



THE FUTURES OF CULTURE

Volume II : The Prospects for Africa and Latin America

(Project co-ordinated by E. Masini)

Future-oriented Studies Programme

March 1992



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FOREWORD

The present document is the second publication of the results of the project on the "Futures of Culture" co-ordinated by Professor Eleonora Masini. The contributions presented here proposed testing - in two regions, Africa and Latin America - the assumptions which had resulted from the work of the consultative working group of experts which met at UNESCO Headquarters on 9 and 10 January 1990. Six main trends were highlighted at that meeting:

- 1) the globalization of the Western cultural modernization "model", a product of increasing worldwide interdependence;*
- 2) the growing influence of the cultural on the economy, most striking in the case of new technologies;*
- 3) the process of the uniformization and homogenization of cultures and cultural values;*
- 4) the pluricultural dimension of almost all societies in the more industrialized countries;*
- 5) the rise of resistance phenomena or of cultural affirmation as a reaction to this movement of "standardization" of cultures;*
- 6) the emergence of new cultures, engendered by scientific and technical progress.*

These were the working assumptions which were applied to the African and Latin American "cases" at a meeting organized at Barcelona from 13 to 15 September 1991, during which the documents were presented and discussed. The organizers of the meeting would like to express their thanks to the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya and the Centre Catala de Prospectiva who acted as hosts to the meeting.

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I. THE FUTURES OF CULTURE: AN OVERVIEW WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO WESTERN CULTURE

by Eleonora Barbieri Masini

Introduction

The foreseeable future of the world and of its inhabitants as the carriers of value systems depends on the futures of culture, or the futures of value systems shared by groups which identify groups of people and guide their behaviour. In our time it seems that such systems and their differences are indeed central to change in various fields. Changes, in their turn, are the distinctive feature of the present (more forcefully than they were in the past) and often lead to tension and conflicts unless the value systems, the cultures, are able to coexist.

The futures of cultures can be explored in terms of the possibles, probables and desirables, indicated by B. de Jouvenel (1) in his studies.

In this paper culture is considered to be the locus of value priorities, indicating the behaviour of a given social group and, hence, the choices among the many possible futures. Perhaps this also explains the greater interest in culture: the world is facing a set of increasingly difficult problems to the solutions which will more and more require choices related to priorities. Such priorities often become confused and the carriers of value systems need to go back to them to search for old or new priorities. Hence another characteristic that is peculiar to our time: uncertainty in decision-making. A good example of confusion in priorities is the controversial interest shown in the cultural component of development in recent years.

It is interesting that this greater concern for culture should coincide with a period in which human beings fear for their actual physical survival on the planet (a great issue to be solved). Could it be that this anxiety vis-à-vis future survival requires individuals and society as a whole to reconsider values? (2) Further, could it be that human beings believe that by maintaining their cultural values and identity they will manage to survive spiritually despite the threat of physical destruction? Perhaps, when physical survival is threatened, and cultural identity also challenged by values different from their own, human beings strive to find an identity to which they can remain steadfastly faithful in an attempt to recover their security.

These are some of the questions we will be trying to answer in the framework of the UNESCO "Futures of Culture" Project.

1. Historical Development of the Concept of Culture

What is culture? In UNESCO Sources (April, 1991) (3), Max Cerrans quotes Julien Green as saying "Culture cannot be improvised. It is the soul of a nation. But it is also as vulnerable as a fledgling bird, at the mercy of such voracious predators as alienation, fashions, the desire to dominate and economics".

Interestingly this last point was discussed at the September 1991 UNESCO conference in Prague on the theme "Culture and Democracy" (4). In that context, culture was seen mainly as related to specific nations, as indeed it often is. In this paper it shall also be related to smaller social units, for example "living communities" as D. Goulet will define them. Moreover the concept will not necessarily be related to a geographical dimension but rather to a set of values, beliefs and behaviours characterizing groups of people, over and beyond material boundaries.

What is culture? To avoid abstract and static definitions (to the extent to which this is possible), a partial answer may be found to this very difficult question from a brief historical overview of the concept, retracing the path of human thought through the centuries, referring also, though very briefly, to some theories of cultural development. Essentially we will refer to Western society, though referring briefly to some aspects of other societies which will certainly be further developed by participants from those societies. In any case, it can be said that precisely because in the social sciences there is no universal consensus on the concept of culture which has developed through the years (5), it is better to see it in its historical development.

In many Western languages, the word "culture" derives from the Latin *colere*, meaning "to cultivate". The idea is one of cultivating one's self in an effort to attain the ideal of wisdom within the human being found in Greek thought: culture is the ideal through which human beings become themselves. This individual interpretation of culture can, as indicated by Paul Schafer (6), have a philosophical or aesthetic orientation, the former emphasising intellectual development, the latter aesthetic perfection. Historically, we can go back to various Greek thinkers, and then to Cicero, who writes of "cultura animi", for the philosophical emphasis, and to the lyrics, poetry, music, and dance of Roman times and the Middle Ages for the aesthetic emphasis.

A long historical process is necessary through the Renaissance, Enlightenment and industrialization for the above concept gradually to change and eventually become a collective rather than an individual concept. During the Renaissance the "humanitas" concept continues to prevail. By the XVIIth century, culture is first used to indicate the condition of a group of people and, by 1871, Edward Burnett Tylor, one of the first anthropologists, was describing culture in "The Origins of Culture" (7) "in its widest ethnographic sense, as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Much later, Ruth Benedict (8) in writing "no man is born with virgin eyes" was referring also

to what Tylor had described as a "complex whole" influencing the human being from its very origins.

According to a group of scientists - Tylor, Boas, Meas, Benedict, Herscovits and others - cultural values and behaviour are related more to a specific time and place than to any universal basis. This approach has had a great influence on the concept of culture and is basically the one adopted in this project. A more individual concept of culture does not seem to answer the requirements of the project, as it will be dealing with communities that differ both in time and space, although the individual aspect will not be overlooked completely. Similarly, a completely universal view of culture is not completely acceptable as it could lead in the present and in the future to homogenisation.

Although the development of the concept of culture has not been a linear process - even in the 1960s some authors were writing about culture as the reaching towards perception - the definition of culture has gradually undergone a transformation with the individual process becoming increasingly a socio-historical process. Moreover, culture, from being a characteristic of a group, came also to be a characteristic distinguishing one group from the other (thus taking on a more sociological connotation) and, finally, the "many cultures", defined on the basis of different value systems, which is the basic assumption of this Project.

Hence culture can be seen as being made up of behavioural patterns, which make it recognisable and, in some way, predictable. At this point, the importance of the different value systems is related to a plurality of cultures.

A crucial definition of culture is the one adopted by UNESCO in 1982 in Mexico City, according to which (9):

"Culture ought to be considered today the collection of distinctive traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterises a society or a social group. It comprises, besides arts and letters, modes of life, human rights, values systems, traditions and beliefs."

2. Brief Description of Theories of Cultural Development

It is useful to refer to some theories of cultural development in order very briefly to link culture to history and thus also to be able to foresee how culture can be expected to develop in the future.

For many scholars the great significance of technological advances and economic growth is related to cultural advances. For some - such as V. G. Childe (10) - these developments are mainly related to the urban revolution, while writing is what makes cultures become civilizations. Civilization, according to this author, is the kind of culture which includes the use of writing, possesses cities, political organization and an organized specialization of tasks.

A very important point is also the contact between cultures. According to Childe the cultures of Europe and Asia are interconnected and part of the same process.

A. J. Toynbee (11) drew up a large-scale comparative study, criticised by many, in which he listed 23 civilizations. This study has the great merit of going beyond the link between culture and the nation state toward a much broader unit of analysis. According to Toynbee, the process of development of a culture starts with the challenge of a "creative minority", at the point at which a given population responds to the challenge. The vitality which is thus generated leads to an integration which is then characteristic of what Toynbee calls the capacity of a civilization to self-determine itself. Challenges may be internal or external. The civilization, in facing or not facing the challenge, may or may not reach maturity, depending on the force of the challenge: the challenge may be too strong and the civilization may get blocked, or even not answer the challenge at all, thus in a way committing suicide.

Sorokin (12) instead considered the various reasons that provoke the aggregation of cultures, and the constitution of super-structures. He distinguished two types of super-structures: the idealistic and the sensate, one being rational, the other super-rational, and the best being of course the mixture of the two. In some cases, there are fluctuations among the systems which create disturbance. In the Thirties, this author spoke of a long sensate period which would accentuate itself in time. The last decade has provided some basis for agreement with him.

3. Western Culture: a Historical Overview

In defining Western culture, again we need to go over its historical development, albeit somewhat synthetically, in order to find indications of the "futures of cultures" which are relatively close to the present time and also have some predictive capacity.

The West is not only geographically defined; it is also related to a specific set of values (13). The West is wherever the European life-style and, hence, system of values has spread. The concept of space is self-centred, the concept of time linear, knowledge is based on abstraction, reality is fragmented, the order of human relations vertical, the vision of relations between human beings one of exploitation, the position of many (the periphery) subservient to that of the few (the centre), social groups are fragmented, the economic paradigm is one of more production for more consumption and vice-versa, with the support of more science and more technology. (Of course many other characteristics could be listed.)

We have chosen to start our analysis from the end of World War II, which is when Western culture started to expand at great speed, when, as Ruth Benedict puts it, fortuitous reasons put Western culture in the position of expanding more than other cultures.

By around 1960, the visibly technological and economic Western model was being proposed by Europe and North America to the rest of the world as the model to follow. There were other less visible non-economic and non-technological aspects underlying the model which

basically advocated freedom and justice in economics and in politics, and seemed to attract people of other cultures as the best possible model of development.

The less material components of development were put to one side in the belief that progress compounded economic growth and technological innovation in a just and free perspective that would spread to the whole world (if it were willing to accept it) and would continue to grow and expand in the future.

At the time (late Sixties) even one part of futures studies believed that progress was going to continue and increase and that it could even be forecast. Hence, Western culture was proposing its model in terms of space all over the world and of time for the generations of the future.

In this context, Western culture can be described as a collective consciousness of the people of the West, of their right to indicate the distribution of power - economic and technological - and, as a consequence, political structures. This can be considered a cultural affirmation by the West of its perceived strength vis-à-vis other cultures.

By the Seventies, this blind faith in economic and technological power, as being crucial to the West and exported by the West, was challenged for the first time, by the technological capacity of Japan, and gradually of other countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong and possibly others.

Signs of growing uncertainty were also evident within the Western culture itself: social movements started to spring up in the West advocating peace, a clean environment, the respect of human rights, of women's rights and so on.

These could be described as tentative alternatives to competition, consumption for further production etc. In an effort to remedy some of the damage being caused by development. Some of these movements are still strong, for example the movement in favour of human rights and women's equality.

It is important to understand the impact that these movements were to have on the futures of cultures in bringing a new awareness to people in the West (Western Europe and the US), in Eastern and Central Europe (as recent history has shown) and, in different ways, to people in the South. Although this trend of awareness is still not a reality worldwide, it underlies all the other trends we will be describing in the "futures of cultures" project. Never again will human rights be trod upon, without this being visible or without there being at least the awareness of it; never again will women accept non-recognition of their contribution to society, for better or for worse; never again will they accept invisibility; never again will society allow its environment to be violated with impunity. This latter issue particularly is an important issue in itself, and one which has become a priority, and a controversial one, also in terms of culture.

Another important issue that has been challenging the confidence of the West in its development model is the changing population structure at the global level. While the population of the North is ageing, that of the South is increasing and the number of young people is becoming particularly high. In the years to come a very large majority of the population of the South will be in need of education, at least at the primary level. This gives the dimensions of the educational needs and job requirements of the population of the South which are behind the migratory flows from Latin America to the US and Canada and, more recently, from Africa to Europe, or from Asia to North America and Australia. These trends are already affecting both the receiving and the sending cultures; they can be expected to have an even greater impact in the future, as migration takes place at a faster rate, leaving less time for adaptation than in the past.

The migrating groups bring with them values, religions, behaviours and family structures. In these great movements, other values come into contact with and challenge the values of the West, which either has to adapt or reinforce its own values. If the Western model is reinforced, then a trend towards global society emerges. In turn the values of the migrant community seem also to be reinforced, thus challenging the values of the receiving country. One aspect, as described by Sardar, is "the Islamic perception that correlates the teaching of Islam to the problems of today (14) so that it can meet the challenges of the future".

4. The Challenges from the South

But another very important challenge was in the making. The first signs were already evident in the Seventies and Eighties and by the Nineties, the potential explosiveness of the challenge was becoming more than obvious: the Third World was finally awakening from the dream which said that political independence and economic freedom went hand in hand.

In a number of different ways, some violent, others less, the Third World started to make it clear that it would not be marginalised, that it would not simply be a market for the North and the West. China expressed this tragically at Tienamen and India with the introduction of protectionist policies (possibly the violence in India should also be seen in this light). Surely it is no coincidence that the largest countries in the world today in terms of population are showing special opposition to Western culture and emphasising their own cultural basis, in the process of awareness referred to earlier.

At this point the debate on development changes, for it is becoming increasingly clear in the collective consciousness of people that the cultural aspect is just as important as the economic, scientific and technological aspects - if not more so - and may become an increasingly explosive issue.

5. Culture and Development

Since the end of the Eighties the debate has centred on whether culture can be accepted as the core of development. If this is so, then we must accept that the latter is diversified, being based on different value systems, and less imitative and less measurable than a development based only on the Western model.

Once the cultural aspects of development started coming to the fore, and the development model of the West was critically accepted or even rejected by the developing countries, the West itself became less secure. This loss of confidence is what we are currently witnessing, even though a preliminary boosting of the model may come from the changes underway in Eastern and Central Europe. In any case the Western model of culture can no longer claim to be universal.

This point was discussed at length in the preparatory phase of the project (15), among others by D. Goulet, who stressed the state of development and the state of cultures. According to Goulet, in terms of development, the world is currently regressing to an economic growth paradigm and the boundaries between the economic and political aspects are disappearing. R. Dumont (16) believes that the last forty years have been years of misdevelopment, of the mismanagement of resources, whereas R. Preiswerk (17) refers to maldevelopment, with governments still seeming to define development as maximum economic growth, industrialization and mass consumption.

According to D. Goulet (18) a new paradigm for development is also emerging in a variety of contexts. It is based on the primacy of basic needs satisfaction with a priority of non-material values over economic development. However, in a recent text Goulet speaks of development as a two-edged sword, striving towards material goods and technological progress, as well as towards freedom of choice and greater independence.

6. Some non-Western Cultural Concepts of Importance in Relation to Global Cultural Trends and the Resistance of Cultures

It is possible to describe some non-Western cultural concepts which may be at the basis of alternative trends in culture. We know that in Western culture, science and its application are central. Indeed, according to Ashis Nandy (19), there is today a tendency in Western culture for science to be an ally of authoritarianism and a consequent need to look elsewhere for democratic values. Traditional cultures "not being driven by principles of absolute internal consistency and parsimony, did allow the individual to create a place for himself in a plural structure of authority" and hence had an inbuilt critical capacity, each individual having "some play vis-à-vis the institutions he worked with". The capacity to challenge authority often absent in Western cultures as "for instance one man's guru is always another man's anti-guru".

Another important non-Western concept that may usefully contribute to different ways of reading the futures of cultures is the different concept of time.

The perception of time accumulated over the centuries and expressed through myths and symbols is extremely important. The Chinese, for example, have always linked time, space and nature as is shown very clearly in their linguistic rendering of the words: "world" and "universe". Time is never seen as an abstract measure. The savouring of time, as well as of beauty and other aspects that lend charm to life, is conveyed in the depth of the time and space concept of the Chinese. This does not mean that the Chinese did not measure time. The sundial, the water clock or clessidra are all Chinese inventions and a functioning calendar has existed in China since the second millennium before Christ.

In the UNESCO Courier (20), the description by Honorat Aguessy of the African concept of time is one of living in a shifting kaleidoscope. "Time in African society is complex, dense and opaque" says this sociologist from Benin.

In Latin America, the present seems to disappear in the tension between the past, still living in the present, and the future. There is a certain link between a past which is idealised as it no longer exists and a future, which may be better than the present, but which also does not yet exist.

7. The Global Trends of Culture and Emerging Global Cultures

The global trends of culture appear to be among the better known aspects of the current debate on the futures of culture. Since the Seventies, there have been indications of the advent of a post-Industrial society, based more on services, especially telecommunications, than on the production of goods, but at the same time with a more materialistic basis of profit and consumption, increasingly homogenised requirements and supply in a sort of a closed, virtually inescapable circle.

Although cultural priorities and behaviours seem to become the same or similar worldwide, differentiation also seems to be a requirement. Even those convinced that technological development is the path to follow, for example, Toffler and Naisbitt (21) (22), are indicating this need for differentiation in both the North and the South.

As I mentioned earlier, Western culture has contributed the most to the globalization of trends, in the conscious or subconscious belief that the transfer of its own model to other cultures was for the benefit of all. The changes that these contradictory but, at the same time, global trends in cultures might bring to the futures of culture, as they develop in different places at the same time or close in time, need to be carefully considered. Indeed the changes occurring within cultures under the influence of global trends are just as important as the changes resulting from the increased awareness and self-determination of cultural identities.

The global trends emerging in different parts of the world are related to specific choices and the spread of technologies, mainly communication technologies. The result is often a duality of cultures within the same society: on one side, the Western-oriented culture, on the other the culture related to specific cultural identity. We have learned that it is precisely this dual aspect that can produce tension and conflicts with the weaker culture adapting in different ways to the dominant one. We find this duality in Latin America, but also in Eastern and Central Europe, where dormant conflicts between cultures seem to re-emerge when they come into contact with another dominant culture, such as the West European one.

8. Cultures of Resistance

The movement toward global trends in cultures or a global culture appears to be accompanied by the resistance of certain "living communities". Some cultures in particular seem to need to be differentiated from an apparently Western dominated society. In this project we refer to this phenomenon as the "resistance of cultures" or, as indicated by D. Goulet, the resistance of "living communities of culture", thus distinguishing them from cultures that are historically dead. (This aspect will be further developed by those responsible for the regional studies on Africa and Latin America.)

What is it that enables societies to maintain their identity? At what stage of the process does this occur? According to some indications, the limit beyond which a culture changes is related to the physical survival of its members. At that point there is an almost necessary acceptance of another culture based on rational choices which may lead to change, or to some form of coexistence of different cultures.

Another element to be considered is the size of the "living community". In the experience of some researchers the resistance of certain cultures is related to the fact that they are small.

In this context it may be useful to discuss Eric Fromm's (23) concept of the "social character" of a given group which is defined by the acceptance of certain values.

A set of collective values is interiorised by each individual and thus the collective values of the group are preserved. When this collective interiorization ceases, the group also ceases to survive and groups recognisable for certain cultural characteristics start to assume different cultural characteristics.

If a group stops interiorising values for a period, these values can still be recovered in time and the group culturally reconstituted. A group which has maintained its interiorised values at a minimum level (empirical studies could be carried out to establish what this minimum level is) may bring them to the surface, if it feels that these values are being threatened and need to be defended. In this process the values can even be reinforced.

This may explain the renewed vigour of the values of Islam. At a time of danger and threat, the values are reinforced, moulded into different shapes, to meet differentiated requirements. A similar situation may exist for the original Indian ethnic groups of Latin America. It seems that the growing threat from a dominant culture creates the foundations for reinforcing the original culture and may even become the basis for political rebellion.

Other issues need also to be considered in trying to understand why some cultures fail to resist. Could the non-resistance be related to a failure to perceive the strength of the threat, such as perhaps among the Australian Aborigenes or the American Indians in the US and Canada? Or, should non-resistance be attributed to an inherent weakness vis-à-vis economic and technological progress, as in Latin America, thus bringing us back to the point made earlier, namely that an economic basis is an essential condition for a culture to survive?

Could there be something cyclic in the survival of cultures? Are we coming to the end of Sorokin's "sensate" society or is there a continued reinforcement of it? Does what we are currently witnessing represent the challenge from the creative minorities referred to by Toynbee? Are there psychological, spiritual or even physical forces that drive dormant cultures to react and survive?

Finally another issue concerns the instrumental use of "living communities" for broader global goals, whether for their support or destruction. This points to the need to see the resistance of cultures both in their own terms and also in conditional terms, namely in relation to the survival of other cultures.

The simultaneous existence and emergence of a global culture and of a culture of resistance, as well as the re-emergence of different cultures leads to the possibility of a plurality of cultures as an alternative to the domination of one culture and tensions and conflict between cultures.

9. A Pluricultural Society

A basic issue in considering the futures of culture is whether we are moving toward a domination of one culture or the resistance, survival and revitalisation of cultures, which will find different new sets of cultures to survive.

In the next decades, this may indeed be the case in Asia, with its many different cultures, or possibly even some cultures of Latin America or Africa in the effort to find common and only apparently lost bonds.

The pace and the dimensions of current migratory flows are unprecedented. These can be expected to continue and influence the search for new clusters of cultures. Migration will no longer be a trickle process from Europe to North and South America, as at the beginning of

the century or to a lesser degree after World War II. It will involve a rapid, practically uncontrolled stream of people, carrying their own value systems, behaviours, religious beliefs and family structures, in this way contributing to globalising trends and/or to a pluricultural society, and thus in some cases avoiding the suicide of a culture referred to by Toynbee.

In a pluricultural society education can be either intercultural, aiming at a certain degree of integration, or multicultural, meaning that people remain themselves in a climate of mutual respect, in which contrasts are smoothed out and assumptions discussed.

Dominance versus recognition of differences in a pluralistic society will be the tensions at the core of the future of a society based on a diversity of value systems.

When ethnic groups discuss the future, the differences existing in each of these societies come to the surface. Each group wants to reinforce its own historical capital and, as a consequence, its identity. The past and the future can be a way of escaping from the present. However, as the future must always be built on the present in the knowledge of the past, the historical capital can be a strong force towards change. To discuss the future involves bringing to the forefront the different values that exist among the various groups and, therefore, the different cultural foundations which on the surface may seem to have been moulded through time but which at the same time strive for common survival. In a rapidly changing society, there is no time to take refuge in either the past or the future. We have to utilise the knowledge from the past and the drive towards action in the future in order to make better use of the present. The only temporal space on which the human being has any influence is the future, as both the past and the present are already accomplished, as B. de Jouvenel said many years ago.

In terms of a pluricultural society, we must search in the past for the basis of each culture, and its strengths and weakness. We have to look at the visions that each culture has inbuilt, but also the compromises, hopes, fears and desires, that are expressed in the present of each and every one of the cultures which have to co-exist and will be increasingly required to do so in the future. To simply ignore desires as expressed in myths and symbols and discard them could have disastrous consequences. Without a mutual respect for each of these, however different, the consequences may be catastrophic.

Focusing only on technological and economic aspects of changes and futures, as is the temptation in times of rapid change, disregarding different cultural, social and psychological aspects, has already had disastrous repercussions which could become even worse should this trend continue in the future, as events in the Gulf and in the Balkans clearly show.

Although a pluricultural society, in which respect for different value systems develops toward a complementary behaviour, may seem a faraway vision at the moment, it is one that has to be reached if humanity is to survive beyond the XX1st century.

To the question whether cultural analysis is to be interpreted and its future seen in a double track there can be only one answer: the interpretation should be made by many in the awareness that the futures of culture are based on values and are also their carriers. It is not possible to interpret any analysis of the futures of culture objectively as the future is per se a highly normative category and this cannot be escaped.

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II. IMPERATIVES OF SOCIAL CHANGE: AFRICA AND THE WEST

by G. Sogolo (*)

Culture is the most distinguishing factor among human groups and its most perceptible identifiable marks are artefacts, language, food habits, housing, architectural designs, etc. However, culture as a way of life is understood more or less in terms of a variety of intangibles which include a set of behavioural patterns, values, beliefs, thought systems and the people's mode of perceiving reality - all woven into a network of sustained social institutions.

Among the items of culture some are core while others are peripheral. For the purpose of this discussion, an item is considered as core to a culture if it is intrinsic and therefore necessary both for the being of that culture and for differentiating it from other cultures. We could say, for instance, that items such as a common language, shared beliefs, values and mode of thought are core to a given culture. On the other hand, a cultural item is peripheral if its absence or alteration does not affect the essential character of the culture as a whole. For example, visible as the mode of dressing may be, a change in this aspect of culture is most unlikely to alter our perception of a given culture. Nor would it be entirely correct to say of a culture that it has changed because its members now hunt with automatic rifles instead of bows and arrows.

Although the above distinction between the "core" and "peripheral" elements of culture is fraught with difficulties, I intend, nonetheless, to draw on it here as a conceptual tool for the understanding of the dynamics of social change, which is my main concern in this discussion.

From the axiom that society is a dynamic phenomenon, I want to examine some of the significant forces of social change in the context of the African cultural experience and years of historic contact between Africa and Western Europe. To that extent, this discussion is cross-cultural in approach, with emphasis on the major aspects of these confronting cultures, using their variants as manifest areas of interplay under a unique African thought system.

The results of this culture contact have gone in two directions: (i) with items of conflict resulting in cultural resistance and (ii) with those of agreement leading to cultural assimilation. The cumulative effect, however, is a synthesis in Africa of what may rightly be described as an emergent culture of unity in diversity.

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There is a great deal of information on the dynamics of culture contact, that is to say what happens when two cultures meet. Most of the information is provided by social anthropologists who studied pre-literate or partially literate societies, particularly African cultures that were subjected to Western influence through colonial conquest. Useful as such studies may be, they do not provide a single principle that is applicable to all situations. Nor do they point to a uniform pattern of change in every society that has undergone the colonial experience. The reason is obvious; a change in people's social and cultural institutions involves a multiplicity of complex processes - almost all of them operating concurrently.

A great deal of change that occurs in any modern society today is externally imposed either through direct culture contact or through indirect transmission. When change is imposed on a technologically inferior culture by an external influence or a higher order, it involves the transfer of ideas and artefacts. That, indeed, was the relationship that existed between European colonial powers and the various indigenous peoples of Africa. But the confrontation between the two sets of culture went beyond the simple process of borrowing or reshuffling culture traits. The process on the whole involved a remarkable degree of conflict, leading to social stress in the receiving cultures.

But, first, let us examine those aspects of colonialism that seem to have appealed to Africans. From what we know of the colonial entry into Africa, it came as an attractive package which included Western education, commerce and industry. Attached to this irresistible package were European values, scientific ideas, religion and social norms. And they were all imposed by the use of coercive force. In fact, colonialism is sometimes described as a show of force in which, according to historical evidence, a dozen colonial soldiers would round up thousands of Africans. In spite, however, of evident use of force, there is a school of thought which believes that the colonial package was, anyway, too attractive for most African communities to reject. True, a lot of Africans today would reject the description of the colonial incursion into the continent as identical to a military conquest; many certainly would not accept colonial administrations as armies of occupation.

There is no historical evidence to support such a view, nor is it backed up by the facts of the initial reaction of African peoples to colonialism.

In spite of our earlier caution against the application of a single principle as an explanatory model of social change in all situations, I am tempted to draw on a schema of change formulated by the well-known social anthropologist, Raymond Firth. Firth's theory was based on his empirical study of the social history of the Polynesian peoples. According to him, when a powerful Western culture confronts a technologically less powerful one, the results occur in four stages:

- (i) first, on initial impact, there is ready acceptance of such Western artefacts as guns and tools, but little modification of the traditional cultures;

- (ii) then, as the process of interaction gathers momentum, there is a more radical absorption; the old group values give way to a growing individualism and strains begin to appear between the old values and the new;
- (iii) then, a third stage in which there is a reaction of hostility against the new order, a tendency to revert to traditional practices; sometimes a vain attempt to put the clock back;
- (iv) finally, if the story ends happily, there emerges a more sophisticated synthesis of old and new; a novel social organization is achieved which is unique and viable in itself, but which owes something to both modern and traditional influences. (1)

Firth's schema is, I think, more useful when perceived as a sketch of facts limited to his objects of study, rather than as a universal principle. Yet the facts accord foursquare with the African experience, even though the explanations may not be identical. In what follows, I intend to analyze briefly some of the significant forces that determined the reaction of Africans to cultural importations from Western Europe.

With the advent of colonialism, the changes brought about through the impact between Africa and the West were of various kinds, political, economic, scientific, religious; indeed, the cultural confrontation resulted in new sets of values, norms and a whole range of social and cultural institutions. Our earlier distinction between core and peripheral elements of culture is of significant relevance at this point. First, where the receiving society in Africa perceived no substantial difference between any indigenous item of culture and its imported counterpart, assimilation was nearly as easy as the reaction between two dissoluble chemicals.

In quite a number of areas the resultant changes, although of a highly visible sort, did not affect the central nerves of African cultures and so generated little or no conflict. If, for instance, instead of the day set aside for rest by the people's indigenous calendar the new order stipulated Sunday, such a change was not likely to cause a major cultural conflict. Or take yet another example, the influence of foreign fashions, music and dance on African youths some of whose most dominant role models these days are Mike Tyson (hair style), Michael Jackson and Mike C. Hammar (dance). Such changes are not as essential as those I refer to as core. A great deal of cultural imports from the West were, however, structurally disruptive of the core elements of African cultures. With such disruptions, it became impossible for the items affected to "mesh" or co-exist with other institutions as they used to be. In some cases, the people were thrown into radically different ways of thinking and strange, sometimes contradictory goals which they had never thought about, were imposed on their institutions. This, I suppose, was what Firth tried to represent with the third stage of his schema, "a reaction of hostility against the new order" and a powerful tendency to return to the old.

