Polish Academy of Sciences

Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries

Hemispheres
Studies on Cultures and Societies

No. 23

ASKON

Polish Academy of Sciences
Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries

Hemispheres
Studies on Cultures and Societies
No. 23

ASKON Publishers
Warsaw 2008

Polska Akademia Nauk
Zakład Krajów Pozaeuropejskich

Hemispheres
Studies on Cultures and Societies
No. 23

Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON
Warszawa 2008

Publication co-financed
by the State Committee for Scientific Research

This edition is prepared, set and published by

Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON Sp. z o.o.
ul. Stawki 3/1, 00–193 Warszawa
tel./fax: (48 22) 635 99 37
askon@askon.waw.pl

PL ISSN 0239–8818
ISBN 978–83–7452–033–1

HEMISPHERES is indexed in
Quarterly Index Islamicus and *Historical Abstracts*
and in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities

Contents

Jerzy Zdanowski, *Slaves, Pearls and the British in the Gulf in the Late Colonial Time* 5

Abdulrahman al-Salimi, *Immigrant Religions: A Study of Religious Diversity in the GCC States* 31

Nkolika Ijeoma Aniekwu, Eunice Nkiru Uzodike, *Reproductive Health Law and Policy: Legal Reforms in the African Subregion* 41

Jimoh Amzat, *Lumpen Childhood in Nigeria: A Case of the Almajirai in Northern Nigeria* 49

Peter Emeka Arinze, *An Examination of Corruption in Nigerian Economy* 61

Emmy G. Irobi, *Unmet Human Needs and the Niger Delta Conflict in Nigeria* 77

Magdalena Zaborowska, *Evolution as Variability of Duration. An Analysis of the Concept of Qabz va Bast in Iranian Tradition* 95

Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem, *A Dialogical Approach to Islam: The Catholic Church and Its Mission in the Light of the Second Vatican Council and the Pontificate of Paul VI* 111

Dobrosława Wiktor-Mach, *European Islam. The Case of Polish Tatars* 135

Tomasz Kruszewski, *Two Polish Perspectives on the Young Turkish Republic during the 1920s* 147

Agata Hummel, *Local Economy and Different Forms of Credits in a Community of Purhépecha Indians in the State of Michoacán, Mexico* 157

Book Reviews

Pap Ndiaye, *La Condition noire. Essai sur une minorité française* – rev. Bara Ndiaye 177

Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation* – rev. Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem 180

Toyin Falola, Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* – rev. Stanisław Piłaszewicz 183

Sylwia Surdykowska, *Idea szahadatu w kulturze Iranu* (The Idea of Shahadat in the Culture of Iran) – rev. Zygmunt Pucko 185

Jerzy Zdanowski

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Slaves, Pearls and the British in the Gulf in the Late Colonial Time*

Slaves were imported to the Persian Gulf mainly from East Africa. Estimates of the total number of slaves kidnapped or bought in East Africa in the 19th century and then exported abroad vary significantly. Most estimates of the number of slaves who passed from the coast to Zanzibar and to points north each year for the period between 1800 and 1870 range from 6,000 to 20,000. Between 1870 and 1876, the year the slave trade was abolished in Zanzibar, 300,000 slaves were sent to the island and to Arabia, the Persian Gulf and India. These figures give a total East African Arab slave trade of 1,257,100.[1] Higher estimates said about over two million slaves sent from Zanzibar abroad between 1830 and 1873, when the exportation of slaves by ships was forbidden. There are opinions that if mortality of slaves and losses en route are taken into account, the total number of East Africans enslaved and sent from the region could reach over 20 million.[2] Ralph Austen gives more conservative estimates and thinks that 800,000 slaves were exported from East Africa to the Muslim world in the 19th century. They were transported to the north and 300,000 of them across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and the rest from the Swahili coast.[3] This process was a consequence of industrialization and the growth of the international economy. The demand for unfree labour was determined by the spread of virulent diseases which left many countries depopulated and limited the stock of free wage labour.[4]

At the turn of the 19th century the exportation of slaves from East Africa was governed by Omani rulers. On 1785, Oman managed to re-establish its political authority over Kilwa, which it had lost several years before. The Omani rulers purchased slaves in Kilwa for the Muscat market and for their growing needs in Zanzibar. Rising European

---

* The main body of the text is the Introduction to my book *Slavery in the Gulf in the First Half of the 20th Century. A Study Based on Records from the British Archives* (forthcoming in ASKON).

[1] See: M. Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989, (first published as *L'Esclavage dans le monde arabe*, Edition Robert Laffont, Paris, 1987), p. 186–187.

[2] See: G. Campbell, "Introduction", in *Abolition and its Aftermath in the Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia,* ed. by Gwyn Campbell, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 5.

[3] R. Austin, "The 19th Century Islamic Slave Trade from East African (Swahili and Red Sea Coast): A Tentative Census", in *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade*, ed. by W. G. Clarence-Smith, London: Frank Cass, 1989, p. 21–44.

[4] See: Campbell, "Introduction", in *Abolition*, p. 1–7.

demand for slaves also contributed to the expansion of the slave trade and to the sharp rise in prices for slaves. In Kilwa the prices went up from 25 Omani dollars to 40 dollars a head. According to the estimates, in 1811–1821, 2,500 slaves were annually exported from the Swahili coast to the Europeans only. The Sultan of Oman levied duty for exportation and generated the growing revenues. In Kilwa the duty was 10 Omani dollars per head and a total of 25,000 dollars a year constituted a third source of the Sultan's income. A British officer who visited Zanzibar in 1811 considered about three-quarters of the island's 200,000 population to be made up of a servile labour. Later on slavery became the main source to sustain the clove plantations on the island. According to the above-mentioned officer, up to 10,000 slaves were exported each year to Muscat, India, and the Mascarene Islands.[5]

The second source of slave importation was the upper Nile valley and Abyssinia. Approximately half a million people from these regions were taken to Egypt and another half to ports of the Red Sea for export to Arabia and the Persian Gulf. A great majority of the slaves were youths under fifteen years of age and most of them were girls. The European travellers recounted in their diaries that slaves were to be seen practically everywhere in Arabia. The Swiss traveller Jean Louis Burckhardt, who travelled in the early 19th century with slave caravan from Shendi to Suakin, stated that some 5,000 slaves annually passed through this town. He admitted that the slave girls were commonly prostituted by the slave traders.[6] In 1838, for instance, an estimated number of 10,000 to 12,000 slaves were arriving in Egypt alone each year, and some of them were bound for domestic service there or for export to undertake similar service, but others for use as concubines, construction and factory workers, porters, dockers, clerks, soldiers, and cultivators.[7] The English traveler Charles M. Doughty, who travelled to the Central Arabia in the 1880s recounted that African slaves were brought up to Arabia every year with *hajj*. He met many slaves from Abyssinia who told him that "in their country were trunks of wild coffee-trees great as oaks". We read that "there are bondsmen and bondwomen and free negro families in every tribe and town; many are home-born and free-born, *muwalladin*. A few persons may be seen, at Teyma, of the half-negro blood; they are descendents from freedmen, who grown to substantial living have taken poor white women of the *sunna* or smiths' caste, which is reckoned illiberal. A pleasant looking young Heteym woman in the Kella at M. Salih was the wife of a negro *askar*, Nejm's freedman who had been sent to keep the cisterns at Moaddam".[8]

Many of East African slaves were sent to the Persian Gulf. In 1850, the British Native Agent in Lingah reported the arrival of two vessels from Berbera bringing cargoes of female slaves to the port. He also stated that another vessel which had been chartered by two individuals belonging to Charak had brought up 40 slaves from Zanzibar. One vessel

[5] See: Gordon, *Slavery*, p. 184–185.

[6] Ibid., p. 173.

[7] See: R. Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, p. 60.

[8] Ch. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, with an Introduction by T. E. Lawrence, Vol. I–II, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979 (first published in 1888), Vol. I, p. 603, Vol. II, pp. 250, 289.

brought 27 Abyssinian female slaves and half of them were landed in Bandar Abbas and half in Lingah. Another vessel brought 20 Abyssinian female slaves.[9] In 1857, the British Political Resident in Bushire reported, "When their vessels arrived from the African coast with slaves, they disembarked them on the coast of Batinah in Sohar, and then brought them over land to the date groves in Ras al-Khaimah and other places".[10]

Although Abdul Sheriff emphasizes that in the 19th century the demand for African slaves in the Middle East was low as few economic sectors there experienced development, the situation in the Persian Gulf seemed to be different.[11] Thomas M. Ricks stresses that prior to the 18th and 19th centuries, slaves in Iran and the Persian Gulf societies were marginal to the Persian, Arab and Indian population. They functioned out of the public sphere in houses and workshops, and only in the 18th and 19th centuries slaves and slave trade became significant. The reasons for this change were the growth of trade and the labour shortage in the region, which created new demand for imported labour, and in particular, for slaves from East Africa.[12]

According to Th. M. Ricks, annual importations to the Persian Gulf in the 19th century were much greater than in the previous one. In 1772–1782, the annual import covered 500–600 slaves and in 1782–1842, it was 800–1000, while in 1842–1872 it reached up to 3,000. The total imports were accordingly 30,000–36,000 slaves for 1772–1782, 48,000–60,000 for 1782–1842 and 60,000–90,000 for 1842–1872. In 1872–1902, the total imports decreased and was 1,500–3,000 slaves or 500–1000 per year. 80–90 per cent of the imported slaves, especially in the period of the dramatic increase of the number in 1842–1872, were most likely re-exported from the Gulf into the Ottoman and Iranian hinterland to work as cash-crop or irrigation canal workers in Fars and Kirman.[13] This data corresponds with other estimations. According to Arnold B. Kemball, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, around 3,500 slaves were imported annually in the second quarter of the 19th century. The season for the Gulf traffic in slaves was between 1st July and 1st November. In 1841, 117 boats arrived at the port of Charak only, having slaves on board, and they brought 1,217 Africans and Abbysinians.[14] R. Austen estimated that between 3,000 and 3,500 slaves were retained each year in the Gulf region in 1830–1866.[15]

[9] "From Lieutenant Colonel Hennell, Resident in the Persian Gulf, to Lieutenant Colonel Sheil, the Envoy at the Court of Persia, Bushire, 24th June 1850", IOR: R/15/1/123 Vol. 166.

[10] "From the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, dated 25th September 1857", IOR: R/15/1/127 Vol. 173.

[11] Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade and its Fallout in the Persian Gulf", in *Abolition*, p. 105–106.

[12] Th. M. Ricks, "Slaves and Slave Traders in the Persian Gulf, 18th and 19th Centuries: An Assessment", in *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by W. G. Clarence-Smith, London and Totowa (N.J.): Frank Cass, 1989, p. 60.

[13] Ricks, "Slaves and Slave Traders", p. 67.

[14] A. B. Kemball, "Supression of the Slave Trade in the Persian Gulf", in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, No. XXIV. – New Series. *Historical and other Information connected with the Province of Oman, Muscat, Bahrein, and other Places in the Persian Gulf*, Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, 1856, p. 646–649.

[15] Austin, "The 19th Century", p. 29.

In the 19th century, slaves came to the Persian Gulf primarily from East Africa via the Omani ports of Sur and Muscat, and partially to the small Arabian ports of Sharjah, Dubai or Ras al-Khaimah. Direct slave trading between the Persian Gulf ports of Bandar Abbas, Lingah, Ras al-Khaimah and Basrah was also carried on. Many slaves were eventually carried into Turkey, Persia, Sind, and the territories on the Western coast of India. A. B. Kemball admitted that the treatment of the African slaves was neither severe nor cruel. During the sea voyage they were not bound or kept under particular restraint. Rice, dates, and fish in sufficient quantities formed their food, and a coarse cloth round the middle of the body constituted their clothing. The male slave labor was used in a great variety: as soldiers, farm labourers, cash crop workers, irrigation canal workers, pearl divers, fishermen, maritime sailors, dock workers, porters and domestic servants in towns and villages on the both sides of the Gulf. The role of the imported female slave labourers was the same as it was in the previous centuries: they functioned as domestic servants or concubines.[16]

There was a great proportion of female slaves imported to the Gulf in the first half of the 19th century. In Kuwait and Lingah there were about twice as many females as males, while in Muscat the proportions were 45 to 55 and in Sur there was a male preponderance (40:60).[17] On the Persian coast, the number of men bears in the case of Africans a pretty equal proportion to that of the women. But of Abyssinians the greater number were females, in the proportion, perhaps, of two to one[18]. As Abdul Sheriff mentions, it stood in contrast with the Atlantic slave trade, where a majority were adult males, with females constituting less than 20 per cent of the total number. It may suggest that a system of slavery in the early 19th century was driven more by socialization and reproduction of the slave community and less by immediate productivity.[19]

In 1841, prices for Africans in Zanzibar were 7 to 15 Omani dollars for boys from 7 to 10 years of age and 17 to 20 dollars for full grown men. The females were somewhat more valued than the males: a stout young man was sold for 35 or 40 dollars. The profit on the above in Muscat was 20 per cent, and in Basrah and Bushire never less than 50 per cent. The Abbysinian females were much prized for their beauty and figure: their value was from 60 to 200 dollars. The males also were much valued: their price varied from 50 to 150 dollars and upwards.[20]

The largest number of male slaves sent to the Persian Gulf was absorbed in the pearl fisheries industry. Pearl diving was the most important industry in the Persian Gulf. The outcome of the pearling season determined the livelihood of merchants, boat-owners, creditors, brokers, sailors and divers. Every year the season's catch

[16] Kemball, "Supression", p. 647.

[17] "The British Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Government of Bombay, Bushire, 21st November 1889", IOR: R/15/1/200 5/65 I.

[18] Kemball, "Supression", p. 649.

[19] See: Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade", p. 104–105.

[20] Kemball, "Supression", p. 649.

was bought by dealers from India and Europe. The Gulf pearls were partially taken to Europe directly, and partially were sent to Bombay where they were pierced, graded and exported to Europe. Paris was the European centre of the Gulf pearls. Some of them were sent to Zanzibar, but this channel of exportation was a minor one.

According to John G. Lorimer, a British consular officer who produced a comprehensive survey of the Gulf, in 1904, the number of boats employed in the pearl diving was about 4,785, and the number of people directly engaged in pearling was over 74,000. The value of the pearls exported from the Gulf, estimated in 1833 at 300,000 pounds and in 1866 at 100,000 pounds, was in 1905–1906 1,434,399 pounds at the lowest computation. At the same time the value of the mother-of-pearl exported amounted to 30,439 pounds. The great bulk of the pearls from Bahrain, Lingah and Dubai was exported to Bombay, where they were classified for dispatch to European and other markets, but some were sent to Baghdad. The Baghdad markets favoured the white pearls and the yellow ones found a sale in India and Turkey. Indifferent and bad pearls were sold to Persia, where they were used to ornament articles. In 1902, Manamah and Lingah were the principal ports of exportation; the former drawn to itself all the trade of the middle, the latter that of the lower Gulf.[21]

Bahrain remained the main place of exportation of the pearls in terms of value. In the years 1905–1906 the value of pearls exported from Bahrain was 1,26,03,000 rupees and it was followed by Trucial Oman with 80,00,000 rupees.[22] Lingah exported pearls of the value of 6,95,861 rupees, Kuwait – 1,34,700 and Muscat – 22,500 rupees. In spite of yearly fluctuations, the total estimated value of the pearl export from the Gulf was steadily growing and almost doubled between 1873 and 1906. In the case of Trucial Oman it increased almost 5 times and it was the same in the case of Bahrain. In Muscat it was slightly higher but it decreased in Lingah and Bushire. The principal factors of the fluctuations were the quality of the pearls obtained, which varied from year to year, and the prices ruling the market. This second factor was perhaps the more important one as the average prices for pearls almost doubled since 1877. In 1899, in anticipation of the Paris Exhibition of 1900, the speculators tried to rise the prices but they failed and many bankruptcies followed. In 1901, the yield was good in terms of quality and quantity, and with the approach of the coronation of King Edward VII the prices had risen considerably.[23]

The bulk of the pearl banks lied on the Arabian side of the Gulf from the coast of Trucial Oman, a few miles to the west of Dubai town up to Bahrain archipelago. The largest and richest banks were situated to the north and east of Bahrain. The pearl

[21] J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and the Central Arabia,* Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, Vols. I–II, 1908–1915, Vol. I, *Historical*, Appendix C *The Pearl and Mother-of-Pearl Fisheries of the Persian Gulf*, p. 2220–2236.

[22] The sums of rupees are given in the system of crores and lakhs (lakh = 100,000, crore = 10 million = 100 lakhs), e.g. 1,26,03,000 means 12,603,000 rupees and 6,95,861 means 695 thousand, eight hundred and 61 rupees.

[23] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2252–2253.

banks of the Persian side were poor as well as small and were situated between Lingah and Tahiri, and again near Kharag Island.[24]

There were several diving seasons, called *ghaus* (literally "diving"). The earliest season was *al-ghaus al-bard*, or "cold diving". It started in the middle of April and continued for 40 days. During this season the operations were performed at shallow waters. The sea was so cold that the divers worked in alternate half-hour shifts. The next and principal season was called *al-ghaus al-kabir*, or "great diving" and began in June or sometimes in May after the end of the wind called the *shimal*. This season lasted until September. Its beginning was known as the the *rakbah*, and the end as the *quffal*. J. Lorimer adds that in 1906 the *ghaus al-kabir* in Bahrain lasted from 16th May to 18th September. The other season was the *raddah*, or "return" and it started a few days after the *ghaus al-kabir* was concluded. It lasted about 3 weeks. In 1906, the *raddah* in Bahrain began on 20th September and ended on 14th October. Besides the seasons of pearling at sea, there was also a winter season called the *Mujannah* when the fishery was conducted by wading in the shallows along the coast. The pearl output obtained during that season was generally small. In winter a number of the Gulf pearlers used to visit the Ceylon banks and Soqotra and the Red Sea where they remained continuously for two consecutive seasons.[25]

The unit of organization was a boat's crew with the *nakhuda* or captain. The *nakhuda* was, in 7 or 8 cases out of 10, the owner of the boat and was entirely responsible for the crew. Next in importance to the captain were the *ghasa* or divers who were followed by the *siyub* or haulers. The haulers were, generally, assisted by one or more *radhafah* or extra hands. Sometimes a *walaid* or apprentice was taken and his duty was to catch fish and prepare food. The total crew of a pearl boat varied from 10 to 40 men. The divers were mostly poor Arabs and free Negroes or Negro slaves. Persians and Baluchis were also engaged in diving.[26]

The money of the people engaged in the pearl diving created a buying power and stimulated importations which guaranteed revenues from the customs for the local governments. The diving industry fuelled boat-building as well as sail-making. The money required to equip the boat for sea and to maintain the crew was partly advanced from those interested in the operation and partly borrowed from a special class called *musaqqams*. They were, generally, wealthy people, but some of them did not have sufficient capital and conducted their business by means of loans obtained from wealthy Arab or Indian merchants at a 10 to 25 per cent interest. The manner in which the debts of operatives to financers were adjusted was the core of the whole business and covered different forms of contract. Traditionally, the *musaqqams* class was very strong and dominated the industry but in the early 20th century their position was no longer what it had been before and their numbers were dwindling. In Bahrain in 1908, there were only 3 *musaqqams* and not more than 10 per cent of

[24] Ibid., p. 2221.
[25] Ibid., p. 2229.
[26] Ibid., p. 2228.

the Bahrain fleet had dealings with them, while earlier the majority of boats had been fitted out with their assistance.[27]

Thus, pearling operations were carried on largely with borrowed capital and the whole industry was governed by prevalence of debt. Many *nakhudas*, especially those who were not owners of boats, owed more than they could pay to their *musaqqams* on account of the expenses of fitting out their vessels. In a similar way, the divers were indebted to their *nakhudas* for advances. Under such a system of finance and in such a society, the rights of lenders had to be safeguarded and the obligations of *nakhudas* to *musaqqams* and of divers to *nakhudas* were regulated by special tribunals. They were called the *salifat al-ghaus* or "diving courts" and they were constituted in every Arab principality, when required, by the local shaikh, who appointed one or more men – as a rule *nakhudas* of repute – to act as judges. The *salifat al-ghaus* did not administer oath and when an oath was necessary, the parties were sent to a *qadhi*, or judge.[28]

The survey of J. Lorimer is extremely useful in revealing the African and slave presence in the Persian Gulf at the turn of the 20th century. It proves that people of African origin were a significant part of the population of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the Trucial Oman. The African population was also very conspicuous in Oman. In 1904, there were 4,000 Africans out of a total of 35,000 people in Kuwait. A third of them were *ma'tuq*, or emancipated slaves, while the remains were *mamluk*, or the enslaved. In Qatar there were 2,000 free Africans and 4,000 slaves not living in their masters' houses, apart from domestic slaves living in the houses of their masters. The total population of Qatar was 27,000 at that time. According to Lorimer, there were nearly 5,000 free Africans and 6,000 slaves out of a total of 45,000 on two islands of Bahrain. However, he stresses that it was impossible to distinguish "Negro" families from the communities by whom they were owned. The Sunni Arabs of Bahrain tended to intermingle with African slaves to that extent that "there was a noticeable infusion of Negro blood" among them. Nevertheless, the mixture of Arab and Negro blood was prevented by the fact that a full-blooded African slave was more valuable than a half-caste one. Slaves were generally married to slave wives by their masters who took possession of the offspring. There were a few cases when a slave was married to a free women by his master.[29]

African slaves were more numerous on the Trucial Coast. According to a British report of 1881, there were 10,040 slaves out of a total of 36,400 for 9 towns on the Trucial Coast (Ras al-Khaimah, Hamrah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Hamriyyah, Ajman, Sharjah, Khan, Dubai and Abu Dhabi).[30] In 1904, the Africans from the Swahili coast still composed a considerable part of the total population of Ajman, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Umm al-Qaiwain and Sharjah. J. G. Lorimer estimated that about 72,000 people lived there and that Negro slaves were exceptionally numerous in the coast towns. He admitted that the Swahili language survived among Negro slaves of the full blood.[31]

[27] Ibid., p. 2227.
[28] Ibid., p. 2233–2234.
[29] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. II, *Geographical and Statistical*, pp. 241, 1051, 1531.
[30] See: Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade", p. 109.
[31] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. II, *Geographical and Statistical*, p. 1437.

Arabs intermixed with African slaves through a system of secondary marriages with slave women or concubinage. Additionally, there was a permanent influx of Indian girls from the Malabar coast and even Bombay in the middle of the 19th century, who were brought to the region for sexual services. The same process took place on the Persian side of the Gulf. The ethnical elements which intermingled were Persians, Arabs, Baluchis and Africans. The populations of such towns as Bushire, Kung and Lingah were extremely heterogeneous and was described as "a medley of races". In Bandar Abbas the population was heterogeneous and this segment which was a mixture of Persians, Baluchis, Arabs and Africans was known as Abbasis and spoke the Abbasi patois with a significant Swahili ingredient.[32]

Outside the Persian Gulf, the Africans composed a considerable element of Oman. This country had a long history of contacts with Zanzibar and the East Africa coast. Most of male slaves imported to Oman were employed in the date plantations. Lorimer stressed that the number of Africans and half-caste (*mawalid*), bond and free, was large. The majority of them came from the Swahili coast and there were few Ethiopian women and Nubians. The Arabs of pure blood were very few because of concubinage with slaves or marriages with free African women. In Muscat there were 10,000 Africans and 15,000 people of mixed African and Arab race out of a total of 40,000. Africans were also very conspicuous in Matrah, where they were concentrated in a separate quarter. However, Lorimer believed that it was the Baluchi who composed the strongest segment of the Muscat and Matrah numerically. A heavy infusion of African blood was showed by a large proportion of the population of Sur on the southern coast of Oman. This port had close commercial relations with Africa and its inhabitants were involved in slave trade. Offspring of Omani Arabs born by slave mothers were called Bayasirah and had an inferior social status.[33]

The lack of proper documentation of slave trade makes a general estimation of the percentage of African slaves in the population of the Persian Gulf difficult. The estimation of Lorimer's figures, which are considered sometimes inflated, shows that the African presence in the Persian Gulf littoral varied from 1 per cent in Basrah to 11 per cent in Kuwait, 25 per cent in Muscat and Matrah and 28 per cent on the Trucial Coast. The total number of slaves can be estimated as 36,880 out of a total of 253,000, which gives the average percentage of 14,5 for the region (including Basrah, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Trucial Coast, Lingah, and Muscat and Matrah).[34] Ricks gives lower proportions; in his view between 1722 and 1902 African population of East African origin constituted 6,3 per cent of the total population. On the other hand, Austen's opinion is that a general rate of slaves for the region was 10 per cent.[35]

[32] Ibid., p. 10–11.

[33] Ibid., pp. 296–297, 1183–1185, 1198–1200.

[34] Calculations of Abdul Sheriff based on Lorimer's estimates, Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade", p. 111.

[35] See: Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade", p. 112.

At the turn of the 20th century, it was the British Government who played a principal role in the repression of the slave trade in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The emancipation of African population in the Gulf did not, however, begin with the formal manumission of slaves by the British in the 20th century. The release of slaves was a part of Islamic norms. Although Islam did not abolish slavery, it recommended to free a slave as an act of piety and charity. At least two *hadiths* refer to the slave manumission. The *hadith* entitled "Excellence of Emancipating a Slave" says, "Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger as saying: If anyone emancipates a Muslim slave, Allah will set free from Hell an organ of his body for every organ of his (slave's) body. Sa'id Marjana said: When I heard this hadith from Abu Huraira, I went away and made a mention of it to Ali bin Hasan and he at once emancipated the slave for which Ibn Ja'far was prepared to pay ten thousand dirhams or one thousand dinars".[36] Another *hadith* "How should the masters treat their slaves and expiation if they show high-handedness" tells the following story, "Sadhan Abu Umar reported: I came to Ibn Umar as he had granted freedom to a slave. He (the narrator further) said: He took hold of a wood or something like it from the earth and said: It (freedom of a slave) has not the reward even equal to it, but the fact that I heard Allah's Messenger say: He who slaps his slave or beats him, the expiation for it is that he should set him free".[37] Thus, Islam also stressed fair treatment of slaves, including adequate food and clothing and support of old slaves. Islam prescribed several ways of manumission of slaves, including a possibility of buying freedom by a slave himself. This type of freed slave was the *mukatib*. Under this arrangement, a contract was made between the owner and his slave, usually for the payment of a particular sum of money, and after payment was completed, the slave was free.[38]

The manumission was accomplished by a formal declaration on the part of the master and recorded in a certificate which was given to the freed slaves. It was a common practice to permit secondary marriages with slave girls and the offspring of these relations were free children with full rights like those who were born of free mothers. The mother of such children (she was called *umm walad*) could not be sold and was supposed to be freed on the death of her master.[39]

In the case of a slave who was *umm walad*, Muslim law required the freeing of her children after the master's death. This way of emancipation was called *mudabbar*. A *mudabbar* slave received his master's assurance that, on his master's death, he or she would be freed. After such an assurance was given the *mudabbar* slave could not be sold, but he or she continued to work for the master, and his/her property

[36] *Sahih Muslim being Traditions of the Saying and Doings of the Prophet Muhammad as Narrated by His Companions and Compiled under the Title Al-Jami'-us-Salih by Imam Mulim rendered into English by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi*, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976, Vol. II, Chapter DXCI, p. 790.

[37] Ibid., Vol. III, Chapter DCLXII, p. 882.

[38] See: H. J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa*, London: Hurst, 2001, p. 75.

[39] See: B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East. An Historical Enquiry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 8–9.

was, at least from the legal point of view, at the master's disposal. A master could still enjoy sexual relations with a female slave who was *mudabbar*. There were, however, several restrains. A man could retract his last testament, if he wished, including the provision to emancipate a slave. A slave could not be made *mudabbar* unless he/she fell within that third of the estate over which the testator had powers of independent allocation. A debtor whose patrimony did not cover his debts was not eligible to free a slave. And again, if someone owned a part of a slave (when the ownership was shared between two or more people) and he freed the slave, the latter did not become free until due compensation was paid to the co-owner.[40]

Manumission was an especially pious act because it was not required. Since slavery was basically accepted by Islamic doctrines, the man who emancipated a slave and gave him a manumission certificate was considered a man of exceptional piety. The freed slaves enjoyed the legal rights of the free born people, but their former masters remained their patrons. The ex-masters were legally responsible for arranging the ex-slaves' marriages and were legal heirs of all the property the slaves acquired after they were freed in the absence of children. Frederick Cooper, in considering the slave situation in the East Africa in the 19th century, stressed that as a result of this traditional attitude toward manumission coastal people had difficulties in understanding the liberation of slaves by the British authorities. Since their masters did not free them in accordance with Islamic law, the status of slaves manumitted by the British changed only in terms of the foreign law. Most people understood that the emancipation by the colonial government was no more than a purchase and referred to slaves manumitted as "slaves of the government" or "slaves of the Consul".[41]

Frederick Cooper stresses that in the East Africa manumission was a regular occurrence in the 19th century. In both Zanzibar and the mainland, slaves were often freed by their masters as atonement for wrongdoing, in gratitude for recovery from an illness, as a provision of a will, or as a reward for loyal service. Freed slaves received a certificate from the *qadi*, which they often wore in a small silver case around the neck. Cooper shows, however, that manumission, being a part of a larger pattern of charity in Muslim societies, did not include in Zanzibar the slaves who picked the cloves at the plantations. Thus, there was a dual nature of a slave for his master – he/she was a person worthy of generosity and at the same time, a transferable object.[42]

Humphrey J. Fisher describes the legal Islamic texts which dealt with slaves' emancipation and which determined the customs of manumission in Africa. The freeing of a slave was a form of expiation for some wrongdoings and was called *kaffara*. The emancipation of a slave was the necessary (*wajib*) expiation for non-intentional homicide. For breaking the Ramadan intentionally, the expiation was either to free a slave or to fast for two subsequent months. Whoever swore to renounce

[40] Fisher, *Slavery in the History*, p. 74.

[41] F. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa,* Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997, p. 242–243.

[42] Ibid., p. 244–245.

sexual relations with his wife – this was called *tazahara* – could resume them only after the expiation of freeing a believing slave, without bodily defects, whom the master owned fully and whose servitude was total.[43]

Fisher highlights an important aspect of African slaves' situation which was their conversion to Islam. Judging by the names of African slaves brought to the Persian Gulf in the early 20th century all of them were Muslims. According to the descriptions of European travellers, the conversion of African slaves to Islam was quite general. In the West Africa, slaves were treated as prisoners and if they did not voluntarily practice Islam, they were settled in cultivable areas, under clerical supervisors who both organized the farm work and initiated the slaves in Islam. In the case of prisoners of war, who were also treated as slaves, they were kept for three days with the clerics who tried to convert them; if they refused, they were executed on the third day. Fisher stresses that when converted, the slaves could not count on emancipation. The author argues with some champions of Islam who declared that a slave who embraced Islam was free, and agrees that it was true in an apocalyptic or spiritual, but not in the ordinary sense.[44]

The principally anti-slave attitude of the British authorities at the turn of the 20th century was, however, relatively recent. Trading in slaves was a very lucrative enterprise. On board of the fleet which in 1626 brought Sir Dodmore Cotton, a British Ambassador, with his staff from Surat in India to Bunder Abbas in the Persian Gulf there were more than 300 slaves bought by Persians in India and the British representative suggested no remarks. But in 1772 it was decided by the English courts that a slave who set his foot on the British soil, became free. Yet the slave trade and the slavery itself continued abroad under the British flag. Some estimates say that around 1790, out of some 74,000 slaves exported annually from Africa, about 38,000 belonged to British merchants. In 1807, when an act was passed, it became illegal for any vessel to ship slaves from any port in the British dominions after 1st March, 1807, and to land slaves in a British colony after 1st March, 1808. In 1811, the traffic in slaves was declared to be felony and was made punishable to prevent commercial transactions in slaves by British subjects. The next step was made in 1833 with the abolition of proprietary rights to slaves throughout the British dominions. The final liberation of all slaves took place in August 1838.[45] There was no compensation for the slaves, their ex-owners received 20 million pounds for their loss of unpaid labour. Among them there were prominent persons, such as John Gladstone and his sons, including the future Prime Minister William, who received 85,600 pounds for his 2,183 slaves in Jamaica and British Guiana. Nevertheless, in 1842 there were estimates of still 5 or 10 million of enslaved people in India, which was then governed by the British East India Company on behalf of the British Government. Thus, the emancipation of slaves was a long process. The last Act of

[43] Fisher, *Slavery in the History*, p. 76.
[44] Ibid., p. 71.
[45] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2475.

Abolition in the British Empire took place in 1928, when slavery was abolished in the Gold Coast.[46]

The position of the British Government in regard to slavery in the Persian Gulf can be described as uncompromisingly hostile to the slave trade and adverse to slavery as an institution. Certain questions, relating to the meaning and application of agreements and enactments, were, however, from time to time discussed, and especially subsidiary matters connected with anti-slavery proceedings provoked various opinions between the main British institutions responsible for preventive operations, but the general actions of the British anti-slavery policy at the turn of the 20th century in the area were quite effective – the traffic in slaves was stopped and the slavery as an institution weakened.

From 1800 to the 1920s the policy of the British Government on the littoral of the Persian Gulf was consistently to avoid any interference in the affairs of the hinterland. In the early part of this period it was solely concerned with making the seas safe for commerce; with putting down piracy; and at a slightly later stage, with suppressing the slave trade. In 1844, A. B. Kemball, Assistant Resident in the Persian Gulf, admitted: "The general policy of the British Government in relation with the Arab States is the entire suppression of piracy, and consequent security to the trade and traders of all nations. […] The first principle of our policy is a total non-interference in local matters concerning only themselves […]".[47] However, as the strategic importance of the Gulf area, particularly from the Indian standpoint, became greater, the British authorities consolidated their relations with the rulers of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Muscat, and with the Trucial shaikhs.

The first agreement on the slave trade in the Persian Gulf was the General Treaty of 1820 signed with the shaikhs of Trucial Oman. It was laid down by the 9th Article of that Treaty that carrying off slaves from the coasts of Africa or elsewhere and transporting them in vessels was plunder and piracy, and that the subjects of the signatories would restrain from doing anything of such a nature.[48]

In 1837–1838, it was, however, decided, not to put pressure on the Trucial shaikhs or on the ruler of Muscat to abolish the slave trade in their dominions entirely, and the reasons for this policy were political, particularly the awareness of the fact that

[46] See: M. Sherwood, *After Abolition. Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807,* London: I. B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 1–2, 15–17.

[47] "Observations on the past policy of the British Government towards the Arab Tribes of the Persian Gulf. By A.B. Kemball, Assistant Resident in the Persian Gulf. Sumbitted to Government on the 18th October, 1844", in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government,* pp. 62, 74.

[48] The text in C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries,* Vol. XI, *The Treaties relating to Aden and the South Western Coast of Arabia, the Arab Principalities in the Persian Gulf, Muscat (Oman), Baluchistan and the north-west frontiers province, revised and continued up to the end of 1930 under the authority of the Government of India*, Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933, p. 245–249; see also: "Major-General Sir W.G. Kerr to the Bombay Government", 11th April 1820, in J. A. Saldanha, *The Persian Précis*, Vol. 2, *Précis of Correspondence regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf*, 1801–1853, p. 107–113.

the slavery was a part of the local social system and its abolition could destroy the political stability. New agreements with the shaikhs of Ajman, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ras al-Khaimah were signed in 1839, 1847, 1856 and 1873, by which the five Trucial shaikhs committed to prohibit the exportation of slaves from any place on board of vessels belonging to themselves and their subjects, and consented to the detention and search, and – when in breach of the agreement – to the confiscation of such vessels by British cruisers[49].

On 4th September, 1822, the first treaty for the suppression of slavery was concluded with the ruler of Muscat. It prohibited the sale of slaves to Christian nations by the subjects of the ruler. It also empowered the British Government to establish an agent in the Sultan's dominions to watch the trade. On 17th December, 1839, the ruler of Muscat authorized the detention and search by British Governmental cruises of Omani vessels suspected of being engaged in the slave trade. Until 1856 the ruler of Muscat ruled both Oman and Zanzibar. After the death of Sayid Sa'id these two territories became separate sultanats. As a result, the old agreement was revised and in 1873 new agreements with the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Sultan of Muscat were concluded. Vessels engaged in carrying slaves were declared to be liable to confiscation by British officers and courts and the closure of all public markets for slaves was declared by the ruler of Muscat. But the most remarkable provision of the Treaty of 14th April, 1873, was that all persons thereafter entering the Sultan's dominions were free. In Zanzibar the complete abolition of the slave trade was declared on 5th June, 1873.[50]

At the end of January 1847, at the instigation of the British Government, a decree was promulgated by the Sultan of Turkey, under which Turkish merchant vessels were prohibited from engaging in the slave trade. It was agreed that offending vessels might be captured by British as well as by Turkish ships. In the former case the vessels seized were to be delivered over by the captors to the Turkish authorities in the Persian Gulf. Earlier, in 1812, the Pasha of Baghdad issued an order of handing over to the British Agent in Basrah any native of India kidnapped and brought to the Turkish Arabia. These regulations were confirmed in a treaty concluded in Constantinople on 25th January, 1880 between the Porte and the British Government. By this agreement the Turkish Government undertook to prohibit the importation of African slaves into any part of the Ottoman dominions, and not to allow the exportation of such, except as domestic servants travelling with their masters or mistresses, in which case they should be provided with certificates. British cruisers were authorized to visit, search and detain merchant vessels suspected of being involved in the African slave trade, and these rights were to be exercised in the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Aden, on the coast of Arabia, in the Persian Gulf, on the East coast of Africa and in Ottoman waters where there were no

[49] The texts in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, pp. 669–670, 670–678.

[50] See: Aitchison, *A Collection*, p. 237–239; *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, pp. 248–249, 249–250, 250–256, 660–662.

constituted authorities. This treaty was brought within the operation by means of an Order in Council on 26th August, 1881.[51]

On 31st May, 1861, the Shaikh of Bahrain subscribed to the three agreements accepted by the shaikhs of Trucial Oman and agreed, in view of protection to be afforded him by the British Government, to abstain from slavery and other unlawful practices by sea[52].

By 1900 no agreement on the subject of slavery was obtained from the shaikhs of Qatar or Kuwait, or from those of Hasa. The latter province was a dependency of the Wahhabi Amirate of Najd, and the former two were under the influence of the Turkish Government. The Shaikh of Qatar concluded the treaty with the British Government on 3rd November 1916, under which he accepted obligations similar to those of the other Trucial chiefs. It was agreed, however, that he and his subjects would be allowed to retain Negro slaves already in their possession, on condition of their treatment being satisfactory. No formal engagement existed as yet in the case of Kuwait, but the degree of control and influence exercised in that Amirate by the British Government was regarded as sufficient to enable to impose in practice an effective check on slave traffic within its boundaries.[53]

In 1870 the Wahhabi Amirs established themselves on the sea coast and they became a matter of concern to the British Government, who was, however, cautious to abstain from all interference with their activities in the hinterland save to the extent that these might bear on the position of the other maritime rulers of the Trucial area and thus lead to piratical outbreaks, the revival of slavery, or the absorption of Muscat or Bahrain. London had no treaty relations with the Wahhabi Amirs, and its communication with them (apart from formal representations or demands for reparation for injuries committed at their instigation or by their subjects or vassals) was confined to polite exchanges of letters.[54] On 10th May, 1927 the Treaty of Jeddah was signed with Ibn Saud who undertook to co-operate by all means at his disposal with the British Government in the suppression of the slave trade, while a separate exchange of notes took place on the same occasion regarding the retention by the British consular officers of the right to manumit slaves.

The suppression of the traffic in slaves in Persia was governed by the British-Persian Convention of 2nd March, 1882. The Persian Government agreed to take steps for the suppression of the trade, and allowed the British to search, detain, and bring for trial before the nearest Persian authorities Persian merchant vessels engaged in carrying slaves. The measures taken under the Convention resulted in the reduction

[51] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2482.

[52] See: Aitchison, *A Collection*, pp. 72, 118–120, 235.

[53] See: Aitchison, *A Collection*, p. 258–261; *The Persian Gulf. Historical Summaries 1907–1953*: Vol. II, *Historical Summary of Events in the Persian Gulf Shaikhdoms and the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, 1928–1953*, Gerrards Cross: Archive Editions, 1987, p. 135.

[54] "Historical Memorandum on the Relations of the Wahhabi Amirs and Ibn Saud with Eastern Arabia and the British Government, 1800–1934, 26th September 1934", IOR: R/15/1/745 India Office Memorandum No. B. 437, P.Z. 5620/1934.

of the slave trade on the Persian littoral to relatively unimportant dimensions. The extent, however, to which the slave traffic between the Persian and the Arab Coast continued to persist was considered by the Government of India as disquieting, and the possibility of its revival on a larger scale was very real. The lack of effective control by Persia of Persian Baluchistan was especially dangerous and resulted in a small but regular traffic from that area. In April 1928, the Persian Government declared that the Slavery Convention of 1882 was derogatory to Persian dignity and pressed for its abrogation. The British authorities wished to retain the Convention but their position was complicated by the existence of the League of Nations' Slavery Convention of 1926, which imposed on the states adhering to it an obligation to prevent and suppress the slave trade. Once Persia signed the League of Nations' Convention, the case for a special agreement between it and the Great Britain became substantially weakened. The position of the British Government was that Persia would be incapable of discharging effectively her obligations as there was no Persian navy. Moreover, there was a danger that the Persian obligations would be officered from foreign and non-British power. Consequently, the British Government aimed at retaining control by the British Navy of preventive action at the sea against the slave traffic.[55]

As the main source of the slaves' exportation was East Africa, in 1871 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to enquire into the subject of the East African slave trade and in 1873 a mission to Zanzibar and Muscat was sent to arrange a treaty with the Sultan of Muscat. In 1874, a British cruiser arrived in the Zanzibar station and the operation of preventing the exportation of slaves from the Eastern African coats started. In two years it was reported that the dealers abandoned the wholesale exportation and that the slaves were brought to Arabia in small lots. At the same time the dealers began to use the French flag, which secured them against search by British vessels. The use of the French flag by the subjects of the Sultan of Muscat, provided by the Commercial Treaty with France of 1844, became common in the 1890s and this practice – often unauthorized and fraudulent – was extended to the vessels of Trucial Oman and the traders of Basrah. At the beginning of the preventing operations British cruisers provided surveillance of 2,500 miles of the Arabian coast from Mukalla to Basrah but after 1884, when a serious increase in the importation of slaves from Africa to the Gulf was reported, they started to watch 500 miles of the African coast, which proved to be more effective.[56]

Between 1884 and 1908 dozens of Arab vessels were stopped and searched. The principal reason of the increase in importation was at that time a severe famine upon the mainland of Africa, which brought down the price of slaves. The British Government, because of the reverses in the Sudan, eased its efforts to prevent the slave trade in this country, which was the second reason of the increase. The slaves

[55] See: *The Persian Gulf. Historical Summaries 1907–1953*, Vol. II, *Historical Summary*, p. 136–137.

[56] See: *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, p. 250–256; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2495.

were brought to Aden and then transported to Batinah, or shipped to Sur in Oman, which was considered one of the chief emporia of the traffic from Africa. In 1886, operations against slavers entering the Gulf were undertaken on a large scale. Four cruisers were employed and as a result about 200 Arab crafts were stopped and searched. Ten years later, however, the total number of slaves imported to Sur was estimated at 300 per annum. The cargoes of slaves consisted at that time of only five to ten Africans each, and only occasionally amounted to 50. As the demand in the interior behind Sur was not great, for the system of irrigation in these districts did not demand slave labour, the majority of the slaves were re-exported in small vessels to the Batinah district of Oman, where irrigation was mostly from wells. Some of them were retained there but the rest was distributed to Trucial Oman by land or to the coasts of the Persian Gulf by sea.[57]

In 1890, Colonel E. Ross, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, stressed that in spite of the fact that slaves were not openly sold in the dominions of the sultan of Muscat by public brokers, the illegal traffic was briskly carried on all over Oman. No effectual steps were taken by the sultan to suppress the notorious traffic. There were many thousands of Africans in slavery in Oman, who under the Treaty of 1873 were illegally in bondage and the number was rapidly increasing. The Government of India was of the opinion that the Sultan of Muscat ought to issue a proclamation similar to that issued by the Sultan of Zanzibar on the subject of the prohibition of traffic in slaves but the sultan of Muscat opposed this idea. He claimed that the proposed proclamation would be resented by the population of Oman and lead to insurrection. The Political Resident shared this opinion and highlighted the difference between the political conditions of Zanzibar and Oman. He considered it impossible for the sultan of Muscat to give effect to a decree of the proposed tenor throughout the territories under his nominal rule. In existing circumstances nothing would be gained by the issue of a decree which would be a mere "brutum fulmen" even if the Sultan was willing to issue it.[58] Finally, the proclamation was issued on 17th April, 1873, and it said, "Let it be known that we have entirely forbidden all traffic in slaves either publicly or privately and that in the event of our finding anyone engaged in the same in our dominions or dependencies he will forfeit his property as well as his personal safety".[59]

The question of the importation of African slaves into the Persian Gulf through Oman received much attention again in June 1900, when Captain Cox, British Political Agent at Muscat, visited Sur. The inquiry among the local Indian community showed that in the last several months over 1,000 African slaves had been imported to this port. Of this number 850 arrived in five large vessels, of which three carried the French flag. The majority of the slaves imported to Sur in 1900 changed hands there

[57] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2498.

[58] "From Colonel Ross, Political Resident in Persian Gulf, at Bushire, to Cunningham, Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, at Calcutta, 29th December 1890", IOR: R/15/6/20.

[59] "Slavery in the Persian Gulf, 15th February 1939", IOR: R/15/1/228 5/193 IV (B 55).

and was then distributed northwards by land. The demand for slaves was good and children were fetching 120, male adults 150, and girls 200 to 300 the Muscat dollars.[60]

In the season of 1901 about 1,000 slaves were again landed in Sur, and in 1902 it was reported that the trade was flourishing. Nevertheless, the direct measures against the Sur slave-traders were impossible, for the French flag question was still unsettled and the danger of offending French susceptibilities still existed. In this situation, sudden retribution overtook the slave dealers of Oman in an unexpected quarter, nearly 3,000 miles from their homes. In the middle of February 1902, a flotilla of Arab vessels was anchored in a small inlet of Samuco Bay in Mozambique. The Omani Arabs formed a large camp there, and being armed, they actively engaged in the purchase of slaves. On 8th March, the Portuguese war-vessels arrived at Samuco Bay and joined a land force of armed natives commanded by a Portuguese officer. A battle took place and 114 Omani Arabs were captured. 12 of their vessels were taken and in the camp 725 slaves were found. They had been collected by the local tribe from various sources and sold to the Omanis at an average price of 3 Muscat dollars a head. The case was finally disposed on 3rd October, 1903, when the court sentenced 54 dealers to transportation for 25 years to Angola. The Shaikh of Samuco was also brought to justice. The Omani vessels were destroyed. The news of the catastrophe reached Sur and turned the town into a scene of lamentation and the seizure had a very depressing effect on the trade in slaves from East Africa. On the other hand, it led to a serious increase in a trade in Baluchi slaves from the coast of Persian Makran to the Batinah coast of Oman.[61]

At the turn of the 20th century the traffic in slaves from Makran to Arabia was carried on by people from Jask, Bahu and Dashtyari districts, who were purchasing slaves from the inhabitants of Bahu and from Kalat subjects in Dasht and were selling them to merchants from the Oman coast. The principal places of export were Tank and Wank in the Bir district, but slaves were also shipped at Galag and Sadaich. Many of the slaves exported were Africans, but among them were some low class Baluchis who had been sold by petty headmen. The trade was stimulated by the proceedings of some local chiefs, who scoured the country with an armed retinue and reduced poor Baluchis to slavery and were selling them. One of them was Said Khan, the ruler of Gaih, who invested profits of slave-dealings in rifles and ammunition. His example was followed by Mir Barkat of Jask, who formed a gang for slave-kidnapping. The victims were captured also in Gaih and Bint neighbourhoods, and even in Bashakard. The enslavement of free Muslims was contrary to the law of Islam and some *mullas* of Jask addressed frequent remonstrances, but the rulers concerned refused to desist. It was estimated that from Jask alone 450 slaves were exported to Arabia during three years ending in 1904. In 1903, there was a considerable influx of fugitive slaves into the free port of Gwadar, a dependency in Makran of the

[60] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2499. The Muscat dollar was converted up to 1897 at the rate 1 dollar = 2 rupees, and from 1897 to 1906 at the rate 3 dollars = 4 rupees.

[61] Ibid., p. 2500–2501.

Sultan of Oman. These slaves believed that their owners intended to sell them into slavery abroad. Of 95 slaves manumitted in Muscat in 1904–1905 no less than 60 were Persians or Baluchis exported from Makran to the Batinah coast.[62]

In the 19th century and till 1925 copies of the Slave Trade Proclamation were sent from India to the Gulf: in 1873 and in 1874 to Muscat, Bahrain, Sharjah, Bandar Abbas, Lingah, Basidu and Gwadur and, finally in 1925, they reached Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait, Bandar Abbas, Gwadar, Sharjah, Basidu, Mohammarah, Lingah and the Karachi Telegraph Officials at Jask, Henjam and Charbar. Inhabitants of the Arabian coast of the Gulf were warned that the India Penal Code would be applicable in every case of smuggling slaves from the sea to the coast.[63]

Apart from the slave trade to and in the Persian Gulf as carried on by sea, the second aspect of the phenomenon was domestic slavery and the traffic of domestic slaves, or slaves born in slavery in the area. The general opinion was that domestic slavery as practised in the Persian Gulf was of a comparatively harmless character. Among the rulers and inhabitants of the countries surrounding the Gulf there was a strong social and also religious feeling in favour of its continuance. For these reasons, and on account of the difficulty of intervening with beneficial effect in the internal affairs of independent and quasi-independent states, the British Government generally abstained from active interference with domestic slavery in the Persian Gulf. In the case of Persia the practice was that runaway slaves were not admitted to premises owned by the British Government, as the result could be a great influx of slaves, leading to political complications with the Persian authorities. The exception was made when the slaves were in imminent danger. William G. Clarence-Smith stresses, however, that "domestic slavery", a phrase so frequently repeated in the studies on the attitude of Islam to slavery, is to some extent a misleading term as the duties of a domicile slave covered a range of purely productive tasks.[64] This remark perfectly reflects the situation in the Persian Gulf in the period under study. Male slaves were used there as divers in summer-time and as house-servants in winter.

According to the statistics provided by J. Lorimer, the practice of setting slaves free by the British officials started in 1852 and till 1908 693 slaves were rescued at sea and 1,853 released by the exertions of the British authorities. Among the latter group there were two types of slaves: (1) those released under the treaty as "recently" imported by sea, and (2) domestic slaves released otherwise than under the treaty. There were, however, very few domestic slaves among those emancipated until 1908, as the custom to manumit domestic slaves was a rather new phenomenon in the Gulf. It became socially accepted first in Muscat in the 1890s. It happened occasionally that, with the consent of the Sultan, domestic slaves who were proved to have been badly treated or whom no owner appeared to claim were manumitted, and if they were returned to their masters they received a guarantee of kind treatment.

[62] Ibid., p. 2510–2511.

[63] "Proclamation", IOR: R/15/1/ 214.

[64] W. G. Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, London: Hurst, 2006, p. 3.

An attempt to introduce manumission of domestic slaves in the Trucial Oman in 1899 failed as the Shaikh of Sharjah declined to entertain such a proposal of the British Resident in the Persian Gulf on the ground that his subjects would demand compensation of him for every slave manumitted. In Bahrain an attempt was also made to obtain from the leading tribal chiefs the written agreement that they would not buy, sell or give away slaves but the chiefs were not amenable to persuasion and the project was abandoned. The Government of India authorized, however, the Political Agent in Bahrain to manumit slaves, acting on his own responsibility with the consent – which might not be withheld – of the shaikh of the island. The instructions permitted the emancipation of domestic slaves when they were abused or no sufficient guarantee was offered for their subsequent good treatment.[65]

The manumission was carried on by the British Government at that time in Egypt. In 1877, the Convention for the Suppression of the Slave Trade was signed by the British and Egyptian Governments and four special offices were established in Cairo, Alexandria, the Delta and the upper Egypt to register manumissions and to find work for freed slaves and to place the children at schools. Following the British occupation of Egypt in 1883, the activities of the manumission offices increased. By 1889 they had freed 18,000 slaves. The manumission certificate was useful to find a job, but with the development of free market in Egypt and the erosion of the guilds, more and more slaves found job in the cities and thereby an important reason for holding back on manumission was eliminated. It turned out that free labour was cheaper and less troublesome than slave labour. With the recovery of the Sudan, the Anglo-Egyptian Declaration of January 1899 was announced and the slave trade in this country was abolished.[66] It also had a significant consequences for the manumission in the Persian Gulf, where slaves from the Sudan were numerous. If they applied for manumission, their cases were proceeded under the rules of the above-mentioned Declaration.

Suzanne Miers, in the chapter on slavery in Hijaz, shows that in Hijaz the British practised consular manumission almost from the day of the appointment of a British consul in Jeddah in the 1870s. The Hijazi and the Turkish authorities of the country bitterly opposed this policy but the British public and the Anti-Slavery Society adamantly rejected the return of fugitives. The problem was that slavery was recognized by the *Qur'an* and accepted as such by the Islamic clerics. Hijaz was a poor and barren land. Its prosperity depended on the pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Every year many pilgrims brought slaves and sold them to defray their expenses, while others purchased slaves and took them home.[67] Slaves manumitted at the request of the British consul were of two kinds: persons from British or other colonial possessions who had been kidnapped and brought to Hijaz by slave brokers, and slaves who took a refuge at a British consulate or on a British

[65] Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, Vol. I, *Historical*, p. 2514–2516.

[66] Gordon, *Slavery*, p. 179–181.

