strongly criticizes Confucianism, it cannot totally ignore its values. This may explain the final restoration of the Emperor whose throne had been usurped by a woman, Wu Zetian.

New utopias appeared during the great general crisis of the Chinese imperial system during the XIX century, aggravated by the presence of imperialism. Two of these utopias are worth mentioning; the Taiping rebellion and that of the philosopher Kang Youwei. The Taiping rebels aspired to a highly equalitarian society, with special emphasis on women's rights and with a marked collectivist accent. Old equalitarian and collectivist aspirations from Chinese tradition were to be found in this utopia, mixed with Christian ideas introduced by missionaries.⁷

Kang Youwei (1818-1927) was part of the generation of intellectuals searching for a Chinese answer to the confrontation with the West, and he participated in the political reform movement of 1898.⁸ Kang has been considered the utopian par excellence of China, thanks to his work *Datong* (The Great Unity), written in 1902. In this work, Kang proposes the reorganization of national states through the creation of a world government, as well as equality, the disappearance of oppression and of its instruments, such as the family, etc. This utopia definitely lies within the Chinese cultural tradition, although Kang mentions in his text that he has heard of Marx and Socrates. Certain elements of Darwinian social evolution, in vogue in China at that time, can also be found in this work. This work has been of great importance in the history of modern Chinese thought and has been considered an antecedent to socialist ideas. In the introduction to a compilation called *Texts on utopian ideas in China*, which

of *Asian Studies*, vol. XXXVI, núm. 4, August 1977, pp. 647-660. The author evaluates part of the work emphasizing its historical Confucian context.

⁷ See Shih, Vincent Y.C., *The Taiping Ideology*, Seattle, University of Washington, 1967.

⁸ See *Ta T'ung Shu, The One-World Philosophy of K'ang Yu-wei*, Introduction, translation and notes by Laurence G. Thompson, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1958; Hsiao Kung-Chuan, *A Modern China and a New World, K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1975; and *K'ang Yu-wei a Biography and Symposium*, edited and translated by Lo Pang-Jung, Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1967.

appeared in 1959 in the People's Republic of China, the compilers use the term *datong* to designate utopias instead of the transliteration *wutuobang*, alleging that this term *wutuobang* better describes the ideas of the precursors of communism in China.⁹

Western ideas at the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX had a positive reception among Chinese youth, who were anxious to find solutions to the deteriorated situation prevalent in their country. Thus, influences from socialist and social-democratic thought can be found in Sun Yatsen's "Three Principles of the People."¹⁰ In the same way, Chinese anarchist movements were also nurtured by European ideas, although they had their own anarchist tradition within Daoism.¹¹ It was through the anarchists that Marxist ideas were introduced into China. The first extracts from the *Communist Manifesto* appeared in the anarchist magazine *Natural Justice* in 1908.¹²

The communist utopia of Marxism was eagerly received in China. For Meisner, this was more due to its utopian character than to the Marxist method of historical analysis of reality on the basis of objective economic criteria.¹³ At first, the ideological differences between their own philosophical tradition and the currents coming in from the West were not clear to Chinese intellectuals. The violent rejection of Confucian principles related to authority on the part of the youth involved in the May 4th Movement¹⁴ contributed to establishing the bases for reshaping political models from starting points which were totally new to China. Nevertheless, it has been very difficult, if not impossi-

⁹ Bauer, W. *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁰ See Schiffrin, Harold Z., *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of The Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968.

¹¹ About Chinese anarchist movements see references in Scalapino, Robert A. "Prelude to Marxism: the Chinese Student Movement in Japan, 1900-1910", in Feuerwerker, Albert, Rhoads Murphey and Mary C. Wright (eds.), *Approaches to Modern Chinese History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967, pp. 190-215 and Bernal Martin, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1976.

¹² Meisner, Maurice, *Li Ta-Chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁴ See Chou Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960.

ble, for the Chinese to break loose from their own tradition and, together with these attempts at rejecting traditional ideals, a tendency towards syncretism also appeared. In this respect, it is interesting to mention Guo Moruo's vision of the relationship between Marxism and Confucianism which is found in his little known text of 1925, "Marx visits the ancestral temple of Confucius." Guo narrates, in a humorous way, an interview between Marx and Confucius, showing coincidences in some of their objectives, despite the difference in their methods. He also makes evident that each represents a different world and way of perceiving things, while pointing out a coincidence in their final objectives.¹⁵

The Chinese Communist Party has assumed the communist utopia of Marxism, which is not considered to be a utopia but a future towards which humanity is inexorably directed.¹⁶ This utopia, as well as more concrete, long term goals (reaching the level of development of the most advanced capitalist countries), is shared by the diverse groups which make up the Chinese Communist Party. Some Chinese Marxist intellectuals have searched for the roots of the Marxist utopia in their own historical tradition; the works of Hou Wailu, published in 1959, stand out in this respect. But this tendency, and especially these works of Hou, were severely criticized by the Cultural Revolution and, as a result, have not been mentioned in China since 1965.¹⁷

It is interesting to examine the utopian contents of the Maoist tendency within the Chinese Communist Party. This party was first caught up in a harsh revolutionary struggle, and then in the arduous task of constructing a national State and bringing about economic development. Meisner and Schwartz have discussed the Maoist utopia and its relation to the austere lifestyle typical of

¹⁵ Guo Moruo "Marx visits the ancestral temple of Confucius", in Lin Wu-chi and Li Tien-yi, *Readings in Contemporary Chinese Literature*, vol. 11, New Haven, Yale University, second edition, 1968 (Mirror Series C, num. 8), pp. 6-15.

¹⁶ Although Marx and Engels write little on communism, see "The Communist Manifesto", and "Critique of the Gotha Programme" in Marx, Karl, *Select-ed Writing*, edited by David McLehhan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 221-247 and 264-570 respectively; also the Marx-Engels-Lenin selection, *La Sociedad Comunista*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Anteo, 1974.

¹⁷ See Bauer, W. *op. cit.*, pp. 371-404.

the Maoist conception of the New Man, its ethical motivations and its connection with some of the sociopolitical goals of Maoism.¹⁸ We shall approach the subject through the most important political experiments of Maoism: People's Communes and the Cultural Revolution.

In the writings of Mao Zedong it is difficult to find exactly what his idea was of the new society towards which he wanted to lead his country. It would appear that the concept of an ideal society that would signify the solution to contradictions did not exist in Mao's thought. The idea of contradiction is predominate in his concept of history and he does not propose a solution in any explicit way. This fact puts him close to the Yin and Yang school. Thus, for Mao the world has unfolded and will continue to do so in a constant confrontation between contradictory elements on various levels and with varying degrees of intensity. "...Contradiction is universal and absolute; it is present in the process of development of all things and permeates every process from beginning to end. What is meant by the emergence of a new process? The old unit with its constituent opposites yields to a new unity with its constituent opposite, whereupon a new process emerges to replace the old. The old process ends and the new one begins. The new process contains new contradictions and begins its own history of development of contradictions".¹⁹ In this way, the universality of contradiction is affirmed and substantiated throughout the text.

What enables us to speak of a Maoist utopia is due not so much to Mao Zedong's philosophical writings but to his putting into practice radical social and political models without precedent: People's Communes and the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, it is interesting to emphasize how Maoism assumes only some elements of Marx and Engels' communist utopia while prac-

¹⁸ See Meisner, Maurice, "Utopian Goals and Ascetic Values in Chinese Communist Ideology", *J.A.S.*, vol. XXVIII, núm. 1, Nov. 1968, pp. 101-110; Schwartz, Benjamin J., "The Reign of Virtue; Some Broad Perspectives on Leader and Party in the Cultural Revolution", *The China Quarterly*, núm. 35, July-Sept. 1968, pp. 1-17 and Schwartz, B., "Modernization and the Maoist Vision Some Reflections on Chinese Communist Goals", *The China Quarterly*, núm. 21, Jan.-March 1965, pp. 3-19.

¹⁹ Mao Tsetung, "On Contradiction", *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1965, p. 318.

tically ignoring others like internationalism and the dissolution of the family, for example. The main points of the Maoist utopia become, within the Maoist concept, the solution to the problem between the country and city and between manual and intellectual work, putting special emphasis on the human ability to transform reality according to ideological criteria. Both contradictions are especially true of the historic reality of China, a fact that explains the setting aside of other communist goals.

The People's Communes, as conceived of in 1958, were the basis of a broad collectivist organization which, combining agricultural activities with industrial ones and with defense, education and other services and the collectivization of other sectors of everyday life, seemed to be the road to the solution of differences between the country and city. Furthermore, the communes were introduced as an experimental nucleus where the individual could participate in a wide range of different activities, thus breaking away from the alienation of doing only one kind of work. Moreover, the communes were created within the framework of a movement that planned to use large human contingents and the inventiveness of people instead of heavy machinery and advanced technology. This movement was called the Great Leap Forward.²⁰

When we mention these Maoist policies of 1958, it is our intention to reconstruct the utopia they implied, taking into account only their theoretical formulation and not the obstacles encountered in their practical application and the problems which this caused at the production level as well as in the resulting internal political struggle. After this great mass movement and its later retreat, the idea of the division of labor was again instituted through the Socialist Education Movement, a prelude to the Cultural Revolution.

In the case of the Cultural Revolution, setting aside the political struggle which occurred, we find that the fundamental point

²⁰ For more details, see *Un Brillante Decenio*, Pekin, Ediciones en Lenguas Extranjeras, 1960; Prybyla, Jan S., *The Political Economy of Communist China*, Pennsylvania, International Textbook Company, 1970; and Dutt, Gargi, "Some Problems of China's Rural Communes", in MacFarquhar, Roderick (ed.) *China Under Mao: Politics Takes Command*, Massachusetts, M.I.T. Press, 1966, among others.

of its ideology was the reshaping of the relationship between manual labor and intellectual work which, in practical terms, was the relationship between leaders and the led, cadres and the masses, administrators of an enterprise and its workers.²¹ During the Cultural Revolution, when the appearance of a new bourgeoisie in the party was proposed, its leaders were referring to the formation of a ruling bureaucracy, constituted as such in virtue of the privileges offered by education or technical proficiency. This vision of the Cultural Revolution can be explained by analyzing it in the context of Chinese history where the model for the imperial state took the form of a lettered bureaucracy whose power was not theoretically based on ownership of the means of production, but on a long process of studying the Confucian classics which culminated in the imperial exams. In practice, the financing of such lengthy studies —although there were many exceptions— could only be the prerogative of the most economically favored classes. However, the existence of these studies offered the system the possibility of renewing its leadership. This, to a large extent, was responsible for its lasting so long.

The strong roots of contradiction, of its permanence and universality, in Maoist thought have given Maoism the awareness that society is in the process of transformation, in continuous contradiction, and that the perfection of its political and social system has not been reached. This explains the emphasis on class struggle as an expression of contradiction which, during the Cultural Revolution, permeated everything from artistic and scientific activities to the most unusual aspects of everyday life, thus giving the political and social system a paranoid character that halted development of the arts and sciences and transformed the people's potential political participation into a cynical repetition of slogans. At the same time, however, there is no doubt that the Cultural Revolution left society with previously unknown levels of economic equalitarianism and contributed to the rupture with the traditional principles of authority, namely, generation

²¹ For more details, see Cavendish, Patrick and Jack Gray, *Chinese Communism in Crisis, Maoism and the Cultural Revolution*, New York, Praeger, 1968; Danbier, Jean, *Historia de la Revolución Cultural Proletaria en China*, México, Siglo XXI Editores, 1972; and Fan, Kuang Huan (ed.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: Selected Documents*, New York, Grove Press, 1968.

and age. In addition, in certain sectors of the Marxist left in other parts of the world many Maoist innovations in Marxism, deriving from the People's Communes and the Cultural Revolution, contributed to renewing faith in socialism, which had been deteriorated by political practices in the Soviet Union. Although this phenomenon was most intense in some Third World countries,²² the student movements of 1968 and the reactions of some sectors of the European left to the changes in China after the Cultural Revolution demonstrated that the Maoist utopia transcended, to a certain degree, the limits of its own country.²³

The practical experience of Maoist policies, which we have considered as utopian, had to confront the reality of China's technological and economic backwardness in relation to an unstable international community that was in competition and expansion, and the lack of an internal political consensus. This, in addition to the extremist excesses of its leadership, led to the downfall of Maoism, political struggle and the rise of a new group of leaders. These leaders have proposed new goals which stress economic development more than political struggle and are propelled by two fundamental necessities: 1) the recovery of the political system's legitimacy, damaged during the Cultural Revolution, by raising the people's living standard and 2) the quest for a political space within the international community that will be in proportion to the country's size and aspirations.

In general, the utopian idea, equalitarian and based on a remote past, present throughout all of China's history, kept alive the hope for a new society within the Confucian system and was, at the same time, a vehicle for criticism and a refuge for those who rejected the vigilant Confucian State which was a source of inspiration for the enlightened despotism of Europe.²⁴ Since contact with the West was established, the Chinese have incorporat-

²² See, among others, Connelly, Marisela, "La influencia del pensamiento de Mao en América Latina", *Estudios de Asia y Africa*, núm. 56, vol. XVIII, April-June 1983.

²³ See Bettelheim's reaction to the fall of the so-called "Band of Four", in Burton, Neil G. and Charles Bettelheim, *China Since Mao*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1978.

²⁴ See Botton Beja, Flora, *China: su historia y cultura hasta 1800*, México, El Colegio de México, 1984, pp. 356-357.

ed into their utopian equalitarian tradition similar contents offered them by different currents of Western thought. Yet, although seemingly contradictory, it has been characteristic of Chinese thought that it has considered the propositions we regard as utopian to be capable of being applied in practice and worthy of being tried.

In historical perspective, it would seem that China has produced a recurring dichotomy regarding social models. On the one hand, there have existed dominant secular ideologies. Confucianism in former times and Marxism today, both of which have their own utopian social projects. On the other hand, there have been utopian projects developed outside the Confucian order. Do other utopian projects exist today outside of Communist Party? It is quite possible that they do, but this possibility has not yet been adequately investigated. One place to look might be little known literary genres such as science fiction. Perhaps the present liberalization of the Chinese political system will permit the "builders of bridges"²⁵ to make these new utopias known to us in the near future.

²⁵ Expression taken from Wang Meng "Jiaqiao zhe", *Shijie Wenxue*, Beijing, núm. 2, April 25, 1985, pp. 258-262.

THE PING LIU LI UPRISING

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The objective of this essay is to investigate the Ping Liu Li Uprising, which took place in December, 1906, in the Jiangxi-Hunan border area. To this end, I will attempt to analyze the characteristics of the area, its growing economic importance at the time of the uprising, the social groups found in the area, and the political repercussions of the new ideas about nationalism and democracy which Chinese students had brought back from their study in Japan. I will also discuss the impact of the activities of secret societies in the area, especially the Gelao Hui (Elder Brothers Society), to which many of the leaders of the uprising belonged.

The effects of the famine of 1906 in the area, especially among the poor population were crucial to the uprising. The famine was in fact one of the main reasons why the people joined the movement. On the other hand, the progress of the uprising was hampered by a lack of organization and problems within the leadership group. As a result, the uprising was easily suppressed by the Government Army, in spite of having had initially a great deal of strength and support.

Finally, I want to analyze the various components of the uprising (e.g. leadership, organization, ideology, social composition and popular support). It is necessary to note, however, that Chinese popular movements are very difficult to analyze in the way we can analyze similar movements in places like Europe. The difficulty stems from the fact that we do not have enough data for a quantitative explanation —as Lucien Bianco emphasizes in his article "Peasants and Revolution: The Case of China."

The reader must, therefore, keep in mind that the present analysis is inevitably limited by the nature and amount of the available data.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

The districts of Liling and Liuyang are located in Hunan Province, and the district of Pingxiang in the Province of Jianxi. The three places constituted a triangle of vital economic, political and social importance (see the map).

The economy of this area was fairly diversified. It included agriculture, mining, manufacturing and railways. In Liling a porcelain industry employing many workers was established by Xiong Xiling. The economy of Liuyang was basically dedicated to agriculture, while Pingxiang had mines located near the Hunan border. These mines belonged to a Chinese Company, but were partially supervised and financed by Germans. This mining business was located in Anyuan, near Pingxiang, and the coal produced was taken from Anyuan by rail to Liling. There were about 10 000 miners in the region.¹

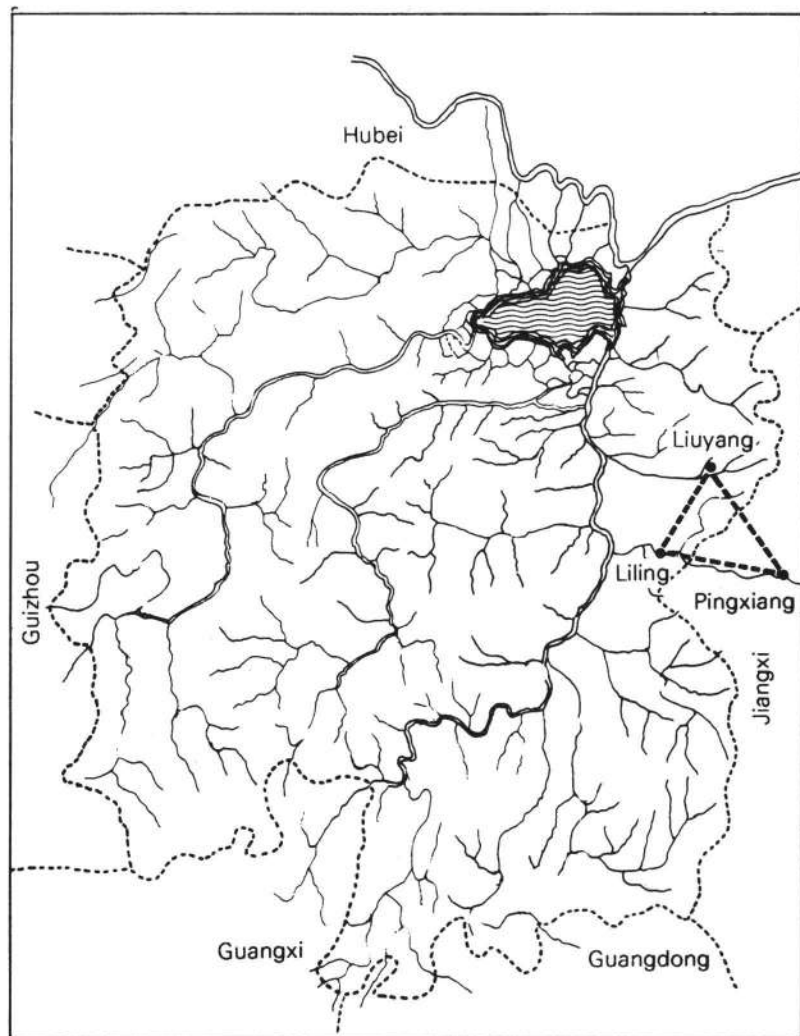
The commercial interests of the Imperialists Powers must also be considered since the opening of Changsha as a treaty port in 1904 increased their business in the Hunan region. The British and Japanese in particular desired to monopolize commerce in the province.²

The Hunanese elite, however, reacted against the growing strength of the imperialists in every field. For example, in the mining business they founded the Hunan General Mining Company in order to recover the mines from the foreigners. At the end of 1907, the Company purchased a great deal of mining

¹ *Hunan Jinbainian Dashi Jishu*. [Chronological Record of Major Events in Hunan During the Last Hundred Years]. Committee for the Compilation of a Hunan Provincial Gazetteer. Ed. 2 vols. (Changsha: Hunan People's Press, 1959), vol. 1, p. 236.

² See *The North China Herald*, October 26, 1906. Consul B. Giles from Great Britain complained about the increasing influence of the Japanese in the commerce of Hunan, and the influence of the Germans in the mining business.

MAP OF HUNAN PROVINCE



Source: Allan C. Wilford. *Our Entry into Hunan* (London: Robert Culley, 1908).

land,³ restricting the development of foreign enterprises. The same tactic was followed in order to recover rights over the rail system, even though this was more difficult due to the fact that various provinces were involved and an enormous amount of capital was necessary. But ultimately, the Hunanese elite succeeded in preventing the expansion of foreign competition, and in extending and protecting their own economic influence. In this way the members of the Hunanese elite obtained greater economic power and also acquired new political aims as a consequence of their struggle to protect their class interests.

Socially this area acquired great importance because of the variety of groups found there—miners, pottery workers, peasants, merchants—all of them in one way or another linked to the Secret Societies which traditionally had a great deal of influence among these groups.

Politically, new ideas had begun to be introduced from abroad, especially from Japan. The Chinese students, who had been living in Japan and had read books unavailable in China, returned to their country with new political concepts. This political literature introduced them to the concepts of republicanism, nationalism, and democracy. Once back in China they enlisted these political concepts in their struggle against the Manchu Dynasty.

All of these elements are very important in order to understand precisely why an uprising of such magnitude broke out in the Hunan region, and why it had such far-reaching repercussions. I would like to discuss each of these elements in turn, beginning with the role of the secret societies in the area.

Activities of the Secret Societies and the Leadership of Ma Fuyi

The Gelao Hui was one of the most important secret societies operating at the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is difficult to say when the Gelao Hui was formed, but many sources agree that first appeared in Zeng Guofan's Army at the time of the Taiping

³ *Hunan Jinbainian Dashi Jishu, op. cit.*, p. 181.

rebellion. The Gelao Hui absorbed many more soldiers when the army was disbanded and the soldiers found they had no jobs and no money to get home.⁴

Around 1900, the Gelao Hui began again to infiltrate the Hunan military forces. At first this fact did not seem important, but it in fact had significant implications. If the members of the Gelao Hui were in the army they knew how to fight. At any given moment they could give real support to the secret society. This could have been utilized in the Ping Liu Li uprising, if it had been better organized.

During the period from 1900 to 1904 the Gelao Hui leader in the Hunan area was Ma Fuyi. He was born into a peasant family in Liling. In his youth, he belonged to the Qing army for a short time. When he reached a high position in the secret society,⁵ he organized a military force in Pingxiang and traveled often between this area and Changsha in order to promote insurrections.⁶

In 1904 Huang Xing, the nationalist leader and organizer of the Revolutionary Alliance, planned a military adventure against the Qing Dynasty. He requested the cooperation of Ma Fuyi and his secret society. Ma accepted and took responsibility for the Liuyang and Liling areas. Nonetheless, the uprising failed because the local gentry found out about these events and reported them to the Hunan governor.⁷ Ma Fuyi fled to Jiangxi but was arrest-

⁴ Charlton M. Lewis, "Some notes on the Ko-lao Hui in late Ch'ing China", in Chesneau, *Secret Societies and Popular Movements in China, 1840-1950*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1972). p. 99. *Hunan Jinbainian Dashi Jishu*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁵ About the ascension of Ma Fuyi within the secret societies, the sources have different versions. *Hunan Jinbainian Dashi Jishu*, *op. cit.*, p. 204, says: "He founded a secret society organization, Lungzhan Hui; later the Gelao Hui branches in Fujian, Jiangxi Hunan and Hubei, honored him as their leader." In *Qing Shi*, History of the Qing Dynasty, 8 vols., (Taipei: Committee for the Compilation of the History of the Qing Dynasty, 1961), vol. 8, p. 6242, it is stated: "After the death of Wang Zhiyu, Ma inherited his position and organized his followers..."

⁶ *Xinhai Geming*, The Revolution of 1911, 8 vols. (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Historical Studies), vol. 2, p. 463. In addition, Ma Fuyi established ten rules for the revolutionary army.

⁷ *Qing Shi*, *op. cit.*, p. 6241.

ed in the Pingxiang railway station and executed in Liuyang on April 20, 1905.⁸

This relationship between the nationalist leaders and those of the secret societies engendered anti-Manchu sentiment among the latter. This sentiment would be reflected, somewhat ambiguously, in the subsequent uprising in the Hunan-Jiangxi area.

Famine in Hunan and Jiangxi During 1906

Most sources agree that one of the causes of the Ping Liu Li Uprising was the famine suffered by the people of Hunan and Jiangxi as a result of the floods of the spring and summer of 1906. In May, information began to spread about the intense floods in the Hunan province. The water inundated all areas of the region; at Changsha it rose to over 40 feet, and the Dongting lake overflowed. As a result, people who lived in these places were left homeless and "without food or the means of cultivating their holdings when the water subsided."⁹

Besides the problem of the floods, Hunan province faced the difficulty of having to export a great deal of the rice that it produced because the local price of rice was much lower than elsewhere. For all practical purposes, the province was the granary of the country. But with the floods the situation became critical because there was not enough to provide for both national and local needs.¹⁰

The price of rice went up all over the country. In the Yangzi Valley the price rose about fifty percent in two weeks.¹¹ For most of the poor people it was impossible to buy rice. The public granaries were opened but this measure was not enough to feed the people. According to a report of a missionary present in Changsha at that time, the ravages of the famine severely affected a large portion of the population:

⁸ *Hunan Jinbainian...*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁹ *The North Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette*, Shanghai, 1850-1941. May 11, 1906, p. 323.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1906, p. 612. See *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

¹¹ Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368-1968*, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), p. 154.

It may as well be stated at once that never in the course of my experience in China have I seen a greater aggregation of squalor, of disease, of feculent putrefaction, of contaminated and contaminating humanity, than I saw during my frequent visitations to the wretched homes of the poor living at the north-end of Changsha. It is to me a marvel that the people succeed in living at all...¹²

It seems that conditions in other places were worse than those in Changsha, since the local gentry of Changsha speculated with rice causing scarcity and price increases, thus compounding the problems resulting from the flood.

Given the seriousness of the famine, it is not surprising to find that many poor people turned to banditry. As one Qing official stated:

People became poor and food was scarce, stealing and robbing became common among the people. Bandits took advantage of the situation, persuading people to join them; as a result, nine families out of ten had a member in these gangs...¹³

This situation was undoubtedly favorable to the Ping Liu Li Uprising, but we cannot state that it was the most important factor. This movement was much more than simply a food riot, as we will see once all the elements are analyzed.

Organization of the Uprising

The Ping Liu Li Uprising occurred in December of 1906. Members of the Revolutionary Alliance like Huang Xing Chen Dienhua and Song Jiaoren were still primarily active in Tokyo and thus did not participate directly in the uprising. It was organized by leaders of the secret societies who were former fellows of Ma Fuyi. Once Ma Fuyi died after the failure of the 1904 uprising, his followers organized the people of the Hunan and Jiangxi area and swore to take their revenge. At that time, the secret societies

¹² *The North China Herald*, August 3, 1906, p. 266.

¹³ *Jindaishi Ziliao*. [Materials on Modern History], 4 vols. (Beijing: Historical Materials Editions and Translating Group of the Chinese Academy of Science. Modern History Research Institute, 1956), vol. 4, p. 65.

in the Ping Liu Li area were divided into three groups: the Gelao Hui (Elder Brothers Society), the Hongfu Hui (Fortune Society), and the Wujiao Shi Hui (Martial Arts Teachers Society). The leaders of the Gelao Hui were Gong Chuntai, Li Jinchu, Fei Naigu, and Xiao Kechang. The leader of the Hongfu Hui was Jiang Shoudan. The leader of the Wujiao Shi Hui was Lu Renchu.¹⁴

These leaders of the secret societies accepted the help of students who had been members of Huang Xing's Tong Meng Hui in Tokyo. Huang Xing had also formed branches of his society in Hunan and placed Yu Zhimo in charge.¹⁵

In 1906, the Revolutionary Alliance in Tokyo sent two students back to Hunan to persuade the soldiers of the Qing Army to support the uprising and to reorganize the secret societies. They were Cai Shaonan and Wei Zongquan. As soon as they arrived in Hunan they had a meeting with Yu Zhimo and other revolutionaries. In it they concluded that in order to take over the capital, Changsha, the secret societies and the army should act simultaneously.

Once the decision was made, the two students went to talk to the leaders of the secret societies in the Ping Liu Li area.¹⁶ They began to organize the secret societies and to give speeches to propagate the political ideas of the Revolutionary Alliance. At the same time they tried to unify the diversified secret society groups into a single organization. At first the leaders of Gelao Hui and Wujiao Shi Hui responded to their appeal favorably. Both groups held a joint meeting in Pingxiang and swore that they would destroy the Manchu Dynasty and revive the Han Dynasty. The new organization was given the name Hongjiang Hui (Hong River Society), and Gong Chuntai was made the principal leader.¹⁷

At this stage of the organization of the uprising, the secret society leaders were influenced by the new ideas of the students

¹⁴ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁵ About the activities of Yu Zhimo, see *Hunan Lishi Ziliao* [Historical Materials of Hunan], (Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 107-109.

¹⁶ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 225. *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, p. 463. This last book says that the student leaders participated in the uprising as individuals, and that the Tong Meng Hui did not plan the uprising. *Jindaishi Ziliao*, p. 60.

¹⁷ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

who had studied in Japan, but at the same time they kept their old ideas of expelling the Manchus and restoring the Hans or ethnic Chinese. We can find evidence of both the new and old ideas in the oath of the new society:

I swear that I will follow the ideal of the Republic of China and absolutely obey Elder Brother. I share my heart with the other members in our aim to destroy the Manchu Dynasty and revive the Han Dynasty. If I violate this oath I will be punished by death.¹⁸

After the establishment of the Hongjiang Hui, the number of members and followers increased, especially among the poor peasants and miners. The organization developed very fast; in several months it had spread all over areas of Jiangxi (the districts of Pingxiang, Yichun, Fenyi, Wanzai) and Liuyang and Liling in Hunan.

In July of 1906, the preparations for the uprising continued and Gong Chuntai and Cai Shaonan summoned the various leaders for a meeting in Pingxiang, issuing several directives for the future uprising. They ordered their people to secretly manufacture the necessary military equipment; to raise a fund of five thousand dollars; to contact both the leader of the Hongfu Hui (Jiang Shoudan), and other leaders of the Gelao Hui who at that time had not joined yet the new organization; to inform the people of Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou about the revolutionary activities in Hunan and Jiangxi; and at the same time to report on the above activities to the headquarters of the Revolutionary Alliance in Tokyo.¹⁹

Contact was made with other secret societies. Jiang Shoudan from Liuyang, and Xiao Kechang, the leader of the miners in Pingxiang joined the Hongjiang Hui. At the same time the labour of proselytizing among the peasants and workers of the area continued. They explained the nature of the movement to the people in the temples where all of them gathered and distributed cloth coupons (*piao hu*) among these poor people.²⁰ In this way, the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226. The same words were found in a list of names of the members of the secret society by the Army Chief of Pingxiang when he tried to arrest a major leader. *Jindaishi Ziliao*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁹ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 227

²⁰ *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, p. 491. *Jindaishi Ziliao*, *op. cit.*, p. 58-59.

leaders of the secret societies won the support of many people, especially in Pingxiang.

In the beginning, the local gentry was not aware of the importance of this secret society agitation and of the support it had among the people. This lack of awareness on the part of the gentry is very obvious if we read carefully the report of the Chief of the Army in Pingxiang. He said that he had tried to convince the gentry "to search each house and implement the old law of *baojia*." But "the gentry were afraid of the burden and were reluctant to do it. They thought the crisis would be over and did not realize that the critical point had come."²¹

However, the preparations for the uprising continued and the gentry eventually realized that what the Chief of the Army had said was true. In early October, the Hongjiang Hui held seasonal celebrations in Ma Shi where the headquarters of the society were located. Thousands of people gathered for this event, and the gentry called on the Government Army to suppress this disturbance of the peace.

Besides this incident, on October 21, Li Jinchi, one of the leaders of the Hongjiang Hui from Liuyang, was caught. As a consequence, the workers of Pingxiang reacted violently and decided to rescue him. Meanwhile the local government, in an effort to protect against any possible uprising, sent a telegram to the provincial government of Li requesting that Li Jinchi be executed, and another telegram to the mining authorities in Ping requesting them to be especially vigilant in order to avoid any possible violent action on the part of the workers.²²

The government began to investigate and tried to arrest the principal leaders. When the Army Chief of Pingxiang tried to arrest one of the leaders of the Hongjiang Hui, he found a list of members including Cai Shaonan and Jiang Shoudan.²³

Up to that time, the gentry had not participated actively in suppressing the activities of the secret societies. But after the events

²¹ *Jindaishi Ziliao*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²² *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, pp. 491-492. *Jindaishi Ziliao*, *op. cit.*, Report to Jiangxi governor from Pingxiang Army Chief, p. 59. *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

²³ *Jindaishi Ziliao*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

mentioned above, the gentry, especially the upper class began to collaborate with the government.

In November, violent incidents spread throughout the three districts. In Liuyang, poor people began to gather and burned down the gentry's houses and the police station. They attacked especially the property of the gentry who were participating in organizing civilian forces.²⁴ In Liling there were also minor incidents in which pottery workers participated. They tried to contact the miners in Anyuan, but the pottery company found out about their efforts and immediately communicated the information to the local government.²⁵ The local government telegraphed the railway authority in Anyuan, ordering them to stop the trains. In addition, troops from Changsha were sent to Liling.²⁶

The leaders of the secret societies and two students, Wei Zongquan and Cai Shaonan, had already formulated a plan of action for the uprising. They thought that the forces were best divided into three sections (i.e. one from Liling and Liuyang, another from Anyuan, and the third one from Yichun and Wanzai in the province of Jiangxi). The first one would attack Changsha. The second one would be dedicated to protecting the mining regions. And the third one would attack Nanchang.²⁷ However, this original strategy was not followed because the uprising began prematurely, and as a consequence all the forces were disbanded.

On December 3, the people of Liling were preparing uniforms and weapons for the uprising when government forces arrested some of the people present, including one minor leader, Luo Liangzhu. Luo Liangzhu confessed that the leaders of the Hongjiang Hui were spread around Changsha, Liuyang and Liling in Hunan province, and in Pingxiang Wanzai and Yichun in Jiangxi province; and that the forces of Pingxiang, Liuyang and Liling had scheduled to revolt simultaneously on December 20.²⁸

At the same time, the major leaders, including Gong Chuntai, invited the other leaders to a place near Ma Shi to discuss what they were going to do under these circumstances. Gong

²⁴ *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 467.

²⁵ *Jindaishi Ziliao, op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁶ *Hunan Jinbainian...*, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

²⁷ *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 465.

²⁸ *Jindaishi Ziliao, op. cit.*, p. 66.

Chuntai, Cai Shaonan and Wei Zongquan decided that the uprising should be delayed for a while because the government had discovered their location and because of the inadequacy of their weapons. But all the local leaders thought that the uprising should start immediately, before the date previously scheduled, taking advantage of the large proportion of the people they had in their forces and the unpreparedness of the government forces.

One of these local leaders, a member of the Hongjiang Hui decided to go back to Ma Shi to join the two thousand people there and to proclaim the uprising using a white flag with the Han character printed on it.²⁹ And as soon as the major leaders learned this, they decided to follow him immediately and asked Xiao Kechang, the leader of the miners, to support the movement, but he refused because he considered that the conditions for the uprising were not yet ripe.³⁰ This refusal of Xiao Kechang to join the uprising was very important because it showed that there was poor coordination among the leaders. In the end all the forces of the miners under Xiao Kechang in Anyuan were kept out of the uprising. There were some miners who joined the movement, but it seems they were not direct followers of Xiao.

There were other reasons why the miners avoided joining the Liling and Liuyang groups. The government had already implemented a series of preventive measures, outlined in the already mentioned telegrams, to disrupt any possible action by miners. When the uprising broke out, the government put heavy army forces in Liuyang in order to block any linkup between the groups there and the miners in Pingxiang.

In the end, the Ping Liu Li Uprising started spontaneously on December 4, 1906, without sufficient preparations and without the support of all the major leaders.

The Uprising

After the outbreak of the uprising, people from places around the Ping Liu Li area also began to participate. According to several

²⁹ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

³⁰ *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, Joint Report from the Jianxi Army Commander and Jiangxi Governor, p. 492.

sources, the total number of people who joined the movement was 30 000, about 10 000 each from Pingxiang, Liuyang and Liling.³¹ But the Qing Army numbered more than 50 000.³²

On December 7, a group of rebels advanced on the market town of Shangli and occupied it, but this action met an immediate response from the Government Army.

According to the report of the Chief of the Ping coal mines to the Jiangxi Governor, as soon as he learned about the occupation of the city he sent the foreigners to Changsha for their own protection and restored order among the workers of the coal mines. The next morning, he said, "everything was more or less under control; the coal production was carried on as usual."³³

In the district of Liuyang the people who were linked to the uprising were soldiers from the New Army and members of the Hongfu Hui. The leader of this society, Jiang Shoudan, decided to act separately from the other groups. He proclaimed his own "Document of Purposes," which differed from that previously proclaimed by Gong Chuntai. Both documents will be analyzed below.

Unlike the situation in Liuyang, in the district of Liling, the people who participated in the uprising were basically poor peasants, local soldiers and pottery workers.³⁴

In both places, the Government Army attacked the revolutionary forces, but the key focus of government retaliation was Pingxiang because of its economic importance, especially its mines and railways. The major government forces were located in mining areas, even though Xiao Kechang, the leader of the miners, refused to join the uprising. The Anyuan miners were agitated and represented a considerable force. Both the gentry and the government were afraid of their power.³⁵

³¹ *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 464. Great Britain Foreign Office. *Papers on China*. Document 10927, num. 11. Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey. Beijing, February 21, 1907, p. 40.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 465.

³³ *Jindaishi Ziliao, op. cit.*, Report to Jiangxi Governor from the Chief of Ping Coal Mines, p. 62.

³⁴ *Hunan Jinbainian...*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

³⁵ *Jindaishi Ziliao, op. cit.*, Report from Ping Chief of the Army, p. 67. The Governor said: "I sent two telegrams to ask Anyuan to implement Martial Law and ordered the Army Chief not to lose time" (p. 480), *Xinhai Geming*,

Because of the seriousness of the uprising, the government had to use armies from four provinces, Jiangxi, Hunan, Hubei and Jiangsu. They wanted to suppress the uprising as soon as possible, and for that reason used all the forces available. As one of the Chiefs said: "Our number is ten or twenty times that of the enemy; if they kill ten of us, we will have twenty of thirty more to replace those killed..."³⁶

Moreover, the Government Army was well equipped with all kinds of guns and modern arms. On the contrary, the rebels had only knives, small cannons and a few automatic rifles that they had obtained from the enemy.³⁷

The imperialist power represented by Japan, Germany, and Great Britain realized the importance of the uprising, and although the leaders of the uprising had said that the lives and properties of the foreigners would be protected, these countries were prepared for military intervention if necessary. It was reported that "Two Japanese battleships and one each from Germany, Great Britain and the United States were sent to Zhuzhou."³⁸

In any event, foreign intervention was not necessary. One by one the revolutionary armies were defeated in spite of some victories at the beginning of the uprising.

On December 7, Gong Chuntai, the principal rebel leader tried to occupy Liling with the Eastern Divisions, but his soldiers ran into the government army and because of their disorganization were defeated.³⁹ At the same time in Pingxiang the Hunan Navy arrested a member of the secret society from Liling who was on

op. cit. The manager of the mines sent a telegram to the Jiangxi Governor asking for more soldiers (p. 481). The gentry who were responsible for the civilian forces said to the railway authorities that there were a lot of "bandits" in that place and that they needed more reinforcement.

³⁶ *Jindaishi, op. cit.*, Report from Ping Chief of the Army, p. 71. For more details about the Government's forces, their number and their organization see *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 469. *The North China Herald*, Dec. 14, 1906, and Dec. 21, 1906.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Great Britain, *op. cit.*, Sir Jordan to Sir Edward Grey, p. 40.

³⁸ *Hunan Jinbainian, op. cit.*, p. 237.

³⁹ The source said that in the middle of the fighting a train passed with only a few soldiers (60), but the revolutionary people thought that there were many more. Then they disbanded and were defeated. *Hunan Jinbainian, op. cit.*, p. 237. *Jindaishi, op. cit.*, p. 70.

his way to see Xiao Kechang. As soon as they found out about this incident, the miners protested. The mining authorities telegraphed the government and the arrested leader was brought back to Pingxiang. These incidents obliged the government to implement a severe preventive policy in Anyuan, and half of the army in Pingxinag was sent there. In this way, they prevented the miners from joining the rebel forces in Liling and Liuyang.

In Liuyang the major forces were attacked by the government army, and as in Liling, because of the lack of organization, they were defeated on December 12. Gong Chuntai and Cai Shaonan tried to contact Fei Naigu, but on the way Cai Shaonan was caught and tortured to death, and Fei Naigu was killed before Gong Chuntai arrived. Gong, seeing that he could not do anything for the moment, secretly went to Changsha.⁴⁰

As for Xiao Kechang, the government learned that he represented a great threat. And although Anyuan was controlled by the government army and the miners did not have the opportunity to join the uprising, the authorities decided to arrest Xiao Kechang and executed him on December 25.⁴¹

After the execution of Xiao Kechang, the miners were investigated and a system of *baojia* was established. The Jianxi governor reported:

After we executed Xiao Kechang we set up a police station in Anyuan and investigated the background of all the workers and townspeople. Each worker had to provide a cross guarantee. There were more than a thousand of them that could not provide such guarantees. Most of them were Hunan people and they were sent back to Hunan.⁴²

Moreover, the government continued to search everywhere for the participants in the movement, trying to prevent other similar incidents in the future.

The gentry was requested to inform the authorities of any rebel activities they discovered and to send them all the criminals they had caught in their respective areas. A great many poor

⁴⁰ Hunan Jinbainian, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 238. Jindaishi Ziliao, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁴² Xinhai Geming, *op. cit.*, p. 521. See also Hunan Jinbainian, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

people, in many cases innocent, were accused without any proof of guilt, as we can see in this document from the Pingxiang administration:

The local gentry has turned in 35 bandits. The suspects are all foxy and the gentry did not provide any evidence of their guilt. Moreover, we do not have witnesses during the interrogation. Thus, it is difficult to sentence them...⁴³

In general, the authorities followed a strict policy with regards to the people they caught. The leaders of the uprising, those who had been taken part in planning the actions, were executed immediately after being arrested. People who followed them received a minor punishment if they cooperated with the authorities by disclosing the names of other rebels. And people who only threatened to join the uprising but did not, could return home if they turned over the cloth coupons which they had received from the "bandits."⁴⁴

Apparently, the uprising ended without achieving anything. Nevertheless, it was a step in the subsequent revolutionary movements in the area and had important repercussions on the social level, as we shall see in the following part of this essay.

An Analysis of the Uprising

There are important elements that are crucial for understanding why the peasants, workers and members of the secret societies decided to participate in the Ping Liu Li uprising and why it was finally defeated by the government forces.

The leaders of the movement had important grass roots strength and army connections which helped them gain support for the uprising. However, they also had important organization problems and an inconsistency of ideology which led to the defeat of the movement. The mass support for the uprising, which

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 496.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 495. Great Britain Foreign Office, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Sir Jordan says that the Government offered from 1000 taels to 500 taels for the heads of most important leaders of the uprising who had not been caught yet.

was such a crucial element, was forthcoming in part because of the economic conditions existing at the time.

As we have seen, the leadership of the movement was made up primarily of workers, all of whom were members of the secret societies. Xiao Kechang was a miner with experience in the army who lived for a long time in Anyuan, the center of the mining industry. As a result of coordinating all the activities of the secret societies in the area, he became a powerful leader. It seems that Xiao was not only the most powerful leader in the region, but also the one with the greatest awareness of the situation and of the political risks of an impetuous action. For this reason he decided not to involve his forces in the uprising.

Xiao Kechang's groups were the most important force in the area. Both the local government and the local gentry realized this and consequently implemented measures to prevent the direct intervention of Xiao's followers. The Chief of the Army in Pingxiang said the following about Xiao's power: "If Xiao Kechang takes the initiative, his power will be enough to overthrow the army in Anyuan, and if that happens Liling will also be destroyed. We have to be cautious with Xiao Kechang."⁴⁵

The two other major leaders, Gong Chuntai and Jiang Shoudan from Liling and Liuyang respectively, were also workers. Gong was an illiterate worker, who nevertheless kept the closest contact of any of the leaders with the students Cai Shaonan and Wei Zongquan at the beginning of the movement. Jiang Shoudan was a former miner, who like Xiao, had connections with the army.

The student leaders, really did not participate in the uprising. It is true that they collaborated with the secret society leaders in the organizational stage at the very beginning. However, when the uprising broke out, they were on their way to Japan to inform the Tong Meng Hui about the activities in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area. As soon as they discovered that the uprising had begun, they returned to the area but could not do anything. They were faced with a *fait accompli*.

Another important factor we have to take into account, as far as the leadership is concerned, is the difference of opinion

⁴⁵ *Jindaishi, op. cit.*, p. 67.

among the major leaders as to the organization and *modus operandi* of the movement. Both the ideas and actions of the leaders were inconsistent with what they had originally planned. The outbreak of the uprising was due to a precipitate action on the part of the leaders. This lack of unity and organization among them was one of the causes of their defeat.

The lack of organization among the leaders impeded taking advantage of their ties with the New Army. There were many members of the secret societies who had infiltrated the New Army, not only in Hunan, but also in Jiangxi. This fact alarmed the authorities as we can see in a report of the governor of Jiangxi:

Jiangxi has only ten thousand soldiers and all of them are in the New Army. The Army has been seriously infiltrated by Gelao Hui and anti-Manchu revolutionaries. Not long ago, I received a secret letter reporting that there were two thousand of them in Nanchang and four thousand in Yujiang... 70% of the soldiers are of such background...⁴⁶

The members of the New Army, however, were not able to give enough support to the uprising, precisely because of the lack of communication between these army members and the major leaders and forces of the movement.

The ideological discrepancies among the leaders are visible in the Proclamations of Purpose issued after the outbreak of the uprising. For example, Gong Chuntai's proclamation contained eclectic ideas reflecting his own point of view and at the same time that of the student leaders, but the views were not well concatenated.

Gong expressed, for instance, his disgust with the Manchu government for permitting the imperialist powers to benefit from the weak situation of China. Nevertheless, he asserted that "the property and lives of the foreigners will be protected."⁴⁷ This document continues by saying that the rebels' intention was not to found a new empire but rather to build a Republic "showing the benefits equally for all the citizens."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 501. Also Sir Jordan said that a considerable proportion of the members of the Army "were in sympathy with the rebels..."

⁴⁷ *Hunan Jinbainian, op. cit.*, p. 232.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

This proclamation included some social ideas about the distribution of wealth and land; evidently in order to get more support from the poor peasants: "We will deliberate on new approaches to soften all social problems, distributing the ownership of the land equally."⁴⁹ They emphasized the fact that egalitarian systems, even those in Western countries, had not yet reached the goal of an equal distribution of wealth.

The proclamation of the Hongfu Hui leader, Jiang Shoudan, also manifested a revulsion toward the Manchu Dynasty, but stated that his secret society was opposed to the establishment of a Republic. This proclamation is more traditional than that of Gong Chuntai. Members of the Hongfu Hui planned to follow a traditional pattern of rebellion:

If we the Han people are able to regain power, then, we get success. If there is some kind of dictatorship, it will be just like that of a grandfather in family. You obey him, but you share his prestige, and if you are beaten at times it is for your own good. That is very different from being a slave.⁵⁰

In spite of the leaders' eclectic ideas and internal problems, they were clearly able to convince the masses to join the uprising. One of the factors that helped them gain the support of the masses was the economic conditions of the poor people of the area, exacerbated by the famine suffered in 1906.

According to surviving documents, the mass support of the uprising came principally from poor peasants, pottery workers and miners. During the year 1906, most of the poor people found themselves in a situation much worse that they had ever experienced before. In Anyuan there were a great many unemployed people who immediately joined the uprising.⁵¹ Furthermore, after the outbreak of the uprising many workers of Liling lost their jobs. Governor Zhang Zhirui of Pingxiang stated the following:

After the Liu Li uprising, many workers left their jobs to join it. Right after the fall of Shangliu city, I heard that the number of workers who resigned each day was into the hundreds. But after

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵¹ *Xinhai Geming, op. cit.*, p. 472.

the major forces of the uprising were defeated the workers came back secretly; since they did not have jobs, robbery was the natural consequence.⁵²

Probably the unemployed people from Anyuan were poor peasants who, because of the famine, were trying to find jobs in other economically important places. And as we can see from the previous quote, when the uprising grew workers from other areas, like Liling, left their jobs to join the movement. However, many workers were already unemployed before the uprising. Unfortunately we do not have any available data about the number of the unemployed.