Before discussing some specific areas of cultural conflict between Africa and the West, let me make a few important remarks. First, my interest is in conflicts between very different kinds of

social values and institutions rather than conflicts between individuals, groups or categories of people. Second, the issue of whether or not a given direction of change was for better or for worse belongs to the realm of value judgement and so ought to be separated from our analysis of the dynamics of change. In every society, there are individuals who perceive change - almost any change - as having deleterious consequences. Such people have great tendencies towards the *status quo* and, quite often, entertain unjustified nostalgia for some "good old days" that probably never existed. Many others are more adventurous, eager to search for a new order and more prepared to accept change. And thirdly, social change is never total. I have no knowledge of any culture that has been absolutely transformed or caused to dispense with every trait of its past. The nearest I have read about were the Tasmanian aborigenes, the Tierra del Fuegians and the North American Indians, all of which still have surviving relics in modern cultures.

The cultural confrontation between the West and traditional African societies was marked by a great deal of conflict in political values. That conflict is still evident in contemporary African political systems which, almost without exception, are dictatorial in style. Although the historical facts remain controversial, the explanation has been that precolonial African political systems, like those of Medieval Europe, tended towards totalitarianism. This dictatorial style of political administration is explained as an offshoot of what Africans believed about the nature of the state, the authority of the ruler, the rights of the individual and the relationship between the state and the citizen.

A major part of the political culture of traditional Africans was tied to religious beliefs. Indeed, religion provided the explanation for the origin of the state and the justification of the authority of the ruler. Religion also served as the measure through which Africans identified the limits of the ruler's power, the right of the citizen, as well as standards by which behaviour was judged, crime identified and punishment apportioned.

One other important factor in the political world-view of traditional Africans was the role of kinship in social organization. This is by no means an African peculiarity. Kinship bond has, in fact, long been identified everywhere as the chief character of "primitive" societies as distinct from "civilised" ones.

H. S. Maine emphasizes the point:

All ancient societies regard themselves as having proceeded from one original stock, and even laboured under an incapacity for comprehending any reason except this for holding together in political union. The history of political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions. (2)

Although Maine thinks that kinship has lost its significance in modern socio-political systems, the fact is that this social feature remains a central element in the political formations of contemporary African societies. In other words, African political thought still rests

predominantly on an organic conception of a socio-political order based on the natural formation of kinship. This conception is strengthened by the various myths of creation that continue to serve the primordial function of communal identities.

There is hardly an African community without its own myth of creation. And, although such myths are about how the world came to be what it is, they embody the people's beliefs about the structure of society and patterns of social relations. The Yoruba people of Southern Nigeria, for instance, have a myth of origin which Basil Davidson describes as follows:

When God decided to make a homeland for mankind... he sent down from Heaven a powerful spirit... to create the Earth. This archangel *Orishanla*, managed the work in four days, appointing the fifth for worship and rest... Having created the earth, God began to people it with mankind beginning with Yorubaland... the first men and women... were born at Ife. Orishanla... shared the work of ordering the earth with other spirits. Prominent among these was Oduduwa who became the first king of Ife. From Ife his children went out to become the kings and queens of other sections of Yoruba (3).

Of course, the Yoruba people do not perceive this myth to be a historical reality. Yet, it has great significance in terms of social relationship, the exercise of authority and the people's perception of political obligation.

The importance of these historical antecedents, whether myth or reality, is that they define the people's conception of the nature of the state and their relationship to it. Femi Otubanjo believes, for instance, that in Africa "common descent is the underlying force and the justification for all social existence" and therefore that "the idea of the state with its impersonal institutions and primary emphasis on geographical contiguity did not exist in traditional African political imagination" (4). And he thinks that this primordial sense of attachment has not been significantly affected by political modernization.

Modern democracy is anchored on the crucial issue of the legitimization of power. And this is where African myths of descent, particularly in their supernatural flavour, have always played a significant role. The belief was and is still strongly held in most African societies that rulers derive their mandate from some divine sources from which society also emerged. Part of this belief is that the succession to leadership is also legitimised by the myth of descent and those forces which the group identified as the source of its origin. The situation is vividly presented by K. Oberg when he says that among the Ankole of Western Uganda, the position of the Mugabe (King) "was exalted, his authority supreme, his leadership all-embracing, his high status sanctioned, in the first place, by his descent from Rubinda, the original creator of the Abarinda dynasty, and in the second place, by his possession of the symbol of kinship..." (5).

In addition to the myths of descent, the exercise of political power in Africa was also grounded in the consensus of the people whose force and authority were believed to be behind the actions of the rulers. In other words, power was derived from the people and held

in trust for them. The complex network of beliefs that gave legitimacy to the authority of the rulers was held together by the religion of the community. As I noted earlier, the situation is similar in many respects to the political philosophy of medieval Europe, as evident from the works of St. Augustus, St. Thomas Aquinas and other thinkers of that era who tried to defend the superior rights of the Church against all secular theories of power.

In some cases, African monarchs wielded absolute, undiluted power. Such, for instance, was the power vested in the Mugabe (King) of the Akole:

Physical, magical and religious power was vested in the King's person... The legal status... gave him the highest political authority. Appointments to office were ultimately in his hand as were the decisions for war or peace... He had the right to punish individuals by death, exile, beating, torture and cursing... The Mugabe was, strictly speaking, above the law. No man could take legal action against him, for there was no authority higher than the Mugabe before which he could be accused, tried and sentenced. (6).

The case of the Akole seems to lend support to the position of historians who claim that African traditional political systems were autocratic and authoritarian. V. G. Simiyu argues for this position on two main grounds (7). First, according to Simiyu, African political structures were so geared to gerontocracy that recruitment into the leadership class was exclusive to members of royalty and participation limited to the immediate members of the ruling aristocracy. Second, the rules of procedure were such as to strengthen the authoritarian tendencies of despotic leaders rather than serve as a check against their excesses. Simiyu thus rejects the view that traditional African systems were a model of democracy. Nor does he accept the claim to "egalitarianism" which Julius Nyerere attributes to these societies.

Simiyu's point are valid, but not entirely. Insofar as political recruitment and participation were concerned, traditional African systems were hardly democratic. But the claim that there were no checks against the excesses of African rulers has no historical support. Powerful though African monarchs were, their powers were circumscribed by the customs and usages of their kingdoms. The kings were expected to work within a structure characterized by inhibitions and social control. In fact, the social system prescribed elaborate and explicit rules of behaviour and a king had to forfeit the right to rule if his conduct fell below expectation.

Besides, several African societies did not operate a centralised political system. Several cultures were segmented and in such societies power was collectively shared and administered by many, operating within a council of elders. And although the judicial, political and ecclesiastical powers of the society might be vested in such a council, the tendency towards tyranny was forestalled by the representativeness and pluralism of its members. That is why N. Sithole believes that some African political systems operated on the principle of popular choice and why he calls it "bad history and bad civics to say that Africans never had democracy until the coming of the white man to Africa" (8).

There is abundant anthropological evidence to support the claim that where the threat of tyranny existed or where a ruler abused his power and authority, the people had the residual right to remove him. In other words, a king's right to rule was questioned by the people the moment he appeared to have desecrated his position of honour. As Fortes and Evans-Pritchard put it: "An African ruler is not to his people merely a person who can enforce his will on them. He is the axis of their political relations, the symbol of their unity and exclusiveness, and the embodiment of their essential values" (9). Any ruler, therefore, who failed as the custodian of the communal values was expected to abdicate, go into exile or even commit suicide. On the part of the citizens, the obligation to conform was automatic once the ruler's conduct was beyond question. That way, a balance was struck between leadership and followership in keeping with the norms of the community, thereby promoting the common good.

Religion, perhaps, remains one area of the cultural confrontation between Africa and the West that says a lot about social conflict. The Christian religion, as we hinted earlier, came to Africa as part of a whole package. The other parts of that package, as Robin Horton, rightly observes, were forces to reckon with and therefore constituted "a favourable climate for the conversion" of Africans from their indigenous religions. (10). It is, therefore, difficult to say in clear terms whether Christianity was accepted on its own merit or simply as an appendage to the other colonial imports.

Christianity and traditional African religions, we could say, are religions according to the *Oxford Dictionary* which defines religion as the "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control over his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship". But how truly does this definition represent the two forms of religion?

Obviously, the "higher unseen power" in the Christian religion is God, whose first attribute, according to Tillich, is that of a supernatural being, an attribute that "separates God as a being, the highest being from other beings, alongside and above which he has his existence." (11). By his attribute, God's supernaturalism cuts Him off from men and other beings. It is important to note that there are other conceptions of God, mostly derived from the scriptures, which tend to dissolve this barricade between Him and Man. None, however, challenges God's attributes as a Being that is all-powerful, all-knowing and perfectly good.

In conceptual terms, one would want to know the extent to which the Christian God shares the above attributes with God as conceived in traditional Africa. On this, there is even a much more basic controversy about whether the concept of a High God exists in traditional religion or by Christian superimposition. Writers such as Idowu (12) and Mbiti (13) claim that there is evidence from available literature to show that African societies have always had a notion of a Supreme God identical in many respects with the Christian God.

More recently, however, P'Bitek swore that Africans do not have the concept of the High God. To say that "African peoples knew of the Christian God long before the missionaries told them about it", argues P'Bitek, "is simply to robe our deities in hellenic garments" (14). He

attributes this misconception to the unfortunate belief by some African scholars that the only way of making Africans occupy a status of dignity like other men is to show them to be religiously literate, to know the God which "all Men" know. P'Bitek's position is supported by the views of many other African thinkers who argue that African Gods are as many as the roles they have to play.

Such a realization was bound to invite frustration which, I think, helps us to explain what Firth describes in his schema as a move from acceptance to rejection. In a sense, it could be said that Africans realized, belatedly though, the powerlessness of the Christian God in matters of this world. And, as it were, it was this realization that provided them with a powerful ground for questioning the reality of the doctrines of Christianity. What they could not understand was why, unlike their deities, the Christian God did not appear to be concerned with their material welfare, at any rate, not visibly.

It is possible, though, to explain the change in the attitude of Africans to Western religion as a result of the gradual development of the intellectual consciousness of the people. What this means is that the people's initial acceptance of Christianity was due to an uncritical mentality presumed to have pervaded traditional African cultures. According to this claim, it was only when Western education woke Africans up out of their intellectual slumber that they saw the contradictions and so had to reject what had earlier been accepted. This argument, I think, is difficult to sustain.

Social anthropologists of different persuasions have exaggerated the uncritical character of African peoples. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, for instance, says of the Azande of Southern Sudan that these peoples have no theoretical interest in a lot of subjects and so do not perceive the contradictions which they, Europeans, perceive. "The Azande do not press beliefs until they yield contradictions; and they show no theoretical interest if they are pressed on them by outsiders" (15). From this, one could almost imagine the contrast in Evans-Pritchard's mind; a Western culture in which every individual devotes his life-time to the resolution of contradictory beliefs or values. The truth, of course, is that there is no such human society. In fact, people generally live with and are little perturbed by contradictions as long as they can manage to keep the contradictions more or less insulated from one another.

The switch by Africans from acceptance to rejection of certain aspects of Western culture cannot therefore be explained in terms of the absence at one time and presence at the other of some special intellectual ability for detecting theoretical contradictions. I suggest that a very much more crucial reason is that these people accept ideas which yield practical rewards and reject those which do not. And each idea has to be tested to arrive at a decision. That test, understandably, takes as much time as it took Africans to change their attitude towards certain imposed items of European cultures.

Another point very much related to the presumed non-critical mentality of Africans is the claim that these people perceive the passage of time as something deleterious. What it means is that the past always appears to Africans better than whatever the future can offer. Examples

often cited to support this claim include several rituals of recreation which are intended to annul the passage of time. In Western Sudan and in most societies along the West African coast, rituals are held to restore things as they were in the good old days (16). This supposedly peculiar African perception is then contrasted with that of science-oriented Westerners who see the past not always as good as what the future has to offer. This attitude, according to the claim, is tied to the progressive character of science. In Lord C. P. Snow's words, all scientists have "the future in their bones". (17). In other words, the scientist yearns for the future and tries frantically to hurry up time while the traditional African thinker is busy trying to annul the passage of time.

Again, the contrast is misleading. There is no doubt that scientists everywhere have great faith in progress. Yet, the truth is that orthodox science is as conservative as any other area of human endeavour. Thomas Kuhl has shown this clearly. Much as the scientist wants to build on an existing body of knowledge by seeking to break new grounds, he is always cautious not to discard what he has, at any rate, not before he finds a replacement. Besides, it is doubtful if this attitude to the passage of time is an African peculiarity. Every culture has its own share of conservative minds who tend to want to preserve things as they are. It is, therefore, more of a universal human trait than a peculiar feature of African cultures.

An important point to note is that a great deal of what passes for conflict in the cultural confrontation between Africa and the West arose out of plain misconception. Take, for instance, the general presumption that moral standards are universal and that what is wrong in one society remains so in another. This may be true, but only in an ideal world. Besides, even if all cultures were to accept uniform moral standards, the modes of seeking to attain such ideas would still differ from one culture to another. More important, no moral system operates in isolation from the peculiar social customs, institutions and behavioural norms of a given society. It follows, therefore, that there are bound to be problems in any attempt to transplant the moral standards of one culture into another.

One example will suffice as an illustration of the kind of incongruity I have in mind about cross-cultural value exchange. The introduction of Western bureaucratic systems into Africa during the colonial era was accompanied by a corresponding set of official norms and expectations in public life. For instance, probity in public office demanded objectivity and absolute impartiality from an officer in the performance of his duties. Yet, in most of the African cultures where these codes were expected to operate, the extended family structure was such as to blur the distinction between a man's official commitment and his obligation to members of his family, the clan or ethnic group to which he belonged.

Under such circumstances, certain bureaucratic ethics such as the rule against nepotism surely posed an irreconcilable conflict of duty in the minds of many Africans. That sort of conflict still exists today even in modern Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, a corrupt officer who embezzles public funds easily finds defence among his kinsmen insofar as a part of the embezzled funds is utilized to improve their lot. That way, what a Westerner would regard as a serious violation is, in most African situations, a justified act of sharing the wealth that

belongs to the entire society. In fact, certain other forms of corruption have, quite often, been explained as integral parts of the people's customs, such as, for instance, bribery whose acronym of "kola" is a derivation from kola-nut which by tradition used to be an acceptable form of bribe. The explanation is that in certain African cultures, custom demands that a person seeking favour, say from a chief or king, has to offer some gift before he can get a hearing. The point, I suppose, has been sufficiently made, namely that conduct which may appear morally outrageous in some cultures, need not be so perceived in others.

In the various areas of confrontation between the West and Africa, a great deal of cultural fusion has occurred. Most of it is determined by modern values attached to development. Science and technology are the major vehicles of this growing tendency towards cultural pluralism. No doubt, the universality of the principles of science now commands almost total acceptance. In spite, however, of this universal appeal, the confrontation of Western science with the traditional African mode of thought is producing a unique synthesis of the two. Thus in certain areas of the applied sciences such as medicine, the African belief in the supernatural is blended with the curative principles of modern medicine (18). This kind of intermix is even more glaring in African religious practices. Spiritual churches and faith healing, now the vogue in many African societies have one foot in traditional religious beliefs and the other in orthodox Christianity (19). In other aspects of culture, such as economic and political arrangements, the growing tendency is to fabricate institutional forms that bear a unique African character.

As the various communities of the world become exposed to one another, the kind of culture blending discussed above will continue to take place. I suggest that in the culture contact between Africa and the West, utilitarian considerations have been the major determinants of which cultural item to accept and which to reject. Agreed, a people's resistance to foreign cultures may be prompted by certain perceived intellectual contradictions. But, as we noted earlier, human beings in general can manage certain contradictions as long as they do not constitute an obstacle to the pursuit of their needs and insofar as their material welfare is secure.

In the confrontation between the West and Africa, there is no doubt that the cultures of the former have emerged as dominant partners. Yet, the values attached to the new cultures need some critical reading. In spite of the successes of modern science and technology, the future of the modern world has become more and more uncertain. Ecological disasters, pollution, ozone depletion, invention of deadly weapons, etc. are now some of the new worries of the Western world. Culturally, the introduction of modern social institutions and artificial state structures have left most Western communities more individualistic and less humane. It is almost impossible to accept Western cultures and patterns of development without accepting their dangerous components.

Today, the African faces an unpleasant dilemma; he either adopts modern development, its values and dangers or he takes the path of retracing his cultural roots at the expense of slowing down his developmental tempo and progress. What, then, is the way out? First, is

the realization that social change in any society is both an inevitable process and one that it is humanly impossible to stall. Second, change always results in social stress which can only be absolved by creating a harmonious synthesis between the old and the new. The resultant synthesis may be an entirely new product with its own character. In contemporary Africa, the cultures emerging out of the people's contact with the West are a blend, partially removed from their indigenous roots and yet some distance from those of the West to which they aspire.

In projecting future scenarios for Africa, Firth's schema of change should provide some guide. Between the West and Africa, cultural confrontation was initially marked by certain contradictions which led the receiving cultures into an outright rejection of some aspects and a reconciliation with others. The tail-end of the process also involves growing hostility against imported cultures. That, at least, has been evident from the various programmes of cultural revival in post-independent African states. The imperatives of modern development, particularly its material attractions, were significant in weakening attempts at cultural resistance.

Of the possible scenarios, cultural globalization through assimilation and adaptations appears already to be in the making. The primary determinants of this process are material considerations and such other practical effects favourable to human survival.

This is already evident from the attitude of Africans to Western science and technology which, in spite of their infinite number of contradictions have received a comparably more favourable response than other Western imports. The important point to note here is that human beings everywhere have a tremendous capacity for cultural adaptation. That ability increases where a change carries the promise of material reward and is therefore capable of promoting man's struggle for survival. Like individuals, cultures too have limitless potential for absorbing situations of conflict, no matter how deep. No doubt, a radical change in any culture leads to psychological and social stresses. But soon after the initial shock, the process of adjustment sets in, reducing what may appear outrageous to a commonplace phenomenon. That way, societies all over the world have been able to expand their social horizon in a process that is beginning to blur cultural boundaries.

Politically, the globalization process became most noticeable in recent times through the wave of political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. African nations are also part of this wave of political changes with the upsurge of pro-democracy movements in countries such as Zaire, Cameroon, Togo, the Republic of Niger, Congo, Ivory Coast, etc. In other parts of Africa where the pro-democratic tempo is less dramatic, it has taken the subtle but open form of aversion to military dictatorship or a rejection of the one-party system in preference of multi-party democracy, as for instance in Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique and other African nations.

As we noted earlier, traditional political systems in Africa were dictatorial in style. That past has often been used by some contemporary African leaders as a justification of their

dictatorial tendencies, claiming that the patterns of Western democratic institutions which involve formal opposition were never part of the African political heritage. The reality of the existing situation is that the cultural support of this argument is overridden by economic considerations. The economic superiority of the West over Africa serves as a weapon for the former to impose its values and institutions. Already, some Western nations and financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, have started to insist on democratic reforms as a precondition for granting aid to needy economies, most of them in Africa. Those that fail to comply run the risk of internal social unrest.

In spite, however, of the obvious trends towards cultural globalization, there are powerful constraints tied to what I referred to earlier as the *core* elements of culture. True, the contact between the West and Africa has produced a certain degree of cultural assimilation. Yet, the possibility of total integration appears unrealistic. The future scenario which, I think, has a greater possibility is that the receiving cultures of Africa will continue to retain their marks of identity while borrowing those foreign elements considered to be of irresistible value.

For the West and a great many of the Western educated elite in Africa, everything good is to be said of the emerging process of cultural pluralization. Yet, the value of every culture is better perceived through the eyes of the insiders than from outside. From the perception of most traditional Africans, the most distinct, most cherished aspects of their cultures are not exchangeable for modern development, no matter what the material advantages are. One aspect of culture not likely to be significantly altered by alien innovations is the world-view of a people, more specifically their mode of perceiving reality.

As I hinted earlier, the introduction of the Christian religion into Africa no doubt had a certain impact on the people's way of life. Yet, Christianity has not been successful in uprooting the essential tenets of African religious thinking. The same may be said in other core areas such as the African perception of human relations and the place of man in society which has remained almost intact despite the exposure of these societies to the harsh individualism that characterizes the capitalist system. Nor have Western ideas and institutions had a significant effect on the core values of African cultures in relation to the people's conception of the good life. Whichever scenario we project, certain core elements of African cultures will continue to be sustained in spite of their conflict with elements of Western cultures. The basic issue then is that of what to do to minimize such areas of cultural conflict.

As the problems of Western patterns of development multiply, one suggestion has been that African cultures should retrace their past and revive those cultural elements swept away by modernity. In theory such a suggestion may sound plausible. But the truth, of course, is that recreating the past of a culture is an almost impossible venture, particularly in an era of increasing communication that is breaking down all social barriers. More important, once new ideas, values, tastes and ways of doing things have been introduced into any culture, they are difficult to discard. That, I believe, is why the idea of intermediate technology, once suggested as an alternative to Western development, has not moved much beyond an idea.

Modern Africa is in a cultural crisis, the manifest signs of which are social and political instability. The root of the crisis is traceable to the continent's colonial experience and the various changes introduced by Western cultures. Peter Ekeh rightly characterizes the experience as comparable to the industrial revolution in England and to the French revolution.

In addition to the disparate activities of the colonizers and the colonized, and in addition to the... colonial situation, colonialism may be considered as a *social movement* of epochal dimensions whose enduring significance beyond the life-span of the colonial situation lies in the social formations, developed from the volcano-sized social changes provoked into existence by the confrontations, contradictions and incompatibilities in the colonial situation (20).

Among the profound changes which Ekeh has in mind are: (i) the "transformed indigenous social structures" such as the village, community, chieftancy and kinship; (ii) "migrated social structures" which include the institutions of modern state apparatus like legislatures, law courts, bureaucracy, universities, political parties and the military, all imported wholesale from the metropolitan countries and (iii) "emergent social structures" which were neither indigenous nor migrant, but merged to meet societal needs of the new colonial environment, eg. tribalism and ethnicity. Colonialism came therefore with new and artificial state structures that were strange to diverse and sometimes incompatible groups of people.

In addition, it thrust Africa into the world capitalist system dominated by metropolitan forces that operate with harsh individualism, a new world in which Africans were ill-equipped to compete. And as a result, the continent is now enmeshed in a predicament marked by underdevelopment, fragile state structures and the crisis of legitimacy.

Although not every colonial importation was socially objectionable, several of them were. However, the greatest error of the colonial administrators was to think that they could replace every item of African culture by some Western counterpart, or worse still, that they could replace them wholesale. And in so doing, a great deal of damage was done to the core areas of these cultures.

As the contact between Africa and the West continues, damage is still being done to post-colonial African cultures. Not only are cultures of the West dominant partners in this interaction, some Western societies appear eager to create a world culture out of theirs. The futility of these efforts is evident from the rising wave of cultural resistance among the receiving cultures of Africa. And it proves an important social fact, namely that the core elements of different cultures do not mix without a crisis. The only path, therefore, towards a harmonious co-existence, is not to interfere with such items.

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CHANGEMENT SOCIAL ET PROCESSUS CULTURELS EN AFRIQUE: TENDANCES ET PERSPECTIVES

par Elikia M'Bokolo (*)

Rares sont les domaines dans lesquels les élites politiques et intellectuelles africaines ont autant écrit que sur la culture. Cette inflation des discours (qu'ils soient de légitimation, de fondation, de critique ou de réflexion) remonte bien au-delà de la période des indépendances et tranche évidemment avec la médiocrité générale des performances en matière économique, politique ou encore scientifique. Elle n'empêche pas cependant qu'une nouvelle problématique de la culture soit nécessaire en Afrique et à propos de l'Afrique.

Jusqu'à présent, plusieurs conceptions de la culture ont coexisté en Afrique ou à propos de l'Afrique et l'un des nombreux problèmes intellectuels que pose ce continent est que la nature et les implications de cette coexistence sont rarement explicitées. Depuis les idéologies de la négritude (E. W. Blyden au XIX^e siècle, L. S. Senghor et A. Césaire au XX^e) et les théoriciens les plus audacieux de la lutte pour l'indépendance (A. Cabral en particulier), une sorte de consensus veut que "la culture" soit à tous points de vue importante dans le cas de l'Afrique, qu'il s'agisse d'affirmer sa personnalité, d'élaborer des modes originaux de gestion du politique, de fonder des voies de développement spécifiques ou encore de concevoir des rapports sociaux d'un type nouveau.

I. DISCOURS ET PRATIQUES DE LA CULTURE EN AFRIQUE

Or, il n'est pas du tout certain qu'en avançant le mot de "culture" tous parlent absolument de la même chose. Je distinguerais volontiers trois approches différentes, qui impliquent des pratiques de la culture et des politiques culturelles très éloignées les unes des autres.

A. La conception "muséale" de la culture

L'approche habituelle, qu'on pourrait qualifier de conception muséale de la culture, se caractérise par de très sérieuses ambiguïtés.

Ses fondements théoriques, dans la bouche ou sous la plume des Africains, renvoient à une série de propositions et à un système d'affirmations qu'on peut articuler de la manière suivante: les Africains aussi ont une culture, qui compense largement les défauts de réussite

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dans les domaines économique et technique et qui doit leur valoir la reconnaissance comme hommes de la part du reste de l'humanité; le caractère particulièrement élaboré de cette culture et ses multiples réalisations permettent à l'Afrique de se présenter très honorablement au "rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir" qui fondera la "civilisation de l'universel" de demain; l'Occident, dans son hégémonisme colonialiste et triomphaliste d'hier et dans celui, plus subtil, mais non moins dangereux, d'aujourd'hui, a pillé sans vergogne et continue de piller les trésors culturels de l'Afrique tout en niant la richesse de ceux-ci. La tâche de l'Afrique est donc de montrer par tous les moyens disponibles et de faire RECONNAITRE les ressources, les splendeurs et l'originalité de sa culture, d'en récupérer et d'en rapatrier les œuvres les plus représentatives confisquées injustement par les Occidentaux, de promouvoir les talents des créateurs d'aujourd'hui.

Cette approche a trouvé sa manifestation la plus spectaculaire et la plus brillante avec le Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres organisé à Dakar en 1966, dont le succès a suscité de nombreuses tentatives d'imitation, la dernière en date étant un Festival, au nom tout à fait identique, prévu pour avoir lieu à Kinshasa en 1994.

C'est elle aussi qui s'exprime par la création, partout en Afrique, de musées nationaux ou à vocation régionale, financés par les Etats ou par les organismes internationaux.

Il ne saurait être question de remettre ici en cause les effets positifs de ces initiatives. Mais l'on ne peut s'empêcher de s'interroger sur les origines intellectuelles de cette conception et sur les permanences éventuelles de certains a priori qui l'ont fait naître. En effet, cette conception a vu le jour en Occident et parmi les Occidentaux, avant d'être réappropriée par les élites africaines. Or, en Occident, elle se rattachait à une double vision de l'Afrique, à la fois positive (l'Afrique aussi peut créer des œuvres de valeur universelle, susceptible d'influencer des créateurs occidentaux) et négative (elle ne peut créer que des œuvres culturelles, étant par excellence, selon la formule inventée par Léopold S. Senghor, le continent de l'émotion et du cœur, à l'opposé de l'Occident, qui aurait hérité de la "raison hellène"). Il n'est pas impossible que cette conception subsiste aujourd'hui chez ceux qui, poussés essentiellement par des considérations mercantiles, sont devenus les promoteurs efficaces et heureux des artistes africains qui émigrent dans les pays du nord.

B. Nationalisme et culture

L'approche nationalitaire de la culture représente une deuxième conception, qui n'est pas sans ombre, ni sans danger.

Du point de vue théorique, elle se rattache à la première approche, dont elle reprend la plupart des présupposés. Mais elle s'en différencie par ses références géographiques: l'horizon continental (l'Afrique), voire "racial" (les peuples nègres), auquel la première approche renvoie, est ici abandonné au profit du cadre territorial correspondant aux Etats issus de la colonisation. Si la première approche est par excellence celle des "intellectuels",

celle-ci est plutôt celle des "politiques". Cette particularité lui permet de s'inscrire matériellement et symboliquement dans la réalité, mais elle s'accompagne aussi d'un certain nombre d'effets pernicioeux.

Cette approche se caractérise en effet par une vision trop politique, voire politicienne, de la culture et par un rapport à la culture, à la fois naïvement et mécaniquement utilitariste, mais aussi volontariste et autoritaire. Partant du constat que les Etats issus de la colonisation ne constituaient pas des "nations" et qu'aucune politique de modernisation et de progrès ne pouvait réussir tant que ces Etats ne seraient pas devenus des nations, les dirigeants politiques africains ont assigné à la culture la fonction de susciter et de soutenir le sentiment national et la mission de devenir le "ciment idéologique" des nouvelles nations. Cet usage de la culture au service d'une politique implique évidemment une certaine vision de la culture. Entre la conception élective de la nation, comme ensemble de citoyens jouissant de droits clairement définis et résolus à vivre ensemble, et la conception ethniciste de la nation, comme regroupement d'individus ayant en commun des caractéristiques biologiques ou culturelles qui les engagent les uns envers les autres, les idéologies contemporaines en Afrique ont constamment hésité, donnant souvent l'impression de pencher vers la seconde.