[67] S. Miers, "Slavery in Saudi Arabia and the Arab States on the Persian Gulf, 1921–63", in *Abolition and its Aftermath*, p. 120.

ship. The latter kind applied for freedom and often complained of ill-treatment. The number of emancipations was small, but consular manumission provided an avenue of escape and, in consequence, threatened the institution of slavery.[68] Between 1926 and the end of 1933 a total of 209 slaves was freed at the British request. Almost all had been brought to Arabia as children or had been born into slavery. All spoke Arabic. There were fewer women among fugitives but this did not indicate that male slaves in Hijaz outnumbered females. The truth was that women found it harder to escape, concluded Miers.[69]

In the Persian Gulf the chief institution responsible for manumission was the British Residency in Bushire on the Persian coast. Its history goes back as far as to 12th April, 1763, when the East India Company concluded a trade agreement with the Shaikh of Bushire. As a result, a factory was opened in this port to replace the factory in Bandar Abbas (Gombroon), which was closed because of the economic decline in this part of the Persian coast.[70] The new factory was subordinate to that in Basrah which functioned as head station for the Company's trade in the Gulf.[71]

In 1778, Basrah was reduced in status from an Agency to a Residency, and it was equal but not longer superior to Bushire. Afterwards, the Resident in Bushire reported directly to Bombay and continued to do so until 1873.[72] The wars with France were very important for the development of British policy in the Gulf, and the campaigns against the Qawasim' piratical activities between 1806–1820 marked the turning points of British interests in the region. In 1820, the Resident in Bushire became responsible for the affairs of the whole Gulf and his title was restyled "Resident in the Persian Gulf". The primary functions of the Residency were no longer focused on diplomatic or commercial relations with Persia, which were transferred to the British Envoy in Teheran – but on political relations with the Arab littoral.[73]

The duties of the Resident combined the general supervision of almost 1,600 miles of coast from Basrah to Jask in the north and Ras al-Hadd in the south, and conducting relations with local rulers, as well as with the native agents in Bahrain, Lingah, and Sharjah. Since the 1820s the Resident had used to make an annual tour of the Arabian side of the Gulf. In 1843, the Resident was granted consular functions and his post was placed under the authority of the Foreign Office as he acted in the

[68] S. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century. The Evolution of a Global Problem*, Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003, p. 94.

[69] Miers, "Slavery in Saudi Arabia", in *Abolition and its Aftermath*, p. 123.

[70] CXXIV "Extract of a letter from Commission and Instructions to Mr. William Andrew Price, Provisional Agent of Persia, dated 22 January 1763", in J. A. Saldanha, *The Persian Précis*, Vol. 1, *Selections from State Papers,* p. 162–163.

[71] CXXVII "William Andrew Price to Benjamin Jervis", in J. A. Saldanha, *The Persian Précis*, Vol. 1, *Selections from State Papers,* p. 165–166.

[72] See: Penelope Tuson, *The Records of the British Residency and Agencies in the Persian Gulf*, London: India Office, 1979, p. XIV.

[73] "Major-General Sir W. G. Kerr to the Bombay Government", 11th April 1820, in J. A. Saldanha, *The Persian Précis*, Vol. 2, *Précis of Correspondence regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853*, p. 107–113.

capacity of Consul-General. Since then the cost of maintaining the Residency was divided between the British and Indian exchequers. The functioning of the Residency was permanently overshadowed by the issue of financial matters. Neither the Government of India nor Foreign Office and the India Office were willing to increase the resources of the Residency for extra staff. In consequence, there was little change in the establishment of the post in the 19th century and the duties on the Arabian shore were confined to a great extent to the native agents.[74]

In 1873, the responsibility for the Persian Gulf affairs was transferred from the Government of Bombay to the Government of India. The reasons for this decision were merely political. Increased facilities of communication and the extension of commerce drew Asiatic countries nearer Europe. Wars and rapid dynastic changes in some of these countries demanded prompt decisions on questions of the great international consequences. Nearly all of these questions were of purely imperial character, such as no authority but the highest in India could resolve. The Bombay Government did not oppose to such argumentation and, as a result, the control of the Persian Gulf territories was taken over solely by the Viceroy and his government. Since then the Resident was to communicate directly to the Government of India through the Foreign Department.[75]

In the 1890s and early 1900s, British Consulates or Vice-Consulates were established in Bandar Abbas, Kirman, Ahwaz and Muhammarah in Arabistan, Kirmanshah and Lingah, and all of them were placed under the supervision of the Resident. British influence in the Gulf expanded at that time and on the Arabian side the most remarkable effect was the appointment of a British officer in Bahrain on 10th February, 1900.[76]

The British Political Residency in the Persian Gulf operated from Bushire till 1946 when it was transferred to Bahrain.

Between 1906 and 1949 altogether 945 statements were made by slaves at the British Residency in Bushire (7 applications) and the Agencies in Bahrain (284 applications), Kuwait (3), Muscat (244), and Shargah (397). Fifteen were made at the British Consular Agencies in Bandar Abbas (7), Basidu (7) and Lingeh (1), and two on the British war-of-man. Two statements were made in Dubai in a special case of Indian boys who were kidnapped and brought to this port and recovered by the local Indian community. One case of a slave from Dubai, but of Abyssinian, origin was recorded at the British Consulate in Addis Ababa.

The applicants were illiterate, so, when reporting at an Agency, they were describing their situation orally and in most cases in Arabic, and their words were written down by assistants to the British officials at this Agency. Then the applicant put his thumb on the document and his or her statement was translated into English. The statements

[74] Tuson, *The Records*, p. 7, see also J. Onley *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj. Merchants, Rulers and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[75] Ibid., p. 4.

[76] Tuson, *The Records*, p. 44.

made in Shargah, in front of a British Official, who was a native or an Indian subject, were sent for further consideration either to the Agency in Bahrain, or to the Residency in Bushire. In 1917, the following Instructions for the Residency Agent at Shargah were prepared:

> All cases of slaves or negro divers taking refuge at the Consulates and Agencies in the Persian Gulf were dealt by the Residency. If you hear of a slave or diver going to a certain Consulate you should not write to the Political Agent or Consul and ask him to return the slave and diver to Shargah. If the man is a slave and not also a diver, it is not necessary for you to do anything. If the man is a diver and you desire to prevent his escape you should write to the Officer concerned saying that you hear that such and such a man has taken refuge at his Agency or Consulate, and that the is a runaway diver and ask that he may be detained pending orders from the Residency.

At the same time the Residency Agent was obliged to send a copy of the statement of a slave and his letter to Bushire with remarks as to the amount of debt, what proof there was of it, whether the man was a slave etc. When the *nakhuda* of a runaway diver was wishing to go in pursuit, and asked for a letter of the Consul or Political Agent, the Residency Agent was obliged to give a letter introducing the *nakhuda* and saying that he had a claim against the diver. He could suggest the *nakhuda* and the diver go before the Salifeh Court, if there was one, or before the Sharia Court.[77]

Each statement begins with the information of the place of birth and origin of the slave. Then the life story is narrated and reasons for running away from the master. The statement ends with the request to be granted a certificate of manumission. The pattern can be illustrated by the following:

> *Statement of Qambar bin Faraj, slave aged about 20 years, the 13th day of June 1932*
>
> I was born in a village Saffa in Qatif. My parents were slaves of one Haji Salih bin Ahmad bin Haji Ahmad of Qatif in whose house I was born. He freed my father voluntarily when I was young and sold my mother about ten years ago. As soon as I attained majority I started serving my master Haji Salih taking his cattle to the field for grazing in winter and by going for diving in summer. He used to take my earnings and give me only a few out of it. About five years ago he visited Iraq for the purpose of performing pilgrimage and took me with him for service. After spending a short time in Iraq, we both returned to Qatif where I had to serve as before. Finding it impossible for me to serve my master any longer owing

[77] "Political Residency, Persian Gulf, to the Residency Agent, Shargah", Bushire, 11th June 1917, IOR: R/15/1/202 5/104 II, III.

> to maltreatment and insufficient food and clothing, I was compelled to escape from him and came to Bahrain three days ago in a Jolly boat.[78]

Since 1934 the Agents in Bahrain and in Muscat were empowered to grant a manumission certificate, so the cases were reported to Bushire but the decision was taken on the spot. Agents, when reporting the case to Bushire, expressed their opinions and recommended or not to grant a certificate. The typical conclusion was: "I herewith forward two statements made before me for the grant of manumission certificates. I recommend that the certificates applied for may be granted. The applicants speak Arabic and look like Negroes." [79] In response, the Political Resident authorized an Agent to grant a manumission certificate to the applicant.

The procedure ended with granting a manumission certificate to the applicant. Usually, it took 2 weeks to go through the procedures. On 24th June, 1935 a female slave named Hasinah bint Khamis submitted her application and she was granted a manumission certificate on 8th July, 1935.[80] This was the most common length of considering an application.

Sometimes the procedure lasted several months, especially in the case of fugitive divers. These applicants were quite often free people, free born or *mawali*, born slaves but manumitted by their master, and were running away from their debts. They were playing slaves to avoid paying debts to their *nakhudas*, or captains of the boats. It was commonly known that it was not a slave who was responsible for the borrowed money but his master. In such cases an Agent was obliged to clear the status of the applicant and establish the sum of debts and the people to whom the applicant was indebted.

Whenever a slave applied to an Agency for manumission, usually the practice was to keep him or her at the Agency while the case was under consideration. This was not always necessary, unless there was a danger that the slave would be re-enslaved, or that he or she could not support himself or herself in a town by his/her own labour.[81]

The instruction of the Political Resident to the Political Agents in Kuwait, Bahrain and Muscat and to the Residency Agent in Shargah concerning manumission dated of 11th November, 1907, said that runaway slaves who took refuge at British Residencies and Agencies in the Persian Gulf were manumitted only when the respective slave agreement applied to them. The instruction stressed that in Bahrain and on the Arab coast slaves who were born in slavery or who were imported prior to the execution of the slave agreements with the sheikhs, were returned to their masters. The last sentence was based on paragraph 3 of Colonel Meade's letter No.

[78] IOR: R/15/2/1825.

[79] "The Political Agency, Bahrein, to the Secretary to the Hon'ble the Political Resident", Bushire, No. 924/V.o of 1932, dated the 9th July 1932, IOr: R/15/2/1825.

[80] "The British Residency and Consulate General, Bushire, to the Political Agent and Consul", Muscat, 8th July 1935, IOR: R/15/1/218 5/190 IV.

[81] "Political Agency, Bahrain, to the Political Agent, Sharja", Bahrain, the 28th September 1938, No. 297-A/4, IOR: R/15/2/1825.

31, dated 26th April, 1898, which ran: "Slaves imported to the Arab coast and Bahrain subsequent to the dates of the agreements with the Sheikhs of Bahrein, Ras-ul-Khimah, Shargah, Um-ul-Kowain, Debay, Ajman and Abu Thabi were given manumission certificates on taking refuge at British Agencies. Those who were born in slavery, or who were imported prior to the execution of the agreements with the Sheikhs, were returned to their masters." The practice in Bahrain in regard to such slaves was, however, to make the masters sign papers agreeing to treat them kindly if returned, with the condition that they would be liable to be released if it was found that they were badly treated.[82]

The rules of 1898 were still applicable in the first years of the 20th century. As time passed and there was less and less slaves imported prior the execution of the agreements, the existing practice changed. Certificates were granted to all kidnapped slaves and there were more and more cases of issuing certificates for slaves born in slavery.

Slaves who were seeking manumission certificates did it for various reasons. 5 main argumentations can be traced in the statements: (a) ill-treatment which meant that they were not fed and clothed by their masters; (b) fear of being sold and separated from their families; (c) not getting money for their job; (d) unwillingness of their masters to get them married, and (e) simply a desire to be free. The argument (d) is worth noting as it sheds light on the problem of the reproduction of the community of African slaves in the region. The slaves concerned stressed the obligation of their masters to get them married and complained that they were not married despite the fact that their earnings were sufficient to maintain a family. The common practice was to formalize a marriage of a male slave with a slave girl belonging to the same owner. In this case the master took possession of the offspring. The other option was to marry a male slave with a girl who belonged to another master. Both practices became more and more difficult because of the scarcity of fresh slave girls.

A common opinion of the soft nature of slavery in the Muslim world can hardly be shared after reading the statements. Besides the fact that, as W.G. Clarence-Smith mentions, "the institution of slavery […] depended on brutal raids, pathetic sales of destitute people, traumatic forced marches, dangerous journeys, and the demeaning routines of the slave market"[83], the slaves were beaten, kept in chains, separated from their families, forced to work, sexually used, turned out the houses when getting old, threatened to be sold, and in fact sold without their consent. It should, however, be remembered, that the slaves who asked for manumission represented only a small segment of slave population. The majority of them, especially those who were born in slavery, used to accept their status and were relatively well off when compared with the slaves who were turned out by their master of the houses in the critical years of the economic crisis. Slavery was part of a particular society

[82] "British Residency in the Persian Gulf", No. 1604, confidential, 6th May 1908, IOR: R/15/1/213 5/183 (D 31).

[83] Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, p. 5.

which functioned in a harsh environment and was anxious about itself as a whole. That was a poor society where free people fared worse than slaves, with free divers permanently tied with their captains by debts. Abdul Sheriff is right, when stressing paternal rather than racial bonds of the Persian Gulf communities. Secondary marriages with slave girls were not instances of leisure, but created relations whose consequences were acknowledged. Offspring of those marriages were integrated legally and socially as sons and daughters with equal rights as those born of free mothers.[84] Social practice was often far from prescribed norms. Some statements prove the existence of all kinds of racial prejudice and the fact that sometimes the desire of possession was stronger than the religious consideration to free a slave. The norm that the *umm walad* could not be sold and the offspring of a free father and a slave mother were free was broken down pretty often.

For some of the slaves, however, especially those who were kidnapped, the status of a slave was unacceptable and they were trying to get an opportunity to run away. Being formally freed, they had a long way to go to achieve social emancipation.

[84] Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade", p. 116.

Abdulrahman al-Salimi

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Immigrant Religions: A Study of Religious Diversity in the GCC States

1. Introduction

The study of religion has recently gained increasing importance, particularly as religion has been perceived as a major destabilizing factor since the end of the Cold War. Religion is closely tied to a new era of global changes: the end of the Cold War, globalization, the information revolution, and is interwoven with modern global theories, the clash of civilizations and a view to the end of history.

In this light, I present this study of the religions in the member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). These countries form an important part of the Arabian Peninsula, which includes two holy sites for Muslims (Mecca and Medina); furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad described the Arabian peninsular as "a country of one religion where two religions cannot coexist". This paper argues that the religious rights of non-Muslim groups in the GCC should be changed, and identifies what can be characterized as the "religious personality" of the expatriates in the GCC countries. Finally, it examines the major changes in the policies of other religions in the GCC resulting from such factors as the increased employment of foreigners, the majority of whom are from non-Muslim backgrounds, and the expansion of those religions through various establishments and their values. The paper concentrates on examining changes in policy with regard to religion during the last three decades of the 20th century. This is the period that follows the introduction of new political regimes. The major religions with long traditions in the region were Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism, the greatest number of expatriates being of the Christian religion. Researchers have tended to concentrate their studies either on American Reformed Church sources or on British missionaries activities.

Historically, the first Christian mission in the Arabian Peninsula at the end of 19th century was an independent American Protestant mission. It was set under the administration of the Reformed Church in America in 1895. Subsequently, it was fully integrated into the Reformed Church's mission structure in 1925. Its major aim was the evangelization of Arabia through missionary activities such as preaching, the distribution of Bibles, medical and education services." The mission activities began gradually in Basra and then in Kuwait, and later covered the whole region, including Bahrain and Oman in 1885, then Qatar and what became the United Arab Emirates in 1889 and Saudi Arabia in 1893.

With respect to Jews in the region, they were more or less confined to urban centers during the Islamic period, in both Oman and Bahrain trading in Sohar and later also in Mirbat (in the south of Oman) or in Eastern Arabia in El-Hasa region and Bahrain. In Yemen, however, their presence continued throughout the historical periods. In modern times, their presence in the region was largely associated with temporary migrations, especially from Iraq and Iran. Jews came to Muscat from Iraq in 1828 to escape the oppressive rule of the Ottoman governor of Iraq during the time of Dawud Pasha. Oman was chosen as a place of migration because of its religious tolerance. Wellested noticed, during his visit to Sohar and Buraimi, a total of twenty Jewish families in the cities, but they left by the second half of the 20th century. In Bahrain, however, their presence continued, and until now most of them are engaged in business and other financial activities. The non-Muslim groups included not only the Jews but also Hindus, probably thanks to the economic ties between the Indian sub-continent and the Arabian Gulf states, especially Oman, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. These groups had their own temples and places of worship. They came during the British colonial period in the 19th and 20th centuries, and some of their family names still exist in the commercial and finance world.

2. Expatriates and the changing demographic structure of the GCC

In fact this phenomenon goes back to the sixties of the last century, shortly before the British withdrawal from the Gulf had been completed. Nevertheless, the political and economic changes that came about under the British system played a role in the emergence of what are known these days as the "Arab Gulf States". The discovery and export of oil contributed to a major reshaping of the whole community structure, and continues to do so. The area attracted migrants who were looking for work and improvement in their life-style; in the early 1950s, the GCC population was small and poorly trained, and incapable of managing their fast developing economies, and so needed foreign manpower. This fact was eventually reflected in the demographic structure. The development of the current situation where the majority of the population consists of immigrants and the indigenous population minority has resulted in unprecedented social and cultural tensions. The populations of the GCC countries is now divided into natives on the one hand and migrants on the other, with the latter in many cases greatly outnumbering the local population in the workforce. The makeup of the population in the GCC has attracted academic interest in a region which is unique in its population structure, in particular because of the relationship between demographic structure, social behavior and governmental legislation.

The majority of the workers in each country are originally from Asia. Indians are the biggest group, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Sri Lankans and then by people from other Middle Eastern countries, Europeans and Americans. Foreign workers in GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) represent approximately 70% of the total manpower of these countries, while the Arabs from non-GCC States represent only 25–30% of the manpower totaling approximately 3.5 million. Half of these are from Egypt, and one million come from Yemen.

If we look at this development from an economic perspective, we can see that dependence on foreign workers has become the main driving force in the economies of the GCC countries. A system of control for foreign workers in these countries, by which the period of their stay is fixed has helped to stabilize economic and political interests. For this reason, these countries have witnessed only minor opposition to the existence of foreign workers. The flow of foreign workers to the region went smoothly owing to the strict rules and regulations imposed by the authorities concerned. The nationals, on the other hand, occupy significant posts in the public sector. Foreign workers in GCC countries have not, in general, caused any problems as is sometimes the case in other countries.

The oil producing countries which are members of the GCC participate in many common, social, historical, political and economic activities. They almost agree on one migration policy of labour and workforce. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the countries in the region have witnessed some difficulties in increasing number of unemployment among nationals and the dangers of foreign control of the labor market as well as negative effect of foreign cultures. However, these issues could be discussed and solutions found, although the circumstances differ from one country to another in the ratio of national and foreign workers' populations, as well as military and economic capabilities.

During the last three decades, the percentage of foreign workers in GCC countries has risen from 31% in 1975 to 40% in the mid-1990s. The population of GCC countries as a whole was 32.5 million during 2002, 12.5 million of these being foreigners who thus represented 38.5% of the total population of the region. The highest percentage of foreigners are in Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. In the UAE, for instance, almost 80% of the total population of the country are foreigners, while the percentage of foreigners in Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain is only 26–40%. The foreign control of manpower in the GCC countries is clear. For example, in 2001 the total figure of manpower in these countries was between 12–13 million people, from which 8 to 8.5 million were expatriates and thus constituted a majority in each state. The average is in some cases as much as 70%. With regard to Qatar and United Arab Emirates, the average percentage in the same period reached 80 to 90%. The lowest figure was in the Sultanate of Oman, where the government of the country maintained a policy for the past thirty years of keeping a demographic balance between the local population and expatriates in such a way that expatriates did not exceed a quarter of the total population. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain came second as the percentage figure in each of these two countries did not exceed 30– 40%. It is to be noted that in the last 30 years there was disarrangement in the policy, which should be observed in the area of demography, particularly with regard to foreigners. In Kuwait the figure did not exceed 72% since the beginning of the year 2000 and no big changes have occurred during the last ten years.

3. Religion and immigrant labor

This development has created a society consisting of a mixture of races and cultural communities which passed through difficult stages on the way to assembling

a national identity in the form of nationalism. A good example of this experience not only in the political and strategic fields, but also from a sociological point of view, was the second Gulf War (1990–1991). There are neither accurate statistics in this field, probably because of lack of strategic social study centers, nor cooperation in religion in GCC states. The table below shows one estimate of the religious demographic in the GCC:

The establishment and management of Hindu and Buddhist institutions in the GCC is not clear, although it is known that Hindu institutions are administrated by businessmen in Oman and Bahrain, and more recently in Dubai (UAE), which has become a centre of most cultural and religious groups in the Gulf region. These communities are also found in Kuwait. In Muscat, the United Hindus Society was established in 1940 by Indian businessmen better known as Banyans. These founders belonged to the Krishnan which are high caste Hindus and are the ones who introduced Hinduism in the region. The Hindu Society, since its establishment in the Gulf area, was capable of managing Indian Schools and dealt with all social and family problems of the Hindu community. The Society recently undertook the responsibility of administering temples. The Society Council was formed of high business personnel of Indian origin, and they have a significant influence on the Hindu labor force in the region, and they now fully control their social organization. However, since rules and regulations of foreign communities' clubs and associations were updated in GCC countries, there were some difficulties in obtaining clearances of associations' activities and even worshiping, as many countries didn't recognize the Hindu religion.

The Society was capable of circulating Indian culture through religious and social functions, and this made them the third largest community among the population of the region. As regards Buddhists, they still have not showed their presence in the region because they are few in numbers and their social activities are not known as yet. Another small community in GCC states is the Baha'is who mainly originated from Iran. They came to the region in the 1960s and settled in Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE, and a few in Oman. Many moved to Dubai and settled there following the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Christian groups fall into two categories: the minority and the economic immigrants, the former being reasonably stable while the latter fluctuates. Resident Christians in the Arab Gulf States constitute around two million people. They represent between 5% to 6% of the total population. This has resulted in a great expansion in the number of churches in the GCC.

Christian communities in GCC are also represented by Arab Christians who came from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. The Coptic Orthodox Church or Egyptian Copts are a major segment of the Arab Christians living in the GCC. They are mainly concentrated in Kuwait with approximately 40,000 people. Copts are usually found at all levels of society from laborers and farmers to medical doctors and executives. They exist in all GCC countries but in much smaller groups outside of Kuwait.

The Arab Orthodox Christians were originally from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. Their Eastern Churches are located all over the GCC. They represent the Greek Orthodox Church in Kuwait, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Oman. In addition, the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church has congregations in Kuwait and Sharjah. Christians in the GCC countries are also affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church in small numbers, through several churches under its authority. In Kuwait there are Greek Catholic Church, Maronite, Chaldean and other churches.

There are also Indian Orthodox Churches originating from Kerala: the Malankara Indian Orthodox and Jacobite Indian Orthodox. The Jacobians are under the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus. These churches are supported by India and their immigrant members, usually entrenched for many years and generations in the Gulf societies. The Indian Orthodox churches and the Protestant Mar Toma are located all over the Gulf and have thousands of members, quite often occupying good positions in society.

The expansion of Evangelical churches has influenced the Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Palestinian Arabs. There are Arab Evangelical congregations in almost all the GCC countries and they are usually served by ordained ministers connected to the Reformed churches: the Evangelical Synod of the Nile and the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon. The Evangelical churches are in fact developing more intensively than the traditional oriental churches and show their influence on the Christians of the Middle East.

Another Christian group originally resident is an important minority in both Kuwait and Bahrain which is spread in smaller groups in the capitals. There are approximately 200 Christian families in Kuwait who run the Catholic and Protestant churches. In Bahrain, besides providing a haven for various communal activities, this oil producing island hosts the well-respected American Mission Hospital, a busy Christian bookstore, and a congregation of Evangelical Arabs.

4. Religions' influences, GCC states' policies and their developments

The presence of Christians in the GCC is reflected in both political and religious affairs. Kuwait's invitation of a representative of the Holy See in 1996 made it the first Arab Gulf state to ever receive a top Vatican official. Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates are the only members of the GCC to maintain diplomatic ties with the Vatican – Kuwait since 1968 and UAE since 2007. The former Crown Prince of Kuwait Saad al-'Abd Allah visited the Pope in the Vatican in November 1996, and this was followed by an exchange of visits by foreign ministers from both states. Also, the Emir of Bahrain visited the Vatican in November 1999, which resulted in an official proposal from the Vatican for the establishment of an embassy in Bahrain. The Custodian of the two Holy mosques, King Abdullah bin Abd ul-'Aziz of Saudi Arabia, made an official visit to the Pope in the Vatican in 2007 and also when he was a Crown Prince in 2000; in 1997 Prince Sultan bin 'Abd ul-Aziz, the Crown Prince and the Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia visited the Vatican.

A great event for Kuwait's Evangelical community was the ordination of a Kuwaiti citizen as priest and pastor of the National Evangelical Church on January 8, 1999. Emmanuel Benjamin Al-Gharib, born in Kuwait in 1950 and educated in Egypt, was the first Gulf Arab to become head of a Protestant congregation. He has been the first local person to represent a new religious authority beside Islam, since the existence of the old traditional missionaries. Moreover, in Kuwait, a number of Christians have obtained high positions in both the private and public sectors, including the ambassador to Japan. In 2001, the King of Bahrain appointed a Christian, a Jew and a Hindu to the parliament.

In addition, the establishment of a center for Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) has given a new dimension to the current changes. The MECC currently had formerly its head office in Bahrain, and now it moved to Dubai. This council has not been officially recognized by GCC countries, but nevertheless plays an extensive role in communication among the mainstream churches. All the four main streams of Christianity are represented in the Gulf: Eastern Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. The seventh MECC Gulf Churches' Conference was held in Bahrain on November 15–19, 1999. This was the first time the ecumenical organization had held this meeting in the Gulf region itself. The theme of the conference was "God's People in the Gulf: Ecumenicism in a Muslim Context." The following Gulf Churches' Conference – "Christians and Muslims in the Gulf" was held 5–9 November 2001 in Kuwait. On 23rd March 2008, Qatar gave Catholics a special gift for Easter as it inaugurated St Mary's Roman Catholic church in Doha, the first of five that will be built in Qatar.

This development is obvious in the holiday's celebrations, and Kuwait, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates have proclaimed Georgian New Year an official holiday. Also the internet performs introduction service which makes the GCC countries a center for dialogue between Muslims and Christians and this can be demonstrated through the following websites:

http://www.abicbible.com/christian/islam.htm
http://leaderu.com/common/

Another sign of change in the region is the development of dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Simplified religious dialogues are found, such as those sponsored by Dar Al-Amanah in Muscat and Bait Al-Koran in Manamah. These Muslim-Christian dialogues are often very limited in the number of attendees and the level of discussions. Discussions at a high level have not been held as yet. Nevertheless, simple dialogues have the potential of attracting a larger audience, should they be given more attention by senior religious authorities in the region.

The change in GCC policies towards Christians has come about as a result of external and internal influences. The socio-economic effects of incoming expatriates have affected the views of the original residents and their understanding of religious freedom. Furthermore, the changes in international politics have resulted in a greater degree of personal religious freedom in many countries, which in turn has led to a more tolerant environment in the GCC countries. For example, a high-level member

of the Saudi royal family insisted publicly for the first time in 2001 that Saudi government policy allows private non-Muslim worship within homes. Neverthless expatriate Christians continue to report on police investigation and harassment of such worship services.

5. Freedom of religions and the problems it poses

Another matter of concern with regard to non-Muslims in the GCC countries are missionary activities. A significant number of Christians in the GCC region have engaged in proselytizing in the region, which was initiated originally by the Reformed Protestant Church. Previous missionaries enjoyed friendly relations with the locals, and have long been remembered for the humanitarian and health services they provided. As domestic services in the GCC region have developed, the traditional services provided by missioneries were no longer required. As a result, any missionary activity in the region these days has often been met with suspicion from both individuals and governments. One cause of such incidents is that the locals view missionaries as foreigners and cast doubts on the teaching of Christianity.

There are still differences in the policies of individual GCC member states with regard to religions other than Islam in the region, each state having its own policy in this respect. Rules and regulations are not clear yet with regard to freedom of religion, missionary activities and proselytizing campaigns of other religions. This matter is of concern to governments in these states, but also to citizens. Getting an official permission, for instance, to build a church, a temple or club association takes a lot of time and this causes complications in the relationships between locals and expatriates in the region.

Several years ago a newspaper report stated that three Americans were arrested in Abu Dhabi for distributing compact discs and videotapes promoting Christianity. According to the report, the three Americans, who were arrested on 12th March, 2001 could not identify their affiliated church. The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi said it was aware of the case but would not comment further. If convicted of promoting a religion other than Islam or seeking converts, the Americans could face jail sentences of between five and 10 years.

Five of some twenty expatriate Christians arrested in Riyadh on June 6th 1998, were deported by the government of Saudi Arabian to their home countries. Four Filipinos and a Dutch national were believed to have been expelled for involvement in Christian activities, which are strictly forbidden in the Islamic Kingdom. At least eight other Filipinos arrested in the police crackdown on suspected Christian worshippers have reportedly been transferred out of detention cells, in preparation for their imminent deportation.

According to traditional Islamic teaching, changing one's religion is still viewed as put by Prophet Muhammad (SWA): "the one who changes his religion should be killed". This position has resulted in much concern about human rights in these countries with regard to freedom of religion and the freedom to change one's religion. International organizations, therefore, often raise these issues as officially

there are no explicit rules with regard to these matters in almost all GCC member states. What provokes the matter further is the interference of Churches on the one hand and Human Rights organizations on the other in internal affairs of the states concerned.

The GCC countries permit religious freedom in their constitutions. The existence of opinions based on the Prophet's reported saying has resulted in a standstill between traditional religious doctrines and official government laws. An example in this respect can be that of Hussein Qambar Ali, in 1997, convicted of apostasy and stripped of his civil rights after confirming in court that he had become a Christian. He was also ordered to pay the costs of the court case. Hussein filed an appeal, but left the country before the appeal went to court. It was later reported that he returned to Kuwait and declared himself again to be a Muslim.

Differences in culture are one of the main problems facing immigrants in the region, and this has put the Church on many occasions in a dilemma in dealing with them. There is an impression in GCC states that the Church, particularly the Protestant Church, recently started popularizing the English language. Other churches, however, popularize other languages. Therefore, the issue of language is another problem to the Church. Hindus face no such problems with regard to language. It is to be noted that each community has its own school in most of GCC states; there are American schools, British schools, Philippine schools, Indian schools etc. The opening of such schools has separated these immigrants from the local communities. Although these schools are secular in nature, they comply more with the religious and national customs of their mother states.

The GCC has witnessed significant political and economical changes in recent history, which has influenced the social and geographical structure of the region. For instance, the period of post-protection has reflected these changes in two aspects. Firstly, global changes in information technology and economics has led to the appearance of different cultures and religions in the GCC region. Secondly, the emergence of Christianity in the region is related to the migration and resettlement of a significant number of workers in the region. The Christian community which has come about as a result of these factors is solely for non-resident members of the society of a different social, political and economical character. This gives rise to the question of the long-term future of this community and whether its existence is only to continue as long as there is migration to the region.

One difference between GCC Christianity before and after the period of the protection is an improved understanding between nationals and others. Different Christian organizations have different policies, achievements and schools of thoughts, discussed in the Middle- Eastern Church Council (MECC).

The factors discussed above which have influence on the appearance of Christianity in the region, can also be attributed to the appearance of other religions (such as Hinduism and Buddhism). Nevertheless, all religions other than Christianity remain less significant in presence and influence.

Literature

Abella Manolo I., "Asian Migrant and Contract Workers in the Middle East", in R. Cohen (ed.), *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*, Riyadh, 1998

Al-Khaleej News, 03.04.2001

Al-Majalla, 22.12.2001, A conversation with the Vatican ambassador in Kuwait.

Kapiszewski Andrzej, "National and Expatriates Population and Ladour Dilemmas of the GCC States", Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001, p. 33–47

Pearson Rolf (MS**),** *Gulf Christianity – a background: A short history of the Church in the Gulf*, MECC: Dubai

Scudder Lewis G., *The Arabian Mission's Story in Search of Abraham's Other Son*

Whitley Andrew, "Minorities and the Stateless in Persian Gulf Politics", in *Survival* 4, 1993

http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/0300/0003068.html

http://www.mecchurches.org

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/600285.stm

http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/990526/1999052616.html

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/282096.stm

www.kuwait-info.org/Country_Profile/religion.html

www.kuwait-info.org/Country_Profile/la.../people.html

http://www.mecchurches.org/posandpress/news.asp?id=37

http://leaderu.com/common/saudiarabia.html

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/282096.stm

http://www.hrwf.net

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/125304.stm

http://www.cwnews.com/Browse/1996/05/593.htm

http://www.religiousfreedom.com/wrpt/mideast/kuwait.htm

Nkolika Ijeoma Aniekwu
Eunice Nkiru Uzodike

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Reproductive Health Law and Policy: Legal Reforms in the African Subregion*

Generally, law aims to achieve behaviours and actions that promote public good or limit harmful consequences to individuals. Reproductive health laws are legislative instruments by which states regulate reproductive health practices, and give effect to reproductive health policies. The emergence of concepts of reproductive health and rights that require implementation by pragmatic legal rules often presents special challenges to religious and moral authorities, especially in African countries. The discomfort with and opposition to the formulation of a concept of reproductive rights, as articulated in the Programme of Action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, remain an obstacle to the enactment of laws designed to achieve reproductive and sexual health, especially for women.[1] Nevertheless, many governments have endorsed the Cairo Programme, thereby assuming state responsibility to formulate and advance laws that serve their populations' reproductive health interests. Accordingly, laws must protect the "rights of men and women to be informed [about] and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as to other methods for regulation of fertility."[2] The Cairo Programme protects access to such methods "which are not against the law". This provision respects the traditions embodied in law to which many countries endorsing the Cairo Programme adhere, and provides legislators and judges with discretion to exercise judgement on the relative weight to be given secular, customary or religious laws.

Since the early 1990s laws have increasingly been used in many jurisdictions to advance international standards on human rights, reproductive health and policy. In 1993, the second World Conference on Human Rights was held in Vienna. This meeting saw a culmination of women's rights as an integral part of international human rights law. In sub-Saharan Africa, certain societal and cultural factors are increasingly been

* The authors wish to gratefully acknowledge Rebecca Cook, Bernard M. Dickens and Mahmoud F. Fathalla's magnificient resource book, *Reproductive Health and Human Rights: Integrating Medicine, Ethics and Law*, Oxford Press, 2002.

[1] United Nations Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994; Document A/Conf. 171/13, New York, 1994 (hereinafter referred to as the Cairo Programme).

[2] Ibidem.

recognised as severely compromising women's health and well-being, and the need for a principle based on legal provisions on reproductive and sexual health in national laws and constitutions that would express the obligations entrenched in international instruments and human rights law have never been more paramount. This paper looks at the emerging developments in reproductive health law and policy in the African sub-region, and the impact of legislative reforms on gender-specific issues, such as abortion, female genital mutilation, harmful traditional practices, sexual and domestic violence.

* * *

In some countries, reproductive health laws have been successfully integrated into existing constitutions, legal systems and legislative frameworks and not as separate laws.[3] These laws may describe reproductive health policies positively, as when they facilitate education in sexual and reproductive health or negatively, as when they allow health care practitioners a right of conscientious objection to perform particular services, without requiring them to refer patients who seek such services to practitioners who do not have objections.[4] Where legal claims to rights are codified, a section of the enactment is often specified to provide for reproductive health care, protect and promote reproductive rights and award damages in criminal and civil cases.[5] In the above instances, reproductive health issues are expressed within the detailed provisions of an existing enactment, with any apparently inconsistent provisions in other parts of the law becoming subordinate and subject to provisions contained in the reproductive health section.[6]

In other countries, separate laws on reproductive health matters have been specifically enacted. In 2003, the Russian Federation parliament proposed the enactment of a comprehensive law that would express the reproductive rights of her citizens and the guarantees available to them for implementation.[7] Some countries have developed laws limited to advancing a particular goal in reproductive health care. In 1995, Guyana replaced its restrictive abortion law with one that gave priority to women's rights to avail themselves of safe abortion services.[8] In 1965, Guinea prohibited female genital cutting, often described as female genital mutilation, by including the practice within its Penal Code's Prohibition of Castration.[9] In 1966, the

[3] For example, Peru, Colombia and some African states have amended their constitutional and criminal laws to include rights to reproductive health, with particular emphasis on obligations to women's health. See N. I. Aniekwu, "Converging Constructions: A Historical Perspective on Sexuality and Feminism in Post Colonial Africa", *African Sociological Review*, South Africa, Vol. 10, 2006.

[4] For example, Nepal law does not require that a health service provider refers patients who seek certain reproductive health care, such as abortion, to other practitioners. See: Rebecca Cook, Bernard M. Dickens and Mahmoud F. Fathalla, *Reproductive Health and Human Rights: Integrating Medicine, Ethics and Law*, Oxford Press, 2002.

[5] See for example Ghana Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1994.

[6] See CRLP and International Federation of Women Lawyers (Kenya Chapter), Women of the world: laws and policies affecting their reproductive lives – Anglophone Africa, New York, CRLP, 1997.

[7] Tabled by State Duma Deputy, N.V. Krivelskaya, 1997.

[8] Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1995, Guyana, Act No. 7 of 1995.

Central African Republic issued an ordinance[10] prohibiting female genital mutilation in order to conform to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Ghana enacted a law in 1994 explicitly prohibiting the practice of FGM.[11]

More countries in Africa, and beyond, have started to enact specific laws that address reproductive health issues.[12] In 1990, the United Kingdom brought advanced reproductive technologies and research under the general control of the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority.[13] In 1996, the Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, laid out international guidelines that states should embody in their legal codes or legislation for protecting reproductive health and preventing HIV/AIDS.[14] Some countries have amended constitutions and included provisions for the protection of different aspects of reproductive rights. Article 40 of the 1991 Colombian Constitution, for example, protects the right to decide on the number and spacing of one's children.[15] Other constitutions have more general provisions, such as on the right to liberty and security of the person that has been applied to protect reproductive rights.[16] In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada found that the provisions of the Criminal Code that limited women's choice of abortion violated women's rights to security of the person.[17]

Less certain in their effects on reproductive health are constitutional amendments intended to protect human life from the moment of conception, such as have been introduced in the Irish[18] and Philippine[19] constitutions and in several Latin American countries. Religions differ on when life starts to exist, but the Roman Catholic Church has generally held that this is at the moment of conception, and encourages countries to adopt laws that protect life from conception.[20] These laws prioritize protection of unborn life over other interests. However, where the lives of women or their dependent children would be endangered, for instance by successive pregnancies at short intervals, legislative provisions have been interpreted as not limiting a legal recourse

---

[9] Penal Code of the Republic of Guinea (1965), Article 265.

[10] Central African Republic Ordinance No. 66/16 of 22 Feb. 1966.

[11] Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, Ghana, 1994, sec. 1.

[12] See CRLP, Reproductive Rights 2000: moving forward (New York: CRLP, 2000), 41–2. See also N. I. Aniekwu & Eunice U. Uzodike, **"**Legislating Gender, [Re] producing Rights: A look at African Case law in Diaspora", (forthcoming), *The Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law*, Faculty of Law, University of Liverpool, U.K. 2008.

[13] Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, Ch. 37.

[14] Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and human rights (UNAIDS), Geneva, 23–25 September 1996 (HR/PUB/98/1).

[15] Article 40 (2), Colombian Constitution, 1991.

[16] For instance, in 1982 Canada adopted a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that included this right in general terms.

[17] *R. v. Morgentaler* (1988), 44 Dominion Law Reports (4th) 385 (Supreme Court of Canada).

[18] Article 40.3.3., inserted by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitutional Act, 1983.

[19] Article II, sec. 12.

[20] Treatise of the Roman Catholic Church, 1869.

to abortion, even in countries that predominantly ascribe to the Roman Catholic faith.[21] For instance, in Ireland, following an amendment to the national constitution by which the state guaranteed the right to life of the unborn child, with due regard to the equal right to life of the woman, the Supreme Court has held that abortion is legally allowed where it is probable that there is a real and substantial risk to the woman's life if pregnancy is continued, including risk of psychological imbalance.[22]

Legal developments in reproductive health in Africa

In different regions of Africa, examples can be found of statutory attempts to legally address population policies and reproductive health issues with the aim of protecting women's health. Some policies contain implementation strategies that specifically impact women's access to reproductive health care. In Ethiopia, the country's Implementation Strategy involves "amending all laws that impede in any way, the access of women to all social, economic and cultural resources […] and amending relevant laws to remove unnecessary restrictions on the advertisement, propagation and popularization of diverse contraception control methods".[23] The constitution, adopted in 1994, provides that "women have the right to protection by the state from harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices that oppress women or cause bodily or mental harm are prohibited".[24] In 1998, a Proclamation repealed a Penal Code provision prohibiting the advertisement and promotion of contraceptive methods.[25] However, in Chad, a woman must obtain the consent of her husband in order to be prescribed any reversible contraceptive method.[26]

In 1992, Ghana adopted a reformed Constitution proclaiming, "all customary practices which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person are prohibited".[27] In 1996, the country issued the Reproductive Health Service Policy that seeks to address the provision of reproductive health care for women. The policy outlines provisions for safe motherhood, adolescent reproductive health, prevention and management of unsafe abortion, and reproductive infections including STIs and HIV/AIDS.[28]

[21] In 1997, El Salvador amended its Penal Code to remove exceptions to its prohibition of abortion, which had formerly permitted abortion to save a woman's life or when pregnancy resulted from rape; see Decreto No. 1030, Articles 133–7, 1998. In Mexico, there's recent legal reform making abortion legal before 12 weeks of pregnancy.

[22] *Attorney General v. X.*, 1992 Irish Reports 1 (Supreme Court of Ireland), 55.

[23] CRLP & International Federation of Women Lawyers (F.I.D.A.-K), Women of the world: laws and policies affecting their reproductive lives, Anglophone Africa 117, 1997; See also Aniekwu & Uzodike, "Legislating Gender".

[24] Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 35(4) 1994, translated in *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, ed. Gisbert H. Flanz, 1996.

[25] Ethiopia Proclamation No. 141/1998 amending the 1957 Penal Code.

[26] Les Femmes A Travers Le Monde: Lois Et Politiques Qui Influencent Leur Vie Reproductive, L'Afrique Francophone 35–36, 1999.

[27] Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, art. 26(2), Ghana Publishing Corp.

[28] N. I. Aniekwu, *Sexual Violence and HIV/AIDS in Sub – Saharan Africa: An Intimate Link*. Paper presented at an International Conference on Human Rights, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, U.K., March 2006.

Abortion is permitted in some African countries without strict legal restrictions. In South Africa and Zambia, women may have an abortion without offering a justification as long as procedural requirements prescribed by law are observed.[29] In 1996, South Africa enacted the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1996, making its abortion law one of the most liberal in the world.[30] The Act permits abortion without limitations during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, within 20 weeks on numerous grounds and at any time if there is risk to the woman's life or of severe fetal impairment.[31] The Act repealed a 1975 law that had prohibited abortion unless the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest, the mother's life was in danger, or there was a fetal impairment.[32]

In 1996, Burkina Faso amended its Penal Code to permit abortion at any stage of pregnancy when a woman's life or health is endangered and in the case of severe fetal impairment.[33] Abortion is also permitted during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy in cases of rape or incest.[34] Under the previous law, abortion was prohibited unless performed to save a woman's life.[35] In other African nations like Egypt, the criminal law makes no explicit exception to protect life and has been interpreted to permit abortion under such circumstances on the grounds of "necessity".[36] This is a general principle of criminal law, according to which certain crimes may be excused when they are committed as the sole means of saving one's life or the life of another.[37]

In Zambia, the law permits abortions on social and economic grounds but this generally receives broad interpretations as medical personnel are typically allowed to consider a woman's economic resources, her age, marital status and the number of her living children.[38] In other countries, abortion is strictly prohibited or permitted only "to save the woman's life".[39] In Zimbabwe, the threatened injury to the woman's health must be either "serious or permanent".[40] In Senegal, the criminal law prohibits abortions and makes no explicit exception to protect life, even though it has been interpreted to permit abortion on the grounds of "necessity".[41]

---

[29] See "Zambia's Termination of Pregnancy Act", 1974. See also CRLP, "The World's Abortion Laws", Wallchart, 1999.

[30] "South Africa's Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act", Act No. 92, art. 2, 1996.

[31] Ibidem.

[32] "South Africa's Abortion and Sterilization Act", 1975, reprinted in International Advisory Committee on Population and the Law, *Annual Review Of Population Law* 48, 1975.

[33] Burkina Faso, Law No. 043/96/ADP amending the Penal Code, arts 383, 387, 1996.

[34] Ibidem.

[35] Burkina Faso, Penal Code, arts. 317, 328, 1984 (superseded).

[36] CRLP, The World's Abortion Laws, Wallchart, 1999.

[37] The doctrine of "necessity" was first debated in *R v. Bourne* [1939] 1 KB 687 where it was held that the termination of a pregnancy in order to preserve a woman's life or enduring health is lawful despite the English criminal law prohibiting the "unlawful procurement" of abortions.

[38] Zambia's Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1974.

[39] As in Sections 229–232 of the Nigerian Criminal and Penal Codes.

[40] See Anika Rahman, Laura Katzive & Stanley K. Henshaw, "A Global Review of Laws on Induced Abortion 1985–1997", *International Family Planning Perspectives 56*, 1998.

[41] N. I. Aniekwu, "Health Sector Reform: A Perspective on Human Rights and Gender Issues", *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, U.K., 2006, p. 127–140.

Since 1994, a number of African governments have formulated comprehensive national policies to address HIV/AIDS. Many of these have a gender component, focusing on the special needs of women. For example, the Ministry of Health in Tanzania issued a policy in 1995 enumerating strategies for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and setting forth the rights of individuals with HIV or AIDS.[42] The policy specifically addresses issues of AIDS and gender in a section calling for women to be provided with basic education about their bodies, human sexuality, HIV/AIDS and other STIs.[43] However, in many African countries, national laws are silent on a number of issues relating to the rights of people living with or affected by AIDS, including women. Women especially are doubly stigmatized, often facing discrimination from their families, communities and employers, despite the fact that their husbands and regular sexual partners have infected many.[44]

Female cutting or genital mutilation has been prohibited by legal or administrative measures in at least twenty one African countries. Guinea banned the practice in a Penal Code provision that defines the offense of "castration" to include "mutilation of the organs of either man or woman".[45] In 1966 in the Central African Republic, the then President Bokassa issued an ordinance prohibiting female genital mutilation, explicitly noting an intent to conform to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protect women's dignity.[46] Non-African countries with immigrant communities in which female cutting or genital mutilation may be prevalent have also taken legal steps to prevent the practice within their borders. In 1985, the United Kingdom adopted the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act which makes it a crime to "excise infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of the labia majora or minora or clitoris of another person…"[47]

The 1990s saw further national legislative and administrative activities aimed at eradicating the practice. In some African countries, this activity coincided with a period of constitutional reform. In 1994, Ethiopia prohibited harmful customs in her constitution.[48] The 1994 amendment to Ghana's Criminal Code making FGM an offense was the first of the recent national developments in criminal legislation.[49] The law provides that "whoever excises, infibulates or otherwise mutilates the whole or any part of the labia minora, labia majora and the clitoris of another person" is

[42] Ibidem.

[43] Ibidem.

[44] Human rights Internet**,** human rights and HIV/AIDS: effective community responses 18, 1998.

[45] Penal Code of the Republic of Guinea, art. 265, Conakry: Republic of Guinea, 1997. Female genital mutilation is hereinafter referred to as FGM.

[46] Central African Republic Ordinance No. 66/16, *Journal Officiel de la Republique Centra Africaine*, March 15, 1966.

[47] United Kingdom Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act, 1985, ch. 38.

[48] Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 35(4), translated in *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, ed. Gisbert H. Flanz, 1996.

[49] Ghana Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 1994. Reprinted in 47 *International Digest of Health Legislation* 30, 31, 1996.

subject to imprisonment of not less than three years".[50] In 1995, Uganda adopted a new Constitution which provides that "laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women are prohibited by this Constitution."[51] Also in 1995, Djibouti amended its Penal Code to prohibit female cutting.[52] In 1996, Burkina Faso amended its Penal Code to provide that "any person who violates or attempts to violate the physical integrity of the female genital organ shall be punished by imprisonment or fine".[53] In 1998, Tanzania and Togo also adopted laws to provide that persons who carry out, engage in or participates in female circumcision by traditional or modern methods shall be punished by imprisonment or fine or both.[54] In 1999, Senegal amended its Penal Code to state that "any person who violates or attempts to violate the integrity of the genital organs of a female person […] shall be punished by imprisonment from six months to five years".[55]

In cases of rape and sexual violence, many countries including Nigeria and South Africa, have "cautionary" rules of evidence that require additional care to be taken when accepting the uncorroborated testimony of women who were raped. In effect, cautionary rules result in an additional burden of proof for the prosecution beyond that ordinarily required proving other assault crimes.[56] In other countries, including Nigeria, evidence of a woman's past is often admissible to rebut charges of sexual assault. This is the case in Zimbabwe, where evidence of the complainant's prior sexual history may be admitted as relevant to the issue of consent.[57] A number of factors continue to impede investigations and prosecutions of sexual violence crimes, including attitudes of law enforcement and judicial personnel, investigative techniques and presumptions disfavoring intrusions in "private matters" or requiring physical evidence or evidence of a "struggle." These types of rules and practices serve to doubly victimize women who report sexual violence crimes and discourage others from coming forward when they see how other victims are treated by the criminal justice system.[58]

Recognizing that laws by themselves will not change people's actions and the poor situation of women's reproductive health in African regions, many states are

[50] Ibidem.

[51] Constitution of Uganda, art. 33(6) 1995. Reprinted in *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, ed. Gisbert H. Flanz, 1996.

[52] Djibouti Penal Code, promulgated by Law 59/AN/94 of Jan. 5, 1995.

[53] Burkina Faso Law No. 43/96/ adopted Nov. 13 1996 on the Penal Code, art. 380, Journal Officiel Du Burkina Faso, Jan. 27, 1997.

[54] The Sexual Offences Special Provision Act, Section 169A, Tanzania, 1998.

[55] Republic of Senegal Law Modifying Certain Provisions of the Penal Code, Art. 299 (adopted January, 1999).

[56] N. I. Aniekwu, *The Roles of Legislation and Human Rights in Health Sector Reform,* Paper presented at the World Bank Institute National Course on Millennium Development Goals in Abuja, Nigeria, November, 2005.

[57] See *Venia Magaya v. Nakayi Shonhiwa Magayavenia*, Supreme Court of Zimbabawe, Harare, November 2, 1998.

[58] Aniekwu, *The Roles of Legislation.*

taking different initiatives to prevent female genital mutilation, unsafe abortions, AIDS infections, lack of access to family planning and gender-based sexual violence. Key amongst these are social and policy actions by individuals, organizations and groups working on their own or in concert with foreign donors and government agencies. National strategies and policies to implement international goals and standards for the protection of women's health and rights are present throughout the region. A number of agencies have formed special departments within government ministries that are devoted to enhancing women's health and protecting reproductive rights. Many non-governmental organizations have undertaken education and outreach campaigns to discourage cultural practices that compromise women's health such as female genital cutting and gender-based violence.

Conclusion

The historical process from disregard to the recognition of women's rights as an integral part of regional and international human rights law has been slow and unsettled, especially in Africa. Nevertheless, several areas crucial for women's status including those related to reproductive health, inheritance, succession, custody of children, work and freedom of movement have continued to evolve. In many instances, gender remains a sensitive and divisive issue in the realm of human rights law, especially in the African sub-region. At the same time, the outcome of international instruments and conferences like the Vienna, Cairo and Beijing meetings, suggests that there is hope for human rights protection for women, even in Africa.

Human rights law has a dynamic character. The content of established international law can be broadened through evolving interpretations in African municipal systems in order to stimulate the evolution of national laws in ways that enhance the protection of all human rights, including reproductive rights. African women can consequently use the international human rights framework to advance reproductive health and avoid the preservation of a parallel human rights universe that is gender-specific. Provisions of law are not isolated enclaves in a legal system, but instead have an internal coherence, which promotes a legitimate system of law. Systematic interpretation can provide clarity on the content of provisions by including related provisions in the evaluation. A holistic approach to legal reform based on interpretation with other human rights and consideration of the final documents of international conferences might, in the long run, propel reproductive rights throughout Africa.

Jimoh Amzat

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Lumpen Childhood in Nigeria: A Case of the *Almajirai* in Northern Nigeria

Introduction

Ya almajiri!	O almajiri!
Bayin Allah	Servant of Allah
Inna taimakeni	Mother help me
Da abinci na ci	With food that I will eat
Domin Allah	For the sake of Allah
Inna mai ba kowa	Mother who gives to everyone
Domin Allah	For the sake of Allah
Inna, sadakaa!	Mother, bring alms
Domin Manzon Allah	For the sake of Allah's messenger
Ya almajiri!	O almajiri!

The chanting of the song above signifies the presence of a child called *almajiri*[1] (a migrant Islamic school pupil). He sings the song to draw attention to his plight which is highly deplorable. The child, usually male, is a Quranic school migrant pupil who left home in search of sound Quranic or Islamic education. In essence, the search for knowledge pushes an *almajiri* away from his parents and makes him set his feet on the hot street of Sokoto metropolis and other urban centres in Northern Nigeria. From Maiduguri, Yola, Kano, Kaduna, Birni-Kebbi, Gusau, to the extreme end in Sokoto, *almajirai* are almost ubiquitous and constitute major urban social reality in Northern Nigeria. Hence, *almajiranci* or seasonal migration of school-age male children from mainly rural to urban areas of Hausaland is a social phenomenon that has drawn great concern among various interest groups.[2] It constitutes a distinct social problem and the *almajirai* are now a distinct sociological group in Nigeria. Part of the local community who have perceived the menace created by the system of education has often referred to it as *karatun wahala* (education problem). But the concerns expressed in most instances have not led to practical solutions within the community.