It is clear that mass support for the uprising was manifested throughout the affected area. At the beginning of the movement the rebel armies won the support of the people basically because of their conduct towards the poor, as can be seen from the following quote:

The revolutionary armies are very well disciplined. Whenever they go, they only demand weapons and food from the people. Those who they have executed or removed are members of the gentry responsible for civilian soldiers, rich families and people who work for the Manchus. The students businessmen and ordinary people are not disturbed.⁵³

Moreover, mass support for the uprising was also manifested by the fact that the information the government tried to obtain to use against the rebels was kept secret by the people. If the people were requested to reveal the whereabouts and plans of the rebels they refused.⁵⁴

Since most of the peasants and workers sympathized with the rebels, they withheld information about the movement from the authorities since by this they were in a sense protecting themselves.

⁵² *Jindaishi*, *op. cit.*, Report from Ping Governor Zhang Zhirui and the gentry representative Li Youru. p. 63.

⁵³ *Hunan Jinbainian*, *op. cit.*, p. 233. See *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, p. 493. Report from the Jiangxi Army Commander and Jiangxi Governor. The report says that "whenever they go they threaten local people to join them and people come as a cloud..."

⁵⁴ *Jindaishi*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

To at least this extent, they were inextricably interwoven into the movement.

Likewise, the gentry in the particular situation acted as a class. The gentry had recently obtained economic power in the area and wanted to preserve it. For instance, when it was learned that the miners of Anyuan were involved in the uprising, the gentry immediately asked for more government help. A report to the Governor Zhang Zhidong stated the following with respect to the importance of the area and the fear of the people who had some relation to the mining and railway business:

Yesterday, I received a telegram from the Pingxiang mining administration and the President of the Shanghai business office, Sheng Zhihuai, saying that there was an uprising in the Pingxiang area... If the situation got worse, the consequences would not be confined to mines and railroads.⁵⁵

In short, as we have seen, there was broad popular support for the uprising which cannot be explained solely in terms of the usual opposition of secret societies to the dynasty in power. We agree with Esherick⁵⁶ in saying that in the Ping Liu Li Uprising, perhaps for the first time, the seeds of a class consciousness are evident. This class consciousness can be seen in the working class origins of most of the leaders of the movement, and the strong mass support it received, as well as in the opposition to it from the side of the government authorities and the local gentry.

Final Considerations

The Ping Liu Li Uprising of 1906 was a large scale mass movement led by secret societies, especially the Gelao Hui which had traditional importance in this area. The literate class represented by the students did not play an important role. They were only a circumstantial factor without great significance.

The secret society leaders involved in the movement did not have any direct support from the Revolutionary Alliance in

⁵⁵ *Xinhai Geming*, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

⁵⁶ Joseph Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China, the 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 65.

Tokyo. This illustrates a weakness of the revolutionary movement which had important implications for 1911. However, in the uprising we see some transformation of traditional secret society ideology under the influence of the revolutionaries in the fact that at least one group called for a republic, and both Jiang Shoudan and his followers and Gong Chuntai and his saw a major threat from foreign influence in China.

The leaders of the uprising had the support of a large proportion of the peasants and workers who were greatly affected by the famine of 1906. For this reason the uprising should be considered a real class movement in which the local elite and the government army represented the opposition which saw its interests threatened.

In spite of the extent of the uprising it did not succeed for several reasons. One problem was the character of the secret society leaders: their lack of political vision and their discrepancies with regard to the organization and objectives of the movement. A second problem was the spontaneity of the uprising and its failure to take into consideration the power and capacity of the enemy. A third problem was the lack of weapons; the participants in the uprising had only a few guns, knives and some work tools which could be used as arms, whereas the government and opposition forces were well-equipped with modern weapons.

Nevertheless, the Ping Liu Li Uprising had a positive influence on the overall revolutionary movement that was growing in China and that culminated with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. It demonstrated that at a given moment the masses of peasants and workers could respond and support a movement for the overthrow of the regime and ultimately of the social system as a whole. As Sir Jordan, a member of the British Foreign Office states:

Now, however, that it [the uprising] has been suppressed, and that the authorities are on the look-out for symptoms of a further outbreak, there seems little chance of the revolutionaries organizing another successful movement for the present. But as stated above there is every probability that the first favourable opportunity will witness an immediate recrudescence of troubles.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Great Britain Foreign Office, Sir Jordan to Sir Edward Grey, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

THE TALE OF ZHOU CHU: AN EARLY
MIEVEAL SINO-TIBETAN PRECURSOR
OF *BEOWULF*?

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The dragon, as is well known, is a marvelous creature found in the lore of all peoples of the Old World (= Eurasian continent) and much of the New. The story of the dragon-slayer is likewise common. The famous dragon-slayer of British legend is St. George, though Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon, is also a dragon-slayer. In the German *Nibelungenlied*, Siegfried becomes invulnerable (almost!) by slaying the dragon Fafnir and bathing in its blood. Other examples of dragon-slayers include Perseus, Marduk, Hercules, Apollo, St. Michael, and Tristan —heroes usually more famous for exploits in other legends or myths. The object of this brief study is double: to consider, first, two heroic traditions, one Northern European and the other Sino-Tibetan, that involve the slaying of dragons (and similar monsters) and that exhibit a surprising number of detailed similarities, and, second, to attempt to account for these coincidences.

Beowulf. *Beowulf*¹ is the longest (3 182 lines) and greatest poem extant in Old English, the language of the English nation prior to the Norman Conquest (1066). The two best guesses as to the place and date of *Beowulf's* composition would be Northumbria during the "Age of Bede" (about 720-750) or Mercia dur-

¹ For the sake merely of convenience, the description of *Beowulf* has been freely adapted from *The Reader's Guide to World Literature* (New York, 1961), pp. 47-48.

ing the reign of Offa II (757-796). The poem is preserved in a single late tenth century composite MS devoted to marvels that include fragments of the legend of St. Christopher, gigantic and reputedly dog-headed, and the reports that, according to medieval tradition, Alexander the Great sent back to his master Aristotle of all the wonderful things he had seen in India.

The main narrative of the poem is made up of three folk stories, to which the historically accurate raids and savage feuds between Danes, Geats, Swedes, and Frisians are only incidental. In the first of these episodes, Beowulf, a mighty swimmer and wrestler, frees the mead-hall (Heorot) belonging to the Danish King Hrothgar by wrenching out the clawlike arm of the male monster Grendel, who has decimated Hrothgar's band for twelve years by his ravenous nocturnal visits. In the second, the hero slays (by decapitation) Grendel's dam, a hideous water-hag, in her cave beneath a mysterious lake (described —line 799— as the "nicor's pool" —"nicor", Old English for any sea or water monster). These two episodes are closely related, and the second brings the poem to a dramatic climax. The third, however, is quite different in tone, for Beowulf is no longer merely fighting for youthful glory. Now a wise and aged king who has ruled the Geats for fifty peaceful and prosperous years, he fights and dies to save his people from a fire-breathing dragon that has laid waste their countryside.

The content of the tale is complex. The scenes in Hrothgar's court reflect not the crude barbaric civilization of the Baltic, but the cultivated Christian aristocracy of an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon court. Yet vestiges of belief in magic runic symbols, of heathen cremation ceremonies, and of the pagan power of Wyrð (Fate) remain side by side with faith in God's power over man, in the existence of Heaven and Hell, in the significance of Biblical story from the sinfulness of Cain to the passion of Christ. A complete reconciliation is never achieved; Wyrð, for example, is both Fate and God's plan for the world. But the poem is tempered throughout by a Christian spirit.

Zhou Chu. The tale of Zhou Chu appears in *Shishuo xinyu* (New Collection of Worldly Sayings) compiled by Liu Yiqing (403-444). As it is relatively short, we shall cite it in full:

When Zhou Chu was young, he was fierce, violent, and overbear-

ing, and was regarded as a great calamity by the local folk. On top of this, there was a dragon in the rivers of Yixing [in the province of Jiangsu], and the mountains harboured a tiger. Both beasts did great harm to the people of Yixing, yet they spoke of the “three beasts” — Zhou Chu being by far the most fierce. Someone urged Zhou Chu to kill the tiger and behead the dragon— with the hope that if he did so, only one “beast” [at the most] would remain. Zhou Chu killed the tiger with his sword and then plunged into the waters to smite the dragon. For the space of many leagues the dragon would rise to the surface and then dive deep, but Zhou Chu stuck to it all the way. This went on for three days and three nights. The local folk said that by then the dragon and Zhou Chu must both be dead and so were even more overjoyed [than they were when he killed the tiger]. Zhou Chu, however, finally did slay the dragon and emerged from the water. As he did so, however, he heard the people rejoicing and understood for the first time how much they hated him. Thus, he resolved to change his ways. Consequently he journeyed to the capital in search of the Lu brothers [scholars noted for their probity]. One brother was not at home, but Zhou Chu obtained an interview with the other. He told him the whole story, and then added, “Now I want to change, but many years have already slipped by and I have accomplished nothing.” Lu replied, “The ancients prized the maxim that states ‘A man may die content at sunset if in the morning he has heard the Truth.’ Besides, you still have your future before you. Moreover, what people really hate is one’s not setting a serious goal in life. Why should you be troubled by the mere lack of a good reputation?” Thus inspired, Zhou Chu set to work with a will to change his ways, and in the end he did indeed become a loyal official and a filial son.

As in the case of *Beowulf*, the content of this tale is also complex. Zhou Chu is represented, first, as a violent young man who oppresses his neighbors and, next, as a bravo who is willing to take on a tiger and a dragon single-handed. Both aspects of his conduct, but especially the second, relate to the tradition of the *xia*, or person (man or woman) who, in traditional China, was adept in the martial arts (and was often given to chivalrous conduct —the “Chinese knight-errant”). Zhou Chu’s recognition of his status in the community and the advice of Lu lead him, however, to “change his ways” and adopt the prevailing *ru*, or Confucian, ideology (as exemplified in the virtues of loyalty to one’s prince and filiality to one’s parents). (As it happens, the

historical Zhou Chu seems to have achieved a perfect synthesis of both traditions, for it is recorded in the histories that after a courageous career at court he died fighting bravely against the Di barbarians). In the account given, Confucianism triumphs.

The two stories, as narrated above, display certain general resemblances. We shall now consider a series of detailed similarities. Both heroes are "mighty men", adept with the sword and, additionally, great swimmers. Zhou Chu has no hesitation in plunging in after the dragon and struggling with it under water for three days and three nights, while the swimming motif is recurrent throughout *Beowulf*. Lines 481-578 of that poem are, for example, devoted to the episode of Beowulf's boyhood endurance swim (five days) with his friend Breca, during which (they swim sword in hand) they slay a number of sea monsters. Of his personal exploits during the swimming match, Beowulf states (lines 536-554):

The grisly sea beasts again and again
Beset me sore; but I served them home
With my faithful blade as was well-befitting.
They failed of their pleasure to feast their fill.
Crowding round my corpse on the ocean bottom!
Bloody with wounds, at the break of day,
They lay on the sea-beach slain with the sword.

* * *

...And so I was granted
To slay with the sword-edge nine of the nicors.
I never heard tell of more terrible strife
Under the dome of heaven in darkness of night,
Nor of man harder pressed on the paths of the ocean.
But I freed my life from the grip of the foe
Though spent with the struggle.

These lines serve both to demonstrate the prowess of Beowulf in the water and to adumbrate the great fight with the dam of Grendel. In another episode (lines 2222-2229), Beowulf is depicted as swimming with no less than thirty sets of armor on his back:

Nor was that the last of his grim engagements
When Hygelac fell, great Hrethel's son;

When the lord of the people, the prince of the Geats,
 Died of his wounds in the welter of battle,
 Perished in Friesland, smitten with swords.
 Thence Beowulf came by his strength in swimming;
 Thirty sets of armor he bore on his back
 As he hastened to the ocean.

The story of Beowulf and Breca is set within what is called the "taunt of Unferth." Unferth is a typical "wicked counselor," but his jibes make Beowulf only all the more resolved to deal with Grendel. Thus, Unferth plays a role here similar to that of the anonymous counsellor who, with bad faith, urges Zhou Chu "to kill the tiger and behead the dragon".

The tiger and the dragon themselves furnish yet another parallel between the two tales. Of the various heroes mentioned in the first paragraph of this essay, none seems ever to have faced a simultaneous, doubly related threat, as must both Beowulf and Zhou Chu. The further parallel is that both Beowulf and Zhou Chu face one opponent on land (Grendel/tiger) and one in the water (dam of Grendel/dragon). And both heroes behead their submarine foes.

The dramatic climax of Zhou Chu's story occurs when he emerges from the water and experiences the "shock of recognition": "...he heard the people rejoicing and understood for the first time how much they hated him." A very similar scene—though the emotion is at first despair—occurs also in *Beowulf* (lines 1477-1491):

Then the tried retainers, who there with Hrothgar
 Watched the face of the foaming pool,
 Saw that the churning reaches were reddened,
 The eddying surges stained with blood.
 And the gray, old spearmen spoke of the hero,
 Having no hope he would ever return
 Crowned with triumph and cheered with spoil.
 Many were sure that the savage sea-wolf
 Had slain their leader. At last came noon.
 The stalwart Scyldings forsook the headland;
 Their proud gold-giver departed home.
 But the Geats sat grieving and sick in spirit,
 Stared at the water with longing eyes,
 Having no hope they would ever behold
 Their gracious leader and lord again.

Until (lines 1505-1515),

Then he who had compassed the fall of his foes
 Came swimming up through the swirling surge.
 Cleansed were the currents, the boundless abyss,
 Where the evil monster had died the death
 And looked her last on this fleeting world.
 With sturdy strokes the lord of the seamen
 To land came swimming, rejoiced in his spoil,
 Had joy of the burden he brought from the depths.
 And his mighty thanes came forward to meet him,
 Gave thanks to God they were granted to see
 Their well-loved leader both sound and safe.

Finally, both Beowulf (lines 2058-2061) and Zhou Chu were scorned as very young men, but ended their careers as paragons.

The parallels between the stories of Beowulf and Zhou Chu are surprising and seem beyond the category of blind coincidence to explain convincingly. Yet to even the casual reader of Eastern and Western literature, such curiously close parallels are nothing new. Do we not, for example, discover a Cinderella in a Chinese text of the ninth century, complete with envious step-sister and slipper left behind at the ball? Odysseus and his adventure with Polyphemus in a story recorded in the *Taiping guangji* (late tenth century)? The lion and the unicorn concealed in an early gloss on the *Book of Odes*? And both Caedmon (fl. c. 657-680), the illiterate English cowherd, and Hui-neng (638-713), the illiterate Chinese kitchen-boy, attaining to an intuitive grasp of enlightenment and expressing it in memorable verse? The American anthropologist Julian Steward elaborated a series of logical apothegms to determine just how improbable such coincidences are on the basis of pure chance.² An alternative expla-

² According to Steward (J. Needham, *Trans-Pacific Echoes and Resonances*, (Singapore, 1985), p. 14), when a closely similar culture-element is found in two or more localities, the probability that independent invention has occurred is *directly proportional* to (a) the difficulty of communication between the places and (b) the uniqueness of the element, and *inversely proportional* to (c) the number of elements shared by the two places and (d) the elapsed time since the first appearance of the element complex in either locality. By these criteria, the probability of "independent invention" as between the tale of Zhou Chu and *Beowulf* would seem very slight indeed.

nation involves the Jungian concept of archetypes, but this theory, not widely accepted to start with, never accounts adequately for the *discrepancies*. The last alternative is the much debated theory of diffusion, and, at first glance, this, too, seems unlikely, especially as between East Asia and Northern Europe in early medieval times. Yet, let us attend a moment to the observations of Joseph Campbell (*Creative Mythology*, chapter 3), to whom we also owe the Caedmon/Hui-neng example: "However, it is a fact that in early medieval times there were great movements of hardy peoples between Europe and the Far East." He goes on to say:

As early as the fifth century A.D. related tribes of Huns struck simultaneously into Europe, India, and China. A dynasty of vigorous Tibetan kings was expanding its inner Asian conquests and influence from the period of Song-tsen Gam-po (c. 630) to the death of Ral-pa-chen (838). Nestorian as well as Manichaeian monasteries were on the caravan ways to China itself until the reign of the fanatic emperor Wu-tsung (r. 841-846). And... there is more than incidental similarity between the myths and legends of the Iron Age Celts and Iron Age Japan...

Another avenue of connection, according to Campbell (citing Miguel Asín y Palacios, *La Escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia*), aside from war and conquest, was trade:

From the eighth to the eleventh centuries an active trade was carried on between Moslem countries of the East and Russia and other countries of northern Europe. Expeditions left the Caspian regularly and, ascending the Volga, reached the Gulf of Finland and so through the Baltic to Denmark, Britain, and even as far as Iceland... In the eleventh century trade was conducted by the easier sea route across the Mediterranean, chiefly by means of Genoese, Venetian or Moslem vessels.

Three other avenues were also opened, as Campbell, again citing Asín y Palacios, notes —renewed pilgrimages to the Holy Land, which flourished after the establishment by Charlemagne (r. 768-814) of the Frank protectorate over the Christian churches of the East; the Crusades; and, perhaps most important of all, the contact of Moslem and European civilizations in Spain and Sicily. And the American historian William H. McNeill speaks

of a "steppe gradient", whereby for millenia the vast plain between China and Europe was witness to the ebb and flow of innumerable barbarian migrations that perhaps even reached the south China coast or possibly Japan.

This relatively ecumenical nature of the medieval Eurasian world is perhaps a fact too often lost sight of, especially by students of literature. Let us, therefore, consider the matter somewhat further, taking, as before, Joseph Campbell as our guide:

In all the world of Europe and Asia there were then but four essential languages of learning, science, and religion: in the Levant, Arabic; Latin in Europe; Sanskrit in the Indian sphere; and Chinese in the Far East. And as Arabic was the dominant of the two tongues in the West, so was Sanskrit in the Orient.

Campbell then proceeds to outline an amazing literary consequence of this situation:

The most illuminating summary prospect of the paths, bypaths, and transformations through which a body of Oriental lore might pass from Sanskrit into Latin and hence into European life is provided by an Indian book of fables, the *Panchatantra* [Skt.: "Five Headings"—a collection of tales in Sanskrit, c. A.D. 300-500]. Translated about 550 A.D. into Persian for the Sassanian King Khosru Anushivran (531-579), it was turned into Arabic about 760 with a new title: *Kalilah and Dimnah, the Fables of Pilpay*; and this was translated into Syriac c. 1000; Hebrew, c. 1250; and Old Spanish, 1251. About 1270 a Latin translation of the Hebrew appeared, *Directorum humanae vitae*, which in turn became, in 1481, *Das Buch der Byspel der altern Wysen*, and, in 1552, A.F. Doni's *La moral filosofia*, which in 1570 Sir Thomas North rendered as *The Morall Philosophie of Doni*: after all of which we have, finally, the elegant seventeenth-century *Fables* of La Fontaine, who, in 1678, wrote in his introduction to the second volume: "*Seulement je diray par reconnaissance que j'en dois la plus grande partie à Pilpay, sage indien. Son livre a esté traduit en toutes les langues.*"

Recently, yet another avenue of contact—this one much earlier than Hunnish inroads or the spread of the *Panchatantra*—has been discovered: "The Sarmation Connection," according to which the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, as well as the closely related accounts of the Quest for

the Holy Grail, derive ultimately from the traditions of the Sarmatians, an Iranian-speaking people from the steppes of what is now South Russia. These traditions, still preserved in the Caucasus, concern a band of heroes called the Narts and share many motifs and themes common to the Arthurian narratives (death of a chieftain and disposal of his magic sword in a lake, struggle for possession of a magic cup, etc.). Interestingly enough, 5 500 Sarmatians of the Iazyges tribe were sent as heavily armed cavalrymen, or *cataphractarii*, soon after A.D. 175 to Britain to bolster the Roman garrisons along Hadrian's Wall, where they subsequently established a *vicus*, or veteran's colony, at Bremetennacum, a Roman auxiliary fort near the modern town of Ribchester in Lancashire, that endured for several hundred years. And it has even been speculated that the historical King Arthur may have been a descendent of these Sarmatian immigrants.³

No such clear filiation, unfortunately, connects our tales of

³ By a strange and symmetric coincidence, a Chinese army in 36 B.C., victoriously storming the fortified capital of a Hun leader, had come upon some very peculiar mercenary soldiers: according to *Qian Han Shu*, ch. 70, the Chinese, upon setting up camp and beginning the siege, could see from afar "more than a hundred foot-soldiers, lined up on either side of the gate in a fish-scale formation, practicing military drill." After the sack of the place, 145 of these soldiers were captured alive. The singularity of the expression "fish-scale formation (*yu lin zhen*)" has led to the view that the soldiers were no other than Roman legionaries, exercising in the *testudo* formation of interlocking shields. According to the American sinologue H.H. Dubs and others, they may well have been the remnants of the captives made by the Parthians on the occasion of their great victory over Crassus at Carrhae in 54 B.C. In support of this hypothesis, Dubs points out that in A.D. 5 there was a city, newly founded, in Gansu province (northwest China), called Ligan or Lijian, a name almost identical to that applied to Media, Syria, and perhaps all of the eastern Roman empire. Still more remarkable, in A.D. 9, the name was changed to Jielu, which could mean "prisoners captured in the storming of a city." Additional evidence that the soldiers were Romans lies in the fact that the Hun capital was defended not only by earth walls but also by a double palisade of wooden stakes, the latter a typical piece of Roman military technique. If this was the case, then the evidence points to a settlement of the remaining Romans in a military colony on the Old Silk Road, where they married Chinese women and spent the rest of their days probably not too differently from the Sarmatian veterans who married local (Pict) women and then founded their *vicus* at Bremetennacum in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall. See J. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1961), vol. 1, p. 237.

Beowulf and Zhou Chu. Yet, there are a few points that may be suggestive of a possible relation. First, the writings of the Venerable Bede, contemporary, according to some scholars, with the anonymous author of *Beowulf*, and especially his important *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, present certain unmistakable Eastern features, notably mention of "ice hells", which are no part of Biblical eschatology but derive from Buddhist and Jain traditions, whence they entered the lore of Islam via Zoroastrianism (so Campbell, once again citing Asín y Palacios and his epoch-making study of Islamic influences in the *Divine Comedy*). Second, *Beowulf* is primarily an entertainment dignified by style and wonders, and in the tenth century we may note that there are several Anglo-Saxon works that cater for a similar appetite, with stories and lore from distant lands, Greece and India among them. The third piece of suggestive data relates to the historical Zhou Chu. As will be recalled, he died valiently fighting the Di barbarians, and these were precisely the precursors of the Tibetans who held such wide sway in inner Asia during medieval times, a people of relatively loose tribal structure, organized, rather, in war bands under the command of a strong leader. Finally, the Geats, Beowulf's people, are a very elusive tribe, renowned for prodigies, inhabiting mysterious margins, in many ways like the tribes of which Alexander writes to Aristotle.

An interesting possible parallel to *Beowulf* and the tale of Zhou Chu is found perhaps in the "Hildebrandslied", an anonymous fragment and the only relic in German of early alliterative heroic poetry, which dates from c. 800 A.D. and is arguably the earliest poem extant in Old German. It recounts the tale, familiar to readers of Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum: An Episode", of a warrior father and son who, ignorant of their true familial relationship, undertake a duel in which the father slays the son. In the German version, the protagonists —Hildebrand, the father, and Hadubrand, the son— are described as "Huns". The same story appears, as it happens, in the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) of Ferdowsi (c. 935-c. 1020/26), whence Arnold derived his materials. Ferdowsi refers to Sohrab and Rustum as "Tartars", i.e., pertaining probably to some Central Asian tribe of Altaic speech. The contrast with *Beowulf*/Zhou Chu is that in this instance the tradition surfaces first in the West; but in both cases it can be identified with an Asian origin. In this connec-

tion, it is perhaps also interesting that the Indian scholar Coyaji has been able to draw strikingly detailed comparisons precisely between *Shāhnāmah* and the Chinese epic or legend-cycle, the *Feng-shen yen-i* of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, and that another Iranian-Chinese parallel, pointed out by Darmesteter, is that of the blasphemy of a king shooting arrows at Heaven (cf. J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* [Cambridge, 1961], vol. 1, p. 165). And most recently, the distinguished scholar and translator Yang Xianyi (*Yiyu oushi*, Peking, 1983, pp. 80-81), has even argued for an eastern origin of the *Nibelungenlied*!

Farther than this, for the moment, we can hardly take the study of our two tales. Our tentative conclusion is, however, that the stories of Beowulf and Zhou Chu are more than casually related, not implausibly through westward diffusion, via war or trade, directly or indirectly, of a Sino-Tibetan tradition, and thus constitute yet another example of the many shared traditions of the early medieval Eurasian ecumene.⁴

⁴ A fascinating glimpse of culture contact in action is provided by the Byzantine historian Priscus of Panium. According to Derek Brewer ("Medieval European Literature") citing H.M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912), p. 84) in B. Ford (ed.) *Medieval Literature: The European Inheritance* (Penguin, 1983), vol. 1, part 2, pp. 42-43:

About A.D. 448-449 the Roman Emperor Theodosius II... sent an embassy to the barbarian King of the Huns, Attila, 'the scourge of God'... Priscus... writing in Greek, tells us of a splendid banquet given to the Romans, and then, 'when evening came on torches were lighted and two barbarians stepped forth in front of Attila and recited poems which they had composed, recounting his victories and his valiant deeds in war. The banqueters fixed their eyes upon them, some being charmed with the poems, while others were roused in spirit, as the recollection of their wars came back to them. Others again burst into tears, because their bodies were enfeebled by age and their natural ardour had perforce to remain unsatisfied.' The little scene is emblematic of the remote beginnings of medieval European literature and culture.

And, we may add, the scene is also emblematic of how some fragments of Hun lore might conceivably have entered the Occidental mainstream if even only one member of Theodosius' embassy had had sufficient curiosity to question his hosts concerning the content of the songs. Who knows, one may wonder, on how many other occasions, unrecorded by historians, did similar encounters occur?

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TRIBE IN INDIA: THE FALLACY OF A COLONIAL CATEGORY*

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A tribe is a tribe which is included
in the list of scheduled tribes...

AN INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

Tautology creates a dead, a motionless world...
ROLAND BARTHES. *Mythologies*

Tribe has been the most salient category used in the study of Indian indigenous ethnic formations: the adivasi societies. It is my contention that the tribal construct in India is a *colonial category* and that it formed part of the colonial legitimizing ideology. As such this category operated as a device to catalogue conquered populations, to reformulate control policies and to facilitate the incorporation of these populations into the colonial system. The ideology of tribe did not disintegrate in India with the end of colonialism. It has been reformulated in the context of the Hindu model of caste-ideology, a context observable in the conceptualization of adivasi "backwardness" and in the alternatives espoused for social mobility.

After briefly reviewing the main modes of approaching the study of adivasi societies in India, I will discuss the evidence provided by Jharkhand's ethnohistory, and use it to question the validity of the tribal paradigm in India. The socio-historical de-

* This article is part of a larger work on ethnic phenomena in India. I am grateful to Harjot S. Oberoi and to David Lorenzen for their comments on the subject here discussed.

velopment of Jharkhand's adivasi societies, located in the massive Indian Central "Tribal" Belt, is the best illustrative instance to refute this paradigm. I will end with a concluding section on "The Myth of the Tribe"

I. THE TRIBAL CONSTRUCT IN INDIA

Generally, anthropologists defined tribe as a type of society characterized by political autonomy, a subsistence economy and territoriality. This resulted in the construction of a fixed idealized type that divorced "tribal" societies from the historical processes that affected them, most notably the colonial situation in which "tribal studies" initially developed.

The vagueness of the category *tribe*, its uses, its derogatory implications and its lack of correspondence with reality, has made anthropologists increasingly dissatisfied with it. Nonetheless, notwithstanding their doubts about its validity and usefulness, anthropologists have continued to use *tribe* as a basic category. Two factors seem to account for its persistence. First, the continuation of microstudies which ignore the societal macrolevel, historical processes and structural transformations (Copans 1974: 74-80). Second, there has been a confusion between idealized types and reality. The category *tribe* was *constructed* out of ideas about what societies were thought to have been in the precolonial past. This construct was in turn extrapolated into the colonial situation and mechanically applied to societies which were already inserted in a capitalist economy and the world market (Mafeje 1971).

Hardly any of the so-called tribes can still be defined by their political autonomy, isolation and subsistence economy. A reality that included a new articulation of systems of production, a division of labour and a system of power inaugurated with colonial rule and, afterwards, structural changes in the modern states, force us to question the validity of this idealized type.

The roots of the so-called "tribal problem" have often been sought in the socioeconomic and social characteristics of the "tribes" themselves, characteristics supposedly stemming from their past (as in Mair 1936: 264). The term *tribalism* alludes to this "problem" in Africa. In India it is called *particularism*, although the word *tribalism* has been also used (as in Roy Bur-

man 1968; Bose 1964: 7 ff., who equates it with nationalism, and D.P. Sinha 1972). This perspective excluded from the analysis the contradictions that arose from colonialism and, later, from the operation of political and economic forces in the independent states, and the nature of the process of class formation (Onoge 1977: 40). Moreover, the construction of a "tribal problem" on these premises served to create a spurious social sector, "the tribes", whose arbitrarily defined peculiarities greatly helped, as in India, to set this sector aside from the rest of the society.

The most serious consequence of this kind of anthropological perception of indigenous peoples has possibly been the construction of a still persisting derogatory image of these societies. It suffices to see the currency in academic parlance of terms like "primitive", "simple", "backward", and the "underdeveloped" of later vintage. This image reflects prejudices that have been put to "scientific" use. It is an image not only advanced by the central societies (now under the guise of developmentalism), but also by sectors of intellectuals and planners in the non-Western world (Mafeje's "converts", *op. cit.*: 253). Thus we find in multiethnic states a variety of assimilative, integrative and indigenist policies, and instances of ethnocide and even genocide, all justified in the name of "progress".

The British colonial government in India used the category *tribe* as an element of classification for administrative purposes, and as such it has continued to be used in independent India. In India, the category "tribe" has not developed as a conceptual category, independent from administrative practice, possibly because anthropology in India has tended to be applied anthropology. Defining "the tribes" is the task of government officials (Indian Constitution: Art. 342). The official selection of criteria to define the *Scheduled Tribes* is questionable for its lack of correspondence with reality and its ethnocentric bias. These criteria were so unsatisfactory that A.R. Desai (1961) considered they could only apply to 20% of the adivasi population, while K.S. Mathur dismissed the classification as "a typical case of fiction-creation by Government officers" (1972: 460. See also Dube 1960: 11; Roy Burman 1960: 17; Bailey 1961: 10). Furthermore, the whole exercise has resulted in the legitimation of derogatory stereotypes.

From the studies of British colonial administrators like E.T.

Dalton (1872) and H. Risley (1891), to the pioneer works of S.C. Roy (1912, 1915) and V. Elwin (1943 and many monographs), to the bulk of contemporary writings on the adivasis, the term "tribe" has remained vague, not adequately conceptualized and consequently, of weak methodological value (see Pathy *et al.*, 1976: 401-406; Pathy 1982: 23-48). Indian "tribalist" anthropologists comfortably accepted as tribes those people registered as such in the official list. Thus, "a tribe is a tribe which is included in the list of scheduled tribes" (Sahay 1969, *cit.*, by Pathy *et al.*, *ibid.*: 402).

Most Indian "tribal studies" have remained synchronic and descriptive, ignoring the economic and political transformations that affected the populations studied. "Tribes" were seen as homogeneous units, forming an undifferentiated bloc (although set in a hierarchy of "more" and "less primitive groups"), marked by "backwardness". While anthropologists in India may have abandoned the stereotype of isolated groups and begun to pay more attention to social interaction (K.S. Singh 1982: 1318), their point of reference — for definition and establishing the mobility patterns of "the tribes" — continues to be that of the dominant Hindu model.

A persistent assumption has been that "tribes" have a shallow conception of history. Their history is thus easily labelled "mythology", a trait that is thought to be accompanied by an "over-all tradition-orientation" (Dube *op. cit.*, 1960: 11-12). "Tradition-orientation" has often been equated with "backwardness in the scale of civilization". On these grounds and from a particular (Western and alien) conception of "progress", the adivasis' sense of history and their culture are declared to be retrograde, a "negation of progress", a perpetuation of backwardness (as in B.K. Roy Burman: 1960: 19). In this way, backwardness becomes a trait inherent in these societies. At the same time, endogenous innovations and change are never mentioned.

Indian anthropological literature seldom introduces the term *ethnicity* with reference to the adivasis, and when it does do so it is often in an ambiguous way (Surajit Sinha's [1965: 57-83; 1974] "tribes" as "certain ethnic groups"; Dube's [1977: 1-5] "tribal ethnicity"). On the whole, however, Indian anthropologists have remained faithful to the old category of *tribe*.

Lastly, adivasi societies have been defined in terms of a contrast with non-adivasi society (usually understood as Hindu society), and set at one end of several variously defined a-historical *continua*: the tradition-modernity paradigm (leading to G.S. Ghurye's conception [1969] of adivasis as "backward Hindus"); the tribe-caste *continuum* (basis for assimilationist models like Srinivas' [1966] Sanskritization model), and the developmentalist traditional-modern *continuum* for administrative use (V.K. Mathur 1969: 11-25). M.K. Gautam (1978a: 20) has already called for a perspective independent from the Hindu caste model, and N. Sengupta (1986) provides an excellent discussion of the "tribe-mainstream" dichotomy. One last mode of defining the adivasis on the basis of a *continuum* has been to place them in relation to a "peasant pole", "tribals" and peasants conceived as "two idealized evolutionary levels of socio-cultural integration" (Sinha 1982: 3. Earlier expressed as "tribal-caste/peasant continua", Sinha 1965).

What has aroused opposition has not been the shortcomings inherent in these *continua* but the conception of some adivasis as peasants. This fact derives from the way the category peasant has been defined (for instance, Roy Burman 1983b: 1173). The neat compartmentalization of "three types of communities: tribal, caste and peasant" in Mathur and Agrawal (1974), and Vidya-rathi's (1967) "three dimensions of Indian society: primitive, peasant and industrial", should be noted in this context. On the other hand, K.S. Singh (*op. cit.*) considers that in many of the "tribal areas" a peasantization trend started at the end of the eighteenth century, while B.B. Mandal concludes that the agricultural "tribes" in Bihar can be considered to be peasants (1975: 355-362; Beteille 1974). This, however, is not the end of the problem. The fact that adivasis exist in the frame of a class society and that their relationships with it cannot avoid the operation of class forces, are issues that, with few exceptions (Pathy *op. cit.*; N. Sengupta 1982, 1986), have not yet been subjected to analysis.

II. JHARKHAND'S ETHNOHISTORY: THE CREATION OF "TRIBES"

Father of the Earth, ours is the land...
 In Nagpur, our ancestors left their footprints.
 In the country reclaimed by us, you made others
 sit in our property.
 Our ancient order was wiped out...

Birsaita Song

British colonial and Indian administrative ethnography, combined with applied anthropology, have generated an epistemology which views Bihar, in which part of Jharkhand is included, as a living museum of tribes.

In constructing this discourse, facts in the history of Jharkhand's ethnic communities have been largely ignored or altered to uphold "the myth of the tribe". The existence of different systems of production, the incorporation of these communities into a cash economy and later into a colonial economy, their subsumption under the capitalist mode of production, processes of class formation, changes in the social division of labour and in the relations of production, and the evolving nature of power relationships: none of these phenomena are discussed in the existing ethnographies of Jharkhand.

The concrete historical experiences of Jharkhand's populations, the transformation they had experienced in the long timespan, and their economic-political location in the wider social context, were ignored. Instead, selected socio-economic traits were arbitrarily attributed to them to make them fit into the construct of *tribe*. In fact, Jharkhand's ethnohistory reveals not the existence of "tribes", but rather a variegated development of its indigenous societies and processes of transition from lineage and communally-based societies to a class-based society.

A review of Jharkhand's ethnohistory makes visible the historical depth of the socio-cultural styles of its adivasi communities, and how social maintenance and the attachment to land and territory have acted as an axis for the reproduction of collective identities. These dynamics were present in the past and they are today.

Jharkhand's reality challenges "the myth of the tribe" with

the evidence provided by history. To evaluate this evidence, this article focusses on key processes that have affected adivasi societies and not on isolated communities.¹ For that purpose, illustrative instances are presented to show the processes of transformation Jharkhand's adivasi societies have undergone in the course of time. Internal discontinuities occurring in these societies, like the development of social differentiation, are also observed in these cases. An analysis of the modes of incorporation of Jharkhand's adivasi societies into the colonial system follows. In this way I will question the tribal paradigm by examining both different specific "histories" and general processes like colonialism.

In sum, I will argue that there were no "tribes" in Jharkhand until the European perception of Indian reality constructed them and colonial authorities gave them their administrative sanction. In fact, the tribal paradigm is ill-suited to categorize both past and present adivasi societies. In Jharkhand, these societies are now basically peasant societies inserted in a class society, possessing *at the same time* specific ethno-cultural styles.

The region

With 5 810 867 persons registered as Scheduled Tribes out of an all-India total of 51 628 638, the state of Bihar² has one of the largest proportions of indigenous ethnic communities (8.31% of the population). Of the total Scheduled Tribes population in Bihar, 5 329 283 persons (91.7%) are located in its Jharkhand region (CI 1981: series I, part II-B, iii).

More important than Bihar's existing internal administrative division is the geo-ecological regional differentiation of the state.

¹ To isolate particular communities would have meant to reproduce the perspective that has ensured the existence of the tribal paradigm. The intention is precisely to demonstrate that the elements used to characterize Jharkhand's adivasis as "tribes" (isolation, inherent egalitarianism, autonomy, economic independence, slow change) are invalid.

² The modern state of Bihar borders on the north with the Nepalese Terai, on the east with the state of West Bengal, on the south with the state of Orissa, and with the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on the west.

This results in three well-demarcated regions: North Bihar to the north of the Ganges river, the South Ganges Plain or South Bihar, and the South Bihar Plateau comprising Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas (Map 1). The distinctive geo-ecological characteristics of these areas have partially conditioned the development of systems of production and the emergence of socio-cultural patterns. The Ganges river divides Bihar into two physically different regions: the fertile plain of the north, and the south which is fertile along the Ganges but becomes hillier as one proceeds south into the Chotanagpur plateau. In the past, the Ganges divide already marked the development of two different regions.³

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, when Akbar acceded to the throne of Delhi, Chotanagpur seemed to have been little affected by external influences. Under the Mughals, the Raja of Chotanagpur was made a tributary. Whatever independence and isolation Chotanagpur had enjoyed in Mughal times was relative. Chotanagpur was surrounded by a cash economy. If this economy did not penetrate the entire area, it was because its lower land productivity was not particularly vital for the reproduction of Mughal "feudal" economy (Habid 1963). In 1765 the East India Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which included Jharkhand.

Today, the Jharkhand area of Bihar comprises practically half of state's territory, extending over the districts of Palamau, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Santal Parganas, Dhanbad, Ranchi and Singhbhum (Map 2). Jharkhand, however, denotes more than a geographical region. Together with the adjacent districts of the states of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, it forms part of a distinct socio-cultural region: Greater Jharkhand.

Demands for a separate state for this region were presented in 1928 to the Simon Commission and later, in 1954, to the States

³ The state of Videha on the north was already on the decline in the VI century B.C., and the state of Magadha in the south rose to prominence around that time. The hilly and forest region of Jharkhand (Jharakhanda: "forest territory") may have formed part of the Magadha state during Ashoka's reign (273-232 B.C.) (Thapar 1966: 50-69; Spear 1958). The name *Jharkhand* for Chotanagpur appears in the late Sanskrit literature and continued to be used by Muslim historians, changing to Kokrah (possibly from the Oraon Kurukh) in the sixteenth century (S.C. Roy 1912: 151, 176, 359; Bradley-Birt 1903: 10, 12; Pandey 1963: 111).

Reorganization Commission.⁴ In 1973, the Jharkhand Party demanded a state comprising 72 619 sq. miles of territory with a population of 30 598 991, covering three districts of West Bengal (Bankura, Midnapur, Purulia), seven from Bihar (Ranchi, Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Palamau, Santal Parganas), four from Orissa (Sundargarh, Keonjhor, Majurbhanj, Sambalpur), and two from Madhya Pradesh (Raigarh and Sarguja). Greater Jharkhand can be claimed to extend even further if the hilly and jungle areas of Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are included on the basis of their pattern of uneven development and ethno-cultural composition (A.K. Roy 1982a: 5).

Paths leading to Jharkhand

F.B. Bradley-Birt noted at the beginning of the century:

Nothing but a special volume... could attempt to give a detailed account of all the tribes and castes that people Chota Nagpore ...All the races of Northern India seem to have collected in this corner of the empire...

(*Op. cit.*: 22)

From ancient times Jharkhand received people who migrated into the area. Major adivasi groups like the Mundas, Santals, Oraons and Hos and other early settlers reached Jharkhand after a series of migrations.⁵

The ancestors of the adivasis have been identified as the native population the Indo-aryans found when they entered the sub-continent. The differentiation between Aryans and adivasis persisted across the centuries, later formulated on a racial basis as

⁴ Jharkhand was to embrace 63 859 sq. miles of territory with a population of 16 367 175. This proposal differed from later claims in that it excluded some parts of West Bengal but included larger areas of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh and the hill and jungle areas of southern Uttar Pradesh.

⁵ Pioneer ethnographers like S.C. Roy (1912, 1915), E.T. Dalton (1872) and W.W. Hunter (1868, 1877) attempted to reconstruct the early history of these groups on the basis of archaeological and linguistic data, the analysis of Hindu scriptures and adivasi oral history.

the one between "superior" and "inferior" communities. The racial basis (the construct of "racial purity") which has sustained this dichotomy is untenable on historical grounds, not to mention its ethnocentric-racist bias. As pointed out by N. Sengupta (1982b), attention should shift to the evolution of a different mode of production in the fertile river basins after the discovery of iron and the development of agricultural technology and irrigation, leading to an intensive use of land and to economic specialization, social differentiation and regional integration. This process did not take place in the hilly areas because the terrain did not allow such intense land utilization. The developments that were possible in the plains were understood as expressions of a "higher civilization", while the people of the hills and the jungles were seen as not so technologically advanced and, following a fallacious correlation, as belonging to an "inferior race". These regional-economic and cultural identifications did not become fixed until the advent of colonialism when different pre-capitalist societies were integrated in the capitalist system in various ways. Existing differences were used by British colonial administrators, and isolationist policies towards the adivasis were shaped with an assumed protectionist intent. In the background of these policies stood a history of military repression and economic exploitation of adivasi land and labour. The process of unequal integration based on the construction of fixed categories (Scheduled Tribes) continued after independence.

The Mundas and other Austric-speaking people⁶ in early times lived in the hilly regions along the Aravalli and Vindhyan ranges.⁷ The migrations of the Mundas before they reached Jharkhand are preserved in their collective memory in the cosmogonical myth of the primeval couple and in the story of *Lut-*

⁶ Hodgson gave them the name Kol or Kolarian. Max Muller recognized the Kolarian languages as part of an independent linguistic Munda family, different from the Dravidian to which the Oraons linguistically belong. The term *Munda* embraces several related languages and peoples. Santal oral history speaks of Mundas, Hos, Santals, Bhumijis, etc., known as Kherwars, as having the same origin and speaking the same language (Grierson 1967; Gautam 1977).

⁷ According to S.C. Roy, they later occupied the valleys of the big rivers of northern India, and finally were displaced southwards by the incoming Indo-aryans (1912: 26-27, 55-60).

kum Haram and Lutkum Buria (S.C. Roy 1912: app. I and II).⁸

Of the different people comprised in the Munda group *latu sensu*, the Mundas finally settled in the central Chotanagpur plateau, concentrating in the forest areas of what is now Ranchi District. The Bhumijis settled in Manbhum. The Hos proceeded further south and, after displacing the Bhuiyas, established themselves in Singhbhum. The Oraons, of Dravidian origin, possibly migrating from the western coast of India, already found some scattered Munda communities in the Chotanagpur plateau when they reached it. They settled in the northwest and west of the region, which they successfully opened to cultivation,⁹ and gradually extended their settlements up to the centre of Chotanagpur (S.C. Roy 1912: vii, 1915: 17-39; Dalton *op. cit.*: 176-177, 237; Bradley-Birt *op. cit.*: 23-24).

Little is known about the Santals' original habitat. Their oral history records their recurrent migrations.¹⁰ As a result of the 1793 Permanent Settlement, they ultimately reached what was later known as Santal Parganas (probably from Birbhum, West Bengal) towards the end of the eighteenth century, brought by the British administration to clear the lowlands of wild animals and open them to cultivation. By 1830 their migration into the area was considerable. They became concentrated in the Rajmahal forest after the British administration created the Damin-i-koh in 1835.

Santal traditions show that in many cases the recurrent migrations were exoduses organized to avoid direct confrontation in conflictive situations. This survival technique continued to be used at least until mid-nineteenth century.¹¹

The hill tops of the Rajmahal plateau had been long inhabited

⁸ Recent linguistic studies suggest that in an early period, the Munda-speaking people were distributed in the region to the north-west and west of Chotanagpur (Zide 1971).

⁹ Possibly introducing the use of the plough.

¹⁰ Dalton located their origins in the area between the Hoogly and the Kasai rivers, while W.W. Hunter believed they originally came from the Himalayas, theory that Dalton did not accept (Dalton *op. cit.*: 208-211; Hunter 1868: 149, 152, 219, 221).

¹¹ W.J. Culshaw refers to this phenomenon of constant displacement (1949: 5).

by the Paharias.¹² While the Paharias used land mainly as a subject of labour (see footnote 16), the originally self-sustaining communities like the Santals, Mundas, Oraons and Hos, exploited land as an instrument of labour. This meant that socio-economic organization had to be based on continuity, with the agricultural work-team investing its labour in the land. Subsistence and the reproduction of the productive unit became essential. The individual producer was functional only when linked to the family group, lineage and village unit; land was held in common and work was collective. Labour was neither remunerated nor a commodity.

Total self-sufficiency was not the norm among Jharkhand's agricultural communities. For baskets, pottery and metal objects, Santals relied on craftsmen from other communities. The Munda *Lutkum Haram and Lutkum Buria* myth (Asur legend) speaks of the iron-smelting Asurs living in the midst of Munda communities.¹³ This legend attributes to the Munda deity Sing Bonga the destruction of the Asurs and their furnaces. This may possibly record an attempt at an artificial preservation of the Mundas' self-sufficiency through the exclusion of iron-smelters, to control the access of other communities to iron or to preclude the introduction of commodities that could have unbalanced systems of distribution (following ideas in Meillassoux 1978).

From a variety of indigenous formations to the forging of "tribes"

The stigma of the "tribe of predatory freebooters": the Paharias

In the nineteenth century, the Paharias were described as "thieves

¹² The Paharias are the Maler or Savaria Paharias in the present subdivisions of Rajmahal, Pakur and Godala in Santal Parganas District (Vidyarthi 1960: 26). They maintained that "the human race was first produced on the hills", and their traditions do not speak of migrations. Oraon oral history, however, mentions the Paharias' migration from Rohatas when driven out by the Indo-aryans. Some then went towards Chotanagpur and others to the Rajmahal hills (Dalton *op. cit.*: 236, 255-256).

¹³ The Asurs seem to have been in the region before the coming of the Mundas. Archaeological remains seem to indicate they engaged in some trade (Trapar and Siddiqi 1979: 22 ff.).

and murderers” (Heber 1861: 120). The appellation dates back to 1770 when the British administration became interested in the Paharias, a “tribe of predatory freebooters, raiding and terrorizing the plain country from the foot of the hills to the Ganges” (Russell 1916: 155). That was precisely the year when the great Bengal famine started to be felt with severity in the region between the Rajmahal hills and the Ganges (Hunter 1868: ch. II; N.K. Sinha 1962: ch. III; Mishra 1970). In the years that followed, the Paharias systematically plundered the plains to such an extent that these were abandoned by the cultivators (Hunter 1877: 303; O’Malley 1910: 34-35).