Dans la plupart des pays, la conception de la nation était (est?) chargée d'un jacobinisme certain: les cultures locales, les particularités ethniques apparaissaient comme autant d'obstacles sur la voie de l'unité nationale. Leur traitement a varié d'un pays à l'autre et parfois, à l'intérieur de chaque pays, selon les périodes et selon les responsables. Dans certains cas, les cultures locales ou certains de leurs aspects ont été "folklorisés", comme sous la colonisation: on leur permet de s'exprimer, de se donner en spectacle à certaines occasions; on les tolère, on les protège même, comme des survivances du passé, appelées à disparaître; mais elles ne sauraient participer des nouveaux mythes mobilisateurs. Dans d'autres cas, les pouvoirs laissent aux citoyens la faculté de recourir, dans leur vie personnelle, aux rites et rituels issus de la culture traditionnelle, à l'occasion des cycles de la vie, pour les besoins sanitaires ou religieux... Mais il est arrivé aussi que, sous couvert d'unité nationale, les cultures locales aient été combattues de manière ouverte ou insidieuse et que les pouvoirs, identifiés, à tort ou à raison, avec l'une des formations ethniques, aient tenté d'imposer comme "culture nationale" la culture de cette ethnie: ce fut, par exemple, le cas au Zaïre au plus fort de la politique du "retour" ou du "recours" à "l'authenticité africaine" pendant les années 1970.

C. Culture, société et devenir

L'approche qui se révèle comme la plus féconde, est une conception globale et dynamique de la culture telle que l'a élaborée notamment Denis Goulet dans le cadre du projet "Futures of Cultures" de l'UNESCO

Elle revient à considérer la culture non comme un assortiment d'artefacts matériels ou spirituels, mais comme un ensemble ou un système d'attitudes, de représentations et de

pratiques qui soudent des communautés vivantes et qui leur permettent de donner un sens à leur devenir. Dans cette approche, la culture ne renvoie pas aux seules élites: elle n'est pas seulement "ce qui reste quand on a tout oublié", pour reprendre une formule chère à Edouard Herriot, ni seulement le produit du travail de créateurs doués. Loin de se réduire à des objets destinés à être enfermés dans des bâtiments spécialisés (musées, bibliothèques, galeries...), loin de se résumer à des gestes et paroles venus du fond des âges et dont la valeur pour les gens d'aujourd'hui tient en grande partie à ce qu'ils ne les comprennent pas, la culture se présente comme partie intégrante de la vie actuelle; comme héritage vivant et réinterprétation permanente du passé; comme volonté d'être dans le monde présent, c.-à-d. d'inventer les ressources de tous ordres les plus adéquates pour promouvoir l'existence collective et individuelle; et, enfin, comme détermination à durer et comme projection de soi dans l'avenir.

Cette approche permet, en somme, de prendre la culture "par le bas", de restaurer les processus sociaux, d'identifier les acteurs et les lieux du changement social. Attentive au vrai mouvement social, c'est elle qui débusque le mieux et permettrait au besoin d'utiliser le plus efficacement les pratiques alternatives qui sont à l'œuvre dans nos sociétés.

Je me propose ici de sonder les pistes les plus fécondes dans cette perspective et de montrer la complexité stimulante des faits sociaux qu'elle aide à mettre en lumière dans le contexte africain.

II. UNE AFRIQUE OU PLUSIEURS AFRIQUE ?

On ne retiendra ici que les deux questions les plus en rapport avec notre propos: celle d'abord du concept d'"Afrique", dont les différentes acceptions renvoient à des moments, à des possibilités historiques, à des groupes sociaux et à des stratégies très contrastés; et, d'autre part, celle, dans notre monde que beaucoup affirment être devenu "un village planétaire", de ses rapports historiques avec les autres grands ensembles géographiques, politico-économiques et culturels.

A. L'Afrique une

La thèse de l'"unité" culturelle de l'Afrique a ses partisans aussi nombreux et aussi résolus que ceux qui croient plutôt à la pluralité des Afriques. Si on laisse de côté les querelles d'école pour s'attacher aux mouvements de la vie sociale, il apparaît clairement que, selon le moment ou le lieu d'où l'on parle, chacune de ces thèses peut être vraie, c.-à-d. correspondre à la perception et aux aspirations des acteurs sociaux et à des espaces d'efficacité.

La vision unitaire de l'Afrique est d'abord liée intellectuellement et politiquement au paradigme "tradition et modernité".

Historiquement datée, elle a été construite, mais en partie seulement, dans l'Occident européen où elle a pris, relativement tard, le relais du couple antithétique "sauvagerie et

civilisation". Ce dernier couple, pour s'en tenir aux époques (XIX^e et XX^e siècles) qui ont un sens pour la mémoire des hommes d'aujourd'hui, a d'abord servi à légitimer, auprès des opinions publiques européennes, la colonisation en tant qu'entreprise de l'Europe "civilisée" vis-à-vis de l'Afrique "sauvage" et à atténuer la rivalité entre les Etats européens dans leur course au clocher en Afrique, en exaltant une sorte de croisade collective des "races supérieures". Une fois la conquête coloniale passée et devant les nouvelles nécessités de "la mise en valeur" économique, le paradigme "tradition et modernité" s'est imposée pour justifier aussi bien la pérennité de la colonisation que les méthodes souvent expéditives d'exploitation économique. L'ethnologie, science éminemment coloniale, mais en même temps sympathique à l'égard de l'objet étudié, a fourni tout l'appareil théorique du paradigme.

Bon gré, mal gré, consciemment ou non, les élites africaines se sont réappropriées cette vision pour des raisons qu'il est aujourd'hui facile de comprendre: elles ont été formées à l'école de l'Occident; une partie de leur idéologie leur est venue aussi des Noirs de la diaspora (Etats-Unis d'Amérique et Caraïbes) qui, en raison de leur expérience propre et de leurs aspirations, avaient tout intérêt à se représenter l'"Afrique mère" comme unie.

Il ne faut pas négliger la portée politique actuelle de cette vision. C'est au nom du paradigme "tradition-modernité" que les autorités coloniales se sont partout lancées dans les politiques de modernisation autoritaire.

A leur tour, les élites politiques installées au pouvoir au lendemain des indépendances ont conçu, dans leur très grande majorité, le même type de "modernisation", importée de l'étranger et imposée d'en haut sur les masses en majorité rurales prétendument restées "traditionnelles". Assez paradoxalement, l'échec, aujourd'hui consommé, de la plupart de ces politiques, loin de remettre en cause cette vision, renforce chez certains l'idée qu'il doit bien exister une Afrique, profondément enracinée dans sa tradition et refusant, à la fois pour survivre et pour préserver son identité, toute tentative d'occidentalisation.

B. L'Afrique plurielle

Mais, l'Afrique vécue et pratiquée au quotidien, telle que la perçoivent aussi bien les acteurs locaux que les observateurs étrangers, est plus souvent une Afrique plurielle qu'une Afrique unique. Comme en "Amérique latine", les contraintes géographiques n'y sont pas pour rien, dans un continent à la fois immense, massif, parsemé de nombreuses barrières naturelles. Les expériences politiques, économiques et intellectuelles ont, de leur côté, façonné des communautés distinctes, où les choses de la vie prennent sens à partir de références multiples et très variables.

1. Les faits linguistiques

Les langues sont une bonne illustration de cet état de fait. Les langues officielles, qui servent notamment à la formation des élites et des cadres de l'Etat et de l'économie, sont toujours les

langues des anciens colonisateurs dont l'un des effets est de maintenir des cloisons souvent étanches entre les pays africains et de rendre, dans de nombreux domaines, les relations "nord- sud", avec les anciennes puissances coloniales, relativement plus aisées que les relations "sud-sud", entre pays africains. Les langues que les Etats ont proclamées comme "nationales" présentent très souvent l'avantage d'être transfrontalières, beaucoup d'entre elles étant des langues véhiculaires. Mais, pour leurs besoins quotidiens, souvent en milieu rural, les gens continuent d'utiliser des langues vernaculaires dont l'aire de diffusion est presque toujours très restreinte.

2. Les phénomènes religieux

Les religions, dont on mesure aujourd'hui la vitalité dans le contexte de la transition démocratique que connaissent de nombreux pays, offrent d'autres lignes de démarcation.

Certes, "l'animisme" constitue le fonds commun de toutes les sociétés africaines: il demeure partout vivant et connaît même parfois, en relation avec la crise économique et l'insécurité politique, un regain inattendu. Mais, ici encore, les expériences individuelles les plus fortes et les solidarités les plus actives renvoient souvent à des religions à tendance exclusiviste, d'importation ancienne ou récente: judaïsme, christianisme et Islam.

Il existe ainsi: une ou deux Afriques de l'Islam, le long du Sahel et de l'Océan indien, dont les références et la sensibilité renvoient plus souvent à La Mecque, voire à l'Afrique du nord, en tout cas au monde musulman, plus qu'au reste du continent noir; une Afrique résiduelle du judaïsme, basée en Ethiopie, dont on a pu constater récemment les relations privilégiées avec l'Etat d'Israël au moment du "rapatriement" des fallachas éthiopiens vers l'Etat hébreu; plusieurs Afriques du christianisme, où la cohabitation entre les différentes dénominations est loin d'être harmonieuse.

En fait, la figure quadriforme de l'Afrique en termes religieux ("animisme", judaïsme, christianisme et islam) n'est qu'une apparence, car chacune de ces religions est à son tour subdivisée en de formes multiples et contrastées selon l'angle (chronologique, rituel, dogmatique...) dans lequel on la prend.

3. Les problèmes du développement

L'économie enfin constitue à l'évidence un dernier facteur de différenciation. Les experts et les spécialistes le savent, habitués qu'ils sont à classer les pays africains, comme les autres "pays en développement", en P.M.A., pays pétroliers, "pays intermédiaires"..., à en établir les profils, à en sonder les problèmes et à en scruter les perspectives. Mais l'homme du peuple aussi connaît ces inégalités de croissance et de développement, cherche à ne pas en être la victime désignée et a appris à en tirer un relatif profit. Cette conscience aiguë de l'inégalité économique entre pays africains se voit à de multiples signes tels que les réseaux d'émigration, constitués parfois depuis longtemps, en partance des pays les plus pauvres

(Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique...) les pays les plus riches ou réputés tels (Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Nigéria, Afrique du sud, Kenya...): on sait que, dans les pays d'accueil comme dans les pays d'origine, ces réseaux d'émigration constituent l'un des laboratoires les plus actifs des processus sociaux et culturels.

C. Le visage de l'Afrique combattante

Les Africains en lutte ont aussi élaboré, dans toutes les phases historiques connues de ce long combat, leur(s) propre(s) image(s) de l'Afrique. Nous devons à cette intense activité politico-intellectuelle en gros trois figures de l'Afrique: l'Afrique comme passé; l'Afrique comme projet; l'Afrique comme histoire.

La figure de l'Afrique comme passé, forgée d'abord au plus fort de la lutte contre la traite des Noirs et contre l'esclavage, a trouvé ses premiers artisans parmi les intellectuels d'origine africaine en Amérique du Nord et dans les Caraïbes. Elle s'est ensuite épanouie, au cours des cent dernières années, sous la plume d'historiens et de philosophes de l'histoire éminents tels qu'Anténor Firmin, Edward W. Blyden et, bien sûr, Cheikh Anta Diop. Ceux-ci ont d'abord cherché à établir "l'antériorité des civilisations nègres" sur les autres civilisations connues et le rôle de l'Afrique comme foyer de civilisation dont auraient bénéficié tour à tour les mondes hellénique et romain et l'Occident européen. On voit bien que, dans cette perspective, la réflexion historique est le noyau dur de l'activité culturelle et que celle-ci est l'arme privilégiée dans la lutte pour la reconnaissance, à l'échelle internationale, des droits des peuples africains. Cette Afrique historiquement construite est évidemment une.

La figure de l'Afrique comme projet s'est façonnée plus tard que la première et nous en voyons les avatars jusqu'à ce jour. Cette figure n'est pas sans rapport avec le passé. Partant de l'idée que l'Afrique a été prospère et puissante autrefois tant qu'elle s'est trouvée unie, on proclamait que sa renaissance après la longue nuit coloniale passerait nécessairement par la restauration de son unité. Le thème de l'unité africaine ne doit pas seulement être rattaché au panafricanisme militant et aux contorsions politiques de l'O.U.A.. Il faut souligner aussi que, depuis plus de trois décennies, il nourrit une intense production culturelle de la part de créateurs autonomes, comme ces nombreux musiciens qui, de Joseph Kabasele à Pierre Akendengue, en passant par Myriam Makeba et Abeti Masikini, ont fait de l'Afrique unie le motif central de plusieurs chansons à succès.

Quant à l'Afrique comme histoire, c'est-à-dire comme mouvement continu et comme processus en interaction avec d'autres espaces géographiques, politiques et culturels, la perception que les Africains s'en font est loin d'être homogène. Le problème posé n'est pas seulement intellectuel (comment interpréter le mouvement historique en Afrique?); il est aussi, dans la meilleure acception de ce mot, politique (comment tirer le meilleur parti de la connaissance du mouvement historique en Afrique pour la solution des problèmes d'aujourd'hui?).

L'une des questions posées est celle de la décadence. Si l'Afrique a été puissante et prospère autrefois, comment expliquer sa situation d'aujourd'hui? Est-elle en décadence et, si oui, quelles en sont les causes et comment en partager les responsabilités? Beaucoup, derrière l'historien nigérian Ade J.F. Ajayi, contestent que l'Afrique soit tombée dans une quelconque décadence: sa vitalité serait restée entière tout au long de l'histoire; la colonisation elle-même ne serait qu'un "épisode", une sorte de "parenthèse" après laquelle le continent noir, ayant retrouvé la maîtrise de son destin, pourrait renouer avec cette vitalité passée. Pour d'autres, au contraire, la décadence, commencée il y a trois cents ou quatre cents ans, se poursuivrait sous nos yeux; les responsabilités sont claires: c'est "l'Europe (qui) a sous-développé l'Afrique".

Une autre question concerne l'usage éventuel qu'il y a lieu de faire du passé: "table rase", "recours", synthèse critique avec d'autres apports? Jusqu'à une époque très récente, parmi les dirigeants et les élites d'Afrique, la majorité donnait ses faveurs, avec plus ou moins de sincérité et de ferveur, à une approche positive du passé. L'une des idéologies les plus séduisantes de l'Afrique Indépendante prétendait construire le "socialisme africain" sur les pratiques et les valeurs de solidarité de "l'Afrique traditionnelle". Dans un genre tout à fait différent, l'une des idéologies les plus curieuses du dernier quart de siècle africain a cherché à justifier et à légitimer l'instauration d'une véritable autocratie et de tous les abus du patrimonialisme par le "recours" à "l'authenticité" des sociétés africaines traditionnelles.

Entre ces deux extrêmes, les régimes réputés "modernistes", comme celui de la Côte d'Ivoire, n'ont pas répugné à puiser un surcroît de force dans les symboles, les valeurs et les insignes du passé en exploitant au maximum l'idéologie du "père fondateur de la nation" dont Harris Memel Fote a montré récemment les connexions avec le mythe du "héros fondateur" de lignage, de village ou de royaume.

Ce dont ces multiples références au passé attestent, ce n'est pas seulement l'habileté politique et intellectuelle des dirigeants africains; c'est aussi, au sein des sociétés africaines, une prégnance des traditions, au niveau des représentations ou à celui des réalités vécues, tellement forte que les élites se sentent, bon gré mal gré, tenues de s'y référer.

III. L'AFRIQUE ET LES AUTRES: UN CONTINENT OUVERT

Les réflexions énoncées ci-dessus, sur l'unicité ou la diversité de l'Afrique, ont constamment fait intervenir un acteur important qu'il convient maintenant de considérer en lui-même: le monde extérieur. Selon une théorie encore en vogue auprès de ceux qui, pour des raisons très différentes, proclament l'irréductibilité absolue, positive pour les uns, négative pour les autres, du continent noir, l'Afrique se serait ou aurait été, jusqu'à l'intrusion coloniale, tenue à l'abri ou à l'écart des effets dévastateurs ou féconds des contacts avec les autres parties du monde. Or cette théorie, dont les implications intellectuelles, politiques et pratiques sont encore très actives aujourd'hui, ne résiste ni à l'observation des faits culturels sur le continent, ni aux acquis les mieux établis des sciences humaines.

La massivité de l'Afrique et le nombre des obstacles qui s'opposent à la pénétration du continent ont été les principaux arguments de cette théorie. C'est ne concevoir les choses qu'à partir du point de vue très étroit de l'Europe occidentale.

A. L'Afrique, l'Orient et le monde musulman

Car, bien avant l'établissement des contacts entre l'Europe et l'Afrique au XV^e siècle et parallèlement au développement de ces contacts, l'Afrique noire a entretenu des relations multiséculaires et étroites avec d'autres parties du monde, en particulier avec l'Afrique méditerranéenne, le Proche Orient et l'Asie orientale. Certes ces relations n'ont pas été sans ambiguïtés ni sans conflits.

A une époque où l'esclavage constituait le rapport social le plus courant entre les individus et entre les groupes, les Africains ont fourni au monde arabe, à la Perse, à l'Inde, voire aux pays d'Extrême-Orient, des contingents importants de main d'œuvre et de force armée servile. Très tôt aussi des formes actives et durables de colonisation ont vu le jour, en particulier à Madagascar, où s'installèrent les Indonésiens, les Arabes et les Noirs du continent et, d'autre part, sur la côte de l'Océan Indien, où s'établirent des ressortissants de Shiraz (Perse), de l'Arabie et, plus tard, de l'Inde. Le scénario fut à peu près le même dans les pays sahéliens quoique les contacts commerciaux avec les peuples méditerranéens, dont l'ancienneté est attestée par Hérodote, n'aient été suivis que tardivement et jusqu'à une époque récente, d'une manière d'ailleurs discontinue, par des phénomènes de peuplement, de conquête militaire (XI^e, XVI^e et XIX^e siècles) ou de colonisation.

Cette longue histoire a légué à une grande partie de l'Afrique son profil démographique actuel et certains de ses problèmes politiques structurels, principalement les problèmes liés aux querelles d'autochtonie et aux difficultés de coexistence entre les groupements issus de ces différentes phases de peuplement.

Cependant dans le domaine culturel, elle a donné naissance à une très féconde effervescence qui fait sentir ses effets dans les secteurs les plus divers: linguistique (avec, en particulier, les développements continus du swahili dans toute l'Afrique orientale et dans une bonne partie du Zaïre); religieux (avec des interactions sans cesse renouvelées entre des croyances animistes toujours vivaces et des pratiques musulmanes constamment tiraillées entre l'utile adaptation aux particularités des terroirs et la nécessaire fidélité aux fondements de l'orthodoxie).

Aujourd'hui encore, les élites intellectuelles et, plus encore, les dirigeants politiques, habitués à raisonner dans les dimensions d'une histoire courte et tout acquis aux mythes réconfortants du "Tiers Monde" issus de Bandoung, répugnent à évoquer sous tous ses aspects cette histoire, sous prétexte que cela risquerait de briser le front des "pays en développement" face aux puissances industrialisées. Mais on imagine volontiers ce qu'une telle histoire, saisie dans toutes ses dimensions, convenablement réactivée et équitablement partagée, peut apporter,

dans une stratégie de création et de renforcement d'une véritable coopération sud-sud entre l'Afrique et ses voisins du Maghreb, du Machrek et de l'Océan Indien.

B. L'Afrique et l'Occident

Quant à l'Occident européen, ses relations objectives avec l'Afrique n'ont été fondées, jusqu'il y a quelques décennies, que sur la violence, physique et directe, médiatisée et symbolique, dont les formes successives (traite et esclavage, conquêtes militaires et colonisation, exploitation économique et oppression culturelle, racisme et ségrégation) sont aujourd'hui bien connues.

C'est par le moyen de cette violence que l'Afrique a été intégrée dans le système global mondial à la place qu'elle occupe aujourd'hui. La logique dominante de cette intégration a été et reste de caractère économique, car, pour reprendre un concept de l'historien Fernand Braudel, le système mondial est d'abord "une économie-monde". N'ayant à aucun moment maîtrisé ce processus, dont les centres de décision et les bénéficiaires se trouvaient et se trouvent encore en Europe et dans les autres régions développées du monde, l'Afrique occupe une position dépendante dans le système mondial où elle a été spécialisée dans des fonctions spécifiques: d'abord celle, unique dans l'histoire du monde par sa durée (du XVI^e au XIX^e siècle) comme par son ampleur (les chiffres variant selon les écoles de 10 à 100 millions d'hommes et de femmes exportés), de fournisseur de la main d'œuvre servile dont le travail dans le Nouveau Monde a créé les richesses et les profits qui furent déterminants dans la naissance du capitalisme moderne; puis, à partir du siècle dernier, celle, partagée progressivement par les pays d'Amérique latine et d'Asie, de fournisseur de denrées agricoles et de matières premières industrielles.

Cependant cette approche essentiellement économique ne suffit pas à rendre compte de toutes les tendances que l'on constate aujourd'hui et qui importent dans les stratégies politiques et sociales, individuelles et collectives, de maintien, d'innovation ou de création de valeurs et de pratiques culturelles. Il faut en effet tenir compte aussi d'autres dimensions dans la longue histoire des relations entre l'Afrique et le monde aujourd'hui développé.

Il y a eu en particulier la religion chrétienne, dont l'introduction et la progression en Afrique ont constamment été marquées du sceau de l'ambiguïté. Religion des esclavagistes, des vainqueurs, des colonisateurs et aujourd'hui des riches, elle a sans cesse recélé un grand pouvoir de séduction. Imposée parfois par la force, l'adhésion à la religion chrétienne a été le plus souvent le résultat d'un calcul élaboré de la part des Africains: il fallait capter pour soi, sans nécessairement renoncer à ses croyances anciennes, les valeurs spirituelles sur lesquelles se fonde la réussite permanente des Blancs. Or, en devenant chrétiens, les Africains découvraient en même temps le fossé énorme séparant le "christianisme théorique", qui proclamait l'égalité des hommes devant Dieu, et le "christianisme réel", qui légitimait l'esclavage, la colonisation, la ségrégation et les inégalités de statut ou de condition. Très vite, les Africains ont ainsi découvert la nécessité, dont on constate partout aujourd'hui le

caractère fécond, d'adapter, de bricoler en quelque sorte, les apports extérieurs, qu'il s'agisse de religion, d'idéologie, de mode de développement et de gouvernement ou encore de modèle de société.

Les phénomènes d'identité appelleraient des remarques et des constatations identiques. Juste retour des choses, certains des Africains déportés dans le Nouveau Monde ou leurs descendants sont revenus en "Afrique-mère", surtout au cours du XIX^e siècle, au moment précis où l'Europe, ayant épuisé tous les profits de la traite esclavagiste et développant le capitalisme industriel, proclamait sa volonté de coloniser le continent noir. Les divisions de celui-ci en Etats concurrents, en ethnies jalouses de leur identité et en communautés rivales ou antagonistes risquait de faire et fit en définitive le jeu des ambitions colonialistes européennes. Le rôle de ces Noirs revenus des Amériques s'avéra décisif. Ce furent eux qui formèrent les Africains à l'idée que, face au monde extérieur et en considérant les intérêts globaux et à long terme du continent, l'Afrique était une et devait renforcer son unité de manière à la rendre agissante. Cette conscience de l'identité continentale, plus ou moins forte selon les régions, les classes sociales et les époques, est devenue l'une des caractéristiques majeures et l'un des ressorts les plus vigoureux de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

Disons enfin un mot sur l'émergence de l'individu et de l'individualisme.

Quoique nos connaissances en ce domaine soient encore très parcellaires, il semble bien que les sociétés africaines anciennes se caractérisaient par la primauté du groupe (lignage, famille, village...) sur l'individu.

Ce n'est pas pour nier l'existence de la notion d'individu ou la prise en compte de l'initiative individuelle: précisément, à l'origine de l'Etat, du village, de l'ethnie, il y a presque toujours une initiative et une prouesse d'un individu, le héros fondateur du groupe. Mais la plupart des formations sociales connues ne reposaient pas sur l'affirmation et l'exaltation de l'individu.

Les choses ont commencé à changer brutalement avec la traite. Par elle, l'individu est apparu d'abord comme valeur marchande, comme la marchandise par excellence: si l'esclavage a disparu, le développement de l'économie moderne et du salariat a généralisé l'éclatement de la société en individus autonomes, conçus et perçus principalement comme force de travail vénale. D'un autre côté, la nécessité de survivre dans le contexte légal de la traite et la compétition sociale générée par celle-ci et prolongée par les structures issues de la colonisation ont fait émerger l'individu comme acteur social central d'une société intégrant la mobilité comme valeur positive.

Cependant l'émergence de ces valeurs liées à l'individu n'a pas effacé, il s'en faut de beaucoup, les structures anciennes de groupe et les valeurs collectives qui leur étaient attachées et qui continuent de représenter, aux yeux d'une grande partie de la population, la forme idéale de société. On verra que la gestion de cette tension entre individualisme et valeurs communautaires constitue l'un des facteurs les plus féconds de l'innovation sociale et culturelle dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

Reste que, dans la conscience collective, ces relations de longue durée, à la fois forcées et spontanées, avec l'Occident ont laissé des deux côtés des attitudes où se mélangent la fascination et la peur. Il est nécessaire, dans une réflexion sur les tendances culturelles de notre monde, d'évoquer, même rapidement, ces attitudes, dont on se servira en conclusion pour esquisser des scénarios pour le futur.

Du côté de l'Occident et schématisant quelque peu, on peut retenir quatre attitudes.

Il y a d'abord celle qui nous vient en partie d'Homère et d'Hérodote et qu'a élaborée une longue lignée de penseurs. L'Afrique y apparaît comme un continent plus ou moins mythique, chargé de valeurs positives. Continent de l'innocence, de la vertu, de la sérénité, elle est le lieu où les dieux, lassés de leurs querelles et de l'ingratitude des hommes, vont se reposer et puiser en quelque sorte un surcroît de sagesse. Berceau des savoirs, elle a été l'institutrice des autres continents et pourrait redevenir l'ultime recours d'une humanité égarée dans les excès du matérialisme et aspirant à redécouvrir les valeurs de la spiritualité.

Dans "De la démocratie en Amérique" (1835), Alexis de Tocqueville nous offre la substance d'une deuxième attitude fondée sur la peur, celle-ci trouvant sa justification dans une histoire chargée d'antagonismes et de violences entre les "races" d'Afrique et d'Europe. "Ceux qui, écrit-il, espèrent que les Européens se confondront un jour avec les nègres me paraissent donc caresser une chimère (...). Jusqu'ici, partout où les blancs ont été les plus puissants, ils ont tenu les noirs dans l'avilissement et l'esclavage. Partout où les nègres ont été les plus forts, ils ont détruit les blancs; c'est le seul compte qui se soit jamais ouvert entre les deux races." Ces propos apparaissent d'autant plus remarquables qu'ils sont de la main de l'un des esprits les plus éclairés de son temps et les plus ouvertement anti-esclavagistes, quoique sa longue amitié avec Arthur de Gobineau ait fait s'interroger sur son attitude face au racisme. Cette peur, déjà ancienne, reparaît aujourd'hui chez tous ceux qu'inquiètent, par exemple, la vitalité démographique de l'Afrique, opposée à la "peste blanche" (titre significatif d'un livre de Pierre Chaunu) dont souffre l'Europe, et chez ceux qui s'interrogent sur les ruptures que "la force du nombre et l'énergie du désespoir" (expressions du même Tocqueville) risquent d'introduire dans un monde où les richesses sont si mal partagées.

Justement, Arthur de Gobineau est l'une des figures les plus représentatives, sans en être le fondateur, d'une troisième attitude. Fondée soi-disant sur les acquis de "la science" et sur des "preuves" tirées de l'histoire, celle-ci part de la différence des expériences historiques, des modes de vie, d'organisation socio-politique et s'appuie sur les inégalités de développement pour proclamer que les Africains sont, non pas différents des autres hommes, mais génétiquement inférieurs à eux et que de l'Afrique il ne peut sortir rien de bon ou de positif.

Dernière attitude enfin, celle qu'on pourrait puiser chez Joseph Conrad et que prolongent jusqu'à nos jours maints écrits sérieux et reportages journalistiques. Pour l'auteur de "Un avant-poste du progrès" et d'"Au coeur des ténèbres", l'Afrique apparaît à la fois comme impénétrable, insaisissable, rebelle à toute entreprise de domination matérielle ou intellectuelle. L'Afrique broie sans pitié tous ceux qui prétendent l'ouvrir malgré elle à un

prétendu progrès et engloutit sans rémission tout corps étranger qui s'aventure à n'importe quelle fin à pénétrer en elle. Une telle conviction peut déboucher sur des formes de tolérance fondatrices d'une communauté internationale véritablement plurielle, consciente et fière de ses diversités.

Du côté de l'Afrique, les attitudes présentent au moins autant de figures que du côté des Européens.

La peur est bien visible dans toutes les croyances et tous les mythes qui assimilent les Blancs, donc les Européens, aux albinos. Dans la plupart des sociétés d'Afrique noire, ceux-ci sont perçus comme des hommes certes, mais comme des hommes dont la fabrication et la mise en forme auraient été inachevées et qui appartiendraient de ce fait à une humanité parallèle, sinon inférieure, à la nôtre, dont les ressorts nous seraient inaccessibles. Il faut les accepter quand ils viennent, les tolérer quand ils sont là, mais en aucun cas aller les chercher ni vouloir se les concilier ni encore moins s'efforcer de se comporter ou d'être comme eux.