The cited song shows some of the various problems facing the *almajiri*. He sings to appeal to givers to alleviate his heavy plight. The song is tender when it is accompanied by beats which emanate from bowls and sticks which the *almajiri* carries about (often worn on his neck). But the physical look of the singer depicts

[1] *Almajiri* is the singular, *almajirai* is the plural while *almajiranci* is the local term for the system of Islamic education involving *almajirai*.

[2] S. Khalid, "Nigeria's Educational Crisis: the Almajiranci System and Muslim Realities", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. Lxxxv(3): 2001, p. 85–103.

the condition of a lumpen kid "suffering" immensely for a "sin" he has not committed. Interest groups have always asked whether the *almajirai* (really) "suffer" from roaming around in search of sound Islamic education since the knowledge departs from "worldly affairs" and is connected rather with priceless and ultimate reward in the hereafter. Is it worth dying if world affairs are vanity? It is for this reason that it is usually hard or controversial to argue that the *almajirai* suffer. In Islamic education it is imperative for every Muslim to seek for such knowledge in order to be a good Muslim. The pattern of searching for knowledge before Westernization involved movement from one region to the other. *Almajiranci* is thus a reflection of such a historical pattern. But an aspect that is not controversial is that for most people, *almajiri* is not an enviable reference category in the social realm. It is not controversial to conclude that the *almajirai* live in a deplorable condition. Neither is it controversial to submit that they form part of the "underclass" which needs help of other people in order to live. The *almajirai* attract special attention and it could be said that they now constitute a part of urban menace. It is in this vein that the paper describes the *almajirai* as part of the lumpen or problem population.

A majority of the *almajirai* are children between the ages of 5–19. A study found that about 83.49% of the *almajirai* are between the ages of 5–15 out of which 33.33% are in the age category of 5–9.[3] The term *almajiri* is an Hausa word for pupil or student, derived from the Arabic term *almuhajiri* meaning migrant. Historically, the term has its origin in the flight of Prophet Mohammed and his patriots from Mecca to Medina in the early days of Islam.[4] Knowledge was dispersed and not geographically bound; disciples were encouraged to seek knowledge. The Prophet is quoted to have said "find knowledge even if it is in China" and "whoever sets out seeking knowledge will be walking in the path of God until his return, and whoever dies while travelling for learning will be regarded as a Martyr"[5] and those who respond to the call be referred as *al-muhajirun* (emigrants). *Almajirai* are part of the disciples yielding to the call of the Prophet in search for knowledge and scholarships away from their home. Khalid[6] observed that *almajirai* does not originally connote the destitute or beggars but with their pattern of movement and living, the terms are now closely related.

Generally, because the culture of the people is based on Islamic legacy, *almajiranci* has been well entrenched within the value system. It is thus an educational value which, especially with the 1804 Jihad of Usmanu Danfodiyo, accounted for the full incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the Islamic way of life. The founder of the caliphate was also a product of such emigration. But then, the community was

[3] Ibidem.

[4] S. Khalid, "*Almajiranci*: A Hausa Cultural Phenomenon", *Hausa Studies*, Vol. 1(1), 1998, p. 12–22.

[5] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqadimmah*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 427.

[6] Khalid, "*Almajiranci*", p. 12–22.

agrarian and pastoral, built around community ties. Hence, the *almajiranci* was a generally supported community value, and served to ensure collective well-being in functional ways that sustained the system. But with transformations propelled by colonial heritage, the *almajiranci* form of education is sustained in a dual realm with less functional stance in the face of modernity, though without a depreciating value within the traditional and religious circles. This explains why there are still hundreds of thousands of *almajirai* in the northern states roaming the street. And on the street, the *almajiri* faces tremendous challenges which reflect his deplorable condition when in search of Islamic knowledge and scholarship.

Lumpenhood: what is it?

The capitalist mode of production transformed the masses of people into the working class, and thereby they (the proletariat) constitute a class which suffers from exploitation, pauperization and alienation. But there is still a class below the working class. This category forms part of what Spitzer[8] termed as the problem population. The category is not just in the margin of the society, it is made up of the social junks who have failed to contribute to the capitalist economy. They constitute "parasites" to the economy. Within the problem population, Spitzer singled out the social dynamite as the volatile group which the street children are part of. The *almajirai* are a part of the social volatile, social dynamite, and therefore a part of the problem population.

Lumpenhood lies in the failure to be a part of the working class. In situations where the working class is so poor, for the lumpen proletariat life is extremely meaningless. Its members are the socialrejects who exist at the margin and survive therein constituting a menace to the core. They are the marginalized unemployable or the alienated classless category who have been the major feature of most poor countries. In developing countries where the proletariat suffers from extreme poverty, the condition of the lumpenproletariat is less than human. The lumpens are the social scavengers. Not only do street *almajirai* scavenge for food, they also scavenge for social existence at the margin.

Cabral[8] also described the lumpens as *déclassé*. In this regard, lumpenhood depicts a "class" that is not classifiable within the working-class category. This dilemma is reflected in the livelihood of the lumpens. Lumpenhood is a sub-class pattern of sustenance. It is a livelihood at the margin. The street *almajirai* therefore experience lumpenhood with no substance of childhood; a childhood which sets the categories of underage to the street and makes the street a carriage of possibilities and (tremendous) vulnerabilities. They are devoid of the affection needed for proper development. They form a substantial part of the street population in Nigeria. They roam the streets in the name of searching for livelihood with the preference of street

[7] S. Spitzer, "Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance", *Social Problems*, Vol. 22, No. 5/1957, p. 638–651.

[8] A. Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: An African People's Struggle, Stage One*, London, 1974.

begging to starvation. Lumpenhood depicts a deplorable condition which most often is inhuman. It is for this reason that the *almajirai* fit into the different descriptions: social dynamites, underclass, classless, alienated, unemployable, social volatile and so on. The question is how deplorable is the condition of the lumpen kids so that they could be described as such? The next section examines the condition of the *almajirai*.

Almajiranci: Lumpen Childhood?

The *faseurs* of Congo (Brazaville), the *shegues* of Congo (Kinshasa), the *talibes* of Senegal and Egypt, the *tsotsis* of South of Africa, the area-boys of Lagos and the *almajirai* of Northern Nigeria: all share one common feature: negotiating for space and survival on the street. The *tsotsis* are distinct street children and gangs like the *shegues* of Congo. These two groups, however, are not school students but the search for livelihood pushes them to the street. Hence, the street becomes their home and the place of survival. The *shegues* have also been distinct street children who share similar purpose with the *faseurs*. The *talibes* of Senegal and the *almajirai* of northern Nigeria share a common purpose: the pursuit of Islamic knowledge and scholarship. But with other categories of street children, they share lumpenhood and streethood like the *Kaponye* of Zambia, Youthman of Sierra-Leone, and the shoe-shiner boys of West Africa. All these signify that street children constitute a distinct social problem and a sociological group in Africa in general. Each of the groups has a different motive for engaging in street culture. UNICEF[9] estimates that there are up to 10 million of street children in Africa, a substantial number of which constitute the *almajirai* of Northern Nigeria.

To *almajirai*, the street is a space, carriage avenue which links people and places and could also be a home. Hence, the street is adopted as a personal space to achieve some possibilities. It is pertinent to distinguish three sets of *almajirai*. The first set of *almajirai* is sent to the urban centre to live with an Islamic scholar (*mallam*) permanently until the completion of their Islamic education. Those *almajirai* are generally given in trust to a resident *mallam* but they have to fend for themselves and may not return until they graduate. Another category may return to their parents during the raining season for farming activities. The last category migrates (from rural areas) with their Islamic scholars during the dry season to the urban centres to return to rural areas for learning and farming in the raining season. Mainly, during the learning period, *almajirai* have to strive to better their lots since their parents might provide little or no support. It is important to note that a majority of them (especially from the first two categories) now live on the street alone, to attend lessons only when a chance occurs and then to return to the street.[10]

---

[9] B. A. Oloko, "Children's Work in Urban Nigeria: A Case Study of Young Street Traders in Nigeria", ed. W. E. Myers, *Protecting Working Children*, NY: UNICEF, 1989.

[10] J. Amzat, *Reproductive Health Issues among Street Adolescent* Almajirai *in Sokoto Metropolis*, forthcoming, 2007.

The *almajirai*'s schools are far different from modern schools, or even "modern" Islamic schools. Classes are held in early mornings and late afternoons.[11] This gives opportunities for afternoon fending activities. Mostly, classes are held under trees or in other available open space or in z*aure* (open space just at the entrance to the compound); where they stay in open air, blazing fire is a source of light for the venue or at times some of them have lanterns. The pupils sit on bare floor with wooden slates. At times a classroom might be available to the school; such a classroom may serve multiple purposes, one of which is to serve as a sleeping place for hundreds of the pupils. There is no formalized register for attendance check-up. The *mallam* might not know all the students or even know their actual number.[12] It is possible for a few of them to abscond with impunity.

But the teaching is to some extent coercive, the *mallam* is always in possession of a cane which he can swing at any slight provocation. He can also impose severe punishment depending on the offence committed, thereby actually maltreating the children. One major aspect is that the school timetable is structured in a way that it would allow the pupils to go and search for their means of sustenance.[13] In other words, they enjoy a lot of freedom after the morning session till later in the evening for another session. But the freedom is exercised not under the supervisory eyes of the *mallam* but along the carefree urban streets. As regards street life, there are two categories of street *almajirai*.

UNICEF[14] and Aptekan[15] argued that there are children "on" the street and children "of" the street. There are also *almajirai* "on" the street; those who beg and engage in all forms of economic activities and return to the *mallam*'s home. Another category are those "of" the street, those who have run away from the *mallam* and define the street as their permanent abode. Some of them still bother to attend classes while others don't, for those who do not attend classes anymore, the purpose of coming to the city is out-rightly defeated; hence they constitute a great nuisance to the urban community. Since the school is mostly not formalized and students are in the hundreds, it is difficult for the *mallam* to detect those who have finally absconded from the school. This might be responsible for the upsurge in the number of children sleeping along the streets, in motor parks, markets and other odd places in northern Nigeria.

Oloko[16] and Osenwegie[17] reported that *almajirai* are normally visible where economic activities are at the highest, such as busy streets, markets, motor parks,

[11] M. Abdulrahaman and P. Canhan, *The Ink of the Scholar*, Lagos: Macmillan, 1978.

[12] Amzat, *Reproductive*.

[13] S. Khalid, *A Socio-Economic Study of the Migrant Quranic Schools System (*Almajiranci*) in Sokoto Metropolic: 1975–1995*, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Bayero University Kano, 1997.

[14] UNICEF, "First Call for Children" – World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children Convention of the Right of the Child, Genewa, 1990.

[15] L. Aptekar, "Street Children in Nairobi", *Africa Insight*, 26(3), 1996, p. 250–259.

[16] B. A. Oloko, "Children's Work in Urban Nigeria: A Case Study of Young Street Traders in Nigeria", ed. W. E. Myers, *Protecting Working Children,* NY: UNICEF, 1989.

[17] A. Osenwegie, *Street Children in Lagos*, Dakar: Urban Management Program, 1998.

roaming in search of livelihood. Right from physical appearance, it is easy to observe the deplorable condition the street child has to contend with. Bashir[18] observed that an *almajiri* child could be identified by his haggard, tattered looks, carrying calabashes, plastic or enamel bowls used in carrying their offerings. It has become a common abuse to call anyone looking so dirty an *almajiri*. The *almajiri* child puts hope on his bowl and wears it on the neck. They mostly walk barefooted. Khalid[19] observed that they have developed *espirit de corps* as they walk in groups mostly of 2–10 (or more) and they share the offering within the group. They are also mostly found in front of restaurants waiting for leftover food and drinks. The *almajirai* are left at the mercy of the *mallams* who provide accommodation (usually very clumsy and not comfortable) but because of the economic constraints with the *mallams*, *almajirai* have to scavenge for food.[20]

Furthermore, Khalid noted in a study conducted in Sokoto that most *almajirai* sleep in overcrowded houses, uncompleted building where amenities like toilets, bathrooms and pipe-borne water are not available. Hence, they look haggardly dirty with dirty cloths. A visit to their residences in the *makaranta* (school) indicated that they sleep almost in hundreds in very clumsy environments, partly on the mats or floor in houses without doors, windows, screens and other basic facilities. This is not different from what street children experience elsewhere. The *tsotsis* of South Africa and the *faseurs* of Congo sleep in their "homes" on the street – mostly at the backyards of malls, open fields, uncompleted structures and the likes. These conditions seem far below slum life. Though a majority of them has come from the ghetto or rural areas, the street kids or lumpen kids also account for a class category in urban Africa, with the highest concentration in the slum areas where they find solace with their counterparts. Moreover, the "tragedies" and nature of urban life not only account for the demise of the *almajirai* but also enable their livelihood by providing a carefree atmosphere where they can roam and sleep.

When the street *almajiri* roams the street, he walks with melody in his mouth begging for means of survival. The *almajiri* child prefers begging to starvation. It is as if the children are specifically trained to beg for survival. Yunusa[21] and Khalid[22] have noted that it is hard to discuss *almajirai* without their major survival strategy which is begging. The *mallams* send the students to the street to beg and to forage for food in refuse dumps.[23] The *mallams* who harbour hundreds of pupils are not

[18] F. A. Bashir, "Street Children: The case of Kaduna Metropolis", *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Resource Book*, ed. The ANPPCAN Child Rights Monitoring Center, Kaduna: ANPPCAN, 1994.

[19] Khalid, "Nigeria's Educational Crisis", p. 85–103.

[20] M. B. Yunusa, "Child Abuse Within the Almajiri System of Education: A Note on the Need for Reform", *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Resource Book*, ed. The ANPPCAN Child Rights Monitoring Center, Kaduna: ANPPCAN, 1994.

[21] Ibidem.

[22] Khalid, "Almajiranci", p. 12–22.

[23] P. Ebigbo, "Street Children: The Core of Child Abuse and Neglect in Nigeria", *Africa Insight*, 26(3), 1996, p. 244–249.

paid and little or no support is provided by the parents. Most of the *mallams* also live on earnings of the *almajirai* in order to survive. Earnings from begging are usually shared between the *mallams* and the pupils. Some of them already have fixed rates to deliver to the *mallams*[24] while some would share with the *mallam* depending on their earning for the day.[25]

As it has been noted, most of the *mallams* do not work except teaching. A majority of them are farmers, therefore they move with the pupils during the long dry reason to the city. The *almajiranci* becomes an economic instrument for the migrant *mallams*. It is not difficult to imagine daily returns from a hundred *almajirai*. It is because of this that Indabawa[26] observed that there is a gradual transformation of *almajiranci* from an education to a political economy category. For the parents, it also provides opportunity to free them from socio-economic burden of their children. This might be for a very long time – 2, 3 or 5 years or more – without adequate parental responsibility, but under the "generous merchant" *mallam* whom God has blessed to "support" a large number of children. It should be noted that the *mallams* are not paid for the educational services. But it is not only these two categories of people that benefit, the society also does.

The *almajirai* are now integral part of the urban household economy or survival. Apart from begging, some of the *almajirai* also develop "innovative" ways of surviving by engaging in menial jobs. Hence, they provide cheap labour for the urban community. A substantial majority of the *almajirai* are now house-helps who assist the urban population in different domestic chores at cheap rates. Apart from this, there is a growing number of shoe-shiners, wheel barrow pushers and domestic labourers among the *almajirai*. The street children are even attached to women in *purdah*[27] who send them on different errands for a stipend at the end of the day. The *almajirai* wash plates, fetch water, wash cloths, dump refuse and engage in other domestic chores. There are also a growing number of street hawkers among them. Some of them are attached to traders at the market places who give them wares for sale in return for food and token amount of money depending on the sales. Generally, the *almajirai* play a supportive role for the household survival in the city. Khalid[28] reported that almost every person in Sokoto, including those who oppose their presence, make use of the services of *almajirai*. It was further observed that over 80% of

[24] Yunusa, "Child Abuse".

[25] Khalid, "Nigeria's Educational Crisis", p. 85–103.

[26] J. B. Indabawa, "Almajirai, Qur'anic School and The Kano State Social Policy", ed. Yadudu, *The Conception and Implementation of a Social Policy: Kano State Experiment*, Kano: Bayero University, 1992.

[27] The literal meaning of *purdah* is a curtain, but the term is used to designate the practice of secluding women from contact with men outside of the immediate family. This may be accomplished through virtual seclusion in separate quarters in the home, veiling in public, and the provision of segregated public facilities (Papanek, 1973; White, 1977). The practice restricts women's activities and movement; hence they are mostly full-time house-wives. The practice is meant to ensure sexual modesty among the women. Male children who are not sexually active (like the *almajiri*) can have access to the women in *purdah*.

[28] Khalid, "Nigeria's Educational Crisis".

households during the survey utilized the services of *almajirai* either occasionally or permanently. Hence, most urban families rely on the labour of the *almajirai,* especially for chores they would not saddle their own offsprings with.

Worse still, an *almajiri* child strives without adequate parental care or attention. For the *almajirai*, the parent-child bond is a mirage. Right from the early age of 4 or 5, a majority of the children are left under training that set them away from home to a strange home devoid of parental care which is very vital in the early days of childhood. Those who are full-time *almajirai* (who are meant to complete their studies before returning home) might see their parents only once or twice a year (if privileged). In this they resemble the *talibes* of Senegal and other categories of street children. The *almajirai* are thus deprived of parental emotions and they could also lack affection for others, especially in society where they have to sing, roam and roar, work and wait for leftovers at the restaurant, or worse still, scavenge for food in the refuse for livelihood.

Furthermore, the *almajiri* child walks the street every morning to see "urban" well-dressed children going to school. For the *almajirai*, Western education is a forbidden commodity – probably because it is not so "holy". It should be noted that over the decades, there has been a gradual acceptance of Western education which has reduced the population of full-time *almajirai*. With the gradual success recorded by universal primary education and now universal basic education, there has been a series of transformation in the Quaranic school system. Nevertheless, there is still a bundle of "conservatives" who preserve the system of *almajiranci*. Most of the street *almajirai* are not exposed to Western education and such deprivation can curtail the life potentialities of a child. This could also be responsible for reproduction of lumpenhood because the possibility of social upward mobility is hampered since Western education is highly functional in this respect in our society.

Almajiri and the street: the vulnerabilities

Almajirai live at the margin of the society; but the margin is a place of both possibilities and vulnerabilities, though the latter with a high level of risk. For the *almajirai*, the street is the margin fraught with vulnerabilities. The *almajiri* is left to strive for survival on the street without any adequate parental support. This partly explains the child's susceptibility to different social ills in the society. The existence of *almajirai* constitutes enormous challenge to the society. Yunusa[29] summarised the condition of the *almajirai* as following:

> The growth of the pupils is impaired; they grow without affection, self-respect and often suffering from battering. A typical almajiri is deviant, sick, dirty, poor, homeless, untaught, neglected and ill-treated [...] The pupils grow up unskilled, and form a large number of urban unemployable in Northern Nigeria [...] roaming the street unmonitored and unsupervised.

[29] Yunusa, "Child Abuse", p. 33.

Almajirai are dirty, unkempt, truant, infested with various diseases and because they are mostly thugs without self-esteem, they are easily recruited into anti-social behaviour and movement. It is further reported that a majority of those who fought in the Maitasine[30] uprising in Kano were *almajirai*. The street *almajirai* have been implicated in the incessant riot/ethno-religious conflict and killings in Kano and other parts of the northern states. They could be self-acclaimed "defenders" of religion because (apart from other underlying reasons) one of the major reasons of their condition is religious. Hence, they are so volatile in religious matters. Furthermore, the *almajirai* are vulnerable to elite and religious manipulations. The street children could be recruited to perpetrate the agenda of "others". The *almajirai* have thus been vital instruments in perpetrating ethno-religious conflict especially in the northern parts of the country.

Even more, because of relative freedom enjoyed by the street children they are also vulnerable to drug use.[31] The *almajirai* are no exception in this regard. Some of the *almajirai* smoke cigarettes, marijuana and inhale the fumes of glue and petrol.[32] They have found solace in drug use and places where they are mostly found also make them vulnerable, they mix with adults who serve as a reference group for them at motor parks, market places and on the street at different times of the day. Some of these adults take drugs. This could explain the link between drug use and other deviant behaviour perpetrated by the *almajirai*. Apart from this, it could also lead to some health problems.

Studies[33] reported that street children are generally vulnerable to different health problems. The *almajiri* child living on the street, especially in the weather conditions of northern Nigeria, is highly vulnerable to infectious diseases such as malaria, diahearrea, cold, asthma and many forms of injuries. The *almajirai* are also vulnerable to accidents. Many of them have been reported knocked by motorcycles and other vehicles. From eating leftovers and scavenging for food from refuse, they are also vulnerable to different food-borne diseases. Luggala and Kibassa[34] explained that street children are usually exposed to hazardous and harmful social conditions which adversely affect their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. In other words, developmental process of the children is impaired. This constitutes serious threat to the well-being of the *almajirai*.

It has also been observed that sexual perversion is common among street children. This could predispose such children to STDs including HIV/AIDs. Motihar[35] observed that the dynamics of the street, which include strong peer pressure and crime linkages,

---

[30] An ethno-religious/Islamic sect in Nigeria.

[31] J. L. P. Lugalla and C. G. Kibassa, *Urban Life and Street Children's Health: Children's Account of Hardships and Violence in Tanzania*, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003.

[32] Amzat, *Reproductive*.

[33] J. K. Anarfi, "Vulnerability to Sexually Transmitted Disease: Street Children in Accra", *Health Transition Review*, Supplement to Volume 7, 1997, p. 281–306; Lugalla and Kibassa, *Urban Life*.

[34] Lugalla and Kibassa, *Urban Life*.

[35] R. Motihar, "Emerging Initiatives to Decrease the HIV Vulnerability of Marginalized Children in India", *Sexual Health Exchange*. Vol. 1, 2005, p. 14–15.

lure street children easily to drug use and illicit sexual perversion. A study[36] has found limited sexual activities among the adolescent *almajirai*. The study also observed that there are certain misconceptions about HIV/AIDS among the group and very low utilization of health care service. This could also explain the high vulnerability of the *almajirai* to various health problems. Access to good health care is very limited. The *almajiri* might be beaten, kicked and assaulted. That they engage in child labour itself buttresses that they undergo inhuman treatment from the society. *Almajirai* have no choice than to start menial or odd jobs at the tender age of 5 in order to survive. The *almajirai* are shoe-shiners, nail-cutters, washer-boys, errand boys, house-helps, hawkers and so on. This is the typical form of exploitation and assaults that street *almajirai* are exposed to. This implies child slavery which is highly detrimental to the overall national development. Generally, seeking for livelihood at the margin is difficult for the lumpen kids but it is the last option available other than starvation.

Lastly, it is pertinent to keep in mind that as the street is an avenue of possibilities, so also it is a place of vulnerabilities. The street is gradually being transformed into "home" among the *almajirai* in the communities where they strive. The margin exists within the care of the mainstream but the capacities of different segments of the margin exclude and sustain the street *almajirai* in the face of exploitation, abuse and neglect. Hence, they constitute a distinct vulnerable group in the society. The question then is: what has been done and what could be done to alleviate the deplorable condition of the lumpen *almajirai*?

Conclusions and recommendations

The search for Quranic or Islamic education brings the *almajiri* to the urban centres where he is faced with deplorable conditions. One important aspect to note is that a majority of other children go through Islamic education without becoming *almajirai*. This is because there are also designated Islamic schools in the northern part of Nigeria. For instance, in south-western part of Nigeria, there is no problem of street *almajirai* despite large population of Muslims. It is mainly because there is classroom-based Islamic education. The categories of street children in the south are not Islamic migrant school pupils. *Almajiranci* has been sustained since the pre-colonial days in northern Nigeria. In those days, community ties existed and accommodated the system. The migrant pupils then were seen as religious figures who attracted the kindness of the community in terms of basic needs. The street life was non-existent. But with the gradual transformation of the society the community ties started breaking down, the spirit of collectivism dissipated with eventual succession of individualism, especially in the emerging urban centres in northern Nigeria. In the urban societies, such mechanical solidarity has dissipated in the face of modern advancement, though it is still a major feature of rural communities. It could not be restored in the urban life to accommodate *almajiranci* as it used to.

[36] Amzat, *Reproductive*.

From the foregoing it is evident that social realities have transcended *almajiranci* as a value in the modernizing society. There is need for massive transformations of the system in line with the current realities. In the past, there had been various efforts to address the problem of this street community in northern Nigeria. Khalid[37] reported that the first official attempt to put a halt on the practice of migrant Quranic schooling system was started by Kano Native Authority in 1959 when parents were alerted on the dangers of allowing children to roam the street begging in the name of Islamic scholarship. This met with serious resistance from some *mallams* alleging that it constituted attacks against Islam. It was further reported that the street *almajirai*'s roles in the Maitasine upspring in Kano prompted another concerted effort when the state government enacted an edict tagged the Quranic schools registration edict. Also, the state government in Sokoto signed an edict concerning the control of juveniles accompanying the Quranic *Mallams* Adaptive Rules. Despite various efforts to manage this social problem, it still persists, which implies the lack of adequate political resolve.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the lack of strong resolve on the part of the government is not unconnected with religious values attached to *almajiranci*. Such resolve cannot be strong and instrumental when there is no value detachment and objective attempts at resolving the problem. But for the religious value, it has been difficult for the government to implement certain "drastic" and practical recommendations. As a matter of urgency, there must be official and effective prohibition of child begging and *mallams* should be prevented from sending children out for begging. As it has been recommended before[38], there should be official recognition of the *almajiranci* system and establishment of state-funded Quranic school model in all LGAs. But the schools need to incorporate Western education and employ the existing *mallams* for Quranic session. This would eradicate unpaid teaching by the *mallams*.

Efforts need to be channelled through participatory approach in the different communities. Mass mobilization would ensure sustainability of the solutions. The possibility of obtaining sound Islamic scholarship in organized system should be communicated to the rural communities. More importantly, solutions also need to be structured considering the socio-economic aspect of *almajiranci*. This could be achieved through series of rural empowerment programs (without which the problem might still persist). Through appropriate value re-orientation, construction of model Quranic schools, legal prohibitions, and empowerment with strong political resolve, detached objectivivity and dedicated efforts, the problem of *almajiranci* would be a problem of the past.

[37] Khalid, *A Socio-Economic*.

[38] Kano State, Report of the Committee on Almajirai, Kano: Government Press, 1988.

Peter Emeka Arinze

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

An Examination of Corruption in Nigerian Economy

Statement of the problem

There are many unresolved problems in Nigeria, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is perhaps especially troubling. Corruption, a major problem in Nigeria, is no secret either within the country or outside it. Nigeria's abysmal ranking in the Transparency International (T.I) corruption index[1] or conversation with any citizen would indicate that corruption is rampant. And the damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. The menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, extortion tollgates and slow traffic on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others. Even the people on the streets recognize the havoc caused by corruption – funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the thin air. Thus, it is believed by many in the society that corruption is the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, the issue keeps reoccurring in every academic and informal discussion in Nigeria. And the issue will not go away.

Origins of corruption

Corruption started in Nigeria a long time before the independence. Corruption in the pre-independence Nigeria was perpetrated by the so-called colonial masters.[2] They, in a bid to rule Nigeria ultimately, employed the divide and rule tactics. Carrots and sticks were the major instruments at their disposal to perpetrate their acts. The colonial masters bribed the black African leaders whom they believed to be influential. To make use of these influential leaders – chiefs and elites – undue favours and advantages were granted to them. These favours and advantages softened the hearts of the elites and made the Europeans more and more powerful. Cadre classification was another form of corruption.[3] Only the white rulers and their black elite counterparts were allowed to enjoy some privileges at the expense of the toiling masses.

After the independence, this culture of corruption was transferred to the Nigerian elites and rulers. The highly corrupt tendencies at Nigeria and their leaders reached

[1] *The Transparency International Corruption Index (CPI)*, 2001, p. 234–236.
[2] *National Interest Newspaper,* March 26, 2005, pp. 1, 33.
[3] Ibid., p. 33.

their peak following the economic development of Nigeria and the discoveries and exploration of oil in the eastern part of Nigeria. The government award of contracts has become the bane of Nigerian economy. People have sought various political leadership not with the aim of serving people but to unduly acquire wealth through misappropriation of public funds entrusted in their care.

The level of discipline and integrity in the Nigerian society has gone drastically down to the lowest ebb. The quest for material goods has become the order of the day, since money, regardless of its source, has come to be worshipped as a status symbol in the society. The ends justify the means with the level of materialism and the consequent corruption is pervading the society; banks have joined the bandwagon. To them their last resort is the depositor's fund kept in their trust and this has led to the distress of banking system in Nigeria.

In fact, corruption started in Nigeria long before the independence in 1960. The only difference between corruption as then and now is that while in the past it was orchestrated at individual levels, now it is a national culture, if not ideology in Nigeria.

This paper aims at:

1. examining the nature and causes of corruption;
2. assessing corruption and the development of national economy;
3. assessing the efforts of the government in fighting corruption;
4. assessing the impact of corruption on poverty alleviation;
5. making recommendations based on the finding.

Definition of corruption

Perhaps, because corruption has received an extensive attention in society and has been exaggerated in the academic communities, corruption has received varied definitions. Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad.

Specifically, corruption or "corrupt" behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit.[4] Corruption is an effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense, or a misuse of public power for private benefit.[5]

In addition, corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private gains, be they personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gain. It is a behaviour which oblates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains connected with influence.[6] This definition includes such behaviour as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgement of a person in a position of trust), nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of inscriptive relationship rather than merit), and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public

[4] Inge Amundsen, "Corruption Definitions and Concepts", in *Report commissioned by Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation (NORAD),* Michelsen Institute, Chapter 1, 2, 4, January 2000.

[5] Ibidem.

resources for private use).[7] Additionally, corruption is an anti-social behaviour providing improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, which prevents the authorities from improving the living conditions of people.

Conceptual framework and a survey of literature

Paolo Mauro has observed that bureaucratic (public) corruption can be traced to the government's intervention in the economic policies aimed at liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation of existing industries.[8] According to the author, "where government officials have discretions in applying them, individuals are often willing to offer kick-backs to officials to circumvent the rules. Officials are often tempted to accept these kick-backs." The author noted that where there are trade restrictions, especially if importing certain goods is subjected to quantitative restrictions, the necessary import licences become very valuable and importers will consider bribing the officials who control the licence issue.

The author also says that protecting a home industry from foreign competition through tariffs tends to create a semi-monopoly for the local industry. Local manufacturers can lobby for the establishment and maintenance of these tariffs. In the process, some industrialists may even be willing to corrupt influential politicians to keep the monopoly gains. Other areas where corruption is practised include price controls, multiple exchange rate practices, natural resources endowments, etc.

In developing countries, governments are the major factors in determining economic directions and the bureaucracy is therefore vital and influential and likely to accept bribes or be subjected to rent seeking as Mauro observed. Corruption, therefore, becomes part of the society and the development process.

Onigu Obite described corruption as "the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour, moral depravity".[9] He went on to state that corruption takes place "when at least two parties have interacted to change the structure or process of society or the behaviour of functionaries in order to produce dishonesty, unfaithful or defiled situations".

The author asserted that there are two broad areas where corruption thrives – the bureaucracy and private sectors. It also has to be recognised that there can be political, judicial, as well as economic corruption, though they are all closely linked with bureaucratic corruption. But, if "corruption is an act which deviates from the formal rule of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power, or status, then corruption can be analysed within the paradigm of political economy".[10] The origin of corruption

[6] Ibidem.

[7] Seymour Martin Lipset, Gabriel Lenz, *Corruption and Culture Market,* World Bank Publication, 2000.

[8] Paolo Mauro, *Why Worry about Corruption*, IMF Publication Washington D.C., 1997, p. 4.

[9] Onigu Obite, "The Sociological Study of Corruption in Nigeria", in *Corruption and Development*, ed. Femi Odekunle, Ibadan University Press, 1986, p. 12.

[10] Ibidem.

is located in the political and economic arrangements which govern the organisation of the society.[11] What obtains in the private sector obtains also in the public sector. The difference is that bureaucrats serve the state, while private employers are constrained to enterprises that are not much exposed to public eye.

Max Webber postulates that there must be a separation between the private sources or the personal assets of a public officer and those of his office.[12] This model is premised on the argument that public servants or bureaucrats are numerated for their services through salaries and other incentives and therefore any appropriation of resources of their office for private or self-serving gains constitutes corruption.

George Moody and Stuart categorised corruption into two broad types, grand corruption and petty corruption.[13] The authors asserted that grand corruption is perpetuated by public officials, often in collusion with large foreign companies, to influence or secure the sales of goods and services of high value which would not have been chosen in a fair competition. According to the authors, petty corruption involves small-scale individual activities of officials, such as policemen, custom officers, store staff, account staff, schedule officers in ministries, dishonest magistrates and judges, etc.

The authors noted that of the two types, grand corruption is more detrimental. However, petty corruption is more noticeable among ordinary members of the public and in the long run it may be more destructive than grand corruption. Motivation for this act may be financial and material benefits; it could also be the quest for power, influence, glory, communal recognition and immoral benefits. The authors observed that corruption is both in the public and the private sector of the country.

Lipset and Lenz defined "corruption as an effort to service wealth or power through illegal means"[14] – private gain or public expense, or a misuse of public power resources for purely private or dishonest use, nepotism or disregard for accountability.

The authors divided corruption into three sub-divisions. These are:

1. political corruption;
2. bureaucratic corruption;
3. electoral corruption.

The authors asserted that political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It occurs when the politicians and political decision-makers who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the name of the people are themselves corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians and legislators.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] John Girling, *Corruption, Capitalism and Democracy*, Routledge Publication 1997, p. 1–20.

[13] Quoted after Reginald and Herbert Green, " Poverty, Basic Services Survival as Development in sub-Sahara Africa: Some Issues of Public Service, Professionalism", *Production and Development Journal*, 1996, p. 2–48.

[14] Quoted after Luc Deevust, "Statistical Analysis of Under-and-Over Invoicing of Imports", *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 8, p. 303–323.

Bureaucratic corruption occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. This type is encountered daily at places like hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices, etc.

Electoral corruption on the other hand, includes the purchase of votes with money, promises of offices or special favours, coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election. Here, votes are bought, people are killed or maimed in the name of election, losers end up as winners and votes turn up in areas where votes were not cast. Other forms of this corruption include: bribery, which is any payment (in money or kind) that is taken or given in a corrupt relationship, e.g. kickbacks, pay sweeteners, greasing palms, etc.

Demola Olusoga explains the concept of corruption as giving of something of value (e.g. money, sex, gift, etc.), whether demanded or not, to influence the receiver's action favourably toward the giver.[15] He extended the definition to include bribery, fraud, abuse of office and outright robbery. Under fraud, a party usually obtain something of value from another party under false pretences. In case of office abuse, officials paid to manage public institutions resort to looting the resources entrusted in their care through many fraudulent devices.

Augustine Ruzindana is of the opinion that corruption is not simply a development problem,[16] but a problem of governance of trade of morals and ethics, and of a weak and immature system of public order. The author says it involves a deviation from certain standards and norms that those who hold power are believed to abide by.

A.O. Sanda argues that corruption is inevitable because Nigerians are becoming insecure.[17] They are anxious about what may happen to their children tomorrow. This phenomenon is an inducement for the hoarding of wealth by all means.

The author suggests that socialism may be what Nigeria needs now, as capitalism or quasi-capitalism preaches wealth accumulation.[18] The author says, the desire to be called a comparator bourgeois has forced many into stealing public funds. The author maintains that the "gap" between the rich and the poor has grown so wide that it is only safe for the poor majority to see the "big man" as the one involved in corrupt practices.

Summing up, all the authors reviewed have shown concern about corruption. The more reoccurring theme is that corrupt practices have become synonymous with a general malaise corroding the root and superstructure of Nigerian society.

Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the degree to which corruption affects the development of the Nigerian economy. Operationally, the work will rely on the content

[15] Demola Olusoga, *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy*, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Seminar paper presented by A.O. Sanda at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos, Plateau State, 1981.

[18] Augustine Ruzindana, "Corruption and Economic Development", *National Interest Newspaper*, March 26, 2005, pp. 1, 33.

approach methodology of gathering data. The work is descriptive and historical, in the sense that it is a qualitative analysis. Materials and information were obtained from government publications, newspapers, journals and the author's observation.

Results and discussion

The economic strength of an economy may be measured by the value of its accumulated wealth and the rate at which it grows through savings and investments and, consequently, its monetary management, and the liquidity of the banking systems that can affect investment and the consumption expenditure in the economy. Thus, the inability of Nigeria to manage her macroeconomic variables to move the economy is due to corruption. Corruption has over the years acted as deterrent to foreign investors who would have been ready to invest in the country but for the high rate of corruption. One cannot forget the difficulty in obtaining loans from foreign financial organisations on the grounds of corruption. These factors have hindered development efforts in Nigeria.

Generally, the impact of corruption on the Nigerian economy can be viewed from two perspectives:

(a) corruption in the public sector;

(b) corruption in the private sector.

It is worth noting that the most remarkable impact of corruption in Nigeria was recorded in the period between 1970 and 1974, when the revenue of government from oil went up from 26% to 85%. By the time the country was enjoying this oil boom, the problem started because those at the helm of affairs knew nothing of what to do with the money. This led to wasteful spending, an increase in fraud and misappropriation of investment capital.

A survey on corruption, released by the Ministry of Finance in 2003 showed that there was an increasing rate of corruption in the public services with the police topping the list (see table 1).

According to the World Bank, between 1978 and 1993, approximately US $200 billion was invested in Nigeria with very little return;[19] since the independence in 1960 no administration has been declared corruption-free. What has been a notable difference is the degree of corruption. The first Republic collapsed in early 1966 when the military intervened, ostensibly to stop, among other things, the spate of corruption with which regional and national governments had been associated.

Virtually every military administration since then has hammered on the issue of corruption and the need to extirpate it from our system. If Major Nzeogwu's dream was to make the bureaucrats and the political bosses more transparent and responsive to the needs of the society, that dream died with the failure of the revolutionary council to administrate the country. Though Nigeria was to be under military rule for 33 years thereafter, the incidence of corruption increased, as reflected in the table 2. Undetected incidences of corruption, according to a 1980 Ministry of Justice study,

[19] Quoted after Paul Adams, "Nigeria Next Pariah?", *African Report,* May/June 1995, p. 43–45.

Table 1. The most corrupt public institutions as perceived by public officials, households heads and enterprises

	Public Official (%)	**Households Heads** (%)	**Enterprises** (%)
Police	32.7	30.4	25.7
N.P.A. Nigeria Ports Authority	8.4	4.1	5.1
Political Parties	6.3	10.2	6.1
Municipal/Local Govt.	5.5	4.1	3.3
Federal/State/L.G. Executive Council	3.8	11.3	7.1
Members of the National Assembly	3.2	4.3	3.8
Courts	2.9	4.1	2.4
Customs Authority	2.7	1.6	1.7
Traffic Police/FRSC	25.4	2.7	1.5
Office of the Accountant General, Fed/State	1.9	1.6	1.5
Water Board	1.8	1.4	1.7
State Government	1.6	1.5	1.0
The Armed Forces/Military	1.5	1.8	1.8
Office of Prosecutor (DPP)	1.1	0.l7	0.3
The News Media	1.0	0.7	0.3
Internal Revenue Board	0.8	1.0	2.1
Nitel	0.8	0.3	0.7
Office of Social Welfare	0.8	0.2	–
Post Office	0.7	0.7	1.6
Ministry of Education	0.6	1.7	0.4
Code of Conduct Bureau	0.4	0.1	1.2
Central Bank	0.3	1.2	1.0
Ministry of Health	0.3	0.7	0.7
Ministry of Agric and natural Resources	0.3	0.5	0.2
Public Registry (ID, Passport)	0.3	0.5	0.3
Ministry of Commerce	0.3	0.2	0.3
Ministry of Works and Transport	0.2	0.5	0.2
State Budget Authority	–	0.5	0.3

Source: Public Official Survey Summary Reports, a Publication of the Ministry of Finance, 2003.

Table 2. Bribery and corruption: crimes known to the police

Years	Figures	Annual Percentage Change
1967	300	16.6
1968	350	1.4
1969	355	8.7
1970	386	22.0
1971	471	25.7
1972	592	13.7
1973	673	11.1
1974	748	9.4
1975	818	30.6
1976	1068	11.6
1977	1191	23.0

Source: Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Crime and Quality of Life in Nigeria (Lagos, 1980).

were put at about 87.5 percent of all reported cases.[20] Except for the settlement of political scores, many cases of corruption are either dismissed or placed in the fridge after the report of investigation commissions have been submitted.

Democracy and corruption

Nigeria's return to democracy in October 1979, was expected to usher in a new era of economic development under Shehu Shagari. Unfortunately, it collapsed on 31st December, 1983 having been in place for about 51 months. Since politics and economics are interwoven, Nigerian politics had become transformed into a system in which politicians and their protégés found it difficult to resist the temptation to use the public purse to further their private nest.

President Shehu Shagari in his regime was termed a leader who was unable to control the corrupt tendencies of his party machinery and closest advisers.[21] The meetings of his cabinet and party council became grand bazaars where the resources of the state were put up for auctions.[22] After less than five years his regime was overthrown by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime which soon was overthrown too.

When the Babangida administration came to power, it promised that it was going to usher Nigeria back to "democracy so that Nigeria would regain its lost glory". For eight agonising years, Nigerians lived in the dream of great expectations of a transition

[20] "Crime and Quality of Life", in *Ministry of Justice Survey*, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Lagos, 1980.
[21] Obite, *The Sociological Study*, p. 12.
[22] Ibid., p. 15.

programme that was introduced, a uniquely Nigerian version for democracy through a system of political engineering that the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida designed, culminating in the option A4 system that despite its clumsy procedure produced an acceptable national leader in June 1993. This is how corruption was institutionalised.

The Babangida administration could not properly account for additional $12.04 billion from oil sales that Nigeria earned during the Gulf War.[23] Over 90% of the money was squandered not on any high priority or truly generated investment. The Okigbo Panel reported that Babangida and the then governor of the Central Bank clandestinely disbursed money while the country was riddling with a crushing external debt.

At the end of his tenure in 1993, General Babangida left a budget deficit of ₦90 billion, which General Abacha in his broadcast in October 1995,[24] described as "a disturbing source of inflation". General Abacha then promised to reduce the deficit to ₦13.08 billion or 1.22 percent of the GDP.

Ironically, recent revelations have shown him as the worst head of state the country has ever had. Over US $1 billion has reportedly been recovered from his family and cronies. And magazines report that his son Mohammed Abacha has confessed that his father gave him US $700 million "for safe keeping in my house".[25]

Similarly, the Obasanjo/Atikun regime has had series of corruption scandals. The most recent is the dismissal of the education minister, Prof. Fabian Osuji, on the ₦55 million scam. Some of his accomplices were to include Chief Adolphus Wabara, Prof. Okebukola, Prof. Jude Njoku, Honourable Matazu Shehu and others.

President Obasanjo's speech in concerning this issue can be found in the Nigerian dailies and specifically in the *Guardian* and *Vanguard Newspapers* of 23rd March 2005. He said that "faced with a heavy indictment by no less a personality the number two citizen, Chief Adolphus Wabara yesterday resigned as President of the Senate. The resignation takes effect from April 2005, when the legislative chamber is billed to resume from Easter break".

According to the *Guardian*, the alleged ₦55 million bribe was an offer to some members of the National Assembly by the Minister of Education, Prof. Fabian Osuji, to secure a smooth passage of the ministry's budget for 2005.[26] Earlier there had been a series of corruption scandals including: accusation of members of the national Assembly of collecting ₦54 million to clear ministerial nominee for appointment to the national office.

The causes of corruption

Analysts tend to believe that developed countries are less corrupted than developing nations.[27] One of them points out that throughout the fabric of public life newly

[23] Ibid., p. 16.

[24] Sani Abacha, *Post-Coup Address to the Nation*, Nigeria 1982, December, 1993.

[25] Mohammed Abacha, *News-watch*, May 8, 2003.

[26] "Scam in National Assembly", *The Guardian Newspaper*, March 23, 2005.

[27] Wraith and Simpreins, quoted after Adams, "Nigeria Next Pariah?", 1995, p. 43–45.

independent state runs the scarlet thread of bribery and corruption.[28] Another writer notes that it will probably be difficult to grant (by honest means) a visa to a developing country that would be subject of a corruption study.[29]

Why is corruption a viable enterprise in Nigeria? Poverty and sheer personal greed have been pointed out as reasons for the massive rate of corruption. However, the causes of corruption are many, and they have political and cultural variables. Some evidence points to a link between "corruption and social diversity, ethno-linguistic factionalism, and the proportions of country's population adhering to different religious traditions. Corruption is also wide spread in non-democratic countries, hence, the political system and the culture of a society could make the citizens more prone to corrupt activities".[30]

Corruption in Nigeria can be particularly traced to the following factors: extended family system (where when one person in a family becomes successful, others, such as relatives and friends, cling to the individual for financial support), inequality in the distribution of wealth, lack of social security, political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth, conflict between changing moral codes, the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms and the absence of a strong sense of national community.

Obsession with materialism, compulsion for short cut to affluence, glorification and approbation of ill-gotten wealth by the general public are among the reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria. It has been noted that one of the popular, but unfortunate, indices of good life in Nigeria is flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption. Because of this, some people get into dubious activities, including committing ritual murder for money.

The effects of corruption on the economy of Nigeria

Many studies have been conducted that show the evils or consequences of corruption. And corruption has taught Nigeria a dangerous and wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking, and law abiding.[31] Through corrupt means, many political office holders acquire wealth and properties in and outside Nigeria, and many display their wealth (which is beyond their means), but the society does not blink. This has made politics a big business in Nigeria, because anything spent to secure a political office is regarded as an investment, which matures immediately one gets into office.[32]

The effects of corruption on the Nigeria's socio-political and economic development are myriad. The negative effects impact economic growth reducing, among other

[28] Nye, ibidem.

[29] Ibidem.

[30] Lipset and Lenz, quoted after Syed Hussein Atlas, in *The Sociology of Corruption,* Singapore Times Book, 1980.

[31] Shehu Abubakar, "Edo Civil Servants call off strike", *Daily Times*, July 9, 2002.

[32] David J. Gould et al., *The Effects of Corruption on Administrative Performance. Illustration from Developing Countries*, Washington D.C.: World Bank Publication, 1983, p. 2.

things, public spending on education.[33] Corruption has reduced Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Nigeria uses the GDP instead of GNP to measure its national income.

Particularly, corruption has made Nigeria elites invest abroad, outside the nation's economy, thus, depleting the GDP, and lowering our per capita income.

According to Lipset and Lenz,[34] the effect of corruption on growth is in part a result of the reduced level of investment, as it adds to investment risk. The effect of corruption on education comes from the fact that the government spends relatively more to make room for "graft".[35] And corrupt government officials would shift government expenditures to areas in which they can collect bribe easily. In addition, increase in the poverty level and income equality have adversely affected the stability of government loyalties and national unity is damaged. In terms of geo-political zones, poverty levels vary from one state to another. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS – formerly FOS) Report covering 1980, 1985, 1996, 2004 and 2007 the zones in the North are worse than those in the South. See table 3 below:

Table 3. Incidence of poverty in Nigeria by geo-political zones 1980–2007

Zones	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2007
South South	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1	51.1
South East	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.2	26.1	34.2
South West	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9	43.0	43.0
North Central	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.7	67.0	63.0
North East	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.1	72.2	67.2
North West	37.7	37.7	36.5	77.2	71.2	63.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2007), formerly Federal Office of Statistics.

From table 3, North East has the highest rate of poverty in the years 1980–2007, followed by North West which had the highest increment of 40.7 between 1992 and 1996. Generally, the Northern geopolitical zones have the higher rate of poverty than the three Southern geopolitical zones, while the highest poverty figure 77.2 percent was recorded for North West in 1996. In 2004 and 2007, the South East recorded the lowest 26.1 and 34.2 percent, respectively, while North East recorded the highest 72.2 and 67.2, respectively.

Measures to alleviate poverty

In recognition of the devastating effects of poverty in Nigeria successive governments established various poverty alleviation programmes to reduce those effects. Prior to 1993, the major poverty alleviation agencies of the government

[33] Adams, "Nigeria Next Pariah?", p. 43.

[34] Lipset and Lenz, *Corruption*, p. 26.

[35] Ibidem.

were national Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN). In 1997, another major agency, the Family Economic Advance programme (FEAP) was established, particularly to provide micro-credits through the (PBN) and other participating banks to cooperatives at the ward level to enable the members of FEAP to establish cottage enterprises.

Other programmes include Family Support Programme (FSP), Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF), Mass Transit Programme, the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), the National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA). Agricultural Credit, Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) and Community Banking Scheme (CBS) (Ugbor 2001).

The recent government efforts include the establishment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2000 and 2003, respectively, by President Obanjo – led administration. All these programmes have had no impact on the poor.

Thus, corruption – when practiced on a large scale – can significantly harm the social, political and economic life of any society. Corruption can be costly in both monetary and non-monetary terms. Where corruption increases the cost of doing business, consumers and tax payers bear the burden. If a successful bide must pay 10 percent to a corrupt official as a condition of being awarded a contract, the funds in question are in reality tax papers funds, which could otherwise be allocated to worthy public purposes.

Corruption may also desert public expenditures decision. Let us look at revenue allocations to every state, that is, what each state and Abuja got from the federation account between June 1999 and May 2007.

Table 4 shows the amount collected by each state government in April 2007, for which the government should be held accountable. These figures do not embrace the internally generated income, which, in some states (Lagos and Rivers), could be almost as large as the Federation's allocation. The Federal Capital Territory under Malam El-Rufai collected ₦193 billion and on top of that, probably, twice as much or almost ₦380 billion in internally generated revenue, bringing the total to about 570 billion, which made the FCT richer than virtually all the states with the possible exception of Rivers. The Federal Government itself collected ₦7 trillion. The total for the states alone was ₦9.0 trillion. Together, that represents more money in eight years than all previous governments had spent since 1960 when Nigeria won her independence. In spite of all these spending, poverty still persists, and infrastructure decays.

Corruption is also corrosive to the legitimacy of government. Where elected officials, police, or public servants are seen to be "on the take" the law-abiding citizens become cynical, while others may be tempted to ignore the law whenever it does not suit them. Suffice it to say that when a government asks the public to contribute to the public will, whether through taxation, compliance with regulations, or by making other personal sacrifices, the government whose officials are lacking in virtue is least likely to elicit virtuous conduct from the citizens.

Table 4. League of states (figures in billions of Naira, 1 Naira = 1 US Dolar)

	State	Allocation		State	Allocation
1.	Rivers	622	20.	Edo	197
2.	Delta	561	21.	Kebbi	196
3.	A/Ibom	495	22.	Ogun	195
4.	Bayelsa	452	23.	Kogi	195
5.	Kano	371	24.	Cross River	190
6.	Lagos	331	25.	Anambra	183
7.	Katsina	281	26.	Zamfara	182
8.	Oyo	263	27.	Abia	181
9.	Ondo	257	28.	Yobe	177
10.	Kaduna	256	29.	Taraba	176
11.	Borno	242	30.	Enugu	173
12.	Niger	237	31.	Kwara	166
13.	Imo	231	32.	Plateau	155
14.	Bauchi	227	33.	Ekiti	153
15.	Jigawa	226	34.	Ebonyi	149
16.	Benue	222	35.	Gombe	146
17.	Sokoto	214	36.	Nasarawa	245
18.	Osun	210	37.	Abuja	193
19.	Adamawa	200			

Source: Accountant General of the Federation, May 2007.

Measures to combat corruption

Various attempts have been made to fight corruption. The resolve to fight and win the war against corruption led to the promulgation of the corrupt practice and other related offences – Act 2000. The Act was the first bill presented by President Olusegun Obasanjo to the National Assembly for consideration at the inception of the present democratic administration in 1999. There are three main responsibilities on the Independent Corrupt Practice Commission.[36]

i.To receive and investigate reports of corruption and in appropriate cases prosecute the offender(s).

[36] "Corrupt Practice and Other Offences Act, 2000", in *The Nigerian National Assembly Minutes of Proceedings*, 2004.

ii.To examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption and related offences with a view to enlisting and fostering public support for the fight against corruption, with a view to eliminating corruption in public life.

iii.Educating and enlightening the public on and against corruption and related offences with a view of fostering public support for the fight against corruption.

With time, the commission has come to be accepted by the populace and expectations are high. But the public is still awaiting the federal government to come out and deal with the following:[37]

1. the unanswered questions about the corrupt practices of heads of military government since 1996;
2. how the funds allocated for the repair of the refineries were used, as the refineries have not functioned significantly;
3. the Federal Governments position on the I.D. Card Project scandal, in the light of established fraud involved (2001);
4. the Halliburton scandal involving $2.4 million improper payment to the Principal Officers of the Inland Revenue Service (2003);
5. why ₦300 billion allegedly spent on road repairs in 2003 produced no road repairs or roads;
6. why $16 billion allegedly spent on NEPA between 1999–2004 produced no electricity for the nation.

A major problem is that the process/mechanism and organs established to address corruption are themselves suspects. Loud protests concerning the DUE PROCESS have been ignored. No public investigation has been launched even though many Nigerians can give evidence backing allegations of corruption in the DUE PROCESS establishment.

Conclusion

The challenge of corruption in Nigeria now has to be faced as a regular national agenda. This is why it is essential to underscore the collapse of government into military dictatorship and the persistent stagnation and the decline in the Nigerian economy as the most important causes of the problems. Hence to transform Nigeria into an economy free of corruption it is imperative to pursue a programme of vigorous democratisation and accelerated economic recovery for alleviation of poverty. Nigeria's funds looted abroad, which could be so handy for economic development or for liquidating the Nigeria's foreign debt trap, are perhaps the core of the questions of corruption. An organised Nigerian initiative is needed for the development of the economy and accelerating the economic recovery and arresting its threatened social integration under the combined weight of foreign debt and corruption.

[37] "ASUU's Position on the Federal Government's Corruption Crusade", in *The National Scholar*, A Publication of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), June 2005, Vol. 5, No. 6, p. 19–20.