In such years of scarcity and starvation, plunder was an activity not restricted to the peoples of the hills, but one to which many peasants resorted to after having been forced by famine and drought to abandon their lands and to take refuge in the hills. Wandering *sannyasis* were active in Rungpur, Rajshahi and Malda in groups of up to fifty thousand strong (Monckton Jones 1918: 180, 212, 213; Hunter 1868: 70 ff.). They were joined by crowds of starving peasants. Bands of up to five hundred men moved, unresisted, across abandoned villages and lands from Kharakpur to Rajmahal. In the winter of 1772, these starving masses fell upon the Lower Bengal fields, burning and plundering. Dacoity became “a standing trouble present in all parts of the provinces and at all seasons of the year” (Hunter *ibid.*: 178), as a result of the general economic conditions at the time, of the insensibility of an administration mostly worried about the collection of revenue, and of the hoarding of grain.¹⁴ Despite the famine, revenue was rigorously collected.¹⁵

Deep transformations in the land tenure system occurred in the 1770’s. According to Hunter:

Before the commencement of 1771, one-third of a generation of peasants had been swept from the face of the earth and a whole generation of once rich families had been reduced to indigence...

¹⁴ Monckton Jones *op. cit.* letters and documents: 207, 211-212; Fort William-India House, letters dated 4 February, 31 August, 11 September 1770, 28 August 1771, 9 March 1772: 117-131, 361-368; Prasad 1960: 191-194, 224-229.

¹⁵ The East India Company was informed in 1772:

The influence [of the 1770 famine] on the revenue has been yet unnoticed, and even *unfelt, but by those from whom it is collected*; for notwithstanding

In 1776 the scarcity of cultivators had completely transposed the relations of landlords and tenants in Bengal...

(1868: 56, 59-60).

The process of depopulation continued for fifteen years after the famine; cultivators fled to the cities; the impossibility to pay the revenue took many to prison.

The Paharias' communal system of production

The situation of disorder and scarcity brought about by the famine affected the Paharias in a lesser degree since they could fall back to the forests for survival. It added, nevertheless, to the changes that had been taking place in the agreements between them and the zamindars of the plains.

At that time, the economic life of the Paharias could be characterized as based on a communal system of production, dependent on a territory of forests and hill slopes (Pathy 1982: 37-39). The Paharias used land mainly as a subject of labour.¹⁶ They depended on forest products and hunting, practicing some agriculture (O'Malley *op. cit.*: 34), which puts them marginally into the agricultural self-sustaining category. Labour was family-based and followed the principle of reciprocity.

Today they still live on the forests and practice slash-and-burn cultivation on the flat hill tops. In the low hilly areas they have taken to plough cultivation where the forests have disappeared, and to a combination of both forms of cultivation at intermediate altitudes (Vidyarthi *op. cit.*: 26-27). Their original system of production, in which shifting land and the right to its usufruct were collectively vested in the community, became endangered

the loss of at least one-third of the inhabitants of the province, and the consequent decrease of the cultivation, *the net collections of the year 1771 exceeded even those of 1768...* (Letter from the Revenue Department, Fort William, Nov. 3, 1772. Prasad *op. cit.* 417-430. Italics added. Also N.K. Sinha *op. cit.*: 54-55). Revenue collection was made under pressure (Forrest 1910: 265-266).

¹⁶ Conducive to "a type of 'instantaneous' production whose output is immediately available, allowing a process of *sharing* which takes place at the end of each enterprise" (Meillassoux 1972: 99), as in the case of hunting and gathering.

by the immigration of non-*adivasi* cultivators and a consequent reduction of forest lands when these were opened to intensive agriculture.¹⁷

The Paharias had until the end of the eighteenth century a history of independence. The Mughal government only exerted nominal control over them and seemed to have accepted the idea that no revenue was obtainable from the hilly areas. In my view, by the eighteenth century a modified version of the arrangements based on reciprocity had already been extended beyond the community in the form of the annual agreements with the zamindars of the plains, whereby divisional and village headmen (*sardars* and *manjhis*) took charge of detecting crime, and Paharia contingents guarded the hill passes and prevented raids upon the plains. The Paharias thus exchanged protection for the zamindars' respect for their economic independence. The *sardars* were given service tenures (*jagirs*) in the plains. However, the zamindars' growing desire for control over people and land became a real threat to Paharia economic self-sufficiency. Raids that took place following the 1770 famine often reflected the need of the Paharias to check the advance of the cultivators of the plains. More than simple economic survival guided the Paharias in their raids at the end of the eighteenth century: by then they were engaged in an open guerrilla warfare to safeguard their independence.

Colonialism: "the most rational mode of domination"

British military penetration into these areas began two years after acquiring the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765. From 1767 to 1778 the British extended their control over these areas with the aim of subjecting them to the payment of revenue. Captain Brooke, Militar Governor of the Jungleterry,¹⁸ estab-

¹⁷ The Paharia is the only "Scheduled Tribe" whose population has been constantly declining since 1931 (set at 93 282 in the 1971 Census). The formerly selfsufficient Paharias are now plagued by illness, malnutrition, debts, harassment by forest officials, and by the illegal use of their lands (as for mining) (Narayan 1984: 26-27).

¹⁸ The British called Santal Parganas, parts of Hazaribagh, Monghyr and Bhagalpur, the *Jungleterry* or *Jungle tarai*.

lished armed control over the area and set up a scheme "of pacification" based on the transformation of the Paharias into instruments of the colonial administration, and on their incorporation into the colonial economy by settling them and establishing markets at the outskirts of the plains (O'Malley *op. cit.*: 36). The plan, sanctioned by the Government in 1778, was carried out by August Cleveland, Collector of Bhagalpur.

Cleveland's subjugation of the Jungleterry has been referred to as "the most permanent,... the most rational mode of domination".¹⁹ His mode of domination was in fact corrupt. It proved also not to be permanent and collapsed after Cleveland died.

Cleveland's measures were neither conciliatory nor benevolent, as usually portrayed. They were simply an example of colonial control tactics.²⁰ Among other things, he formed a corps of Paharia archers (the Bhagalpur Hill Rangers, disbanded in 1857), who were to be used against their own people. He also set up a tribunal of *sardars*, presided over by himself, to try their brethren and execute the sentences. Cleveland took advantage of the animosity between Paharias and Santals. Santals were sentenced on false charges of dacoity and murder, sometimes to death, by the Paharia Councils he set up. Adivasi protest in the area could thus be repressed by the new bodies of native collaborators created by Cleveland.

Cleveland made explicit his colonial policy in a letter dated November 21, 1780:

The circulation of money in the hills by Government appears to me the most likely bait to ensure the attachment of the chiefs... The enemies of Government are to be considered as enemies by the hill people... It shall be... the duty of the Corps to bring all refractory hill chiefs and Gautwalls to terms...

(O'Malley *op. cit.*: 38-39. Italics added).

Sardars and *manjhis* began receiving regular cash payments

¹⁹ As stated in the inscription on the monument dedicated to him in Bhagalpur (O'Malley *op. cit.*: 41).

²⁰ See Ganguly 1958: 19; Forrest *op. cit.*: 79; O'Malley *op. cit.*: 37; Hunter 1877: 305-307; Srivastava 1981.

for their collaboration. The administration considered the operative "a financial success" which contributed to breaking the control of the local zamindars and facilitated the Government's direct management of the area.²¹

How the Santals became "the day labourers of Lowland Bengal"

The Santals as settled agriculturalists:

The Santals, although not considered to be as "fierce... nor as hostile" as the Paharias, were nevertheless an obstacle for the regional completion of colonial control:

Until 1790, the Santals were the pest of the adjacent lowlands... Every winter, as soon as they had gathered in the rice crop..., the whole nation moved down upon the plains, hunting in the forests and plundering the open country on the line of march...

(Hunter 1868: 219).

Hunting and gathering —complementary activities for these settled agriculturalists— were considered to be plundering by the British. Paradoxically, Hunter also remarks that amongst the Santals "crime and criminal officers... [were] almost unknown" (*Ibid.*: 217).

Santals considered land to be a village patrimony. According to customary law, the individual had the right to the usufruct of land but not to its possession nor inheritance. All economic activities were based on cooperation.²²

²¹ Out of the East India Company's experiences in the control of the Rajmahal hills originated the Nonregulation system (*Regulation I*, 1796 on justice). In 1823 the government promised not to take revenue from the Paharias. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Paharias were government tenants with occupancy right on their lands but unable to dispose of them (*Ibid.*: 214-217).

²² The village *paramanik* was in charge of matters related to land and cultivation, and justly distributed land among the community's members at the end of every year, when every family handed over its right to use the land it had previously been allotted, for it to be redistributed. The Santal clans were

Santals were territorially organized into confederacies of about twelve villeges (*parganas*), which regulated matters of justice and conflict resolution, the decisions being implemented by a council (*panchayat*). Superior to this council was the Hunt Council (*Lo Bir Sendra*) with jurisdiction over a larger number of villages. Village chiefs (*manjhis*), with no special prerogatives, were first informally elected and later accepted on hereditary grounds. A *more hor* ("group of five"), similar to the *panchayat*, was found in every village. Decisions were usually taken by consensus. Temporal or permanent excommunication (*bitlaha*) was the most severe possible punishment.²³

Colonialism gives birth to a "tribal reserve"

At the end of the eighteenth century important migrations took place among the Santals of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa due to problems they had with the local zamindars and to the situation created by the 1770 famine (O'Malley 1938: 51).

In 1812, Sutherland, Magistrate of Bhagalpur, recommended that the colonial government declare the hill tract and the adjacent plains in Paharia and Santal country to be government property. Subsequently, the colonial Government took possession of the Damin-i-koh as direct proprietor and from 1832 on promoted the migration of Santals, reputed to be excellent clearers of lands and cultivators, into the region.²⁴ By 1851 there were already 82 785 adivasi and non-adivasi migrants in the Damin, living in 1 473 villages, as well as 10 000 other people established beyond the demarcation fence.²⁵ Only the 1 164 Santal villages

not related to occupational ascription, had equal status (except for two: Chorai and Besera), and only served to regulate marriages (Dalton *op. cit.*; Hunter 1868; Risley 1908; C. Mukherjea 1943; Man 1867; Datta-Majumder 1956; Orans 1965; Culshaw *op. cit.*).

²³ Each village had also a religious chief (*naia*, *nayaka*, *naeke* or *laya*). The solar deity, Sing Bonga, was the most important one in the Santal pantheon, followed by Chando, the moon, and Marang Buru, the Great Mountain, and lesser deities, with whom the *ojha* acted as an intermediary (*Ibid.*).

²⁴ Migrants came from Orissa, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Barabhum, Chotanagpur, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Midnapur, Bankura and Birbhum.

²⁵ The ring fence of pillars marking the Damin-i-koh was 295 miles in circumference and embraced 866 sq. miles of highland and 500 of lowland territo-

paid rent. The Paharias, meanwhile, remained in the high part of the hills.

What did the creation of the Damin imply? The colonial government *expropriated* the lands of the inhabitants of the area and created a "tribal reserve" for its own profit. It exacted labour from the Santals who worked as day labourers to open the area to cultivation. Subsequently, Santals were transformed into tenants paying rent in cash on lands onto which the then Deputy Collector Pontet brought new migrants. The area under cultivation was thus enlarged and "a handsome revenue" obtained.²⁶ A money economy expanded through the new weekly markets and new commodities were introduced (Hunter 1868: 228). The control of the Rajmahal hills was also considered by the British to be a strategic imperative that provided them with a guard post over the Ganges river route.

The Santals, transformed into "the day labourers of Lowland Bengal", began to be described as industrious, as an agricultural reserve army. However, the moment they challenged the pattern of colonial domination in 1855, they were again depicted as "blood-thirsty savages" (Hunter *ibid.*: 220-225; CR 1958: 259). It was precisely in the Damin-i-koh where the 1855 Santal Movement started (Devalle 1977).

From lineage-based societies to state formation: Mundas, Oraons, Bhumijis

Chotanagpur's settled agricultural communities shared a similar language and social institutions and, up to the advent of the first Chotanagpur Nagbansi raja (c. fifth century A.D.), followed parallel patterns of social, economic and cultural development.

According to S.C. Roy, the Mundas settled in Chotanagpur around the sixth century B.C.²⁷ The lands they occupied were

ry (Hunter 1868: 223 fn. 61a). For details, see Gait *et al.* 1909: 237 ff.; Hunter 1877: 309-310; CR 1856: 238; Roy Chaudhuri 1965: 74-75; Raghavaiah 1971: 148).

²⁶ The aims of the administration are clearly stated in the letter Deputy Collector Pontet sent to H.J. James, Acting Collector of Bhagalpur, in 1837 (*Cit.* in Roy Chaudhuri 1959: 3 ff).

²⁷ At first there were groups of independent villages led by a secular (*mun-*

considered to be the village's patrimony. The descendants of the founding clan of the village (*khuntkattidars*) controlled the land, protecting their rights under customary inheritance laws. Individuals integrated into the community through adoption²⁸ could have the usufruct of lands allotted to them for maintenance, but did not have other rights over them (S.C. Roy 1912: 166 ff., 433, 435; Hoffmann *op. cit.*).

The *khuntkatti* system and the egalitarian character of Munda society began to change with the development of social stratification based on a differential attainment of power over land and with the transformation of the offices of village chief and of chief of confederacy into hereditary positions. This marked the beginning of a tendency towards the establishment of chiefdoms.

The election of a raja among the Mundas and the Oraons, initially with no prerogatives over land, initiated a change in their economic and political patterns which led to state formation. In time, the Raj Nagbansi family of Chotanagpur drew up genealogies to support its claims to a Rajput origin.²⁹

Settled agriculture, the continuous occupation of a territory and a territorial administrative organization provided the basis for state formation among the Mundas and Oraons. The emergence of an aristocracy with economic privileges (control over land, labour, services and rent), accelerated the already existing process of social differentiation. The ensuing mode of production has been characterized as "feudal".³⁰

da) and a religious chief (*pahan*), and a *panchayat*. Later, villages came together in confederancies (*parha* or *patti*), led by a *manki* and a *parhapanchayat*. Mundas were divided in exogamous groups (*kili*), each of whom founded a village. The descendants were known as *khuntkattidars*. *Mundas* and *pahans* came usually from the founding clan.

Sing Bonga, the solar deity, leads the Munda pantheon. Village deities (*hatu bongako*) are venerated in the sacred grove (*sarna*).

²⁸ They were called *eta haturenko* ("men from other villages") or *parha horoko*.

²⁹ There is no historical account of the emergence of kinship among the Mundas nor on the origins of the Nagbansis. S.C. Roy (*Ibid.*: 141; 1915: 136 ff.) and Dalton (*Ibid.*: 164-168) recorded a myth of origin according to which the first raja may have been a Naga adopted by a *manki*. See also P.C. Roy Chaudhuri (1965: 143-144) and K.S. Singh (1971: 170).

³⁰ Patty 1982; K.S. Singh 1971; S.C. Roy 1912.

There is an ongoing debate on the categorization of pre-colonial non-Euro-

At first, the village community had to make collective payments of a permanently fixed rent to the overlord, and the peasants had to provide free labour (*begari*). Later, these demands evolved into a system of *abwabs* (tributes) levied by the raja and the *jagirdars* (K.S. Singh 1966: 3-4; 1977: 175).

Munda society ceased to be egalitarian and based on the communal holding of resources with a collective organization of labour and production. Dalton has noted on the emergence of two classes in each village: the privileged *bhuinhars* ("the militia of the state") and the mass of the peasantry working on rent-paying lands (*rajhas*) (*Op. cit.*: 167). The situation was more complicated.

I visualize the system of social stratification based on the control of land and labour that developed in Chotanagpur together with state formation as follows: There was a rent-receiving ruling class at the top composed of the raja, his family and the new landlord sector.³¹ There followed a dominant peasant group (*khuntkattidars*, later *bhuinhars*), descendants of the original settlers and principal office-holders. This sector had a privileged position, paying quit rent to the raja and holding some lands rent free. However, they were also found cultivating *rajha* lands ("the share of the raja") and rendering free services. This dominant peasant sector could more or less preserve its control over the means of production at the level of production (Mukhia 1981: 290; Stein 1985: 21). To a certain extent this may have also been the case with the next group in the hierarchy: peasants working the lands of the former group and on *rajha* lands who paid rent, produce or both to the upper groups. A fourth layer was that of the landless agricultural labourers working on the landlords' privileged private lands (*manjihars*), paying the landlord in services mostly translated into cultivation for free, with no right of occupancy.

In general terms, it was the existence of a group's superior

pean social formations and the applicability of the category "feudalism" to India (See *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1985. *Comp.* H. Mukhia 1981 with R.S. Sharma 1965, 1985).

³¹ The new landlord sector comprised the *jagirdars* (holders of a *jagir*: conditional or unconditional assignment of land for its revenue), the *korposhdars* (maintenance grantees) and the *thikadars* (holders of a temporary or permanent land leases).

rights over the rest of the peasants' lands that allowed the extraction of surplus in various forms: the lord's share of rent, labour, gift and free services. Given that only the surplus was extracted, the self-sufficiency of the peasantry probably did not break down in the case of cultivators working land under rent or giving part of the produce.³² It seems doubtful that this was the case of the fourth group, which had an insecure position on the land they tilled and was made to contribute forced labour.

The rajas, who became increasingly Hinduized, began to give land grants to brahmins from Upper and Central India, who were brought to spread Hinduism among the population. Hindu and Muslim moneylenders, merchants and potential courtiers followed in their wake, also obtaining land grants from the raja. They eventually appropriated these lands for themselves by dispossessing the cultivators who had opened them to cultivation and tilled them.³³

The process of immigration intensified during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Peasants were encouraged to migrate to the area to extend agriculture and thus generate a larger surplus. The raja also brought military mercenaries, who were remunerated with *jagirs*, for purposes of defense and to control the peasantry. Land grants were given to all these alien elements. This led to the emergence of the *jagirdars* who, at first, collected part of the agricultural produce, and later established a cash rent system.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the raja, his family and the *jagirdars* were already indebted to Muslim, Hindu and Sikh moneylenders and merchants who were paid with permanent or temporary leases (*thikas*), with perpetual leases at fixed rentals and with usufructuary leases. In this way, by the nineteenth century, many of the original settlers had been transformed through this process of making land grants into tenants. Ultimately, only the wastelands and the forests were left to them.

It has been sometimes argued that the raja gave land grants as a way of relinquishing his claims over the surplus generated

³² Cf. Habib for medieval India (1985: 48).

³³ The concept of service land grants seems to have been alien to the area. The practice may have started quite late since the oldest registered lease dates back only to 1676 (S.C. Roy 1912: 164-165).

in those lands in favour of the *jagirdars* (S.C. Roy 1912: 165), but that he did not intend to give them full control over them, which was what eventually did happen. In contrast to what happened in the European feudal system (peasants received land grants to cultivate these lands for the lord), Indian rajas gave land grants in order to get the surplus collected. Peasants paid rent to the *jagirdars*, but did not necessarily enjoy security on the land they tilled since they could be replaced by other peasants who provided forced labour in the form of agricultural work (Sharma *op. cit.*).

The new landlords also intervened in the internal affairs of the villages, restricting the activities of the *panchayat* and exerting pressure on the chiefs in order to preclude independent decisions. Non-economic coercion served to reinforce the economic control over the means and processes of production, and formed an integral part of the pre-capitalist mode of exploitation. A complex land tenure system thus evolved in Chotanagpur hand in hand with the rising power of the rajas. All this was later compounded with the changes brought about by British colonial administration.³⁴

A process of "feudalization" also took place among the Bhumijis. Surajit Sinha (1962: 42) as well as K.S. Singh (1971: 171) suggest that the emergence of the state among the Bhumijis was an endogenous development, a fact that would make them the exception among other Kolarian groups. Dalton earlier noted that the Raja of Dhalbhum, for instance, was unmistakably of Bhumij origin, despite the rajas' claim of being kshatriyas or Rajputs. Dalton further stated that the zamindars were also of "the same race as their people" (*op cit.*: 174).

S. Sinha considers that brahmanic influence, starting between the seventh and twelfth centuries A.D., was a force that could have contributed to state formation. By the sixteenth century the Bhumijis were already organized in kingdoms and claimed to be Rajputs. At the end of the eighteenth century the British, after encountering the strong resistance of the local chiefs, forced their way into the Jungle Mahals where they found already well established kingdoms in Barabhum and Patkum (S. Sinha 1953).

S. Sinha views this development as being one of "a feudalism-

³⁴ See S.C. Roy *ibid.*: app. III, and 1961: 278-323.

tic structure [evolving] from a tribal democratic base", in the course of which former administrative units did not change their democratic character. But was this democratic base maintained once the social stratification accompanying a "feudalistic structure" emerged? This seems not to have been the case. A landholding sector, with the raja or zamindar at the top, included the chiefs (*sardar ghatwals*) of a number of administrative units of twelve villages each, the chiefs of each of these units (*sadiyals*), village headmen with service tenures (*ghatwals*), soldiers (*tanbedars* or *paiks*) also with tenures of cultivable land, and the *kuntkatjidars*. Poor peasants, artisans and landless labourers came last.

The raja obtained his income mainly from agricultural land in the villages over which he had attained proprietorship. The tenants provided free labour and a certain amount of "tribute" in kind on the occasion of the Durga Puja festival. Artisans gave a share of their products to the raja in exchange for land free of rent. The *sardar ghatwals* only paid a symbolic revenue to the raja, and in fact preserved a great deal of autonomy.

Different communities: brahmins as priests, literate people as officers for the administration, service castes, craftsmen and trading groups, were encouraged to immigrate to the territories of the Barabhum, Patkum and Bhagmundi "feudal" chiefs. These elements did not endanger the supremacy of the Bhumijis, particularly over land. The brahmins, however, acquired economic and political power after receiving generous land and village grants (*brahmottars*). Many of them settled as tenants or started operating as moneylenders and *diwans* (Jha 1967: 109-110).

In addition, the *ghatwals* (village headmen), entrusted with defense and the maintenance of order, became "proprietors of states comprising each from one to twenty manors... the most substantial tenants under them... [being] also hereditary Ghatwals rendering services and paying... a very low fixed rent..." (Dalton *op. cit.*: 175).

The differential access to land and politico-administrative offices, and thus to power, gave rise to a fairly rigid social stratification, ritually expressed in caste-ranking combined with widespread Hinduization.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the immigrants' encroachment of Bhumij economic life was considerable, a situation aggravated by the effects of the Permanent Settlement. Brit-

ish law tended to favour the usurious activities of the money-lenders and this adversely affected the indebted rajas and chiefs as well as other sectors of the population. Zamindars and *sardars* had also begun to exact an increasing number of illegal cesses that soon became permanent taxes which added to the tolls levied by the petty officials of the East India Company.

The common grievance of indebtedness finally induced some rajas and zamindars to join forces with the discontented people in a series of armed insurgencies that swept the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum, culminating in the 1832 uprising (Devalle *op. cit.*).

Chotanagpur and Singhbhum under colonial rule

In 1765, Chotanagpur came under the rule of the East India Company, and the first agreement on rents was reached with the Raja of Chotanagpur in 1771. In 1789 it was suggested that the Permanent Settlement should not apply to Chotanagpur since the revenue received from this area was more a fixed tribute than a tax revenue determined by land production. Nevertheless, the Permanent Settlement was introduced in the last years of the eighteenth century. This caused an adverse reaction in the rural areas among the zamindars when lands on which they had been declared full proprietors came to be auctioned off to cover revenue arrears (Gopal 1949; Jha 1963; Guha 1981). The zamindars' indebtedness and the operation of usurious capital became one of the pivots around which the land market revolved, with the result that land started passing into the hands of moneylenders. With regard to the adivasi peasantry, there was no room in the new provisions for the customary land rights of the original settlers and the village office-holders. These omissions in the new system gave the zamindars increased power to evict peasants from their lands. Customary law was abruptly replaced by contract law.³⁵

³⁵ The Permanent Settlement vested individual land proprietorship on a host of landholders taken in bloc to be zamindars, who then could freely inherit, sell, mortgage or give away these lands. While the Permanent Settlement reinforced the new zamindars' position, it seriously weakened that of the common peasantry, and created sharp conflicts in the countryside.

Increasing rent demands by the British began to affect the zamindars. The Raja of Chotanagpur had constant difficulties in paying the revenue; zamindars were ruined; landlords with unlimited power increased the rents of the cultivators, and the oppression and pauperization of the peasantry grew.

In 1817, Munda and Oraon lands were put under the direct administration of the East India Company as part of the District of Ramgarh and the Raja of Chotanagpur ceased to be a tributary. In 1823, the government took over from the Raja and his *jagirdars* the right to tax the production of liquor, to collect road-tolls, and to tax the products sold in the market. For all this the government received Rs. 6 500 which was added to the Rs. 15 041 fixed as revenue payment under the 1799 Settlement.

The situation of instability and the incidence of recurrent rural insurgency³⁶ led in 1833 to an administrative change: the creation of the South West Frontier Agency. With the establishment of courts of justice and military cantonments, the *jagirdars* and *thikadars* continued the despoliation of the adivasi peasantry, but now under a semblance of legality. Around 1856, the *jagirdars*, some 600 in number, had come to control approximately 150 villages each. Munda land inheritance laws were disregarded by the landlords. Backed by British law, the landlord "regained" possession of lands when there were no male heirs of the tenants. As Hoffmann noted in relation to laws forbidding adivasis to sell their lands:

The lawgiver intended the lands to be *inalienable*, i.e., to remain in the possession of the raiyats. The lawyer says: they are *unsaleable*, i.e., the raiyat cannot give his valuable right in the land *for money*, but he can give it *for nothing*...

(Hoffmann *op. cit.*: fn. 337. Italics in the original).

Complete villages could be bought at the Ranchi Court, as for instance, when the village headman went into debt and gave

³⁶ For instance: the protest of the Mundas of Tamar in 1789 and 1797, the one led by Dukan Shahi Manki in 1807, those in Rahe and Silli in 1796-1798, in Rahe in 1812, the major movements of 1819-1820 led by Rudu and Konta Munda, and of the Mundas of Sonapur in 1831-1832.

his village as a guarantee. As soon as the creditor won the case, he started acting as a zamindar, demanding rent from the *khuntkattidar* peasants.

The process of peasant exploitation and land alienation commenced in Chotanagpur well before the establishment of colonial control, but it acquired major proportions under British administration with the introduction of an alien legal and tax system and administrative measures that aimed at attaining a more effective system of revenue collection. For instance, the system of rent payment in services (*kamioti* or *beth begari*), which had evolved into a veritable bonded labour system, was regulated but not abolished by different laws that culminated in *The Bihar and Orissa Kamiati Agreements Act* (1920) (A.G. Roy *et al.* 1964: 2120 ff; Mukherjee 1933: 232).

Alienation of the peasants' land was not contained by *The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act* (Act II BC, 1869), neither was the incidence of illegal rent increases controlled by *The Chota Nagpur Landlord and Tenants Procedure Act* (1879) (Rent Law). Landlords imposed rents even on trees, especially those that produced lac, as well as making other exactions (Gait *et al. op. cit.*; S.C. Roy 1912: 292).³⁷

The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (1908) (Bengal Act VI of 1908) protecting *khuntkatti* rights on land, was enacted when it was already too late. By then few *khuntkatti* villages still existed.³⁸ The restrictions on land transfers from "tribals to non-tribals" under section 46 of the Act also fostered the emergence of a class of adivasis who were moneylenders on a part-time basis (lending as a complementary activity to agriculture) when laws made moneylending and the appropriation of lands from debtors difficult for non-adivasis (K.S. Singh 1972: 370-380).

Further south, the Hos had settled in Singhbhum, a region

³⁷ The situation of Chotanagpur's adivasi peasants in mid-nineteenth century was graphically described by *Calcutta Review* in 1869:

When the oppressor wants a horse, the Kol must pay; when he desires a palki, the Kols have to pay, and afterwards to bear him therein... Does somebody die in his house? he taxes them; is a child born? again a tax... And this plundering, punishing, robbing system goes on till the Kols run away. These unjust people ...even force the Kols to borrow... (*cit.* in S.C. Roy 1912: 221).

³⁸ See Govt. of Bihar and Orissa 1931: 8-9, 109 ff.; chapter XVIII, sec. 242 to 256; S.C. Roy 1961; K.S. Singh 1971: 102-107.

well suited for defense, after migrating from Chotanagpur. The central plateau was well protected by ranges of hills and thick jungle. To the south, where the hill ranges were higher, lay the Kolhan. The Hos owed nominal supremacy to the Raja of Singhbhum and remained independent, resisting the attempts of the Raja to subjugate them militarily. Only forty years after the East India Company gained control over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, did British troops enter the Kolhan. Later, after major military operations in 1836, the Hos surrendered. In 1837, the Kolhan was made a Governement Estate. Singhbhum was constituted as a new district, and a British officer was posted at Chaibasa with authority over 620 villages and around 90 000 people (Risley *op. cit.*: Ch. IV). A rent of eight annas for every plough was fixed after the British 1819-1820 military campaign. This system was confirmed in 1837. Thirty years later, a settlement based on a fixed assesment on the lands was introduced (Dalton *op. cit.*: 181-182; Jha 1971: 74). This mode of assesment marked the end of the semi-independent life of the Hos.

The previous system of Ho government through heads of *pirs* (divisions) and of villages was absorbed into the colonial administration. The *munda* (village chief), for instance, came to act as the village police officer and helped to collect the tax revenue.

The first regular settlement in Singhbhum took place in 1897, following the introduction of forest reservation policies and the opening of the Bengal Nagpur Railway.³⁹ At that time, non-advaisis had already acquired land in the area, and moneylenders were giving loans at high interests and taking land from indebted Ho cultivators.

According to Dalton (*ibid.*), the Hos were thus "tamed, softened, and civilized". In other words, they were conquered and forcibly integrated into the colonial system. The process of despoliation of their lands and resources that then started was to be further accelerated when Singhbhum was acknowledged as a source of industrial wealth.

³⁹ The last settlement took place in 1913-1918 under the provisions of *The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act* (1908).

Jharkhand's incorporation into the colonial system

The main factors that marked the incorporation of Jharkhand's adivasi societies into the colonial system may be summed up as follows:

1. Precapitalist systems of production were articulated with the colonial economic formation under the dominance of capitalism.

The introduction of individual land ownership by means of the Permanent Settlement, resulted in the alienation of adivasi lands, in the pauperization of the peasantry, and in the migration of contract labourers—in fact a form of bonded labour—to the tea plantations in Assam and to the coal mines of Bihar and Bengal. A new legal system came to regulate both land alienation in the form of transfers or sales—since land became a commodity—and the *kamloti* system of exploitation of peasant labour.

The pervasive effect of a money economy, the creation of a market in land, the emergence of a moneylending landed sector and the development of chronic peasant indebtedness, were instrumental in producing deep transformations in agrarian economic relationships.

The changes imposed upon the existing precapitalist societies by colonialism were totally different in nature and scale to the ones these societies had formerly experienced. In pre-colonial times, the partial transformation of the old communal systems occurred over the course of a very long period. Apparently, the effects of change and conflicts among the nascent classes were locally solved without entailing deep social dislocations.⁴⁰

The main conflict that emerged in Chotanagpur as a result of progressive subinfeudation was the one between different kinds of landlords and the peasantry. The latter, however, could retain a certain control at the level of the processes of production, maintaining a degree of selfsufficiency. Furthermore, the adivasi

⁴⁰ For instance, it has been suggested that the accession of the Nagbansis as rajas of Chotanagpur provoked open conflict (Thapar and Siddiqi *op cit.*: 30, fn. 2). As well, Bhumij "feudal" society seems to have been ridden with conflict involving the raja-zamindars and their tenants (Jha 1967: 12-13).

states were small and lacked the necessary resources to give rise to a separate landlord class with autonomous power, able to drastically undermine the resilient communal base.

Chiefs and rajas also had some limitations regarding what lands they could have access to. It was the inflow of people alien to these societies who coveted lands in adivasi territories, people like merchants and moneylenders, who found in the system of land grants the channel through which to obtain and augment their control over land and peasants. This emerging landlord class was precisely the one that gained from British conquest. The members of this alien class presented themselves to the British rulers as if they were zamindars (Hoffmann 1961: fn. 325). The new laws then accepted them as such at the same time that these laws ignored the existing *khuntkatti* system. The village's collective responsibility for the payments of fix quit rents was also replaced by law with the peasant's individual payment. It was colonialism that created the conditions for the emergence of a rich peasant class from among the claimants to the old zamindar status. The first step in this direction, the Permanent Settlement of 1793, was "as much a permanent settlement of rights as of revenue" (Gopal *op. cit.*: 7).

The imposition of the capitalist mode of production in its colonial form brought with it the restructuration of the existing precapitalist systems which were simultaneously undermined and preserved but distorted, to fulfill the needs of capital.

The transformation of the original communal systems became complete in the 1770's, as in the case of the Paharias when they were "settled" and incorporated into the market economy. That they paid no taxes in the nineteenth century did not mean that they were not already unequally integrated into the colonial system. They were made to pay their share serving as collaborators of the colonial regime, fulfilling the role of police in the repression of discontent in their areas. At present, the Paharias' continuing reliance on forest products is not so much a remnant of an old system as simply a mechanism for survival in a crippled peasant economy. In the case of the Santals, the creation of the Damin-i-koh initiated their transformation into an agricultural reserve army and a pool of captive labour for the capitalist plantations in Assam.

Adivasi societies were shaped by colonialism into units —

“the tribes”— who were given a subordinate role in the new economic system. They were “preserved” in this constructed way to permit the reproduction of the labour force and to ensure their survival at the level of subsistence. Capitalist plantations in Assam, indigo plantations in Bengal and mines in Jharkhand, developed on the basis of the harsh exploitation of the labour of temporary adivasi workers. Their rural communities of origin were also exploited since, besides reproducing the labour force, they took care of the sick, the aged and the jobless.⁴¹

In the context of the colonial economy, the rural community became “an organic component of capitalist production” (Meillassoux 1972: 103). The village was preserved as the source of subsistence for the worker’s family. Wages were kept low, barely permitting the physical survival of the worker himself. Wages were reduced still further if workers were teamed in gangs and paid by piece rates. In consequence, by the mid-nineteenth century, Hazaribagh and Ranchi were considered to be “the best recruiting districts to get labourers for the tea plantations”.⁴² In the three years between 1864 and 1867, one percent of the total population of Chotanagpur District had been recruited (many emigrants were not recorded). In the 1901 Census, more than 91 000 persons born in Chotanagpur were registered as working in Assam (Antrobus 1957: 348-385; B.B. Sinha 1979: 180). The drain of migrant labour came from areas that were certainly not overpopulated. At the end of the nineteenth century the effects of this drain were compared to those of the Black Death in Europe (Thapar and Siddiqi *op. cit.*: 55).

⁴¹ Temporary workers in the mines were not entitled to any sick leave or privilege. The very way in which mining companies acquired rights over land under the *Land Acquisition Act* (1894) was based on the assumption that the rural communities had to perform this supportive role. In Singhbhum, a constant supply of cheap labour was ensured when former rights and tenures were trespassed (Corbridge 1982).

⁴² See *Bengalee* 1886 No. 40, 41, 43; 1887. Antrobus 1957. Laws passed in 1901 forbade the recruitment except by licensed contractors. The 1932 *Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (Act XXII of 1932) allowed the free movement of labourers and gave them a certain degree of security. The *Payment of Wages Act* (1936), the *Industrial Employment Standing Order Act* (1946), and the *Industrial Dispute Act* (1947), benefitted the labourers only marginally (M.R. Chaudhuri 1978: 22).

The Bengalee stated in 1886 that Santal Parganas constituted "the mainstay of the labour force" in the tea gardens, supplying 44.7% of the workers (1886, núm. 39). Santals had been also considered since the beginning of the nineteenth century to be "the means of rendering British [indigo] enterprise possible through the whole of Bengal". They formed a labour force that capital exploited with no guilt, making use of ethnic stereotypes which marked them for specific forms of wage slavery. These peoples were seen as:

Patient of labour ...able to live on a penny a day, contented with roots when better food is not to be had...

(Hunter 1868: 224, 226-227).

The fact that there was an assured pool of labour supply in Jharkhand also made the rising death-toll of workers due to illness and harsh working conditions not a matter of concern, and precluded improvements in the situation. Contemporary reports on the tea plantations clearly indicate a declining birth-rate, abortions and suicides among the labourers, showing that adivasi workers had reached the limits of endurance and were unwilling to perpetuate the group ("ethnic suicide"). From the point of view of the capitalist enterprise, the unwanted workers, disabled by illness or starvation, could not be sent back to their original communities, neither was the enterprise going to incur any social welfare expense. In the light of this, the high death-tolls and the declining birth-rates point to a situation I call *gradual genocide*.

2. The process of colonial conquest and consolidation was not a peaceful affair. Subjugation, often glossed over as the "pacification" of territories, was attained by force. Military operations consistently preceded the establishment of administrative control in all areas of Jharkhand and were launched every time there were signs of protest. Control was not only attained by the actual exercise of force but by a permanent threat of violence (Devalle 1988). This total "culture of repression" (Huizer 1974: 21 ff.) used physical violence as well as other means of coercion which crystallized in a legal and revenue system that fostered the operation of pressure mechanisms like the reproduction of indebtedness and extensive forced labour. It also used native institu-

tions and forms of social organization, putting them at the service of the colonial system.

“Feudal” states were dismembered under the pressure of the increasing rent demands that affected all strata of the society. This led to the general exploitation of the peasantry and created conditions for a heavy inflow of immigrants who came to form a new landlord class. This also provided the basis for the reproduction of a vicious circle of moneylending and indebtedness on a large scale. The advance of landlordism-moneylending led to the transformation of the *adivasi* cultivators into tenants and bonded labourers, mostly as a result of the practice of rack-renting.

3. Fixed ethnic stereotypes — “the tribes” — were constructed to denote a variety of systems of production and cultures, ignoring the complexities in the socioeconomic organization, law systems, history and civilizational patterns of the *adivasi* societies. These societies were perceived as an undifferentiated mass from which to extract labour and revenue, a process that was thought to lead automatically to their acquisition of “civilization”: the creation of the colonized man in body and soul.

The existing *diku-adivasi* (alien-indigenous) opposition — implying regional/ethnic *cum* economic differences — was indirectly sanctioned by early legal provisions like the Permanent Settlement, and fixed in the new correlations established in the transformed system of agrarian relationships: *diku* landlord — “tribal” tenant/agricultural labourer. The “alien exploiters” (that the term *diku* came to indicate) gained added strength when they became zamindars under the protection of British legal and administrative system which conferred them the status of private land proprietors.⁴³ In the new division of labour, “the tribals” functioned only as agricultural labourers and as a reserve of labour force.

Under colonialism, communities that evaded the other

⁴³ Private property of land was known in India prior to 1793 under Hindu and Muslim rule but the ownership rights were divided up among several different persons. In medieval India, the *raiyyats* preserved their rights on the land they cleared and tilled, while those who were granted service tenures (*jagirs*) only had a conditional grant and depended on the State. The fundamental change introduced with the Permanent Settlement was to give the zamindars the status of exclusive private proprietors.

dominant cataloguing device —caste— were defined according to the tribal paradigm. It was then that “the tribes” made their appearance in the Indian scenario. A creation of European origin, *tribe* was one of the elements through which Europe constructed part of the Indian reality.

4. A final factor must be considered for nineteenth century colonial Chotnagpur: the arrival of German Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic missions. In this way, the pillars that have classically sustained colonial penetration and ensured colonial hegemony: the military, a legal and administrative system, a capitalist economy, and the Church with its “civilizing”/educational mission were all present in Jharkhand.

The core of the Munda area was contained in the *Quadrilateral*, flanked by the Catholic churches at Bandgaon, Sarwada, Dolda and Buruduth.⁴⁴ Although the Roman Catholic mission was the last to enter the area, it attained the fastest rate of conversions (15 000 converts in 1887; 71 270 by 1900). The German Evangelical Lutheran mission was the first to settle in Chotanagpur when it established stations in Munda territory in 1845. It had 40 000 converts by 1895. The Anglicans established their first mission at Murhu by the late 1860's, follower in succeeding years by a series of outposts (K.S. Singh 1966: 13 ff.). Santals and Hos rarely converted; the bulk of adivasi Christians were Mundas and Oraons.

Education given by the different missions, based on European values, contributed to the adivasis' deculturation, and its effects are clearly observable today.

Some expected consequences resulted from the relations of the adivasi peasantry with the missions: an initial perception of British rule as just, and the use of legal means to channel protest (which would partly account for the long years of legal struggle during the Sadari Larai). In this way, the questioning of the colonial system was controlled, and violent conflict avoided until it surged up with great force at the closing of the century in the Birsaita Movement (Devalle 1977).

⁴⁴ Later on other Catholic stations were established in Karra (1891), Khunti (1892-1896), Darma (1899-1900) and Torpa (1886-1889).

Other results were not so predicatable. Adivasis who came into contact with the missions became more aware of the way in which the colonial system worked, and organized themselves to resist it. Converts refused to work without pay for the zamindars. While the mass of the cultivators held uneconomic holdings and had to resort to migration to survive, some converts had secured their lands through registration, like in the case of some *mundas* and *mankis* who retained land for their private use. Moreover, since rents did not increase as much as the prices of agricultural products, a more affluent peasant sector emerged among Chotanagpur's adivasi converts. It was possible for them to transform a certain amount of surplus into savings, as the payment of the cost of many legal procedures during the Sardari Larai seems to indicate. However, their economic power was insufficient to enable them to evolve into a rich peasant sector. Their lands were not the most productive, neither were they important in the rural land market. Capital, good lands and market control (subordinated to the colonial economy) was in the hands of *diku* zamindars (Thapar and Siddiqi *op. cit.*: 40-51). Furthermore, it was the landlord class that British legislation protected, especially from the consequences of indebtedness.⁴⁵

It is against this background that the history of Jharkhand's adivasis from the end of the eighteenth century should be understood, a history that later led to an anticolonial and ethno-national struggle (Devalle *ibid.*).

After Independence the situation did not substantially improve with the legal abolition of the zamindari system (*Bihar Land Reform Bills* [1950]) and the land ceiling legislation.⁴⁶ In fact, peasants were evicted by the landlords in great numbers in the sixties, transfers of lands increased, and the landlord class maintained its position, now relieved of the formal responsibility they had towards their tenants (Tomasson Jannuzi 1974; Das and Sen-gupta n.d.). As a result, the process of peasant differentiation accelerated. Many cultivators became agricultural labourers. In

⁴⁵ With laws like the *Relief of Encumbered Estates in Chutia Nagpur Bill* (1875), and the *Chota Nagpur Act* (1876).

⁴⁶ *Bihar Agricultural Lands — Ceilings and Management— Bill*, (1955); *Bihar Land Reforms — Fixation of Ceiling Area and Acquisition of Surplus Land— Act* (1961); *Bihar Act*, (1962). See Tomasson Jannuzi 1974.

the sixties and seventies, class oppositions were translated into an intense class struggle in Bihar's countryside, reflected in the mounting incidents of violence against dalit and adivasi peasants (A. Sinha 1982).

Special laws like the *Chota Nagpur* and the *Santal Parganas Tenancy Act* account for the fact that the proportion of adivasi agricultural labourers is lower than that of other sectors. This also explains the low amount of land sales in adivasi areas (S.R. Bose 1971: 17, 21). However, the proportion of adivasis who are cultivators has decreased⁴⁷ since this legislation could not contain moneylending and land alienation through a manipulation of the law.⁴⁸

III. THE MYTH OF THE TRIBE

Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all history...

ROLAND BARTHES, *Mythologies*

Jharkhand's socioeconomic evolution in the course of history, summarily described above, gives evidence that supports my contention that it is erroneous to place Jharkhand's adivasi societies within the artificially created framework of *tribe*. The assumed egalitarianism, the "primitive" subsistence economy with little or no external trade, the autonomy and isolation of such an ideal unit, are not to be found among Jharkhand's adivasis either now or in the past.

Well before the incorporation of adivasi precapitalist societies into the capitalist system through colonialism, internal social differentiation had already emerged. The collective holding

⁴⁷ Among the Santals, for instance, it decreased from 73.51% in 1961 to 54.9% in 1971, while the proportion of landless labourers increased from 12.19% to 34.26% in the same years (Hrach 1978: 100).

⁴⁸ This occurred despite the amendments to existing laws like the *Chotanagpur Tenancy Amendment Act* (1969), and the *Moneylenders' Act* (1974). Although rural indebtedness is endemic in Bihar, the *Bihar Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Denotified Tribes Debt Relief Act*, and the *Bihar Moneylenders' Act* were only passed in 1974. Bonded labour, regulated by the 1920 Act, is still a feature of rural Bihar.

of lands, characteristic of a communal system of production, gave way to privileged hereditary holdings in the hands of some members of the community (*mundas*, *pahans* and *mankis*). There is evidence of the development of an "aristocracy" in some of Jharkhand's adivasi societies when a family acquired special prerogatives and power over land and people. This happened among the Mundas and the Bhumijis where some lineages became ruling ones. The development of a social division of labour, which partially replaced former collective labour forms, and a differential distribution of the products of work, wealth and access to land gave rise to class divisions and to state formation in these societies.

Social differentiation also started appearing in societies like that of the Paharias based on a communal system of production when headmen began to be retributed by the zamindars with service tenures in the plains. No longer was the emergence of a social hierarchy precluded. *Jagir* lands were employed as an instrument for production and the Paharia *jagirdars* became involved in new relations of production (zamindar-intermediate *jagirdars*-cultivators).

In sum, given the qualitative aspects of the social and economic organization of the adivasi precapitalist societies of Jharkhand in pre-colonial India as well as after their subsumption under colonial capitalism, their categorization as "tribal" is at best, out of place and, at worst, ahistorical and sociologically groundless. There were in fact no tribes in Jharkhand. In essence they were a parthenogenetic creation of British colonial administration. Only by a curious trick of historical reversion could there be tribes nowadays. Adivasis live in a class society, and exist in an economic formation where the capitalist mode is dominant. What does exist, however, is the *ideology of tribe* which, in Wolpe's words, "sustains and reproduces capitalist relations of production" (1972:454).

To deny the existence of tribes in Jharkhand on socio-economic grounds, and to categorize the indigenous ethnic communities basically as agrarian in view of their historical evolution and their present prevailing economic location, does not imply that ethno-cultural formations do not exist in Jharkhand or should be ignored.

The tribal paradigm constructed unchanging societies on the basis of a limited conception of culture. The reconstructive eth-

nographic tradition, which still sustains this paradigm, restricted culture solely to its material expressions and to external symbols of collective identification. It thus denied the essential *social* nature of culture as a synthesis of a people's collective consciousness, operative in social practice. Paradoxically, given their concern with culture, the defenders of the "tribe" in fact engaged in negating the actual cultures of the populations called "tribal". The resulting picture has been one of people with a "museum culture", devoid of history and dynamism.

The solidity that "the myth of the tribe" demonstrated during the colonial era is not surprising. This myth justified the colonizer's *mission civilisatrice*. The myth has not died and nowadays nurtures developmentalism and the recommendations made by applied anthropologists and administrators. Why has it preserved its vitality? In my view, this myth has been and remains an element which fosters the expansion of State hegemony over Indian society *via* the distortion or/and nullification of the history and culture of the subordinated sectors, thus eroding the basis of their collective consciousness.⁵¹

In Jharkhand there exist ethnic formations grounded in specific socio-cultural styles which have developed in the long time dimension. This "depth of the historical field" (Abdel-Malek 1981), expressed in a consciousness of historical permanence, gives these ethnic formations continuity and elements for the formulation of endogenous social projects through which to interpret and face concrete social realities.

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THE RISE AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

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INTRODUCTION

It is not the objective of this study to examine or present the circumstances or context in which Islam appeared, nor to analyze the formation of the first Islamic community, the "Umma" of Medina, based on Mohammed's prophetic activities. The objective is to try to establish at what moment we can speak of a true state, consolidated or constituted, which can be called "Islamic." Further on we will explain our definition of "state" and "Islamic".

Bearing in mind that the Islamic state did not appear nor was it implanted in a vacuum, in accordance with the principle "there are no leaps in nature" (*natura non facit saltus*), we must suppose that there was a basis for this state and a gradual process of development. It is therefore necessary to consider the external and internal political and social conditions which pre-Islamic Arabia was experiencing. As a result of such an examination, we can conclude that Arabia was on the road to the formation of a state and that this process was interrupted by the eruption of Islam. Nevertheless, Islam was a positive element which not only did not annul this process but actually accelerated it, giving it a new dynamic and providing it with a solid base on which to build. In other words, we are supposing that the appropriate conditions for the formation of a new state already existed, and that this process lacked only the appearance of a charismatic leader who would capitalize on these conditions and convert the state into a universal empire and religion.

In one way, Islam can be considered an external element since its basic ideas were foreign to the cultural heritage of pre-Islamic Arabia. In another way, however, it can be considered an internal element since it was not violently imposed from the outside through military conquest. Islam was voluntarily accepted as a revelation of the One God to His messenger Mohammed Ibn Abdallah and became the very backbone and key to a new cultural tradition.

SOCIOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA. TOWARDS POLITICAL UNIFICATION?

It is our hypothesis that at the time Islam appeared, Arabia was on the road to political unification under the control of a state in the process of formation led by the Quraysh tribe of Mecca. Favorable external conditions —the military weakness of the Byzantine and Persian Empires, and of their ally Yemen— were being taken advantage of. This process of unification would have been impossible had these conditions not existed. There are two key factors: the external or international situation and internal sociopolitical development.

International Context

Under this heading we wish only to recall well-known facts.¹ Persia and Byzantium, the two great empires that disputed control of the area, could not permit the appearance of an independent competitor which might in some way affect their interests. If the area's importance today is derived from its immense oil reserves, in the pre-Islamic era it was derived from control of the trade routes which crossed the peninsula. Control of these routes and the flow of merchandise between Europe and the Far East, were the objectives of both the Persians and Byzantines.

¹ See, for example, Ph. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*. See also S. Smith, "Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.", in BSOAS XXVI (1954) pp. 425-468.

However, given the impenetrability of the desert and the fact that armies not accustomed to it could easily be annihilated by the warlike Bedouins, control of these routes was left to strategic allies hired especially for the task. Remember, for example, the so-called "stopper states" of the *Gasaniids* and *Lahmids* in the northern part of the peninsula which, respectively represented the interests and boundaries of the Persians and Byzantines. Bedouin tribes were also contracted as mercenaries to protect specific parts of the trade routes. Nevertheless, Yemen's control of these routes was of even greater importance.

Yemen not only had a long tradition of sedentary life, but had also been the site of famous civilizations and empires which were based on a well-planned irrigation agriculture and flourishing international trade. One great empire after another had been born, flourished, become decadent and disappeared. First there was the Kingdom of Saba, mentioned in the Bible, whose queen supposedly visited King Solomon. The Sabeans built the famous Marib dam upon which their agricultural success depended. The *Mineans* came after and finally the Himyarite Kingdom which existed at the time of the appearance of Islam. By this time, however, the kingdom was in a period of obvious decadence. Having enjoyed an autonomy and independence more nominal than real, the kingdom had been moving back and forth between spheres of influence and patrons, between Persians and Byzantines. Yemen was no longer in a position to watch over and control the trade routes, not for itself nor for the benefit of its protectors. Several tribes from the northern part of the peninsula had become aware of this fact and had started a trading enterprise of their own, though still of modest proportions. We must especially take into account the Quraysh tribe which was in the process of settling down in Mecca, an important station on the "incense" trade route. Mecca, which had been a pilgrimage center since time immemorial, was without a doubt, the ideal site to establish a new trading emporium of international scope to replace Yemen. The Kaaba, with its famous black stone, was the shrine whose construction was attributed to Ibrahim (the patriarch Abraham of the Bible) and to his son Ishmael, born of Hagar, Abraham's slave, and considered to be the progenitor of the Arabs.

The constant battles between the Byzantines and Persians had weakened them to such a critical point that their very existence

would have been threatened had a powerful external force appeared. The same was true of their Arab ally, Yemen, of the peninsula. In this way, the external conditions were extremely favorable for the appearance of a competitor. And this was exactly what was happening in the northern part of the peninsula. Two facts corroborate this point: The first is the explicit mention in the Koran (106,2) of two caravans per year belonging to the Quraysh, but whose safety the Koran attributes to God, exhorting the Quraysh to recognize this fact. The winter caravan went south, towards Yemen and Abyssinia, and the summer caravan went north to Syria. The second fact is the famous military campaign of Abraha. The date and the motive of this Abyssinian campaign against the Arabic peninsula are not known with full accuracy. Christian Abyssinia was a Byzantine ally and under Byzantine orders. The Abyssinians went into the desert to punish an alleged persecution of Christian Arabs unleashed by Arab tribes converted to Judaism. This occurred in the southern part of the peninsula. As a result of this invasion, the Marib dam was badly damaged and was not repaired. This was to have negative repercussions on agriculture, causing new waves of Yemenite migration towards the north of Arabia and beyond its borders.

The fact that Abraha went north after punishing the southern Arabs, leads us to believe that his motives were more than religious and that what he really proposed to do was to inflict an exemplary punishment on the Quraysh of Mecca and other northern Arab tribes that were also attempting to organize independent trade activity, taking advantage of Yemen's impotence.²

Although the Arab chronicles place Abraha's invasion in 570 A.D., the year in which the prophet Mohammed was supposedly born, the invasion should be dated 547 A.D.³ Decimated by a smallpox epidemic, Abraha's campaign was a total failure, a fact alluded to in the Koran (105, 1-5) where this failure is present-

² According to R. Simon, "Hums et Ilaf, ou le commerce sans guerre. Sur la genese et le caractere du commerce de la Mecque", in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XXIII (1970), pp. 221ff., Abraham's campaign was not directly against Mecca, but against the *Lahmids* or, more precisely, against tribes dominated by them, since the former took control of trade in northern Arabia, including Mecca, after Yemen's fall.

³ R. Simon, "Hums et Ilaf..."

ed as a miracle of God in favor of Mecca. The external obstacles had been eliminated. As for the internal ones, the Quraysh were overcoming them in a generally diplomatic and peaceful manner through alliances and pacts, though occasionally they had to resort to arms. Thus, after the "*harb-al-fiyar*" war (590 A.D.), Mecca replaced the Lahmids and gained control of their markets, especially of the famous Ukaz, which left them at that moment without rivals.

Sociopolitical Development

In this section I want to present some social data about Arabia before or at the time of the appearance of Islam which are, in my judgment, indicative of the phase of social evolution in which its inhabitants were found. I want first to determine the cultural level they had attained. I will define culture as the mechanisms created and accepted by a society to domesticate and govern itself, in other words, a more or less complex system of beliefs, values, techniques, social, economic and religious organization, etc. Once the vital problem of subsistence is resolved and overcome, the most important problem is political, the recognition of an authority and a minimum set of rules to regulate the social conduct of its members. The success and ability to convert this idea into practice determines the difference between societies, and in historical retrospect marks the step from a primitive society to a civilized one.⁴

Today, contrary to the hypothesis presented by Gordon Childe, both archeologists and anthropologists agree that there is no evidence to sustain that the phenomenon of *urbanization* is essential and indispensable to the development of a civilization and the appearance of a "state."⁵ Instead, two phenomena are considered fundamental: social stratification and institu-

⁴ See, for example, E.R. Service, *The Origins of the State and Civilization. The Process of Cultural Evolution*. W.A. Norton & Co., New York, 1975. As is well known, this same type of problem has been analyzed by Karl Marx and Max Weber, though with different points of view.

⁵ E.R. Service, *Ibid.* pp. 7f; R. Mc. C. Adams, *The Evolution of Urban Society*, Alding Publishing Co. New York, 1966, pp. 9f.

tionalization of political authority. Actually these two phenomena are interrelated. The difference between a "primitive" society and a "civilized" society lies not so much in the fact that one has different problems from the other, but in the manner or *form* of solving these problems. Both must confront political, military and judicial problems. In other words, they are carrying out political, military and legal functions, but in a *qualitatively* different way. The dichotomy between one and the other is not to be found in their problems nor in their functions, but in the *institutionalization* of power, in other words, in the *forms* these functions take. This qualitative change is directly related to social stratification. It is said that a "primitive" society is one made up of or formed by blood relationships (clans, tribes), the people being equal among themselves. Social *stratification* destroys this equality and establishes a *hierarchical* order, in other words, a central power, at the same time that it introduces major changes which lead to a new level of cultural evolution.

It seems to us that in pre-Islamic Arabia there are clear indications that the Quraysh tribe of Mecca was going through a process of social stratification and that it had the firm intention of constituting a central political authority, a state, to whose power the entire peninsula would be subject. As I have tried to show in another work,⁶ the fact that this tribe was in the process of becoming sedentary, the fact that the idea of the nuclear family was being imposed with increasingly greater force at the expense of tribal or clan solidarity; and especially the fact of the change of occupation from tending flocks to trading, were producing such fundamental changes that the former values and social structures of the tribe were endangered. However, these facts were at the same time giving rise to new ideas and a new type of political, religious and social organization.

Undoubtedly, the Quraysh's dedication in body and soul to trading represented radical change which then brought about important changes at the level of social stratification, and in the political and religious spheres. Commercial activity signifies, above all, emancipation from nature, something not possible for

⁶ M. Ruiz Figueroa, *Mercaderes, Dioses y Beduinos. El Sistema de Autoridad en Arabia Preislámica*. El Colegio de México, México, 1975, pp. 59-71.

those who tend herds or farm, the occupations of other tribes. While the Bedouin and agrarian economies depend almost totally on the conditions of nature and the products are almost exclusively destined for internal consumption, commerce depends mostly on ability and revolves around surplus and exchange which brings about the accumulation of capital, something unheard of in the other types of economy.

Since the process of emancipation from nature is identical to that of the "individualization" of man, as K. Marx calls it,⁷ the individual leaves his prior situation as a "generic being" or "herd animal," and communal property is replaced by a more advanced historic phase of property relations. The outcome of this process is the appearance of private property side by side with communal property, until the latter finally disappears together with the former social orders.

It is not necessary to insist that the accumulation of large amounts of capital in the hands of a few was going to result in economic disparity between the city and the country, and between the rich and the "dispossessed" (as the Koran calls the poor of Mecca) of the cities themselves. Commercial activity put in doubt the social organization itself, structures, obsolete tribal institutions, and even the fundamental values of the ancient "Bedouin ethic." In place of the Bedouin *majlis*, the government of Mecca created a new *mala* council, made up of wealthy people and even foreigners (something contrary to tribal tradition); it created the *Dar al-Nadwa* to arrange intertribal alliances and marriages; and there was a restructuring of the religious posts and functions of the Kaaba. An example of the latter was the *Ifada*, the presiding over pilgrimages in Mecca itself, which was given to the Tamim tribe in reward for services rendered to Mecca: for having guaranteed a monopoly of the Ukaz market. It also created the *Tahammus* association which involved several tribes from outside Mecca and which imposed ritual and legal prescriptions for pilgrimages. The Prophet's first biographer, Ibn Hisham, called these prescriptions "unjustified innovations."⁸ This or-

⁷ *Pre-Capitalistic Economic Formations*, New York, 1965, pp. 65ff. M. Ruiz Figueroa, *Ibid.*, pp. 60ff.

⁸ Ibn Hisham, *Sira Rasul Allah*, Gotingen 1859, p. 128.

ganization actually represented a manipulation of religion with economic and political motives behind it. It was a way of subjugating the tribes under the economic and political leadership of Mecca in the guise of religion.⁹

The Quraysh also set up new administrative functions in Mecca to guarantee the proper functioning of their commercial activities. A military guard was created to protect the caravans, but we may assume that it also served to keep order in the city where business transactions involving enormous sums of money occurred. A regular informer-spy service was created to constantly bring news of the success or failure of the trade caravans. N.P. Coussin de Perceval¹⁰ also mentions the creation of a "espece de magistrature criminelle," the *diyya* and the *jazina* or finance administration.

M. Weber calls the creation of new offices like those mentioned a "legal order," as opposed to the "conventional order" like that of Bedouin society. The former has "personnel specialized in putting coercive power into effect (the machinery for carrying out resolutions) which the conventional order does not have." Weber observes that legal order is not the same as legal domination, but that it can exist in other systems of domination.¹¹

From the above, we can conclude the following:

a) Incipient social stratification (under the influence of the idea of family) was brusque and accelerated rapidly with the appearance of private property, a product of commercial activity.

b) Rupture with traditional Bedouin order and its obsolete organizations brought about the creation of a new administrative apparatus and new offices which were to bring about the appearance of specialized personnel, further accentuating social stratification.

c) Once Bedouin social equality had disappeared, hierarchical social stratification and the creation of new administrative offices were nothing more than the "institutionalization" of a

⁹ M. Ruiz Figueroa, *Ibid.*, pp. 65-71.

¹⁰ *Essai sur l'Histoire des Arabes*, vol. I, Paris, 1847, p. 274.

¹¹ *On Law in Economy and Society*, tr. E. Shills, Cambridge, 1954, p. 27.

central authority in the hands of the merchant elite. This is, I think, the first step towards the creation of a state.

d) Mecca built its base or structure of political power on a sacred territory, the *haram*, or sanctuary of the Kaaba, as was customary and as Mohammed was to do in Medina. The great tribal confederations were usually formed in this way, and were led by a saint or charismatic leader, something that Mecca did not have.

e) Mecca broke with tribal narrowness by incorporating members of other tribes into the new politico-religious leadership. In order to achieve this, religion was manipulated by political and commercial motives,¹² something that Islam was to consider as "unjustified innovations," in other words, as heresy.

Mecca and Arabia were undergoing this period of transition and social crisis when Islam made its appearance. Under Mohammed, Islam was to introduce profound changes and modifications in this "natural" evolution of pre-Islamic society.

The Islamic State Established by Muhammad

General Considerations

We have already shown that when pre-Islamic Arabia began the "institutionalization" of a central authority, it was on the way to the formation of a *state*. I accept the view of the state as the "agent, aspect or institution of society which is authorized and disposed to employ force, in other words, to exercise coercive power;"¹³ or according to a common definition: "the legitimate holder of a monopoly on violence."

There is no way of knowing how the experience of the

¹² An indirect confirmation of the politico-religious objectives of the Quraysh is to be found in a commentary given by Ibn al-Kalbi (Moslem writer of early times, a scholar on pre-Islamic religious traditions) in his book *Kitab al-Asnan*, (*Book of the Idols*) p. 28, l. 16ff.: "A certain man of the Yuhayna named Abd al-Dar b. Hudayb, once said to his people: 'come let us build a sanctuary (*bayt*) that will rival the Kaaba (of Mecca) and thus attract many of the Arabs'".

¹³ *Diccionario de Sociología*, F.C.E., México 1980, p. 112.

Quraysh would have ended had it not been interrupted by the appearance of Islam. In the V century A.D., there was a similar attempt in Central Arabia led by the famous Kinda tribe which ended in failure, basically because of factionalism and the feuds implicit in tribal organization. These weaknesses result from the values such organization implies and is founded upon, values that today would be called "chauvinistic nationalism" and "exclusivism." Looking back, there are many examples of empires of relatively short duration which were founded by nomads in different parts of the planet. It seems fair to assume that for a man of privileged intelligence like Mohammed, with his clairvoyant vision, this fact did not escape him.

Mohammed, presented by M. Weber as the prototype of a charismatic leader, gifted with extraordinary, almost superhuman qualities, at least in the eyes of his followers, was perfectly aware of the economic-political-religious project of his tribe. Taking into consideration his lifelong behavior, we can be sure that he was in favor of this project, and that he firmly believed in the possibility of carrying it out. There is no doubt, however, that he was deeply concerned about the enormous deficiencies he saw in this project which were creating discontent and undermining its success from within. The appearance of private property and the accumulation of great wealth by a few families were giving rise to a new phenomenon: the appearance of two social groups, the poor and the rich, with an enormous gap between the two. These wealthy families, especially the Umayyad clan, had no interest other than increasing their wealth and the power it signified. In this way, and to an ever greater extent, they began to neglect their tribal obligations. The Koran itself gives a testimony to this effect with its frequent and severe criticism: "Nay, but you honour not the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor, and you devour heritage, devouring all, and you love wealth with exceeding love."¹⁴ For us, this text sums up the conflict and social crisis which Mecca was experiencing and which motivated the appearance of a charismatic leader who tried to find solutions to the crisis.

¹⁴ *The Koran*, 89, 17-20 Quotations from Koran and taken from *The Holy Quran*, Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary, by Maulana Muhammad Ali. Chicago, I.I. Special Promoters, Co. Inc., 1973.

We know that the Prophet frequently retreated to a cave on Mount Hira, close to Mecca, where he sometimes spent entire nights absorbed in contemplation. We can conjecture that on these occasions the Prophet asked Allah to let him know how to help his people, not only to save them from idolatry, but to resolve the severe social crisis they were going through; how to overcome the narrowness of tribalism, its hedonistic ethic and the anthropocentric values it was founded on; the correct function and use of wealth; and how to help his people become a great empire. He was convinced that the people were capable of accomplishing this. The Prophet was, without a doubt, one of the Arabs of his times best informed on the Persian and Byzantine Empires, a result of his experience in the caravans and of the innate curiosity which led him to find out all he could from those who had knowledge of any subject that interested him. For example, what the Koran says about the Bible shows quite precise knowledge of the latter, but not to the extent of making us suppose the Prophet had a copy of it in his hands. The references are best understood as coming from another person.

If we base ourselves on the Prophet's subsequent conduct, we can say that what most attracted his attention was the existence of certain similarities between the two empires that he would later try to reproduce in the *Umma* (Moslem community) of Medina. Both empires were what is today known as "religious empires": empires which considered themselves to be universal because they were founded on a religion that had pretensions of being revealed as the only true religion. In Arabia, there was a union of state and religion, but the region lacked an ideological apparatus, a true universal religion, to legitimate the incipient Quraysh state. This was something that neither the power of wealth by itself, nor tribal values and structures could provide in a lasting form.

Such were the thoughts of the Prophet when God unexpectedly communicated to him through the Archangel Gabriel that he had been chosen as the Prophet and Messenger of God among and for the Arabs. He was to be the carrier of a revelation, the continuation of the same revelation that God has been giving man since the Creation. The Prophet was reviving in Arabia a phenomenon which occurred in other parts of the world around the middle of the first millennium B.C. In this way, the appearance of

an Arab state in the VII century A.D. can be associated with a quite different context: that of the "axial age" which had occurred a millennium before.

Karl Jaspers gave the name "axial age"¹⁵ to a series of changes and transformations which can be considered "revolutionary" and which occurred in the first millennium before Christ; more concretely between 800 and 200 B.C., the consequence of which was to be the structuring of human society and universal history in an irreversible way and in well-defined directions that were to crystallize in the major civilization complexes that still influence our lives today. Men appeared in different parts of the planet who brought about true "cultural revolutions": Zarathustra and the prophets of ancient Israel; Buddha in India; Thales, Solon, Pithagoras and Socrates in Greece; and Confucius in China.

Towards the middle of the first millennium B.C., there appears to have been great economic prosperity, especially mercantile. A flourishing international trade made possible the exchange of ideas. This is substantiated by the fact that coins were minted almost simultaneously in Anatolia, northern India and China.¹⁶ New ideas appeared and creativity and innovation without precedent developed. The creators and propagators of these new ideas, due perhaps to similar experiences, shared certain outlooks and especially had to confront the old problem of justice and personal responsibility. These ideas and problems generally arose in the context of the market with much greater clarity than in that of the temple.

The radical differences between these geocultural areas and civilization complexes resulted from the way in which the problems were presented and how they were answered: an interiorization of the ego (India); a turning outward towards nature (Greece); or an interest in history, seen as an area in the struggle for justice and the continuous advance of a cosmic moral order (Middle East).

In time, the adepts of these new ideas were to form a special "community" and to supply themselves with "sacred scriptures" to which a "universal validity" was to be attached. Another fundamental doctrine of the axial age is that the total solution to

¹⁵ *Von Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, Zurich 1949, pp. 15-106.

¹⁶ Hodgson, T.W., *The Venture of Islam*, I, Chicago, pp. 111-113.

the human dilemma includes an order or world *beyond death*. These ideas were eventually incorporated into the substance and essence of great empires, giving birth to universal religions.

The "monotheistic" ideology of the Middle East is a particular outlook which postulates an unrepeatable, linear history, as opposed to the ideology of India which claims that history is cyclical and consists of an indefinite process of incarnations and reincarnations. In the Middle East the cosmic drama has a beginning and an end. We can define its essence in three units: only one God, only one community and only one life. Judaism, Christianity and, of course, Islam are included in this current. We give full credit to Professor Hodgson for having called attention to the fact that Islam should be placed in the monotheistic current which had its roots in the axial age. Nevertheless, we feel that we can go still further and say that Islam can (and perhaps should) be interpreted as a repetition, the last and coming late, of the "axial age," a millennium after this occurred in other parts of the world. We shall attempt to analyze the appearance, evolution and consolidation of the Islamic state within this context.

Mohammed's answer to the project of the Quraysh

If we wished to summarize the central idea of the cultural revolution of the Axial age, we could use the word "transcendence." In other words, the introduction in the routine of human life of the notion that there is a parallel world or order, infinitely superior and more perfect, which becomes the model and norm for individual and social human conduct, since it is conceived of as a moral or metaphysical order "beyond" this world. From this springs the necessity of "salvation" and of the "bridge" or instrument that makes possible the transition from this world to the cosmic order.

We could also say that this idea of "transcendence" is what M. Weber calls the "rationalization of religious life."¹⁷ This rationalization goes beyond the practices and rites used to bring

¹⁷ *Grundriss der Sozial-ökonomik III Abt., Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1925, pp. 127ff. M. Ruiz, "Algunas Reflexiones sobre el Dios del Corán", *Estudios Orientales*, vol. VII, México, 1972, p. 210.

benefits and good fortune, and includes a systematic relationship between man and the divinity. At the same time, in contrast to the immutability of tradition, this rationalization develops religious morals based on an ethical concept of the divinity.

In accordance with this ethical aspect of the god, the order of nature and society are now under his protection and those who violate it will be punished. The ideas of magic and evil are now replaced by a religious ethic. Misfortune is not the result of some deficient power of the god, but is instead his anger provoked by a transgression committed by the person.

Once it has been postulated that there exists only one God all powerful, creator of man and all that exists, and therefore owner and absolute sire of all creation, two fundamental conclusions can be drawn that will change the lives of those who accept this principle: that man is subject to God, to whom he owes total obedience, and that an essential equality exists among all men, regardless of their language, race or origin. As a result, man is the representative or "caliph" of God on earth. Wealth is a gift from God and should be managed according to His laws. From this principle of there being only one God who is the creator, the social, family, economic and political order of human society is derived. This was the principle upon which a Mohammed proposed to build a new politico-religious order as an alternative to the Quraysh proposal.

The Meccans' intention was to create a strong centralized authority and use it to bring about the politico-religious unification of the peninsula in order to exploit it economically and commercially. To do this, they used an essentially "traditional" method: the election of a *haram* or "sacred" territory, such as the Kaaba sanctuary, as the center and symbol of this new power and as the guarantor of the many pacts and tribal alliances that the Quraysh were making. Instead of war and violence, the Quraysh chose peaceful means using their great political and diplomatic ability, evidence of which is abundant. Although they maintained their tribal structure for the most part, they nevertheless included wealthy men from other tribes in the ruling elite.

In contrast to the above, the Prophet's project seems to have been the following: 1) The Prophet first presents an ideological-religious theory, a new theocentric vision of the cosmos that legitimated and established the basis for his plan. Mecca had no such

ideological theory to give its plan legitimacy. 2) Belonging to the Prophet's new socio-political-religious order depends on the personal decision of each individual. It was not based on lineage such as belonging to a tribe, but broke away from the narrowness of tribalism by affirming the fundamental and essential equality of all members of the new religious and political community, the *Umma*. 3) The Prophet's politico-religious project was not limited to the Arabian Peninsula but had instead a universal scope. 4) I do not think it is wrong to affirm that the Prophet considered the participation of the Quraysh in his project to be vital, given the exceptional political qualities of some of its members.

Points one and two are sufficiently obvious and do not need to be proven. However, regarding points three and four, I would like to elaborate. Concerning the universality of Mohammed's plan, there may perhaps always be controversy, especially about the beginning of his career, due in large part to the lack of dependable sources from the time. Regarding the last years of the Prophet's life, there can be no serious doubts about the universalist concept of his mission. I want to briefly mention two facts that confirm this as well as a text from the Koran that supports this idea.

Around year seven of the Hijra, according to tradition, the Prophet sent out emissaries to the great monarchs of the time with an invitation to each to convert to Islam and to recognize him as the legitimate messenger of God. The implicit argument is that they should therefore submit themselves to his political domination. There is no evidence to support that these letters were sent to the Persian, Byzantine or Chinese emperors. However, the contacts made with the Byzantine governor in Alexandria are well known. I believe that this tradition in itself is sufficient to prove my hypothesis. At any rate, we have two of the Prophet's actions to back up the contents of his message. In year eight of the Hijra (630 B.C.), Mohammed prepared two military expeditions against Byzantine territory (no doubt a prelude to future conquests after his death). The first penetrated as far as the Muta region, south of the Dead sea. Although this expedition was a failure, the fact remains that the Prophet went beyond the borders of Arabia with a powerful army. The second expedition went towards Tabuk, a Byzantine oasis halfway between Medina and Damascus. Perhaps because of the first failure, many Moslems

strongly opposed going far from Arabia, using a wide variety of excuses, as the Koran says (9,42: "Had it been near and a short journey, they would certainly have followed thee..."). After reaching Tabuk, Mohammed changed his mind and returned to Medina with his army of 30 000 men without having attacked.

If we add to these actions declarations from the Koran, the Prophet's universalist intention of establishing a new religious-political order in Medina is fully substantiated. The revelation given to Mohammed annuls Judaism and Christianity and makes their laws obsolete. In 7,157 it says: "Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the *Ummi*, whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. He enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and prohibits for them impure things, and *removes from them their burden and the shackles which were on them.*" In the next 61,8 it says: "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouth, but Allah will perfect his light. He is who sent his messenger with the guidance and *the true religion, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them,* though the polytheists may be averse."

It is possible that at the beginning of his career the Prophet was not completely clear on the universalist perspective of this mission; but I think that it was not absent, keeping in mind that right from the start he was conscious of the fact that the revelation brought him by the archangel Gabriel placed him in the same line of prophets God had been sending the world continuously since the creation of Adam, and that he was the last, "the seal of the prophets" (Koran 33,40). This means he was placed in universal history.

Regarding point four, concerning the importance of the Quraysh, I would like to mention a fact that no one seems to have called attention to. I feel that Mohammed had almost an obsession for his native Mecca and its inhabitants. The story of Mohammed's failure in Mecca to convince its people to share his message and project is well known. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Quraysh did not want to risk the sure profits they were having by following the extravagant, moralistic ideas or "fables" as they called Mohammed's teachings that spoke of the resurrection of the dead and a final judgement. Mohammed's extraordinary efforts —showing Allah's kindness towards Mecca, or threatening them with prompt punishment— did not have the

expected results. To the contrary, seeing that Mohammed's followers were increasing little by little, especially among the young people, the inhabitants of Mecca began to threaten him. Mohammed, convinced of the futility of his efforts, decided to emigrate to Medina, giving up the affiliation and protection of his tribe, but not admitting defeat.

Conjecturing again, but based on the Prophet's behaviour in Medina, I believe that he concluded that Mecca could only be conquered by force, and that he began to prepare for this undertaking. Using guerrilla warfare, he began to harass Mecca's trade caravans, often causing them heavy losses in surprise attacks. With the booty obtained, he was able to increase and better arm his fighters. At the same time his prestige spread throughout Arabia due to his valor in defying Mecca's power and his ability to avoid being annihilated. His fame as an extraordinary and exceptional personage was recognized by friends and enemies alike and aided him in establishing a network of alliances with powerful tribes that were enemies of the Quraysh.

In year 6 of the Hegira (628 A.D.) the Prophet revealed that he had a dream in which a supernatural being gave him the keys to the Kaaba. This was cause for great alarm in Medina, since it was obviously thought that Mohammed maintained the idea of a military attack of Mecca for which the people of Medina felt totally unprepared. Possibly the Prophet only wanted to feel out the state of mind of his forces and so, showing signs of great flexibility and realism, he announced they would go to Mecca peacefully, as simple pilgrims. This news alarmed Mecca where it was considered to be an act of provocation. They prepared a military contingent to wait for Mohammed in Hudaibiya, one day's journey from Mecca. After arduous and embarrassing negotiations during which Mohammed was at times forced to impose his decisions on his followers who wanted to precipitate matters, the famous "Treaty of Hudaibiya" was made. The treaty contained clauses that were unfavorable and could be considered humiliating for the members of the Islamic *Umma*, but seen from the Prophet's point of view, the simple fact that the Quraysh had made a pact with him meant they recognized him as an equal which was the greatest political advance that could be hoped for. As a matter of fact, this was how the treaty was judged in all Arabia, increasing the Prophet's prestige in the area.

According to the treaty, the Moslems were to return to Medina without finishing the pilgrimage to Mecca which could be made the following year. A ten year truce was agreed upon during which time both parties were free to make all the alliances they wished. Having eliminated the danger of an attack from Mecca, the Prophet was free to concentrate his efforts on other tasks that needed attending to, especially the internal government of the *Umma*.

We feel that the Treaty of Hudaibiya should be considered a key point in the political evolution of pre-Islamic Arabia. In it the only two contenders for absolute power over the peninsula express themselves. From this time on, all the tribes would either have to ally themselves with Mecca or with the city-state of Medina.

The Prophet felt that victory was at hand after the pact was signed. (Koran, 48.1: "Surely we have granted thee a clear victory.") Based on this conviction, he stated publically that from then on no purely political alliances would be accepted and that any tribe wishing to make an alliance with him must first convert to Islam. Most of Arabia inclined towards Mohammed. Only two short years after the treaty was signed, alleging violations on the part of Quraysh allies, Mohammed appeared in Mecca with an army of ten thousand men. After a mostly symbolic resistance, Mohammed entered Mecca victoriously. This was the culmination of his mission.

The generous pardon the Prophet bestowed on the people of Mecca, again caused great discontent among some of his followers who burned with desire to avenge old affronts. Actually, this pardon is in stark contrast to the way the Prophet treated other enemies like the Judaizing tribe of Medina, the Banu Qurayza. Accused of plotting with Mecca, they were condemned to death, their property was seized and their women and children sold as slaves. One explanation would be the one already mentioned: the Prophet's interest, almost obsession in winning over the Quraysh so that, once converted to and instructed in Islam, at the right moment they could lead the new community.

Another surprising fact which has never been given a adequate explanation is that the Prophet did not openly designate his successor. It is not possible to think that a man of Mohammed's clear-sightedness, whose plans were always long term, did not

give careful and frequent thought to this aspect so vital to the survival of the *Umma*. For a short period, the community was led by skilled men like the first four caliphs. The problems would start when this first generation of able and honest Moslems came to an end. For a period of crisis due to immaturity, there was no doubt that the best men would be the Quraysh who would be able to assure not only the survival but the universalization of the new religion and the new state. To designate a successor, considering Arab tradition, would have meant limiting power to only one lineage, automatically excluding other possible candidates, which was something the Prophet did not want to do. I feel that the Prophet consciously and deliberately decided not to name a successor, considering this to be the *Umma's* best option. This decision was the most favorable for the old and most stalwart personal enemies of the Prophet and Islam. Mohammed could not openly state that he wanted to leave the door open for the Quraysh, and concretely for the Umayyad clan, to come to power. He therefore commended the decision to Allah and did not name a successor.¹⁸

After the victory over Mecca, the unification of the peninsula under his political leadership and the banner of Islam was only a question of time. As is mentioned in the Koran, a time limit was set for all the tribes of the peninsula to convert to Islam. Those who refused were to be slain by the sword wherever they were found, (Koran 9,5: "when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters (i.e. the pagan Arabs) wherever you find them"). It was urgent for Mohammed to unify the peninsula before his death, and he accomplished this, thus establishing the first Moslem state in all of Arabia.

There is no doubt that the politico-religious unification of Arabia under the command of the Prophet signified the creation of a true state. There is likewise no doubt that this state was the first "Islamic" state. Membership in the community was based

¹⁸ If we place ourselves in the world of the "possible", we can suppose that if Mohammed had not conquered Mecca, Mecca would have destroyed the *umma* of Medina upon the death of the Prophet, or perhaps the *umma* would have destroyed itself due to internal rivalries (between Ansar and Muhayirun, or between the Prophet's own companions) in the struggle for power. This was about to happen during the great civil war known as the *fitna al-qubra*.

on acceptance of the Koran as "holy" scripture or revelation and the acceptance of the essential elements that convert a pagan to a Moslem. These elements include belief in one God and in Mohammed as his Messenger, in the angels, the prophets and the last day; and compliance with the fundamental practices or obligations of a Moslem (the five pillars of Islam): profession of faith, prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage. Some authorities also include the *jihad* misleadingly translated as "holy war"). Present also were the so-called "personal statute laws" (inheritance, marriage, divorce, etc.). These were the basic elements which characterized a state as "Islamic".

It is also logical to believe that in the times of its founder, this state could not yet fully develop all its potential. Mohammed began a "rationalization" of religious life, but this was not complete and was carried on by his followers, as has happened with other religions. The Islamic state of the *Abbasids* was not the "prophetic" state of Medina. The classical Islamic state was simply the option that came to dominate the other possible options.

Consolidation of the "Islamic" State after Mohammed

I indicated above that the key concept in the axial age was "transcendence", or a world superior to the mundane world, which implies the urgency or "command" to transform the mundane which is in need of "salvation", in whatever way this be understood and put into effect. As could be expected, these concepts produced profound transformations in personal and social life, irreversible transformations not only during the axial age itself, but again through their repetition by Islam a millennium later.

These visions or cosmovisions were "institutionalized" during a relatively extended period of time, and this brought about their adoption by the ruling elite in preference to other kinds of ideas and their respective representatives. This "institutionalization" meant "official" adoption of the monopoly on legitimating ideas regarding political power; in short, the union of state and religion. It took Christianity, for example, three centuries to become the official religion of the Roman Empire thanks to the conversion of the Emperor Constantine.

In this process of institutionalization, the work done by the

new intellectual elite or *carriers* of the new model of civilization, was obviously absolutely essential. Actually the history of these ideas is identified with the history and struggles of their carriers to impose them in an official manner; to unite with the political elite and prevail over other social groups. In speaking of the consolidation of the *Islamic* state, the figure of the *carriers* of the Islamic message, the Ulema, is of the greatest importance.

I believe we can affirm without doubt that this group came into being during the Prophet's life and was under his orders and strict vigilance. The future *Ulema* (those who know, the experts) started out as instructors or "catechists" whom Mohammed commissioned to go out and teach Islam and to instruct new converts, including whole tribes that were adopting Islam throughout the Arabic peninsula. Ali, the fourth caliph was not only a military chief in punitive and conquest expeditions, but was also an instructor. This group carried out the functions of *imam* and presided over prayers in places far from Medina, as they later did after the conquests in all the new territories, where it was impossible for the caliph to do so. The famous *Qurra*, or authorized readers of the Koran (those knowing the accepted variations in the different ways of reading the sacred text), were part of this still informal group of "carriers". It is not difficult to guess that it was from this group that the first *Qadis* (religious judges) emerged, named by the Umayyads to impart the justice of the Koran in newly conquered territories.

The Umayyad Caliphate

The *caliphate* was created upon the Prophet's death as the new *Umma's* only institution in which, it was felt, the charisma of its founder would be perpetuated. The caliphate appropriated political, judicial, military and religious powers; in a word, it concentrated all authority under its command. The caliph was the *Imam*, or the person presiding over prayer, especially during the official Friday Ceremony in the mosque. Utman, the third caliph, ordered an official recension of the Koran, in an effort to have only one version of the sacred text and to suppress the different variations in circulation in several provinces. Although the order met with strong opposition from the *Qurra*, this was due more

to personal and practical reasons than to a questioning of the caliph's authority to order such a thing. In any case, the order was carried out in all the provinces, and the Koran we have today is Caliph Utman's edition. The principle that "the prophets have no heirs" was meant to exclude the right of Ali and his descendents to the caliphate and to proclaim that prophetic functions such as receiving revelations had ended forever. Aside from this incident, during the time of the first four caliphs the "carriers" of the Islamic message remained an informal and shapeless group that was subject to the caliph like any other person.

In contrast to Christianity, which was born as a persecuted religion and took more than three centuries in making allies and obtaining political power, Islam came into being united with political power and was, besides, victorious: the conqueror and founder of a great empire in less than half a century. These differences were to leave profound marks on the behavior and attitudes of each religion in significant ways. Christianity, which did not bear the responsibilities implied in governing an extensive empire, had three centuries for self-reflection, time to study and formulate its beliefs in a scientific manner, using the specialized terminology of Greek philosophy to define its dogma. In the coming centuries, it maintained its orientation around doctrinal aspects, around orthodoxy. Islam, on the other hand, turned outward; involved in the responsibility of consolidating and extending its political domain, it neglected self-reflection and the technical and precise formulation of doctrinal aspects in its formative stage, giving preference to correct behavior, to well doing, to "orthopraxis", an attitude predominant until today.

We do not feel this is the only reason for this orientation and predilection for works over doctrine in Islam, but we do feel it had decisive influence. During "the first test" (the first civil war) which lasted from the murder of the caliph Utman, the election of Ali, the "Battle of the Camel" against Ali (instigated by Aisha, the Prophet's widow, and two of the Prophet's eminent companions, Talha and Zubayr), until the murder of Ali and the coming to power of Muawiya, founder of the Umayyad dynasty, the central topic of discussion was precisely, "what is the *Umma*?" In other words: "what is it that makes someone a true Moslem?" "Does a grave sin exclude someone from the community?" "What relationship is there between faith and works?" The theme of

human works was the central one and not the preoccupation with defending the truth of a dogmatic proposition.

Intimately related to correct behavior there was naturally the problem of "who should occupy the office of caliph and what requirements should he meet". In the second half of the seventh century, there was a proliferation of rival groups which defended opposing politico-religious opinions and led armed uprisings that could have led to the creation of ministates each with its own caliph. This might have caused the fragmentation of the empire and perhaps even the disappearance of Islam. In this turmoil the Umayyads seized power by force, paying little heed to their religious legitimacy.

They have been accused of transforming the simplicity and austerity of the caliphate of Medina into a mundane kingdom; of having worried more about their own interests than those of Islam and of having been responsible for a heterodox innovation in the introduction into Islam of the hereditary transmission of political power. At any rate, the ancient and stalwart foes of Islam, by saving the empire's political unity, though by force of arms, also saved the unity of Islam, although this may not have been their intention.¹⁹

Regarding the history of the incipient group of "carriers" during this period and their relationship with the dynasty, we can point out the following:

1) The Umayyads hastened to combat and if not annihilate, at least neutralize the most extremist groups that were in arms. This was the case with various groups of the *Khariji* movement and the incipient *Shia*, or party of Ali. This facilitated things enormously for the moderate groups who, practically without rivals, were able to impose their "Islamic" vision on the majority. In time, this would become the predominant vision of Islam, known as *Sunnism* (from the word *Sunna* which refers to the behavior or customs of the Prophet).

2) The *carriers'* behavior in relation to the Umayyad govern-

¹⁹ M. Ruiz F., *El Mundo del Islam*, p. 67 (unpublished). As has already been mentioned, the Prophet may have foreseen this possibility. This could account for his almost obsessive desire to win over the Quraysh to the cause of Islam.

ment seems to us to have been deliberately ambiguous. On the one hand, Umayyads are accused of having put their own interests before those of Islam, knowing there were many areas and new problems arising from the conquests which had never had an "Islamic" solution but only the precedent of administrative practice. On the other hand, they called upon the people to obey their rulers even in the cases where they were "sinners" (guilty of gravely violating some of Islam's principles) and to renounce the use of violence or trying to overthrow them. In the context of the Arabia of those times, this seems to me to be an eminently realistic attitude. For one thing, the Umayyads were too strong to be overthrown, and for another, the armed revolts had only produced chaos, lawlessness and the danger of self-destruction. In this way, the utopias of *Shiism* (an imam or charismatic ruler, i.e. one perfect and infallible like Mohammed) or *Kharijism* (only the best should govern, the most just, while those guilty of grave sins should be excluded from the Umma) were abandoned, and things were accepted as they were. The reality, though painful, that the *Umma* was made up of sinners also, without excluding rulers, was likewise accepted. On this basis they tried to reach the best compromise possible for the good of the unity of the community and to avoid chaos and lawlessness.

3) This group of Islamic scholars dedicated itself to preparing not a doctrinal catechism but an authentically Islamic *legislation*, based on the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet which would regulate all human conduct, not only in public affairs but also the routine of each Moslem's private life. This task was concluded during the following dynasty. The *Sharia*, or Sacred Law of Islam, was to occupy the most important position and be the cornerstone of the new Islamic edifice, thus demonstrating a marked preference for works over doctrine.

4) In contrast to the first four caliphs who also took strictly religious matters in their hands, the Umayyads, perhaps due to disinterest or because they did not feel qualified, openly neglected this aspect. This unjustified vacuum came to be filled by the Ulema who appropriated the religious authority and power of the Umma from then on. It was in this way that a definite separation between state and religion was established in Islam, contrary to the widespread opinion that state and religion are the same thing or at least inseparable in Islam. From this time on the strug-

gle which occurred in other civilizations, like the Christian one, was launched between the political and ecclesiastical powers for the supremacy of one over the other.

5) The Umayyads' secularism, their slight interest in religion and, above all, their deficient moral behavior, caused the community to become disillusioned with the caliphate and to reach the conclusion that this institution could not serve as the incarnation of the prophetic charisma. As a result, this charisma was transferred to the Sharia, the Law of God, infallible and immutable, to which every Moslem, including the political rulers, must submit himself. This pretension of the *carriers* that the political power should submit itself to the dictates of the Sharia was the main point of conflict in their confrontation with the political powers. The rulers were to answer for their acts according to the norms of conduct of the Sharia, and were responsible for these acts to a superior authority, God, and therefore to Allah's representatives on earth. This affirmed the superiority of religious power over political power and put the latter at the service of the former, an idea that was later formalized in the classical legal theories dealing with the Islamic government.

By naming the Sharia supreme authority of the community, as opposed to the Shia utopia of an infallible imam, the Sunnis were also choosing an authority endowed with the charisma of infallibility, although in this case this infallibility was an impersonal one.

6) Toward the end of the Umayyad dynasty, the group of "carriers" of the Islamic message or Ulema, appears as a strong, if not homogeneous, group sufficiently united to confront any enemy. This group came to occupy the vacuum of religious power given up by the Umayyads, and became the intermediaries between the governors and the governed. They were the people's representatives and therefore their moral authority and prestige among the population had to be taken into account by all sensible rulers. Such was the situation of this group when the *Abbasids* took power from the Umayyads.

The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 A.D.)

During the Abbasid caliphate, Islamic civilization reached its full

maturity, its apogee. The first two centuries are considered to be the classical era or golden age of the Islamic empire. Based on prosperous agriculture and an extensive network of international trade, abundant wealth encouraged the flourishing of philosophy, science, art and religion. Likewise, the luxury of the court and of the rich merchants became famous. In this fabulous world of A Thousand and One Nights, the Ulema had to confront new challenges and tried to impose their message in competition with new rivals.

From all of this long history, I feel the following points are the most important:

1) The Ulema arrived at the threshold of the new dynasty as a strong group that had appropriated religious power which they did not seem willing to give up or share with the political rulers. They had direct contact with the population and their influence constituted a power the rulers had to take into consideration.

2) This seems to indicate two kinds of behavior on the part of the rulers towards the Ulema:

a) In the beginning, confronted with the existence and moral power of this group and still being in a period of consolidation, and in accordance with the new dynasty's general policy of presenting itself to the people as an "Islamic" government in comparison with the "mundane" conduct of the Umayyads, the Abbasids decided to give the Ulema "*official recognition*", in an effort to win them over and obtain their support. This would provide the legitimacy necessary to make a show of the title "Princes of the Believers", which had been the title of the first four caliphs. In this way a precedent was set in the sense that anyone who wished to take over the government of the Umma must first have the support and approval of the Ulema as a symbol of the legitimacy of his government.

This procedure on the part of the Abbasids, although the result of their temporary insecurity, established a precedent that finally became so strong that it was irreversible. At the same time, it involved a recognition that the Ulema and not the Caliphate possessed the religious power. The caliph had to subject himself to the precepts of the Sharia and to the Ulema if he wanted to be considered legitimate.

The Abbasids tried to incorporate the Ulema in the state bureaucracy as *qadis*, *imams* or counselors, thus putting them on the payroll of the caliph's treasury. The Ulema were to receive a salary for their labors, and in this way they were more or less subject to the control and manipulation of the political power.

Al-Mansur (754-775), founder of Bagdad and the man responsible for the strong measures taken to consolidate the dynasty, must have thought long and hard about what to do with the Ulema. Remember the booklet of the great writer and thinker, Ibn al-Muqaffa,²⁰ *Kitab al-Sahaba* (The Book of Friendship), written with the idea of suggesting to the new caliph several possible solutions to problems he considered to be especially serious at the moment a new dynasty began, problems which if not given a correct and adequate solution from the start would in time become unsolvable and would threaten the dynasty's stability. For example, Ibn al-Muqaffa points out several problems related to the army and how they could be solved. He also discusses how to confront the rivalry between Syria and Iraq (already apparent during this era). Naturally he writes about the problem which concerns us, here: what should be the attitude and true relationship between the caliphate and the Ulema, in other words, between state and religion. Al-Muqaffa proposes that the caliphate again take the religious power in its hands, thus joining the two powers. As we know, al-Mansur did not take this advice.

b) Nevertheless, during one of the following stages, the caliph al-Mamun (813-833), one of al-Mansur's successors, tried to put Ibn al-Muqaffa's advice into practice. As is well known, this caliph was a great patron of science, philosophy, art and knowledge in general. He was the founder of the famous *Bayt al-Hikma* (The House of Wisdom), a research center where, among other things, translations were done of as many classic Greek works as could be brought from Byzantium, especially those pertaining to philosophy and medicine. In this way, he precipitated a confrontation between Islam and the rationalist thought of the Greeks. One of the most well-known philosophic-theological currents was

²⁰ Ibn al-Muqaffa, considered the initiator of Arab prose, translated from the Persian several works of the type known as "mirrors for princess" and the famous story of the *Sasanid* kings, *Sha Nama*.

mutazilism, which tried to carry out what we would today call a "scientific revision" of Islam and purify it of the more materialistic and literal interpretations held by the most traditional and conservative groups. This current proposed a pure divine essence, simple and practically devoid of attributes; that the Koran had been created; that the affirmations of the Koran concerning God should be understood in a metaphorical and not a literal sense (for example, that "God is seated on his throne"). The caliph supported this doctrine which presented a more scientific and rational interpretation of Islam, and he decided to declare it the "official doctrine", obligatory for all his subjects, as a kind of dogma of faith.

The popular reaction in Bagdad on the part of artisans and bazaar merchants is also well-known. Led by Ibn Hanbal (855), an eminent jurist and the founder of a law school (the most traditional), who had been jailed many times, these sectors presented violent opposition to the effrontery of the caliph, who refused to yield. The *Mihna*, a kind of Holy Inquisition, continued to operate even after the caliph al-Mamun, but was finally dissolved and abolished by the caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847-861). The *mutazili* school was declared heretical, persecuted and practically disappeared.

This was one of the most violent and decisive confrontations between state and religion in Islam. The outcome favored the Ulema. It ratified them as the unquestionable supreme authority on religion, and proved their power based on the unrestricted support of the people who considered them their defenders and legitimate representatives before the caliphate which needed a superior moral authority, the Sharia, to moderate its abuses and the absolute arbitrariness it wanted to employ.

This costly victory gave increased valor and confidence to the "carriers" of the Islamic message in their confrontations with rival currents, some of which were also backed by the caliphate. By then, the caliphate was aware of the real power and influence of the Ulema, but also of the possibility of using Islam to legitimate its political power.

Among the main rival visions and cosmovisions within Islam are found the following: philosophy and science; mysticism, and the vision of the imperial Persian tradition.

Philosophy and science went hand in hand, forming part of the same scholastic curriculum. The union of philosophy and medicine was especially noteworthy. Together they were classified as "foreign sciences", as compared to "Koranic" or "sacred" sciences (*hadith*, or the study of the Sunna of the Prophet; Arab grammar; *fiqh* or jurisprudence, etc.). The philosophers formed an elite and privileged circle, and were regarded as such. As long as they could depend on the protection and subsidy of the caliphate, they were able to express their ideas with relative liberty and to carry out their medical research without being bothered too much by the "clergy". Actually the philosophers were under suspicion of heresy for daring to submit revealed religion to the arbitration of human reason, and also because of some of their affirmations which were considered excessively daring: for example, it was asserted that the resurrection of the dead cannot be proven philosophically, and that there existed a principle of causality (a principle that shed doubt on the actions of God as the only real actor at every moment).