Une deuxième attitude repose sur la conception du genre humain comme étant absolument un. Blancs et Noirs non seulement appartiennent à la même humanité, mais constituent deux faces différemment valorisées de l'homme: les Noirs étant la figure de l'homme dans sa vie sur terre et les Blancs celle de l'homme après la mort.

Dans cette approche, répandue dans toutes les sociétés bantu d'Afrique centrale et australe, l'homme dans sa vie terrestre est naturellement noir; la présence des Blancs ne peut correspondre qu'à quelque perturbation majeure du cosmos, à moins qu'elle n'indique une intention particulière de(s) dieu(x). Si ceux-ci ont décidé de réintroduire les ancêtres morts dans la vie de tous les jours, ce doit bien être pour inviter les hommes à suivre le mode de vie de ces derniers, leurs enseignements ou leurs injonctions. Cette attitude a été et reste particulièrement active dans les phénomènes de caractère religieux.

Dans ses écrits, en particulier dans *"L'étrange destin de Wangrin"*, le vieux sage Amadou Hampaté Ba nous a donné ce qui est peut-être la matière de l'attitude la plus subtile de ces sociétés paysannes d'Afrique, solidement enracinées dans leur terroir, habituées à voir passer des hégémonies éphémères. Vue par l'Occident comme un continent en retard, l'Afrique aurait la chance exceptionnelle d'être "partie" après les autres, donc de les voir les uns après les autres trébucher ou tomber sur des obstacles auxquels ils n'auraient pas pris garde: elle jouirait par conséquent du privilège unique de choisir en connaissance de cause le moment de son propre "départ" aussi bien que le sens et le rythme de la marche. Amadou Hampaté Ba a su également tirer de très riches enseignements du fait que les Africains, de l'avis de la plupart des historiens, n'avaient, jusqu'à la fin de la colonisation, quitté leur continent que sous la contrainte. Le contact avec les autres s'est donc principalement fait sur le continent même, les étrangers étant forcément moins nombreux, entièrement ignorants des réalités, des possibilités et des contraintes locales. La force des Africains, dont Wangrin constitue la figure emblématique, a été et reste de pouvoir à loisir retourner à leur profit un rapport de forces apparemment défavorable et infléchir dans un sens inattendu les apports extérieurs.

IV. MONDIALISATION ET GLOBALISATION: LES TENDANCES ACTUELLES

En s'inspirant de la subtilité d'Amadou Hampaté Ba, on est donc forcément conduit à appliquer avec prudence les concepts de "mondialisation" et de "globalisation" au contexte et aux particularités de l'Afrique. Il y a lieu, en tous les cas, de s'interroger sur les facteurs, les lieux et les figures de la mondialisation et de la globalisation.

A. Les facteurs de mondialisation et de globalisation

Pour ce qui est des facteurs, une longue tradition, issue de l'idéologie tiers-mondiste, confortée par le paradigme "centre et périphérie" et par les théories développementalistes des années 1970, s'est illustrée en mettant en lumière le rôle déterminant des facteurs internationaux de tous ordres et, en particulier, l'importance décisive des facteurs économiques.

L'évolution de plus en plus contrastée des économies africaines au cours des deux dernières décennies permet de nuancer beaucoup l'incidence du facteur économique.

Rappelons d'abord cet apparent paradoxe qui fait que, en se plaçant du point de vue des pays industrialisés, l'Afrique intervient pour très peu (environ 1%) dans le commerce international, alors que en voyant les choses à partir du continent africain, cette intégration dans l'économie mondiale est génératrice de bouleversements de très grande ampleur et sans précédent.

Mais, il est évident que toutes les parties de l'Afrique n'importent pas autant, ni de la même manière, aux grandes puissances: ici joue pleinement l'antagonisme classique entre les pays à façade maritime, très intéressants pour les Etats industrialisés, et les pays enclavés, contre lesquels jouent les coûts prohibitifs des transports et de mise en valeur. Aujourd'hui, comme dans les phases antérieures du capitalisme international, ces pays maritimes sont à leur tour hiérarchisés en fonction de leur utilité économique, de leur poids démographique et de leur intérêt stratégique: ce qui fait, par exemple, que le Gabon (267 667 km², 1 200 000 habitants, mais riche en pétrole, uranium, manganèse) est perçu comme plus important que la Tanzanie (945 087 km², 26 000 000 habitants, dépourvue de ressources minières); de fait, les lieux de la globalisation culturels sont-ils plus nombreux et ses figures plus radicales au Gabon qu'en Tanzanie. Ce constat des différences vaut aussi pour les pays enclavés.

Quels que soient par ailleurs les pays considérés, les formes et l'importance des tendances culturelles mondiales qu'on y repère, en rapport avec les mouvements de l'économie, varient considérablement en fonction de l'histoire particulière de leurs relations avec les Etats industrialisés et de l'intensité du développement en leur sein de rapports sociaux de type capitaliste.

A titre d'exemple, l'opposition entre le Sénégal et l'Afrique du Sud est très significative de ce point de vue. Le Sénégal a été intégré à l'économie mondiale plus tôt (traite esclavagiste dès

le XVII^e siècle; cultures d'exportation, à commencer par l'arachide, dès le milieu du XIX^e siècle; émigration de travailleurs vers la France à partir des années 1930) que l'Afrique du sud (pas ou très peu de traite esclavagiste; économie minière à partir de la fin du XIX^e siècle).

Or les figures de la "modernisation" sociale et culturelle semblent au premier regard plus nombreuses, mieux enracinées et plus authentiques en Afrique du Sud qu'au Sénégal. C'est que, dans le premier pays, le développement du capitalisme fut continu, allant sans cesse en s'élargissant, en raison même de l'intérêt économique, stratégique et politique que les grandes puissances lui ont constamment porté, alors que les nouveaux besoins de l'industrie européenne, française en l'occurrence, ont fait perdre au Sénégal, dès la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale, la plus grande partie de son utilité économique.

Il faut ajouter que les facteurs de "mondialisation" comportent d'autres dimensions que celles de l'économie.

La culture, directement importée ou imposée d'Occident, en est une. Mais ici encore les nuances sont nécessaires. Prenons, par exemple, les moyens de communication.

Il semble bien que leur rôle a souvent été surévalué, qu'il s'agisse de la presse écrite, de la radio ou encore de la télévision. Même avant la libéralisation de la presse des années 1990-1991, les journaux étrangers à l'Afrique (en dehors de ceux, comme "Africa", "Demain l'Afrique", "Jeune Afrique"... édités à l'étranger par des équipes en partie africaines et privilégiant un public de lecteurs africains) n'ont, pour ainsi dire, jamais été lus sur le continent: à leur diffusion se sont constamment opposés plusieurs obstacles, parmi lesquels leur prix relativement élevé, leur langue, leurs centres d'intérêt, souvent éloignés de ceux de leurs lecteurs. Il en est de même pour les radios étrangères. Les études d'audience de la B.B.C., de la "Voice of America" et de Radio France Internationale, pour ne citer que les plus importantes, montrent que les auditeurs de ces chaînes se recrutent dans un milieu social extrêmement étroit et localisé, formé de "lettrés", fonctionnaires, cadres, intellectuels et jeunesse scolarisée. Enfin, la télévision est restée, jusqu'à ces dernières années, un phénomène essentiellement urbain, socialement encore plus restreint dans son implantation comme dans ses effets que les radios étrangères.

Les évolutions culturelles de l'Afrique actuelle doivent donc être interprétées plus à partir d'une problématique de la création, de l'invention, du bricolage, du syncrétisme, qu'à partir d'une théorie de l'aliénation ou du mimétisme.

Les systèmes et les valeurs politiques représentent aussi une des dimensions de la mondialisation, où se constatent les mêmes contradictions entre les idées reçues et les réalités éprouvées sur le terrain.

On a dit ainsi, tout au long des vingt-cinq premières années des indépendances, que l'Afrique, après avoir tenté imprudemment la greffe des modèles constitutionnels, parlementaires ou présidentiels occidentaux, avait enfin retrouvé ses ressorts spécifiques et

son génie particulier dans les régimes de dictature plus ou moins éclairée, personnelle et patrimoniale. D'après les mêmes théories, l'Afrique (re-) découvrirait aujourd'hui l'impératif universel de la démocratie sous la pression conjuguée des grandes puissances et des bailleurs de fonds internationaux, tous convaincus désormais que la démocratie, en dehors de sa valeur propre, est la condition de développement.

Or, rien n'est moins sûr. Pour s'en tenir aux formules politiques autoritaires, de nombreuses études de cas ont montré que celles-ci puisaient leurs méthodes, leurs techniques et jusqu'à leur personnel dans le fonds colonial, tout en se référant, à des fins de manipulation idéologique et intellectuelle, à de soi-disant traditions de "l'authenticité" africaine. Quant au renouveau démocratique actuel, on peut à bon droit, comme je le montrerai en conclusion, y voir l'aboutissement, bien sûr provisoire, du bouillonnement idéologique et de l'effervescence sociale et intellectuelle que l'Afrique a connus depuis au moins l'époque des indépendances.

On est donc conduit à réévaluer le rôle de "l'Etat-nation" issu de la colonisation: tout en conservant, en particulier sur le plan strictement politique et idéologique, une très large autonomie, celui-ci apparaît comme l'acteur essentiel dans le processus d'une intégration accrue des sociétés africaines aux processus mondiaux.

L'école est l'un de ses moyens d'action privilégiés et cela pour plusieurs raisons. Revendication majeure de la dernière période de lutte contre la colonisation, l'universalisation de l'école, par la voie de l'obligation et de la gratuité, est devenue l'une des fonctions essentielles de l'Etat, comme le prouve le poids de l'instruction publique dans le budget de tous les Etats africains. Or, sauf dans de rares exceptions, l'instruction se donne et l'accès au savoir se fait dans les langues des anciens colonisateurs, retenues dans ce rôle comme étant la seule ouverture à l'universalité. Du coup, le refus ou l'impossibilité de l'intégration se traduira par la valorisation d'autres langues, véhiculaires ou vernaculaires. Au-delà de la langue et des savoirs positifs, on sait que ce que l'école transmet aux élèves c'est tout un ensemble d'attitudes au monde, de valeurs sociales, mais aussi de stéréotypes et de préjugés qui se couvrent de la légitimation scientifique de l'institution scolaire. La masse, particulièrement importante en Afrique, des exclus pour cause d'échec ajoute encore au prestige de cet ensemble complexe de connaissances et de manières de faire, de sentir et d'être réservé à une infime élite, qui paraît l'avoir conquis de haute lutte et qui fournit l'un des modèles les moins discutés de l'homme et de la femme d'aujourd'hui.

Les politiques de "développement" et de "modernisation" forment un autre levier efficace entre les mains de l'Etat. Comme sous la colonisation, la modernité, conçue par les élites économiques et politiques, apparaît comme une occidentalisation tantôt audacieuse, dans les pays qui ont connu une forte croissance dans les années 60 et 70, tantôt honteuse, là où, notamment dans les P.M.A., la pauvreté de l'Etat et des citoyens est restée la même, si elle ne s'est pas aggravée. Les "safaris technologiques", réalisés à des coûts exorbitants, furent souvent, entre les mains des pouvoirs, un moyen commode de flatter l'orgueil national tout en exaltant le génie créateur des "pères de la nation". Aujourd'hui encore, malgré la crise générale des modèles de développement économique et la relève des générations politiques,

les Etats, en particulier ceux à la tête desquels se trouvent désormais les premiers ministres et les responsables "made in F.M.I." et reconnus par les organismes internationaux pour leur compétence, incitent les citoyens à découvrir et à cultiver les valeurs et les vertus (épargne, travail, esprit d'entreprise, goût du profit, individualisme, volonté de puissance...) qui seraient inhérents à tout progrès économique, qui manqueraient aux Africains et que ceux-ci ne pourraient découvrir qu'à l'école de l'Occident.

B. Les foyers de mondialisation

Les foyers d'où se diffusent avec le plus de force les formes mondiales de sociabilité et de culture sont inégalement répartis en Afrique. On peut distinguer les pôles locaux de la mondialisation, à la fois relais des impulsions venues de l'étranger et centres actifs, des zones périphériques qui ou bien la subissent ou bien y échappent. Cette distinction est utile, parce qu'elle renvoie à des mouvements sociaux très différents dans les deux cas de figure et parce qu'elle suggère que les interventions éventuelles d'un organisme tel que l'UNESCO devraient prendre des formes différentes selon ces deux situations. Ces pôles locaux, pour s'en tenir à eux, forment une chaîne, avec des maillons de force inégale, de pays et de lieux de vie.

Parmi les pays, plusieurs, en raison de leurs relations à la fois anciennes et intenses avec les espaces extérieurs à l'Afrique, ont été autrefois actifs, qui aujourd'hui semblent en déclin: il s'agit en particulier de pays tels que la Sierra Leone, le Libéria, Zanzibar, le Sénégal, le Ghana ou encore le Bénin. Tous ces pays ont perdu leur rôle autrefois très actif de centres du commerce avec l'étranger, de lieux privilégiés d'immigration d'Africains de la diaspora acculturés à l'Occident ou de communautés étrangères, de foyers intellectuels et politiques.

D'autres pays, qui ont aussi connu ce destin, comme le Nigéria et le Gabon, ont au contraire renforcé leur rôle de pôles locaux: ce qui a facilité le maintien de ce rôle, c'est, d'une part, la présence, dans leur sous-sol, de richesses minières, le pétrole en particulier, qui ont pris le relais des produits de la terre (oléagineux et bois), accéléré les processus d'intégration à l'économie mondiale et d'occidentalisation et, d'autre part, leur pouvoir d'attraction de la main d'œuvre étrangère, érigé ces pays en modèles pour leurs voisins. L'Afrique du Sud appartient aussi à cette catégorie avec cette particularité que son aire d'influence est restée intacte depuis environ un siècle sur l'ensemble de l'Afrique australe et que l'abolition de l'apartheid est de nature à en faire un modèle pour la partie australe, voire pour l'ensemble du continent.

Enfin, un dernier groupe de pays réunit ceux qui, comme le Zaïre ou le Kenya, sont devenus des pôles locaux relativement tard, dans la phase finale de la colonisation: ces pays ont été perçus à la fois comme modèles, au plus fort de leur succès économique, habilement exploité sur le plan politique et idéologique (le Kenya de Jomo Kenyatta, le Zaïre des années 1965-1975) et comme des repoussoirs à la suite de la double crise, à la fois économique et politique, qui les ronge depuis le milieu des années 1970.

Parmi les lieux de vie, la ville apparaît à la fois comme l'une des manifestations les plus visibles du développement en Afrique des modes de vie de caractère universel et comme l'un des foyers privilégiés de leur diffusion.

Il est clairement établi aujourd'hui que l'Afrique traditionnelle a aussi connu des formes de vie urbaine, parfois sur des zones étendues, telles que le Sahel, le pays yoruba, les savanes congolaises... Cependant, si certaines de ces villes (Ibadan, Kano, Sokoto, Djenné, Mombasa, Zanzibar et toute la côte swahili...) ont survécu jusqu'à nos jours, le phénomène urbain tel que nous le constatons aujourd'hui est d'origine très récente et revêt une croissance exceptionnelle au plan purement quantitatif, mais aussi dans ses effets non mesurables.

Quelques repères chronologiques et statistiques suffiront pour donner une idée de cet accroissement: Cotonou est passé de 75 000 hab. (habitants) en 1961 à 500 000 hab. en 1988; Ndjamena de 100 000 hab. en 1962 à 500 000 hab. en 1975; Niamey, de 55 000 hab. en 1964 à 600 000 hab. en 1988; Dakar, de 500 000 hab. en 1967 à 1 500 000 hab. en 1988; Abidjan, de 618 000 hab. en 1970 à 2 500 000 hab. en 1988; Kinshasa enfin, de 1 750 000 hab. en 1975 à 4 000 000 hab. en 1988 (Lelo Nzuzi, 1989, p. 111).

Aussi ne faut-il pas s'étonner que, si la vie sociale tend à prendre partout des formes nouvelles, les principaux foyers de créativité culturelle; socio- politique, économique et intellectuelle se trouvent en ville.

V. VIE SOCIALE ET FORMES CULTURELLES

Les réseaux où s'élaborent les nouveaux rapports sociaux et les formes culturelles dans lesquelles ils s'expriment et auxquelles ils donnent naissance sont multiples: certains semblent renvoyer à "la tradition", alors qu'ils constituent de véritables innovations; d'autres sont purement le produit des situations nouvelles, liées à la réussite ou la difficulté d'insertion en milieu urbain ou dans les nouveaux rapports sociaux en milieu rural; certains encore correspondent à des phénomènes de groupes, alors que d'autres se rattachent à des initiatives individuelles.

A. Les réseaux "traditionnels": réactivation ou invention

1. L'éthnicité

Les phénomènes liés à l'éthnicité sont peut-être l'un des exemples les plus riches et les plus instructifs dans le contexte mondial actuel caractérisé, au "nord" comme au "sud" par la montée des "nationalismes" et des "micro-nationalismes".

On commence à accepter aujourd'hui que le concept d'"ethnie", au moment où son application à l'Afrique est devenue quasi-exclusive (fin du XIX^e siècle), était en quelque sorte

l'équivalent du concept de nation en Europe. Aux yeux des colonisateurs et de tous les théoriciens convaincus du retard ou de l'infériorité constitutive des peuples africains, l'Afrique n'avait connu ni des Etats ni des nations comme ceux de l'Europe, qui constituaient évidemment les modèles absolus. Les définitions qu'ils donnaient des ethnies africaines (groupements d'individus ayant en commun un passé, une langue, des coutumes, une forte conscience de leur passé, voire une volonté évidente de vivre ensemble) faisaient des ethnies, non pas une chose différente des nations européennes, mais des nations au rabais, auxquelles il aurait manqué certains attributs (la dimension, le rattachement à un Etat, la profondeur historique, etc....) pour qu'elles fussent de véritables nations. En fait, les historiens et les anthropologues s'accordent pour expliquer que ces "ethnies" étaient un processus d'identification parmi d'autres, correspondant dans certains cas à des Etats précoloniaux, équivalant dans d'autres cas à des formes de résistance à ces Etats.

Ce dernier aspect est particulièrement important, car il nous introduit aux formations ethniques contemporaines. Les divers régimes coloniaux ont donné aux ethnies une forme et parfois un contenu inédits: le découpage des frontières a amalgamé de force des groupes dont les relations dans le passé avaient pu être principalement conflictuelles; les appareils coloniaux (administrateurs, missionnaires, armées, grandes entreprises dévoreuses de main d'œuvre) se sont appuyés sur certaines ethnies contre d'autres, en ont valorisé certaines aux dépens d'autres, les ont spécifiées les unes par rapport aux autres en exagérant et en caricaturant les différences aux dépens des parentés transversales. Mais, d'un point de vue africain, la colonisation fut aussi, à sa manière, une longue crise, générant la destruction des ensembles politiques, le désordre économique, le renversement de normes et des valeurs sociales et religieuses et obligeant les individus et les communautés, pour survivre, à la reconstitution des réseaux sociaux destinés à organiser la résistance à la colonisation ou l'intégration à sa logique ou les deux à la fois. En milieu urbain, l'on vit de bonne heure apparaître des "associations d'originaires". Regroupant des gens issus de la même "ethnie", mais parfois seulement de la même "région", dans l'acception que les colonisateurs donnaient à ce mot, ou encore de gens qui parlaient la même langue, sans forcément être de la même ethnie ou de la même région, ces associations répondaient à des objectifs multiples, explicites ou inconscients: surmonter les différences de classe produites par le nouveau système; organiser la solidarité face à un environnement social perçu comme hostile; entretenir les coutumes et pratiques anciennes que l'on croyait menacées, que l'on préférait aux apports de la colonisation ou dont on estimait le maintien indispensable dans le vide semé par la colonisation. Apparues en Afrique du Sud dès la fin du XIX^e siècle, se multipliant dans l'ensemble du continent à partir des années 1920, ces associations connurent une sorte d'apogée au cours des années 1950, quand beaucoup d'entre elles servirent de support ou de cadre aux partis "nationalistes".

Une fois installés au pouvoir, ceux-ci s'empressèrent souvent d'interdire les regroupements ethniques, sous prétexte qu'ils exacerbaient les particularismes et menaçaient l'unité nationale. Les élites intellectuelles apportèrent souvent une caution supplémentaire aux pouvoirs en faisant des "ethnies" une pure création du colonialisme et en présentant le "tribalisme" comme l'une des stratégies souterraines de l'impérialisme habile à "diviser pour

régner". Il est remarquable qu'au moins dans les milieux intellectuels, les discours aient aujourd'hui considérablement changé et s'énoncent davantage en faveur des identités ethniques. C'est que la pratique sociale a elle aussi initié, dans ce domaine, des mutations sensibles. Les régimes nés des indépendances ont eu des effets inattendus. L'imposition du parti unique, de syndicats et de mouvements de masse uniques a accéléré la (re-) naissance des associations ethniques ou régionalistes, ayant vocation à contrecarrer le monopole de l'Etat sur la vie sociale. Mais, en même temps, comme chaque chef de l'Etat se représentait en tant que "père fondateur de la nation", situé au dessus des querelles partisans et des intérêts particuliers, qu'ils fussent individuels ou collectifs, ces régimes en sont venus paradoxalement à tolérer, sinon à encourager, la multiplication des associations ethniques, destinées à combattre la confiscation de l'Etat par un groupe ethnique particulier et à organiser en quelque sorte l'équilibre par la concurrence entre mouvements ethniques rivaux. Les termes ultimes de ces évolutions ne sont pas moins paradoxaux. A l'issue de la colonisation bon nombre d'Etats se trouvaient menacés d'éclatement et certains, comme le Congo (Zaire) et le Nigéria, ne purent pas éviter de longues et meurtrières guerres civiles. Au sortir de cette période de troubles et de tensions, se répandit dans toute l'Afrique, avec de rares exceptions, un modèle unique d'Etat, de type jacobin, fondé sur la centralisation administrative et politique et sur la volonté, clairement exprimée, d'homogénéiser la société en combattant les particularismes. Or aujourd'hui, dans tous les débats et projets qui agitent l'Afrique, le modèle d'Etat privilégié est au contraire un Etat décentralisé, dans lequel de surcroît les communautés ethniques ou régionales se verraient reconnaître la plus grande autonomie de gestion et d'initiative.

Ce processus, que nous venons d'esquisser dans le cadre de communautés relativement larges, peut se saisir aussi au niveau de communautés plus étendues ou plus restreintes: mais ces trois niveaux ne sont pas forcément en harmonie. Faute de place, j'en ébaucherai seulement les grands traits.

2. La nation

Au niveau plus large, on trouve la nation, au double sens de communauté de citoyens partageant les mêmes droits sur un espace donné ainsi que la volonté de vivre ensemble et de société ayant des caractéristiques et des héritages communs.

Certes, un siècle d'existence dans le cadre des territoires actuels et plusieurs décennies de lutte commune contre la colonisation et contre les dictatures post-coloniales peuvent paraître une trop courte durée pour avoir définitivement façonné des nations en Afrique. Mais, si l'on veut considérer les nations comme des processus toujours en acte plutôt que comme des états achevés une fois pour toutes à un moment donné, il est clair aussi que l'Afrique contemporaine se définit en terme de nations, jusque dans les formes extrêmes que peut revêtir le sentiment d'appartenance à une nation. Qu'on en juge, par exemple, par les poussées de fièvre xénophobe dont sont saisis à tour de rôle les pays africains contre leurs voisins du continent à l'occasion de compétitions sportives ou en période de crise économique aiguë.

Ceci peut paraître contradictoire avec les considérations sur les phénomènes ethniques. Mais les deux mécanismes identitaires ne s'excluent pas; ils opèrent ensemble, parfois en termes conflictuels, comme lors des guerres civiles ou dans la course au pouvoir, parfois dans une sorte d'harmonie, comme dans les "politiques des quotas" (prévoyant, dans plusieurs pays, des quotas ethniques ou régionaux dans la fonction publique-ou à l'entrée à l'université).

3. La famille

Au niveau plus restreint, l'évolution de la famille présente une complexité comparable.

Les sociétés africaines traditionnelles reposaient sur des lignages, familles étendues, regroupant sur un espace plus ou moins grand (le village ou la "concession") plusieurs générations de gens liés par la filiation, le mariage, l'alliance, voire la simple proximité, tous se considérant comme des "parents", obligés notamment les uns à l'égard des autres à des devoirs de réciprocité et d'entraide.

Presque toujours et partout, la "modernité" coloniale et post-coloniale s'est identifiée, au nom du christianisme, du "droit" en tant qu'opposé à la "coutume" et de la simple efficacité, à la famille restreinte à la fois monogamique et mononucléaire. Les "foyers sociaux" et écoles ménagères de l'époque coloniale, les actuels centres d'information familiale, relayés par les manuels scolaires et les magazines de "la femme moderne" ou de "l'homme moderne" ont été les agents les plus actifs de la diffusion de ces nouvelles manières de concevoir et de vivre la vie de famille. Du coup la famille élargie a été assimilée au "village", celui-ci étant à son tour fortement déprécié, à du "parasitisme", à un obstacle à la vraie "vie de couple" et à un frein pour l'épanouissement matériel, affectif et intellectuel.

Mais ici encore plusieurs tendances et contraintes de la vie rurale aussi bien qu'urbaine moderne ont conduit à une sorte de retour de la "grande famille", à ceci près que celle-ci est plus souvent une recomposition sur une base ou avec des ingrédients et des calculs nouveaux qu'une simple copie des familles d'autrefois: le renforcement des structures d'une société de classes, qui conduit les "petits" à solliciter le secours ou la protection des "grands"; l'utilité que ceux-ci trouvent à s'entourer de "petits" et à manifester, au besoin avec éclats, leur sollicitude à l'égard de leur parenté et à l'égard de leur "village", ce qui tendrait à prouver que, dans la conscience collective, les anciennes formes d'organisation sociale n'ont pas encore perdu, à supposer qu'elles le perdu un jour, leur valeur d'exemplarité et de référence irremplaçable.

B. Mécanismes de survie

Tous les indicateurs s'accordent pour souligner l'ampleur de la crise économique et sociale de l'Afrique: détérioration des termes de l'échange; difficulté ou impossibilité de l'industrialisation; chômage massif dans les villes, frappant les jeunes aussi bien que les

classes d'âge mûres, sans distinction par ailleurs des niveaux de formation scolaire et universitaire; stagnation de l'agriculture, véritable parent pauvre de toutes les politiques de développement. L'Afrique est sans conteste, de tous les continents en développement, celui qui a le moins progressé depuis trente ans et celui dont plusieurs parties ont même régressé. Il faut ajouter que, malgré ce contexte général de blocage, de difficultés structurelles et conjoncturelles, les classes dirigeantes africaines, dans presque tous les pays, ont tout fait pour tirer le profit maximal des rentes agricoles et minières et se sont abusivement enrichies. Dans les cas les mieux connus, qui sont des pays à potentialités très variables et des régimes très différents par leurs proclamations idéologiques (le Mali de Moussa Traoré, le Nigéria à l'époque du boom pétrolier, la République Populaire du Congo, le Zaïre du Maréchal Mobutu Sese Seko, la Centrafrique de Jean Bedel Bokassa...), le pouvoir en place semble même être devenu le principal instrument de sous-développement au point qu'on a parlé à leur propos d'"Etat prédateur".

1. L'"économie informelle"

Or, l'une des réponses à cette crise multiple se trouve dans ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler l'"économie informelle".

L'important ici n'est pas de discuter la pertinence de ce concept, aujourd'hui fortement remis en cause, mais de voir les processus sociaux qu'il désigne. On a décrit sous ce terme des métiers très divers, apparus et se développant principalement en milieu urbain et se constituant parfois en réseaux, sinon en corporations. Peseurs d'hommes, laveurs de voitures, gardiens de voitures, pompeurs de pneumatiques, cireurs de chaussures, marchands ambulants, gargotières, tenanciers de "maquis", récupérateurs de déchets, tenanciers et ouvriers de petits ateliers spécialisés dans de menus services, vendeuses de pagnes ou d'aphrodisiaques, écrivains publics, jardiniers ambulants, prêteurs sur gages, banquiers des pauvres et membres actifs de réseaux de "tontines"...: la liste de ces "petits métiers d'Abidjan" et de toutes les villes du continent africain, depuis les grandes métropoles jusqu'aux très petits centres urbains, est, pour ainsi dire, interminable.

Certes, l'Afrique n'en a pas la primauté, puisque les pays aujourd'hui industrialisés en ont connu de semblables dans les premiers temps de la révolution industrielle; elle n'en détient pas davantage l'exclusivité, puisque tous les pays en développement subissent des expériences identiques. Mais, dans le contexte africain, le phénomène connaît une ampleur inédite et semble appelé à une longue durée, dans la mesure où les perspectives d'industrialisation sont nulles et où ne peut donc opérer ici le schéma classique de l'absorption progressive de ces acteurs économiques dans la classe ouvrière ou dans les couches inférieures du secteur tertiaire.