Recommendations for effective control of corruption

Many laws are already on the book to fight corruption in Nigeria (including those crafted by international organisations), but what is important now and the most effective weapon against corruption, is the establishment of a true welfare state based on popular democratic government and an egalitarian economic arrangements that relinquish the doctrine and practice of economic religion of "market forces",[38] and the debt (death) trap set for future generation by the IMF and the World Bank.

Other steps the authorities could take to control corruption include:

1. credible law enforcement agencies to ensure that enforcement are predictable and forceful;
2. introduction of transparency and accountability in government functions, particularly in all financial transactions;
3. encouragement of a free press and electronic media to forcefully report to the public on corrupt practices in the society;
4. minimisation and simplification of government regulations, particularly those involving the issuance of licenses, permits and preferential positions, which would restrict opportunities for rent seeking by corrupt means;
5. scrutinising sources of income, scrutinising individual deposits of huge sums of money by financial institutions for sources which would go a long way to curbing looting of national treasury by civil servants;
6. putting barriers to transferring to Western financial institutions financial gains derived from corrupt practices.

[38] Ibidem.

Emmy G. Irobi

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Unmet Human Needs and the Niger Delta Conflict in Nigeria

At the beginning of the 1990s, Nigerians' assessment of the country's political future and well-being was decidedly less than optimistic. Despite enormous wealth accruing from the exportation of one of the world's best crude oil and abundant other natural resources, a majority of elites and leaders was pessimistic about the country's sincerity and willingness to find solution to ethnic, religious and minority conflicts.

Compounded by additional mounting challenges such as the distribution of oil wealth, ethnic groups' inequality, claims of marginalization, domination and endemic corruption, there is undoubtedly an apparent signal that the federal system is flawed and incapable of stemming disaffection among diverse ethnic groups. Thus, democratization is not yielding the expected fruits and results in Nigeria.

Today, after ten years of democratic dispensation, observers still see no sign of hope in resolving pertinent "national questions" and attendant ethnic conflicts that were inundating the country since independence. As a result there is widespread despair, poverty, discontent and anomy, as events seems to indicate that the national boat is fast drifting off course and citizens are afraid and can no longer entrust their destiny in the hands of corrupt and less visionary leadership.

These worrisome issues demand a thorough examination because they help to understand the conditions in which substantive policy discourses are presently situated.

In this vein, this article examines the Niger Delta conflicts in Nigeria's oil producing region. This analysis will solely be based on John Burton's[1] basic human needs theory (HNT), which could help us understand the consequences of unpopular governance and political decision making that fail to satisfy the needs of the people. By so doing, we could protect Nigerians from unscrupulous politicians and leaders that promote ethnic group anger, conflict and poverty. In this vein, our argument is that the human carnage and economic destruction in the Delta were due to unmet basic human needs of the communities. We also suggest that a new policy strategy that satisfies basic human needs of all ethnic groups is imperative to avoid wider

[1] John Burton, *Deviance, Terrorism, and War: The Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979; John Burton, *Conflict. Human Needs Theory*, London: Macmillan Press, 1990.

ethnic conflict and possible international intervention in the country. This will not come very easily, but by interactive deliberation of important stakeholders in a national forum to identify common goals and needs of the oil producing communities.

We shall first consider the basic human needs theory. This will take us to the second part where we will examine briefly the rugged history of unmet basic needs in the oil-producing region of Niger Delta and show the consequences of denying diverse groups these non-negotiable needs. We posit that the conflict of the Niger Delta is also a result of inarticulate federal government's economic policies that alienated and distanced the people of this oil-producing region from the goods of modernity that accrue from wealth of Nigerian natural resources.

Brief overview of human needs theory

The human needs theory of the 1970s and 1980s came out to challenge the prevailing realist "frustration-aggression" theory, which supports the notion that human beings are genetically prone to aggressive behavior[2] in a particular given condition. Realist scholars support the use of power-based negotiations as the only practical way to resolve inter-group conflicts. However, the new wars and conflicts experienced in most countries in Africa have shown how immune these skirmishes are to coercive and forceful means addressed to them. This aggressive-power theory was rejected by scholars[3] statement from the Seville conference of May 1986 explaining, that "violence was not human nature and was simply a social construct or invention" of individuals or groups.

This stimulus-response hypothesis of conflict espoused by the realists was also not digestible for John Burton[4] who strongly criticized the "frustration-aggression" theory. The human needs theory is largely a reaction against these separate disciplines' explanation of social problems. According to the scholar, „there are fundamental universal values or human needs that must be met if societies are to be stable. That this is so thereby provides a non-ideological basis for the establishment of institutions and policies. Unless identity needs are met in a multi-ethnic society, unless in every social system there is distributive justice, a sense of control and prospects for the pursuit of all other human development needs, instability and conflict are inevitable".[5] In this vein, group aggression is provoked whenever the basic human needs are frustrated and denied by any government.[6]

[2] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1985.

[3] David Adam, "The Seville Statement On Violence: A Progress Report", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1989, p. 113–121; John E. Mack, "The Enemy System", in Vamik Volkan et al., eds., *The Psychodynamics of International Relationship*, Vol. 1, *Concept and Theories*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990.

[4] John Burton, *Conflict: Basic Human Needs Theory*, London: Lou Macmillan Press, 1990.

[5] John Burton, "Conflict Resolution as a Political System", in Vamik Volkan et al., eds., *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships*, Vol. 2, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1991, p. 21–22.

[6] Ibidem.

[7] Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954.

The human needs theory is an improved version of Abraham Maslov's[7] pyramidal needs theory of conflict resolution which places emphasis on food, water, shelter, and love. In tune with this idea, Galtung added that conflict will be resolved if attention is given to the needs for "welfare", "freedom" and "meaning".[8] However, Burton in his works argues that there are very important and more fundamental needs than food, water, and shelter and it is the struggle to satisfy non-material human needs which is the prime source of conflict[9]. According to this scholar, basic needs are defined to include among others: identity, security, recognition, autonomy, participation, distributive justice and rationality. These human needs and values are therefore not negotiable[10] and are ingrained in any conflict.

However, critics of the human needs theory doubt if it will be able to resolve conflict effectively in view of the fact that only needs and not the interests[11] of the parties will be addressed, while to resolve any inter-group conflict satisfactorily both needs and interests of the stakeholders have to be considered and satisfied. Furthermore, other scholars have described the human needs idea as indefensibly "essentialist", "de-contextualized, and a-historical".[12]

The attractiveness of unmet human needs theory in resolving conflicts is that it helps to explain why ruling class manipulation or cultural differences in Nigeria or elsewhere sometimes generate conflict and sometimes fail to do so. Pertinently, the human needs theory provides a new way of conceptualizing conflict resolution, taking into account the non-negotiable issues with a view to helping disputants consider methods of accommodating social arrangements to the demands of individual groups. The importance of this theory is that it recognizes the essence of good governance which has eluded Nigeria, in particular for many years of personal rule and military dictatorship, while accentuating the fact that needs of all stakeholders must be met for peace to reign in the Niger Delta. Furthermore, it provides a plausible explanation of ethnic groups' conflicts in Nigeria, where the basic human needs of citizens are neglected. Pertinently, the theory distanced from the extant theories that blame conflicts in Nigeria or elsewhere on primordial instinct of the people to fight each other without cause. Interestingly, it exposes the ineffectiveness of inarticulate and weak institutions of conflict management in Nigeria mostly as a result of nepotism, corruption and ineptitude of the ruling elites. However, in Nigeria institutionalization problem can be solved only when

---

[8] Johan Galtung , "International Development in Human Perspective," in Burton, *Conflict*, p. 301–335.

[9] John Burton, *Conflict Resolution: The Human Dimension*, www.gmu.edu/academic/ijps/vol3_1/burton.htm.

[10] Burton, *Conflict. Human Needs Theory*.

[11] Marshall Rosenburg, *Nonviolent Communication. A Language of Life*, California: Puddle Dancer Press, 2003, p. 3–7.

[12] Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999 as cited by Richard Rubenstein, "Basic Human Needs: The Next Steps in Theory Development", *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2001.

there is some fundamental and visible change in the power political consensus that dominates political legal decision making.

Brief historical overview of unmet needs in the Niger Delta

The contemporary history of the Niger Delta represents the predicament of minority groups in Nigeria denied their basic needs. Some of these groups have allegedly suffered from economic and political marginalization and relative deprivation from successive governments in Nigeria since flag independence in 1960.[13] It is to be remembered that in the late 1950s, minorities in the South Eastern Nigeria appealed to the colonial administration for a separate and autonomous river state. But unfortunately, the Willink Commission report of 1958 denied the Delta people their need for autonomy.[14] In literature scholars have identified inequality and deprivation as major triggers of conflicts in a society.[15] A good example is the Niger Delta where development policies and distribution of oil resources have developed into ugly situation of mistrust, anger, a feeling of shared deprivation and become a basis for political mobilization for militant leaders.

Since 1990, a growing number of scholars and social scientists have developed interest in the study of this conflict. These scholars have written about the genesis of this conflict, drawing attention to the patterns of accumulation surrounding oil[16] and its implication for conflict; on the Niger Delta communities and relations to oil produced from their soil, petrol wealth and its problem[17] and violent minority conflicts[18]. There is, however, a consensus in literature that lack of transparency in governance, corruption among government officials, poverty and absence of a uniform economic development plan in the oil producing areas spurred the prevailing conflict. The story of Niger Delta is very complex and does not fit into any one characterization. Scholars who see the conflict as that of oil and its distribution which did not bring much needed "petrolic"[19] modernization but economic underdevelopment and ecological catastrophe, might be right in a way. But that opinion does not represent the main problem of the Niger Delta people. As inhabitants of a region neglected and marginalized by successive governments and regimes in Nigeria, they require the

[13] Rotimi Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1996; Eghosa Osaghae, "Managing Multiple Minority Problem in a Divided Society: the Nigerian Experience", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1998, p. 1–24.

[14] U. Okpu, *Ethnic Minority Problem in Nigerian Politics*, Stockholm: Wiksell, 1977.

[15] Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970; Ted Gurr, Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

[16] Kenneth Omeje, "Oil Conflict and Accumulation Politics in Nigeria", *Environmental Change and Security Program Report Issue*, No. 12, 2006/07, p. 44–49; Ike Okonta, Douglas Oronta, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil*, Verso, UK, 2002.

[17] M. Watts, "The Devils Excrement", in S. Cambridge et al., eds., *Money, Power, and Space*, Oxford: Blackwell; S. A. Khan, *Nigeria. The Political Economy of Oil*, London, 1994; T. Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty. Oil Boom and Petro-States*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

[18] Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*; Osaghae, "Managing Multiple Minority Problem".

[19] Watts, "The Devils Excrement".

satisfaction of their intangible basic needs which sometimes scholars do not pay due attention to.

These include their need for autonomy, security, equality, and recognition as equal partners in the federal system. These have been the people's basic demands since independence which government has denied them.

Analytically, the Niger Delta conflict represents a general breakdown of relationships and a challenge to norms and to authorities. It is a frustration-based protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack of recognition and identity.[20]

The former Nigerian military dictators and their sycophants who ruled Nigeria in the early 1980s and 90s failed to listen to the demands of the oil producing region. And as a result of lack of any political will to address the anger of the Delta communities, the flame of conflict has engulfed the Niger Delta. In consequence of this administrative and policy transgression, Nigeria has fallen into the group of oil rich countries "where policy makers collectively fall into wealth induced stupors".[21] The abject neglect, endemic poverty, inequality and disease conditions that prevail in the Niger Delta area have sensitized the people, mobilized them to seek justice and human rights along ethnic lines. The Niger Delta communities are also demanding the satisfaction of their tangible need of good health care facilities, drinking water, equipped schools, and job opportunities for the growing population. These are all legitimate needs of a marginalized lot in a country blessed with mineral wealth.

Nigeria derives its wealth from oil. Formerly, the country used to derive its foreign exchange from the sales of agricultural produce like palm oil, cocoa and groundnuts in the 1960s. The end of the Nigeria-Biafran civil war in 1970 brought about the increased oil exploration and extraction from the creeks of the Delta which prominently spurred vast economic and social development programmed in the mid-1970s. Significantly, this was the time Nigeria earned a lot of foreign reserve and wealth from sales of crude oil after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. General Gowon's regime earned a lot which was used to develop some parts of the country with neglect to some southern regions that were defeated in the civil war. Nigeria's oil earnings rose quickly from $4.733 billion in 1975 to $10 billion in 1979 and reached a windfall sum of $15 billion in 1980[22]. Since the independence in 1960 Nigeria's government has accrued $350 billion in oil reserves.[23] This era marks the beginning of the "locust years" or "natural resource curse" in the Nigerian history – a period of oil politics and "squandermania", white elephant projects, corruption among ruling elite.

---

[20] Burton, "Conflict Resolution", p. 20.

[21] W. Salant, "The Economics of Natural Resources Extraction: A Primer for Development Economics", *World Bank Research Observer*, No. 10, February 1995, p. 310.

[22] Cyril Obi, "The Impact of Oil on Nigeria's Revenue Allocation System: Problem and Prospect for National Reconstruction", in Kunle Amuwo et al., eds., *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*, Lagos: Spectrum Books Limited, 1998, p. 267.

[23] Martin I. Sala, A. Subramanian, "Addressing the Natural Resource Curse: An Illustration from Nigeria", *IMF Working Paper* WP/139, 2003, p. 3.

Responsibility, good governance, and leadership did not match with the blessing of the new found "black gold"[24] and as a result the natural resources have become a "curse" on a country of well over 120 million citizens. This is partly because of the bitter and competitive politics it heralded which has pitted groups and individuals against each other, threatening the country's unity and security. Instead of a blessing that would have sustained ethnic groups' relationships and improved the well-being of the people in Nigeria the reverse was the case because in the process of development the government underestimated the probability of a violent subordinate group's response.

Following the carting away of barrels of crude oil for sale, and the accruing profits from this transaction, the oil producing communities awoke to remind the federal government of their infrastructural needs as well as special entitlement and privileges commensurate with the wealth coming from their land. The elites and community leaders were quick to point out the health hazards caused by the pollution of their soil and water as a result of intensive mining in the creeks. They demanded more financial allocation and partnership in disbursing the resources from their soil as well as compensation for lands polluted because of oil exploitation.

More than 20 ethnic groups live in the Niger Delta area. The total area occupied by these communal groups is about 70,000 square kilometers, with a population of more than 20 million dispersed into nine states in the total 36 states in the federation. It is here that popular oil companies like Shell, Agip, Exxon mobile, and Chevron have their operational bases.

These Delta communities whose livelihood depends on farming and fishing were afraid and concerned about their future survival and subsistence in the light of the ecological or environmental disaster in the area. Environmentalists explain that such disaster could equally be provoked by human beings by the use of the technology or by dangerous natural phenomena. But in the case of Niger Delta the disaster was made as a result of intensive oil exploitation and spillages as well as disruption of oil pipe lines by militants. The danger and consequences of this human ecological transgression is increasing in the form of water-borne diseases, water blindness, food shortages, lack of good drinking water, and endemic poverty that contour the social condition of the people in the Niger Delta amidst abundance. The failure of Nigeria's government to take measures that could change oil boom from a liability to an asset has become the most troubling part of the country's wealth. According to the World Bank estimate, only one percent of the population (i.e. the states and indigenous investors) as a result of corruption and predatory activities, enjoy 80 per cent of the oil revenue.[25] Furthermore, a 2006 United Nations report placed Nigeria as the 159th out of 177 countries on its Human Development Index and reported that more than 70 per cent of Nigerians lived on less than US$1 a day.[26] The gruesome

[24] M. Watts, "Black Gold White Heat", in S. Pile, Martin Keith, eds., *Geographies of Resistance*, London: Routledge, 1997.

[25] Kenneth Omeje, *Oil Conflict and Accumulation Politics in Nigeria*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 44.

[26] United Nations Human Development Report, 2006, as cited in Omeje, *Oil Conflict*, p. 45.

picture in this region invoked further demands from leaders of the oil-bearing states related "to the disposition of mineral land rents, the application of the derivation principle to the allocation of federally collected mineral revenues, the appropriate institutional and fiscal responses to the ecological problem of the oil producing areas, the responsibility of the oil prospecting companies to the oil producing communities and the appropriate arrangements for securing the integrity and autonomy of the oil producing communities within the present federal structure".[27]

However, it must be acknowledged that the successive military and civilian administrations in the country from 1984 on tried to satisfy the people's need of increased revenue allocation based on the principle of fairness and equality. A major step in this direction was taken by former President Ibrahim Babangida who increased financial appropriation to the oil producing states from 1.3 percent to 3 per cent of oil fund for development. As a follow up the administration subsequently established the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) with special allocation for the development of communities in the Delta region. These measures did not satisfy the demands of the southern states and oil producing communities. Instead, they increased protests against the government policy and demands for more. OMPADEC was accused of gross corruption and mismanagement and awarding contracts to agents of the military administration. Community leaders continued to demand 50 per cent of the total revenue from oil as well as land rents from the oil prospecting corporations due to them.

In response to the demands of the oil producing states, a constitutional conference initiated under the pressure by the military leader Sani Abacha made an increased provision of 13 per cent for derivation in the revised Nigerian constitution. This increase in financial allocation also made provisions for addressing ecological pollution of the Ogoni soil and other areas where exploration is being carried out by Dutch Shell Company.

Under the Abacha rule, corruption, personalized rule and over-centralized fiscal policy combined with the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) worsened the economic situation in the country and made it quite difficult for the government to concede more to the oil producing ethnic communities of the Delta. This confirms the "resource curse" theory, as well as the scholars' view that in some mineral rich countries, "policy makers unprepared to manage their new found wealth are invariably blanketed with advice from the world bank and other international organizations".[28]

In the Niger Delta and the country as a whole, the impact was great especially as it affected families, women and children, farmers and young people, deepening poverty and causing unemployment in the area. The negligence of basic needs like decent drinking water, education, health care and political marginalization became a mobilizing impetus for the communities as they rallied around their representatives to fight for their cause. The result of this ethnic mobilization was the birth of the

[27] Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*, p. 27.
[28] Salant, "The Economics".

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), followed by the Ethnic Minority Organization of Africa (EMIROAF), and the Ijaw Ethnic Minority Rights Protection Organization and the Southern Minorities Movement.[29]

The policies that led to the radicalization of the civil society are to blame for the violent events in the Niger Delta region. Allegation of marginalization of the ethnic minorities and denial of their demands for equality in distribution of natural resources in the federal system escalated conflict in the Delta. In literature of conflict resolution denial of such basic needs like security, equality and autonomy[30] often sparks off violent conflicts. The demands of the oil producing communities later expanded to include autonomy in a new federal system, self-determination and return to the old allocation formula based on the principle of "derivation", instead of the current practice where population and territorial size and other criteria favor the non-oil producing regions, as well as federal compensation for the environmental pollution as a result of oil extractions.

The movement (MOSOB) began as a non-violent civil society agitating for a peaceful resolution of the problems of the Ogonis and peoples of the Niger Delta and popularizing their views and anger through organizing rallies, public enlightenment campaigns and seminars aimed at creating people's awareness about the suffering of their communities. Niger Delta communities later became radicalized as anti-transnational oil corporations, mainly because pleas of Niger Delta leaders and communities for accommodation and equality in wealth distribution were ignored and dismissed as impossible by the government. The group protested against the corruption and lack of transparency in the administration of OMPADEC and also strongly denounced the composition of the commission, which according to some of the members excluded the representatives from other oil producing areas like Ondo, Edo, and Delta states.[31]

In Nigeria the oil wealth, which was supposed to be an expandable pie, has become fixed and some people now intensively fight to get a cut at all cost. The assumption that there could be more oil wealth to go around the country through good management and cooperation gave way instead to the belief that more for one group means less for others. While in some other oil rich countries of the Western world their resources have fostered cooperation and development, it is causing havoc in Nigeria in the form of ethnic competition and conflict.

The consequences of unmet needs in the Niger Delta

The consequences of inarticulate policies and unmet needs in the Niger Delta are escalating spirals of conflict, ethnic polarization, social disintegration and economic backwardness, broken relationships, poor communication links between oil producing communities and the government, illegal stealing of crude oil, emergence of separate,

[29] Obi, "The Impact of Oil", p. 269.

[30] Burton, *Deviance, Terrorism and War*.

[31] *National Concord*, 11 December 1992, B2, as cited in Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*, p. 36.

mutually isolated groups which form exclusive circles and nurture resentments and hostilities towards the oil producing companies.

Alienated and impoverished ethnic groups often would see themselves as victims of an unjust society. And invoking such "victim mentality" is what brings them around warlords, and justifies their use of violence to achieve their goals. In the Niger Delta, militant warlords are stepping up their campaign against the government neglect, wooing the support of the masses to their struggle for economic development of the area.

Riveting to the days before the discovery of oil in the country, when Nigeria depended on agricultural produce for its financial income, Nigerians never had it so rough. Little or no conflicts existed. Though some misunderstandings occurred, they were not so deep as to disrupt relationships or generate much animosity among different cultural entities either in the North or in the South.

But today the Niger Delta that had been accommodative and hospitable to their neighbors from non-oil producing states seems to have increasingly become closed a society because of oil resources. The gift of oil has made groups and individuals in the Delta start looking inwards towards their kith and kin. The closing of social boundaries has caused citizens from other ethnic groups and minorities to be called aliens in the Niger Delta. This development raises the pertinent issue of citizenship in Nigeria federalism. The society fits into what John Lie[32] called "The paradox of peoplehood".

Social cognitive scholars have drawn attention to the intensity of competition among in-groups and out groups for scarce resources which can be wealth or of psychological kind, like status, control and prestige.[33] These types of social categorization not only polarize a community but also accentuate similarities among members of the same category. This is a major ingredient in the mobilization of ethnic groups to action.

Even within the same minority states and local government in the Niger Delta the classification of some cultural groups as non-indigenes and others as indigenes has emerged, disrupting relationships that have existed since independence. And according to some scholars[34], this situation has inflamed inter-cultural group conflicts and further demands for more states and local government in the Niger Delta region, all of which provide marginalized ethnic groups with a political template for claiming centrally controlled oil revenues, even if there is no oil within their local jurisdiction. This is actually the underlying issue in the local conflicts that ensued among the various ethnic communities in the Delta.

Some of the notable conflicts include those in Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Itsekiri-Urhobo conflict in Warri.[35] As disputes intensified, ethnic associations were mushrooming pointing accusing fingers to the others as harbingers of conflict

[32] John Lie, *Modern Peoplehood*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 145–147.

[33] Michael Hogg, Domnic Abrams, *Inter-Groups Relations. An Overview*, Philadelphia, U.S.A: Psychology Press, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002, p. 19.

[34] Osaghae, "Managing Multiple Minority Problem", p. 11.

[35] Ibid., p. 12.

projecting more hatred and jealousy, while at the same time carving out for themselves territories of influence and governance. The Niger Delta region is so much polarized that chances of effective stakeholders' communication remain slim. This problem of who are and who are not members of a common society is experienced not only in the Niger Delta region but in the country as a whole. It was one of the major sources of ethnic conflict between Christians and Muslims in northern Nigeria in the early 1990s.[36] While citizenship allows one to participate in a community, it is being denied to some minority groups in various regions of Nigeria. Suffice it to say that there is no "democratic citizenship" in the country, where there exist "common membership and shared imminent community".[37] As far as conflict resolution is concerned, this does not augur well for harmonious relationships in the region, and country as a whole. Analytically, such group behavior is indicative of how dangerous invented ethnic identity or "imagined victimization" can be as an instrument in the hands of "ethnic militants" to foment protracted violence in the bid to achieve their parochial gains.

Threatened in this region, as a result of struggle for oil rent and resources, are also the revered traditional kinship relationships and traditional ways of resolving communal disputes. Typically, a council of chiefs works with paramount kings to govern traditional society with the consent of community members. The oil companies considered the system ineffective and slow and treated the chiefs with disrespect. This largely weakened the positions of the traditional rulers and created avenues for self-proclaimed leaders and corrupt youth factions. The traditional chiefs were accused by the youths for leasing lands for oil exploitation and illegal collecting of land rents from the government. Hence the choice by the cultural associations and militant groups to use violence and kidnapping of oil workers as means to achieve their goals or make the federation meet their demands. For example in 2006, militants kidnapped four foreign oil workers in the Ijaw creeks. They threatened to kill the workers if their demands of $1.5 billion and the release from prison of two Ijaw activists were not satisfied. In another development 30 armed militants attacked an Italian oil company, Agip, killing 8 Nigerian soldiers. Also in May of the same year a lone gunman on a motorcycle killed an American oil company executive in the street of Port Harcourt.[38]

In the Delta dramatic changes in people's relationships have contributed to the escalation of the violent behavior of groups. Confrontation and compulsion on the side of government officials replaced collaboration and dialogue as the dominant forms of relating or interaction. The movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and other cultural associations detest any compulsion, and as a result a contagious competitive behavior among stakeholders and individuals exists which influences the spread of violence in the region.

[36] Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*.

[37] Angus Stewart as cited in Stephen Ndegwa, "Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Movements in Kenyan Politics", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3, September 1997, p. 599–616.

[38] Sebastian Junger, "Blood Oil", *Vanity Fair*, online, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/02/junger200702.

Today what the reaction of the angry communities in the Delta has shown is that human needs have become human greed. The greedy elite's competition for oil rent and patronage produces devastating effects on the Niger Delta society and the entire country. Jealousy, corruption and ethnicity motivated the angry and extreme reaction of the oil producing communities. Ethnic entrepreneurs, warlords, predators, sycophants converged to connive with some government officials and oil producing companies to plunder the wealth that belongs to all Nigerians. On the other hand the military dictators in their hay days in office also sacrificed the tenets of good governance, transparency, and responsibility to behave like proverbial "locusts" in the fields of Nigeria, stealing and eating up as much as they could before leaving office. This "locust" behavior was confirmed by the anti-corruption chief in Nigeria, Nuhu Ribadu, who claimed that in 2003 alone, 70 per cent of the countries oil wealth was stolen or wasted; by 2005 it was only 40 per cent.

In the literature,[39] attention has been drawn to the type of predatory accumulation that exists in Nigeria. The behavior of the elites, the oil companies and the manner in which they accumulate this wealth not only raises concern but are worrisome. The ostentatious life styles, cash-spreading bonanzas to patronage networks, neglect of people needs, and prestige seeking have all synergized to provoke more agitation, anger and protests. In his book *The Paradox of Plenty*, Terry Karl[40] argues that oil boom can produce cognitive disorders among state officials, who become "habituated" to fiscal policies that weaken state capacities, fall prey to a "rentier psychology" and suffer from bouts of "petromania". To buttress this, Omeje[41] noted that, "the interests of the 'state class' conveniently combine with those of the state to support a regime of predatory accumulation and lawlessness. The action of some Transnational Oil Companies (TNOCs) – insensitivity to the local environment; destruction of biodiversity; inflation of contracts; imports and supplies; and collusion with state officials to subvert tax and investment policies are made possible by the accumulation climate encouraged by the rent seeking economy".[42]

According to those who introduced the rentier state concept[43], resource rents make state officials both myopic and "risk averse". It was less visionary economic and political choices in decision making which have brought fiscal centralization that has marginalized the Niger Delta communities, and denied them their fair share in the economy of Nigeria.

Little wonder the youths in the Niger Delta are rallying round the warlords and clan heads to fight for redress and justice and advocating for more federal allocations for the protection of their ecological environment which has been destroyed as a

[39] Omeje, *Oil Conflict.*

[40] Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Boom and Petro-States*, as cited in Michael Ross, "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse", *World Politics*, No. 51, January 1999, p. 297.

[41] Omeje, *Oil Conflict*, p. 46.

[42] George Frynas, *Oil in Nigeria. Conflict and Litigation Between Oil Companies and Village Communities*, 2000, as cited in Omeje, *Oil Conflict*, p. 44–47.

[43] Ross, "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse", p. 297–322.

result of intensive oil prospecting activities and sabotage and for more federal funds to develop their communities. In 1994, the oil producing delegates to the national constitutional conference declared, "To release the resource potentials of states and propel them towards self-actualization, emphasis must shift from the politics of allocation to the reality of generation. In this regard, the rights of the states to exploit and develop their resource potentials must be guaranteed by the constitution. Accordingly, the notion of looking up to the center for succor in terms of 'need', 'population,' size and 'land mass' or 'water mass' must now be laid to rest in favor of the derivation principle".[44] In the absence of any effective government proposition on how to resolve issues in the conflicts, mobilized groups, vigilantes and community leaders resorted to rent seeking, and compensation from some of the oil companies in return for security and protection of installations and foreign workers in the fields.

According to reports, Agip oil company paid $40 million to MEND in return for the permission to repair disrupted and old oil pipeline.

However, the activities of these cultural groups and associations like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Ijaw Ethnic Minority Rights Protection Organization, and Movement for Reparation to Ogbia which are most violently coordinated have often been challenged by the police and security forces. The turf of the Delta had therefore not only been covered by oil spillage, but also by the blood of fallen fighters, policemen, soldiers, local leaders, children and innocent men and women of the Niger Delta. Examples of these conflicts include among others the Umuechem carnage of 1990–1993, Ogoni (1994–1995), Ijaw and Ilaje (1998–2000), Odih massacre (1998–1999), Warri conflict between Urhobo and Itsekiri (2002). These conflicts have claimed thousands of innocent lives and disrupted many families.

The consequences of unmet human needs and government's negligence of citizens' welfare are grim, and the importance of managing this conflict cannot be overemphasized. Once confrontation and violence are stopped options to resolve the conflict will become available for discussion.

Common sense and vision demand change in the way all sides frame this conflict, and seeking an effective strategy to resolve the conflict collaboratively, restoring strained relationships and trusts. The government and officials need a face-saving exit and dialogue without which the country will continue to put off the embers of conflict.

The Niger Delta is like a volcano in the heart of Nigeria and a sore in the mind of the present leadership. The present level of conflict could be likened to a steam from the volcano site. The question Nigerians should be asking is not whether this volcano will erupt, but when? As far as conflict management is concerned,[45] Nigeria has never fared very well, and past strategies implemented to resolve disputes have

[44] *Vanguard*, 20 October, 1994, p. 14.

[45] Emmy Godwin Irobi, *Ethnic conflict Management in Africa: A Comparative Case Study of South Africa and Nigeria,* Denver, Colorado: Outskirt Press, 2005; E. G. Irobi, Anthony Agwuele, "The Relevance of Rotational Presidency in Managing Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria", *Hemispheres,* No. 22, Warsaw, 2007, p. 33–46.

failed. Hence the consequence of not satisfying the needs of the oil producing minority states was militant violence and economic sabotage by warlords in the Delta demanding more resources from the oil revenue. Nigerian government led by president Ya'Adua faces a great challenge to find new strategies that will discourage use of force and coercion as means of addressing the group's grievances and basic needs.

How the Government handles the situation

In the literature the scholarly notion that democracy contributes to inter-ethnic peace receives great attention.[46] Nevertheless, this is also dependent on the type of regime, norms and institutions in a particular country. In Nigeria, the types of democratic dispensations and weak federal institutions that existed since independence were short of possessing the required norms of peaceful resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts. The pseudo-democracy which the military dictators created was very autocratic and exclusive to a few privileged groups and individuals who had little interest of the country at heart. This could equally be said about the civilian administration that came to power in 2007 through flawed electoral process and as such lacks popular support and legitimacy.

As far as managing the Niger Delta issue is concerned the government has taken some steps which were not acceptable to the communities. The medium of composition and interaction must also be embedded into democracy in such a way that the envisioned solutions are generally acknowledged as the true expression of the aggrieved communities and stakeholders in conflict. Unfortunately, this is not the case in a country where ethnicity and regionalism have become instruments of politicy by the leadership and their cronies as they continue their bid for power and greater control over oil resources.

Over the years the Nigerian government used different strategies based on wrong assumptions to address the underlying issues in the Niger Delta conflict. The government responses have been "redistributive". Redistributive state responses to ethnic minority grievances have involved token revisions in federal revenue sharing arrangements to accommodate and assuage the stringent claims of oil producing communities to a significant proportion of economic resources obtained from their localities[47] – such as the earlier mentioned increase in federal allocations to oil producing areas from 1.5 to 3 percent of federally accrued oil money. This was later increased to 15 percent by the Abacha regime and the allocation of more funds for the treatment of the polluted farming lands from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of federal account.

These measures did not help to assuage or satisfy the demands of the oil producing states and the communities who felt cheated by the federal government and oil producing companies. The Delta communities wanted more, arguing that the proposed

[46] David Clark, Timothy Nordstrom, "Democratic Variant and Democratic Variance. How Domestic Constraint shape International Conflict", *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 1, February 2005, p. 250–270.

[47] Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*, p. XII.

allocation does not fully compensate for the ecological damage of their agricultural land and the economic welfare of the region.

The immediate consequences were the routine kidnapping of foreign employees of the transnational oil companies, and sabotage of oil companies and their installations by community activists and thugs, leading to further oil spillages and economic losses for both the government and the oil producing companies. As a result of increased sabotage and violence Shell Oil Company was forced to suspend operations in Ogoni-land in early 1993. In 1994, other oil producing companies like Elf, and Agip reported losses worth millions of dollars as a result of community protests and disruptions.[48] And between 1998 and 2003 there were more than 400 disruptions of oil pipes and installations in the Niger Delta. Within this time frame, the violence and attacks cost the government a lump sum of $6.8 billion in revenue accruing from oil sales.

The importance of leadership and choice of policies is very vital to address such a volatile situation before it escalates. According to Richard Samuels, articulate leaders "will demonstrate a range of creative ways to combine resources and ideas and to seize opportunity"[49] and find realistic solution to a group's problem. Instead, the military dictators preferred the use of military force as a strategy of conflict resolution. President Babangida in 1992 dissolved many cultural associations and groups in the Niger Delta agitating for their human needs and rights.[50] By enacting decrees government agents were giving impetus to scout for and arrest leaders of these associations in order to intimidate and stop their mobilization efforts in the region. The government has reacted to the demands of the communities by choosing the adversarial method of conflict resolution. It uses litigation, ad hoc tribunals, judicial commissions of inquiry, military decrees to discourage protests. Litigation and ad hoc tribunals may serve the interest of the government and some of its supporters, but as far as the management of the Niger Delta conflict is concerned it stops short of satisfying all stakeholders. What the communities want is a forum for equal participation, and unfettered dialogue that has eluded the Delta people and Nigerians at large since independence. The Nigerian leadership was authoritarian, and by harassing citizens they not only hampered transition to democracy but also impeded consolidation of democracy in the country. The "military regimes typically favor apolitical solution […] to ethnic problems, subordinate human rights to omnipotent decrees, and regard even the mildest redress-seeking ethnic movement as a direct challenge or threat to authority, to be put down by violent means".[51] In any civilized country dispute resolution is best addressed collaboratively and consensually by being empathic, listening to the people's side of the story with a view to making the right decisions.

[48] Obi, "The Impact of Oil", p. 271.

[49] Samuel Richard, as cited in Nanneri Keohane, "On Leadership", *Perspectives on Politics*, No. 3, December 2005, p. 705–722.

[50] Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*, p. 43–44.

[51] Osaghae, "Managing Multiple Minority Problem", p. 13.

However, the use of force to quell violence in the Delta was in tune with the assumptions in some circles that the destruction of oil pipes and human killing was the handwork of some local criminals extorting oil rent from the multinational oil corporations in the areas. But unfortunately the strategy did not reduce violence or economic sabotage.

It is, however, pertinent to concede that such a strategy is usually applied when issues like territory, prestige and survival of a regime are at stake. The government considered the threat to the source of the country's livelihood (oil installation and companies), the demand for territorial autonomy and loss of human lives as highly salient issue under contention. And the cost of inaction might be greater.

Nevertheless this type of behavior by the government and its agencies exposes the bankruptcy of any effective or pragmatic conflict resolution policy. The governments intervention in the Delta could be misconstrued by the Niger Delta communities as "state violence through militarism […] that appears as group conflict"[52] and a way of protecting the interests of the multi-national oil companies and their employees. This also explains why militant groups target security forces in the creeks patrolling the waters. This situation of suspicion and insecurity is a result of impaired relationships and communication links, and lack of trust among the community leaders and government officials.

But in spite of all these, the federal government has tried to stem the violence by meeting some of the demands of the communities in the Niger Delta through creation of states and local government authorities. This design is tailored to appease those communities clamoring for federal presence in their areas and to address the "disproportionate contribution to national wealth and equally disproportionate suffering of its people".[53] In the new democratic dispensation, the former president Olusegun Obasanjo equally took steps to manage the conflict by appointing Niger Delta indigenes to high government positions. Projects were initiated to improve social and economic infrastructures, pay compensation and provide educational scholarships for youths in the region, such as the establishment of special bodies like Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB), the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and the consolidated council on social and economic development of coastal states to oversee development projects in the Delta. However, irrespective of these, the Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta declared that government needs to do more for them, commensurate by with the amount of oil wealth the Delta soil produces for the country.

The militant movement opined that the commissions so far established were conduit pipes for the government and its agents to divert public funds for personal gains, and vowed to continue violence, disruption of oil pipelines, and kidnapping of oil workers until all their demands are met.

In this vein political explanation of the situation in Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole is that the government has no effective conflict management mechanism to

[52] Ibeanu Okechukwu, "Oil the Friction: Environmental Conflict Management in Niger Delta, Nigeria", *Environmental Change and Security Projection Report*, No. 6, Summer 2000, p. 25.

[53] *The Guardian*, 20 March 1992, p. 11 as cited in Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts*, p. 41.

address groups' anger or provide the basic needs of the communities of the Niger Delta. Statist theorists on "resource curse" blame it on the weakness of state institutions, its ability to extract and deploy resources, enforce property rights and resist the demands of interest groups and rent seekers.[54]

As far as conflict management is concerned, past governments in Nigeria have introduced policies that are "exceptionally risk-averse", that while furthering social and economic transformations risk provoking conflicts. The Niger Delta conflict is such an example of the consequences of inarticulate policies that fail to meet the needs of the people. The Niger Delta communities want to become partners in development and oil resource ownership. They advocate for a more decentralized fiscal policy and more revenues to be distributed on the basis of derivation instead of the current practice of favoring major ethnic groups in the country by such criteria as population and territorial size. Any other course the government takes is bound to fail and exacerbate conflict.

Conclusion

This article tries to show the consequences of unmet human needs in the Niger Delta. From our analysis it is the failure of successive regimes in Nigeria to craft policies that satisfy the tangible and intangible needs of the oil producing communities in the Delta which heralded the human carnage, environmental disaster and poverty in the region.

The expectations of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta are that the government combats poverty by initiating development projects that will alleviate their plight, give jobs to the youths, provide hospitals, schools and basic infrastructures that will make life worth living in a rich country. As a marginalized lot the Delta people agitate for their intangible need of participation, security, autonomy, and recognition as a worthy group. The people also want increase in financial allocation, and compensation for environmental disaster caused by oil exploitation. Militants protest because government institutions did not address some of these expectations. Conflicts in the Delta and in other parts of Nigeria are because of "failures to include in institutions and in decision making a human element and to employ available intellectual resources continually to reassess institutions and social norms and thus resolve problems as they emerge".[55]

In this vein applying the theory of unmet human needs to the conflict in Nigeria may plausibly help address some of the needs that underlay the conflict and find a sustainable peaceful resolution to the problem. Human needs are inalienable rights of every Nigerian citizen and the denial of these needs spurs agitation and violence. Our argument is that institutions established by the previous governments were not attuned to address conflicts and group agitations. A proper analysis and understanding of the

[54] Ann O. Krueger, "Government Failure in Development", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, No. 4, Summer 1990, as cited in Ross, "The Political Economy", p. 308.

[55] Burton, *Conflict Resolution: The Human Dimension.*

needs of these communities is required in order to design transparent institutions that will address them. Strategies to create workable institutions of conflict resolution will be an outcome of a consensual decision through national dialogue. It's when stakeholders and the government officials talk to each other face to face that a new sense of restoring strained relationships and communication is realized. There is no reason why the human needs of the Niger Delta communities should be a source of violence and disobedience against the state once their needs are recognized and institutions are adjusted adequately. In human needs framework the use of force by the government and adversarial politicy that often negates problem solving strategies have proven illogical and dysfunctional.

What is required to address the Niger Delta conflict is a type of dialogue that will institute a new form of decision-making policy which places obligations on states and federal governments to prevent those pathologies or conditions that lead to group agitation and conflict. The promotion of peace and harmony in the Delta region is also pre-conditioned by successful dealing with system-level areas through crafting appropriate institutional innovations and nurturing norms and practices of respect for the minority rights and human needs.

The lack of practices of respect, accommodation and empowerment of the oil producing areas is a denial of an intangible need that has to be satisfied and is critical for peace in the Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole. Deductively, the conflict in the Delta is due not only to ownership of oil wealth, but also to the policies that marginalized the community's elite and striped the people's rights of participation in decision-making regarding the development of their area. The communities want to be part of any government development plan for their region, and this is very critical to peace building in the area.

The consequences of unmet human needs therefore challenge Nigerian leadership to show creativity and good governance that will bring economic well-being and development to the citizens. Development policies that will generate ethnic group conflict are not economically viable. The lesson thereby is that peace is not the absence of conflict but a result of satisfied basic human needs of the people.

Magdalena Zaborowska

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Evolution as Variability of Duration
An Analysis of the Concept of *Qabz va Bast* in Iranian Tradition

A dozen years ago or so the Iranian philosopher and thinker Abdolkarim Soroush[1] collected and edited a series of articles devoted to religion and its evolution, which were first published in one of the well-known Iranian magazines, *Keyhan-e farhangi*. The title of the publication was *Qabz va bast-e teurik-e shari'at.* This controversial work, as the reviews emphasized, was centred around the issue of variability of our perception of religion and transformation of our understanding of the sacred texts, that is to say our religious knowledge, as Soroush called it. Soroush described this process of evolution using two Persian terms*: qabz* and *bast*, which are usually translated as contraction and expansion, or constriction and relaxation. The analysis of the terms *qabz* and *bast* used by Soroush makes it possible to place his theory in the context of a much broader problem, that is to say the dynamic nature of the world. It allows one to demonstrate that the key ancient Persian ideas are still present in human culture and consciousness, regardless of the passing centuries.

The concept *qabz va bast* is an expression having an extremely broad meaning and an equally wide range of usages. The expression may be employed to depict the psychic state of man, his emotions and feelings, and his states of the soul, mind or heart. At the same time, it may refer to his physical or biological sphere, which is closely related to his psyche. Under these circumstances, it is used to describe basic phenomena or physical processes in human life, such as, for example, breathing or heart beating. This expression, however, has also been used in political culture, where, without changing its basic meaning, it is employed to describe the processes or phenomena realized no more on the level of man, but on the level of the society in which that man lives. Different connotations of the expression *qabz va bast* can be encountered in the colloquial language, in the language of science and medicine, and

[1] Abdolkarim Soroush – born in 1945 in Tehran. Soroush is one of the leading Iranian intellectuals and contemporary philosophers, well-read in European philosophy of religion, hermeneutics and political science as well as in Muslim theology, philosophy and law. He gained popularity in the early 1980s, and in mid-1990s he played an important role in the reform movement in Iran. The reform movement quickened with the victory of Said Mohammad Khatami in the presidential elections. Issues raised in Soroush's works became political slogans thanks to which Khatami won the elections.

the term has still a different meaning in philosophical and Sufi literature. The concept *qabz va bast* thus permeates culture in its diverse dimensions.

The expression *qabz va bast* consists of two words joined by the conjunction *va: qabz* and *bast.* The word *qabz*, which is an Arabic loanword, has a dozen or so meanings in the Persian language. It can be translated as a contraction (diastole), constriction, contracture, pressure and astringency, and in this meaning it can be used to denote the contraction of the cardiac muscle. Therefore, accordingly, the verb *qabz shadan* should be understood as to contract, constrict or diminish.

Qabz also means to grasp or clench something in one's fist.[2] It may also signify to bring something under control, to capture, to seize, to take possession of something or to acquire something, which can also be expressed in the Persian language by other verbs, such as: *tamallok kardan* or *tasarrof kardan.*

Qabz is also translated as *ta'ddi*, that is injustice, violation, invasion, ingression, oppression and aggression. In addition, it can stand for *zeberdasti*, that is to say dexterity, brightness, and ability (skill), but it can also mean restraint, moderation and self-control.

The word *qabz* may also be translated as *gereftegi*, which, in turn, may denote blocking, jamming, damming, constriction, clogging (chocking up), obstruction and blocking up. In Sufi poetry, its meaning may be compared, among others, to the following terms: *ruh*, *jan qalb, del* or *khater* and *aql*. The first two terms, *ruh* and *jan*[3], denote human soul or spirit, the next two words, *qalb* and *del,* may be understood as human heart, spirit, soul but also mind; the term *khater*, in addition to the above-mentioned meanings, may also stand for memory, thought and consciousness, while *aql* may denote mind, brain or intelligence. Therefore, accordingly, the terms *qabz-e ruh* or *qabz-e jan* may mean the state of the soul, heart or mind consisting in a form of the clash, constriction, pressure or blocking up, but also bringing something under control or capturing. A. Schimmel translates the term *qabz-e ruh* as a "compression" of the soul.[4] The terms *qabz-e qalb* or *qabz-e del*, in turn, refer to the phenomenon which may be compared to the "flying of thoughts", that is to say, the appearance of ignoble or sinful thoughts in the heart.[5]

[2] In the Holy Qur'an, terms *qabz* and *bast* appear in the sura *Cow*. In the verse 245 we read: Who is he that will lend God a good loan, and He will multiply it for him manifold? God grasps, and outspreads; and unto Him you shall be returned, (2:245), transl. A. J. Arberry, Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1995. As J. Bielawski claims the verse refers to compressing and opening hand or palm. Furthermore two of 99 God's names are *qabid* and *basit*, which mean grasping and distributing and giving, see: J. Danecki, *Wstępne wiadomości o islamie* (Preface to Islam), Vol. II, Warszawa: Dialog, 2002, p. 231.

[3] S. J. Sajjadi in his dictionary of the Sufi terminology writes that *jan*, human soul, consists of *ruh*, spirit and *aql*, reason. See: S. J. Sajjadi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e ta'birat-e erfani*, Tehran: Entesharat-e tahuri, Zaban-e farhang-e iran, 1381, (2002/2003).

[4] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 100, 128.

[5] *Qabz* in: S. M. Abulqasemi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e mafahim-e erfani-je divan-e shams*, Tehran, 1383 (2004/2005).

That is why Bayazid Bestami[6] wrote that when the heart contracts, the *nafs*[7] expands, that is to say, the expansion of the ego proceeds.[8] However, the process may also go in the opposite direction, that is to say when the *nafs* overcomes man he falls into a state of *qabz.* Likewise, the term *qabz-e aql* denotes the state in which the ability of reasoning and comprehending is disturbed.[9] *Qabz* is thus the state of the soul, heart or mind.[10] In Sufism, the meaning of the state is expressed by the Persian word *hāl*. A. Schimmel holds that *hāl* is something ephemeral, it is the gift of the Divine glory.[11] A Sufi cannot reach the state of *hāl* only through his endeavours and efforts, since it can be felt thanks to God or by the Grace of God.[12] *Hāl* flows down upon the Sufi and his heart or mind all of a sudden, without earlier announcement. Just as it comes unexpectedly and overpowers man, it may disappear equally fast.[13] Tradition has that the ”heart of a believer lies between two fingers of the Merciful; He turns it according to His will”.[14]

---

[6] Bayazid Bestami – Persian Sufi from the 9th century. His tomb is located in the village of Bestam near Shahrud city, and is a famous pilgrimage place.

[7] *Nafs* is the term which is often translated as a ”human soul,” ”I” or ”ego.” It is sometimes described as the prison of the spirit, H. Corbin translates *nafs* as a ”carnal soul,” and A. Schimmel calls it the ”lower self.” Such a *nafs* is a nesting-place of instincts, a source of our sins and of our interest in the material world and worldly pleasures; it may also be the source of evil. The mind, *aql*, struggles against the *nafs*, and this struggle is called *jehad-e akbar*, greater jihad. However, the struggle against the *nafs* does not consist in its destruction but in its calming down and taming, or, as A. Schimmel writes, training. There are several stages of the development of the *nafs*. The lowest level of the *nafs* is *nafs-e ammara:* the commanding, earthly or even animal part of the soul, its lowest level, identified by some researchers with the ”ego” or ”I.” *Nafs-e ammara* is the egoic ”I” (self) concentrated on the satisfaction of one’s own desires and cravings. Its attributes include ignorance, wrath (anger), hatred, tyranny, arrogance, perversity, envy, avarice, adultery and hypocrisy. The other dimension of the *nafs* is the ”self-accusing” *nafs*, which is compared to the conscience; the ”accusing” *nafs* is the *nafs* which was illuminated by the light of the heart – it begins to purify itself. It is compared to the intellect, and its attributes include ascetism, piety, restraint, devotion, inclination to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, overeagerness, payment of taxes and spiritual struggle. The third stage of development of the *nafs* is the ”inspired” *nafs*. God inspired this *nafs* to do good. It has such qualities as reason, wisdom, knowledge, revelation, inspiration, consciousness, perfection, grace, charity and generosity. The last stage is the ”purified” *nafs*, also called the ”serene” *nafs* or the *nafs* ”at peace.” This is the state attained when the *nafs* returns to God and finds comfort and solace in Him. When the *nafs* achieves the highest stage of development, it passes over to reach the heart level, claims Javad Nurbakhsh. According to him, such a *nafs* can be called the heart, which Nurbakhsh calls *nafs-e nateqe*, that is a rational, reasonable, or thinking *nafs*. See: Javad Nurbakhsh, *Psychologia sufizmu* (The Psychology of Sufism), transl. by Łukasz Łyp, Kraków: NW Publications, 2000.

[8] *Qabz* in: Abulqasemi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e.*

[9] Ibidem.

[10] Granted that both *qalb* and *khater* can mean heart, mind or soul, *hal-e khater* and *hal-e qalb* can be understood as a state of mind or consciousness.

[11] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 99.

[12] In Islam God is considered a source of various emotions and feelings like fear and hope.

[13] *Bast* in: Sajjadi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e ta’birat-e erfani*.

[14] J. Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Pub., 1984.

Man living in a state of *qabz* feels grief and suffering. In addition, he can be overcome by a feeling of anxiety and fright. Doubts and a feeling of hopelessness are also elements accompanying the state of *qabz*. E. W. Lane, a 19th-century researcher into the Arabic language, defined *qabz* as the state refraining from augmenting the sensation of joy.[15] Mirza Qulam Ahmadi[16], in turn, argued that a state of *qabz* is the state in which the heart is covered by the veils of negligence towards God. The state of *qabz* reveals itself in the situation when the heart of man stays in the shade of the *nafs*, an earthly part of the soul. Man is then overtaken by the feelings of uncertainty, sadness, suffering and fear of death. *Qabz* is a momentary and transient state, that is why people can be periodically overtaken by a feeling of depression, fear and anxiety, which is the effect of doubting God.[17]

The state of *qabz* can be compared to darkness or eclipse, just as in the case of the Sun. Some mystics, however, consider it to be a very useful state, since, as Schimmel writes, *qabz* is the state during which the revelation is feasible, since God usually does reveal Himself precisely at night. In addition, in this state man is characterized by passiveness, as if he waited for God's orders.[18] The state of constriction is conducive to revelation and is, in a way, an introduction to the state of *fana* understood as annihilation or vanishing.[19] Likewise, Arabi called the state of *qabz* the state of self-concentration which we experience when we reach the stage when the order of nature breaks up.[20]

The states which overtake man all of a sudden, breaking into his heart or soul, as Bahram Jassemi writes, usually arise in pairs. These are then opposite states which neutralize themselves.[21] The state of *bast* is the opposite to the state of *qabz*. As Sheikh Mahmud Shabestari wrote in his Sufi poem *Golshan-e Raz* in the 13th century, sometimes the heart ascends towards higher worlds, sometimes its state is low, sometimes it is independent, and sometimes it yields to influences.[22]

In Persian, the word *bast* may signify expansion and extension, which is also rendered by the term *gostardan* and *pahn kardan*, as well as augmenting, *farāch shodan,* or opening up, *bāz kardan*. In addition, *bast* means enlarging, expanding, for example, on the subject, or translating, *sharh dādan*. As a state, it can signify the state of pride and the state of joy and enthusiasm, which in Persian can be expressed by using the term *enbesāt*. *Bast* also means the state of excitement and flush and, as A. Schimmel writes,

[15] W. E. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Williams and Norgate, 1863.

[16] Mirza Qulam Ahmadi (1835–1908) – the founder of the religious movement of Ahmadiya.

[17] M. Q. Ahmadi, *Malfuzat*, Vol. 5, p. 10, citation after Imam Kalamazad Mohammed*, Expansion and Contraction of the Heart*, http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/others/expansioncontraction-heart.shtml.

[18] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 99.

[19] *Qabz* in: Abulqasemi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e.*

[20] Ibn Arabi, *Droga do Pana Mocy: o wycofaniu* (Journey to the Lord of Power), transl. by J. Szczepański, Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2003.

[21] B. Jassemi, "The Dimensions of the Mystical Journey", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, Vol. XXXVIII, 2005.

[22] J. Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*, London: Khaniqah Nimatullahi Press, 1992.

it is an inspiring state.[23] *Bast* is similar to a feeling of *shouq*, which indicates strong desire, enthusiasm, appetite or admiration. E. G. Brown in his translation of *Chahar maqale* (The Four Discourses) by Nizami of Samarkand translates this term as "exaltation".[24] On the other hand, *bast* may be employed to describe the state of calmness, relief, loosening up and comfort as well as relaxation. *Bast*[25] indicates the situation when the heart turns to God and fills up with joy and happiness.[26]

The Persian word *bast* also means development, growth, extension, expansion and relaxation. In Sufism it may indicate the state of dilation (expansion) of the heart during a mystical vision called *kashf*.[27] Schimmel, in turn, calls this the intensification of the ego.[28] As S. Sajjadi writes, in the state of the *bast*, once the veil of the *nafs* is lifted from the heart, the illumination, that is the mystical vision, is feasible.[29]

In addition, Sajjadi compares the state of the *bast* to the state of *raja*, which in Sufism is described as the state of hope or expectation. Moreover, the Persian word *raja* itself denotes a feeling of inspiration, aspiration and ambition.[30] The distinction between the state of *raja* and the state of *bast* lies in the fact that whereas the former refers to the future, that is to say, it means, for example, the feeling of hope for the future conciliation with God, the latter concerns the present time.[31] Analogously, the state of the *qabz* is compared to the state of the *khavf*, which means fear and awe. *Raja* and *khavf*, however, in the literature concerning this subject are often defined as the stages, *maqam*,[32] and not as the states, *hāl*. The twelfth-century Sufi of

[23] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimentions of Islam*, p. 129.