A fight to death began between the Ulema and the philosophers to win over the political elite. The philosophers (doctors, astronomers, etc.) were held in esteem and backed by many princes whose courts sponsored intellectual soirées. Often the philosophers were instructors to the heirs of these princes. The Ulema made it clear to the princes that by protecting heretics, they became accomplices in heresy, thus making them illegitimate rulers of the Moslems. Time was to give the Ulema the victory. As is well known, the defeat of *mutazilism* was the beginning of the end of philosophy and science in Islam, despite the extraordinary success they had achieved.

In our opinion, the standardization of education through an extensive network of *madrasas* (school-university) established by the *Selyuqui* Turks to demonstrate the purity of their faith against the *Ismailite* heresy, was a strong blow to philosophy and science. Once excluded from education on the basis of representing foreign, or "non-Koranic" sciences, philosophy and science began to lose their patrons. The work of the great al-Ghazali (d. 1111 A.D.) *Al-Tahafut al-Falasifa* (The Contradiction or Selfdestruction of Philosophy) was another blow to rationalist thought in Islam. After the Mongol invasion (1258 A.D.) and the great devastation it caused, philosophy and science all but disappeared

from the Moslem East. This represented a definitive victory for the Ulema.

The influence of the imperial Persian tradition, which challenged everything Arab and indirectly confronted many Islamic values, was mainly concentrated in the court and the state bureaucracy where the great majority of employees were of Persian origin and were well-trained to carry out their tasks. Some of the rites and values of this tradition were avidly imitated by rich Arab merchants who had become culture and art lovers. Likewise, in the case of the philosophers and scientists, this elite was associated mainly with the court and the government, and did not reach the people. As a result, its influence was more notable with the caliph and other princes who attempted to surround themselves with an almost divine aureola and to place themselves far above the reach of their subjects, adopting such pompous titles as "The Shadow of God on Earth", and "The Caliph of God" (not of the Prophet).

Sufism, or mysticism, on the other hand, was to influence all social strata. The Ulema were unable to stop the spread of Sufism and finally, in time, became involved in its practices and values.

Born, as is the case with all religions, from man's genuine desire to have a more intimate contact with God, Sufism was at first the secret of a new elite that wanted to go beyond the juridical rules and ritual practices that lacked emotional content. For the Ulema, bound as they were to the literalism of the *Sharia*, to speak of man as loving God, and worse yet, of God's love for man, was a pretension considered almost heretical. It was even more alarming to the Ulema when some mystics, carried away by their emotions, declared that for a true mystic the *Sharia* no longer had any value; that it was a passing thing, a thing for the common people but not for the 'friends' of God who possessed the true wisdom or "gnosis" which God gave them.

Conclusion

We hope to have achieved the goal of this work in showing how a particular interpretation of Islam was able to impose its vision as the correct and true one, and to have this vision be accepted,

promoted and protected by the political power, which in this way became an authentic Islamic government with the legitimacy necessary to govern the Moslems.

This vision was the juridical vision of the Ulema. They were able to banish the rationalist vision of the philosophers and scientists, the Persianized vision of the state bureaucracy and the mystical vision, which was, nevertheless, to recover strength in a later period.

In this way, the "Islamic state" as it is basically known even today, was definitively consolidated around the third century of Islam (10th century, A.D.), when the group of "carriers" of the Islamic message not only succeeded in having the political elite (the Abbasids) adopt its vision, but was also able to make them subject to the *Sharia*, recognizing it as the supreme authority before which (and, as a result, before whose representatives, the Ulema) the governors had to answer for their acts.

It was not strange for the Ulema to attack with all their strength any incipient heresy before it took on major proportions and spread among the people. In comparison with the philosophers, the mystics were easy prey because, in general, they did not have the support of the courts. Several mystics lost their lives due to the pressure of the Ulema. Without a doubt, the best known case was the crucifixion of al-Hallaj (d. 922 A.D.). Things were to change when the Sufis learned to be more cautious and to profess their faith in the *Sharia* as the basis for their mysticism.

Again, thanks chiefly to the pen of the philosopher, mystic, and theologian al-Ghazali, Sufism was gradually recognized as a part of Islam. In time it was to become so popular that it would leave an indelible mark on Sunnite Islam.

SECULARIST DISCOURSE AS ETHNIC IDEOLOGY: A CASE FROM THE ARAB EAST

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INTRODUCTION

If one observes the contemporary political panorama of the Middle East, and especially of the Arab East (*al-Mashriq*), the strong representation which ethnic minorities have in movements and political parties that have championed secularism at all costs is notable and surprising. For example, there are cases like the Orthodox Christians in the left wing of the Palestinian resistance (led by Dr. George Habbash of the PFLP and Nayif Hawatimah of the DFLP); the Druse, Orthodox Christians and Shi'i Muslims in the Lebanese National Progressive Movement (under figures such as the Druse leader Walid Jumblatt, the Christians George Hawi and In'am Ra'ad, or the Shi'i Nabih Berri); the Kurds in the Syrian Communist Party (with their leader Khalid Baqdash); the Alawites, Druse, *Isma'ili* and Orthodox Christians in the Syrian Ba'ath Party; the Takriti Sunni in the Iraqi Ba'ath; the Azerbaijani Turks in the Tudeh of Iran, etc.

It is evident that, as minorities, these ethnic groups support or propose sociopolitical projects that guarantee them ample space to develop their "differences" as cultural groups. This obvious premise—that can be summarized as a preoccupation with gaining a minimum platform in the competition for power with the cultural groups that make up the majority—is closely tied to elements of ascription and assignation in ethnic demarcation. Much emphasis is usually placed on the ethnic factor as a type of classification based on subjective identity; an affirmative or positive

cultural definition of identity, with elements such as the memory of community, the importance of ethnic visibility, mythical discourse and reality in self-definition, etc., standing out as being of particular importance.

If we understand the ethnic factor as a dialectical concept, the ascriptive aspect of subjective *identity* can be contrasted with the assignative aspect of an objective system of *identification*. This is what allows ethnic structures to form true systems of cultural division of labor within so-called "national" states. When the ethnic factor ceases to be a positive fact of identity and becomes a negative weight in social identification, it becomes an obstacle to achieving a competitive position in the national political movement.

The religious concealment (*al-taqiyyah*) that has historically manifested itself among certain communities of heterodox Muslim schisms in the Arab East has always been unilaterally interpreted as a question of mere sectarian survival. It is worth also mentioning its interpretation as a determining factor in facilitating socioeconomic mobility and political representation. Certain extreme cases have been observed in which the sectarian form of identification within the sect itself is based precisely on non-identity, on the loss of the historical memory of community and on a culture defined as the absence of cultural consciousness (concretely manifested in ignorance regarding the sectarian interpretation of the religion). These cases stand out more vividly when ethnic groups are defined as cultural groups with a political consciousness of their history: ethnic groups as cultural classes struggling in the field of the project for a national culture, if we understand culture as a form of politics.

Without submitting ourselves to classificatory criteria that might be partial or fragmentary —economic, somatic, linguistic, religious, sectarian, of historic customs or duration— we must place the ethnic group in the field of cultural symptomatology. In this way, the ethnic factor corresponds to a type of stratification based on the social fixations of cultural projections which roughly may correspond at a given moment to classes, class sectors of functional groups within society. We can sustain this argument if we consider that cultural forms can express and articulate interests and consequently power relationships. The ethnic group thus acquires a historical definition clothed in certain cul-

tural characteristics which externalize power systems. As cultural groups that transcend a functional corporate form, we can speak of "ethnic groups in themselves" and "ethnic groups for themselves" based on the kind of expression the ethnic demands take. Historically we should not lose sight of (even in the most extreme case) the economic basis of the demands, always bearing in mind the relation between an economic ecosystem and a system of cultural production, mediated by politics. For this reason, we stick to a notion of the ethnic factor which implies the evolution of an historic singularity that cannot be established beforehand.¹ The ethnic factor thus assumes the characteristics of an idea "in process."

In his work on Syrian politics, Nikolaos van Dam sustains that the majority of sources dealing with the sectarian problem in Syria tend to be partial, prejudiced or of a blatantly propagandistic nature. Sectarianism (*ta'ifiyah*), regionalism (*iqlimiyah*), tribalism (*asha'iriyah*) or clanishness (*'a'iliyah*) are subjects which are politically very sensitive. Official discourse represses open discussion of these subjects which are relegated to the Party's internal documents (with a very limited circulation), to very polemical political memoirs or biographies (of old politicians marginalized from power circles), to the clandestine opposition, or to the communication media of other Arab countries (particularly Lebanon, which has always served as a sounding board for Syrian politics).² This "concealment" is the type of situation on which we have based our working hypothesis on the secularist discourse as ethnic ideology.

In our case study, we offer the hypothesis that secularism within the dominant political ideology in Syria implies a type of externalization of a fundamental primordialism. Consequently we must deconstruct the secularist ideological practices, analyzing their ethnic content rather than their formal manifestations. In other words, we must pay more attention to their sociohistor-

¹ This idea comes from Nadir Marouf's comments in the Meeting on Ethnic Minorities and National States organized by CEESTEM in Mexico City (26-29 October 1982).

² Nikolaos van Dam, *The struggle for power in Syria: sectarianism, regionalism and tribalism in politics, 1961-1980*, London, Croom Helm, c. 1981, pp. 10-12.

ic connotations than to their discursive denotations. Therefore, going beyond the obvious level of an analysis based on the necessity of the "cultural survival" of minorities, we will bear in mind the implications of secularist discourse as a vehicle for the social mobility of ethnic minorities. The development of secularist discourse in the Near East is intimately tied to the dynamics of the projections of ethnic power in the region. In fact, secularist discourse has served as an ideological vehicle for the hegemonic national projects led by determined ethnic groups/classes. The paradox is that these types of "modernizing" discourses that the national ideology supports and that supposedly intend to go beyond the religious, sectarian, communal, tribal or regional definitions of the community are in reality the outer shells of ideological practices of an extremely ethnic nature. We can even go so far as to establish a positive correlation between the secularist accents of the discourse and an ethnic entrenchment in power.

SOME THEORETICAL NOTES

If we place cultural *praxis* in general under the heading of discourse as Foucault does, we necessarily implicate in this *praxis* the game of desire and power. In order to achieve the goals of desire and power, the discourse must ignore the fundamental fact of its being based in these very same goals. As a result, the discourse is always put at the service of "the will of truth" by means of a "style" that consists of simultaneous revelation and concealment. This idea is already sketched out by Marx in his *German Ideology* where he tells us that a class must present its own interests as though they were common to all members of society. When a class expresses its interests in an ideal form it presents these interests as the only rational and universally valid ones. In this sense, every established order (or order to be established) produces what Bourdieu has called "the naturalization of its own arbitrariness."³ Day to day experience gives us an idea of how we adopt rationalizing motives for our actions which do not neces-

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 164.

sarily have a counterpart in reality. What is rationalization at an individual level is ideology on the level of collective action. Habermas intervenes here when he tells us that the unity of knowledge and interests is revealed in the dialectic that takes the historic vestiges of the suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed.⁴ In our experience a subjective consciousness does not necessarily take part. Bourdieu develops this idea with regard to certain ethnic discourses when he sustains that "in social formations in which the expression of material interests is strongly censored and political authority relatively uninstitutionalized, political strategies of mobilization can only be effective only if the values they pursue or propose are presented with the misrecognizable form of the values in which the group recognizes itself."⁵ Bourdieu calls the strategies used to produce "regular" practices "official strategies," since their object is to transmit selfish, private interests (in relating different social units to different levels) into impartial, collective, publicly acknowledgeable and legitimate interests. This "making official" requires the necessary competence to manipulate the collective definition of a situation, bringing it as close as possible to the official position.⁶

A specific type of interpellation shapes the organizational principle of ideology; therefore the unity of an ideological discourse is not necessarily related to its logical consistency, but to the condensing function developed by an interpellative figure in relation to others. This is why, for example, class determination of certain ideological structures does not assume a specific form beforehand: the class character of an ideology is determined by its content and not its form. According to Laclau, the ideology of a dominant class interpellates all the members of a social whole, through hegemony, absorbing and neutralizing those discourses that resist domination, and articulating interpellations and contradictions that are not specifically class-oriented.⁷

The question of formal interpellative indetermination leads

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1971, p. 315.

⁵ Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, London, Verso Editions, 1979, pp. 158-161.

us to an analysis of the relation between the denotative and connotative elements of discourse; between its means of expression (signifier) and its concept (signified). The problem of form and content in discourse can be analyzed by beginning with the notion of concealment in the ideological structure as the necessary form of its possibility (externalization). For Bourdieu, it is in this respect that "understanding ritual practice is not a question of decoding the internal logic of a symbolism but of restoring its practical necessity by relating it to the real conditions of its genesis, that is, to the conditions in which its functions, and the means it uses to attain them, are defined."⁸

In the constitutive motion of the ideological structure, its own internal determination disappears in the externalization of its "complete" form. The manifestation of this motion occurs only under "conditions of possibility" ("externalization" *Veräußerlichung*) which require this disappearance. "A conceptuality" (*Begriffslosigkeit*) of the ideological form occurs when the process that makes it possible disappears in the end product. The *autonomization* of the externalized form, with the inherent disappearance of the genetic formation which makes it possible, determines the characteristics of misrecognition within the ideological structure.⁹ In this way, it is a form whose terms of mediation have disappeared.

The concealment of the internal relations of mediation makes up part of the ideology's structure and is not found in the subjective consciousness of the perceiver. It is a kind of appearance which does not imply subjective self-deception (reflective theories of "false consciousness"), but a real concealment of the ideological structure. Underlying the ideology are relationships that can only exist in their form of concealment (a kind of reality in which the real motion disappears). Absence of the cause should be perceived as the distance through which the phenomenal forms of the process are determined, and because of which the cause can not possibly be represented in them: mystification is the neces-

⁸ Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁹ Formulation of Jacques Ranciere, "The concept of 'critique' and the 'critique' of political economy" (from the *1844 Manuscript to Capital*), *Economy and Society*, vol. 5, Number 3 (August 1976), pp. 352-357.

sary form of their existence.¹⁰ We can therefore state that a necessary relation exists between the possibility of a discourse and its historic conditions of possibility (what Marx sketches as the necessary opaqueness of production relations to its agents).

This brief theoretical *excursus* displaces the notions of "ideas" or "consciousness" from the concept of ideology. Following Althusser, we shall treat "ideology" as "social relations," meaning that the analysis of ideology is the analysis of social relations, and not the analysis of a reflection of social relations in some world of ideas. Foucault follows this line when he insists that a discourse does not represent an idea or become incarnate in a given discursive figure, but that it simply repeats another discourse in a different way. In this manner, discursive strategies are extremely selective instruments of inclusion or exclusion.

Ideology as social relations leads to a situation in which the process of signification is not understood as an *a priori* and arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified; it is rather about the product of the fixation of the relationship of a chain of signifiers. The signifier plays a strategic part in the creation and determination of the signified through the relationships established with other signifiers. In his "political theory of language," Barthes points out the function of ideology in the appropriation processes of the language system and in ownership of the means of enunciation. The analysis of an ideology consequently implies the deconstruction of the process through which the relationships of fixed predication for/in the subject are produced."¹¹

Julia Kristeva sustains that the subject *is not*; it is only the process of signification and is only presented as a practice of signification.¹² Therefore, ideology becomes the way in which the subject is produced in language, with the ability to represent itself and consequently to act within the social whole. The func-

¹⁰ See Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, London, New Left Books, 1977, pp. 188-189.

¹¹ Quoted in Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 7.

¹² Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, Paris, Editions au Seuil, 1974, pp. 179-180.

tion of ideology is the fixation of these representations. In other words, positionality is produced for a subject within a mode of representation.¹³

As the form in which the individual "lives" his role in the social whole, ideology constitutes a practice of representation that produces a determined signified and needs subjects as supports. This practice consists of limiting or fixing the incessant productivity of the chain of signification. Limitation of the signifier's activity in the production of certain signifieds is tied to positionality in society and in social relationships. For Lacan, "only the relationship between one signifier to another signifier engenders the relationship of signifier to signified?"¹⁴ This idea, centered on the productivity of the signifier, leads us to the psychoanalytical premise that society must necessarily repress in order to reproduce its functioning structures. In this way, psychoanalysis tries to demonstrate how the subject is constituted in the positions permitted it by predication, precisely through the limitation of the productivity of the chain of signification. In summary, this is a concept of productivity in which the play of differences in the chain of signification is what produces the signifieds. The position of the subject is that which determines the fixing of this relationship, without losing sight of the fundamental fact that this deals with a subject which is produced at this moment of productivity.¹⁵

The play of relationships between signifiers to produce fixations of signifieds can be understood in the language of the unconscious which has such notions as "distortion" (*Einstellung*), implying a slippage of the signified under the signifier; "condensation" (*Verdichtung*, "metaphor" in literature), understood as a superposition of signifiers; or, "displacement" (*Verschiebung*, metonymy), the turn of meaning which is the mechanism applied by the unconscious to evade censorship. It should be pointed out that all of these notions make up the "considerations of representation" (*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*) which the unconscious imposes on the significative material; in other words, its neces-

¹³ See Coward and Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 3, 6 and 60.

¹⁴ Quoted by Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 111.

¹⁵ Coward and Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 68 and 122.

sary forms of possible representation.¹⁶ All of this approaches Bourdieu's meaning where he sustains that:

The fact that symbolic objects and practices can enter without contradictions into successive relationships set up from different points of view means that they are subject to *overdetermination through indetermination*: the application to the same objects or practices of different schemes... which, at the degree of precision (i.e. of, imprecision) with which they are defined, are all *practically* equivalent, is the source of the polysemy characterizing the fundamental relationships in the symbolic system, which are always determined in several respects at once.¹⁷

ISLAM AS A HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGICAL MATRIX

Rodinson tells us:

The religious community is a society that resembles a nation in many respects. It forms itself, takes decisions collectively under the guidance of its leaders, defines and adapts its internal structures, attacks and defends itself, and has a strategy and tactics. It gives a feeling of belonging, a patriotism of the community that makes people take sides on global options with vigor, devotion and self-sacrifice if necessary.¹⁸

In the Islamic interpretation of history, the importance of "unity" or "unicity" as a central Islamic concept through which everything is perceived constantly stands out. *Tawhid* is an integrating concept of the total personality, thought and conduct both of the individual and of the community. It signifies the unity of identity, function, destiny and purpose of the community of believers. Life in its totality, in all of its social, political and economic aspects is included in this unity. As a result, Islam, more

¹⁶ See Ehrmann's work, *Structuralism*, New York, Doubleday Anchor, 1970, p. 119. There is a follow-up on Freudian analysis of the "work of dreams" (*Traumarbeit*) as material for understanding the mechanisms of the unconscious.

¹⁷ Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁸ Maxime Rodinson, *Marxisme et monde musulman*, Paris Editions du Seuil, 1972. Quote taken from the English version, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1981, p. 12.

than being a religion with its beliefs and forms of worship, is an economic, political and social system; a culture and a civilization; a vast and integrated legal system; in general, a unified form of life that covers religious as well as secular aspects. As a totalizing concept, based on a perception of reality which does not recognize a division between the sacred and the secular, Islam possesses its own conception of history.¹⁹ Abdallah Laroui conceives history as one of the fundamental integrating elements of Islam (together with faith, culture and conduct). In this respect, he develops the distinction made by the classical Arab historians between "true history" (*tarikh*) as an established and controlled knowledge of the facts of the past and present (in the Arab's possession), and "legend," "myth" (*usturah*, from the Greek *historia*) which lacks verification (the property of other people).²⁰ The historic conception permeated by the Islamic *tawhid* has prevented the autogenous development of a notion of secularism. In fact, in the Arab and Persian classic texts there is no synonym for the term "secular." On the other hand, in the unitarian perspective of Islam, secularism would be all that whose origin is human and whose metaphysical foundation lies in the ontological hiatus that separates God from man.²¹

The problem of politics introduces cleavages in the doctrine of "Divine Unity" with the obvious divorce from revealed realities. As these cleavages spread and deepen, protosecular currents arise that are afterwards consolidated with the influence of Western ideologies. The realities of power are responsible for the fact that the integrity of the Islamic ideological matrix remains "patched" (*tarqi*).

After the Muslim conquest of the Arab East, Islamic ideology became the dominant civilizing force in the region. The *Shari'ah*, the Islamic legal system, had eminently mercantile foundations and, as a result, the integration of Arab social formations

¹⁹ See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1980, *passim*.

²⁰ Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual. Traditionalism or Historicism?*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, p. 15.

²¹ Seyyed Houssein Nasr, "Religion and Secularism, their Meaning and Manifestation in Islamic History", in *Islamic Life and Thought*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1981, pp. 7-9.

in the *Ummah*, the Islamic community, was relatively easy. The Arab Caliphate was established with Islam as the hegemonic ideology of the *Ummah*, but with tributary spaces of exclusion that tolerated the "people of the book" (*Ahl al-kitab*) who belonged to the region's great monotheistic religions. "The people of the book," Christians and Jews, who had received written revelations before Muhammad, had, in fact, a second class citizen status that permitted them to maintain an identity through their religious organization, personal statute laws, worship and religious trusts. Muslim law, the hegemonic mechanism of power *par excellence* was not applied to the *dhimmis* (non-Muslims) who had their own canons and institutions, for which the religious leader of the community was directly responsible to the Muslim Caliph or Sultan.

In this way, the minority religious communities had a statute protecting their freedom of worship, mobility, residence and education in exchange for paying a special tax. The statute of protection represents, in practice, a condition of exception that ascribes to certain religions a statute which is applied only to personal life and is divorced from the sociocultural context of the *Ummah*. This Islamic system of exception from the *Ummah*, the *millah*, was particularly developed under the Ottoman Empire as a historical heir of the Arab Caliphate. The Ottoman Turks consolidated the statute of protection under the system of "religious nationalities" of the *millet*. Hourani describes the Ottoman Empire as being made up of "closed communities" of local, tribal, linguistic and religious groups. These were self-contained, coexisting worlds that had contact among each other but did not mix. Since all of these worlds had a marginal existence, the Muslim Sunni majority (or Shi'i in the case of Iraq) had a cultural sense of power and historical decision that the other worlds lacked.²² Paradoxically, in practice, the tolerance accorded to the institutionally accepted differences, mainly to Jews and Christians, did not apply to heterodox Islamic schisms. Islamic heterodoxy was certainly more dangerous and threatening to the integrity of the *Ummah*. As a result, within the *millet* system,

²² A.H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, London, Oxford University Press, pp. 22-23.

groups like the Druse, Alawites, or Muslim nationalities that were neither Turk nor Arab, as in the case of the Sunni Kurds, had a very ambiguous statute subject to the fluctuations in their relations with the military power.

The decadence of the Ottoman Empire brings about a gradual erosion of the Islamic system of exception. The formal protection by the *Sublime Porte*, or the direct protection by local rulers, that was extended to religious minorities was considerably affected by the interventionism of Western imperialist powers in the region. Secularism began to be seen as an ideological center of refuge when the system of "religious nationalities" started to decay. Christians were the most susceptible to Western secular ideas, while the initiatory Islamic sects (the Alawites, Isma'ili and Druse) had in their esoteric practices of religious concealment fertile ground for adapting to protosecularist discursive tendencies.

During the XIX century, European secularist ideas were introduced in the Arab East within the overall modality of Western type nationalist discourse. Consequently, the *Sublime Porte* took measures against the appearance of local nationalisms, using secularized policies designed to reconstruct the sense of an Ottoman community. During the Ottoman administrative movement for modernization, the *Tanzimat* (1839-1876), a secularizing supracommunal Ottoman nationalism was undertaken to counteract the Empire's fissiparous tendencies. This policy was particularly evident during the time of Ibrahim Pasha's government in the Great Syria when equal status was given to all the religious communities. Shortly after, these policies became counterproductive, since they were used by the imperialist powers as a mechanism for extracting further concessions from the *Sublime Porte* by exacerbating communal tensions. At the same time, the modernization policy attempted by the Ottoman regime accentuated even further the systems of ascriptive differentiation by intensifying the processes of clarification of socioeconomic classes that closely followed ethnic demarcations.

Arab Christians, who were more exposed to Western education and culture (especially Orthodox Christians who, as a demographically small minority, had an accentuated consciousness of social mobility and "situation"), advocated the idea of supracommunal Syrian nationalism at the end of the XIX century. This nationalism, proposed by intellectuals like Khuri, Busta-

ni and others, was based on secularist perspectives of Arabism founded on the notions of fatherland, culture and common language. The Arab nationalist current, secular in nature, proposed by the intelligentsia, was quite heterogenous in its idea and functionally weak in terms of its social bases.²³ Communal fragmentation of the educational system prevented the rise of a national secularist perspective, and, at the same time, the dominant Muslim urban class resented Ottoman secularism, becoming ever more distrustful of the ideas of secular Syrian nationalism.

In answer to the secular nationalism advocated by Christian intellectuals, an Arab nationalism arose with Panislamic reformist overtones at the moment when a current of centralizing Turkish hegemony appeared in the Empire. The harsh Turkification policies that the Young Turks attempted to implant beginning in 1909 were responsible for a definitive impulse towards Arab nationalism which, during this phase, mainly took the form of a nationalist Sunni Islamic current. With their positivist, rationalist and secularist ideology, the Young Turks invented the myth of the Turkish nation as the source of a new value system for the Ottoman community. This reconstitution of Ottomanism, based on a model of Jacobine centralism, ignored the communitarian definitions of the Arab communities, especially of the Christian ones, and considered them "disloyal" because they proposed alternative secularist models. According to Rodinson, in a dialectical process, the distrust of the dominant group increased the "disloyalty" of the minority, increasing the original distrust and creating a vicious circle. In this manner the Turkish myth

²³ Syrian secular patriotism (*irtibat watani*) is structurally weak due to the heterogeneity of its ideas and its social bases. Ideas are posited that go from a very narrow concept of nationalism (like those of Khuri or Bustani) to extensive notions of pan-Arabism—as in the cases of Najib Azuri in his *Le réveil de la nation arabe dans l'Asie turque* (Paris: Plon, 1905) and Edmond Rabbath in *Unité syrienne et devenir arabe* (Paris: Rivere, 1937) which illustrate this ambiguity. At first, the secular nationalism of the intelligentsia of the *petite-bourgeoisie* lacked the social base necessary to change from a platform of ideas to a concrete program of social action to fight against the Turks, and the socioeconomic elements necessary to counteract being fenced in by Western imperialism. The exception may be the Copt Salama Musa whose secularist notions tried to break away from the atavisms which prevented development of an industrial society.

strengthened itself and became self-perpetuating, isolating the minorities.²⁴

Western imperialism as a catalyst of the secularist discourse

Rodinon introduces the problem as follows:

Islam has been interpreted less as a divine revelation about mankind, the world, and God than as an Arab national value. Even Christian Arabs recognize it as such ... Moderate versions of Arabism make room... for the rights of ethnic minorities and the particular observances of religious minorities. But extremist versions have been very influential, particularly during crises. Past collusion of minorities with European powers, their present role as agents of European capitalist penetration of the East, and the external loyalties implied by all this... have sometimes been used to arouse suspicion of them.²⁵

Imperialist intervention as "protector" of the minorities
—France of the Maronites on Mount Lebanon, Russia of the Orthodox and Armenians, and England of the Druse and the Jews—

²⁴ Rodinson, *op. cit.*, p. 162. *Kemalism* appeared shortly after as a result of this reconstituted notion of Ottomanism as an ideology based on rejection of the Islamic *polis*. It is interesting to follow up on certain antecedents among the Kurd minority of *Kemalism*. Ziya Gökalp, the intellectual founder of *Kemalism*, supposedly came from a Kurd family from Diyarbekir. Lufti Fikri, Kurd deputy in the Ottoman Parliament for the Mudjedded Party ("Renovation Party") in 1912 proposed total secularization of the Empire, as the direct predecessor of Mustafa Kemal. *Kemalism* first developed in Eastern Turkey and, at first, received the support of the Kurds in their Islamic discourse against the Armenians, and after in their secularist discourse. When Mustafa Kemal's secularism turned into exacerbated Turkism, the Kurds were the first victims of this chauvinistic ideology. During the twenties, the correlation between secularization and Turkification led the Turkish law on political associations and parties to prohibit the mention of the existence of national minorities in the Turkish Republic. The Kurds were "assimilated" as "Mountain Turks" to avoid questioning the idea of national unity. See Gérard Chaliand (editor), *People Without a Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: Zed Press, 1980), pp. 12-13.

²⁵ See Maxime Rodinson, *The Arabs*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 106.

concealed a manipulation and strengthening of communal political consciousness. Apart from acting as the catalyst of a secular nationalism that would preserve and guarantee the position of minorities in the post-colonial era, colonialism instigated and encouraged all kinds of subnationalisms. In the Arab East, the case of the Maronite Christians, who recreated the myth of the Phoenicians in Lebanon, and perceived their role in the Middle East as the vanguard of modern European civilization, stands out.²⁶ During the colonial period, separate educational systems for the different communities were consolidated, communal political autonomy was established and preferential ethnic recruiting for the military forces in charge of repressing the Arab nationalist movement was carried out. The direct attack on the part of colonialism against preexisting systems of ideological hegemony explains why the struggle for independence during the Mandate took on many secular and antisectarian characteristics. During the Mandate, the nationalization or Arabization of foreign ideologies stands out. These ideologies were legitimated through new hermeneutical interpretations of past heritage that ascribed authenticity (*asala*) to them.²⁷

Capitalist penetration in the Arab East and the consequent erosion of dominant mercantile social forms brought about the relative integration of certain rural ethnic centers (that until then had only marginal ties with the national market) through an agrarian "feudalization" of the capitalist process of development. Accentuation of urban/rural contacts and relations caused tension in the hegemonic ideological center of Islam. The gradual erosion of the position of the *effendi* class (a mercantile class of absentee landlords) as the "national class" weakened Islam as the

²⁶ Other interesting cases are the instigation of subnationalism among the Berbers in the *Great and Small Kabylie* during the war of liberation in Algeria. The French colonialists tried to revive aboriginal myths, changing the Berbers into "Numidians"... whites of Indoeuropean origin. In this respect Rodinson says: "I refer to myths as the central themes of an ideology, descriptions of past or future situations supposedly real... Myths depend on a *kerygma*, that calls upon people to organize, preserve, defend or change the world they live in, and sometimes also their personal lives, through actions that may be symbolic (rites) or pragmatic (magic, technical work, organization, etc.)". *Marxisme et...*, p. 156.

²⁷ See Haddad, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

center of the nationalist movement. Until that time, the traditional urban elite (predominantly Sunni) had dominated and represented the rural ethnic minorities through a system of political clientelism. When this system of representing their interests reached its structural limits, the need to create true national political platforms arose. The urban petite-bourgeoisie tried to put these platforms into action through the creation of ideological parties based on European models. However, these political methods of the petite-bourgeoisie reverted to the system of clientelism. Given the impossibility of creating autonomous national projects, the rural ethnic groups decided to seek power from within the existing national systems. The ethnic groups endorsed the clientelistic policy carried out by means of cliques (*kutla*) with regional power bases that entered the national political scene (using regional politics as a spring-board), and returned to the local level to consolidate their power.

In the thirties, the Arab nationalist ideologies were greatly influenced by European fascism and socialism. A number of parties with secularist platforms appeared and achieved an important political clientele among minorities. The Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (founded in 1929) applied a local version of the concept of European popular fronts with a sizable adherence of Kurds and Armenians. The Syrian Nationalist Social Party was an answer to pan-Arab nationalism interpreted as Sunni hegemony, and proposed (under the leadership of the Lebanese Orthodox Christian Antoun Sa'ada and with an important Christian and *Alawite* clientele from Ladhahiyyah) a restricted Syrian-Lebanese nationalism based on the total removal of sectarian barriers. The National Action League (led by the Alawite Zaki al-Arsuzi, with obvious Nazi influence) proposed a chauvinistic conception of Syrian nationalism which found support among the peasants of Hama. In the forties, the political bankruptcy of the traditional bourgeois Sunni leadership contributed to the success of a host of populist, socialist and nationalist ideologies, parties and movements in the Arab East. The majority of these had as common denominator a secularist discourse which gave the minorities a sense of historic mission in the Arab nationalist movement. The problem with all these parties that attempted to impose their definition of a national community was that they lacked true national bases. With a highly decentralized

and cellular structure, they projected local politics as national politics. The facts are that, until the sixties, the individual cells of these parties had much more political importance than their national structures as a whole. With a much greater proportion of members from minority groups (mainly Alawites, Druse, Isma'ili and Orthodox Christians) than the other parties in relation to their percentage within the population, the development of the Ba'ath Party is significant and interesting.

The Ba'ath Party in Syria

Article 15 of the Constitution of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party proclaims:

The national bond is the only existing bond in the Arab State. It guarantees harmony amongst its citizens, uniting them in the crucible of one nation and combating all other forms of factional solidarity represented by religious, sectarian, tribal, racial and regional factionalism.²⁸

Despite the fact that it professed a marked antisectarian secularism, as van Dam sustains, the Ba'ath Party was essentially constructed through "traditional social channels;"²⁹ in other words, it was a political mobilization through the manipulation of the solidarity of clans, ethnic groups and sectarian, religious and regional groups. This would have necessarily led to the impasse typical of traditional Syrian politics had the Ba'ath not played its card with the army. The military was to take charge of the impasse of Syrian politics after Independence in 1946.

The Shishakli military dictatorship (1950-1955) marked the culmination of the period of Bonapartist military governments that finally opted for the national hegemonic project of the urban Sunni bourgeoisie. Cultural Sunni hegemony was manifested in the system of communal representation in Parliament, in the establishment of Islam as the State religion, and in the campaigns to enforce Arabism which provoked a strong communal

²⁸ In Bashir al-Da'uq (editor), *Nidal al-Ba'ath*, vol. 1, (Beirut: 1970), p 176.

²⁹ Van Dam, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

reaction, notably the Druse and Alawite rebellions. The dictatorship fell due to military pressure, a fact that suggests a substantial change in the social composition of the armed forces. The gradual promotion of minor officials belonging to rural ethnic groups after each *putsch* was noteworthy. These officials reached the highest echelons of the military in the sixties. Based on colonial ethnic recruitment policies, the army was the ideal means of social mobility for the rural ethnic communities. Through the ideological indoctrination carried out in rural secondary schools and military academies, a political bond was established between the intelligentsia of the urban petite bourgeoisie and peasants belonging to ethnic groups, mediated by the military which adhered to different nationalist and populist tendencies. Ethnic divisions and competitions between the different political parties at first prevented the new generation of military men from developing a united form of political action.

Gramsci emphasizes the role played by "traditional" intellectuals as a tie between the urban petite bourgeoisie and the peasants (incapable of producing their own intellectuals). In the country/city articulation of the Syrian process, the efforts of Michel Aflaq, Salah al-Din al Baytar and Khalid Baqdash stand out as urban intellectuals with an ideological reserve coming from a peasant base. Secularism was an urban discourse that would be adapted as a rural ethnic practice to become part of and direct the national hegemonic process. The populist overtones of these discursive practices were tied to an almost instinctive conservatism on the part of the peasants who lacked an overall, integral vision of the transformation of social relations. As a result, the communist movement, and more global and totalizing discourses such as Nasserism and the Muslim Brotherhood, had little success among ethnic peasants since they contained overtones of Sunni hegemony and unflinching Arabism.

The Ba'ath appeared in the thirties among the young intelligentsia of the urban petite-bourgeoisie, and in the forties it penetrated the peasant middle class of ethnic communities, proclaiming secular Arabism, socialism of the populist type, and consolidating its relations with minor army officers from rural ethnic communities. The development of the Ba'ath as a political movement had a determining effect on the social composition of its membership. Although its historical origin dates from

1940 with Michel Aflaq (Orthodox Christian) and Salah al-Din al-Baytar (Sunni Muslim), both from the lower middle class of Damascus, its original membership began in the Al-Tahjiz secondary school whose student body was mostly comprised of rural immigrants. It had influence in the Druse community through Aflaq's family's personal relations with several Druse families (Christian families from the Al-Maydan section of Damascus traded with the Hawran and Jabal al-Duruz). Despite the fact that the Ba'ath Party strongly penetrated rural areas, it was always politically weak in urban centers like Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama.³⁰ In the sixties, Ba'ath leadership became progressively of rural communal origin due to penetration in the party of military men (through the formation of the Ba'ath Military Committee). In general, local branches of the Party, especially that of Ladhahiyyah, were better organized and had disproportionate influence in the national structure. Towards the mid-sixties, intermixing with the military gave place to the notion of an "Ideological Army" (*Jaysh al-aqa'idi*) with a supposed historical and social mission in the construction of a national community. Nevertheless, power relations in the armed forces continued to be determined by personal alliances between the leaders of officer factions and followers recruited through sectarian, regional or tribal connections. In an obvious break between the political ideas adopted and their practical transference to the social level, after 1966 there was a systematic purge of the Sunni, Druse, Isma'ili, Kurd and Christian factions within the Ba'ath and among high-ranking Army officers on the part of the Alawite faction.

It was precisely during the political radicalization of the Neo-Ba'ath (1966-1970), when secular discourse reached its rhetorical extreme, that the structures of sectarian power, specifically of the Alawites, were secured. Noteworthy during this period were the repressive policies against the Kurds which reflected serious structural limits for secular Arabism. The anti-Kurd campaign, contained in the "Arabization" policy of the Jazirah, exposed the true content of the discursive practices of the Neo-Ba'ath.³¹

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Only in 1971 the first land allotments were awarded the Kurds, considering that Agrarian Reform was the touchstone of the Ba'ath's social discourse. The Arabization campaign of the Kurd region was finally discontinued in 1976.

The communal sectarian character of the Neo-Ba'ath regime stands out in its ideological introversion that emphasized specific Syrian identity and isolated Syria from the Arab world, particularly from pan-Arab currents.

The Neo-Ba'ath's ideological introversion can be functionally related to the historic process of religious "dissimulation" that persisted among the Alawites. While Islam's metaphysical foundation is "knowledge" (*'ilm*) of the religion, identity among the Alawites revolves around the notion of "concealment." With a background of historical persecution, Alawite identity is surrounded by religious practices having exoteric and esoteric aspects which permit religious "dissimulation" (*taqiyyah*), in the sense of hiding their faith and professing a different one. As a sect of initiates, the Alawite religion is little understood by the uninitiated majority of Alawites. As a result, this ignorance can be considered a type of collective identity. In fact, many Alawites did not identify with their religion until the last decade due to their isolation, lack of education and lack of communication with other Alawite groups. Socioeconomic changes and changes in their political circumstances have brought about a relative increase in sectarian consciousness among the Alawites. Gubser views this process as one of "situational selection", in which the individual selects the group identity that affords him the greatest benefits in a given situation.³² It should be noted that in the traditional systems of stratification of minorities like the Druse and Alawites, the religious *shaykhs* do not participate in political leadership which is monopolized by the families of feudal notables (the 'Abbas, Kanj and Murshid among the Alawites, and the Jumblatt, 'Arslan, Al'Atrash and Abu'Asali among the Druses) who have relationships of political clientelism with the urban elite. This type of minority does not have a corporate form of representation of political interests; therefore it revolves around government jobs, the military and the Ba'ath. Since they do not have an autonomous form of political organization as a minority, the Alawites permeate and take over state structures. The protosecularist dis-

³² See Peter Gubser, "Minorities in Power. The Alawites in Syria," in R.D. McLaurin (editor), *The Political Role of Minority Groups in the Middle East*, New York, Praeger, 1979, p. 22.

course of concealment becomes a necessity for consolidating their position within the state apparatus. In this respect van Dam says:

In the late periods of the struggle for power among Ba'ath officers, it was proven over and over again that, in the long run, those who spoke openly in favour of strengthening the position of their religious groups weakened their own positions, and not those of their opponents who also wished to strengthen their positions on a secular basis, but who did not speak openly of this desire.³³

Although secularism sought to guarantee a communal and cultural identity for the minorities of the Arab nation, the ideologues of the Ba'ath could not ignore the role played by Islam in the socioeconomic and political center of Arab society. Michel Aflaq, a Christian, considered Islam a necessary ingredient of the common cultural property of the Arab nation. The rhetorical mechanisms used to attempt to bring about an ideological settlement of these tensions were as follows: if Arab nationalism identified with Islam as culture and history, socialism was secular and prevented an economic monopoly or political domination by one group over another. Economic equality and the equality of political opportunities did not necessarily imply cultural assimilation. This rhetorical line brought about the "historical compromise" that the Hafiz al-Assad regime attempted to carry out beginning in 1971. Its policies prove that the Ba'ath secularists have never really dared to seriously challenge Islam as an hegemonic ideology. The new Ba'ath policies, more than representing a struggle against communal divisions, were an adaptation to these divisions. Assad assumed positions that were more "Arabized" in his regional politics and tried to achieve the image of accepting heterodox sects as integral currents of Islam (he obtained certification as a Muslim from the Syrian *ulama'*, and from the Lebanese *imams* the legal opinion that the Alawites belong to the Shi'a). In general, Assad has tried to create a conciliatory attitude towards Islam in many of his statements and actions: he has emphasized the progressive elements of Islam; in 1973 he declared that the President of the Republic should be a Muslim (this had been previously revoked by the Neo-Ba'ath);

³³ Van Dam, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

in 1974 he showed himself to be a devout Muslim by making the *hajj* to Mecca; he attends Islamic conferences; he has reduced working hours during the Ramadan, etc. On the other hand, although Islamic legislation continues to be the basis for Law, the Assad regime has resisted strong pressures to have Islam declared the state religion.

It was not long before the Assad regime's "historic compromise" encountered unavoidable structural limits. Again, van Dam correctly identifies this process:

The problem became a vicious circle: on the one hand, power was essential to bring about the drastic social changes necessary to suppress sectarian, regional and tribal loyalties; on the other, maintaining power implied dependency on those same loyalties, therefore preventing their suppression.³⁴

Beginning in 1976, taking advantage of Syria's intervention in Lebanon, a series of attacks and assassinations of officers and government officials heralded the escalation of sectarian provocations against Alawite "atheism." Urban Sunni groups, of a heterogenous social composition, unleashed a violent opposition movement, conceived of as a crusade (*jihad*) against a repressive and sectarian regime. The spearhead of this movement was the *Mujahidin*, one of several groups comprising a broad opposition front, known generically as the "Muslim Brotherhood" (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), but whose ties with other movements using the same name in other Arab countries are still uncertain. In a speech given in 1979, in answer to the massacre of cadets perpetrated in Aleppo by the "Muslim Brotherhood," Assad spoke of equality being an integral part of Islam and attacked groups that thought that they possessed a monopoly on the definition of Islam, saying that rigidity and fanaticism contradicted the spirit of Islam.³⁵ On the other hand, in February 1982, Assad reacted implacably to outbreaks of Sunni rebellion in Hama, unleashing bloody reprisals that destroyed much of the old section of the city.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

Some considerations as a conclusion

From our brief examination of the case of the Ba'ath Party in Syria, the inescapable fact of the permanence of the religious, sectarian or ethnic community as a sociopolitical unit in the Middle East remains. The case of Turkey appears to dramatically illustrate the doubtful product of a secularization policy at all costs, better understood as the hegemonic imposition of a Turkification process.³⁶ In the case of Iraq, with a Takriti Sunni minority dominating the Shi'i majority and the Kurds, the pan-Arab secular discourse of the Iraqi Ba'ath takes on the character of sectarian practice. Sunni domination can be considered in this sense to be the transmuted continuation of the Hashemite regime. Hanna Batatu says that the Shi'i and Sunni in Iraq are, after all, just that — Shi'i and Sunni — a fact no ideological pretension can disguise. With all the rhetorical extremes of its secular discourse, the Iraqi Ba'ath had become by 1968 the almost exclusive property of a dominant Sunni stratum.³⁷ Lebanon is perhaps the most patent case of a social system in which the political base continues to be communal and where ideological justifications have degenerated into communal fighting.

The permanence, even resistance, of so-called "primordial" loyalties of solidarities is perhaps the most current problem in Middle Eastern societies, Ajami says:

The idea that ideology revolutionizes the world and blows away ancient feuds and weaknesses may or may not be empirically valid, but it has become a dictum of our age. When it is subscribed to, it can magnify the futility that societies experience as they discover those stubborn traits that simply refuse to go away. Then men begin to think they have labored in vain, that their deeds are like foot-

³⁶ Fouad Ajami says: "The Turkish State that led the movement toward secularism is now in chaos; its politics are a theater of violence from the right and the left, its parties are a pale reflection of each other, and its economy is a prisoner of the International Monetary Fund. The cultural price Turkey had to pay for this change was immense, and it is not easy to see the benefits." *The Arab Predicament. Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 187.

³⁷ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 1035.

prints in the sand. Is not the resurgence of Islam that is said to be sweeping the region proof that generations of nationalists, liberal and Marxist ideologues alike, have failed to leave any real sign of their presence?³⁸

In the so-called "resurgence of Islam," it may be well to see not only a permanence, but a true resistance of the notion of unity (*tawhid*) as the *Weltanschauung* of the social strata that conceive of culture as the exercise of politics and then struggle for power in order to define this cultural space. In his "Political Testament," the Druse leader Kamal Jumblatt alludes to the petite bourgeoisie of the bazaar (the traditional Muslim middle class, comprised of artisans, vendors and small merchants with a traditional education and relatively steady incomes), whose "political fury", invoking God and the national culture, does not recognize a separation between the realm of interests and that of values.³⁹ In its critique of "imported doctrines" (*al-mabadi'al-mustwarda*), popular culture uses Islam as an effective weapon for resisting state power. The governing authority (*al-sultah*) not being able to monopolize religion as a channel for political expression and, as a result, when the state controls the regular channels of political discourse (parties, unions, popular organizations, press, radio and television), the mosque remains as the last autonomous political forum. In this respect, religion has been used as a vehicle for very secular political sentiments. The fact remains that nationalism has not been able to displace the old loyalties because it has developed upon them, has coexisted with them and, although it has eroded them, has mimicked them to some degree by absorbing their psychological elements and, as Batautu would say, by expressing itself within the emotional and conceptual framework of Islam.⁴⁰ Behind this is the old problem of legitimacy as a fundamental political resource whose aspects of identity, authority and equality attempt to base themselves on a continuity between traditional religion and the "political religion" of secularist nationalism.

³⁸ Ajami, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

³⁹ Kamal Jumblatt, *Hadah'i Wasiyyati* (Beirut: 1978), p. 106.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 272.

The legitimacy problem —identity, authority and equality— is intimately related in the Middle East to the historical problem of the definition of the overall community. Concepts like *'asabiyyah* (corporate solidarity of the group), *qawmiyyah* (nationalism in a broad sense), *wataniyyah* (restricted nationalism), *ummah* (religious community or, in its modern sense, national community), or *millah* (non-Islamic religious community within the *ummah*), point towards a multidimensional definition of the national community. Although these definitions have an all-encompassing character, their vehicles of expression and mobilization are still those connected to family ties, ethnic groups, sects or religion. Discourse, as a conglomerate of ideas in this instance, continues to be adopted by social blocks which relate to each other politically through systems of clientelism (*wasita*). The functioning of these systems, with their often very accelerated dialectics, requires an ideological determination through discursive indetermination. In this respect, Bassam Tibi alludes to the Arab language not simply as a means of expression, but as an end in itself. Arabic, with its esoteric enchantment and rhetorical imprecision, is an ideal medium for all types of dissimulation or concealment.⁴¹

We may conclude with Jacques D  rri  da's thoughts on the "critique of presence," according to which the structure of the sign is determined by the "trace" of the other that is always absent. D  rri  da calls the part that plays what is radically other in the structure of difference that constitutes the sign, "trace;" in other words, the mark of the absence of a presence. In this way, D  rri  da is against the "metaphysics of presence" which attempts to find a coincidence between the definition and what is defined, the end and the means, etc.⁴² Following this line of thought, Fredric Jameson says:

The heterogeneity between signifier and signified... will become the instrument of a radical critique of Western philosophical and metaphysical tradition, which has always emphasized the identity

⁴¹ According to Tibi, what Michel Aflaq offers in his ideology is no more than vague metaphysics. See Ajami, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

⁴² Jacques D  rri  da, *of Grammatology*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. xviii-xxi.

between experience and knowledge, between language and thought, and which has carried out its tasks beneath the sign of the ideal of total presence, the mirage of the *logos* as the ultimate univocal concept.⁴³

⁴³ Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

LES OFFRANDES FUNÉRAIRES A MARI: EXPRESSION RITUELLE D'UN ÉTAT DIMORPHE

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Cet article prétend faire le bilan des informations relatives aux offrandes funéraires fournies par les textes du palais de Mari —XVIII^{ème} siècle a. J.C.—, ainsi que suggérer la relation éventuelle entre les rites funéraires tels qu'ils étaient pratiqués par les monarques mariotes et le caractère dimorphique de l'État —appareil de contrôle sur les populations urbaines et nomades—, relation qui semble transparaître dans la dichotomie des offrandes aux "sarrāni", rois historiques de l'État mésopotamien, et les "malikū", éponymes des sociétés à structure tribale.

Comme dans de nombreuses cultures anciennes et contemporaines, la pratique des offrandes funéraires a revêtu en Mésopotamie plusieurs formes que l'on peut regrouper grosso modo en trois grandes catégories: a) les provisions funéraires, c'est-à-dire les offrandes déposées dans les sépultures au moment de l'inhumation des corps et qui consistaient en des objets utiles et des aliments nécessaires aux défunts dans leur voyage vers le monde souterrain; b) les rites de communion, repas pris par les vivants en mémoire des morts, auxquels les *ešimmu*, 'ombres', qui devaient être ainsi nourries dans l'au-delà, étaient censées prendre part, faute de quoi elles seraient condamnées à errer sur terre sans repos; enfin, c) les rites propitiatoires, c'est-à-dire les sacrifices offerts aux esprits infernaux, démons et dieux du monde souterrain —voire aux rois divinisés— pour les honorer, les rendre favorables et souvent, lorsqu'il s'agissait d'êtres maléfiques, pour en écarter l'influence néfaste. A l'origine de la première catégo-

rie, on trouve les croyances les plus anciennes de l'humanité; la deuxième et la troisième supposent des systèmes de pensée plus sophistiqués, en particulier celle qui voit dans les rois décédés des êtres divinisés, et qui semble remonter aux sources mêmes des idéologies d'États fortement théocratiques.

Le terme akkadien *kispu* désigne généralement le rite de communion auquel semble faire allusion sa racine, *kasapu* 'couper en morceaux, partager', bien qu'il s'applique parfois aux provisions déposées dans les sépultures et aux rites propitiatoires.¹ Son équivalent sumérien, *KI-SĪ-GA*, ne comporte d'ailleurs aucun élément sémantique signifiant plus particulièrement partager, mais, au moins dans les textes akkadiens, il désigne normalement, tout comme le *kispu*, un repas funéraire.

Indépendamment des commentaires présentés par les éditeurs des textes de Mari,² le sujet a fait l'objet de plusieurs études auxquelles nous avons pu avoir accès, entre autres l'article de Philippe Talon,³ «Les Offrandes funéraires à Mari», et un chapitre entier du livre d'Akio Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege in alten Mesopotamien*.⁴ Ceci nous permettra, après une brève exposé de l'état de la question, de ne pas nous arrêter à une discussion de détails et de passer directement au sujet qui nous occupe: découvrir l'éventuelle valeur symbolique des offrandes funéraires en tant qu'expression rituelle du dimorphisme de l'État.

À Mari, le *kispu* est mentionné dans un document de type rituel, dans deux lettres et dans des textes administratifs, et dans tous les cas, en l'honneur de rois défunts, ce qui s'explique parfaitement par le caractère "palatin" des archives découvertes jus-

¹ Cfr. Akio Tsukimoto, «Aspekte von *kispu(m)* als Totenbeigabe», in *Death in Mesopotamie*, Bendt Alster (éd), XXVI RAI, Mesopotamie 8, Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology, 1980, pp. 129-138.

² Parmi les éditeurs des textes cunéiformes de Mari — ARM et ARMT —, ceux qui se sont consacrés aux documents administratifs ont contribué, grâce à leurs commentaires aussi bien philologiques qu'à propos des réalia, à défricher le terrain pour les trois types de rites nous intéressant: J. Bottéro, ARMT VII, no. 26, 4, p. 199, et no. 47, p. 229; M. L. Burke, ARMT XI, no. 17, p. 139; M. Birot, ARMT IX, no. 66-68, pp. 283-287; et ARMT XII, pp. 23-25.

³ Ph. Talon, «Les Offrandes funéraires à Mari», in AIPHOS 22 (1978), pp. 53-75.

⁴ Ph. Talon, AIPHOS 22 (1978), pp. 52-75; Akio Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege in alten Mesopotamien*, ADAT 216, pp. 57-78.

qu'à présent. Nous nous intéresserons aussi aux offrandes aux "malikū" attestées dans des documents administratifs, et aux sacrifices dits *paḡrā'u*, dont font également état des textes administratifs et des lettres; nous verrons, en effet, que ces deux rites étaient aussi des rites de communion et que l'on leur a souvent prêté un caractère funéraire.

Les textes administratifs, environ soixante-dix, qui constituent le gros de notre dossier,⁵ n'offrent qu'indirectement des renseignements sur le *kispum*, puisqu'il s'agit de registres de livraisons de denrées comestibles ne fournissant qu'une seule indication, pas toujours explicite d'ailleurs, concernant leur destination, *ZI-GA ana*, 'sortie pour', ou simplement *ana*, 'à tel ou tel effet', et le plus souvent *NĪG-DU-LUGAL/naptan šarrim*, 'le repas du roi'. Certains enregistrements rendent compte de la fourniture des denrées alimentaires *ana kispim ša šarrāni*, 'pour les offrandes-*kispum* des rois', ou simplement *ana kispim*, sous-entendu sans doute *ša šarrāni*. Ces offrandes, présentées régulièrement les 1er et 16 du mois, et exceptionnellement à d'autres dates,⁶ constituaient un vrai repas⁷ au menu très semblable à ce-

⁵ Voir la liste la plus exhaustive des textes dans A. Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege...*, *op. cit.*, p. 57, no. 223-225, auxquels il faut ajouter deux textes publiés plus récemment, ARM XXIII, 60, 7 et 248 7-8.

⁶ Voir les tableaux synoptiques élaborés par Ph. Talon, «Les Offrandes»..., pp. 72-74. Apparemment, à d'autres périodes et en d'autres endroits, le *kispu* n'était célébré régulièrement que le premier jour du mois, jour de la néoménie: l'équivalence lexicale —*ūm kispim* = *ūm bubbulim*, jour du *kispu* = jour de la nouvelle lune (cf. RA 16 [1919], p. 152; CT. xviii. PL. 23 [= K 4397]) en est l'une des preuves, ainsi qu'un texte où l'on peut lire: *[k]ja-l [a] šfa-at-ti a-na [k]šī-GA (= kispim) [b]ji-ib-bu-li-im ša bit a-bi-ka [mi]-na-a a-na-ad-di-in*, "qu'offrirai-je de toute l'année pour le *kispum* de la nouvelle lune de la maison de mon père (AdB I, 106 17-19)." Ceci a fait penser aux rites de communion des temps pré-sargoniques (RTC 58 I 10-II 2 = DP 222 I 10-II B, cité à ce propos par Ph. Talon, AIPHOS 22 (1978), pp. 53-54), ainsi qu'aux offrandes présentées à Lagash pendant la période d'Ur III, en l'honneur des rois défunts (ITT 2, 957 et passim), bien que ces pratiques n'y soient pas désignées par le terme sumérien *KI-SI-GA* équivalent au *kispu* akkadien.

⁷ Dans un texte célèbre où le *kispu* est décrit comme un véritable banquet, nous trouvons, en effet, assis au centre de la table, les dieux Samas, Ea et Mar-kuk, avec, à leur gauche, les *etimmu*, 'les âmes des défunts'; la place de droite serait vraisemblablement occupée par les vivants. BBR, 52, 9 ss. Les comestibles composant le repas varient selon l'époque et le lieu, puisque nous trou-

lui des banquets du roi, bien que plus léger et moins varié; différents plats élaborés à base de comestibles le plus souvent d'origine végétale —seuls deux des textes publiés jusqu'à présent⁸ parlent de viande de mouton— entraient dans la composition des menus. Le nombre de personnes prenant part au banquet peut être déduit de l'importance des portions signalées, et il indique une assistance moyenne d'une dizaine d'hommes à chaque repas; ce nombre pouvait être plus élevé s'il y avait des femmes parmi les convives, et atteindre le double ou davantage, à l'occasion...⁹ Le *kispum* étant un repas pris par les vivants avec leurs défunts, notamment leurs ancêtres, il serait logique d'y voir figurer le roi en personne ainsi que sa famille, mais l'observation de Tsukimoto¹⁰ sur le fait que dans les registres mensuels le *kispum* n'exclut pas forcément la célébration du banquet royal est très pertinente. Deux hypothèses pourraient être avancées: soit que le *kispum* célébré à Mari deux fois par mois n'ait pas été un rite de communion, mais une offrande propitiatoire, comme le pense Tsukimoto; soit que, dans le rite de communion périodique, le roi ait pu être représenté par un prêtre,¹¹ le monarque réservant sa présence pour des occasions plus solennelles.

Dans une des lettres nous fournissant des renseignements sur le *kispum*,¹² le roi d'Assyrie, Šam šī-Adad —prédécesseur

vons aussi bien du lait et du miel (TCL I 7, 6 et 16), que du pain (ADD 1127 v [?] 9), de la bière (PBS 2/2 B, 1) et de la viande (JCS 11, 36 no. 27, 6), voire —exceptionnellement, il est vrai— des tortues (VAS 16, 51, 5).

⁸ ARM XXIII, 60, 7 et 248 7-8.

⁹ Si l'on admet que la ration de pain la plus courante était de 2 qa —environ 2 litres— pour un homme et de 1 qa pour une femme (cfr. F. Joannes, ARM XXIII, p. 108), en prenant le composant le plus fréquent et sa portion la plus régulière, celle de 20 qa de *NINDA KUM* —malgré des variations sporadiques pouvant dépasser les 100 qa— on peut estimer à une dizaine de personnes le nombre des convives. Ce simple calcul semble confirmé par deux attestations sur la viande de mouton entrant dans la composition du menu, puisque chacune d'elles mentionne 1 mouton et que nous savons par ailleurs que la carcasse d'un mouton entier était normalement divisée en dix portions —10 *maliku* (voir à ce sujet l'excellente étude de J.M. Durand, dans ARMT XXI, pp. 64-69).

¹⁰ A. Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege...*, op. cit., p. 60.

¹¹ Le remplacement dans les rites du roi par un prêtre n'est pas à prouver: il semble, en effet, impliqué par le fait que la quote-part du roi, *kurmattu*, est la provende du prêtre *sangu* (cfr. E. Dhorme, *Choix de textes religieux assyriobabyloniens*, Paris 1907, p. 390, col. IV 55 ss).

¹² ARMT I, 65.

de Zimri-Lim—, qui s'était emparé du trône de Mari, communique à son fils, Iasmah Adad, vice-roi de Mari, son intention de se rendre à Terqa où il compte arriver le jour du *kispum*, et laisse ainsi entendre que son voyage aurait pour but de participer à cette cérémonie funéraire.¹³ L'intention politique du roi est tout à fait plausible si l'on songe à l'intérêt qu'avait l'habile politicien à consolider son pouvoir en témoignant une attention particulière à la ville de Terqa, centre des ethnies amorites,¹⁴ en marquant une dévotion empressée à la divinité de ce groupe.¹⁵

Cette manoeuvre politique serait d'ailleurs confirmée par une inscription¹⁶ où Samši Adad se proclame *pa-li-ih (d) Da-gan ensi Aš-šur ba-ni É-KI-SI-GA É qu-ul-ti-šu É (d) Da-gan qe-re-eb Ter-qa (ki)*, 'préposé d'Enlil, adorateur de Dagan, Ensi d'Aš-šur, constructeur de l'É-KI-SI-GA, temple de son silence, temple de Dagan, dans le centre de Terqa'. Plusieurs commentateurs ont voulu voir une *bit-kispim*, maison du *kispum*, dans l'É-KI-SI-GA, ceci dans le cas où le scribe aurait confondu *SI* et *SĪ*; il faudrait alors transcrire É-KI-SĪ- [!] —GA—, qui ferait alors allusion au temple de Dagan.¹⁷ On retrouve cependant la même graphie, É-KI-SI-GA,¹⁸ dans le fragment d'un texte publié récemment, ce qui semble confirmer la traduction proposée par la CAD¹⁹ qui voit dans l'É-*quitišu*, maison du silence, la "traduction" —nous préférons l'équivalence— de l'É-KI-SI-GA. Il faut pourtant admettre que même dans le cas où l'É-KI-SI-GA ne serait pas une 'maison du *kispum*', la relation de Dagan avec le culte funé-

¹³ Tsukimoto (*Totenpflege...*, *op. cit.*, p. 70) suggère qu'*ūm kispim* soit compris simplement comme 'le premier jour du mois', mais cette valeur adverbiale qui, à notre connaissance, n'est attestée nulle part ailleurs, ne se justifie pas, pensons-nous, puis que l'équivalence n'est que lexicale.

¹⁴ Cf. H. Lewy, «The Chronology of the Mari textes», in *RAI* xv, p. 19 et n. 3.

¹⁵ E. Dhorme désigne Dagan comme dieu 'national' des amorites (*Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie*, Paris, PUF, 1949, pp. 165 s.); il serait plus exact de dire ethnique.

¹⁶ S.A. Condamin, *ZA* 21 (1980), p. 247.

¹⁷ A. la suite de C. Bezold, *ZA* 21 (1908), pp. 250 ss.; A.K. Grayson, *ARI* I (1972), pp. 24 ss.; B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel I*, *Studia Pohl Series Maior* 10/1 (1981), p. 52; et J.M. Sasson, *AOAT* 203 (1979), p. 125.

¹⁸ D. Charpin et J.M. Durant, «La Prise du pouvoir par Zimri-Lim», in *M.A.R.I.* 4, p. 325, n. 14a.

¹⁹ Vol. 13, *sub cultu*, 2) a, p. 302 b.

raire n'est pas à écarter, puisque *qultu* présente une connotation funéraire certaine, dans la mesure où son champ sémantique inclut des acceptions telles que 'les morts de la nuit' et 'le silence de la mort'.²⁰

Dans une lettre plus tardive,²¹ le dieu Dagan apparaît à nouveau concerné par la célébration du *kispum*. Nous y apprenons en effet que le roi Zimri-Lim — fils du roi détrôné par Šamši-Adad et qui, à la mort de ce dernier, recupérera le trône de Mari — aurait vraisemblablement négligé ses devoirs envers son père défunt,²² puisque un muḥḥu — extatique — de Dagan, s'adresse à Kibri Dagan, gouverneur de Terqa, pour lui transmettre ce message: «Le dieu m'a mandé: "Vite écris au roi. Qu'il présente des offrandes à l'esprit de Iaḥdun-Lim"», *kispim ana iṭemmim Iaḥdun-Lim liksipū*.

Il semble clair — et c'est le premier point sur lequel nous voudrions insister — qu'une relation existait entre le dieu Dagan et le culte des ancêtres, comme le suggèrent ces deux lettres. Akio Tsukimoto, sans nier catégoriquement une telle relation, semble la mettre en doute²³ quand il rejette les arguments de ceux qui tentent, d'une part de prouver les attributs funéraires de Dagan et, d'autre part ses liens avec les sacrifices *pagrâ'u*, voire les offrandes aux *malikū*.²⁴ Nous estimons, pour notre part, qu'à la lumière des nouvelles interprétations de certains éléments du texte du rituel de Mari relatif au *kispum*, le problème peut être reposé; il s'agit pour ce faire de reprendre la discussion de chacun de ces éléments.

Les denrées destinées aux offrandes aux *malikū* — elles sont mentionnées vingt-quatre fois —²⁵ apparaissent régulièrement,

²⁰ CAD sub *qultu* 1 et 2 b, pp. 302-303.

²¹ ARMT III, 40.

²² Sa filiation a été mise en doute. Cfr. D. Charpin et J.M. Durant, «La Prise»..., *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, pp. 335 ss.; mais il est certain qu'il se considérait comme le fils de Zimri-Lim.

²³ A. Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

²⁴ Ph. Talon, par exemple, sans cacher de prudentes hésitations, s'efforce d'établir une chaîne, *maliku*-offrandes, *maliku*-démons, (d) Malik = Nergal + Dagan, Dagan Bel-pagre, sacrifices *pagrâ'u*... où tout se tiendrait («Les Offrandes»..., *op. cit.*, pp. 69-71.

²⁵ Cfr. le tableau élaboré par Ph. Talon, «Les Offrandes»..., *op. cit.*, p. 75.

aussi bien dans les registres mensuels que dans les billets courts, juste après les mentions du *kispum*: elles ne sont que trois fois l'objet d'enregistrements séparés. La date de leur livraison est la plupart du temps celle de la néoménie, le premier jour du mois. Comme l'a justement observé, parmi d'autres auteurs, Ph. Talon, «cela laisse supposer que l'offrande au(x) *malikū* est comme le *kispum*, de type funéraire, et qu'elle est liée, d'une manière ou d'une autre, aux rites célébrés en l'honneur des rois défunts». ²⁶ Nous ne trouvons malheureusement pas dans les documents des archives épistolaires de renseignements sur les offrandes *ana malikū* pouvant compléter notre information dans le contexte de Mari.

En akkadien, le terme *malikū* (de la racine *malāku*) désigne des conseillers, tandis que *malku/malikū*, dans certains contextes, a le sens bien connu en sémitique occidental, de prince, roi. Les *malikū* de nos textes sont donc interprétés tantôt comme les conseillers des rois décedés et honorés avec leurs maîtres, ²⁷ tantôt comme les rois anciens honorés collectivement. ²⁸ Par ailleurs, sur la base de plusieurs textes où des *malku/malikū* font référence à des démons, on a proposé de voir dans les *malikū* de Mari des esprits infernaux. ²⁹ J.F. Healy ³⁰ a peut-être raison de penser que les *maliku* assimilés aux dieux infernaux dans des textes assyriens plus récents ne représenteraient que l'aboutissement de l'évolution d'une croyance ayant pour origine le culte des rois anciens, concus plus tard comme des démons et finalement identifiés aux dieux du monde souterrain, les Anunnaki. De toute manière, une chose est certaine, les offrandes aux *malikū* doivent être interprétées comme des rites de communion à la mémoire des morts, quels qu'ils soient, humains, divins ou divinisés.

Les sacrifices *pagrā'u* — il s'agit à proprement parler de sacrifices *SISKUR/niqū* — sont très peu représentés dans les textes

²⁶ Ph. Talon, «Les Offrandes»..., *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁷ D. J. Wiseman, JSS 10 (1965), p. 125; Tsukimoto s'incline pour cette hypothèse (cfr. *op. cit.*, p. 69).

²⁸ M. Dietrich-O. Loretz, UF 13 (1981), pp. 69 ss.

²⁹ Cfr. J. Nougayrol, RA XLIV (1950), pp. 32 ss.; J. Aro, OLZ LVI (1961), Col. 604; et Ph. Talon, «Les Offrandes»..., *op. cit.*, pp. 66-68.

³⁰ Malku: MLKM Anunnaku, in W.H. Romer, *Festschrift*, F.M. Bohl, 1973, p. 313.

administratifs — nous n'en avons repéré que quatre mentions— et ne fournissent que de maigres informations ne manquant pourtant pas d'intérêt. La plus intéressante³¹ concerne la livraison jour après jour, du 17 au 30 du mois de *malakum*, de la viande de boeuf et de mouton. Le nombre de participants au rite de communion, d'après les quantités de nourriture indiquées, serait, exceptionnellement, de deux personnes, et le plus souvent d'environ soixante-dix personnes.³² Les preuves manquent cependant pour faire de ceci une affirmation. Ailleurs, une allusion est faite au pied de boeuf, *sa pagrâ'i ana (LÚ) Hanna (mes)*, 'des (rites) *pagrâ'u* pour les hannéens';³³ signalons à ce propos une lettre³⁴ mentionnant des *muskenu*, 'des gens du commun', qui veulent accomplir des sacrifices *pagrâ'u*. Dans une autre lettre,³⁵ le dieu Dagan transmet au roi sa volonté par l'intermédiaire d'un *muḫ-hu*, 'extatique': qu'il n'y ait pas de négligence dans l'accomplissement des sacrifices *pagrâ'u*, qui, comme nous le verrons plus loin, étaient offerts au dieu Dagan.

L'interprétation de ces sacrifices est d'autant plus difficile que, contrairement au *kispum* et aux offrandes aux *malikū*, les *pagrâ'u* ne sont attestés qu'à Mari. Le terme *pagrâ'u* lui-même est énigmatique. On a voulu y voir une forme ouest-sémitique du mot akkadien *pagru* qui signifie corps, cadavre, carcasse de bête abattue. Selon l'acception, on a pensé qu'il s'agissait, soit d'un sacrifice en l'honneur de cadavres d'hommes, autrement dit, les morts, ou même de leurs mânes,³⁶ et, dans ce cas-là, le sacrifice serait à rapprocher du *kispum* et des offrandes aux *malikū*, soit d'une allusion aux bêtes abattues et ce serait alors leurs carcasses qui donneraient son nom³⁷ au sacrifice qui ne revête-

³¹ ARMT XXI 62.

³² Ces quantités sont de 2 *malaku* —2/10— de mouton une fois, et de 2 *mešrētu* —2/70— de boeuf une autre fois, mais elles atteignent 1 *malaku* —1/7 de boeuf et même 1 *malaku* 1 *mesirtu* —1/7 + 1/70— ou 1 *malaku* 2 *mešrētu* —1/7 + 2/70— dans la plupart des cas; si le *meširtum* de boeuf qui équivaut en tant que portion au *malakum* de mouton représente la ration d'un homme (voir n. 9), le nombre de convives serait alors, en effet, exceptionnellement de deux personnes, et plus généralement de soixante-dix.

³³ ARMT XXI, 76.

³⁴ ARMT XIV 12, R 3' —Tr. lat. 12.

³⁵ ARMT II, 90.

³⁶ J. Bottéro ARMT VII, paragraphe 47, p. 229.

³⁷ G. Dossin RA 42, p. 135. Remarquons que le lot auquel appartiennent

rait pas nécessairement, dans ce cas, le caractère d'un rite funéraire. Le contexte d'une lettre où le sacrifice *pagrâ'u* est accompli en honneur à Dagan et en dehors de toute référence à un rite funéraire quelconque semblerait confirmer cette interprétation: un homme entre dans le temple de Dagan à Terqa, le dieu s'adresse à lui pour s'enquérir des entreprises militaires de Zimri-Lim, et il se plaint de ce que le roi ne s'en réfère pas à lui pour obtenir un appui qu'il serait disposé à accorder. Une fois le message transmis au roi, absent de Mari, l'homme est obligé d'offrir un sacrifice *pagrâ'u* à Dagan. Il s'agirait là de prouver la légitimité d'un prétendu prophète et non pas d'un rite funéraire.³⁸

Un titre bien énigmatique de Dagan, *Bel Pagrē*, 'Seigneur des pagrē', mérite cependant réflexion. Dans une lettre³⁹ qu'adresse à Zimri-lim, une femme de Terqa, Dam Hurasim, forme des vœux pour les succès militaires du roi et invoque les noms de Dagan, Bel Pagrē, et d'Itur-Mer, roi de Mari: (*d!*) *Da-gan be-el pa-ag-re-e ú (d) I-túr Me-er šar Ma-ri (ki) a-ia-bi-ka u na-a [k]-ri-ka [a-n]a qa-[t]i-ka [li-ma-al]-lu-ú*, 'Que Dagan, Bêl Pagrē, et Itur Mer, Roi de Mari, livrent en tes mains tes adversaires et tes ennemis'. Le titre *Seigneur des Carcasses* ne semble pas très heureux, mais il peut s'agir d'un problème de perspective culturelle, et l'expression pourrait signifier pour les mariotes Seigneur des (Sacrifices) *pagrâ'u*, tout simplement. Il y a pourtant lieu de se demander, indépendamment de la relation de Dagan avec les sacrifices *pagrâ'u*, dans quelle mesure le titre Bêl Pagrē ne couvre pas d'autres connotations. David Neiman propose de rendre dans contextes culturels précis des termes araméens et hébreux dérivés de la racine *pgr*, non pas par leur signification la plus courante de 'carcasse, cadavre', mais par celle de 'stèle':⁴⁰ le mot

ces textes ne concerne que des animaux déjà abattus et parfois qualifiés de morts —*dim-ma*. J.M. Durand, à l'appui de cette dernière interprétation, cite un texte dont il propose une nouvelle traduction (ARMT XVIII, 38), où un fonctionnaire déclare que son dieu s'est fâché contre lui à propos du don d'un *pagrâ'u*, et demande, en conséquence, à son destinataire de lui envoyer du gigot aminci (J.M. Durand, ARMT XXI, pp. 34, n. 5, et 161, n. 20).

³⁸ ARM X, 63, 15.

³⁹ David Neiman, «PGR: A Canaanite Cult Object in the Old Testament», J.B.L. 67 (1948), pp. 55-60.

⁴⁰ G. Dossin, «Une Révélation du dieu Dagan à Terqa», RA 42 (1948), pp. 125-135.

araméen *pgr* dans deux stèles de Ras-Shamra et le mot hébreu *pegarim* dans trois textes de l'Ancien Testament. Dans Ez. 43, 9, en particulier, il est évident qu'il s'agit précisément de stèles royales auxquelles on rendait un culte idolâtrique: «Le Seigneur dit — nous citons Neiman — qu'Israël devra enlever de son milieu des objets abominables, et alors Il habitera avec lui pour toujours. Ces objets abominables sont la prostitution et les מְבִיחֵי מַלְכֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ 'les stèles royales'». Or, deux vers plus haut, on lit que ces stèles étaient placées dans des lieux sacrés (consacrés au culte de Yahveh). Et Neiman de conclure qu'il s'agissait de la pratique cananéenne consistant à placer des stèles offertes aux dieux à la mémoire des rois, dans des lieux sacrés, stèles qui devenaient de ce fait elles-mêmes objet de culte. Pourrait-on, d'une part, établir une relation entre ces pratiques ouest-semitiques et celle des sacrifices *pagrâ'u* à Mari et identifier, d'autre part, les *pagrê* du titre de Dagan aux stèles, voire aux statues royales, auxquelles on aurait rendu un culte en l'honneur des mânes des ancêtres?

Le texte du rituel relatif au *kispum* — qui pourrait d'ailleurs apporter une solution au problème de l'identification des *maliku* — semble évoquer une telle pratique. Son état très fragmentaire ainsi que son ambiguïté laissent malheureusement de nombreux points non éclaircis, et sans nous attarder à ces détails, maintes fois débattus,⁴¹ nous passerons directement aux points qui nous occupent.

Ce document nous apprend que le *kispum* devait avoir lieu le soir du premier jour du mois d'Addaru. Les nourritures (à présenter) devaient sortir du palais et, avant l'arrivée du roi, un mouton devait être sacrifié dans la salle des trônes aux statues de Sargon et de Naram Sin.⁴² La meilleure portion de la viande d'un deuxième mouton, une fois cuite, devait être offerte à Šamaš, le dieu soleil, dieu de la justice. Le *kispum* proprement dit était alors offert en l'honneur des plus célèbres souverains de la dynastie d'Akkad, Sargon et Naram Sin, dont les noms apparaissent tou-

⁴¹ Tsukimoto ajoute aux commentaires de son éditeur, M. Birot, un long commentaire dans *Totenpflege...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-78, où il s'écarte sur plusieurs points de la traduction proposée par l'éditeur.

⁴² D'après M. Birot («Un Rituel», pp. 146-147), le terme *lamassatum* signifie normalement 'des génies', mais peut aussi faire allusion à des statues qui auraient le même pouvoir que les génies.

jours précédés du déterminatif des êtres divins ou divinisés, ainsi que des (LÜ) *Hā-na (mes) ia-ra-di ú a-na šu-ut Nu-um-he-e*, des ‘Hanées yarādi (?)’ et des membres [de la tribu] des ‘Numha’. La suite du texte, trop mutilée, est assez difficile à saisir, mais les renseignements fournis donnent déjà matière à réflexion. Ne pourrait-on voir dans les statues des rois divinisés —statues érigées dans la salle du trône où est accompli le sacrifice préalable et peut-être aussi le *kispum*— le pendant babylonien des *pegarim* d’Ezekiel? D’autres questions restent en suspens. Qu’ont donc à faire, dans le contexte d’un *kispum* en l’honneur des rois, ces hannéens et ces numhéens. Pourrions nous établir une relation quelconque entre eux et les rapports de Dagan de Terqa avec le *kispum*? Et si Dagan avait une relation avec le *kispum*, pourquoi n’y apparaît-il pas? Les cassures du document faisaient-elles allusion à sa présence? Autant de questions que les textes soulèvent plutôt qu’ils ne les résolvent.

Reprenons pourtant ce qui nous semble bien établi par les textes: le *kispum* est un rite de communion avec les ancêtres royaux; Dagan de Terqa était bien en relation avec le *kispum*, comme il l’était avec les sacrifices *pagrā’u*, et d’une façon plus générale, sa relation avec les morts reste probable —son temple pouvant être considéré comme la Maison du Silence (des morts), et son titre interprété comme celui du Seigneur des Morts ou Seigneur des Statues (des Ancêtres); enfin, les offrandes aux *malikū* avaient une relation certaine avec le *kispum*, mais l’identification de leurs destinataires reste très discutée.

Akio Tsukimoto n’accepte pas que les *malikū* puissent être les rois anciens parce que —s’interroge-t-il— où est la différence entre *ana šarrāni* (comme destinataires du *kispum*) et *ana malikim/i*? La réponse pourrait, nous semble-t-il, être virtuellement contenue dans la suggestion avancée avec beaucoup de prudence par M. Birot; l’éditeur du texte du rituel, quand il signale l’équivalence possible entre les hanéens et les numhéens du rituel de Mari et les Hanéens et les Nuabu/Namḥu de la ‘‘Généalogie de la dynastie d’Hammurapi’’⁴³ considérés comme les représentants

⁴³ M. Birot («Un Rituel», p. 147) pense en effet que ces hannéens et ces numhéens pourraient y figurer au même titre que dans le texte de la généalogie de Hammurapi (J. J. Finkelstein, «The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty»,

des éponymes tribaux. Nous voudrions ajouter quelques considérations en réponse, d'abord, à l'objection de Tsukimoto. Sargon et Naram Sin seraient, d'après nous, évoqués en tant que rois des populations urbaines qui se considéraient d'origine akkadienne, tandis que les hanéens et les nuhméens représenteraient les ancêtres dont se réclamaient les dynasties régnant alors aussi bien à Mari, qu'à Babylone et à Assur. Nous savons par le texte de la "Généalogie" que la dynastie d'Hammurapi se considérait de la lignée des tribus amorites dont Ammišaduqa énumérerait la longue liste des ancêtres à l'occasion d'un repas où ils étaient solennellement conviés.⁴⁴ Nous savons également que la fameuse Liste Royale Assyrienne⁴⁵ s'est certainement inspirée d'une source semblable à celle de la dynastie babylonienne. Or, Hana et Nuabu/Numhu/Namhu⁴⁶ apparaissent dans les listes babylonienne et assyrienne. Ces documents ne font pas allusion à des vagues peuplades, mais à des éponymes ethniques, des ancêtres putatifs, des princes de jadis.

Ne serait-il pas dès lors légitime d'y reconnaître les *malikū* des offrandes? M. Israël Ephal nous a signalé dans ce sens que les sheikhs tribaux pouvaient en effet être désignés, tantôt comme des rois, tantôt comme des princes ou des chefs, par les citadins de la Palestine et de la Mésopotamie, et que des termes tels que מלכי (des rois, l'équivalent hébreu de l'akkadien *malikū*) et נסיכי (princes ou chefs, l'équivalent de l'akkadien *nasikū*), entre autres, seraient donc interchangeables;⁴⁷ c'est ainsi que les sheikhs midianites se voient attribuer dans la Bible le titre de נזיר ou celui de מלכי,⁴⁸ ce qui rappelle la façon dont les chefs des tribus araméennes de Laqe sont désignés dans les inscriptions assyriennes, tantôt comme *sarrani* (rois),⁴⁹ tantôt comme *nasiku* (chefs).⁵⁰ Or, ces *maliku* pourraient être les mânes des rois évoqués dans le titre de Dagan Bel-Pagre. C'est Dagan de

JCS 20 (1966), pp. 95 ss.) où ils représentent les ancêtres éponymes de la dynastie babylonienne.

⁴⁴ J.J. Finkelstein, «The Genealog»..., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

⁴⁵ I. Gelb, JNES 12 (1954), pp. 209 ss.

⁴⁶ J.J. Finkelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁴⁷ *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Institutum Bialik, Jerusalem, 1962, p. 688.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 686.

⁴⁹ AKA, 286, p. 94.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 359, p. 45.

Terqa qui rappelle à Zimri —Lim aussi bien ses devoirs envers l'esprit de son père, que son obligation d'accomplir les sacrifices *pagrâ'u*; c'est lui qui s'intéresse aux entreprises militaires du même Zimri-Lim et qui est invoqué en tant que Bel Pagra, en même temps qu'Itur Mer, invoqué en tant que roi de Mari. C'est encore à Terqa, où Šamši Adad a fait construire une *É-KI-SI-GA*, Maison du Silence, Temple de Dagan, qu'il se rend pour accomplir un *kispum*.

Ceci ne fait que prouver la place toute particulière occupée par ce dieu dans les affaires du royaume. Laquelle? Le royaume de Mari est dimorphique, c'est-à-dire à double composante ethnique et culturelle⁵¹ —urbaine-akkadienne et tribale-pastorale-amorite— se manifestant à plusieurs niveaux, social, économique et politique,⁵² et il serait normal qu'une telle structure transparaît dans la hiérarchie du panthéon et dans les rites du royaume.

Dans ce sens, certains parallèles sont intéressants à souligner:

Itur-Mer, roi de Mari-et Dagan, Bel Pagrē.
kispum ana sarrāni et offrandes *ana malikū*.

Si Itur Mer est le roi de Mari, la capitale du royaume, et donc, en quelque sorte, le dieu de l'État, ne serait-il pas Dagan, en quelque sorte conçu, en sa qualité de dieu des ethnies amorites, comme le dieu de la dynastie au pouvoir qui se reconnaissait issue de lui?... Dagan de Terqa qui s'intéresse aux affaires du royaume, est aussi celui qui s'intéresse au *kispum* de Zimri-Lim; Šamši Adad se réclame des monarques akkadiens, mais il rend hommage à Dagan de Terqa où il se rend pour accomplir le rite en honneur à ses ancêtres. Il s'agirait là d'une expression religieuse du dimorphisme de l'État, particulièrement intéressante à relever en tant qu'élément essentiel dans l'histoire des idéologies.

⁵¹ La plus belle expression du dimorphisme de l'État de Mari consiste en l'affirmation de Bahdi-Lim rappelant à Zimri —Lim qu'il est roi des akkadiens aussi bien que des hannéens, et qu'il doit, par conséquent, monter un âne et non un cheval quand il apparaît en public. (ARMT VI, 76).

⁵² M. Rowton a longuement exposé sa thèse sur le dimorphisme étatique à Mari dans de nombreux articles. Celui qui a paru dans le JNES, 36, 1977, pp. 181-198, en présente une vue d'ensemble.

Le *kispum ana šarrāni* et les offrandes *ana malikū* en seraient, à leur tour, l'expression rituelle. Mais ces arguments sont tirés d'un contexte culturel dont l'historien aime à se servir et il nous reste à attendre que les épigraphistes découvrent ou retrouvent un jour des documents qui viendraient confirmer ou infirmer ces hypothèses.

SIGLES

- ADD: C.H.W. Johns. *Assyrian deeds and documents*.
 AIPHOS: *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales (et Slaves)*, Université Libre de Bruxelles.
 ARI: Grayson, A.K. *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*.
 AOAT: *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*.
 ARM: *Archives royales de Mari*.
 ARMT: *Archives royales de Mari-Transcription et Traduction*.
 BBR: H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zum Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*, Assyriologische Bibliothek.
 CAD: *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.
 CT: *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in The British Museum*.
 UF: *Ugarit Forschungen*.
 ITT: Thureau Dangin, *Inventaire des Tablettes de Tello conservées au Musée Impérial Ottoman*, Paris 1910.
 JBL: *Journal of Biblical Literature*.
 JCS: *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*.
 JNES: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.
 JSS: *Journal of Semitic Studies*.
 MARI: *Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*.
 OLZ: *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*.
 PBS: *Publication of the Babylonian Section*, University of Pennsylvania.
 RA: *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*.
 RAI: *Rencontre assyriologique internationale*.
 RTC: Thureau Dangin, *Recueil de Tablettes chaldéennes*, Paris 1902.
 TCL: *Textes cunéiformes du Louvre*.
 VAS: *Vorderassyatische Schriftdenkmölar*.
 ZA: *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*.

L'ÉTAT ET LA REPRODUCTION ETHNIQUE EN AFRIQUE

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I. REMARQUES D'ORDRE MÉTHODOLOGIQUE

En sciences sociales, les études sur l'Afrique noire sont encore dominées par les études sur les ethnies. On a l'impression que les ethnies ne se sont pas transformées depuis la colonisation jusqu'à nos jours. Certaines études les concernant semblent encore relever de l'imaginaire, d'autres, plus sérieuses, donnent un ensemble de reflets de la réalité.¹

Quant aux études dites marxistes, leurs approches souvent mécaniques des ethnies ne donnent pas non plus une lecture convaincante car elles déforment le plus souvent les réalités africaines (loin de moi cependant le fétichisme des réalités).²

¹ Voir Gerard Leclerc, *Anthropologie et colonialisme*, Éd. Fayard, 1972, où l'auteur explique l'origine et la déformation colonialiste de l'ethnologie. Voir aussi les articles de Jean Pierre, "Les Beté: une création coloniale", et de Jean Bozin, "A Chacun son Bambara", tous deux *Au cœur de l'ethnie* (sous la direction de Jean-Loup Amselle et Elikia M'Bokolo), Paris, Éd. La Découverte, 1985, pp. 49-85 et 87-127, respectivement.

² Meillassoux, Claude, *Terrains et théories*, Paris, Éd. Anthropos, 1977, 344 pp., où l'auteur analyse les difficultés d'application des théories européennes sur les terrains africains. Meillassoux, Claude, *Anthropologie économique des Gouro de Côte-d'Ivoire: de l'économie de subsistance à l'agriculture commerciale*, Paris, Mouton, 1964. Coupons, J., *Mode de production, formation sociale ou ethnie* (les sciences d'une anthropologie marxiste, document de travail), Paris, Centre d'études E.E.S.S. Godelier, M., "Le Concept de tribu, crise d'un concept ou crise de fondement empirique de l'anthropologie?", in *Horizon: Trajets marxistes en anthropologie*, Paris, Maspéro, 1973, pp. 93-131.

Notons également l'ambiguïté de la position intellectuelle des Africains eux-mêmes face à la question ethnique, ambiguïté renforcée par une réaction contre l'obsession des Européens, surtout en sciences sociales, à ne considérer l'Afrique noire qu'à travers ses conflits ethniques. Tout conflit en Afrique est ainsi réduit à un pur conflit ethnique.

Les intellectuels africains, soit idéalisent l'approche et les questions ethniques, soit ils les rejettent purement et simplement.³

Reconnaissons cependant la difficulté à échapper à ces courants pour les raisons principales suivantes:

—En premier lieu, l'étude des ethnies fait partie intégrante des études des différentes sociétés, races, classes sociales, groupes sociaux, etc., dont les intérêts économiques, politiques, idéologiques, écologiques, etc., sont différents.

Dans ces conditions, aucun auteur n'est totalement neutre dans son approche.

—Les notions d'ethnie, de tribalisme, clan, nation, nationalisme, multinationalisme, voire de race, etc., désignent les attitudes, les positions et les calculs qui ont donné aux indépendances africaines leur allure particulière. Cette situation spécifique, caractérisée par de fréquents conflits, a suscité des théories relativement sérieuses.⁴

Certains y voient parfois la résurgence de la situation sociale et politique produit de la colonisation et des indépendances, la remontée des vieilles formes de solidarité et d'antagonisme de l'Afrique traditionnelle.

D'autres estiment qu'il s'agit d'un prolongement pur et simple des pouvoirs coloniaux que les bourgeoisies africaines continueraient d'utiliser pour perpétuer leur mainmise sur l'État.

Ces théories ne rendent cependant pas compte de la complexité du problème dans la plupart des cas. Deux remarques s'imposent ici.

³ Lanciné, Sylla, *Tribalisme et parti unique en Afrique noire*, Paris, Preses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977. Diop, Majhemout, *Contribution à l'étude des problèmes politiques en Afrique noire*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1958, 267 pp. *Histoires des classes sociales dans l'Afrique de l'ouest*, Paris, Éd. F. Maspéro, 260 pp.

⁴ "État et société en Afrique noire", actes du colloque organisé à Paris, Centre de recherches africaines, tome LXVIII, in *Revue Française d'Histoire et d'Outre-mer*, Paris, 516 pp.

Premièrement, qu'il faut aborder avec une extrême prudence la question de savoir dans quelle mesure les tribalismes actuels sont à rattacher à l'Afrique précoloniale. L'ère coloniale a en effet sensiblement modifié les conditions d'existence et d'évolution des formations sociales et politiques africaines. Il est par ailleurs très embarrassant d'entreprendre l'étude de l'Afrique sous cet angle.

En effet, il semble que l'État national sous sa forme idéale, c'est-à-dire d'État recouvrant une formation nationale, homogène et consciente de son identité, n'a pas été le type d'organisation politique le plus répandu de l'Afrique ancienne.

Les États de cette période ont été, dans la grande majorité des cas, des formations pluri-ethniques⁵ regroupant des communautés aux origines, à l'histoire, et parfois aux structures différentes, même si un processus d'assimilation — délibéré ou involontaire — au noyau dirigeant a existé. Parallèlement à cette situation, des groupes ethniques ou nationaux étendus, partageant une communauté d'origine, de culture ou de civilisation, se sont trouvés longtemps écartelés entre des hégémonies différentes ou émiettés en unités autonomes. Par ailleurs, si brassages et mélanges biologiques et culturels ont été une constante de l'histoire africaine, ils ne sauraient masquer une situation complexe où les relations entre groupes allaient de l'alliance intime à l'hostilité ouverte: c'est ainsi que bon nombre de ces conflits ont facilité l'installation des colonisateurs à la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle. Si ces conflits facilitent encore aujourd'hui l'ingérence des grandes puissances (exemples: dans la corne de l'Afrique, au Soudan, au Tchad, etc., etc.), ils favorisent également l'unité de l'Afrique.

La deuxième remarque concerne l'opinion suivant laquelle le régime colonial est le responsable conscient et exclusif des conflits tribaux. Les colons ont souvent mis en pratique la "politique des races" — terme un peu abusif quand il s'agit des groupes ethniques — importée par les Français d'Indochine en Afrique et appliquée en particulier à Madagascar, au Tchad et en "Afrique occidentale française" (AOF), et qui consistait, par exemple, à opposer les Berbères aux Arabes; les Britanniques, eux, en adoptant des méthodes d'administration différentes au sein d'une même colonie (Ouganda, Nigéria, etc.), ont produit des effets

⁵ *Idem.*

identiques à ceux de cette "politique des races". Les Bantoustans d'Afrique du Sud procèdent de la même politique.

Pourtant, en examinant mieux la question, il semble que le régime colonial n'ait pas été qu'une diabolique manipulation des différences ethniques. Les contradictions internes propres aux ethnies ont joué un rôle important. L'histoire n'est pas toujours "consciente", mais elle n'est pas non plus inconsciente. Elle est un faisceau de contradictions en devenir où le conscient et l'inconscient prennent place.

Le régime colonial est bien sûr à l'origine de toute une série de pratiques économiques, culturelles et administratives génératrices de déséquilibres régionaux et sociaux ayant à leur tour secrété une idéologie tribaliste. C'est ainsi que les différentes fractions de l'élite africaine en lutte pour le pouvoir ont utilisé et parfois ravivé ces particularismes.

À l'heure actuelle, la pratique de classes a pris la forme — subtile — d'une action qui nie les intérêts divergents des groupes en présence (élites urbaines, prolétariat ou semi-prolétariat, masses rurales, bourgeoisie bureaucratique, etc.) au profit d'une collectivité tribale soi-disant menacée par les groupes voisins.⁶

Avant d'en terminer avec ces quelques remarques, ajoutons aux difficultés concernant l'approche des études ethniques le caractère exogène des concepts utilisés pour caractériser les sociétés africaines traditionnelles, ainsi que la domination des sciences sociales, à l'est comme à l'ouest, par l'idéologisme, pour ne pas dire l'exotisme, en ce qui concerne les études sur l'Afrique.

La question qu'on peut dès lors se poser est la suivante: l'analyse des sociétés africaines doit-elle être déterminée par la question ethnique ou par celle des formations de nouvelles classes et couches sociales? L'ethnie est-elle encore au coeur de ces études, ou a-t-elle fait place aux nouvelles classes dont elle est l'origine? Nous ne pensons pas que la crise traversée par l'Afrique en ce moment soit seulement une crise alimentaire, une crise de manque de technologie, de manque de capitaux; il s'agit d'une crise bien plus profonde, celle des sociétés africaines elles-mêmes,

⁶ Zocizoum, Yarisse, "Appareil d'État et reproduction sociale", in *Histoire de la Centrafrique: Violence du développement, domination et inégalités*, Paris, Éd. L'Harmattan, 1984, p. 384.

c'est-à-dire celle des ethnies vidées de leur contenu. C'est plutôt cette dynamique qu'il est important de saisir. Ne séparons pas la question ethnique de la question des classes, même si les études des ethnies en Afrique posent davantage de problèmes que celles des classes ou autres catégories sociales généralisées dans le monde par le système capitaliste.

En effet, quelles que soient les différences de cultures, de conditions de vie, etc., on peut étudier les conditions de travail et de vie d'un ouvrier de Renault dans la banlieue parisienne de la même manière que celles de son homologue nigérien employé dans la filiale Renault au Nigéria.

Utiliser les mêmes termes pour caractériser l'ethnie Baya en Centrafrique, par exemple, et les Corses ou les Basques en France, semble quelque peu difficile... les uns et les autres sont pourtant de ce monde!

Le propos de la deuxième partie de cet essai ne sera pas d'analyser les groupes ethniques en Afrique, mais de montrer le rôle fondamental joué par l'État colonial d'abord, néocolonial ensuite, dans la reproduction des ethnies. Nous entendons par reproduction ethnique deux choses:

—le processus spontané ou non de destruction-conservation des ethnies qui est en même temps un processus dynamique de différenciation en classes et couches sociales de la société dite moderne, c'est-à-dire, marchande, capitaliste, ou de sa variante socialisante.

—la façon dont l'État, qui gère ce processus, accélère, freine et masque la continuité et la transformation des ethnies.

Pour ce faire, il conviendra d'analyser le rôle de l'État dans la reproduction ethnique par rapport aux facteurs suivants:

1o. La terre et l'espace ethnique (autrement dit, le problème foncier).

2o. Le mode de travail, c'est-à-dire la façon dont l'espace ethnique s'articule autour de la nouvelle division du travail, liée à la colonisation et à l'avènement de la dite indépendance des pays africains.

3o. La reproduction liée à l'espace urbain. Peut-on parler d'ethnisation urbaine?

- 4o. La reproduction liée à la scolarisation.
- 5o. La reproduction liée à l'administration.
- 6o. La reproduction liée au pouvoir. L'ethnisation du pouvoir sous forme politique (partis), idéologique, tribal, etc.
- 7o. La reproduction ethnique comme moyen d'occulter la formation des nouvelles classes et leurs alliances externes et internes.

Nous n'étudierons pas ici l'État en tant que tel — ce n'est pas l'objet de notre article —, mais nous tenterons de saisir sa fonction dans la reproduction ethnique.

II. L'ÉTAT, FACTEURS ET PROCESSUS DE REPRODUCTION ETHNIQUE

1o. La terre et l'espace ethnique

Le régime foncier, lié à l'organisation sociale et économique, fonctionne comme révélateur de cet ensemble socio-économique. Or, celui-ci présente dans les sociétés africaines précoloniales au moins deux constantes majeures :

— Il s'agit d'abord de sociétés paysannes où le rapport à la terre est par définition fondamental puisqu'il est à la base même de la survie du groupe.

— Les structures de pouvoir qui régissent la vie de la collectivité, aussi bien à l'intérieur du village que dans ses rapports avec l'extérieur, ne sont que très partiellement à base territoriale.

Le rapport à la terre n'est donc ni nécessairement ni prioritairement un rapport de type territorial.

La caractéristique des relations lignagères ethniques fait qu'elles reposent sur les hommes et non sur la terre; l'élasticité du territoire est donc fonction des dimensions lignagères.

Les limites en sont floues et changeantes, et elles varient au gré des déplacements ou des fluctuations démographiques.

Le rapport essentiel à la terre n'est pas fondé sur un lien donné une fois pour toutes. Prenons par exemple le cas de la propriété privée individuelle ou collective. L'essentiel est de cultiver la terre et non de la posséder, de se l'approprier.

Pour les Africains, la terre, source de vie, est sacrée; c'est une unité présente, souveraine et donnée en tant que telle, elle n'est ni appropriable, ni aliénable.⁷

Par conséquent, pour casser les institutions traditionnelles liées à la terre et régissant les rapports entre les membres d'une même ethnie et ceux des membres d'ethnies différentes, les colons, en Afrique centrale et ailleurs, vont d'abord déclarer les terres vacantes pour les répartir ensuite —au moyen de décrets— par ethnies et en fonctionnariser les chefs.⁸

C'est là une façon de détruire le génie des ethnies, mais aussi de bloquer leurs relations et de les reconstituer en exacerbant les conflits interethniques liés au nouveau partage de l'espace; il s'agit également de gommer toute relation traditionnelle de bon voisinage.

Pour ce faire, on va territorialiser les ethnies et les hiérarchiser, voire même les classer et les distinguer par culture. En Afrique centrale, par exemple, on parlera de:⁹

- civilisation de la forêt pour désigner les ethnies de la forêt;
- civilisation des cours d'eau pour désigner les populations où l'eau joue un rôle important dans l'activité de production;
- civilisation de la savane pour ceux qui vivent dans la zone de la savane, etc.

Après la première guerre mondiale, on va tenter de fixer davantage les ethnies en créant ce qu'on a appelé le "paysannat africain"; il s'agissait de créer une propriété privée collective et individuelle pour chaque ethnie et de s'attacher à théoriser sur la 'personnalité' de chaque ethnie en fonction du nouvel espace créé. On tentera même d'intervenir dans les relations-hommes/femmes afin de freiner l'alliance ethnique par mariage ou bon voisinage. Après l'indépendance, les terres vont être redéclarées terres d'État, autre mystification encore plus efficace pour

⁷ Coquery-Vidrowich, Catherine, *Afrique noire: Permanences et ruptures*, Paris, Éd. Payot, 1984 (voir en particulier le chapitre sur l'agriculture).

⁸ Zocitzoom, Yarisse, "Le Régime de l'indigénat ou la réorganisation des villages", in *op. cit.*, tome I, 1983.

⁹ Zocitzoom, Yarisse, notes introductives à la formation sociale précoloniale, in *op. cit.*, tome I.

restructurer et vider les ethnies de leur contenu, car les nouveaux agents économiques, sociaux, politiques et idéologiques qui joueront le rôle d'intermédiaires vont peu à peu enlever aux chefs fonctionnarisés les dernières parcelles de pouvoir ethnique qu'ils détiennent. Les relations interethniques s'établiront désormais en termes de valeur d'échange et non en termes de valeur d'usage dominant comme c'était le cas dans les relations traditionnelles entre ethnies.

L'individu ethnique est dès lors évalué en termes de valeur marchande. L'école et les vêtements coûtent aux familles. Celles dont les enfants fréquentent les mêmes écoles auront des intérêts communs à défendre avant les intérêts proprement ethniques. En modifiant l'espace, l'État reproduit d'une autre manière les relations ethniques. On peut dans ces conditions accélérer la destruction physique des ethnies (génocide colonial), en limiter la transformation en nouvelles classes sociales ou encore accélérer ce processus. On parle ailleurs de "politique indigène de l'État" qui tente, selon la conjoncture, une intégration des ethnies et de leurs relations dans l'espace dit national (voir le cas du Mexique).

2o. Le mode de travail

Il s'agit de montrer comment s'articule l'espace ethnique autour de la nouvelle division du travail liée à la colonisation et à la situation après l'indépendance. Le mode de travail précolonial était surtout fondé sur la division sexuelle et sur la division en classes d'âges. Cette division du travail était caractérisée par un développement limité des forces productives. Cette situation correspondait plus ou moins à l'organisation des sociétés où le travail et l'exploitation du travail d'autrui ne sont pas considérés d'emblée comme un moyen de s'enrichir. De plus, tout y était contrôlé à travers des règles coutumières.

Avec la colonisation, le mode de travail va se modifier¹⁰ progressivement étant donné la nouvelle division sociale du travail. Le moteur en sera le travail forcé ou les cultures obligatoires.

¹⁰ Babassana, Hilaire, *Expropriation et formation du salariat en Afrique noire*, Grenoble, Presses universitaires de Grenoble. Zocizoum, Yarisse, et Morio Simone, *Deux études sur le chômage des jeunes instruits*, Unesco, 1979.

Tout en tenant compte de l'espace ethnique traditionnel de travail, d'autres espaces et d'autres structures vont être créés. Par exemple, en Afrique centrale, le portage sera essentiellement le lot de l'ethnie Madja. Les moyens de transport moteurs n'existant pas, le système de portage permit aux colons de recruter une main-d'oeuvre pour le transport des produits, voire d'eux-mêmes. Des Madja formèrent ainsi un corps de transporteurs, ce qui amena les autres ethnies à les qualifier d'ethnie porteuse de Blancs.

La culture du coton était surtout réservée aux Baya de la savane, celle du café aux Mabka de la forêt, la construction des nouvelles pistes aux Bada et les recherches de diamant aux Karé. Les Yakoma étaient spécialisés dans la gérance des magasins modernes et certains d'entre eux dans la confection artisanale de vêtements, les Gbadjiri dans la pêche professionnelle moderne, etc... La tendance était à la spécialisation de chaque ethnie, et elles ont fini par se définir en fonction des professions imposées par le pouvoir colonial. Ces professions devaient être à l'origine des contradictions interethniques et de l'éclatement de chaque ethnie en nouvelles couches sociales.

30. La reproduction liée à l'urbanisation

En Afrique, l'urbanisation moderne est le fait de la colonisation. Urbaniser signifie modifier l'espace relationnel ethnique. C'est détruire, mais également reproduire les caractères ethniques des urbanisés. A un niveau officiel et dans les faits, l'administration coloniale va ethniser la vie urbaine. Les chefs de quartiers sont nommés par les autorités coloniales, mais ces nominations entraînent certains phénomènes spontanés. En effet, les populations qui arrivent de leurs régions vont d'abord dans les quartiers où vivent leurs ethnies. On ira dans les quartiers des pêcheurs, des forgerons, des tailleurs, etc., si l'on a des parents dans le métier. Précisons que la coupure entre la ville et la campagne n'était pas très nette au début de la colonisation, et ceci pour plusieurs raisons:

—L'espace physique de la ville coloniale¹¹ s'étend de la rési-

¹¹ Ela, Jean, *La ville en Afrique noire*, Paris, Éd. Kayrthala, 211 pp.

dence de l'autorité coloniale, qui joue souvent le rôle de centre administratif, jusqu'au dernier village formant avec d'autres une chaîne de villages ethniques qui s'enfoncent loin dans la brousse. Le centre de la ville est ainsi relié au centre du village de chaque ethnie. Les milices coloniales sont chargées d'assurer le bon ordre de ces relations.

—Les quartiers doivent porter le nom des chefs ethniques. Par exemple, à Bangui, capitale de la République Centrafricaine, les quartiers portent le nom du chef ethnique ou celui de l'ethnie, le quartier Sara (ethnie chargée surtout de la milice), le quartier Ngalipassi (nom du chef Baya), etc. La disposition de l'espace ethnique urbain permet ainsi de reproduire physiquement, moralement, etc. les ethnies et leurs contradictions. Il s'agit d'identifier, de personnaliser les ethnies tout en détruisant la conception qu'elles ont de leur identification. Ce processus crée bien sûr des conflits permanents favorable aux autorités coloniales.

40. La reproduction liée à la scolarisation et aux religions¹²

L'école, comme le travail forcé et les religions catholique, protestante et musulmane ont joué un double rôle:

—prolétarianiser, "universaliser" et individualiser les personnes, donc désorganiser les ethnies;

—constituer des groupes ethniques, hiérarchiser les ethnies par l'instruction des uns et le maintien des autres dans l'ignorance.

Certaines ethnies vont être scolarisées pour des raisons d'ordre pratique de colonisation: faciliter, d'une part, certaines tâches administratives, d'autre part, la pénétration des nouvelles terres ethniques. C'est ainsi que la scolarisation va hiérarchiser les ethnies et provoquer un mouvement de rejet de certaines d'entre elles. On assistera pourtant à des situations différentes où le processus de reproduction des ethnies se verra confirmé. En effet, certains

¹² Ahanhanzo Gléll, Maurice, *Religion, culture et politique en Afrique noire*, Paris, Éd. Economica-Présence africaine, 1981, 206 pp.

chefs ethniques vont refuser la scolarisation de leurs membres et rejeter les ethnies scolarisées accusées d'être à la solde des Blancs. L'école joue ainsi un double rôle de destruction et de reconstitution. Elle prolétarise les membres des ethnies, leur donne une conscience d'une identité et d'un espace commun de colonisés par rapport au pouvoir colonial, voire néocolonial, mais permet à chaque ethnie de distinguer et de revendiquer en même temps sa propre identité par rapport à celle des autres et aux divers pouvoirs en place.

Les relations entre l'État colonial et l'église catholique ont toujours été très étroites, même si l'on a pu y noter quelques contradictions. Comme l'administration, l'école, etc., les religions —catholique et autres— fonctionnaient comme instrument de désorganisation ethnique et entraînaient l'abandon des croyances ancestrales au profit d'une nouvelle conception du monde. Elles avaient aussi tendance à privilégier telle ou telle ethnie parce que plus docile que les autres. Chaque religion, que ce soit la catholique, la protestante ou la musulmane, tendait à monopoliser une ethnie qui finissait par assimiler leurs rivalités. La lutte entre ces religions devenait un combat ethnique, chaque ethnie s'identifiant à une religion présentée par l'autorité comme la meilleure possible. Les Baya, par exemple, sont en majorité protestants, les Madja et les Sara catholiques, et les Bada plus musulmans que catholiques ou protestants. Cette situation devait créer des contradictions ethniques et donner une fausse conscience de son identité à chaque ethnie. Les États africains actuels ont hérité de cette situation et l'appareil religieux est devenu, entre leurs mains, un moyen de renforcer leur pouvoir en divisant ou en hiérarchisant les ethnies.

5o. La reproduction liée à l'administration

L'administration coloniale avait signifié pour les ethnies la fonctionnarisation du chef et la hiérarchisation ethnique. Non seulement on favorisera la représentation de certaines ethnies dans l'administration, mais on tentera d'en développer l'hégémonie en faisant d'un chef ethnique le chef d'un canton ou d'une région groupant des ethnies différentes et parfois ennemies. Cette politique, au lieu d'unifier les ethnies, renforce la tendance de cha-

cune à se couper des autres et donc à se reproduire en tant que telle. Mais ce type de reproduction appauvrit l'ethnie et conduit à sa désorganisation. On observe que, dans n'importe quelle situation, la reconstitution ou la désorganisation de l'ethnie suit un même processus toujours favorable aux diverses autorités de l'État.

Au Sénégal, au Tchad, au Gabon, en Centrafrique..., on note le même processus, et les appareils étatiques vont être ethnisés. En Centrafrique, l'armée sera, au début de la colonisation, l'espace privilégié des Sara et des Baya dont les colons vont s'attacher à glorifier la force, la bravoure et le physique athlétique. Les Yokoma seront policiers, les Madja gendarmes, et l'on aura tendance à s'identifier avec tel ou tel corps. Il est facile d'entrer à l'armée si l'on est Baya, dans la gendarmerie si l'on est Madja, etc. Après la colonisation directe, la bourgeoisie bureaucratique aura recours à une redistribution croisée dans l'espoir d'occulter un schéma colonial qui continue pourtant à fonctionner.

60. La reproduction liée au pouvoir politique et aux langues¹³

La reproduction liée au pouvoir politique signifie l'association de certains chefs ethniques à la gestion de l'État colonial et néo-colonial. On donne ainsi un pouvoir à certaines ethnies qui l'exercent sur d'autres. Les partis et syndicats dominés par telle ou telle ethnie reflètent parfaitement cette situation: l'Abako (Association des Bakongo) au Zaïre, le M.S.A. (Mouvement socialiste africain) —qui regroupait les Noirs musulmans du Nord— de Koulamala au Tchad, etc.

L'État néocolonial poursuit cette pratique en imposant au pouvoir une ethnie par rapport à d'autres. En Centrafrique, par exemple, l'imperialisme français imposera aux autres ethnies la dictature d'un Bokassa et de toute sa suite ethnique.

Les langues ethniques utilisées par les pouvoirs coloniaux joueront également un rôle important dans la reproduction ethnique

¹³ "Les pouvoirs africains", *Revue Pouvoirs*, no. spécial 25, P.U.F., 208 pp. Calvet, Jean-Louis, *Linguistique et colonialisme*, Paris, Éd. Payot, 1979.

parce qu'elles feront des ethnies d'origine des ethnies supérieures aux autres. C'est dans une langue ethnique spécifique que le colon donnera des ordres aux membres d'autres ethnies. C'est dans cette langue que la Bible, catholique ou protestante, sera traduite. La langue imposée unifiera les ethnies, mais les fera aussi se rejeter mutuellement. Si le sango est aujourd'hui la langue nationale en Centrafrique, c'est au prix de ce processus. Et le refus du pouvoir s'identifie malheureusement au refus de cette langue. Avant que cette langue ne soit admise par toutes les ethnies et enrichie par leurs propres langues, parler sango revenait à s'identifier aux ethnies d'origine, c'est-à-dire aux Yakoma et aux Sango. Le pouvoir politique et celui des langues sont donc bien des moyens de reproduire ou de détruire une ethnie.

70. La reproduction ethnique comme moyen d'occulter la formation des nouvelles classes et leurs alliances externes et internes¹⁴

La reproduction ethnique telle que nous l'avons définie a pour effet de transformer les ethnies en classes tout en masquant cette transformation. La hiérarchisation des ethnies crée de nouvelles contradictions au sein même de l'ethnie supposée hégémonique; dans ces conditions, les ethnies sont vidées de leur substance traditionnelle. La nouvelle division de l'ethnie individualise les personnes et crée de nouveaux intérêts, ceux des sociétés modernes, c'est-à-dire capitalistes ou socialisantes. Les salariés d'une même usine, quelles que soient leurs différences ethniques, ont des intérêts communs à défendre qui sont d'abord ceux des salariés. L'ouvrier n'ira pas chercher pour se mettre en grève les membres de son ethnie, mais ses collègues de travail; il en va de même pour les différentes fractions de la bourgeoisie bureaucratique, commerçante, etc., qui émergent des ethnies éclatées. Il est bien entendu que pour avoir davantage de pouvoir, chaque fraction tente d'utiliser son ethnie, ce qui donne lieu au tribalisme.

Une pratique fréquente en Afrique pour masquer l'alliance

¹⁴ Zocizoum, Yarisse, "Des différentes classes et couches sociales aujourd'hui, in *op. cit.*, tome II. Yannopoulos, T., "Lutte de classes et guerres régionales au Nigéria", in *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques*, Juin, 1968.

de classes des différents éléments bourgeois émanant des ethnies consiste en des recrutements croisés d'éléments ethniques dans des administrations dirigées par des éléments ethniques différents. Si un ministère est dirigé par un élément de l'ethnie A, cet élément va s'abstenir de recruter davantage d'éléments de sa propre ethnie; il recrutera par contre des éléments des ethnies B, C et D en échange d'un recrutement des siens dans les ministères dirigés par des éléments émanant des ethnies B, C et D. Il s'agit là d'un mécanisme apparenté au phénomène de clientélisme bien connu dans de nombreux pays du monde. Cette manipulation permet aux responsables des ministères de renforcer leur pouvoir et de défendre ensemble leurs intérêts sans être taxés de tribalistes. Et, de plus en plus, que ce soit au niveau de l'administration publique ou de l'administration privée, la tendance est à la défense des intérêts de classe plutôt que des intérêts ethniques. L'État dans ces pays étant un outil majeur d'embourgeoisement, on comprend que cette manipulation renforce davantage la reproduction des nouvelles classes dominantes liées aux forces politiques et économiques étrangères. De leur côté, les travailleurs subalternes des entreprises privées et publiques prennent également conscience de leurs intérêts communs et les défendent en tant que tels. Mais si l'idéologie du "développement national" ou de la "lutte contre l'impérialisme" masque ce processus, elle masque également les conflits ethniques que ce processus peut provoquer.

Les sociétés africaines sont ainsi en crise permanente, et cette crise est le moteur même de leur mutation. Les rivalités ethniques n'ont pas cessé d'exister, mais elles n'existent plus pour elles-mêmes, car elles ne s'expriment désormais que dans des conjonctures politico-économiques modernes données, et c'est dans un sens comme dans un autre. Elles sont dès lors vidées de leur contenu et leur fréquente évocation relève surtout de l'idéologisme ou d'un ethnocentrisme malveillant.

Il s'avère donc peu convaincant de continuer, d'une part à réduire tous les conflits en Afrique aux conflits ethniques, et d'autre part à inventorier *ex cathedra* les ethnies pour classer certaines d'entre elles en tant que minorités nationales. Signalons à ce titre que les minorités nationales ne sont ni figées, ni déterminées physiquement ou quantitativement.

La minorité nationale n'est définie qu'en fonction du pouvoir d'État, elle n'est pas déterminée dans l'absolu, elle ne l'est

qu'en fonction d'une situation concrète par rapport à un pouvoir d'État et dans une conjoncture politique précise dans un pays donné.

Conclusion

Ce court article est notre petite contribution à la question ethnique en Afrique.

Je ne suis pas ethnologue, mais suis assez convaincu, en tant que nègre et élément d'une ethnie africaine, et suite à de nombreuses observations sur le plan économique et social, que les sociétés africaines d'aujourd'hui ne peuvent être réduites à des questions ethniques. Les ethnies sont une réalité, mais une réalité qui se détermine à l'heure actuelle par l'évolution moderne du continent africain.

Leurs relations sont maintenant régies par des lois de rapport marchands-capitalistes, sans oublier certains facteurs dont j'ai donné plus haut quelques exemples.

Que dire du rôle des grandes puissances et des États dans la manipulation des conflits ethniques? Les études ethniques sans cesse répétées et les recherches *ex cathedra* concernant les origines ethniques ne sont-elles pas aussi des facteurs nourrissant directement ou indirectement l'idéologie ethnique et le tribalisme qui cachent si bien les nouveaux rapports sociaux, économiques et politiques dans les sociétés africaines?

LANGUES, ETHNIES ET CONSTRUCTION NATIONALE EN AFRIQUE NOIRE: LE CAS DU ZAÏRE

SYLVAIN CARREAU
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Ce sujet peut mener le chercheur à se poser plusieurs questions:

1. Peut-on parler d'une "langue" sans "ethnie"?
2. Inversement, est-il possible d'évoquer une "ethnie" sans parler de sa "langue" correspondante?
3. Une langue, dispose-t-elle par elle-même d'une force d'intégration ou de désintégration des individus d'un ou de plusieurs groupes homogènes ou hétérogènes?
4. Quelle est, en Afrique noire, l'incidence des langues, d'une part étrangères —c'est-à-dire de colonisation—, d'autre part nationales, sur le projet étatique de construction nationale?

Tenter de répondre à ces questions permettra peut-être de mieux comprendre la problématique principale de notre communication, c'est-à-dire de quelle manière cette Afrique noire, à la fois homogène et plurielle —tant linguistiquement qu'ethniquement— lutte pour la construction d'une nation forte capable de promouvoir le développement intégral de ses habitants.

Il conviendra par ailleurs d'apporter quelques éclaircissements quant à l'usage des concepts de "lignage", "clan", "tribu" et "ethnie", usage qui prête parfois à confusion au lieu de capter ces mêmes concepts de façon fonctionnelle, c'est-à-dire en raison du contenu que les différents groupes sociaux concernés leur confèrent dans le quotidien.

Car, en fait, le problème ne se situe pas, par exemple, au

niveau de savoir si tel groupement mérite d'être dénommé "tribu" et tel autre "ethnie", mais plutôt de connaître l'idée et la projection que tout groupement social se fait de lui-même quant à sa survie et à sa reproduction, c'est-à-dire son maintien.

A ce propos, Lobho Lwa Djugudjugu qui s'inspire des observations de M. Balandier et de M. Mercier, affirme ce qui suit:

Le lignage, c'est l'ensemble des parents vivants avant un ancêtre commun réel, c'est-à-dire non fictif ou non mythique. Tandis que le clan est formé d'individus ou d'un ensemble de lignages dont l'ancêtre commun, très éloigné dans le temps, peut être fictif ou mythique, auquel cas la parenté devient plus affaire de contrat social qu'affaire de consanguinité. Cependant, le clan est généralement un groupe unilinéaire, et exogame, de parents: s'il est patrilinéaire, il comprend un ascendant masculin, ses enfants des deux sexes et les enfants des descendants masculins en ligne paternelle.

Parallèlement au clan patrilinéaire, le clan matrilinéaire est formé d'un ascendant féminin, de ses enfants des deux sexes et des descendants féminins en ligne maternelle. Le clan se différencie donc du lignage par son envergure et par l'ancêtre à partir duquel on établit l'arbre généalogique du groupe. Le même rapport existe entre lignage et lignée, entre lignée et famille étendue, enfin entre celle-ci et famille nucléaire.

Mais quand passe-t-on du clan à la tribu et à l'ethnie? Cette question pose le problème de la délimitation exacte entre famille, lignage, clan et tribu, problème complexe quand il s'agit des sociétés africaines.

Le schéma théorique que nous venons de tracer n'est qu'une pure construction de l'esprit, car la réalité sociale est trop nuancée pour s'accommoder facilement d'une classification aussi systématique. En effet, en ce qui concerne les Ba-kongo, par exemple, on ne sait au juste —dit M. Balandier— où il convient d'insérer chez eux la notion de tribu qui nous occupe particulièrement. Il en est de même du groupe Fang: les limites entre le clan et la tribu restent souvent imprécises, et selon M. Balandier un groupe est considéré comme tribu dans le Haut-Gabon, tandis qu'il apparaît comme clan dans les districts côtiers.

C'est à juste titre que M. Mercier pense qu'il convient d'abord de rappeler combien l'on doit se garder de toute définition schématique et figée de la tribu, pour souligner en suite combien toutes les manifestations du tribalisme sont loin d'avoir toujours la même signification. Et face à un modèle théorique nécessairement figé, on a affaire à des réalités mouvantes; et M. Mercier d'en conclure

que la réalité ethnique ne peut jamais être cernée objectivement, qu'un groupe ethnique n'est après tout que la théorie que ses membres s'en font.¹

Ce que nous appellerions pour notre part la 'conscience intra-ethnique'.

Cela dit, précisons que l'élaboration et le développement de ce thème se basent sur des faits historiquement connus, voire même vécus. Notre approche — loin de se limiter à la théorie — se veut donc fondamentalement historico-évolutionnelle et pragmatique, et c'est la raison pour laquelle cette communication abordera trois points essentiels, à savoir:

1. Afrique précoloniale et coloniale;
2. Afrique indépendante et ses problèmes sociolinguistiques; et enfin,
3. Analyse du cas du Zaïre.

I. AFRIQUE PRÉCOLONIALE ET COLONIALE

A. Afrique précoloniale

L'une des caractéristiques les plus marquantes des sociétés africaines d'avant la pénétration coloniale est leur homogénéité linguistique respective.

C'est grâce à cette homogénéité linguistique que la communication sera facile entre les individus d'un même groupe. Cette même homogénéité contribuera amplement à la réalisation des projets primordiaux et vitaux au niveau des groupes et, par conséquent, influera aussi bien sur la formation que sur la consolidation de royaumes et d'empires comme ceux du Dahomey ou, mieux, Abomey, Yoruba, Kongo, Monomotapa, Buganda, Bushi, Mali, Ghana, Mossi, Songhai, Lunda, Kuba, Zulu, etc.

Au cours de la période précoloniale, on peut noter, par ailleurs, que les conflits interroyaumes ou interempires qui débouchaient sur l'expansion des uns par rapport aux autres n'impli-

¹ Djugudjugu, Lobho Lwa, *Société et politique en Afrique traditionnelle: Bahema et Walendu du Zaïre*, Kinshasa, P.U.Z., UNAZA, 1980, p. 155.

quaient pas nécessairement l'abandon des langues des vaincus en faveur de celles des vainqueurs. De la même manière que les vainqueurs, s'ils s'imposaient politiquement et, dans certains cas, administrativement, ne souhaitaient pas particulièrement imposer leurs langues, si bien qu'au sein d'un même grand empire ou d'un royaume étendu, diverses communautés linguistiques pouvaient exister.

La colonisation, par contre, va s'accompagner d'une imposition religieuse —le christianisme— et politico-administrative, d'un nouveau système d'exploitation économique et d'une imposition linguistique et culturelle dans la majorité des cas, surtout avec les Français et les Belges. C'est du reste ce que reconnaît P. Maes quand il écrit: «Durante las conquistas coloniales en África, los militares primero, luego los administradores, y después los colonos y los comerciantes, consideraban evidente la superioridad de su idioma sobre el que hablaban los "indígenas".»²

B. Afrique coloniale

Si, politiquement, il est facile de délimiter l'Afrique dite "pré-coloniale" de l'Afrique "coloniale", le problème semble se poser quand on aborde la dimension ethnoculturelle et sociolinguistique.

En effet, si l'occupation officielle de l'Afrique par les colonisateurs européens se réalise en 1884-1885 à Berlin, elle s'achève *grosso modo* au début des années soixante.

Contrairement à la situation des anciennes colonies espagnoles d'Amérique latine, par exemple —si nous parlons en termes généraux—, les cultures africaines, qui s'appuient sur leurs langues respectives, demeurent et vivent parallèlement au système colonial qui a du mal à les enrayer.

En Afrique noire francophone —les anciennes colonies françaises d'Afrique occidentale et équatoriale— la langue française sera imposée comme langue d'enseignement et d'administration coloniale. Toutefois, il convient de noter que le contact entre colonisateur et colonisé —comme partout ailleurs— se fait, dans un

² Maes, Pierre, «Asegurar la supervivencia de las lenguas africanas», in *Le Monde diplomatique*, julio 1981, p. 12.

premier temps, par le biais d'un interprète qui, à la longue, finira par perdre sa fonction dès que le processus d'assimilation linguistique se sera accompli au bénéfice du colonisateur français.

Dans ces colonies, pour les Noirs, parler français équivalait à être instruit, à se rapprocher davantage de l'homme 'magique' blanc, tout en se détachant progressivement et inconsciemment d'une ambiance culturelle authentique.

C'est ainsi que de nombreux parents enverront leurs enfants dans des écoles généralement tenues par des missionnaires catholiques ou dans des écoles laïques. Et ceci dans un seul but: faire de leurs enfants des prototypes du Blanc tel que le planifiait la philosophie coloniale française. De là aussi, pour ces jeunes gens, la tendance à oublier, sinon à perdre leurs langues maternelles respectives au profit de la nouvelle langue d'enseignement dont les concepts de transmission du savoir n'auront rien à voir avec le mode de vie, de penser, bref, la culture propre à ces jeunes élèves.

Ce que nous venons de signaler concernant les anciennes colonies françaises d'Afrique noire ne diffère pas vraiment de ce qui s'est passé dans les ex-colonies belges d'Afrique centrale: le Congo belge, le Rwanda et le Burundi.³ Là aussi, parler français, pour les colonisés, équivalait à se rapprocher de l'homme blanc sans espoir de pouvoir l'égaliser un jour, car la philosophie coloniale belge, considérée comme 'paternaliste', ne pensait jamais donner l'occasion aux colonisés d'atteindre le niveau des citoyens belges. Il s'agissait en réalité de faire atteindre aux colonisés un niveau qui leur permettrait de mieux servir la cause coloniale, c'est-à-dire l'exploitation, au maximum et sous toutes les formes, des colonisés.

Par ailleurs, cette couche infime de la population qui accédera à l'enseignement du français commencera à se considérer comme légèrement différente des analphabètes de la langue, si bien que sa projection vitale la conduira à 'singer' le Blanc et

³ En fait, le Rwanda et le Burundi furent des colonies allemandes qui passèrent sous mandat belge à l'époque de la Société des Nations et se transformèrent un peu plus tard, sous les Nations-Unies, en territoires sous tutelle belge. Le régime administratif dans ces deux territoires ne se différenciera donc pas du régime administratif colonial belge au Congo bien qu'il faille tenir compte de quelques aspects propres aux territoires sous tutelle.

à montrer aux siens qu'elle est en train d'accéder à un autre monde de valeurs. C'est ainsi que'on cesse de manger avec les mains, qu'on s'habille comme le Blanc, qu'on parle et s'adresse aux siens comme le fait le Blanc avec ses subalternes noirs, etc...

Dans le système scolaire, de l'école primaire à l'école secondaire (4 ans, excepté dans les petits séminaires, 6 ans), le français sera la langue d'enseignement par excellence —surtout dans les centres urbains— parallèlement aux langues vernaculaires utilisées en deuxième lieu dans les écoles primaires seulement.

Quant aux anciennes colonies britanniques d'Afrique noire, notons que —malgré l'existence de la philosophie d'administration indirecte, *indirect rule*, consistant à octroyer une certaine 'autocratie' aux communautés noires par le truchement de leurs chefs traditionnels respectifs— les Anglais n'ont pas non plus complètement écarté la langue anglaise du système d'enseignement en vigueur dans leurs colonies.

Ceux qui auront la chance d'aller à l'école dans les centres urbains, surtout, seront en contact fréquent avec l'anglais, puisque le système d'administration coloniale facilitera, de par sa nature, la transmission du savoir à travers les langues vernaculaires selon les régions, l'anglais, considéré comme une discipline à l'instar des autres matières, passant alors au rang de deuxième langue.

C'est du reste ce que note Oscar Uribe Villegas en ces termes: «en el Africa de habla inglesa, el inglés se enseñaba como materia y no se le empleaba como lengua de instrucción; por eso su conocimiento llegó a ser ahí inferior al que los africanos tenían del francés en el Africa de colonización francesa.»⁴

Cette brève description du panorama sociolinguistique de la période coloniale en Afrique noire serait incomplète si nous omettions de mentionner le cas de l'arabe, langue étrangère à l'Afrique noire et antérieure à la pénétration ou —mieux— à l'expansion du français et de l'anglais en Afrique.

De fait, certains pays africains sous la colonisation française ou britannique étaient confrontés à un double problème d'utilisation, soit le français ou l'anglais, soit l'arabe.

⁴ Uribe Villegas, Oscar, *Problemas sociolingüísticos africanos*, México, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, UNAM, 1983, p. 5.

Dans certains cas, le problème fut résolu en faveur des langues nouvelles, le français ou l'anglais. Dans d'autres, l'arabe l'emporta dans quelques secteurs éducatifs. Dans d'autres cas encore, on assista à une sorte de symbiose ou —mieux— de coexistence entre l'arabe et l'une des deux langues précitées.

C'est ainsi qu'au Sénégal —pays à 80% islamisé—, malgré une grande expansion du français dans l'enseignement et dans le cadre administratif colonial, les écoles coraniques, produit de l'islam, se développeront en marge du français. Le même phénomène apparaîtra dans le nord du Cameroun, en Mauritanie, au Mali et dans le nord du Tchad où prédomine l'islam.

Au Nigéria, le Nord du pays étant fortement islamisé, l'arabe va prédominer à travers les écoles coraniques, mais seulement au niveau religieux, car, comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, ce sont surtout les langues vernaculaires qui serviront de langue d'enseignement dans la plupart des ex-colonies britanniques.

En ce qui concerne l'Afrique noire d'expression portugaise, jadis colonisée par le Portugal, la situation sociolinguistique des colonisés ne diffère pas de celle des anciennes colonies belges.

La philosophie coloniale portugaise en Afrique noire —fondée sur une espèce de ségrégation à tous les échelons— ne facilitera pas l'accès d'un bon nombre de colonisés à l'enseignement. Et ce sera surtout au sein des communautés résultant d'un métissage entre colons portugais et autochtones noirs que l'on observera un nombre plus ou moins élevé de scolarisés qui, de ce fait, seront en contact avec la langue portugaise en tant que langue d'enseignement. Ceci s'observe surtout en Angola, Guinée-Bissau, dans les îles du Cap Vert et au Mozambique. Ce qui précède ne signifie pas que quelques Noirs non métissés n'aient pas vécu la même situation.

Les langues vernaculaires continueront à prédominer à l'intérieur des autres couches de la population. Parfois, dans l'ex-Congo belge par exemple, elles seront utilisées comme langues d'enseignement dans les zones rurales, alors que le portugais sera enseigné comme une discipline parmi d'autres. Signalons cependant que, même si dans les écoles des centres urbains le portugais était utilisé comme langue d'enseignement, cela n'exclut pas sa prise en compte en tant que discipline à étudier en profondeur.

Dans tous ces systèmes coloniaux, la tendance des missions sera de promouvoir l'évangélisation à travers les langues loca-

les. D'où le foisonnement, pendant la colonisation, de nombreux petits ouvrages écrits par des missionnaires sur les langues africaines. Ces petits ouvrages, sous forme de grammaires ou de lexiques, serviront parfois aux administrateurs coloniaux — surtout dans les anciennes colonies britanniques et belges— dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

Voilà donc esquissée, de façon condensée, la situation sociolinguistique en Afrique noire pendant la colonisation. On observera que malgré l'imposition, dans certains cas —celui des anciennes colonies françaises, par exemple—, d'une langue étrangère comme langue d'enseignement et de communication entre colonisateur et colonisé, les langues vernaculaires n'ont pu être complètement détruites. Ceci pour la simple raison que, d'une part, il était impossible d'alphabétiser la population tout entière et que, d'autre part, la proportion même réduite d'alphabétisés ne pouvait rompre totalement avec sa culture fondamentale essentiellement orale, c'est-à-dire les langues vernaculaires propres à chaque groupe social. Ce phénomène fera de cette couche d'alphabétisés des bilingues qui serviront d'intermédiaires linguistiques entre le colonisateur et leurs peuples respectifs ignorant le français.

On observera de la même manière que là où l'imposition d'une langue étrangère n'a pas été aussi marquée que dans les anciennes colonies britanniques, les langues vernaculaires n'ont cessé de progresser suivant une dynamique multiforme qui permettra, à certaines d'entre elles du moins, de s'affirmer en tant que langues nationales, officielles des nouveaux États indépendants dès leur accession à l'indépendance.

Ce sera le cas du kiganda, en Uganda, parlé par 2 900 000 personnes en 1977; du kikuyu et du luo, au Kenya, parlés respectivement par 2 800 000 personnes en 1977 et 1 900 000 en 1977, sans oublier le kiswahili utilisé comme langue nationale véhiculaire; du même kiswahili, en Tanzanie, où il est la première langue parlée: 1 300 000 individus, et 20 000 000 si l'on inclut tous ceux dont il est la deuxième langue, dans les Comores, au Zaïre, au Kenya et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique orientale non mentionnés; du kinyarwanda et du kirundi respectivement au Rwanda et au Burundi; du lingala, du kikongo et du tshiluba au Zaïre; du haussa, parlé au Nigéria par 5 700 000 personnes en 1952 plus 3 000 000 qui l'utilisent comme deuxième langue, et par 25 000 000 de personnes au Cameroun, au Tchad, au Bénin, au

Togo et au Ghana; du yoruba parlé par 8 000 000 de personnes ou plus en 1973 et, enfin, de l'ibo parlé par 9 000 000 de personnes en 1973;⁵ du kibemba en Zambie; du mbundu en Angola; du shona et du ndebele au Zimbabwe, etc.

Ceci ne signifiant pas que là où le français fut imposé et assez répandu, certaines langues vernaculaires n'aient pas progressé. A ce propos, notons l'énorme impact du wolof au Sénégal, parlé par 36% de la population et 45% l'utilisant comme deuxième langue,⁶ du toucouleur parlé au Mali et en Gambie; du soninké en Mauritanie; du bambara au Mali, en Côte-d'Ivoire et au Burkina; du baulé beaucoup plus répandu en Côte-d'Ivoire, etc.

II. AFRIQUE INDÉPENDANTE ET SES PROBLÈMES SOCIOLINGUISTIQUES

Si le plurilinguisme se présente comme un phénomène universel, on ne peut toutefois sous-estimer sa prépondérance au sein des nations du Tiers-Monde et plus précisément, dans le cas qui nous occupe, en Afrique.

Décrire une nouvelle fois toutes les caractéristiques de l'Afrique indépendante au lendemain de son indépendance s'avère inutile. Cependant, il risque d'être ardu de démontrer la projection des langues africaines, en rapport avec les groupes auxquels elles appartiennent, sur la construction de la nation en Afrique sans une certaine référence à ces caractéristiques. Nous les présentons donc brièvement.

Personne n'ignore, du moins parmi les lecteurs de la littérature politique des premières années d'indépendance de l'Afrique noire, que les nouveaux États indépendants d'Afrique vont adopter, dans le domaine politique, des structures gouvernementales copiées sur les anciennes métropoles. C'est ainsi que de 1957, date marquant l'indépendance du premier État d'Afrique noire — le Ghana —, jusqu'en 1965, la forme de gouvernement prédominante

⁵ Grimes, Barbara F., *Ethnologue*, California, Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1978, pp. 184, 117, 178, 139, 140, 155.

⁶ Grimes, Barbara F., *ibid.*, p. 160.

sera, d'une façon générale, le 'parlementarisme' basé sur le multipartisme.

Signalons également que, malgré l'avènement des indépendances politiques, il n'y a pas de rupture totale avec les anciennes métropoles. C'est ainsi que se maintiendra, sur le plan économique et financier surtout, une dépendance de ces nouveaux États par rapport aux anciennes métropoles, dépendance appelée par euphémisme "coopération" et incluant l'assistance technique aux jeunes États dans divers domaines: sanitaire, financier, éducationnel, etc.

Au niveau sociolinguistique —dans ces États africains— il n'y aura pas non plus de rupture entre les langues de colonisation et les États. Et cela pour plusieurs raisons:

1. D'abord, les jeunes États constitués artificiellement, c'est-à-dire sur la base d'une reproduction coloniale, elle-même répondant aux visées impérialistes qui avaient présidé au partage arbitraire de l'Afrique, affrontent le problème immédiat de bâtir des nations homogènes sur des bases hétérogènes.

Rappelons que la lutte pour le pouvoir dans ces jeunes États va impliquer le recours à des appuis-claniques, tribaux ou ethniques faisant resurgir le problème d'identité de groupe homogène face au nouvel État qui se veut unitaire et national. Tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'étude des politiques africaines des premières années de la décennie des soixante noteront que ce sont surtout des luttes fratricides, interethniques qui caractérisent la dynamique sociopolitique de la plupart des États africains au lendemain de leur indépendance. Au Kenya, par exemple, les *Luo* tolèrent la prise en main du pays par un *Gikuyu*, le Président Jomo Kenyatta; au Rwanda et au Burundi, on assiste à de meurtrières luttes politiques entre les *Batutsi*, minoritaires, et les *Bahutu*, majoritaires;⁷ au Congo-Léopoldville (aujourd'hui Zaïre), les luttes intertribales conduisent le nouvel État à des sécessions: celle du Katanga, onze jours après la proclamation de l'indépendance, et celle du Kasai; en Afrique occidentale, au Dahomey

⁷ Au cours de l'année 1988, on a assisté à la résurgence de conflits tribaux entre *Batutsi* et *Bahutu* au Burundi, conflits qui se sont soldés par un bilan d'environ 4 000 morts.

(aujourd'hui Bénin), au Togo, au Nigéria, au Ghana, etc., des minorités ethniques sont mécontentes des nouvelles formes de composition gouvernementale et préfèrent se rebeller contre le pouvoir établi constitutionnellement.

2. Ensuite, et il s'agit là du corollaire de ce qui précède, chaque communauté culturelle — pour ne pas dire tribale — tend à sauvegarder "ce qui lui est propre", ce qui implique également le langage, c'est-à-dire la communication. En d'autres termes, on ne pourra pas aborder la question des luttes intertribales sans faire allusion aux conflits interlinguistiques qu'elles entraînent ou, mieux, impliquent. Car la langue est l'un de ces facteurs essentiels qui font et défont les sociétés.

Un problème majeur se pose dès lors pour les nouveaux États: quelle langue vernaculaire adopter pour en faire la langue officielle au sein de ces États pluri-ethniques? En guise de réponse, l'option en faveur de l'unique alternative neutre correspondant aux États produit de la colonisation: l'utilisation de la langue de colonisation comme langue officielle. D'où, pourquoi le cacher, une inévitable recolonisation linguistique par les ex-métropoles pour assurer, en quelque sorte, une certaine unité sociolinguistique dans ces nouvelles entités indépendantes.

3. Il serait également naïf de croire que l'absence de rupture au niveau linguistique soit uniquement liée au problème de surissement de luttes intertribales en Afrique. En fait, cette question n'est pas indépendante de la stratégie globale de la colonisation censée, d'une façon ou d'une autre, transmettre et répandre sa culture à ces "incultes", à ces "indigènes". Et cette transmission ou expansion culturelle coloniale ne pouvait se réaliser pleinement qu'à travers la langue du colonisateur. Celle-ci sera utilisée pendant environ quatre-vingts ans, durée de la colonisation européenne en Afrique, pour rapprocher ou unir faussement des communautés qui, en fait, n'avaient rien en commun, du moins linguistiquement parlant, avant la domination coloniale.

De là l'apparition d'une résistance tacite à la culture coloniale sous la forme d'une intégration nationale dans la lutte contre le colonialisme, alors qu'en réalité, chaque communauté tribale, au sein d'un même territoire colonisé, n'a pas oublié "ce qui lui est propre". D'où, également, cette résurgence — avec les indépendances — des luttes pour récupérer "ce qui est propre", luttes qui conduisent au résultat escompté par le colonisateur dans

sa stratégie de domination: émiettement du nouvel État indépendant avec comme conséquence le recours à la variable ex-métropole pour résoudre les problèmes.

C'est ainsi que les nouveaux États africains indépendants seront contraints de garder comme langue officielle le français, l'anglais ou le portugais. Mais cela ne va pas les empêcher d'opposer une certaine résistance à ces langues, du moins pour ce qui est de leurs populations. Pierre Maes corrobore notre observation quand il écrit ce qui suit sur la langue française en Afrique:

Si bien el uso del francés tiende efectivamente a extenderse con bastante amplitud en el Congo y en Gabón, pero casi siempre como segunda lengua, la afirmación es totalmente inexacta para los demás Estados donde el francés es esencialmente la "lengua oficial", o una de las lenguas oficiales, es decir, la de la escuela y la de la administración. Todas las investigaciones demostraron que la gran mayoría de las conversaciones entre africanos, aún en las grandes ciudades, se realizan en la lengua materna si los interlocutores tienen una en común, y en otra lengua africana en caso contrario; lengua que se ha convertido, en el transcurso de los años, en la lengua vehicular, o en una de las lenguas vehiculares dentro de las fronteras de los nuevos Estados independientes.

Tal es el caso del wolof (valaf) en el Senegal, del bamabara o diula (jula) en Malí, del haussa (hawsa) en Níger, del sango en República Centroafricana, del moré y el diula en Alto Volta, del árabe (dialecto turku) en el Chad, del árabe (dialecto hassania) en Mauritania, y nuevamente del diula en toda Costa de Marfil. Por lo tanto, el francés sólo se utiliza entre africanos, fuera de la escuela y de los estrados judiciales, cuando los interlocutores no pertenecen al mismo grupo etnolingüístico, y por supuesto en las conferencias internacionales, en las que el francés se impone a todos como la única lengua común.

Sacar de este último hecho la conclusión de que estos Estados serían plenamente "francófonos" equivaldría a decir que Francia y Alemania serían países anglófonos cuando un presidente de la República Francesa y un canciller alemán utilizan el inglés en sus conversaciones frente a frente.

Esta abusiva extensión del concepto de francofonía, con fines puramente políticos, tuvo hasta ahora el resultado práctico de impedir a las lenguas africanas desempeñar el papel que normalmente deberían tener en el desarrollo cultural, y también económico, de los pueblos africanos, manteniendo al mismo tiempo para el gran público francés la peligrosa ilusión según la cual existirían doscientos

millones de personas que hablan realmente francés, cuando las estimaciones no superan los noventa millones.⁸

On observe par ailleurs que certains pays africains n'auront que peu ou quasiment pas de problèmes en ce qui concerne le choix d'une langue vernaculaire officielle, ou ils utiliseront celle-ci en juxtaposition avec la langue de colonisation, considérée également comme officielle. Ce sera surtout le cas de petits États où le problème du plurilinguisme n'est pas très accentué et où l'homogénéité ethnoculturelle et sociolinguistique est très grande. A ce titre, on mentionnera le Rwanda avec le kinyarwanda; le Burundi avec le kirundi; le Lesotho avec le sotho; le Swaziland avec le swazi; le Togo avec l'ewe; la Somalie avec le somali ou somalinya; la Tanzanie où, malgré l'existence de 115 langues, le swahili prédomine et est considéré comme la langue nationale, officielle et véhiculaire par excellence, alors que l'anglais n'est que secondaire et limité aux couches beaucoup plus scolarisées du pays; l'Ethiopie avec l'amharic parlé par 8 400 000 personnes;⁹ la Zambie avec le chibemba considéré comme la langue véhiculaire la plus répandue, etc.

Face à cet éventail sociolinguistique, d'autres États opteront simplement pour la langue de colonisation comme langue officielle utilisée alors dans l'enseignement et l'administration publique tout en choisissant, comme langues nationales à caractère semi-officiel, quelques-unes de celles semblant inclure le plus grand nombre de citoyens. C'est le cas de certaines ex-colonies françaises d'Afrique, comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut dans la référence faite à Pierre Maes, et surtout du Zaïre qui fera l'objet de la suite de cette communication.

III. LE CAS DU ZAÏRE

Le Zaïre est un vaste pays situé en Afrique centrale. Sa superficie est de 2 345 000 km², et le pays est habité par environ 30 000 000 de citoyens zaïrois, selon le dernier recensement (1980).

Ces trente millions d'habitants ne parlent malheureusement

⁸ Maes, P., *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

⁹ Grimes, B.F., *op. cit.*, p. 96.

pas la même langue —une situation différente aurait largement contribué aux efforts gouvernementaux tendant à l'implantation d'une seule langue vernaculaire officielle au lieu d'avoir à recourir au français. Ceci nous mène à nous interroger sur la situation sociolinguistique au Zaïre.

Situation sociolinguistique

Au Zaïre, on compte plus de 250 langues, ce que l'on appelle improprement 'dialectes' inclus. Pourtant, en parlant de langues au Zaïre, Barbara F. Grimes n'en enregistre que 193.¹⁰ Ceci dépend du critère dont elle s'est servi pour déterminer ce qui est langue et ce qui ne l'est pas.

L'essentiel à retenir ici est que le Zaïre constitue l'un des rares pays où le plurilinguisme prédomine et traduit cette prolifération ethnoculturelle qui a une large incidence sur la politique nationale.

Pour résoudre ce problème de multilinguisme au niveau national, le gouvernement zaïrois a adopté les mesures suivantes:

a) La langue officielle est le français. Celle-ci peut être considérée comme la langue véhiculaire principale dans les milieux des alphabétisés ayant au moins terminé l'école primaire. C'est ainsi qu'au Zaïre, un intellectuel —universitaire ou qui a terminé l'école secondaire ou primaire— de la région du Kasai où la langue dominante est le tshiluba, communiquera avec son homologue du Kivu, du Bas-Zaïre, de l'Équateur où respectivement l'on parle en majorité le kiswahili, le kikongo et le lingala, en français. Le français, comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut, est à la fois —au niveau de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire— la langue d'enseignement (de communication de la science) et une discipline parmi tant d'autres qu'il faut dès lors bien connaître. Après le secondaire, le français n'est utilisé que comme langue d'instruction, à moins que certains étudiants n'optent pour une licence ou un grade équivalent en lettres françaises, formation où le français est alors étudié en profondeur en tant que discipline et spécialité universitaires.

¹⁰ Grimes, B.F., *ibidem*, p. 200.

On peut ainsi apprécier l'importance du français en tant que langue d'enseignement, discipline, langue de communication entre intellectuels appartenant surtout à des groupes sociolinguistiques différents, langue officielle et, partant, d'usage dans l'administration tant publique que privée de l'État zaïrois. Pourtant, malgré cette inévitable —du moins por l'instant— officialité du français, il existe au sein de certaines communautés nationales du Zaïre une sorte de répugnance à l'égard de cette langue, dès lors considérée comme langue de domination, d'intellectuels, de prétentieux, etc. Nous verrons plus loin de quelle manière la langue française résiste aux attaques sociales au Zaïre.

b) Il existe, au Zaïre, ce que l'on peut qualifier de "langues vernaculaires principales ou véhiculaires secondaires". Ces langues correspondent aux quatre grandes zones sociolinguistiques du pays. Il s'agit du kiswahili, dans l'est du pays et parlé par 2 500 000 personnes en 1972;¹¹ du kikongo ya leta ou kituba, parlé dans le sud-ouest du pays par 1 500 000 individus en 1970;¹² du tschiluba, parlé dans les deux régions du Kasai et en partie au Shaba par 4 613 400 personnes ou 18% de la population en 1976;¹³ et, enfin, du lingala, parlé principalement dans la capitale du pays —Kinshasa— et chez les Bangla du nord-ouest du Zaïre.

Cette dernière langue, le lingala, a tendance à se répandre dans tout le pays pour diverses raisons: 1) elle est la langue de la capitale; 2) elle est utilisée, au niveau national, par le Président de la République chaque fois qu'il s'adresse à la population; 3) elle est, en quelque sorte, la langue vernaculaire importante de la région d'origine du Président; 4) elle est, depuis l'époque coloniale, la langue de toutes les forces armées du Zaïre.

Néanmoins, nous verrons plus loin que malgré une stratégie politico-gouvernementale de promotion du lingala en tant qu'éventuelle langue nationale capable de se substituer au français, des

¹¹ Grimes, B.F., *ibidem*, p. 199, citant Nida, E.A., *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, New York, United Bible Societies, 1972, 2ème éd.

¹² *Idem*, p. 192, citant Nida, E., et Harold Fehderau, «Indigenous pidgins and koines», in *International Journal of American Linguistics*, no. 36, 1970, pp. 146-155.

¹³ *Idem*, p. 194, citant *World Almanac*, 1978.

opinions contraires sur la question émanent des trois autres principaux groupes sociolinguistiques rivaux du pays.

Si ces quatre langues sont qualifiées de 'vernaculaires principales ou véhiculaires secondaires', c'est parce que, d'une part, elles sont nationales et correspondent à de grands groupes sociolinguistiques dans le pays et que, d'autre part, elles facilitent au sein de chaque zone où elles sont utilisées, c'est-à-dire leurs respectives zones d'origine, la communication entre des groupes sociaux disposant d'autres langues nommées improprement par quelques linguistes 'dialectes', alors que, pour notre part, il s'agit bien de langues; peu important, en effet, la quantité d'individus qui les utilisent, la superficie réduite où elles sont parlées ou la structure grammaticale écrite qu'elles peuvent ou non avoir. Et ne perdons pas de vue que même certains types de communication orale, qualifiés aujourd'hui de langues par ces linguistes eurocentristes et limités, ont revêtu les mêmes caractéristiques que ce que l'on qualifie aujourd'hui de dialectes. Le problème fondamental demeurant celui de savoir *qui* qualifie, selon quel *critère* et dans quelle *fin*, tel système de communication orale de 'langue' et tel autre de 'dialecte'?

Disons, enfin, que ces quatre langues — compte tenu de leur large diffusion au niveau national — ont conduit le gouvernement actuel à les qualifier de 'nationales' avec un caractère semi-officiel. C'est-à-dire qu'elles se situent au même niveau, juste après le français qui demeure l'unique langue officielle au Zaïre.

c) Après le français et les quatre langues vernaculaires principales dont nous venons de parler, viennent ce qu'on peut appeler des 'langues vernaculaires secondaires', qualifiées généralement et par erreur de 'dialectes'.

Il s'agit, en fait, de toutes les autres langues zairoises que l'on retrouve vivantes au sein des quatre grandes zones sociolinguistiques mentionnées ci-dessus.

Parmi ces langues, quelques-unes sont parlées par une population variant entre 100 000 et 500 000 habitants, c'est-à-dire la population ou plus de la population de certains États du globe, tels que, par exemple, Grenade avec une population de 108 000 habitants (1975); le Surinam avec 400 000 habitants; les Bahamas avec 210 000 habitants (1976, d'après l'Almanach mondial), etc.

De plus, certaines de ces langues vernaculaires secondaires

du Zaïre disposent d'ouvrages bien conçus et structurés sur la littérature de leurs peuples, et sur l'apprentissage de ces mêmes langues. Elles sont parfois utilisées par les mass-media locaux pour mobiliser toute la population locale —qui ne connaît pas, dans ce cas, la langue vernaculaire principale correspondant à sa zone— pour des programmes à caractère politique et culturel.

A ce titre, on peut mentionner la mashi au Kivu central et dans le Sud-Kivu. Cette langue dispose de nombreuses grammaires écrites, généralement, par des missionnaires. Il existe également de petits ouvrages sur l'histoire du Bushi —royaume— et la philosophie des Bashi.¹⁴

A ce sujet, qu'observe-t-on au Zaïre? Chaque fois que le Président de la République visite officiellement la ville de Bakavu, chef lieu ou capitale de la région ou province du Kivu, toute la population —bien qu'en partie swahiliphone— est mobilisée à travers la radio et la télévision en langue shi considérée, dès lors, comme langue des autochtones de Bukavu.

Dans les écoles primaires du Bushi —spécialement dans les zones rurales de Kabare, Ngweshe, Nyangezi, Kalehe, etc.—, le mashi, du moins durant les trois premiers niveaux du primaire actuellement, et pendant la colonisation au cours de toute la formation, est utilisé comme langue d'enseignement parallèlement au français qui, dans certains endroits, n'est même pas pris en considération comme langue d'instruction.

Ce que nous venons de signaler pour le mashi vaut pour des centaines d'autres langues zaïroises qualifiées de dialectes.

Notre question demeure donc posée aux linguistes: quand faut-il qualifier un système de communication verbale de 'langue' ou de 'dialecte'? Et selon quel critère faut-il le faire?

Si l'on part du critère *volume* de la population utilisant un système donné de communication orale, il y a risque d'erreur. En effet, dans le cas du Zaïre, par exemple, plusieurs langues telles que le mbuti parlé par 35 000 individus en 1972, le kifuliro parlé par 56 000 personnes la même année, le kilega parlé par 150 000 individus en 1972, etc., sont reprises en tant que telles

¹⁴ Voir à ce sujet, Kagaragu, A., *Emigani bali bantu* (Les proverbes étaient des hommes), Bukavu (Zaïre), Diocèse du Kivu, 1963.

par B.F. Grimes¹⁵ du moins, qui qualifie le mashi —ce en quoi il se trompe lourdement— de dialecte apparenté au kihavu, parlé dans l'île d'Idjwi, et reconnaît ensuite, sans se rendre compte de la contradiction, que les Bahavu (ceux qui parlent le kihavu) apprennent le mashi et non l'inverse. Ce qui impliquerait, normalement, que les Bashi (ceux qui parlent le mashi) comprennent généralement le kihavu et que le mashi soit beaucoup plus complet que le kihavu qui, dans ce cas, devrait être considéré comme un 'dialecte' —pour reprendre un concept erroné et démodé cher à certains linguistes— proche du mashi et non le contraire.

Le nombre d'individus qui parlent le mashi est par ailleurs beaucoup plus élevé que celui de ceux qui parlent le kihavu. Les Bashi sont, semble-t-il, plus de 400 000, ce qui permet de mettre en doute le chiffre de 262 000 personnes que Grimes, en se référant à son collègue Williams E. Welmers qui fait certainement une erreur, attribue aux Bahavu.

Notre souci —rappelons-le— n'est pas de se perdre dans un débat improductif consistant à distinguer 'langue' et 'dialecte'... Bien au contraire, et notre position reste la même: toute communauté, grande ou petite soit-elle, à partir du moment où elle existe et a conscience de son existence, dispose d'un système de communication qui peut être verbal ou codifié à travers divers signaux propres. On parle bien du langage des animaux... C'est la communication parlée qui nous intéresse, et cette communauté dispose dès lors d'une langue.

Et dire que telle communauté a une langue et que telle autre n'a qu'un dialecte revient à poser le problème de la façon dépassée et discriminatoire des vieux anthropologues, ethnologues et historiens qui parlaient des sociétés faisant l'objet de leurs recherches comme de sociétés sans culture, sans histoire, sans civilisation face aux leurs qui, évidemment, avaient culture, histoire, civilisation et bien d'autres choses encore.

Et nous nous permettons de prendre parti et de dénoncer ce genre de recherches qui restent primaires à force de rendre subjectif leur objet pour donner une vision fautive de sa réalité.

Ces observations concernant le kihavu et le mashi valent pour

¹⁵ Grimes, B.F., *op. cit.*, pp. 191-195.

plusieurs autres langues zaïroises qualifiées encore à l'heure actuelle de dialectes zaïrois.

A un niveau international, nous découvrons, par exemple, que cette même langue shi parlée par plus de 400 000 personnes occupant un territoire beaucoup plus vaste que la petite île de Grenade, continuera à être considérée comme un dialecte face à l'arawak (parlé par 700 personnes), au djuka (parlé par environ 20 000 personnes) ou au matawari (parlé par 1 000 personnes en 1977, selon le Summer Institute of Linguistics), considérées comme langues au Surinam dont la population totale n'était même pas supérieure à 440 000 habitants en 1976, d'après l'Almanach mondial de 1978. Les mêmes préjugés fonctionnent donc — du moins chez les linguistes partisans de cette distinction — en ce qui concerne les critères d'appréciation de ce qui est langue et de ce qui est dialecte.

Passons à présent à quelques commentaires sur un problème très apparenté à la situation sociolinguistique du pays, celui de la dynamique sociolinguistique face au projet étatique de construire une Nation.

Dynamisme sociolinguistique au Zaïre et problématique de construction nationale

Nous étudierons ici de quelle manière les langues zaïroises, liées dès lors aux cultures nationales pour ne pas dire ethniques, s'affrontent et se développent face au projet de l'État de construire une Nation zaïroise. Tous les efforts gouvernementaux pour choisir une seule langue zaïroise comme substitut du français feront également l'objet de notre réflexion.

D'une certaine façon — nous l'avons signalé plus haut —, les langues servent à identifier des communautés en les différenciant les unes des autres. Elles peuvent en même temps constituer un facteur de rapprochement ou d'éloignement entre divers groupes humains. Quand elles rapprochent, on peut dire qu'elles remplissent un rôle positif d'intégration de groupe; quand elles éloignent, on dit qu'elles jouent un rôle négatif de désintégration de groupe. Il est donc difficile, voire même incorrect, de tenter de séparer radicalement la problématique d'une langue de la problématique sociopolitique et culturelle de la société au sein de

laquelle elle se développe. C'est dans le même ordre d'idées qu'on peut affirmer qu'il est difficile de dissocier, au Zaïre, la problématique sociolinguistique de la problématique ethnique et nationale du pays.

Au Zaïre, les rivalités qui opposent diverses ethnies dans leur course au pouvoir se reflètent dans l'opposition des langues correspondant aux ethnies en compétition. Et les langues servent, nous le savons bien, de moyen d'expression de l'appréciation d'un groupe sociolinguistique donné sur un ou plusieurs autres groupes.

Au Zaïre (alors Congo), au lendemain de 1960, lorsque surgissent les luttes interethniques, plusieurs observateurs se demandent dans quelle mesure il sera possible de bâtir réellement une 'nation' congolaise capable de résorber toutes les tendances séparatistes se manifestant au sein du nouvel État indépendant. Ces conflits vont s'accroître durant les cinq premières années de l'indépendance pour ne s'adoucir qu'avec le nouveau régime militaire, toujours en vigueur, de l'actuel Maréchal Mobutu, lors de son coup d'État contre le pouvoir civil le 25 novembre 1965.

Quelle est la situation des langues vernaculaires pendant ces cinq premières années? Elle va bien sûr de pair avec les luttes intergroupales. Les Bakongo se sentent unis par le kikongo; les Baswahili —bien qu'ethniquement hétérogènes— se rapprochent selon les circonstances et les intérêts politiques, grâce au kiswahili qui finira par leur donner une dimension politico-géographique: les gens de l'est (du pays) désigneront les groupes politiques unis des baswahili; les Baluba des deux Kasai —malgré leurs conflits internes— se sentiront unis grâce au tshilkuba; les Bangala s'unissent davantage par le lingala, même si au niveau de la population de la capitale, Léopoldville (aujourd'hui Kinshasa), d'autres groupes ethniques non lingalophones utilisent cette langue, sans doute pour des raisons circonstancielles.

Ce phénomène sera marqué au point que plusieurs regroupements tribaux s'exprimeront politiquement par le seul fait d'avoir une langue en commun. Et différents leaders politiques de la période 1960-1965, voire même de l'époque actuelle, iront —avant tout—, pour constituer leurs partis, recruter des membres au sein de leurs tribus où l'on parle la même langue. C'est-à-dire que les partis —au lieu d'élaborer leur stratégie en fonction d'une base idéologique donnée à l'instar des pays occidentaux d'Europe producteurs de nouveaux États— se fondent sur

une base purement tribale ou sociolinguistiquement homogène, capable d'assurer leur survie face à ceux qui leur sont opposés. Le premier Président de la République Démocratique du Congo, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, de l'ethnie Kongo, sera le leader de l'Abako (Alliance ou Association de Bakongo). Il irait même plus loin dans son projet politico-ethnique avec la création d'un État fédéral où le Bas-Congo (aujourd'hui, Bas-Zaïre), fief de Bakongo, aurait été un État autonome fédéré.

Cette thèse sera combattue par le Premier Ministre Patrice E. Lumumba, de l'ethnie Atetela, qui, malgré des efforts, ô combien louables, pour la construction d'un Congo unitaire (thèse qui finalement l'emportera) à travers son parti, le MNC/L (Mouvement national congolais, aile Lumumba, à distinguer du MNC/K, aile A. Kalondji, de l'ethnie Luba du Sud-Kasai, et dissidente du parti de Lumumba), n'arrivera pas à échapper aux implications structuro-tribales considérées comme 'sécurité ethnopolitique primaire' du nouvel État.

Les Baluba du Katanga, majoritaires —sous la conduite de leur leader, J. Sendwe—, et les Tchokwe se rallient aux visées séparatistes de Moïse Tschombe, de l'ethnie Lunda. Ils vivront ainsi en sécession par rapport au reste du pays dès le onzième jour (le 11 juillet 1960) après la proclamation de l'indépendance du pays.

Partout ailleurs, au sein des assemblées provinciales de la jeune République Démocratique du Congo, les luttes interparlementaires se fondent sur des critères plutôt tribaux qu'ideologico-politiques bien structurés et uniformes. Cette corrélation 'ethnie-parti-pouvoir' est bien reprise par C.K. Lumuna-Sando:

[...] la conscience tribale s'exprima alors pour affirmer chacun sa culture dans l'hétérogénéité des centres urbains. [...] Ainsi en 1950, les Mongo, à Kinshasa, tiennent à affirmer avec A. Roger Bolamba, Ileo, Njoku et d'autres: «Nous ne sommes pas des Bangala». De même, dès 1953, les Lulua-Frères forment un mouvement de réaction contre l'hégémonie des Lubakasais à Luluabourg et aux environs, tandis que les Songye, en 1958, créaient avec Dominique Manono le Mouvement de l'Unité Basongye, pour faire poids à la polarisation Luba-Lulua. Partout dans le pays, chez les Warega, les Bashi, les Bakusu, ou dans la guerrière Balubakat issue de la Conakat, les années 50 vivent l'essor des organisations tribales dans les centres urbains.

De tous les partis politiques qui vont entrer en lice pour réclamer l'indépendance presque tous émaneront de ces organisations tribales, culturelles dirigées par les national-tribalistes évolués des centres urbains. *Le MNC de Lumumba (octobre 1958), le PSA de Gizenga et le CERE de Weregere, Kashamura, Bisukiro et le PNP (rassemblement de "modérés issus de l'ancienne Union Congolaise [1959]"), créé à Lumumbashi par G. Kalenda et Kitenge, assistés de l'avocat belge A. Rubbens (1957), ont une envergure universaliste, nationaliste. Mais au-delà de leur idéologie, leurs structures ne sont, à la base, qu'un cartel d'associations tribales (ex., cartel BALUBAKAT, FEDEKA, ATCAR à Lumumbashi pour le MNC/L).*¹⁶

La défection de Joseph Ileo et de Kalondji Albert qui créa l'aile MNC/K pour le Kasai, et la solidarité mutuelle des Ankutshu-Tetela, frères de race de Lumumba, sont d'autres témoignages de l'idéologie nationaliste et de la structure d'un mouvement qui n'échappait pas au prisme du nationalisme tribal dans la politisation des masses. Le CERE au Kivu, créé par Bisukiro, Kashamura, Weregere (28 8 1958), n'échappa point à ce prisme malgré ses options idéologiques "antitribalistes", "nationalistes" et même socialistes.

Mais à Kasongo, Kindu, comme à Bukavu, le CERE, malgré son idéologie, n'échappera pas aux conflits tribaux, à travers les attitudes national-tribalistes des citoyens, devant les Bashi, les Barea, les Babembe dans le Sud-Kivu, les Bakusu-Tetela dans le Maniema et d'autres nations tribales.

Après des alliances successives avec l'ABAKO, le PSA, le MNC/Kalondji (1959), le CERE connut des dissensions internes, avant que Kashamura n'opte pour l'alliance avec le MNC/L.

Il y avait alors le CERE du Nord-Kivu avec Jean Miruho, le CERE bastion du Kivu avec Kashamura dans le Sud-Kivu et le CERE-Weregere à Uvira.¹⁷

De 1965 à nos jours, si la situation a changé, c'est seulement au niveau de la suppression du pluripartisme en faveur d'un système à parti unique tendant dès lors à atténuer à un niveau global ce phénomène ethnique qui, en fait, demeure.

Le Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), parti unique fondé le 20 mai 1967 par le Président Mobutu Sese Seko,

¹⁶ Nous soulignons.

¹⁷ Lumuna-Sando, C.K., *Zaire: Quel chagement pour quelles structures? Misère de l'opposition et faillite de l'État (La mémoire historique d'un peuple)*, Bruxelles, Éds. Africa, 1980, pp. 52-53.

veut rassembler tous les citoyens du Zaïre au sein d'un même État, d'une même Nation, et va jusqu'à appliquer à la réalité zaïroise des concepts exogènes comme ceux de "Parti-État", "Parti-Peuple ou Parti Nation".

L'une des raisons ayant présidé à la fondation du MPR fut sans doute le souci du nouveau gouvernement de mettre fin au tribalisme qui, il faut bien l'admettre, était en train de devenir un facteur essentiel de désintégration. C'est pour cela qu'au Zaïre, tout zaïrois — et dès sa conception... — est membre du MPR. Le Président fondateur l'a d'ailleurs précisé en ces termes: "Olingà, ólingà té ozàli sé membre yà MPR" (Que tu le veuilles ou non, tu es membre du MPR).

Le MPR aurait peut-être pu résorber totalement le problème ethnique, perçu négativement, s'il ne s'était pas identifié à part entière avec son fondateur qui, peut-être inconsciemment, tend à reposer le problème en s'appuyant politiquement et principalement sur les "siens" qui, dans ce cas, viennent du même clan, de la même zone, de la même région.

Sans cette regrettable tendance, le MPR aurait peut-être conduit, avec le temps, à une cristallisation progressive de différentes ethnies parlant la même langue dans le cadre de la réalisation d'un projet politique global national.

Le régime actuel a tenté sans succès de trouver une formule pouvant contribuer à la suppression du tribalisme. Il s'agit de la politique de "permutation des agents et fonctionnaires publics de l'État" censés travailler dans des zones sociolinguistiques différentes des leurs. C'est ainsi, par exemple, qu'un swahiliphone va travailler dans une zone tschilubaphone et vice versa alors qu'un lingalophone sera muté dans une zone swahiliphone, kikongoophone ou tschilubaphone.

Cette politique a eu des conséquences néfastes. En premier lieu, le nouveau permuté arrivait dans une zone inconnue où il devait apprendre à s'adapter socialement et linguistiquement: apprendre une nouvelle langue sans disposer d'une infrastructure minimum *ad hoc*... Ce qui n'est pas simple, surtout pour un adulte. Car si dans les bureaux on utilise en effet le français quand il s'agit d'élaborer des documents administratifs, en réalité la communication se fait généralement dans la langue vernaculaire du lieu où l'on se trouve.

Ensuite, les enfants des agents ou des fonctionnaires en muta-

tion sont obligés, s'ils sont aux trois premiers niveaux du primaire, de suivre un cours sur la langue de la zone où ils habitent. Ils auront bien sûr moins de peine à le suivre que leurs parents, mais il ne faut pas perdre de vue que ces enfants, à la maison, continueront à utiliser leur langue d'origine malgré le poids de la nouvelle langue à laquelle ils sont confrontés. D'où, parfois, des chocs culturels accompagnés d'une certaine confusion au niveau de l'apprentissage de la nouvelle langue. Et n'oublions pas que dans certains cas, deux ans après, leurs parents sont envoyés ailleurs.

En troisième lieu, s'il faut bien reconnaître à cette politique quelques mérites — par exemple, celui de faire découvrir d'autres contrées du pays et les langues qui s'y parlent, d'autres cultures, etc. — sa stratégie d'action n'a malheureusement pas tardé à revêtir un caractère tribal. Comment cela? Les fonctionnaires responsables des permutations de leurs agents ou subalternes envoyaient certains d'entre eux, suivant des critères souvent subjectifs, dans des zones où les conditions de vie étaient soit faciles, soit difficiles. Dans les zones à meilleures conditions de vie, ils envoyaient souvent des membres de leur propre ethnie, des amis appartenant à d'autres ethnies ou des individus qui, moyennant cadeaux remis aux chefs, obtenaient la zone souhaitée. Et dans les zones à conditions de vie difficiles, où sévit encore, par exemple, la maladie du sommeil, où le coût de la vie est très élevé étant donné la rareté des biens de consommation primaires ou la difficulté de l'exploitation agricole, ils envoyaient des inconnus ou des indésirables comme s'il s'agissait d'un règlement de compte, d'une punition.

C'est ainsi que cette politique de permutation va être boudée par de nombreux citoyens qui y verront pur favoritisme pour certains groupes sociolinguistiques et punition pour d'autres.

Un autre phénomène important à analyser est celui de la rencontre entre les principales langues vernaculaires du Zaïre — elles sont au nombre de quatre — et l'effet ou les effets qui en résultent.

Comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut, la rencontre de ces quatre langues nationales à caractère officiel a toujours reflété la concurrence sociopolitique existant entre les différents groupes sociaux qui les parlent principalement. En effet, un swahili-phonie, dans sa zone d'origine sociolinguistique, ne tolère pas qu'on lui parle dans une autre langue que la sienne, et certainement pas en lingala qu'il considère comme la langue de ceux qui

veulent s'imposer par la force. C'est le même cas pour un kongophone. Les balubaphones se montrent beaucoup plus agressifs quand ils entendent un lingalaphone ou un kongophone s'exprimer chez eux dans leurs langues respectives. Pour les lingalaphones, surtout ceux de la capitale, quiconque ne s'exprime pas en lingala ou s'exprime mal dans cette langue, est appelé "motóka" (provenant de... sous-entendu, de l'intérieur, de la province, de la campagne). Ceci implique donc le mépris pour toute personne qui ne parle pas ou parle mal le lingala.

Il ne s'agit là que des premières impressions de l'homme de la rue, même si, parfois, dans des milieux considérés comme intellectuels, le même genre de mépris interlangue est également présent.

Mais quelle est la situation de Kinshasa face à ces conflits de langues?

S'il est vrai que la langue dominante et la plus employée à Kinshasa est le lingala, cela n'exclut pas l'utilisation — même si elle est faible — des trois autres langues vernaculaires principales dans la capitale. En raison de la composition pluri-ethnique de la population de Kinshasa, les groupes non-lingalophones qui y ont élu domicile se voient contraints de parler le lingala qui a tendance à fonctionner comme langue véhiculaire face aux autres langues vernaculaires, principales ou secondaires, qui s'y parlent étant donné le caractère "cosmopolite" — si l'on peut parler du cosmopolitisme d'une ville par rapport à ses provinces — de la ville de Kinshasa.

Ce qui précède est applicable jusqu'à un certain point aux langues vernaculaires secondaires de chacune des quatre zones sociolinguistiques principales du pays. Au Shaba, un Muluba (qui parle kiluba) a tendance à mépriser un Mubemba, un Kalunda ou un Tchokwe et viceversa. Au Bas-Zaïre, zone du kikongo par excellence, un Muyansi minimisera un Muyaka, un Pende et viceversa. Dans la région de l'Équateur, un Mungwandi tend à mépriser un Mongo, un Ngbaka, etc. Au Kivu, un Mushi tendra à faire de même vis-à-vis d'un Murega, un Mukusum, un Munande et vice versa.

Il est donc bien évident que ce phénomène de tolérance allant jusqu'au mépris ne peut être — à moins de se limiter à une analyse partielle et incomplète — étudié indépendamment du phénomène ethnique auquel il est toujours étroitement lié.

Enfin, quelle est la situation du français dans le conflit inter-langue au Zaïre?

Face à cette division continue du Zaïre, le français a été l'unique alternative —du moins jusqu'à présent— qui permette aux zaïrois d'adopter un même système de communication orale. Nous avons noté que le français n'était pas utilisé par la majorité de la population. Pourtant, à un niveau officiel, il a pu donner au monde extérieur l'image d'"un Zaïre homogène", linguistiquement parlant. En d'autres termes, "un Zaïre francophone", malgré les ambiguïtés qu'implique le concept de francophonie... Ce sont donc, dans une certaine mesure, les contradictions internes du pays qui favorisent, de nos jours, le maintien du français en tête des autres langues nationales.

Mais ne perdons pas de vue la résistance des divers groupes sociolinguistiques zaïrois face à l'utilisation du français en tant que langue officielle, même si chacun d'eux reconnaît son incapacité à opter pour une langue nationale qui puisse se substituer au français.

Au Zaïre, la résistance face à la langue française se manifeste à trois niveaux:

1. Au niveau des masses

Nous l'avons déjà mentionné, tout individu ayant tendance à s'exprimer en français en dehors du milieu scolaire est considéré comme un vantard, un prétentieux, un complexé. Ce que les masses attendent de cet individu, c'est qu'il s'exprime dans une langue vernaculaire; dans le cas contraire, il risque de s'attirer la méfiance des gens. A Kinshasa, on va même jusqu'à taxer les Zaïrois qui ont la manie de parler français en dehors de l'école ou —dans une certaine mesure— du bureau, de "je les connais". Sans doute parce qu'ils prétendent 'connaître' plus que les autres et utilisent souvent le verbe 'connaître' dans leur conversation.

2. Au niveau bureaucratique

Bien que le français soit la langue des documents administratifs, publics ou privés, la communication entre agents ou fonction-

naires des entreprises publiques ou privées se fait très souvent dans la langue nationale correspondant, généralement, à la zone sociolinguistique en question. A moins que les agents ou fonctionnaires aient affaire à des étrangers (européens ou ressortissants d'autres pays africains) ou des nationaux qui ne connaissent pas la langue nationale de la zone. La communication se fait alors en français. Ce qui précède n'exclut pas, bien sûr, l'utilisation, dans la bureaucratie, du français par quelques zairois qui préfèrent s'y attacher. En tout cas, la tendance générale est d'utiliser les langues nationales.

3. Au niveau de l'enseignement universitaire et supérieur

Malgré l'utilisation du français comme langue d'enseignement, on observe qu'en dehors des amphithéâtres, les étudiants et les professeurs — quand ils ont la même origine ethnique — ont tendance à s'exprimer dans leurs langues vernaculaires respectives, principales ou secondaires selon le cas.

C'est-à-dire que l'Université elle-même, foyer par excellence de développement du français, résiste à sa manière à l'utilisation d'une langue considérée dès lors comme un mal nécessaire facilitant la transmission du savoir. Dans certaines universités du Zaïre, on a souvent vu des étudiants se donner des explications en mathématiques ou en chimie en tshiluba ou dans d'autres langues nationales, selon le cas.

Enfin, un dernier mot sur les efforts du gouvernement et des linguistes pour avoir une seule langue nationale officielle qui facilite l'unité nationale de l'État pluri-ethnique zairois.

Actuellement, dans le monde en général, et en Afrique en particulier, l'État a pour préoccupations essentielles l'intégration nationale et le bien-être social et matériel de ses habitants. Mais entre buts et moyens pour l'atteindre, le fossé reste immense.

Au Zaïre, la balkanisation ou même l'atomisation de l'État en plusieurs ethnies manifestant jour après jour leur identité particulière par rapport à une hypothétique identité nationale globale, empêche bien sûr la réalisation pacifique de l'unité nationale véritable. Ceci est d'autant plus vrai que pour opter en faveur d'une seule langue nationale officielle, plusieurs thèses, toutes subjectives, se sont affrontées au Zaïre.

La thèse du lingala

Nous l'avons, d'une certaine façon, déjà abordée plus haut. Selon ses défenseurs, le lingala serait la langue officielle par excellence étant donné sa large utilisation dans la capitale, l'emploi qu'en fait le Président de la République, voire même les gouverneurs de régions,¹⁸ dans toutes leurs allocutions à la population zairoise tout en sachant très bien que la majorité du peuple zairois ne comprend pas cette langue. Le lingala, pour ses défenseurs, a plus de chance de s'étendre dans tout le pays que le kiswahili, le tshiluba ou le kikongo ya leta. De plus, toute l'armée zairoise l'utilise quel que soit l'endroit où se trouvent ses membres; et la musique zairoise moderne est généralement chantée en lingala.

La thèse du kikongo

La thèse du kikongo se base sur le fait que le premier Président du pays fut un Mukongo. Par ailleurs, le kikongo se parle dans une zone assez vaste —la région du Bas-Zaïre et une partie de la capitale, une bonne partie du Congo-Brazzaville et le Nord de l'Angola. Ceci tendrait à donner au kikongo une dimension internationale; il représente également l'un des anciens royaumes les plus structurés et organisés du pays, à savoir le royaume Kongo.

La thèse du tshiluba

Cette thèse repose surtout sur le caractère plus dynamique des Baluba qui, quel que soit l'endroit où ils se trouvent —au Zaïre ou à l'étranger—, utilisent sans complexe le tshiluba et poussent l'apprentissage de la langue chez leurs enfants dès leur plus jeune âge. Le tshiluba se parle également dans les deux régions du Kasai (Kasai oriental et occidental) et est la langue de tous les Kasaiens résidents ou domiciliés au Shaba ou à Kinshasa.

¹⁸ Plusieurs gouverneurs lingalaphones nommés dans des régions swahili-phones ou tshilubaphones se sont souvent adressés aux résidents de ces zones —dans leurs communications publiques et parfois sans interprètes— en lingala en sachant bien qu'ils n'étaient pas compris.

La thèse du kiswahili

Cette thèse se fonde principalement sur le caractère international¹⁹ de la langue, sur sa structure grammaticale très élaborée et sur l'existence de bons manuels d'apprentissage. L'Unesco même fait usage du swahili pour certaines de ses publications.

Voilà donc comment ces diverses thèses sont présentées. Mais les arguments allant à l'encontre de chacune d'entre elles ne manquent pas.

Le lingala, par exemple, est considéré par ses opposants comme une langue au vocabulaire très pauvre puisqu'elle contient de nombreux mots français. Il s'agit par ailleurs, selon ses détracteurs, d'une langue que le système au pouvoir veut imposer de force au lieu de laisser agir la dynamique socio-interlinguistique. Enfin, le lingala est une langue peu parlée comparativement aux trois autres langues nationales et il n'a aucune projection internationale, exception faite du Congo-Brazzaville où il est également parlé. Le lingala ne peut donc, d'après ses détracteurs, en aucun cas être choisi comme langue officielle.

En ce qui concerne le kikongo, argumentent ses opposants, bien que cette langue soit parlée dans le Nord de l'Angola et dans le Sud-Est du Congo-Brazzaville, elle manque de dynamisme expansif au niveau national et se limite à la seule région du Bas-Zaïre et à la capitale pour des raisons déjà exposées. De plus, le kikongo tend à traduire le caractère fermé attribué aux Bakongo. Partant, le kikongo ne remplirait pas les conditions objectives d'une langue officielle.

Quant au tschiluba, son choix en tant que langue officielle impliquerait une montée politique des Baluba qui inquiéterait beaucoup la plupart des groupes ethniques de l'Ouest, en l'occur-

¹⁹ Le swahili est parlé par plus ou moins 40 millions de personnes et est enseigné en tant que discipline dans certaines universités étrangères (Sorbonne, Louvain, USA, El Colegio de México, etc.). Il est parlé, en dehors de tout l'Est du Zaïre, au Rwanda, au Burundi, en Tanzanie, au Kenya, en Uganda, dans le Sud de la Somalie, aux îles Comores, en Zambie, dans le Nord du Mozambique, au Malawi, dans le Nord-Ouest de Madagascar. Au cours du 1er trimestre de 1986, l'OUA (Organisation de l'Unité Africaine) a finalement adopté un projet reconnaissant le kiswahili comme l'une de ses langues de travail officielles.

rence les Bakongo et les Bangala, qui ne les supportent pas et les qualifient d'ambitieux, de vantards, etc. A Kinshasa, on entend souvent dire "De mulú vantard" (c'est-à-dire Muluba vantard). D'autre part, le tshiluba est très confiné aux deux régions du Kasai. De là une tendance à l'isolement tout à fait négative pour l'expansion d'une langue.

Le swahili, par contre, jouit d'une portée internationale beaucoup plus importante que celle des trois autres langues nationales principales. Pourtant, argumentent ses détracteurs, cette langue n'est pas d'origine zaïroise puisqu'elle est originaire de la côte orientale africaine, Zanzibar, et pénètre le territoire zaïrois par l'intermédiaire des trafiquants d'esclaves, des arabes et des arabisés. L'origine étrangère du swahili joue donc en sa défaveur. On pourrait rétorquer que le français est aujourd'hui une langue officielle qui n'est pas d'origine africaine, en général, ni zaïroise, en particulier!

Ces arguments, même si certains d'entre eux sont sensés, sont marqués par le subjectivisme ethnique qui caractérise depuis bien longtemps les luttes politiques au Zaïre, et ceci jusqu'à nos jours. Face à ces luttes, dont la répercussion sur l'aspect linguistique des diverses ethnies du Zaïre est claire, la solution la plus sage, la plus neutre, dès lors la dernière alternative, a été d'opter pour la langue de colonisation, le français en l'occurrence.

Quelle conclusion tirer maintenant de ce qui précède pour ce jeune État africain qui affronte un problème de construction nationale depuis bientôt vingt-neuf ans?

Certains théoriciens de la problématique sociopolitique africaine considèrent qu'insister sur le phénomène ethnique comme s'il était le seul à étudier, relève de l'exagération. D'autres pensent que le phénomène ethnique est idéalisé par certains intellectuels africains, influencés dans leurs recherches par certains africanistes européens, au point d'en arriver à l'invention pure et simple de l'ethnie en Afrique. Ces théoriciens estiment que des problèmes majeurs tels que la faim, la question sanitaire, l'enseignement, le militarisme, l'intégration économique, les échanges commerciaux entre États africains, etc., devraient faire l'objet d'études sérieuses au lieu de réduire une réalité complexe à une question ethnique.

Il est bien évident que tout réductionnisme risque d'entraîner un certain particularisme qui, à son tour, peut rendre sub-

jective l'analyse d'un phénomène donné de la réalité qui, dans ce cas, ne sera présentée que partiellement et selon les visées du chercheur au lieu d'être appréhendée dans sa totalité.

Néanmoins, considérer que le 'tout' est 'tout' par le seul fait du hasard risque d'entraîner des erreurs d'appréciation. En effet, les composantes d'un 'tout' sont à ce point nécessaires que chacune d'entre elles doit être étudiée de façon exhaustive afin de comprendre le type de rapports unissant ce qui permet, dès lors, une intégration parfaite aboutissant à l'obtention du 'tout'. Ne perdons pas non plus de vue que, dans leurs relations, dans leurs confrontations, une, deux ou trois composantes peuvent avoir plus d'incidence sur les autres, ce qui n'empêche pas ces dernières d'avoir chacune leur rôle dans la constitution et la compréhension du 'tout' qu'elles forment. Et c'est à ce dernier niveau que nous pensons situer la compréhension du phénomène ethnique en Afrique en général, et au Zaïre en particulier.

Il est bien évident qu'en Afrique, tout ne peut être réduit au seul phénomène ethnique. Mais ce phénomène reste tellement marqué au sein des nouveaux États qu'il ne peut être analysé de façon simpliste puisqu'il envahit la plupart des secteurs, si non tous, de l'État dans la majorité des pays africains. Pour en revenir au Zaïre, objet principal de cette communication, qu'observe-t-on?

Sur le plan politique, au niveau gouvernemental, les postes-clés sont occupés par des individus originaires d'une seule région (province). Il arrive qu'un portefeuille soit attribué à un ressortissant d'un autre groupe ethnique qui ne jouit cependant pas d'une totale liberté d'action car il est parfois secondé par un individu du groupe ethnique au pouvoir ou encore un ami-complice du clan au pouvoir, même s'il appartient à une autre ethnie ou région.

Un État qui se veut 'moderne' essaie de survivre, de fonctionner avec des variables purement claniques traduisant mal les relations de lignage qui caractérisaient les divers rapports socio-politiques et économiques de l'Afrique noire traditionnelle, devenue caricaturale, trahie dans le sens où elle sert de prétexte à un seul groupe ethnique minoritaire pour s'imposer — grâce aux facteurs modernes de domination — à tous les autres groupes ethniques du pays. Par exemple, quand un Président déclare que dans l'Afrique de nos ancêtres, l'Afrique traditionnelle, il n'y a jamais eu deux chefs dans un seul village, il ne se trompe pas quant à

la valeur historico-sociale de l'appréciation sur le monocéphalisme de l'exécutif dans certaines des sociétés traditionnelles africaines. Mais si l'on profite de cette dimension d'unicité du pouvoir dans les communautés africaines traditionnelles bien équilibrées pour justifier l'accaparement de tous les pouvoirs par l'État qui se veut 'moderne' et doit, par conséquent, fonctionner selon des critères propres aux sociétés modernes des pays occidentaux d'Europe qui l'ont produit, l'erreur est alors grave car :

1. Si dans les villages traditionnels africains il n'y avait qu'un seul chef, il l'était, en général, d'un groupe linguistiquement et ethniquement homogène. Et là encore, ses attributions étaient bien limitées et il ne pouvait, en aucun cas, gouverner sans consulter le 'conseil des sages' dont l'avis était essentiel quant à la gestion des affaires de la communauté.

Dans le cas des empires qui regroupaient diverses formations ethniques et linguistiques, le chef ou l'empereur devait parfois prendre en considération l'avis des représentants de diverses localités. Cette règle fut observée au sein de certains empires et royaumes comme ceux du Danxomé, Benin, Mali, Mossi, Songhai, Monomotapa, Bushi, Buganda, Zulú, etc.

2. Si l'on assiste, à l'heure actuelle, à un monocéphalisme de l'exécutif, ceci ne signifie pas que les pouvoirs d'un Président ne sont pas limités afin d'éviter les abus pouvant découler de l'exercice de ses fonctions.

Même dans des systèmes politiques à bicéphalisme de l'exécutif où un chef de gouvernement a plus de poids que son Président, on remarque que des mécanismes, parlementaires surtout, fonctionnent toujours pour contrôler la légalité des actions de l'exécutif.

Au Zaïre pourtant, malgré l'existence d'un certain bicéphalisme de l'exécutif, c'est le Président-fondateur qui dirige tout; malgré l'existence d'un Conseil législatif (Parlement), c'est le Chef de l'État qui a le dernier mot car, ne l'oublions pas, les Commissaires du Peuple (députés) sont en réalité nommés par le Comité central du parti et non élus par le peuple selon la coutume des pays jouissant d'un véritable régime de représentation populaire.

Au niveau économique, les efforts gouvernementaux — quand ils existent — tendent à promouvoir certaines régions au détriment

des autres, ceci en fonction de considérations politico-ethniques. C'est le cas, par exemple, de la région du Kivu, au Centre-Est du pays, région très agricole qui a fini par être complètement délaissée. Le gouvernement central ne s'est jamais préoccupé de la destruction totale de l'environnement de la région.

La région de l'Équateur bénéficie par contre plus que toute autre de facteurs de promotion socio-économiques: hôpitaux modernes, nouvelles écoles, routes bien asphaltées, un aéroport international, bien que la zone ne soit pas d'un grand intérêt touristique et soit assez peu visitée, dans ce but tout au moins; on y observe un développement croissant de l'agriculture grâce aux experts étrangers (israéliens, coréens, etc.) payés très cher par le gouvernement zaïrois comme si, avec leur arrivée, les universités et instituts supérieurs techniques du pays avaient cessé de former des ingénieurs agronomes.

Dans d'autres régions, comme celle du Kasai oriental, par exemple, il n'y a plus d'électricité après 22 heures. La centrale hydro-électrique d'Inga, considérée comme l'une des plus puissantes du monde et capable d'alimenter toute l'Afrique avec ses 40 000 Mw (fin des travaux), fournit aujourd'hui de l'électricité à la région du Shaba —sans doute en vue d'un éventuel contrôle politique de celle-ci, en cas de manifestations anti-gouvernementales— et pourtant, certaines localités peuplées y restent encore, la nuit, dans l'obscurité. Il est vrai qu'Inga produit un courant direct qui ne peut être dévié sur ces zones. Il est cependant curieux qu'avec un aussi grand potentiel électrique, elles demeurent encore dans l'obscurité pendant la nuit. Et, malgré le fameux "Inga", la majeure partie du territoire zaïrois n'est pas éclairée.

Au niveau national, les voies de communication —routes, lacs, fleuves et chemins de fer— qui ne sont pas directement en relation avec les intérêts politico-économiques du groupe au pouvoir sont mauvaises et vétustes, dans un état d'abandon datant, dans la plupart des cas, de l'Administration coloniale.

Au niveau de l'éducation et de l'enseignement, la tendance à privilégier les ressortissants de certaines régions au détriment d'autres se maintient.

En effet, à plusieurs reprises, et alors que presque partout, sinon partout dans le monde, des normes objectives d'appréciation font passer un candidat d'un niveau à un autre, le Gouvernement zaïrois fait souvent abstraction de tout critère objectif

—dans ce cas, l'obtention d'un certain pourcentage fixé par le système éducatif du pays, mesure applicable à tous les candidats sans exception— dans l'admission à un niveau supérieur d'enseignement.

Des candidats dont la note était faible ont souvent été admis alors que l'on en refusait d'autres dont la note était élevée. Et ceci uniquement en fonction de particularisme de tous types: régionalisme, clanisme, tribalisme, ethnicisme ou amitié. Par ailleurs, sous prétexte de créer un équilibre interrégional dans l'enseignement, un système de "quota régional" a été institué qui reflète à merveille cette tendance à accepter des candidats faibles, mais originaires de régions privilégiées, au détriment d'autres qui sont souvent meilleurs.

Que des candidats d'une région X soient meilleurs que ceux d'une région Y ou Z n'est pas dramatique. Ce qui est inquiétant, c'est de constater que la région X produit systématiquement de meilleurs éléments que la région Y ou Z.

La question se pose alors de savoir *pourquoi* X produit mieux que Y ou Z? Les causes une fois décelées, il faudra essayer d'y remédier pour obtenir un rendement de type X. Et non pas, sous prétexte d'établir un équilibre régional au niveau national, accepter dix candidats moins bons ou pas bons du tout de Y ou Z, n'en accepter que dix meilleurs de X et en rejeter dix autres parce que l'on ne peut admettre que dix candidats par région! Après tout, si X fournit toujours de meilleurs candidats, ce sera dans l'intérêt général et non pas dans celui de X seulement, et c'est la vision contraire qui mène aux particularismes qui ne contribuent si peu à l'effort de construction de l'État-Nation.

Quant aux bourses d'études universitaires ou post-universitaires pour l'étranger, leur obtention se fait, à plus ou moins 90%, en fonction des mêmes critères. Le responsable cherche d'abord à promouvoir les 'siens' avant d'appliquer des critères objectifs, et s'il reste quelques bourses disponibles, il les accorde à des inconnus pour faire croire au public que les candidats viennent de diverses régions ou ethnies.

Par ailleurs, et il faut vraiment le déplorer, dans la plupart des universités et instituts supérieurs techniques ou de pédagogie du Zaïre, à partir de 1975, l'appartenance du professeur et de l'étudiant à une même communauté socio-linguistique a, dans une certaine mesure, joué un rôle prépondérant dans la réussite de

certains étudiants. Les professeurs baluba ont tendance à accepter facilement les étudiants baluba; les professeurs bakongo facilitent la tâche aux étudiants bakongo, etc. Ce qui ne signifie en aucun cas qu'il n'y a pas, au sein des universités et instituts supérieurs zairois, de professeurs impartiaux, responsables et conscients de leur rôle d'éducateur. Ils existent, mais ne sont malheureusement pas très nombreux, et risquent d'être contaminés par ce mal nécessaire qu'est le tribalisme dans le mauvais sens du terme.

Quant à la structure de l'armée zairoise, nul ne peut douter, à l'heure actuelle, du caractère majoritairement clanique et, à la rigueur, régional de la composition de son staff-dirigeant.

Au cours des dix dernières années, on a peu à peu assisté à la retraite prématurée et politique de divers officiers supérieurs de l'armée zairoise, ceci malgré leurs capacités et meilleure formation. Ils payaient le fait de ne pas appartenir au clan au pouvoir et de constituer ainsi un danger potentiel.

Les preuves tangibles du poids de la langue, de l'ethnie — et de que sais-je encore? — dans la vie quotidienne des États africains d'aujourd'hui en général, et du Zaïre en particulier, abondent. Notre souci, en rédigeant cette communication, a été de présenter une situation linguistique et ethnique face à l'inquiétude permanente des États africains de construire des nations du type 'État-Nation' d'Europe occidentale dont le concept est aujourd'hui en crise. Il suffit en effet de jeter un coup d'oeil sur la situation en Irlande du Nord, en Belgique (Flamands et Wallons), en France (Corses, Catalans et Bretons ne se veulent plus français), en Espagne (les Basques donnent des maux de tête au gouvernement espagnol, et les Canaries ne cessent de réclamer leur autonomie); les Sikhs exigent l'indépendance du Pendjab au sein d'une Inde qui se veut unie et indivisible, les Tamiles du Nord de Sri Lanka réclament leur autonomie, et se sentent beaucoup plus proches de leurs frères de l'État Tamilnadu du Sud de l'Inde, et enfin, très récemment (au cours du 1er semestre 1989) en Union Soviétique, précisément en Ouzbékistan, où l'affrontement entre minorités fait rage, etc.

Face à cette situation, les gouvernements africains vont-ils continuer à perdre leur temps à construire des nations calquées sur un modèle occidental en pleine crise ou vont-ils chercher de nouvelles voies propres à leurs modes de vie, à leurs cultures?

C'est bien dans ce sens qu'il faudra centrer tous les efforts pour aboutir à une intégration sociale optimale au niveau des États africains. Car, en fait, il ne s'agit pas de supprimer ou de minimiser les questions linguistiques et ethniques, mais de savoir comment les utiliser à leur juste valeur pour bâtir en Afrique noire de nouveaux États nationaux qui échappent à la crise européenne décrite plus haut.

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Centro de *Estudios de Asia y África*



This book makes available, for the first time in English or French, some of the academic studies on Asia and Africa written in recent years by scholars working in Latin America. Many of these scholars have been associated, as professors or graduate students, with the Center of Asian and African Studies of El Colegio de México, a center founded in 1964. Much of their work has been published in *Estudios de Asia y África*, an academic journal published by El Colegio de México. This work has unfortunately passed mostly unnoticed in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa since scholars in these regions have often not had the time to learn Spanish.

The essays of the present volume, represent a variety of disciplines and discuss a variety of topics about different regions and historical periods. Nonetheless, it is clear that, taken as a whole, the essays could only have been written in Latin America. Many of them display both an anti-imperialist identification with the problems of the ethnic minorities and the peoples of the Third World and, at the same time, an objective independence from the nationalist interests and ideologies that sometimes cloud political and social judgments in the countries of Asia and Africa themselves.



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