La prolifération de ces petits métiers manifeste plusieurs choses: le refus chez les exclus de se laisser enfermer dans la marginalité et dans l'exclusion et leur volonté de se prendre en charge sans attendre l'intervention hypothétique de l'Etat; leur connaissance des besoins nouveaux nés en milieu urbain et que les entreprises "formelles" ne pensent pas ou ne

peuvent pas satisfaire; leur capacité de s'insérer dans les mécanismes de l'économie capitaliste et de créer, notamment dans le domaine financier par les "tontines", les procédures de substitution qui leur permettent d'avoir accès au crédit. Toute cette ingénierie sociale témoigne, non pas d'un refus de la "modernité", mais d'une grande ardeur à y adhérer et de la capacité de forger les mécanismes de cette adhésion. Elle montre aussi des formes de solidarité, dont plusieurs autres réseaux sociaux prouvent le besoin.

2. Les réseaux religieux

Prenons par exemple les réseaux religieux dont la dynamique s'intègre dans un processus de longue durée, caractérisé par un mélange d'attraction et de soupçon, de méfiance et d'enthousiasme, d'orthodoxie et de dissidence, à l'égard des religions étrangères, christianisme et islam en particulier.

Alors que progresse la sécularisation des sociétés occidentales, la prégnance des croyances et des pratiques religieuses reste très forte en Afrique. Le risque d'erreur et de partialité est grand dans l'interprétation de ce phénomène. On a pu voir dans la persistance des croyances animistes en milieu urbain comme un réflexe passéiste ou comme la recherche d'une assurance, d'une protection et de garanties spirituelles dans un environnement social défavorable, miné par l'esprit de compétition, par les stratégies rivales de réussite sociale individuelle et par l'insécurité matérielle ou psychologique. Pour d'autres, la progression de l'islam et la vigueur des communautés chrétiennes traduiraient au contraire le discrédit des spiritualités anciennes. On peut concevoir aussi ces innovations religieuses comme des stratégies individuelles et collectives de production de nouvelles valeurs sociales et morales.

Pour s'en tenir au seul exemple du christianisme, on constate que celui-ci a souvent tendance à se détourner des églises et des structures établies pour adopter la forme plus souple de "groupes de prière" ou celle de "sectes", dont la rigidité apparente est atténuée par l'instabilité des effectifs des fidèles. Le langage de ces "frères" et "sœurs" en Jésus, presque toujours très mal vus des églises établies, est riche de significations: langage de solidarité, d'entraide, d'égalité et de tempérance, il a été au plus fort des autoritarismes africains, l'une des rares critiques cohérentes de la forme actuelle de la société et l'un des lieux où s'exprime avec le plus de vigueur l'aspiration à un Etat de droit et à une société juste.

Ajoutons que ces regroupements et fraternités ne se limitent pas aux seuls milieux populaires. Si les classes dirigeantes ne répugnent pas à se mélanger au peuple dans ces églises, elles choisissent aussi, dans de nombreux cas, de se regrouper dans d'autres structures (francs-maçonneries d'obédience européenne; sociétés secrètes dérivées, mais indépendantes, des loges maçonniques étrangères; sectes venues d'Orient et d'Extrême-Orient) dont la vocation semble plus ouvertement politique.

C. La culture populaire urbaine, une invention collective

1. Elites et peuple

L'Afrique d'aujourd'hui se caractérise aussi par une grande effervescence culturelle dont les deux branches semblent encore relativement indépendantes: d'un côté, la culture des élites et des créateurs intellectuels; de l'autre la culture populaire. Ces deux notions ne représentent évidemment qu'une approche commode de phénomènes complexes: entre les deux pôles extrêmes les articulations subtiles et les va-et-vient féconds ne manquent pas.

Plus connu, le travail créateur des élites intellectuelles revêt les mêmes formes que dans le reste du monde et a commencé, depuis une vingtaine d'années, à recevoir la reconnaissance et la sanction de la communauté savante, artistique et intellectuelle internationale, notamment dans les domaines du cinéma, de la littérature et des arts plastiques.

Cependant ce qui importe le plus dans la conception de la culture que nous avons adoptée ici, c'est la deuxième forme de production culturelle, qui exprime plus directement la dynamique sociale à l'œuvre dans les pays africains ainsi que la situation et les préoccupations du plus grand nombre. Le travail culturel d'initiative populaire prend en milieu urbain des formes diverses selon les pays.

2. La "sape" brazzavilloise et kinoise

On connaît déjà relativement bien le phénomène des "sapeurs" congolais et zaïrois. Née à Brazzaville au milieu des années soixante et à Kinshasa un peu plus tard, la "sape" ("Société des ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes", mais en même temps jeu de mots sur le concept français de "sape") a d'abord regroupé des jeunes des quartiers pauvres préoccupés seulement en apparence d'exhiber les costumes, chaussures et habits les plus chers importés d'Europe et de rivaliser d'élégance et d'originalité. Le phénomène est en réalité plus complexe: enraciné dans certains quartiers, identifié à tort ou à raison à certains groupes ethniques, les "sapeurs" constituent un "micro-société dans la société globale" (J.-D. Gandoulou), dotée d'une "sous-culture" exaltant la liberté jusqu'à la provocation, et dont les excès et les excentricités expriment le rejet d'une société figée, qui n'offre aux jeunes que le chômage, le désœuvrement, l'exclusion des réseaux d'enrichissement et de prestige liés au pouvoir, la soumission à une idéologie rigide ("socialisme scientifique" à Brazzaville et "authenticité" à Kinshasa), par ailleurs économiquement inefficace.

3. Le "kung-fu" malgache

Le "kung-fu" malgache est tout aussi complexe. Le mouvement a été initié au début des années 1980 par un sage revenu de Chine où, disait-il, il avait étudié et médité dans un monastère. Sa doctrine mélangeait les arts martiaux et l'ésotérisme et prétendait fournir à ses fidèles les moyens de se défendre contre toutes les épreuves, y compris la crise économique et de se prémunir contre les tentations, en particulier celle de consommer de la drogue. Des

milliers de jeunes malgaches devinrent "kung-fu" et répandirent dans les centres urbains des slogans riches de contenu: "Toujours vainqueurs, jamais vaincus", "Au service du peuple", "Pratiquons un sport spirituel". L'on disait d'eux qu'ils se faisaient initier auprès d'une source située au pied de la colline sacrée d'Ambohimanga, siège spirituel de l'ancienne monarchie malgache, et pourvoyeuse d'une eau qui rendait les "kung-fu" invincibles.

Synthèse d'apports étrangers et de très anciens héritages du terroir, mélange du politique et du religieux, sursaut de révolte et de survie de marginaux, le "kung-fu" malgache est le type même du "phénomène social total" cher aux sociologues. Ces jeunes prirent sur eux de dévaster en 1984 le quartier général des forces spéciales du régime, connues pour rançonner les citoyens. Quoiqu'interdit en 1985, le mouvement a continué de recruter des sectateurs au point de devenir une force sociale que se disputent aujourd'hui le pouvoir et l'opposition à Madagascar.

4. "Set Setal" à Dakar

Dernier exemple, le phénomène "set setal" (littéralement "être propre, rendre propre"). Apparue en 1988-1989, dans une conjoncture dépressive (persistance de la crise économique; élections législatives et présidentielles de 1988 émaillées d'incidents et d'accusations réciproques de fraudes et de trucages; expulsion massive des Mauritaniens en 1989), le mouvement tire probablement son nom d'une chanson à succès du musicien Youssou N'dour et recrute dans le même milieu des jeunes chômeurs urbains que les deux premiers. Se substituant à un Etat et à des municipalités à la carence légendaire en matière de salubrité publique, le mouvement a entrepris d'abord de nettoyer les villes, à commencer par Dakar, puis de couvrir les murs de peintures destinées à les embellir tout en transmettant un message spirituel.

Il ne s'agissait plus seulement de purifier matériellement la ville: le mouvement s'est donné aussi la mission de rendre les gens attentifs, individuellement et collectivement, à la propreté morale et spirituelle.

Ces exemples très divers, qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de multiplier, confirment tous les mêmes aspirations et les mêmes pratiques: un besoin de pureté et de moralité; la pratique effective d'une solidarité construite et mise en œuvre dans les épreuves quotidiennes; la volonté de se prendre en charge en dehors de pouvoirs souvent absents de la sphère sociale; la capacité d'élaborer et d'expérimenter des modèles alternatifs et efficaces de vie en société.

VI. SCÉNARIOS ET TENDANCES

Il est donc clair qu'il n'y a pas lieu de désespérer de l'Afrique, si l'on choisit de l'approcher par les communautés vivantes d'hommes et de femmes qui y construisent chaque jour des formes d'existence et des rapports sociaux féconds. Tout dépend peut-être en définitive du lieu d'où l'on choisit d'envisager l'avenir du continent africain. Les scénarios ci-dessus sont

seulement en apparence rapportés à des ensembles géographiques et géopolitiques: à l'intérieur de ceux-ci, ils renvoient en réalité à des phénomènes de groupe, à des faits de mode et à des attitudes qui s'inscrivent parfois dans la longue durée.

A. Quelques scénarios vus d'Occident

1. Le pire

C'est en Europe et singulièrement en France qu'est apparu ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler l'"afro- pessimisme", dont une critique systématique reste à faire. Disons, pour ce qui concerne notre propos, que, dans cette approche, il ne peut arriver à l'Afrique que le pire, c'est-à-dire la continuation des tendances actuelles conduisant à une marginalisation accrue dans le système économique mondial, voire à une véritable "clochardisation" (autoritarismes rampants; corruption généralisée; démographie galopante, sécheresses, famines et épidémies; misère morale) que, visiblement, elle n'aurait pas les moyens de surmonter.

2. Le souhaitable

Quoiqu'il ne soit pas formulé de manière explicite, ce scénario peut être reconstitué à partir des prises de possession d'un certain nombre d'O.N.G. (Organisations non-gouvernementales) spécialisées dans l'aide humanitaire au développement.

L'Afrique représenterait en quelque sorte un mode de vie, une civilisation que l'Europe a malheureusement perdu et que, trop avancée dans le système industriel et marchand, elle ne saurait retrouver. Matériellement pauvre, économiquement en retard, l'Afrique recèlerait cependant des valeurs morales et spirituelles exemplaires, qu'il faut l'aider à tout prix à préserver: respect de la nature; amour de la famille; sens de la solidarité et en même temps des hiérarchies; prise en compte des rythmes naturels d'existence...

A défaut de préconiser un impossible retour à ces valeurs, on exclut pas que les jeunes d'Occident, par une politique nouvelle de coopération entre le "nord" et le "sud", fassent un détour instructif par l'Afrique, ni que le temps aide à l'émergence, un jour, d'échanges féconds entre un Occident qui aurait découvert les impasses du capitalisme industriel et de la société de consommation et une Afrique qui n'aurait pas les moyens de décoller de son état actuel.

3. Le probable

Plus pragmatiques, les hommes d'Etat et d'affaires ne voient pas d'autre alternative celle consistant à gérer au mieux les mécanismes actuels.

Egalement entachée d'eurocentrisme, cette attitude repose sur la conviction que le modèle économique, politique et intellectuel des sociétés occidentales est, à ce jour, le moins

mauvais, sinon le meilleur. A mi-chemin entre le pessimisme et l'optimisme, elle considère que toutes les sociétés ont vocation à accéder à ce modèle, à condition d'y mettre le temps et le prix. L'Afrique serait seulement en retard, quoiqu'il s'agisse d'un grand retard. Son tort aurait été d'avoir voulu aller trop vite. Son aspiration légitime au progrès doit être encouragée, soit par une contrainte modérée, mais ferme (notamment en matière de "gestion" économique et financière), soit par une aide appropriée et "conditionnée" qui serait réservée en priorité à ceux des pays qui se conformeraient le mieux au modèle (en particulier en matière politique, pour ce qui est du respect des droits de l'homme et des formes démocratiques de pouvoir).

B. Quelques scénarios vus d'Afrique

La situation de crise économique durable et l'idéologie de l'urgence, à laquelle les hommes d'Etat et les élites d'Afrique ont fini par adhérer, n'ont guère permis d'élaborer sérieusement des scénarios alternatifs. En outre les régimes de "parti-Etat" ne pouvaient tolérer la seule pensée d'une possible alternative. Enfin, la transition démocratique actuelle, qui entraîne dans son tourbillon les cadres et les élites longtemps tenus à l'écart du pouvoir, laisse peu de temps à la pensée et à l'imagination. L'on est donc davantage sur le terrain mouvant des vœux que sur celui, plus ferme, des convictions réalisables.

1. Le meilleur

Assez curieusement, le scénario considéré ici comme le pire en Occident est sans doute celui que nombre d'Africains prendraient comme le meilleur.

L'argumentation, chère aux penseurs "progressistes" - historiens (Cheikh Anta Diop, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Walter Rodney entre autres), économistes (Osende Afana) et idéologues (Kwame Nkrumah) - pourrait se décomposer de la manière suivante: les pires épreuves que l'Afrique ait connues (traite esclavagiste, exploitation et humiliation coloniales) sont l'œuvre des pays occidentaux; tout au long de cette histoire l'Afrique n'a cessé de "résister" à l'intrusion étrangère; la décolonisation, occasion unique pour l'Afrique de renouer avec son histoire et son génie propre, a été confisquée par des politiciens corrompus, ayant intérêt à s'accommoder du néo-colonialisme. Rien ne serait plus profitable à l'Afrique que d'être enfin laissée à elle même.

Ce point de vue s'appuie en particulier sur certaines formules adoptées au cours de la transition démocratique. Il s'attache à examiner en profondeur les "conférences nationales" au cours desquels sont adoptées les nouvelles institutions ainsi que les procédures de la transition et au cours desquelles on déballe longuement, trop longuement aux yeux des observateurs occidentaux, toute l'histoire des décennies des indépendances. Ces "conférences nationales", dont la revendication se répand sur tout le continent depuis la première, réunie à Cotonou en 1990, mettent souvent au premier plan les autorités religieuses et les cadres intellectuels peu compromis avec les pouvoirs sortants et correspondent ainsi au

besoin d'ordre et de justice dans l'efficacité et la pureté évoqué précédemment. Elles semblent aussi renouer avec les meilleures traditions africaines (celle de la "palabre" féconde et celle du pardon des fautes individuelles pour le bien de la collectivité) et avec cette habileté, attestée partout, par laquelle les groupes reconstituaient en permanence leur passé pour gérer au mieux les contradictions du présent.

2. *Le pire*

Il n'est pas loin de ressembler au probable de l'Occident. Voir dans l'Afrique un cadet de l'Occident a depuis toujours rempli d'indignation le plus grand nombre d'intellectuels africains. Beaucoup reprochent précisément aux "pères de la nation", qui ont confisqué le pouvoir politique aux lendemains des indépendances, d'avoir manqué d'imagination et, bénéficiant dans une conjoncture exceptionnelle de la confiance et de la ferveur populaires, de n'avoir pas utilisé celles-ci dans des projets de renouveau social à la fois ambitieux et novateurs.

Les possibilités et les risques de la situation actuelle de renouvellement du personnel politique suscitent en eux les mêmes inquiétudes que la décolonisation il y a une trentaine d'années. La sympathie avouée, au demeurant tardive, des pays occidentaux à l'égard du processus démocratique leur paraît être une nouvelle manœuvre chargée de calculs impérialistes et, au mieux, un retour insupportable du vieux paternalisme de l'Europe à l'égard de l'Afrique.

Ces craintes s'appuient notamment sur le crédit dont bénéficient auprès des puissances occidentales les premiers ministres et nouveaux cadres de l'Etat "made in F.M.I.": de fait, ces "F.M.I. boys", produits des meilleures institutions universitaires et financières occidentales ont en commun la même vision "économiste" du devenir social, la même croyance à la validité et à l'efficacité universelles des règles et recettes du libéralisme économique, la même ignorance et le même mépris des ressorts culturels de la société et de leur rôle éventuel dans la redéfinition du devenir collectif.

3. *Le possible*

Un peu différent du scénario réputé le meilleur, il renvoie au souhaitable de certains milieux occidentaux.

De ce point de vue, les espaces de dialogue entre l'Afrique et l'Occident ne manquent pas, même si de nombreuses ambiguïtés restent à lever. En effet, l'idée d'un devenir du continent africain radicalement irréductible à tout autre n'est pas absente de la réflexion africaine contemporaine. Celle-ci cependant ne se complait pas dans le narcissisme, encore moins dans l'idéalisation et l'admiration naïve d'un passé que, d'expérience, beaucoup d'Africains savent révolu et dont les plus audacieux commencent, non sans injustice et de manière unilatérale, à décrire et à critiquer les défaillances et les excès. Dans ces conditions, laisser l'Afrique développer son génie propre reviendrait à lui donner les moyens d'expérimenter sur

une large échelle l'efficacité de ces synthèses hardies, des ces innovations inattendues, de ces syncrétismes inédits jusqu'ici issus essentiellement des classes populaires acculées à la survie et auxquels une véritable alliance entre le peuple et les élites donnerait les moyens de s'épanouir.

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IV. THE FUTURES OF CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

by Antonio Alonso Concheiro (*)

... *"Pero aquí abajo cerca de las raíces es donde la memoria ningún recuerdo omite y hay quienes se desmueren y hay quienes se desviven y así entre todos logran lo que era imposible que todo el mundo sepa que el sur también existe".*

Mario Benedetti ("El sur también existe")

Culture is a highly equivocal term. In its widest meaning, it has been interpreted and understood throughout history as the natural activity of man, as the negation of nature and, thus, its corruption, or as a negation of nature which seeks to transcend it. To add spice, culture and the products of culture are often used as interchangeable or synonymous, though they certainly exhibit fundamental differences.

Culture is above all a social invention, an act of continuous collective and individual creativity. It should include the form and nature of the act of creation itself, that is, the invention of culture, which we often tend to forget. This act of invention differs among peoples as much as the end results -culture and cultural products- do.

Culture, a process of cooperative coordination (1), can only be studied through culture. We study cultures that are not our own through the world of our own meanings and symbols, assuming that any culture is equivalent to any other (cultural relativity). Leaving out of our efforts the act of cultural creation itself, we generally assume that cultures are simply different modes of adaptation to nature, different codes for the same fundamental purposes. To our eyes they are thus different interpretations of a reality, an abstract nature, that is common to all (2). We seldom recognize that in this manner we are only studying and classifying cultures which we invent through our own cultural framework and not the cultures themselves. In other words, we generally reach for and obtain only ethnocentric visions of other cultures.

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Whatever it is that the members of other cultures think they are doing -their acts, ideas and institutions - it is measured against our own creativity and we thus denaturalize the essence of their creativity. As for our own culture, we rarely have to make it explicit. We take it for granted and its assumptions are given or felt as self-evident. If all this is true of our past or present cultural status, asking for the construction of foreseeable futures of a culture or cultures cannot be but one of the purest acts of imagination: invention upon invention, creation upon creation. And yet it makes sense if we want to understand our present, for the soul of nations is reflected as much by their memories as by their hopes, desires and fears; i e, by their history and their futures. Cultures are not static; they reinvent themselves permanently. They adjust to changes of the environment, and above all to those created by culture itself. Our cultures are criticized, placed under siege, by the new cultures we invent, and vice-versa. Cultural invention and accommodation is thus a dialectical process. The rate of cultural change is our rate of invention plus the rate of innovation, diffusion and general acceptance. Some aspects of cultures change slowly; historical heritage itself is culture and, although it can be reinterpreted, reinvented (as it frequently is), it changes at a snail's pace and seldom in essence. At the other extreme, some cultural aspects change at a much faster rate, resembling the pace of a hunting cheetah; for example, our technical means and our production processes.

The statements contained in the brief project proposal, are certainly provocative, in more sense than one. An open exchange of ideas may help to draw the desired sketch of possible or probable future alternatives which could lead to being better prepared for a deteriorating world in rapid transition, in a rapid mood of change (3), which seems to offer chaos as a potential future, aggravated by cultural differences and misunderstandings. Through dialogue and shared experiences, by allowing us to offer commonalities in diversity, the intention is, no doubt, to alleviate potentially dangerous present and future situations by reducing cultural misunderstandings. The differences will, I hope, remain, for diversity is strength, and should not worry us; diversity is -at least for the human race- a guarantee of a greater capacity to adapt and thus to survive. We will have done much if at least we contribute to giving more precision to our shared views or shared differences, and to enlarge the set of possible alternative paths of action. To avoid disaster, both improved mutual understanding and respect for each cultural variety, are much needed.

So, let us begin by posing some basic questions: Is there anything we can recognize and call "Latin American culture"? If there is, can we sketch some of its categories, or its basic traits? Can we speculate on the direction in which its futures will move? How will it respond to changing economic or technological realities? Will there still be in the future a Latin American culture? These are difficult questions which can only be given tentative answers. I do not pretend to fully understand the issues. Cultural problems are, almost by definition, ill-defined problems. One can only give personal impressions, which will probably have to be repeatedly rewritten with the passage of time.

What is Latin America? Why is it recognized as a distinguishable entity? These may seem trivial questions. Yet, Latin America, a simple name, is charged with historical cultural

content, pertinent to our enquiry. America, the New World (as opposed to Europe, the Old World) was first an imaginary entity, the true "Plus ultra", the longed-for "Atlantis". Even before it was discovered, America was already a creation of the needs of Europe, as Alfonso Reyes (1889-1959; Mexico) puts it. It was that territory which had to exist beyond the known world because a troubled Europe so needed it (4); a territory where mankind could start anew, avoiding the mistakes of the known world; in short, a Utopian world. After the news of its real existence reached Europe, this New World obtained its name, "America", almost by accident (5). America was from the beginning, in European eyes, a world of hope and future.

After its discovery but before its conquest and colonization, America (seen through European eyes) was one, a vast territory, cut off from the rest of the world, inhabited by unevenly distributed peoples, yet with low population densities, and with rich heterogeneous traditions and civilizations. America began to fracture as the different imperial powers of the time began to transplant their frontiers to the new land. England, France, Spain, Portugal and even the Dutch, all found accommodation and expansion in America. To the North, an Anglo America (with some French strongholds) began to form itself. To the South, there remained the viceroyalties of New Spain and Brazil. With the wars of political emancipation and the wars of independence, the South further fragmented itself into a mosaic of nations, some small some big, in spite of Bolívar's dreams. Later Anglo America territory expanded to the South. The new frontier was set at the Río Grande. What remained South of the Río Grande was "Hispanic-America" (plus Brazil), to denote its colonial origin. The term "Hispanic America" was probably coined during the 19th Century (6). But the term refers to what we were, not to what we are; and it leaves out Brazil, our brother culture. The last objection could be corrected, as has been attempted, by replacing "Hispanic America" by "Ibero America", but it would still be a term referring to our common past, not our present or our future. A more acceptable term had to be found, and thus "Latin America" came into being. First employed during the 1860's (7), it did not come into general use until after the first decade of this century, following the publication in 1910 in Paris of the first issues of the "Bulletin de l'Amérique Latine". For Americans south of the Río Grande in the late 19th century, the new name was more acceptable. Latin America was using French influence to gain its second emancipation from Spain, a cultural emancipation. Positivism was at large in our lands. The term "Latin" was used to combat the "Hispanic". Yet, our Latinism is a 19th Century myth, a result of our adopted tutorship by the French culture. With a strong component of Indian and black cultures, with a more recent immigration to the southern cone of Germans and Central Europeans, our spirit, our inner self, can be only partially Latin. The term can also be taken as a remote reference, and thus less painful, to the Roman origin of the Mediterranean nations that accomplished the conquest and colonization of our land; as the origin of the origin; as reference to our languages (Spanish and Portuguese) and to our common Catholicism.

Less popular, but sometimes used, is "Indian America (Indoamerica)", to denote our Indian origin. This might be acceptable for countries where the Indian is a strong influence (such as Mexico, Central America, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay

and, to a lesser degree Venezuela) but it would leave out countries like Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. Further, it would also leave out the undeniable black influence and our Iberian formation.

Thus, we adopted "Latin America"; most likely we did so in opposition to the other America, the Anglo America, the America of the upper North of America (the United States and Canada, although Canada, with its population of French origin, could claim to be as Latin as the rest of the countries South of the Río Grande), that Anglo America which, by its mighty economic and military power, claims for itself the continental whole by calling itself "America" (in a more prudent version it also calls itself "North America", in an accommodation that excludes - or perhaps includes - Canada and Mexico in deference to their geographical existence). Latin America is today, as it has been during the whole 20th Century, a defensive name. A call for unity, of common cause against the Panamerican hegemonic dreams of our northern neighbour. Although we agree with Shakespeare that "It would smell as sweet by any other name", words define, and naming is the first step to knowing. Hence our preoccupation with our name.

What may seem to be a long introductory digression points to several cultural characteristics of Latin America. As Alfonso Reyes repeatedly pointed out, "Our substance (that of Latin America) cannot yet be compressed into a Bayer tablet". It is true that among our nations there are huge cultural differences. Our independent America is a colourful mosaic of a variety of climates and geography, sometimes packed together in a few square kilometres; from desert lands (as in the northern part of Mexico) to the extended plains of the Argentinian pampas, to the dense tropical forests and jungles, such as the Brazilian Amazon; from the heights of the Sierra Madre and the Andes to the extensive coastal areas of the whole continent; from the mildest of weathers, where the change of seasons passes unnoticed, to regions with climatic extremes. And although not embracing a purely naturalistic explanation of cultures, it is clear that, insofar as the environment determines needs and provides means, it foreshadows culture. With a history where poor communications and transportation networks have prevailed, geography, far from being a unifying factor, has separated us. The cultural diversity of our America, however, does not stop there. The region embraces equally the Andean cultures of mountainous origin and coastal fishing cultures; cultures of rural isolated communities which still have a strong Indian ascendancy, as well as cosmopolitan urban communities such as Buenos Aires; and within our cities, a variety of subcultures, from those of learned communities to those of affluent governments and businessmen, to those of people living, fighting and dying in their own belts of poverty, mainly formed by recent rural immigrants struggling to adapt to their new, and to them foreign, urban environment. Within our regional diversity, heterogeneity, is not solely a matter of national differences. Speaking of our diversity, Germán Arciniegas says (8): "In Brazil they speak to us of the four Brazils; Bolivians distinguish the white Bolivia, that of the Aymaras, that of the Guaraní, and that of the Quechua; in Venezuela there are those of the Andes, those of the plains and those of central Venezuela; in Ecuador, the cities of Quito and Guayaquil turn the country into a double-headed eagle; in Argentina there is the world of the Porteños, the reversel of that of provinces". One can easily add Peru, with extreme differences between the culture of the

coast and that of the high mountains; or Mexico, where the North, the Highplain (centre), the West, Gulf and Southeast are pieces of a giant kaleidoscope.

And yet, to balance this Latin America possesses a strong and important set of commonalities: linguistic and religious community; similarity of ethnic mixture; parallel histories (the Conquest and the colonial centuries apart, the almost simultaneous wars of independence - except in Cuba and Brazil - against Metropolitan Europe; vacillation of the young independent states between a monarchy and a republic, with the latter finally adopted; the "peaceful" revolutions of the early 1930's - Santo Domingo, the fall of Siles in Bolivia, that of Leguía in Peru, that of Yrigoyen in Argentina, the fall of Washington Luis in Brazil, that of Ibañez in Chile (9); the guerrilla insurgence in the 1950's and 1960's and the proliferation of dictatorships; the resurgence of democratic regimes in the late 1970's and 1980's - Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay); similar successive influences (during the Independence, Illustration, a new philosophy; then the military; later the era of the lawyers; and more recently, an era of economic leadership). But above all, Latin American unity manifests itself as sentiment and ideals, particularly to reaffirm ourselves vis-à-vis others (in particular, at first as opposed to Europe and today to the United States, and in both cases as more than a mere political or economic posture). The *Ariel* (1900) of the Latin American (Uruguayan) José Enrique Rodó (1872-1912), which inaugurates this century, is ample proof. All said, unity weighs more heavily than diversity. There is more essence and substance of the Latin American than its heterogeneity seems to deny. Latin American culture is characteristically **heterogeneous**; that is, it exists as a real entity. As an oversimplification, to be taken with the caution of all oversimplifications, Mexico and Argentina, with their big cultural differences, are extremes of the Latin American being, clearly recognizable in both.

Our search for what is Latin American, an inquiry into our being, the need to define ourselves, has been particularly intense in our region; a kind of venture to reaffirm and explain to ourselves our ways of life, our style, our conscience or spirit. So, the act of inquiring about the Latin American culture is a familiar one for Latin Americans. I dare say that this permanent **questioning of our being**, is a cultural characteristic of Latin Americans. Few other regions or nations have been so obsessed by the topic. Anthropologists, philosophers, sociologists, historians, and even psychologists have tried their hand at the task. It is as if we had lost our origins in the trauma of Conquest. Quoting freely from Alfonso Reyes, the soft and sensitive ware of the Indian civilizations, up to then isolated from the world, cracked into pieces when it hit the iron pot of the European civilization represented by Spain. The intensive and extensive "**mestization**" process which took place after the Conquest created and sustained our **duality of origin** which has marked us culturally. We seem to have a certain "nostalgia of primitive originality and a feeling of restlessness for having to use borrowed universal instruments, which we still feel to be smuggled goods" (10). Some will consider that the Indian **was**, but no longer **is** us; and they will not lack some reason. But there will also be those who claim that in our historical doings we have always been watched over by the silent, remote figure of the Indian, a permanent kind of shadow, whose absence weighs more heavily than its presence. They certainly do not imply that, today, in our common lives, the Indian culture has more weight than the Creole culture; that would be a

denial of our history. But in our cross-breeding and in the presence-absence of the Indian we carry our origins engraved on our forehead. These are "mestizos" - mainly Indian-white Europeans, but also Indians-black and black-white - a true racial mix, which has stamped on us many of the traits of our culture: a tragic, dramatic, feeling for life, a certain sadness, improvisation, insecurity, introversion, mistrust, ambiguity, temporal immediacy, and even what some qualify as an inferiority complex. There is no doubt that we are not simply a European transplant to the American geography. We are, by mestization, much more than that. We have our history and our own circumstances. Sometimes we are accused of cultural copying, of creative incapacity (particularly with respect to science and technology). But to adopt and to adapt are two different things, and we have been adapting. We have an Iberian, Latin, origin, a historical development deeply influenced by Europe; that is undeniable. We took and modified, each as we could, in our own way, the language we speak today. We were colonies for at least three centuries. We were fully colonized in more ways than in the economic sphere alone; in contrast, for example, the story of much of colonial Africa is an episode of incomplete colonization.

If our culture is European in origin and formation, we should accept that it belongs partly to "Western Culture". This is a term so familiar and so abused that it may seem unnecessary to pause and meditate on it. It would appear that everyone understands its meaning in a unique way. Nevertheless, an inner urge compels me to pause and clarify, as if intuition were telling me "this is not the case". If my interpretation proves correct, it would be valid to ask if we really are or want to be considered part of "Western culture". Let me explain. "West", as in "Western culture", is not intended primarily as a specific geographical reference; it does not define a specific framework of geographical or climatic conditions with which other cultural references tend to be associated (Africa, Latin America, Europe or cultures of tropical lands, for example). As a general reference to geographical situation, "Western" is of no use for it depends on the geographical position of the user. Is "Western culture" more than European culture? Of course it is; yet not altogether. It includes Europe and America, although not always all of Europe (is South Africa considered part of Western societies?). Thus, "Western" probably means a mixture (or union?) of Christian and European in origin. It is a term of an accommodating nature, with strong political connotations. "Western" has today an almost mystical meaning with a medieval flavour, oriented towards creating the political and military unity of certain states. Stressing the common values, myths, ways of life, etc, the texture of culture has always served a unifying purpose. This is one, if not the function, of culture. In our case, in this century, this loose concept of Western culture was first utilized to face the threat of the East, personified since the Second World War by the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, and more recently, given their economic success, by Japan and other countries of the Asian rim of the Pacific Basin, or the "evil" behaviour of some Islamic countries. The insistence on the assumed cultural unity of a set of nations under the banner of Western culture seems to resemble a new modern crusade. It is "us" against "them" (11). This usage of the concept of Western culture, so charged with political and demagogical traits, is probably a child of this century (a mere speculation) (12). Roman culture, given a similar political need, would probably have invented the concept of Southern cultures (in fact Mediterranean cultures), for its threats came from the barbarians of the North, not from the

East. Even the medieval European world, frequently at war with the neighbouring Asian nations, did not conceive a struggle between East and West; theirs was a conflict of Christianity versus non-Christianity, equally represented by Turks, Ottomans, Huns or Tartars. Few would dispute, I think, that Western culture is a complex heterogeneous body of cultures (some would say subcultures, national and even intranational, as with ethnic-cultural minorities), each trying to maintain or gain identity and to differentiate itself from others. The West which was (and still is, but in a different sense) a collection of competing empires, is today a culture. British, French, Spanish, Italian, North American or Australian cultures appear to be aspects of a unique body called Western culture. Can Latin American culture be considered or does it wish to be considered a part of this Western culture? Some would answer yes, some no; some would say we have been a part of it, although on the periphery, but we are not now or will not be in the future. It is true that at the beginning of the century some Latin American countries, like Argentina, would have liked to be an extension of Europe. But the idea of **synthesis** has prevailed: we are neither East nor West, but our own.

In Latin America, although the Indian heritage (and in some countries the vivid, exuberant, black as well) is still strong, on the whole the dominant cultural texture is that of the mestizos, the cross breeds (13). Our culture is closer to Western culture (that is to say, to the European tradition) than to any other; perhaps today it is closer to that part of it as represented by the United States. As such, as a product of mestization, it is a **young** culture. Indeed, since the beginning of this century it has been, an **adolescent** culture, and as such, it has the identity problems of adolescents. It knows it has a future, but not exactly what it wants this future to be. It dreams of itself as the great future synthesis of cultures, sometimes even assigning itself the role of saviour of the highest universal values. It is the racial melting pot that could become the land of the "cosmic race" of José Vasconcelos (1881-1959; Mexico), which would come to fulfill the "divine mission of America". This new and future "cosmic race" had to be in America, but in as much as Anglo America operates mostly on the principle of the segregation of races and Latin America on the principle of cross-breeding, it had to be South of the Rio Grande. Latin America has a long tradition of being "future"; it has always been and still is a "promise". But it has also been incapable of giving matter or substance to its being "future". We have told ourselves so many times that the future will be ours, that we have almost come to believe it to the extent that a **passive, contemplative**, attitude prevails, a kind of waiting for the promised land (as if it was granted as a divine right and we did not have to work for it).

Until the first decades of the 20th century, the importance of anything non-European resided in what it could mean for Europe. Peoples and their cultures existed only through the European mind, and were given or denied value only according to their relation to it. As Ortega y Gasset put it, any cultural forms outside the European were only "marginal forms of the human, with no other sense but to underline -even more- the central and substantial character of the European evolution" (14). In fact, during the first decades after the discovery of America, Europeans asked themselves if Americans, the "perfect savages" could be included as part of the human race. According to Oswald Spengler, non-European cultures were ignored because they had no connection with the cultural patterns of the European (15).

Even for authors such as Max Scheler, who rejects the idea of judging the evolution of humanity's knowledge as a whole by looking at a small piece of the achievements of the modern West, the "old countries across the sea" (of which only the United States deserves to be mentioned by him) "are but a cultural state of Europe" (16), though he grants them a more or less autonomous development. At the most, the old European, in an attitude almost unchanged in its general contemporary version, could perhaps grant a place to the great cultures of China and India; perhaps even to the Mayas and Incas. From the beginning of this century, the United States, with a growing role in the international scenario and its military, economic and political strength, forced its way into a European recognition of its specific cultural traits as something different from the culture of the old continent. Beyond that, the common contemporary European is almost as ignorant of Latin America or Africa as his ancestors were at the time of discovery and colonization. For both Europe and the United States any reference to America is to a powerful USA. The rest of America, Latin America, is the unknown backyard of what is seen as America. In cultural references, common symbols and metaphors, Latin America and Africa are only part of the periphery. Except for, maybe, some of their resources and as potential markets, they are seen as lacking strategic importance in any meaningful way. According to this Western cultural ethnocentric view, the culture of Latin America can only play the role of a species - and a not too successful one at that - rather a second-hand copy of Western culture, sprinkled with Indian and African touches; and the culture of Africa remains by and large a collection of tribal (hence "inferior") cultures, to be studied as if they were a living museum of very old evolutionary stages in the progress of humanity. The serious business of modern Western culture is that of understanding, rationalizing and taming, through science and technology, that powerful and mystifying entity called nature. Western culture presupposes that this must also be the main drive of any other culture, and judges and interprets it by this standard, forgetting that different cultures recognize and live different subjective realities. Just as according to Bergson there are different possible forms of cerebration, so there are different possible ways of conceptualizing life.

In this context, it seems natural (and it is a frequent practice) to confront Latin American cultural traits with those of Anglo America. Patrick Romanell, born in the United States and of Italian origin, attempted it by using aesthetic categories (17); for him, in Anglo America there prevails an epic feeling of life; in Latin America a **tragic feeling of life**. Without falling into mere historicism, he underlines the differences of influences which the two Americas have had: The United States comes from the Reformation, European liberalism, British empirism, modern science and the Industrial Revolution; Latin American culture constitutes a more balanced hybrid of Indian, black and European cultures, and, with regard to the latter, comes from Spanish thought, the Counter Reformation and all its consequences. When it separated from England, the United States did not break with its past; on the contrary, it affirmed what it had been and what it wanted to be. The independence of Latin America was the negation of what it had been since the 16th Century; it was not the inauguration of a set of national projects but the adaptation of a universal ideology, totally alien to our past (18).

The epic soul of Anglo America fights ceaselessly to conquer external obstacles; religious and political expressions of its epic feeling are the Puritan and democratic traditions of the United

States. Anglo America is pragmatic, oriented to factual matters (quantity), and to the problems of knowledge. It acts to domesticate nature; it rewards success and having determined a problem, it must solve it, and solve it to its satisfaction. It has "a rendezvous with destiny" (Franklin D Roosevelt). The Latin American tragic soul, on the other hand, fights equally strongly to conquer itself, split between the values and ideals of its Precolombian heritage and its European conquerors; soaked in Catholic tradition, it questions the essence of failure. It is basically inspired by social behaviours and problems; it is more spiritual and oriented towards a nonsystematic, intuitive mode of thought. It values the humanities and has great sensibility, tending to qualify rather than quantify, deriving from it competence for the arts. It has a "rendez-vous with death" (Alan Seeger, USA poet (19). Anglo America is "the image of everything we are not... in its present we could see our future. Indiscreet mirror; each time we asked it for our image, as did the stepmother in the story, it showed us that of the other" (20). According to Leopoldo Zea, "Anglo America boasts of being the future of Western culture. All its propaganda is animated by that eagerness. It tries to make in America a second Europe of greater dimensions. The Latin American does not hide his feeling of inferiority. On the contrary, he exhibits it, he is continually denigrating himself".

Latin American history is a continuous effort to live by leaping forward in stages of development. Having arrived late at the "banquet of civilization", it has to imagine it can shorten the stages; it has to try to move faster than Europe and the United States, or faster than Japan and the Asian Tigers. It is perpetually catching up. And yet, paradoxically, its secret "is not to arrive earlier, but to remain where we are" (21). As in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, this is a strange region "where you have to run as fast as you can to remain in the same place". As a result, one of our watchwords seems to be improvisation; we react quickly and adapt flexibly to changing conditions (though frequently with less than satisfactory results); and when improvisation becomes a habit, irresponsible behaviour becomes the norm. We live in a permanent metamorphosis, in a constant abrupt change of skin (not of substance). The Indian tradition was killed by the Conquest; abolition of the colonial era was decreed with our independence; rural traditions were mowed down by modernity and progress. Each successive plastic surgery performed on our cities preserves less and less of the old. We live as a constant negation of ourselves. As Alberto Zum Felde put it (22): "Our destiny is to proceed by destroying ourselves in order to realize ourselves... . Becoming what we will be, by sacrificing what we are; that is our law". Ours is a reality of plasticity; the fresh clay of an adolescent culture, which preserves part of the adventurous Spanish spirit. Economic plasticity; migratory plasticity; vocational plasticity. We value, above all, the moment; we are always hunting for the instantaneous expression of values in an effort to avoid the imminent; instant rewards or instant relief, not constancy, are our motivators. And in changing, intuition, more than knowledge, is our guide. In our preference for temporal immediacy we throw ourselves into dreams of projects without paying much attention to our realizations. In our tempo, change tends to be a total reordering not a soft, smooth, thoughtfully planned change of economic model, but an abrupt switching from an all-virtuoso import-substitution model to a now all-virtuoso export-promotion model; from closed economic fortresses where the state tended to suppress the civil society, to open

economies and privatization processes at world record speeds; radical changes without preserving the part of the old models which is still of value. To adjust a law, "here [in Latin America] a whole new Constitution is voted" (23). Each new government goes in a new direction. We live from surprise to surprise, plastically adapting to sudden change.

Latin American culture is also, for most people, a culture for survival. We share this cultural characteristic with many others. Some African and Asian nations lead the way. Behavioural codes are accommodated to the struggle of living until the next day, adding to the feeling of temporal immediacy. Reality is no longer the totality in time and space, but the here and now. Plasticity as a way of life is imposed by the need to survive. The culture of opulence and consumption, of paste-board like legality, the freedom and individuality of wealthy nations is paralleled by the culture of survival, of injustice and disparity, of communal effort that almost resembles a society, of authoritarianism. Democracy is no longer informed participation guided by ideological principles, but an obvious vote market. He who gives me more today will have my strongest support today. Party loyalties lack significance; tomorrow is another day. Options are limited. Projects with medium or long-term rates of return mean little. The evolutionist "survival of the fittest" can actually be seen day-in and day-out in the jungle of life. The order of categories of values is turned upside down by the urgency to satisfy basic needs. The proverb "Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today" becomes "Do tomorrow as much as you can leave over from today". Extended families are an insurance premium. Resignation and fatality become part of the pathos of life. As the Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti writes (24): ... "Here below, the available hunger reaches for the bitter fruits of that which is decided by others"...

A historical cultural tradition of Latin America is that of concentration and centralization. Concentration of power and decisions, of wealth, of people; a culture of the few substituting the whole; a land of monopolies. Political centralism is in Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, the reality of realities. We distil centralization from both our Indian and Spanish-Portuguese heritage. Since the time of Izcóatl we have lived under the dictates of strong central powers, our "philanthropic ogres" (25), which project themselves as the totality of our nations, including their past, present and futures. We are people of "caudillos". With a poor distribution of wealth (extreme examples of which are Brazil and Mexico), Latin America is a territory of absurd disparities and contrasts. The image, true or false, it does not really matter, is that a few families own and control it. Exports are concentrated in a few products, which are exported to a few major clients. Production and employment are concentrated in a few huge firms, regardless of the economic sector. Agricultural production is concentrated in a modern sector, where the majority of small subsistence producers do not participate, and it is dominated by only a handful of products. Population is concentrated in a few major cities. Life in these cities concentrates most of the social, cultural and institutional facilities. One could continue almost ad nauseam.

In spite of all that has been said, one could argue that urban cultures of the big cities of Latin America apparently do not differ much from those which prevail in the North; or do they? Alfonso Reyes wrote around 1940, in an article about Buenos Aires (26), that the large urban

centres of all countries were called to build, in time, "an automatic chain of international relations with some independence of vernacular cultures"; far from becoming a compendium of their countries, he saw them as bases of "horizontal nations", as cultural bridges between nations. In his words: "The citizens of these horizontal nations understand each other better than their own neighbours and countrymen". This may be even more true today, for urban landscapes everywhere look the same; similar technologies are in use in all metropolitan areas, although infrastructures are less developed in those belonging to southern countries. But between these "horizontal nations" of North and South there are also growing cultural differences. Most big Latin American cities are inundated by migrations from rural areas (an exception would be, for example, Buenos Aires); an important part of their population is made up of first-generation rural immigrants, frequently living in groups according to their origin, who transplant their rural culture to the urban habitat. Most large Latin American cities are expanding at an accelerated rate, faster than was the case during the last century for European cities. Meanwhile in Europe and in parts of the United States migration from the city is accomplishing the opposite; that is, urbanizing rural communities.

Many of the assertions made up to now are certainly impressionistic and partial; in the study of cultures, Latin American or not, it is particularly true that he who wants to have the last word, the whole truth, is a fool. The basic traits of Latin American culture which I have tried to sketch have many subvarieties; some of these reach the level of true subcultures. Most are an improvised means of resistance. As ways of life their timespans are very limited, they are more a matter of fashion. Few of them touch the core of the prevailing set of fundamental values. Some characteristics of these subcultures or cultural varieties are incorporated into the mainstream culture, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently. But cultures cannot be improvised; like any seed they need time and fertilizers to produce fruit. Most end by being assimilated. Perhaps the environmental combinations to which they respond change faster than they do, denying them the time to reap. The more the mainstream culture assimilates them, the more it changes in a creative way; the more it acquires its own spirit. The mix of cultural varieties always colours the mainstream culture, perhaps in an unnoticeable way, until, with the passage of time, the basic values of the latter come into question. Cumulative contradictions end up in crisis, and these lead to the emergence of alternative models of organization, of behaviour, of relations. Thus culture creates and recreates itself. We return, but not to the point of departure; we return as something different from what we were when we departed. Some of the conditioning elements of Latin American culture will certainly change in the future; perhaps all of them. Man is a historical entity, that is, a being whose essence is change. And Culture is Man. Latin Americans of today are not the same as those of yesterday and those of tomorrow will not be the same as we are. However, some basic cultural determinants will certainly change at a much slower pace than the rest, giving us the opportunity to consider them as almost invariable. Our origin and mestization will remain; by and large so will our geography (although we have tremendously increased our destruction capacity and could in the future provoke irreversible changes of great magnitude). Our historical framework will grow and could be reinterpreted once more with the passage of time. What we are and what we live today and tomorrow will be part of our history a day after tomorrow. But what today is history will still be there guiding our

culture. Today's history will be part of tomorrow's history, more remote but ever present. A second group of cultural determinants will change at a moderately slow pace. With time, if huge abnormalities are avoided, Latin American culture will cease to be adolescent and will become a young adult. Temporal immediacy and associated traits, such as improvisation, could gradually be replaced by longer term views of evolution, and instant rewards by more permanent satisfiers. Religion and spirituality or the predominance of political life could either be modified or replaced. The same is true for most other basic values. But the truth is that we do not know enough about this changing world to imagine its future rationally. Other factors affecting culture will change faster. Technology and economy will most likely be among them (27). We can speculate as to the specific cultural characteristics they will favour or contribute to suppress. In any case, perhaps in the future we will have discovered a little more of what we are by disentangling a few knots in the complexities of Latin American culture. But if Latin America is "like a foetus of a future star moved by the waves of divine causes" (28) we should leave room in our speculations for the ideal. We will still be "future", but hopefully with teleological substance.

Notes and references

- (1) An appropriate definition of the essence of culture is proposed by Víctor Díaz Arciniega in the prologue of ALFONSO REYES: VOCACION DE AMERICA; ANTOLOGIA (Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1989): appropriate because it stresses the social nature of culture, because it implies a dynamic flow of forces, and because it underlines acceptability by the social corpus.
- (2) See Roy Wagner, THE INVENTION OF CULTURE, revised and expanded edition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, 168 pp.
- (3) Perhaps it is only our natural fear of the unknown, of the unstable, which makes us fear rapid transitions. Those who today are forced to starve and suffer easily curable diseases fear change to a lesser degree. A new world can hardly be a worse world for a great number of Third World inhabitants. Whether the world is deteriorating or not must be left for a different occasion. Chaos, or what we perceive as chaos, is generally a transitory state to a new order. It was either Brecht or Nietzsche, I believe, who said that one must be a chaos if one wishes to give birth to a dancing star.
- (4) The historian Edmundo O'Gorman puts it beautifully: "America appeared on the horizon of Christian culture at a time when, with the declining Middle Ages, Man began to be left without God" (Edmundo O'Gorman, LA INVENCION DE AMERICA, No 63, Lecturas Americanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1984).
- (5) There are several versions as to the origin of the name, obviously honouring Amerigo Vespucci. Alfonso Reyes, a well informed and authorized source, attributes the coining of America to Martin Waldseemüller, a printer of Friburg, who used it in a cartographic work of the erudites of Saint-Dié. We say almost unintentionally, without paying much attention to the fact, for a few years later, even when it had gained some popularity, the same Waldseemüller did not use it in his following cartographic works (ALFONSO REYES: VOCACION DE AMERICA; ANTOLOGIA, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1989).
- (6) The Chilean Lastoria uses it by mid-19th Century as synonymous with Spanish America (Elsa Cecilia Frost, LAS CATEGORIAS DE LA CULTURA MEXICANA, Colección Nuestra América, No 24, Centro Coordinador y Difusor de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México DF, 1990).
- (7) Coined by Carlos Calvo, in charge of the business affairs of Paraguay in Paris, where between 1864 and 1867 he published his *"Annales Historiques de la Révolution de l'Amérique Latine"* (Elsa Cecilia Frost, IBID).

- (8) Germán Arciniegas, *"Las cuatro Americas"*, CUADERNOS AMERICANOS, No 3, 1949, pp 7-17.
- (9) ALFONSO REYES: VOCACION DE AMERICA; ANTOLOGIA, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1989.
- (10) José Emilio Pacheco, *"La patria perdida"*, in EN TORNO A LA CULTURA NACIONAL, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Secretaría de Educación Pública, México DF, 1976, p 17.
- (11) For example, the way the news was reported in Mexico during the recent war against Iraq seemed to suggest that we should join the Western allies side simply because it was a matter of us, sons of the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition (thus, no questions allowed), against them, the extremists of Islam.
- (12) During the 6th and 7th Centuries Saint Isidoro de Sevilla divided the world into East and West (the latter including Europe and Africa, mainly its Mediterranean shores), as opposing sides according to religious unity. By 800 AD the Church was divided in two (Roman Catholic in the West and Greek Orthodox in the East); a final rupture of the two occurred in 1054 AD, breaking a strong link between East and West. It is interesting to note that Greece, the source of much of the European and, hence, Western culture, was generally excluded from the West. The West was then a well-defined (if changing) part of Europe and conflict between East and West was explained in cosmological terms. The West was the Latin, Catholic world; the rest was the East.
- (13) Not to be misinterpreted, there is clearly still a strong Indian presence in the region. There are a few million inhabitants of the region that only speak an Indian language and several more million that are bilingual (an Indian language plus Spanish). Guaraní is the second official language in Paraguay; Mayan is de facto the second language of Yucatan, Mexico. Indian languages undeniably influence the Spanish used in most Latin American countries, both in words and usage; and language is closely connected to culture. Further, some Indian communities still preserve even their own forms of government, ruling in parallel with the national governments. In short, there is a large Indian culture alive in Latin America. Not all is mestizo land. Rodolfo Stavenhagen's paper at this meeting complements our ideas, placing more emphasis on the Indian point of view.
- (14) José Ortega y Gasset, LAS ATLANTIDAS, en OBRAS COMPLETAS, Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1953, 3rd edition.
- (15) Oswald Spengler, *"Der Untergang des Abendlandes"* (1918-22; *"The Decline of the West"*, 1926-28).
- (16) Max Scheler, *"Sociología del saber"*, Revista de Occidente Argentina, Buenos Aires, 1947.

- (17) Patrick Romanell, LA FORMACION DE LA MENTALIDAD MEXICANA, Colmex-Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1954.
- (18) Octavio Paz, EL OGRO FILANTROPICO, Joaquín Mortiz, México DF, 1979.
- (19) Patrick Romanell, *"La Formación de la mentalidad en México"*, Colmex-Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1954.
- (20) Octavio Paz, EL OGRO FILANTROPICO, Joaquín Mortiz, México DF, 1979.
- (21) Octavio Paz, Ibid.
- (22) Alberto Zum Felde, EL PROBLEMA DE LA CULTURA AMERICANA, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1943.
- (23) ALFONSO REYES: VOCACION DE AMERICA, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1989, p 342.
- (24) Mario Benedetti, *"El sur también existe"*.
- (25) Octavio Paz, EL OGRO FILANTROPICO, Joaquín Mortiz, México DF, 1979.
- (26) ALFONSO REYES: VOCACION DE AMERICA; ANTOLOGIA, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México DF, 1989.
- (27) Examples of how these could influence culture were discussed at the meeting of the Working Group on the Futures of Culture, organized by UNESCO in collaboration with Eleonora Masini and held in Paris, France, January 9-10th, 1990.
- (28) Leopoldo Lugones, *"Montañas de oro"*.

V. CULTURAL STRUGGLES AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

by Rodolfo Stavenhagen (*)

To outside observers several facts seem to characterize the Latin American region as a cultural area: its basic cultural unity, its identity as part of so-called Western civilization, and its early incorporation into the process of economic development and social and political modernization (when compared to other countries of the Third World) (See Note 1, page 98). As regards its basic unity, scholars point to the fact that in most countries Spanish is the official language and except for Brazil, other national languages of colonial origin are only sparsely represented in the area (Guyana, Haiti, Suriname, Belize and the small island states of the Caribbean). Also, in most countries Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion and the role of the Catholic Church has been historically important, though in recent years Protestantism has made significant inroads in the region.

Precisely because of these factors, linked to a European colonial presence of three hundred years, the Latin American elites and ruling classes have strongly identified with Western civilization since the emergence of the area's independent republics in the nineteenth century. By doing so, these elites commonly ignored and frequently denied the cultural contributions of the indigenous American peoples as well as those who were brought in slavery and servitude, mainly from Africa (numerous indentured servants were also imported from India to the Caribbean).

This important link of the local elites with the "West" created a complex web of economic, political and cultural dependency between the northern industrial centre and the Latin American periphery, which has conditioned the ambiguities of the region's development and underdevelopment to this day. In contrast to later processes of colonial implantation and decolonization in Africa and Asia, the Latin American experience has several unique features which deserve to be mentioned.

In the first place, the colonial economy took shape during the early stages of world mercantilist and capitalist expansion, thus allowing for the evolution of local structures of production and capital accumulation which did indeed set the stage for the dependency relationships which came to characterize the region as a whole, but which also allowed for the early development of endogenous structures of social domination and control within the emerging international division of labour. The relative economic unity of the region during the colonial period turned into disunity and fragmentation after political independence from

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Spain in the early nineteenth century. Celso Furtado, a Brazilian economist, writes: "The formation of a Latin American consciousness is a recent phenomenon, the result of new problems posed by the economic and social development of the region during the last three decades. Traditional development, based on the expansion of exports, transformed the countries of the region into economies which to a great extent were competitive among themselves. Because they each exported the same raw materials and imported the same manufactured products from outside the region, no economic link was established between these countries. Thus, the traditional form of development, within the framework of the international division of labour which arose during the Colonial Pact and was consolidated during the first phase of the Industrial Revolution, contributed to the consolidation of regional fragmentation." (2). Furthermore, "The integration of the region into the world economy and the corresponding ease of borrowing from abroad helped to stifle whatever potential for a local production of technology might have survived the Spanish crown's attempts at modernization in the closing decades of the colonial era, as well as to hinder the development of manufacturing experience within the Continent. (3)

Secondly, while the history of the relations between the European colonists and the indigenous peoples has been varied and complex, in general a dominant "settler" society was superimposed on the native populations, thus creating a new kind of syncretic culture which resulted in the mixed or "mestizo" societies that have received the attention of so many of the region's scholars and politicians.

Moreover, numerous ethnic and racial strands have contributed to the composition of the area's population. In the Caribbean during the sixteenth century and in the interior of South America up to the early twentieth century indigenous peoples were the victims of genocide. Many were massacred and exterminated: an often neglected chapter of the region's history. The remaining indigenous peoples, particularly in the Andean and Mesoamerican highlands, were conquered and integrated into the colonial system. After the extermination of the indigenous populations of the Caribbean, African slaves were brought to work the sugar plantations of the islands and the adjacent areas (northeastern coast of South America, principally). In later years, after the abolition of the African slave trade, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, East Indian indentured plantation workers were brought to the British colonies in the Caribbean region. The Iberian colonizers and settlers represented an unending population stream during three centuries of colonial rule. Again, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, numerous European immigrants from southern and central Europe settled in numerous Latin American countries, particularly in the Southern Cone. More recently, immigrants from Asia (China and Japan) have added their contribution to the ethnic make-up of the region. In fact, Latin America has a long and chequered history of immigration which has resulted in a heterogeneous, multiethnic, culturally diversified population.

Another distinguishing feature of Latin American social structure has been the relatively rigid and hierarchical stratification system based originally on the rural landowning patterns (large estates and plantations, subordinate peasant labour). This in turn became associated with a

vertically ordered political structure, characterized by "caciquismo" and "caudillismo" (personal charismatic leadership and power wielding by elite strongmen) and the prevalence in all spheres of life of a patron-client relationship, which has been a perennial obstacle to the emergence of democratic political institutions. The rise of mass politics in the twentieth century and its frequent expression through populist parties and regimes, alternating in power with repressive military dictatorships, has only strengthened this hierarchical system.

Ever since the XVIth Century, European writers have been fascinated with America. At that time, they populated the continent with fantastic imaginary beings, and for a number of philosophers it was the source of Utopias and dreams and new universal civilizations. For the original Americans, however, conquest and colonialism was a long, drawn-out nightmare from which many of them have not yet awakened.

To speak about culture in a region as vast and internally diversified as Latin America poses from the outset some conceptual problems. There are different ways of conceiving culture. Firstly, we may refer to culture as the accumulation of the material and spiritual artifacts of a society. In this sense, culture is seen as a conglomerate of "goods", as "capital", as patrimony and heritage. This is the most common way of using the term culture, as when we speak of the cultural heritage of a country, or when we speak of "advanced" and "lesser" cultures in terms of their "cultural goods" or their level of "cultural development".

A second way of looking at culture refers to a complex system of values, signs and meanings that are shared by the members of a specific society or ethnic group, in other words, a people or a nation, and which distinguishes them from other similar kinds of groups. In this sense, culture can be seen as a system of communication, as a "guide for living", a common code of behaviour that sets "we" apart from "they" and that establishes boundaries of a special kind around the cultural group or community; invisible boundaries which may at times be as strong and impermeable as brick walls, or conversely which may shake and topple as a result of cultural change. Cultural change, in turn, may be the result of internal dynamics, of external interactions or of outside aggression and destruction. Latin America's cultures have had their share of each of these options.

Thirdly, the concept culture also refers to the creative intellectual and artistic activities of individuals and collectivities in historical process. In this sense, culture is to be seen as a dynamic and innovative process whereby groups react to the challenges of their external physical and social environment, and in the process transform themselves.

Urban and industrial modernization came relatively late to Latin America, if compared with the countries of the North. The rural roots of contemporary Latin America can still be seen in the cultural ethos of the region, even if most countries are now classified as predominantly urban (but only in the last few decades). (4). The conflict between urban and rural has appeared time and again throughout the region's history and is often expressed in the literature. As a result of massive internal migrations and the rapid urbanization of recent decades (particularly since the fifties), some observers have noted the "ruralization" or

"peasantization" of Latin America's cities, by which they mean the fact that the life-styles, aspirations and concerns of millions of people undergoing rapid social change are still linked to the ways of life of the traditional rural environment.

The year 1992 has been proclaimed the fifth centenary of the "Discovery of America" and numerous governments have joined together to carry out official celebrations of this event which undoubtedly changed the course of history. But whereas some would celebrate the expansion of Western civilization, the conversion of the heathen, the first modern steps towards the integration of a true world economy, others believe that there is little to celebrate and more to meditate. The black populations of the Americas remember over three centuries of slavery and slave trade giving rise to racism and racial discrimination of which they continue to be the victims to this day. The indigenous peoples remind the world that the "Discovery" and ulterior conquest and colonization of the Americas was the beginning of their genocide and ethnocide, and numerous indigenous organizations during the last few years have proclaimed that they shall commemorate five hundred years of resistance to exploitation and oppression. It is significant that half a millenium after the European invasion of the Americas the ideological battle over the true meaning of this so-called "Encounter of Two Worlds" is still being fought. (5)

Today's cultural conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean can hardly be understood without reference to the history of the European colonial empires in the area. The conquest of the Aztec and Inca empires as well as the Mayas and other less well-known cultures by the Spaniards at the beginning of the sixteenth century marked the beginning of the hegemony of the Spanish empire in the Western world during more than a century and a half, and at the same time it presaged its future and inevitable demise. Spain was the first state in modern times to organize and administer a vast colonial system during three centuries which functioned at three levels: economic, political and cultural. Though Spain was later displaced by the Netherlands, France and England as a world power, the Spanish seaborne empire definitely marked the historical evolution of America and the world. (6)

Spain first occupied the Caribbean islands and after a brief economic boom in this region, the core of Spanish power moved to the mainland, and the Antilles practically reverted to a subsistence economy of little relevance to the Spanish colonial system. Only at the beginning of the seventeenth century were the Dutch, French and English able to dispossess Spain of a part of its Caribbean possessions and challenge its naval power in the "Spanish Main". The principal and most durable impact of Spanish domination of the islands during a whole century was the almost complete extermination of the native populations. The needed labour for the new colonial plantation economy was later supplied by the African slave trade and indentured servants from India.

The Spanish empire prospered after the military destruction of the Aztec and Inca states and the progressive absorption of the peripheric populations into the new colonial structures. Some of these peoples maintained a vigorous and permanent resistance to colonial domination and they were never defeated by the colonial armies. They only lost their

independence or were exterminated in the nineteenth century during the period of consolidation of the independent republican states.

In nuclear America, the heartland of the "higher" civilizations, a rigid colonial administration firmly controlled the economic and political system for three centuries. The immediate results were not long in coming. Within the first hundred years after the conquest the native population was decimated by epidemics, mistreatment, exploitation and ecological devastation, and declined by 80% according to some estimates. One author speaks of "a demographic disaster without counterpart in the history of mankind... The causes were many... The effects of the many migrations caused by the presence of the Europeans and their prodigal use of Indian manpower... the expansion of European livestock... (and) infectious diseases brought from the Old World... It has taken roughly four centuries for the Amerindians to fully recover in absolute numbers from the demographic loss suffered in the sixteenth century." (7). The colonial economy (husbandry, mining, cash crop agriculture) produced the disorganization of the subsistence economy of the indigenous peoples and led to periodic agricultural crises and famines. (8). The Indians' forced labour depopulated the villages. Forced religious conversion and the imposition of a foreign faith destroyed the ideological bases of the indigenous cultures, just as the expropriation and concentration of land in the hands of the colonizer destroyed the ecological bases of the agrarian communities and transformed the indigenous peasantry into a class of servile labourers for the large landholder and the Church. It was during colonial times that the highly stratified and hierarchical social and economic structure took shape which persisted for over three hundred years, well into the modern period of the independent republics.

From the beginning of the colonial system humanist voices were raised against the "destruction of the Indies" (Bartolomé de las Casas) and in favour of the rights of the Indians to defend themselves and to exist as sovereign nations, but these voices were silenced or ignored for reasons of state. Spanish philosophers and theologians held lengthy debates about the nature of the "New World" and its natives, (Francisco de Vitoria, Ginés Sepúlveda) about the moral and religious justification of the conquest and the subordination of the Indians to the will of the Crown. Later they developed theories about the moral underpinnings of the state and the characteristics of governance. In this the Spanish philosophers distinguished themselves from the political philosophers in the United Kingdom who were more concerned with the social contract and the civil liberties of individuals. These two approaches to political philosophy still condition current debates in Latin America. (9)

The economic and social polarization of the colonial system also fashioned a cultural polarization. On the one hand there was the culture of the Spaniards and the dominant *criollos* ("creoles", the word refers not to the mixture of whites and blacks as in the Caribbean, but to the local descendants of the early Spanish settlers who acquired a different identity from that of the inhabitants of the metropolis). On the other hand there developed the various popular cultures of the subordinate ethnic groups (natives, blacks, mestizos and the various mixed "castes" that resulted from intermarriage and miscegenation). The

conversion of the Indians modified their religious life profoundly, and the indigenous popular and folk faiths became a syncretism of Iberian Catholicism, Prehispanic religions and African cults. It has been noted that the indigenous peoples adopted the formal and superficial aspects of colonial Catholicism for obvious reasons of self-defence and survival (the Inquisition weighed heavily on daily lives), but basically maintained their native beliefs and practices. This syncretism can be seen in ceremonies, rituals, beliefs and liturgy, as well as in the wealth of folk legends and myths. Many ancient practices of the Indians were forbidden and persecuted by the ecclesiastical authorities, but they were practised in secret, became modified and adapted to new circumstances even into modern times. Something similar occurred among the African religions which the slaves brought to Brazil and which to this day are practised with great vitality providing the country's popular cultures with their own specific identities (candomblé, macumba etc.) Needless to say, popular Catholicism and voodoo have combined to give Haiti a particular character as well.

Colonial domination also made its impact on the organization of territory and space. In Cuzco, Quito and Mexico the conquerors built their capitals on the ruins of the ancient indigenous urban centre, a politically astute move inasmuch as the city controlled the territory. In other areas, the European settlers founded towns and cities, forced the dispersed population to concentrate there and dominated the surrounding countryside from this new urban centre in which invariably the governor's palace, the military barracks and the church surrounding the central square became the material expression of the power structure. These were centres of administration and government, markets and trade, sites of schools or universities, tribunals and bishoprics. Here civilian and religious power, the market and the military, the public and private spheres joined in magnificent union. Since those times, in Latin America, the city has dominated the countryside, even though up to recently the agrarian society and the peasantry had profoundly marked the rest of society. Given the pre-eminence of urban life in the political and economic domination of Latin America, some authors have underlined the existence of two cultures, the urban and the rural, which have competed for hegemony in Latin America to the present day. These contrasts have become the subject of sociological analysis.

Theories of the dual society are fashionable in the contemporary sociology of development. They underline the contrast between the urban and the rural, the civilized and the folk, the modern and the traditional. The indigenous cultures are all characterized as pre-modern, archaic, underdeveloped. Modernization theory dictates that they must change and incorporate the values of the market, capital accumulation, economic growth, privatization, individualism and the profit motive. At the same time, personal loyalties and identities must be displaced from the local community to the wider society, and particularly to the modern nation-state. The tendency from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, from the particularistic to the universalistic, is seen as an overarching generalizing process that must necessarily involve the whole of society, and especially the "different" non-dominant cultures and peoples.

At the beginning of the colonial period, the Christian missionaries studied the indigenous languages and utilized them for the purpose of evangelization. Primers, missals and

dictionaries of the principal native languages were prepared and printed. In the special schools created for the sons of the native chiefly families (the Spaniards wanted to create an indigenous aristocracy at their own service), these languages were taught. In Paraguay, guaraní even became in time the national vehicular language. But in 1770 Emperor Charles III of Spain decreed that henceforth the use of Indian languages in civilian and religious affairs was to be banned and thus the native tongues were reduced to the sphere of daily life in the indigenous family and community. Thus the polarization of culture into two well-defined social strata was consolidated: the dominators and the dominated.

Ever since the early sixteenth century America has been identified in the European mind as the site of real and possible Utopias. In western Mexico (Michoacan), Friar Vasco de Quiroga wanted to create an ideal society inspired by Thomas More's Utopia. Later, the Jesuits established their theocratic communities in Paraguay, only to be expelled from America towards the end of the eighteenth century. The contradictions between the Christian preachings of the friars and the bleak social and economic reality of everyday life for the colonized indigenous populations increased over time. In many parts of the continent the indigenous resistance to colonization never ceased or did so only quite late. After the demographic disaster of the sixteenth century, the indigenous population increased again slowly. Up to very recently, in most Andean and Mesoamerican countries it was always the oppressed numerical majority, albeit a political and sociological "minority". The collective memory of their lost liberty and sovereignty was kept alive amongst the indigenous peoples by their oral traditions, their clandestine religious cults, as well as the images of ruined cities of ancient splendour. Linked as they were to the injustices, the oppression and the exploitation of colonialism, these remembrances gave rise to numerous millenarian and messianic social and political movements which at times were capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of partisans and adherents. They were, however, invariably and cruelly crushed by the colonial governments.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, European ideas of the Enlightenment as well as the democratic principles of the American revolution penetrated Latin America's elites. The latter's political consciousness was awakened through the influence of the French revolution, the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and political upheaval in the latter country at the turn of the nineteenth century. As has happened so often in history, the popular masses arose in arms at the call of the leaders of the independence movements (Bolívar, Hidalgo and others) but they did not reap many benefits from the demise of the Spanish empire. The local ruling classes, particularly the landowners, were able to transform political independence into a victory over the popular classes. Political independence was appropriated by the old and new ruling classes of the landowning oligarchy and the nascent urban bourgeoisie. The place of the Spaniards who were expelled or emigrated was soon taken over by merchants and traders from France, England and the United States who, along with their wares and capital, also brought their European cultural models.

Political independence posed an enormous challenge to the new rulers: how to integrate coherent societies and polities, how to forge new nations, how to be accepted by the

"civilized nations" of the world, how to govern heterogeneous and dispersed populations in a vast and hostile geography. The answer was the development of a nationalist ideology, not exempt of idealism and romanticism, which characterized political philosophy and the educational systems in Latin America well into the twentieth century.

Latin America's intellectuals took it upon themselves in the nineteenth century to build their national cultures or rather, as it might be said today, to invent them out of the ruins of the Spanish empire and out of the multitude of regional and fragmented micro-societies which made up the new republics but which could hardly be considered as finished and coherent nations. The liberals and positivists were inspired by the United States and northern Europe; the conservatives looked for their model in traditional Spain and France. Both currents however had in common that they spoke for the interests of the minority ruling classes and in that they partook of an elitist, limited vision of society. The ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the Latin American nations was considered to be an obstacle to national integration and progress.

The disintegration of the colonial economy and administration contributed to the fragmentation and atomization of social and economic space. The area's reintegration into the world market was only to come again years later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of capitalism. National society continued to be economically and socially highly stratified despite the adoption of formally democratic institutions. The landed oligarchy based its power on the concentration of land ownership and this only increased with the introduction of new export crops and the attendant exploitation of rural labour. *Caudillismo*, *caciquismo* and patron-client relationships became the dominant forms of political domination and social control and are now a permanent element of political culture in Latin America.

The intellectual elites despaired of the contradictions between the "formal" country (republican, democratic, institutional, legalistic) and the "real" country (backward, violent, hierarchical, traditional). They soon adopted racially and geographically deterministic ideologies, borrowed from Europe and the United States, to attempt to explain the perennial instability and backwardness of their nations. They no longer blamed the colonial heritage of Spain, but also the hostile geographic environment with its mountains, jungles and deserts and, above all, the ethnic characteristics of the Indian stratum of the population which was still the majority in many of the republics at the beginning of the twentieth century. Liberals and conservatives agreed that the indigenous peoples and cultures which still existed in Latin America had to disappear.

The national project which these ideologues and early "nation-builders" generated excluded the indigenous peoples. In the Southern Cone countries this vision turned into genocidal military campaigns against the Indians, in the service of the landowners and the European settlers, reminiscent of the American Frontier. In other regions the official language and culture was imposed on the Indian peasantry by way of the religious and state sponsored educational systems. Positive national law became the only recognized legal system, the

traditional political and legal authorities and institutions of the indigenous communities, as well as their communally held lands, were disregarded and taken over by the state or turned over to private landed interests. By accelerating a rapid process of assimilation and incorporation of indigenous peoples into the new nations being formed, the cultural destruction of the Indians was hastened. This was carried out in the name of progress and civilization. Today we call this process **ethnocide** (see below). In the new national culture invented and fostered by the urban elites there was no place for the cultures of the native, aboriginal peoples of America.

In order to hasten the process of "nation-building" as imagined by the **criollo** governing elites, numerous countries promoted immigration from Europe. This policy coincided with the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the introduction of new export crops such as coffee and cotton which required large amounts of labour. Foreign immigration was also expected to "Westernize" and "whiten" the local populations. The racist theories which had become popular in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century provided ideological justification for such policies in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico and other countries. (A slightly different pattern emerged in the British Caribbean countries, including Guyana, where East Indian plantation labour was introduced in the nineteenth century.)

The racial ideology has by no means disappeared from the elite culture in Latin America, but for obvious reasons of recent history, it has been largely discredited. What many of the home-grown racists preferred to forget, was that in the view of the North European racial pseudo-theorists the "Latin" races themselves (to which of course these ideologues belonged) were to be considered as inferior by Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Aryan or Teutonic standards (to mention but a few of the racial categories which became politically charged value judgements). It has sometimes been stated that racism was absent from Latin American history (in contrast to the situation in the United States), and that the mixing of the races began early in colonial history. While the latter is of course true, the former is not. (10). A strong undercurrent of racist thinking characterized the cultural evolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and contributed to a cultural profile, effectively wielded by the ruling classes, from which the subordinate Indian peoples (with their languages, customs and traditions, world-view and social organization as well as artistic achievements) were practically excluded.

The major ethnic fact of the twentieth century, in the countries where the Indians had not been completely exterminated, was the rapid growth of the **mestizo**, i.e., the biologically mixed, population. The "pure" whites (if there ever was such a category at all, and of course the concept of white race itself corresponds to no known scientifically established fact), were rapidly diminishing in numbers, as was the relative proportion in the total population of the "pure" Indians. The **mestizo** population also occupied the middle rungs of the social and economic stratification system and has been increasingly identified in recent years with the growing Latin American "middle classes". It did not take long for the intellectuals to discover formerly unknown virtues in the **mestizos**. Soon, they were considered to have incorporated the best features of the two original races (the white and the Indian) which had

intervened in their make-up. They became the bearers of the new concept of nationality which evolved together with the strengthening of the nation-state. The rise of the *mestizo*, now extolled in literature, social science and political discourse, coincided with the growing political presence of middle class parties and social movements which by the mid twentieth century had practically displaced the more traditional oligarchic parties from the centre of the stage. José Vasconcelos, a Mexican philosopher and educator of the twentieth century called the *mestizos* a "cosmic race" and augured a major role for Latin America in world history. (11)

"Mestizo-America" was a concept which anthropologists liked to use in order to distinguish those countries with large Indian populations from the mainly Southern Cone countries from which the Indians had practically disappeared. The term *mestizo* nowadays refers not only to the process of racial mixture, but rather to the process of cultural syncretism or acculturation, whereby the two great cultural traditions which clashed in the sixteenth century have become meshed in a single emerging global culture, which in each one of the countries concerned is now considered to be the "national" culture. At least so goes the argument wielded by those who see in the figure of the *mestizo* the kernel of nationalism and national unity.

To the extent that the "racial" (or rather, racist) solution to the problem of ethnic and cultural diversity (as considered by the ruling elites) has fallen out of favour, emphasis has increasingly come to be placed upon cultural issues. Indigenous peoples are no longer considered to be racially inferior to whites and *mestizos*, but Indian cultures are thought to be backward, traditional and not conducive to progress and modernity. Furthermore, the existence of a diversity of Indian cultures, distinct from the dominant, Western, urban culture of the wielders of political and economic power, has been considered as undermining efforts towards national unity and development. Thus, the "solution" found by governments and social scientists in the twentieth century, has been to further what has variously been called acculturation, assimilation, incorporation or integration. For this purpose, governments have set up specialized institutions and have followed specific policies in the educational, cultural, economic and social fields designed to "integrate" the Indian populations into the so-called national mainstream.

In modern Latin America, the concept of national culture was predicated upon the idea that Indian cultures do not exist. When, as in most countries, their existence cannot be simply wished away, it was stated that they have nothing or little to do with "national" culture and that, at any rate, they have nothing or very little to contribute to national culture (their greatness, if any, lies in the historical past). Indigenous cultures, if they were recognized as such at all, were considered only as diminished remnants of their former splendour and were thought to be naturally disappearing; therefore, the best which an enlightened government could do was to hasten their demise. In this fashion, so the argument went, was not only national culture and unity strengthened but the indigenous peoples themselves were to benefit greatly in terms of material and spiritual development, modernization and progress.

Modernization, national integration and development became the political catchwords of the twentieth century and states fashioned different kinds of policies accordingly: investments, infrastructure, industrialization, urbanization, education. While in some instances national revolutionary or populist regimes attempted to transform the traditional hierarchical social structures of inequality and injustice through reformist measures such as land redistribution, or to strengthen the domestic market through import substitution policies, in most cases economic development strategies have strengthened, albeit modernized, inequalities and accentuated regional and social disparities. (12)

In the heyday of "economic development", during the two or three decades after the second world war, it was held that economic growth policies would contribute to closing the gap between the "modern" and the "traditional" sectors; the "dual society" would tend to disappear, the "backward" regions and populations would catch up with the modern, urban centre. While things have changed considerably in both the modern and the traditional sectors over the last two or three decades, in fact a new kind of polarization has developed. Economic development policies which have benefitted the new urban and rural upper classes, the new bourgeoisies, the new and fast-growing middle sectors, have hardly brought solace to millions of poor peasants and urban shanty-town dwellers.

In the sixties the so-called "modernization" paradigm in social science literature was critically reviewed by a number of Latin American social scientists and found to be wanting. Instead of the idea of some kind of unilinear development taking place, alternative models spoke of dependency, the development of underdevelopment and internal colonialism. (13)

In fact, during the years of crisis (seventies and eighties) the rich have grown richer and the poor have grown poorer in Latin America. This is shown not only in income distribution figures but also in terms of standards of living and quality of life (housing, health, education, nutrition, employment and other indicators), which have worsened in relative and sometimes even in absolute terms in most countries. (14). Economists have pointed to the fact that the eighties was a lost decade for the region; per capita incomes have dropped to the same level as in the early seventies. (15). And these average figures mask growing internal disparities. Millions of internal migrants have become marginal shanty-town dwellers with no hope for improvement within their life-times. As one observer has stated, the shanty-town has become the last stage of capitalism for large masses of the marginalized urban population in the region.

Hardest hit and most vulnerable in this process have been the indigenous peoples. Whereas in some countries Indians do represent relatively small and regionally isolated minorities, in others they make up fully half if not more of the population (Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, parts of Mexico and of Colombia). Here, the Indians are "sociological" but not numerical minorities. In all of Latin America, there are over 400 different indian ethnic groups, each with its own language and distinctive culture and way of life. They range from small bands of isolated jungle dwellers whose physical survival is constantly threatened by the advancing frontier of the national society, to the several million-strong Indian peasant societies of the Andean highlands. While estimates vary and census returns are unreliable, it

is safe to state that Indian populations today might well represent around 35 million people on the sub-continent (about 10% of the total population of Latin America), and their numbers are growing.

Assimilationist policies by governments, churches, international organizations and private associations have been fairly successful over the years and have tended to reinforce the natural integrative tendencies of the expanding market economy, means of transport and communications, the school system and other such mechanisms. Some observers during the fifties and sixties were able to predict the complete disappearance of Latin America's Indians by the end of the twentieth century. However, things have not turned out exactly that way.

By the early seventies a number of militant Indian organizations had sprung up in several parts of Latin America which in one way or another demanded a change in official policies as well as respect for their cultures and recognition of their own Indian identities. Indigenous intellectuals, who had gone through the official school systems, developed arguments for alternative cultural policies. Social scientists, many of whom had worked in the service of national governments or international organizations in the field of "indigenous affairs" had become critical of the official assimilationist ideology and posed important new issues concerning the "national question" in Latin America. It was obvious that the whole issue of "national culture" and, conversely, of cultural nationalism, had to be raised anew.

These new cultural and ideological currents did not arise in a vacuum. In the first place, they coincided with similar movements elsewhere in the world and which have been termed an "ethnic revival" by some observers. Secondly, they emerged in Latin America at a time when dissatisfaction with traditional models of economic growth and social development, which had been followed by most governments in the region over the past twenty five years or so, was great. So-called "developmentalism" (*desarrollismo*) had not provided the easy way out of poverty and backwardness which it had promised earlier, and the social, cultural and political costs of purely growth-oriented strategies was particularly high in some countries. Military coups and repressive authoritarian governments on the one hand, and on the other, revolutionary guerrilla movements and populist political parties seeking inspiration from the grass-roots, were instrumental in the search for alternative models and strategies of development. In this process it became necessary to reject the prevailing, dominant concept of national culture and to reconsider the role of the multiple Indian ethnic groups in the process of national development.

Progressively governments and public opinion became aware that the Indian peoples were not only living vestiges of some historical past to be thrown in the dustbin of history, but dynamic social forces who were demanding their rightful place in contemporary society on their own terms (and not on those decided for them by elitist intellectuals, political ideologues, government bureaucrats or foreign missionaries).

As stated before, in the currently widely held view of development, there is little place for indigenous peoples who are ethnically and culturally different from the dominant groups in

society. They are dismissed as remnants of the past, as obstacles to modernization. Ethnic attachments would be considered as non-rational, traditional, even conservative. So-called "tribal" loyalties are derided as primitive and anti-national. (16)

However, a major and as yet unresolved task in the development process is to achieve that people really do become the beneficiaries of capital investments, technological innovations and modernization in general. It is becoming increasingly recognized that sundry development projects, the introduction of a monetary economy in subsistence agricultural systems and other elements of modernization, may have harmful and negative effects on large masses of the population, particularly traditional communities and indigenous and tribal peoples. At the beginning of the farnous development decades, such harmful consequences of development policies used to be dismissed by planners and practitioners as the "inevitable social costs" of development, and it was expected that their effects would be transitory and that the affected populations would soon become incorporated into the benefits of the modernization process and would enjoy higher and more desirable standards of living.

Things have turned out differently however. The harm that has been wrought upon countless millions of people around the world by "modernization" and "development" has yet to be fully documented and digested. From desertification and deforestation, through pollution and intoxication, to pauperization, marginalization, social polarization and dependency, the effects of so-called maldevelopment or perverse development probably add up to one of the major human tragedies of our time. To be sure, this is not what modernizers have intended, and there is no denying that numerous benefits have accrued to populations and communities in different parts of the world. But then, as so many recent evaluations and post-hoc studies have shown, such benefits have much too often been channelled to only a small segment of the target population, to specific social classes or even subgroups within these classes. A frequently cited case in point is the "green revolution" and similar rural development schemes, which have only rarely made prosperous farmers out of poor peasants and have most often than not condemned the already poor to further and often harsher poverty.

A particularly heavy burden has befallen indigenous peoples. In recent decades, after centuries of exploitation and marginalization, not only have many of them become the economic victims of all sorts of development schemes, but in many cases they have been physically destroyed as viable groups. Quite frequently their collective disappearance as identifiable communities is not simply a regrettable by-product of development, but actually the stated or implicit policy objective of the development planners. In contrast to the weaker social classes (peasants, artisans, workers in traditional manufactures, small traders, specialists in obsolete services, or simply members of communities in depressed areas) who suffer the backlash or the unintended consequences of development, in many cases indigenous groups are the victims of a deliberate strategy of destruction by the state or a country's dominant elites, commonly referred to as **ethnocide** or **cultural genocide**.

Ethnocide entails two principal aspects: one is economic and the other is cultural. Economic ethnocide is embedded in the theory and practice of development. It means that all pre-

modern forms of economic organization must necessarily disappear to make way for either private or multinational capitalism or state-planned socialism or mixes thereof. Cultural ethnocide means that all sub-national ethnic units must disappear to make way for the overarching nation-state, the Behemoth of our times. Development and nation-building have become the major economic and political ideologies of the last quarter century or more. Both of them, as traditionally expounded by statesmen and academics alike, have been ethnocidal in that they imply the destruction and/or disappearance of non-integrated, separate ethnic units. This is frequently carried out in the name of national unity and integration, progress and of course development.

Governments generally tend to deny that they commit ethnocide. The concept, after all, has a rather distasteful implication. They usually affirm that their policies are intended to improve the situation of this or that distinct ethnic group, that their aim is simply to grant backward or traditional or marginal or primitive groups (the terms used may vary from region to region) the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. Sometimes, however, state policies are clear: indigenous groups must assimilate or integrate for the good of the country, and of course for their own good.

Ethnocide may be defined, briefly, as the process whereby a culturally distinct people (usually termed an *ethnie* or an ethnic group) loses its identity due to policies designed to erode its land and resource base, the use of its language, its own social and political institutions as well as its traditions, art forms, religious practices and cultural values. When such policies are carried out systematically by governments (whatever the pretext: social progress, national unity, economic development, military security) then such governments are guilty of ethnocide. When the process occurs due to the more impersonal forces of economic development, cultural change and modernization, yet not guided by any specific government policy, it is still ethnocidal as to its effects but may be labeled, in sociological or anthropological terms, simply social change or acculturation.

This distinction between two forms of ethnocide does not lack importance even though the end result may be the same: the disappearance or significant diminution of the group. Governments, as was stated before, do not generally like to be accused of ethnocide; and when social change occurs "spontaneously", so to speak, in which an *ethnie* tends to disappear as such, it is of course better for everybody concerned to attribute this cultural fact to the "invisible hand" of history. Thus, nobody is to blame. But when governments are responsible for ethnocidal policies, and when such policies are carried out without the consent and the participation of the *ethnies* involved, then it is likely that the state incurs specific violations of internationally recognized human rights, as shall be discussed later.

Social, economic and cultural change are, of course, universal phenomena: no people ever remain static and unchangeable over any length of time. Such processes are fairly natural and should not be considered as ethnocide. The latter occurs only when due to such changes (whether consciously imposed or spontaneous) an *ethnie* loses the capacity to reproduce itself socially and biologically as an ethnic group and becomes unable to maintain its culture as a

creative tool for the solution of collective problems and the satisfaction of its own primary material and spiritual needs. Thus there is a clear difference between social, cultural and economic change, in which every human group in the modern world is caught up willynilly, and ethnocide.

As mentioned before, many economic development projects may be labeled as ethnocidal, even when ethnocide is not clearly their objective. If economic development is to serve the people, then ethnocidal development should be considered a contradiction in terms. Yet it occurs frequently for two principal reasons. Firstly, many development projects and programmes are designed for reasons which have little to do with the well-being of the people, but rather with political, financial, external interests etc., and their execution will mainly benefit technocrats, bureaucrats, ambitious politicians or multinational corporations. Secondly, those responsible for development projects and programmes are usually fairly ignorant about the situation of the indigenous peoples, do not particularly care about the problem and usually hold such groups in contempt. This is particularly the case when the dominant state ideology is based on the concept of a single nation which rejects and lacks respect for those other, heteronomous ethnies, as has been traditionally the case in Latin America.

Whereas most countries in the area are multi-ethnic, few states acknowledge this fact and only some of them have established specific legal safeguards and policies for the protection of the indigenous peoples within their borders (legal safeguards that are usually more honoured in the breach than in their application). Governments generally argue that by providing equal rights and opportunities to all of their citizens they are respectful of the cultural specificities of particular indigenous groups. This is, of course, not entirely correct and it usually doesn't work out that way. Most states have an explicit or implicit assimilationist bias and despite the formal recognition of fundamental liberties and individual human rights, the indigenous peoples are usually at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the state.

A common feature of many indigenous peoples is that their traditional habitat has only recently become the object of "national development planning." Areas which used to be remote and isolated from national decision-making centres, have now become "poles of growth", reserves of vast amounts of sometimes strategic mineral and other natural resources, the sites of costly dams and mining enterprises, the targets of land development and settlement schemes. For technocrats and planners, multinational corporations or poor, landless squatters, such areas have become a "new frontier". The best known of such regions is, of course, the vast Amazon basin in South America, which has become an ecological and ethnocidal disaster of which the Brazilian government has only in the last few years become aware as a result of international attention.

In the scramble for land and riches, it is usually forgotten that many of these areas have their traditional inhabitants and owners, namely, the indigenous populations. When the expanding frontier and the merry development planners reach the territory of these peoples, conflicts usually occur, which sometimes may become violent. Many indigenous communities have been physically exterminated by the expanding frontier.

The first and principal attack on the way of life of indigenous peoples is upon their land and ecological resource base. The loss of land and territory has contributed to wiping out many peoples around the world. It is probably the principal factor in the ongoing process of ethnocide of which they are the continuing victims. For indigenous peoples, land is not only a productive resource, an economic factor. Land is habitat, territory, the basis for social organization, cultural identification and political viability; frequently associated with myth, symbols and religion. Land is the essential element in the cultural reproduction of the group.