[24] Nezami Aruzi Samarqandi, *Chahar Maqale*, translation E. G. Brown, Tehran: Entesharat-e hermes, 1382 (2003/2004).

[25] Mirza Qulam Ahmadi stated that only *qabz* is a temporary state, while the state of *bast,* according to him, is always a permanent one. See: Ahmadi, *Malfuzat*.

[26] Similar states of exaltation and ecstasy, which constitute the structural principles of religious and artistic experience in Islam, are discussed by J. C. Bürgel, who points out that these states may explode in the heart of the believers, for example, during the prayer. This happens particularly often in the situations when prayers are said at large meetings and during religious feasts. Many such rituals, writes Bürgel, have a dimension of sanctified joy and exaltation. The feeling of joy may also be caused by a monotonous process of repetition of certain actions, which, under specific circumstances, may even turn into ecstasy. In this context, Bürgel points to the structure of the qazals of Jalal al-Din Rumi, in which one can find forms such as radifs, i.e. repeated, like a refrain, words and phrases of the verse. See: J. C. Bürgel, "Ecstasy and Order: Two Structural Principles in the Ghazal Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi", in *The Heritage of Sufism*, L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan, eds., Vol. 2, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999.

[27] *Bast* in: Sajjadi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e ta'birat-e erfani*.

[28] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 129.

[29] Mystical vision in Sufi literature is often described by the term *kashf*, which in the Persian language can be translated as disclosure, discovery, exposure and also revelation and inspiration.

[30] Persian term *raja* can be translated into English also as aspiration, term used in medical terminology.

[31] *Bast* in: Abulqasemi, *Farhang-e estelahat-e.*

[32] The stage in Sufi terminology is defined as *maqam. Maqam*, as opposed to the state, *hāl*, is a steady level elaborated to a large extent by the Sufi himself. *Maqam* means a station, a place of

Shiraz, Ruzbihan Baqali, placed the stages of *khavf* and *raja* among the twelve stations on the way to perfect and universal love called *eshq-e koll*.[33] In the 9th century, Shaqiq Balkhi of Khorasan, one of the first Sufis, distinguished four stages of development of the soul, among which, in addition to asceticism, longing for the paradise and love for God, the second stage was the state of fear, i.e. *khavf*. Each of the four stages was to consist of a forty-day meditation during which the Sufi experienced other states.[34]

However, the list of the constellations of the heart, being, as C.W. Ernst argues, a comparison of the states of the heart, compiled by the sixth Shiite Imam, Jafar Sadeq, encompasses the above-mentioned states of *khavf* (fear) and *raja* (hope and expectation).[35] The states of the heart, emphasizes Ernst, play in Sufism a fundamental role in the mystical experience of the soul.[36]

The expression *qabz va bast* is rendered by translators and researchers in many ways. Thus, in Sufism it may mean the state which can be rendered by the term *gereftegi va goshadegi*, which signifies constriction and relaxation. In this meaning it usually refers to the heart or to the soul and it denotes two opposite states coming one after another, which are defined by A. Schimmel as the states of soul compression and intensification of the ego.[37] These may also be the states of fear and hope, anxiety, apprehension, and the states of openheartedness and warmth and kindness. These may be the states of doubting God and trusting in Him. The states of *qabz* and *bast* may signify pessimism and enthusiasm. Both states may appear at various stages of evolution. The state of *qabz* appearing at the early stage will not be identical with the state of *qabz* occurring at a different stage of evolution of the Sufi, as Schimmel points out. As Nurbakhsh emphasizes many a time, the heart undergoes constant change, it increases and decreases in size alternately, and it changes and freezes in duration by turns.[38]

The state itself, which is called *hāl* in Persian because of its transient character, may be compared to a feeling or mood which is also ephemeral. For example, according to the Buddhist doctrine, the combating of destructive emotions appearing in man, understood there as burdensome states of mind[39], may arise through creation and self-directed evolution of the operation of constructive emotions, that is, positive

standing. In music, the *maqam* are the places of frets which can be used during the playing of a given melody. Nowadays, the term *dastghah* is used in lieu of the *maqam*.

[33] C. W. Ernst, "The Stages of Love in Early Persian Sufism", in *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism*, eds. L. Lewisohn, D. Morgan, Oneworld, 1999, p. 450.

[34] Ibid., p. 440.

[35] Ibid., p. 437.

[36] Ibid., p. 438.

[37] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 128.

[38] Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*.

[39] Burdensome states of mind according to Buddhism are states that prevent actual perception and help achieving emotional balance. See: *Emocje destrukcyjne. Jak możemy je przezwyciężyć. Dialog naukowy z udziałem Dalaj Lamy* (Destructive Emotions: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama), ed. D. Goleman, transl. A. Jankowski, Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2004, p. 163.

states of consciousness. This is feasible since in human mind there can be no destructive, or negative emotions, and positive, inspiring emotions at the same time. Furthermore, constructive emotions, which, according to Buddhism, include, *inter alia*, sympathy, kindness, compassion and empathy, neutralize anger, rage or hatred. Neurobiologists have conducted research on how the human brain behaves when man experiences various emotional states, and how it looks like in the state of the different forms of meditation. On the basis of research conducted on a meditating Buddhist monk it has been observed that in different states into which the monk entered, the activity of his brain varied. This confirmed earlier research which showed that the experiencing of positive emotions, such as enthusiasm or joy, occurs in combination with the increased activity of the prefrontal cortex of the left cerebral hemisphere. Depression and sadness, in turn, caused a simultaneous decrease in the activity of the left cerebral hemisphere and an increase in the activity of the right cerebral hemisphere.[40] This may indicate that only one hemisphere can show increased activity in the same time.

In the context of the relationships between positive and negative emotions or the states of mind, which are discussed both by Buddhism and modern scholarship, it is interesting to point to the description of successive and mutually neutralizing states of the *qabz* and *bast*, which may be compared to destructive and constructive emotions, respectively.[41] A similar principle is characteristic of the struggle with the *nafs*, an earthly part of the human soul. As Nurbakhsh[42] writes, this struggle is conducted, among other things, through control of the whims and fancies of the *nafs* and by means of turning its blameworthy features into praiseworthy features.[43] Transformation of the bad features of the *nafs* into human features and divine attributes is, according to him, a difficult practice and it is actually available to few people.[44]

According to Buddhism, the remedy to negative emotions which disturb man in perceiving reality, constrain his mind and limit his freedom, is meditation and increasing in one's own self the experiencing of positive emotions, such as kindness, compassion and empathy.[45] Likewise, in the Sufi doctrine, when we experience the feelings of doubt, depression and fear, which accompany the state of *qabz*, we are unable to perceive the full picture of God since, as Abdullah Ansani wrote, the truth is behind

[40] Examinations carried on volunteers by R. Davidson, neurobiologist from the University of Madison in the United States. See: *Emocje destrukcyjne*.

[41] It is considered impossible to achieve a balance between two opposite elements, because when human controls one of them, the other appears immediately. See: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, "Qalaba, the Turning of the Heart", *Nuradeen Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1984.

[42] J. Nurbakhsh – born in Kerman, Iran. Held a dean position in the Faculty of Psychiatry, Tehran University. He wrote many books on Sufism. Now lives in Great Britain where he holds a position of a sufi master of the Nematullahi order.

[43] Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*.

[44] Nurbakhsh calls it an annihilation of *nafs* features.

[45] According to Buddhism doctrine, positive and constructive emotions are based on common sense. See: *Emocje destrukcyjne*, pp. 128, 143.

the veil. It is in the state of *bast*, which is characterized by a feeling of enthusiasm, euphoria and kindness, that the process of illumination, i.e. *kashf,* may take place. According to Sufism, the liberation from the state of *qabz* can be achieved, among other things, through prayer thanks to which man liberates himself from the state of fear and apprehension.[46] In this sense, the terms *qabz* and *bast* refer to man's emotional states, to his psyche and to his soul whose central point is the heart in which, in a way, the entire being and the entire human existence is concentrated. The number of the states of the heart is infinite, as Nurbakhsh writes. Infinite are also changes and progress of the heart on the path leading to perfection.[47]

The terms *qabz* and *bast* are also used to describe the phenomena associated with the physical and biological side of the functioning of man. Therefore, in modern Persian the expression *qabz va bast* is employed to express the contraction (systole) and expansion (diastole) of the heart muscle.[48] The process is an indispensable and permanent element of human life, a basic and key activity of the human organism, which keeps man alive and ensures his functioning. A similar phenomenon is the act of inhaling and exhaling of the air, which may also be termed in this way, where *qabz* may indicate breathing in and *bast* may stand for breathing out. Among philosophers who wrote about this term in such a way was Arabi[49], who saw the development of the whole world as a consequence of God's breathing in and breathing out.[50]

The product of breathing in and breathing out is nothing but the breath, the *nafas*.[51] According to Arabi, God's breath is the cause of the development of world. The Qur'an says, in turn, that God breathed life into the first man when He insufflated His breath into him.[52] This is the old Hindu idea that the process of breathing of the world, the breath of Brahma, the god, is the cause of an eternal and perennial process of coming into existence and of all and any development. Breath as the effect of the

---

[46] Ahmadi, *Malfuzat*.

[47] Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*.

[48] The word *qalb*, the heart, is an Arabic loanword which denotes something that turns, rotates or circulates. Baba Taher says that the heart passes from one state to another because it is constantly pulsating – upon each turn it acquires new knowledge. The heart as an organ is in constant motion, it is involved in transformation of the venous into arterial blood, while the spiritual heart, as Nurbakhsh calls it, also moves between the *nafs* and the *ruh* (spirit) being, by turns, under the influence of the former or of the latter. See: Nurbakhsh, *The Psychology of Sufism*.

[49] Ibn Arabi – philosopher and mystic who lived in 12th/13th century.

[50] Z. Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra: An Analysis of the Al-Hikmat Al-'Ashiyyah*, London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p. 38.

[51] The term *nafas*, breath, as researchers say, is related to the term *nafs*. *Nafs* is the term denoting the human soul, yet it is most often used to define a wordly part of the soul, the human ego, which is a nesting-place of desires and cravings. In Islam, to denote the soul or spirit (there is a distinction between the soul and the spirit), there still exists a term *ruh*, which is usually not regarded as synonym of *nafs*. In many other languages the word "soul" is related to the process of breathing or to the breath. In many philosophical systems the soul is the synonym of breath and life, and it is thought to exit the body with its last breath.

[52] God breathed his breath into man as his soul.

process of *qabz* and *bast* is thus similar to the life-giving force which leads not only to the sustaining of life but also to its further evolution. In Sanskrit, for example, both breath and life may be rendered by one word: *prana*.[53] In Hindu tradition, breath is regarded as an external (outer) manifestation of bioenergy, a vital and dynamic force which pulsates, that is to say, it is subjected to exactly the same process as *qabz* and *bast*. In the yoga tradition it is the symbol of life, as well as of development, and its curbing through meditation means liberation from the circle of the *sansara*, i.e. the life and death.[54] Holding the breath through which we inhale the *prana* is practiced in meditation and it is supposed to facilitate the cleansing of the mind.[55]

Sufism likewise, as Schimmel writes, had more advanced meditation practices which were usually connected with breath control. The holding of breath was practised in Afghanistan and India, where it was called *qabz-e dam*.[56] One of the rules which came to be the basis for the Brotherhood of Nagshbandiyya, which was founded in the 14th century, was the consciousness of breath, *hush dar dam*.[57] This might indicate that each breath should be made with full consciousness, and each amount of exhaled and inhaled air should be accompanied by thinking about God.

Theories similar to those found in Iranian philosophy and in Sufi thought appeared also in other cultures. We can see a good deal of analogy in Christian sources documenting the ancient thought of Greeks and Romans, and the thought of ancient Hebrew and even Coptic Egyptians, where the key concept of their traditions was the heart and heart-related symbols. The descriptions of contraction and expansion of the heart may be found, for example, in the Bible. A. Guillaumont points out that the ancient Semites regarded the heart as the centre of not only emotional life but, first of all, of mental life as it was the centre of thinking and reasoning.[58] The heart thus conceived is also subjected to the processes which, in the Persian language, are termed *qabz* and *bast*. The heart expands when man experiences joy and happiness; it then turns to God and opens up to Him. The heart being in such a state is filled with trust and hope. The state of *qabz*, however, is preceded by the feelings of fear and fright, which are direct causes of the contraction (*qabz*) of the heart.[59] Saint Augustine, who for a certain period of time was a follower of Manichaeism, an ancient Iranian religion, believed that wisdom was experienced precisely in the heart, in the state of the highest ecstasy.[60] This resembles the previously described conviction

[53] *Prana* in: *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon*, http://webapps.uni-koeln.de/tamil/.

[54] M. Jakubczyk, "Elementy filozofii jogi"; in *Filozofia Wschodu*, ed. B. Szymańska, Kraków: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2001.

[55] Ibidem.

[56] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 173–174.

[57] Ibidem.

[58] A. Guillaumont, *U źródeł monastycyzmu chrześcijańskiego* (Études sur la spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien), transl. by S. Scholastyka Wirpszanka OSBap, Vol. II, Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2006, p. 15.

[59] Ibid., p. 19.

[60] Ibid., p. 69.

that in a state of the *bast* the attainment of illumination, mystic vision, and cognition is feasible. According to A. Guillaumont, the Semites held that it was the heart that contained the entire universe within itself, and the universe of the heart had sometimes a fine atmosphere and sometimes its atmosphere was disturbed by the sin.[61] This approach, in turn, resembles the veil of *nafs* mentioned by the Sufis, which alternately covers and unveils the heart, thereby evoking the alternating states of *qabz* and *bast*.

In Persian culture, however, in modern philosophical and religious thought the concept *qabz va bast*, while retaining the same scheme, has acquired a new application proposed by Abdolkarim Soroush. Soroush came out with a theory which he called *qabz va bast-e teurik-e shari'at*[62], that is to say, the *qabz* and *bast* of the religious knowledge.[63] Soroush's theory concerns some of numerous key problems raised in the discourse on the process of power democratization and the adjustment of Islam to modern times.

Today, among very important philosophical problems with which Iran has to cope is the issue of the relationship between religiousness and laity, and of what is divine and what is human. Delineation of boundaries between the sacred and the profane has come to be an issue of utmost importance in the discourse on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The issue of compatibility of the form of governing the state which is identified with the West rather than with the East, with the Iranian, Muslim vision of power, has not only been discussed very often in recent decades but also aroused unusual emotions. The most important voice in this discourse are, no doubt, the views of the Iranians themselves, who, being aware of threats ensuing from the uncritical acceptance of alien structures, attempt to work out a model compatible both with their own tradition and religion and with the exigencies of a global world.

The foundations of the theory of *qabz va bast-e teurik-e shari'at* include the distinction made by Soroush between religion, *din*[64], and religious knowledge, *ma'refat-e dini*[65]. Religion[66], as Soroush emphasizes, is sacred. The sacredness of religion has always been an obstacle to Muslim reformers who were accused of profanation when they proposed any change, whether in the system of law or in the

[61] Ibid., p. 75.

[62] According to F. Jahanbakhsh, *teurik-e shari'at* means *ma'refat-e dini*, religious knowledge. See: F. Jahanbakhsh, *Az Bazargan ta Soroush* (Islam, Democracy and Religious Modernism in Iran, 1953–2000: From Bazargan to Soroush), Tehran: Entesharat-e behzad, 1382 (2003/2004), p. 170–173. In scholary literature terms *qabz va bast-e teurik-e shari'at* and *qabz va bast-e ma'refat-e dini* are often used exchangeably.

[63] Soroush's ideas correspond to the theory introduced by Swedish linguist Peter Gardenfors. Gardenfors analyses the dynamics of epistemic states and demonstrates that changes in human views are submited to a phenomenon of expansion and contraction of knowledge. See: P. Gardenfors, *Knowledge in Flux: Modeling the Dynamics of Epistemic States*, Cambridge and London: A Bradfors Book The MIT Press, 1988. Farzin Vahdat in turn claims that Soroush's theory rests most of all on the idea of the falsification introduced by Karl Popper.

[64] *din* – religion, faith, fatum.

[65] *ma'refat-e dini* – religious knowledge.

[66] What Soroush means here is the Qur'an and Traditions of the Prophet and the imams.

realm of theology.[67] The sacredness of religion is connected with its invariability and its permanent character. Soroush writes as follows:

"The religion itself is permanent, that is to say what God said, what is written in the Qur'an, and what the imams said is permanent and nobody has the right to belittle or augment its importance".[68]

God is the source of religion. It is He who sent the revelation and it is His words that are considered to be what Soroush defines as *din*.[69] That is why man has no right to interfere in what was revealed. However, the religious knowledge, which he calls *ma'refat-e dini,* is solely an interpretation of the sanctified word of God. This or other interpretation of religion is the effect of man's investigation into religion. Thus, religious knowledge has its source in man and not in God, and as the work of man it can be neither sacred nor unchanging, as Soroush points out:

"Religious knowledge [...] is a result of human activity, just like philosophy, medicine, psychology, all this is human knowledge".[70]

Thus, religious knowledge is barely a science. As such, it is not only varying and relative, but also susceptible to the influence of other domains of science. It is constantly changing, modified, developing and evolving.[71] Religious knowledge thus conceived, as the perception of religion by man, is what should be adjusted to the world of today.[72] According to Soroush, the interpretation of religion, being in a state of constant change, can be modified, which is understood here as susceptibility to change, adjustment to constantly changing conditions in the world, contraction and expansion. In one of his articles we read: "Thereby religious knowledge undergoes modernization".[73]

Therefore, no interpretation, as Soroush points out many a time, can ever be regarded as sacred and absolute.[74] Our interpretation of religion is dynamic, he emphasizes. This indicates that there may be differences in particular interpretations and that they may contain errors or doubtful theses.[75] Just as the other domains of knowledge and science, religious knowledge is undergoing the process of contraction and expansion, that is to say, *qabz* and *bast.* As Soroush writes, sometimes this pulsation is light and it is marked by low intensity, and sometimes it is intensive and strong.[76]

---

[67] As F. Jahanbakhsh says, this was the reason that many of Soroush's precursors did not succeed in Islamic reform.

[68] A. Soroush, *Qabz va bast-e teurik-e shari'at*, Tehran: Mo'assesse-ye farhangi-ye serat, 1382 (2003/2004), p. 503.

[69] Ibid., p. 504.

[70] Ibidem.

[71] Ibid., p. 486–487.

[72] Ibid., p. 504.

[73] Ibidem.

[74] This ascertainment can definitely be treated as a critique of the *velayat-e faqih* conception. Soroush thinks that no group of people should claim the right to interpret religion without critique and participation of others.

[75] A. Soroush, "Text in Context", in *Liberal Islam*, ed. Ch. Kurzman, Oxford University Press, 1998.

[76] Soroush, *Qabz va bast-e teuik-e shari'at*, p. 486.

In recent years, however, Soroush moved one step further in his views. He came to the conclusion that revelation, *wahy*, is also subjected to the process of the *bast*. It is on this issue, *inter alia*, that he focuses in his latest works, the book entitled *Bast-e tajrobe-ye nabavi*.[77] The main theses of the book include the conviction that revelation is subjected to the process of expansion and contraction, that is to say, evolution, *takammol,* conceived as gradual self-improvement. This is feasible if we consider Soroush's assumption that revelation is nothing but a kind of religious experience the natural feature of which is variability and vividness, understood here as the process of evolution and self-improvement.[78] A. Naraqi holds that according to Soroush the concept of religious experience may encompass the whole gamut of varying forms of perception, that is to say, cognition (*edrak*).[79] In Persian, *edrak*[80] may signify comprehension, receiving or perception. In addition, *edrak* may render the meaning of maturation, becoming mature. M. Moin points out that *edrak* also means an action which is realized through the ability of perception and it consists in perceiving and acquiring images of things via the mind, *aql* or *nafs-e nateqe,* that is the rational soul.

Further analysis of revelation as a form of religious experience which has the attributes of dynamic knowledge leads Soroush to another statement, namely, that revelation is a form of inspiration.[81] Soroush compares the Prophet's religious

[77] A. Soroush, *The Expansion of the Prophetic Experience*, transl. by N. Mobasser, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008. Similar views about historicity of the Qur'an and dynamism of its interpretation are presented also by the others Muslim intellectuals, Egyptian scholar Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, or Algerian Mohammad Arkoun. See: N. H. Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysys*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006, and *Rethinking the Qur'an: Toward a Humanistic Hermenetuics*, Utrecht: Humanistics University Press, 2004, also M. Arkoun, *The Concept of Revelation: From the People of the Book to the Societies of the Book,* Claremont, California 1988. Years before, another Muslim reformer, Mohammad Iqbal Lahari, also underlined the dynamics of Islamic Thought, See: M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Kazi Pubns Inc., 1999.

[78] A. Soroush, *Bast-e tajrobe-ye nabavi* (The Expansion of the Prophetic Experience), Tehran: Mo'assesse-ye farhangi-ye serat, 1378, (1999/2000).

[79] A. Naraqi, *Bazkhani-ye nazari-ye soroush dar bare-ye tajrobe-ye nabavi va bast-e an*, www.drsoroush.com.

[80] *Edrak* in M. Moin, *Farhang-e farsi* (The Persian Language Dictionary), Vol. I, Tehran: Nashr-e behzad va nahid aqamirzai, 1382, (2003/2004).

[81] The problems of inspiration and revelation are the issues widely discussed by Iranian philosophers within the framework of epistemological discussion, starting with the founder of the philosophy of *ishraqi*, or illumination, Suhrawardi, through representatives of the Isfahan school of transcendental thought, for example Molla Sadra and his continuators. In contrast to theologians, who viewed revelation as the knowledge transmitted to the Prophet and contained in the Qur'an, those philosophers pointed to such form of cognition as was realized through mystical visions. This form of cognition was accessible not only to the prophets. An important point of intuitive cognition was the intuition conceived as the inner sense allowing for mystical experience. Revelation, in Soroush's opinion, is not confined solely to the person of the Prophet but constitutes a form of mystical experience accessible also to others. Inspiration, says Soroush, comes from the ego of the Prophet which unites itself with God. Such a view corresponds with the Sufi mystical vision of the unification with God.

experience to poetry. He claims that the experience such as the revelation of the Qur'an was for Muhammad, even though it is more appreciated, is nothing but an experience shared by poets and mystics. This view leads him to the conclusion that the best form of the comprehension of revelation is a poetic metaphor.[82]

The knowledge that Muhammad acquired by means of revelation and that is the effect of inspiration, just as in the case of a poet, says Soroush, is subjected to further process of transmission already in accordance with the Prophet's skills and capabilities. As a result, the differences in eloquence and expression of the account as well as the character of the language of the Qur'an, its severeness and rigidity contrasting with the fragments that are mild and merciful, may be a reflection of the changing states in which the Prophet found himself.[83] Soroush believes that Muhammad, while giving testimony of the knowledge transmitted to him, must have experienced the states of *qabz* and *bast* alternately. In this regard, he also refers to Jalal ad-din Rumi, who, in one of his poems, expressed the view that the Qur'an is a mirror of the states of mind of the Prophet. Soroush emphasizes that the text of the Sacred Book discloses when Muhammad was happy and gay and when he was overtaken by the mood of boredom and sadness.[84]

The terms *qabz* and *bast* are used by Soroush to depict various phenomena. In recent years, he has devoted a good deal of his reflections to a constant and incessant process of ongoing revelation. Soroush's application of the terms *qabz* and *bast* in relation to the development of our interpretation of religion may be viewed as an attempt at emphasizing the existence of a constant process of changes which occur in our outlook on religion. An everlasting development described through contraction and expansion or breathing in and breathing out is realized here in the form of changes in the way man looks at religion. As Soroush emphasizes, every branch of science and knowledge is subjected to the process of *qabz* and *bast*. In addition, our methods of interpretation and tools for the understanding of religion, which are also understood by Soroush as other domains of science, are changing, i.e. they are expanding and contracting.[85] Today, the perception of what is sacred is such, and tomorrow it may change, since, on the one hand, the world is changing and, on the other, our knowledge of the world changes, too. Moreover, our attempts to comprehend the world and religion also encounter, by turns, the periods of *qabz* and *bast*; we are overtaken by the feelings of doubt and joy, closing off from the world and opening to knowledge, just as was the case with the Prophet who was overcome by the very same states.

Soroush has made an attempt to introduce changes in the understanding of what is sacred and of what does not belong to the sphere of the sacred any more. Thanks

[82] M. Hoebink, *The Word of Mohammad*, an interview with A. Soroush, http://www.drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-The%20Word%20of%20Mohammad.html.

[83] A. Soroush, *The Relation between the Mathnawi and the Qur'an*, http://www.drsoroush.com/English/By_DrSoroush/The%20Relationship%20between%20the%20Mathnawi%20and%20the%20Qur'an%20.html.

[84] Hoebink, *The Word of Mohammad*.

[85] See: Jahanbakhsh, *Az Bazargan to Soroush*, p. 172.

to the distinction he made, further reflections on the changes of law or principles stemming from religion, and being in force in a given country, should not be viewed as the breach of sanctity of religion but as efforts aimed at modernization of its perception, which should face contemporary challenges. However, his reflections regarding the nature of revelation as a dynamic and varying religious experience may not be acceptable to many Muslims.

The concepts of *qabz* and *bast* inscribe themselves into the Iranian idea of a dynamic nature of the world. The idea of a constant, eternal movement leading to evolution is not alien to Iranian philosophy. The founder of transcedent theosophy, Molla Sadra[86], the philosopher of metamorphoses and trans-substantiality, as H. Corbin[87] calls him, introduced into philosophy the term *harkat jouhari*[88], i.e. substantial motion. Such motion, which he understands as the process of change, is, according to Sadra, a permanent attribute primarily of the sublunar, that is to say, earthly world, and the substances contained in it. In Sadra's opinion, motion always signifies the process of self-improvement since all beings have an inborn wish to evolve.[89] Nature in Sadra's philosophy is dynamic and motion is aimed, just like an inner development in Sufism, at constant self-improvement of the substance and its metamorphosis. Motion in Molla Sadra's theory is coherent and catenary, it does not arise all of a sudden but it *is* and it exists without cause. Motion is closely connected with changes, and the latter, in turn, indicate a constant process of existential changes.[90] The process also concerns the soul, which, in Sadra's opinion, reaches the spiritual world through transformation and self-improvement. The process of change lasts till the time when the soul departs from the body in order to unite itself with the source, which, here, is understood as God. Sadra argues that everything is changing, and the cosmos undergoes constant change that is caused by nature, which is also a symbol of durability and continuity.[91]

The idea of evolution, which can be seen in transcendental philosophy, may also be found very often in Sufi poetry. M. Składankowa writes that the ideas of motion can be encountered much earlier in the poetry of the 13th-century mystic Moulana Jalal ad-din Rumi, where the driving force is, in turn, the spirit, consciousness, effort[92] and

[86] Molla Sadra (Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi) (1571–1640) – born in Shiraz, Persian philosopher and the founder of the Persian school of transcendental philosophy. He is the author of many Qur'an and *Usul-e Kafi* commentaries, as well as other books on philosophy and gnosis. His thoughts till today are taught at Iranian Universities and religious seminaries. Molla Sadra died in Basra.

[87] H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique,* transl. by K. Pachniak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2005.

[88] *harkat* – motion, action, behaviour; *jouhar* – essence, nature; *jouhari* – fundamental, essential.

[89] I. Kalin, "Between Physics and Metaphysics: Mulla Sadra on Nature and Motion", *Islam and Science*, Vol. I, 2003, p. 65–93.

[90] Ibidem.

[91] Ibidem. See also: "Mulla Sadr: His Teachings" in *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S. H. Nasr, O. Leaman, London: Routledge 1996, Vol. I, p. 643–662.

[92] M. Składankowa, *Zrozumieć Iran* (To Understand Iran), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 1996, p. 135.

suffering.[93] M. Składankowa says that according to Rumi, therefore, nothing *is*, but everything *happens*.[94] Importantly, evolution and development in Rumi's work do not deny the previous forms but place them in the subsequent forms. Rumi saw the world as the battlefield of controversies. It is an ancient Persian idea, M. Składankowa points out, expressed in Persian tradition in the form of dualistic doctrines, where there was a clear-cut subdivision into evil and good, and brightness and darkness.[95] However, in Moulana Jalal ad-din Rumi these controversies turn from one into the other, evolve, transform one into the other mutually, and that is why, even though they contradict each other, they complement each other and constitute, in a certain sense, a oneness. This is confirmed by Rumi's words, which, in any case, inscribe themselves well also into the reflections on neutralizing Sufi states: "I replied: Show me a fear that is without hope, or a hope without fear. Since the twain is never apart".[96]

Of a similar opinion was Arabi, who believed that love was a mixture of both positive and negative emotions, that is to say, feelings that bring joy and satisfaction as well as dilemma and despair.[97] William James, in turn, American psychologist and philosopher of the late 19th century, while reflecting on the problem of continuity of experience in human life, wrote: "In every crescendo of sensation, in every effort to recall, in every progress towards the satisfaction of desire, this succession of an emptiness and fullness that have reference to each other and are one flesh is the essence of the phenomenon".[98]

What James calls the pulses of reality may be compared to what Soroush renders by the term *qabz* and *bast,* transferring, in a way, its symbolism to another level. The same mechanism as may be observed in the process of man's spiritual evolution, was employed by Soroush to express constant evolution and improvement of our comprehension of what is sacred and important in the life of a religious man.

Soroush argues that in his work on this issue he received help from his study of the poetry of Hafez[99] and of Moulana Jalal ad-din Rumi[100]. Helpful, he says, was also an analysis of the various commentaries on the Qur'an. If this is really so, as Soroush himself writes, that he dealt with this problem before he familiarized himself with the views of Dilthey, Heidegger or Gadamer, its hermeneutical character is perhaps an expression of inquiries and considerations within the framework of the Iranian

[93] M. Składankowa, *Kultura perska* (Persian Culture), Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1995, p. 169–170.

[94] Rumi compares *qabz* and *bast* to the seasons of the year, autumn and spring. See: Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*.

[95] Składankowa, *Zrozumieć Iran*.

[96] *Discurses of Rumi (Fihi ma fihi)* transl. by A. J. Arberry, London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 1993.

[97] See: Ibn Arabi, *Księga o podróży nocnej do najbardziej szlachetnego miejsca* (Kitab al-Isra'), transl. by J. Wronecka, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 1990.

[98] W. James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909, p. 283.

[99] Hafez – 14th-century Persian poet born in Shiraz.

[100] The effect of his interests in the mystical poetry of Moulana is his commentary on *Masnavi Ma'navi.*

intellectual tradition. In that case, the solution to one of the burning problems of contemporary Iran can be found in the course of the study of Rumi's poetry, transcendental philosophy and the exegesis of the Qur'an. Therefore, Soroush's broad erudition appeared to be very helpful as it combines both the knowledge of the mystic tradition acquired through the study of philosophers and poets, and a thorough knowledge of such domains as Muslim law or theology. As the years went by, such knowledge was supplemented, as in Soroush's case, by the knowledge of the principles of modern science, European philosophy and sociology, which in this case was perhaps only a supplement.

The understanding of life and world as a process of improvement and change is, according to M. Składankowa, a characteristic element of the Iranian outlook on life. This idea of constant development manifested itself during various periods and in various forms.[101] References to such a way of looking at the world which is constantly evolving, and to such an outlook on man, who is constantly developing and changing, may be found in Persian literature, among other authors, in Rumi, when he writes as follows:

"Every moment the world is renewed and we are unaware of its being renewed
Whilst it remains (the same in appearance)"[102]

Soroush's views also become a part of this philosophy, thus coming to be a proof of the fact that Eastern tradition, with all its differentiation and richness of thought, may be an equally important source of solutions and answers to the questions nagging the present-day world as the achievements of Western scholarship.

The process of constant change which consequently leads to development and self-improvement is being realized in the inner (internal) dimension, in the human soul, in what in Shiism is defined as *baten*, that is hidden, esoteric, ephemeral. In the outer (external) approach, however, this refers to the opposite of the *baten*, that is to say to the *zaher*. In Persian culture the *zaher* stands for what is apparent, exoteric, visible and evident. This also resembles, in a sense, an ancient Iranian idea of the existence of the world of embryos which are thought to be the patterns of all living creatures[103], or similar Platonic ideas which function as prototypes. As the Stoics in ancient Athens argued, and as Molla Sadra in 17th-century Persia maintained, man is, after all, a microcosmos – a minimized reflection of the universe.

[101] Składankowa, *Zrozumieć Iran*.

[102] Moulana Jalal ad-din Rumi, *Masnavi Ma'navi*, book 1:1144, trans. R. A. Nicholson, Tehran: Entesharat-e so'ad, 1381 (2002/2003).

[103] M. Składankowa, *Mitologia Iranu* (Mythology of Iran), Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1989, p. 31.

Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

A Dialogical Approach to Islam: The Catholic Church and Its Mission in the Light of the Second Vatican Council and the Pontificate of Paul VI

The turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries witnessed a substantial improvement in the relations between Christianity and Islam. That more optimistic and promising approach was a result of well-organised Christian missionary work and the activity of Muslim reformers.[1] In their numerous writings Sayyid Ahmad Khan[2], Jamal al-Din al-Afghani[3], Muhammad Abduh[4], Rashid Rida[5], and Muhammad Iqbal[6] were calling upon the believers of both religions to come closer together in the spirit of mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire together with the growth of nationalistic aspirations resulted in the break-up of the Muslim *umma* and formation of the nation-states. The increasing migrations and contacts between people of different religions and cultures required from Christians and Muslims gaining more knowledge of each other and an establishment of a communication path that would promote tolerance and reciprocal understanding.

The interwar era was the time of the pontificate of Pius XI (1922–1939), who had responded to the needs of the new realities and contributed to the pre-Vatican

[1] Ch. Troll, "Mission and Dialogue: The Example of Islam", *Encounter*, No. 189–190, p. 3–14.

[2] Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1892), a great Muslim thinker and reformer from Indian Subcontinent. He was among the first who strongly advocated the need of making Islam compatible with the modernity.

[3] Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), a well-known Islamic activist and reformer. Originally from Afghanistan; traveled extensively to spread his teaching, especially the idea of pan-Islamism, in India and Arab lands; also active in the intellectual circles of Muslims living in Paris.

[4] Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), one of the most famous reformers of Islam from Egypt. He called upon the Muslims to reconcile Western modernity with the tradition of Islam. He undertook the task to reform the teaching at Al-Azhar, the most conservative Islamic university.

[5] Rashid Rida (1865–1935), a Muslim revivalist who contributed greatly to the preservation and dissemination of the ideology of Islamic reform. For an interesting analysis of his three *fatwa-s* about missionary activities among Arab Muslims in Egypt delivered in *Al-Manar* see: Umar Riyad, "Rashid Rida and a Danish Missionary: Alfred Nielsen and Three Fatwa-s from *Al-Manar*", *Islaamochristiana*, Vol. 28, 2002, p. 87–107. See also: Emad Eldin Shahin, "Muhammad Rashid Rida's Perspectives on the West as Reflected in al-Manar", *Muslim World*, Vol. LXXIX, 1989, p. 113–132.

[6] Muhammad Iqbal (1876–1938), a famous poet and thinker from Indian Subcontinent. He is known as the spiritual father of Pakistan.

Council II important change in the gradual positive modification of the Christian attitude towards Islam. Since the pontificate of Pius XI the official texts of the Catholic Church have begun to make a clear distinction between paganism and Islam.[7]

The outcome of the Second World War brought a further increase of the nationalistic aspirations as well as interreligious encounters. The Christian missionaries and scholars continued their reflection on related issues. They could look back into a long history of reciprocal contacts during which the attitude of the Catholic Church had undergone an evolution from a complete rejection, through attempts to learn about Islam from the sources and direct encounters, to "coping with it" while aiming to understand. Now, with the new world order and ethnic, cultural and religious diversity everywhere there was a pressing need for a subsequent step in that evolution, namely for establishing a path of reciprocal relations between Christians and Muslims on the basis of full recognition and respect of each other.

On December 20, 1949, the Catholic Church announced, through its Congregation of Sacred Office, *De Motione Oecumenica*, a document about the ecumenical movement outlining the rules of contacts between Catholics and non-Catholics.[8] One should underline that in the document the word *dialogue* is not mentioned and it does not deal with the relation of the Catholic Church with people other than Christians. However, we would agree with Sakowicz that the instruction contains a meaningful "description" of a word *dialogue* as well as statements of general nature clearly indicating that the outlined methods of contacts could be applied in relations with the "outside world," including the followers of non-Christian religions.[9]

The rarely mentioned by the scholars in that context *De Motione Oecumenica* should, however, be considered an important document, indicating the forthcoming change in the Catholic Church's attitude not only towards ecumenism but, in consequence, also towards the non-Christian religions. The significance of the document lies in the following points. First, the Catholic Church, fully aware of its superiority as the depository of the truth, agreed on meetings with non-Catholics in which both parties would discuss the problem of faith and customs. Second, it was recommended that during such meetings the questions should be discussed openly and without omitting "difficult" topics. Third, the contacts with others were, according to the Church, essential for increasing its awareness of the values present in the life of the others. Finally, as a result of such encounters, the both parties would not lose whatever God had given them but would instead attain a real fulfilment in Him. Moreover, the instruction also recommended that the ecumenical contacts should include common prayers. Therefore, in a way, it became an inspiring signal for a future Catholic Church's dialogue of religious experience

[7] J. Urban, *Dialog międzyreligijny w posoborowych dokumentach Kościoła* (Interreligious Dialogue in the post-Vatican Council II Documents), Opole: WT UO, 1999, p. 135.

[8] Congregation of Sacred Office, *De Motione Oecumenica*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. XLII, p. 142.

[9] E. Sakowicz, *Dialog Kościoła z islamem według dokumentów soborowych i posoborowych (1963–1999)*(The Church's Dialogue with Islam in the Vatican Council II and Afterwards Documents (1963–1999)), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Wyszyńskiego, 2000, p. 41.

not only with non-Catholics but with non-Christians as well. All in all, one may conclude that in the light of *De Motione Oecumenica*, the way for establishing a dialogue in Christian-Muslim relations was opened.

Meanwhile, the Christian reflection both on the two religions and the reciprocal contacts between their followers continued and stimulated the changes.[10] Here one should underline the activity of Louis Massignon (1883–1962),[11] one of the greatest modern scholars on Islam who had significantly influenced the changes in Christian attitude towards the Muslims. Professor Massignon devoted his long and hard working life to one goal, namely to increase the Western awareness of the need or rather the imperative to discover and appreciate the richness of Islamic civilisation. He called upon the scholars to develop curious, inquisitive and objective research on related issues. It should be pointed out that Massignon himself maintained that his studies on Islam and especially on the works of al-Hallaj had helped him to re-discover his own Catholic faith. With regard to the characteristics of the three great monotheistic religions Massignon wrote that Judaism was the religion of hope, Christianity – the religion of love, and Islam – the religion of faith.[12] While sharing the conviction included in the Qur'an statement that all three religions had traced their origin from one source, Massignon did not hesitate to accept the affinity of Muslims with Abraham through Isma'il. What is more, the scholar maintained that Muslims were the people chosen and blessed by Abraham and the Qur'anic assertion of the superiority of God's laws over the human laws was bringing them closer to Christianity.[13]

Christian Troll wrote in one of his articles about the work of Father Victor Courtois (1907–1960).[14] Despite the fact that he remains rather unknown his contribution as a forerunner of Christian-Muslim dialogue is of a great importance. During the years 1946–1960 in Calcutta Father Courtois was the editor of the magazine *The Notes of Islam. A Bulletin of Information about Islam with Special Reference to India*. The purpose of that periodical was to help in better understanding of Islam. Victor Courtois undertook the task to make the reader aware of how Islam had come and what its message was.[15] He attempted to present the religion of Islam in the most objective way, focusing on its beliefs, institutions and modern developments. While avoiding unnecessary comments and polemics

[10] A. Siddiqi, "Fifty Years of Christian-Muslim Relations", *Islamochristiana*, Vol. 26, 2000, p. 51–77.

[11] Ibid., p. 43–48. See also: Ch. W. Troll, "Islam and Christianity Interacting in the Life of an Outstanding Christian Scholar of Islam: The Case of Louis Massignon (1883–1962)", *Islam and the Modern Age*, August 1984, p. 157–166.

[12] G.C. Anawati, "An Assessment of the Christian-Islamic Dialogue", in *The Vatican, Islam and the Middle East*, ed. Kail C. Ellis, Syracuse, New York, 1987, p. 54.

[13] L. Massignon, "Trois priers d'Abraham", *Opera Minora*, ed. Y. Moubarac, Beirut, 1963, Vol. III, p. 804–816.

[14] Ch.W. Troll, "Christian-Muslim Relations in India. A Critical Survey", *Islamochristiana*, Vol. 5, 1979, p. 119–149.

[15] Ibid., p. 126.

Father Courtois referred to the words of Ramon Lull (1232–1315) who in his studies of Islam always attempted to find those elements that were common for both Islam and Christianity and eventually could bring the two religions closer. Commenting on his own curriculum of Islamic studies courses designed for Christian seminars Father Courtois remarked:

> Insistence should always be made not on what separates Christians from Muslims but on what may [...] bring them closer to each other and to the heart of Christ. We should study them not as enemies but as Brothers. To study we shall add much prayer.[16]

The articles of Victor Courtois reveal his good knowledge and thorough understanding of Islam, and in particular an awareness of its dynamic character, the nature of its ever present spirit of renewal and reform and its great impact on all spheres of human life. He repeatedly stated the objective of the *Notes:* to contribute to a better appraisement of Islamic culture. Simultaneously he worked, reflected and wrote, although outside of the sphere of the *Notes,* to promote a better knowledge of Christ and his teaching among Muslims. Courtois called for a wider ecumenism between religions, especially Christianity and Islam. The mainspring for Courtois' call laid in a clear perception of what unites all men most deeply: the common Fatherhood of God, which in turn he saw as the basis for the brotherhood of all men. Courtois focused on the Heart of Christ as the centre of the hearts of men and the fulfilment of their deepest and best aspirations. While calling for reciprocal understanding between the Christians and the Muslim he expressed his conviction that:

> Where they better known, they would surely be better loved, and where there is love there is God. *Ubi Caritas et Amor ibi Deus est*.[17]

The *Notes on Islam* succeeded well, gained international recognition and were increasingly read by Muslims. The periodical reported about the beginnings of Christian-Muslim „conversations" that gradually were developing into a world–wide dialogue. Victor Courtois strongly advocated Christian-Muslim co-operation and his contribution to the fostering of all the initiatives that could bring the two religions closer together is of great importance.

The efforts of all the forerunners of Christian-Muslim dialogue finally brought positive and promising results in the second half of the 20th century.[18] *Aggiornamento*, the spirit of changes and reforms as introduced by John XXIII (1958–1963), had opened the Catholic Church to the "outside world" and dialogue with modernity.[19]

[16] Ibid., p. 127.

[17] Ibid., p. 128.

[18] See: H. Tessier, "Chretiens et Musulmans: cinquante annees pour approfondir leur relations", *Islamochristiana*, Vol. 26, 2000, p. 33–50; Siddiqi, "Fifty years of Christian-Muslim Relations", p. 50–77.

[19] For further details on the pontificate of John XXIII see: P. Dreyfus, *Jean XXIII*, Paris: Artheme Fayard, 1979; P. Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984.

The new spirit introduced in the Church a process of active revitalisation in which the faith was to undergo a broad and positive process of modernisation. Instantly upon on his advent to the Holy See, John XXIII saw that an ecumenical council was not only urgent but also essential to bring the Church "up to date" in the radically changed modern world. The heart of *aggiornamento* was the Second Vatican Council that opened on October 11, 1962.[20] Although the Holy Father would not live to see the completion of his work, he is definitely credited for one of the most pivotal events in the history of the Church.

On April 11, 1963, John XXIII issued his most important encyclical, i.e., *Pacem in Terris*. This document became both inspiration and the basis for the new Church approach to the modern world. The main issue discussed by the Pope was the "peace among the nations", and, as indicated in the opening lines, the encyclical was addressed not only:

> To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and all other Local Ordinaries who are at Peace and in Communion with the Apostolic See, and to the Clergy and faithful of the entire Catholic World,

but, what was very significant, also to:

> All Men of Good Will.[21]

The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* focuses on the condition of modern man in the society. Within the complex of problems facing the man, John XXIII devoted his particular attention to the issue of human rights. While referring to the question of religious belief he said:

> Among man's rights is that of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his religion in private and public.[22]

According to the Pope, the human rights could be observed only when all the people are assured that "they are equal in natural dignity". This is the prerequisite for both "the man's awareness of his rights" and, resulting from it, "the recognition of his duties".[23] Moreover, as John XXIII stated, "the possession of rights" would

[20] For a thorough discussion on a number of issues related to the "revolutionary transformation" and the new approach of the Catholic Church to the modern world as introduced by the Second Vatican Council see: Matthew L. Lamb & Matthew Levering, eds., *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; *Vatican II: Forty Years Later*, ed. William Madges, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006; Melissa J. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

[21] John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html

[22] Ibid., no. 14.

[23] Ibid., no. 44.

encourage and convince the man that it was essential to recognise and respect other people and would guide him in search for real values in life:

> When society is formed on a basis of rights and duties, men have an immediate grasp of spiritual and intellectual values, and have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by truth, justice, charity and freedom. They become, moreover, conscious of being members of such a society. And that is not all. Inspired by such principles, they attain to a better knowledge of the true God – a personal God transcending human nature. They recognise that their relationship with God forms the very foundation of their life, which they live in the society of their fellows.[24]

While discussing the condition of modern man in society, John XXIII pointed out that each person was unique and therefore "among the essential elements of the common good one must certainly include the various characteristics distinctive of each individual people." The common good, concluded the Holy Father, "can never exist fully and completely unless the human person is taken into account at all times".[25] According to him, the realities of the modern world required that the issue of common good should be approached through universal perspective and in the global context. John XXIII addressed the matter as follows:

> The universal common good requires the encouragement in all nations of every kind of reciprocation between citizens and their intermediate societies. There are many parts of the world where we find groupings of people of more or less different origin. Nothing must be allowed to prevent reciprocal relations between them. Indeed such a prohibition would flout the very spirit of an age that has done so much to nullify the distances separating peoples.
>
> Nor must one overlook the fact whatever their ethnic background, men possess, besides the special characteristics which distinguish them from other men, other very important elements in common with the rest of mankind. And these can form the basis of their progressive development and self-realisation especially in regard to spiritual values. They have, therefore, the right and duty to carry on their lives with others in society.[26]

In the modern world where the domination of the stronger and richer over the weaker and poorer results in misunderstandings, conflicts and wars it has been proven that the use of force in resolving such problems never brings feasible solutions. Therefore, according to John XXIII:

> Men nowadays are becoming more and more convinced that any disputes which may arise between nations must be resolved by negotiation and

[24] Ibid., no. 45.
[25] Ibid., no. 55.
[26] Ibid., no. 100.

> agreement, and not by recourse to arms. [...] it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice.[27]

Only by establishing contacts with one another, believed the Pope, the nations around the world would come to "a better recognition of the natural ties that bind them together as men" and "a fairer realisation [...] that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations".[28]

Being aware of the fact that the contacts involving relations between people of different religious beliefs would pose a tremendous challenge for the Catholic Church, John XXIII did not hesitate to address the issue. With the conviction (1) that the realities of the 20th-century world required such a challenge, (2) that the principles set out in *Pacem in Terris* had arisen "from the very nature of things," and (3) that the Catholics, firm in their belief, should be ready to listen and understand the others, the Pontiff explained:

> The putting of these principles into effect frequently involves extensive co-operation between Catholics and those Christians who are separated from this Apostolic See. It even involves the cooperation of Catholics with men who may not be Christians but who nevertheless are reasonable men, and men of natural moral integrity. "In such circumstances they must, of course, bear themselves as Catholics, and do nothing to compromise religion and morality. Yet at the same time they should show themselves animated by a spirit of understanding and unselfishness, ready to co-operate loyally in achieving objects which are good in themselves, or conducive to good".[29]

While analysing *Pacem in Terris* we may notice that despite the fact that John XXIII never mentioned the word *dialogue*, the whole text is about a dialogue of the Catholic Church with modernity. In addition, the encyclical stated the principles of conscious preparation for conducting such a dialogue, that is, for establishing a new means of communication and a new relation between people of different races, cultures and religious beliefs. The Pope believed that this was a new challenge for the 20th-century world. Therefore, he was convinced that the Catholics should undertake "an immense task" to meet that challenge with a conscious reflection and responsible action while being fully aware that the new could only be built "little by little",[30] and definitely within the framework of the Catholic Church's long historical tradition. "Establishing new relationships in human society, under the mastery and guidance of truth, justice, charity and freedom," stated the Holy Father, could bring about "true peace in accordance with divinely established order".[31] "Peace among

[27] Ibid., no. 126–127.
[28] Ibid., no. 128–129.
[29] Ibid., no. 157.
[30] Ibid., no. 161.
[31] Ibid., no. 163.

the nations" was, according to John XXIII, not only the most important task but also the imperative and the ultimate aim of the modern world. All the nations, then, should strive for mutual understanding, because:

> The world will never be the dwelling place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every man, till every man preserves in himself the order ordained by God to be preserved.[32]

The "dialogical message," as contained in *Pacem in Terris*, was a clear sign that the Catholic Church was definitely entering a new era of its relations with non-Catholics and non-Christians. The aim of such relations, namely "peace among the nations" was clearly articulated, so did the method to achieve it, that is, "little by little." The encyclical outlined the prerequisites for the foreseen "dialogical encounter," such as the focus on the situation of a man in society, the need to preserve his natural dignity and respect for his right to religious freedom. The "message" was there. Thus, it was upon the successor of John XXIII to grasp "the message" and carry on with "the immense task."

The spirit of renewal and reform was continued by Paul VI (1963–1978). His new, related initiatives brought decisive changes in the attitude of the Church to Islam and its followers.[33] The Second Vatican Council called upon the Christians to respect the spiritual, moral and cultural values in other religions, including Islam.[34] On September 29, 1963, while opening the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI addressed the issue of other monotheistic religions. The Holy Father said that the Catholic Church "looks beyond the horizon of Christianity," i.e. to the followers of other religions believing in one transcendent God.[35] It should be underlined that, in his allocution, Paul VI spoke directly neither about any particular religion nor about a dialogue. However, one may say that his speech clearly indicated and signalled an upcoming new approach, and in consequence, a new attitude of the Catholic Church towards non-Christians, and among them the followers of Islam. Furthermore, the discussed address became an inspiration for a further argumentation of the need to conduct an interreligious dialogue as presented by Paul VI in his encyclical *Ecclessiam Suam* (October 6, 1964), as well as in the final documents of the Second Vatican Council, and in particular, in the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965).

While discussing the Second Vatican Council's documents reflecting the Catholic Church's attitude towards non-Christians, including Muslims, one should remember that it is essential to view them within the living tradition of the Church. Moreover,

---

[32] Ibid., no. 165.

[33] See: M. Borrmans, "Le Pape Paul VI et les Musulmans," *Islamochristiana*, Vol. 4, 1978, p. 1–10.

[34] For a broad discussion on related issues see: J. Waardenberg, ed., *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perceptions since the Mid-20th Century*, Leuven: Peeters, 1998.

[35] Borrmans, "Le Pape Paul VI", p. 5.

it is also important to consider them in the context of the long historical evolution of the Christian views related to Islam.[36]

Among the sixteen documents containing all the decisions of the Second Vatican Council there are eleven that address the issue of interreligious dialogue. In five of them we find indirect references to the question, the other four touch upon the matter directly. There are also two documents in which we find statements focusing, in particular, on Islam and the Muslims.

As for the documents where we find indirect references to the issue of interreligious dialogue there are the following: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (November 21, 1964), Decree on Priestly Training *Optatam Totius* (October 28, 1965), Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis* (October 28, 1965), and Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicum Actuositatem* (November 18, 1965).

Sacrosanctum Concilium indicates the Catholic Church's acceptance of spiritual diversity of various ethnic groups and nations and expresses its willingness to include some of these traditions into liturgy.[37]

Unitatis Redintegratio outlines the rules of ecumenical encounter between Christians. However, the principles stated here, such as (1) elimination of hostility and wrong doings, (2) need to know each other better in order to conduct a theological dialogue, (3) undertaking common efforts to improve economic and social conditions and (4) dialogue of action to eliminate injustice, promote culture and strife for peace, are the same as those for dialogue and cooperation with all, that is, with non-Christians as well.[38]

The *Optatam Totius* underlines the need to increase the knowledge of other world religions, because according to the Catholic Church's view, "the seeds of the word", namely the elements of the truth and goodness, may also be found in other religions. Therefore, the document advocates that the students of the seminaries should acquire a substantial knowledge of other religions and cultures.[39]

As for the *Gravissimum Educationis*, it elaborates further on Christian education outlining the new goals and responsibilities of the theological faculties at the institutions of higher learning. The Declaration points out the need to develop the theological research, so that the Christians could reach a thorough understanding of the Gospel in the context of Christian wisdom as inherited from the predecessors. Such research would help to deal with the problems of modernity, i.e., to accommodate the results

[36] See: Matthew L. Lamb, "The Challenges of Reform and Renewal within Catholic Tradition", *Vatican II: Renewal*, 2008, p. 439–442.

[37] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat- ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html, no. 37.

[38] *Unitatis Redintegratio*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html, no. 2, 3, 7, 12.

[39] *Optatam Totus*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html

of rapid science and technology development and prepare specialists capable of conducting dialogue of experts concerning the crucial theological, philosophical and religious issues. Placing in *Gravissimum Educationis* a short reference to the encounter with non-Christians signalled clearly the Catholic Church's will and determination to undertake an immense task of education and preparation for a sincere dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions.[40]

As for the *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, one may find here a reference to the issue of cooperation with other people. According to the document, "the common patrimony of the Gospel and the common duty resulting from it of bearing a Christian witness make it desirable, and often imperative" to establish a closer cooperation between Catholics and other Christians. These common efforts should be realized "by individuals and by ecclesial communities, and at national or international levels". Furthermore, the realities of the modern world and "human values common to all mankind" make it essential that this cooperation should also include those who do not profess Christ's name but acknowledge these values. This dynamic and prudent cooperation, as stated in the Declaration, "which is of special importance in temporal activities," is a prerequisite to attain "the unity of the human family".[41]

While analysing the documents of the Second Vatican Council with the direct references to the issue of interreligious dialogue, one may say that they clearly reveal the change in the Catholic Church's attitude towards others, namely other Christians and non-Christians. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965) points out the need to embark on further studies of the Revelation as important for Christians in order to engage into a theological dialogue with "others." With respect to that task the reading and analysing would be of great assistance. Therefore, the document states that:

> […] all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, […] should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids which, in our time, with approval and active support of the shepherds of the Church, are commendably spread everywhere. And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for „we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying."[42]

[40] *Gravissimum Educationis*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_gravissimum-educationis_en.html

[41] *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963–1995)*, F. Gioia, ed., Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997, p. 44, paragraph 28.

[42] *Dei Verbum*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html, no. 25.

According to the document, it is also important for the Christians to engage themselves in translations of the sacred texts, provided with the essential and adequate explanations, so "that the children of the Church may safely and profitably become conversant with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit." Furthermore, the Christians should also bear in mind that they should share knowledge of the Bible with non-Christians as well, and for that reason:

> […] editions of the Sacred Scriptures, provided with suitable footnotes, should be prepared also for the use of non-Christians and adapted to their situation. Both pastors of souls and Christians generally should see to the wise distribution of these in one way or another.[43]

As for the Decree *Ad Gentes Divinitus* on the Mission Activity of the Church (December 7, 1965), here the references to the issue of non-Christian religions reveal a few important points. First, in the light of *Ad Gentes Divinitus* the Catholic Church views non-Christian religions as "diverse ways" of seeking after God, to prepare for the encounter with God.[44] Second, the Decree points out that the "seeds of the word" are present in other religions and other contemplative cultural traditions.[45] Third, it encourages Christians to engage in an open sincere and patient dialogue, i.e., "to carry out an apostolate by way of example", because, as stated in the document:

> They (the Christians) are organized for this purpose; they are present for this, to announce Christ to their non-Christian fellow-citizens by word and example, and to aid them toward the full reception of Christ.[46]

Finally, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* also affirms the role of lay people and their engagement in preparatory education for conducting dialogue with non-Christians. It is stated as follows:

> Worthy of special praise are those laymen who, in universities or in scientific institutes, promote by their historical and scientific religious research the knowledge of peoples and of religions; thus helping the heralds of the Gospel, and preparing for the dialogue with non-Christians.[47]

Furthermore, the document emphasizes that such cooperation should be done "in a brotherly spirit with other Christians, with non-Christians," and that the lives of laymen "may be a witness for Christ among non-Christians."[48]

---

[43] Ibidem.

[44] *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html, no. 3.

[45] Ibid., no. 6.

[46] Ibid., no. 15.

[47] Ibid., no. 41.

[48] Ibidem.

With regard to the Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* (December 7, 1965) one may notice that it not only confirms the statements concerning religious freedom from *Pacem in Terris* but also brings a further elaboration on the issue. The document acknowledges that "the human person has a right to religious freedom," and that "the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself." Furthermore, this right has its foundation in the very nature of human being and "not in the subjective disposition of the person". Therefore, "the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed".[49] However, the modern world is characterised by two important facts, namely that (1) "religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents", and, (2) "forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life very difficult and dangerous for religious communities".[50] Therefore, the document directs an urgent plea of the Council not only to Catholics but to all men to reflect on the issue of religious freedom attentively, because:

> All nations are coming into even closer unity. Men of different cultures and religions are being brought together in closer relationships. There is a growing consciousness of the personal responsibility that every man has. All this is evident. Consequently, in order that relationships of peace and harmony be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.[51]

Only when people are free in their religious belief a dialogue becomes possible. In the realities of the modern world, the people of various ethnic origins and different religious beliefs come closer together. They need to communicate. Therefore, in the light of *Dignitatis Humanae* the Catholic Church's dialogue with non-Christian religions was and still is an imperative of our days.

The last document, i.e., the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965) addresses the issue of a dialogue between people. It reveals the Catholic Church's conviction that:

[49] *Dignitatis Humanae,* www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651027_dignitatis-humanae_en.html, no. 2.

[50] Ibid., no.15.

[51] Ibidem.

[52] *Gaudium et Spes*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207-gaudium-et-spes_en.html, no. 92.

> By virtue of her mission to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigour.[52]

In order to carry on its dialogical mission effectively the Church has to be united. Therefore, it is essential to "foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity". Moreover, as stated in the document, it is of the outmost importance that:

> We do not forget that the unity of Christians is today awaited and desired by many, too, who do not believe in Christ; for the farther it advances toward truth and love under the powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, the more this unity will be a harbinger of unity and peace for the world at large. Therefore, by common effort and in ways which are today increasingly appropriate for seeking this splendid goal effectively, let us take pains to pattern ourselves after the Gospel more exactly every day, and thus work as brothers in rendering service to the human family. For, in Christ Jesus this family is called to the family of the sons of God.[53]

In the light of *Gaudium et Spes* the realities of the modern world require that the Church would approach with esteem and respect also the followers of non-Christian religions:

> We think cordially too of all who acknowledge God, and who preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity. We want frank conversation to compel us all to receive the impulses of the Spirit faithfully and to act on them energetically.[54]

and engage with them in a dialogue:

> For our part, the desire for such dialogue, which can lead to truth through love alone, excludes no one, though an appropriate measure of prudence must undoubtedly be exercised. We include those who cultivate outstanding qualities of the human spirit, but do not yet acknowledge the Source of these qualities. We include those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways. Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, human and divine, we can and we should work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace.[55]

As for the documents of the Second Vatican Council referring directly to Islam, there are two, namely the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*

[53] Ibidem.
[54] Ibidem.
[55] Ibidem.

(no. 16) and Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non–Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (no. 3).[56]

The question of Islam appeared during the second session in 1963 in relation to the issue of the Jews, namely the annex to the *Schema of Ecumenism* that had been prepared at the personal request of John XXIII. When the text was presented at the Council's session, it met with a strong opposition on the part of the bishops from the Middle Eastern region. It was obvious that in that area the problem of Israel was evoking high emotions and the religious aspect was closely related to the growth of political tensions. Therefore the bishops from the Middle East argued that if the Council called upon the Christians for a more balanced, just and amiable attitude towards the Jews, it should then at the same time promote a similar approach toward the Muslims. The matter of Islam was brought into attention of the Council at the very right moment. It was the beginning of the pontificate of Paul VI.[57] The new Pope was a person of a great sensibility and openness and particularly curious about the richness of other cultures and diverse ways of thinking and religious sentiments. It was owing to his long lasting friendship with a great scholar Louis Massignon and other specialists on Muslim civilisation that Paul VI had a very positive attitude to Islam and its followers. Therefore, he had no hesitation in supporting the request of the Middle Eastern bishops.

During the following months the Pope undertook a number of initiatives to develop and promote a dialogue with other religions and particularly that with Islam. It should be pointed out that the pontificate Paul VI resulted in a number of documents dealing with the matter of interreligious dialogue, among them apostolic letters: *Spiritus Paracliti* (April 30, 1964) and *Progrediente Concilio* (May 18, 1964), apostolic exhortations: *Postremo Sessio* (November 4, 1965) and *Evangelli Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), apostolic constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* (August 15, 1967) and encyclicals, such as *Ecclessiam Suam* (August 6, 1964) and *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967).[58]

As an institutional sign of the desire to meet and relate to the followers of other faiths of the world the Holy Father established in 1964 the Secretariat for Non–Christians, including the section for Muslims.[59] On that occasion, on May 18, 1964, Paul VI published his apostolic letter *Progrediente Concilio.* While referring to the words of Gospel: "I also have other sheep but they are not from the very same sheepfold. I have to lead them through" (J 10, 16) the Pontiff emphasized the need to strengthen the efforts on the path of dialogue and cooperation of the Catholic

[56] See: *Lumen Gentium*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; *Nostra Aetate*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_ council/documents/vat- ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

[57] For a comprehensive discussion about the pontificate of Paul VI see: F. X. Murphy, *The Papacy Today*, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co.,Inc., 1981, p. 91–140.

[58] These documents are discussed by Sakowicz in *Dialog Kościoła*.

[59] For an overview concerning the activities of the Secretariat see: M. L. Fitzgerald, "The Secretariat for Non-Christians Is Ten Years Old", *Islamochristiana*, Vol. 1, 1975, p. 87–96.

Church with non-Christian religions. The Secretariat began its activity on May 19, 1964. However, the competence of that new institution was defined later on by the Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae* (August 15, 1967). The Secretariat was established with the purpose:

> To search for methods and ways of opening a suitable dialogue with non-Christians. It should strive, therefore, in order that non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians and that in their turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life.[60]

The new attitude towards non-Christian religions, including Islam, embraced the term *dialogue.* This term, which is both the norm and the ideal, was introduced to the Church in Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclessian Suam,* on August 6, 1964.[61] Since that time, the term *dialogue*, which means not only a discussion but also includes all the positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths, has been frequently used by the Council as well as in the Church related teaching. The encyclical *Ecclessian Suam* has been called "the great character of dialogue".[62] In this document Paul VI outlined for the Church the ways of dialogue, especially emphasizing the need for missionary activity in the modern world. Furthermore, the encyclical had a great impact on the development of the term *dialogue* and its implementation in the teaching of the Church.

Ecclessiam Suam revealed a deep self-awareness of the Church of its identity and its mission. The starting point was the positive attitude of the Church towards the outside world and the spirit behind the *aggiornamento* as advocated by John XXIII. While marching on its way to Salvation through the history of cultures and societies the Church needs constant renewal and reform. Although the Church identifies itself neither with a particular culture nor society, it is a part of them and a part of the entire world. Moreover, the Church is nourished by the richness of these cultures and these societies need to be nourished by it, since it instils in them the word of God. The Church lives in the world and it is connected with the whole humanity by unbreakable ties. Therefore, the Church wants both to be understood by others and understand the problems of others and desires to serve the needs of each and every human being. This conviction becomes the basis for a dialogue:

> We need to keep ever present this ineffable, yet real relationship of the dialogue, which God the Father, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, has

---

[60] "Address of the Pope at the Conclusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat", in *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions*, Vatican: Polyglot Press (English Edition), p. 8.

[61] Paul VI, *Ecclessiam Suam*, www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html

[62] E. Sakowicz, "Dialog międzyreligijny", *Jan Paweł II: Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu*, ed. E. Sakowicz, Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2006, p. 136.

> offered to us and established with us [...] We, that is, the Church should strife to establish and to foster it with the human race.[63]

The dialogue of salvation, as stated in *Ecclessiam Suam*, "was opened spontaneously on the initiative of God: 'He (God) loved us first' (1 JN 4:10)," and it is upon the Church "to take the initiative in extending to men this same dialogue, without waiting to be summoned to it".[64]

The characteristic features of such a dialogue as described in *Ecclessiam Suam* are: (1) the clarity:

> Clearness above all […] This fundamental requirement is enough to enlist our apostolic care to review every angle of our language to guarantee that it be understandable, acceptable and well-chosen.[65]

(2) the meekness:

> The virtue that Christ sets before us to be learned from him: "Learn from me, because I am meek and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29). […] the dialogue is not proud, it is not bitter, it is not offensive. […] It is peaceful; it avoids violent methods; it is patient; it is generous.[66]

(3) the trust:

> Not only in power of one's words, but also in an attitude of welcoming the trust of the interlocutor. Trust promotes confidence and friendship; it binds hearts in mutual adherence to the good which excludes all self-seeking.[67]

and (4) the prudence:

> This esteems highly the psychological and moral circumstances of the listener (cf. Mt 7:6), whether he be a child, uneducated, and unprepared, diffident, hostile. Prudence strives to learn the sensitivities of the hearer, and requires that we adapt ourselves and the manner of our presentation in a reasonable way lest we be displeasing and comprehensible to him.[68]

The dialogue, as discussed by Paul VI in his encyclical embraces four circles. The first, "it is of mankind as such, the world"[69]; the second, "it is made up of men

---

[63] Paul VI, *Ecclessiam Suam*, No. 58–108, in: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963–1995)*, F. Gioia, ed., Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997, p. 68, paragraph 98.

[64] Ibid., p. 68, paragraph 99.

[65] Ibid., p. 70, paragraph 106.

[66] Ibid., p. 71, paragraph 106.

[67] Ibidem.

[68] Ibid., p. 71, paragraph 107.

[69] Ibid., p. 74, paragraph 123.

who above all adore the one, supreme God whom we adore too"[70]; the third, "it is nearest to us (the Church), and comprises all those who take their name from Christ"[71]; and, the four, "it is the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church of which the Roman Church is *mother and head*".[72]

As revealed in *Ecclessiam Suam* as well as in other documents and a number of undertaken related initiatives, the opening of a dialogue with the people of the world, among them the followers of non-Christian religions, was the Pontiff's priority. According to Paul VI, such a dialogue was a tremendous challenge for both the Christians and non-Christians and engaging in it was not only a need but an imperative of those days and the days to come. In *Ecclessiam Suam* the Holy Father said:

> We refer to the children worthy of our affection and respect, of the Hebrew people, faithful to the religion which we call of the Old Testament. Then to the adorers of God according to the conception of monotheism, the Muslim religion especially, deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in their worship of God. And also to the followers of the great Afro-Asiatic religions.[73]

While aware of both the considerable differences between Christianity and non-Christian religions and the Catholic Church's conviction that "there is but one religion, the religion of Christianity" Paul VI acknowledged that:

> We do, nevertheless, recognize and respect the moral and spiritual values of the various non-Christian religions, and we desire to join with them in promoting common ideals of religious liberty, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order. For our part, we are ready to enter into discussion on these common ideals, and will not fail to take initiative where our offer of discussion in genuine, mutual respect would be well received.[74]

The positive attitude of Paul VI towards Islam and his will and determination to develop a dialogue with its followers met with quite sympathetic reception and amiable gestures on the part of the Muslims. During his visit in Egypt, in March 1965, the cardinal Francis Koening, archbishop of Vienna, was invited by the Sheikh Ahmad Hasan al-Bakuri, the principal of Al-Azhar (the most famous Muslim university in Cairo), to give a lecture in reference to the issue of interreligious dialogue. On May 31, 1965, in the amphitheatre of Al-Azhar in the presence of nearly two thousand Muslims, the Christian cardinal addressed the audience reading a paper "Monotheism

[70] Ibid., p. 78.

[71] *Ecclessiam Suam*, www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html, no. 109.

[72] Ibid., no. 113.

[73] Paul VI, *Ecclessiam Suam*, no. 107–108, in Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 78.

[74] Ibid., p. 78–79.

in the contemporary world". The paper was received very well and later a large number of its copies in Arabic was distributed all over the Muslim world.[75]

All the initiatives and efforts of Paul VI related to the development of a dialogue of the Catholic Church with non-Christians, and particularly with the followers of Islam, were finally officially acknowledged in two significant documents, namely the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (no. 16) and Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non–Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (no. 3).[76]

As for *Lumen Gentium*, this document is considered to be fundamental for the doctrinal teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The Constitution reveals the self-awareness of the Catholic Church on its nature, its doctrine and its mission. According to Sakowicz, this particular self-awareness enabled the Church to enter a new path of relations with non-Christians and, in a way, "to feel responsible" for their destiny.[77] Furthermore, both the Council and then the entire Catholic Church were becoming increasingly aware of the fact that an interreligious dialogue in its universal dimension carries enormous potential. Since only individuals or communities who have become conscious of their identity could initiate and conduct successfully a sincere dialogue with others, in the light of *Lumen Gentium* the Catholic Church's prospects for such "an encounter" with non-Christians were quite promising.[78]

In *Lumen Gentium* the Fathers of the Council presented their position concerning the relation of non-Catholics and non-Christians to the people of God. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church states that:

> All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God which in promoting universal peace presages it. And there belong to or are related to it in various ways, the Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, for all men are called by the grace of God to salvation.[79]

Moreover, the Catholic Church recognizes that there are different links by which it is related to various religious and non-religious individuals or communities. The closest ties are with other Christian churches. As for the others, i.e., "those who have not yet received the Gospel" they are related to the people of God in various ways. In the first place are the Jews, "the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh". Moreover, according to the Constitution, "the plan of salvation also includes" Muslims.

---

[75] Cardinal F. Koenig, "Le monotheisme dans le monde contemporain", MIDEO, Vol. 8, 1964–1966, p. 407–422.

[76] For the complete text and the analysis of both documents see: R. Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II. On the Tenth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*", *Encounter*, Vol. 21, January 1976, p. 1–7.

[77] Sakowicz, *Dialog Kościoła*, p. 49.

[78] See: F. Zapłata, "Misyjny charakter Kościoła w świetle konstytucji dogmatycznej *Lumen Gentium*", *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, Vol. 58, 1966, z. 373, p. 326–336.

[79] *Lumen Gentium*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, no. 13.

One should point out here that in *Lumen Gentium* we encounter the first Catholic Church's official statement concerning Islam.

The text, adopted by the Council on November 21, 1964, is very brief and deals with Islam in the following words:

> But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are Muslims, who professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the same one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge the mankind. [80]

This text replaced the first draft:

> The sons of Ismael, who recognize Abraham as their father and believe in God of Abraham, are not unconnected with the Revelation made to the patriarchs.[81]

With regard to the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non–Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, it is the crucial document of the Second Vatican Council entirely devoted to the issue of dialogue with non-Christians. Despite the fact that the Declaration is the shortest of all the Council's documents, it is unique because it reflects a real breakthrough in relations between the Church and the followers of non-Christian religions. In *Nostra Aetate* we find both the statements of general nature (no. 1 and 5) and in relation to particular religions, namely Buddhism (no. 2), Judaism (no. 4) and Islam (no. 3). The Declaration begins with the following words:

> In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.[82]

The statements of general nature contain a few important points, namely (1) that God created all the people and accepts each and everybody:

> One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.
> Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the

[80] Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II", p. 2.

[81] Ibid., p. 2.

[82] *Nostra Aetate*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_ council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html, introduction.

> hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going? [83]

(2) that there are seeds of the truth in other religions:

> From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense. [84]

and (3) that all the people are brothers and therefore the non-Christians should become partners of a dialogue with the Catholic Church:

> We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: „He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).
> No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.
> The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to „maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.[85]

In comparison with the first text on Islam in *Lumen Gentium*, the second one in *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965) is much more developed. It consists of two parts. The first, namely the doctrinal one, describes the values of the Muslim faith and worship and points out the values common to Islam and Christianity:

> Upon the Moslems too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, speaker of men. They

[83] Ibid., no. 1.
[84] Ibid., no. 2.
[85] Ibid., no. 5.

> strive to submit whole heartedly, even to his inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They honour Mary, His virgin mother, at times they call on her too with devotion. In addition they wait the day of judgement when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently they prize the moral life and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.[86]

The second part of the text deals with the practice and collaboration, calling upon the followers of both religions to work together:

> The most sacred Synod urges all (Christians and Muslims) to forget the past, to strive sincerely for mutual understanding, and on behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safe-guarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.[87]

It should be noted that the task of compiling the Declaration from start to finish was within the gesture of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. The experts on Islam were asked to work on the text in 1963. The Council finally adopted the Declaration on October 28, 1965 by 2221 placed as against 88 non-placed. The Secretariat for Non-Christians, established to put this Declaration into practice, came into being at Pentecost of 1964 only, and it did not really begin to function before March of 1965.

As mentioned previously, from the beginning of his pontificate the Pope Paul VI was well aware of the need and importance to develop the dialogue with the Muslims. Furthermore, he found the basis to undertake such an initiative quite clear and convincing. At this point, it is important to remember what he said about the matter during his Angelus prayer on October 17, 1965. While informing the people about the decision of the Second Vatican Council to announce the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the Pope called upon all the Catholics to pray for non-Christians, and particularly for those who trace the roots of their faith to Abraham, that is, for Jews and Muslims because, as he concluded:

> The Heavenly Mother surely loves them (Jews and Muslims) and we should pray for them to her.[88]

As pointed out previously, the Secretariat for non-Christians (the name was changed later to Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue) was founded in 1964. However, its special Section for Islam has become quite active only since 1965. The Section has hosted many delegations from all parts of Muslim World. For example, in December 1970 the representatives of the highest Islamic Council

---

[86] Caspar, "Islam According to Vatican II", p. 3–5.

[87] Ibid., p. 6.

[88] Paul VI, "To the Faithful at the Angelus Domini, Rome, (October 17, 1965)", in Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; *Interreligious Dialogue*, p. 140.

from Cairo came to the Vatican, and in October 1974 a delegation of the experts in Islamic law was received. Those visits were followed by re-visits: the representatives of the Vatican met with the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and the Saudi King Faysal.[89] In attempts to promote the idea of interreligious dialogue and, in particular, that of a dialogue with Islam the Secretariat began to issue a special bulletin and other publications.[90]

Every year the Section for Islam addresses the Muslims all over the world with special wishes and words of friendship on the occasion of 'Id al-Fitr, a holiday at the end of Ramadan, the month of fast. The wishes are broadcasted by the Vatican Radio in Arabic, translated into other languages and officially published. This gesture of friendship and respect coming from the Vatican has definitely contributed to the substantial improvement of the Christian–Muslim relations in recent decades, promoting friendly and fruitful contacts between them. In 1967 the end of Ramadan almost coincided with the Christian New Year of 1968. While addressing the pilgrims gathered in Mecca, the late King Faysal referred to that fact in the following words:

> I do not wish to miss this opportunity of pointing out that Islam is the religion of truth, the religion of freedom, the religion of co-operation and the religion of tolerance. So, when a message was sent out from the Vatican on the occasion of the Christian New Year, through a spokesman for his holiness Pope Paul, greeting Muslims and saluting the religion of Islam, this was given a very warm welcome by Muslims and received by them gratefully.[91]

During his pontificate Paul VI made pilgrimages to several countries. He went with his pastoral visits to the Holy Land (1964), India (1964), Portugal (1967), Turkey (1967), Columbia (1968), Switzerland (1969), Uganda (1969), Philippines, Austria, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Ceylon (1970).[92] The program of those visits included meeting with local Muslim populations and their leaders. Paul VI welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations with countries with a majority or significant number of Muslims and Muslim leaders were cordially received at the Vatican. Furthermore, thanks to the initiative of the Pontiff various meeting and conferences were organized to promote the development of Christian–Muslim relations.

The closer look at the texts of the speeches given by Paul VI proves his commitment to develop and promote the interreligious dialogue. The Holy Father was convinced that only sincere reciprocal contacts between the various religious and ethnic groups

[89] See: Anawati, "An Assessment of the Christian-Islamic Dialogue", in *The Vatican, Islam*, p. 55–56.

[90] Fitzgerald, "The Secretariat for Non-Christians", p. 92–93.

[91] Ibid., p. 94.

[92] For the important addresses related to Christian-Muslim dialogue during these visits see: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; *Interreligious Dialogue*, Bethlehem, January 6, 1964, p. 117–119, Istanbul, July 25, 1967, p. 149–150, Kampala, August 1, 1969, p. 168, Manila, November 29, 1970, p. 173–175, Djakarta, December 3, 1970, p. 176–177.

in the Middle East could possibly appease the existing tensions and lead to peaceful solutions.

On January 4, 1964, during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land while addressing the King of Jordan Paul VI made a reference to the above matters in universal terms. He said:

> We, Peter's Successor, remember his reference to the Psalms in his first Epistle: "He who would love life and see good days, [...] let him turn away from evil and do good, let him seek after peace and pursue it" (Ps. 23, 13–15). Saint Peter also wrote: "Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the King" (1 Peter, 11,17) May God grant Our prayer, and that of all men of good will, that living together in harmony and accord, they may help one another in love and justice, and attain to universal peace in true brotherhood.[93]

A few years later Pope discussed the matter of dialogue and reciprocal relations in more precise terms. On September 18, 1969, in his welcome address to the new ambassador of Pakistan the Pope remarked:

> The Catholic Church, in fact, teaches that "Faith needs to prove its fruitfulness by penetrating the believer's entire life, including its worldly dimensions, and by activating him towards justice and love, especially regarding the needy" (*Gaudium et Spes*, N. 21). She also recognizes that "in the first place among" those who acknowledge the Creator "there are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, Who on the last day will judge mankind" (*Lumen Gentium*, N.16). Hence the Church strives, through this common belief, to foster concord and peace among individuals, families, nations, and races, by the observance of social and international justice for the fruit of justice is peace.[94]

On December 8, 1975, Paul VI announced his apostolic exhortation *Evangelli Nuntiandi*. While explaining the evangelical mission of the Catholic Church, as seen through the light of the decisions and documents acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council, the Holy Father addressed the issue of interreligious dialogue. It should be noted that the new attitude of the Church, adopted by the Council, definitely had great impact on the theological justification of the Church's dialogical mission, as discussed by Paul VI in *Evangelli Nuntiandi*. In his apostolic exhortation addressed to "The Episcopate, the Clergy and to all the Faithful of the Entire World," the Pontiff pointed out the unique character and the role of Christianity among other

[93] www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1964/documents/hf_p_vi-spe-19640104_jordania_en. html.

[94] www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1969/documents/hf_p_vi-spe-19690918_ambasciatore-pakistan_en. html.

world religions. However, at the same time, he acknowledged that "good" and "truth" might also be found in other religions. For Paul VI an interreligious dialogue did not necessarily mean a dialogue of religions, but rather a dialogue of religious people. The Pope's aim was to encourage the religious people to dialogical encounter and cooperation, so that they could overcome the existing barriers and prejudices, and eventually reach mutual understanding. As the Holy Father explained:

> This first proclamation is also addressed to the immense sections of mankind who practice non-Christian religions. The Church respects and esteems these non-Christian religions because they are the living expressions of the soul of vast groups of people. They carry with them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God. [...] They possess an impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts. They have taught generations of people how to pray. They are all impregnated with the "seeds of the Word".[95]

There is no doubt that for Paul VI the question of interreligious dialogue, and, in particular, a dialogue with the followers of Islam, was an important task, so to say, an imperative of the 20th century and the century to come, and he considered it essential for the peace and security in modern world. Therefore, until the end of his pontificate, the Holy Father addressed that issue on many occasions. On April 8, 1976, while receiving at the Vatican the Egyptian President, the Pope said:

> We also express at this time our great desire that the Muslim-Christian dialogue should continue and make progress among your people, in that fraternal spirit which ought to characterize all those who adore one God – just and merciful.[96]

The spirit of changes continues but this "great desire" of Paul VI still waits to be fulfilled.

[95] www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exortations/documents/hf_p_vi-spe-19751208_evangellii-nuntiandi_en. html, no. 53.

[96] www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1976/documents/hf_p_vi-spe-19760408_presidente-egitto_en. html.

Dobrosława Wiktor-Mach

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

European Islam
The Case of Polish Tatars

1. Euro-Islam as a dynamic perspective

The Euro-Islamic discourse presents an ideological alternative to the dominant Western understanding of the Muslim world. "European Islam" proponents challenge the representations of Islam and Muslims as being fundamentally distinct from tolerance, progress, rationality, democracy, human rights, liberty. Researches perceiving Muslim societies as petrified in the past and essentially non-modernisable fail to appreciate the diversity and complexity of Muslim contemporary discourses and practices. In reality, apart from Wahhabi, Integrist, Salafi, or other more or less fundamentalist ideologies, there are also liberal ideas, nationalist projects, Muslim feminism, etc. The discussion on the interpretations of Islamic scriptures, laws, and customs continues to divide the *umma*, which can not be perceived as a monolith. The Sunni communities oppose some Shi'i practices; both groups question the activity of certain allegedly Islamic movements, such as the *Ahmadiyya*.

Muslim diverse traditions steadily transform themselves, responding to the changing context, external influences, and developments in other parts of the Islamic world. Some Muslim intellectuals actively engage in the redefining of Islamic concepts in an attempt to adjust them to the conditions of modernity. For instance, the moderate intellectual movement – Egyptian *Wasatiyya* (Centrism) – propagates Islamic reformation based on rethinking the Sharia in contemporary modern states. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the ideological fathers of *Wasatiyya*, claims that modernity and tradition do not contradict each other. Quoting a passage from a *hadith* which states that in every century Allah would send a person to renew the religion, he underlines the dynamics within Islamic tradition.[1] The Islamic scholars of the European Council for Fatwa and Research – an institution with Qaradawi as a chairman – discuss the problems Muslims face in Europe from the Sharia point of view. In result, new fatwas are issued responding to present needs and transforming conditions.

The dualistic perspective of the opposition between Islamic and European cultures or civilisations misses out the "hyphenated identities" which are being shaped in

[1] Sagi Polka, "The Centrist Stream in Egypt and its Role in the Public Discourse Surrounding the Shaping of the Country's Cultural Identity", *Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 39, No. 3, July 2003, p. 42.

contemporary Europe, such as a British-Muslim or a Moroccan-Dutch Muslim identity. The Muslim newcomers often gain a citizenship of an European country, and search for a way to manage their supposedly incompatible identities. Certain Muslim intellectuals support these attempts and inquiry by partaking in the debate on the Europeanisation of Islam. As Tariq Ramadan has explained his mission:

> The approach I propose is anchored in the Islamic tradition and amplified from within it: in this sense it is both deeply classical and radically new. Beginning with the Qur'an and the Sunna and the methodologies set down by the ulama throughout the history of the Islamic sciences, I have tried to immerse myself again in reading these sources in the light of our new Western context.[2]

Although many Muslims living in the West find Ramadan's ideas attractive, the emergence of moderate Islam results also from day-to-day interactions and influences. In fact, Euro-Islam should be analyzed as one of the discursive traditions in Islam and seen in two major dimensions: ideological ("scriptural tradition", shaped by the ulamas' discussions) and interactional ("lived tradition", influenced by "normal" Muslim praxis). The major development in the "lived" Western European Islam, according to recent studies, is the individualisation of religious beliefs, which demonstrates that Muslims are in fact "Europeanising".[3] One of the main proponents of the individualisation thesis, Jocelyne Cesari, speaks of a cultural revolution that has occurred in Muslim milieu, partly as a result of experiencing a pluralist social order. In this process, the role of community in influencing individual choices has decreased, and religious practices have been to some extent shifting to the private sphere. Contrary to the older Muslim generation, Cesari argues, the youth nowadays have less trust in the mosques, imams, muftis, and other religious institutions.[4]

Euro-Islam is widely reckoned by Western elites to be the means of countering Islamic radicalism from within the Muslim communities. Western Muslims are expected to construct Islamic solutions to the troubles of immigrants, to propose a coherent identity that would unite religious fidelity and acceptance of the liberal democracy and its institutions. Clearly, no intellectual proposition would eradicate social or economic problems or change the fate of alienated immigrants, lost between often contradicting norms and ideas. Nevertheless, if such a liberal movement gains ground, it can legitimate the Muslim identity in a modern society and be an important paradigm in the Muslim thought also outside Europe.

Euro-Islam is often thought of as a new trend in Islam; this term is chiefly employed in reference to recent Muslim immigration to Europe. However, if we approach this phenomenon also from the socio-historical perspective, we can argue that the processes of Europeisation of Muslims and Islam have actually quite a long history.

[2] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam,* Oxford University Press US, 2005, s. 3–4.

[3] Frank Peter, "Individualization and Religious Authority in Western European Islam", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations,* Vol. 17, No. 1, 2006, p. 105.

[4] Ibid., p. 107.

For instance, in Central Europe "indigenous" Muslim minorities are historically well established. Even though undergoing profound acculturation, they have not adopted the religion of the majority. The Muslim minority groups, such as Polish Tatars, managed to retain their Islamic faith, as well as some elements of their ethnic identity.

In this paper I would like to focus on the socio-cultural processes that contributed to the emergence of an European identity of the Polish Tatars' community. This case of successful integration can contribute to the current debates on Islam in Europe. It provides an argument that, in certain conditions, new, moderate forms of Muslim identity and practices can emerge.

2. The Tatars: historical background

At present, on the territory of Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus there are around 20 thousands of Tatars.[5] Before the World Wars, those Tatars belonged to one ethnic community of the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, known also as the Lipkas. Nowadays, as a result of wars, border changes, and migration only roughly five thousands Tatars live in Poland, mainly in the north-eastern region, in Warsaw, and in Gdańsk. The main center of the community, and the place of the *muftiat* (an Islamic high council), is Białystok. Close to the border with Belarus, two historic mosques are active, one in Bohoniki (built in the mid-19th century), the second in Kruszyniany (18th century). They attract numerous believers, especially during Muslim feasts. Many Tatars bury their deceased in accordance to Islamic prescriptions at the cemeteries located near these two mosques.

The Muslims began to settle on the territory of Lithuania in the 14th century as a result of contacts with the Golden Horde. Later, the decline of the Golden Horde (and then the Great Horde) resulted in the next wave of settlers in Lithuania – the refugees escaping civil wars. Small groups of Muslims from the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and Turkey moved into these lands too.[6] The warriors offered their service to the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Witold, who entrusted them with the defense of Lithuanian borders. Since that time, the Muslim Tatars have always actively participated in state affairs, particularly in the Polish military history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the community was enlarged by the Tatars chiefly of Nogay and Crimean origin. Tatars' separate social entities were distinguishable from other segments of Polish-Lithuanian society. From the Battle of Grunewald (the 1st Battle of Tannenberg) onwards, the Tatars' military units took part in every noteworthy Polish military campaign, even when the wars were against Turkish peoples (such as the struggles with the Ottoman Empire, including the Battle of Vienna). The Tatar regiments always used their own colors and symbols. The Jagiellon dynasty granted the Tatars numerous civil rights, but for full political rights the Tatars had to wait until the end of the 18th century. In exchange for the military service, the kings endowed them with land and exemption from taxes.

[5] Selim M. Chazbijewicz, "I Konferencja Tatarów Nadbałtyckich" (The First Conference of the Baltic Tatars), *Świat Islamu*, Vol. IV(15), No. 2, 1996, p. 4–5.

[6] Marek M. Dziekan, "Historia i tradycje polskiego islamu" (History and Tradition of Polish Islam), in *Muzułmanie w Europie* (Muslims in Europe), ed. Anna Parzymies, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2005, p. 203.

During the partitions of Poland Tatar communities were under Russian administration. In order to weaken the Tatars' loyalty to the Polish state and society, Russian authorities gave them opportunities of better career and higher education. Moreover, Russians stimulated the contacts between the Polish Tatars and other Turkic Islamic groups (of Crimea and Azerbaijan), which turned out to be fruitful. At that time, contacts with Russian Muslims were also established. Those new relations led to the ethnic and religious revival among Polish Tatars, but did not direct them against their adopted homeland. On the contrary, together with ethnic Poles, Tatars participated in the uprisings against occupants and vigorously opposed Russification practices.

The re-establishment of Poland in 1918 began a prosperous period in the life of the Tatar community. Tatar leaders set up the independent Polish *muftiat*, breaking off formal relations with the *muftiat* of the Crimea.[7] In a short time imams' level of education was raised, and numerous Tatar and Muslim associations were established. In the 1930s in Poland there were 17 mosques with religious schools and three houses of prayer. The Islamic clergy and Muslim activists worked effectively on strengthening religious knowledge and identity among fellow believers.

As a result of the Second World War, the Polish Tatars suffered serious losses. A large part of the traditional Tatar settlements fell to the Soviet Union. Under communism, two parallel social processes took place. On the one hand, the Muslim Tatar identity weakened significantly. The ways of life, beliefs, habits, ideas began to increasingly mirror the mainstream Polish culture. The absence of contacts with other Muslims and the lack of adequate information hindered the religious education among the post-war generation of Tatars. The state activities banning independent religious movements and associations further contributed to the religious decline. The activity of the reactivated Muslim Religious Association was limited. It is, however, worth noting that nevertheless the Tatars managed to mobilise themselves and struggled to rebuild their social, cultural, and religious life.

On the other hand, the Tatars' distinctiveness as a separate ethnic group persisted despite the adverse conditions. In the late 1960s an interest in the Tatar community arose. Some scientific and popular articles were published, presenting the history and culture of this group. A museum featuring Tatar traditions was set up in Sokółka, where also a cyclic event, "The Sokólka Orient", was held.[8]

The 1990s witnessed a cultural and religious revival among the Tatars. The new opportunities enabled them to re-establish relations with their fellow believers not only from Lithuania or Belarus, but also from Turkey, Tatarstan, or Arab countries. Religious practices have become more popular, and the Islamic prescriptions obeyed on a wider scale. More Tatars got an opportunity to go on the *hajj*. The most religious and gifted young people have been sent abroad to study in madrasas in France, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liban, Saudi Arabia, etc.

---

[7] Leon Bohdanowicz, "The Polish Tatars", *The Polish Tatars Yearly*, Vol. 11, 2006, a lecture delivered to the Royal Anthropological Institute, 7 December, 1944.

[8] Artur Konopacki, *Muslims on Polish Soil*, Białystok: Elkam, 2006, p. 57.

The contacts with non-Polish Muslims brought, however, a significant observation. Some representatives of the Tatar elite realised the uniqueness of the "Polish variant" of Islam. Similar feelings appeared inside the Tatar community itself. The encounters with Muslims from outside Europe, especially with immigrants from Arab countries, made the Tatars aware of the symbolic boundaries that exist inside the *umma*. To underline their own religious world-view (and socio-political implications it carries), some Tatars claim their Islam to be moderate, unorthodox, European. Stressing their belonging to the Polish society, they underline the compatibility of moderate Muslim identification with the Polish identity.

3. Negotiating the social identity

Let us focus on the crucial factors that have enabled and contributed to the emergence of a hybrid identity of the Polish Tatars, unifying Islamic and European values and norms. In the course of history, the group shifted their ethnic boundary, so as to accommodate Tatar, Muslim and Polish elements. The process of negotiation of social identity encompassed not only broadening the boundaries, but also revision of the cultural stuff. It is important to recognise the ways Muslim identification of the Tatars came to be reconciled with the values and practices of a Polish (and earlier in the past also Lithuanian) society.

From a broad perspective, the concept of European Islam is best understood as expressing a specific religious practice and a unique interpretation of Islamic scripture with the implication it carries for the public life of the Muslims in non-Muslim countries. Euro-Islam perspective consists in the acceptance of both the crucial values of Western social order and the Islamic principles. It implies the reinterpretation and reassertion of some Islamic concepts, such as *dar al-harb* (a land of war), or *jihad,* in such a way that they do not oppose the core elements of European culture. The chief aim of the European Islam concept is to choose such features and ideas from Islamic and European cultural systems that may form a coherent picture.

The Tatars' case provides an interesting glimpse at the process in which social actors and groups negotiate and reconstruct their identities in order to incorporate the allegedly incompatible aspects of European and Muslim attachments. What does the "negotiation" involve? First of all, such process enables the retaining of discrepant identities, without the need to get rid of one (or more) of them. Each of these identities is equally crucial. In order to unite various elements, contents of the concerned identities need to be revised and restructured. The Tatars have assimilated to the mainstream Polish culture to a large extent; nonetheless, they have managed to preserve some distinctive elements of Tatar tradition and retained their attachment to Islam. This process has taken place in the context of interactions with other social groups, among which the "significant others" served as vital points of reference. In such processual phenomenon groups exchange symbols and messages and constantly relate to each other's ideas, moves, gestures and responses. Finally, the internal discourses and the authority of group leaders might to a large extent affect the identity formation. Hence, reconstruction of identity involves the factor of power-relationship inside a community.

The shaping of a "hyphenated" identity needs to be thus perceived as a complex process that takes into account practices and strategies of social actors, the role the leaders play in the community life, and the ever-changing social and political reality.

3.a. The shaping of a hybrid identity

The Polish Tatars' symbolic model of the world includes a classification of the social world that challenges the stereotype of "a Catholic Pole". This social representation formed by Tatars is an outcome of a historic process. The Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania, who requested the Tatars to settle down at the border regions of Lithuania, offered them freedom in practising their religion and customs. There was no pressure from the public authorities, who did not intend to form a state based on a religious collective identity. Actually, the complete religious toleration was guaranteed. Since the beginning of their settlement, the Tatars had made an effort to stick to Islam; they built mosques in every village, organised their own religious educational system, and celebrated Islamic feasts.

Witold gained an important place in the Tatars' collective memory. In their legends and narratives they called him Vattad, which means the defender of the (Islamic) faith. Until the 1930s at least, the Tatars mentioned his name in prayers.[9]

An important role in the acculturation and integration processes played an institution of a family. As the new settlers were only men, they were allowed to marry Christian women without having to change religion, and the children from the mixed marriages were often raised in Islam. Is was also common for the Tatars to adopt Christian surnames of their wives.[10] A family as a social institution mediated in the renegotiations of the Tatar identity boundaries and facilitated the acceptance of the Polish elements.

The main factor that influenced the formation of the sense of uniqueness among the Tatars was their faith. Even though retaining Islam used to be difficult because of the separation from the *umma*, the majority of Tatars continuously considered themselves to be Muslims. The religious culture also helped them to preserve many folklore elements, beliefs, rituals that resemble the cultures of other Turkish groups.[11]

In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Tatars did not strive to politicise religion, as it occurs among contemporary Muslims all over the world. Neither did the Tatar leaders want to create a publicly visible force to influence the state's decisions, nor did they seek to struggle for the "Muslim public interest". Actually, the Polish Tatars did not set up a common religious organisation up to the 20th century. There were separate religious communities, which consolidated the faithful inhabiting a given region. Led by imams, known also as *mullas*, these local structures fulfilled social and religious functions.

Members of the Tatars communities willingly came to construct their Polish identity. The social structure of this group can to a certain extent account for this phenomenon.

---

[9] Selim M. Chazbijewicz, "Szlachta tatarska w Rzeczypospolitej" (Tatar Gentry in Poland), *Verbum Nobile*, Vol. 2, 1993.

[10] Bohdanowicz, "The Polish Tatars".

[11] Stanisław Kryczyński, "Tatarzy Litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej" (Lithuanian Tatars. A Historical-Ethnographical Study), *Tatar Yearbook*, Vol. 3, 1938, p. 1.

Interestingly, the percentage of nobles was significant among the Polish Tatars. The Tatar nobles were recognised as such in Lithuania on the basis of letters issued by the authorities of the Golden Horde. Besides, many Tatars were awarded the gentry status as a proof of recognition for their state service. The Tatar elite enjoyed almost equal rights with the Polish-Lithuanian nobility.

What is characteristic of the way this group built their identity is that not all elements of the Polish culture were chosen. In fact, only specific traits, cultural elements and attitudes were picked out to form the Polish dimension of Polish Tatars' social consciousness.

The most important cultural resource was the language. By the middle of the 16th century the Tatars had forgotten their mother tongue. A document (*Risale-i-Tatar-i Leh*) made in 1558 for the Turkish Suleiman by an anonymous Tatar traveler mentions that only the Tatars who moved to the Grand Duchy recently knew the Tatar language.[12] By the end of the 18th century, the Tatar nobility was generally using Polish, but other Tatar groups adopted the local languages (mixtures of Polish, Belorussian, Russian, Lithuanian).[13] Some scholars put forward a hypothesis that one of the reason of losing the native language so quickly was the diversity of dialects the Tatar groups used, and accepting local languages led to easier communication.[14]

The strong loyalty to Polish state is another characteristic of the Tatars who proudly underline their military service rendered since the beginning of their settlement in Poland. Participation in the military campaigns against Polish rivals, among other against Ottoman Empire, is recalled as a proof of the Tatar patriotic attitudes. Besides, the Tatars indicate patriotism of their intelligentsia in other fields, such as law or science. Among the collective values shared by this group of special importance are: ideas of the Enlightenment and Polish Romantic Movement.

Many Tatars adopted Polish surnames and names. Interestingly, it is quite usual for the Tatars to use two names: one related to the Eastern, and second to the Slavic roots, e.g. Mustafa – Stefan, Ramzan – Roman, Machmet – Maciej. Also the names common to both Islam and Christianity, such as Adam or Jakub, are frequently used.

The Tatar ethnic or national identity is closely related to military traditions. Tatar values include pride, courage, and independence. Their ancestors are remembered as great warriors of the wild steppes in Central Asia. This Tatar attachment gained more significance in the first half of the 20th century. After the first contacts with Muslims in Russia, nationalist ideologies spread among the Polish Tatars, many of whom joined the separatist movement of the Crimean Tatars or engaged in formation of the independent Tatar government in the Crimea (1917–1918). Among vital relations the Tatars develop nowadays are the contacts with Turkey and Tatarstan.

---

[12] Ibid., p. 228–229.

[13] Ibidem.

[14] Henryk Jankowski, "Nazwy osobowe Tatarów litewsko-polskich" (Names of Lithuanian-Polish Tatars), *The Polish Tatars Yearly*, Vol. 4, 1997, p. 67.

To sum up, three aspects of identity: nationalist (being a Pole of Tatar origin, or a Polish Tatar), religious (Islam), and ethnic (Tatar features) can merge into a coherent form of identity. To illustrate this case, the Polish Tatars call themselves: "people living in the borderlands, between Europe and Asia, having three faces and three fatherlands".[15]

3.b. Revision of contents

In the multicultural milieu of the borderlands, freedoms in religious practice were protected. No pressure was exerted on Muslims to change religion. But at the same time, interactions with neighbors led to mutual influences and changes in the cultural systems. The village of Kruszyniany, given to Tatars by the king Jan III Sobieski in 1679, was called *triniedielnaja* (triple-Sunday). On Friday Tatars held their religious celebrations, on Saturday – Jews, and on Sunday – Christians.

One outcome of assimilation tendencies among the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars was the emergence of a flexible attitude towards some Sharia prescriptions. For example, the rules prohibiting consumption of pork and alcohol were not widely respected. Moreover, some Tatar customs began to resemble those practised by Christian neighbours. At the Tatar cemeteries, *mizars*, in Bohoniki and Kruszyniany, some tombstones do not look like those in traditional modest Muslim graveyards: the photos of the deceased are attached and sometimes candles are lit. Other instances of syncretic practices, encompassing elements of both cultural systems are found among feasts and celebrations. Under the influence of Christianity, the Christmas as well as the Easter was also celebrated by the Muslim Tatars, although religious elements were eliminated. For example, a number of Tatar families decorated Christmas trees and painted Easter eggs.

Similarities in attitudes between the Tatars and the mainstream of Poles were also visible in the relation to women. It is worth noting that the Polish-Lithuanian Tatar Muslim women always enjoyed a large degree of freedom. Co-education of boys and girls was considered a norm, and a number of women studied at university. The Tatar women did not wear the Muslim veil, even though in accordance with Muslim tradition they prayed in separate rooms.[16]

3.c. The state as the significant other

The process of negotiating the collective identity and of the dynamic revision of cultural content of the Tatar community was highly influenced by the context of social interactions with other ethnic groups, and by the state policy towards minorities.

A multi-ethnic state was formed in the Central-Eastern Europe at the time when at the Iberian Peninsula the Reconquista came to an end. Even though in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the Roman Catholic Church played significant role in the

[15] Ryszard Vorbrich, "Między Zachodem a Orientem. Tatarzy Polsko-Litewscy w poszukiwaniu tożsamości" (Between the West and the Orient. Polish-Lithuanian Tatars Searching for the Identity), *The Polish Tatars Yeary*, Vol. 4, 1997, p. 91.

[16] Bohdanowicz, "The Polish Tatars", p. 201.

public affairs, the state was renowned for religious tolerance. The political system was conducive to the development of ethnic identities of particular groups. The term "nation" was not restricted to the dominant ethnic component, but it encompassed all inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian territory. We may say that the basis for the collective identity in that state was the classical Habsburg nationalism.[17] Neither religion nor national culture was considered an essential prerequisite of citizenship. The Tatars had enjoyed most rights since the beginning of their settlement.

The state–minority relations were not always amiable. The reactionary movement in the beginning of the 17th century, supported by the Polish monarchs, was directed, among others, against Tatars. Their liberties and privileges were restrained or taken away. In the toughest period of 1600–1615 the Tatars were prohibited from building or renovating their mosques. Because of Jesuits' agitations in 1609 a wooden mosque in Trakai was destroyed. On the other hand, the Tatars were supported by the Lithuanian families of high nobility, and the king Jan III Sobieski restored Tatars' rights completely.[18]

The most prosperous time for the Tatar community was the Second Republic of Poland (1918–1939). Cultural, religious, and scientific life flourished and numerous institutions were set up. It was then, in the inter-war period, that the Tatars elected their first mufti – the highest Muslim representative in Poland. The legal basis for the relations between Tatars and the Polish state was developed and the state authorities encouraged Tatars' contacts with Muslims from other countries, particularly from Egypt and the Balkan region.

4. Inspirations

The Tatar leaders, such as Selim M. Chazbiewicz, relate their community's experiences to the reformist movements in Islam *(An-Nahda),* which have roots in the 19th century.[19] The direct encounters with Europe stirred up debates over the inferiority and backwardness of the Arab-Muslim world. The intellectual center of Islamic discussions was Egypt, where the foundations for contemporary social and political movements were raised. Heterogeneous ideologies (reformist, fundamentalist, liberal, modernist, pan-Islamic, Islamic nationalism, etc.) had basically two issues in common. On the one hand, a vital source of inspiration for the emerging discourses was the admiration of the European civilisation, its rapid development and scientific, technological, military achievements. On the other hand, the disappointment with European colonisation prevented many Muslims from simply copying all European solutions.

The reformist ideas soon spread outside the Arab world. In the second half of the 19th century, a far-reaching program of religious and social transformations was

[17] Vorbrich, "Między Zachodem".

[18] Kryczyński, "Tatarzy Litewscy", p. 26–27.

[19] For a characteristic of the most influential reformist Muslim thinkers see e.g. Azzam Tamimi, "Islam and Democracy from Tahtawi to Ghannouchi", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2007, p. 39–58.

carried out in Russian Muslim community. After the success of Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet authorities proceeded to root out the Muslim reformation, its leaders and ideas. As a consequence, the achievements of this radical movement do not constitute part of the collective memory of Muslims living presently in the post-Soviet republics. Nevertheless, there is an attempt in the Polish Tatar community to popularise the reform projects from the past.

It is Abubu Nasr al-Kursavi (1783–1814), a Volga Tatar, who is regarded as a pioneer in the public criticism of the Muslim status quo. Like other first Tatar "enlighteners" (*prosvetiteli*) in Russia, al-Kursavi belonged to a Sufi order of the Naqshbandiyya path (*tariqat*).[20] He refuted the official theological doctrine of *taqlid* (the unquestioned acceptance of Islamic doctrines), which had been imposed on Muslims living in Russia by the emirate of Bukhara, at that time a flourishing intellectual center of the Islamic world, that attracted also Tatar students from the Crimea and Volga regions, who then disseminated the teachings and ideas of Bukhara's clergy among the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars. The problem was that the education in madrasas resembled the situation of medieval European universities. The knowledge was passed from a master to a student and the main task was to memorize religious text.[21]

Al-Kurasavi is regarded as a father of a Tatar modernist trend, *jadidism,* which sought to overcome the supposed contradiction between faith and reason. It was furthered developed, among others, by a Crimean Tatar – Ismael Bey Gasprinski (1851–1914).[22] The phenomenon of *jadidism* is still not defined and there are a number of grey areas in the academic knowledge, resulting partly from the diversity within this movement. Yet it seems that the main characteristic common for *jadidis* was an engagement in modernisation efforts, aimed at reforming Muslim social order. The reformers were looking for a response to the pressure for change in the second half of the 19th century. The main focus of the Muslim activists was thus the fusion of Islam with modernity.[23]

A basic obstacle to modernisation of Muslim society, Gasprinski claimed, was the traditional system of education in the Islamic schools. He designed a so-called "new method" of schooling, *usul-i jadida,* which became popular after the publication of *Khoja-i Sibyan* in 1884. The novel program encompassed introducing the European curriculum for Muslim students (science, European languages, and the humanities), rejecting the scholastic Islamic studies, and banning physical penalties. Attacked by conservative ulama, Gasprinski searched for legitimisation of his reformist efforts in the Muslim tradition and scholarly past. Mathematics, geography, physics, he used

[20] Alexandre Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union,* London: Hurst, 1985, p. 38.

[21] Selim M. Chazbijewicz, "Islam w Rosji" (Islam in Russia), *The Polish Tatars Yearly*, Vol. 9, 2006, p. 25.

[22] Ibidem.

[23] Ingeborg Baldauf, "Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World", *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2001, p. 72.

to underline, were once part of Islamic curriculum and there is no justification for excluding them from modern Muslim schools.

While many Islamic scholars sought to reform Islam from within and had clearly been referring to the Golden Age of Islam, Gasprinskii understood "renewal" *(tajdid)* in a different way. It is not enough, he argued, to endeavour to re-establish the past glory and to substitute the contemporary models and patterns with that from the time of the Prophet. In fact, *tajdid*, and its method *islah* (repair) might only lead to restoration of the Muslim successes from the past, which is insufficient for the challenges of the modernity.

Today these reformist traditions from the past are being re-discovered to support the arguments that Islamic reformation or modernisation is possible. The Muslim reformists' ideas are recalled and discussed. Such references are useful in situating contemporary Euro-Islamic paradigm in the longer discursive tradition. For the Polish Tatars it is important that such reformist movements developed also in the East, among non-Arab Muslims.

5. Final remarks

The contemporary ideology of the Polish Tatars underlines the unique experience of this ethnic group which functions as a model example of merging different cultural systems into one coherent social identity. The Tatars as the European Muslims have managed to retain their attachment to Islam, accept modern Western ideas, concepts, habits, and to cultivate their Tatar unique features. A symbolic proof of the acceptance of modernist Islamic ideas was the direct reference to the reformist An-Nahda movement. The new mosque built in Gdańsk (the first mosque in Poland after the Second World War) in 1990 was given the name of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, who was a prominent founder of Islamic modernism.