Development planners and indigenous peoples continue to clash over the issue of land; what for the former is simply a factor in economic calculus, for the latter constitutes a vital necessity for survival. Land development stands in stark contradiction to the significance of land to indigenous peoples. As long as this contradiction is not solved, ethnocide will continue in the name of development.

Besides the issue of land, ethnocide proceeds by other ways and means: the monetary economy which creates new consumer needs, brings in new products and displaces old ones, the disappearance of traditional occupations and the penetration of wage labour into the economy; the national school system which not only introduces the official or dominant language but also different values and attitudes which replace traditional ones. In short, the process of modernization and secularization (so dear to the development sociologists of the fifties and sixties) has contributed to irreversible ethnocide in many parts of Latin America. Some governments also adopt clear-cut policies of forced assimilation of ethnic minorities, such as prohibiting the use of the vernacular language in schools and public places; imposing the national or official language as the only one taught in the schools; forcing people to change their traditional names which identified them as belonging to a given indigenous community; destroying their sacred places or burial grounds, imposing forced religious conversions etc. Some of these measures come close to the crime of genocide, prohibited by the United Nations Convention against Genocide, but many of them are "merely" ethnocide, thus not sanctioned by international law, but clearly in contravention of national and international human rights standards. Only during the last few years, perhaps since the middle seventies, have governments and official agencies become aware of the human implications of savage, impersonal, technocratic development. Statements are now in order that the human and social factors of development plans must be carefully studied and taken into consideration before any major policy decisions are taken. The World Bank has now decided to make credit for major development projects in the Third World contingent upon safeguards for the well-being of tribal peoples. This policy has been applied in the Brazilian Amazon. Governments have been pressured into passing legislation for the protection of indigenous cultures and communities. Unfortunately, very frequently such safeguards and legislation exist on paper only.

No one has understood the dangers of ethnocide better than the indigenous peoples themselves. While their resistance to ethnocide and genocide is as old as these destructive practices, the political organizations of many of these peoples, at least on the international scene, is a fairly recent phenomenon. In placing their problems before international public

opinion, they have been aided by a number of intergovernmental, non-governmental, academic, professional and human rights organizations. The gist of their various activities has been the recognition of the need for a new approach to the problematique of economic and social development of ethnically distinct peoples within the context of the modern so-called nation state. As against policies which lead to ethnocide or preserve internal colonialism, there has arisen a call for self-determination, autonomy and **ethnodevelopment**. This means basically that indigenous peoples demand the right to decide about their own affairs, to participate in the decision-making bodies and processes where their future is discussed and decided; to political representation and participation; to respect for their traditions and cultures, to the freedom to choose what kind of development, if any, they want. Ethnodevelopment means that an ethnies, whether indigenous, tribal or any other, maintains control over its own land, resources, social organization and culture, and is free to negotiate with the state the kind of relationship it wishes to have.

Ethnodevelopment, like the concept of self-reliant development which was current in the seventies, means looking inward, it means finding in the group's own culture the resources and creative force necessary to confront the challenges of the modern, changing world. It does not mean autarchy or self-imposed isolation, and much less retreat into a museum of "tradition", though ethnies that may wish to remain isolated (as some tropical forest tribes in the Amazon basin) should by all means be free to enjoy the basic human right of isolation. Ethnodevelopment does not mean breaking up existing nations and subverting the process of nation-building (a major task of our time, particularly in the Third World), but rather redefining the nature of nation-building and enriching the complex, multi-cultural fabric of many modern states, by recognising the legitimate aspirations of the culturally distinct ethnies which make up the national whole. Ethnodevelopment does not mean blurring the very real social and economic class divisions which characterize the modern world capitalist system by stirring up some artificial "tribalism" but rather it assumes that not only class but also ethnic identity and community are socially integrating principles. Thus class-based social movements in the modern world can only benefit and improve their performance if they recognize the validity and legitimacy of ethnic demands (such as has occurred in the revolutionary movement in Guatemala). Ethnodevelopment, finally, means rethinking the nature and objectives of local level development projects, from hydro-electric dams to the introduction of plantation crops by keeping in mind, first and foremost, the needs, desires, cultural specificities and grass-roots participation of the indigenous groups themselves.

A United Nations report recommends, "in multi-ethnic societies, action must always be based on criteria which, at least in principle, assert the equality of the cultural rights of the various ethnic groups. The State has the obvious obligation to formulate and implement a cultural policy which will, among other things, create the necessary conditions for the co existence and harmonious development of the various ethnic groups living in its territory, either under pluralist provisions which guarantee that one group will not interfere with another, or under other programmes which guarantee equal and genuine opportunities for all." (17)

Thus the question arises whether there exists a human right to cultural identity. It seems that the international community is moving in this direction, though the concept itself is open to discussion. Certainly the indigenous peoples demand that such a right be recognized internationally and domestically.

In this respect, two basic issues arise which have not yet been solved. The first relates to the process of cultural change, adaptation and reinterpretation. Indigenous cultures are not static, and no protective cultural policy should be designed to keep them, as it were, as living museums, an accusation which is often levelled at those who demand protection for indigenous cultures. The solution to this issue is that indigenous peoples simply be allowed to manage their own cultural affairs and develop their own cultural potential, with the support of, but not the interference by, the state. Why the support of the state? Because if left entirely on their own, these cultures would indeed tend to disappear as a result of ethnocidal processes which take place in society with or without state intervention.

The other basic issue regarding a possible human right to cultural identity is that certain traditions and customs in indigenous cultures are considered by outside (mainly Western) observers to be in violation of universal individual human rights (for example, the formal and social inferiority of women). Which holds priority: the collective right to cultural identity or the universal individual human right to liberty and equality? The question has not yet been answered satisfactorily.

In international human rights circles there is currently going on a lively discussion concerning the so-called third generation human rights or the rights of solidarity. Some authors would deny that these are human rights at all, others insist that they should be so considered. A particular point of controversy is the right to development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986, which is of special interest to indigenous peoples. As has been shown repeatedly, the liberal, transnational or state-bureaucratic model of development can be deadly to indigenous areas. The process of ethnocide has been widely documented. If indigenous peoples are not only to survive but also to be able to improve their standards of living on their own terms and increase their status relative to the rest of society, then development ought to take the form of **ethnodevelopment**. (18)

Notes and references

- (1) *Some of the issues dealt with in this paper have been developed by the author elsewhere, particularly in THE ETHNIC QUESTION: CONFLICTS, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 1990
- (2) Celso Furtado, *Formação económica da América Latina*, Rio de Janeiro, Lia Editor, 1970
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- (4) See Robert N. Gwynne, *Industrialization and Urbanization in Latin America*, London, Croom Helm, 1985
- (5) Cf. Miguel Molina Martínez, *La leyenda negra*, Madrid, Nerea, 1991
- (6) J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire*, New York, Knopf, 1966
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- (11) José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica, misión de la raza iberoamericana*, Paris, Agencia Mundial de Librería, 1925
- (12) See Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), *The Development of Latin America in the Eighties*, United Nations, 1981
- (13) See for example Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Falletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979; André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, London, Penguin, 1971; Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *Between Underdevelopment and Revolution: A Latin American Perspective*, New Delhi, Abhinav, 1981

- (14) See the annual reports on the economic situation in Latin America, published by the Economic Commission for Latin America.
- (15) Gert Rosenthal, "Balance preliminar de la economía latinoamericana en 1989", *Comercio Exterior* 40 (2), 1990
- (16) This section of the present chapter relies heavily on my *The Ethnic Question: Conflicts, Development and Human Rights*, Tokyo, The United Nations University, 1990, chapters 7 and 8.
- (17) José R. Martínez Cobo, *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations*, New York, United Nations, 1987
- (18) See Björn Hettne, "Ethnicity and Development - an Elusive Relationship", paper presented to the UNRISD workshop on ethnic conflict and development, Dubrovnik, 1991

VI. CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN LATIN AMERICA: FUTURE PROSPECTS

By Denis Goulet (*)

Introduction

This paper analyzes the dynamics of cultural resistance and assesses future prospects of cultural diversity in Latin America.

1. A preliminary definition is in order. It is preferable to speak of "living communities of culture" instead of "cultures". The latter term evokes something abstract, whereas the former suggests vital societies animated by their values. Living communities of culture have three characteristics:

- a) a common system of signifying and normative values. Signifying values give meaning to existence in its totality; normative values supply behavioural rules as to how life should be lived;
- b) some shared basis for people to identify themselves as members of a single group: a common territory, history, language, religion, race, or ancestors;
- c) the will or decision to be primarily self-identified as a member of a given community.

A living community of culture displays economic, social, and political vigour. Clearly, not all communities of culture are vital: some survive within larger societies merely as incidental adornments or as relics of the past. And living communities are not necessarily or always sovereign political units.

Although it is their community of culture which confers to members of society their primary identification and value allegiance, individuals may also maintain secondary identities and loyalties. Indeed, cultural communities themselves usually possess several partially overlapping identities and loyalty systems. In addition to factors mentioned above — religion, race, history, language — other bases for identification also exist. Individuals may identify themselves as belonging to a world-wide fellowship of scholars, athletes, or musicians: this is functional identification. Or one may identify oneself on the basis of some shared interest as a soccer fan, bird watcher, or photographer.

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2. A second introductory note recalls general characteristics present in Latin America's diverse cultural communities.

Latin American demography is formed from three basic elements: native Indian ethnies, an African component, and European races, mainly Spanish and Portuguese (1). A fourth component comprises diverse immigrant groups - Japanese, Chinese, Italian, German, Swiss, Korean - which came to Latin America out the last century and a half. Over four centuries of racial miscegenation have left Latin American communities of culture, even today, lacking a clear identity. Their identity is fluid and fragile, not fully integrated and forever oscillating between self-definitions as Indian, European, or of mixed race. Latin America's cultural communities are dualistic in other ways as well. The literary dichotomy of Ariel and Caliban captures this duality well — Latins as both Idealistic and materialistic, simultaneously dreamers and pragmatists. And Latin American culture groups are at once outward and inward-looking. They look outward and are mimetic: in the 19th century they imitated French philosophy (Comte's positivism) or British social mores. In this century, the dominant cultural model copied is the United States. At the same time, however, Latin American cultural communities remain intensely inward-looking. Throughout the continent endless debates rage over what it means to be distinctively Bolivian, Guatemalan, or Venezuelan. Everywhere one finds an abiding preoccupation with the internal boundaries of cultural definition!

The role played by geography in shaping Latin America's collective psyche is immense. Its cultures are profoundly marked by vast distances, large spaces, huge stretches of land, sky and terrain — mountains, deserts, forests.

A common attitude toward politics and governments is likewise discernible across the varied gamut of Latin American cultures. Most nations gained their independence through revolutionary struggle and, not surprisingly, the stance people have toward government remains one of suspicion. They instinctively adopt an adversarial posture towards governments, even those they have freely elected. Argentina's Jorge Luis Borges writes that "The Latin American is a person, not a citizen. The State is impersonal: The Latin only conceives of a personal relationship". (2)

A. TOWARD A THEORY OF CULTURAL SURVIVAL

Every human society possesses an "existence rationality" (3), a conscious strategy for surviving and protecting essential values, given its ability to process information and the resources available to it. Survival is a minimum collective goal, and individuals depend on society to satisfy needs related to esteem and freedom. By definition, non-developed societies are unable to maximize material satisfactions and those psychological satisfactions whose enjoyment presupposes an abundance of goods. On the other hand, they can optimize the satisfaction of survival, identity, solidarity, and esteem needs. The rationality on which modernization is founded appears "alien" to minds not already conditioned by it. It would

be a mistake, however, to conclude that irrationality dictates the choice of instruments pre-modern societies make to meet survival and other basic needs. Consequently, whenever one existence rationality impinges on another, certain conditions must be met if change, whether imposed or proposed, is not to lead to undue cultural destruction. Since existence rationality concerns survival and need-satisfaction under present capacities for processing information, suitable means must be found enabling members of one society to process more and more varied information than before. In addition, whether they are rooted in the scarcity of resources or in rigidities of the allocation system, old resource constraints must be overcome (4). Because the core values of all existence rationalities aim at nurturing survival, basic esteem, and freedom, core values should not be challenged frontally. Such an attack unduly threatens basic identity. If change is to be welcomed, therefore: (a) new capacities for handling information must be generated; (b) vital resources not previously available must be made available; and (c) the alien rationality implicit in "modernization" must be re-interpreted in terms compatible with traditional existence rationalities.

Existence rationalities contain both core and peripheral values, as well as signifying and normative values. In general, signifying or meaning values are closer to core than to periphery values, although some meaning values may be peripheral. Moreover, certain normative values may be essential to the cultural identity of a particular group, in which case they constitute core, and not periphery, values.

As one culture group impinges upon another, several dynamisms come into play. Each community of culture possesses a different "index of survivability," a different capacity for assimilating change without losing its identity and vitality. Some culture groups can withstand far-reaching changes in their value systems, institutions, and ways of life without losing their identity, whereas others collapse under a lesser barrage of imposed change. History records that cultural communities can preserve their identity over long periods of time even under conditions of extreme duress, thanks to "secondary adaptation" (5). Secondary adaptation occurs when an oppressed community of culture exhibits subservience in its surface behaviour, an apparent servility which lulls the dominant cultural group into complacency and lessened repressive vigilance. At a "secondary" or covert level, however, the oppressed group engages in cultural resistance: in code language it affirms its sense of identity and pride, mounts educational campaigns against domination, at times even organizes open revolts. African communities in Northeast Brazil practised secondary adaptation behind the cultural "mask" of such "innocent" activities as capoeira and candomble. Plantation slaves in the Southern United States educated themselves, organized, and resisted behind the "mask" of folk-tale sessions and the singing of spirituals. For enslaved communities, compliance serves a defensive function allowing them to "elude" the dominant system and to avoid being imprisoned by the definitions and roles larger society imposes on them (6).

In all pre-modern societies a vital nexus links signifying to normative values (7). Modernity shatters this nexus, and not all societies can survive the assault.

B. EMERGING CULTURES

As living entities, cultural communities are always receiving and sending influences which alter their values, their way of relating to strangers, and their horizons of what is viewed as possible. External influences may challenge their belief system, and strengthen or weaken their economic, technical, or political autonomy. Moreover, culture groups are forever adjusting to changes in nature and surrounding environments. Consequently, cultures are always in the process of emerging.

At present, two large culture groups are emerging in Latin America. The first is what the political scientist Fred Riggs (8) calls prismatic dual cultures. A prism receives undifferentiated white light and refracts it into all colours of the spectrum. Similarly, culture groups receive outside influences such as technology, a rationality system, or a style of work through some demonstration effect, proposed political alliance, or the example of visitors. In response, Riggs explains, receiving societies transform the new behaviours or institutions so that these take on different forms when absorbed into local settings. This is evident in Latin American history: the conquest of Mexico and Peru by Spain and its subsequent territorial extensions, as well as the forcible seizure by Portugal of Brazil and the westward expansion by *bandeirantes*, produced syncretism on a vast scale. Behind Spanish and Portuguese forms — institutions, laws, creeds, beliefs, and buildings — there perdured indigenous beliefs, symbols and practices. Devout Catholics in Brazil or Haiti make novenas to the Virgin Mary; at the same time they consult a *Mae-do-terreiro* or a Voodoo priest for blessings, purification, and other spiritual ministrations. Artistic syncretism is manifest in hybrid forms of music, dance, and dress. New prismatic cultures are now emerging as the proportional mix of European with African and Indian cultural elements is constantly being readjusted under the stimulus of modernity and the demographic mobility it unleashes.

A second emerging culture is that of modern capitalist development based on a model of rationality derived from science and technology. This culture is dominantly urban and looks down disparagingly on the countryside (9). It attaches great importance to one's functional identification as doctor, teacher, factory worker, clerk or manager. Modern Latin Americans pattern their behaviour on North American models of consumption, leisure, and status attribution. Consumption itself becomes an important status symbol, signified in the brand of automobile, electronic equipment or sports gear one owns.

In the sphere of religion, earlier historical syncretism has given way to the eclecticism of free choice. A high degree of spiritual mobility exists in Latin America. Although they are traditionally Roman Catholic, many people are transferring their spiritual allegiances to Protestantism or spiritualism.

Latin America's new elites are primarily scientific, technical, financial and managerial; their value system is cosmopolitan, secular, pluralistic, relativistic. These new elites are the principal shapers of political life, although not necessarily of cultural life. To illustrate, progressive liberation theologians in Latin America have made their mark within Christianity

at large, but the masses still practise popular religion, with pilgrimages to sanctuaries and promises to saints. Moreover, even modern individuals often retain traditional patterns of behaviour in their private domestic lives.

C. CULTURAL RESISTANCE

In times of rapid change it is difficult to maintain cultural integrity, particularly among subnational groups. One conspicuous effect of the spread of Western technology is the homogenization of lifestyles. Standardization is evident in airports, hotels, industrial parks, residential suburbs, supermarkets, clothing, habits of food consumption, and aspirations.

When modern technology is transferred to societies other than those of origin, it imposes its logic of uniformity on tools and modes of work. Practices relating to work and leisure are far more constitutive of a culture than such external features as dress, music or artistic wares. As one former member of the British Parliament notes, "Culture, after all, is about people and patterns of everyday life — not monuments and souvenirs" (10). Some uniformities are doubtless inevitable in modernization processes but, as they make their choices, development planners should beware of the high price in cultural dilution exacted by standardizing modern technology. In order to preserve cultural diversity, planners should select work-related technologies which protect that diversity. Their decisions have great bearing not only on the quality of work and its meaning in people's lives (11) but also on their patterns of consumption, the degree of urbanization deemed acceptable in their societies, and the scale of the institutions they will choose. These are the vital loci where the battle for cultural survival will be won or lost. This is not to suggest that the fine arts are unimportant, but simply that they are easily relegated to the periphery of cultural values when technology sets the pace in daily living. Nowhere do the values vectored by modern technology so quickly assert their primacy as in the behaviour of business and professional elites. Not only their language but their dress, ethical codes, and stylistic preferences rapidly become modeled on those of rich-world counterparts. Standardization is not always to be regretted! Nevertheless, since these elites constitute "significant others" which masses imitate in their aspirations, one is less than sanguine about the long-run viability of a plurality of rich cultures. On the streets of La Paz one still meets peasant women in traditional garb alongside bankers wearing pin-striped suits. Although such residual and picturesque signs of cultural diversity may co-exist, a deeper question remains. Whose values dominate in the planning of school curricula or television programming? Will the Bolivian peasant woman's children be more powerfully influenced by the banker's new values than his children will be by the old Quechua values both their grandparents shared?

Technology transfers impose a high price in cultural destruction. This price can be minimized by deliberate policy measures only if the danger of cultural homogenization inherent in technology transfers is recognized. Moreover, resistant cultures are often the victims of generalized psychological, behavioural, and linguistic discrimination, at times even of physical marginalization as they are relegated to the boundaries of some territory. (12)

Three conditions must be met if cultural resistance is to succeed (13). First, if they are to defend their authentic identity, threatened communities must become plural cultures. They need to revitalize their own modes of living, their economic and legal systems, their language and traditions. Old traditions are ratified by each new generation only if they prove themselves functional for this generation. Those traditions are constantly being altered because, at any given time, traditional societies contain in their midst a number of deviant members who challenge the basic values of their societies. How living communities come to terms with deviants is an important cultural datum. The most basic sense in which a cultural group under attack must become pluralistic, however, is that it must in some way become modern, at least to the extent of coming to understand modernity's values, institutions, modes of knowing, and definitions of problems. Pre-modern cultures cannot resist modern technology and its underlying rationality unless they critically understand that technology and that rationality, unless also they harness some of technology's preferred instruments to turn them against their originators, to "fight cultural fire with fire". Cultures at risk must learn how to use the media and legal systems of modernity, as well as the political power and the economic mechanisms by which wealth is circulated in modern societies. At least in this limited sense, every culture must become a plural culture.

The second condition of successful resistance is that a community of culture must possess a minimal economic base which gives it some measure of control over the speed and direction at which it will develop its resources (14). No cultural community lacking minimum economical security can gain mastery over its destiny: it will be thrust into the role of an eternal suppliant of resources, to be tolerated only on the wider society's terms.

A third requirement of cultural resistance is that communities in jeopardy must play some political role. An active political role may be necessary to defend the community's right to settle disputes amongst its members according to its own legal procedures, to assert its claims not to be discriminated against in society at large, or to conduct schooling in its own language. It may also be necessary to wage political combat in order to define a community's status and relation vis-à-vis the state. Even if communities of culture do not engage in overt political activity, they may need to conduct public education campaigns in order to gain psychological respect from the institutions of society, and from mainstream cultural groups, and from citizens at large.

D. DIFFERENTIATION OF CULTURES

The world is witnessing a general process in which cultural communities in increasing numbers seek a differentiated identity. Cultural communities, especially sub-national groups, strive to project their primary identity as distinctive culture groups because they feel a need to create an arena in which they are the dominant actors, in contrast to larger arenas in which they operate as inferior subcultures. It is a reassuring source of esteem to be a majority population in one sphere even if that sphere is a small one. Thus a Guaraní with a cultural

Identity recognized by society at large is not simply a minority Indian who happens to be a Paraguayan.

Many culture groups which, in the past, have not actively projected their identity now seek to reverse the earlier assimilation. In past times, economic or political necessity forced many groups to accept a level of cultural assimilation to larger societies which they now contest. Only by re-asserting their differentiated cultural identity can Quechua Indians in Bolivia, Mapuches in Chile, and Brazilians of African origin press collective claims upon society. The global trend favouring collective claims raises serious questions for social theorists. Flora Lewis asks:

Is the individual the only definition which democracy allows, or should diversity be institutionalized? Ethnicity is a human, cultural and social reality that cannot be wiped out...

Should it also be a legal reality within a society? If so, are hierarchies tolerable, based on numbers? on property? on history? on the assertion of inherent superiority (15) ?

As modernization penetrates all aspects of life (school, family, work, recreation) ever more deeply, cultural communities seek a differentiated identity for still another reason: in order to be differentiated from the passe-partout culture of modernity founded on homogenized technology and consumption. Consumerist images are necessarily mimetic and, therefore, standardized. Twenty years ago young people everywhere, if they wished to be modern, listened to the Beatles; now they listen to Michael Jackson and Madonna. Modern technology imposes itself in uniform fashion, and a highly standardized managerial ethos is gaining sway worldwide. Indeed, technology itself is rapidly displacing other cultures and imposing itself as a culture in its own right (16).

Alongside growing differentiation, an emerging global culture is in gestation. Thanks to the internationalization of production, the collapse of national barriers under the assault of freely circulating goods, images, information, money, and people, no physical locale can any longer serve as the exclusive home ground of a single culture. The impulses of acculturation flow everywhere, rapidly and pervasively. People everywhere are coming to view themselves as members of the wider human family. Mayan farmers in Guatemala, rubber tappers in Rondonia (Brazil) and Argentine cattle ranchers all sense that they belong to a large human community. It becomes increasingly difficult for any of us to define ourselves solely as citizens of a particular nation, adepts of a particular religion, members of a particular linguistic or racial group. Media technology, penetrating deeply into the inner recesses of our consciousness, makes us aware that the destinies of other human beings on our planet relate to our own lot. A global culture is in gestation.

E. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

What are the prospects for the survival of diverse vital communities of culture in Latin America? Groups whose existence rationally centre on nomadism may find it impossible to survive, as lands become more densely populated and as pressures upon shrinking natural resources grow at a geometric rate. Perhaps the best that can be won for such cultural communities is that they can "buy time" to make gradual adjustments to new forms of existence they may adopt in the future.

Numerically small dispersed populations may also find it impossible to survive as coherent vital cultures. A minimum number of people is required if a culture is to maintain itself and its institutions at a bottom threshold of vitality, genetic and social. Other cultural communities, however, may successfully develop dual identities, value allegiances, institutions, and behaviours in ways which protect their fundamental values and identity. On what terms will they survive, however? Will it be as economically viable and culturally integral units living in isolation, or on the margins of national societies to which they are politically attached? Will they carve a niche in the dominant societies enveloping them to live therein as vital small enclaves, as Mennonites have done in Paraguay and Miskitos in Nicaragua? Or will they avoid ethical and behavioural assimilation but nonetheless function with ease in the midst of an alien wider cultural milieu, thus exhibiting the prismatic effect whereby modernity is refracted behaviourally in terms of culturally specific social organization and living patterns? This range of prospects—itself not exhaustive—exists as possibilities for culture groups in general. But one would not hazard a guess as to which particular cultural communities in Latin America can survive under one or other set of conditions just outlined.

In broader worldwide terms, prospects for cultural diversity bifurcate in two opposite directions: an optimistic and a pessimistic scenario. **Pessimistic scenario.** Throughout the world, cultures and authentic cultural values will be diluted and "bastardized", or reduced to marginal or ornamental roles in most national societies and regional or local communities. **Optimistic scenario.** Humanity advances in global solidarity and practises ecological and economic conservation as the responsible steward of the cosmos. Vital and authentic cultures abound, each proud of its identity while actively rejoicing in differences exhibited by other cultures. Human beings everywhere nurture a sense of possessing several partial and overlapping cultural identities, all the while relativizing each of these in recognition of their primary allegiance to the human species. Cultural communities plunge creatively into their roots and find therein new ways of being modern and of contributing, out of their cultural patrimony, precious values to the universal human culture now in gestation.

Quite possibly some Latin American cultural communities may survive in ways which embody neither the optimistic nor the pessimistic scenario. Such cultural groups may reject development, consumerism, and modern technology altogether, and find ways of subsisting, perhaps at a modest level of well-being, while preserving distinctive religious ethnic, linguistic, and artistic patterns of life. Perhaps the entire development enterprise itself, and

the trappings of modernity attaching to it (specialized institutions, large-scale activities, urban settlement patterns, an exploitative approach to resources) will prove unsustainable in the long-term. In this scenario, groups which can survive with some measure of cultural vitality are communities devoted to pre-modern agriculture in the mode of tribal, ethnic, or extended family solidarity. The normative value system of such communities could successfully place limits on their members' desire for goods and services. These societies might even generate a modest surplus of wealth to be used for artistic achievements in music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, recreation, or sport. Moreover, present-day nation states in Latin America might conceivably split up into a larger number of decentralized national entities or sub-national bio-regions, each enjoying considerable degrees of autarchy.

On purely rational and evidential grounds, and given the forces at work to destroy and dilute cultures, the pessimistic scenario appears the more likely. But history is always full of surprises: many important long-lasting patterns of events which occur were not predictable at an earlier time. These unexpected outcomes may not necessarily be irrational, but their rationality is not manifest before the fact.

Cultural policies formulated today should aim at creating conditions and incentives rendering the optimistic scenario more likely and feasible tomorrow.

F. WHAT CAN UNESCO DO?

UNESCO can **publicize, legitimize, and assist**. To publicize is to educate, to disseminate, to render manifest the culturally destructive effects of monolithic development strategies. What is needed is not denunciation but analysis and illustration. This task UNESCO can accomplish by publications, by staging events, by promoting and supporting (financially, morally, institutionally, and logistically), movements dedicated to cultural vitality, cultural diversity, and cultural resistance.

Its second role is to legitimize. The dominant view today holds that only one mode of rationality is legitimate, objective, and valid, namely, the rationality based on a scientific epistemology which reduces truth and objective knowledge to what is quantifiable and statistically measurable. Serious critical work in demystifying the epistemological claims of modern rationality needs to be conducted. This may entail research commissioned by UNESCO: the evaluation of alternative theories of cognition, of society, of modernity, of development. Legitimizing proceeds in two ways: one is negative, by destroying the monopoly of legitimacy presently claimed by reductionist, one-dimensional views of history, society, evolution, and theories of knowledge. The other is positive, by demonstrating how divergent modes of rationality are no less scientific and valid than science-based cognition (17).

UNESCO's third function is to assist. This may take the form of providing technical aid to cultural communities struggling for survival and vitality. It may also take the form of

persuading governments to adopt cultural policies which actively promote diversity of language, economic viability of diverse cultural communities, pluralistic legal systems. UNESCO may likewise help by staging events such as international gatherings of cultural communities of struggle, thus providing them with a forum for networking in solidarity, and giving a voice to those who have no voice. The larger objective is to conduct an ongoing dialogue among cultures: a dialogue of traditional with modern cultures, of dominant modern cultures based on science and technology with other cultures founded on different conceptions of rationality.

CONCLUSION

The forces operating to dilute, assimilate and destroy cultural communities are so great that the future of many of them is uncertain. Authentic cultural diversity, expressing with integrity and vitality diverse modes of being and of social organization, is doomed unless the positive value of such diversity is recognized. Development planners at every level must incorporate the active defence of cultural diversity into their decisions about resource use. Such active defence must not be treated as a mere externality in the cost-benefit equation.

Several years ago I interviewed an Indian cacique in eastern Paraguay. The forest inhabited by his tribe had been obliterated to construct the Icaray Dam. The chief lamented the destruction of his people's sylvan habitat and the dispersal of his remaining subjects into cities where their identity and values would quickly be lost. Most bitterly, however, he grieved because the young men of his tribe would no longer perform the sacred dance in the forest. I asked why the sacred dance was so important. "Because it is what holds the cosmos together", he replied.

Unless we preserve diverse economically vital, politically vigorous, and socially autonomous living communities of culture, we cannot keep the cosmos together or assure the planet's survival (18).

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