In the emergence of the Tatar model of Euro-Islam, three mechanisms played crucial role. Firstly, acculturation process whereby attitudes, beliefs, and customs of the minority group were modified so as to integrate into the mainstream society. Secondly, distinct aspects of the social identity were maintained and some unique elements enriched the culture of the new homeland. In this process, the cultural boundaries of a "receiving" country were shifted to encompass new symbols and meanings. Thirdly, the Islamic tradition had to be reworked in order to allow for acceptance of the European culture, especially the heritage of the Enlightenment and idea of modernity.

Selim Chazbijewicz, a Tatar ideologue, admits that it was the way the Muslims interpret the principles of their religion that made peaceful cohabitation in European society possible. He stresses the "liberal and more universal approach to the Sharia" among members of his community in contrast to Arab interpretations.[24] From such a perspective, many Islamic concepts held by the Polish Tatars have acquired

[24] Selim M. Chazbijewicz, "Obracając oblicze na Wschód i Zachód" (Facing the East and the West), *The Polish Tatars Yearly*, Vol. 11, 2006, p. 59.

meanings focusing on morality. Jihad, for instance, is regarded as a pious effort visible in daily efforts to overcome one's weaknesses and ills of one's community.

In Poland, the Tatar model of religion raises controversies among the Muslims arriving to Poland since the 1970s, and in more significant number since the last decade. The immigrants have come mainly from Arab countries, but also from Turkey, the post-Soviet states, Iran. There are also refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Chechnya. The most visible is the tension between Tatars and Arabs. On the one hand, the Arab newcomers tend to criticise the Tatars' attitudes to religion. According to some Arabs, Tatars have gone too far from the core of the religion and religious principles. On the other hand, for the immigrants the history of the Tatar community serves as a useful argument in debates on the compatibility of European and Islamic values.

In spite of the tensions and cultural differences, both Tatars and Muslim immigrants in Poland propose alternatives to Orientalism which portrays the Muslim "other" as entirely different from a Westerner. The history of the Polish Tatars is a valuable example showing how Islam can be continualy reinterpreted or reconstructed without losing its distinctiveness. European Islam of the "new Muslims" in Poland has only recently been emerging and its development is yet to be analysed.

Tomasz Kruszewski

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Two Polish Perspectives on the Young Turkish Republic during the 1920s

Introduction

This article includes excerpts of two memoirs from journeys through Turkey which took place a few years after the republic was established. While presenting chosen descriptions, I focused on the authors' views on contemporary aspects of everyday life in this country, its economy, political affairs, moral issues and general picture of the state. The subjects of comparison are works of Wanda Melcer-Rutkowska, vel. Sztekkerowa (1896–1972), who was a writer, poet and author of many reportages,[1] and Tadeusz Vetulani (1897–1952), who was a zoologist and author of many works about research on horses, *inter alia*, Turkish arabians.[2] He was also a professor at Poznań university and Higher Rural School in Poznań.[3] Other works from the third decade of the 20th century about contemporary Turkey written by, *inter alia*, Tadeusz Kowalski[4] and Zygmunt Vetulani, the brother of Tadeusz Vetulani, who was a trade advisor of Polish Legation in Ankara, were of great importance in the verification process of the gathered information. The latter book referred only to economic issues.[5]

In the article I have deliberately avoided concentrating on both authors' detailed observation and opinions about reality at the time, giving readers freedom of interpretation. Nevertheless, the general character of both memoirs is worth mentioning at the beginning.

Melcer-Rutkowska was in Istanbul and Ankara for almost half a year between 1925 and 1926. When forming her opinions, she applied Western European standards, which resulted in her critical views. Despite these, her general judgement of the visited country was positive. The major part of her memoirs was dedicated to impressions of culture and art, limited to a narrow section of Turkish society, and this is why I have omitted it. The memoirs appeared within the series of the Biblioteka

---

[1] W. Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja dzisiejsza* (Turkey Today), Warszawa, 1925.

[2] See: T. Vetulani, *Wstęp do badań nad typami koni arabskich w Turcji* (Introductory Survey about Types of Arabic Horses in Turkey), Poznań, 1932.

[3] Idem, *Obrazki z współczesnej Turcji* (Pictures from Contemporary Turkey), Kraków, 1930.

[4] See: T. Kowalski, *Turcja powojenna* (Post-War Turkey), Lwów, 1925.

[5] See: Z. Vetulani, *Turcja* (Turkey), Warszawa, 1928.

Dzieł Wyborowych (The Library of Excellent Writings). The editor of these series was Feliks Gadomski whilst Jan Burian was responsible for printing them in „Rola" Printing House (18 cm, 158 pages). The work received an attractive cover made of red linen, with a straight verge and impressed with the logo of the Biblioteka Dzieł Wyborowych series on the upper facing.

T. Vetulani collected his impressions during a three-month scholarship for zoological research, which was granted by the Polish Ministry of Religious Cults and Public Instruction. His research took place in the autumn of 1929 in several greatest Turkish cities. The researcher became a publisher of a modest booklet in a paperback cover (23 cm, 27 pages). A magazine from Cracow, called *Przegląd Powszechny* (General Review), dealt with printing it. The text with a report about the next research journey through Turkey was published again in 1934. As the author claimed, he had tried to describe Turkey objectively and without prejudice – often met in literature and opinions at that time. He characterised himself as a sincere devotee of beautiful Turkey and as a friend of its nation, which can be noticed clearly in his work.[6]

Although both accounts were written at the nearly the same time (the difference being merely several years), their implications were very different. This was caused by personal presuppositions about Turkey, but most of all, by the different levels of cultural relativism of the authors.

Political and administrative relations

Melcer-Rutkowska had her first contact with the state administration in Kavak (Rumeli Kavak),[7] where her ferry stopped for two hours for sanitary, custom and passport inspection.[8] The contacts that she had with authorities in trying to receive *vesika* (also called: *wesika* by both authors)[9] or the police permission to stay in Istanbul were much more troublesome. The difficulties must have been quite serious because she appeared to collect the document with three months' delay. In her memoirs she widely described various nuances of political and administrative life, for example, focused on Turkish parliament, the population, the procedure of voting (2 metal vases were used to vote) and even on the decor of the board where meetings were held. She even indicated which seats were occupied by particular personages, including the President. On the other hand, she could not tell what his name was, in spite of defining herself as a journalist. While writing about the political elite, she characterised it as nationalistic. To convince her readers of this she offered two proofs. The first one was the practice

[6] See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż Anatolii* (Along Anatolia), Warszawa, 1937.

[7] All geographical names (except Istanbul) I quote after the sources in original Polish spelling, giving their Turkish equivalents in brackets.

[8] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 11.

[9] T. Vetulani also mentioned the document during the second journey. As he informed, it was a custom to leave the permission at the Police Office for the whole time of a visit in a given city. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 68.

of painting over inscriptions which had been written in English or French, and which could be seen at railway stations, ports etc. and replacing them with captions in Turkish. Secondly, in Istanbul the author was a witness of deportation of Greeks, who were expelled from Turkey a few hours after the authorities' decision had been made. She also noticed they could not take anything from their homes. She admitted that the same was practiced by the Greeks towards the Turkish in Greece, however, but these actions were extremely unpleasant for all involved and she was disgusted by them.[10]

T. Vetulani, on the other hand, found that internal affairs became so settled that foreigners were not much controlled by police and military police. During his journey only once a police officer from a small spot called Karakej (Karaköy in Istanbul) asked politely the researcher to show his pass. Neverthless he noticed that a detailed record of foreigners travelling through Istanbul to the Asiatic part of the country was kept. When he arrived from Eskiszehir (Eskişehir), a man in plain clothes first asked him about the purpose of his journey then he compared the answer with the notes in his notebook.[11]

The things that made rather negative impression on the traveller were issues connected with official uniforms of, for instance, bus staff in Ankara, which he immediately explained with financial difficulties of the young statehood.[12] Thanks to the second journey we have an opportunity to see how the bus transport in the capital of Turkey had changed throughout the time. In 1929 big vehicles travelled according to schedule there, but five years later they were replaced with private buses with wooden seats for five to six people, and they did not leave until all seats were paid for.[13]

Both Melcer-Rutkowska and T. Vetulani perceived Turkey as a safe country because of honest citizens on the one hand, but on the other hand they observed well operating police and gendarmerie system which fought with any abuses and put photographs of criminals, especially political ones, on the walls of police stations. The Polish woman felt safe all the time even when she was taking walks along the streets late at night. Nonetheless she realised some dangers in Istanbul, the blame for which was put on non-Turkish background immigrants.[14]

Economy

One of the forms of running a business which Melcer-Rutkowska could observe through windows of local cafes and hotels was petty street trade. She described, *inter alia*, pedlars who were offering their goods and services near one of the Istanbul mosques. The peddlers were trading with rosaries and perfumes, and scribes were

[10] Ibid., p. 44–45. See also: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż* , p. 12.
[11] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 3.
[12] Ibid., p. 16.
[13] T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 42.
[14] Idem, *Obrazki*, p. 15; Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, pp. 77, 103.

offering writing a letter.[15] As far as agriculture is concerned she mentioned Pendik by Marmara with plantation of olive trees stretched for a long distance.[16]

At the same time she was engaged in polemics with opinions of the Turkish that they were basically agricultural people. She claimed that the nomadic life style could be clearly observed in the country and agriculture tools were archaic. Instead of using poorly spread iron ploughs, there were used wooden ploughs pulled by drudges.[17] T. Vetulani, when writing about agriculture, mentioned Kyrkaacz (Kırkağaç), the place popular with melon plantations where melons were sold very cheaply.

Industry issues were discussed by both researchers very poorly.[18] They wrote about Balia, a place rich in silver and lead mines and about the mountains between Istanbul and Ankara which were affluent in copper. Melcer-Rutkowska could watch tent colonies with labourers brought there to exploit natural resources from a train passing them.[19]

Melcer-Rutkowska's opinion on animal breeding was partly positive. Although she was not an expert in that field, she described horses and cattle as weak and frail. She explained it by the fact that Turkish people exploited these animals in hard work, which made it impossible for the animals to look robust. As a contrast to it she could observe sheep and goats breeding, as these were used both in food and in the clothing industry. She also mentioned that professor Rostafiński from Poland was invited by Turkish government to prepare building plans connected with clothing production.[20]

T. Vetulani also abolished a stereotype of laziness of Turkish people, which was very popular in Europe. He noticed himself "pleasure of work" among various social groups, which resulted from patriotism. He particularly appreciated perfectionism and conscientiousness of Turkish clerks who were working in much worse conditions than Polish ones. He only criticised big land possessions called *çiftlik* with both organisational and technical shortfalls.[21]

Education

T. Vetulani on his way to Balikesir spotted young boys running along a train and shouting 'Newspaper, newspaper!', which meant for the author that children and

[15] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 19.

[16] Ibid., p. 32–33.

[17] Ibid., p. 43. T. Vetulani wrote about primitive agricultural tools such as: *dögen* and *juwak* (*tasz-juwak*) during his second journey as well. He discussed a model farm in Gazi near Ankara,which was established by Kemal Atatürk, in details. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, pp. 39, 48–50.

[18] T. Vetulani discussed the Turkish industry in a more detailed way during his second journey. He mentioned a factory of sugar, established by banks, army planes plants, urban slaughterhouse located in Eskiszehir. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 38–39. Also: Z. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 7.

[19] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 10, Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 43.

[20] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 44.

[21] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 14. In an economic report his brother wrote about Turkish diligence: "An Anatolian Turk is characterized by modest requirements, diligence, discipline and persistence but also by slowness while working. A Turk from Thrace is more active and progressive". See: Z. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 12.

the youth were interested in reading after a new alphabet had been introduced.[22] It is important to note that his visit in Turkey took place after the language reform was implemented. Neverthless he had some problems with communication especially in the country, though during one of his excursions he visited a peasant who spoke Russian fluently.[23] In the field of education he noticed strong patriotic elements. For instance, during a holiday of the republic (29 October) he was moved by ardent speeches delivered by adults but he also admired students who were gesticulating lively and expressing tolerance and faith in the concept of republic.[24]

Melcer-Rutkowska concentrated on education in more details. She noted that attending religion classes at school was not obligatory. At the same time putting any religious symbols or images of people and animals on the walls was forbidden. Although there were some legislation gaps, shortages of well-educated teachers and very low salaries, the number of schools was tolerable. For instance, in 14 departments there were secondary schools with 11 classes, in the other 59 departments there were secondary schools with 7 classes and in arrondissements there was a substantial number of primary and folk schools. In the last-mentioned schools many educators were clergymen, which resulted in their overestimated authority in the society at the expense of secular intellectuals. She visited two Istanbul schools: female tutorial and male secondary school Galata Seraj (Galatasaray) and she was extremely impressed by both institutions. Cleanliness in the buildings and in didactic facilities (e.g. physics and chemical workshops) as well as politeness of teachers and the drive of students amazed the Polish woman. She liked an amateur theatre and film projection stage in the female school and physical classes in a huge sports hall in the male school. She commented that Turkish society paid a vital attention to sports, especially to football. The students were wearing bows and badges of one of two sport clubs: Galata Seraj or Fener Bagcze (Fenerbahçe). In a situation when one of the teams lost, its supporters did not sleep at night but cried with despair. Such behaviour was fuelled basically by parents. Melcer-Rutkowska together with the principal of the male school admired a sculptor's atelier and a sculpture of the President prepared by the students.[25]

Turkish towns and villages

In Melcer-Rutkowska's descriptions disproportions in Turkish building industry are clearly presented. Next to narrow high and private houses and rarely seen modern multi-storey buildings there were located huge and impressive edifices. She also deplored the burnt districts of Istanbul which were not tidied and were turned into a

[22] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 10.

[23] Ibid., p. 19.

[24] Ibid., p. 26. He must have been impressed by patriotism expressed there because he recalled this holiday in his next book. He could also observe devotion to motherland in 1934 while celebrating the day of victory. He listened to a speech delivered by general Abdurahman Nafiz among many other speeches. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 78.

[25] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 67–71.

ruin because of wooden houses. Even though a ban on building wooden constructions was issued, there were still a lot of them.[26]

The next city described during journeys in the 1920 was Ankara. A journey to Ankara was supposed to take 26 hours in a comfortable train.[27] Apart from a desert located just in the middle of the distance to Ankara, there was Eskiszehir, a place popular with hot springs and sepiolite deposits.[28] T. Vetulani spent about a month in Ankara and its vicinity so he devoted a lot of attention to this place. It was maintained in cleanliness, had many squares and statues of its hero: Gazi Kemal-Pasha (Paşa). The Polish researcher kept illustrating that Kemal-Pasha could look at the masterpiece from the hills of a suburban district Czankaja (Çankaya). Ankara, where a stylish building of Polish Embassy was located, and its modern suburbs Jeniszehir (Yenişehir) and Kawakla (Kavaklıdere) were developing dynamically at that time.[29] The development must have been either extremely dynamic or overestimated by T. Vetulani, because Melcer-Rutkowska quoted different opinions of Turkish people saying, for instance, that Ankara was a tiny and provincial town. She also heard from one native that he had spent one week in Ankara and he would never go there again, another said that the relocation of the capital would not persuade him to move out from Istanbul. If it remained the capital it would have certain opportunities for development.[30] Observing the today's agglomeration with a population of a few million people the quoted opinions can be characterized as sceptic. Obviously, at that time such judgements were justified because the Polish tourist presented the city in rather a pessimistic way. According to her, there were houses made of clay mixed together with chaff, dung of animals was desiccated on the walls of these houses (it was used as fuel in winter)[31] streets paved with stones were flooded with mud, electric lamps on the streets were scarce, in houses there were neither electricity nor heating stoves (only paraffin stoves were used). Moreover, only Turkish was spoken and only mutton was served in restaurants, whereas cafes were empty. On the other hand, Melcer-Rutkowska found views with snowy peaks and a hill with a castle beautiful. She could admire the scenery from Czankaja, the President's residence, 5 km away from the mountains.[32]

[26] Ibid., pp. 18, 72.

[27] When T. Vetulani reported his second journey he presented two differents duration of a journey to Turkey: 14 hours in a fast train and 17 hours in a slow train. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 52.

[28] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 34–35.

[29] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 7. In 1929 T. Vetulani had an opportunity to see a building of Agricultural Academy, which was being built at that time. Five years later he was impressed by a completed object which was one of the finest in Europe. An account of the second journey contained several descriptions of buildings and institutions in Ankara, including libraries, e.g. Halk ewi, Ismet-paşa-enstitüsü. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż,* p. 44–48. Z. Vetulani presented comprehensive data on building industry in the capital and in small towns. As far as Ankara was concerned, he mentioned problems with sand storms. To limit it, 220 000 trees were planted in Czankaja. T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 94–99.

[30] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 40.

[31] T. Vetulani mentioned *tezek* (dried clay with bull dung) during his second journey as well. See: T. Vetulani, *Wzdłuż*, p. 39.

[32] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, pp. 41, 65–66.

T. Vetulani also described briefly the first capital of Turkey from Byzantine times: Brussa. He basically focused on its therapeutic properties. For instance, he wrote about hot springs in Czekirga (Çekirge-Bursa) districts where every house had a supply of hot mineral springs and where a clean double room with baths twice or three times a day cost only 2 Turkish pounds, which was equal to 1 dollar.[33] The researcher presented a typical Turkish village with houses built with grey unbaked bricks and a garden plot nearby which were surrounded by high walls. The walls connected with each other formed a maze of streets and alleys. The windows of the houses overlooked closed yards. On the squares there were artesian wells and watering-places for animals. An exemplary village Muttalip – near to Eskişehir – consisted of 600 houses and 6 mosques.[34]

Morals and attire

Hospitality was one of the most often mentioned features of the Turkish society. It was discussed repeatedly by Melcer-Rutkowska. As an example she presented visits in shops whose owners invited customers for a rest and a cup of coffee even though the visitors were not willing to buy anything.[35]

T. Vetulani compared the Turkish society to a big family. Men in this family address themselves: son, father, brother and a word sir is eliminated from everyday language. Solidarity, brotherhood and mutual kindness were present all the time. Strict moral principles were a basis of development of the republic. The researcher was also impressed by modesty of Turkish people, which unfortunately was barely observed in Polish society and which made them talk about gaps and shortages in the young state.[36]

Later he pointed to mendacity which had been very common before the time of the republic and its reforms[37], and bribery, which was insignificant when he was in Turkey. The improvement in this field resulted from the development of the country and social reforms which led to willingness of the society to work for a secular state. He explained natural honesty of Turks by a high level of safety, including a lack of theft (he saw heaps of cereals in towns squares which were not watched by anybody).[38]

Helpfulness was also a typical feature of a Turk. He became convinced about it while he was searching for insects which he needed for his research. Initially natives wondered at his actions and smack their lips, as was their habit, but later they caught insects just to help the researcher.[39]

---

[33] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 9.

[34] Ibid., p. 19.

[35] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 27.

[36] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 12–13.

[37] While Edward Raczyński was visiting Instanbul in 1814, he emphasised small number of beggars in comparison with Western cities. See: E. Raczyński, *Dziennik podróży do Turcyi odbytey w roku MDCCCXIV* (Diary of Journey to Turkey held on 1814), Wrocław, 1821, p. 190.

[38] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 14–15.

[39] Ibid., p. 15.

T. Vetulani also analysed the issue of harems because he wanted to correct the wrong image of them among the Europeans. He distinguished a colloquial understanding of the word "harem" (polygamy) which was common in the West from the proper meaning (a part of a room meant for women). As he emphasised, polygamy was abolished in 1926 as a consequence of introducing the Swiss civil code. Because of the society's impoverishment polygamy took place rather rarely, especially among the intellectuals, even before 1926. Before the reform was implemented polygamy was popular in villages, where a woman was treated as an employee. According to the author, the position of woman there was similar to that of a servant.[40]

When Melcer-Rutkowska compared Polish and Turkish morals, she noted that the two nations had distinct attitudes towards cemetery. As she reported, in Turkey there were a lot of such places in accidental locations without any fence. This situation encouraged engaged couples or families to come there and rest or celebrate a holiday in the shade of cypresses.[41]

How did clothes look like at the turn of the second and third decade of the 20th century according to a lady and a scientist? While Melcer-Rutkowska was walking among a colourful crowd near Istanbul stalls she could observe a variety of garments. She noticed Huns in Çarşaf, Persians wearing black caps, Turks wearing turbans and the fez caps and Muslims, who were always seen with rosaries, regardless of the social position.[42] In another place she observed a female street-trader of beads who was wearing striped pantaloons, white kerchief on her head which was beautifully embroidered with black silk and tied below her chin in an Arabian way and it was so long that it covered her figure down to the knees.[43] Readers of Melcer-Rutkowska's account could familiarise themselves with very detailed characterisation of a Turkish woman. She described styles and behaviour of women from every social group separately. Ladies, townswomen, peasant-women and women-soldiers were depicted by the author. Some personages, e.g. a diplomat's wife, Mufidé Ferid Hanum (Hanim), were presented thoroughly. Today, while reading Melcer-Rutkowska's descriptions a reader can feel that she tried to confirm her theory that Turkish women were discriminated. She supported it with facts that there was no suffrage for women and that men dominated the country. On the other hand, she indicated opportunities and freedom of women when it came to divorce and managing their assets. Finally, her hypothesis about discriminated women in Turkey was abolished. It happened when she asked a Turkish minister's wife about women's lot in Turkey. Her interlocuter answered without any hesitation that "a woman in Turkey is the happiest person in the world!".[44]

[40] Ibid., p. 19–20. Melcer-Rutkowska also confirmed these opinions.
[41] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 48–49.
[42] Ibid., pp. 26, 28.
[43] Ibid., p. 35.
[44] Ibid., p. 87.

T. Vetulani's presentation of Turkish style was not as comprehensive as Melcer-Rutkowska's. Only women in the depths of the country were seen wearing chadors. Faces of these women were covered with kerchiefs but completely uncovered women's faces were also seen. Peasants' outfit consisted of sandals or boots, thick white and woollen stockings up to knees, black trousers put into the stockings, woollen red belts used to protect them from dramatic temperature falls, colourful stripped shirts (usually red) and caps with a peak turned to the side or to the back.[45]

Hygiene

When Melcer-Rutkowska searched for some relaxation, she complained that there were not any places for a sea bath. If you wanted to have one you had to drive for an hour to Floria where the beach was heavily crowded with Russians.[46] By the way the traveller paid a lot of attention to the group of emigrants who escaped from their communist country. This situation caused the Turkish women's justified fears of expansion of women from the north.

T. Vetulani noticed that Turks cared about cleanliness not only because of religious demands or customs (e.g. frequent hand-washing, unshoeing before entering religious person's house) but also because of recent political changes. Istanbul as well as Ankara and other cities were clean at the end of the 1920s, in contrast with old descriptions. Obviously, some districts were cleaner than others and it depended on the wealth and personal culture of their citizens. However, administration helped the poor part of the society significantly by installing free bath devices. Moreover, the changes connected with hygiene were also seen in hotels and T. Vetulani could spot cleanness there as well. Nonetheless there were some exceptions, too. Among them Darbali in Balikesir and Osmanie in Brussa[47] can be listed. Whereas Melcer-Rutkowska only a few years earlier complained that in Ankara there was not even one European bathtub and that having a bath was only possible if you knew someone important and then you could have a bath in a small number of Embassies provided with this luxury.[48]

Attitude of Turkish people towards the Poles and the history.

T. Vetulani as a Polish citizen experienced sincere friendliness from Turkish intellectuals, townspeople and peasants. Some of them emphasised historical solidarity and some admired Polish bravery. What surprised the researcher was that Turks avoided the topic of Polish-Turkish wars. However, they appreciated both nations for bravery during fights. T. Vetulani summarised the difficult relations with a proverb: the quarrels of lovers are the renewal of love.[49] On the other hand, Melcer-Rutkowska

[45] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 17–18.

[46] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 31.

[47] There were also other names of hotels in towns, eg.: Hayat oteli, Palas oteli, Askeri. See T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 16–17.

[48] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 36–37.

[49] T. Vetulani, *Obrazki*, p. 4.

was not satisfied with the number of Polish books and newspapers in Turkey. The Turkish people expressed a vivid interest in Polish history, culture and ethnography during an exhibition presenting Poland.[50]

These exemplifying characterisations showed how Turkey could be perceived by foreigners after the republic had been introduced.[51] The travellers indicated various difficulties that appeared at that time, which are typical of a transitional period in every country. While T. Vetulani in preparing his report enjoyed his fascinations connected with Turkey, Melcer-Rutkowska was too critical towards the reality existing in this country. The true Turkey in the 1920s was probably hidden somewhere in between those two presentations.

[50] Melcer-Rutkowska, *Turcja*, p. 97. See also an interesting work on industry exhibition in 1924: *Resimli Mecmua Lehistan (Polonya) Sanayi ve Türkiye* (...) *Instanbul'daki 1. Leh Sergisi Münasebetiyle*, ed. L. Łydko, Varsovia–Grudziądz–Istanbul, 1924 (reprint: Ankara, 2006).

[51] Quite a lot of papers and memoirs of Poles travelling through Turkey in different periods in the 19th and 20th centuries were published in Poland (e.g. by S. Bełza, J. Narkiewicz Jodko, J. Potocki, E. Raczyński, J. Rostafiński).

Agata Hummel

PL ISSN 0239-8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Local Economy and Different Forms of Credits in a Community of Purhépecha Indians in the State of Michoacán, Mexico

Introduction

Angahuan is an indigenous community situated in the mountain region called Meseta[1] Purhépecha or Meseta Tarasca. The name comes from ethnic group of the same name.[2] Meseta Purhépecha is one of the 3 subregions of the Purhépecha region. Geographically, it is the most isolated one, therefore it has preserved traditional Indian sociocultural elements. The Purhépecha region is inhabited by the Indians of the group of the same name as well as by non-indigenous population.[3] Purhépecha ethnic group consists of about 95 000 people[4]. Angahuan is situated at the altitude of more than 2000 m above sea level. The climate is cool and rainy. In the recent decades it has become warmer, which has made it possible to introduce cultivation of avocado on the terrains that belong to the community. Avocado, called green gold, is actually one of the most profitable products of the Uruapan area. Uruapan is the capital of the municipium (administrative area), to which Angahuan belongs. Avocado cultivation is also one of the biggest ecological threats for the region because of uncontrolled deforestation to establish orchards, extensive use of artificial fertilizers, and impoverishment of the soil, characteristic of the avocado plant. The second, and not less important, problem that concerns the economy and ecology of Meseta Purhépecha, is intensive, and often illegal, exploitation of forests.

It is difficult to determine an exact number of the community[5] inhabitants. The church records speak about around 7,000 persons registered in the parish, but official statistics

[1] The term *meset*a as the proper noun in the name Meseta Purhépecha is sometimes replaced by the term *sierra*, both meaning a highland plateau.

[2] The name Purhépecha and Tarasco often replace each other. Both names have different historic and ideological connotations which are not relevant in the context of this article.

[3] The name of the region refers to the ancient distribution of Purhépcha Indians, marks a geographical presence of Purhépecha Indians and is an element of ethnic identity construction. However, the population of the region is not purely indigenous. There are indigenous villages often bordering on *mestizo* ones. Also most cities are inhabited by non-indigenous population.

[4] Perfil Indígena de México: http://pacificosur.ciesas.edu.mx/diagnosticoestatal.html.

[5] The name "community" defines a specific Indian social organization (Sp. *la comunidad*). It is a local community which is ruled by its own traditions which determine the members' coexistence.

count a little more than 4,000 inhabitants. Probably the actual number of inhabitants is somewhere between those two. Difficulties with estimating the exact number of population indicate an important role of immigration for work – temporal or permanent.

Angahuan is a community of a strong Indian character. All inhabitants speak the purhépecha language. It is their first language. Spanish is the language they learn at school. The community members actively participate in traditional *fiestas* and other social activities of an indigenous character. The local system of traditional authority still functions. It consists of democratic electing of local representatives by all male members of the community. This system is, however, strongly influenced by the outside world.

The community members have different ways of making a living and different sources of income. The community has forests, which are managed by its members according to their will. The timber from the exploitation of forests was not long ago still being used to produce boxes for avocado transportations and sold very cheaply to the export concerns. Timber processing is a traditional male job. Because of rapid shrinking of forest resources and thanks to the growing local ecological awareness an important part of timber for avocado boxes is brought from other regions.

Farming is also traditionally men's duty. However, in the families where men are absent women take care of this activity. In Angahuan land is cultivated mostly for one's own use. The exception is avocado. The avocado cultivation is a new alternative for the community. It has been introduced to the region thanks to recent climate changes. Because of the lack of experience of farmers and still difficult natural conditions in the highest parts of the mountains, it is a risky venture which does not always bring desired effects.

Women mainly do textile handicraft. Mainly they sew and weave parts of traditional indigenous clothing, which is still used by most women every day. In Angahuan there are many different micro-enterprises run by women as well as by men, or by whole families. Those are small stores with basic grocery products, one hardware shop where one can buy construction materials, stationer's, stores with traditional clothes and materials, butcher's, one shop with cellular phones. There are also other ventures like private telephones for public use, announcements through a local loudspeaker system in the streets, and occasionally installed food stands, inside or outside the houses of the women who sell the food.

Because of the fact that the community is set close to a young volcano that had its first and last eruption in the 1940s, the recent decades have observed a fast development of tourism and related facilities and services such as hostels, bungalows, restaurants, guided horse tours to the volcano and to the ruins of the town covered with lava. Thanks to this sector of local economy, as well as to a mass work migration to the United States, the external capital comes to the community, and along with it some new forms of managing money, more characteristic of global capitalism than of local, traditional economy.

In Angahuan there are also cooperatives. It is a form of organization for production promoted by the national government and non-governmental organizations. The local varieties of cooperatives differ significantly from the original model which consists

of common work on each stage of production, or service for a client in the case of service ventures. An economic individualism, natural in Angahuan, often penetrates a cooperativistic form that stays cooperative only by name. This kind of cooperatives are formed by carpenters, coordinators of a tourist sector, owners of nurseries.

In the community there are more and more bricklayers because of the growing demand for constructing houses. However, this trade, as many other ones that require high qualifications, is very low-paid, partly because it has many representatives. That is why around 30 per cent of the community members find work outside the region, in big cities in Mexico and in the United States.

The communal character of social relations and local economy

The economy in Angahuan is not independent from regional and global economic processes. Nevertheless, it has a lot of local qualities which are closely connected to the traditional social organization. The local and extra-local elements constantly clash against each other. This results in the process of hybridization where elements of different socioeconomic orders meet. Sometimes these elements are contradictory, then there is a conflict. Sometimes they are complementary and they fuse. Later in this article I will focus on the issue of the local ways of money management. My interest in this particular dimension of economy in socio-cultural context is related to my studies of microcredits as a development program. Microcredits are interpreted from the perspective of anthropology of development, that is, a branch of anthropology that represents a relativistic approach to economic models, placing them in their cultural context. It also questions the objective value of the capitalistic model of economy and development. The functioning of microcredits is interesting not only because of its role in promoting the socio-economic development. An analysis of the combination of the two ways of economic thinking, that of donors and that of receivers of credits, also allows better identification of differences between them and, consequently, better understanding of the local economic behavior and local culture. This kind of study also helps to realize how the features of Western way of economic thinking are culturally relative. A detailed description of the microcredit phenomenon can be found in my previous article and in texts of some other authors.[6] However, at the end of this article I will refer to the microcredit example to contrast it with some other forms of money loaning.

During my fieldwork in Angahuan I observed some regularities in the ways of managing money and organizing work. These regularities are related to the local character of economy, to partial isolation from external influences, and to the social organization of the community. It must be emphasized that the communal character

[6] M. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Dipak Ghosh, Robert E. Wright, "The Impact of Micro-credit on Poverty: Evidence from Bangladesh", *Progress in Development Studies* 5, 2005, p. 298–309; Giovanni Beluche et al., *Microcredito contra la exclusion social: experiencias de financiamiento alternativo en Europa y América Latina*, Flacso, San José, 2005; Marguerite Berger, Laura Goldmark, Tomás Miller-Sanabria, ed., *El boom de las microfinanzas. El modelo latinoamericano visto desde adentro, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo*, Washington, 2007; David Bornstein, *El precio de un*

of the described socio-economic model does not result from the fact that all members of the community are equal, that there is the unlimited community of cultural and social experience, religious and economic attitudes, equal division or even redistribution of material goods, etc. As in the "Western culture", the community as a social organization unifies people of very different individual characteristics, abilities, aspirations, etc. However, the concept of indigenous community should not be mistaken for something like ideal unity of people or their integration in all dimensions.

The indigenous community is a form of social organization[7]. Its unique character consists of the fact that strong emphasis is put on the aspect of collectivity as a way to protect the economic as well as cultural dimension of peoples life. It does not exclude individual freedom and opportunities. The system of common territorial management does not eliminate individual land's ownership and its use. The system of work for the community (so called *faenas*) does not exclude individual ventures. Finally, communality does not exclude diversity. Although the community values promote limited economic development and little economic ambition of its members it does not result in absolute equality of the members. There are some ambitious or well-to-do individuals, and some modest ones. In some communities, more economic activity is observed than in the other ones.

In fact, internally, the community is full of extremities, different social and economic attitudes. There is no unique behavioral pattern, or one manner of social or economic action. It may be an important finding when studying different forms of investing money from microcredits. These differences do not just depend on the level of knowledge about the microcredit logic or on concrete capacity of investment but often on the vision of one's own life. There are people in the community that want and are able to invest money for profit. These are not only people who eventually get richer than the others. These are also people who are sufficiently resourceful to set up a more or less stable and safe economic life in a rather unstable local economy. Others, with a more unstable character but knowing how to take care of themselves, may seem irresponsible but they usually reach the desired economic position. There are also people who, although they have good intentions, cannot work towards economic stabilization. Finally, there are people who are just "lazy" and "do not care". This is why studies on microcredits have to take into consideration the diversity of personalities, family situations, ways of life, etc.

sueńo. La aventura de Muhammad Yunus y el Grameen Bank, Debate, México D.F., 2007; Marguerite S. Robinson, *The Microfinance Revolution. Sustainable Finance for the Poor. Lessons from Indonesia. The Emerging Industry*, Washington: The World Bank, 2001; Agata Hummel, "Los microcréditos en una comunidad indígena de México. Un enfoque sociocultural", *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, No. 28 (forthcoming), 2008.

[7] I argue here with a romantic view of a community as a social organization, alternative to the a capitalistic one. The romantic interpretation has been used for developing an ideological basis for some indigenous and socialistic movements. See for example Hernandez J. Eduardo Zárate, "La comunidad imposible. Alcances y paradojas del moderno comunalismo" in Guillén Miguel Lisbona, coord., *La comunidad a debate. Reflexiones sobre el concepto de comunidad en el México contemporáneo*, Zamora/Tuxtla Gutierrez, 2005.

Therefore the community, rather then being a unifying social structure, is a space of intense interpersonal communication where the negotiating of meanings and of common social space takes place. The instruments of this negotiation are various kinds of cultural activities (working for the benefit of the community, celebrating *fiestas*, social commitments like accepting the role of *compadre* – a ritual kinship).

The aim of negotiation is to reach consensus between individual and collective needs. In this communication space there is enough room for both ambitious and average persons. Such a character of the studied social reality is conducive to co-existence of different kinds of economic activities. Like among individuals, some of those activities have more pro-community character, and some are more individualistic.

Division of labor in the local economic system – an example

The following description of work interdependencies may be a good example of how the local economy works. While analyzing the use made of the loans I observed the following phenomenon. A majority of women,[8] when they take their credits, invest money in buying threads or fabrics – if their main occupation is to weave or to sew, or in consumer goods – if they own a store. It happens that, when the credit is given to a group, some women do not yet have the need to invest in their lucrative venture. The credit cycle is not adapted to the individual or even group dynamics of producing and selling. So women do not always invest credits in their enterprises because they do not always need investment there. Sometimes, if a woman already has the threads that she needs for work, she invests in something else: in improving her house, in education of her children, in clothes, in organizing a *fiesta*, etc. At the same time, she continues to produce and thus makes money to pay the credit back.

A more careful examination of the structure of economic management reveals that some women do not invest cash, be it from microcredits or from their own earnings, led by individual interest only. Let's take an example of one of the Angahuan inhabitants, Antonia.[9] Antonia weaves basic fabric but she does not make the finishing trim. The trim consists of tassels and laces on the ends of a *rebozo* (shawl). The unfinished *rebozo* is passed to other women, who add the missing elements. This is to finish the production process more quickly, to sell the item and to start making another one. In this case Antonia invests her credit to also pay those women who

[8] On the declarative level it is a majority. However, at this stage of investigation it is difficult to tell if some declarations concerning the destiny of the money are not caused by the pressure put on meeting the rules of investing microcredits. It is then possible that some women sometimes invest their credits not according to the recommendations of the microcredit organizations and do not declare it publicly. I take it into consideration because this is what some women suggested to me not in their own cases but about other women they know.

[9] All the names mentioned in this article are fictitious. The goal of presenting concrete characters is to illustrate some phenomena and to emphasize the role of individuals in the process of economic management.

work with or for her. This system of economic dependencies gets more complicated because of the fact that women often come to Antonia and ask her for a loan which they will pay back working for her. This form of collaboration brings benefits to both parties. From Antonia's point of view, the fact that her *rebozo* is finished by somebody else speeds up the process of production, enables faster cumulation of the ready products, and more efficient response to the demand. In other words, in more tense situations it helps Antonia not to drop out of market.

In this way an economic structure or institution is being constructed on a microscale (Fig. 1). An individual, Ms X, who has organizational skills like Antonia, cash and access to the market, commissions some stages of production to other people, who usually are in a less favorable economic situation. The individuals who work for her do not have financial reserves, they do not work for themselves but rather accept commissions from other people. They often do not have enough money for basic things, such as food or clothes. It is probably because they do not plan their work, and do not analyze the balance of incomes and expenditures. It may be due to a number of reasons – from individual characteristics of the person, through family situation, to structural conditions. People from lower levels of this economic relations system do not have enough cash to invest. Such individuals often use the position of Ms X, who does not only organize her own work, but offers it to other people. They benefit from the position of X not only as the work organizer but also as a provider of loans without any interest rates. This is what can be called a communal element of local economy. Credit which is given in the form of advance payment

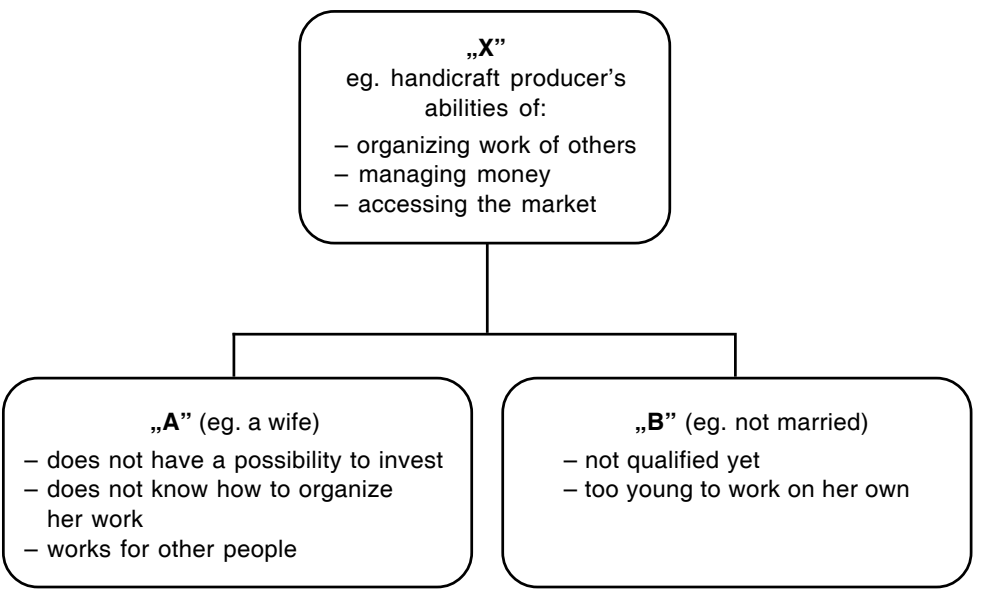

Figure 1. The local system of economy relations to compare with Figure 2 (p. 173)

makes it possible to adjust the possibilities of the whole local economic system to the needs and abilities of all the members of the community, or at least to those of a majority. Thanks to those mechanisms the whole local system adapts to the market – both the local and the external one, because many products are sold outside the community. This credit system is also one of the most important elements of establishing and maintaining social relations. I will return to this issue later, while presenting *tanda* – an independent local saving and credit system.

The consequences of this kind of socioeconomic system reach much further. The position of X gives her prestige and authority. I do not want to use the word "power", as it could be associated with abuse, especially in the Mexican context, usually meaning taking care of one's own interests at the expense of others, which in this system is not observed, probably thanks to the communal character of the described relationships. If X abuses her authority, she would probably stop consolidating the web of relations in the group with a social capital. The communal mechanism of limiting the power of the individuals who abuse it is usually effective. The authority of X is connected with her pro-social attitude, responsiveness to other people's problems and needs, financial flexibility, and willingness to make her capital temporarily available to other people without expecting direct benefits. This person does not just give her money to the needy. She loans it to other individuals for some period of time, according to their needs. What X gets in return is positive opinion, respect and social support. The response of the members of the group, established on the grounds of the socioeconomic relations described above, to the economic support that the X is providing, can be work contribution while organizing *fiestas*, family celebrations, anniversaries, or doing other jobs in the field or in the house of X. In this way, a whole network of social relations is created, as well as social capital (trust, mutual respect, connections, norms, ability to cooperate). This capital is formed on the basis of organizational abilities, qualifications in certain "profession", and the ability of X to accumulate economic capital. The role of this central individual is crucial. She is a kind of junction through which all relations pass. She is basically responsible for constructing, maintaining and functioning of this kind of social capital.

This might be the right moment to pass to the discussion of the concept of social capital as one of the possible analytic tools that could help to better understand the socioeconomic relations in Angahuan.

Social capital

The concept of social capital is an important tool used in the analysis of development politics. In my opinion, it is worthwhile to test its interpretational power in the context of local economy analysis. Social capital, to use a very basic definition, can be described as norms, institutions, social organizations which promote mutual trust, support and cooperation within a group. The paradigm of social capital includes the assumption that stable relations of trust, mutuality and cooperation can contribute to three kinds of benefits: a) diminishing the costs of transaction; b) producing public goods, c) facilitating

the creation of effective organizations ruled from the bottom.[10] On the economic level, social capital, as an informal institution, makes it possible to reduce the costs of transaction connected with the economic risk and the lack of knowledge about each other among the participants of this transaction. The constant use of the deposit of social capital usually leads to consolidation of the social network, which is an indispensable condition of existence of a strong civil society or a community.[11]

Social capital, however, does not necessarily lead to establishing high level of social participation, a civil society or a democratic community. It does not necessarily imply growth of productivity, of production, of economy as a whole. There are many other variables that should be taken into consideration. The classic definitions of social capital related this phenomenon with none but positive consequences related to economic and social development. The critics of those definitions state that it is necessary not only to determine if social capital exists in a given society, but first of all to check if the social organization of a civil or communal character originates from social capital, not only from social capital, or not from social capital at all.[12] While describing social organization it is necessary to take into consideration many other factors besides social capital, such as material resources or beliefs.

Social capital can have positive effects in the context of socioeconomic development. However, it can also operate against public interest. Social capital, in some cases, leads to discrimination, exploitation, corruption and domination by the mafia or authoritarian systems. Alejandro Portes warns: the tendency to organize socially can be a source of public goods, but it can also lead to public "evil". This public "evil" can signify weakening of individual initiatives, exclusion of others, the limitation of freedom, provocation of internal conflicts.[13] The form of social capital that I have identified in Angahuan and described above, is rather specific. Apart form horizontal relations of trust, mutuality and support, vertical relations can also be identified, with a central figure of coordinator. It is worthwhile to pose a question if those relations qualify as some of the negative consequences of social capital.

The same basic elements of social capital that create a community, can also be intercepted by individuals or groups with power.[14] Those elements can then be used against social interest. For example, individuals who create power structures could be an equivalent of X from the system described above. Those individuals make these structures appear as social capital institutions to take advantage of the existing norms and relations of social control. In other words, while calling themselves members of the community, they try to dress up their antisocial actions as ones for the sake of the community. However, those negative forms of using social capital

[10] John Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*, Santiago de Chile: División de Desarrollo Social, 2000, p. 7.

[11] Ibid., p. 10.

[12] Ibid., p. 12.

[13] Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:1, 1998, p. 1–24.

[14] Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*, p. 16.

are easy to recognize because they usually pursue the final goal of destroying the communal social capital institutions: trust, cooperation and authority legitimized by the group.

I do not think, though, that we can speak of this kind of antisocial function in the case of the network of interdependencies with X as the central person. Although X organizes the group and manages its functioning, she does not try to use the group's activity for her own benefit, or the benefit of her closest family. This is why to describe the role of X I would rather use the word "authority" than "power". Authority is associated with social consent to fulfill the role of the head of vertical relations of mutuality, with legitimization of this exceptional position, and even with gratitude for the work that X does. Thus, in spite of vertical relations, this scheme can still be seen as a social capital with pro-social character.

This form of social capital does not seem to contradict individual initiative or to act against individual freedom. According to Portes i Landolt,[15] social capital sometimes kills individual initiative. They cite a study on the rural communities where individuals who have accumulated some small amount of economic capital, but still above the average, feel that this capital is being wasted because they have to respond to the claims of aid coming from the poorer part of the family or of the community. In this perspective, the norms of solidarity and mutual support result in "free riding", that is, unfair use of the results of someone else's efforts, and make the accumulation of capital impossible.[16] In Angahuan it is possible to observe this phenomenon at first glance. The individuals who get rich above average and do not share their material recourses are criticized for antisocial attitude. It generates tensions but, in my opinion, those tensions stay within the norms of communal social organization.

There is an opinion that forms of solidary (communal) social capital hinder economic development because they make accumulation of financial capital impossible. However, my empirical observations seem to contradict this opinion. In this context entrepreneurial individuals manage their investments with considerable freedom, going back and forth between the capital market and the communal social relations. In extreme cases, they reject the redistributive claims, addressed to them from the members of the community, and leave the community to continue their individual economic development. Those entrepreneurs, however, usually reject only those claims that they consider excessive. Such an attitude will always find support among the locals interested in sustaining the interpretation of complex cultural norms which, at least partially, supports the individual accumulation of capital.[17]

Norms and sanctions that refer to generosity practices and concern those members of the community who have managed to accumulate financial capital, do not bring those individuals down to the average economic level of the community. They rather

[15] Alejandro Portes, Patricia Landolt, "The Downside of Social Capital", *The American Prospect* No. 26, 1996, p. 18–21, cited after: Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*

[16] Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*, p. 14.

[17] Ibidem.

encourage them to invest the economic capital in the social capital, instead of maintaining it in a form of private property. The pressure of the public opinion on sharing is not only a form of pressure on those individuals to contribute to developing public material resources. It is also connected to the personal benefits to the donor – in a short- and long-term perspectives. The financial capital is used to develop social capital to reach rational but not necessarily economic goals.[18] In a short-term perspective, the donor achieves emotional satisfaction from acceptance by the group and from the reinforcement of his or her social prestige. In a long-term perspective, his/her credits of mutuality in the network of individual contacts, as well as of cooperation with the community as a whole, are growing. The same institutions which encourage communal expenditures play the role of social control agents and prevent "free riding".[19] The individual socioeconomic interests are eventually protected within the community.[20] Individuals who give more also get more, both in the social capital aspect and in the economic capital aspect.

In my opinion, communal social capital discussed here does not limit the socio-economic development of community members but contributes to the formation of what I call the economy of balance.

Economy of balance within the community

Within the socioeconomic system in Angahuan, which I described above, a family is an important unit in which social capital, with a few exceptions, is created through socialization. The social and economic support in the family is something natural and always at the first place, before other social relations. All family relations, as well as those connected to ritual kinship, are usually a very important element of a single economic network. Trust, mutual respect, norms, connections, capacity of cooperation created at a family level can easily spread over a bigger relational network or get included in some already existing one.

This socioeconomic system is characteristic of a rural indigenous community. The described institutions may be considered an important element of the community economy. I call this system the economy of balance because economic behavior is driven not only by individual interest, but also by a sense of community, and sensibility to the needs of others. In this context, by balance I understand the existence of a pro-economic as well as pro-social factors in people's behavior.

This is not a homogeneous system in which capitalistic rules cannot come into play. On the contrary, "capitalistic" behavior coexists with the economy of balance – pure individual interest, competition, aspiration to seize (not necessarily accumulate), at all social costs, as much capital as possible, to surround oneself with urban symbols

[18] Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91, No. 3, 1985, cited after: Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*

[19] Portes, "Social Capital: its Origins and Applications".

[20] Durston, *¿Qué es el capital social comunitario?*, p. 14.

of welfare (a big concrete house, a 4-wheel drive car, etc.). That is why we can talk about a socioeconomic hybrid in which two models coexist. Sometimes they come into conflict with each other, and sometimes they fuse. A conflict may cause a break of institutions of the economy of balance on the one hand, and a rejection of some rules of capitalistic economy, on the other. Fusion consists of introducing some elements of capitalistic economy into the system of economy of balance, or vice versa. The hybrid community economy is then a combination of the two forces: fusion and conflict.

The economy of balance is a hybrid that has been developing for years. Any external interventions, be it social or economic ones – from the introduction of the religious *fiesta* system and artisan specialization in many communities in the colonial times, through the regional, national and global economic relations, to development projects – have been influencing the local economic system, causing fusions and conflicts, and resulting in hybridization. However, within such hybrid, it is still possible to distinguish between those two types of economy and ways of thinking about social and economic relations: a communal and a capitalistic one. It is often an intuitional distinction but still worth considering.

The example of the different stages of *rebozo* (traditional shawl) production, corresponding to different cells of the socioeconomic interdependency network, is only one of many possible illustrations of communal economy. Many production-related or other income-generating activities follow, partially or fully, the same scheme. Individuals or families with greater need for labor force that they can ensure themselves offer jobs to those who do not have them or are not able to organize them. The rules of the scheme involve not only individual profit but also sensitivity towards other persons, and what follows, maintenance of the communal social relations.

Tanda-like credits and the local economy

The communal economy described above is an area conducive to the development of a system called *tanda*. *Tanda*, in Spanish, means a sequence, an order, according to which things are happening.[21] In the economic context, it is a group of people that practice a common credit system. Each member of the group makes regular payments to a common fund. With the same regularity, the whole gathered amount of money is given to one member of the group as a credit. The *tanda* system is based primarily on mutual trust. The communal organization and the social relations existing within this organization are conducive to the formation of *tanda*-like relations of trust. The members of *tanda* are selected on the basis of already tested relations of mutuality and exchange. This is why the *tanda* system, as well as microcredits, is better accepted in an organized community than in a society of loose social relations.

This type of economic organization exists in many places in the world in various forms, depending on the culture and on the social organization features. *Tanda*, as described here, has originated in Mexico – most probably in the city of Puebla (in the

[21] *Clave. Diccionario de uso del español actual*, Madrid: Ediciones SM, 1999.

central part of the country) and its surroundings. Most probably, the idea and logic of *tanda* were drawn upon a similar Chinese system used by immigrants who came to Mexico as hired workers in the beginning of the 20th century. The *tanda*-like groups gather people interested in saving money and maintaining or creating the social relations between the members of the group at the same time.[22] On the one hand, they are autonomous and self-sufficient, complex systems of financial and social protection. On the other hand, they allow temporary capital accumulation in the hands of an individual, and, consequently, investments that would be difficult to make with individually collected capital. The rotation of the limited recourses enables their more effective usage and, in some cases, even multiplication.

On the supra-local level the *tanda* system also plays an important role. First of all, as a system compatible with the communal logic, it provides relative independence of the local community from the regional and global economy and from institutions such as banks and others credit organizations. Those, as commercial agencies, not only give credits but also collect interests that are difficult to gather in the economy of limited resources. *Tandas*, however, do not require any additional financial expenditures because the guarantee of their functioning is not in the profit but in social relations and trust – in the social capital.

The indigenous communities in Mexico differ from the rest of the society in three dimensions: economic, social and cultural. Those dimensions inter-penetrate one another and relative independence of one dimension contributes to independence of the others. In the situation in which local communities in Mexico have certain autonomy in the dimension of economic activities, and maintain certain autonomy in the social sphere, they can also cultivate cultural autonomy. Total economic integration into the system of the national economy would probably cause a fast socio-cultural inclusion as well. *Tandas* are then the elements of the process of constructing ethnic autonomy.

At the same time, the local communal economy, as an efficient organization based on social relations, is an institution that can participate in the national and even global economic system in a competitive and effective way. Being autonomous in some respect, it is not isolated from the outside economic reality. On the contrary, it provides institutional basis for participation in the global economic relations.

The functioning of the *tanda* system – examples

Tandas function in a similar way as the horizontal-vertical relations that I have described above as an example of the economy of balance. It is only women who are involved in *tandas* in Angahuan. The group usually consists of 20–25 persons, or rather units, where each fee unit constitutes an equal share. A unit is not necessarily equivalent to a person. The share that corresponds to one unit may be gathered by one, two, three or even four persons, depending on the possibilities of the *tanda*

[22] Rosalía Gama, Delma Medrano, Luis Medrano, *Tandas and Cundinas: Mexican-American and Latino-American Rotating Credit Associations in Southern California*, 06.11.2008: http://www.anthro.uci.edu/html/Programs/Anthro_Money/Tandas.htm.

members. Every week all the units of the group contribute the same amount of money to the common fund. The collected amount, equivalent to the sum of individual weekly contributions, is then offered as a loan to a person or a unit, one by one. The cycle lasts as many weeks as there are units.

In the observed cycle the *tanda* of the main coordinator, Lupe, had 23 units. Every unit paid 400 pesos every week, or, in the local jargon, it "was playing with the amount of 400 pesos" (*jugar de a 400 pesos*). There were some individuals who could only pay 100 pesos, so to "enter the game" as a unit they had to form a group of four; those who were able to pay 200 pesos had to form a group of two. However, they did not constitute an independent group that would establish the rules of division of fees and loans. They were controlled by Lupe. She composed a group of women who had expressed interest in dividing the fee among more than one person. She would collect the share from each woman separately, and then give them their respective parts of one unit credit. In that cycle, the credit was 9200 pesos for each unit. The persons from the groups would get relatively less, depending on how many persons were in the group. Individuals who "played" with 100 pesos were usually women who did not have their own business, and they might have been playing with their husband's money. They were not able to collect major amounts.

Lupe's function is voluntary. *Tanda* does not require interest rates to finance its operation. It is a fully intracommunal organization. All the detailed rules depend on the members of *tanda*. Lupe declares that from time to time she obtains a few pesos from some members of the *tanda*. It is supposed to be a reward for her supervisory work.

In the community there are several *tandas*. They do not always work well and do not always continue from one cycle to another. Lupe's *tanda*, in the opinion of many women from Angahuan, has functioned very well for 18 years. From time to time somebody joins the group and somebody quits. It is rather unusual for anybody to not pay on time. According to the rules of the week cycle, in this particular *tanda* the days of payment are Monday through Wednesday. On Wednesday the whole sum of the credit must be in place. If one of the "players" is not able to pay on time she reports it to the coordinator who usually pays the missing rate. The unwritten rule says that Lupe cannot give an incomplete amount of credit because somebody has failed to contribute. She is responsible for collecting the due amount, be it from the *tanda* members or from some other source. Those who do not pay on time usually bring the missing money after few days, and the investment of X is balanced. In the long history of the *tanda* Lupe only once had a serious problem. One person had been behind with her payments for a long time. Lupe had to pay her shares many times. At the end of the cycle that person decided to withdraw from the *tanda*. She eventually paid her debt to Lupe in instalments but has never joined the *tanda* again. Both of them knew very well that after such an experience she should not play in the *tanda*. They split up in peace and mutual understanding.

It happens that some *tandas* function badly. It is probably due to the fact that the coordinating person is not able to make a correct decision while selecting the members

and organizing the group. It may also depend on many factors, like honesty of the group members, sincerity and mutual trust.

The family situation of the coordinator of the *tanda* is very important to understand the importance of her role, as well as the rules of functioning of the group. Lupe has a husband and four children. Lupe has to pay for the two of them to go to school. Her husband, together with his brother, owns a carpenter's workshop where they produce wooden boxes for avocado exportation. They share some profits and invest the rest. They have two workers. Lupe's husband gives her 1000 pesos every week for household expenses. He does not ask if it is enough. If there is a need for more Lupe must fill the gap with her own income which she draws mainly from her multiple-trade store (*abarrotes*, which means various articles). The store is then the second important source of income for the family. Lupe invests her *tanda* credits in the store supplies and pays her weekly contribution from the money she makes in the store. The other source of income is breeding of pigs. The family depends therefore on many income sources.

Lupe, apart from coordinating the *tanda* and supporting those women who cannot manage to pay their contributions on time, is helping those who have financial difficulties. Usually these are women from the *tanda*, and mostly those who play 100 pesos. Those women often do not have enough money to buy food. In this case Lupe gives them products from her store on credit, which they pay later, after receiving their loan from the *tanda*. Lupe's store works in aid of *tanda* and as a support for its members. It is the *tanda's* material base as well as social capital. Properly administrated, it can be not only a source of income for the family but also an indirect source of support for other community members, and as a result a pillar of the community's social capital. The social capital produced by the *tanda* in which Lupe is a coordinator is influencing many levels of socioeconomic relations. The *tanda* in this case can be seen as a kind of an efficient informal microeconomic institution. The role of the store as a *tanda* basis is not neutral. Lisa Redfield Peattie, in her book about social relations of communal character in the city of Guayana district, emphasizes the role of storekeepers, or generally of the owners of small local enterprises, in the construction and maintenance of social relations. They are, in her opinion, centers of informal network of community relations. Because of their public function they know lots of people from the district and with many of them they establish *compadrazgo* relations (fictitious kinship). Storekeepers are also important elements that shape public opinion. They are active in the pro-communal activities: they form groups supporting political parties, they organize public works, etc. They are also people who have contact with an external world: one storekeeper from the district described by Redfield Peattie was even reading some news from the newspaper to every person interested. On the one hand, the role of the storekeeper may be a burden because he/she is often a source of credit, which is not easy for a small business. On the other hand, giving credits is a key element for the business's success. All the ventures that went out of business were conducted by people who, in Redfield's opinion, were not able to work out their position, the position that could

be an axis of social relations. Without this kind of relations the entrepreneur would not be able to compete on the local market.[23]

This example and its interpretation show the mutual benefits that concern all the *tanda* members engaged in the multilevel socioeconomic relations. Lupe gains capital to support the *tanda* from her small business. Thanks to that she reinforces her social relations that make her business competitive. The *tanda* members use both kinds of credits, those that come directly from *tanda,* and those that are given by Lupe. In return for coordinating the *tanda* and for some extra favors people not only offer Lupe social support but also make her store function well.

The *tanda*-like credits and the local economy

A *tanda* is coordinated by one or two persons. They are the centre of the *tanda* and they share obligations of the management of the group. Their role is similar to the function of X. X organizes people that she knows, that she trusts, usually on the basis of some previous socioeconomic relations. In many cases the institutional basis of the *tanda* coordinator's function is a small business of some kind or, in other cases, an informal system of organization of handicraft production. The group of a potential social capital is being formed through the usage of economy of balance network with an economic and social basis in a initiative of the coordinator. She is a person with prestige and authority, she chooses adequate persons for her *tanda*: honest, hard-working, responsible, socially active. This function of the coordinator has a lot to do with power. It is because she can, for example, already at the very beginning accept or reject a candidate to the group. However, *tanda* is a flexible system (as opposed to microcredits). This flexibility consists, for example, of the fact that practically every woman can enter to the play with the beginning of the cycle. Nevertheless, she is being warned about the fact that if she stops paying her contribution, her money will be frozen till the end of the cycle. It happens usually at the expense of the whole amount of the general accessible credit, because every following loan is then lower by one missing fee. The other possibility is that the coordinator or somebody else from the group accepts to pay the missing fee apart from her basic contribution. The person who accepts this solution would fill in the missing element and in consequence will have a double loan. I have not learned yet what happens if the person who stops paying was already credited at the beginning. I think, though, that it happens rarely because people of uncertain economic basis do not receive credits at the beginning of the new *tanda* cycle. The first to obtain the credit are usually those persons who pay the highest, e.g. double fees.

A woman who does not manage to continue playing in *tanda* is not chased nor persecuted or forced to pay. Nobody comments on that, or accuses her of lack of responsibility. This kind of public sanctions do not seem to be popular in the community. The person knows well that she has not fulfilled the rules of the group and she usually

[23] Lisa Redfield Peattie, *The View from the Barrio*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972, p. 56.

withdraws by herself and does not continue the next cycle. If, however, it is a matter of a single difficult situation, she can be accepted back. This flexible way of social capital formation within a *tanda* does not cause a definitive exclusion of women recognized by a coordinator as not suitable for the *tanda* system. Women who feel they failed usually withdraw by their own decision. This does not cause negative results for the social relations in the given group. Summarizing: by flexibility of the *tanda* system I understand a high level of agency (independency of each woman, possibility of an influence on the form of socioeconomic relations). This is a key element in the social system where the pride of woman is very strong in spite of the fact that a common opinion emphasizes a domination of the machismo model.

The coordinator's attitude is also important. She does not impose her authority but it is conceded to her by the group. She only guides people a little bit and looks after rules to be obeyed. Nevertheless she leaves a lot of freedom for spontaneous actions. Her authority is limited to moderation of the system, in which a group of women voluntarily decides to participate. Apart from moderation of *tanda*, the coordinator also plays the role of X in the system of the economy of balance. Her authority derives from this position to a large degree. Socioeconomic relations of interdependency overlap the *tanda* system. Sometimes someone who in a given moment does not have money for food takes products from Lupe's store on credit to pay it back from the *tanda* loan. In the meantime the coordinator credits this person with her own means. Then there arises a complicated system of socioeconomic interrelations. In this way the social capital and the economic one are connected to create a network of the logic presented in the figure 2.

Microcredits and the local economy

Microcredits are one of the most popular institutionalized and formalized forms of money management between women in Angahuan. This fact is a subject of my studies, which I hope will result in a PhD thesis soon. Here I will only propose a possible interpretation of microcredit functioning in the context of local economy. I will contrast microcredits with those grassroots initiatives of saving and investing money described above.

Microcredits work in the similar way that *tanda* does, with some exceptions depending on the particular situation. The foundation of microcredits functioning is a group of mutual trust, which is at the same time a form of guarantee for a bank or an microfinance institution. According to the main idea of microcredits, social capital should be the basis of the group. Women should choose among their friends, neighbors, etc. to form a group. They do it through the existing relations of trust and mutual support. However, social capital cannot always by produced simply by promoting and introducing microcredit rules. In many cases the microcredit model of social capital is imposed from above. This usually does not result in what is expected. Sometimes the microcredit advocates do not have enough knowledge about the rules of local economy and its social dimension. As a result, their activities not only do not cause the creation of social capital with pro-social functions, but also influence

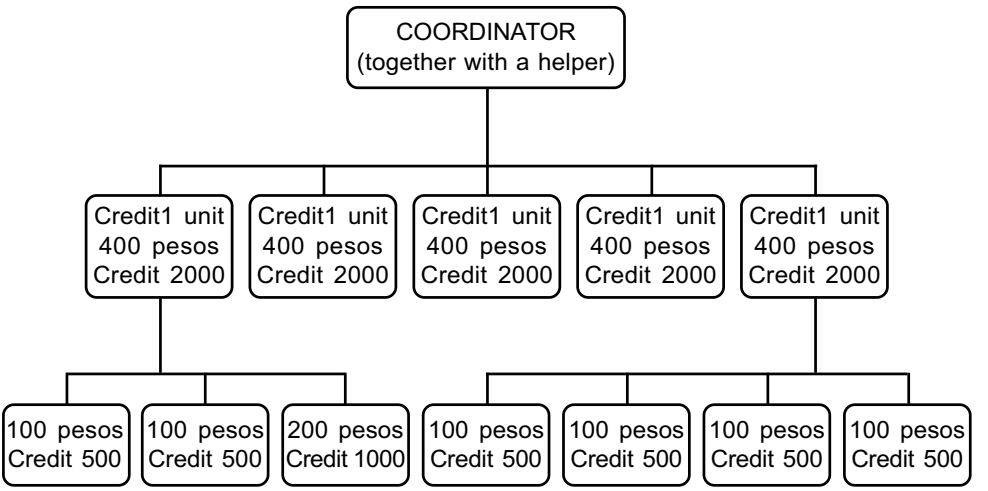

Figure 2. Hierarchical *tanda* system

negatively the existing social capital. If the group is accidentally well selected there is a possibility to create a positive social capital. If not, the group will probably be problematic and dissolve quickly. Sometimes groups are formed with rush because of an urgent need of cash and a temptation caused by the microcredit constant promotion. Then the selection may not be well-thought-out and the results can be negative.

One of the most popular mistake is to keep a strong control on the microcredit group by a representative of the microcredit bank. Unlike in a *tanda*, in microcredits the coordinator is a person from outside of the community. Her authority does not result from the participation in social relations and her position inside them, but has its source outside the group and the community as a whole. Her function is connected with one very important adventage – the access to cash and the possibility to redistribute it between those who do not have this direct access. In *tandas* cash has a collective origin and only on special occasions it comes from the coordinator's private fund. In the case of microcredits the promoter's authority does not stem from the fact of possessing a legitimized function in local socioeconomic interdependency system. It is rather a form of power originating from the outside world and based on the control of access to the economic capital. High demand for cash in the local community reinforces the relation of domination and subordination.

This situation of subordination shows how the two different ways of thinking, capitalistic and communal, clash against eachother. In the first case, the people's behavior is steered by will of control and benefit. In the second case, those features are balanced by a pro-social attitude. When effort is made to reach mutual understanding between representatives of those two ways of thinking there might be

some consensus reached. Than the microcredits can play the positive role for both sides. However, this effort is not often being made. The promoters of microcredits, on the one hand, do not try to understand better local socioeconomic relations to design their offer properly to the local needs. On the other hand, they do not give their clients an access to complete information about rules, goals and benefits of microcredit for their donors.

The external authority of the promoter is not conductive to constructing mutual trust and responsibility. In case of problems the solutions are expected to come from the outside coordinator. The capital, as well as the very idea of microcredits is perceived as external to the community. There is little identification of credit receivers with their group, and what follows is little interest in searching for solutions for group problems. Groups are often made of accidentally chosen members who do not internalize norms of microcredits functioning, nor do they have social relations that could be strong enough to make the group function well.

However, a microcredit group is sometimes constructed on the basis of existing social capital – the one created by a *tanda* or by a network of economy of balance relations. Then there is a possibility that it will function without problems. In this case, apart from the external coordinator, there is normally also a person with Lupe's characteristics. It is her who really ensures an effective members selection and efficient group's functioning. If she has an authority and is able to form a group of high flexibility and independence from the microcredit bank, the social capital can be maintained or developed. It is possible, although rather exceptional, that this kind of group is formed as a response to the promotion of microcredits. However, I did not find such a case in the studied community.

Why, in spite of often antisocial functions of microcredits are they so popular in Angahuan? Why approximately 50% of female members of the community belong to at least one microcredit group? Paradoxically, it probably is connected not with the fact that there is not enough money in the community, but on the contrary, with the existence of a quite an efficient system of money flows. The inhabitants of Angahuan, men as well as women, are enterprising and ambitious. The importance of local customs does not contradict the aspiration towards the improvement of material life conditions, better education, participation in the social and economic life beyond the community level. Cash is being processed in the network of local micro-enterprises as well as delivered from outside through the tourist services that are offered to the guests, and through the influx of dollars sent by emigrants.

In comparison with microcredits, *tandas* can be less attractive to the community members because of the perspective of every week contributions payed in advance to the credit. In microcredits the benefit is seen first. Sometimes it can be double or triple if there is more than one person in the family getting credit. The temptation to get a big amount of money in a short time is stronger than the reflection on how to pay the credit back.

Lupe belongs to the microcredit group. Her group is an example of how the microcredit overlapped the existing *tanda* structure. In the beginning of the first

microcredit cycle Lupe was already regretting that she entered with the *tanda* members to the microcredit program. They did not have enough awareness or knowledge about what they were entering into. They were learning while practicing. They did not expect that microcredits would cost them so much time and that it would mean spendings on frequent trips to town, etc. *Tanda* is time-consuming and cash-consuming. Microcredits require every week group meetings, trips to town, etc. Lupe herself decided to enter into microcredits after consulting it with her husband. They thought that this way they could gather money to do the *colado* (a concrete roof) over the new part of the house. After a few weeks it turned out that microcredits were not firm and strait way to reach the goal that Lupe had defined for herself, and that they were not necessarily more profitable than *tanda*. It is possible that the temptation of receiving money on credit will dominate the *tanda* system and Lupe will dedicate her time to coordinate the microcredit group. It is possible that because of it she will neglect her previously established social relations, and in is also possible that she will manage to work well in both credit systems.

Conclusions

The description and interpretation of the fieldwork data, gathered in 2008 and presented above, is a good material for future theoretical work. Quite deliberately, I have not proposed any theoretical analysis of the studied cases, I have concentrated on presenting fragments of reality that seemed significant to me and I would like to treat the above interpretation as an inspiration for further research, and as a tool for organizing observations of the studied reality. The initial panorama looks as follows: there is an indigenous community – a social organization relatively independent from the external world. This community, as many other rural communities in the countries classified as developing, is a target of development policy. It means that there is a project, directed from above, of transformations that should lead to a concrete goal, i.e., development. One of the tools of this project are microcredits. They should guide the community inhabitants to the "right" development path. However, they are not introduced in social, economic and mental vacuum. Just like the whole system of thought and action which is standing behind them, the reality in which they are introduced has its own structure. I have tried to capture some of this reality in this article. I started with microcredits but I have broadened my interests in the field of investigation to other forms of credit behavior. In order to understand social importance of credit activity, it is good to put it in the context of other socioeconomic behaviors. In this article I have presented a broader background of the phenomenon of microcredits.

While drawing conclusions from the 2008 fieldwork and discussing it with my fellow-researchers who were so helpful reading the article and providing their feedback, I can already see very clearly some missing elements in my knowledge about the studied reality. First of all, there is a need to identify and observe the functioning of more credit groups promoted by different microcredit organizations. Also, those organizations need to be investigated with respect to their norms and

working structures. As a context of credit phenomenon, the local understanding of such concepts as money, entrepreneurship, development, hard work versus laziness, etc. must be explored.

The main problem I have faced in my research from the very beginning was how to identify ethnographic microcredit studies carried out in other parts of the world. There is a lot of sociological, statistic and economic data. What is more, those data are mostly produced within the discourse of development – that is for development agencies or at least within the rhetoric of predominant pro-development thinking. As a result, one can only read about positive aspects and good effects of microcredits. It seems that in my study I am facing a similar problem of the knowledge production perspective that David Mosse is talking about in his article.[24] He shows how different the interpretation of development workers can be from that of anthropologists. Therefore it is extremely difficult to evaluate my point of view and to say if my critique that clearly questions many positive effects of the microcredit system could be applied to other contexts than just that of Mexico, Michoacán and the Purhépecha community. However, I hope that my conclusions can serve as reference to those researchers that study microcredits in other geographical locations, and I think that there is a huge potential in international dialogue between researchers representing various interpretative perspectives.

[24] David Mosse, "Anti-social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, No. 12, 2006, p. 935–956.

PL ISSN 0239–8818
HEMISPHERES
No. 23°, 2008

Book Reviews

Pap Ndiaye, *La Condition noire. Essai sur une minorité française*, Paris, Editions Kalmann – Levi, 2008, 435 pp.

Cet Essai de Pap Ndiaye, précédé par une nouvelle inédite *Les Sœurs* de Marie Ndiaye, elle même sœur cadette de l'auteur, en guise de préface, examine la situation des Noirs de France. L'auteur traite de la condition noire dans une parallèle ou une comparaison avec la situation des Noirs aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique. Il considère les Noirs de France comme une «minorité», se démarquant ainsi de ceux qui résume la question noire en France au communautarisme ou à l'identité culturelle.

Dès l'introduction l'auteur constate l'injustice et montre le paradoxe qu'il va essayer de cerner tout au long d'un livre bien écrit et très riche en informations sur les Noirs en France, mais aussi outre Atlantique. «Les Noirs de France sont individuellement visibles, mais ils sont invisibles en tant que groupe social et qu'objet d'étude pour les universitaires. D'abord en tant que groupe social, ils sont censés ne pas exister, puisque la République française ne reconnaît pas officiellement les minorités, et ne les compte pas non plus».[1], constate l'auteur, qui estime que cette absence de visibilité des populations noires pourrait être acceptable ou bien ne poserait pas de problème en soi, «si certaines difficultés sociales spécifiques qui les affectent étaient mesurées, connues, reconnues. Or, ce n'est pas le cas».[2]

Le livre s'articule autour de six chapitres. Dans le premier, intitulé : «Le fait d'être noir», Pap Ndiaye analyse le problème de la notion de «race», et estime que «fondamentalement, la question de la «race» se pose : il est bien clair que, d'un point de vue biologique, les races n'existent pas».[3] L'auteur explique que les distinctions raciales, jusqu'au milieu du XXe siècle furent présentes pour justifier les rapports de domination matérielle et symbolique exercés par des groupes humains sur d'autres groupes humains. Selon l'auteur, la «race» était donc «une catégorie sociale au service de systèmes de pouvoir, qui produisait des hiérarchies essentielles et irréductibles, et fournissait une justification à des crimes de masse».[4] Dans le premier chapitre, l'auteur

[1] P. Ndiaye, *La Condition noire Essai sur une minorité française*, Paris 2008, p. 12.
[2] Ibidem.
[3] Ibid., p. 30.
[4] Ibidem.

rend compte des débats outre atlantiques dont la notion de «race» est l'objet dans les sciences sociales des Etats-Unis. «Certains auteurs, comme Anthony Appiah ont plaidé pour l'abandon de cette notion, de «race», même décapée de toute signification biologique».[5] Toutefois, il estime que «la «race» est aussi une notion utile à l'analyse des inégalités sociales et des phénomènes de domination sociale».[6] Cette opinion est partagée par la majorité des spécialistes de sciences sociales américains, et mieux, encore, «aux Etats-Unis, de point d'appui à des politiques discriminatoires et racistes, la notion de «race» a pu être transformée en outil de politique antidiscriminatoire».[7] Alors qu'en France, la République proclame la citoyenneté qui ne reconnait pas les particularités. Cependant, «cette figure abstraite bien française non seulement n'a jamais assuré une lutte effective contre les discriminations raciales»,[8] mais aussi traite de «communautaristes» ceux qui s'organisent pour faire face.

Dans le chapitre II, «Gens de couleur. Histoire, idéologie et pratiques du colorisme», l'auteur réitère sa thèse, «être noir n'est ni une essence, ni une culture, mais le produit d'un rapport social : il y'a des Noirs parce qu'on les considère tels».[9] Il propose alors le terme «colorisme» pour mieux rendre compte des nuances de couleur parmi les Noirs. Il se lance ici dans une longue étude de ce phénomène aux Etats-Unis, pour ensuite constater qu'en France, il n y a pas d'études sur le colorisme, «pour des raisons qui tiennent d'abord à la grande marginalité du sujet des «Noirs» en France».[10]

Le III chapitre «Vers une histoire des populations noires en France» propose de passer en revue de manière synthétique l'histoire des Noirs en France métropolitaine depuis le XVIIIe siècle. La présence des Noirs en France ne date pas de l'immigration de travail à partir des années 1960, mais elle est beaucoup plus ancienne et est liée à l'esclavage et à la colonisation. Même si «en France métropolitaine, les esclaves étaient en principe interdit de séjour car le droit français exigeait leur affranchissement, en vertu des lois coutumières du «sol libre» formulées par les juristes du XVIe siècle».[11] Ensuite il y a eu les soldats noirs de la Première et de la Deuxième guerre mondiale, appelés les Tirailleurs "sénégalais''. L'auteur présente une étude bien fouillée de ces derniers avec beaucoup de données statistiques.

Le Chapitre IV, «Le tirailleur et le sauvageon: les répertoires du racisme antinoir», fait le point sur le racisme antinoir pour comprendre ses ressorts, son histoire, ses particularités et ses formes qui sont essentiels pour comprendre les phénomènes d'inégalité.[12] L'auteur affirme que le racisme antinoir puise dans deux répertoires racistes: celui du brave tirailleur (enfantin) et celui du sauvage (dangereux), dans des combinaisons qui varient selon les circonstances. Le répertoire du tirailleur a mobilisé

[5] Ibid., p. 32.
[6] Ibid., p. 33.
[7] Ibidem.
[8] Ibid., p. 34.
[9] Ibid., p. 71.
[10] Ibid., p. 83.
[11] Ibid., p. 114.
[12] Ibid., p. 191.

un lexique qui est celui de l'enfance, de l'indolence, des qualités physiques. Il a été utile aux Blancs pour penser les Noirs dans un rapport d'étrangeté non menaçante.[13]

Le «répertoire du sauvageon» survient plus ponctuellement, comme lors de la crise des banlieues de l'automne 2005 ou lors de faits divers dramatiques. En de pareils cas, un lexique de sauvagerie se développe dans les médias et le monde politique français pour dépeindre les jeunes Noirs comme des «sauvages», des «sauvageons», des «pillards» indifférents au bien commun et agissant très violemment[14].

Le chapitre V, «Penser les discriminations raciales», ici l'auteur reconnait que même, si le terme de «discrimination» s'est imposé dans les discours publics depuis 2005, la lutte contre les discriminations n'est pas menée de façon efficace: «on parle beaucoup, mais on agit moins»,[15] et propose de remplacer la lutte antidiscriminatoire aujourd'hui en vigueur en France par une politique antidiscriminatoire. L'objet de cette politique antidiscriminatoire serait de repérer et de gommer les obstacles et les disparités de traitement fondés sur des critères illégitimes liés à des contextes sociopolitiques variables dans l'espace et dans le temps.[16] Il existe beaucoup d'études de sondages et autres travaux sur les processus discriminatoires dans divers aspects de la vie sociale en France. L'auteur a mené des enquêtes au sein des Noirs de France et a préféré la parole à certains d'entre eux, «La France est bouchée surtout quand on est noir. On a l'impression que l'on ne peut évoluer que jusqu'à un certain niveau, et après on marche sur «les plates-bandes». C'est qui ont essayé de créer quand même impensable d'avoir fait des études et de se voir cantonner à des emplois de gardien de nuit! (...)»,[17] explique Abdoulahi qui est allé s'installer en Angleterre.

Dans le VI et dernier chapitre, «La cause noire: des formes de solidarités entre Noirs», Pap Ndiaye rend compte des différents mouvements politiques, associatifs et même culturels et intellectuels qui ont eu essayer de créer des liens de solidarité entre les Noirs et de les rassembler.

Dans la conclusion Pap Ndiaye reprend la question de Du Bois «Quel effet ça fait d'être un problème?» dans *Âmes du peuple noir*.[18] Même s'il existe des différences entre la situation des Noirs aux Etats-Unis au début du siècle dernier et celle des Noirs de France au début du XXIe siècle, les résultats de l'enquête menée par l'auteur montrent que la majorité des Noirs de l'Hexagone veulent «être à la fois français et noirs, sans que cela soit vu comme suspect, ou étrange, ou toléré à titre de problème temporaire en attendant que l'assimilation fasse son œuvre».[19]

Cet essai de Pap Ndiaye, historien, américaniste, est le premier du genre à vouloir faire un travail de *black studies* à la française. Il propose une description et une

[13] Ibid., p. 217.
[14] Ibid., p. 218.
[15] Ibid., p. 245.
[16] Ibid., p. 255.
[17] Ibid., p. 266.
[18] Du Bois W. E. B., *Âmes du peuple noir,* Paris 2007.
[19] Ndiaye, *La Condition*, p. 362.

analyse très élaborée de la population noire de France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours. Même, si, comme l'auteur le reconnaît lui-même, certains critiques pourraient y voir une histoire de la «victimisation». Cependant, il faut bien reconnaitre que ce n'est pas possible de faire une étude des Noirs de France et faire abstraction des phénomènes de domination raciste et discriminatoire.

Bara Ndiaye

Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*, Cairo, New York, The American University in Cairo Press, 2007, 349 pp.

Despite increasing competition in the Arab media industry (Syria excelling in high-quality television serials, Lebanon in music clips and advertisement and Dubai running up-to-date, efficient and unbureaucratic media city) Egypt still is the major center of entertainment industry, and in particular cinema industry, in the Middle East. The variety of Egyptian television programs, such as talk shows, quizzes, television serials and screened theatre plays feed the numerous channels of other Arab broadcasting stations, especially those of the Arab Peninsula. This Egypt's predominance in the audiovisual field is based on a long tradition, i.e., the late nineteenth-century Egyptian cultural renaissance including a vivid theatre life, rapid development of music industry and the beginnings of film production that have been spreading into the neighboring Arab countries over more then a hundred years.

Viola Shafik, a freelance film scholar, filmmaker and the author of *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity,* an indispensable work for scholars concerned with film and the modern Middle East, published in 2007 a subsequent important work, i.e., *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*. In this book she examines popular and commercial movies from Egypt's film industry, including a number of the biggest box-office hits distributed throughout Egypt and the Arab world. The films are analyzed against the backdrop of the country's overall socio-political development, from the emergence of the film industry in the 1930s, through the Nasser and Sadat times, up to the era of globalization.

Although, according to Shafik, her book "aims to be historically inclusive," it is "not meant to be comprehensive in the quantitative sense". Instead, the author rather attempts to discuss works that "proved to be of outstanding importance due to their box-office success or originality, or that are still widely known and popular today, or, in exceptional cases, because they show a typical approach to the themes they raised". These themes not only have become the subject of numerous intellectual and public discourses in and on Egypt, but also they are important to postcolonial scientific studies. Furthermore, points out Shafik, the words "gender", "race" or "class" are crucial in reference to the issue of either cultural differences or identifications. These important themes-issues discussed in *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation* are: (1) the status of ethnic and religious minorities

(in particular Nubians, Coptic Christians, and Jews), (2) the formation of national identity from pre-colonial via post-colonial until neo-colonial times as well as its crystallization on the global-local ("glocal") nexus, (3) the role of women in society, (4) the development of feminism and the concept of masculinity and femininity and (5) the wheel of social change that has driven the reconstruction of social classes and their distinctive characteristics.

The book is based on an extensive research including the examination of a large number of films and of publications (especially in Arabic) on the history of Egyptian cinema and variety of political, social and cultural problems presented in Egyptian movies, numerous interviews with scholars, film critics and filmmakers. As Shafik notices, the Egyptian films have extensively been discussed with respect to presented social political and religious problems and both the scholars and the critics tend to be "preoccupied with judging films either morally or ideologically, comprehending the medium simply as a producer of the 'image' of someone or something." This approach, says the author, results in a very historiographic and descriptive characterization of Egyptian cinema and in a rather narrow analysis of its formal and structural aspects.

The book is divided into three parts. The first one deals with an attempt to create gendered allegories of the nation that seems to be "oscillating between a formerly colonized 'raped' female nation that has to eventually come to find its male rescuer in the anti-colonial national hero Gamal Abdel Nasser". Here the films are examined historically along with real-life structural movements of either inclusion or exclusion in the film industry. As for the second part, it focuses on two main subjects, that is, (1) femininity and feminism and (2) female stardom, myth production and morality crosscutting with generic characteristics and the star system on one hand and with political and social processes on the other. While tracing different motifs, narratives and structuring elements, Shafik examines Christian and Muslim concepts of femininity and the mainstream of modernist feminist ideals. Moreover, the author discusses the issue of motherhood and working mothers, presents the ideals of bourgeois family and addresses the question of what role women have played during the nation formation. The last part brings an analysis of the impact of social structure on film. Here Shafik discusses audience organization, modes of reception, and, what is the most important, examines the esthetic preferences that divide the audience into distinctive groups. The author considers pivotal genres, such as melodrama, realism and action, in relation to public debates over highbrow and lowbrow culture and in the light of local and international criticism.

The stars, whether directors, such as Youssef Chahine or actors as Omar Sharif, have always been the most important in Egypt's long commercial cinematic tradition. As Shafik underlines, the audience commonly recognizes a film by the names of the star performers and not by its director. Similarly, one may locate a tape in a video store by searching first of all for its leading actors. The Egyptian movie stars are the public figures and they have become the source of national pride. Moreover, as elsewhere, the magazines, newspapers and huge painted and photographic posters

show their images and the stars have become part of daily life's private and public gossip. According to Shafik, the stars' evaluation and the interpretation of their film roles resulted in shaping contradictory and binary concepts, namely conservative and enlightened, traditional and modern, native and imported, rich and poor, good and evil. In addition, in a widespread discussion the controversial status of female performers has emerged and the religious, moral and social conduct of women on and off the screen have become the key issue.

As Shafik reports, from the late 1980s until 1994 twenty one actresses decided to retreat from the show business for religious reasons. In fact, this period showed increasing signs of "new morality" on and off the screen in dress, behavior, and in public opinion. In the Egyptian media, the new morality with its call for more respect for tradition and good morals, surfaced in 1983 with an outraged debate sparked off by the prohibition of two films, namely *Darb al-hawa (Alley of love)* by Husam al-Din Mustafa and *Khamsa Bab* by Nadir Galal. Since that time the press and the courts had begun to compete in censorship and sued certain films and their directors (1994, the most spectacular case launched by an Islamist lawyer against Youssef Chahine who was accused of depicting one of the Qur'an's prophets in his film *The Emigrant*). This, rather aggressive, pro-Islamic campaign advocating religious and ideological conservatism was somehow moderated in the recent years, namely during the secular and more democratically legitimized presidency of Mubarak.

There is no doubt that since the publication in 2007, Viola Shafik's *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation* is on its way to become another (after *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*) indispensable work for scholars on film and modern Middle East. While assessing the book one should underline the following points. First, the work examines a broad spectrum of themes, including gender relations, feminism, Islamism and popular ideas about sexuality and morality. The considerable attention is devoted to the cinema's image of religious and ethnic minorities, namely Copts, Jews and Nubians. Second, the author exposes the issue of cinematic stereotyping and focuses on political and social taboos. Finally, Shafik discusses at length the most popular film genres, such as melodrama and cinema of realism. While presenting a number of examples from cinema of action, the author points out that since the 1950s in Egypt, as elsewhere in the world, one may observe "a mounting resort to violence, shooting and brawls". This could be interpreted as a sign of increasing social antagonization in Egyptian society. In addition, this may also indicate that such a genre in Egyptian cinema was and still is under an impact of American action movies.

Is the Egyptian cinema authentic? It is true that in the Egyptian cinema one may trace considerable influence of Western movies in the sphere of both the content and the form? In any case, the Egyptian cinema is still in search for its roots and national identity and that is what makes it sufficiently authentic, original and unique.

Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem

Toyin Falola, Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, xviii + 329 pp.

This book is a remarkable addition to the growing library on the general history of Nigeria. Its authors are world-known scholars. Toyin Falola is a leading historian of Nigerian origin, now Professor in history at the University of Texas at Austin, author of numerous books: *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African City: Ibadan, 1830–1893* (1984), *Religion and Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (1991), *The Power of African Cultures* (2003), *Economic Reforms and Modernization in Nigeria, 1945–1965* (2004), *A Mouth Sweater than Salt: An African Memoir* (2004), and others. Matthew M. Heaton, a Patrice Lumumba fellow at the same University worked extensively on African science and culture; together with Toyin Falola he has edited few volumes on health and illness in Africa, including *HIV/AIDS Illness and African Well-being* (2007) and *Health Knowledge and Belief Systems in Africa* (2007). This time, their combined efforts explain at large the context to Nigeria's recent troubles.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and in 2006 was the eighth largest oil producer in the world. Despite its richness in mineral resources the success of the country has been undermined in recent decades by ethnic and religious conflicts, political instability, ubiquitous corruption and social unrest. The authors, profiting from weaknesses and strengths of their predecessors, explore Nigeria's pre-colonial and colonial past, and follow its journey from independence to statehood. They not only treat with Nigerian history, politics, administration and economy but also focus on culture and social history, especially on art, music, literature and drama. Colonialism, religion, slavery, nationalism, and the economy are the key themes examined in the book. By this scrutiny the authors show how Nigeria's history has been swayed by the internal and external vicissitudes, and how Nigerians used to meet these challenges. Briefly speaking, the book offers much more than indicated in its title.

The monograph consists of an introduction, ten chapters and concluding remarks. They are preceded by list of illustrations, list of maps, acknowledgements, chronology, biographies of notable people in Nigerian history, list of abbreviation and a glossary explaining various terms and translating words taken from Nigerian languages.

In the introduction it has been disclosed that the aim of the book is to provide a general background survey of the broad themes on Nigeria's history, from the beginnings of human habitation in the region up to the early twenty-first century, including the role of urbanization and globalization in the lives of the people in the present-day Fourth Republic. For twenty-eight of its forty-seven years of political independence Nigeria has been governed by military regimes, which easily recurred to violence in order to silence any criticism: they seriously hampered economic development of the country. In the introduction the reader will also find information on Nigerian peoples and cultures, politics and government, economy and infrastructure.

The first three chapters are concerned with the pre-colonial history of Nigeria. The authors criticize the term "pre-colonial Nigeria" as there was no Nigeria before

the British conquest of this territory: "To speak of pre-colonial Nigeria is anachronistic" (p. 17). Still they decided to honour the tradition, partially because they were not able to make a new proposal. Chapter 1 deals with the formation of human societies and the creation of the indigenous states in the present-day Nigerian area in the period before 1500 B.C. (CE – "Common Era" is used instead of B.C.). The authors provide a good example of a decentralized state system of the Igbo in the south-eastern part of modern-day Nigeria, and then discuss the centralized states like Ile-Ife, Oyo, Benin, Kanem, Jukun and Hausa city-states. Due attention is paid to the coming of Islam and the trans-Saharan trade. Chapter 2 focuses on the developments in the northern savanna in the period between 1500 and 1800, emphasizing the consolidation of the Hausa city-states and the Borno Empire, and depicting long-lasting rivalries between them. Then the effects of the growing trade with Europeans on the Atlantic coast (particularly the slave trade) on southern societies are discussed. In chapter 3 the creation and establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the north, and the effects of the economic transition from the slave trade to legitimate commerce on political and social institutions in the south, are described.

The next three chapters (4–6) embrace the period 1850–1960, during which Nigeria came under British colonial rule. Chapter 4 focuses on the long and slow process, by which the British took direct political control of the territories, which eventually formed the administrative unit called Nigeria. This was accomplished by both treaties of protection and pacification with the use of the violent means. Motives for colonization, establishing of British protectorates in the south, activities of the Royal Niger Company, and collapse of the Sokoto Caliphate are the main themes dealt with in this chapter. The amalgamation of Nigeria, the processes of establishing a colonial administration ("Dual Mandate"), the development of "indirect rule" and economy favourable to the British are presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses the rise of the nationalist movements between the 1930s and 1960, when Nigeria became an independent country under the national leadership of European-educated elites. The authors examine the development of a pan-Nigerian identity, political activism during and after the Second World War, constitutional reforms and regionalism, culture and society in post-war Nigeria.

The further three chapters (7–9) are focused on the independent development of Nigeria, marked by various trials and numerous tribulations. Chapter 7 concentrates on the first decade of the independence when hopes and expectations of the Nigerian citizens were very high. Corruption of the political class and its undemocratic tendencies resulted in rigged elections in 1964 and 1965, and the first of Nigeria's military coups in 1966. As a result, the Igbo dominating Eastern Region seceded, which led to a Civil War lasting from 1960 to 1970. After the Biafra War Nigeria experienced its "oil boom" discussed in chapter 8. This period was marked by the failure of military regimes, replaced by the civilian rule of the Second Republic (1979–1983). The authors show how during this time Nigeria became a "rentier state", dependent heavily on foreign companies for the funding of state projects and initiatives. Chapter 9 covers the period between 1983 and

2007, much of which was characterized by the authoritarian military rule and hopeless economic decline. Plague of corruption, religious clashes, violence in the Niger Delta became common. Long and hard struggles of the civil societies led to the transfer of the political power in 1999 to a democratically elected civilian administration, known as the Fourth Republic.

Chapter 10 scrutinizes the effect that Nigeria and Nigerians have had on world history. In the first part of the chapter diasporic and transnational communities of Nigerians are presented: the Hausa diaspora, the transatlantic diaspora, and the transnational communities in the twentieth century. Nigerian foreign policy is described in the second part of the chapter, in which the impact of Nigeria's foreign policy on regional, continental and global affairs since 1960 is discussed. A special emphasis is laid on the Nigerian ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The book ends with a short analysis of the 2007 elections. It was the first time in Nigeria's history that one civilian regime handed over power to another.

Each chapter is provided with notes which have been placed at the end of the book. Selected biography starts with the list of general histories of Nigeria, and then in succession proposes literature to each chapter. An index is another tool making the reading more comfortable, although it is not complete (e.g. one cannot find the entry Shehu Yar'Adua in it who was mentioned on p. 230 and *passim*).

As far as the shortcomings are concerned, they are very scarce and confine themselves to a few misprints.

Despite accidental and insignificant weaknesses the book offers a splendid reading. The history of Nigeria is presented in a light manner and based on a large social and cultural background.

Stanisław Piłaszewicz

Sylwia Surdykowska, *Idea szahadatu w kulturze Iranu* (The Idea of *Shahadat* in the Culture of Iran), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006, 209 pp.

The monograph written by the Orientalist scholar of the University of Warsaw, who is already well known in academic circles for her numerous publications and papers presented at the international forum and in Poland, marks the crowning of the author's research activity in the last few years dedicated mainly to the perception of the idea of sacrifice in the culture of Iran from pre-Muslim times to the present day. In the execution of such an ambitious undertaking the author showed not only a wide erudition in various fields of human sciences but also courage in acquiring "first-hand" knowledge. In order to stay true to the subject of her scholarly interests, Surdykowska undertook several exploratory journeys into the territory of what was once ancient Persia on her own. Her experiences from those expeditions as well as her first-hand observations endow her work with particular reliability.

What makes the book especially original is also the method chosen by the author. While attempting to define and describe the phenomenon under investigation, she breaks the established and often exhausted schemata of interpretation and consciously chooses a hermeneutical strategy. This is, no doubt, one of the best philosophical methods, even though it is not fully free from limitations either. And yet it can be highly useful in the analysis of literary works written in an ambiguous language and effective in explicating numerous senses contained in them. The method proves to be particularly effective in attempting to render conceptualized culture in the categories of broadly conceived "text," as is the case in the work under review. Indeed, it permits, so to say, to bring out important contents, allowing them to speak in their own voice and in their own name, thus making intelligible what they really speak about. The researcher, in turn, is able to preserve a good deal of cognitive objectivism and the clarity of rules.

Admittedly, the author does not say openly to which particular conception of the hermeneutics she refers, nevertheless, the general meaning of her work allows us to infer that she is particularly interested, among other authors, in the approach of H. G. Gadamer and P. Ricoeur. In accordance with their perception of hermeneutics as a method of rational cognition, the author attempts to decipher the contents of the text, understood both *sensu stricto* and *sensu largo*, through the achievements of many branches of scholarship; hence her returns to the historical early writings, analyses of the context of their emergence, investigation of the semantics of the language of symbols, references to axiology and to philosophy, as well as the use of the latest discoveries of psychology and of the achievements of pedagogy. Thus the work is based upon the syncretic approach to several different, albeit complementary, disciplines, which gives it a critical character besides a purely historical one. What is additionally worth-mentioning is a concise and clear line of argument as well as broad cognitive horizons and use of comprehensive literature in many languages. Therefore, the book by Sylwia Surdykowska may certainly be placed among works of significance, all the more so as this type of publication has not existed so far in the Polish Orientalist literature.

However, the book is not only important to scholars and students of a small circle of Orientalists, but it also constitutes a rich source of knowledge for researchers in other disciplines of study. It appears to be inspiring, in particular, for the minds that *ex professo* touch on Socrates' field of activity. Thus, it is worthwhile to discuss it in a more in-depth manner and to show at least the value of its key issues from this perspective.

In the first part of her book the author outlines a semantic field of the fundamental concept and shows its manifold interpretations and varying usage options in various Iranian texts. Thanks to these investigations, one can learn about the function that the idea of sacrifice performed in the past and about the role it plays in this culture nowadays. One can also point out the place of the value of courage, self-sacrifice or martyrdom in the Iranian sphere of axiology and determine, approximately, the degree of their attractiveness. An in-depth analysis of these two issues made by the author

irresistibly brings to mind the analogy to some kinds of intuition pertaining to the philosophy of M. Heidegger. So, the idea of sacrifice and the preference for realization of certain types of values, which are viewed in Iran's tradition as momentous qualities, can be seen as a category of *abode* introduced by this thinker. Following his line of argument, one may be inclined to assume that the term *abode* denotes not so much a specific physical space having clear-cut boundaries, but rather a concept-related equivalent indicating a certain condition or conduct of man in the world. In the *abode* thus conceived, man goes through his existence as something most personal and irreplaceable. He also knows the meaning of its *eidos*, with which he utterly identifies himself and in which he invariably feels safe and authentic. *Eidos* defines human lifestyle and determines the rhythm of human existence. F. Svenaeus, the author of *The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health*, argues that this *abode* is simply a prerequisite to health.[1] Without the *abode*, man would become an alienated being with drifting identity, gradually gravitating towards the ultimate wasting away of his existence. He would thus be an ill being.

The idea of sacrifice is closely correlated with the problem of man's attitude towards the phenomenon of suffering. Suffering is not solely perceived as an unpleasant ailment or unfriendly invasion of evil, which leads to the loss of integrity of the human *abode*. Neither is it treated as a devastating absurdity annihilating empirical human existence under the pressure of which there is no chance to escape or find any shelter. In the face of the experience of suffering no question of *Why does such evil exist in the world?* is posed. To an Iranian, consideration of this subject would be a purely formal measure, taken completely out of context of the real existence. In the logic of the idea of sacrifice, what counts mainly is the type of intention in the name of which man accepts suffering. Existential reaction towards suffering is more important than rational attempts at explicating the origin of suffering.

The understanding of the peculiarity of attitude towards suffering in Persian culture will become clearer if one gets a deeper insight into the description of Iran's cultural codes. It is their ideological content that determines the attitude which seems to reflect the substratum of an archaic principle, which is often well known in the neighbouring cultures, and which demands suffering and learning through suffering. The rule which calls on people to bear suffering as a necessity makes it, at the same time, the *paideia* which comprehensively makes human existence real. Its constitutive quality is the maintenance of a continuum of exercise in the sphere of intellectual component and a volition-caused and emotional constituent. Suffering as a *paideia* has thus been raised to the rank of a prerequisite for achieving an optimum of good.

However, it is not the only intriguing and inspiring aspect of the book. Another is the author's in-depth argument pertaining to the conditioning factors of duration of that conceptual scheme which still invariably preserves the status of a *quasi*-paradigm of culture in Iran. This is most surprising, the more so as the very nature of suffering

[1] F. Svenaeus, *The Hermeneutics of Medicine and the Phenomenology of Health*, Linköping, 1999, p. 158–203.

escapes any attempts at axiological monopolization and it demands pluralism in thinking about it. The lack of flexibility in this matter may arouse a justified suspicion of fear of losing a stable metaphysical reference system and the menace of the fright of falling into an "existential vacuum." The author, while avoiding any simplifications and the tendency called "bioethical imperialism"[2] by R. Macklin, suggests that the endeavours of the spiritual genius of the Iranians aimed at the preservation of the *paideic* sense of suffering are, in fact, an apology of a certain version of their philosophy of the sense of life in general. Its dissemination owes much to oral accounts and literary tales that are small philosophical treatises which present models and patterns worthy of imitation and show their apotheosis.

The author, without losing from sight the subject of her analysis, then focuses on the virtue of courage and it is with reflections on this that she opens the second part of her work. In this way, she relevantly completes the chief problems of her argument. The analysis made in the first chapters of this part provides us with a key to the mystery of the phenomenon of Iranian *ars moriendi* (the art of dying). Its shape depends on the quality of *ars vivendi*, the vision of death and the manner of going through mourning. Briefly put, the art of living boils down to interiorizing within one's own self momentous values and cultivating them in everyday life. The death, in turn, from the philosophical and theological perspective is treated in this *ars moriendi* not so much as a biological phenomenon, but rather as a social occurrence and, at the same time, as a sacral and ethical event. In social structure death is omnipresent, even though to a human individual it may constitute a moment of full liberation of the self and of the entry into the transendent sphere of the Absolute. Therefore, one must be well prepared for it in order to meet it with dignity when it arrives.

The strategies of taming the *logos* of death, outlined expressively by the author, are fairly specific since they consist in the so-called *celebratio mortis*, which is reenacted during various feasts, *muharram* rituals and funeral rites. The fundamental elements of *celebratio mortis* include, among other things, religious acts, significance of symbols and the semantic sphere of the language. All of them are intended to develop the virtue of courage in the face of the inevitable, making the death present, evoking specific atmosphere and emotional states as well as persuasion inducing the participants to change their relations regarding both tanatogenesis and ontogenesis. For the very same purpose the encouragement is used to reformulate the feeling of sorrow manifested by lamenting and crying and to turn it, too, into the experience with a positive connotation. Iranian tradition, by depriving the sorrow of its characteristic stamp of the tragic, expands its emotional colour to include devout awe. In addition, it glorifies the feeling of sorrow and recommends arousing it as often as possible.

The further part of the work gives us an insight into the essence of the training of emotions, manner of the stimulation of imagination and type of exercise needed to

[2] R. Macklin, *Against Relativism. Cultural Diversity and the Search for Ethical Universals in Medicine*, Oxford, 1999, p. 25.

adapt oneself to the strengthening of the habit of specific response. The systematical training is to ensure the easiness of reaching the emotional commotion in which man experiences excitement and enthusiasm and in which he is seized by the feeling of steadfastness and readiness to sacrifice, including self-sacrifice. Dynamism of entering the state of activation of a selected group of emotions does not take place in an axiological vacuum, but within the space of diverse values. It mirrors a genuine face of man: such as he is in the world, such as he is with other people and such as he is within himself and with himself.

This, on the other hand, with nearly imperious obviousness, provides transcultural bioethics with important data on the relationships between cultural codes and the course of psychical processes in the axiological experience. One may infer that the criteria of evaluation and classification of axiological experience and behaviour they determine, specified within the framework of one culture, seem to be not only inadequate to, but simply incompatible with other, radically different cultures. Therefore, Surdykowska rightly challenges the validity of the theory which propounds the view that there are, supposedly permanent, supraindividual and timeless characteristics of axiological experience, transcending the boundaries of all the cultural codes, since the structure of human mind is the same everywhere.

This is the issue with which the book enriches the West European debate on the essence of psychical health. In the turmoil of incessant argument the dominant element of this discussion is still the trend in which psychical health is seen as manifesting itself in the state of harmony between various elements of the soul and the absence of anxiety in it. Obviously, the doctrine of the balance which originated in the ancient philosophy of medicine was shared by almost all luminaries of that time, including Plato. That great Athenian thinker in his dialogues, such as *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*, *Charmides* or *The Republic,* said that the maintenance of order in human soul is an expression of its health and care for its good and beauty. Yet Surdykowska's work suggests that in the light of the idea of *shahadat,* psychical health, in contrast to the concept of classical provenience, may manifest itself not so much in a high level of inner order but also in the state of a characteristic tension which permanently pulsates in the human self.

This state certainly has nothing to do with any disintegration or chaos precluding the harmony. The point here is only a different distribution of accents and drawing attention to those intellectual categories which are regarded in Iran's culture as indispensable to the preservation of psychical health. In accordance with the dictate of Iranian tradition, a healthy psyche may not stay at rest only, but it must also be in the phase of vigilance and active readiness for heading towards good. It is worthwhile mentioning that on the ground of recent philosophy of medicine cultivated in the West, one may encounter similar approaches to psychical health. Yet none of them attaches such a great importance to the fulfilling of only one selected group of values,[3] even though they are placed on the highest level of axiological hierarchy.

[3] P. A. Tengland, *Mental Health. A Philosophical Analysis*, Linköping, 1998, p. 128–253.

Also, they do not propose any particular method needed for the confirmation of health, as is the case in the book under review.

The unquestionable value of the book is the author's capability to present her own point of view contained in the concluding and recapitulating chapter. While keeping a good deal of prudence, Sylwia Surdykowska refers to the threats to man's personality stemming from an instrumental use of emotions and a seductive charm of values. The author shows how otherwise noble motives stimulating action may degenerate and turn into their caricature, thus becoming the source of tyranny of obligation. She tactfully deprecates the rules of formation which are typical of the so-called black pedagogy, i.e. bringing up in the spirit of devotion and fascination, which, instead of developing man's spiritual potential, exploits him and drives him to self-destruction.

Zygmunt Pucko

HEMISPHERES

Articles submitted to the journal should not be, or have been, submitted elsewhere. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to publish any material under copyright.

An article must be in English or in French, should not exceed 40 typewritten pages (including main text, notes, and tables), and should be typed on A4 or 8 1/2" x 11" with ample margins on all sides. The entire manuscript must be typed double-spaced and numbered consecutively. Title and author's name should be centred at the top of the first page. Institutional affiliation and location should appear at the bottom of the last text page.

Notes must be numbered consecutively throughout the text, typed double-spaced in paragraph style, and grouped together as a unit following the text. Footnotes at the bottom of the text page are not permitted. All titles in non-Roman alphabets must be transliterated. An English translation of non-standard language titles should be provided in parentheses after the title. The style of note citation should conform with the following examples:
1. William C. Clarke, *Place and People. An Ecology of a New Guinean Community*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 12.
2. Augustus Richard Norton, ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East*, 2 vols., Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, vol. 1, p. 134.
3. Marc-Henri Piault, "Quelques orientations nouvelles", *Journal des Africanistes*, tome 65, fascicule 1, p. 5.
4. Joe L.P. Lugalla, "Structural Adjustment Policies and Education in Tanzania", in *Social Change and Economic Reform in Africa,* ed. Peter Gibbon, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1993, p. 215.
5. Zygmunt Komorowski, *Kultury Afryki Czarnej* (Cultures of Black Africa), Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994, p. 89.

When references to the same work follow without interruption use ibid. When notes to the same work follow after interruption, use the author's last name and a shortened title of the book or article. Do not use op.cit.:
6. Lugalla, "Structural Adjustment", p. 185.
7. Ibid., p. 186.
8. Ibidem.

In the reference section, provide the full citation: author's full name, title, city of publication, publisher, and year.

More substantial editing will be returned to the author for approval before publication. No rewriting will be allowed in the proof stage. Authors will be asked to return the material to the editorial office within 4 days of receipt or approval will be assumed. The author of an article will receive 20 free off-prints of the article.

Manuscripts and all editorial correspondence should be addressed to dr. Jerzy Zdanowski, Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries, Polish Academy of Sciences, 72 Nowy Świat St., 00-330 Warsaw, Poland, tel./fax 48 /22/ 826 6356; e-mail: jzdanows@zkppan.waw.pl.

Notes on Contributors

JIMOH A M Z A T, Department of Sociology, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

NKOLIKA IJEOMA A N I E K W U, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, University of Benin, Benin City

PETER EMEKA A R I N Z E, Department of Management Sciences, University of Jos

AGATA H U M M E L, The Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR) at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

EMMY G. I R O B I, International and Areas Studies (IAS), Dept., University of California, Berkeley

TOMASZ K R U S Z E W S K I, Institute of Information Science and Book Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

DOROTA R U D N I C K A-K A S S E M, Institute of Regional Studies, Jagiellonian University, Cracow

ABDULRAHMAN AL-S A L I M I, the editor of *Al-Tasamoh* ("Tolerance"), Muscat

EUNICE NKIRU U Z O D I K E, Department of Private and Property Law, Faculty of Law, University of Lagos

DOBROSŁAWA W I K T O R-M A C H, Institute of European Studies, Jagiellonian University, Cracow

MAGDALENA Z A B O R O W S K A, Department of Iranian Studies, Oriental Institute, Warsaw University

JERZY Z D A N O W S K I, Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw