PHOENIX

in domo Foscari

The Online Journal of Oriental Studies

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Year 2009 – Issue no. 2
Front cover:
The Phoenix logo is based on the original design by Prof. Eugenio GALDIERI, Aga Khan Price for Architecture.


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Preface

to issue n. 2

In memory of Professor Mario Nordio

On January 26th 2010 Mario Nordio, co-editor and co-founder of Phoenix in domo Foscari, professor of Asian History at Venice Ca’ Foscari University, passed away after a long fight against a very aggressive disease. The sorrow of his many and affectionate students and colleagues, in Italy and abroad, is immense. We all lost not only his eminent personality of versatile and engaged scholar but more than everything his humanity and generosity.

Mario was, with Federico Greselin, Maurizio Scarpari, Riccardo Zipoli, the publisher Domenico Baldari and myself, the enthusiastic initiator of this online journal as an advanced frontier of Oriental studies at Venice Ca’ Foscari University.

We shall miss his humor and his learned wit, his passion for music and temper of educator of several generations of orientalists.

By unanimous decision of the Board of Editors, the issue n. 3 (2010) of Phoenix in domo Foscari will be open to the contributions of all scholars who have known him and are willing to honor his memory with a paper dedicated to him. The next call for papers (forthcoming) will specify timeline and format of the Festschrift in memory of professor Mario Nordio.

With great sorrow,
 Gianclaudio Macchiarella, on behalf of the Board of Editors
PAPERS
Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione

By Giacomo BAGGIO*

Summary

This article provides a study and translation of the treatise “Emptiness of the Non-Absolute” written by Kumārajīva’s disciple Sengzhao at the beginning of the fifth century. The treatise is part of the Zhaolun (“[The collected] Treatises by Sengzhao”), still considered to be the major existing body of documents belonging to the earliest Chinese Mādhyamika. Its influence on the later development of Chinese Buddhism was great.

In the first part of this work we describe the historical and philosophical background and milieu in which Sengzhao operated. In the second part, we give an analysis and full-length translation of “Emptiness of the Non-Absolute” together with Yuan Kang's commentary (Tang dynasty) and a selection of explanations by other commentators.

Keywords: Sengzhao, Mādhyamika, Zhaolun, translation

Sengzhao, monaco buddhista vissuto a cavallo fra il quarto e il quinto secolo, è stato riconosciuto come figura cruciale nella trasmissione dell’insegnamento di Kumārajīva in Cina. I suoi saggi costituiscono il più vasto insieme di documenti tuttora esistenti sul primo pensiero del Mādhyamika cinese. Essi non solo furono formativi nei riguardi del pensiero della nuova Scuola dei Tre Trattati fiorita nel corso del sesto secolo ma godettero anche di grande considerazione e di attento studio da parte di molti eminenti maestri buddhisti cinesi delle epoche successive.

Nel presente articolo si fornisce un’analisi e traduzione annotata del trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto,” forse il più importante all’interno del corpus dei Zhaolun, cui si fa precedere una analisi del contesto storico-culturale in cui Sengzhao si trovò ad operare.
1. Kumārajīva (344-413) a Chang’an: l’inizio di una nuova fase del Buddhismo cinese

Con l’arrivo del grande traduttore originario di Kucha Kumārajīva (344-413) a Chang’an nel 402 si aprì una fase del tutto nuova nella storia del buddhismo cinese. La sua attività di traduttore e di esegeta segnò una svolta nell’ambito del lungo e complesso processo di acquisizione delle teorie e dei contenuti Buddhisti da parte dei monaci cinesi.

Oltre alla ritraduzione di alcuni testi della Prajñāpāramitā (segnatamente la Asṭasāhāsrikā e la versione estesa), Kumārajīva tradusse alcuni tra i principali testi del pensiero Mādhyamika: tale scelta rientrava in un progetto unitario che si proponeva evidentemente di fornire da un lato versioni più accurate dei testi della Prajñāpāramitā e dall’altro di offrire una chiave interpretativa per comrenderne i contenuti.

I principali trattati mādhyamika tradotti dal maestro indiano furono i seguenti:¹

1. Zhong lun 中論 (“Trattato sul mezzo”) [T 1564]
3. Shi’er men lun 十二門論 (“Trattato in dodici articoli [dottrinali]”) [T 1568]

Questi tre testi gettarono le basi per la costituzione del Mādhyamika cinese, corrente che avrebbe avuto una storia gloriosa culminante nelle opere del grande maestro Jizang 吉藏 vissuto sotto gli Sui 隋 (581-618) e che prese il nome di “Scuola dei tre trattati” (Sanlun zong 三論宗), con riferimento ai testi summenzionati.

A questi trattati bisogna aggiungere il Da Zhidu lun 大智度論 (“Trattato sulla [recensione] estesa della Prajñāpāramitā”) [T 1509], un commentario di dimensioni imponenti alla versione estesa della Prajñāpāramitā: si tratta della traduzione di un testo indiano ormai perso che esercitò un’influenza vastissima sulla formazione del buddhismo cinese di epoca successiva.

Riguardo al contenuto di questi testi e al pensiero ivi esposto, è fondamentale la seguente osservazione di Zacchetti:

In questi testi (sūtra e śastra) tradotti da Kumārajīva, i buddhisti cinesi trovarono una diversa interpretazione della vacuità: non più vista come fondamento ontologico distinto dalla pluralità, al modo Xuanxue 玄學, ma direttamente come l’aspetto autentico, o la “vera caratteristica” della pluralità stessa. Questa identificazione di condizionato ed assoluto, ponendo le premesse per la rimozione di ogni dualismo, fu una acquisizione teorica di importanza decisiva per gli sviluppi successivi.

È precisamente questa nuova prospettiva a costituire il vero fulcro del pensiero di Sengzhao. L’assoluta identità di condizionato ed assoluto: è proprio questo il senso nuovo e rivoluzionario della vacuità che i cinesi conobbero attraverso i suoi trattati.

2. I trattati di Sengzhao e l’esegesi dell’inizio del V secolo

Quanto allo stile letterario dei discepoli di Kumārajīva e ai contenuti dei loro scritti, facciamo riferimento alla seguente osservazione di Zürcher:

The later “exegesis” which came to flourish in the school of Kumārajīva at Chang’ān in the first decades of the fifth century is no doubt spectacular and extremely important for the later history of Chinese Buddhism, but the originality of the ideas manipulated by thinkers like Sengzhao remains a problem. They had certainly undergone the stimulating influence of the new

2 Lo Studio del Mistero (Xuanxue 玄學) nacque nell’era Zhengshi 正始 (240-249) dei Wei 魏 ed ebbe come primi rappresentanti He Yan 何晏 e Wang Bi 王弼. La Xuanxue fu innanzitutto un nuovo modo di intendere e spiegare i classici della tradizione cinese; i testi che ne costituirono, in un certo senso, il canon furono il Laozi, il Zhuangzi e lo Yijing (“Classico dei Mutamenti”), i quali vennero chiamati collettivamente “i Tre Misteri” (san xuan 三玄). Dal punto di vista filosofico, gli sforzi dello Studio del Mistero furono tutti volti alla ricerca del fondamento ontologico (ben 本) della realtà. Nel tentativo, poi, di definire il rapporto fra questo fondamento unificante e la molteplicità fenomenica venne elaborato un ricchissimo lessico filosofico cui i primi filosofi buddhisti cinesi attinsero a pie mani. Si trattava in genere di coppie di concetti correlati, ognuno dei quali spiegava sotto un diverso punto di vista il rapporto fondamentale fra indifferenziato e manifesto, fra assoluto e relativo (citiamo ad esempio i binomi radice/rami (ben 本/mo 末), fondamento/utilizzo (ti 體/yong 用), movimento/stasi (dong 動/jing 靜).

3 Zacchetti 2000, 97.
Si tratta in definitiva di visioni che, pur fondandosi sul pensiero Madhyamika esposto da Kumārajīva, sono molto personali sia riguardo all’espressione linguistica sia riguardo allo sviluppo delle idee proposte.

Vi è comunque un salto di qualità evidente rispetto all’interpretazione della vacuità fornita dalle cosiddette “Sei Scuole [esegetiche]” (liujia qizong 六家七宗)⁵ fiorite nel IV secolo: per quanto concerne l’opera di Sengzhao, Xu Kangsheng illustra tale differente approccio alla vacuità spiegando che, mentre i rappresentanti delle Sei Scuole si servivano del pensiero Xuanxue (玄學) (“Studio del Mistero” o, più inesattamente, “Neo-taoismo”)⁶ per elucidare concezioni

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⁴ Zürcher 1972, 146.

⁵ L’introduzione dei śāstra mādhyamika in Cina risale alla prima metà del quinto secolo, e dunque i monaci esegeti cinesi del quarto secolo dovettero confrontarsi con le prime traduzioni dei Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra senza il loro supporto: questa situazione di parziale ignoranza rispetto ai contenuti più profondi della Prajñāpāramitā, lungi dall’ostacolare la diffusione delle tematiche in essa esposte, stimolò la speculazione filosofica e religiosa dando adito ad un intenso dibattito di cui il costituirsi di uno straordinario numero di scuole esegetiche fra la fine del terzo secolo e l’inizio del quarto è la dimostrazione più evidente. Queste scuole sono in genere designate col nome di jia 家 (scuola) o zong 宗 (setta), termini dal significato equivalente, la cui accezione è tuttavia sostanzialmente diversa da quella che assumerà in seguito in riferimento alle grandi scuole di epoca Sui e Tang (si veda su questo Link 1970, p. 186). Si tratta in realtà di “teorie esegetiche [articolate]” yi 義 (è proprio questo il termine col quale vengono indicate nelle fonti più antiche) tutte incentrate sul tentativo di comprendere la vacuità, o śunyatā, così come veniva esposta nella Prajñāpāramitā. Anche Zürcher sottolinea il fatto che una traduzione del termine yi 義 appropriata al contesto da noi esaminato sarebbe “opinione, interpretazione, teoria esplicativa” (cfr. Zürcher 1972, 100).

⁶ Sebbene lo Studio del Mistero faccia proprie numerose teorie taoiste e gran parte del suo lessico filosofico sia mutuato dal Laozi e dal Zhuangzi 莊子, non è tuttavia esatto definirlo, come spesso si usa, “Neotaoismo”. Come puntuallizza Zürcher, tale sistema “was both created by and intended for literati, i.e. politicians and state officials, and definitely not by Taoist masters, hermits or cave-dwelling mystics” (Zürcher 1972, 87); inoltre Tang Yongtong mette in guardia: “Many people regard Xuanxue as a satellite of the Lao and the Zhuang philosophy, but they have
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propriamente buddhiste (yi Xuan jie Fo 以玄解佛), Sengzhao, compreso a fondo il pensiero Mādhyamika, dette un’interpretazione profondamente buddhista delle controversie interne alla Xuanxue (yi Fo jie Xuan 以佛解玄).⁷

Sotto questo punto di vista si può ritenere i Zhaolun 肇論⁸ come il punto culminante del pensiero Xuanxue, la conciliazione definitiva delle sue contraddizioni e il superamento della contrapposizione di essere e non-essere 有無,⁹ Fondamento e Utilizzo 體用 etc.

La vicinanza al pensiero Xuanxue da parte di Sengzhao e la profonda conoscenza delle sue problematiche è confermata dalla

forgotten that it is one of the metamorphosis of the Ru School (i.e. Scuola Confuciana)” (Tang Yongtong 1947, 126)

⁷ Si veda Xu Kangsheng 1979, 48 e segg.


⁹ You 有 e wu 無 (=无) sono una coppia di concetti basilare nello Studio del Mistero, e sebbene vengano poi usati in ambito buddhista come traduzione di termini indiani, il loro significato originario, soprattutto nel primo periodo, è pur sempre implicitamente presente. Il problema della loro traduzione è estremamente complesso. Basti qui ricordare le seguenti puntualizzazioni tratte dallo studio di Graham: 1. Nelle lingue indoeuropee una cosa semplicemente è, senza implicare alcunché al di fuori di se medesima, e sono le entità più astratte a venir considerate più volentieri reali dalla tradizione platonica. In Cinese, d’altro canto, ci si riferisce alle cose dall’esterno, dal mondo che le “possiede”, nel quale “ci sono” (you 有). 2. La parola inglese Non-being (o Inexistence) (così come il termine italiano “non-essere”), implica l’assenza di ogni entità, il cinese wu soltanto l’assenza di cose concrete 3. I Taoisti sono simili agli Idealisti occidentali nell’esaltare l’immateriale, ma non possono al pari di essi identificarlo con il puro Essere, poiché per i Taoisti tutto ciò che è privo di forma materiale è per definizione wu. Ma se il Tao è non-essere (wu), allora “non-essere” è un complemento positivo di “qualcosa”, non la sua mera assenza (Graham 1961).
Giacomo Baggio

seguente circostanza riportata nella sua biografia all’interno del Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳: quando nel 408 Daosheng 道生 portò una copia del trattato di Sengzhao Boruo wuzhi 般若無知 (“Prajñā non è conoscenza”) alla comunità del monte Lu, il recluso Liu Yimin 劉遺民 dopo averlo letto commentò: “Non avrei mai sospettato che anche fra il clero Buddhista ci fosse uno [He] Pingshu 平叔 (si tratta di He Yan, assieme a Wang Bi 王弼 iniziatore della corrente guinu 貴無 dello Studio del Mistero durante l’epoca Zhengshi 正始 dei Wei)”.10

Lo stesso trattato aveva ricevuto l’entusiastica approvazione di Kumārajīva il quale, dopo averlo letto, ebbe a dire a Sengzhao: “La mia comprensione non differisce dalla tua, ma ne differisce l’espressione”.11

Prese assieme, le affermazioni di Liu Yimin e di Kumārajīva, forniscono una buona idea delle caratteristiche dell’opera di Sengzhao: dall’affermazione di Liu Yimin si evince il fatto che agli occhi degli stessi contemporanei colti lo stile di Sengzhao e il suo modo di esprimersi richiamavano molto da vicino il pensiero Xuanxue; d’altro canto l’affermazione di Kumārajīva conferma il fatto che, per quanto originale fosse l’espressione di Sengzhao, essa costituiva comunque una corretta comprensione della vacuità.

L’interesse tutto particolare dell’opera di Sengzhao sta proprio in questa operazione ermeneutica di trasmissione di contenuti appartenenti ad un contesto culturale estraneo attraverso l’adattamento degli stessi alla propria personale visione del mondo ed esperienza di vita: tale sforzo si traduce in un uso estremamente libero del lessico che non disdegnà di accostare alle citazioni dei sūtra altrettante sentenze tratte da Laozi, Zhuangzi o addirittura Confucio.

Dal punto di vista dottrinale, i trattati di Sengzhao costituirono una pietra fondante per gli sviluppi successivi del Buddhismo cinese. Nel

10 “不意方袍，復有平叔” (Biografia di Sengzhao, in Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳 [T 2059], 182; l’edizione di tale biografia che si è utilizzata è quella annotata di Wang Quchang in Wang Quchang 王蘧常 1988, 181-188).

11 “吾解不謝子，辭當相挹” in Biografia di Sengzhao, p. 182. La traduzione di tale frase è peraltro problematica; Liebenthal traduce: “My understanding equals yours, but not my phrasing,” mentre Robinson rende con: “My understanding does not differ from yours, and in phrasing we might borrow from each other.” (Robinson 1967, 124).
suo *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* Robinson sostiene a tale proposito: “Molte ragioni portano a credere che egli (Sengzhao) sia la figura cruciale nella trasmissione dell’insegnamento di Kumārajīva in Cina;”\(^{12}\) afferma inoltre che “i suoi saggi furono formativi nei riguardi del pensiero della nuova Scuola dei Tre Trattati nel corso del sesto secolo; essi costituiscono il più vasto insieme di documenti tuttora esistenti sul primo pensiero del Mādhyamika cinese.”\(^{13}\)

La coerenza della sua visione Buddhista, così come l’abilità letteraria con la quale questa venne espressa portano Tang Yongtong a formulare il seguente giudizio d’insieme sui trattati di Sengzhao:

I tre trattati [composti da Sengzhao] *Wu buqian* 物不遷, *Buzhen kong* 不真空 e *Boruo wuzhi* 般若無知 fondono insieme i contenuti e le teorie indiane e cinesi e [dimostrano] una chiara e profonda comprensione delle tematiche connesse al problema [filosofico del rapporto fra] Fondamento e Utilizzo (ti-yong 體用); inoltre, il contenuto vi è espresso con uno stile estremamente bello e vigoroso: per questo costituiscono una delle opere più pregevoli tanto del pensiero filosofico quanto della letteratura cinese.\(^{14}\)

\[\text{3. Sengzhao (384-414): la vita e gli scritti}^{15}\]

Sengzhao nacque nel 384 nei pressi di Chang’an. Essendo di famiglia povera, andò a lavorare come copista, attività che gli diede la possibilità di compiere ampie letture e di acquisire una profonda conoscenza della letteratura “secolare”.

Nella sua giovinezza era appassionato del pensiero Xuanxue e si dilettava nella lettura di Laozi e Zhuangzi, testi che tuttavia non lo soddisfacevano completamente. Fu la lettura del *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*\(^{16}\) a spingerlo a convertirsi al Buddhismo e a prendere i voti.

Raggiunta l’età adulta, la sua vasta erudizione e la sua abilità dialettica gli diedero grande fama e suscitarono la gelosia degli altri monaci.

In seguito si diresse a Gu Zang 姑臧 (corrispondente all’attuale prefettura di Wuwei 武威 nella provincia del Gansu) per incontrare il

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\(^{12}\) Robinson 1967, 123.

\(^{13}\) Ibidem.

\(^{14}\) Tang Yongtong 1983, 234.


\(^{16}\) Per una traduzione autorevole di tale testo si rimanda a Lamotte, 1962.
grande maestro e traduttore indiano Kumārajīva, e quando questo si diresse a Chang’an lo seguì. In tale città si costituì un’equipe di traduzione sostenuta e finanziata dal sovrano dei Qin Posteriori (Hou Qin 后秦, 384-417 d.C.) Yao Xing 姚興 (393-415): Sengzhao venne nominato assistente di Kumārajīva nella traduzione ed ebbe dunque la possibilità di apprendere l’interpretazione della dottrina fornita dal maestro.17

Dopo la traduzione della redazione estesa della Prajñāpāramitā (durata dal 403 al 405 d. C.), scrisse un trattato intitolato Borno wuzhi 般若無知 (Prajñā non è conoscenza: parte III dei Zhaolun) che ottenne l’approvazione di Kumārajīva e fu diffuso anche alla comunità di Lushan.


Mentre era in lutto per la morte di Kumārajīva compose poi Niepan wuming 涅槃無名 (Il Nirvāṇa è senza nome: Zhaolun, parte IV) che fu apprezzato da Yao Xing e circolò fra i membri della famiglia reale. Morì nel 414 all’età di trent’anni, soltanto un anno dopo la morte del maestro, al quale aveva dedicato un commosso necrologio.

A Sengzhao è tradizionalmente associato l’appellativo di jiekong diyi 解空第一 (primo tra gli interpreti della vacuità) ed è indubbiamente che la sua opera costituì una tappa fondamentale nel processo di sinizzazione del Buddhismo, ossia della costituzione di un tipo di Buddhismo che, pur

17 È utile ricordare il fatto che l’attività di traduzione dei testi buddhisti non consisteva nella pura e semplice resa di un testo in un’altra lingua: si trattava invece di un vero e proprio dibattito aperto in cui prima il testo veniva declamato dal traduttore (cioè dal depositario del testo, che spesso lo conosceva a mente), poi seguiva la discussione dei contenuti e solo in ultima istanza la traduzione veniva messa per iscritto dagli assistenti cinesi.

18 Questo trattato assai probabilmente non fu scritto da Sengzhao, o quantomeno delle parti sono spurie. Tuttavia gli studiosi concordano sul fatto che le idee ivi espresse sono quelle del monaco.

19 È Yuankang a riportare nel suo commentario ai Zhaolun questa citazione dal Mingseng zhuan: in base ad essa Kumārajīva avrebbe elogiato Sengzhao attribuendogli l’appellativo di jie-kong di-yi 解空第一 (“primo tra gli interpreti della vacuità”) (Tang Yongtong 1983, 238)
essendo autenticamente cinese, non fosse in contrasto con la matrice indiana.

4. Il trattato *Buzhen kong* 不真空

Il trattato *Vacuità del non-assoluto* fu scritto presumibilmente dopo il 408. Esso costituisce nel suo insieme una esposizione dettagliata della prospettiva della vacuità e delle tematiche ad essa connesse (le due verità, la via di mezzo fra eternalismo e nichilismo etc.) correttamente comprese alla luce del pensiero Mādhyamika. Il suo interesse duplice: da un lato si può apprezzare lo spirito critico con cui vengono puntualmente messi in evidenza i difetti delle precedenti teorie e vengono corretti alla luce di una più precisa e profonda comprensione del messaggio buddhista; dall’altro lato esso costituisce un documento estremamente curioso per l’originalità della espressione e per l’elaborazione molto personale delle concezioni buddhiste ivi espresse.

4.1 *Buzhen kong*: la disputa sull’interpretazione del titolo

Al trattato in questione furono dedicati numerosi commentari. I vari commentatori fornirono spiegazioni divergenti riguardo al significato centrale del trattato: tali differenze emergono chiaramente sin dalla spiegazione dello stesso titolo.

In via generale, possiamo distinguere due principali interpretazioni del pensiero esposto in *Buzhen kong*: le esemplifichiamo attraverso la sottostante tabella (la spiegazione del titolo è quella espressa in forma sintetica da Cai Yingxun nel suo studio):

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20 Per una esposizione dettagliata della questione si veda l’articolo di *Cai Yingxun* 蔡繡勳 1986, pp. 445-448
### Interpretazione del titolo

#### 1° interpretaz.

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<td>Zhaolun shu 肇論疏</td>
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<td>Wencai 文才</td>
<td>Zhaolun xinshu 肇論新疏</td>
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<td>Zunshi 遵式</td>
<td>Zhu Zhaolun shu 注肇論疏</td>
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「不真即空」: 元康等謂一切諸法緣起無自性，故虛假不真，不真即空

“Non assoluto e dunque vuoto”
Secondo Yuankang e gli altri [sostenitori] il significato del titolo è che tutti i dharma sorgono condizionatamente e [dunque] sono privi di natura propria; per questo sono illusori e non reali; non essendo reali essi sono vuoti.

#### 2° interpretaz. (Huayan 華嚴)

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<td>Chengguan 澄觀</td>
<td>Dafang Guangfo 大方廣佛華嚴經</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanshan 憨山</td>
<td>Huayanjing suishu 隨疏演義</td>
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<td>yanyi chao 疏演義钞</td>
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<td>Zhaolun luezhu Zhaolun略注</td>
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</tbody>
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「不是真實的空」: 意在破世俗執般若空為斷滅空，而顯立「真空不空」(或不空空)之說

“Non si tratta di un vuoto reale (assoluto)”
Il senso [del titolo] è quello di confutare il punto di vista convenzionale di chi sostiene che la vacuità cui conduce la Prajñā sia di tipo nichilistico, al fine di mostrare la prospettiva secondo cui “la Vera Vacuità non è vacuità” (o “La vacuità non è vacuità [assoluta, (o ipostatizzata)]”).

#### 4.1.1 Prima interpretazione: “non assoluto e dunque vuoto” (i.e. “vacuità del non-assoluto”)

Stando alla prima interpretazione, i tre caratteri del titolo vanno letti come: “[Tutti gli elementi della realtà] non sono assoluti e dunque sono vuoti” (Buzhen ji kong 不真即空): ovvero, la vacuità è conseguente al riconoscimento del fatto che, non essendo dotati di un’esistenza autonoma, indipendente o fondata ontologicamente, tutti gli elementi dell’esistenza hanno come caratteristica comune la vacuità. I maggiori sostenitori di tale interpretazione furono Yuankang 元康, Wencai 文才 e Zunshi 遵式 nonché gli illustri studiosi moderni Tang Yongtong 汤用彤 e Lü Cheng 吕澄.21

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Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione

Dice Yuankang 元康22 nel suo commentario:


Se fosse come [costoro] affermano, forse che [la parola] kong 空 non indica [già di per se stessa] la Via Mediana?23

Wencai 文才 (1241-1302), maestro buddhista vissuto in epoca Yuan, spiega il significato del titolo con le seguenti parole:

一切諸法無自性生, 資緣而起, 起而非真; 如幻如夢, 當體空也。故下云: “待緣而有, 有非真有”。又云: “萬物非真, 假號久矣”。皆明不真。又云: “即萬物之自虛”、“色即是空”。皆明空也。”


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22 Yuankang 元康 (vissuto in epoca Tang) giunse a studiare alla capitale nel periodo di regno Zhenguan 觀 (627-649). In seguito, su ordine imperiale si stabilì nel tempio di Anguo 安國, ove insegnò i Tre Trattati. Il suo commentario ai Zhaolun è uno dei più pregevoli per la quantità di informazioni fornite e per la spiegazione del testo.

23 Yuankang, Zhaolunshu 證論疏 [T 1859], 170c 2-6
vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose” e che “la materia è identica alla vacuità”: tutte [queste espressioni] mettono in luce [il senso della] vacuità”.24

Zunshi 遵式25 afferma nel suo Zhu Zhaolun shu 注肇論疏 [X 870]:
不真者，非實也，緣生故物性非實有。緣起故，物性非實無。以此而推，性非有無，故曰不真也。


Lo stesso Zunshi spiega la vacuità con le seguenti parole:

「空」字是所顯中道第一義諦。故中論云：因緣所生生法，我說即是空，不實有也；亦名為假名，不定無也，亦名中道義，空寂也。

Buzhen 不真，或起異見，迷於至理，今以不真雙破二執，令即事契理，理本自寂，故曰不真空也。


Tuttavia, coloro che non hanno ancora compreso l’insorgenza condizionata [dei dharma] si attaccano alle [erronee concezioni dell’] esistenza o dell’in’esistenza; in alcuni si originano visioni erronee: [essi] sono disorientati riguardo al supremo principio. Ora, con la concezione di non-assoluto (buzhen) si confutano entrambe questi attaccamenti [all’essere e al non-essere] e si fa in modo che le cose siano conformi al principio. Il principio è di per se stesso fondamentalmente quieto, perciò si dice che “Vacuità del non-assoluto” (Buzhen kong 不真空).27

24 Wencai, Zhuolun xinshu 輯論新疏 [T 1860], 208a 9-13
25 Zunshi 遵式 (964-1032) fu eminente membro della scuola Tian Tai e autore di numerosi scritti dei quali una trentina sono tuttora conservati.
27 Ibidem.
Possiamo notare come, per quanto leggermente diverse, le tre interpretazioni di Wencai, Yuankang e Zunshi considerino tutte la “vacuità” (il carattere *kong* 空 nel titolo del trattato) come il vero traguardo ideale, come la vera via di mezzo fra esistenza e inesistenza. Il motivo per cui si approda alla visione del vuoto è la constatazione della parzialità o “non-assolutezza” (*buzhen* 不真) tanto della prospettiva dell’esistenza (*you* 有) quanto di quella della inesistenza (*wu* 無), da cui la spiegazione sintetica del titolo *buzhen ji kong* 不真即空 (“non-assoluto e dunque vuoto”). Possiamo esemplificare tale prospettiva con lo schema sottostante:\textsuperscript{28}

4.1.2 Seconda interpretazione: “non-assolutezza della vacuità”

La seconda interpretazione ebbe tra i suoi maggiori rappresentanti i maestri Huayan 華嚴 Chengguan 澤觀 (738-839) e Hanshan 憨山. Secondo costoro il titolo andrebbe letto come “Non assolutezza della Vacuità”: si tratterebbe, in altre parole, della negazione della sostanzialità della vacuità ovvero del rifiuto di una concezione meramente nichilistica della stessa.

Chengguan, quarto patriarca Huayan, distingue due significati del termine *zhenkong* 真空:

Il primo significato è quello di “vacuità assoluta”, ossia della vacuità concepita nichilisticamente come eterna assenza di oggetti (*yixiang wuwu wei zhenkong yi* 一向無物為真空義): è per questo motivo, sostiene Chengguan, che Sengzhao nel titolo dell’opera fa precedere a “vacuità assoluta” la negazione “non”:

\footnote{\textsuperscript{28} Lo schema è tratto da Cai Yingxun 1986, 447.}
是故肇公以不不之云：不一向是無物。
“Per questo motivo Sengzhao nega [questo termine] con il bu 不 (“non”); nega cioè il fatto che le cose siano eternamente assenti”.

Nella seconda accezione zhenkong indica il principio della vacuità rettamente inteso come non ostruzione fra l’essere dei fenomeni e la vacuità. Il termine zhenkong in questa seconda accezione entrò nel patrimonio terminologico Huayan a partire da Dushun 杜順 (557-640), primo patriarca e dunque fondatore di tale scuola. Chengguan ne diede la seguente definizione: “La non ostruzione tra materia e vacuità costituisce la Vera Vacuità” (se-kong wuai wei zhenkong 色空無礙為真空) e chiarì tale concetto ricorrendo a varie altre espressioni, quali ad esempio “Vera Vacuità relativa alla meravigliosa esistenza” (dui miaoyou zhi zhenkong 對妙有之真空) oppure “Vacuità non ipostatizzata” (bukongkong 不空空, lett. “Vacuità che non è vacuità”). Leggiamo nel seguente passo:

言真空是不空空者，即真空上以明中道，謂空與不空無障礙故。言不空者，以空無空相故；重言空者，亦名非不空，謂餘一切相無不盡故。是故非空非不空，名為中道，是名真空義。
“Quando si asserisce che la Vera Vacuità真空 è il Vuoto non ipostatizzato (bukong kong 不空空, lett. “la vacuità che non è vacuità [avente di per se stessa esistenza reale]”), [lo si fa al fine di] illustrare la via mediana sulla base della Vera Vacuità e spiegare il motivo per cui fra vacuità e non vacuità non vi è ostruzione.
Se si parla di “non vacuità”, è perché la vacuità non possiede la caratteristica distintiva (laksana) della vacuità (ossia, essa non è un oggetto reale). Se poi di nuovo (cioè dopo averla negata) si parla ancora di vacuità (ci si riferisce qui al secondo kong dell’espressione bukong kong), questa non è che la negazione della non-vacuità (fei bukong 非不空); questo è detto il motivo per cui di tutte le caratteristiche distintive non ve n’è alcuna che non sia esaurita. Perciò la negazione della vacuità e della non-vacuità (fei kong fei bukong 非空非不空) è denominata “via di mezzo”, è ciò che si chiama “il significato della Vera Vacuità”.

29Chengguan 澄觀, Dafang Guangfo Huayanjing suishu yanyi chao 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔 [T 1736], cit. in Cai Yingxun 1986, 442
30 Si veda su questo Zacchetti 2000, 150, nota n. 10
31Chengguan 澄觀, Dafang Guangfo Huayanjing suishu yanyi chao 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔, cit. in Cai Yingxun 1986, 442
Chengguan 澄觀 si serve dunque del termine 真空 nella prima accezione di vuoto nichilistico al fine di spiegare, attraverso la sua negazione, il vuoto autentico (ossia la Vera Vacuità); in tale operazione egli gioca sull’ambivalenza semantica del termine 真 che significa sia “assoluto” sia “vero, autentico, corretto”.

Lo studioso Cai Yingxun 蔡繩勳 considera l’utilizzo della prima accezione come appartenente ad un “livello funzionale” (作用層), mentre considera la seconda accezione come appartenente al “livello assoluto” (境界層, lett. “livello [in cui si esprime l’] ideale”; si tratta del livello in cui, abbandonati i vari espedienti che agiscono al livello funzionale, viene espresso il vero e assoluto ideale buddhista): si tratta in definitiva di un “processo dialettico propedeutico” volto a portare ad una corretta comprensione della via di mezzo mettendo nello stesso tempo in guardia dalle visioni erronee del sostanzialismo e del nichilismo.

Anche Hanshan distingue due significati del termine 真空: il primo presuppone il punto di vista della verità relativa, il secondo quello della verità assoluta:

此論真空不空，以為所觀真諦之境也。不真有二義：一有為之法，緣生故假，假而不實，其體本空，此俗諦不真故空，名不真空。真性緣起，成一切法，體非斷滅，不是實實的空，名不真空。

Questo [trattato] spiega il fatto che la Vera Vacuità真空 non è vacuità, e considera questo [fatto] come la sfera oggettiva della Paramartha (sarebbe a dire: la verità assoluta nel suo manifestarsi quale oggetto di contemplazione).


La vera natura [delle cose] consiste nel loro sorgere condizionatamente, [ed è per questo che] il fondamento tutti i dharma che vengono a costituirsi non è nichilisticamente estinto (i.e. non è assolutamente inesistente); non trattandosi dunque di una vacuità sostanziale, si dice “non-assolutezza della vacuità.”

32 Hanshan 憨山, Zhaolun lüezhu 聶論略注 [X 873], cit. in Cai Yingxun 1986, 442.
Tale descrizione si evince anche dal seguente passo in cui Hanshan spiega il significato dell’espressione

buyou buwu 不有不無 (“non esistente e non-inesistente”) impiegata da Sengzhao:

言不有者，即俗諦不有也。不無者，真諦不無也。以俗諦假有不真故空。真諦緣生，故不是實實斷空，故題稱不真空，含有二義。


Possiamo notare che:

la prima accezione del termine fornita da Hanshan è sostanzialmente identica a quella di Yuankang, Wencai etc. ovvero, la vacuità deriva dal riconoscimento del fatto che tutti gli elementi della realtà non possiedono un’esistenza assoluta o fondata ontologicamente;

la seconda accezione è invece uguale alla prima descritta da Chengguan e consiste nella negazione dell’assolutezza del vuoto.

Rispetto a Yuankang, Wencai etc. Chengguan e Hanshan elaborano dunque un’ulteriore spiegazione del termine zhenkong 真空, più elaborata e raffinata. Dal loro punto di vista “la vacuità” di cui si parla nel titolo del trattato non esprime immediatamente il fine ultimo, ma rappresenta la concezione nichilistica del vuoto, ed è solo attraverso la negazione di quest’ultima che si può approdare alla vacuità rettamente intesa come assenza di ostruzione fra vacuità e fenomeni.

Tale prospettiva si rifa all’elaborazione filosofica della scuola Huayan secondo la quale, quando l’esistenza è correttamente intesa come non-assoluta, ovvero come “esistenza convenzionale” (jiayou 假有), prende il nome di “meravigliosa esistenza” (miaoyou 妙有); d’altra parte, quando la vacuità è correttamente intesa come non opposentesi alla pluralità fenomenica, prende il nome di “Vera

33 Ibidem.
Vacuità” (appunto zhenkong 真空) o anche “meravigliosa vacuità” (miao kong 妙空).

A proposito di queste due diverse connotazioni di “meravigliosa esistenza” e “meravigliosa vacuità”, citiamo la seguente puntualizzazione di Zacchetti:

“Non va dimenticato che tanto la “Meravigliosa esistenza” (miaoyou 妙有) che la “Vera Vacuità”真空 (= “Meravigliosa vacuità”, miao kong 妙空) rappresentano due corrette modalità di comprensione: cioè la comprensione della relazione dialettica, senza “sopraffazione” (duo 奪), fra i due poli di Principio (li 理) e fenomeni (shi 事”).

Sintetizziamo infine questa seconda interpretazione del titolo del trattato attraverso lo schema sottostante.

4.2 Il trattato Bu-zhen kong di Sengzhao: principali tematiche sviluppate

Una spiegazione dettagliata della terminologia impiegata da Sengzhao è stata fornita nelle note alla traduzione del trattato; pertanto qui ci limitiamo a sintetizzare i punti salienti del pensiero espresso.

4.2.1 Assoluta identità di Fondamento e Utilizzo

Vi è assoluta identità, secondo Sengzhao, fra Fondamento (ti 體, spesso espresso da Sengzhao come ji 寂, “quiete”) e Utilizzo (yong 用); il vuoto non è concepito come un fondamento sotteso alla realtà fenomenica: non vi è reale contrapposizione o antagonismo fra vacuità e fenomeni, unità e molteplicità. Tale identità riguarda sia

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34 Zacchetti 2000, 173, nota n. 69
35 Lo schema è tratto da Cai Yingxun 1986, 447
l’ambito dell’esistenza individuale (“l’io e le cose hanno la stessa radice”),\textsuperscript{36} sia l’ambito gnoseologico (“l’affermazione e la negazione sono un unico \textit{Qi}?”).\textsuperscript{37}

La descrizione della Via di mezzo buddhista si costituisce come rifiuto tanto dell’essere quanto del non-essere \textit{(feiyu fêiwu 非有非無)}: sia la visione dell’esistenza che quella dell’inesistenza sono parziali e dunque nessuna delle due può porsi come verità ultima. Facendo proprio l’insegnamento di Nāgārjuna secondo cui “è necessario intendere la vacuità in accordo con la dottrina della co-produzione condizionata”, Sengzhao comprende come sulla base del \textit{pratitya-samutpāda} le cose non siano né assolutamente inesistenti né dotate di esistenza sostanziale: con il rifiuto della fondamentale antitesi essere/non-essere del pensiero Xuanxue egli pone un ideale spirituale più alto che né “i partigiani del non-essere \textit{(guiwu 貴無)}” né “i sostenitori dell’essere” \textit{(chongyou 崇有)} avevano fino ad allora postulato.

\textbf{4.2.2 Il motivo della vacuità}

Il motivo di questa identità assoluta di Fondamento e Fenomeni sta nel fatto che “sebbene le diecimila cose siano molteplici, tuttavia non possono di per se stesse differenziarsi [le une dalle altre]” \textit{(buneng zìyì 不能自異)}, ovvero le cose non posseggono di per se stesse quelle caratteristiche \textit{(xiàng 相)} che consentirebbero di identificarle come singole entità e dunque differenziarle da un dato contesto. Si può dunque affermare che l’unica vera caratteristica \textit{(yìxiàng 一相)} delle cose è per l’appunto l’assenza di caratteristica \textit{(wúxiàng 無相)}: da ciò si deduce l’impossibilità di descrivere in modo categorico la realtà sulla base delle costruzioni linguistiche o concettuali. Sengzhao riconduce tutte le differenze all’ambito della conoscenza basata sui sensi, e all’azione dicotomizzante del linguaggio: l’uomo nomina le cose, le definisce, pretende di stabilire rapporti necessari fra i nomi e le cose, ma in realtà “non identificandosi con i nomi, le cose non colgono la realtà, non identificandosi con le cose, i nomi non seguono il vero, e dunque la verità assoluta se ne sta in solitaria quiete al di fuori della

\textsuperscript{36} “物我同根”, \textit{Buzhen kông lún 本真空論} [T 1858], 152a12.

\textsuperscript{37} “是非一氣” ibidem.

\textsuperscript{38} “萬象雖殊。而不能自異”, \textit{Buzhen kông lún 本真空論} [T 1858] p. 152 a10.
Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione

“dottrina dei nomi”.39 Quindi i nomi non corrispondono alla realtà, la realtà non corrisponde al nome. Realità e nomi non combaciano (ningshi wudang 名實無當).”40

4.2.3 La concezione dello Spirito (shen 神) e la vacuità come li 理

Una delle peculiarità dei trattati di Sengzhao è la rielaborazione assai originale di una concezione tipicamente cinese quale quella dello “spirito” (shen 神).41 L’importanza di tale pensiero in Sengzhao è confermata dal fatto che, oltre ad occupare un posto di rilievo nella trattazione della Prajñā nel trattato Prajñā non è conoscenza, si ritrova nella conclusione dei trattati Le cose non mutano e Vacuità del non-assoluto come espressione sintetica del significato ivi esposto:

39 Per “Dottrina dei Nomi” si intende quella dottrina che si propone di stabilire il corretto rapporto o l’appropriata corrispondenza fra le denominazioni e la realtà (tale operazione è considerata presupposto indispensabile all’ordinamento della società e alla fondazione di un sistema politico efficiente).

40 “物無當名之實，非物也。名無得物之功，非名也。是以名不當實，實不當名，名實無當”，Buzhen kong lu 不真空論 [T 1858], 152 c21-c23

41 La rielaborazione di Sengzhao sulla concezione di shen è assai originale e si differenzia radicalmente da quella della maggior parte degli esegeti del quarto secolo i quali ricorrevano all’idea di “spirito” per spiegare la dottrina buddhista della reincarnazione.

42 Wu buqian lun 物不遷論 [T 1858], 151c 26-28
Entrando in contatto con le cose [si] rimane [nell’] Assoluto: è forse lontana la santità? Incarna [questo ideale] e sarai una cosa sola con lo spirito (ti zhi ji shen 體之即神)!”

Il termine *shen* 神 è impiegato da Sengzhao in varie combinazioni: quelle ricorrenti nel trattato *Buzhen kong* sono *shenxin* 神心 (“mente spirituale, o numinosa”) e *shenming* 神明 (“comprensione spirituale”).

Il termine *shenming* 神明, sebbene sia entrato a far parte del lessico filosofico cinese già in tempi molto antichi, richiama qui immediatamente la disputa sulle emozioni del saggio che tanta parte aveva avuto nei dibattiti Xuanxue del periodo dei Wei. Tale disputa è sintetizzata nel seguente commento di Pei Songzhi (372-451) ad un passo della Biografia di Zhong Hui 鍾會 conservata nella *Cronaca dei tre regni* (Sanguo zhi 三國志), che riportiamo qui nella traduzione inglese di Derk Bodde:

He Yan maintained that the sage lacks either joy or anger, sorrow or pleasure. His discourse was extremely subtle, and Zhong Hui followed him. [Wang] Bi, however, differed on this. He maintained that where the sage was vitally superior to other man is in his spirit-like intelligence (*shenming* 神明), but where he is like other men is in having the five emotions (*wuqing* 五情). Being superior in his spirit-like intelligence, he is able to identify himself with the harmonious whole, so that he is imbued with non-being (*wu* 無); but being like others in his five emotions, he cannot but react to things with emotion. The emotions of the sage are such that though he reacts to things, he is not ensnared by them (*yingwu er wu lei yuwu 應物而無累於物*). It is a great error, consequently, to say that because he is not ensnared by things, he therefore has no [emotional] reactions to them”.

Possiamo notare come Sengzhao riprenda tale concezione da Wang Bi e la rielabori in chiave buddhista; egli afferma ad un certo punto nel trattato:

豈不以其即萬物之自虛。故物不能累其神明者也。

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43 *Buzhen kong lun* 不真空論 [T 1858], 153a 3-5

44 Se ne trova menzione già nello *Shangshu* 商書 e nello *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, ed è di uso comune nei testi del periodo degli Stati Combattenti.

45 Feng Youlan 1952, vol. II, 188

46 Tale ipotesi è suggerita pure da Robinson (si veda Robinson, 1967, p. 307, nota n. 51)
“Il fatto che le cose non possano ostacolare (lei 累) la sua (del saggio) comprensione spirituale (shenming 神明), non è forse dovuto alla sua realizzazione della vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose (ji wanwu zhi zixu 即萬物之自虛)?”

Sengzhao riprende dunque la concezione di shenming come caratteristica che contraddistingue il saggio e la associa alla saggezza o sapienza che scaturisce dalla Prajñā, diversa dalla conoscenza dei sensi, e che consente di “realizzare la vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose”; shenming è dunque la capacità di “vedere o percepire con chiarezza” (ming 明) attraverso lo “spirito” (shen 神).

Citiiamo di seguito due passi ripresi dal trattato “Prajñā non è conoscenza”, il primo dei quali comprova il rapporto diretto di tale concezione con Wang Bi, mentre il secondo ne mette in luce la rielaborazione:

豈曰木石瞽其懷,其於無知而已哉? 誠以異於人者神明, 故不可以事相求之耳。

“Come potrei affermare che [il Saggio] è insensibile come [un pezzo di] legno o una pietra (cioè privo di emozioni), che egli è semplicemente privo di conoscenza?

In realtà si tratta solo del fatto che la differenza fra [il Saggio] e gli uomini [comuni] sta nella “comprensione spirituale” (shenming 神明) la quale [essendo appunto “spirituale”] non si può ottenere attraverso le caratteristiche distinctive (lakṣana) delle cose (questo ribadisce il fatto che non si tratta di una conoscenza basata sui sensi o mediata dall’intelletto).”

智有窮幽之鑒,而無知焉; 神有應會之用,而無慮焉, 故能獨王於世表 [...]

“La Gnosi possiede una comprensione intuitiva estremamente profonda, la quale tuttavia non è conoscenza; lo Spirito (shen 神) ha la funzione di comprendere per riflesso (yìnghuì 應會), ma non è pensiero dicotomico e perciò regna solitario al di fuori dal mondo. [...] Sebbene lo Spirito stia al di fuori dal mondo, esso è tuttavia sempre al suo interno”.

Secondo Sengzhao, quella dello “spirituale” è una facoltà che non è concettualizzabile o quantificabile in termini umani (e perciò dice che “sta al di fuori dal mondo”), ma non per questo è priva di efficacia, anzi, essa ha precisamente il potere di “comprendere per riflesso”.

47 Buzhen kong lun 不真空論 [T 1858] p. 152a 5-7
48 Boruo wuzhi lun 般若無知論 [T 1858] p. 153b 27-29
49 [T 1858], 153b 3-6
ovvero di rispondere agli stimoli delle cose senza rimanerne “invischiata” o contaminata (perciò è detto “sta sempre all’interno del mondo”).

Liebenthal ricerca l’origine di tale concezione nelle appendici Xi Ci al Libro dei Mutamenti ove si racconta di come il saggio Fuxi abbia ordinato le diecimila cose nelle diverse categorie in accordo con le loro tendenze innate e abbia in tale azione manifestato “la potenza della sua comprensione spirituale” (tong shenming zhi de 通神明之德).50 Riteniamo tuttavia sia possibile trovare in Zhuangzi alcuni passi che ancor più sembrano precorrere il successivo sviluppo di Sengzhao.

Consideriamo ad esempio il celebre apolofo del cuoco Ding: mentre egli è intento a squartare un bue, il suo signore lo osserva e rimane affascinato dalla sua maestria e dalla perfezione e naturalezza dei suoi movimenti. Alla richiesta di spiegazioni, il cuoco risponde con le seguenti parole:

“Il vostro servo cerca quanto vi è di meglio, e s’è lasciato alle spalle la merà tecnica.
All’inizio, quando ho cominciato questo lavoro, non vedeva che buoi. Nel giro di tre anni, non vedeva più il bue. Ora non vedo più l’animale con gli occhi, ma lo percepisco con lo spirito (yishen yu 以神遇). Laddove si ferma la conoscenza sensibile, è lo spirito ad aver libero corso.
Il mio coltello si affida alle linee della conformazione naturale (yi tianli 依天理): taglia lungo i grandi interstizi, si lascia guidare dalle cavità principali, segue un percorso necessario; non sfiora mai nervi né tendini, né mai scalfisce le ossa. Un buon cuoco consuma un coltello all’anno tagliando carne; un normale cuoco lo cambia una volta al mese perché trancia alla peglio. Il coltello del vostro servo è stato usato per diciannove anni, ha squartato migliaia di buoi, ma la sua lama è come nuova: sembra appena uscita dalla mola. Guardate questa giuntura: ha un interstizio, e il taglio del coltello non ha spessore (wubou 无厚 ). Se siete in grado di introdurre nell’interstizio questa cosa che non ha spessore (yi wubou ru yongjian 以無厚入有間), potete rigirarvi la lama in lungo e in largo, a vostro piacimento! Ecco perché, dopo diciannove anni, il mio coltello è ancora come nuovo, come se lo si fosse appena affilato”.51

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50 cfr. Liebenthal 1948, 57, nota 184
Su tale apologo possiamo fare le seguenti osservazioni:

1. Quella dello spirito non è una conoscenza mediata dai sensi né dall’intelletto: “Ora non vedo più l’animale con gli occhi, ma lo percepisco con lo spirito (yishen yu 以神遇), “Laddove si ferma la conoscenza sensibile, è lo spirito ad aver libero corso”.

   Si può ragionevolmente supporre che Sengzhao abbia trovato tale concezione assai adatta ad illustrare le peculiarità della Prajñā nella sua radicale differenza dalla comune conoscenza dei sensi.

2. Muovendo il coltello il cuoco non sfiora nervi né tendini e non scalfisce le ossa, allo stesso modo il santo decritto da Sengzhao “non cerca di aprirsi la via [alla vacuità] (tong 通) affidandosi allo smembramento e alla distruzione [delle cose]” (dai zaige yi qiu tong 待宰割以求通); la sua comprensione spirituale gli consente, come il coltello guidato dalla sapiente mano del cuoco Ding, di passare attraverso (tong 通) senza incontrare ostacolo alcuno (qiong suo buneng zhi 穷所不能滞). Egli “conforma il proprio spirito [alla via di mezzo] (Robinson traduce jian 間 con “interstizio”! 53) fra esistenza e inesistenza (qi shen yu yu-wu zhi jian 契神於有無之間)54 e “penetra con la sua mente spirituale l’illimitato” (tong shenxin yu wuqiong 通神心於無窮; il commentatore Wencai glossa qui shenxin 神心 con zhi 智, “Saggezza, Gnosi, Prajñā”).

3. Il motivo per cui l’azione del cuoco è così perfetta è che egli “si affida alle linee della conformazione naturale” (yi tianli 依天理). Tianli 天理 sono i principi naturali, le linee interne delle cose: l’azione di chi ha compreso tali conformazioni interne delle cose e vi si accorda senza opporvisi si connota come “spontanea”.

   Leggiamo in un passo di Buzhen kong: “l’uomo santo si avvale del pensiero autentico [della Prajñā] e il principio è assecondato” (聖人乘真心而理順),56 tenendo presente il pensiero taoista implicito nella concezione di lǐ 理, potremmo rendere tale frase nel seguente

52 [T 1858], 152b 9
53 “to fit one’s spirit to the interstice between the existent and the inexistent” (Robinson 1967, 222)
54 [T 1858], 152a 3-4
55 [T 1858], 152a 4
56 [T 1858], 152a 7


Si ha qui l’impressione che la concezione buddhista del vuoto si fonda con quella della spontaneità taoista concepita come il riconoscimento della dinamica interna delle cose, del loro naturale modo di essere: in Sengzhao entrambe queste concezioni si uniscono in una visione organica e di grande coerenza e suggestione.

Questa rielaborazione e adattamento di concetti taoisti al contesto buddhista conduce ad un’altra fondamentale osservazione, e cioè che è innegabile il ruolo centrale giocato dai filosofi Xuanxue nel terzo e quarto secolo nel riportare in primo piano il pensiero taoista e nell’adattarlo ad un contesto di pensiero tutto incentrato sulle grandi tematiche dell’ontologia, mettendo così a disposizione dei buddhisti di epoca successiva tutta una serie di strumenti concettuali utili a tradurre e spiegare i principi buddhisti adattandoli al contesto culturale cinese. L’esempio più lampante a tale proposito è per l’appunto quello del li 理 che nella sua “odissea semantica” passa dal taoismo di Zhuangzi al pensiero Xuanxue di Wang Bi, Pei Wei 裴頠 e Guo Xiang 郭象 (ognuno dei quali lo rielabora in modo molto personale, adattandolo al proprio sistema di pensiero), dal buddhismo ancora impregnato di Xuanxue di Zhi Daolin 支道林 fino alla definitiva e consapevole acquisizione da parte di pensatori buddhisti come Sengzhao.

4. Notiamo infine che il capitolo del Zhuangzi da cui è tratto l’apologo del cuoco Ding si intitola “Nutrire il principio vitale” (Yangsheng 養生) e ha come tema conduttore la pratica del Dao, ovvero l’applicazione pratica dei principi taoisti. Non sarebbe dunque affatto strano se Sengzhao, il quale come dice la sua biografia “si
dilettava nella lettura di *Laozi* e *Zhuangzi*? 57 ne avesse tratto ispirazione per descrivere il vero senso della vacuità buddhista, da lui concepita in termini essenzialmente pratici ed espressa come atteggiamento dell’uomo santo verso il mondo.

4.2.4 L’applicazione pratica della vacuità

Sengzhao non si pone come obiettivo quello di spiegare la vacuità in termini teorici, il suo interesse si volge piuttosto all’aspetto pratico della stessa. La vera tematica che costituisce il fulcro del trattato è l’atteggiamento dell’Uomo Sommo (zhiren 至人) o dell’Uomo Santo (shengren 聖人) verso il mondo, il suo modo di esperire, il suo costante rapportarsi alla molteplicità pur senza distaccarsi dalla vacuità. Fedele alla concezione tipicamente cinese secondo cui non può esistere un pensiero o una concezione di vita che non si traduca anche in un concreto ideale di saggezza, in un modo d’agire nel mondo, Sengzhao descrive la figura del Santo ricorrendo sovente ad espressioni taoiste e per nulla buddhiste.

4.2.5 “Equilibrio” contenutistico e formale del trattato

Sia dal punto di vista stilistico che contenutistico si nota nel trattato un grande equilibrio: il procedimento argomentativo applicato consiste nell’affiancare due serie parallele di “premesse-deduzioni” (del tipo $A \rightarrow A_1$) e nel portarne avanti lo sviluppo simultaneo. Di queste due serie parallele, l’una si basa sulla concezione dell’essere e l’altra sul non-essere, oppure l’una adotta il punto di vista della verità relativa e l’altra quello della verità assoluta etc.; attraverso lo svolgimento si arriva ad un punto in cui queste due linee convergono: si tratta della coincidenza dei due aspetti che viene dedotta sulla base della loro non-assolutezza. Tale “equilibrio teorico” fra essere e non-essere etc. si sposa perfettamente con lo stile letterario della prosa parallela (*pian wen* 駢文)58 adottato da Sengzhao ed assai diffuso all’epoca. Facciamo qui di seguito un esempio di tale procedimento argomentativo: 59

58 Per una sintetica ma efficace trattazione dello stile *pian wen* si rimanda a Nienhauser 1986, 656-660.
59 Si tratta del passo in [T 1858], 152b 18-22.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: 萬物果有其所以不有</th>
<th>B: 有其所以不無</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“vi è un aspetto in base al quale le diecimila cose non sono esistenti”</td>
<td>“vi è un aspetto in base al quale non sono inesistenti”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1: 故雖有而非有</td>
<td>B1: 故雖無而非無</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sebbene esistenti [esse] tuttavia non sono [assolutamente] esistenti”</td>
<td>“sebbene inesistenti, tuttavia non sono [assolutamente] inesistenti”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2: 有者非真有</td>
<td>B2: 無者不絶虛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[da ciò si deduce che] l'esistenza non è esistenza assoluta”</td>
<td>“[da ciò si deduce che] l'inesistenza non è il Vuoto assoluto”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3: 若有不即真</td>
<td>B3: 無不夷跡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“se l'esistenza non si connota come assoluta”</td>
<td>“se l'inesistenza non cancella le tracce60 [delle cose esistenti]”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusione:**
然則有無稱異。其致一也
“allora esistenza e inesistenza differiscono nella denominazione ma si riferiscono ad un unico [principio]”

Le due serie parallele di premesse-deduzioni, che in questo caso sono state indicate con A e B, assumono l’una la prospettiva dell’essere e l’altra quella del non-essere: si può osservare come esse conducano infine ad una stessa conclusione che afferma la sostanziale coincidenza dei due punti di vista sotto l'aspetto della loro non-assolutezza.

4.2.6 Fra identità (tong 同) e differenza (yi 異)

Un altro metodo impiegato da Sengzhao al fine di esprimere la prospettiva dell'assoluta identità e unità cui conduce la via di mezzo buddhista, è quello di combinare all'interno di un'unica frase due diverse locuzioni una delle quali esprime la prospettiva della differenza, della dispersione o del dualismo (soggetto-oggetto, affermazione-negazione etc.), l'altra quella dell'unità, della natura indifferenziata del cosmo. Possiamo notare fra l'altro come tutte

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queste frasi facciano riferimento ad un atteggiamento inestricabilmente legato alla prassi, alla sfera dell’azione: il soggetto è quasi sempre l’uomo sommo o l’uomo santo, vero protagonista del trattato e incarnazione del sommo ideale buddhista. Proponiamo di seguito alcuni esempi di questa tecnica descrittiva:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tong 同</th>
<th>identità</th>
<th>yi 異</th>
<th>differenza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>shen yiqi 善—氣</td>
<td>guanhua 觀化</td>
<td>scrutare i [diecimila] mutamenti [del cosmo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>esaminare a fondo l’unico Qi [di cui sono fatte tutte le cose]</td>
<td></td>
<td>“[L’uomo santo] scruta i [diecimila] mutamenti [del cosmo] con la consapevolezza che [tutte le cose sono] un unico Qi”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>shunshi 順適</td>
<td>suoyu 所遇</td>
<td>incontrare le cose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>essere in sintonia [con le cose]</td>
<td></td>
<td>“[L’uomo santo] è in sintonia con tutto ciò che incontra”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>zhichun 至淳</td>
<td>hunza 混雜</td>
<td>fondersi completamente all’eterogeneità [dei fenomeni]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>raggiungere la purezza [dell’unità]</td>
<td></td>
<td>“si fonde completamente all’eterogeneità [del mondo fenomenico] e raggiunge la purezza [dell’unità]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>yi 一</td>
<td>chuwu 觸物</td>
<td>venire in contatto con le cose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>essere uno [con le cose]</td>
<td></td>
<td>“entrando in contatto con le cose è uno [con esse]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>tong 通</td>
<td>ni 逆</td>
<td>incontrare ostacoli (o ostruzioni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>passare attraverso</td>
<td></td>
<td>“non vi è [cosa che] ostacolando la via dell’uomo santo gli impedisca di passare attraverso”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>tonggen 同根</td>
<td>wuwo 物我</td>
<td>[distinguere fra] le cose e l’io</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>avere un’unica radice</td>
<td></td>
<td>“le cose e l’io hanno la stessa radice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>yiqi 一氣</td>
<td>shifei 是非</td>
<td>[distinguere fra] l’affermazione e la negazione</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>condividere un unico Qi</td>
<td></td>
<td>“l’affermazione e la negazione condividono un unico Qi”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Traduzione annotata del trattato Buzhenkong

Commentatori: abbreviazioni

YK = Yuankang 元康 (epoca Tang 唐); Zhaolun shu 聶論疏, in Taishō Tripitaka. Vol. 45, No. 1859.

WC = Wencai 文才 (epoca Yuan 元); Zhaolun Xinshu 聶論新疏, in Taishō Tripitaka. Vol. 45, No. 1860.

CG = Chengguan 澄觀 (epoca Tang 唐).
Traduzioni del trattato consultate:


Ren, Jiyu, 任继愈. 1963. *Han-Tang Fojiao Sixiang Luncong* 汉唐佛教思想论从, 269-318. (presentazione e traduzione in cinese moderno dei trattati *Wu bu qian* e *Bu zhen kong*).


Avvertenze

Il testo adottato per la traduzione è quello raccolto nel vol. 45 [T 1858] del Canone Buddhista nella versione Taishō.

La suddivisione in paragrafi e sottoparagrafi così come i sottotitoli che sono stati apposti (riassunti nella sottostante tabella: “Suddivisione in paragrafi del trattato”) sono ripresi dal commentario di YK (epoca Tang), che è stato qui tradotto pressoché per intero: per la ricchezza delle informazioni fornite così come per l’accuratezza delle spiegazioni di certi passaggi particolarmente difficili tale commentario costituisce la migliore esegesi del testo che ci sia stato tramandata.

In alcuni passaggi particolarmente rilevanti o dal significato oscuro si è citato anche WC, mentre in un unico passo si è riportata la spiegazione di CG, il quale, pur non avendo scritto un vero e proprio commentario sui trattati di Sengzhao, è solito citarne delle frasi e commentarle nei suoi scritti.
Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione

Suddivisione in paragrafi del trattato

Introduzione (xuwen 序文)

1. Si mostra il retto principio (biao zhengzong 標正宗)
   1.1 Si mostra il vero obiettivo [della Prajñā] (biao zhen jing 標真境)
   1.2 Si spiega la vera Saggezza (Prajñā) (ming zhenzhi 明真智)
   1.3 Si spiega insieme l’obiettivo e la Prajñā nella loro coincidenza (hémìng jìng 合明境智相契會)

2. Vengono criticate le visione erronee (po yijian 破異見)
3. Si spiega l’argomento centrale del trattato (ming zuolun yi 明作論意)

Corpo principale del trattato (zhengwen 正文)

1. Si spiega la vacuità attraverso citazioni [dai testi] dottrinali (yin jiao yi ming kong 引教以明空)
   1.1 Si spiega la vacuità attraverso le citazioni di due Sastra (zheng yin liang lun yi ming kong 正教兩論以明空)
   1.2 Si spiega il senso [delle citazioni dai] due trattati (jieshi er lun zhi yi 解釋二論之意)
   1.3 Si citano [dei passi da] cinque sūtra al fine di completare la spiegazione (yin wujing Zheng cheng 引五經證成)

2. Si spiega la vacuità basandosi sulla ragione (ju li yi ming kong 據理以明空)
3. Di nuovo si spiega la vacuità attraverso citazioni [dai testi] dottrinali (chong yin jiao yi ming kong 重教以明空)
4. Di nuovo si spiega la vacuità basandosi sulla ragione (chong juli yi ming kong 重據理以明空)
5. Si spiega la vacuità attraverso [la discussione del rapporto fra] nomi e realtà (jiu ming shi yi ming kong 就名實以明空)
6. Si spiega la vacuità traendo le conclusioni [del trattato] (jiehui yi ming kong 結會以明空)

Vacuità del non-assoluto

YK Questo trattato, il secondo, chiarifica il [significato della] vacuità ed espone l’insegnamento della verità assoluta. Tutti i dharma sono illusori (xujiā 虛假), e perciò si dice che “non sono assoluti” (buzhen 不真). Poiché [i dharma] sono illusori e non assoluti (ovvero, non dotati di esistenza assoluta), essi di conseguenza non sono altro che vuoti.
Qualcuno sostiene che [la parola] zhen 真 (“assoluto”) significhi “essere” e [la parola] kong 空 (“vacuità”) significhi “non-essere”. Per cui [l’espressione] “Bu zhen kong” (ossia la negazione dei due termini) starebbe a chiarificare il senso della Via Mediana (zhòngdào 中道) fra essere e non-essere. Si tratta di una interpretazione superflua e artificiosa che non coglie il senso [autentico]
del trattato. Se fosse come [costoro] affermano, forse che [la parola] kong 空 non indica [già di per se stessa] la Via Mediana?”


Non è forse triste [tutto ciò]? [...].61

Introduzione
1. Si mostra il retto principio

1.1 Si mostra il vero obiettivo [della Prajñā]

La perfetta vacuità e la non-originazione [dei dharma]62: questo è il meraviglioso obiettivo (oggetto) della profonda percezione intuitiva63 [della realtà propria] della Prajñā e il più alto principio64 delle cose esistenti.

61 Segue una citazione dal Fozang jing 佛藏經 [T 653] che serve sostanzialmente a confermare l'interpretazione del titolo (e quindi del senso essenziale) del trattato da parte di Yuan Kang, in contrasto con le interpretazioni meno “ortodosse” di altri commentatori.

62 “Non originazione” rende wu-sheng 無生, traduzione del termine sanscrito anutpāda; tale termine va inteso come forma sintetica dell’espressione bu sheng bu mie 不生不滅 (“[i dharma] non si originano e non si estinguono”); si tratta dell’applicazione del principio del vuoto alla teoria della causalità: tutti i dharma sorgono condizionatamente ma, nessuno di essi essendo dotato di esistenza sostanziale, non vi è in realtà niente che sia generato né niente che venga distrutto.

63 “Profonda percezione intuitiva” traduce xuanjian 玄鑑. La conoscenza cui conduce la Prajñā non è né di tipo sensoriale né di tipo intellettuale, la percezione della realtà cui si giunge attraverso la coltivazione di questa virtù non è filtrata dalle facoltà mentali o sensorie, ma “rispecchia”, “riflette” la realtà così come si presenta nella sua forma più immediata senza sovrapporle significati che di per sé non possiede. I termini jian 鑑 (“riflettere”) e zhuo 照 (“rispecchiare”) sono peraltro strettamente connessi all’ambito della meditazione.

64 Il termine zong 宗 o zongji 宗極 è comunemente usato dai filosofi della Studio del Mistero; ha il significato di “norma, principio, fondamento, verità, scopo o fine ultimo etc.”. Zong è, ad esempio, il “principio integrante” di Wang Bi (“Il senza forma e senza nome (ovvero, il non-essere) è il principio [integrante] delle diecimila
Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione

1.2 Si spiega la vera Saggezza (Prajñā)

Qualora si fosse privi della speciale capacità di comprensione [che caratterizza la] Gnosi del Santo (shengming 聖明), in che modo sarebbe possibile conformare il proprio spirito [alla via di mezzo] fra esistenza e inesistenza?

YK La Gnosi del Santo è la Prajñā. Senza la speciale capacità di comprensione [propria] della Prajñā, in che modo sarà possibile conformare la propria facoltà spirituale (shenqing 神情) al principio della via di mezzo fra esistenza e inesistenza (zhongdao feiyou feiwu zhi li 中道非有非無之理)?

1.3 Si spiega insieme l’obiettivo e la Prajñā nella loro coincidenza

Perciò l’uomo sommo⁶⁵ penetra con la sua mente spirituale (shenxin 神心) l’illimitato⁶⁶, e nessun limite lo può arrestare;

YK [l’uomo sommo] contempla con la mente spirituale il principio senza limiti (以神心觀無窮之理), perciò si dice “penetra con la sua mente spirituale l’illimitato”. Egli non è ostacolato (zhiai 滯礙) dalle cose esistenti, perciò si dice “nessun limite lo può arrestare”.

spinge al limite estremo la sua capacità di vedere e udire, eppure i suoni e le forme non lo possono vincolare (zhi 制).

YK [l’uomo sommo] lascia libere (zong 縱) le orecchie di udire i suoni, [eppure] non è da questi illuso; lascia liberi gli occhi di guardare le cose, [eppure] non è da queste condotto a smarrimento.

65 “Uomo sommo” (zhiren 至人) è un termine taoista che indica l’uomo saggio, colui che ha realizzato il Dao; questa saggezza o sapienza non è di tipo intellettuale: si riferisce invece al raggiungimento di una “pratica di vita”, di una completezza e una sintonia perfetta con se stessi e con il mondo. Si può notare come Sengzhao sia interessato alle implicazioni pratiche della vacuità: è forte qui il contrasto con le scuole esegetiche del quarto secolo le quali mantenevano un approccio assai intellettualistico e tendevano a considerare quello tra vacuità e fenomeni come un intrico rompicapo filosofico.

66 “L’illimitato” traduce wuqiong 無窮; tale termine fa parte del lessico taoista e compare spesso nel Zhuangzi; Liebenthal intende il termine come traduzione di (dvaya-) kotráhita, “ciò che non è né positivo né negativo” (Liebenthal 1948, p. 57, nota 183).
Il fatto che le cose non possano opporre resistenza alla sua comprensione spirituale, non è forse dovuto alla sua realizzazione della vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose (ji wanwu zhi zixu 即萬物之自虛)?

Perciò l'uomo santo si avvale della cognizione autentica (zhenxin 真心) [che gli deriva della Prajñā] e asseconda il principio [della vacuità]. Quindi non vi è [cosa che] ostacolando [la sua via] gli impedisca di passare attraverso (tong通).

YK “Assecondare” si riferisce [al fatto che] tutti i dharma sono vuoti, e che questo Retto Insegnamento (zhengdao 正道) non viene violato. Se si è saldi nel pensiero della Prajñā e la Verità asseconda la Via del Vuoto, allora non vi è [cosa che] ostruendo [la via] impedisca di passare attraverso.


67 Shenming 神明 (“comprensione spirituale”): su questo termine si veda il paragrafo 4.2.3.

68 L'espressione “realizzare la vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose” (ji wanwu zhi zixu 即萬物之自虛) viene ripetuta per ben tre volte all'interno del trattato, e secondo Tang Yongtong ne esprime il contenuto essenziale (si veda Tang Yongtong 1983, 236). Zixu 自虛 significa “essere vuoto di per se stesso, essere vuoto intrinsecamente”: tale espressione chiarisce il fatto che è proprio della natura spontanea delle cose essere vuote; la vacuità non è dunque né una caratteristica sovrimposta né il risultato di un processo per cui le cose vengano infine rese vuote.


70 Il carattere tong 通 (“passare attraverso”) è fondamentale nella visione di Sengzhao: l'uomo sommo è colui che, compresa la vera natura delle cose (ossia la loro vacuità), vi si conforma nel suo agire nel mondo; poiché asseconda (shun 順) la tendenza naturale delle cose, queste non costituiscono un impedimento alla sua conoscenza né alla sua azione. YK glossa il carattere tong 通 con tongchang 通畅 “passaggio libero, non ostruito, non ingombro”; tong ha dunque il significato di “penetrare, pervadere senza incontrare resistenza”.

71 Come Guo Xiang, Sengzhao sottolinea il fatto che bisogna assecondare (shun 順) la tendenza innata delle cose e “non violare la loro appropriatezza” (bu-duo wu-yi...
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YK Fra i “capitoli interni” del Zhuangzi [ve n’è uno intitolato] “I maestri sommi e venerabili”,72 in cui si dice: “Quelli, nel loro essere uomini, sono in accordo col Fattore delle Creature (i.e. col processo di trasformazione, col Dao) e vagano a piacere nell’unico qi (i.e. nella natura indifferenziata) di Cielo e Terra” (you hu yiqi 游乎天地之一氣). Guo [Xiang] commenta [questo passo] con le seguenti parole: “Tutto è obliterato [in mistica unione], perciò non vi è dualità”.

Fra i “capitoli esterni” del Zhuangzi [ve n’è uno intitolato] “Il viaggio di Sapienza verso settentrione”73, in cui si dice: “La vita dell’uomo si ha col concentrarsi del qi: una volta che il qi si sia concentrato si ha la vita, una volta che si sia disperso si ha la morte. Se morte e vita si seguono [l’una l’altra], di cos’altro mai mi dovrei affliggere? Perciò le diecimila cose sono un’unica cosa. Ma ciò che [gli uomini] trovano bello è la vitalità e l’individualità, ciò che trovano brutto è il fetore e la putrefazione. Ma il fetore e la putrefazione si trasformano in vitalità e individualità, la vitalità e l’individualità si trasformano in fetore e putrefazione. Perciò si dice: ‘Tutto il mondo è un unico qi’ (tong tianxia yiqi er 通天下一氣耳). Per questo l’uomo santo tiene in pregio l’unità” […]

Ora, [Sengzhao] prende a prestito espressioni di tal genere [riguardo all’“unico qi’”] per caratterizzare il Dao dell’unità (yidao 道).

Non vi è [cosa che] ostacolando [la sua via] gli impedisca di passare attraverso (tong 通) e perciò si fonde completamente all’eterogeneità [del mondo fenomenico] (bunza 混雜) e raggiunge la purezza [dell’unità] (zhichun 致淳).

YK Zhuangzi dice74 “La folla degli uomini comuni si affatica e si affanna (yiyi 役役), mentre l’uomo santo se ne sta [come] ignorante e stolido (yumang 不奪物宜). Solo che per Sengzhao questa tendenza innata non consiste nel fen 分 specifico di cui ogni essere è dotato, ma nella sua vacuità di Natura propria.

72 “I maestri sommi e venerabili” (Da zong shi 大宗師) costituisce il capitolo 6 del Zhuangzi. La citazione si trova alla p. 268 dell’edizione di Guo Qingfan; per una traduzione inglese si veda Legge 1962, 251-252.

73 “Il viaggio di Sapienza verso settentrione” (Zhi beiyou 知北游) costituisce il capitolo 22 del Zhuangzi. La citazione si trova alla p. 733 dell’edizione di Guo Qingfan; per la traduzione inglese si veda Legge 1962, 60.

74 La citazione è tratta dal secondo capitolo del Zhuangzi (Qiwu lun 齊物論), p. 100, dell’edizione di Guo Qingfan (in tale edizione il carattere ji 紀 è sostituito da chun 純); trad. inglese in Legge 1962, 193-194. Il commento di Guo Xiang è il seguente: “‘Puro’ significa ‘non eterogeneo’. Nel partecipare al mutamento delle diecimila cose, la folla degli uomini comuni ritiene [questo mutamento] eterogeneo e [dunque] affannandosi senza sosta affatica la propria persona e affligge il proprio cuore,


Essendo in sintonia con tutto ciò che incontra, entrando in contatto con le cose è uno [con esse].75

75 Chu wu 觸物 significa “essere in contatto con le cose”, “avere a che fare con le cose” e indica dunque lo stare nel mondo, il concreto vivere e agire quotidiano. Dal punto di vista convenzionale, il contatto con le cose (chu wu 觸物) parrebbe implicare il dualismo soggetto-oggetto; ma il punto di vista di Sengzhao è quello assoluto della Prajñā e in base ad esso fra fenomeni e vacuità non sussiste alcuna dicotomia, per questo la sfera del contatto con il mondo esterno è nello stesso tempo la sfera della perfetta unità di tutte le cose e dunque dell’assoluto. Sengzhao sottolinea inoltre con tale espressione il valore pratico della vacuità e nello stesso tempo priva la vacuità di qualsiasi connotazione astratta.

Stando così le cose, allora sebbene i fenomeni siano molteplici, essi non possono tuttavia di per se stessi differenziarsi (buneng ziyi 不能自異);76 dal fatto che non possono di per se stessi differenziarsi abbandona ‘quella [cosa]’ e ne persegue ‘quest’altra’ (qubi jiuci 去彼就此). Solo il grande santo è privo di attaccamento, perciò stolidamente (ovvero, rifiutando la conoscenza) procede diritto ed è una cosa sola col mutamento; essendo una cosa sola con il mutamento, costantemente vaga [a piacere] nella unicità (du 獨) [del cosmo]. Dunque sebbene prenda parte [all’alternarsi] di milioni di anni nella loro disordinata eterogeneità, occupandosi delle molteplici differenze [dal punto di vista del] Dao, il passato e il presente sono [per lui] un’unica cosa” (cit. in Guo Qingfan p. 102).

76 L’espressione “[I fenomeni] non possono di per se stessi differenziarsi” (buneng ziyi 不能自異) sta ad indicare il fatto che i fenomeni non possiedono di per se stessi (zi 目) quelle caratteristiche che permetterebbero di distinguere (yi 異) gli uni dagli altri. Come verrà spiegato in seguito, è sulla base del linguaggio e del pensiero dicotomico che essi si costituiscono come entità definite e a sé stanti. Possiamo
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deduciamo che i fenomeni non sono fenomeni assoluti (fei zhenxiang 非真像). I fenomeni non sono fenomeni assoluti, quindi per quanto [vengano considerati] fenomeni, essi non sono [affatto] fenomeni [in senso assoluto].

**YK** “Essendo in sintonia con tutto ciò che incontra, entrando in contatto con le cose è uno [con esse]”: [Il Santo] contempla tutto ciò che incontra attraverso la Prajñā. Egli sa che tutte [le cose] sono vuote e che non sussiste alcuna ostruzione [fra vacuità e fenomeni]; quindi i diecimila dharma (cioè tutte le cose esistenti) hanno un’unica caratteristica distintiva [che li accomuna, che è in realtà l’] assenza di caratteristiche distinctive (yixiang wuxiang 一相無相) (ci si riferisce dunque al loro essere indescrivibili).

“Stando così le cose, sebbene i fenomeni siano molteplici, essi non possono tuttavia di per se stessi differenziarsi”: poiché [tutti i fenomeni] sono accomunati da un’unica caratteristica, essi non sono diversi [gli uni dagli altri].

“Dal fatto che non possono differenziarsi deduciamo che i fenomeni non sono fenomeni assoluti”: l’unica caratteristica distintiva [dei fenomeni] è l’assenza di caratteristica, perciò “fenomeno” è identico a “non-fenomeno”.

Se è così, allora le cose e l’io hanno la stessa radice, l’affermazione e la negazione condividono un unico qi (yiqi 一氣).

**YK** “Le cose” sono le cose esteriori; “l’io” è la propria persona. Entrambe sono accomunate dal fatto di essere privi di caratteristiche distinctive, perciò si dice che “hanno la stessa radice”.

[Affermazione e negazione] sono accomunate dal Retto Insegnamento (zhengdao 正道), perciò si dice “condividono un unico qi”.

Ciò che è nascosto, sottile, remoto e occulto non può certo essere compreso a pieno dalla gente comune.

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spiegare la questione anche da un altro punto di vista: i fenomeni si diversificano l’uno dall’altro grazie alle loro caratteristiche distinctive (xiang 相; scr. laksana). Ma una volta accertato che l’unica caratteristica delle cose è appunto l’assenza di caratteristica (wuxiang 無相; scr. anīmitta), ne deriva l’impossibilità di caratterizzare le cose in modo categorico e definitivo: è per questo, dice Sengzhao, che quello che convenzionalmente chiamiamo “fenomeni” (xiang 像) non sono affatto “fenomeni in senso assoluto” (fei zhenxiang 非真像). Il carattere yi 異 (“essere diverso, diversificare”) ha qui il significato di “distinguere, estrarre da un contesto”: si costituisce quindi come vero e proprio principio di individuazione.

77 L’oggetto che si vuole investigare è definito “nascosto, sottile, remoto e occulto”: come potrebbe essere compreso se non attraverso la Prajñā, la quale è definita come “riflesso” che illumina gli arcani più profondi e oscuri? (cfr. Robinson 1967, 128).
2. Vengono criticata le visione erronee

Quindi nelle discussioni degli ultimi tempi sussistono frequenti discordanze riguardo al principio della vacuità:

**YK** Proprio perché il principio della vacuità è misterioso e sottile, coloro che ne parlano non ne colgono la realtà (shi 實). Si giunge così al formarsi di visioni erronee [della dottrina].

se si cerca [di raggiungere] un accordo [di vedute] attraverso il disaccordo [di varie teorie contrastanti], su che cosa si potrà mai convenire?

**YK** Se ci si serve di approcci diversi (butong zhì qíng 不同之情) per andare a cogliere la medesima Verità, in che modo si può raggiungere un accordo [di vedute]?

Dunque molte teorie si sono combattute e le ragioni79 [apportate da ognuna] differivano [da quelle delle altre]. Quali sono [queste diverse posizioni]?

**[PRIMA POSIZIONE]** [Descrizione:] Quanto alla teoria del “non-essere della mente” (xinwu 心無)80, [essa afferma che] la mente non [deve] essere rivolta alla molteplicità, [ma che] non si dà affatto la non esistenza della molteplicità”.

[Critica:] In questa teoria l’aspetto corretto sta nella pacificazione dello spirito; l’errore sta nella [mancata asserzione della] vacuità delle cose”.

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78 Vengono di seguito prima esposte e poi criticata tre delle principali teorie esegetiche sviluppatesi nel corso del IV secolo come tentativo di spiegazione organica della vacuità dei dharma, assunto assolutamente centrale nei sūtra della Prajñāpāramitā. Per motivi di spazio non ci è possibile discutere qui le varie teorie nel dettaglio, ci limiteremo quindi a fornire soltanto le informazioni strettamente necessarie a comprendere il senso delle parole di Sengzhao.

79 Traduciamo xìng 性 con “ragioni” sulla scorta di Yuan Kang (che rende tale termine con lìxing 理性 [T 1859], 171b20(07)). Tsukamoto traduce invece zhēnli 真理 (Tsukamoto 1955, 15).

80 Precisiamo il fatto che il carattere wú 無 (“non essere”) veniva comunemente usato dai monaci del quarto secolo come sinonimo di “vacuità” (kōng 空), e anche in questo caso ciò che viene tradotto letteralmente “non-essere della mente” (xinwu 心無), deve essere inteso come “vacuità della mente”, “vacuità riferita alla mente” (xin-kōng 心空).

Il commento al [Shishuo xinyu 世說新語] dice:
“Quando il monaco [Zhi] Mindu [diretto verso sud] stava per attraversare lo Yangzi, aveva per compagno [di viaggio] un monaco del nord. Insieme fecero un piano, dicendo “Se andiamo al sud non avendo [da esporre] che la vecchia esegesi [della vacuità], non riusciremo ad avere di che mangiare. Allora insieme crearono la dottrina del non-essere della mente”. 


Il Gao seng zhuan dice:
Lo śramana Dao Heng, dotato di grande talento, sosteneva la teoria del non-essere della mente, diffondendola nella regione di Jing (valle del medio corso dello Yangzi, corrispondente all’odierno Hupei).

Zhu Fatai disse: “Questa è un’eresia, e [dunque] dev’essere sottoposta a critica. Allora chiamò a raccolta i monaci eminenti e incaricò il [suo] discepolo Tan Yi di confutare [Dao Heng]”.

Fornendo ragioni [a sostegno della propria posizione] sulla base delle scritture, essi si attaccarono e risposero in un concitato botta e risposta.

81 Per una traduzione inglese di tale testo si rimanda a Mather 1976.

82 Nel commento di Liu Xiaobiao 刘孝標 al Shi-shuo si spiega in cosa consistono “la vecchia” (jiu yi 舊義) e “la nuova esegesi” (xin yì 新義): “La vecchia esegesi sosteneva che una volta che si sia raggiunta l’onniscienza (sarvākarajñatā) la perfetta comprensione diviene possibile, e a quel punto i diecimila legami legami hanno fine: questo è detto “[stato] di vuoto non-essere; [si ha inoltre uno stato in cui] si risiede constamente senza mutare: questo è detto “meravigliosa esistenza”. Quanto all’esegesi del non-essere [della mente], essa sostiene che il fondamento (Tang: 體=心體) dell’onniscienza è [caratterizzato da] una vuota apertura che è simile alla suprema vacuità: pur essendo vuoto esso ha la capacità di conoscere, pur essendo inesistente ha la capacità di rispondere [agli stimoli], risiede in ciò che è fondamentale 居宗 e raggiunge il culmine; il non-essere non è che questo!”.

舊義曰，種智是有，而能圓照。然則萬累斯盡，謂之空無。常住不變，謂之妙有。而無義者曰，種智之體，豁如太虛。虛而能知，無而能應，居宗至極，其唯無乎 (cit. in Tang 1983, 188).
Dao Heng si avvalse della sua abilità oratoria e non volle [in alcun modo] desistere. Poiché si era oramai al tramonto, i monaci [sciolsero l’assemblea e] si raccollarono di nuovo all’alba del giorno seguente.

Hui Yuan era presente all’assemblea e pose alcune obiezioni: domande e richieste di spiegazione si levarono come lame affiliate.

[Alla fine] Heng ebbe la sensazione di star deviando dal solco della teoria [che sosteneva], perse la compostezza e si mise a percuotere il tavolo con lo scacciamosche83 senza che gli riuscisse di rispondere prontamente.

[Hui] Yuan disse: “Se intendi andar veloce pur senza affrettarti84, a che pro [fare avanti e indietro come] la spola di un tessitoio?” 85

83 Il termine zhutei (lett. “coda di cervo”) indica uno scacciamosche fatto con i peli della coda del cervo. Tale utensile richiama immediatamente l’ambito delle Conversazioni pure (qingtan 清談) di epoca Wei e Jin: è noto infatti che i “conversatori puri” amavano tenere questo oggetto in mano mentre esponevano il loro punto di vista sul tema in questione ed è questo il motivo per cui le Conversazioni pure si chiamavano anche zhutan (citasioni dello scacciamosche”). Insigni personalità dell’epoca Wei e Jin venivano ritratte in posa eloquente con in mano il zhutei: tale attrezzo costituiva un efficace simbolo visivo che connotava immediatamente lo status di chi lo brandiva come quello di un nobile in ritiro dalla vita politica.


夫聖心冥寂，理極同無，不疾而速，不徐而徐。是以知不廢寂，寂不廢知：未始不寂，未始不知 [T 1858, 155a24-26].

85 Zhuzhou 行軸 indica letteralmente la spola di un tessitoio e, per estensione, la trama di un’opera letteraria. Sembra tuttavia che qui il termine sia impiegato in senso figurato: così come la spola fa avanti e indietro nel tessitoio, Dao Heng, nella sua incertezza si dibatte fra le contraddittorie implicazioni di una teoria che appare ormai difettosa ai suoi stessi occhi. Tale lettura è confermata da Tang, il quale
Tutti i presenti risero. La teoria del non-essere della mente da quel momento si estinse”.

Ora, anche il maestro del dharma [Seng]zhao critica questa teoria; prima ne espone il principio e poi la critica.


“In questa teoria l’aspetto corretto sta nella pacificazione dello spirito; l’errore sta nella [mancata asserzione della] vacuità delle cose”: questa è la critica vera e propria.


[SECONDA POSIZIONE] [Descrizione:] Quanto alla teoria della “immediata identità con la materia” (jise 即色)87, essa illustra il fatto che la materia non è materia autonomamente e dunque sebbene [sia detta] materia, essa non è [realmente] materia [la cui esistenza sia fondata ontologicamente]. Quanto alla materia di cui si parla, bisogna soltanto considerarla immediatamente per quello che è: [la materia] non ha certo bisogno di attendere che [una natura propria] la renda materia [dotata di esistenza assoluta].88

[Critica:] Questa [teoria] si limita ad affermare che la materia non è autonoma, ma non ha compreso che la materia [anche sotto l’aspetto della sua esistenza condizionata, e dunque puramente convenzionale] non è materia [ma è vacuità].

86 [T 1859], 171 b 23-171c 12.
87 Il monaco Zhi Daolin, principale sostenitore di questa teoria esegetica, si rifà al pensiero di Guo Xiang 郭象 per spiegare la concezione buddhista dell’impermanenza: la vacuità dei fenomeni è data secondo lui proprio dal loro non avere un fondamento. L’affinità con Guo Xiang emerge sia rispetto alle concezioni filosofiche sia rispetto al lessico impiegato.
88 Zürcher traduce in modo leggermente diverso ma il senso è comunque lo stesso: “Those who speak about matter must only (realize) that matter is matter as such (without any substrate). For how would matter be dependent on anything which causes matter to be matter 色色 in order to become matter?” (Zürcher 1972, 123).

Il passo ora citato nel trattato di Sengzhao è appunto questo appena riportato.

“Quanto alla materia di cui si parla, la dobbiamo considerare immediatamente per quello che è: [la materia] non ha certo bisogno di attendere che [una natura propria] la renda materia [dotata di esistenza assoluta]”: questa è ancora [l’esposizione] del senso delle parole del maestro del dharma del [Dao] Lin.

Se si ritenesse la materia come esistente autonomamente, la si potrebbe chiamare “materia esistente”. Se invece [si comprende il fatto che] è solo grazie alla materia come [risultato di] condizioni (yuansè 綠色) che si costituisce la materia come risultato (guosè 果色), allora la materia non è fissata (dingsè 定) [in un’esistenza assoluta]. [Tale fatto] può anche essere espresso nel modo seguente: se è grazie alla materia sottile (xisè 細色) che si costituisce la materia grossolana (cusè 糧色), allora la materia non è fissata [in un’esistenza assoluta ma è dinamica].

“Questa [teoria] si limita ad affermare che la materia non è autonoma, ma non ha compreso che la materia [anche sotto l’aspetto della sua esistenza condizionata, e dunque puramente convenzionale] non è materia [ma è vacuità]”: si tratta della critica [di Sengzhao]. Il maestro del dharma Lin ha compreso soltanto che la materia di cui si parla non è autonoma ma si costituisce a partire da cause e condizioni; non ha capito però che la materia è fondamentalmente vuota, e [dunque egli] continua a mantenere l’esistenza convenzionale (jiayou 假有) [della ‘materia senza affermarne la vacuità’].

[TERZA POSIZIONE] [Descrizione:] Per quanto riguarda [la teoria] del non essere originario (benwu 本無), essa enfatizza grandemente il non-essere. Di qualunque cosa sia oggetto del discorso viene sostenuta la subordinazione rispetto al non-essere.

Perciò [secondo questa teoria], se [si tratta di] negazione dell’essere, [questo] essere è non essere; se si tratta di negazione del non essere, [questo] non-essere è [ugualemente] non essere.89

89 [T 1859], 171c 13-24

90 Troviamo una delle spiegazioni più chiare di questa teoria esegetica (di cui il monaco Dao’an era probabilmente in più insigne rappresentante) nella biografia di Tan Ji, all’interno del Gao seng zhuan: “Quindi i profondi Vaipulya-sūtra (si tratta dei sūtra Mahāyāna, in particolare la Prajñāpāramitā) spiegaron tutti esaustivamente il
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[Critica:] A voler cercare il senso fondamentale dei trattati [Mahāyāna], esso risulta essere solamente che “non-esistente” (fei you 非有) [significa] “non esistente in senso assoluto” (fei zhen you 非真有) e “non-inesistente” (fei wu 非無) [significa] “non inesistente in senso assoluto” (fei zhen wu 非真無). Ma che necessità c’è [di intendere] la negazione dell’essere 非有 [come] inesistenza di questo essere (wu ci you 無此有) e la negazione del non-essere 非無 [come] inesistenza di quel non-essere (wu bi wu 無彼無)?

Questi non sono che discorsi da estimatori del non-essere.91 È forse questa comprensione delle vera realtà delle cose? Se ne coglie forse la vera essenza?”.92

fatto che i cinque skandha sono originariamente inesistenti. La teoria del benwu da quel momento godette di grande considerazione. Per quale motivo? Prima della misteriosa creazione, non vi era che un indistinto, illimitato deserto; fino a che il Soffio Originario plasmò e trasformò [le cose], e fu così che le molteplici immagini furono dotate della forma. Sebbene le forme dipendessero dall’azione trasformatrice, il fondamento di [questa] provvisoria trasformazione non era che una emanazione della Spontaneità. Essendo dunque [l’azione trasformatrice] spontanea e così-di –per-se-stessa, come potrebbe mai esserci un creatore [che renda le cose ciò che sono]? Da questo punto di vista, il non-essere precede l’originaria trasformazione [che da vita all’universo]; il vuoto è l’inizio delle molteplici forme [del mondo fenomenico]: è questo il motivo per cui esso viene chiamato “non-essere originario” (故 方等 深經，皆備明五陰本無。

本無之論由來尚矣。何者? 夫冥造之前, 廓然而已。至於元氣陶化，則群像稟形。形雖資化，權化之本，則出於自然。自然自爾，豈有造之者哉!由此而言，無在元化之先，空為眾形之始。故稱本無。)

91 È chiaro qui il riferimento alla corrente guiwu 貴無 dello Studio del Mistero. Tale corrente, di cui Wang Bi 王弼 fu il più insigne rappresentante, considerava il non-essere come origine e fondamento del mondo fenomenico. Questa concezione venne adottata da alcuni Buddhisti del IV secolo al fine di spiegare il senso della vacuità.

92 Secondo Sengzhao, la teoria del “non-essere originario” non riuscì a cogliere la natura interdipendente (bi-ci 彼此) di essere e non-essere dal momento che essa è volta al rifiuto tanto dell’essere quanto del non-essere, considerati come accessori rispetto all’unica realtà rappresentata dal non-essere originario che costituisce il vero fondamento di entrambe.
3. **Si spiega l’argomento centrale del trattato**


**WC** Se in base alle caratteristiche delle cose ne stabiliamo i nomi (yixiang liming 依相立名) e secondo il nome afferriamo le cose, allora tutte le cose nominate possono essere ritenute cose: questa è detta “esistenza di nomi e forme surrettivamente costruita dalla mente illusa” (wangxin suo ji mingxiang juyou 妄心所計名相俱有).

Se con [il nome della] “cosa” rendiamo cosa una cosa [che nella realtà è] inesistente (feiwu 非物), allora sebbene [noi la consideriamo] cosa, essa in realtà non lo è affatto.

**YK** (commento ai due paragrafi precedenti) Se ci si serve del nome delle cose per nominare le cose esistenti, allora [si crederà nell’] esistenza sostanziale di cose passibili di essere nominate. Di conseguenza si dice “allora le cose possono essere ritenute case”.

Se ci si serve del nome delle cose per nominare le cose inesistenti, allora non vi è esistenza sostanziale di cose passibili di essere nominate. Di conseguenza si dice “allora, sebbene vi siano cose [che vengono considerate tali], esse tuttavia non sono cose [reali]”.

Perciò, non identificandosi con il nome, le cose non raggiungono la realtà (ovvero, non possiedono una controparte reale) (buji ming er jinshi 不即名而就實); non identificandosi con le cose, i nomi non seguono l’Assoluto (buji wu er luzhen 不即物而履真).94

**CG** Quanto [al significato della frase] “Il nome, non essendo identico alla cosa, non segue l’assoluto”, [possiamo dire che] il nome è solo

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93 Con **feiwu** 非物 (lett. non-cose) si intende ciò che, non esistendo nella realtà, esiste solo come pura denominazione; esempi classici di tale evenienza sono, in ambito buddhista, “il pelo della tartaruga” (guimao 龜毛), “le corna del coniglio” (tujiao 兔角) etc.

94 **Ming** 名 sono le denominazioni arbitrarie sulla base delle quali si costruiscono le cose (wu 物): questa costruzione delle cose è resa dall’utilizzo del verbo wu 物 in senso putativo (considerare cosa) o fattitivo (rendere cosa) – tale forma grammaticale è estremamente appropriata al fine di mettere in rilievo il fatto che la realtà convenzionale è “ritenuta tale” o “costruita come tale” e quindi non è “così di per se stessa”. Date queste premesse, non essendovi una relazione necessaria fra nomi e cose, la realtà (shi 實, ossia l’esistenza che la cosa avrebbe in sé, il fondamento che garantirebbe l’aderenza dei nomi alle cose) non viene mai raggiunta.
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convenzionalmente stabilito (ming dan jiali 名但假立), e non possiede la capacità di cogliere le cose; se il nome fosse la cosa, allora chiamando il fuoco [uno] dovrebbe bruciarsi la bocca. Se la cosa fosse il nome, allora basterebbe osservare una cosa per conoscerne [automaticamente] il nome. Ora, non è certo così: è chiaro che entrambi (il nome e la cosa) non sono reali e dunque non si può cogliere l’uno servendosi dell’altro (feishi gu bu xiangde 非實故不相得).95

Se è così, allora la verità assoluta se ne sta solitaria e quieta al di fuori dell’“Insegnamento dei nomi” (du jing yu mingjiao zhi wai 獨靜於名教之外).96

Si può forse affermare che i testi scritti e le parole abbiano la capacità di discuterne? [Certo che no!] Purtuttavia io non posso arrestare [la mia esposizione] né rimanere in silenzio: mi limiterò ad arrangiare [alcune] frasi al fine di darne un’idea sommaria. Proverei a spiegarmi con le seguenti parole.

**Corpo principale del trattato**

1. Si spiega la vacuità attraverso citazioni [dai testi] dottrinali

   1.1 Si spiega la vacuità attraverso le citazioni di due Śastra

   Il Trattato sul Mahāyāna97 recita: “Tutti i dharma sono privi tanto delle caratteristiche distintive dell’esistenza (youxiang 有相) quanto di quelle dell’inesistenza (wuxiang 無相)”.98

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95 Chengguan 澄觀 (quarto patriarca della scuola Huayan, vissuto in epoca Tang), *Da Fangguang Fo Huayanjing suishu yanyicha* 大方便(os廣佛華嚴經随疏演義鈔 [T 1736].

96 La “dottrina dei nomi” (mingjiao 名教) stabilisce un rapporto necessario fra nomi e realtà: sarebbe possibile attraverso la corretta applicazione di questa norma ordinare il governo e la società.

97 Con tale termine ci si riferisce al *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, Mahāyāna śastra per eccellenza. Secondo Robinson la citazione è tratta dal seguente passaggio: [T 1509], 105a 5-10: “若法因緣 生, 是法性實空, 若此法不空, 不從因緣有, 譬如鏡中像, 非鏡亦非面, 亦非持鏡人, 非自非無因, 非有亦非無, 亦復非有無, 此語亦不受, 如是名中道”. Tuttavia ci sembra che nel *Da zhidu lun* vi siano altri paralleli ancor più calzanti, cfr. ad es. [T 1509], 444c 01-2: “般若波羅蜜實相中，諸法非常非相無相，非有相非無相故不應難言”, oppure [T 1509], 667c 15-16: “菩薩得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提時，得諸法無，所有性，是無所有性中非有相非無相”.
Il Zhonglun afferma: “Tutti i dharma non sono né esistenti né inesistenti: [questa] è la Suprema verità assoluta (diyi zhidì 第一真諦).”

1.2 Si spiega il senso [delle citazioni dai] due trattati

Cercare [di comprendere questa prospettiva secondo cui i dharma] non sono né esistenti né inesistenti, non significa certo che si possa arrivare alla verità assoluta solo dopo aver fatto piazza pulita (dichu 滌除) delle diecimila cose ed essersi coperti gli occhi e turate le orecchie, raggiungendo [in tal modo] una condizione di silenziosa immaterialità (jiliao 寂廖) e di vuota apertura (xuhuo 虛豁).

YK Laozi (cap. 25) dice: “[Prima della formazione del cielo e della terra vi era qualcosa di amorfo e completo.] Com’era silenzioso e immateriale! (jì xi liao xi 寂兮廖兮): ristava solitario e immune da mutamento”. Il commentatore dice: “l’assenza di suoni è detta ‘quiete’ (jì 寂), l’assenza di forme è detta ‘immateriale’ (liao 廖)”. Il senso di questa espressione è che non si può affermare che il vuoto nichilistico (duankong 斷空) corrisponda inizialmente alla verità assoluta.

In verità, se si assecondano le cose e vi si passa attraverso (tong 通), allora non vi è cosa che costituisca ostruzione.

[Se si comprende che] il piano dell’espressione convenzionale (wei 偽) è identico alla [verità] assoluta (zhēn 真), allora [risulterà...]

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98 L’“assenza di caratteristiche distintive” (wuxiang 無相; scr.: ānimitta) di qualunque genere, è una delle tradizionali “porte della liberazione” (scr. vimokṣamukha), ovvero uno dei principali conseguimenti che conducono all’estinzione.

99 Zhonglun 中論 [T 1564]. Robinson considera come citazione soltanto la prima delle due frasi.

Un passo abbastanza vicino al testo citato potrebbe essere il seguente: [T 1564], 7c 24-24; 7c 16: “是故知虛空，非有亦非無，非相非可相，餘五同虛空”.

100 Il termine dichu 滌除 (“lavare via, eliminare completamente”) è tratto da Laozi 10, anche se in tale contesto ha un’acccezione diversa e significa “ripiulire, rendersi puro”: “Purificando la tua mistica visione, potrai renderla immacolata?” 滌除玄覽，能無疵乎 (Laozi 10).

101 Wei 偽 significa letteralmente “artefatto, artificialmente creato dall’uomo”, e in questo senso non è che un sinonimo della “verità relativa” che si costituisce come una serie di espedienti creati ad hoc per facilitare e rendere in qualche modo
chiaramente che] la natura [delle cose] (xing 性) (ovvero, il loro essere vuote) non muta.102

La natura [delle cose] non muta, quindi sebbene [da un certo punto di vista le cose siano considerate] inesistenti, esse tuttavia esistono.

Non vi è cosa che costituisca ostruzione, quindi sebbene [da un certo punto di vista le cose siano considerate realmente] esistenti, esse tuttavia non esistono.

Sebbene esistenti [sotto un certo punto di vista, le cose] sono inesistenti: è ciò che si definisce “rigetto dell’esistenza” (feiyon 非有).

Sebbene inesistenti [sotto un certo punto di vista, le cose] sono esistenti: è ciò che si definisce “rigetto dell’inesistenza” (feiwu 非無).

Se è così, allora non è che non vi siano cose [nel mondo], è solo che le cose non sono cose [dotate di esistenza] assoluta (zhennwn真物).

Se le cose non sono cose [dotate di esistenza] assoluta, allora dov’è possibile trovare delle cose passibili di essere ritenute cose?

1.3 Si citano [dei passi da] cinque sūtra al fine di completare la spiegazione

Perciò un sūtra103 recita: “Il vuoto è la natura [propria] (xing 性) della materia; non è certo il risultato della distruzione della materia”.

[Dice questo] allo scopo di chiarire il rapporto dell’uomo santo con le cose: egli (l’uomo santo) non fa che realizzare la vacuità intrinseca (scr.: svabhāva-śūnyatā) delle diecimila cose; cercherebbe forse di aprirsi la via [alla vacuità] （通）affidandosi allo smembramento e alla distruzione [delle cose] (dai zāige 待宰割)104?

possibile la comprensione dell’unica verità la quale, nella sua assolutezza, si sottrae ad ogni approccio linguistico. Anche YK glossa wei 僞 con su 俗.

102 Xing 性 è “la natura [delle cose]”. Tale termine è spesso usato come sinonimo di vuoto: le cose appaiono diverse se guardate dai punti di vista delle verità relativa e delle verità assoluta. Ma questa diversità non riguarda le cose, bensì il linguaggio e il pensiero che ad esse si rivolge. Quindi la natura delle cose non varia.

103 Ci si riferisce qui al Vimalakīrti-nirdesā. Curiosamente la citazione sembra presa dalla vecchia traduzione del Vimalakīrti-nirdesā effettuata da Zhi Qian支謙 fra il 223 e il 228 [T 474], 531b 07-08 “色空，不色敗空，色之性空”, non dalla nuova versione di Kumārajīva.

104 Questo fondamentale passaggio è una critica di quelle teorie buddhiste secondo le quali è attraverso l’analisi e la scomposizione della materia nei suoi costituenti più sottili che si può realizzarne l’inconsistenza (xise mingkong析色明空).
Quindi [Vimalakīrti] quando giaceva malato parlò della irrealità (o “non assoluta [esistenza]”)\(^{105}\) e nel Chaori jing\(^ {106}\) si trova l’espressione secondo cui [i quattro elementi] (sida 四大; scr. mahābhūta: terra, acqua, fuoco e vento) sono identici alla vacuità.

Dunque i testi del Tripitaka differiscono nell’esposizione [della dottrina], ma ciò che li accomuna è [il fatto di esporre] un unico stesso [principio].

Perciò il Fang guang asserisce che [dal punto di vista della] suprema verità assoluta non vi è realizzazione [della buddhità] (wucheng 無成) né ottenimento [del Nirvāṇa] (wude 無得)\(^ {107}\); [tuttavia, in base alla] verità relativa al mondo (shisu di 世俗諦; scr. Lokasamvṛti-satya) vi sono ugualmente realizzazione e ottenimento.\(^ {108}\)

[L’espressione] “vi è ottenimento” è una denominazione fittizia (weihao 偽號) per [indicare] il “non ottenimento”.

“Non ottenimento” è il nome assoluto (zhenming 真名) per [indicare] l’“ottenimento”.\(^ {109}\)

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\(^{105}\) *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa [T 475], 545a26 “Come la mia malattia è falsa e inesistente, così la malattia degli esseri è falsa e inesistente” (“如我此病非真非有，眾生病亦非真非有”). Cfr. lo stesso passo nella versione di *Zhi Qian [T 474], 526b07 “如我此病非真非有，亦是眾人非真非有”.

\(^{106}\) *Chaori jing 超日經 sta per Chaori sanmei jing 超日明三昧經 [T 638] (tradotto da Nie Chengyuan聶承遠 sotto i Jin Orientali西晉). L’espressione usata qui da Sengzhao è ripetuta in diversi passi del sūtra (ad es. in p. 532b28, p. 533a21, p. 533a25...).

\(^{107}\) Traduco *wucheng wude 無成無得 come “non vi è realizzazione [della buddhità] né ottenimento [del Nirvāṇa]” basandomi su una glossa di YK, ma si può anche intendere “non vi è perfezionamento [attraverso una pratica] né [un possibile] conseguimento”.

\(^{108}\) *Fang guang 放光 venne ben presto ad indicare in Cina la Prajñāpāramitā tout court. Dunque qui non necessariamente ci si riferisce a [T 221]. Si può comunque confrontare [T 221], 36c 19-20: “須菩提言：「有所逮、有所得, 不以二世俗之事有逮有得...」”

\(^{109}\) In questo punto le due verità vengono espressamente messe in relazione con il linguaggio. *Weihao 偽號 indica l’uso che si fa del linguaggio quando si vuole esporre la verità convenzionale, mentre *zhenming 真名 (“nome assoluto”) indica l’espressione linguistica di chi si basa sul punto di vista della verità assoluta (si tratta in tal caso di un uso apofatico dell’espressione linguistica, della negazione di qualsiasi costruzione intellettuale). Dal punto di vista della verità assoluta le cose

Poiché [si danno] denominazioni fittizie (偽號), sebbene [vengano dette] “fittizie”, esse non sono tuttavia [qualcosa di assolutamente] inesistente.\(^{110}\)


Le due espressioni [di “assoluto” e “relativo”] non sono mai state identiche, ma le due idee [cui esse fanno riferimento] non sono mai state diverse (erli weishi shu 二理未始殊).

Quindi un sūtra recita: “Si può dire che fra verità assoluta e verità relativa vi sia differenza?Risposta: [fra le due verità] non vi è differenza alcuna”.\(^{111}\)


Forse che, poiché la verità è caratterizzata attraverso questi due aspetti (ovvero quello della verità assoluta e quello della verità

\(^{110}\) Sengzhao vuol far capire che la teoria delle due verità non è che una propedeutica per evitare di attaccarsi tanto all’esistenza quanto all’inesistenza: la verità assoluta contraddice l’esistenza (eternalismo), mentre la verità relativa contraddice l’inesistenza (nichilismo).

\(^{111}\) Citazione pressoché letterale da Mohe boruo boluomi jing 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 [T 223], 378c 11-12

“世尊！世諦、第一義諦有異耶？須菩提！世諦、第一義諦無異也”
relativa), bisogna considerare tali aspetti come due cose distinte l’una dall’altra.\footnote{Hong Xiuping spiega: “[L’espressione] ‘Forse che bisogna considerare tali aspetti come due cose distinte?’ significa che non bisogna separare l’aspetto secondo in base al quale le cose sono esistenti e quello in base al quale esse sono inesistenti e trattare questi due aspetti come due cose distinte. Ciò che i sutra illustrano attraverso binomi come verità assoluta e verità relativa, esistenza e inesistenza è la Via Mediana, la quale non può essere compresa se si separano i due aspetti” (Hong Xiuping 1996, p. 83-84). Dunque nel loro essere parole, le due verità sono diverse, ma nel loro essere designazioni metaforiche, indicano lo stesso principio. \footnote{In questo punto del trattato si comprende chiaramente come l’obiettivo di Sengzhao non sia quello di negare semplicemente l’essere e il non-essere, bensì quello di rigettare entrambi mettendone in luce la non-assolutezza (buzhen 不真).} [Certo che no!]

YK Non bisogna ritenere che siccome le verità nominalmente sono due, il fondamento della dottrina (fa ti 法體) sia anch’esso duplice.

2. Si spiega la vacuità basandosi sulla ragione

Dunque vi è un aspetto in base al quale le diecimila cose non sono esistenti, e ve n’è un altro in base al quale esse non sono inesistenti.

Essendoci un aspetto in base al quale non sono esistenti, sebbene esistenti [esse] tuttavia non sono [assolutamente] esistenti.\footnote{L’asserzione secondo cui “le cose sono assolute ” coglie soltanto un aspetto della realtà: essendo parziale non può dunque essere assolutamente vera.} Essendoci un aspetto in base al quale non sono inesistenti, sebbene inesistenti, tuttavia non sono [assolutamente] inesistenti.

Sebbene inesistenti, non sono tuttavia [assolutamente] inesistenti: [da ciò si deduce che] l’inesistenza non è il Vuoto assoluto (juexu 絕虛; \textit{i.e.} vuoto inteso in senso nichilistico).

Sebbene esistenti, non sono tuttavia [assolutamente] esistenti: [da ciò si deduce che] l’esistenza non è esistenza assoluta (zhenyou 真有) (non si tratta cioè di un’esistenza intesa in senso sostanziale).\footnote{Il termine “tracce” (\textit{ji} 跡) si riferisce alla “conformazione”, alla “fisionomia” delle cose esistenti. YK spiega: “quanto alle tracce, esse sono le conformazioni [che traspaiono dall’] aspetto esteriore delle cose” (跡者，事相之跡).}

Se l’esistenza non si connota come assoluta e l’inesistenza non cancella le tracce\footnote{Il termine “tracce” (\textit{ji} 跡) si riferisce alla “conformazione”, alla “fisionomia” delle cose esistenti. YK spiega: “quanto alle tracce, esse sono le conformazioni [che traspaiono dall’] aspetto esteriore delle cose” (跡者，事相之跡).} [delle cose esistenti], allora esistenza e inesistenza differiscono nella denominazione ma si riferiscono ad un unico [principio].
Perciò il giovane [Rātnakara] disse in un sospirio: “Tu affermi che i dharma non sono esistenti né inesistenti; è grazie a cause e condizioni (yinyuan 因缘) che tutti i dharma si originano”.\footnote{Citazione letterale da \textit{Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa} [T 475], 537c 15.}

Lo \textit{Yingluojing}\footnote{Citazione non letterale dallo \textit{Yingluo jing} 瓔珞經 [T 656] (testo tradotto da Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 sotto i Qin Posteriori 後秦, 384-417 d. C.) probabilmente tratta da p. 109a 1. La “ruota del dharma” (dharmačakra) simboleggia l’insegnamento buddhista. Essendo tutti gli elementi dell’esistenza privi di natura propria, essi non hanno esistenza sostanziale. Anche il dharma buddhista è tale. L’originale del testo citato prosegue infatti dando la seguente spiegazione: “Tutti i dharma sono come il vuoto, ed è per questo che non vi è niente che giri, né vi è niente che non giri” (…諸法如空,故無有轉,故無無轉).} asserisce che quando viene fatta girare la ruota del dharma, non vi è niente che giri né vi è niente che non giri: questo significa che nel girare [la ruota del dharma] non vi è niente che giri.

Queste sono le sottili parole dei vari sūtra. Qual è [il loro significato]?

Si vuole affermare che le cose sono inesistenti? Allora la visione eretica [del nichilismo] non sarà più considerata errata (xiejian feihuo 邪見非惑); si vuole affermare che le cose sono esistenti? Allora la visione eternalista sarà ritenuta corretta (changjian weide 常見為得).


Quindi quello che predica il rigetto dell’esistenza e dell’in esistenza è un discorso [che si mantiene] fedele alla verità assoluta.

\textbf{3. Di nuovo si spiega la vacuità attraverso citazioni [dai testi] dottrinali}

Perciò il \textit{Daoxing jing}\footnote{Citazione letterale dal \textit{Daoxing boruo jing} 道行般若經 [T 224], 425c 27} afferma: “La mente non è né esistente né inesistente”. Il Mādhyamika\footnote{Sebbene la maggior parte dei traduttori intenda \textit{Zhongguan 中觀} come \textit{Zhonglun 中論} [T 1564], preferiamo qui intendere tale termine come “pensiero Mādhyamika” \textit{touc cort}. Le motivazioni sono le seguenti: 1. Nei Trattati di Sengzhao l’espressione \textit{zhongguan yun} 中觀云 ricorre in tutto 4 volte ed è assai difficile trovare dei paralleli calzanti alle supposte citazioni in [T 1564]; 2. Nei Zhaolun è impiegato...} sostiene che le cose procedono da...
cause e condizioni, quindi non sono esistenti [di per se stesse]; esse sorgono condizionatamente, dunque non sono inesistenti.

Se cerchiamo di comprendere il significato [di queste affermazioni], conveniamo che è proprio così. La motivazione è la seguente: se l’esistenza fosse esistenza assoluta (真有), allora l’esistenza [delle cose] sarebbe di per stessa eterna (真常有) e non avrebbe alcun bisogno di attendere che le condizioni la rendano esistente.

Se si trattasse invece di assoluta inesistenza (真無), l’inexistenza [delle cose] sarebbe di per stessa eterna e non avrebbe alcun bisogno di attendere che le condizioni la rendano inesistente.

Dal momento che l’esistenza non può essere indipendente, ma si dà solo in seguito a condizioni, ne deduciamo che l’esistenza non è esistenza assoluta.

L’esistenza non è esistenza assoluta, [e dunque] sebbene di esistenza si tratti, non la si può affatto chiamare “[reale] esistenza”.

Quanto alla negazione della inesistenza [assoluta], l’inexistenza può essere detta tale solo se consiste nella [condizione di più] profonda immobilità (湛然不動). [Ma] se le diecimila cose fossero inesistenti [e dunque si trovassero in tale condizione di immobilità], allora non si dovrebbe dare l’insorgenza [dei fenomeni]. Tuttavia [nel mondo si può osservare che] vi è insorgenza [di fenomeni], e quindi non c’è [assoluta] inesistenza: attraverso la spiegazione dell’insorgenza condizionata (緣起) [dei fenomeni], viene dunque negata l’[assoluta] inesistenza.

Il termine 中論, dunque è strano che poi ci si riferisca allo stesso testo usando un nome diverso; 3. Il termine 中觀 impiegato col senso di Zhonglun 中論 [T 1564] non è affatto diffuso, né all’epoca di Sengzhao, né nelle epoche successive, durante le quali si preferirà, oltre al nome originario, il termine Zhongguan lun 中觀論.

120 YK spiega i due termini “esistenza assoluta” (真有) e “inesistenza assoluta” (真無) come “esistenza fissata (o definita, definitiva)” (定有) e “inesistenza fissata” (定無).

121 La via di mezzo si traduce nella negazione tanto dell’esistenza quanto dell’inesistenza: tale via di mezzo è correttamente compresa da Sengzhao sulla base del Pratītya-samutpāda. In base all’insorgenza condizionata non si può affermare né che i fenomeni abbiano esistenza sostanziale (se fosse così la loro esistenza sarebbe autonoma e non ci sarebbe bisogno delle condizioni perché essi si costituiscono) né che essi siano assolutamente inesistenti (se così fosse l’interazione delle cause e condizioni non produrrebbe alcunché).
Quindi il trattato sul Mahāyāna asserisce che tutti i *dbharma*, per [l'interazione di] tutte le cause e condizioni, dovrebbero essere esistenti (*yingyou 應有*). Tutti i *dbharma*, per [l'interazione di] tutte le cause e condizioni, non dovrebbero essere esistenti (*bu ying you 不應有*). Tutti i *dbharma* inesistenti (*yiqie wufa 一切無法*), per [l'interazione di] tutte le cause e condizioni, dovrebbero essere esistenti. Tutti i *dbharma* esistenti (*yiqie youfa 一切有法*), per [l'interazione di] tutte le cause e condizioni, non dovrebbero essere esistenti.

[Quanto a questa citazione,] non si tratta certo della mera [esposizione] di teorie contrapposte. YK Nella [citazione] summenzionata le due coppie di asserzioni si oppongono l'un l'altra: il fatto che si oppongano reciprocamente in tal modo non è privo di significato (*fei turan 非徒然*). A cercare il senso di queste parole, esso [consiste] nell'illustrare la via di mezzo che [si esplica] nel rifiuto tanto dell'esistenza quanto dell'inesistenza.

Se [l'espressione] “dovrebbero essere esistenti” (應有) fosse identica a “esistono [realmente]”, allora non si dovrebbe parlare affatto di inesistenza.

Se [l'espressione] “dovrebbero essere inesistenti” (yingwu 應無) fosse identica a “non sono esistenti”, allora non si dovrebbe parlare affatto di esistenza.

[Il fatto è che] l’esistenza di cui si parla [non] è [che] un’esistenza convenzionale (假有) che serve a chiarire il “rigetto dell’inesistenza”

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122 Ci si riferisce anche qui al *Dazhi du lun* [T 1509]. Proponiamo come parallelo p. 623a 2-7:

“一切法不自在皆屬因緣生。有人雖見一切法從因緣生。謂為從邪因緣生。
邪因緣者微塵世性等。是故說不見法無因緣生亦不見法從常因緣微塵世
性生。如虛空常常故則無生。虛空亦不與物作因。以是故無有法從常因緣
生”.

Il Mādhyamika nega la realtà di tutti i *dbharma* postulati da alcune scuole buddhiste come elementi ultimi dell’esistenza; quindi le espressioni “i *dbharma* dovrebbero essere esistenti” 應有 e “non dovrebbero essere esistenti” 不應有 non esprimono che il punto di vista relativo e convenzionale; assolutamente parlando non vi sono infatti *dbharma* esistenti né inesistenti, ma questa prospettiva deve essere compresa sulla base della produzione condizionata; tale dottrina mette in luce la non assolutezza dell’esistenza e dell’inesistenza dei *dbharma* e dunque consente di non attaccarsi all’una o all’altra opinione.
(yi ming feiwu 以明非無). [Dall’altro lato] si prende a prestito l’inesistenza al fine spiegare il “rigetto dell’esistenza” (yi bian feiyou 以辨非有).


4. Di nuovo si spiega la vacuità basandosi sulla ragione

Quindi, vi è un aspetto in base al quale le diecimila cose non sono esistenti, [e dunque] non è possibile [affermare] l’esistenza. Vi è un aspetto in base al quale non sono inesistenti, [e dunque] non è possibile [affermare] l’inesistenza. Per quale motivo?

Se si vuole affermare che [le cose] sono esistenti, [allora questa] esistenza non sussiste assolutamente (fei zhensheng 非真生).


[Esistenza e inesistenza], non essendo assolute, non esistono realmente: è così che il significato della “vacuità del non assoluto” appare chiaramente in queste parole.

Perciò il Fang guang124 afferma che tutti i dharma non sono che appellativi convenzionali (jiabao 假號) e che essi non sono assoluti.

Prendiamo come esempio il caso di un uomo creato magicamente: non è che esso sia inesistente, esso [semplicemente] non è un uomo reale.

123 Queste due diverse espressioni, spiega YK, consistono nel duplice rifiuto di esistenza e inesistenza (feiyou feiwu 有非無).

124 Cfr. Fangguang boruo jing 放光般若經 [T 221], 128c 29: “須菩提：「名字者不真，假號為名…」.”
5. Si spiega la vacuità attraverso [la discussione del rapporto fra] nomi e realtà

Se servendoci del nome cerchiamo [di afferrare] la cosa, [ci accorgiamo che] la tal cosa non possiede una realtà che corrisponda al nome (wu dangming zhi shi 無當名之實).

Se servendoci della cosa cerchiamo [di afferrare] il nome, [scopriamo che] il nome non possiede la capacità di cogliere la cosa (wu dewu zhi gong 無得物之功).

Una cosa che non possegga una realtà che corrisponda al nome non è [propriamente] una cosa.

Un nome che non possieda la capacità di cogliere la cosa non è [propriamente] un nome.

Perciò il nome non corrisponde alla realtà, la realtà non corrisponde [al] nome.

Se non vi è [reciproca] corrispondenza fra nome e realtà, dove stanno le diecimila cose?

YK Le diecimila cose sono tutte vuote, perciò si dice “dove stanno le diecimila cose?”

Perciò il Mādhyamika sostiene che nelle cose non vi è [distinzione fra] ‘questo’ e ‘quello’.


125 La prospettiva sul linguaggio che viene presentata in questo paragrafo è in genere denominata in ambito buddhista jiamingguan 假名觀, ovvero “prospettiva secondo cui le denominazioni sono fittizie o puramente illusorie”; scr. prajñāpāramitā. Tale prospettiva è volta a negare non certo le cose, bensì la pretesa assolutezza delle denominazioni che alle cose si riferiscono; pur essendo un tema trasversale della letteratura Prajñāparamitā, essa non appartiene tuttavia alla fase iniziale del suo sviluppo: l’elaborazione di questa tematica non si trova ad esempio nel Daoshijing né nel Damingdujing ma si ritrova nel Fang guang jing e nel Guanzan jing (si veda su questo Cai Yingxun 蔡纓勳 1986, 453 e segg.; si veda inoltre Yuan Bisheng 1998).

126 Gong 功 significa “capacità, efficacia, potere”.

127 “Realtà” è da intendersi in questo contesto come “fondamento reale, sostanziale” che corrispondendo al nome renda possibile l’identificazione categorica di una tal cosa (si vedano i due articoli sovracitati di Cai Yingxun e Yuan Bisheng).
[In realtà, gli appellativi di] ‘questo’ e ‘quello’ non sono fissati in una designazione univoca (mo ding yu yi ming 莫定乎一名), mentre gli esseri illusi mantengono la certezza che sia necessariamente così.


Se si comprende il fatto che ‘questo’ e ‘quello’ sono inesistenti, quali cose potrebbero [mai] esistere [nel mondo]? 129

Dunque sappiamo che le diecimila cose non sono assolute (fei zhen 非真); esse da sempre non sono altro che denominazioni convenzionali (jiabao 假號).

Per questo motivo il Chengjijing usa l’espressione “stabilire un nome forzatamente (ovvero, arbitrariamente)” (qiangming 強名)130 e [l’ufficiale di] Yuanlin131 fa riferimento al caso del dito e del cavallo.

YK Zhuangzi132 dice “Dimostrare che un dito non è un dito è meno efficace che dimostrare che un dito non è un dito con qualcosa che non sia un dito; dimostrare con un cavallo che un cavallo non è un cavallo è meno efficace che dimostrare che un cavallo non è un cavallo con qualcosa che non sia un cavallo. [Il Cielo e la Terra sono identici al dito, le diecimila creature sono identiche al cavallo]”. Il senso è che questa [persona] considera il suo dito come dito e non considera come dito il dito di quell’altra persona; per il [caso del] cavallo è lo stesso. Ogni cosa ha un ‘questo’ e un ‘quello’, quindi ‘questo’ e ‘quello’ non sono fissati [categoricamente] (feiding 非定); ogni cosa ha un’affermazione e una negazione, quindi affermazione e negazione non sono fissate [categoricamente].

128 I due pronomi “questo” e “quello” indicano i vari modi in cui vengono designate le cose in base ai vari punti di vista.

129 Indipendentemente dalle soggettive designazioni, le cose nel mondo non esistono affatto.


131 Ci si riferisce qui a Zhuangzi, il quale occupò tale incarico amministrativo.

132 La citazione è tratta dal secondo capitolo del Zhuangzi, intitolato Qiwu lun 齊物論, alla p. 66 dell’edizione di Guo Qingfan; per una trad. inglese si veda Legge 1962, 183. Per una discussione approfondita del contenuto di tale capitolo e per l’analisi della terminologia impiegata si veda Graham 1969.
Dunque in quale luogo non si possono trovare discorsi profondi?133

6. Si spiega la vacuità traendo le conclusioni [del trattato]


YK Sebbene cavalchi le mille trasformazioni, esca alla vita e rientri nella morte, [l’uomo santo] non è contaminato dalla vita e dalla morte (buwei shengsi suo ran 不為生死所染), perciò si dice che “non muta”.

Sebbene proceda attraverso le diecimila illusioni e non sia mai inattivo [nel mondo], non vi è dottrina erronea che lo ostacoli (buwei daohuo suo tuo 不為倒惑所壅).

Poiché egli ha compreso la vacuità intrinseca delle diecimila cose (wanwu zhi zixu 萬物之自虛), non considera vuote le cose prendendo a prestito la [nozione di] vacuità (bujiu xu er wu 不假虛而虛物).


133 Sengzhao vuol dire che molti sono i testi nei quali si espone la natura puramente convenzionale del linguaggio e la sua non aderenza alla realtà: tali discorsi si trovano tanto nei sūtra buddhisti quanto nella letteratura secolare (qui viene citato come esempio il Zhuangzi).

134 Proviamo qui un certo imbarazzo ad usare la concessiva introdotta da “pur”: l’uso di tale proposizione pone infatti una distinzione (quella fra vacuità e mondo fenomenico) che l’uomo santo ha ormai completamente superato. In altre parole, l’uomo santo non realizza la vacuità nonostante i fenomeni, bensì in completo e totale accordo con i fenomeni stessi.

135 Cfr. Mohe banruo boluomi jing 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 [T 223], 401a2-4 “世尊！若實際即是眾生際, 菩薩則為建立實際於實際。世尊!若建立實際於實際, 則為建立自性於自性”. Si confronti inoltre Fangguang boruo jing 放光般若經 [T 221], 140c14-15: “知有十八法。是故, 須菩提！是為如來大士之所差特, 不動於等覺法, 爲諸法立處”

136 Si tratta di un appellativo riferito al Buddha

不動真際) è il luogo in cui tutti i dharma sono stabiliti: e non è che tale luogo in cui [tutti i dharma] sono stabiliti si stacchi dall’Assoluto, ché anzi esso coincide perfettamente con l’Assoluto stesso. Stando così le cose, è forse lontana la via [che conduce alla santità]? 

Entrando in contatto con le cose [si] rimane [nell’] assoluto: è forse lontana la santità?

**YK** “Dao (道, la Via)” significa “il vero principio della non-nascita” (wusheng zhengli 無生真理); “Santità” (sheng 聖) significa “la vera saggezza della Prajñā” (boruo zhengzi 般若真智).

Incarna [questo ideale] e sarai una cosa sola con lo Spirito¹³⁸ (tizhi ji shen 體之即神)!

**YK** Sono tutte le cose con cui si viene in contatto a costituire la Via e separatamente [da questa] non esiste certo un’altra Via. È proprio nel realizzare con la propria vita (tiwu 體悟) [questa verità] che consiste la santità e separatamente [da questa realizzazione in prima persona] non esiste certo un altro [ideale di] uomo santo.

**WC** […] Il Renwangjing¹³⁹ dice: “Il bodhisattva, quando non ha ancora realizzato la buddhità, considera la bodhi come [fosse] un’afflizione (fannao 煩惱; scr. klesa), mentre una volta realizzata la buddhità considera l’afflizione come [fosse] la bodhi”.

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**Fonti**


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¹³⁸ Secondo Robinson, in questo contesto Shen (spirito) ha un significato affine a buddhatā (natura di Buddha).

¹³⁹ Renwangjing 仁王經 = 佛說仁王般若波羅蜜經 [T 245], p.829b5-6


**Studi in lingua cinese e giapponese**


Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione


Tu, Y. 涂艳秋. 1996. Seng Zhao Sixiang Tansuo 僧肇思想探索, Taibei.


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Materiale in lingue occidentali


Il trattato “Vacuità del non-assoluto” di Sengzhao: analisi e traduzione


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L’autore ringrazia il prof. Zacchetti per il paziente e cordiale aiuto offerto nella revisione dell’articolo.

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regard to the development of Chinese Philosophical concepts from the ancient religious-mythological background.
Performing the “Buraku Culture”: Taiko Drums From Factory to Stage

By Flavia CANGLÀ*

Summary

“Tradition versus modernity” has for long worked as popular “metonymically frozen” axis to define Japan, and to describe a “nation” in which both the extremes are seen as two sides of the same coin: a well-balanced internal social stability. The notion of “Japanese tradition” has already been described by various scholars as interpretative template for the post-war nationalistic agenda to reinforce the national identity during the encounter with “the Other”. But what if the construct “the Japanese” – and Japanese tradition - were jeopardized at the national level by cultural symbols themselves, such as Taiko drums? The Taiko has mostly been analysed in its mediating role to foster the construction of a “Japanese” identity both in Japan and North America. The present article aims to focus on Taiko’s “social biography”, to shift the focus from the “user” to the “maker” – historically the Burakumin – in order to explore the manner in which drums can differently work as “social agents” for people to address issues of discrimination, identity and related culture and ultimately to challenge the supposed idea of national homogeneity. I will firstly present the history of Taiko and its role within the post-war cultural nationalism onwards. Secondly, I will frame the analysis of Taiko within the notion of “Buraku culture” by presenting local strategies undertaken by spokespersons and “sites in the middle” - namely Ikari group in Osaka and Archives Kinegawa Museum of Education and Leather Industry in Tokyo. The Taiko represents, on the one hand, a means of self-representation and the starting point of a discourse on cultural identity yet, on the other hand, an educational tool by which the idea of pride ends up playing a different role. In both cases however the object making/playing becomes the opportunity for people to propose alternative discourses concerning the immaterial social relations behind. The value of the Taiko goes from its industrial production - which implies social stereotypes and discrimination towards some professions - to the stage level – be it music performance or education – as space for cultural resistance and new and imaginative uses of the object.

Keywords: buraku, Taiko, Ikari, performance, education, discrimination
Taiko as Cultural Symbol

The Taiko 太鼓 has been one of the most important musical instruments throughout Japanese history, used in most festivals and many religious ceremonies. Between the 8th century and the mid-20th century, a wide variety of drums were used in all types of contexts — from Shinto rituals, accompaniment to folk songs (min’yo 民謡), festival music (ohayashi お囃子), and folk arts such as drum dances (Taiko-odor i太鼓踊り), to court music (gagaku 雅楽) and classical forms such as nob and kabuki. However, the power of the Taiko had long been specifically associated with religious meanings and to earth-elements. Besides, Taiko were used as signal warnings in battlefield, and to announce different activities in Buddhist monasteries.

Taiko was considered an instrument of divine power to communicate with deities (kami 神), to drive away the bad spirits, to bring rain to the fields and to attract animals during hunting. During local folkloric celebrations drums were usually played to invoke the presence of kami, thus they were seen as magic instruments with uncanny powers. That is why it was usually forbidden out of the mentioned kind of celebrations. The invocation of kami out of ritual events was allowed in rural villages, to invoke rain in case of drought: the Taiko sound played an important role in the magic rituals undergone for this purpose. Although the religious factor has diminished in recent times, the Taiko still remains an important part in various local folk celebrations.

Ensemble Drumming

The majority of Taiko playing today derives from kumi-daiko 組太鼓 (ensemble drumming). “Kumi-daiko” refers to an ensemble of various drums and large number of people in the performance. In contrast to the individualistic nature of traditional Taiko playing, kumi-daiko is a mix of traditional Taiko with new choreography and rhythms. This new style was created in 1951 by Daihachi Oguchi, a jazz drummer who formed the first group, by putting together drums different in shapes, sizes, and pitches and placed them like the arrangement of a western jazz drum set.

Both the vibrant sounds and rhythms of this new style, as well as the staging effects of the performance, set the trend for the very beginning of the modern Taiko drumming. At the same time the group Sukeroku Daiko emerged with performances full of choreography and solos. After the group broke up, Seido Kobayashi

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1 Malm 1986, 22-51.
2 Mogi 2003, 91.
Performing the “Buraku Culture”

went on to form the Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, considered as the very first professional Taiko group. Another Taiko ensemble named Za Ondekoza was founded in 1969 by Tagayasu Den in Sado Island. He sent students to learn the drumming and dancing rituals of various communities around Japan and invited musicians and musicologists to teach their techniques, including both folk performers and modern musicians.\(^3\) It was from these initial students that they went on to form the Taiko ensemble Kodo, after splitting off from Za. Kodo has gone on to be one of the world’s most popular performance ensembles.

In 1964, during the international Olympics Games to Japan, a “Festival of the Arts” was held to celebrate Japan’s traditional performing arts, including Taiko music. During the 1970’s, pushed by the national politics, local governments formed their own Taiko ensembles and added this tradition to many local festivals.

“Nihon no Taiko”: Japanese Drum or Drum for Japanese?

The Taiko as “symbol of old times gone” for the Japanese cultural tradition, found its ground on popular discourses undertaken from different levels. This image found its space within notions such as bunka 文化, culture or minzoku bunka 民族文化, national culture, which has played an important role in post-war years to displace tradition recovery-oriented politics.\(^4\) One of the most powerful strategies of cultural nationalism in which the Taiko has played a strong role as Japanese instrument for Japanese music, was embodied in the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Bunkazai Hogo 文化財保護, enacted in 1950. The Law was encouraged by a growing public awareness of the importance of protecting cultural traditions and performing arts to re-establish Japanese distinctive identity. The provisions of the law are still carried out by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Bunkacho 文化庁, (hereafter ACA), a branch of the Ministry of Education, established in 1968 through a merger of the Cultural Bureau of the Ministry of Education and the Cultural Properties Protection Commission. ACA strives to promote international cultural exchange programs, as well as preserve folk festivals and regional annual events throughout Japan. According to a survey by ACA, over 30,000 folk performing arts are being passed down nationwide. These folk performing arts vary in content, depending on the region, and can be classified into Kagura 神楽 (Shinto music and dance), Dengaku 田楽 (performances that accompany the planting of rice), Furyu 風流 (costumed instrumental processions including Taiko

\(^3\) Bensen 2006.
\(^4\) Hobsbawm 1983; see also Gluck 1993; Ivy 1995.
drums), Shukufukugei 祝福芸 (auspicious presentations), and Gairaimyaku 外来脉 (performances whose origin can be traced back to Chinese performing arts). Local preservation societies (hozonkai 保存会) were funded to ensure the continued practice of particular arts, including some drumming rituals.

With growing recognition in local communities and encouragement by the government, the number of Taiko groups increased throughout the country. In 1979, a great number of Taiko drummers decided to create a federation to connect all the players scattered all over Japan. As a result, Nippon Taiko Federation was established as a nation-wide private volunteer organization with starting members of 110 groups. Since the establishment, the Federation has been pursuing various activities with the purpose of promoting and preserving Taiko traditions. In November 1997, Nippon Taiko Foundation officially replaced the original Nippon Taiko Federation, to further promote Taiko culture both domestically and internationally. Moreover, the folk music festival called Nihon no Taiko 日本の太鼓 – Japanese Taiko – organized by the National Theatre of Japan, was held for the first time in 1977. In the festival, performances of folk Taiko and creative Taiko (sosaku Taiko 創作太鼓), are closely intertwined in order to create a balanced mixture of old and innovative styles.

The presentation of Taiko as specifically “Japanese” has also been a tactic of several Taiko players internationally. By the 1970s, young adults in Japan faced problems similar to those of Japanese-Americans across the Pacific, namely the need to reinterpret their heritage and clarify their identity. According to Shawn Bender, in the aesthetic discourse on Taiko pedagogy and training, the size and shape of the “Japanese drumming body” has been considered as ideally suited to the performance itself: “the short legs and small bodies of typical Japanese individuals, […] are re-imagined as the roots of the distinctly Japanese aesthetic that is manifested in Taiko performance.”

Taiko drums have for long showed a great appeal for the study of Japanese American and Japanese Canadian communities since the late 1960s, as space of expression of ethnic pride in new host social

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6 Mogi 2001, 178.
7 Bensen 2006.
8 Terada 2001.
9 Bender 2005, 198.
contexts. Most of the hitherto literature on the Taiko object agency—be it exercised through the embodiment of the musician and the sound of the instrument, in national or international ethnicity-based discourses—has overlooked the focus on the “social biography” of the thing itself. As Kawamoto argues “In many kinds of event and ceremony, the presence of Taiko is clear. But who are the creators of this instrument that brings such a benefit into our cultural practices? Taiko was produced by Buraku people from the Edo era onwards. The fabrication needs a very elaborate technique and is still mostly made by Buraku people. Even nowadays it keeps supporting the shared culture considered indispensable: indeed, during national traditional performances such as bunraku, kabuki and noh theatre, hand-drums and shamisen still play a very important role.”

Focusing the attention to Taiko makers has led to interesting insights, into the role of makers in the history of Taiko drumming and in Japanese society. Yet at the same time this new perspective may threaten the ground of what Befu called the “habitus of homogeneity”. A look on this biography may invert the proposition “Nihon no Taiko” (Japanese Taiko) and re-imagine the drum as tool for—in service of—people instead of “belonging to anyone.” An analytical shift from Taiko as a national symbol to the materiality it is made of, would represent a first step towards the examination of different forms of social meanings attributed to it, as well as the potential agency it might exercise itself. I would argue that, to a certain point, these meanings might be framed within the domain of the Burakugaku (Buraku studies), although they combine the idea of “Buraku culture” with unsteadily invocations of human rights based grounds or attempts of withdrawing Buraku-non-Buraku dichotomy. According to the Burakugaku approach, the contact with the material stigmatized on the ground of defilement “will later becomes the foundational structure of a larger process or function, which is no longer perceived as defiled”. The touch of dead animal bodies and leather to fabricate the object creates a sort of superstition based on the idea of pollution.

11 Kawamoto 2001b (Emphasis mine).
12 Gamlen 2003.
13 Befu 2008.
14 Kawamoto, 2001a.
However the act of *touching* might conversely support the activation of new perspectives for the people involved: that is the booming sound in music to communicate pride-based messages or the creative pleasure of playing/*touching* the materiality for children educational programs.

**The Notion of “Buraku Culture”**

**Historical Background of the Buraku question**

The construction of national identity in Japan, based on an assumed cultural homogeneity, has provided the social mechanism entailed in the perceptions towards minorities with arbitrary symbolic and ethnic boundary markers. The assumption underpinning claims to national exclusivity, has been a cardinal feature of some intellectual literature and the dominant political direction to date, aimed at creating a monolithic image of the *Japaneseness* and the *cultural pattern* related thereto. As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney put it, Japanese self-images have evolved historically through dialectical relationship with “significant others”, such as the West, the Ainu, the Burakumin and other *internal* and *external others*, who must be viewed as significant means of comparison within the majority-minority relation: once a dominant group is identified as the majority, the nation-state tends to transform all remaining categories into minorities or *ethnic alterity*. The Burakumin have been included in these groups in Japan, even though their designation as *ethnic* might appear controversial.

The Buraku-min (Buraku部落 in Japanese refers to hamlet; min人民 to people) refers to the groups historically recognized as the descendants of outcast populations in the feudal days (1603-1867), who were assigned those professions perceived as ‘polluting acts’, such as tanners, leatherworkers, butchers, and executioners. Other groups were composed of prostitutes, diviners, beggars, guardians, people who took care of prisoners, artists, wandering monks and lepers. Many scholars who studied the origins of the Burakumin

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15 For a detailed English literature on *Nibonjinron*日本人論 (literally “theories of the Japanese”), see Miller 1982; see also Mouer and Sugimoto 1986; Dale 1986; Yoshino 1992; Befu 2001.


17 Lie 2004, 85.

18 De Vos & Wagatsuma 1966.
believe that they came into being at the time of the formation of the Tokugawa feudalistic system (1537-98), when they developed as special-status people and stable social rank. However, to track down first historical examples of categorization of these groups, in the past called the eta 無多 (extreme filth) binin 非人 (non-human), it is necessary to go back to the early Heian Period (794–1185), when the coexistence of Shinto and Buddhism caused their teachings to mix: Buddhist ideas of compassion for all living things led to the government decree against the slaughtering of animals, whereas Shinto placed emphasis on purity against pollution, to concepts such as kegare 犲れ (pollution) or imi 忌み (taboo), mainly associated with the image of blood and death.

In 1871, the Meiji government promulgated the ‘Emancipation Edict’, declaring the abolition of the lowest social rank: with the Edict (Ordinance No. 61), the Japanese government took steps to remove the lowest status by renaming the eta into shin heimin 新平民 (new common people). However, while abolishing status titles, the Meiji state withdrew protective measures such as monopoly over some occupations. As consequence, their condition did not improve, but rather worsened as most of them lost their sustained livelihood created by Tokugawa politics. Since the end of the eighteenth century onwards, along with the erosion of pre-industrial social organization and the spread of political nationalism, Burakumin groups, in spite of losing their social and economic supposed role, found their cultural-perceived nuance in political arguments. In other words, before the destruction of their legal status, “Burakumin identity” was, paradoxically, seldom recognized as political-defined unit: they lost their economic privileges, hence they were included in new social and economic low strata, and conversely, developed a political entity often endowed with ethnic imagined idiom. With the implementation of the Dōwa 同和 (assimilation) Administration in 1969 the conditions of Buraku communities improved, mainly in the area of housing. However, discriminatory practices still occur in employment and marriage. According to the statistics quoted by the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Institute in 1985, at the time there were 6,000 Buraku areas hosting three million people. However these numbers should be mentioned much more as symbolic reference point,

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considering the diverse obstacles to count the entire amount of the Buraku communities and Burakumin people.22

Nowadays, to answer the question “who is the Burakumin” is not an easy task, perhaps even quite ineffective, insofar as the same words available to talk about the issue might easily fall into the stereotyping traps that the very question of Buraku has gradually created. They are not fixed in a homogeneous category and their “identity” is still too often associated with a vacuum-like set of cultural and social traits, or simply to the idea of “poverty”. Additionally, the current use of the two terms “Burakumin” and “Buraku” may be confusing, since living in a Buraku community does not mean anymore to be of Burakumin ancestry, nor the other way round.23 That is why a more appropriate direction of study might be looking at “rituals of reversal” and new discourses challenging the strict notion of Buraku as a neatly defined group out there.24 As a matter of fact, the idea of “Buraku culture” turned out being a complex ideoscape,25 a mix of different voices in conversation in which notions of “culture” and “group” may be emphasized or deconstructed at various degrees depending on the context.

The “Burakugaku”

The question of Buraku has for long been described in terms of discrimination, through a human rights-based approach addressing the process of social stereotyping and consequent self-identification as minority group. Other seminal works in Japanese sociology have criticized the very idea of Burakumin identity,26 and the ethnicity-oriented notions supporting it, as well as pointed out the historical discontinuity between the early modern and modern times, or, by borrowing Hatanaka’s words “the end of Buraku history”.27 Other scholars turned their attention to the literary language and fictional narratives to Buraku issue,28 as well as the strong influence of popular

22 Honda 1993, 136.
24 Gofmann 1963, see also Brubaker 2004.
25 Appadurai 1996.
26 Fujita 1998.
28 Fowler 2000, see also Andersson 2000.
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stereotyping clichés - such as the idea of the Burakumin as “poor, leather worker or butcher”.\textsuperscript{29}

Recently, new trends in anthropology - namely the Burakugaku 部落学 (Buraku studies) by Kawamoto Yoshikazu - began to move the academic discourse beyond a discrimination/human rights dichotomy and move the focus of research the from the problem of the identity to the positive social contributions the Burakumin have made to Japanese culture as a whole. According to these scholars Burakumin’s predecessors in the pre-modern period played an important role in developing main material culture and traditional practices such as noh, kabuki theatre and Taiko music, among others. This new approach of study aims thus to examine the occupational role of Burakumin’s traditions in maintaining some of the basic cultural and religious systems: for instance, Burakumin converted the defiled materials and “recycled” them into pure, useful, living and even sacred substances, like nutrients for plants (fertilizers), the ingredients and instruments for performing arts and the medium of religious rites of purification.

According to Kawamoto, the question of Buraku needs to be analysed in its double dimension, as product of a process of exclusion on the one hand, and, above all, in relation with the social benefit Buraku-related professions may offer, on the other. Looking at this double dimension would help to better understand the story and the cultural system of Buraku, as well as to propose a “re-discovery” of Japanese traditional culture.\textsuperscript{30} Until the establishment of Burakugaku as branch of study, the issue was analysed as Burakumondai 部落問題 (Buraku question) by many disciplines, such as sociology, history, ethnology and psychology. Each discipline came to offer interesting interpretations over the issue, but none of these could explain the issue in its complexity, quite conversely it has been divided among each discipline and explained without any idea of unity. That is, as Kawamoto explained to me

\textit{...it absolutely needs to establish a unitary branch of study, which includes all disciplines. So far there have been lots of examples of Buraku study framed within a human-rights based approach. This approach mainly aims at solving the question of discrimination thus it interprets the whole problem}

\textsuperscript{29} Honda, 1996.

\textsuperscript{30} Kawamoto 2005, 55.
in these terms (...) I think the problem of discrimination should be solved but I also wish that a possible solution could include a new understanding of the Buraku question, which I think covers various number of disciplines. Besides this question does not converge only in the problem of discrimination, but as research topic that has a positive meaning as well, it owns enough arguments that need to be considered within an educational perspective.

Framing the study of Buraku within the analysis of the Buraku-related material culture, might help to examine the dialectical relationship between people and stereotyping objects, how “persons make and use things and the things make persons” respectively, in order to see whether, when and how people actually look at these very artefacts as means of distinctive culture (Buraku culture) or alternatively use them to view their practices out of the idea of cultural specificity. The malleability and fluidity in which objects can act within and for social relations of their creators, as well as the different ways they may be perceived, suggest the potentials of these objects to actively stimulate responses and constitute new social contexts. More challenging studies on the relations with objects might be focusing indeed on process of “material resistance”, on how some alleged “cultural symbols” – in a mutual and creative relationship with the “users” - might perform, reproduce or contrarily contrast public and dominant discourses on power and national identity. Through the notion of “agency” as conceived by Gell, Taiko may be viewed as a “system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it.”

**Ikari and the Road of Human Rights and Taiko**

The Taiko has recently become a vehicle for human rights action in Naniwa Buraku in Osaka. Naniwa community (formerly Watanabe Village), was historically the largest centre of leather trade and Taiko production. Traditional techniques of leather and Taiko production have been inherited in the community through successive generations. When I first visited the Osaka Human Rights Museum (Liberty Osaka) in 2007, I realized the great historical connection stressed by

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31 Tilley 2006, 4.
32 Hoskins 2006.
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the museum language, between the ex Watanabe Village and leather-working as factor of identification as Buraku.

One of the human-rights based projects in the ward is the “Road of Human Rights and Taiko” (fig. 1), initiated in 2002 by a committee comprising of the Osaka Municipal Government, Japan Rail East, the Osaka Taiko Industrial Association and the Naniwa branch of the Buraku Liberation League (hereafter BLL), and various experts, and eventually completed in November 2003, “The Year of the Drum”. The project was aimed to tell the history of Naniwa Buraku, “represent community pride in the local culture” as well as “eradicate the discriminatory image of poverty.”34 The area composed of 10 zones, from “Taiko makers” to “human rights culture”, which runs nearly 500 meters from the Ashiharabashi railway station to the Osaka Human Rights Museum (Liberty Osaka), is made of stone monuments, information boards and Taiko-shaped benches (fig. 2). National and local governments also engage in ‘human rights enlightenment activities’ (jinken keibatsu katsudō 人権啓発活動) and ‘human rights culture town development’ (jinken bunka machizukuri 人権文化町作り) through the creation of posters, promotional videos, brochures, festivals and monuments. The whole exhibition in Liberty Osaka museum placed in front of “Wadaiko Models Zone” (fig. 3), cannot be considered without taking into account the impact of the road. The visit to the museum seems indeed composed of a first look at the surrounding area, through the walk from Ashiharabashi station to the museum entrance that virtually brings the visitor into the cultural project as conceived by BLL: to shape a positive idea of Buraku culture by integrating Taiko images into the neighbourhood urban environment.

This is the urban context in which Ikari group grew up. In 1987, a performance of Okinawan drumming named the “Taiko Concert Bridging Okinawa and Osaka” inspired some young Burakumin in the audience to form a group and call themselves Ikari 怒 - Anger: “Taking the anger, ikari from any discrimination in our world, the name of our Taiko group, “Ikari” was made.”35 The aim was protesting against discrimination, bringing the “robbed traditional culture” back to “the city you can hear the Taiko sound”, developing

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34 Asahi Shimbun, Buraku no Reikishi Kaoru Machi, 17 April 2003.
Flavia Cangià

Flavia Cangià

pride in the Buraku culture as well as changing common social perceptions towards Buraku people.

From 1987 Ikari group has around 20 members who continuously change, mostly from Naniwa community, from high school students to those in their 30s, men and women. The members usually practice in a spacious gymnasium built especially for them and in return they give free performances at community schools and local events. Matsura Nobohiro, current group leader, illustrates their ethos:

The production of Taiko is based on the use of parts of dead animals’ bodies, this is considered a defiled and dirty profession and for this reason Burakumin are still discriminated against. They are believed to kill animals, even human beings, they are said to smell badly and to be dangerous. However we want to show who actually the Taiko creators are. With our music we want to talk about who produces this instrument, we want to talk about Buraku people. The group was formed to change the understanding of Buraku work and traditional culture, as well as to bring back the sound of Taiko to our town.

The small gymnasium wherein Ikari has its weekly rehearsal is filled with Taiko of every size. The members usually place themselves all around the hall, looking to the big mirror on the right side of the hall. The leader, in turn, is placed in the back, shouldering the rest of the group, and playing the giant Taiko (o-daiko) by large drumsticks. As Matsura explained to me, the image of him playing the o-daiko has been used to shape the main stone-made statue exhibited in the Wadaiko Model Zone, 1 kilometre away from the hall. As the pounding rhythm starts, the performers assume a very concentrate expression and a loud booming sound, marked by a rhythmical cadence of screams, begins. As Matsura kept explaining:

the beating of Taiko speaks of struggle against Buraku discrimination. The Taiko represents the ideas and stories of Buraku people; we do not beat vigorously just to combat discrimination and to say that the Buraku problem is a terrible thing, but also to capture the public attention on the people behind Taiko production and change perspective towards this profession.

The audio sense, namely the strong vibrating effect of the beating and the vigorous sound of Taiko, may thus help the players to highlight the value of the instrument, which is the potential for music to share social messages in order to move audience’s attention toward the Taiko makers’ social role in constructing Japanese highly recognized tradition:
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Performing the “Buraku Culture” to a certain extent, we also wish we could stop discrimination, but it is very hard. We anyway wish to provide for another impression of what relates to the idea of Buraku, thus, for instance, what is not usually publicly acknowledged is that Taiko, which in Japan is one of the most recognized cultural symbols, has a specific history. This history is linked to the Buraku. The traditional performers were the ones who got all the praise, whereas the people fabricating the drums were never really recalled. We wish to do so by playing the Taiko and performing in front of people.

According to this view, Buraku people might finally claim their own culture that is part of that culture nationally recognized as “Japanese.” Through an inclusive perspective, Ikari avoids to challenge completely the idea of Taiko as Japanese traditional symbol: it makes use of its national importance in order to demonstrate the social and cultural benefit of Buraku professions. All the praise given to performers and the instrument itself should be shifted to the makers.

Moreover, the group is concerned with the risk to easily instil a sense of anger towards the idea of discrimination in young players, as some spectators accused them. That is why older members wish that young ones could first of all enjoy the Taiko playing:

Beating the Taiko should not become an occasion of pain, but just an opportunity to alternatively express emotions, enjoy the pleasure of the sound, while sharing it with the audience.

Indeed the very mission of the Taiko playing just starts from the experience of discrimination, as ground on which people can thus be entitled to claim the robbed culture back, but moves then to a positive dimension that is the personal perception of music and the encounter with the audience as social moment of sharing par excellence.

Archives Kinegawa, Museum of Education and Leather Industry in Tokyo

Another context in which I came across an interesting use of leather-made artefacts, such as Taiko, aimed at creating alternative discourses on the same topic of discrimination, is the Archives Kinegawa, Museum of Education and Leather Industry in Kinegawa, Tokyo. Among the few areas in Tokyo recognized by the government as dow a chiku - a designated area where Buraku people live – there is Higashi Sumida (in the past called Kinegawa) one of the main leather-working centre throughout Japan. It was from the Meiji period (1868-1912), when a first big flow of migration from Asakusa started, that
Kinegawa in the east of Tokyo inherited 70% of the entire national pig-leather tanning, until the beginning of the Showa era (1926-1989), when the area was again threatened by a new flow of migration. The localization of leather industry changed dramatically with the Ordinance for the Removal of Fish and Wildlife Processing Industries in 1982, which pushed for processes of modernization and urbanization and urged leather workers of Asakusa to move out of the city, specifically in Arakawa and Kinegawa.36

From 1936 Kinegawa ex elementary school has played in the area an important role as institution for a human rights-based education devoted to the Buraku problem, but eventually closed in 2003 due to the decreasing in students’ number. Most of the families living the neighbourhood wanted their children to attend schools far away from the area, being afraid that their children could be identified as “Burakumin” if related to the school of Kinegawa. When the school closed the teachers decided to collect some valuable objects as memory and build a little documentation hall at the fourth floor of the building, during the 40th anniversary of the school foundation. For architectural security the museum was moved to the ground floor. Nowadays the museum collects the educational material of Kinegawa Elementary School and related activities, machinery for leather-working, leather-made objects, maps of the area from the past to date, pictures of the school and the community, as well as children’s written composition from 1968 to 2003. The value of the museum can only be considered in connection with the story and personal involvement of Iwata Akio, Dowa Education teacher at the Ex Elementary School of Kinegawa, member of the Tokyo Dowa Education and Research Council, author of several books on educational practice in Kinegawa and currently teacher in another elementary school in the east of Tokyo.

The exhibition is divided into 8 sections, mainly organized into three thematic spaces: the history of the school and Kinegawa, leather-working techniques and the educational project of the ex school. The whole room is around 40 square meters divided into two corners. Once walked, the visitor is taken into a circular route in the room, around the wall dividing the two corners, the instruments of leather-working and the panels located in the middle. Soon in front of

36 Kinegawa Enkakushi Kenkyukai 2005.
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the door there is the little space on the history of Kinegawa and the school, which exhibits pictures, songs and the collection of compositions written by children from the late 1960s to 2003. A sketched leather-made sheet hanged up on a panel is however the first object the visitor concretely pays attention to, while walking in. It introduces the other two spaces, respectively on the production of leather and the educational model of Kinegawa: old leather-working instruments, tools and new-fashioned items – such as bags, shoes and book-covers – are displayed; leather-made sheets of various colours are kept into a display cabinet; pictures and paintings of leathers-workers are mixed with most recent photographs of neighbours working for the construction of the museum. Ultimately the space on the educational model, called “Leather and Teaching,” exhibits the educational practice on leather-working through pictures of children creating leather-made items – integrated by their opinions on school activities. A quote from a label illustrates the aim of the museum:

The practice of education on leather-tanning process does not mean only to teach the technique of transforming raw skin into leather, but also to look at neighbours’ lives and opinions. By making people to fabricate artefacts themselves, such as Taiko, we aim to foster a specific idea of education.

Educational practice and teachers’ training of surrounding schools – in Kinegawa elementary school named “The Town We Live” – is still based on visits to the factories to discover what the objects used during lessons are actually made of (figs. 4-5).

Next step was making children try the experience of creation itself (fig. 6-7). A written composition by an ex student of the school, called Taiko wo Tsukuttayo! たいこを作ったよ! “We made Taiko!” exhibited in the museum, says:

First we made the trunk in terracotta. It was really good using clay. Then we burned it and it became solid. We stretched and cut the leather, usually used for Taiko, by some scissors but I could not do that as I was a bit weak. So I was happy that teacher Okaji helped me to cut it. Then we wet it with water, we opened the hole by a pair of pliers and I had to close the eyes as it was very hard. Then we wet it again. We sewed the leather on the trunk of the Taiko by using a big thread. To put it into a twisted stick was very hard but I thought “if I try hard, maybe I can do that”. When it came out I was so happy. Finally, I felt happy to make different paintings on the Taiko. It was also great making the drumsticks. When I tried to beat the Taiko, it sounded very good, so I was excited to the idea of playing also at home.
Another child describes:

the first thing was making the trunk. The clay-made trunk was completed once I burned it. The next step was cutting a spherical piece of pig raw skin by using some scissors specifically for leather. That was quite difficult. Then, once I put the pig-skin into the water, it soon became white and I was very surprised. Then, to stick the pig raw skin to the trunk by using a big thread was very hard. We inserted the thread into a twisted stick such as a disposable wooden chopstick. We turned it around 5, and then 10 times and it was quite difficult. Once the Taiko was completed we tried to beat it and the sound was very good. We also made drumsticks. I was very happy to make Taiko.

The very moment of production thus represents the way children might become aware of the meaning of Taiko-making: they are supposed to do so by acknowledging the difficult techniques behind the fabrication of the object, as well as the pleasure in touching the leather. The aim is to foster children’s pride in their parents’ professions as well as in the neighbourhood and its history, thus ultimately develop an alternative and positive image towards factors relating to the idea of Buraku. The artefact fabrication works here as a means to influence thoughts and actions of people. Material production becomes the performance through which children and objects create and define each other in alternative ways. The meaning created through the process of Taiko-making is not always simply conceivable through words, as Iwata argues:

‘Touching the leather, creating leather-made objects, such as little Taiko drums, and then playing it could help children to image leather-workers’ emotions and pride in fabricating such a nice instrument. These emotions are far less easy to explain by testimonies, yet they are extremely important to put the social idea of leather-working out of the public stereotype of leather as smelling and dirty.

This is the strategy undertaken by teachers in educational programs to create conjunction between the abstract levels of the producer and the user, though the virtual mediation of the children in the middle - supposedly the new generation able to change the distorted relationship between the former two. The “agency” of materials involved is exercised through specific features: the “smoothness and tenderness” of leather, the final sound, as well as the high techniques needed to create the drum, are the elements that may change children’s perspective from a きもちわるい気持ち悪い！negative feeling to a すごい！positive one. According to another child:
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Taiko players are great, but the Taiko makers are even more impressive. At the beginning I thought it was just a matter of making the trunk and stretching the leather. But today I learnt that it is not this easy, that it takes time and hard work. I would like to show the hard work it takes, to the people who make a fool of the Taiko makers. (S.)

Conclusion

The degree of pride as Burakumin or more generally towards personal experiences, as developed respectively in the two cases, is directly proportional to the degree the issue is publicly brought up within the contexts wherein Taiko drums perform: in Naniwa large governmental funds have served to implement political measures of reconstruction and possible integration with nearby areas, thus the context has grown up in social visibility of the Buraku question. Quite conversely, the public discourse on the topic created a big obstacle to mention and critically talk about the issue in all Kanto region. Here most of the people oscillates between ignorance, common ideas such as “netako wo okosuna” 寝た子をおこすな！philosophy (which means “Buraku discrimination will go away only if we don’t make a fuss about it”) or the belief that in the region the problem does not exist anymore.

The Taiko Road and Ikari group in Naniwa speak of Taiko in terms of “culture,” “human rights culture” and “robbed culture” respectively, which, although belonging to a specific minority, has been stolen in the name of national cultural tradition, on the one hand, and famous performers, on the other. The reference to human rights, in turn, has served to enlarge the audience, to present Buraku people as a more homogeneous minority group and finally to internationalize the scope of message, from the Buraku discrimination to “any discrimination in our world”. Conversely, the teachers in Kinegawa have used the Taiko-making itself in education, as possible “site” for communicating messages which go beyond words and time and require the very moment of creation, as well as the tactile and olfaction contact with the material, to critically produce and perform personal images, out of the Buraku-non-Buraku axis. The touch and smell themselves, which have created the ground of and reinforced the stigma towards some professions and acts, may here conversely work as tools to fill the gap. Through a mimetic strategy people attempt to reduce difference with the mainstream society by, on the
one hand, actively retaining dominant visual and discursive images of the issue as an “invisible taboo” while, on the other, undertaking a process of “symbolic competition” and inverting the meanings usually attributed to the object-index:37 while teachers try to avoid an easy mentioning of the term Buraku itself, not to “show off”, so to speak, the space in which the Taiko is made by children is eventually the very space of visibility for ideas to circulate.

Ikari group, in turn, does not retain dominant features of Buraku issue as an invisible taboo as it wishes to make noise on it through the sound of Taiko. Similarly, the project undertaken in Naniwa, called the Road of Human Rights and Taiko, has replied to the invisibility of the Buraku issue by integrating Taiko visual images into the daily urban life of neighbours. “Culturally frozen” images of Taiko in Naniwa, are displayed in representative scenes such as the stone-made representations of Taiko players in the Road, hence they are ordered in a way that makes them exemplar: the object is described, identified and recognized qua “Buraku culture”. In the case of Kinegawa museum and the educational program, “Buraku culture and history” - better the “Buraku question” - rather represent possible terms of reference to take into account, a sort of categorical maps, which may help to figure out the context but should not absolutely restrict the horizon of reactions teachers/exhibitor wish to provide children/viewer with.

This idea of “Buraku culture” seems to represent a polyphonic arena in and around which diverse voices, more or less intentionally, interact to manipulate the meaning of objects in the name of the “tradition” to be re-established. The tradition is seen in different ways in different contexts: whether it is specifically “Japanese”, a “robbed culture” or, as a worker in a leather factory once called it, the “culture of the base-people,” the idea of “tradition as unitary framework of unproblematic homogeneity” is here clearly at stake.

The making and playing the Taiko simultaneously follow a similar circular direction, which goes from the product, the drum, being it created or played, to the material it is made of, and vice versa. In the case of Ikari the “sonority” of Taiko, whereas in Kinegawa a broader idea of “materiality”, involving touch and sight as much as sound, have actively supported in creating social meanings. In both the cases,

however, people try to recreate and tell the story of the object, which is the story of people, through a sort of “agency” that, in different ways, succeed in going where utterance could not.

Finally, leather-made things are “talked” and “manipulated” as they represented more than simply commodities, but a vehicle to identify own role within society, a way to “have voice in” and re-establish own social position in economic, social and historical milieu. The process of singularization of these very objects becomes clear in the transformation of social ideas into items for the museum and into music for Ikari group. The social biography of these things is told in diverse ways through the support of objects’ circulation within society. In both the cases the objects’ circulation seems to be a symbolic mutual interaction between the performers and the audience: as soon as the latter, be it the visitor, the spectator or the children at school, acknowledges the importance of these objects, chances for the former to be liberated from discrimination seem to increase.

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Some specimens of Central Asian decorative elements in Ajantā and Bāgh paintings

By Matteo COMPARETTI*

The pictorial decoration of the twenty-nine Buddhist caves of Ajantā (Mahārāṣṭra) represents one of the most ancient specimens of Indian painting preserved until the present. According to the chronology proposed by Walter Spink, they should be dated to the second part of 5th century AD, most likely between c. 460 and 480.¹ The paintings were commissioned by members of the aristocracy of the Vākāṭaka (c. 255-480) or, better, Western Vākāṭaka (c. 460-483) (called also the Vatsagulma Branch), one of the most powerful dynasties of Southern India, at the time ruled by King Hariśeṇa (c. 460-477).² The paintings in the Buddhist caves at Bāgh (south-western Madhya Pradesh) have in common with the ones at Ajantā both chronology and patronage.³

The present study wants to be a contribution to the chronology proposed by W. Spink for both sites considering representations of foreigners of possible Iranian origin also through some (cautious) parallels offered by Chinese art which, as it is well known, does not suffer of the lack of written records like India.

Keywords: Ajantā, Bāgh, paintings, Bactria

Ajantā and Bāgh

Several studies have been dedicated to the representations of foreigners in Indian art and specifically, on the paintings at Ajantā.⁴ However, regarding these paintings, many critics objected to the sup-

² Weiner 1977, 7-35; Spink 1990, 1991.a; 1992. The monks at Ajantā were followers of the Mūlasarvāstivādin sect which is a form of Hīnayāna: Weiner (1977, 32-5).
posed identifications.\(^5\) Actually the figures of foreigners at Ajañṭā and Bāgh are so numerous that a brief article would not be enough. For this reason in the present paper only Ajañṭā caves I, II, XVI and XVII and Bāgh caves IV-V will be considered.

The representations of foreigners are easily recognizable, especially when they are identified as Iranians, because of the characteristic garments so unusual for the Indian climatic conditions, more suitable for members of the Kuṣāna aristocracy or other external people often identified in Indian literature as invaders. These people were first considered Persians by students of Indian art, and in one specific case, it was thought that one famous scene from cave I had been positively identified as a presentation of the embassy sent by Khosrow II Parvēz (590-628) to Pulakeśin II Calukya (c. 608-642) which took place around 625\(^6\) (Fig. 1). Such an identification openly contrasts with the chronology of the paintings proposed by Walter Spink and currently accepted by most scholars. Then the identification does not consider that Pulakeśin was a Hindu sovereign, and so his presence in a Buddhist context is furthermore suspect.\(^7\) According to D. Schlingloff, the scene should be identified as a story that Buddha told to Ānanda when the latter expressed against the place chosen to enter the nirvāṇa by his master: the city of Kuśinagara. Buddha talked about the story of a pious Kuśinagara king called Mahāsudarśana. His people loved him and they wanted to give him precious gifts. Mahāsudarśana was reluctant in the beginning but in the end he financed a religious building with the money received from the gifts. According to D. Schlingloff, the Iranian features of some people represented giving gifts to the king underlines the exotic character of the inhabitants of Kuśinagara, very often represented in foreign dresses.\(^8\) In Indian art, foreigners dressed like Kuṣāna or Śaka (that is to say wearing caftans, trousers, boots and the so-called “Phrygian” cap) can be seen very often, however they seem to be used as a simple decorative theme without


\(^6\) The hypothesis of identification was advanced few decades after the discovery of the Ajanṭā caves: Fergusson (1879). See also the summary of this story with commentaries in Spink (2005, 181-83).

\(^7\) Spink 1992, 251.

\(^8\) Schlingloff 1988, 59-60; 1996, pls. 1.2, 44; 2000, n. 44/1, 1,2.
any specific allusion to Iran.\textsuperscript{9} Most likely, the models for such representations were just merchants, soldiers, or invaders come to India from the North-West. In fact, F. Grenet recognized two donors in front of King Mahāsudarśana as Persians because of their beards and bright skin.\textsuperscript{10}

The other important pictorial cycle of cave I is reproduced on the central ceiling (Fig. 2). Here four panels are decorated with banquet scenes, that were very appreciated in pre-Islamic Persia and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{11} Unfortunately, one of the panels has been completely lost. The sitting central figures of the three remaining panels are bigger in size than the attendants around them. They hold weapons and in one hand they bring a dish or a cup. Their garments are typical of the Central Asians, and they wear also exotic pointed headgear. In two panels, it is possible to observe floating ribbons attached to the shoulders of the bigger figures. This is another characteristic of Iranian art although it can be often observed in Gupta art as well.\textsuperscript{12} The servants are all women, while the person sitting next to the central one can be a man or a woman, with a finger lifted according to a habit very common in Sasanian and Sogdian art, expressing reverente.\textsuperscript{13} The three scenes have been identified as generic representations of the Persian court, or

\textsuperscript{9} At Ajañtā some decorations of the façade of cave XIX are arch-like-niches containing the head of a foreigner, in some cases wearing a Phrygian cap and with long moustaches (Bautze-Picorn 2002, 248). See also Zin (2003, 287). Other ornamental architectonic elements of probable Iranian origin are the crenellations represented very often at Ajañtā (Melikian-Chirvani 1975, 9-10). Crenellations can be observed at Bhārhut,\textsuperscript{11} and Bhājā (Franz 1965, figs. 31, 53, 64, 91; Huntington 1999, fig. 5.22). So it is possible that their introduction in India occurred during the Parthian period or even before (Goetz 1974, 4-5). See also Sen-Gupta (2004). Another interesting decorative element in these caves is the Greek meander (Taddei, 1997). On the impact of Classical Greco-Roman art in India (Goetz, 1974).

\textsuperscript{10} Grenet 1996, 72.

\textsuperscript{11} Silvi Antonini 1996.

\textsuperscript{12} See for example the famous Gupta silver plate with figures in the Cleveland Museum of Art which is considered to come from North-Western India (Harle 1991, fig. 4). The ribbon appears as a royal symbol offered to sovereigns in Gupta coins (Raven 1994, 46).

\textsuperscript{13} Frye 1972; Bromberg 1991.
as representations of Kubera/Vaiśravaṇa in his Western Paradise.\(^{14}\) However the three main figures of every scene are not identical, so it is not excluded that they are representations of the Guardians of Directions (*Lokapāla*), especially with consideration of the fact that they should have been four in origin and they perfectly fit in a Buddhist context.\(^{15}\)

At least two dancers wearing garments similar to the ones of the foreigners at Ajanṭā, appear in a painting on the wall between cave IV and V at Bāgh (Fig. 3). The scene is probably the representation of a dance which takes place in the sky close to Indra Palace as part of the story of Māndhātar King.\(^{16}\)

Several people in the paintings at Ajanṭā and the two dancers at Bāgh wear a particular kind of dress called *camail*. This is a poncho-like, multi-pointed jacket similar to the one worn by the joker of the modern playing cards. According to J. Harle, the *camail* is a Central Asian invention and its introduction to India would have been dated to the period of the Śaka and Kuśāna invasions.\(^{17}\) Actually, the *camail* does not appear in Persian art but can be observed in the Gandhāra reliefs and as far as the Xinjiang region of China as a part of the dress of the donors around the Buddha.\(^{18}\) At several 6th-7th century Buddhist sites of modern Afghanistan like Bāmyān and Fondukistān, the *camail* can be seen even on Buddha paintings and statues\(^{19}\) (Fig. 4). Also, some 7th century bronze statuettes of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from Kaśmīr\(^{20}\) and at least one stone statue\(^{21}\) have the same dress. The

\(^{14}\) Grenet 1996, 79-80, n. 34; Bautze-Picron 2002, 250-51. If the model for those figures could be considered Sasanian, then it should have been most likely a representation of sovereigns. In fact, in contemporary Sasanian art the gods never hold weapons (Vanden Berghe 1988, 1514). Only at Tāq-e Bostān the equestrian statue in the big grotto has a shield and a spear but it is not clear if this is the representation of a divinity (Comparetti 2006.a). Furthermore this late monument could hardly be considered representative for the whole Sasanian art.


\(^{16}\) On the paintings at Bāgh in general see Marshall (1927); and Mārg (1972). For more recently published studies see Zin (2001) and Pande (2002).

\(^{17}\) Harle 1987, 571-72.


\(^{20}\) Pal 1975, pls. 30.a-b, 32, 36; 2007, figs. 43-44, 90; Paul 1986, pl. 87.
Some specimens of Central Asian decorative elements

camail was certainly known also in 8th century Sogdiana, as can be noted in a cycle of paintings at Panğakand, identified as the story of the Rostam’s adventures (Fig. 5). In a painting found in the Temple I at Panğakand a god accompanied by a horse wears the camail as well (Fig. 6). But the statues from Afghanistan and Kaśmīr, and the Sogdian paintings are all dated to a later period than the Ajantaand Bāgh paintings, while the only earlier specimens come from Gandhāra reliefs representing foreign donors. So it is quite improbable that the people dressed like Iranians at Ajantaand Bāgh are Persians or, as it was recently (and cautiously) expressed Sogdians.22

**India and Central Asian Iranians**

It is beyond any doubt that Sogdians have been travelling to India mainly for trading purposes at least since 3rd century. This fact became evident after the discovery of the Sogdian inscriptions in the region of the Upper Indus (Northern Pakistan) and thanks to those studies devoted to the presence of Indian words into Sogdian language.23 The knowledge of the Sogdians about India is attested significantly in Panğakand monumental paintings and in some sculptures.24 However, the Sogdians were not the only Iranian people to have been in contact with India. Bactrian presence has been recorded in (enigmatic) Indian literature since the Kuṣāna period and it has been observed that some products imported into India were called with names derived from Bactria.25 The information in Indian literature would point at the Bactrians (called also Ṭokharians) who, in the second half of 5th century, had been conquered by the obscure and iranize Ṭeptalites.26 Furthermore, Buddhism was very spread in Bactria-Ṭokharistān while in other parts of Central Asia it suffered persecutions.27

There is then something more which could be added on the base of new investigations in Bactrian art. A 5th century silver bowl kept in

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21 Paul 1986, pl. 88.
22 Yaldiz 2006, 91.
23 De La Vaissière 2005, 74-83.
25 De La Vaissière, 2005, 75 (with bibliography).
the British Museum and considered to be Bactrian is embellished with roundels containing human heads whose peculiarities constitute a clear parallel with the Ajanta and Bāgh paintings (Fig. 7). The visible portion of their dress and, above all, their headgear call to mind some figures at Ajanta. Also the beard is a characteristic typical of many foreigners represented in Indian paintings. The same knotted cloak and headgear can be observed in a painting from cave XVII at Ajanta known as Mahakapi jataka.

Bactrian metalwork still represents a not well-known subject especially when compared to Sogdian production. However, there are several other metalwork very similar to the Bactrian one just observed which have been proposed to have come from that Central Asian region. Two have been recovered at Datong, China (Figs. 8-9), while a third one was found in the Molotov Region (Russia) and it is now part of the Hermitage collection (Fig. 10). Decorations of human heads inside roundels do not appear in Persian art but they are reproduced quite often in Central Asia, for example, on the garments of a participant at the banquet at Balalyk Tepe, a site of 6th-7th century Bactria.

The ceiling of cave I and II presents a division in several squares and in some of these spaces other foreigners can be recognized (Fig. 11). In this case their attitudes are not serious and their pronounced noses and beards recall typical Chinese funerary statuettes (the mingqi) which are, however, mostly dated to 6th-7th century. In fact, it is not improbable that at both Indian and Chinese courts during the 5th century the most requested actors, dancers and musicians were of Iranian origin, possibly even Bactrian. The hypothesis could be likely, but it does not explain the representation of foreigners in more serious contexts both at Ajanta and Bāgh (Figs. 2-3). Possibly, in Indian art the “paradisiacal” scenes had to evoke exotic lands like Central Asia or Persia and in such a context the people had to be dressed like strang-

28 The bowl is reproduced in Dalton (1964, pl. 205); Marshak (2004, fig. 38).
29 Schlingloff 1988, ch. 24 fig. 30; 1996, XVII, 24.1, 30; 2000, 144.
30 Fajans 1957, 56, figs. 3-4; Qi 1999, 257 figs. 2-124-25, 319 fig. 3-8; Marshak 2004.
31 Al’baum 1960, figs. 115-16, 148; Silvi Antonini 1972.
32 Most of the material on this kind of mingqi was collected by Mahler (1959). It is worth remembering that in 6th-7th century China, the Iranians represented in arts are mostly Sogdians, see Comparetti (2004.a; ibid. 2006.b).
ers. A similar phenomenon happened also in Chinese literature where some characters of entertaining tales were Iranians or Arabs come from very distant lands. Curiously enough, for the Sogdians, India represented the magic land of their tales often represented in paintings. Another peculiarity of the foreigners at Ajantās is the presence of metalwork in their hands. Very interesting metalwork which reproduce typical Iranian objects can be observed on the external ceiling of cave II, or in a painting on the external wall of cave XVII where a couple of lovers seems to be disturbed by a servant wearing a green caftan and a cap, with a metal jar in his hands (Fig. 12). Also, in this case there is a clear parallel with some Chinese funerary paintings of the Tang period, representing local or Central Asian attendants with imported metal objects in their hands. This is possibly an allusion to wine and not just to the trade of luxury metalwork controlled by Iranian merchants. In Chinese sources (mainly referred to 7th-8th centuries) Sogdians are described as people fond of dancing, singing and drinking although it is not excluded that other Iranians liked to do exactly the same things.

People on horses wearing caftans, with particular headgear and floating ribbons can be seen in some paintings from cave XVI and XVII. The horses of the strangers in a scene painted in cave XVII identified as the Devāvatāra jātaka have a crenellated mane, not common in Indian art (Fig. 13). This is another element originally extraneous and definitely introduced into India from the steppe world during the invasions that occurred from the North-Western regions.

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33 Schafer 1951.
35 Ghosh 1996, pl. LVIII fig. 15; Okada, Nou 1996, 169.
36 Once more, the metalwork in Chinese paintings reflects most likely a Sogdian production. On 8th century Tang funerary paintings found in the Shaanxi Province with attendants bringing in their hands metal objects (Zhang 1995, figs. 24, 35, 41, 51-53, 61, 64, 73, 95-98, 103-104, 128; Qi 1999, 420-27).
37 Chavannes 1903, 134.
39 On a general discussion on this element see Lucidi (1969). The Chinese too adopted it from Central Asia (Desroches 1995, 94-95).
A last decoration worth mentioning concerns the pictorial ornament of four inner octagonal pillars of cave XVII. At the end of 19th century, J. Griffiths reproduced the decorative elements of these pillars, but his work was almost completely destroyed during a fire. One pillar in particular presents very interesting decorative elements composed by white pearl roundels on every side of the octagonal support containing single vegetal and animal subjects, such as the bull and the wild boar (Fig. 14). The pearl roundel containing the wild boar could be compared to similar Sasanian decorations from Dāmghān (North-Western Iran) where some 6th century stucco panels present boar heads within pearl roundels (Fig. 15). In Sasanian art, pearl roundels appear only as external architectural decorations in stucco. Sasanian art had possibly some influence on 5th century Indian decorations, but it is clear that round frames embellished by pearls along their rims and containing various subjects have been spread in India at least since the 1st century BC. Pearl roundel decorations were among the favorite textile embellishments in Central Asia during early Middle Ages (starting in 6th century) and they were spread in the ancient world most likely by the Sogdian merchants active along the so-called “Silk Road” from China to the Byzantine Empire.

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40 One of the main studies on Indian columns is still Stern (1972). The pearl roundels on the pillar under examination in cave XVII at Ajañtā can be seen in Hajime (1968, 35, pl. 21) and Taddei (1976, fig. 57).
41 Griffiths 1896 (reprint 1983), pls. 143, 147.
42 Kröger 1982, 262; Bromberg 1983. Pearl roundels containing boar heads can be observed also on some metalwork considered to be Sasanian (D’amore 1994, 63 cat. n. 23).
43 Jairazbhoy 1963, 148-62; Meister 1970, 265-66; Kröger 1981, 447; Klimburg-Salter 1996, 480-81, 485. Also Indian elements were adopted in Persia. The lotus where Mithra is standing in the rock carvings at Tāq-e Bostān has been considered long ago to be an Indian borrowing (Kröger 1981, 447).
44 Pearl roundels can be observed on the reliefs Śaṅcāri and Bhārhat (2nd-1st century BC) (Bénisti 1952). On pearl roundels in Indian painting see also Eastman (1943).
45 Compareti 2000; 2004.b; 2006.c. The parallel between the attitude of Indian and Chinese ruling class towards Iranian merchants fits very well in this context since it appear clearly that some decorative patterns introduced by foreigners were not used by local nobility. This is probably due to the barbaric (or, in India, mleccha) touch of those elements which - at least in China - were used mostly as diplomatic gifts given in exchange to neighbouring countries (Compareti 2006c, 163).
However, the pearl roundels observed in India, especially as architectural decorations, seem to be a local creation.46

**Conclusion**

Although the first studies of the Buddhist paintings at Ajanta and Bāgh considered the foreigners there represented as Persians because of their Iranian garments, it cannot be excluded that other people in contact with India could have been represented there. Their identification can uniquely be based on their garments, headaddresses, attributes and attitudes. Dresses like caftans, boots and pointed caps suggest Central Asian peoples who have invaded India repeatedly since the 1st century AD from the north-western part of the Subcontinent. However, it does not seem very likely that Indian artists and donors would have appreciated representations of foreign invaders among those paintings which had to embellish religious complexes. Their presence should be considered the result of peaceful contacts, possibly due to trade relationships between Iranians and Indians.

The textile decorations of the foreigners at Ajanta and Bāgh display only simple geometric designs and no pearl roundels that have started to be very common in Persia and Central Asia since the 6th century. This observation is a further evidence in support of the chronology advanced by Walter Spink (5th century). In fact, in case of a later chronology (supported by other scholars, especially Indian ones),47 pearl roundel decorations would have been reproduced on the garments worn by the numerous foreigners of Iranian origin portrayed in Indian paintings. The geometric designs look very accurate just like the style of their clothes (camail) and accessories (headgears, weapons but also the harnesses of the horses) because they were copied by Indian artists who could observe directly those foreigners. The style of those garments can be actually observed in some metalwork that are considered to be a production of Bactria.

As it was observed above, the foreigners under discussion can be considered Iranians but not necessarily Persians or Sogdians mainly

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46 There were probably some direct influences of Sogdian art into Northern India and especially in Kaśmīr but there are no evidences about such an exchange before 7th century (Compareti 2000, 338-39).

for chronological reasons. It seems moreover very unlikely that Indians reproduced representatives of the Hephtalites who were in very bad relationships with them. In all probability, those people are Bactrian traders as it can be supposed by their garments and the metal objects that they hold in their hands. This latter points seems to be confirmed by the presence of many of these objects at least at Ajañtāas to make a clear association in order to suggest the identity of those foreigners to an Indian observer of that period.

Although Bactrian inscriptions found in the Upper Indus Valley are not so many as Sogdian ones, they exist and attest the presence of this Iranian people in that part of India already during the 4th-5th centuries.\textsuperscript{48} It is highly probable that the Bactrian inscriptions were left by traders who were directed to India although they could be considered also traces of the passage of singers and actors of Bactrian origin requested to entertain Indian courts of the 5th century as it can be observed in the paintings at Ajañtā and Bāgh.

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Some specimens of Central Asian decorative elements


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Morocco’s Legislative Elections of 2007: the Contradictory Trends in Terms of Transition

By Serena DALLA VALLE*

Summary:
Most of the studies concerning democratization in Arab Countries have recently demonstrated the difference between the theoretical definition of processes of transition and empirical reality, by stressing the importance of the historical and cultural factors that underlie the transformation of regimes. This contribution will point-out that a relatively open political and economic system, based-on multiparty contests and alternation in power, is not sufficient to open a democratic space within existing institutions. By examining the latest legislative elections in Morocco, the case study of this paper will highlight the progresses and the regressions of the country during the “consolidation of democratic choice” (Tozy M., Journal of Democracy, January 2008). The analysis will focus on electoral practices – electoral mechanisms, role of the administration, juridical context, observation of the electoral campaign and results and other issues surrounding “election time”, in order to highlight the contradictory indicators that are characteristic of Moroccan electoral policies. Once again, and despite the clear efforts of the central administration to attain transparency and credibility, these elections have not been a true test of power. Moreover the regime seems to have settled on a state of transition as an equilibrium: the Monarchy, with a strategy that combines administrative dispositions and cooptation, selects allies as well as opponents, de facto controlling the political scenario.

Keywords: Morocco, authoritarianism, electoral politics, islamist parties

Theoretical perspectives: critiques and definitions of intentions
Since the 1990s, the idea of a smooth global passage to a democratic world has withered away. Events in Africa and Asia show that democratic progress is dependent, more than ever, on social, economic and political factors, and exposed to the fragility and non-linearity of democratic progress. The evolving model of transition was based on a few core assumptions: that countries moving away from authoritarianism tend to follow a three-part process of
democratisation consisting of opening, breakthrough and consolidation; and that a country’s chances of successfully democratising depend primarily on the political intentions and actions of its political elites.¹ In view of the many failed democratic transition processes in the 1990s, however, this seems to be a fragile assumption. Rather, it appears necessary to go back to the meaning of the so-called “democratization process” and to analyse it from a multidimensional viewpoint taking into account both favourable and unfavourable political, cultural, economic and international factors.

Without entering the huge debate that surrounds the “transitological approach,”² I will focus on the processes of institutional reforms and procedures in the light of the dominant relationships of authority. In other words I suggest an approach that highlights the historic and cultural factors underlying these regimes’ transformation. In the case of Morocco, the main object of this study, the issue of “democratic reforms without democratization,”³ is more related to this particular culture of power and authority than to the universal approaches identified by the democratization literature.

Therefore my study will focus on the electoral process as a dynamic that is likely to influence the regime’s transformation. The analysis of


this electoral period, in fact, can tell us a lot about the obstacles that stand in the way of democratisation: electoral fall-out is likely to shape the forms through which the opposition expresses itself, the nature of ruling coalitions, and the prospects for different types of liberal, competitive political transitions. Moreover, this study challenges the conventional wisdom that multiparty contests automatically lead to the achievement of a democratic governance for key political institutions. It argues instead, as the case study in this paper will highlight, that while elections allow the political elite to circulate, plebiscites to be held, and political protagonists and competing political projects to take the stage, they may strengthen undemocratic relationships of authority as well. By agreeing to conduct regular, contested, elections, the electoral framework of the Moroccan political system allows for democratic elections. However, the limited role of Parliament in the constitutional architecture and a political context in which pluralism and \textit{alternance}\textsuperscript{4} seem to remain quite compatible with continued political domination by the \textit{makhzen},\textsuperscript{5} reduces the importance of these elections: they appear closer to pseudo-competitive instruments of regime maintenance rather than processes which create obligations for the government and devolution of power to democratically elected institutions.

This is the main issue and poses a major question: is an open and transparent electoral contest enough to initiate a political transformation towards more democratic institutions?

Guided by this problem, I will explore the extent and limits of the electoral process in Morocco, by focusing on the last legislative elections of September 2007. The first part of the study will briefly introduce the main characteristics that inform electoral processes in Morocco. The idea is to identify some features of the Moroccan political system, and emphasize that it is defined more by the traditional culture of power and authority than by the political

\textsuperscript{4}After the legislatives elections of 1997, a government of change (\textit{gouvernement d’alternance}), was created to allow the democratically elected oppositions to enter the parliament.

processes that have been introduced by the advent of multiparty contests and alternation of power.

Recognising that the rules of the electoral game are constantly being adjusted – as is the case with the new electoral code and the law governing political parties that has been legislated by the previous government - the second part will examine the election mechanism (number of constituencies, thresholds, access to candidature and ratio of voters to seats) specific to this last consultation and its effects on the final results. The administrative structure, the juridical context and the role of domestic and international non-partisan observers will also be considered. This part will rely to a great extent on the reports and official documents that came out during election time.

Finally, in the third part, based mostly on the fieldwork on Moroccan elections coordinated by professor M. Tozy and the Centre Marocaine des Sciences Sociales of Casablanca, I will focus on the role of the main actors in the political systems - political parties, monarchy, central administration, traditional notables\(^6\) and civil society - in the electoral process, question the implications that such elections have had for all of them, and try to draw some conclusions from the “lessons” learned from the scrutiny.

**The case study: the role and practice of elections in the Moroccan political system**

Morocco has a long-standing tradition of elections and over the last 15 years has been engaged in a process of economic and political liberalisation. Significant progress has been made in the fields of freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly and – to a lesser degree – media freedom.\(^7\) Moreover, Morocco has generally

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\(^6\) We use the expression “traditional notables” to designate those actors who reach some form of management of social relationships that are grounded in forms of legitimacy other than those produced by a democratic election.

\(^7\) Following the 2007 Report of Human Right Watch, since mid-2005, a series of prosecutions of independent weeklies, the most outspoken and critical sector of the Moroccan news media, have showed the continuing limits on freedom of the press. Courts convicted at least four weeklies, or their journalists, on criminal charges of libel, publishing ‘false news,’ or ‘insulting’ a foreign head of state, and were trying a fifth for ‘undermining’ the institution of the monarchy:

proven to be open to the international community, as demonstrated by its participation in the Barcelona Process and its signing of free trade agreements with the United States and European Union. However, the relatively open political and economic system based-on multiparty contests and alternation in power (at least since the 1997 elections, which were dominated by parties from the country’s long-time opposition) has been revealed inadequate to the task of opening a democratic space in the institutions and increasing democratic governance. A specialist of Moroccan politics has written:

La libéralisation politique vise à revigorer le système politique et non a céder le pouvoir. Elle continue donc de s’inscrire dans la logique du régime autoritaire.8

The recent legislative elections in Morocco have highlighted the progresses and the regressions in the country during the “consolidation of democratic choice” and have opened up a debate which is not only concerned with some critiques of the electoral system as a technical instrument of control, but also enters more deeply into issues whose relevance extends beyond the electoral process itself.

To better understand the specific political context of Morocco, we could start with some definitions by specialists in Moroccan politics, who have tried to classify this regime in terms of the level of authority and the distribution of political power: Daniel Brumberg, in his “Liberalisation versus Democracy: Understanding Arab Political Reform,” places Morocco in the category of “liberalized

autocracies,” by stressing the fact that these are countries “tempering authoritarianism with pluralism and providing a kind of virtual democracy with their ultimate reliance on the supreme authority of the monarch or the president.”

Adopting another point of view, particularly by focusing on the role of the elites in opening democratic spaces, A. Maghraoui\textsuperscript{11} utilises the term *autoritarisme concurrentiel*, where he highlights the strategy of a system that allows a gradual cooptation of the elites without becoming democratic. Santucci’s definition,\textsuperscript{12} who classifies Morocco as *pluralisme contrôlé* or *pluralisme autoritaire*, where the coexistence of the Monarchy and democracy excludes every form of progress in terms of civil expression and political representation, which could undermine the King’s political and religious authority, is in a similar vein.

In his article which appeared in *The Journal of Democracy*: «Is the third wave of democratization over?,” L. Diamond\textsuperscript{13} develops the notion of pseudodemocracy, one that seems to fit the Moroccan political structure:

a regime that hides authoritarian behaviour behind a democratic façade [...] when the existence of formally democratic institutions, such as multiparty electoral competitions, masks – often to legitimate – the reality of authoritarian domination [...] a regime that seems to have settled upon a state of transition as an equilibrium...while tolerating the existence of genuine – not merely artificial state-controlled – opposition parties and dissident activities in civil society.

Finally, Muhammed Tozy,\textsuperscript{14} by presenting the Moroccan system as one that “revolves around a political game that has been defused,” suggests that the dilemma of power in Morocco is to nurture a class of political leaders who take part in the conduct of public affairs without having any assurance that they can change the basic orientation of political life.

\textsuperscript{14} Tozy M., op. cit., p. 37.
The conclusions of these contemporary approaches seem to preserve and confirm the segmentary perspective on the Moroccan system already deployed by John Waterbury in 1970, where Morocco is described as a regime in which the King orchestrates division and competition among circulating elites, who are successively used and removed, causing immobilism and constantly changing superficial alliances.

This short overview of the different analyses of the Moroccan political system allows us to suggest that the “technical factor” of the existence of regular and competitive elections as the essential driving force towards opening a democratic space in institutions is to all extents and purposes questionable. At face value, Morocco has adopted the ‘multiparty game’ and has conducted regular and contested elections for key government institutions. But from the point of view of democratic governance and legitimacy, the most sensitive question is whether elected representatives, in whatever political system, have sufficiently significant competences to exercise governmental power, or to hold the government accountable to Parliament and fulfil their role as legislators.

The role of elections

Being aware that the true sphere of power is represented by King Mohammed VI and his court (the latter including not only the King’s inner circle of relatives and classmates, but also an outer circle of royal advisors, leading technocrats, co-opted politicians, and personalities from the business world), the analysis of the prerogatives of the representative institutions of Morocco highlights that elections have never determined the main direction of the country but are used instead as an instrument of control and elite renovation.

Despite the liberalizing reforms of recent years, political power still remains firmly in the hands of the makhzen or power structures that surround the royal palace. The palace still reserves the right, both constitutionally and in practise, of veto over the future development of the Moroccan political scene. The constitutional subservience of the national Parliament to the King, allows us to speak of a “dual

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system”\textsuperscript{16} where the government and Parliament are both accountable to the King. Thus, despite the existence of this constitutionally legitimized system of power and control, the King makes use of a parallel structure of power involving a mixture of ex-politicians, businessmen and senior army officers. For example, we can observe the much greater power of the royally-appointed regional governors and \textit{walis} (governors) compared to the elected local authorities and so put in proper perspective any gains made by political parties in elections in Morocco.

The essential prerogatives of the King are affirmed mostly in article 19 of the constitution:\textsuperscript{17} his religious prerogative, as commander of the faithful, protector of the nation and its religious status; the symbolic prerogative, as guarantor of the unity of the nation, of its long-standing independence and integrity; and the political prerogative symbolized by his safeguarding the civil rights and liberties of individuals and the community.

Among the expansive constitutionally designated prerogatives available to the King are his right to appoint the Prime Minister and the Ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Religious Affairs, all key portfolios that are commonly named “ministries of sovereignty.” At any time, the King has the authority to dismiss the government, dissolve parliament and rule by decree. The king also presides over the judiciary, appoints ambassadors, ratifies treaties, and is the supreme commander of the armed forces. With his authority to appoint all 16 regional \textit{walis}, the king has full influence over the country’s patronage system.

To summarise, the Moroccan political system operates at competing formal and informal levels involving the existence of a fully articulated institutional structure, including a constitution (revised for the fourth time in 1996, since gaining independence in 1956), a bicameral legislature, a judiciary, and a complex multiparty system in which elections at the national and local levels take place on


a regular basis. Despite some unquestionable advances in terms of pluralism and competition, the monarchy is still the central political actor, heavily influencing the country’s policy orientations, and setting significant limitations on the real power of the opposition and key government institutions. Thanks to the all-encompassing powers that are ensconced within the constitution and through the invocation of historical tradition and religious legitimacy, the monarch is formally bound by a political statute but above the law insofar as his status of direct descendent of the prophet Mohammed and his royal title of “Commander of the Faithful” are concerned.

The practice of elections

Morocco has had a long history of multiparty activism both before and after independence. A wide range of secular, Berberist, socialist and Islamist parties have vied for political dominance in the Moroccan parliament, but none has ever come close to serving as a true alternative to monarchical rule. Given the monarchy’s centralized authority, political party opposition can only influence policy making at the margins and only with the full consent of the king, who “decides who can participate in politics and establishes the boundaries within which political actors can operate.”\(^\text{18}\) Indeed, the presence of a multiplicity of political groupings results in a highly fragmented party landscape working to further divide and weaken an already enfeebled legislature.

After the 1997 election, Hassan II moved in a direction that many observers of Moroccan politics interpreted as a turning-point in the liberalisation process, by inviting the opposition parties to form a coalition-government under the direction of Abdel Rahman Yusufi, leader of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP). However, these ouvertures in the political landscape were very limited and were not followed by a real discussion about the expansive constitutionally designated prerogatives available to the King, thus leading some experts to interpret the alternation in power as a mere exercise in cooptation or even as a way for the Monarchy to settle on a state of

prolonged transition. Paradoxically, in fact, the success of the leftist alliance, named the kutla bloc, has contributed to strengthen the monarch’s power by forcing the former to accept the rules of the game proposed by the king at the expense of its credibility before the electorate. The empty space left by the leftist opposition forces, engaged in a politics of conciliation with the Monarchy, was quickly occupied by the Islamist movement that begun to apply for formal participation in the electoral process.

The next electoral event of 2002, held under the reign of Mohammed VI, did not continue the 1997 precedent of selecting the prime minister from the ranks of the victorious party; indeed a non partisan technocrat was appointed. The 2002 parliamentary elections were reported to have been well-administered and resulted in an enhanced role for women in the political realm through a national list that all parties agreed to reserve for women candidates. Islamists were the other major victors at the election, jumping from 14 to 42 seats in the Chamber of Representatives. However, despite the clear commitment to political liberalisation – concerning a series of human rights, social and economic reforms, such as the family code, Mudawwana, and the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) charged with enquiring into the human right violations that occurred during the reign of Hassan II – the new king Mohammed VI did not inject any further substance into the democratic process by, for example, increasing parliamentary authority or even declining to exercise his own considerable legislative power.


The electoral processes of recent years demonstrate that there is a systematic effort by the Palace to prevent the emergence of any significant political force that could more forcefully assert itself in the Parliament and eventually promote an extension of its prerogatives. The core question thus is not whether Morocco will continue its democratic transformation, because, according to some Moroccan observers, such transformation has not even started.

In the following section I will try to determine if, and how, the electoral framework of the legislative elections of September 2007 are still based upon a “defused” system that prevents, once again, the achievement of a real devolution of power.

**The 2007 electoral system and the political scenario**

Electoral laws have profound effects on the degree of fairness and representativeness of elections. Broadly speaking, electoral laws govern such things as the voting system, registration rules, district boundaries, and the control of voting places. Although usually spelled out in a single electoral code, these issues are often addressed in multiple related laws, as well as the constitution. Morocco’s regime has instituted significant changes in its electoral laws before almost every parliamentary election, often in an attempt to influence election results, at the cost of lowering turnout rates (see Table II) and delegitimizing the voting process itself, as demonstrated by the alarming rate of abstention on September 2007.

**The juridical context**

The election to the Chamber of Representatives is regulated by law n° 31-97, which relates to the Chamber of Representatives and stipulates a proportional system, structured by means of two lists to be used for parliamentary elections. Each Moroccan voter votes for a local party list in one of 95 multimember districts in order to select between 2 and 5 seats of the 295 that are filled this way. The remaining 30 seats are chosen by means of a nation-wide list, which is

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reserved by political consensus for women candidates\textsuperscript{23}. A 6 percent threshold is set for parties seeking seats in Parliament. The seat allocations are made through a complicated “remainder system” run by local magistrates who determine the “threshold number” needed to win a seat in a particular district. After the top vote-getting parties have been allocated one seat each, the threshold number is subtracted from their vote totals, and the rest of the seats are allocated to parties according to their remaining vote totals, in descending order. The “remainder rule” makes it very difficult for any party to win more than one seat per district while it means that the stronger parties typically can have at least a decent chance of winning a seat in almost every district.

The electoral code (law n° 9-97) was amended on 23 March 2007 with a series of revisions concerning different aspects of the electoral process. The law n° 22-06 increased the percentage of votes a party must obtain to enter parliament from 3 percent to 6 percent – the ‘representation threshold’ - in combination with another law, which establishes that every party that wants to run a candidate in the election must have either garnered a minimum of 3 percent of the vote at the national level during the preceding legislative election, or have collected the signatures of 100 voters - the ‘access threshold’\textsuperscript{24}. Proposed by the big parties, this measure was intended to limit the fragmentation of the Moroccan political landscape. Morocco has, in fact, more than forty declared political parties, about ten of which were created after the legislative elections of 2002, with a steady increase in the number of parties entering the electoral process.\textsuperscript{25}

Other important modifications of the electoral code relate to voting rights for Moroccan people living abroad (law n°23-06) and to the organisation of an exceptional revision of electoral lists (law n° 24-06). An array of fresh regulations was also adopted by the High Authority for Communication and Audiovisual – HACA, created in 2002 - for assuring equitable access to the audiovisual media during the

\textsuperscript{23}The new Parliament actually has 35 female members, as a handful of women won seats in the district race


\textsuperscript{25}There were 9 parties attending elections in 1977, 12 in 1984, 16 in 1997, 26 in 2002, and 33 in 2007
electoral campaign (decree n° 14-07). Since the Moroccan constitution doesn’t contain a policy on the non-partisan observation of elections, the government puts the Consultative Council for Human Rights (CCDH) in charge of following and coordinating all initiatives related to civil and international observation, and electoral control.

Finally, a change of constituency boundaries was also approved by government decree (decree 2-07-160).

Outside the electoral framework, another important law concerning the conditions for party creation was adopted on October 2005; this new decree has somewhat affected the results of the last elections and deserves to be analysed in more detail.26

The Moroccan constitution of 1996 declares Morocco to be a multi-party system. Article 3 of the 1996 constitution stipulates that “Political parties, unions, district councils and trade chambers shall participate in the organization and representation of the citizens. There shall be no one-party system.” The modifications proposed by the Ministry of the Interior in October 2004 were primarily intended to regularise the parties’ formation and organisation through the improvement of their internal management, simplification of the procedure for receiving public funding, and diversification of their membership by establishing quotas for women and youth. Following this new decree, fundamentalist and regionalist formations were excluded from the system as were religious, racial, regional, socio-professional, or linguistic references in party platforms – thus forcing existing Berberist and Islamist parties to recast their constitutions. Moreover this modification stipulated that the government would provide a yearly grant to cover operating costs to those parties that secured at least 5 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections - with the aim of recasting the party system into fewer larger blocs – and required parties to convene a congress every four years or lose their subsidy. Additionally, it forced parties to be more transparent in policy making, in their financial affairs and in the electoral program as well. A remarkable issue that was introduced concerns the Ministry of Interior, directly appointed by the King, which now has the option of

prohibiting the political activity of any party deemed not to be in conformity with the standards established by the law.\textsuperscript{27}

Another decree that strongly affected the final results of the 2007 parliament election, concerns the change in constituency boundaries. Surrounded by a huge controversy, the adoption by decree of the new electoral map as designed by the Prime Minister, Driss Yettou, was read by both observers and politicians as a way to maintain, through intelligent engineering, the already great fragmentation of the political sphere and to prevent certain parties from achieving too large a constituency. Only government parties were consulted on the changes and even if the opposition expressed concerns about the way some electoral districts had been redrawn, the Ministry did not provide any detailed explanation, except for the need to adjust boundaries in line with the 2003 administrative re-districting.

Without entering into this debate, it seems possible that a strategy of ‘gerrymandering’ has been adopted in order to reduce the representative power of certain parties. Since the first change to the electoral map after the adoption of a proportional electoral system in 2002, weak constituency magnitudes have been the main characteristic of the new electoral system. In fact, with the changes introduced in 2007, this weakness seems to be magnified by the increase in the number of feeble magnitude constituencies, individual parties experiencing both a greater number of weakened constituencies—from 60 to 67—and a decrease in the number of middle magnitude ones from 31 to 27. Moreover, the proportional aspect of the system is significantly reduced by the fact that sub-national constituencies are very small, comprising only 2-5 seats and that effect is strengthened by the increase in the number of electoral districts from 91 to 95.

When discussing the main effects of this new subdivision, we can point to the representativeness gap in several constituencies that, in some cases, has even increased since the modification of the electoral map. For example, the differential between the most represented and the least represented constituency is a factor of 22,69 (this is the case of the rural district of Aousserd, in which a seat represents no more then 3,700 voters and that of Ain-Sbaa - Hay Mohammadi with 88,257 voters per seat The increase in the number of electoral

\textsuperscript{27} It is the case of the party \textit{Badil wal Hadari} and the party \textit{Al Oumma}, which both left the political scene after a decision by the Minister of the Interior.
districts from 91 to 95, and the alteration of some of them, has had remarkable consequences as well: the constituencies of Hay Hassani-Ain Chock – 5 seats in 2002 – has been divided into two constituencies with 2 and 3 seats respectively, while the number of seats in the Ain Sebaa-Hay Mohammadi constituency has been reduced from 5 to 3, making this one, as we have seen, the most under-represented constituency. Another aspect to consider is the impact of the new constituencies’ boundaries on the proportion of votes to seats. By taking the case of the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and the Istiqlal Party we can see that even if the PJD garnered 503,396 votes (10.9 percent) on the local list while the Istiqlal party just garnered 494,856 (10.7 percent), the PJD obtained 40 seats whereas the Istiqlal party only obtained 46 (see Table I).

If these observations help to describe some of the technical factors behind the final electoral results, other factors more closely related to the political culture of the country could be suggested. As many specialists of Moroccan society have argued, a weak constituency magnitude pushes candidates to perpetuate the electoral practices of a uninominal electoral system by concentrating their efforts on “local loyalty.” Because of the small number of seats per constituency, winning seats depends less on political programs and platforms, and more on local personalities, who can carry a large number of votes while their political affiliation may not be very relevant and can even change. These notables, who play a fundamental role in their constituency due to their familial, tribal or economic resources, are considered likely to mobilise an important electorate with their name, whereas their party affiliation is not a distinctive factor. As a consequence, the negotiating power of these notables vis-à-vis parties is strengthened, while the chances of success for the candidates that are not at the top of the electoral list are reduced.

The political context of the 2007 elections

The national legislative elections held in Morocco in September 2007 were the second to be held during the reign of the King Mohammed VI and the eighth since Morocco achieved independence in 1956. Along with this election, the palace really called for a competitive campaign that would include genuine opposition parties, a free and fair electoral process, robust voter participation, and hence international approval. The elections took on further potential
significance both domestically and internationally because of the participation of the Islamic political party of Justice and Development (PJD), which was forecast to perform particularly well, and because of the creation of a political party by ex minister Fouad El Himma, who resigned his post as delegate Minister to the Interior in order to run in his native constituency of Rahmna, in the region of Marrakech. He was a former classmate of King Mohammed VI and a close collaborator of his, thus prompting a flurry of speculation about his strategic role in the political scene.

The PJD, which first entered the Parliament after winning nine seats in the 1997 legislative elections, represents what can be described as “legitimized Islam,” since it does not call the Moroccan kingdom’s political foundations into question (as opposed to the other main Islamist organisation led by Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine). It nevertheless insists on the principle of defending Moroccan society’s Islamic identity through legislative and institutional means, by promoting policies commensurate with their long-term agenda of Islamicizing society. Its role within the institutional system is seen by many observers as a stabilizing force that should be supported in order to contain the growth of the fundamentalist organisations. But if the PJD has been successful in building bridges with the outside world, it remains controversial at home, where secular rivals accuse it of spreading a radical ideology through its press while putting on a moderate face to the world. Well-organised and recognised even by rivals as hard working, the PJD is not monolithic, although the most

radical wing within it has been gradually pushed out of the top positions.\footnote{For a panoramic of PJD’s genealogy and structure see: Mohsen-Finan K., Zeghal M., «Opposition islamiste et pouvoir monarquique au Maroc», Revue française de science politique 2006/1, Vol. 56, p. 79-119.}

One last remark: several components of civil society engaged in significant efforts at electoral mobilisation, including local organizations, artists and the central administration in the person of the Minister of the Interior. For example, Morocco witnessed a large and sophisticated voter education effort before the 2007 elections. One element of that effort was led by “2007 Daba” (daba meaning “now” in Moroccan dialect)\footnote{For the 2007 Daba association’s efforts to increase political awareness among Moroccans, see: http://www.2007daba.com.} which brought together business and community leaders, with the implicit encouragement of the king, in order to educate voters about the election process and to encourage engagement in the political process, particularly among the youth and in rural areas.

**The electoral campaign**

The authorized period for electoral campaigns to the Chamber of Representatives is two weeks. This campaign officially began on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of August and ended the day before the vote. For the first time, the political parties were forced by law to conduct their electoral campaign on the basis of a detailed political program. The act of drafting different political programs was meant to serve transparency and add credibility to political action, even if any governmental program, whatever it is, depends on the King’s prior approval, as head of the executive. The King himself chose the occasion of the eighth anniversary of his accession to the throne to indicate the strategic orientations and the main paths the coming government was supposed to take. The following extract from Mohammed VI’s “Speech of the throne” provides a short overview (in French):

...Je m’attache à définir les grandes orientations pour la nation marocaine, en veillant, parallèlement à cerner les préoccupations quotidiennes de tous les citoyens [...] les élections ne consistent pas, au fond, à s’engager dans une compétition inutile et inopportune, à propos des judicieux choix stratégiques de la nation, qui font, d’ailleurs, l’objet d’un consensus national et forment le socle du développement et du progrès dans la modernité et
répondant aux contraintes de l’époque. Il s’agit notamment, de l’état de droit et des institutions, de la citoyenneté fondée sur le respect des droits et des obligations de l’Homme, du libéralisme économique et de la liberté d’entreprendre.  

As a consequence of following the same guidelines and strategic orientation, the electoral programs pursued by the different candidates showed an absence of clear ideological demarcations and a similarity in their political projects. Moreover, core economic policies and social initiatives were not strongly affected as

[…] leaving aside the far left and certain radical currents within the Islamist Party for Justice and Development (PJD), everyone running in the elections subscribed to the ambiguous societal project that monarchy has long put forward, and which has the virtue of pleasing progressive, conservatives, and even fundamentalists alike.

A culture of consensus among political parties seems to be the predominant characteristic of this last consultation, thus preventing parties from engaging in a real national debate.

The results

It is not the aim of this study to analyze these results in depth (see Table I and III), but just to present an overview of the main results of this consultation. Most notable are the severe setback for the socialist party, the USFP (Socialist Union of Popular Forces), which slid from the first position it held in Parliament in 2002, with 50 seats, to fifth position, losing twelve seats, the half-failure of the Islamist party, the PJD (Justice and Development Party), which won only 46 seats (as opposed to 42 seats in 2002 and 9 in 1997), when they were expected to gain up to 70 seats, and the remarkable comeback of the historically conservative Independent party, (Istiqlal party) from 48 to 52. Also deserving mention were the MP, or Popular Movement with 41 seats, and the RNI, or National Rally of Independents with 39 seats; these two old parties have traditionally occupied fourth and fifth place, thus creating an interesting form of electoral fragmentation and preventing

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34 Texte du discours de SM le Roi à l’occasion de la Fête du Trône, 30-7-2007, [available from : http://www.maroc.ma]

35 Tozy, op.cit. p.38
a landslide victory by any party, no matter how popular it may be.\textsuperscript{36} Since the Istiqlal party emerged as the leading party, its Secretary-General Abbas El Fassi was appointed Prime Minister by the King. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Morocco’s largest party by far is that of the abstentionists, with 63 percent of registered voters; of the remaining 37 percent who bothered to vote, a sizeable amount voted blank.

\textit{An analysis of the "election time"}

In the last part of this study, I will try to develop some perspective about the “lessons learned” from these elections and ultimately highlight the contradictory trends that these main findings could lead to. I will focus on four points: the low turnout, the issue of transparency and credibility, the submerging of national issues within local ones during the electoral campaign, and the flurry of speculation about the victory of the Islamist party and its performing below expectations.

\textbf{Low turnout: political disengagement or protest vote?}

Official turnout for these elections was 37 percent of 15.5 million registered voters (52 percent in 2002). As an estimated 4 million voters did not register, the turnout rate of all eligible (rather than just those registered) voters is even lower. In addition, there was a significantly high rate of invalid votes (18 percent for local constituencies; 28 percent for the national list). Given that no distinction is made between blank and invalid votes, it is difficult to determine in which proportion these were protest votes, or the result of insufficient voter education. The new Chamber of Representatives is thus based on a mere 4.6 million valid votes in a country of 30 million inhabitants (see Table II).

Deciphering the political message sent by voters and abstentionists alike is therefore exceedingly difficult, apart from the obvious distrust in the current political system displayed by 63 percent of the registered electorate. The adoption of a complex proportional ballot system in a country where literacy and awareness of political

\textsuperscript{36} For the official results of the elections, see the Ministry of Interior website, at: [http://www.elections2007.gov.ma/]
intricacies are not supposed to be widespread, could be considered as one of the causes of the high level of abstention registered for this election, even if abstentions tended to cluster in districts where literacy rates are higher, a fact which casts doubt on voter ignorance as an explanation.

The complicated socio-economic situation, in Morocco as in many parts of the world, might be read as another determinant of the electoral process. The country’s enduring economic stagnation has nurtured a strong current of scepticism vis-à-vis the capacity of politics to lead the country toward modernisation. Besides, the suicide bombing attack of May 2003, which has brought the country to limit individual liberties, and then adopt an anti-terrorist law, has pushed civil society to not consider the electoral process as a primary issue.

From the point of view of the institutional system, the increased difficulties for political parties to transform a partisan pluralism into a real political pluralism, where the former is reduced to a mere competition to take part in public affairs and play a role in the execution of royal directives, can be regarded as another strong reason. The crisis of the political landscape is symbolized by the parties incapacity to respond to their essential functions, and contributes to a breakdown of the social pact between citizens and parties. The search for a compromise between the central power and parties willing to ensure the equilibrium of the political system at the expense of ideals and real alternation, has generated a system that is strongly discredited in the citizens’ eyes.

Finally, the widespread use of money and vote-trading during the electoral campaign up to election-day has been regarded by significant segments of civil society as a systematic, and deceitful, element of the electoral process.

Generally speaking, in a healthy democracy, a low voter turnout is not necessarily a sign that the political establishment is in danger. 37 In Morocco, however, this is not the case. Rather, this can indicate a protest-vote from the urban, educated, and unemployed sectors of potential voters with a political consciousness. In fact, it seems to be the urban middle-class that is not committed to rural notables, family alliances, or tribal loyalties who mostly boycotted the elections. Their

casting of blank ballots and refusal to vote was most likely an act of passive protest, intended to penalize the regime and to express their general dissatisfaction.  

The issue of transparency and credibility

The need to show Morocco’s real commitment to conducting a more credible election process, has become a real issue in legitimizing the country’s “democratic credentials” at the national and international level. The Monarchy has shown it wishes to get in line with the “good governance agenda” being pursued by Morocco’s international partners, by improving the issue of electoral transparency, by promoting a strong communication campaign, by engaging organisations in civil society in the practice of electoral observation, and by providing a legal setting for an impartial coverage of the electoral campaign.

Of course, the manner how voting was conducted on election day and the vote counting thereafter affects the overall credibility and pluralistic connotation of Moroccan elections. The monitoring of voting places has been a highly contested issue, in which various actors participated: the central administration, the official organism for monitoring represented by the Consultative Council of Human Rights (CCDH), the Collective Association for the Elections’ Observation (CAOE) which is made up of a coalition of local civil society organisations, and party representatives. Additionally, the Government accepted international observers for the first time, represented in this instance by a delegation from the American National Democratic Institute, whose purpose was to provide an impartial assessment of polling procedures. The final declaration submitted by the American think tank was quite positive as far as the voting is concerned: overall it was deemed to be

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40 Last time, in 2002, it took about a year before the detailed results, including the number of votes received by each party in each constituency, were published - and they were not published by the authorities but by a private publishing company
open and fair. From another point of view, some political parties and civil society organizations alleged cases of corruption and a lack of impartiality by the local and regional election administration. The report published by the CAOE was particularly harsh in this sense, declaring that:

si l’administration territoriale n’a pas interféré dans le déroulement de la campagne électorale et du vote, des fonctionnaires et agents relevant de cette administration sont intervenus en faveur de candidates sans qu’ils soient punis.

**The submerging of national issues within local ones in the electoral campaign**

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the electoral campaign was national issues were submerged in local ones. The Moroccan people’s “everyday” is what turned out to be the *crux* of the electoral campaign, and thus the “problematic of proximity,” the most engaging issue for the electorate, emerged at the expense of any discussion of the major fault lines that divide Moroccan society. The point is that the logic of political action seems to be reduced to an intermediation between the needs of the citizens and the State, without taking any long-standing political projects into account.

The political programmes deployed by the single candidates for the electoral campaign were all characterized by being based first of all on “local issues”, in other words those related to the specific background of each constituency. Moreover, the electoral system devised by the Ministry of Interior, as already suggested earlier, pushed the candidates to perpetuate the electoral practices of the uninominal electoral system by concentrating their efforts on “local loyalty” instead of a more global constituency. Take for example the case of the former communist party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), which

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has presented itself as being one of the most anti-Islamist forces in Moroccan politics. As noted by some observers of Moroccan elections, it didn’t hinder that party from setting itself up as a branch of the pious - and rich - Chaabi family. The father, Miloud Chaabi, was re-elected in the Essaouira constituency; his daughter, Asmaa Chaabi, mayor of Essaouira, was beaten, whereas his son, Faouzi, was elected in the Rabat-Chellah constituency. The party, with its profile and history of ties to Morocco’s largest trade-union, the Moroccan Union of Labour (UMT), was supposed to gain a large number of votes in urban areas, either among the francophone middle and upper classes, often fiercely opposed to the Islamists, or among remnants of the unionised working-class. Contrary to these expectations, it actually won a majority - 10 - of its 17 seats, in rural or semi-rural areas, with only three seats won in urban constituencies (Essaouira, Rabat-Chellah, Fès-Chamalia), the remaining 4 seats being on the national, women-only list.

It is therefore more difficult than ever to draw general conclusions in situations where electoral choices are less and less responsive to generalisations about class, income level, education level, residence, etc. as decisive factors in explaining voting behaviour. This situation is both a cause and a result of the fragmentation of the Moroccan political scene. A result, because the long story of electoral manipulation and interference in the internal life of political parties by the Interior Ministry has produced a political map where political parties do not have any clear-cut ideological profile, apart from the mandatory support for the Commander of the Faithful. A cause, since the voters’ lack of partisan or ideological identification makes vote-buying or clientelism much more effective.

To conclude, we can suggest that this election shows, once more, a dysfunctional articulation between electoral practices and the parties’ governance’ these can be attributed to the lack of a political career being a fundamental trait of these candidates, combined with a power of mobilization that resides more on their political contacts than on their ideological background.

44 Khémisset-Oulmés, Tifelt-Rommani, Chichaoua, El Gharb, Al Haouz, Benslimane, Ouezzane-HadKourt-Jorf el Melha, Ifrane, Karia-Gafsaï, Moulay Yacoub.
The flurry of speculation about the victory of the Islamist party and its performing below expectations

A remarkable observation can be made about the pre-election period: I am talking about the flurry of speculation and controversy among practitioners and analysts alike, surrounding the increasing influence of the Islamist PJD, which performed exceedingly well in 2002 (42 seats), compared to its lacklustre performance in 1997 (9 seats) and was predicted to gain the greatest number of seats in the 2007 election. Even if the PJD actually didn’t confirm the forecasts made by several local and international journalists, and actually ‘lost’ the elections and performed below expectations, it still demonstrated its ability to react favourably to the historic circumstances and bring its program into line with the expectations of the palace. For this party, the real commitment was to discard a sizeable portion of its fundamentalist leadership and to replace it with locally trained young technocrats with Islamist leanings. Following this logic, both in its formal discourse and legislative behaviour, the PJD acted very much in the tradition of all pliable political parties. PJD spokespeople repeatedly declared that the party “accepts the rules of the game,” that it has no intention of ‘imposing Sharia law,’ and that its presence in parliament serves as ‘a barrier to Islamic radicalization.’ Nevertheless, the PJD didn’t perform as it was predicted: actually, along with this ‘normalisation,’ the party has been strongly penalised by some technical factors, such as proportional representation and the redrawing of the electoral map. The PJD maintained its stronghold in the densely populated and relatively dynamic urban areas along the coast between Tangier and Casablanca, which were also the areas most affected by changes in the constituency borders, while it had


46 Tozy, op. cit.

47Mokhliss B., “Saaddine Othmani s’explique”, in Le Reporter, 30-01-2006 [www.lereporter.ma].

48 In Casablanca - the city where the majority of the middle-class of the country is concentrated - the PJD won about 70,000 votes, 20 percent of the total; the Istiqlal party, the winner of the elections, was far behind with only 47,000 votes, 13 percent of overall votes.
great difficulty making inroads in rural regions, where structures led by notables are strong and certain politicians have long cultivated electoral fiefdoms. But the revision of voting methods and the electoral map cannot entirely explain its disappointing performance. Factors within the movement played an important role as well: as suggested earlier, the cost of ‘normalising’ its political language, the stress on technical skills and competence rather than ideological matters and piety and the fact it introduced new prominent technocrats into the ‘political arena,’ at the expense of some of the party’s founders, probably disoriented and disappointed part of its electorate.49 Certainly, the compromise with the central power and the appropriation of the political message sent by the palace allows the Islamists to stay in the political arena, but it also undermines the party’s identity. Contrary to the other parties which have been long established in the Moroccan political system, the PJD keeps a specific image and an identity that must be preserved. The literature about the Islamist movements is quite unanimous in affirming that religious parties, even when they participate in the “game” and seek broad support, cannot stray too far from their ideologically committed base.

In entering the system, the PJD is probably going to lose part of its societal mission, which relies mostly on its capacity to assume the task of resolving societal issues that are not addressed by the central power, hurting its popular support, as demonstrated by its disappointing final result.

Nevertheless, the PJD has launched a process of internal critique and dialogue ahead of its planned conference in July 2008. Among the key questions the PJD must face is the relationship with the ruling regime, viewed by many local observers as currently trapped between inclusion and cooptation, and the voters’ concerns regarding the party’s religious identity and its reluctance to clearly state the extent of its willingness to serve in the government.

Conclusion

The change and the renovation of parliamentary élites

The need to reform the parliamentary structure is viewed as a critical transition in the consolidation of the democratic option.

During these last years, and in conjunction with the ascendancy to the throne of Mohammed VI, the elite inside the palace has been undergoing a process of renewal, by recruiting young personalities largely educated abroad. Along with this sociological transformation, the renewed input aimed at improving the governance project, and the civil society’s important role, which has recently begun to play a significant role in the reform process, and thus in electoral issues, the demand for political mobility in Morocco has increased. Nevertheless, and despite this engagement, in which the central power has taken the lead, the ‘resistance’ of the old political class has been an enduring characteristic in the last elections. Motivated both by the goal of reducing risks and by the fear of giving Islamist movements an opportunity to have access to power, the political class recruited the same elite of notables once again, demonstrating it didn’t understand the message sent by the Palace. As Mohammed Tozy argues in his last analysis of the Moroccan elections, the leadership requested nowadays by the central power must have the characteristics of a political force that could react if faced with a social or economic crisis, and could extend public opinion’s support by pushing civil society to join political parties. Following this interpretation, it seems that at the core of this election one finds the crisis of old elites and the request for new competencies by society at large, which wants the political apparatus to change the way it operates by opening up political institutions.

However, once more this latest election has not been a true test of the reform process undertaken by the Moroccan political class, mainly because the reforms of the political system, as well as more far-reaching policy reform, depend primarily on the emergence of independent political forces with large political bases. In the case of Morocco, the political class is dependent on the King’s largesse for its survival, and is thus forced to depend on the central system of power to survive. At the same time the regime, in calling for a “controlled” process of transformation, seems to have settled on a state of transition as equilibrium where the Monarchy, with a strategy that combines administrative dispositions and cooptation, selects both allies and opponents, de facto controlling the political scenario. In this context, the role of Islamist organisations, as well as social movements

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50Tozy, op.cit. p. 41
derived from leftist secular groups or the urban intellectual elites, are likely to be central actors in the transformation process of political institutions, because of their capacity to strengthen the debate about the traditional structures of power and these structures’ role in limiting the democratization process.

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## Table I

### MOROCCAN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS SEPTEMBER 2007: RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats (local)</th>
<th>Seats (total)</th>
<th>%Vote (local)</th>
<th>Seats (+/-) compared to 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istiqlal (PI)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Justice and Development</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Movement (MP)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>+ 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rally of Independents (RNI)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>- 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Union (UC)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>+ 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>+ 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front of Democratic Forces (FFD)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>+ 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic and Social Movement (MDS)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>- 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Party (PND) - Al-Ahd Union</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>+ 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Congres Ittihiadi (CNI)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of the Democratic Socialist Vanguard (PADS)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Party (PT)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>+ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Environment and Development (PED)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>+ 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Renewal and Equality (PRE)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party (PS)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan Union for Democracy (UMD)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative for Citizenship and Development (ICD)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>+ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of Liberties (ADL)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>- 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Rebirth and Virtue (PEV)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>+ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Forces</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>295</strong></td>
<td><strong>325</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II
MOROCCAN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
SEPTEMBER 2007:
VOTER TURNOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Vote</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Vote / Reg</th>
<th>Invalid</th>
<th>Pop. Size</th>
<th>VAP</th>
<th>Vote / VAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>4,160,016</td>
<td>4,874,598</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>15,520,000</td>
<td>6,363,200</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>5,369,431</td>
<td>6,519,301</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>18,359,000</td>
<td>7,343,600</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>4,999,646</td>
<td>7,414,846</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>22,848,000</td>
<td>10,510,080</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>7,153,211</td>
<td>11,398,987</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>26,069,000</td>
<td>13,816,570</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>7,456,996</td>
<td>12,790,631</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>28,024,000</td>
<td>14,852,810</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7,165,206</td>
<td>13,884,467</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>30,645,305</td>
<td>17,923,815</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5,721,074</td>
<td>15,462,362</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>33,241,259</td>
<td>20,555,314</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IFES (http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=MA)

**Total vote**
The total number of votes cast in the relevant election. Total vote includes valid and invalid votes, as well as blank votes in cases where these are separated from invalid votes.

**Registration**
The number of registered voters. The figure represents the number of names on the voters’ register at the time that the registration process closes, as reported by the electoral management body.

**Vote/Registration**
The number of votes divided by the number of names on the voters’ register, expressed as a percentage.

**Invalid**
The number of invalid votes (including blank votes), as reported by each country.

**Voting Age Population**
It has been chosen to use not only the reported registration rate to calculate turnout percentages, but also the voting age population (VAP) which includes all citizens above the legal voting age.

**Vote/VAP**
The number of votes divided by the Voting Age Population figure, expressed as a percentage.
Table III.1

MOROCCAN LEGISLATIVES ELECTIONS SEPTEMBER 2007: GEOFRAFGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>PJD %</th>
<th>PI %</th>
<th>RNI %</th>
<th>MP %</th>
<th>USFP %</th>
<th>UC %</th>
<th>PPS %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaouia-Ouardigha</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doukkala-Abda</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fès-Boulemane</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharb-Chrarda-Béni Hssen</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Casablanca</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelmim-Es Semara</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laâyoune-Boujdour-Sakia</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrakech-Tensift-El Haouz</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meknès-Tafilalet</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oued Ed-Dahab-Lagouira</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souss-Massa-Draâ</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadla-Azilal</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangier-Tétouan</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taza-Al Hoccima-Taounate</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III.2

MOROCCAN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS SEPTEMBER 2007:
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES

Source:

* Serena Dalla Valle - graduated in 2005 in Oriental studies at Venice Ca’ Foscari University, discussing a dissertation about the notion of democracy in Rashid Gannouchi’s works. She is now studying the Moroccan political system, and the peculiar role played by the Islamic Party of Justice and Development (PJD). She was engaged in a field work during the legislative elections of Morocco, September 2007, and the last communal elections held in June 2009, participating in an observation lab over the electoral politics of Morocco coordinated by Mohamed Tozy (University of Casablanca and Aix-en-Provence).
The Art of Music and the Practice of Arts: Notes for a New Approach to the mevlevîye (‘Whirling Dervishes’) Sufi Brotherhood Tradition

by Giovanni DE ZORZI

Huqûq ü Aşk
‘Beauty and Love’
(Ghalib Dede, 1757-1799)

Summary

Mevlevî houses (mevlevîhâneler) are often described as “the conservatories of the Ottoman Empire”. In fact, after the death of Mevlâna Jalâl-ud-Dîn Rûmî (1207-1273), the mevlevîye sufi brotherhood developed rapidly in tandem with Ottoman expansionism, mevlevî lodges becoming major centres of musical teaching throughout the empire, spreading to Syria and to Egypt, and as far a-field as the Magreb and the Balkans. The special mevlevî interpretation of the ritual samâ’ (Eng. “spiritual concert”) encouraged the emergence of a “literate brotherhood”, dervishes who were accomplished practitioners in music, “dance”, poetry, calligraphy and other expressive forms. Less of a craft or a profession, these practitioners viewed the art of music as an art of interiority where expressive culture was deeply rooted in a mystical understanding of beauty and love (hüsûn-u ashq), a position clearly evoked by the mevlevî poet, Sheykh Ghalib Dede (1757-1799). It is noteworthy that this amateur conception of music and art permeated secular contexts both during the Ottoman and the Republican periods.

Keywords: Mevlâna Jalâl-ud-Dîn Rûmî, Samâ’, Sufism, Mevlevîye, Ottoman Art Music (sanat musiği), Sufi Music (tasawwuf musiği), Whirling Dervishes Ceremony (âyîn-i-şerîf), Ney obliquely held-rim blown flute, Kitâb el-Edvâr, Ebrû (Marbled Paper)

After the depart from this world of its eponym, Persian language Sufi poet Mevlâna Jalâl-ud-Dîn Rûmî (Balkh 1207-Konya, 1273), the new born Sufi brotherhood called mevlevîye became peculiar in the Sufi world for the importance that had in its path the practice of music and of various arts, so that scholars defined mevlevî centres (mevlevîhâneler) as ‘the Conservatories’ (…and the Academies, I would add…) ‘of the Ottoman empire’.

In the following pages, I will take into exam some of the arts practiced by the mevlevîs trying to shape a global, holistic, mevlevî
aesthetic; in my opinion, such an aesthetic was fundamental even in secular Ottoman culture and somehow influenced our days Turkey (fig. 2).

The samâ’

In order to understand the mevlevî concept of art and music we have to face, first of all, the most evident, visible trait that distinguish mevlevîye brotherhood – the so-called ‘whirling dervishes’ – in the vast Sufi world, i.e. the particular ceremony which is a combination of music, movements and poetry and which can be intended as the very particular development of the ancient (or more accurately, pre/eternal) Sufi concept and practice of samâ’.

The Arab verbal noun samâ’ can be translated by: ‘listening, audition’ and, in a more historical perspective, with ‘spiritual concert’. According to the Sufis (and Qur’an VII, 172 ff) the first samâ’ took place before the beginning of Time, when all the souls that would ever live were together, in Union, before Separation. The Creator asked them: ‘Am I not Your Lord?’ (Alast’o bi Rabbi kumm?) and all the souls answered ‘Yes, we testify.’ (Bâli, shabîdna). Such an answer provoked in them an inner state of sweetness and ecstasy, they began to took life and Time began.

More historically, we find the first traces of this particular Sufi ceremonial meeting in Baghdad, III E./ IX a. C. with the written defences of samâ’ made by great Sufi masters as Dhu’n Nun Misrî, Fazîl ‘Ayyaz, Shiblî, Nurî and Junayd.

At its beginning a samâ’ could be the extension of listening to the Qur’an – probably recited or cantillated in the already sophisticated, ornamented, Baghdad Arab style of tajwidh – during a night of meditation and prayer called tabâjjud. Soon, for different precise reasons,2 the ‘listening’ shifted to poetry and music, giving birth to

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1 As ethnomusicologist Jean During observes (During, 1988: 33) the words Bali, ‘Yes’; Bali shabidna, ‘Yes we testify’; Bali Dost, ‘Yes, Friend’; Bali, Jân ‘Yes, Soul’, are some of the more common refrains among the Sufi songs in Iranian and Turkic areas.

2 Expounded by Ahmad Majd al-Dîn Ghazâli, (d. 1126), brother of the better-known Sufi philosopher Muhammad abu Hamîd al-Ghazâli (d. 1111), in Robson, 1938. There is no unanimity on the attribution to Ahmad Majd al-Dîn Ghazâli of the writings.
poetic genres as ghazâl or qasidat, often composed by poets following the Sufi path, using a system of symbols and allegories that led the critics to write about an erotic/mystic genre. In Sufi perspective, during a samâ’ the listening of music could induce particular inner states called, according to their degree, tawajjud, wajd and wujud, which may be defined as ‘ecstasy’ or, more accurately, ‘enstasy’. From such inner states exterior body movements and postures – spontaneous or prefixed – eventually manifested, often accused of being ‘dance’ by Islamic legists (‘ulama, foqaha). (It has to briefly noted here how the same music was -and still is- regarded with suspicion by Islamic legists).

At the same time specific musical repertoires grew which in different forms, and with some changes, have survived to our days. In our perspective, this process may offer a glimpse of what is called ‘dialectical relationship between product and process, musical materials and musical practices’.

After the first debates not all the Sufi brotherhoods (Arab tariqas, Turkish tarikas) adopted the samâ’ among their peculiar spiritual practices. Nevertheless, from an historical perspective, to a certain extent the documents about samâ’ are proofs of the presence of mystical circles in a given area. After a period of tumultuous debate, samâ’ remained for the majority of the brotherhoods a peripheral practice, considered dangerous for beginners yet not of use for the advanced, but generally appreciated for a certain capacity to free one’s heart from ‘spiritual stagnation’.

Anyway, for some Sufi ways samâ’ became a central practice along the path for the inner development of man: the most famous is certainly the case of the mevlevîye brotherhood -our topic- which derived its name from

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4 For the debates inside Sufism, see During, 1988: 73-85. For more about the position of samâ’ and music in the Islamic world, see ibid: 218-245.
5 We briefly remember here some branches of the qadirîyya, the naqşbândî-jâhri dervishes of Chinese Turkistan; the abl-e Häqq of Kurdistan; the indo-Pakistan chishtiyya, that constitute a case in itself thanks to the World success of its great exponent (qawâl) Nusrat Fateh ‘Ali Khan (1948-1997) and of his intense interpretation of qawwâli devotional genre.
his honorific title Mowlâna (‘Master, Our master’)⁶ given to Persian language Sufi poet and scholar Jalâl-ud-Dîn Rûmî⁷ (Balkh, 1207-Konya, 1273).

**The samâ’ in Mevlâna**

According to sources, at the beginning of his career Mevlâna did not practise samâ’ at all but, rather, was a respected and esteemed scholar (‘alim) of Islamic sciences. Certainly, he may have assisted to some samâ’ among the kubravî,⁸ the circle of dervishes conducted by his father, the great Bahâ ud-Dîn Walâd, (better known by his name Sultan al-Ulamâ, ‘King of the scholars’). Or he may have encountered some samâ’-s during some of the many stops in a karwansarây that he made for twenty years after the family fled from the Mongol invasion, wandering from his native Balkh (modern-day Afghanistan) to Konya (modern-day Turkey). At that time Konya was the capital of the Seljuk reign, and his father accepted the invitation of the sovereign Keïquobad. There, Mevlâna completed his studies, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and in 1225 married Gevher Banu, who bore him two sons. In Konya, his father Bahâ-ud-Dîn left this world in 1231, leaving the care of the family and of his circle of dervishes together with the career of religious doctor (‘alim) to Mevlâna. It was only in 1244, as an esteemed 37-year-old husband, father and scholar, that he met with a strange, enigmatic, wandering dervish named Shâms-i Tabriz. The momentous meeting with Shâms radically changed the life and work of professor Mevlâna, to the point that critics divide his work into two phases, ‘before’ and ‘after’ the meeting.⁹ There followed an

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⁶ In the following pages I will adopt the ‘allaturca’ transliteration: Mevlâna.
⁷ Or Balkhî, given his birthplace, Balkh, nowadays Afghanistan.
⁸ Najîm al-Dîn Kubrâ (1146-1221), who lived in the Central Asian Khwarazm, wrote the important treatise favâ’ih al-jamâl wa favâ’îb al-jalâl, (“The Scents of Beauty and the Ways to Splendour”) and was one of the great Sufis of his time. His mausoleum (maqâm) resides nowadays in Kohna-Urgench, between Turkmenistân and Uzbekistân. He was named ‘the teacher of the saints’ for the great levels attained by his pupils, the father of the same Mevlâna, Bahâ ud-Dîn Walâd (d. 1231); sheikh Sayfuddîn Bâkharzi (d. 1261) and by his most famous pupil, ‘Alâ al-Dawla Semnânî (d. 1336).
⁹ Among the works of the ‘first phasê’ are Fihî-ma-Fihî; the Majalis-i Sebâ and the letters, Mektubat. The works of the ‘second phasê’ burn with the fire of divine love: Divân-i-Shâms-i-Tabrizî (around 50.000 verses in various metres) and the above quoted Masnavi-i-Mathnawi (26000 distiches).
intense period of union and spiritual retreat (Arab khâlwat, Turkish halvet) between the two souls of Mevlâna and his master Shâms, severely criticized (and envied) by the community. As often happens, after the happy period of union followed the burning fire of separation: Shâms disappeared, reappearing three years later in Damascus. He returned to Konya and then disappeared a second, definitive, time from this low world (dünya).

The main theories about the adoption of samâ’ by Mevlâna and by his aural community stem from this point. According to some sources\textsuperscript{10}, already during the first, burning, period of separation Mevlâna asked the singers (qawwâl) to sing him love poems while he was practising samâ’ for days and nights. According to such sources, the majority of the ghazal of his \textit{Dîvân-i-Shâms-i-Tabrizî} date from this time.

According to Aflâki\textsuperscript{11}, the first biographer of Mevlâna and historian of mevlevîye, it was in 1247, after the disappearance of Shâms, that forty-year-old Rûmî instituted the collective rite of a spiritual concert with musical instruments, creating great scandal within the community of scholars and men of religion.

But according to the interpretation of ethnomusicologist Jean During\textsuperscript{12}, it was rather on the order of a living Shâms that the rite of a collective samâ’ was instituted, long before his disappearance, when Shâms was still with Mevlâna in Konya. Thanks to Shâms, his spiritual master, Mevlâna had the revelation of his inner state and began to practise samâ’, a dervish practice which up to that moment had been unsuitable for him as a scholar and doctor of religious sciences. There are different anecdotes in the same \textit{al-Manaqîb ol-’Arifîn} (‘The Garland of the Gnostics’)\textsuperscript{13} of Aflâki’s reports of samâ’ in which Mevlâna and Shâms had participated together, the most famous being the one that found Mevlâna whirling in ecstasy in front of the amazed Seljuk notables and officials of Konya who were inaugurating a medrese


\textsuperscript{12} During, 1988: 171.

\textsuperscript{13} An extended survey of Mevlâna samâ’ following Aflâki’s \textit{al-manaqîb ol-’arifîn} appears in Yazici, 2004: 5-18.
Giovanni De Zorzi

(religious school) in his honour. Anyway, in 1247, after the definitive disappearance of Shâms, Mevlâna began (or continued) to practise *samâ’*.

Apart the debates about the beginning of *samâ’* it has to be emphasised here the dimension of the *samâ’* that was typical only of Mevlâna himself: he was inspired and fell into ‘states’ (*ahwâl*) not only listening to music but also at the *bazâr*, listening to the sound of the hammer of a goldsmith, or in a mill, listening to the sound of a millstone that seemed to repeat *subbûh, quddûs* (‘Glorified, Saint’): as in the classical Sufi concept of *samâ’*, for Mevlâna what was listened to was less important than how it was listened to. Another peculiar and very important characteristic of Mevlâna’s own *samâ’* was that during his whirling he very often improvised poetry which devotees around him transcribed and which he then corrected.

Mevlâna’s love for music and for the subtle secrets that ‘the listening’ carried to him meant that he soon gathered around him a small ensemble of professional musicians who were also Mevlâna sympathisers and devotees. Among them Aflâki remembers Kamâl, singer (*qawwâl*) and composer; Abu Bakr-e Rabâbî, player of the fiddle *rabâb*, an instrument equally important in Mevlâna’s work; and Hamza, the *ney* player (*neyzen*). According to Aflâki, Mevlâna resuscitated Hamza for three days in order to listen to him again and he is regarded by all *neyzens* as a sort of ‘common father’.

It seems important to underline how Mevlâna’s first collectives *samâ’s* didn’t observed a very tight protocol, but, rather, they were disordered, full of inspiration and ecstasies that, according to Aflâki’s, the hagiographer, could lasts days and nights, even weeks and months. Such early *samâ’s* may be put in relation with analogues rituals that we can find still nowadays among Sufi circles in the world (fig. 7).

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14 From this point of view, well exposed in all the Sufi treatises, it has to be remembered that ‘a’ Sufi music does not exist, but rather music listened to by the Sufis.

15 Throughout Mevlâna’s work musicians are called *mutrîb* (plural *mutrîban*) ‘the one(s) who has the *tarab*’. The particular aesthetical emotion (*tarab*) is a key concept in Arab musical aesthetic. The medieval term nowadays has fallen into disuse in Turkey, remaining in the *mevlevîye* in order to designate musicians.

16 Huart, 1918-1922, I : 211.
The Art of Music and the Practice of Arts

The Ottoman-Turkish mevlevî development of samâ’

After Rûmî, the mevlevî community recognized Hüsameddin Çelebi as the guide of the brotherhood (tarikâçÊ dedê). He was followed by the first son of Rûmî, poet Sultân Bahâ-od-Dîn Walâd (1226-1312), who elected as successor his own first son, Ulu Arif Çelebi; to him is attributed the codification of samâ’ that soon was called âyin, âyin-i şerîf (later mukabele) intended as a remembrance of Mevlâna’s first ecstasies. An âyin became at least a weekly event: the necessity for trained musicians, singers, and semâzen is evident and this is the main reason for the above definition of the mevlevî centres as ‘the Conservatories of the Ottoman empire’.

Historically, it has to be noted that the mevlevîye brotherhood had a rapid diffusion, parallel to the Ottoman conquests, and the mevlevî lodges became major centres of musical teaching throughout the area of Ottoman rule, spreading in Syria, Egypt, the Maghreb world, in Bulgaria, and in the Balkan area, where the last tekke were demolished in Sarajevo in 1959. Within actual Turkish territories mevlevî centres were numerous and flourished until 1923, when all Sufi orders were abolished by official decree of Kemal Atatürk, so that all the centres of the different tarikats were closed and all propriety confiscated.

By comparing the mevlevî samâ’ as it arrived to ours days, to the samâ’ that we can resume from written and iconographic sources, we can note, with ethnomusicologist Jean During, how through centuries we had the:

progressive shifting from a global mystic experience to its symbolic representation. By ritualizing and codifying the samâ’ to the extreme, and charging it of a symbolism sometime ‘forced’, the mevlevâs have somehow emptied the samâ’ from its ecstatic meaning, or, better, they tried to elevate this to the level of the esprit (…) ‘we deal here with a samâ’ of a second degree, of a representation, of a ceremony that put in place and remembers the ecstasies of its Saint founder. Music, choreography and costumes became signs that take us to a sublimated ecstasy, elevated to a cosmic degree. We are no more in the domain of a danced ecstasy, but rather of the art, of the aesthetic contemplation, of stylization.18

17 Apart an âyin, in the mevlevîye existed various other genres as zîkr and ilâhis, and less formal occasions, such the âyin-i-cem, where the community of the dervishes gathered just in order to sing and make music together, informally, usually at night in a square room.

18 During, 1988: 206. Translated from the original French by the author.
**Mevlevî musical language and court music** (fig.1)

Apart some analogies with Theatre and Choreography that would take us too far, the progressive shifting from a disordered ecstatic experience to the domain of art, with a significant aesthetical and symbolical elaboration is evident in the musical language itself: the *mevlevî âyin-i şerif* is very near to the elegant classical (*sanat*) music played at the Ottoman court. This particularity depends mostly, but not exclusively, from the fact that a lot of musicians and composers active at the Court studied in *mevlevî* centres and/or were affiliated to the order. In a sociological approach, this trait is exemplified by a sultan like Selim III (1761-1808) who was at the same time *mevlevî* (disciple of *osmancî* language Sufi poet Sheikh Ghalib Dede, 1757-1799) poet, musician (*neyzen*) and composer of many compositions like his *Sûzidilâra Ayin-i Şerif*, still widely executed our days.

After all, in the lively music scene of Constantinople ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ genres and environments coexisted: such a musical scene is perfectly depicted by ethnomusicologist Kurt Reinhardt:

Art music was performed not only in monasteries, where it could be heard by everyone, but also at the Sultan’s court and in the palaces of the upper class. There were professional singers and relatively large instrumental groups. As each musician had to be capable of improvising he was also something of a composer.19

**Toward a description of the mevlevî âyin-i-şerif** (figg. 5 – 3)

In order to have a better image of the aesthetical elaboration realized through centuries in the *mevlevîye*, it seems useful to give a description of an *âyin-i-şerif* ceremony in which different plans interact. As we saw above, such a ritual acquired a new significance in terms of musical artifice in aesthetic discourse; in this perspective it seems interesting – and seldom studied – the rapports between structure (music, poetry, whirling) and superstructure (the esoteric meanings). Such ceremony can be described as follows:

Entry of the musicians, of the *semazên*, of the *semazen başı* (‘chief of the *semazen’*) and of the *sheikb* (‘guide’);
Listening to the cantillation of the Qur’an;
*Post duası*, a prayer recited by the *sheikb* and offered to the Prophet, His companions and Rûmî;

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Zikr, ‘remembrance, recollection, repetition’ of the divine name (‘ism ud-dhât ‘Al- lah’, eleven, thirty-three, or ninety-nine times. It has to be noted how, in present days, not all the mevlevî groups the two phases above;

Na'at-i Şerif, ‘Praise, Ode’ in rubato form. This is a genre that occupies a particular position in the mevlevî tradition. Since the second half of the 16th century it has been performed to the particular na'at composed by Mustafa Buhurizade Itrî Dede (1640-1712) on a poem of Mevlâna dedicated to the Prophet;

When the na'at is ended, a stroke on kudüm kettledrum intend to represent the Pre-eternal divine order kun (Be! Fiat, Esto) that made life and Time begin from Pre-Eternity;

Baş ney Taksîm, ‘Head unmetred improvised prelude’ of the soloist ney flute player, listened to with attention and concentration as a sort of wordless paraphrase of the Qur’an. The taksîm resolves on the specific musical mode (makâm) of the given âyn from the characteristic Rast makâm of Itrî’s na’at. This first taksim is generally intended as the Divine breath that animate the world under the impalpable form of the divine name HÛ (‘He’);

Composed prelude (peşrev) of the given âyn, very often in the specific devr-i kebir rhythmic cycle (usûl). The semazens stands up and begin the ritual deambulations around the perimeter of the sacred space, bowing, in turn, one to another. The execution of the peşrev by the musicians lasts until the semazens, guided by the postnişin, complete the third tour of the perimeter. This long phase is called Devr-i Veled and the three tours are intended to simbologize: 1. the awareness of the presence of God; 2. The observance of God; 3. The union with God. It is worthy of note that the first and the son peşrev can be composed from a composer different from the one that composed the nucleus of the following four selams;

After the three tours of the Devr-i Veled there is often a very short taksim of ney flute in order to give the right ‘attacco’ to the whole ensemble on the first note of the first selam;

Four selams (‘salutations’) in different rhythmic cycles in which the semazens take off their robe (khirqa) symbol of the attachments of this low world and begins to turn in a white robe, symbol of the shroud, or sudarium, with the characteristic high cap (sikke) on their head, symbol of the tombstone: as a general rule from a 14 beats cycle to a slower cycle in 9/2 or 9/4, called evfer. In it, semazen stop, fold themselves, and bow to the sheikh, closing the specific selam.

The first selâm (Persian selam-i evvel, ‘Turkish birinci selâm) is often composed in the rhythmic cycle (usûl) Devr-i Revan, (14/8) but it can be also in the cycles diyek (8/8) o in ağır diyek (8/4). It is believed that this first selâm symbolize the consciousness of the existence of Truth and the submission to God’s will;

The second selâm (Persian selâm-i sani, Turkish ikinci selâm) is usually composed on the rhythmic cycle ağır evfer (9/4). It is believed that in this second selâm devishes admires God’s greatness and His creative capacity;

The third selâm (Persian selâm-i salî, Turkish üçüncü selâm) is the more complex, just as happens in the third movement (hâne) of an Ottoman art music composition: it has three movements: the first is usually in Devr-i Kebir (28/4), but also in frenkçin (12/4) or in çiftdiyek (16/4); the second is in aksak semai (10/8) and
the third is in yüruk semai (6/8). It is believed that the third selâm alludes to the submission and to the Unity with God. Traditionally the texts sung comes from Aflâkî Dede: ‘Ey ki hezar aferin, bu nice sultan olur’;

The fourth selâm (Persian selâm-i rabî, Turkish dördüncü selâm) returns to the rhythmic cycle (usûl) ağır evfer (9/4). It is believed that the fourth selâm alludes to the comeback to this world, to the life in this world, and to the normal physical existence of the dervish, that, with the âyin, accomplished a real travel (seýir, a Sufi concept on which we will return later);

After the fourth, final, selâm, the ceremony closes with two poems by Sultân Veled (originally in makâm segâh) that became a sort of hymn of the mevlevîye. Şem’-i-rubuna cismimi pervâne düşürdüm and Dinle sözümü sana direm özge edâdir concluded by the fast 6/8 Son Yurük Semai;

Son ney taksîm, last unmetred free improvisation on the ney flute in the intense, rustling, whirling of the dervishes;

Listening to the Qur’an;

Exit of the sheik, the semazen başı, the semazen and the musicians.

The first 18 distiches of Masnavî-i Mathnâvi as a compendium of Mevlevî Aesthetic

Why music and arts had such a central role in the work of Mevlâna and, then, in the mevlevî path? Is it possible to speak of a ‘mевlevî method’? An interpretation merely hedonistic – music, or Art, as an healthy pleasure – even if is very important[^20] – doesn’t cover all the implications and do not take into consideration an important trait that we can find in other cultures of the world: the practice of art as an inner practice. From this point of view, we should think to the shakuhachi flute practice among the Japanese adepts of the Fuke Zen Buddhist sect[^21] or to the drawing of a mandala among Buddhist practitioners.

[^20]: Let’s think to the fundamental aesthetical concept in Arab world of taraf ‘pleasure, ecstatic emotion’ and note that a mevlevî musician is traditionally called mutrib, i.e. ‘the one that has taraf’.

[^21]: The shakuhachi is a bamboo notch flute. Its story is very similar to the ney flute and its role it has in the mevlevîye. The Japanese Buddhist monk Kakushin (1207-1298) is considered the one who took this flute to Japan after a long sojourn in China. From him took life the Buddhist Zen sect Fuke that practiced shakuhachi as a form of meditation, well expressed in aphorisms like: ‘The breath of flute is the way to the illumination’; ‘There is a meditation with sound’; ‘The shakuhachi plays you as much as you play the shakuhachi’. From this tradition emerged Kurosawa Kinko (1710-1771) a monk fuke that collected and transcribed the repertoire for the shakuhachi that grew through centuries. The core of this repertoire is constituted by 36 pieces linked to the Zen tradition called honkyoku, each of them attributed to the founder of a Zen school. It is believed that the honkyoku were
Tibetan monks. The traditional mevlevî method of apprenticing through impregnation implied a long, long, time pleasantly spent with brothers in an occupation that, as in its etymological sense, ‘occupy’ and placate a certain kind of ‘mind’. At the same time, musical practice in the life of a mevlevî community was an active pause of distension and rebalancing after periods of solitude and ascetism. After such periods of sensorial deprivation, we should remember, with the verses of Sultân Veled that became a sort of hymn of the mevlevîye that sama is the nourishing of the Soul (rûh gidadr), a pure, joyful, full of life, nourishment.

Such a global mevlevî aesthetic can be shaped by the 18 distiches dedicated to the nay flute that opens the immense Masnavi-i Mathnavî and, at the same time, by the teaching/learning of this instrument inside the mevlevî centres.

Above all other musical instruments, a central position was held in mevlevîye by nay flute, a reed flute of the vast ‘obliquely held-rim blown’ family22 (a millenarian instrument, the first archaeological traces dating back to 2500-2800 b. C.) that from that far 9th century a. C. it became one of the very few musical instruments allowed to play in the sufî sama’, ‘listening, audition’. From 13th century a. C., nay became a fundamental symbol in the work of Mevlâna, thanks to the above quoted first 18 distiches dedicated to the nay that, breaking the literary codes of the epoch, opens the Masnavi-i Mathnavî. Following Rûmî ‘input’, nay became an instrument intensively practiced in the sufî brotherhood.

Nay flute is unanimously considered by all Sufi commentaries23 as the symbol of the human soul separated from the Divine world, fallen in this world. Just as the reed was separated from the reed basket, human being/nay longs for Union in the torments of Separation. As we saw above, this state takes us to the Qur’an (VII, 172 ff) that refers

originally conceived as tools in order to reach a particular state of calm through deep respiration.


23 I recommend here the beautiful comment made by Persian poet Jami (d. 1492) to the prelude of Masnavi in Scarcia Amoretti, 1965. In particular, about the mevlevî oral/aural exegesis of the 18 distiches, I will follow here my nay teacher, world fame soloist Kudsi Erguner, in its La fontaine de la Séparation. Voyages d’un musicien soufi, Paris, Le bois d’Orion, 2000: 223-240.
to an assembly which took place before the beginning of Time, when all the souls that would ever live were together, in Union. The Creator asked them: ‘Am I not Your Lord?’ (Alast'o bi Rabbi kumm?) and all the souls answered ‘Yes, we testify.’ ( Báli, shahídna).

Coming into this world, human beings forgot this state, but not completely; sometimes, listening to the ney, to other sounds or to some beautiful words man is connected with something inexpressible; he remembers his source, his origin, his land. Many passages (‘ayat) of the Qur’an invite one to ‘Remember’ (III, 41; IV, 103; XX, 14; XXIX, 45; XXXVII, 75). From such invitations each Sufi brotherhood created a different kind of ritual, individual or collective, silent or loud, called zikr (Arab, dhikr) which can be translated as ‘remembering, mention, repetition (of the name of God)’. During the zikr a dervish aspires to the moment when he will be reunited with his origin in this state of union.

In mevlevî path, as the reed has to be cleansed of the vegetal veils that obstruct its column, blocking the breath of the player, so the man has to empty himself from the veils of his ego (nafs, nufūs) in order to resonate with the Divine Breath. Organologically, the reed is made by a single stem subdivided in nodes by dense sections: in order to make a ney it is necessary to burn such sections with fire. This burning operation takes us to the Sufi concept of hizmet, ‘service’, a central activity inside mevleviye: hizmet is not only exterior but inner, so that is possible to speak about a ‘work upon himself’. As an empty ney is in harmony with its player, so an empty man is in harmony with his creator and in perfect union with Him.

Appear evident here one aspect of the particular mevlevî concept: music as metaphor of an inner practice (hizmet).

**Outside of the mevlevî centres: music connoisseurs in Ottoman culture** (fig. 6)

The debates and treatises on the effect of music on human being were a central theme in the Mediterranean area from Antiquity: from this point of view, about Ottoman culture seem interesting the observations made by Venetian abbot Giambatista Toderini, one of
the many European travellers\textsuperscript{24} that left us descriptions of the \textit{mevlevîs} in Constantinople toward the end of 18\textsuperscript{th} century. In his \textit{Letteratura Turchesca} (“Turkish Literature”) Toderini wrote:

Nella sua Repubblica determinava Platone, che s’applicassero i giovani tre anni a questa scienza (la musica N.d.C.). I Turchi coltivavano lungamente, e i più cogli’strumenti a corde e col Neî. Tengono schiavi, e schiave, che suonino a lor diletto. Disdegnano però i Signori d’alto stato di farsi udire nelle pubbliche adunanze, fuorché suonando il Neî, perché viene reputato strumento di studio. Così imparai da Ibraimo Efendi, mentre nelle praterie di Bojux-derè, ove concorrono molti d’ogni nazione a diporto, sonò un Ulemà mio amico in compagnia del più valente Dervis Mevelì, venuti quel giorno perché sentissi il suono dolcissimo dello strumento.\textsuperscript{25}

“In his ‘Republic’ Platon stated that young should study this science (i.e. the music) for three years. The Turks cultivate it, mostly with string instruments and with the \textit{ney}. They keep slaves that can play for their delectation. The lords disdain to being listened to in public, except when playing the \textit{ney}, reputed as an instrument of study. So I learned from Ibraimo (Ibrahim) Efendi, when in the prairies of Bojux-derè,\textsuperscript{26} where many come to stroll and rejoice, played an ‘\textit{ulama} friend of mine in the company of the most good Dervis Meveli. Both came that day in order to make me listen to the sweet sound of the instrument.’

Toderini’s passage made us note how, outside from a strict \textit{mevlevîhâne} environment, such a concept of music as noble delectation was rooted in secular Ottoman culture and, at the same time, how music practice as a ‘study’ practice can be considered as the secular outlets of the \textit{mevlevî} concept of music as an inner practice (\textit{hizmet}) that mixes with the platonic conception of musica as inner practice (\textit{hizmet}) that overlap with the platonic concept of music as a tool for the refinement of human being, well diffused and present in the Mediterranean area from Antiquity. Finally, it seems worthy of note that the figure of the intellectual as a fine connoisseur of music and arts was, and somehow still is, well spread in the Ottoman, Persian and Central Asian cultural areas.

\textsuperscript{24} Apart from Giambatista Toderini, the musical descriptions and essays of travellers Charles Fonton, Jean Antoine du Loir, Jean de Thevenot, Pietro Della Valle, and Ignatius Mouradega d’Ohsson should be remembered.

\textsuperscript{25} Toderini, 1787: 228

\textsuperscript{26} Nowadays Büyük Dere.
Modulation: the ney, the calamus, the kalâm

After this first part I would like to focus on some parallels between the art of music and some fine arts practiced by the mevlevîs, moreover calligraphy and ebrû trying to uncover a common aesthetics. In order to enter the realm of fine arts, I need to leave the scientific approach for a more impressionistic one in order to modulate (as musicians would say).

The ney reed flute is considered similar to the kalâm (Latin calamus), the tool for the scripture that for centuries preceded the pencil. Symbolically, such a proximity evoke at the same time: the Divine pen that according to Qur’an writes on the eternal Table the world’s destiny; the pen of the Poet; the tool of the calligraphy.

The ney, at the same time reed, calamus and flute, can be somehow intended as another (more abstract) mevlevî aesthetical bridge between music and poetry and under such a light, calligraphy (hatt) can be intended as a silent music…

Given the importance of abstract ornamentation in the aesthetic of the whole Islamic arts, we should remember the fundamental role of calligraphy in Ottoman culture (well expressed by the dictum: ‘The Qur’an was revealed in Mecca, read in Egypt and written in Istanbul’) in which many calligraphists were mevlevî.

Hatt as silent music, taksîm as sonorous calligraphy

Back again to music, we should note that in the mevlevîye a particular musical genre shared the above quoted ornamental, abstract, figurative characteristics that are typical of calligraphy and fine arts: the taksîm. The term comes from Arab taqāsim (‘division’, ‘junction’ between divided parts) and is generally translated by ethnomusicologists as: ‘unmetred free improvisation’. In the particular context of a musical court suite (fasıl), the function of the taksîm is to consent a free moment for the soloist in the middle of a group performance and, at the same time, gives him the chance to expose the modal structure of the makâm of a given following tune, sometime travelling among the relatives sub-groups of makâms. In particular,

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27 It seems worthy of note the existence of an old reference -remembered by Jean During (1988: 204)- that considers samâ’ as ‘the sound of calams writing on the eternal Table.’
inside the *meleviye* the *taksim* genre had a central importance from its first, aural, times. According to the ethnomusicologist Walter Feldman, differently from other Sufi ways, *melevi* didn’t performed the *kaside*, the typical unmetred vocal genre on panegyrist and religious themes, whereas they developed an extremely elaborated form of *taksim*.

The abstract (but firm) conduct of a *taksim* player can be (and usually is) compared to a travel among the *makâms*, traditionally conceived on circles.

*Circles and clouds*

This traditional comparison takes us to the ancient Islamic musical theory which was illustrated on the circle: a perfect example of this is the ancient *Kitâb el-Edvâr* (‘Book of Circles’) by Safî al-Dîn al-Urmawî (1230-94), who is often referred as the founder of the so called ‘Systematist School’. Safî al-Dîn’s *Kitâb el-Edvâr* was highly influential on the following musicological and musical treatises of the Middle East and, moreover, of the Ottoman area. Recently, musicologist Deniz Ertan observed that:

> Because the notion of cycles had both theoretical and philosophical connotations, many Arab, Persian and Ottoman treatises on music theories were entitled ‘Book of Cycles’. *Makâms* and especially *usûls* were often illustrated through cyclic charts. (...) The understanding of the cyclic nature of life as part of the general Eastern thought often accommodates to the idea of each cycle extracting itself from the precedent (...).

Apart its musical theoretical virtue, the circle is a symbol that, by its same nature, can unify different sparse elements. About its philosophical meaning, among the multitude of Sufi elaborations, we should remember the words of one the first *melevi* treatisers, Ismâ’il al-Anqarawî (XVII):

> Suppose that the Essence of the Unique is a Point: the world, and man, can be compared to the circle created by the movement of this point.

If the symbol/concept of the circle is central in all Sufism (tasawwuf), nevertheless its evocativeness is displayed in all its formal evidence in the âyin melevî moreover:


29 Ertan, 2007: 37 and 38.

In the inner travel (seyir) through the phases of the ceremony that the dervish accomplish, which at the same time are believed to represent distinct phases of the knowledge of Truth (from ‘ilm al-yaqîn, to ‘ayn al-yaqîn reaching at haqq al-yaqîn);

In the evolution of the same dervish that, while whirling around his axe, evolves along the circular perimeter of the sacred space of the samâhâne;

The same musical unmetered free improvisation taksîm can be intended as a journey from circle to circle, i.e. the modes makâms and their subgroups.

The circle gives us another chance to modulate and to take into exam a fine art made by circles very appreciated in Ottoman times, the ebrû (from Persian abr, ‘cloud’) better known in the West as ‘marbled paper’: according to ebrû makers, the circles made by the free dripping of ink on paper are ‘designs of God’. Maybe due to this, ebrû fine art was highly esteemed and practiced by dervishes. In particular, I would like to focus here on the particular ebrû school created by Hatip Mehmet Efendi (?-1773), who was the preacher (hatip) of Ayasofya Mosque. He was followed by his ebrû student Sheikh Sadik Efendi (?-1846), born in Bukhara, who founded and animated the Sufi naqsbandî centre named Özbekler Tekkesi in Üskudar. His son Ibrahim Edhem Efendi (1829-1904) became his pupil as well as the Sheikh of Üskudar Özbekler Tekkesi and is considered as the most distinguished marbler of the last century. Necmeddin Okyay (1885-1959) studied with Ibrahim Edhem Efendi and became the ebrû master of the twentieth century, as well as the last Sheikh of Üskudar Özbekler Tekkesi. He taught ebrû to his sons Saim, Sacid, Okyay and to his nephew Mustafa Duzgunman (1920-1990).

The Özbekler Tekkesi in Üskudar in Republican times
(fig.4)

After the 1923 closing of the dervishes tekkes, the Özbekler Tekkesi in Üskudar remained a centre frequented by some of the most important musicians, artists and intellectuals of the republican times.31 After a period of decadence the house nowadays became the American Institute of Turkish Studies.

31 The environment of the Özbekler Tekkesi are reanimated by neyzen Kudsi Erguner in its autobiographical and meditative Erguner, 2000: 42-56.
I would like to end my travel, and close my circle, with a very illuminating passage that a great historian of Sufism, CNRS French scholar Thierry Zarcone, recently wrote about this kind of transmission of Sufi values through art and crafts outside a strict Sufi environment, after the closing of the tekkes:

‘The spirit of Sufism didn’t continued its transmission only through tekkes but also thanks to little shops conducted by Sufis, often respected masters, just like the used books shop of the halvetî Muzaffer Ozak, or like the perfumery (attar-dükkani) of Saim Düzgünman in Üsküdar, in the Asian part of Istanbul. Ney master Niyazi Sayin is an habitué of this shop, frequented also by a number of sheyks sufi deprived of their tekke and by some melami(s) and hamzavi(s), as, for instance, Eşref Efendi. The quality and the cultural level of its clients made this shop a sanctuary of literature, music and traditional Ottoman crafts. Mustafa Düzgünman, son of Saim, became a master in the art, beloved by Sufis, of the marbled paper (ebrû) in which Niyazi Sayin excel. The typical sociality of this shop, still living nowadays, is occasionally a vehicle for the Sufism, outside from the brotherhood environment.’ 32

Conclusions

We began our journey among the art of music an the practice of arts in the mevlevîye by taking into exam the progressive shifting from a mystic experience to its symbolic representation, from the classic, spontaneous, Sufi samâ’ in Mevlâna and in the first, aural, times arriving to the elaborate mevlevî âyin-i-şerif ceremony. The same mevlevî musical language, close to the elaborated musical language of the Court, marks such a shifting. In order to see how different plans interacted in an âyin-i-şerif, it seemed useful an analysis of the ceremony. A strong concept is at the core of the mevlevî art music practice similar to other practices we can find in other world cultures in which art and spirituality intertwines; such a concept that can be traced back to the first 18 distiches dedicated to the ney flute that opens Mevlâna’s Masnavi-i Mathnâvi: just as the ney has to be cleansed from its veils in order to resonate under the fingers of the musician, so human being have to be freed from his/her egotic veils with a ‘work’ (hizmet) upon himself/herself in order to be in touch with his/her Creator. Out of this Sufi concept and practice, we noted with Giambatista Toderini the persistency of some cultural mevlevî values in

the Ottoman secular environment, moreover in the nature of art practice as a tool for a noble delectation.

Our journey continued leaving a scientific approach by virtue of analogies: between the ney, the calamus and the kalâm in order to put in relation music, abstract ornamentation and calligraphy. Spontaneously, the circle imposed itself as the symbol that can unite musical science (Kitâb el-Edvâr) musical practice (the taksîm as a travel) and the same meaning of a āyîn-i-şerif ceremony. Spontaneously, the circle introduced us to a fine art, the ebrû, very appreciated by the dervishes in Ottoman that was somehow a tool for the transmission of Sufî values during hostile Republican times.

In writing these pages I hope to have clarified some aesthetic concepts of mevlevî origin at the core of the practices of music and fine arts in the Ottoman-Turkish area: apparently separated, in my opinion such practices are tied together by a net of cultural implications.

As usual, the journey stops here but is far from being over: listen to to the out of time sound of the ney and… yengi yol!

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By Lara ISKRA

Summary

Mostar played an important role in the history of the Ottoman Bosnia as the economical, political and cultural capital of the Hercegovina during the Ottoman Empire. Mostar grew steadily in the XVI century under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and became a typical ottoman city. The development of the city was mainly due to the large number of vakuf’s foundations or charitable Islamic trusts: rich and powerful individuals dedicated huge amount of moveable and immovable properties for the benefit of the community. The following article will take into account three important figures of these pious founders or vakifs. They all contributed considerably both to the creation of religious and charitable institutions and to the educational and economic development of the entire population. The aim of this paper is to analyze three religious architectural complexes built in a period between the XVI and the XVII century. It mainly focuses on the history and the life of their prominent founders. The close connection of these personalities with the Ottoman Court in Istanbul and their high political and economical role in the Ottoman province of Bosnia, is reflected in their mosques, which represent one of the most beautiful examples of Islamic architecture not only in Mostar but in all Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Keywords: Mostar, Ottomans, vakif, architecture, Mehmed Karadoz-beg, Koski Mehmed-paša, Nesuh-aga Vučijaković

[...]

Sul territorio del sandžak della Hercegovina non esiste città più grande, bella e sviluppata di Mostar. Il clima mite permette alla città di coltivare deliziosa frutta di ogni sorta: fichi, chicchi d’uva grossi come teste umane, che gli abitanti di Mostar portano in dono alle altre città. Questa frutta splende per la sua bellezza e succulenza, il suo colore ed il suo gusto sembrano non abbandonarla mai. Dalla parte dove si trova la conceria scorrono numerosi ruscelletti d’acqua e l’universo intero, steso su morbidi sofà, si rallegra pregando Dio per il benestare dell’impero e del popolo. Grazie a Dio, ho
potuto sostare in questa città tre giorni nella massima felicità e godimento […] con i suoi generosi, ospitali e nobili abitanti.¹

Capitale economica, culturale e politica, nonché centro di governo della Hercegovina durante l’epoca di dominio ottomano, Mostar ebbe un ruolo importante nella storia dell’intera Bosnia e Hercegovina.


Lo sviluppo storico di Mostar durante il dominio ottomano rappresenta un tipico esempio di trasformazione da centro urbano medievale della Bosnia e Hercegovina in un’importante città in stile ottomano (fig. 1).

Mostar visse il suo massimo splendore nel XVI secolo, quando territorialmente raggiunse le dimensioni di una vera e propria città commerciale, nel periodo in cui si crearono e operarono i grossi e potenti vakufi. Proprio a questi va il merito di aver arricchito la città con massicci monumenti di bellezza inaudita. L’istituzione del vakuf consiste nella realizzazione di un’opera pia da parte di un singolo individuo o vakif, poi messa a disposizione della comunità, sulla base delle norme islamiche. I vakif investivano grosse cifre di denaro dando in affitto botteghe ed altre attività, il cui profitto era poi utilizzato per la manutenzione e l’organizzazione di tutte le strutture di

¹ Čelebi 1957, 248-249.
loro appartenenza. I creatori dei *vakuf* furono stimolati soprattutto da un forte sentimento religioso, che indusse uomini benestanti ad operare per il bene della comunità investendo risorse private in ambito pubblico e sociale, convinti di assicurarsi in cambio doni nell’Aldilà. È per questo motivo che gli abbienti signori ottomani, i paša, i vizir ed i piccoli ricchi locali costruirono in tutta la Bosnia e Hercegovina le loro fondazioni pie all’interno dell’istituzione del *vakuf*, avendo così un ruolo primario nello sviluppo della vita religiosa e culturale dei musulmani di Bosnia e in particolar modo nella fondazione, nella crescita e nell’espansione delle città in tutta la regione.2

Il regno di Solimano il Magnifico (1520-1566) fu il periodo in cui l’impero ottomano raggiunse un’estrema prosperità ed il massimo progresso sia economico che sociale. Le aspirazioni del sultano lo inducevano a supportare la cultura, dando un grosso apporto alle arti, ma soprattutto all’architettura islamica, e fu in quest’ambiente di ricchezza e benessere che l’architettura ottomana raggiunse il suo apice, regalando a Mostar quelli che diverranno i monumenti più importanti della città (fig. 2).

Nel presente articolo si cercherà di prendere in considerazione tre importanti complessi di architettura ottomana a Mostar risalenti ad un lasso di tempo compreso tra la seconda metà del XVI secolo e l’inizio del XVII secolo, ponendo l’attenzione soprattutto sulla storia, sulle Figure dei loro committenti e sui miti che gravitano intorno a questi modelli di architettura islamica. L’architettura delle moschee esaminate, appartenenti ai complessi menzionati, indica il rango elevato ed il gusto per l’eleganza e per l’estetica dei committenti: essi non furono, infatti, comuni nobili locali, ma personaggi strettamente legati al potere centrale che gravitano intorno a questi modelli di architettura islamica. 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2 Bejtić 1944, 153-161.
contraddistingue nettamente dal resto della produzione architettonica di Mostar.

**Il complesso di Mehmed Karađoz-beg**

Il complesso architettonico di Mehmed Karađoz-beg (fig. 3) risalente al 1557 rappresenta l’esempio più importante di architettura ottomana a Mostar e nell’intera Hercegovina. Esso comprende, oltre alla moschea, una medresa (fig.4), tra le più antiche sopravvissute a Mostar, uno šadrvan ed un piccolo cimitero adiacente. Il complesso di Karađoz-beg era inserito all’interno della struttura del vakuf e rappresentava il più potente e ricco tra i 300 vakufi che si contavano all’epoca nella città. Il suo committente, infatti, ebbe un ruolo cruciale nello sviluppo di Mostar, dotandola di numerose strutture pubbliche, religiose e di uso commerciale.

*Hadži zaim* Mehmed-beg Karađoz, com’è possibile riscontrare già dal suo nome, fu un personaggio di gran rilievo nella Mostar del XVI secolo. Il primo appellativo sottolinea l’aver portato a termine il pellegrinaggio e dunque l’adempimento di uno dei cinque fondamentali pilastri dell’Islam, innalzando la sua spiritualità e conferendo importanza indirettamente alla sua situazione economica. Il secondo titolo lo designa come *zaim e beg*, titolare di grosse proprietà feudali con alti profitti annui. Il nomignolo Karađoz invece, rimanda molto probabilmente al suo aspetto fisico. Dal turco *kara* “nero” e *göz* “occhi” significherebbe “colui che ha gli occhi neri”.

*Hadži zaim* Mehmed-beg Karađoz fu uno dei maggiori benefattori ed uno dei più potenti signori della Bosnia e Hercegovina ottomana.

Della sua vita privata non ci è pervenuto molto. Tuttavia grazie ad alcune leggende popolari è possibile risalire ad alcune informazioni molto interessanti che lo riguardano. Si narra che in un paesino vicino a Mostar chiamato Bijelo Polje – 12 km a nord di Mostar – sarebbero vissuti due fratelli, uno dei quali si trasferì ad Istanbul, dove godette di grandi ricchezze e di enorme fama. Quando questi morì, il fratello Mehmed si sarebbe recato nella capitale per ereditare il cospicuo patrimonio lasciato dal defunto. La vedova del fratello si sarebbe affezionata molto al cognato e sarebbe stata proprio lei a conferirgli il nome di Karadoz, a causa dei suoi grandi occhi neri. La vedova gli

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3 Hasandedić 2000, 7-9.
avrebbe concesso di ereditare tutta la ricchezza del marito, a condizione che egli utilizzasse questo denaro esclusivamente per creare delle opere pie. Mehmed avrebbe tenuto fede alla promessa fatta e si sarebbe ripromesso di innalzare opere pie in qualsiasi luogo Dio gli avesse indicato.⁴

Altre voci popolari invece, parlano di Karadož come di un personaggio estremamente riservato, che avrebbe coltivato il forte desiderio di acquistare tutte le terre intorno a Mostar per poi seminare di nuove costruzioni.⁵

L’epigrafe scolpita al di sopra del portale d’ingresso della moschea di Karadož-beg, riporta ulteriori dati riguardo la vita del benefattore (fig. 5). Vi compaiono, oltre alla data di costruzione della moschea nel 1557, due ulteriori informazioni di grande valore. Mehmed fu Figlio di Ebu-Seade nonché fratello di uno stimato vizir che governò proprio nel periodo in cui fu eretta la moschea:

Codesta sublime e monumentale moschea fu costruita, durante il regno del grande sultano Solimano-han, che Dio possa potenziare le sue vittorie, dal benefattore hadži Muhamed-beg, Figlio di Ebu-Seade, durante il governo del munifico fratello, stimato uomo di stato e grande vizir, creatore di ordine sulla terra. Il benefattore fece erigere questa moschea su ordine dell’Altissimo ‘Costruite moschee’ e secondo le parole del profeta di Dio ‘A colui che costruisce un mesdžid, Dio costruirà la casa in Paradiso’, e nel nome di Dio, e secondo il Suo insegnamento, dovrà inseguire la soddisfazione divina e sperare nel suo ricongiungimento con Esso. Data del cronogramma anno 965.⁶

È fortemente probabile che Karadož fosse il fratello del grande vizir di Solimano il Magnifico, Rustem-paša, il quale avrebbe rivestito la carica di gran vizir ben due volte: dal 1544 al 1553 e successivamente dall’anno 1555 al 1561. Sono note le origini bosniache di Rustem-paša e il suo cognome patronimico sarebbe stato Opuković o Čigalič. Uno dei suoi fratelli, Sinan-paša, occupò importanti mansioni all’interno dell’amministrazione ottomana: egli fu il sandžak-beg della Hercegovina dall’agosto del 1547 fino al mese di giugno 1549, per poi essere nominato kapudan-paša. Nei primi anni di carriera ad Istanbul, Rustem-paša Opuković sposò la Figlia del sultano Solimano Mihrimah, per poi ottenere l’alta carica di gran visir nel

⁴ Nameťak 1933, 34-36.
⁵ Ibid.: 35.
1544. Dal 1561 la sua mansione fu interrotta a causa dei disordini interni conclusisi con l’esecuzione del primogenito erede al trono, Mustafa. Successivamente, nel 1555, egli riuscì a riconquistare il posto di gran vizir servendo fedelmente il suo sultano fino alla morte, quando fu sepolto nella capitale in una tomba disegnata dal grande architetto Sinan. Anch’egli fu un grande benefattore, le cui numerose opere pie si ammirano ancora oggi ad Istanbul e a Sarajevo.7

Il governo di Rustem-paša coincide con la data di costruzione della moschea (1557) e le informazioni riportate dall’epigrafe ricalcano in modo abbastanza fedele la leggenda popolare precedentemente riportata.

Grazie alla vakufsname registrata nel 1570 è possibile ricostruire la vita matrimoniale di Karađoz-beg (fig. 6). Egli fu sposato ben due volte. La prima moglie, Gulšah-hatun, morì nel 1570, anno della stesura della vakufsname, nella quale si stabilì che un Corano sarebbe stato letto in suo nome. La seconda moglie, molto più giovane rispetto alla prima, Aiša-hatun, fu anch’essa nominata in un’apposita vakufsname aggiuntiva che tutelava il suo diritto di eredità sulle proprietà del marito.8

Karađoz fu padre di tre figli, due periti nel 1570, anno della stesura della vakufsname. In quest’ultima viene nominato l’unico figlio in vita, hadži Jusuf, per la salute del quale si stabilisce la lettura di un sura. Anch’egli rivestì un ruolo importante a Mostar, operando all’interno dell’esercito ottomano come Capitano della Neretva.9

Numerosi sono i documenti storici che attestano le funzioni svolte da Mehmed Karadoz-beg. Il defter Ahkam, custodito nell’Archivio nazionale di Istanbul, testimonia che nel 1565 egli fu il supervisore ai lavori del ponte di Mostar. Questo defter è stato istituito per registrare l’operato nel cantiere del Ponte ed il nome del suo sovrintendente vi compare chiaramente più volte. Un altro manoscritto risalente a data più recente, ora conservato nel Museo civico di Sarajevo, attesta il contributo di Karadoz alla costruzione del ponte.10

Alcuni documenti redatti a Dubrovnik nel XVI secolo narrano i rapporti tra la città costiera ed il sandžak di Hercegovina, descrivendo

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8 Zvonić 1998, 41-42.
9 Ibid.: 42.
10 Zvonić 1998, 41.
minuziosamente l’apparato amministrativo e le personalità politiche di spicco all’interno di quest’ultimo. In questa sede viene ricordato il “vecchio” Karađoz-beg e viene posto in evidenza un suo viaggio d’affari a Dubrovnik, dove il benefattore si apprestò ad acquistare delle stoffe. Soprattutto durante la costruzione del Ponte si rinforzarono i contatti tra la città di Dubrovnik e la Mešana ed egli richiese che gli venissero mandati alcuni mastri costruttori, che avrebbero partecipato ai lavori del ponte dietro luito stipendio.

La data di morte di Karađoz-beg non si può stabilire con certezza. Tuttavia essa si colloca sicuramente dopo il 1570, anno in cui, ancora vivo, avrebbe stilato la sua vakufnama. Nel cimitero ubicato all’interno del complesso di Karađoz-beg, proprio dietro al muro del mihrab si trovano otto antichi nišani disposti a coppie, la cui forma induce a dedurre che risalgano proprio al XVI secolo (fig. 7). Tre coppie di questi ultimi sono pilastri quadrangolari alti 1,5 m, due dei quali presentano le estremità arrotondate. La quarta, invece, è un nišan a base ottagonale senza turbante, che presenta anch’esso la punta arrotondata. Essendo queste lapidi situate esattamente davanti alla parete del mihrab, luogo di massimo rilievo, si potrebbe ipotizzare che queste tombe appartengano proprio ad alcuni membri della famiglia del benefattore Mehmed Karađoz-beg, se non a lui stesso. Come si è visto precedentemente la sua moschea fu eretta nel 1557, mentre nella sua vakufnama risalente al 1570, si ricordano i suoi Figli deceduti Muhamed-beg e Sulejman-beg, nonché la defunta moglie Gulšah-hatun. Basandoci su questi dati, è possibile stabilire che queste lapidi funerarie possano essere state create tra il 1557 ed il 1570.11

Grazie alle vakufname pervenute è possibile risalire a tutto ciò che venne stabilito nell’istituzione del vakuf: la posizione esatta delle costruzioni pie, la somma di danaro destinata al sostentamento del vakuf e l’importanza di quest’ultimo per lo sviluppo di Mostar. Tre di queste vakufnama sono custodite in originale nella biblioteca di Gazi Husrev-beg a Sarajevo: due di esse risalgono allo stesso periodo, mentre la terza è più recente. La prima vakufnama risale al febbraio 1570 ed in essa si registrano tutte le strutture erette a Mostar, a Konjic, a Blagaj ed a Potoci. La seconda vakufnama redatta nello stesso mese è dedicata completamente alla medresa adiacente la moschea di Karađoz-beg. La terza invece, stesa nel mese di ottobre del 1570,

come precedentemente accennato, è riservata all’eredità destinata alla moglie Aiša–hatun, che ammonta a due *dirhem* giornalieri presi dalle entrate del *vakuf*\textsuperscript{12}.

Fonti storiche attendibili dimostrano che Mehmed Karađoz-beg fu nominato supervisore alla costruzione del ponte di Mostar nel 1565 e che fu in stretto contatto con l’architetto Hajreddin e con i maestri accorsi dalla capitale per lavorare al cantiere. Per questo motivo si può presumere che Karađoz-beg si sia servito delle stesse maestranze per la costruzione della sua moschea. La maestosità delle sue proporzioni e la straordinaria plasticità delle sue forme fanno sì che anch’essa venga attribuita all’architetto Hajreddin, degno discepolo del grande Mimar Sinan.\textsuperscript{13} La moschea di Karađoz-beg viene generalmente inclusa, infatti, fra le opere di Sinan che, dopo una supervisione del progetto iniziale, avrebbe affidato la direzione e l’esecuzione dei lavori al suo allievo Hajreddin.

Intorno alla creazione della moschea di Mehmed Karađoz-beg circolano molti miti. Nel 1889 venne pubblicato un articolo che riporta alcune leggende popolari riguardo alla moschea, monumento di tale splendore da aver stimolato la fantasia di molti.

[...] e qui scrisi tutto ciò che ho udito dai racconti popolari sulla creazione di questa monumentale moschea. Sul suo conto corrono varie leggende molto diverse fra loro: una variante cristiana, una ortodossa ed una terza turca.

I cattolici narrano che una volta si ergeva in questo luogo una chiesa, ma quando la Bosnia fu conquistata dai turchi, essi ne ricavarono una moschea e dal campanile fecero il minareto. Si dice che, mentre i turchi si apprestavano a distruggere la chiesa, dall’altare fosse comparsa l’immagine dell’arcangelo Michele. Egli come d’incanto si diresse verso un armadio, le cui porte si chiusero per sempre; solo la grazia di Dio avrebbe permesso di riaprirle. I turchi cercarono di forzare l’armadio in tutti i modi, costringendo in tale tentativo addirittura i frati, visto che alla fine si trattava di un loro santo. Ma i monaci si rifiutarono di violarlo e per punizione vennero tagliati a pezzi e buttati nella Neretva. Fino ad oggi nessuno riuscì mai ad aprire questo armadio. Esso si aprirà solo il giorno in cui questa moschea si trasformerà nuovamente in chiesa. Quando i turchi distrussero la chiesa il diavolo se ne impossessò. È da allora che il demonio si dondola sull’altalena che pende dalla cupola, felice e soddisfatto di ciò che hanno fatto i turchi. Si narra che quando in seguito arrivaron gli austriaci, il diavolo avesse voluto

\textsuperscript{12} Nametak 1933, 34 - 37.

\textsuperscript{13} Andrejević 1990, 46.
scappare a gambe levate, forse per la paura che potessero ritrasformare in chiesa la sua moschea.

Ed ora vediamo la versione ortodossa. Si racconta che un tempo qui sorgeva la loro chiesa accanto ad un grande monastero di monaci ortodossi. Essi vennero presto uccisi dai turchi proprio sull’ingresso della chiesa. Da quel giorno, ogni notte si manifestarono delle strane apparizioni nel monastero e per questo motivo i turchi decisero di raderlo al suolo e di costruire una moschea.

Di tutto quello che è stato riferito precedentemente i turchi non sono a conoscenza. Essi credono che la torre dell’orologio e questa moschea siano state costruite da una certa Kadun – Fatima, mentre la sua amica Šarića kaduna fece costruire la moschea Šarić in fondo alla città di Mostar. Sapete il motivo per cui Kadun Fatima fece erigere la torre dell’orologio e la moschea di Karađoz-beg? Ecco il perché. La kaduna era una gran testarda ed anche estremamente ricca. […] Un giorno le comparve in sogno una fata dicendole che sarebbe stata punita da Dio per il suo peccare di testardaggine se non avesse donato alla città una torre dell’orologio ed una moschea. Kaduna Fatima prestò ascolto alla fata e realizzò ciò che le venne richiesto. Finalmente riuscì a sposarsi con il primo valija imperiale, imboccando così la retta via.14

La moschea di hadži Mehmed-beg è molto ampia, notevole dal punto di vista artistico caratterizzata da una luminosità particolare.15

dal “Diario di viaggio” di Evlija Čelebi (1660)

Da un punto di vista architettonico, la moschea di Karađoz-beg appartiene alla tipologia di moschea a pianta quadrata estremamente semplice e sormontata da cupola con doppio porticato: il primo portico coronato da tre cupolette ed un secondo portico esterno molto spiovente (fig. 8). Sul lato destro della struttura, invece, addossato alla muratura del vano quadrato, s’innalza l’esile minareto. Questa monumentale moschea rappresenta, per il suo stile e per la bellezza delle sue forme, il modello più puro e fine di moschea con cupola del XVI secolo in Hercegovina. La moschea di Karađoz-beg rappresenta inoltre uno dei pochi monumenti nei Balcani in cui sono sopravvissuti gli affreschi originali del XVI secolo (fig. 9). Il risultato degli studi condotti sugli apparati decorativi ha dimostrato che la moschea presenta quattro strati decorativi databili periodi differenti: i primi tre sono stati eseguiti durante il dominio ottomano, mentre l’ultimo fu opera degli austro-ungarici (fig. 10).

14 Zovko 1889, 137-138.
15 Čelebi 1996, 246.
Il complesso di Koski Mehmed-paša

Il complesso di Koski Mehmed-paša (1617) è situato nella parte più antica della zona commerciale di Mostar, sulla sponda destra del fiume Neretva (fig. 11). Dal punto di vista urbanistico la struttura occupa una posizione privilegiata all’interno del tessuto urbano: essendo affacciata sul fiume è chiaramente visibile sia dal Vecchio Ponte che dal vecchio bazar. La moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša si colloca all’interno del complesso architettonico che comprende anche uno šadrvan, una medresa, un türbe ed un numero limitato di lapidi sparse irregolarmente all’interno dell’area.

Numerose fonti ci permettono di ricostruire l’identità del grande vakif Mehmed Koski-paša, cittadino onorario della città di Mostar. Non è nota purtroppo la sua data di nascita e ignoriamo dove e come abbia trascorso la sua infanzia e la sua giovinezza. Documenti scritti attestano che egli avrebbe prestato servizio negli alti ranghi dell’amministrazione ottomana. Fu, infatti, cronista dell’illustre vizir Lala Mehmet Sokolović dal 1604 al 1606 e, nel 1605, fu promosso defterdar di guerra. Queste alte mansioni da lui svolte attestano l’alto ruolo che ebbe alla corte del vizir Lala Sokolović. Quest’ultimo intraprese diversi viaggi in Austria ed in Ungheria per motivi militari ed è probabile che Koski sia stato sempre al suo fianco in qualità di cronista di corte. Egli partecipò sicuramente anche a tutte le operazioni militari condotte dal grande vizir. Quando quest’ultimo morì, il 14 maggio 1606, Koski Mehmed-paša si ritirò in pensione. Le motivazioni che determinarono questa sua scelta non sono chiare: è possibile che egli abbia preso questa decisione con l’avanzare dell’età e con l’insorgere di problemi di salute, ma è altresì possibile che la causa risiedesse in motivi prettamente politici. Lala Sokolović perse la carica di gran vizir a seguito di una cospirazione architettata da un suo familiare di nome Derviš-paša Sokolović, e tre giorni dopo la perdita dell’incarico, Lala Sokolović morì in modo misterioso: un evento che probabilmente spaventò il vakif inducendolo a ritirarsi definitivamente dalla vita politica.\(^\text{16}\)

Dopo aver ottenuto il pensionamento, Koski Mehmed-paša visse ancora cinque anni e morì nel 1611. Degli ultimi anni della sua vita non si sa molto. Tuttavia, una leggenda popolare narra che durante la costruzione della sua moschea egli fu chiamato in guerra nel paese di

\(^{16}\) Hasandedić 2000, 23.
Livno dove probabilmente morì. Il luogo della sua sepoltura rimane ancora oggi sconosciuto.\textsuperscript{17}

Una copia della \textit{vakufnama} di Koski Mehmet-paša è oggi custodita nella sede della Commissione del \textit{Vakuf} a Mostar e rappresenta una fonte preziosa di informazioni sul \textit{vakif} e sulla sua vita. Il documento è redatto in parte in lingua persiana ed in parte in lingua ottomana. La splendida introduzione in persiano è composta in prosa rimata, mentre il testo vero e proprio rivela uno stile elegante, dove tutte le disposizioni ed informazioni riguardanti l’amministrazione del \textit{vakuf} sono intervallate da numerose citazioni coraniche e vari \textit{hadith} riguardanti gli argomenti trattati.\textsuperscript{18}


Non lontano dal complesso di Koski Mehmed-paša, proseguendo verso nord sulla strada della Mala Tepa per circa 50 metri, si trova il \textit{türbe} di Mahmud-baba, uno dei più popolari \textit{šejb} musulmani a Mostar. La costruzione presenta caratteristiche estremamente semplici: un

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid}: 24.
\textsuperscript{18} Hasandedić 2000, 25.
\textsuperscript{19} Hasandedić 1996, 8.
vanò a pianta quadrata sormontato da una copertura piramidale di scaglie in pietra tagliata è circondato da un piccolo porticato esterno sorretto da quattro sottili pilastri lignei. La tomba dello šejh Mahmud baba è situata al centro del mausoleo e consiste in un sarcofago sul quale appaiono due nišani. Su quello principale, la cui estremità superiore presenta la forma di un turbante tipico degli šejh, scorre un’iscrizione che recita:

Oh Dio! Toccato dalla tua misericordia e dalla tua grazia Mahmud baba, che la Fatiha funga da salvezza per la sua anima, anno 980.20

La mancanza di testimonianze scritte rende difficile stabilire con esattezza l’identità di questo venerato šejh. Tuttavia a Mostar si può trovare traccia di varie leggende riguardanti Mahmud baba, diffuse probabilmente con lo scopo di mistificarne la Figura” ed il suo türbe, ma allo stesso tempo importanti perché offrono informazioni interessanti sul suo conto. Questi racconti popolari narrano che Mahmud-baba era il fratello del vakif Mehmed Koski-paša e lo identificano con lo šejh efendi che compare nella vakufnama. Il mito vuole che sia stato proprio lui a completare la costruzione della moschea dedicata al fratello Mehmed, nella quale svolse anche il ruolo di primo imam e šejh della sua medresa-hanikah (fig. 12). La leggenda narra che dopo aver assolto con fedeltà ai suoi compiti, lo šejh fu sorpreso da una morte precoce e fu seppellito non lontano dalla moschea a lui cara, dove ancora oggi troneggia la sua tomba (fig. 13).21

Nell’iscrizione presente sul nišan è riportata la data di morte dello šejh: 980 AH / 1572 AD, ossia 45 anni prima che la costruzione della moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša venisse portata a termine. Se così fosse, la leggenda popolare sarebbe infondata perché in evidente contrasto con quanto attestato nell’iscrizione. Vi sono però parecchi dubbi anche sulla validità di quest’ultima, infatti, dalla forma del nišan e dallo stile calligrafico dell’epigrafe si può concludere con certezza che entrambi non appartengano al XVI secolo. Non è da escludere che gli abitanti di Mostar cui venne affidata la realizzazione di questo türbe, non conoscendo la data esatta di morte dello šejh, abbiano probabilmente riportato una data errata. Se invece la data del decesso di Mahmud baba fosse realmente quella riportata dall’iscrizione, non

20 Hasandedić 1952, 156.
avendo altre prove per un riscontro più sicuro, dovremmo assereire che qui vi è sepolto non il fratello, ma eventualmente lo zio del vakif, sempre della stirpe Koski. Nel türbe di Mahmud baba si è celebrato regolarmente lo zikr fino all’arrivo degli austriaci.22

Nella vakufnama di Koski Mehmed-paša, stilata dopo la sua morte dal fratello Mahmud, si riportano le volontà del vakif. Esso predisponeva direttive molto precise e tassative riguardo ai dipendenti che avrebbero dovuto rivestire le diverse mansioni all’interno del vakuf ed i requisiti necessari affinché potessero svolgere gli obblighi richiesti. Koski Mehmed-paša fu molto chiaro nel richiedere che il ruolo del hatib fosse condotto solo da una persona generosa, molto religiosa, che conoscesse perfettamente il Corano, che possedesse una bella voce e che fosse capace di svolgere elegantemente la hutba ogni venerdì. Il suo salario sarebbe stato di 5 akči giornalieri. L’imam della moschea doveva essere anch’egli una persona onesta e profondamente religiosa. Egli aveva il compito di condurre tutte le preghiere giornaliere comprese quelle notturne, mansione che gli permetteva di guadagnare 7 akči al giorno. Per quel che concerneva i muezzin, il vakif ordinò di scegliere ben due uomini che possedessero un bel timbro vocalico e che fossero disposti ad assolvere i loro obblighi secondo i precetti dall’Islam, con una paga di un akči giornaliero. Nella vakufnama si sottolineava l’acquisto effettuato di 30 Corani rilegati in pelle destinati alla moschea ed il divieto di portarli al di fuori dell’edificio. Per l’illuminazione della moschea e per l’acquisto delle relative candele venne fissata la somma di 2 akči.23

Nella seconda parte della vakufnama il vakif stabilì le mansioni di ulteriori tre dipendenti che avrebbero avuto l’incarico di amministrare il vakuf e di controllare tutti i possedimenti ad esso annessi. Il compito del mutevelija era quello di raccogliere le entrate provenienti da tutte le istituzioni del vakuf e di fissare anticipatamente i salari destinati agli impiegati del vakuf. La sua paga ammontava a 8 akči giornalieri. Il katib era invece il contabile del vakuf, colui che registrava tutte le entrate ed al quale spettavano 3 akči. Il suo collaboratore o džabija aveva l’obbligo di contare e di ordinare le somme di denaro riscosso per poi consegnarlo successivamente al katib: il tutto per ben 3 akči al giorno. Ahmed, uno dei due fratelli del vakif, fu nominato nazir del vakuf: il

22 Ibid.: 32-33.
23 Hasandedić 1952, 152.
suo ruolo era quello di revisionare i conti del *katib* e del *mutevelija* alla fine di ogni anno.\(^{24}\)

Koski Mehmed-paša concludeva il documento cercando di tutelare in qualche modo la futura eredità del *vakuf*. Egli stabiliva che dopo la morte dei suoi fratelli, l’amministrazione e la supervisione dell’intera istituzione doveva passare nelle mani dei migliori eredi diretti, i quali avrebbero poi prestato altrettanta attenzione al successivo passaggio di eredità.\(^{25}\)

Al giorno d’oggi il *vakuf* di Koski Mehmed-paša non gode più dei numerosi possedimenti elencati nella *vakufnama*. La sua proprietà attuale consiste in un terreno di 490 mq sul quale si trova l’intera struttura ed in alcune botteghe poste in prossimità dell’ingresso che assicurano al *vakuf* un minimo di entrate annue.\(^{26}\)

Fonti scritte attestano che i discendenti della stirpe di Koski Mehmed-paša abitavano sulla Havala, nella *mahala* di Sinan-paša, in un palazzo che si affacciava sull’attuale piazza I Maggio di Mostar. La loro famiglia possedeva enormi ricchezze e disponeva di numerosi possedimenti non solo in città, ma in tutta la Hercegovina.\(^{27}\)

La dinastia Koski è scomparsa da molto tempo, come la maggior parte delle antiche famiglie di Mostar. Nel 1940 sono state trovate nel cimitero della moschea di Karadoz-beg due lapidi appartenenti a due fratelli di cognome Koski, entrambi morti nella seconda metà del XIX secolo. Essi rappresentano probabilmente gli ultimi due discendenti maschi della stirpe dei Koski a Mostar.

Vicino al Ponte si trova la moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša, la quale rappresenta un tipico luogo di culto della capitale. Questa moschea è in ottimo stato, tutte le sue parti sono rivestite da una copertura di piombo blu.\(^{28}\)

_dal “Diario di viaggio” di Evlija Čelebi (1660)_

Quella di Koski Mehmed-paša è la settima moschea di Mostar in ordine cronologico di costruzione. Per la sua maestosità e per la sua bellezza viene collocata immediatamente dopo quella di Karadoz-beg

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\(^{24}\) Ibid.: 154.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
\(^{26}\) Hasandedić 2000, 30.
\(^{27}\) Hasandedić 1996, 8.
\(^{28}\) Čelebi 1957, 245.
ed unitamente a quest’ultima rappresenta nella città uno dei monumenti di maggior valore storico ed architettonico. La moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša appartiene alla tipologia di moschee a pianta centrale sormontata da cupola, corredata poi da un porticato esterno coronato da tre cупole con annesso un minareto di pietra addossato esternamente (fig. 14). Quando si accede all’interno della moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša, l’occhio del visitatore viene immediatamente colpito dalla sua particolare luminosità e dagli sgargianti colori delle decorazioni che creano un forte contrasto con il bianco dello stucco delle murature: esse riproducono motivi che ripercorrono il mondo vegetale, disegni che seguono semplici linee e colori, intervallati da pannelli contenenti iscrizioni epigrafiche (fig. 15). Nel complesso le decorazioni della moschea di Koski Mehmet-paša non hanno subito nei secoli modifiche significative: non risulta, infatti, ci siano stati tentativi né di coprire né di alterare gli ornamenti appartenenti ad epoche precedenti. Le decorazioni attualmente visibili sono il risultato di varie aggiunte susseguitesi nel tempo, ma, nonostante ciò, in buona parte sono comunque rimaste fedeli ad uno schema originale.

Il complesso di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković

Il complesso di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković è situato anch’esso nel centro di Mostar, sulla sponda destra del fiume Neretva, non molto distante dalla čarišija e dal Vecchio ponte (fig. 16). La moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković costruita nel 1565 è conosciuta a Mostar con il nome di “moschea sotto il tiglio” per la presenza di un albero di tiglio secolare che si stagliava nel giardino proprio davanti ad essa. Davanti alla moschea si trova un cimitero con antichi nišani, chiamato recentemente “mezarluk dei martiri” dopo l’aggiunta di numerose lapidi poste in ricordo dei caduti nell’atroce guerra del ‘92, le cui date scolpite sui nišani riportano lo stesso anno. In fondo al giardino, circondata da un semplice recinto in ferro, si sviluppa l’imponente türbe di Mehmed-aga Kreha.

Secondo credenze popolari locali, Nesuh-aga Vučijaković nacque nella piccola cittadina di Ljubuški nei pressi di Mostar. Della sua vita non si sa molto, dal suo nome però si può desumere che godette del titolo di aga e che molto probabilmente fu una personalità importante all’interno della società dell’epoca, con una notevole disponibilità
finanziaria. Nesuh-aga Vučijaković è infatti considerato un grande *vakif* della Hercegovina, il cui *vakuf* contava numerose opere pie nonché vari esercizi commerciali che gli garantivano cospicue entrate.

Molteplici fonti attestano che nel 1559 egli svolse la carica militare di *dizdar* della fortezza di Ljubuški, titolo molto elevato all’interno dei corpi dei giannizzeri ottomani. Egli, infatti, fu responsabile dei militari deputati alla difesa della fortezza spesso soggetta ad imboscate ed attacchi nemici a causa della sua notevole importanza strategica. Non è possibile stabilire con esattezza il periodo in cui il *vakif* si trasferì a Mostar. È tuttavia certo che dal 1706 al 1835 il ruolo di comandante di Mostar fu affidato ai suoi discepoli e la stirpe dei Vučijaković ancora oggi presente in città con lo stesso cognome.29

Grazie alla preziosa *vakufnama* è possibile risalire a tutte le informazioni concernenti il suo *vakuf* e le opere pie da lui commissionate. Essa fu stilata il 4 gennaio 1565 ed attualmente il possidente della sua copia originale è un discendente della famiglia, l’ing. Hasan Vučijaković. Da questa fonte si apprende che il *vakif* fece erigere due moschee, la prima nella cittadina di Ljubuški e la seconda a Mostar. Accanto a ciascuna delle due moschee egli costruì anche due *mekteb*. Per il sostentamento di tali strutture egli inserì nell’istituzione del *vakuf* la somma di 123000 *dirhem*, 28 botteghe presenti nella *čaršija* di Mostar, una conceria ed una serie di mulini, alcuni disposti sul fiume Radoblja ed altri lungo il fiume Studenci. Con il profitto dei suoi *mektebi* egli ordinò di ricostruire due ponti rispettivamente sul fiume Radoblja e sul Trebižat.30

Nella *vakufnama* compaiono anche tutte le disposizioni relative ai dipendenti del suo *vakuf*. Al *hatib* della moschea spettavano 2 *dirhem* al giorno, mentre l’*imam* della moschea ne percepiva 5. Quest’ultimo era tenuto a pronunciare per la salute del *vakif* due *sure* al giorno dopo la preghiera del mattino, mansione per la quale veniva pagato con un ulteriore *dirhem*. Nesuh-aga Vučijaković dispose inoltre che questi due incarichi fossero riservati a vita a Sejjid Abdulganija. Il ruolo del *muezzin* era invece riservato al rilegatore di libri di nome Muhammad con un compenso di 4 *dirhem* giornalieri. Il compito del *kajjim* era quello di rifornire quotidianamente la moschea di acqua fresca e di controllare gli altri dipendenti affinché assolvessero regolarmente i

29 Hasandedić 2005, 15.
30 Ibid.
loro doveri; per questo incarico il suo salario ammontava a mezzo dirhem al giorno. In caso di scarsa sorveglianza o per una qualsiasi sua distrazione, nella vakufnama era disposto che fosse punito con detrazioni dallo stipendio. Al mualim del mekteb venivano elargiti 4 dirhem con l’incarico di insegnare ai suoi allievi una sura al giorno. Per le candele e per altre necessità legate ai rituali del culto, il vakif stabilì di versargli un altro dirhem al giorno. Il vakif predispose che tutto l’operato del suo vakif fosse supervisionato da un certo Uvejsaga e che tale incarico venisse assolto successivamente dai discendenti di quest’ultimo.31

Per quel che concerne le disposizioni in merito all’organizzazione della moschea a Ljubuški è interessante notare che, come già in quella di Mostar, il vakif stesso avesse nominato il personale che avrebbe dovuto svolgere le varie mansioni: il loro stipendio era però nettamente inferiore rispetto a quello stabilito a Mostar.32 Sempre riguardo la moschea di Ljubuški, è doveroso menzionare l’ordine del vakif di pronunciare ogni giorno, dopo la preghiera di mezzogiorno, una sura alla gloria dell’anima di Selima-hatun e di Zulejha-hatun. Queste due donne che il vakif ha voluto venissero ricordate quotidianamente nelle orazioni, dovevano essere per lui molto importanti e probabilmente si trattava di mogli o di Figlie, o comunque di componenti della sua famiglia.

Non ci sono pervenute altre informazioni riguardo al vakif. Dopo la sua morte tutte le sue ricchezze e la gestione del vakuf rimasero esclusivamente nelle mani della famiglia Vučijaković. Ancora nel 1889 il vakuf di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković era proprietario di cinque botteghe nel bazar di Mostar e nel cimitero adiacente alla moschea.33

La moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković appartiene alla seconda metà del XVI secolo e, nonostante presenti numerosi elementi tipici dell’architettura rinascimentale dalmata del XV secolo, le sue forme ed il suo stile appaiono riconducibili alle moschee della prima epoca ottomana. In pianta, la moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković è caratterizzata dalla presenza di un unico vano quadrato affiancato sul lato destro da un esile minareto. L’ambiente unico è sormontato da cupola mentre il portico esterno è coronato da tre piccole cupolette.

31 Hasandedić 2000, 256.
32 Ibid.
Al primo porticato esterno è stato recentemente aggiunto un secondo portico spiovente. Internamente, la moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković è estremamente sobria e modesta; nell’intera sala di preghiera si presenta infatti priva di decorazioni, fatta eccezione per la cupola, dove il contrasto cromatico inevitabilmente cattura lo sguardo del visitatore attirandolo verso l’alto.

La moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković è un edificio di pregio e di importanza senz’altro minori rispetto alle due moschee trattate in precedenza. Le abilità architettoniche applicate nella costruzione della struttura appaiono limitate e denotano una scarsa conoscenza delle leggi che regolano le proporzioni dei vari elementi strutturali e poca accuratezza nei dettagli, qualità proprie invece dell’esperienza della scuola ottomana di Sinan. Questi mastri edificatori furono con tutta probabilità originari della zona, ed inevitabilmente utilizzarono le semplici tecniche di costruzione locali. La facciata della moschea di Nesuh-aga Vučijaković presenta numerosi dettagli in stile gotico-romanico dovuti all’influenza della scuola dalmata che, per la loro particolarità, conferiscono un certo valore al monumento. È evidente che l’esperienza dell’arte classica ottomana è stata qui riadattata alle esigenze delle condizioni climatiche della regione, all’uso di materiali reperibili in zona, all’abilità dei costruttori locali, nonché ai diversi influensi di stili occidentali (fig. 17).

**Conclusioni**

La moschea di Karadaž-beg e la moschea di Koski Mehmed-paša rispecchiano un’architettura che si differenzia molto dagli altri esempi di moschea tipici della Hercegovina. Malgrado questa regione fosse ubicata ai confini dell’impero ottomano, essa possiede opere architettoniche di notevole importanza dato che, come precedentemente accennato, per la loro progettazione fu impegnato perfino un architetto importante come Sinan. Il periodo iniziale di attività del grande architetto imperiale coincide con le fasi di espansione dell’impero di Solimano, dunque le sue opere vennero realizzate in seguito alle grandi conquiste sui nuovi territori progressivamente annessi. Nonostante siano considerate moschee “di provincia”, grazie al loro stile, alle loro proporzioni ed ai pregiati decori, sono in grado di competere per la bellezza e per il gusto dei dettagli con le maggiori moschee della capitale. I complessi di
Karadžoz-beg e di Koski-paša sono inoltre dotati di una medresa, di uno šadrvan e, all’epoca della costruzione, disponevano anche di altre strutture economico-sociali facenti parte dei reciproci vakufi, rispondendo così alle esigenze della tipologia di moschea ottomana del primo periodo.

Dalla ricercatezza delle forme architettoniche e dalla complessità delle varie strutture annesse alle moschee si desume che i committenti di entrambe fossero personaggi molto potenti e facoltosi che mantennero stretti contatti con l’alta corte ottomana e rivestirono importanti ruoli all’interno dell’amministrazione politico-militare locale dell’epoca.

Durante i primi secoli dell’impero gli ottomani ricorsero ad un sistema di reclutamento molto diffuso chiamato devširme, o raccolta, che consisteva in una forma di tributo “umano” preteso dallo stato. Ogni famiglia cristiana suddita dell’impero aveva il dovere di offrire uno dei propri Figli al sultano, il quale veniva prelevato dal suo villaggio e trasferito ad Istanbul. Qui veniva convertito all’Islam ed addestrato per diventare un servitore nell’harem del sultano oppure un soldato pronto a servire fedelmente l’impero. Questa forma di tributo apportava ovvi benefici sia alla persona prelevata che alla sua famiglia. I giovani addestrati potevano, infatti, godere di una carriera privilegiata all’interno dell’amministrazione ottomana fino a raggiungere alte posizioni di potere. A dimostrazione di questo, nove dei più grandi vizir di Istanbul furono di origini bosniache e l’elemento balcanico poté in tal modo entrare a far parte dell’élite dirigente ottomana.34

Fin dalla sua conquista la Bosnia fu suddivisa in numerose unità, distretti militari ed amministrativi dell’impero ottomano chiamati sandžak, e gestiti dagli sandžak beji, governatori appartenenti alla classe militare ottomana che rappresentavano il potere esecutivo del sultano. Nel 1580 la Bosnia divenne un beglerbegluk ovvero la provincia con il più alto rango politico-amministrativo all’interno dell’organizzazione provinciale dell’impero ottomano.

La regione dell’attuale Bosnia e Hercegovina è un importante testimone della potenza e dello sviluppo dell’impero che ha qui governato per quattro lunghi secoli, è lo specchio straordinario di una cultura e di una società ottomana che fanno parte dell’animo più profondo di questi luoghi e di cui l’architettura rappresenta il segno

34 Malcolm 2000, 75-80.
più tangibile e duraturo. Nonostante la ricchezza di monumenti estremamente interessanti, all’immensa eredità ottomana della zona non sono state dedicate ricerche complete ed approfondite. Sarebbe necessario un lungo lavoro comparativo al fine di catalogare l’insieme dei monumenti, delineando le caratteristiche salienti, sia delle strutture che degli apparati decorativi. L’analisi delle numerose fonti di archivio e degli antichi documenti ottomani tradotti in lingua bosniaca permetterebbe, inoltre, di tracciare un accurato profilo storico riguardo la vita ed i miti dei personaggi che si nascondono dietro la creazione di queste opere di architettura.

Il patrimonio architettonico islamico della Bosnia e Hercegovina è stato ultimamente in balia del pesante conflitto che ne ha distrutto e danneggiato una vasta parte, in quanto simbolo troppo potente dell’identità islamica. La comunità musulmana locale, con l’aiuto di organizzazioni internazionali e di fondi privati, è riuscita a salvaguardare ed a restaurare molte di queste preziose opere architettoniche. Durante le attività di restauro sono stati condotti specifici studi interdisciplinari che, si auspica, siano solo l’inizio di un’accerata ricerca e di un’adeguata valorizzazione artistica, storica e culturale.

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Identità nazionale indonesiana nei manifesti letterari (1925-1963)

By Marco LAURI*

Summary

This paper deals with national identity problems of modern Indonesia, as highlighted by literary manifestos issued by intellectuals in the period 1925-1963, during which Indonesian national identity took form. It will be shown that national identity was a primary concern for Indonesian writers. National struggle, national culture, historical progress and revolution were concepts debated as long as literary generations followed. A deep influx of Western ideas such as nation-state itself, individualism, revolution, and other Romantic ideals, was adopted by a group of authors, while others chose a more Marxist approach. Both claimed that ‘revolution’ hadn’t been achieved with mere political independence, and it had to be carried on according their own ideals in the cultural field.

Keywords: Indonesia, literature, intellectuals, national identity, colonialism

Premessa

L’Indonesia è il quarto paese del mondo per popolazione ed il primo per popolazione musulmana; dati quantitativi sufficienti a renderla di considerevole interesse, per chiunque si occupi, come chi scrive, di Islam.

Però, le culture, le letterature e la società indonesiane restano in gran parte, in Italia, degli illustri sconosciuti, anche all’interno degli studi islamici. Pur essendo la lingua nazionale di duecentoquaranta milioni di persone, l’indonesiano è poco insegnato nel nostro Paese e solo l’Istituto Orientale di Napoli ne ha attivato una cattedra nell’università pubblica.

Senza avere la pretesa di colmare un vuoto, chi scrive vorrebbe proporre in questo articolo alcune osservazioni, emerse da un lavoro di ricerca intrapreso inizialmente per curiosità ed interesse personali, nella speranza di offrire così al lettore italiano uno scorciò, per quanto modesto, su un mondo di conoscenze poco esplorato e spesso di difficile accesso. Si proporrà una lettura di alcuni manifesti letterari apparsi in Indonesia attorno alla metà del secolo scorso,
concentrandosi sulle relative visioni del problema dell’identità e della cultura nazionali.\footnote{L’indonesiano è scritto in caratteri latini, ma nel corso del ventesimo secolo ha conosciuto due riforme ortografiche. In questo articolo ci si attiene generalmente alla grafia di uso attuale, tranne quando si citi direttamente da testi redatti in un’ortografia più antica, o da una fonte che la mantenga. Inoltre, si è mantenuta la vecchia grafia per alcuni nomi, come quello dello scrittore Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, per i quali essa è rimasta generalmente in uso. In diversi casi ho preferito fornire sia la grafia moderna che quella vecchia, messa tra parentesi. In generale, si tenga presente che fino al 1948 l’odierna era scritta oe, e dopo il 1972, cb kh, dj j y, nj ny, sj sy, fj c.}

**Origine dell’indonesiano moderno e della sua letteratura**

La lingua indonesiana (Babasa Indonesia) non è altrove che la forma letteraria moderna che ha assunto la lingua malese nelle Indie Orientali Olandesi prima, e nella Repubblica Indonesiana indipendente poi.\footnote{II CIA Factbook 2008 fornisce i seguenti dati: popolazione indonesiana 237,512,355 (stima luglio 2008) giavanesi 40,6%, sundanesi 15% (censimento 2000) tasso di alfabetizzazione 90,4% (stima 2004).} È importante sottolineare che il malese non è l’unica lingua parlata dagli indonesiani, anzi, è inferiore al giavanese e al sundanese per numero di parlanti nativi.\footnote{Il malese è definito come lingua nazionale del Paese, col nome di Babasa Indonesia, nell’art. 36 della Costituzione indonesiana.} Nonostante questo, è stata scelta già durante la dominazione coloniale olandese come lingua nazionale, in quanto, a partire dal quindicesimo e sedicesimo secolo, la sua diffusione come lingua franca del commercio e della predicazione aveva accompagnato l’islamizzazione dell’Arcipelago.\footnote{Bausani 1970, 270.}

\footnote{1 L’indonesiano è scritto in caratteri latini, ma nel corso del ventesimo secolo ha conosciuto due riforme ortografiche. In questo articolo ci si attiene generalmente alla grafia di uso attuale, tranne quando si citi direttamente da testi redatti in un’ortografia più antica, o da una fonte che la mantenga. Inoltre, si è mantenuta la vecchia grafia per alcuni nomi, come quello dello scrittore Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, per i quali essa è rimasta generalmente in uso. In diversi casi ho preferito fornire sia la grafia moderna che quella vecchia, messa tra parentesi. In generale, si tenga presente che fino al 1948 l’odierna era scritta oe, e dopo il 1972, cb kh, dj j y, nj ny, sj sy, fj c.}

\footnote{2 Il malese è definito come lingua nazionale del Paese, col nome di Babasa Indonesia, nell’art. 36 della Costituzione indonesiana.}

\footnote{3 Il CIA Factbook 2008 fornisce i seguenti dati: popolazione indonesiana 237,512,355 (stima luglio 2008) giavanesi 40,6%, sundanesi 15% (censimento 2000) tasso di alfabetizzazione 90,4% (stima 2004).}

\footnote{4 Bausani 1970, 270.}
Identità nazionale indonesiana

Le vicende di storia linguistico-letteraria del malese d’Indonesia e dei possedimenti e protettorati britannici (attuali Malaysia, Singapore e Brunei) presentano problemi identitari e socio-politici piuttosto diversificati. Il malese è madrelingua maggioritaria in Malaysia, ma di una minoranza in Indonesia, ed ha conosciuto nei due paesi evoluzioni in parte divergenti, esprimendo due letterature nazionali con portata sociologica e sorgenti d’ispirazione differenti. Tuttavia le relazioni tra queste restano strette e la lingua d’espressione la medesima, se pur con differenze lessicali e, fino alla riforma degli anni Settanta, ortografiche.


La letteratura indonesiana moderna, in caratteri latini, svincolata dalle forme e dai generi tradizionali, prodotta fuori dagli ambienti di

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5 Maier 1994.
6 In particolare, in indonesiano, prestiti lessicali e sintattici dal giavanese, mentre in Malaysia è più forte l’influenza araba; inoltre la storia coloniale ha lasciato all’indonesiano una quantità di prestiti neerlandesi. Ne accenna ancora Bausani 1970, 270. Per una trattazione più dettagliata rimando ad Alisjahbana.
7 La cosiddetta *Ejaan Baru* (Grafia Nuova) è entrata in vigore in seguito ad un accordo tra Indonesia e Malaysia nel 1972.
8 Proclamata nel 1945, è stata riconosciuta internazionalmente nel 1949, dopo una guerra di resistenza che indonesiani ricordano come *Revolusi* (rivoluzione).
9 Chambert-Loir 1994D.
10 Tali erano la *Hikayat*, (racconto tradizionale in prosa, dall’arabo *ḥikāya*, narrazione) lo *Syair* (poesia o poema lungo rimato, dall’arabo *ṣīr*, poesia) e il *Pantun* (quartina, caratterizzata da una particolare struttura metrica e sintattica; sembra trattarsi di una forma locale, non connessa alla *robe‘īyye* - quartina - persiana, e malese è certamente il termine). Questa letteratura malese “classica” fiorisce tra il quattordicesimo ed il diciannovesimo secolo, nella Penisola malese ed in tutto l’Arcipelago indonesiano. I suoi testi sono manoscritti, in caratteri arabi, e la loro fruizione appare legata all’oralità (recitazioni popolari o di corte). Questa letteratura
corte per edizioni a stampa in vista di una fruizione privata,11 nasce in seguito alla dominazione coloniale olandese, inizialmente soprattutto negli ambienti marginali degli eurasiani12 e dei peranakan, i cinesi nati in Indonesia, la cui letteratura a stampa data dalla seconda metà del diciannovesimo secolo.13 Si hanno dapprima traduzioni di romanzi cinesi ed olandesi o comunque europei (e qualcuno arabo). Poco dopo comincia a diffondersi una letteratura politicizzata in malese sgradita al potere coloniale.14 Anche in reazione a questo le autorità coloniali istituiscono nel 1908 il Kantoor voor der Volkslectuur (ufficio per la lettura popolare), in malese Balai Pustaka,15 che diventerà una vera e propria casa editrice del governo coloniale, con lo scopo di offrire agli indonesiani letture “sane”.

Balai Pustaka rappresenta il luogo di nascita della letteratura indonesiana moderna “alta”, scritta in un malese “bello”, stilisticamente maturo e raffinato.16


11 Tutte queste caratteristiche sono indicati in termini di opposizione alla produzione ‘classica’ in grafia araba, manoscritta, cortese e recitata. La lettura individuale in privato è un fenomeno relativamente recente e ristretto in Indonesia; Labrousse 1994.

12 Detti localmente Indo; gli eurasiani di padri olandesi e madri indonesiane erano piuttosto numerosi in Indonesia, dove formavano una specifica comunità; dopo l’indipendenza, a causa della politica anti-occidentale di Sukarno molti si trasferirono nei Paesi Bassi.


15 Fino al 1917, la denominazione ufficiale era Commissie voor der Volkslectuur. Col tempo questa istituzione diventerà la maggiore casa editrice dell’Arcipelago e la scuderia della prima letteratura nazionale indonesiana; si veda Bausani 1970. Balai Pustaka (Poestaka nella grafia dell’epoca) significa “palazzo del Libro” in malese-indonesiano (pustaka è uno dei tre termini per “libro” in questa lingua, di etimo sanscritto; gli altri due sono l’arabismo kitab e il prestito dal neerlandese buku). In questa sede si userà sempre il nome malese.

16 Chambert-Loir, 1994B.
Il 28 ottobre 1928, sotto gli auspici del poeta sumatrano Muhammad Yamin (Jamin), si tiene a Batavia il Congresso Giovanile Panindonesiano, che, se non del nazionalismo (il Partito Nazionalista d’Indonesia era stato fondato un anno prima, e le prime organizzazioni nazionaliste risalgono al 1908)\(^{17}\) è però l’atto di nascita della lingua “indonesiana”. Fino ad allora essa era chiamata semplicemente “malese”; ma ora viene scelta come lingua nazionale, secondo lo slogan *Bahasa, Bangsa*\(^{18}\) (una lingua, un popolo).\(^{19}\)

**Gli Angkatan e le correnti**

La tradizione critica indonesiana, concentrata a lungo sui problemi di periodizzazione (*periodisasi*), ha individuato diverse “generazioni” (*angkatan*; letteralmente “classi d’età”; molto meno corretto parlare di “correnti letterarie”; in questa sede si userà d’ora in poi il termine indonesiano) di scrittori moderni; la prima è proprio la *Angkatan Balai Pustaka*, il cui inizio si fa spesso risalire\(^{20}\) al romanzo *Sitti Nurbaya* (*Noerbaja* in grafia dell’epoca) di Marah Rusli (Roesli) del 1922.

A questa seguono, nella critica relativa al periodo di cui ci si occupa qui, altri tre *angkatan* generalmente riconosciuti: *Angkatan Pujangga Baru* (1933-42),\(^{21}\) *Angkatan 45*,\(^{22}\) *Angkatan 66*, alle quali qualcuno\(^{23}\) aggiunge una *Angkatan Terbaru* (“Generazione dei giovani”) attiva dalla fine degli anni Cinquanta ai rivolgimenti del 1966, ma che

\(^{17}\) Hall 1964: 916.

\(^{18}\) Titolo di una poesia di Yamin (1922; traduzione in Bausani 1970: 362) in cui però la “nazione” era la sola isola di Sumatra.

\(^{19}\) Bausani 1970, 365-366.

\(^{20}\) Così in Bausani 1970, 356.


\(^{22}\) Secondo Lombard 1994, si potrebbe ugualmente parlare di *Angkatan 42*. Le date del ’42, del ’45 e del ’66 si riferiscono a momenti della storia politica d’Indonesia: il collasso del dominio olandese con la breve occupazione nipponica nel 1942, la proclamazione dell’indipendenza (17 agosto 1945) e la presa di potere del generale Suharto nel 1965-66, con una decisa ‘svolta a destra’ in politica estera, economica e culturale.

\(^{23}\) Aveling 1994.
troverebbe la sua maturità nella Angkatan 66. Altre Angkatan sono nate in anni più recenti, oltre i limiti temporali del presente lavoro.

Sia Balai Pustaka che Pujangga Baru hanno espresso le proprie intenzioni editoriali e poetiche in diversi documenti; la fase detta di Angkatan 45, invece, è segnata dalla dura polemica tra gli scrittori “universalisti,” che affermano la propria poetica nella “Dichiarazione di Gelanggang” (1950) e nel Manikebu (1963) contrapposti ad un gruppo marxista, che propende per il realismo socialista e si raggruppa attorno al LEKRA ed ai relativi manifesti di poetica o meglio, di politica culturale.

Al di là della periodizzazione, quindi, non è possibile ravvisare una poetica unitaria, e nemmeno dominante, nell’Angkatan 45, che ha valore come definizione di una fase della storia culturale e politica, ma non di scuola letteraria.

Questa polemica si conclude non nell’ambito della letteratura, ma in quello della storia politica d’Indonesia: nel 1965-66, il generale Suharto prende il potere, esautorando il predecessore Sukarno, guida della lotta per l’indipendenza dai Paesi Bassi; i membri del Partito Comunista sono massacrati e le correnti di sinistra che avevano esercitato l’egemonia negli anni precedenti (grazie al sostegno del presidente Sukarno) sono disperse. Importanti intellettuali di sinistra (non necessariamente aderenti al LEKRA) come Rivai Apin, Pramudya Ananta Tur e Sitor Situmorang sono confinati nell’isola di Buru, altri come Sobron Aidit vengono esiliati.

Angkatan 66, che nasce e si afferma a seguito di questi eventi traumatici, produce un’arte “individualista” e perlopiù non impegnata, ma il suo slancio creativo più ricco si spegne nell’arco di un decennio. Questo Angkatan non ha prodotto un manifesto; anche questa è in effetti più una periodizzazione critica (di H.B. Jassin e altri) che di una

25 Contrazione di Manifes Kebudayaan (Manifesto culturale).
26 Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Istituto per la Cultura Popolare).
27 La Mukadimah del 1950 e il Manifes LEKRA del 1955.
28 In Aveling 1994, N.5 si parla di circa 250.000. Altre fonti riportano una stima circa doppia.
“scuola” accomunata da tendenze similari. L’unità di Angkatan 66 si trova più in una certa tendenza, comunque non generalizzata, alla sperimentazione stilistica, e nell’abbandono, del resto reso necessario dalle circostanze, della letteratura impegnata (con alcune eccezioni importanti, come Umar Kayam).

Nel 1966 inoltre l’identità nazionale indonesiana appare stabilita e, dopo anni “de lutte et d’épanouissement” l’arte segue vie più individuali o più commerciali e smette di essere un terreno di scontro sulla natura della cultura nazionale.

L’ultimo manifesto collettivo della letteratura d’Indonesia preso in considerazione qui è quindi il Manikebu del 1963, redatto in polemica col LEKRA sostenuto dal regime di Sukarno; si tenga presente che fu scritto negli ultimi anni di Sukarno, quando molti scrittori “occidentalisti” o “universalisti,” lontani dal LEKRA o semplicemente critici verso la corruzione e l’autoritarismo sukarniani, quali Mokhtar Lubis, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana e l’allora giovane Ajip Rosidi, pagavano le proprie posizioni con la censura, il carcere o l’esilio. Lo stesso Manikebu fu vietato.

Questo articolo sarà un tentativo di lettura di cinque documenti di poetica e “politica” letteraria, in rapporto alle rispettive visioni dell’identità nazionale indonesiana allora in costruzione: uno per l’Angkatan Balai Pustaka, uno per l’Angkatan Pujangga Baru, e tre per le correnti principali dell’Angkatan 45.

**Caratteristiche generali della letteratura indonesiana**

La letteratura indonesiana moderna del periodo considerato è un fenomeno elitario, che coinvolge poche centinaia di autori e poche decine di migliaia di lettori in un paese che all’epoca supera i cento milioni di abitanti. Queste élites di produttori e fruitori della letteratura indonesiana sono prevalentemente urbane e di provenienza sumatrana (specialmente per i periodi del Balai Pustaka e del Pujangga Baru) o giavanese e sundanese (soprattutto a partire da Angkatan 45). Inoltre, tale élite coincide solo in parte con la borghesia urbana.

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31 Alisjahbana si autoesiliò in Malaysia, Lubis in Australia; il primo romanzo di Rosidi non poté essere pubblicato fino al 1966; Lombard 1994.

32 Labrousse 1994
dominante e la classe politica; gli ambienti letterari non godono di grande prestigio nelle gruppi economici e politici più importanti.33

Questo si deve a diversi aspetti già evidenziati, come il plurilinguismo dell’Arcipelago e la vitalità di alcune letterature locali (in particolare quella sundanese, anche grazie all’opera di Ajip Rosidi)34 e il persistere in larghi strati della popolazione di un legame forte con l’oralità e con le forme narrative e drammaturgiche tradizionali, malesi o di altre regioni. Per il periodo considerato, si deve considerare inoltre un analfabetismo assai più diffuso del tasso attuale (piuttosto basso per un paese povero; ad ogni modo le autorità indonesiane hanno da subito combattuto il fenomeno con energia e successo)35 e la difficoltà economica e spaziale di accedere ai libri, soprattutto nelle zone rurali e nei piccoli centri.

La letteratura indonesiana è accentratata su pochi grandi centri urbani, soprattutto Batavia/Jakarta e secondariamente Medan (Sumatra Nord) Yogyakarta (Giava centrale) Makassar (Sulawesi) Surabaya (Giava orientale); questi centri secondari si mostrano vitali specialmente nel periodo di Angkatan 45, mentre prima e dopo l’accentramento su Jakarta resta prevalente36 a prescindere dall’origine regionale degli autori, che, come si è detto, nei primi decenni sono spesso sumatrani (Yamin, Alisjahbana, Nur Sultan Iskandar, Sitegar, Muis, Rusli, i fratelli Pane, Amir Hamzah, Hamka, Sitor Situmorang). L’accesso ai libri, al di fuori di questi e pochi altri centri, è difficile.37

La letteratura indonesiana è una letteratura di riviste e periodici,38 molti dei quali non esclusivamente letterari. Questo ne rende relativamente più difficile lo studio, per ragioni di reperimento della documentazione originale,39 ma ne facilita la diffusione, nei grandi centri, presso un pubblico più vasto, benché sempre ampiamente minoritario rispetto alla popolazione totale. Una delle cause di questo fenomeno va cercata nella relativa debolezza delle case editrici e nel già citato accentramento urbano degli ambienti letterari in un

33 Labrousse 1994
34 Rosidi 1994
35 Hall 1964: 1101
36 Lombard 1994
immenso paese rurale composto di molte isole, che ostacola la distribuzione e l’accessibilità del libro.\textsuperscript{40}

Un quarto aspetto da evidenziare è la forte occidentalizzazione dei modelli da cui la letteratura moderna s’ispira, sia nelle forme che nel contenuto, fin dai primi romanzi di Balai Pustaka. Al tradizionale \textit{pantun} si sostituisce il sonetto,\textsuperscript{41} alla \textit{bikayat} il romanzo e specialmente la novella (\textit{cerpen}),\textsuperscript{42} al \textit{wayang} il teatro di tipo europeo\textsuperscript{43} (\textit{tonil} o \textit{teater}). La letteratura indonesiana si innesta su un flusso di traduzioni dalle lingue europee (specialmente dal neerlandese o per suo tramite) e in misura minore dal cinese e dall’arabo. La polemica tra LEKRA ed “universalisti” verterà anche sui modelli stranieri da seguire, col LEKRA incline a rivolgersi a traduzioni di opere sovietiche o della Cina Popolare, ma anche ad accusare i suoi avversari di esterofilia ed estraneità allo spirito indonesiano a causa dei loro modelli occidentali e “borghesi”. Questo tratto accomuna l’indonesiana a molte letterature moderne dell’Asia, ma la rottura con le forme tradizionali è stata particolarmente forte\textsuperscript{45} (meno nel teatro, dove autori come W. S. Rendra\textsuperscript{46} hanno cercato soluzioni originali in cui far confluire tradizione giavanese ed influenza europea).

Infine, la letteratura indonesiana vede un consistente ruolo delle minoranze; oltre all’azione pionieristica di eurasiani e \textit{peranakan}, ed in seguito dei minangkabau, va sottolineato come, in un paese musulmano per oltre l’85\%,\textsuperscript{47} gran parte dell’editoria fosse nelle mani dei cattolici,\textsuperscript{48} e un discreto numero di letterati di spicco appartenga alle comunità cristiane cattolica e calvinista (Johannes Engelbert Tatengkeng, Hans Baguë Jassin, W. S. Rendra, per non citare che i più

\textsuperscript{40} Chambert-Loir 1994C. Questo è naturalmente meno vero per i libri scolastici che godono di sostegni statali.

\textsuperscript{41} Bausani 1970, 363.

\textsuperscript{42} Contrazione di \textit{cerita pendek}, “racconto breve”. Si tratta di un genere diffusissimo in Indonesia (Bausani 1970) il cui sviluppo specifico si ha con il periodo di \textit{Angkatan 45} (Lombard 1994).

\textsuperscript{43} Bonneff 1994.

\textsuperscript{44} Voce di etimologia neerlandese; Bonneff 1994.

\textsuperscript{45} Bausani 1970, 271.

\textsuperscript{46} Aveling 1994.

\textsuperscript{47} 86\% secondo il CIA Factbook.

\textsuperscript{48} Chambert-Loir 1994C.
importanti). Questo dato è significativo anche alla luce del ruolo di questa letteratura nel formare un’identità nazionale, scopo che ad esempio i redattori di _Pujangga Baru_ (per cui scriveva J.E. Tatengkeng) si ponevano, come si vedrà, in modo esplicito.

È invece assai limitata e marginale la partecipazione degli śivaiti balinesi alla letteratura moderna.⁴⁹

**I Pancasila**

L’identità nazionale di molti paesi colonizzati, e anche dell’Indonesia, è spesso recente, per quanto si voglia tentare di individuarne radici antiche e profonde;⁵⁰ queste saranno spesso “tradizioni inventate.”

Questo non accade solo nei paesi colonizzati, alcuni dei quali (Viet Nam, Armenia) hanno mantenuto, modernamente riformulata, un’identità nazionale precoloniale; stati che non sono mai stati formalmente delle colonie, come la Turchia, hanno invece un’identità nazionale di formazione ugualmente recente e in qualche modo problematica o imposta.⁵¹ Tali problemi si devono all’introduzione dall’esterno, in modo più o meno dirompente, del modello occidentale dello Stato-Nazione su realtà strutturate diversamente, con una diversa visione dell’identità e del rapporto con lo Stato; questo fenomeno segue all’espansione europea nell’età dell’imperialismo anche al di là degli – enormi – territori effettivamente colonizzati.

Nell’Europa occidentale, i primi stati nazionali (Spagna, Inghilterra, Francia, Portogallo, Svizzera) nascono sulla base di fatti politici, ai quali segue la costruzione di una identità nazionale comune; tuttavia, questo accade prima ancora che il principio politico di nazionalità prenda forma; tale principio, su cui si fonda la nascita degli stati nazionali italiano e tedesco, diventa dominante nel discorso politico europeo solo nel corso del diciannovesimo secolo. In Italia ed in Germania (ma, prima ancora, nei Paesi Bassi, se pure in modo embrionale) lo Stato nazionale si istituisce a posteriori su ciò che viene

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⁴⁹ Lombard 1994 cita un solo autore, del resto minore, Trisna I Gusti


⁵¹ Per la Turchia si vedano in particolare Karpat 2001 e Akçam 2004.
individuato come una comunanza territoriale, etnica, linguistica, unificata dalla percezione comune dell’appartenenza nazionale.

Al contrario, in molti paesi colonizzati, e tra questi l’Indonesia, l’unità politica territoriale creata dal colonizzatore è quella del futuro Stato nazionale, a prescindere dalla cultura, dall’etnia, dai desideri e dai sentimenti degli abitanti; su questa unità politica precostituita, a priori, si punterà ad edificare, con modi che variano a seconda della situazione etnica e sociale, della storia, e dell’orientamento ideologico dei gruppi dirigenti, un’identità nazionale più o meno condivisa.

Inoltre la ricerca e l’elaborazione di quest’identità, ad opera di élites di cultura spesso duplice (partecipe cioè sia delle tradizioni “alte” locali che dell’apporto occidentale, in misura chiaramente variabile) avviene in Indonesia, come altrove, all’ombra dei grandi conflitti ideologici e tra i diversi imperialismi interni all’Occidente.

Il risultato, poco sorprendente, è che queste identità nazionali sono oggetto di processi di “negoziato” e di conflitto. La stessa idea di “Indonesia” è fatta propria dagli intellettuali nazionalisti dell’Arcipelago solo nel 1928 ed il termine è d’invenzione europea.

Per quanto riguarda l’identità nazionale indonesiana, al momento dell’indipendenza essa fu basata sui Pancasila (“cinque principi”, dal sanscrito) elaborati dal futuro primo presidente dell’Indonesia, il giavanese Ahmed Sukarno (1901-1970). I Pancasila hanno costituito, in diverse interpretazioni, la filosofia, se non l’ideologia ufficiale, dello Stato Nazionale indonesiano; furono enunciati immediatamente prima della dichiarazione d’indipendenza del 17 agosto 1945 ed inseriti nel preambolo della Costituzione.

52 Bausani 1970: 365, 369


54 Il 1 Giugno 1945, sotto una forma leggermente diversa da quella che sarebbe diventata ufficiale in seguito.
I cinque principi sono:\(^{55}\)

*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (fede in un unico Dio/Essere Supremo)

*Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab* (Fratellanza umana/umanesimo/ umanità giusta e civile).

*Persatuan Indonesia*\(^{56}\) (unità - nazionale - dell’Indonesia)

*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh brikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawara- tan/perwakilan* (Democrazia sotto la guida della saggezza unanime dei rappresentanti - del popolo -)\(^{57}\)

*Keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia* (Giustizia sociale per tutto il popolo d’Indonesia).

Questi principi sono stati oggetto di contestazione da diversi punti di vista, in particolare – ma non solo – dalle correnti islamiste,\(^{58}\) e di diverse elaborazioni e riadattamenti.

Nel complesso, si può dire che si richiamino ad idee nazionaliste e progressiste di derivazione europea ed in particolare del pensiero delle sinistre di ispirazione occidentale, sebbene sia Sukarno che soprattutto Suharto abbiano tentato di radicarli nelle tradizioni sociopolitiche locali dell’Indonesia e dell’isola di Giava soprattutto. I due regimi hanno ne hanno inoltre favorito un’interpretazione in senso autoritario e totalizzante, accentuandone l’aspetto nazionalista e collettivista.

Come si vedrà, tuttavia, il richiamo alla filosofia dei *Pancasila* assumerà un senso diverso nei manifesti letterari.

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\(^{55}\) Dalla versione ufficiale inserita nel preambolo della Costituzione indonesiana del 1945 (undang-undang dasar Republik Indonesia).


\(^{56}\) Nella prima formulazione del giugno 1945 si ha invece *Kebangsaan* “nazionalismo”, da *Bangsa* “nazione, popolo”, (da intendersi in senso non chauvinistico, in correlazione con il principio internazionalista della *Kemanusiaan* “umanità”).

\(^{57}\) Questo principio è stato tradotto in diversi modi..

\(^{58}\) Si veda ad esempio qui:

http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1655/representative-democracy/
I manifesti e le dichiarazioni letterarie

I cinque testi raccolti e tradotti da Henri Chambert-Loir\(^59\) e di cui si tenterà una proposta di lettura sono:

- una presentazione dei lavori di Balai Pustaka, redatta in francese dal dottor Rinkes, direttore della casa editrice governativa nel 1925, in occasione della donazione alla biblioteca reale del Cairo di tutte le sue pubblicazioni; il testo contiene una sintesi della storia e degli intenti di Balai Pustaka.
- Una presentazione di *Pujangga Baru* che esprime e riassume le intenzioni, gli scopi e la visione letteraria della rivista prima della sua uscita.
- La ‘dichiarazione di *Gelanggang*’ del 1950, rappresentativa della corrente ‘universalista’ dell’*Angkatan 45*.
- La *Mukadimah* del LEKRA che ne espone la visione teorica di “cultura popolare” (*rakyat*, ben distinto da *popler* nel senso di “pop” o “commerciale”),\(^60\) apparsa anch’essa nel 1950.
- Il *Manikebu* del 1963, che riafferma le posizioni “universaliste” in un momento in cui queste erano avversate dal potere politico.

**Balai Pustaka: un progetto coloniale paternalista e pedagogico**

La presentazione, opera del dottor Rinkes, allora direttore di Balai Pustaka, esprime l’idea di cosa dovesse essere la moderna cultura dei sudditi coloniali colti dei Paesi Bassi tra le due guerre, secondo le autorità coloniali olandesi. Questa idea potrebbe riassumersi in una sorta di “paternalismo progressista”.

In definitiva, scopo di Balai Pustaka è fornire agli indonesiani di cultura occidentalizzata delle letture “sane” nella loro lingua, contrastando quindi la diffusione di opere ostili alla dominazione coloniale (*éviter que les politiciens a bon marché, les demagogues, les agitateurs puissent trop facilement les influencer par des livres malsains, dans une direction...*).\(^59\)

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\(^{59}\) Chambert-Loir 1994D. Tutte le citazioni virgolettate dei manifesti sono tradotte da chi scrive dalle sue versioni in francese, tenendo presenti gli originali in malese riportati a fronte, tranne per il testo di Rinkes, il cui originale è in francese. Salvo diversa indicazione, tutti i virgolettati nelle pagine che seguono provengono dai manifesti presi in esame. I corsivi sono nostri.

\(^{60}\) Per la nozione di *pop* nella letteratura indonesiana si veda Labrousse 1994.
nuisible aux propres intérêts des indigènes)\(^{61}\) e al tempo stesso soddisfacendo le loro esigenze culturali ed indirizzandole in canali utili alle autorità olandesi.

Rinkes offre una breve panoramica delle condizioni socioculturali dell’Indonesia che hanno portato alla nascita della casa editrice governativa, dal suo punto di vista, ma con una notevole acutizia; coglie nell’istruzione moderna portata dagli olandesi e nella nascita di una classe di piccoli funzionari e professionisti alfabetizzati da queste scuole nell’alfabeto latino, l’origine del potenziale pubblico a cui le opere edite dal suo istituto si rivolgevano.

Balai Pustaka si indirizza ai suoi lettori sia sostenendo la produzione di opere nuove in stile moderno che recuperando e stampando parti del patrimonio classico delle letterature indonesiane, quando fossero compatibili con i gusti e le intenzioni dei colonizzatori, che promuovendo traduzioni di opere europee moderne, dichiaratamente “adattate” (espressione che si presta bene a nascondere una possibile censura vera e propria) al gusto indonesiano, o almeno all’idea che gli olandesi ed i loro collaboratori locali ne avevano.

Nella presentazione emergono due elementi significativi:

la richiesta di un’offerta culturale adeguata alle proprie esigenze proviene dagli stessi indonesiani colti, e viene “graziosamente” soddisfatta dal paternalistico\(^{62}\) governo olandese.

I Paesi Bassi, anche tramite Balai Pustaka, si assumono la “missione civilizzatrice” di elevare il livello culturale degli indonesiani; si presume come scontata l’inferiorità, o meglio la minorità, della cultura autoctona che viene “innalzata” dalla tutela del colonizzatore; l’indonesiano è dipinto come un minore che viene ‘educato’ dalla saggezza sollecita ma severa del dominio coloniale ‘illuminato.’

Tale “missione civilizzatrice” è evidentemente l’ombra ideologica sotto cui si nascondono conquista militare, asservimento economico e

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\(^{61}\) “Evitare che politici a buon mercato, demagoghi ed agitatori potessero troppo facilmente influenzarli con libri malsani, in un direzione nociva per gli stessi interessi degli indigeni” Traduzione mia.

\(^{62}\) “Sage et paternel” nelle stesse parole del Rinkes. Si tenga presente l’influsso della “politica etica” voluta dalla metropoli per le sue colonie, improntata almeno idealmente alla modernizzazione e al miglioramento delle condizioni degli indigeni. Hall 1964, 913-914.
alienazione culturale; quest’ultima si manifesta, sebbene in forme rese deliberatamente accettabili ai colonizzatori,\textsuperscript{63} anche nelle opere pubblicate da Balai Pustaka, in particolare in “Salah Asuhan” (“L’educazione sbagliata”) di Abdul Muis, scritto nel 1927 e pubblicato l’anno seguente (quindi dopo la presentazione di Rinkes presa in esame).

Si legge inoltre in Rinkes un comprensibile e non ingiustificato orgoglio per il successo qualitativo e quantitativo del progetto e per la sua unicità (a conoscenza di chi scrive, nessuna iniziativa paragonabile, per qualità e dimensioni, era stata intrapresa da nessun governo coloniale coevo) nonché per l’efficacia (seppure relativa) nel campo della distribuzione libraria.

**Pujangga Baru: il nazionalismo progressista**

“La nostra nazione [bangsa, lett. “popolo”] è entrata in un’epoca nuova, l’epoca del progresso” così si apre il prospetto con cui Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, Armijn Pane e Amir Hamzah pubblicizzano, nel 1932, la nuova rivista di cui sono redattori, *Pujangga Baru*, la prima rivista unicamente letteraria d’Indonesia.\textsuperscript{64}

Il fascino e la speranza del progresso è la preoccupazione principale per i redattori della rivista: e lo scopo di tale movimento, di tale “fioritura” (per usare le loro parole, improntate a suggestive metafore vitalistiche) è una “società indonesiana perfetta” (*masjarakat Indonesia jang sempoerna*) e quindi, un’utopia nazionale progressiva. La “nazione” Indonesiana e la sua lingua sono già date per scontate, non sono e non saranno oggetto di dibattito; questo avrà luogo, invece, sulla natura (immaginata come evidentemente unitaria) della sua cultura nazionale in rapporto all’Occidente, durante la *Polemik Kebudayaan*\textsuperscript{65} (Polemica sulla cultura) degli anni successivi.

Ma tutti i partecipanti a tale dibattito condivideranno la visione, politica prima ancora che poetica, di una nazione indonesiana unitaria,

\textsuperscript{63} Moeis 1927

\textsuperscript{64} *Madjallah kesoesasteraan dan babasa, “Rivista letteraria e linguistica”,* in grafia dell’epoca.

\textsuperscript{65} Bausani 1970, 367 Le due posizioni che si contrapposerono nella polemica furono quella, pienamente occidentalista, di Alisjahbana, e quella spiritualista e con tendenze teosofiche di Sanusi Pane; i testi sul dibattito furono raccolti dopo la guerra da Achdiat Karta Mihardja in volume.
partecipe della cultura “universale” (cioè essenzialmente occidentale) e in cui la cultura, le lettere e la linguistica sono strumenti della costruzione e del progresso nazionali.

Sebbene la produzione della Angkatan Pujangga Baru abbia risentito fortemente della scuola simbolista neerlandese dei Tachtiger, il concetto simbolista di ‘arte per l’arte’ resta estraneo alla sua dichiarazione poetica e non potrà prendere piena cittadinanza nella letteratura indonesiana fino ad Angkatan 66. “L’arte autentica dà forma agli ideali, alla lotta, alla sofferenza della società da cui sorge”.

Dunque, la letteratura di Pujangga Baru vuole dunque essere una letteratura politica, nel senso più ampio del termine, e si propone come guida del progresso nazionale. Sia la nazione che il progresso sono presentati come dati acquisiti, cioè come realtà di cui si riconosce il valore, e che il letterato, all’interno del più ampio movimento per l’avanzamento nazionale a tutti i livelli, dovrebbe guidare, nell’ambito del proprio campo di competenza.

C’è inoltre, evidente fin nel nome della rivista, la nozione di un tempo nuovo, dotato di un proprio “spirito” (semangat), cui la letteratura deve “dare corpo;” sembra di vedere qui anche una richiesta di superamento delle forme letterarie orali e tradizionali.

È evidente che le forme nuove vengono dal contatto col colonizzatore e con l’Occidente, ma questo fatto non viene dichiarato esplicitamente (per quanto Alisjahbana ne avesse piena ed esplicita coscienza);66 si lascia che il lettore lo intuisca, accennando invece al ruolo passato della civiltà indiana (e all’Islam) che “suscitò una nuova arte” in Indonesia. Questi riferimenti sono preceduti da quelli all’arte greca, rinascimentale e romantica, ciascuna delle quali sarebbe “conforme alla propria epoca.” Risulta evidente che Pujangga Baru guardi a tali modelli nel voler sviluppare una letteratura nazionale adeguata allo “spirito dell’epoca.”

La terminologia usata, come si nota anche da questi pochi esempi, è storicista, ma soprattutto romantica; non solo il Romanticismo europeo è espressamente citato come esempio di arte “conforme alla sua epoca” ma l’idea dell’artista che esprime lo spirito del suo tempo e della sua nazione, pare profondamente debitrice al romanticismo europeo.

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Stabilite queste premesse ideali, i redattori enunciano un programma ambizioso: vista la situazione pratica in cui si trova la letteratura indonesiana, senza contatti tra i diversi autori né alcuna linea guida (che possa, si presume, segnalare loro “lo spirito del tempo”), la rivista si propone di rappresentare il punto di contatto e la guida, anche nel campo del dibattito linguistico.

Una simile pretesa può accordarsi solo con formulazioni di poetica estremamente generali; ed in effetti nel manifesto preso in esame non sono espresse preferenze stilistiche o indirizzi letterari specifici, al di là dei principi generali della nazione e del progresso. Il campo degli argomenti su cui si pubblicherà si estende a tutti gli ambiti linguistici e a tutti i generi letterari, comprese le forme poetiche tradizionali, espressamente citate.

Tuttavia, proprio in queste generiche premesse ideali, si afferma di fatto una poetica occidentalizzante e, in un paese coloniale come l’Indonesia, necessariamente elitaria.

**Gelanggang: individualismo, universalismo e nazionalismo**


Si apre con due rivendicazioni apparentemente contraddittorie: eredità della cultura universale (“kebudayaan dunia”) e “indonesianità” (“Ke-Indonesiaan”) del “contenuto della nostra espressione emozionale ed intellettuale”. Segue il rifiuto di definire la cultura indonesiana e di limitarsi a concepirla nei prodotti della cultura antica; piuttosto, gli estensori impiegano la metafora delle voci, provenienti “da tutti gli angoli del mondo” e riecheggiate da quella loro propria, quella dell’Indonesia.

In questo ed altri aspetti (come il ribadito impegno della letteratura nella società) questo manifesto sembra collocarsi in una linea di continuità con gli intenti di *Pujangga Baru*; e questo malgrado i redattori di *Gelanggang*, Rivai Apin e Asrul Sani, avessero pubblicato, nello stesso anno, una antologia contenente anche opere postume del grande poeta Chairil Anwar, morto prematuramente nel 1949; il titolo di questa antologia “Tiga menguak Takdir,” sarebbe da tradursi come “Tre contro il Destino,” ma anche “Tre contro Takdir;” Takdir è ovviamente Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, il redattore di *Pujangga Baru*.
prima della guerra, contro il quale i giovani poeti sembrano voler lanciare una ribellione “generazionale”.

L’elemento nuovo nella dichiarazione di Gelanggang è la Rivoluzione (Revolusi). I suoi estensori concordano all’apparenza coi contemporanei e rivali del LEKRA, nel ritenere che la Rivoluzione, ovvero la dura guerra d’indipendenza contro i Paesi Bassi, durata con diverse tregue dal 1945 al 1949, non fosse completa, malgrado il conseguimento dell’indipendenza politica.

Per gli autori della dichiarazione, la Rivoluzione è infatti la sostituzione di “valori nuovi ai valori obsoleti, che devono essere distrutti;” il tono combattivo (“combatteremo ogni tentativo di ridurre o impedire il nostro esame dei valori”) e l’atteggiamento rivoluzionario e prometeico, si possono in parte attribuire al contesto storico (l’indipendenza era stata ottenuta da appena un anno, dopo un lungo e difficile conflitto), ma vanno soprattutto attribuiti all’attenzione, ancora d’impronta romantica e ‘moderna’, per la singolarità e la particolarità dell’individuo e la sua libertà, aspetti centrali anche della poesia di Anwar.67

Nazionalismo, individualismo ed universalismo coesistono quindi nella poetica di Gelanggang. Questo diventa meno sorprendente ricordando la compresenza di universalismo umanitario (Kemanusiaan) e nazionalismo (Kebangsaan/Persehatan) nei Pancasila (non citati espressamente nel testo), e la tesi di Chabod68 sulla relazione tra nazionalismo, universalismo ed individualismo (come aspetti particolaristici ed irrazionalistici) nel Romanticismo europeo, con cui anche questi intellettuali indonesiani sembrano avere molto in comune.

Implicitamente, e senza produrre (diversamente dal LEKRA) un discorso sociale e politico, gli autori di Gelanggang asseriscono se stessi come guida intellettuale della Rivoluzione; il loro “carattere proprio” (sendiri, termine che significa “sé, stesso, proprio, solo” e ricorre varie volte nel breve documento) è anche, romanticamente, il carattere indonesiano, o meglio, il carattere della cultura indonesiana. Nel riaffermare la propria individualità, la collegano (ancora su linee romantiche) all’appartenenza nazionale ed universale; probabilmente,


68 Chabod 1961, 17-79.
è nella centralità della Rivoluzione ancora da completare che si trova il vero nesso emozionale tra i tre aspetti, che sono del resto tipici di una modernità occidentale, pienamente accolta.

Nel nazionalismo di Sani, Apin e dei loro compagni, non sembra esserci traccia di esclusivismo; emerge l’universalismo umanitario dei Pancasila e la rivendicazione, già presente in Pujangga Baru, di un posto alla pari per l’Indonesia e la sua cultura, tra gli stati del mondo; posto che, si immagina, sarà lo sforzo dei suoi intellettuali a conquistarle, nel campo letterario; e questo richiede logicamente che la letteratura indonesiana partecipi della letteratura mondiale, dando e ricevendo “stimoli vocali” secondo la metafora di Gelanggang.

**LEKRA: cultura popolare e cultura socialista**

Sempre nel 1950, l’Istituto per una cultura popolare (LEKRA) di tendenza marxista, pubblica la propria Mukadimah ("Introduzione", dall’arabo muqaddima) in cui enuncia i principi fondamentali della sua poetica, basati sul realismo socialista.

Si tratta del più dettagliato e del più esplicitamente ideologico dei testi esaminati in questa sede.

La Mukadimah contrappongne la cultura popolare, o “cultura democratica-popolare” (Kultur Demokrasi Rakyat) alla “cultura coloniale” (Kultur kolonial), espressione di uno strato superiore minoritario. Quest’ultima deriva dalla combinazione di cultura imperialista (cioè occidentale) e feudale (cioè l’espressione delle élites indonesiane precoloniali).

La cultura popolare è ciò che si oppone a queste due culture, che sarebbero estranee al popolo indonesiano. Ma invano si cercherebbe, nella Mukadimah, un definizione esplicita, in positivo, delle forme e dei contenuti di quest’arte popolare, se non in termini polemici, di lotta.

Ci si concentra invece sugli scopi politici rivoluzionari, e sull’analisi della situazione sociale e culturale d’Indonesia. La dimensione patriottico-nazionale è ben presente, anche in funzione anti-imperialista, e il concetto di “Indonesia” non è messo in discussione. Anche in questo testo, l’intellettuale ed il suo lavoro hanno, naturalmente, una funzione di guida e di stimolo per il popolo e la società. Tale funzione è meglio espressa, come già in Pujangga Baru, e

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69 Maiuscole e minuscole corrispondono a quelle dell’originale
con più forza ancora, tramite il coordinamento e l’azione collettiva dei letterati.

Anche per il LEKRA, come per Gelanggang, la Revolusi del 1945 non si è compiuta con il conseguimento dell’indipendenza; essa è stata tradita dalla borghesia indonesiana ed è sostanzialmente fallita. Compito dell’arte popolare è guidare gli indonesiani allo sviluppo della coscienza, così da compiere la rivoluzione e instaurare in Indonesia una democrazia popolare socialista.

Comunismo e socialismo non sono mai espressamente nominati, ma la loro impronta è evidente; la massiccia retorica marxista, ricca di maiuscole, appesantisce il testo.

Per quanto riguarda i modelli da seguire, LEKRA non respinge a priori la letteratura straniera (purché sia “popolare”; presumibilmente cioè proveniente dal blocco socialista o da autori ad esso legati ideologicamente) né il patrimonio letterario classico indonesiano, riservandosi l’esame critico di quanto in essi possa essere utile alla coscienza rivoluzionaria del popolo indonesiano.

Si tratta di una posizione collegabile al diritto all’esame critico e al rapporto con la cultura universale rivendicati da Gelanggang, ma estremizzata e sottoposta alla finalità “popolare” e rivoluzionaria.

**Manikebu: la riaffermazione dei Pancasila**


La principale novità del Manikebu è il richiamo esplicito e conclusivo ai Pancasila, che abbiamo visto ispirare solo implicitamente la dichiarazione di Gelanggang.

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70 Tradotta in Santamaria 1973, 221.
Dato i che Pancasila sono stati enunciati dallo stesso Sukarno, si può interpretare la loro assunzione, da parte dei Manikebui, a “filosofia culturale” (“falsafa kebudajaan”), come un tentativo di cautelare la propria posizione riaffermando fedeltà ai fondamenti ideologici della nazione. D’altro canto, alla luce di testi come “Tirannia” o altri dei numerosi lavori ugualmente polemici verso l’autoritarismo di Sukarno, si può vedere nel richiamo ai Pancasila un’accusa al presidente. Ancora una volta, la Revolusi sarebbe stata tradita (e dai suoi stessi artefici) o incompiuta.

**Conclusioni**

Tutti i cinque testi qui analizzati, che rappresentano le tendenze poetiche prevalenti della letteratura indonesiana nel periodo considerato, declinano variamente concezioni umanistiche, secolari e in qualche modo occidentalizzanti della letteratura.

Nella stessa epoca, in Indonesia è esistito un filone di letteratura più strettamente legata a valori pre-coloniali, in particolare richiamandosi all’Islam. Tuttavia, sarebbe difficile definire anche questa produzione, ed i suoi intenti, come “tradizionalisti,” perlomeno nel senso proprio del termine. Le organizzazioni e gli intellettuali di tendenza islamica, tra cui i più importanti sono Hamka e Achdiat Karta Mihardja, si ispirano infatti ad un Islam “modernizzato,” de-territorializzato e riportato alle sue fonti originarie, secondo tendenze che in questo periodo sono dominanti anche in India, Medio Oriente e nelle aree turcofone. Hamka in particolare si impegna nella sua regione d’origine, il paese Minangkabau, per ristabilire il “vero Islam” che le consuetudini locali (adat, che tra i Minangkabau prevede una sorta di matriarcato) avrebbero “corrotto”. Questo “purismo” musulmano, accompagnato ad un senso nuovo e più profondo dell’unità della Umma musulmana come legame politico e

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71 Di cui il più noto è “Crepuscolo a Jakarta” di Mokhtar Lubis, che tuttavia non firmò il Manikebui.


73 In particolare in Egitto, con l’opera di Muḥammad ‘Abdūh e Raķīd Ṭīdā. Si veda Branca 2003, 73-75.

74 Karpat 2001.

75 Bausani 1970, 373.
culturale, è in realtà tipicamente moderno nelle forme e negli strumenti. Questi movimenti non vanno confusi con l’attuale ideologia “fondamentalista islamica,” che è più recente, sebbene ne possano costituire in qualche misura un parziale antecedente.

Tra i testi presi in esame, esistono una serie di aspetti comuni importanti; in particolare, ci appare che tra le intenzioni espresse da Pujangga Baru, Gelanggang ed il Manikebu possa vedersi una continuità dell’ispirazione “romantica,” intesa nel senso più ampio, caratterizzata da tre elementi già evidenziati: nazionalismo indonesiano, individualismo, universalismo occidentalizzante.

A tre testi più tardi, Gelanggang, la Mukadimah e Manikebu, è comune una concezione in qualche modo conflittuale della letteratura; il compimento della Revolusi e la lotta per la libertà (individuale per Gelanggang e Manikebu, collettiva per il LEKRA) sono compiti sociali a cui il letterato, per la sua parte, si impegna.

A tutti è comune una concezione progressiva della storia e del ruolo della letteratura come guida della popolazione, e quindi come elemento fondante dell’identità nazionale (o coloniale, nel caso di Balai Pustaka). La costruzione nazionale è un’opera collettiva in cui lo scrittore svolge la sua parte impegnandosi nelle società.

Nella fase di tale costruzione che si prende in esame, i Pancasila rappresentano un fondamento ideale comune a Gelanggang e Manikebu, ma anche nel discorso rivoluzionario del LEKRA e in quello nazional-universalista di Pujangga Baru se ne colgono echi ed anticipazioni.

In qualche modo, questi principi proiettano sulla letteratura, che si propone di essere nazionale e di esprimere la voce dell’intero paese, oltre che degli individui, un’ombra ideale ineludibile.

I manifesti, che hanno espresso le tendenze poetiche e le prese di posizione di larga parte dell’intelligencija indonesiana attorno alla metà del secolo scorso, mostrano la tendenza ad profondo impegno della letteratura nella società, (anche attraverso l’aggregazione di cui si fa alfiere Pujangga Baru) che cozza con la realtà di un ambiente letterario nazionale geograficamente e socialmente limitato, incapace di incidere realmente sulle sorti del paese.

Attraverso di essi si legge l’intenzione di creare un nazione moderna, unitaria e sicura di sé stessa e del suo ruolo internazionale,
ma proprio per questo aperta ad influenze esterne, come è spesso stato il territorio indonesiano nella sua storia.\textsuperscript{76}

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\textsuperscript{76} L’autore ringrazia la professoressa Laura Strappa, che in anni di racconti e conversazioni ha molto contribuito al suo interesse e conoscenza dell’Indonesia, per avergli messo a disposizione i suoi libri sull’argomento, spesso difficili da reperire altrimenti, Daniela Strappa, Marco Aurelio Moro per i preziosi consigli e soprattutto la cara Roberta Amato per il continuo incoraggiamento, l’affetto, la pazienza e l’interesse.


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La poetica del *karumi* nell’opera di Matsuo Bashō

By Matteo LUCCI*

**Summary:**

The paper focuses on the poetics of *karumi* (lightness) in Matsuo Bashō’s later works. Bashō, widely known as the putative founder of haiku, began to advocate this new poetic principle in 1689, when he was in search for new ideas. *Karumi*, indeed, is strictly related to the *atarashimi*, or newness. In opposition to these ideas, Bashō used the term *furubi*, or oldness, and *omomi*, or heavyness, referring to what was wrong both in the world of haikai and in his own style. Analyzing the examples provided by Bashō in order to teach his ideas, the paper distinguishes three different kinds of *karumi*.

**Keywords:** Matsuo Bashō, haikai, karumi, omomi, Italo Calvino

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La poetica del *karumi* nell’opera di Matsuo Bashō

Il ventinovesimo giorno del decimo mese del quarto anno dell’era Genroku 元禄 (1691), dopo quasi tre anni di peregrinare senza posa, Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 fece finalmente ritorno a Edo, riportando con sé l’inestimabile eredità artistica e spirituale del lungo viaggio che lo aveva spinto dapprima nel Michinoku, le province settentrionali, e poi nel Kamigata, la regione di Kyōto e del suo paese natale, Ueno.1 Le esperienze e gli incontri di quegli anni lo avevano profondamente influenzato e lo avevano avvicinato alla concezione di poesia a lui più congeniale. Il viaggio nel Michinoku, che avrebbe ispirato il suo capolavoro, l’*Oku no hosomichi* 奥の細道 (Lo stretto sentiero per l’Oku, 1694), era stato foriero del fondamentale concetto di *fueki ryūkō* 不易流行, l’eterno e il mutevole (o la moda), che coniugava la “venerazione” per i grandi poeti del passato con una costante tensione alla ricerca di un nuovo stile.2 Nel Kamigata, invece, dove era giunto il nono mese del terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1689), Bashō aveva

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1 Per una dettagliata cronologia della vita di Bashō si veda: Kuriyama 2003, 661-70.

instaurato con gli allievi della regione un vivace e intenso dialogo sull’arte dello haikai 俳諧 e aveva così concepito, entro la cornice del fueki ryūkō, la sua poetica più matura. Sostenuto, ma anche ispirato, dagli allievi del Kamigata, Bashō era riuscito nell’intento di trasformare lo haikai in un genere serio, lirico e aulico. Il manifesto di questo “nuovo” haikai è l’antologia Sarumino 猿蓑 (Il mantello di paglia della scimmia, 1691), nella quale gli allievi Kyorai 去来 (1651-1704) e Bonchō 凡兆 (?-1714), non senza la guida del loro maestro, avevano incluso le più recenti composizioni, di gruppo e non, della scuola di Bashō.

Il ritorno a Edo, le cui ragioni non sono note e sulle quali si può solo ipotizzare, è dunque una cesura importante nella vicenda umana e artistica di Bashō, poiché da un lato segnò la fine di un periodo straordinariamente proficuo, durante il quale egli raggiunse la piena maturità come poeta e stabili definitivamente la sua fama di maestro, con un numero sempre crescente di allievi, ma dall’altro inaugurò una nuova stagione della sua incessante ricerca di nuove possibilità per l’arte dello haikai. Infatti, il periodo compreso tra il ritorno a Edo e la morte avvenuta nel settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694) – per ironia della sorte, mentre era in viaggio – è generalmente considerato l’auge della poetica del karumi 輕み o leggerezza. Bashō aveva cominciato a riflettere sull’idea di uno stile “leggero” già nel terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690) – e forse ancora prima, come si vedrà –, ma nei suoi ultimi anni di vita il karumi divenne il fulcro del suo poetare.

In una lunga lettera a Kyorai, datata settimo giorno del quinto mese del quinto anno dell’era Genroku (1692), così Bashō espresse tutto il suo rammarico per la dilagante mercificazione dello haikai a Edo:

Le gare di composizione (tentori 点取り) sono la moda nel quartiere delle residenze, nei bassifondi, nei retrobottega, tra le guardie di scorta, persino nei templi. Per gli arbitri (tenja 点者) sarà una gioia, ma in verità mi sembra una situazione oltremodo deplorevole. In una simile atmosfera non si può nemmeno pensare a qualcosa di nuovo (atarashimi 新しみ) come la nostra ricerca della leggerezza (karumi 輕み). Si vuole commuovere, si preparano prontuari delle espressioni più difficili, si usano a sproporo parole come haritsuke 碴 e gokumon 狱門, e si compongono versi astrusi (teomoku

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4 Si tratta di due tipi di esecuzione capitale. Nello haritsuke, il condannato veniva legato a un palo conficcato nel terreno e quindi trafitto ai fianchi con una lancia
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手重く) in uno stile vecchio (furuki sugata 古き姿). Non possiamo prestare ascolto a tutto questo. Credo umilmente che dovremmo riporre nel nostro cuore ogni desiderio di cambiamento.5

Il moto di rassegnazione quasi nichilistica che conclude questo breve brano fortunatamente non si tradusse mai in realtà, ma certo è indicativo dell’importanza che il karumi aveva assunto per Bashō. La sua sensibilità letteraria, la sua devozione per la poesia dovevano fargli apparire le gare di composizione, con tutto ciò che di pernicioso esse implicavano, come una ferita sull’arte dello haikai, come il riflesso di un mondo, la cultura borghese ed edonistica di Edo, nel quale egli, poeta viaggiatore, faticava a riconoscersi. Fu proprio questo senso di inadeguatezza, in realtà, a motivarlo nella sua nuova ricerca, a dispetto della sfiducia che nutriva nella cultura di Edo.

Le gare di composizione tanto deprecate da Bashō erano nate dalla pratica dei maestri di haikai di assegnare dei “punti” di merito ai propri allievi, i quali così potevano vedere concretamente valutato il livello della propria bravura. Da qui era derivata la parola tentori, letteralmente “prendere punti”, come pure la parola tenja o “colui che assegna i punti”. In seguito, i punti persero il loro significato originario e divennero lo strumento che il tenja, ora non più un “semplice” maestro ma un professionista pagato per la sua prestazione come arbitro, usava per decretare il vincitore tra quei poeti che, componendo a turno, gareggiavano per un premio in denaro e per la notorietà che ne sarebbe potuta derivare. L’ansia di arricchirsi o di guadagnare fama spingeva i partecipanti alla gara a compiacere il tenja con stravaganti e contorte associazioni di idee e soprattutto con ogni virtuosismo lessicale possibile, persino a costo di sacrificare la comprensibilità del verso. Queste gare erano così diffuse che nacquero dei manuali ad hoc, repertori che raccolgivano parole ed espressioni, per lo più desuete, che aiutassero i poeti a suscitare

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stupore o commozione nel tenja, che era in fondo la loro unica vera preoccupazione.6

Per descrivere a Kyorai la degenerazione della cultura dello baikai a Edo, Bashō ricorre a concetti ben precisi. Il primo e il più importante è l’atarashimi o novità, di seguito al quale troviamo subito il karumi. Bashō usa poi l’espressione furuki sugata o stile vecchio, che rimanda al concetto di furubi 古び o vecchiume; infine, l’espressione teomoku, che senza dubbio, almeno semanticamente, fa eco all’omomi 重み o pesantezza. Questi quattro concetti – atarashimi, furubi, karumi e omomi – sono strettamente correlati e, come diverse parti di un unico discorso, riassumono tutta la poetica del karumi, dalla sua prima vaga formulazione, sulla quale purtroppo si hanno pochissime notizie, fino alla sua massima fioritura. In termini di date, la prima corrisponde al periodo 1688-91, gli anni del fueki ryūkō e della nascita di una nuova arte dello baikai; mentre la seconda al periodo compreso tra il 1692 e il 1694, quando Bashō, creato attorno a sé un nuovo circolo di poeti affini alla sua sensibilità, trovò nella vita di Edo l’ispirazione per dare finalmente piena espressione all’idea di uno stile “leggero”.

Il karumi più maturo è l’esito di un processo di rinnovamento – l’atarashimi, appunto – che si palesa, seppur indistintamente, agli inizi dell’era Genroku, quando Bashō, deluso dagli eccessi di certi poeti di Edo e in fondo insoddisfato dei suoi stessi versi, concepisce una riflessione critica (che prende forma nei concetti di omomi e, in misura minore, di furubi) e matura quindi il desiderio di ripensare tutta l’arte dello baikai. La poetica del karumi si fonda, pertanto, su due opposizioni: furubi vs atarashimi, omomi vs karumi.

L’omomi o il primo karumi

Nella lettera del decimo giorno del quarto mese del terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690), così Bashō ammoniva gli allievi Shikin 此筋 (1673-1735) e Sensen 千川 (?-1706), due fratelli originari di Ōgaki, l’ultima tappa del viaggio nel Michinoku: «Dovete fare in modo che le vostre composizioni a catena e i vostri hokku 発句 non siano pesanti né ambigui».7 Shikin e Sensen sono citati nell’ultimo paragrafo

7 Bashō 1962, 385. Lo hokku è l’antesignano del moderno haiku – il cui nome non è altro che la contrazione di baikai no hokku. Come lo haiku, lo hokku consiste di tre
dell’*Oku no hosomichi* come i figli di un certo Miyazaki Keikō 宮崎荆口: “[...] il padre e i figli di Keikō e altri intimi amici vengono a renderci visita, sia di giorno che di notte”. 8 Secondo Ogata Tsutomu 尾形仂, uno dei massimi studiosi di *haikai*, i due fratelli potevano aver avuto modo, un anno prima a Ōgaki, durante quegli incontri tra intimi amici, di discorrere con Bashō sull’*omomi*. In altre parole, poiché la lettera non si dilunga sulla questione della pesantezza, possiamo pensare che Bashō ritenesse Shikin e Sensen perfettamente in grado di afferrare il vero significato del suo insegnamento, anche se esposto in modo vago.9

Nella lettera di Bashō all’allievo Bokudō 牧童 (?-?) datata diciassettesimo giorno del settimo mese del terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690), leggiamo: “La nostra poesia è piena di vecchiume, forse dovremmo mettere in pratica quelle nostre idee.”10 Bashō era evidentemente insofferente alla mancanza di dinamismo nella sua scuola, che ancora non rinunciava all’imitazione del *waka* classico e all’influenza del rassicurante modello cinese, e faticava così a rinnovare il proprio stile, difficoltà che del resto egli riscontrava, forse persino in misura maggiore, in tutta la cultura dello *haikai*. Troviamo in questa lettera un Bashō molto critico verso se stesso, consapevole dei limiti propri e del circolo di poeti che lo circonda, ma del resto già proteso al cambiamento, come appare evidente da quel vago riferimento alle “nostre idee” – non inverosimilmente una velata allusione al *karumi*. Sembra comunque certo che Bashō avvertisse la necessità di pensare un principio o un insieme di principi che potessero risolvere i dilemmi sollevati dalla riflessione incentrata su *omomi* e *furubi*.

Queste due lettere, nelle quali rintracciamo i primi riferimenti sia all’*omomi* sia al *furubi*, dimostrano che l’esigenza di un cambiamento radicale era la questione principale discussa da Bashō e gli allievi della sua scuola già nel terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690) – e proprio su tale esigenza si sosteneva in realtà lo straordinario fervore creativo e intellettuale che animò gli anni del Kamigata. Tuttavia saremmo versi di 5, 7 e 5 sillabe; si può trovare come poesia indipendente, al pari dello *haiku*, appunto, o come prima stanza di una composizione a catena.


10 Bashō 1962, 401.
portati a pensare, come Ogata, che la riflessione critica di quegli anni risalga a un periodo ancora precedente. Il poeta Sora 曾良 (1649-1710), nella lettera a Bashō del ventisesimo giorno del nono mese del terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690), fa un accenno al concetto di 後見. Se si tiene conto del fatto che Sora aveva accompagnato Bashō nel suo viaggio nel Michinoku, si può dedurre – come ci dice Ogata – che l’omomi sia stato discusso dai due poeti in quel periodo。¹¹

L’omomi è un modo poetico manierista caratterizzato dalla dismisura e dalla ridondanza, che impongono al lettore ragionamenti che sopprimono ogni sentimento. Il poeta deve espungere dai suoi versi ogni elemento razionale per evitare che il lettore debba intervenire con il proprio ragionamento. Egli deve dunque fare in modo che un sentimento spontaneo prevalga su tutto. Ma questo sentimento deve essere abilmente nascosto, e non esplicito, in modo che attecchisca sul lettore senza che egli se ne renda conto razionalmente: la bellezza di uno haikai è nell’equilibrio tra semplicità e non-detto. Secondo Imoto Nōichi 井本農一, l’omomi “è qualcosa di ostentato, appiccicoso, ambiguo, intellettuale, sgraziato, incerto, logico, esplicito e povero di emozioni, ricercato, artificioso, verboso e sorpassato。”¹²

Proviamo a chiarire il significato dell’omomi analizzando uno hokku di Kyorai sulla festa delle bambole in primavera.

Ecco come siamo!
Abbassiamo di un gradino
le bambole dell’anno passato
振る舞いや下座に直る去年の雛¹³
[furumaiya shimozani naoru kozo no hina]

Già al tempo di Bashō, per festeggiare l’occasione si disponevano sopra un ripiano diverse file di bambole raffiguranti i membri della famiglia imperiale. La disposizione delle bambole doveva seguire un preciso ordine che assegnava il posto d’onore nella parte posteriore del tavolo rispetto al punto di osservazione. In alcuni casi, il ripiano era fatto a gradini che venivano usati per ordinare le bambole dall’alto verso il basso. In questo modo, ciascuna fila di bambole era più

¹² Imoto 1984, 25.
¹³ Bashō 1990, 313.
importante rispetto a quella del gradino inferiore. Ora, a ogni
ricorrenza era in uso disporre nelle posizioni migliori le nuove
bambole, spostando in posizioni di minor importanza quelle dell’anno
passato. Lo bokku di Kyorai è dunque un malinconico lamento sulla
consuetudine di dimenticare il vecchio in favore del nuovo.

Un passo del Kyoraisō 去来抄 (Le note di Kyorai, 1704), una
raccolta degli insegnamenti di Bashō compilata da Kyorai, può fornirci
un’utilissima chiave di lettura di questi versi.

Se cambiassi il primo verso in “vecchio copricapo” (furue boshi 古ゑぼし) o
“veste di carta” (kamiginuya 紙衣や) andrei troppo oltre. Descrivendo un
paesaggio, sarebbe difficile riuscire in ciò che desidero. Poiché usando
“deplorevole” (asamashiya あさましや) o “seccante” (kuchiwoshiya
口をしや) il significato della poesia sarebbe troppo evidente, decido per
“Ecco come siamo!” accettando il consiglio del maestro che mi disse: “[…]
“Ecco come siamo!” non è del tutto soddisfacente, ma accontentatì.” 14

Nel tentativo di perfezionare il suo bokku, Kyorai cerca delle
possibili alternative al verso iniziale, ma le idee che gli vengono in
mente gli paiono inadeguate, eccessive. Il vecchio copricapo e la veste
di carta, oggetti che implicano un’idea di disfacimento, sminuirebbero
la funzione del secondo e del terzo verso, creando così uno squilibrio
nella struttura del componimento; le due esclamazioni di disappunto
non lascerebbero nulla di non detto, rendendo esplicito il lamento di
Kyorai. In entrambi i casi, la poesia risulterebbe incapace di
commuovere perché troppo “pesante”. Sia Kyorai sia Bashō
ritenevano questo bokku comunque imperfetto, nonostante i loro
tentativi per fare meglio. Più di questi ultimi, tuttavia, a interessarci
sono soprattutto i loro sforzi per non renderlo ancor più “pesante”, in
quanto ci forniscono una visione più ampia del concetto di omomi.

Secondo Imoto Nōichi, l’omomi è strettamente connesso
all’atarashimi, in quanto il desiderio di rinnovamento che quest’ultimo
interpreta sarebbe scaturito proprio dalla presa di coscienza di quei
caratteri negativi (l’infioriettatura del verso, l’imitazione dei classici,
l’uso di metafore ecc.) che Bashō associa all’idea di pesantezza. 15

L’atarashimi, tuttavia, non è teorizzato da Bashō come un vero
principio poetico al pari di karumi e omomi. Esso si configura piuttosto
come il suo programma, come un indirizzo anticlassicista che afferma

14 Kyorai 1973, 428.
15 Imoto 1984, 32.
la necessità di non stabilire alcuna norma, ma di impegnarsi costantemente nella ricerca, rinunciando alla convenzione, la ripetizione e l’imitazione. Senza questa speciale propensione al cambiamento, che Bashō possedeva e stimava enormemente, egli non avrebbe mai potuto trasformare lo haikai.16

Il karumi prende forma

Nel Sanzōshi 三冊子 (I tre libri, 1704), opera di Dohō che raccoglie i più importanti insegnamenti di Bashō sull’arte dello haikai, leggiamo:

Sotto l’albero
la zuppa, il pesce sottaceto, ogni cosa…
Fiori di ciliegio!
木のもとは汁も膾も桜かな
[konomotowa shirumo namasumo sakurakana]
Quando il maestro compose questi versi, disse: “Ho compreso qualcosa del sentimento dello hanami e ho colto il karumi.”17

In questo hokku, che Bashō compose nel terzo anno dell’era Genroku (1690), il sublime del waka 和歌 cede al volgare dello haikai: i sentimenti più aulici della poesia classica si diluiscono nella banalità degli avvenimenti quotidiani. Il tema della poesia è lo hanami 花見, la contemplazione (spesso malinconica) degli alberi in fiore, in particolare del sakura 桜, l’albero di ciliegio. I poeti di epoca Heian 平安 ravvisavano nel sakura una raffinata forma di bellezza struggente, che celebrarono nel waka come simbolo dell’impermanenza. Nella sezione Haru (primavera, 春) del Kokinshū 古今集 troviamo ben quarantuno waka che cantano la bellezza del sakura, una ricorrenza di molto superiore rispetto a quella di altri

16 Bashō avversava sí il classicismo, ma al tempo stesso s’ispirava ai grandi poeti del passato, primo fra tutti Saigyō (1118-1190), non per imitarne lo stile, bensì per emularne la dedizione verso l’arte poetica. Per Bashō, quei poeti avevano raggiunto il fūga no makoto 風雅の誠, la Verità della poesia (o dell’arte), creando versi immortali e sublimi, capaci di commuovere ogni generazione avvenire (a questo proposito si veda: Dohō 1973, 521-2; e Kuriyama 2003, 48-9). Il fūga no makoto, che era correlato al fueki (cfr. supra n. 2), era il fine ultimo della ricerca poetica di Bashō, che aspirava a rendere sublime lo haikai come i grandi poeti del passato avevano fatto con il waka e il renga.

17 Dohō 1973, 565.
oggetti codificati come temi convenzionali della primavera. Nella maggior parte di questi waka, il sakura è associato al verbo chiru 散る (cadere, riferito al fiore che cade dal ramo), in qualche caso al verbo furu 降る, di analogo significato, e al verbo utsurou 移ろう (sfiorire o scolorire). In altre parole, il sakura è rappresentato soprattutto nel momento in cui sfiorisce. I poeti del Kokinshū coglievano l’essenza della bellezza che finisce nel fiore di ciliegio che muore e, fluttuando lentamente nell’aria, cade a terra. Questa immagine si carica di un messaggio esistenziale esclusivo rispetto agli altri topoi della stessa sezione dell’opera. Scrive Sagiyama che nel Kokinshū “i termini indicanti oggetti o fenomeni naturali, congiungendosi ai fattori umani, si caricano delle valenze che vanno ben oltre alla semplice rappresentazione dell’immagine della natura, diventando ‘parole-concetti’ capaci di veicolare i moti del cuore umano.” Il canto dell’uguisu 鶯 (usignolo) che annuncia la primavera, i primi fiori dell’anno sullo sfondo bianco dell’ultima neve della stagione, l’intensa fragranza dell’ume 梅 (fiore di susino) che impregna le maniche della veste, la tenera erba, lo yanagi 柳 (salice), la foschia e l’oca selvatica, tutti questi oggetti esprimono i moti del cuore, denotando una forte empatia del poeta con la natura e sovente veicolando anche sentimenti di malinconico attaccamento alla primavera, ma raramente si caricano di un significato filosofico-esistenziale. Il sakura, invece, sebbene sia talvolta rappresentato come segno della primavera incipiente o come sublime manifestazione della bellezza della natura, è l’oggetto privilegiato dai poeti per dare espressione alla malinconica, talvolta dolorosa scoperta che la vita è vana e tutto passa.

Il verso iniziale di Konomotowa introduce lo scenario dello hanami e, secondo Ogata, richiama un waka dell’imperatore Shirakawa 白河 (r. 1072-86) contenuto nel Senzaishū 千載集 (Raccolta per mille anni, 1187), nel quale l’essenza dello hanami classico è intensificata

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18 Sagiyama 2000, 88-110. Si tratta del gruppo di waka nn. 49-89. A questi quarantuno possiamo aggiungere un altro gruppo di waka nei quali troviamo il più generico hana (fiore) usato per lo più per alludere al sakura.

19 Il verbo chiru è associato al sakura in ventuno waka; il verbo utsurou in tre waka; il verbo furu in due waka.

dall’immagine dei petali dei fiori di ciliegio che cadono uno sull’altro giorno dopo giorno, ammantando il terreno.

Se da quando fioriscono
a quando cadono li guardo,
sotto l’albero
i fiori e i giorni
si accumulano
咲きしより散るまで見れば木のもとに花も日数も積もりぬるかな

[sakishiyori/chirumade mireba/konomotoni/hanamo hikazumo/tsumo-rinurukana]

Fukumoto, poi, rileva ben tre *waka* di Saigyō 西行 sul tema *sakura/hanami* che iniziano con il verso “*konomoto*” e che certamente Bashō ben conosceva. Un improvviso movimento cambia la scena, suggerendo un’atmosfera conviviale. Il secondo verso, infatti, è occupato per intero da due oggetti prosaici: la zuppa e il pesce sottaceto. Il potere suggestivo del *sakura* “classico” (la malinconia per l’impermanenza e la vanità della vita) è sopraffatto da un punto di vista più gioioso, che guarda all’inizio della primavera come a un’occasione per festeggiare dimenticando ogni preoccupazione di carattere esistenziale e godere così dei colori e delle forme primaverili durante un convivio. Il primo verso, attivando la memoria letteraria, crea un’aspettativa di malinconia e struggimento; il secondo la disattende completamente spostando l’attenzione sul convivio. Il cambiamento avviene anche a livello prosodico: si passa dalla monotona successione di quattro “*o*” nel primo verso, all’alternanza di quattro vocali in sette rapide sillabe (*i/u/o/a/a/u/o*) nei rimanenti due versi. Anche il registro linguistico cambia. Secondo Ogata, Bashō ha modellato il verso “*shirumo namasumo*” sulle espressioni popolari “*sunimo misonimo*” 醤にも味噌にも (aceto e miso) e “*sunitsuke konitsuke*” 酢につけ粉につけ (aceto e polvere), usate entrambe con il significato di “tutto, ogni cosa”. L’espressione creata da Bashō, come i calchi originali, produce un’iperbole di significato, abilmente intensificata dall’uso ripetuto della particella *mo*. Inoltre, notiamo che qui il linguaggio popolare genera l’incoerenza tra il tradizionale lirismo

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22 Fukumoto 1992, 207.
24 Ogata 1988, 214.
del sakura e la banale convivialità della festa, producendo così un effetto sorpresa.

L’esclamazione finale rivela l’immagine di una pioggia di fluttuanti petali di ciliegio che cadono ricoprendo ogni cosa sotto l’albero. “Sakurakana” attiva il senso dello hokku esaltando l’incoerenza del secondo verso rispetto al primo e mostrando così lo “strappo” tra la bellezza codificata del sakura e l’umile quotidiano (la zuppa e il pesce sottaceto). In questo hokku di Bashō, la natura irrompe nella vita quotidiana perdendo il ruolo di trasfigurazione dei sentimenti del poeta. Il fiore di ciliegio risulta svuotato di ogni significato, quasi “desacralizzato”; il suo lirismo si perde nella banalità di un petalo che cade nella zuppa e, in un certo senso, diviene parte della festa. Il fiore è semplicemente un fiore, la cui essenza il poeta coglie splendidamente, senza attribuirgli significati intrinseci. Bashō, mediante il linguaggio popolare, esalta la semplicità dei piccoli episodi della vita quotidiana, diluisce la cerebralità del waka e libera il verso da ogni aspetto mentale. In altre parole, Bashō “alleggerisce” il verso rinunciando a ogni forma di linguaggio metaforico e svuotando l’oggetto del simbolismo che gli deriva dalla tradizione: semplicemente, descrive, enuncia un’immagine, rinunciando alla retorica trasfigurazione dei moti del cuore nel sakura e alla codificazione dell’espressione “konomoto”.

**Impersonalità e umile quotidiano**

Nel periodo trascorso a Edo dal quinto al settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1692-1694), l’idea di karumi evolve in una poetica complessa, risultata da un insieme di stilemi differenti, ascrivibili sia alla forma sia al contenuto, come vedremo. Sul piano del contenuto, Bashō realizza un cospicuo abbassamento dei temi. In taluni casi egli crea una sapiente opposizione tra il sublime della tradizione e i temi prosaici suggeriti dalla vita quotidiana, come nel caso di Konomotowa. Altre volte rinuncia completamente ai temi stereotipati della poesia classica scegliendo di privilegiare contesti privi di “letterarietà”. Al contempo, Bashō rivolge la sua attenzione a particolari sempre più minuti e diviene straordinariamente sensibile alla bellezza insita nelle inaspettate interazioni tra gli oggetti. Contestualmente al rinnovamento dei temi, Bashō predilige descrizioni fortemente improntate all’oggettività, in netta antitesi con il lirismo della poesia
classica, la quale aveva codificato in messaggi convenzionali un gran numero di temi e di oggetti, replicati continuamente in vuote forme di classicismo. In tal senso, il karumi è la presa di coscienza dell’inestimabile potenziale suggestivo dell’eclissi dell’autore in una descrizione nella quale l’elemento lirico è stato ridotto al minimo oppure eliminato completamente, così da amplificare l’immaginazione del lettore, non più obbligato alle suggestioni di un tema convenzionale.

Nella lettera del settimo giorno del secondo mese del quinto anno dell’era Genroku (1692), Bashō sottopone a Sanpū杉風 (1647-1732) uno hokku che generalmente si ritiene aderente alle sue idee sul karumi, a giudicare dalla nota di commento dello stesso Bashō:

Un usignolo!
Il suo sterco sui mochi
al limitare della veranda
鶯や餅に糞する縁の先
[uquisuya mochini funsuru en no saki]
Questo **hokku** racchiude le idee che ho in mente in quest’ultimo periodo.²⁵

Nella prefazione in giapponese al **Kokinshū**, l’usignolo e in particolare il suo canto sono celebrati come una delle più incantevoli espressioni della primavera – che molto spesso, come abbiamo già detto, porta con sé sentimenti malinconici e riflessioni sulla caducità di tutte le cose. In questo **hokku**, come in Konomotowa, il sublime della tradizione è diluito dalla raffigurazione di un oggetto indubbiamente prosaico, estraneo al raffinato lirismo del **waka**. Bashō sembra scoprire nell’usignolo una bellezza nuova, diversa da quella codificata dai poeti di **waka**, una bellezza reale che colpisce al cuore del poeta stesso e del lettore, e non una vagheggiata da un poeta ispirato dai modelli tradizionali. Nella scena del dolce usignolo che lascia cadere il suo sterco sulla pietanza – che inevitabilmente richiama alla mente i festeggiamenti per il nuovo anno – egli forse intravede l’essenza della primavera, della sua quotidianità, e scorge una luce che i poeti del passato, presi a imitare le opere più famose, non avevano saputo vedere. **Uguisuya** rinnova la tradizione in senso umile, ricorrendo a un’immagine e a una forma espressiva popolari e non codificate. Bashō non ricorre all’usignolo per esprimere i suoi sentimenti, come è consuetudine nel **waka** classico, ma ritrae oggettivamente una scena di

²⁵ Bashō 1962, 412.
primavera nella quale coglie, dall’esterno e con la sensibilità che gli deriva dal karumi, un’insolita bellezza. Come in Konomotowa, la primavera è privata di ogni connotazione filosofico-esistenziale ed è ritratta nelle sue manifestazioni più concrete, come i petali di ciliegio che cadono nella zuppa o lo sterco dell’usignolo sui mochi. La primavera non è più oggetto di contemplazione, ma è più semplicemente un momento di comunione tra le più piccole manifestazioni della natura e la vita quotidiana dell’uomo. Nel Sanzōshi, Dohō registra un discorso di Bashō sulla specificità dello haikai. Bashō afferma che il waka, il renga 連歌 e la poesia cinese escludono dal proprio repertorio i temi prosaici, scegliendo di cantare solamente i più alti sentimenti umani. Al contrario, lo haikai, pur possedendo un alto valore poetico al pari di waka, renga e poesia cinese, non ha limiti nella scelta dei temi e dei linguaggi. Come esempio, Bashō cita proprio Uguisuya.26

Uguisuya possiede delle notevoli qualità di rottura rispetto alla tradizione e persino alla produzione precedente dello stesso Bashō. È il primo vero componimento, dopo il ritorno a Edo, realizzato seguendo l’ispirazione del karumi, in quel momento di profondo sconforto dovuto alla scoperta della mercificazione dello haikai a causa della moda delle gare. Le scelte di Bashō rispetto alla tradizione divengono più radicali in uno hokku composto nell’inverno del quinto anno dell’era Genroku (1692).

Pesce salato...
Persino le sue gengive sono fredde,
alla bottega del pesce
塩鯛の歯ぐきも寒し魚の店27
[shiodaino hagukimo samushi uo no tana]

Questi versi, hanno come sfondo una strada di Edo in pieno inverno, sono dedicati alla sgradevole sensazione del freddo. Bashō stato ispirato dalla vista delle bianche gengive del pesce sotto sale sistemato sul banco di una pescheria. In Konomotowa e Uguisuya, Bashō ha rinnovato la poesia classica mediante la sapiente opposizione tra il prosaico e l’aulico (zuppa vs fiori di ciliegio, sterco vs usignolo). In Shiodaino, non avvertiamo alcuna influenza della poesia classica, esclusa completamente dagli oggetti che Bashō ha scelto per ritrarre

26 Dohō 1973, 524-5.
27 Bashō 1972, 234.
l’inverno. Il superamento della tradizione è attuato inoltre mediante la riduzione al minimo dell’elemento lirico, come abbiamo detto anche per Uguisuya. Bashō è partecipe della scena tristemente invernale descritta in questi versi e segnala la sua presenza con la semplice particella mo (anche, persino). In altre parole, Bashō sceglie di suggerire uno scenario freddo e triste limitandone la descrizione a un solo particolare estremante suggestivo, le gengive del pesce, contrariamente alla poetica classica, la quale frequentemente affidava le emozioni alla personificazione di animali, alla trasfigurazione dei sentimenti negli oggetti, alle metafore. In Shiodaino, le gengive del pesce non raffigurano la sensazione di freddo provata da Bashō, ma rappresentano un dettaglio di una scena più ampia che tuttavia non vediamo e possiamo solo immaginare.

Nella primavera del settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694), Bashō compose uno hokku, poi incluso in Sumidawara 炭俵 (Sacchi di carbone, 1694), che esemplifica al meglio l’impersonalità e l’umile quotidiano propri del karumi.

Pioggia di primavera…
gocciola dal vespaio
l’acqua filtrata nella gronda
春雨や蜂の巣つたふ屋根の漏り 28
[harusameya hachi no su tsua yane no mori]

Una pioggia leggera e silenziosa cade in una giornata di primavera. L’acqua filtra nella gronda, scivola fino a un nido di vespe e infine gocciola a terra. La pioggia è un altro suggestivo topos caro alla poesia classica. In Harusameya, la suggestione della pioggia di primavera è intensificata dalla descrizione di particolari minuti: la scoperta di un’infiltrazione nella gronda, lo scivolo delle gocce sotto la gronda stessa e quindi sul nido di vespe, il ripetitivo suono della goccia che si infrange a terra, e sullo sfondo il piovoso paesaggio esterno alla casa. Nella “naturale” interazione del nido di vespe e della gronda (oggetti estranei alla poesia classica) con la pioggia di primavera scopriamo l’essenza di quest’ultima, còlta nel suo semplice manifestarsi. Bashō, evitando coscientemente di imprimere alla pioggia alcunché di simbolico, sembra eclissarsi completamente nella sapiente descrizione oggettiva di un momento di comunione tra la natura e la vita quotidiana dell’uomo.

28 Bashō 1990, 400.
Dalla lingua classica alla lingua volgare

Abbiamo messo in evidenza quanto Bashō deprecasse l’uso smodato di una lingua retorica e classicheggiante, sclerotizzata dalla stratificazione di significati codificati dalla letteratura. In particolare, Bashō biasimava l’uso a effetto di vocaboli inconsueti, selezionati al fine di ottenere il favore del pubblico e del tenja, senza alcuna preoccupazione per la coerenza interna del composito e senza alcuna mira artistica. L’attenzione di Bashō per le questioni linguistiche si rivela ancor più chiaramente nelle scelte che egli opera per realizzare il karumi. Bashō fa corrispondere all’intento di poetizzare l’umile quotidiano la scelta di un linguaggio semplice, concreto e popolare. Egli, riconoscendo nella parola una forza intrinseca, capace cioè di esprimere la semplicità e l’originalità delle cose, intendeva reprimere nel verso ogni espressione lirica soggettiva, aspirando a realizzare la massima aderenza possibile tra il contenuto e il tessuto verbale ovvero tra il quotidiano e la sua rappresentazione. La necessità di descrivere senza cedere alle interferenze dell’intelletto e dei sentimenti, mediante un procedimento che abbiamo chiamato eclissi dell’autore, impone un controllo espressivo a limite della banalità, ma al contempo necessita di un’espressione notevolmente immediata e suggestiva per il lettore.

Il karumi, dunque, non dipende solamente dall’abbassamento della materia, ma anche da scelte lessicali che alleggeriscano il tessuto verbale dalla logica e dal lirismo, coerentemente con l’intento di rappresentare la realtà quotidiana mediante il suo stesso linguaggio. La questione è in parte affrontata, dopo la morte di Bashō dall’allievo Sanpū nella lettera del primo giorno del sesto mese dell’era Genroku (1695) indirizzata al poeta Biji 麦娯 (1649-1718), desideroso di apprendere il karumi.

Quanto più la forma di una poesia è pesante, tanto più è contorta e cede alla logica. In tal caso, si dovrà abbandonare il proprio stile e comporre con delicatezza e leggerezza, usando solo parole comuni (fudan no kotoba 普段の言葉). 29

L’uso di una lingua semplice, concreta e immediata, e perciò aderente al vissuto quotidiano dell’uomo e della natura, contribuisce a dare espressione alla realtà dei piccoli accadimenti, materia privilegiata

29 Kuriyama 2003, 55.
del karumi, come i petali di ciliegio che cadono nella zuppa e lo sterco dell’usignolo che cade sui mochi. La scelta di parole comuni, quotidiane, popolari estromette completamente la logica, poiché da esse, in virtù della concretesenza che possiedono, emerge naturalmente una suggestione, un’emozione che il lettore recepisce istintivamente. L’intervento della logica, e dell’intelletto più in generale, è al contrario necessario alla comprensione di un lingua con un alto grado di astrazione.

Nella strategia verbale di Bashô, assai sorprendente l’uso non infrequente di onomatopee. Nel periodo in questione, Bashô riconosce nell’onomatopea uno strumento perfetto per realizzare le sue esigenze espressive, poiché esse sono il massimo esempio di aderenza tra realtà e rappresentazione verbale, in quanto significano un oggetto o un fenomeno mediante la sua imitazione fonica, possedendo in tal modo le qualità migliori per rappresentare la concretesenza della realtà. Secondo Kawamoto Kōji 川本皓嗣, l’onomatopea è amplificata dalla brevità dello haiku in una eccezionale forma di intensificazione o iperbole. Essa, inoltre, contiene l’eco di una lingua colloquiale che contribuisce, nelle opere più tarde di Bashô, a produrre il contrasto tra l’eleganza e l’ordinario quotidiano.30 La capacità di Bashô di esaltare la sostanza fonica del verso, non soltanto mediante l’uso delle onomatopee, bensì anche mediante una sapiente alternanza di vocali, è stata elogiata anche da Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927), che in un famoso scritto ha espresso il proprio rammarico per coloro che, sebbene dicano di apprezzare Bashô, non sono abbastanza sensibili da cogliere anche con l’udito ovvero nell’aspetto fonico la bellezza dei suoi versi.31

Uno dei componimenti di Bashô maggiormente significativi dell’uso di onomatopee è Umegakani, incipit di un kaseden 歌仙 (composizione a tre di trentasei stanze) del settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694) e incluso nella prima parte di Sumidawara.

Nel profumo di susini all’improvviso... Pah! Spunta il sole sul sentiero di montagna!

30 Kawamoto 2000, 88.
31 Akutagawa 1996, 133.
Il profumo dei fiori di susino è un *topos* usato dai poeti di *waka* per indicare le prime giornate tiepide tra la fine dell’inverno e l’inizio della primavera. Il primo verso di questo *bokku*, dunque, è convenzionale, ma è solo il preludio per un altro capolavoro di leggerezza. In questi versi troviamo un sottile gioco di percezioni sensoriali: in un primo momento, la primavera è avvertita dall’olfatto; in seguito, il sole distrae la percezione olfattiva in favore della vista dei fiori di susino, ammirati ora per la loro bellezza, più che per la fragranza, come stabilito dalla tradizione. Il passaggio da una percezione sensoriale a un’altra, il passaggio dalla notte al giorno e il passaggio dall’inverno alla primavera sono metaforicamente significati dal sentiero di montagna. In una prospettiva linguistica, il rinnovamento è operato da Bashō mediante l’uso di *notto*, un’onomatopea con funzione avverbiale che tramite l’esplosione della doppia dentale significa “apparizione inaspettata e improvvisa.”

Ammiriamo un uso del linguaggio mimetico ancor più efficace in questo *bokku* del settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694):

Iihi!
Triste è il lamento
dei cervi nella notte
びいと啼く尻声悲し夜の鹿
[bii to naku shirigoe kanashi yoru no shika]

Bashō riprende dal repertorio del *waka* la stereotipata associazione tra i lamentosi, dolorosi versi notturni di un cervo e la tristezza per l’arrivo dell’autunno, riuscendo a rinnovarla mediante l’abbassamento del linguaggio, in particolare ricorrendo al volgarismo *shirigoe* nonché all’onomatopea iniziale che riproduce concretamente il verso acuto del cervo. La nuova strategia linguistica di Bashō funzionale al suo intento di rinnovare la poesia. L’abbassamento dello stile, infatti, implica il vantaggio di intensificare notevolmente l’espressione, provvedendo così alla corrispondenza tra il contenuto e la forma, coerentemente, in tal modo, con il proposito di poetizzare l’umile; ma soprattutto consente a Bashō di attenuare le codificazioni di temi e

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32 Bashō 1990, 361.
33 Shinmura 1998, 2091.
34 Bashō 1972, 263.
linguaggio tipiche del waka. Egli fonda una nuova poetica, compiendo un’operazione che combina sapientemente la struttura di stereotipi della poesia classica, immenso patrimonio poetico-culturale, con una sensibilità poetica nuova, moderna e interessata, come abbiamo constatato, a materie umili e quotidiane. L’abbassamento della materia e della lingua concorrono all’intento di ridurre la distanza tra l’espressione e il fruitore del testo, tra la rappresentazione e il coinvolgimento emotivo del lettore. Bashō mira infatti a privilegiare e amplificare il valore affettivo del componimento, riducendo al minimo il valore intellettivo, fondamentale per decifrare e recepire i codici della poesia classica. Allora, possiamo intendere il karumi come la poetica dell’assenza dell’intelletto in favore del sentimento, tanto nel processo creativo, quanto nella fruizione. La prospettiva di Bashō dipende anzitutto dalla tradizione dei poeti lirici, che nel waka esprimevano i sentimenti affidandosi a un linguaggio metaforico costituito di temi e motivi codificati. Bashō, invece, reprime ogni aspirazione lirica e al contempo rappresenta il mondo senza caricarlo di significati altri dalla sua originalità. Abbiamo accennato a tale procedimento con l’espressione eclissi dell’autore, in quanto l’autore si eclissa nella rappresentazione dell’oggetto che, mediante un’espressione, come abbiamo già constatato, adeguata a evidenziarne l’essenza concreta, veicola l’elemento affettivo della poesia. Il processo di alleggerimento degli aspetti mentali conduce il verso al punto di sapersi trasmettere con eccezionale immediatezza ossia senza intermediari intellettivi, perché fondato sulla chiara evidenza del significato.

**La leggerezza dell’anima**

Il karumi non si rivela solamente nelle scelte stilistiche e di contenuto, bensì anche in processi psicologici “sottili o impercettibili.” L’essenza del karumi, accertati i caratteri più concreti messi in evidenza nei paragrafi precedenti, è uno stato impalpabile che difficilmente possiamo definire in termini logici rigorosi – e ogni tentativo di definire tale essenza rimane pur sempre

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35 Citiamo qui le *Lezioni americane* di Italo Calvino (1999, 644), che ha dedicato una di queste sue celeberrime lezioni proprio alla leggerezza. Nel prossimo paragrafo tracceremo un confronto tra il karumi e la leggerezza di Calvino; per ora abbiamo solo preso in prestito il lessico calviniano.
La poetica del karumi nell’opera di Matsuo Bashō

un’approssimazione. Il karumi consiste in un poetare alogico, che Bashō ha definito solo mediante l’esempio e un linguaggio metaforico volutamente poco determinato, senza mai tentare una vera razionalizzazione, coerentemente con l’idea stessa del karumi, ma anche, è bene dirlo, con la prassi dell’insegnamento pratico, privilegiato da Bashō per assicurare maggior libertà ai suoi allievi. ³⁶ In altre parole, Bashō aspira a realizzare l’ideale del karumi proprio a partire dalla sua stessa definizione e dalla strategia messa in atto per rendere quella definizione fruibile ai suoi allievi.

Nell’introduzione dell’antologia Betsuzashiki 別座敷 (Il padiglione, 1694), rintracciamo un importante discorso di Bashō nel quale evidente il suo intento di suggerire il karumi mediante un linguaggio metaforico, liberando in tal modo i suoi allievi dal peso della definizione.

Quando il Maestro era prossimo alla partenza, nella stagione del kimono leggero sulla sottoveste di lino, l’ho invitato nel padiglione della mia casa. L’ho pregato di fare ritorno in primavera e poi l’ho esortato a parlare di poesia. Disse:

“Lo stile che ho in mente in questi giorni è leggero, sia nella forma che nell’incatenazione;³⁷ è leggero come guardare il fiume che scorre in un letto sabbioso e poco profondo (asaki sunagawa 浅き砂川). Solo così facendo, potrete scoprire il karumi”.³⁸

Siamo rimasti impressionati e abbiamo desiderato seguire quella corrente, pur essendo noi tutti impreparati a farlo. Poi abbiamo pregato il maestro di comporre uno hokku sull’erbetta estiva del giardino e discutendo di poesia abbiamo composto un kasen intero. Il kasen lo abbiamo scelto come inizio di una raccolta di altri versi sull’estate che avevamo lasciato da parte, poi

³⁶ Bashō non ha lasciato scritti teorici sull’arte dello haikai. Piuttosto che fissare le sue idee in forma scritta, inscriverle in una rigida definizione, egli preferiva dialogare con gli allievi della sua scuola e fornire loro i propri insegnamenti attraverso l’esempio e l’improvvisazione. In tal modo, gli allievi erano più liberi di sperimentare il proprio stile e al tempo stesso potevano reinterpretare in modo nuovo le idee di Bashō.

³⁷ Bashō – secondo l’interpretazione data da Fukumoto (1984, 153) – qui intende i due aspetti della composizione a catena: la struttura e il significato interni al singolo componimento; e la relazione di ogni componimento con le parti che precedono e seguono.

³⁸ Data l’importanza di questo breve passaggio, d’ora in avanti lo citeremo come Asaki sunagawa.
abbiamo messo la raccolta nel dono d’addio per il maestro, così che gli tenesse compagnia durante il viaggio per la provincia di Iga.39

L’autore dell’introduzione, nonché curatore dell’antologia, è il poeta Shisan 子珊 (?-1699), il quale ha organizzato presso la sua abitazione, nella primavera del settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694), una riunione di poeti per salutare Bashō, in procinto di partire per un viaggio nel Kamigata. Nel suo breve discorso sulla poesia – così come è riportato da Shisan – Bashō non inscrive il karumi in una definizione, ma prova piuttosto a riprodurre verbalmente un’impressione o suggestione mediante la descrizione di un’immagine. In altre parole, Bashō non fornisce indicazioni chiare e concrete sul modo di comporre, ma, più semplicemente, descrive un’immagine che possa funzionare per i suoi allievi come suggestione dell’essenza profonda del karumi. Egli ritiene evidentemente più proficuo tralasciare le questioni stilistico-formali e rendere con la massima evidenza possibile il valore affettivo e spirituale del karumi, il quale in tal modo è definibile soprattutto come uno stato d’animo propedeutico – per così dire – alla composizione. La strategia sottesa ad Asaki sunagawa consiste proprio nel tradurre lo stato d’animo intrinseco al karumi in un’immagine chiave, esemplificativa di quelle caratteristiche sfuggenti alla definizione.

Per chiarire il significato della metafora del fiume, Fukumoto cerca di recuperare il senso dell’espressione “sunagawa” (fiume sabbioso, fiume che scorre in un letto di sabbia) analizzando e interpretando alcuni componimenti della scuola di Bashō. La sua conclusione è che essa viene usata come metafora della sensazione di refrigero, alla quale l’aggettivo “asaki” (poco profondo) aggiungerebbe l’idea della trasparenza.40 Fukumoto suggerisce inoltre che la “stagione del kimono leggero sopra la veste di lino” potrebbe alludere metaforicamente agli anni dedicati da Bashō al karumi.41 L’implicito cambio di veste sarebbe dunque una metafora del desiderio di Bashō di rinnovare e alleggerire lo haikai, lavorando quindi in direzione della poetica dell’atarashimi-karumi, “spogliandosi” della vecchia poetica ovvero l’omomi-furubi.

Riflettiamo sullo bokku composto da Bashō su invito di Shisan.

39 Fukumoto 1984, 150.
40 Ivi, 153.
41 Ivi, 151
Le ortensie!
Cespugli nel giardino
del padiglione
紫陽花や薮を小庭の別座舗
[ajisaiya yabuwo koniwano betsuzashiki]

Il giardino che si può osservare dal padiglione di Shisan nel quale si trovano Bashō e i suoi allievi non è curato e la vegetazione appare selvatica e lussureggiante. Le ortensie sono cresciute spontaneamente, all’ombra e al fresco del giardino, colorando la monotonia della verde vegetazione selvatica. Bashō ritrae una scena delicata con uno stile sobrio e descrittivo, senza asserzioni soggettive. Yamamoto Kenkichi scrive: “Il poeta loda il gusto semplice dell’ospite descrivendo solamente ciò che ha visto. Sembra che Bashō abbia composto questi versi spontanei per mostrare a Shisan e gli altri come mettere in pratica il principio del karumi.”

Yamamoto si riferisce certamente al fatto che lo hokku è stato composto nel contesto di Asaki sunagawa ed è pertanto nel novero dei componimenti senza dubbio esemplari del karumi. La leggerezza che troviamo in Ajisaiya possiamo definirla concettuale, nel senso di un’assenza di legami logici evidenti o reconditi: i versi s’impongono senza che sia necessario interpretarli, in quanto sono interamente pervasi del valore affettivo. In tal senso, il karumi nasce dal cuore del poeta, in una fase antecedente al processo creativo e all’attuazione delle strategie stilistico-formali, assurgendo così ad alto ideale letterario.

Tale forma di karumi è particolarmente evidente nel seguente hokku, composto nel settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694) e incluso in Sumidawara:

Pulizie di fine anno:
ripara il suo scaffale
un carpentiere
煤掃は己が棚つる大工かな
[susuhakiwa ono ga tana tsuru daikukana]

Sul finire dell’anno era usanza, nell’epoca di Edo, ordinare e pulire la casa per riservare agli spiriti una rispettosa accoglienza il primo giorno del nuovo anno. Un carpentiere, normalmente impegnato nella

42 Bashō 1972, 252.
44 Bashō 1990, 431.
manutenzione delle abitazioni altrui, nel giorno delle pulizie di fine anno decide di dedicarsi alla cura della propria casa, riparando finalmente uno scaffale rotto ormai da diverso tempo. Bashō, con lo sguardo particolare che gli deriva dal karumi, in questa piccola scena popolare, quotidiana e cittadina, scorge una bellezza inaspettata e lieve – e forse persino vagamente comica. In questi versi, Imoto riconosce il karumi e scrive: “In sottofondo si sente qualcosa di umanamente caloroso, si sentono i sentimenti di una vita ordinaria e ciò aggiunge un certo pathos.”

Con questi versi Bashō riesce a commuovere ritraendo una scena semplice, priva di straordinarietà, eppure pervasa di un sentimento immediatamente coinvolgente.

Mi rinfresco
mettendo i piedi contro il muro
e dormo nel primo pomeriggio
ひやひやと壁をふまえて昼寝哉
[hiyahiyato kabe wo fumaete hirune kana]

Nelle note introduttive di questo hokku, composto nel settimo anno dell’era Genroku (1694) e incluso da Shikō (1665-1731) in Oinikki 筆日記 (Diario nella sacca, 1695), apprendiamo che il tema del componimento è l’ultimo caldo estivo all’inizio dell’autunno. Bashō, ospite di un amico nella città di Ōtsu, è disteso a terra per riposare e cerca refrigerio poggiando i piedi sulla parete, forse ancora fredda per l’aria umida della notte. Il passaggio dall’estate all’autunno è splendidamente evocato da un particolare minuto della vita di città e non dal mutare della natura. Inoltre, tale cambiamento di stagione non è connotato dai sentimenti di Bashō, il quale ricorre alla rappresentazione impersonale e concreta di un piccolo accadimento della vita di tutti i giorni. Scorgiamo in questi ultimi due hokku, Hiyahiyato e Susubakiwa, una leggerezza concettuale, in quanto l’affezione, il sentimento dei versi fluiscono naturalmente verso il lettore, senza l’interposizione dell’intelletto; vi è poi una leggerezza sentimentale, in quanto riesce a commuovere illuminando la naturale, spontanea e immediata semplicità delle piccole cose del mondo; infine, una leggerezza spirituale, in quanto Bashō potrebbe la bellezza delle piccole cose solamente alleggerendo la sua coscienza o la sua anima dal peso dell’esistenza.

46 Bashō 1990, 259.
Quest’ultima sfumatura di karumi (spirituale), riscontrabile in altri hokku già oggetto della nostra analisi, in modo particolare in Konomotowa, Harusameya e Umegakani, riteniamo sia stata ottimamente definita da Marcello Muccioli, il quale scrive: “Il karumi è la bellezza della lievità e della semplicità che danno espressione sommessa a una verità profondamente sentita.”

Muccioli, descrivendo il karumi in termini di lievità e semplicità, rischia di incorrere in una pura tautologia, tuttavia egli riesce a centrare la questione, da una parte liberandosi dell’ansia della definizione per meglio evidenziare i tratti ideali del karumi, piuttosto che i suoi caratteri stilistico-formali, dall’altra proponendo il concetto di verità profondamente sentita. Con Muccioli, il karumi è innanzitutto l’intenzione del poeta, è il modo di osservare il mondo attraverso uno sguardo senza peso e capace così di coglierne le sfumature e le minute bellezze. Riteniamo che il commento a Umegakani di Shida Gishū – poeta e raffinato critico di Bashō scomparso nel 1946 – racchiuda l’essenza del karumi con efficacia e semplicità persino maggiori della proposta di Muccioli: “È di argomento comune e allegro, e al tempo stesso ci fa sentire la presenza di qualcosa di ricco,” ovvero il karumi è riconoscere la bellezza nel comune e nell’ordinario, insomma laddove tutto sembra esserne privo.

Ueda Makoto ravvisa nel karumi una qualità filosofico-esistenziale e sostiene che esso sia la soluzione alla crisi generata in Bashō dalle riflessioni sul sabi. Il sabi, semplificando per dovere di sintesi, consiste in un sentimento di malinconia esistenziale, in un senso per l’impermanenza e per la solitudine materiale e spirituale. Bashō si convince così che sia necessario liberarsi dall’attaccamento alla vita terrena e cercare l’elevazione spirituale nell’immersedizione con la natura. Tuttavia, afferma Ueda, egli non riesce a sottrarsi al coinvolgimento negli affanni materiali, ricorrendo pertanto all’invenzione del karumi, che Ueda definisce “dialettica trascendenza del sabi”, in quanto rende possibile rimanere coinvolti nella vita terrena pur aspirando all’elevazione dello spirito mediante l’annullamento del desiderio. Secondo Ueda, il karumi consiste infatti

48 Ueda 1991, 376.
49 Per un approfondimento sul sabi, si veda: Kuriyama 2003, 50-3.
50 Ueda 1982, 34.
nell’umorismo, nell’accettare e alleviare con il sorriso la sofferenza della vita terrena. Un certo umorismo, peraltro tipico della letteratura dell’epoca di Edo, è già evidente nella prima produzione di Bashō, ma lì si sorride per certi giochi di parole o certe allusioni ai classici. In seguito, Bashō introduce la tecnica della giustapposizione di oggetti disparati per creare l’effetto sorpresa. Negli ultimi anni di vita, l’umorismo diviene una **forma mentis** ed è caratterizzato da un sottofondo filosofico, in particolare la comunione armoniosa di tutte le cose e le creature. Ueda rileva che tale convinzione determina il significato di *Konomatowa*: l’immagine dei petali che “piovono” sulle persone e sulle vivande implica una natura benevola che abbraccia ogni essere e cosa.51 Bashō deve pertanto accettare ogni avvenimento della vita come una manifestazione della comunione della natura con l’uomo, il quale in tal modo non può più sentirsi attanagliato dalla solitudine materiale e spirituale.

Shirane, invece, definito il *karumi* nella sua forma più generica come un’estetica minimalista che predilige la semplicità, stabilisce che esso, nel suo carattere più specifico, riserva al lettore uno spazio bianco o vuoto, affinché con l’immaginazione egli diventi partecipe del componimento.52 Possiamo ritenere valida la definizione di Shirane in tre diverse accezioni. Innanzitutto, il componimento coinvolge l’immaginazione del lettore perché il testo s’impone per la sua semplice letteralità, senza che siano necessari atti interpretativi o aggiunte in genere da parte del lettore; in seconda analisi, perché la rappresentazione oggettiva e alleggerita di significati metaforico-simbolici libera il lettore e il componimento da letture del testo predeterminate; infine, perché Bashō, concentrando lo sguardo sui particolari, lascia al lettore l’evocazione di uno scenario più vasto. Shirane in effetti pone l’accento sull’abilità del poeta nel produrre un sottinteso o uno spazio di non-detto, nel nascondere appena sotto la superficie del testo la sfumatura che determina il significato e la bellezza del componimento. In un episodio raccontato in *Kyorai* Bashō domanda a Kyorai: “A che giova dire ogni cosa?”53 Secondo la concezione implicita in questa domanda, l’equilibrio e la compiutezza di uno **bokku** dipendono da uno spazio vuoto nel testo, creato dal

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51 Ivi, 160.


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poeta per attenuare l’evidenza del significato e rendere il lettore partecipe del risultato finale dell’opera, non aggiungendo egli parti mancanti, bensì cogliendo il nesso che unisce le parti del testo. È una questione di attenuazione dell’esplicitazione cui il poeta giunge ricorrendo alla strategia del suggerire, mediando così tra un linguaggio esplicito e un linguaggio allusivo, e ad ogni modo mettendo in atto l’esclusione dell’intelletto e la valorizzazione del valore affettivo.

Il karumi di Bashō e la leggerezza di Italo Calvino

Nelle Lezioni americane, Italo Calvino stabilisce tre diverse accezioni di leggerezza. La prima consiste in un “alleggerimento del linguaggio per cui i significati vengono convogliati su un tessuto verbale come senza peso, fino ad assumere la stessa rarefatta consistenza.”54 Il karumi in effetti consiste in un alleggerimento del linguaggio, ma nel senso di un abbassamento che recupera la concreta sostanza del mondo in opposizione alle astrazioni verbali e mentali di certa poesia. Se non sembrasse una contraddizione, potremmo affermare che Bashō intenda l’alleggerimento del linguaggio come un recupero del peso corporeo del mondo, per dirla alla Calvino. Ciò è evidente nell’uso del linguaggio fono-mimetico, il quale contribuisce a esprimere proprio la concretezza e quindi il peso dell’oggetto, che in tal modo s’impone al di fuori del testo con estrema efficacia e immediatezza, solo per il fatto stesso di esistere. Calvino, al contrario, pare intendere la leggerezza come dissoluzione “della concretezza dell’esperienza tangibile,” a favore di un alto grado di astrazione del linguaggio, come suggerisce nel confronto tra la «leggerezza del linguaggio» di Guido Cavalcanti e il “linguaggio dotato di peso” di Dante, capace nei suoi versi di dare a ogni cosa “consistenza e stabilità.”55

La seconda accezione consiste nella “narrazione di un ragionamento o d’un processo psicologico in cui agiscono elementi sottili o impercettibili, o qualunque descrizione che comporti un alto grado d’astrazione.”56 Una volta chiarito definitivamente che il karumi è l’opposto dell’astrazione, è facile escludere dal nostro discorso la

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54 Calvino 1999, 643.
55 Ivi, 642-3.
56 Ivi, 644.
parte finale di questa seconda accezione proposta da Calvino e concentrarsi invece sulla “narrazione di un ragionamento o d’un processo psicologico in cui agiscono elementi sottili o impercettibili”, dove troviamo invece una perfetta corrispondenza tra il karumi e la leggerezza. Nel paragrafo precedente, abbiamo ravvisato in Konomotowa, Harusameya e Umegakani una particolare forma di karumi che abbiamo definito leggerezza concettuale, che con Calvino possiamo ridefinire proprio come “un processo psicologico in cui agiscono elementi sottili o impercettibili” ovvero esterni alla ragione. Il karumi è l’opposto del razionalizzare, del concettualizzare, del ragionare, proprietà negative nella concezione di Bashō, il quale vi si riferiva con l’onomi.

Infine, la terza accezione stabilita da Calvino consiste in “un’immagine figurale di leggerezza che assuma un valore emblematico.”57 È questo il caso dell’immagine del fiume ideata da Bashō proprio per significare simbolicamente il karumi. In realtà, Calvino si riferisce a immagini che egli trae direttamente da opere letterarie, citando come esempio il personaggio di Guido Cavalcanti ritratto in una novella di Boccaccio. Asaki sunagawa non è un’opera in senso stretto, ma possiamo assumerne il testo come la versione in prosa di un possibile bokku e potremmo addirittura affermare, forzando un po’ il nostro ragionamento, che Bashō per esemplificare e chiarire ai suoi allievi l’essenza del karumi avrebbe potuto servirsì delle immagini contenute in certi suoi componimenti, come le gocce d’acqua che cadono dal vespaio oppure i petali di ciliegio che fluttuano sulla zuppa.

Nel suo discorso sulla leggerezza, Calvino intreccia molti fili. Uno di questi, forse il più trascurato, origina dalla possibile funzione esistenziale della letteratura e conduce Calvino a definire “la ricerca della leggerezza come reazione al peso di vivere.”58 Le Lezioni americane, così come il bisogno di letteratura, nascono dall’esigenza di conoscere il mondo e definire il proprio operato, e sono condotte da Calvino come un lungo viaggio nella Letteratura senza un itinerario predefinito. Per Bashō, la letteratura e il karumi non sono strumenti di conoscenza, bensì un modo per stare al mondo e non essere sopraffatti dal suo peso schiacciante. In un certo senso, la definizione

57 Ibidem.
58 Calvino 1999, 653.
La poetica del karumi nell’opera di Matsuo Bashō della leggerezza come “reazione al peso di vivere”, marginale nel discorso di Calvino, sembra essere più che valida se la riportiamo nell’esperienza di Bashō. Riprendendo in parte la tesi di Ueda, il karumi non è solo un fatto di poetica, ma è anche e soprattutto una questione esistenziale. Bashō ha cercato di togliere peso al suo ragionare e al suo poetare, eliminando dai suoi versi e dalla sua visione del mondo ogni sovrastruzione razionale e mentale, ogni concezione poetica e filosofica. Molto probabilmente la leggerezza di Calvino sfugge al controllo della ragione assai più del karumi di Bashō. La leggerezza è una “proposta per il prossimo millennio” – come recita il sottotitolo delle Lezioni americane – e fin dall’inizio è pensata da Calvino come il più importante di sei ideali per la letteratura del futuro mediante i quali relazionarsi alla letteratura del passato. Il discorso di Calvino è articolato e complesso, ripercorre le letterature di ogni tempo e luogo alla ricerca di esempi di ogni tipo di leggerezza che gli riesce di immaginare, ma senza l’affanno della soluzione, piuttosto con l’intento di offrire ai letterati del futuro numerose proposte di riflessione e di scrittura. Il karumi, invece, è pensato da Bashō come poetica per il ristretto ambito dello haikai e solo un successivo lavoro di interpretazione da parte nostra può innalzarlo a ideale letterario.

Bashō è certamente un profondo conoscitore della letteratura e la sua sensibilità critica lo induce a scandagliare le opere del passato e del presente alla ricerca di espressioni affini al suo ideale di poesia. Tuttavia egli non sembra interessarsi di questioni universali con piglio programmatico e modellizzante, ma pare piuttosto preoccuparsi solo della sua esperienza di uomo e poeta. Bashō ha fatto dello haikai una ragione e un modo di vita, si è dedicato interamente all’arte, a seguire le orme di grandi poeti, viaggiando in continuazione per luoghi resi famosi dalla letteratura e la pittura. Il karumi è pertanto strettamente connesso alla relazione tra poesia e vita ed è molto difficile, e forse persino inutile, stabilire se esso nasca da un bisogno esistenziale o se l’atteggiamento di Bashō per la vita sia stato influenzato dalla poetica del karumi. Ad ogni modo, il karumi implica qualcosa di profondo e importante oltre il semplice fatto letterario, implica un modo di guardare il mondo con leggerezza, rinunciando a teorie, ideologie, riflessioni. Da qui nasce una poesia che si abbandona alla concreteenza e all’evidenza del mondo.
Conclusioni

Il karumi è una poetica complessa, da una parte relativa a questioni contenutistico-formali, dall’altra relativa allo sguardo del poeta sul mondo. Quanto agli aspetti che interessano la composizione nel suo insieme, abbiamo evidenziato che il karumi è il rifiuto dell’eccezionalità dei temi e della lingua aulica del waka, e consiste in un contestuale abbassamento della materia e della lingua, fino al recupero di temi e motivi dal carattere estremamente quotidiano e particolare, descritti con una lingua popolare e impersonale, senza lirismo e senza un linguaggio simbolico-allegorico. Il karumi è poi una poetica “terrena”, in quanto aderente al concreto vissuto quotidiano, tanto nei contenuti, quanto nella forma espressiva e nel modo impersonale della rappresentazione. Inoltre, il karumi è caratterizzato dall’assenza dell’intelletto, cioè ricorre alla strategia del suggerire emozioni e atmosfere, strutturando il testo in modo tale che funzioni silenziosamente e si faccia suggestione, liberando così il fruitore dell’opera da processi mentali consapevoli. A tal fine, Bashō espuge dai suoi versi ogni rimando intertestuale, ogni reminiscenza, allusione e riferimento, esplicito o velato, alla letteratura classica; in nessun caso affida mai alla conoscenza di opere del passato, giapponesi o cinesi, l’attivazione del senso dei suoi componimenti. Il rapporto di Bashō con la tradizione abbiamo detto che dipende innanzitutto dall’ammirazione, per non dire devozione, per i grandi poeti del passato, e quindi dalla riformulazione (e non imitazione) dei modelli classici nella prospettiva del karumi.

Il senso più profondo del karumi concerne tuttavia gli aspetti meno concreti della composizione e può essere recuperato rinunciando alla definizione, peraltro compromessa a priori dalla mancanza di uno scritto di Bashō centrale e modellizzante, condizione questa apparentemente esiziale, ma in realtà assai favorevole all’immaginazione dello studioso. In un approfondito studio, Yamamoto Kenkichi suggerisce di relazionarsi al karumi senza il rigore accademico-scientifico, senza l’ansia della razionalizzazione, rinunciando all’analisi e approcciantosi con un animo leggero.59 Lo stesso Bashō, d’altronde, dimostra di essere insofferente al razionale, non soltanto con l’esempio del karumi, ma con la sua intera esperienza artistica e privata. Scrive Muccioli: “Per lui la poesia non ha nulla a che

59 Yamamoto 1974, 141.
vedere con l’abilità e il virtuosismo, tanto meno con norme e canoni, ch’egli non insegnò mai ai suoi allievi, da uomo che aveva istintivo il senso dell’incompatibilità dell’arte con la legislazione.”

Ribadiamo che il karumi implica certamente anche una questione esistenziale. Il peso del mondo o il peso di vivere, come avrebbe detto Calvino, appare a Bashō insostenibile. Il karumi, prima ancora che una poetica, è una concezione di mondo, è un bisogno di elevazione, è il bisogno di liberarsi dall’impedimento delle esperienze terrene. Sembra essere forte in Bashō, nel suo pensiero e nella sua opera, l’influsso del Buddismo, in particolare l’insegnamento di liberarsi dalle passioni, dai desideri, dall’attaccamento, in modo da elevare lo spirito verso la perfetta illuminazione del Budda. Bashō cerca nel karumi una via, certo non per l’illuminazione (in fondo era un laico, sebbene amasse la frugalità e la modestia tipiche dei monaci), ma almeno per cambiare il suo approccio all’esistenza, per ripensare il mondo e osservarlo con occhi non velati di pessimismo e disperazione. Il karumi è allora un diverso sguardo sul mondo.

In Tabineron (Discorsi delle dimore di viaggio, 1699), Kyōrai racconta:

Nell’anno della sua scomparsa, il maestro si fermò presso Owari, durante il viaggio per le province occidentali. Quando gli allievi gli domandarono del suo stile, egli rispose: “Prestate il vostro cuore a ciò che fanno i bambini.”

Bashō stimava grandemente una qualità cui si riferiva con il termine ada あだ, “vuoto, effimero,” ma secondo Shirane nel lessico del poeta avrebbe significato “ingenuo, infantile.” L’ada consisterebbe, secondo Ogata, in “un sentire poetico ingenuo e pieno di umorismo, originato da un atteggiamento spontaneo proprio dei bambini.” Ora, nel momento in cui il karumi rappresenta il suo ideale sommo, Bashō si spinge fino al punto di innalzare a poetica l’ingenuità e la sincerità dei bambini, capaci di catturare l’incanto del mondo con inesauribile stupore. A cinquant’anni, inconsapevolmente prossimo alla morte, Bashō guarda all’infanzia, scopre la leggerezza, la semplicità di vivere propria dei bambini, non ancora “appesantiti” dalla ragione, dalla

60 Muccioli 1969, 272.
61 Bashō 1962, 546.
63 Kuriyama 2003, 96.
logica, dalle ideologie, dagli affanni dell’esistenza. È ovvio che egli, in un secondo momento, traduca in poesia questa leggerezza infantile. È assai sorprendente l’analogia della maturazione di Bashō verso l’infanzia – se così possiamo dire – con la poetica del fanciullino di Giovanni Pascoli, animata proprio dal bisogno di una conoscenza prerazionale, libera dalle abitudini e dalle convenzioni del pensiero razionale, soprattutto sostenuta dall’aspirazione a una poesia pura ed essenziale, senza finalità estrinseche, tutta concentrata sulle piccole cose, quelle umili e solitamente trascurate dai poeti. Altrettanto sorprendente è l’affinità con un’affermazione di Jorge Luis Borges sul rapporto tra uomo, bambino e letteratura: “[… i bambini leggono come dovremmo leggere noi [adulti]. Semplicemente, godono di quello che leggono e questo è l’unico modo di leggere che ammetto.”64
Queste affinità, tra le quali dobbiamo includere anche, e soprattutto, la lezione di Calvino, proiettano il karumi oltre il contesto nel quale è stato concepito, elevandolo a ideale letterario universale. Il karumi possiede una potente forza suggestiva, tale da rendere svalutante ogni sua definizione e da indurci a intrecciare il filo con la leggerezza di Calvino, con la poetica del fanciullino di Pascoli e con Borges, dal quale accogliamo il suggerimento a leggere la letteratura e quanto essa contiene e concerne con semplicità. È forse questo il senso più profondo del karumi.

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64 Borges 1984, 73.
La poetica del karumi nell’opera di Matsuo Bashō


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Khan as-Sebil vs. Khan al-Inqarata

by Lucio T. MELE*

Summary:

In the late thirties and early fourties the French scholar Jean Sauvaget published on Syrian caravanserais. Two of these are Khan as-Sebil and Khan al-Inqarata, both from the last quarter of the fourteenth century and Mamluk. Many were taught to believe that these were two different caravanserais, but taking a closer look at the ground plan he was struck by the similarities of the shape, size and proportions and decided to dig into the matter. Along this research he started having more and more doubts, coming across other striking similarities. Like the building inscription. In the following text an attempt is made to re-view Sauvaget’s work, supplement it and shine a different light on whether Khan as-Sebil and Khan al-Inqarata are two, or maybe one and the same caravanserai.

Keywords: Mamluk, Medieval Syrian, Caravanserai, Jean Sauvaget

The French Scholar Jean Sauvaget contributed in an important way to the field of Islamic architectural history. In fact, for Syria, he was one of the pioneers in this field of research. His surveys were given to us in the late thirties and early forties of the twentieth century. Although not going into the finest detail, he was the first to produce a fairly complete architectural and historical documentation of the Syrian khans.

The focus for the following text will be on two of his publications. In 1940 Ars Islamica published his “Caravansérails Syriens du Moyen-Âge, Caravansérails Mamelouks.”¹ This was the continuation of an earlier survey on Ayyubid caravanserais, published in Ars Islamica as well.² A year later, in 1941, La Poste aux Chevaux dans l’Empire des Mamelouks³ was published. More precisely the focus will be on two khans documented by these publications. During the research I did for a survey on Khan el-Bagrur, just off the Turkish-Syrian border in the Urfa district, South of Turkey, I studied texts on Seljuq, Ayyubid and Mamluk caravanserais extensively. I also read the substantial and

¹ Sauvaget 1940.
³ Sauvaget 1941.
beautifully written *Islamic Architecture*, a “classic” reading of the historiography of Islamic architecture. Going through the line drawings at the end of the book, I was struck by the similarities of two caravanserais: Khan as-Sebil (line drawing 6.69, page 555) and Khan al-Inqarata (line drawing 6.82, page 556). Both were published by Sauvaget in the above mentioned texts. Reading more carefully, I came across even more similarities. That’s when I decided to look into this matter more closely. In October 2006 I visited Khan as-Sebil. The following is the result of the research on both the caravanserais, and Sauvaget’s texts. It aims at not only comparing the two caravanserais and Sauvaget’s texts but at completing and up-dating the research of the French scholar. Things have, in some cases, drastically changed since Sauvaget made his documentations. Khan Touman, just South of Aleppo, for example, was in perfect conditions when Sauvaget documented it. Close to nothing was left of it when I visited it in October.

In his text published in 1940 Sauvaget presented a series of khans, one of which is Khan as-Sebil (fig.1-plan). In a village named after the caravanserai we find an edifice in fairly good conditions. Sauvaget refers to Dussaud’s book on Syrian topography for the exact location of this village. The caravanserai appears to be approximately fifteen kilometres North of today’s Ma’arrat an-Nu’man, along the highway between Damascus and Aleppo. It was built in 733 H./1371-72 A.D. according to the building inscription. The construction was ordered by sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Nasir al-Dunya wa’l-Din Sha’ban, as can be read in the same, long dedicatory inscription. This sultan was in power between 1363-1376 A.D. The inscription also states that the name Khan as-Sebil means “the caravanserai free of charge”. More about the building inscription will follow later.

With sides 36 m. long, this square khan is relatively small for Mamluk standards. Khan Skaihun and Khan Orthosie measure respectively 52,5 x 46,6 m. and 43 x 43 m. Two elements are particular

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4 Hillenbrand 1994.
5 Sauvaget 1939, 52; and 1940, 14.
6 Sauvaget 1940, 10.
7 Dussaud 1927, map X, (B-3) (Sebil).
8 Bosworth 1967, 63.
9 Sauvaget 1940, 12, and 1941, 66.
to this caravanserai: the corner buttresses; and the type of vault used to cover the *riwaq*, i.e. cradle vaults. Three of the corner buttresses are polygonal and solid. The one in the northwestern corner is round in plan and hosts a latrine on the first floor. Thus it can be concluded that the upper floor is accessible. In the southeastern corner of the court one can find the stairs leading up to the roof terrace (fig.2). From here it is just a walk to reach the latrine. A staircase in the northwestern corner of the court would have been closer to the toilet. But maybe the builders thought differently in view of hygienic considerations. Nowadays however the latrine has gone. It has been replaced by a spiral staircase going up to the round buttress. Nicely hewn blocks of stone were used to make these spiral steps (fig.3). The same stone was used centuries ago to build the khan, and over the years the colour slightly darkened. The *riwaq* was covered with cradle vaults, running around the court on three sides only. Sauvaget mentions the cradle vaults in his texts, but did not reproduce them in the scale drawing of the khan that comes with it. In contrast to the rest of the structure the cradle vaults were not made of well cut blocks, but of rough, broken stone. On all three sides the *riwaq* has an opening to the court. On his ground plan (fig.1) Sauvaget shows buttresses on the inner side of the outer wall, spaced at regular distances. This produces seven bays on all three sides, each of which is covered by a pointed arch. It must be mentioned that the drawing though is not completely correct. The bays opposite the opening to the court on the West and on the East side are in fact exactly in-line with these openings, and not, as Sauvaget shows, off the axis. In the second bay from the south western corner there is a second opening leading outside the khan, it is a small and low door. It does not appear on the ground plan produced by Sauvaget, even though it looks as part of the original plan (figs.4 and 5). In each bay – but the northern one - the floor was raised, creating a platform (fig.6). All platforms in the *riwaq* have been covered with ‘new’ stone slabs. Here and there the original stone can still be spotted underneath, suggesting that the platforms constituted an original feature of this caravanserai. From the court the western part of the *riwaq* is three steps high. Inside the *riwaq*, on both sides of the opening opposite the portal, stone rings were fixed to the wall to which horses were tied (fig.7). Like the *riwaq*, the court shows a platform around all four sides, only interrupted by the different passageways. These platforms were used to unload the
animals from their heavy burden. They were also used to eat and sleep on, elevated and therefore separated from the animals. On both sides of the main entrance a room was built. We may conclude that the room on the right was the prayer room, since it holds a mihrab in the South wall (fig. 8). The room on the left can be reached from the court, as well as from under the entrance. Today half of this room holds modern sanitary facilities, as an alternative to the original latrine, I suppose. These facilities can be accessed from the court, after taking three steps up. The entrance to the court, with a room on top of it, in the Mamluk tradition, has been set back a little in the façade of the building (fig. 9). Through a hole in the floor of the said room, the gate was defendable from above in this arrangement. This element of defence has been well preserved over the centuries. The room above the entrance is square shaped, has a ribbed vault to cover it, and can be accessed by steps on the roof terrace on the East side of the room (fig. 10). On all four sides openings were made, one of which is the door. The other three are windows, one in each wall, overlooking the countryside. Above each window a mâchicoulis was built onto the wall (fig. 11). Although Sauvaget mentions machicolasions above each window, on the court side there is none (fig. 12). There is one above the door, though (fig. 10). It could have been removed during a restoration, but this is doubtful since the colour of the stone resembles that of the original stone. The mâchicoulis, although not very big (35x45 cm.), was big enough to drop earthenware pots with burning liquids from a height of 5 m. Looking at the mâchicoulis, and imagining the roof of this room had crenellation, one can wonder how the rooftop was reached. There is no staircase inside the room, nor on the outside. How was the machicolation on the rooms’ roof operated? Maybe ladders were used to climb up, but no proof of that was found. In total, the entire khan still preserves thirty five of these magnificent defence elements according to Jean Sauvaget. Unfortunately, the same can not be said about the other defence elements. Sauvaget mentions breastwork with crenellation around the roof terrace, with a small opening for shooting with bow and arrow at the base of each crenel. These openings have a nude, the reveals are

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10 Sauvaget 1940, 10.
11 Sauvaget 1940, 11.
12 Sauvaget 1940, 10.
wider on the inside than they are on the outside. This way the shooter could point his bow and arrow under an angle. The corner buttresses had breastwork with crenellations, which made defending the exterior walls between them considerably easier. Nothing is left of the breastwork's crenellation (fig.13), neither on the room above the entrance, nor on the rest of the edifice. After sixty years this characteristic element has disappeared completely, and it was not replaced during the restoration. Most of the breastwork itself though was restored, complete with the opening and mâchélicoulis. The restored parts are easily distinguishable from the original stonework, because their different colour.

Khan al-Inqara (fig.14) appears, as mentioned, in La Poste aux Chevaux dans l'Empire des Mamelouks. The name ‘Khan al-Inqara’ is not used in the text of this interesting book. It can only be found with the line drawings of this caravanserai. Actually Sauvaget doesn’t give us an architectural survey of al-Inqara, just a translation of the building inscription. It is hard to believe that a person who was so dedicated to documenting the Syrian caravanserais would not give an architectural survey of one of them. The translation of the inscription is surprisingly similar to the one given in “Caravansérails Syriens du Moyen-Âge, Caravansérails Mamelouks”. And he reminds us we can find the Arabic text in Ars Islamica VII. Now why would he do that? Furthermore he locates the khan along the route from Damascus to Aleppo, about twenty kilometres north of Ma’arra. Apart from all this, of the edifice itself we only get a ground plan, details of the crenelated breastwork and a cross section drawing of the khan (fig.15). According to Dussaud, a valuable topography source used by Sauvaget, there are three towns with the name Ma’arra. Three different towns on three different maps, map IV (A-1); X (B-1) and map XII (C-3). Ma’arra on the latter map can not be the case, since it deals with an area North of Aleppo. Map IV covers Damascus and the area east of it. Ma’arra is nearly twenty kilometres north of Damascus. Twenty kilometres farther North of Ma’arra, where Sauvaget locates Khan al-Inqara, we can not follow him. There’s a blank between map IV and the map covering the area above it, map

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13 Sauvaget 1941, 90.
14 Ibidem, respectively fig. 15 and 16 on pg. 64, and fig.17 on pg. 65.
15 Dussaud 1927, 550.
VI. Although it is on the Damascus-Aleppo route, it is hard to believe that Sauvaget would have referred to a place not marked on the maps he used. This brings us down to another Ma’arra, the one on map X. Now, twenty kilometres north from Ma’arra on this map, in the direction of Aleppo, we find Khan Touman. And a little bit further up north Khan el-’Asal. The town called Sebil lies about thirty-two kilometres south of Ma’arra. They’re both on the route to Aleppo. There’s no town called Inqarata on the maps made by Dussaud. In the index of “noms des lieux cités dans l’ouvrage” we do see an Inqiratha.\footnote{Dussaud 1927, 599.} Can this be the same town? Or did Sauvaget mean a town called Ma’aret-en-No’man [map X (B-3)]? If he got the information mixed-up, this could well be the town. Sebil lies about 20 kilometres north of this town.

It was the overall look of the two line drawings, the corner buttresses, the rooms on each side of the entrance, the vaults of the \textit{riwaq} and the positioning of the staircase and the openings around the courtyard that set off my curiosity at first. The ground plans, as produced by Sauvaget, obviously differ, but only in some details. Copied until they both had the exact same size and held against the window, the two seem to be close to identity but for those minor details.

The arrangement of the corner buttresses is the same, three are polygonal and only the one in the northwestern corner is round. They have the same dimensions on both plans. The rooms on either side of the entrance are of equal size and shape. The one on the left was not drawn on the plan of Khan al-Inqarata. This room might not have been accessible for some reason at the time. Also equal in size and proportion is the \textit{riwaq} around the court. The irregular vaults covering the \textit{riwaq} can only be seen on the ground plan of al-Inqarata, all the supporting buttresses included. The openings in the wall around the open court have the exact same positioning and size on both line drawings. As does the main entrance. On the plan of as-Sebil the passage between the two rooms on each side of the entrance has a pointed arch vault, in contrast to the cross vault as drawn on the plan of al-Inqarata. In short, apart from minor differences, these two ground plans are remarkably equally proportioned. Are we really
dealing here with two different buildings? As far as I know blue prints were not in use at the time.

Not only are the ground plans as drawn by Sauvaget slightly different. There are differences in his text as well. Most important is the difference in name. Two different names for one and the same caravanserai. This confusion was caused by Sauvaget himself. But if one carefully reads *La Poste aux Chevaux dans l’Empire des Mamelouks*, one can read that he mentions as-Sebil in a footnote given with the translation of the building inscription. The translation says: “....a ordonné la fondation de ce caravanséral public...”. Under footnote 263 Sauvaget repeats this in Arabic: “Hada l-Khan as-Sabil” (*sic*). In the latter text he does not give the Arabic original text of the building inscription, but refers to it in the first publication. This can be meaningful. It is save to write he would not have done so if in fact it dealt with two different caravanserais. A closer look at both the translations of the building inscriptions tells that, and again apart from slight differences, they are so similar that it might be stated they have the same Arabic source. The order of the words in both translations are similar, as are the names given, as are the dates on which the building of the edifice was terminated. In both his publications, “Caravansérails Syriens du Moyen-Âge, Caravansérails Mamelouks” and *La Poste aux Chevaux dans l’Empire des Mamelouks*, as in other publications by Sauvaget, I never found similarities like that between any other caravanserai or building inscription.

We can conclude Khan as-Sebil and Khan al-Inqarata are one and the same. Why, in his latter publicaion, he decided to call the caravanserai “al-Inqarata” remains unclear to me, unfortunately. If we can call the confusion a mistake, I’m sure the mistake has been made by most, if not all, scholars, professors and students alike. I myself was taught that Khan as-Sebil and Khan al-Inqarata were two different caravanserais. For a long time I believed that to be true. I hope I have convincingly proven in this piece that the two are in fact one and the same.

17 Sauvaget 1941, 66.
18 Sauvaget 1941, 66.
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A Meiji Writer’s outlook on Chinese Literature: the case of Mori Ōgai

By Luca MILASI*

Summary

This paper analyzes the impact of Chinese culture on the Japanese modern writer Mori Ōgai (actual name Mori Rintarō, 1862-1922), regarded by some as one of the preeminent writers of the Meiji period (1868-1912); the task is accomplished presenting and commenting on a series of diverse texts which reveal Ōgai’s interest in Chinese culture.

Traditionally, Ōgai’s literature is associated with Western thought and ideals, though most critics do recognize the kanbun training he received as a young man of letter as a matter of some relevance for the development of his style of prose; reconsidering the impact of Ōgai’s early training in the Chinese Classics, however, is by no means the only source accounting for the subtle, yet overall considerable influence of Chinese literary themes in his mature years as a writer of fiction. It is in his late works, then, that one has to search for his growing reputation as a sinophile. Is it possible to open a new perspective over Ōgai’s interest in Chinese culture presenting several examples of the Chinese sources he read and employed in shaping his own literary tastes. Ōgai also contributed to gradually change the way in which Meiji literati would judge the value of literary works, and influenced favourably the process of rediscovery of forgotten Chinese and Japanese works of the past with his own critical thought, thoroughly working towards broadening his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese literature, along with the study of Western fonts. In this respect, translation excerpts provided in the appendix should be of help in clarifying how Ōgai’s outlook on Chinese literature changed over time, to the point that he developed a more mature approach to the study of Chinese culture, and Chinese language itself. The material commented includes forums such as Hyoshinryō Iroku (‘Scattered Recordings on Notable Works’, recorded ca. 1895 onwards), transcribed and printed on literary magazines, and two concrete examples revealing how his knowledge of the Chinese language and culture enabled Ōgai to derive literary themes and techniques from Chinese fiction. These are the short stories Yasui Fujin (‘The Wife of Yasui’ 1914), and Gyogenki (‘Yu Xuanji’, 1915).
Keywords: Mori Ōgai, Chinese literature, Hyoshinryo Iroku, Yasui Fujin, Gyogenki

In this paper I am going to analyze the impact of Chinese culture on the Japanese modern writer Mori Ōgai (actual name Mori Rintarō, 1862-1922).

Ōgai, along with Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), is regarded as one of the preeminent writers of the Meiji period. Great modern Japanese writers such as Ōgai and Sōseki share a common interest in both the Western and the Eastern literary tradition, one that would enable them to write their own works deriving themes from both, and both aspects of their education needs to be focused on.

Indeed, as many contemporary scholars in Japan and abroad have recently pointed out, given the fact that almost any intellectual of the Meiji Period would be provided the opportunity of receiving extensive training in the Chinese Classics, and would be encouraged to master, at least to some extent, the art of composing poetry in Chinese (kanshi), it is unlikely that the kind of literature Sōseki and Ōgai were introduced to at a very early stage of their formation would play no role whatsoever in shaping the new literature of Meiji writers.¹

Yet, when it comes to discussing whether Confucian studies were the sole and only concern of these two well-known Meiji intellectuals, it becomes clear that their affection towards the old tales of love, romance and supernatural events in Ming-Qing China and Tokugawa Japan, and for Chinese poetry, provided an even greater source of inspiration. When reading Chinese literature, writers such as Ōgai and Sōseki based their interest on a wide variety of literary works, sometimes even wider than that of the scholars of the preceding Tokugawa period. One of the reasons why Meiji writers were able to pick up selected readings among such numerous variety is that since the introduction of Western thought in Japan, intellectuals had formally changed the way they judged the value of literary works, and this would, in turn, work towards influencing favourably the process of rediscovery of forgotten Chinese and Japanese works. This time, more often than ever Chinese intellectuals studying in Japan would be

¹ On the kanshi of the Meiji period, see Keene 1998 (1984), 36-54.
there to help them.\footnote{A glimpse on this condition may be gained scanning through both Murayama 1999, and the posthumous Miura (2003).} Also, new ways to arrange an interpretation of old Chinese material became available.\footnote{On the new proposals of reading Chinese, which I will discuss to a broader extent later on, see Kotajima 1997, 33-55, one of several articles on the poetry anthology Omokage. Ōgai’s ‘chokudokuron’ [proposal on reading the Chinese directly with the pronunciation of the native] is dealt with specifically in pp. 40-45 therein. On translations and new editions of Chinese texts, see Murayama 1999 and its related bibliography, and particularly the introductory section (pp 1-19). Also, Odagiri (1997) brings an example of reworking a Chinese short story by means of an artistic translation (Odagiri 1997, 285-310).}

I chose to focus on Ōgai and Chinese literature because, as we shall see, his literary persona results, to a fair extent, as being a stigmatization of this process. His activity as a writer would only apparently seem to represent the limitations of the Meiji intellectual and man of letters: having received the traditional education of a samurai in the Chinese classics, and having moved to Western study early in his life, Ōgai thoroughly worked towards broadening his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese literature, along with the study of Western fonts.

I am going to present a series of texts by Ōgai that demonstrate his interest in Chinese studies. I am going to use these examples to discuss how Ōgai’s outlook on Chinese literature changed over time, to the point that he developed a more mature approach to the study of Chinese culture and Chinese language itself. He was not entirely alone in this, as his views on Chinese literature were partly shared by some scholars belonging to the same literary circle, and constantly participating in the very same forums, such as Mori Kainan (1863-1911) and Kōda Rohan (1867-1947), another well-known novelist of the period and acclaimed scholar of Chinese.

Judging from the body of his original as well as his translation works, it becomes clear that Ōgai fundamentally succeeded in shaping a new literature drawing from the past and the present of both East and West, which earned him a reputation. His interest in Chinese literature matures from the plain reverence towards the Confucian classics that had its historical roots in the old concept of “learning” in Japan, to a fruitful rethinking of the value of many unorthodox and mainly disregarded efforts such as, to give one example for each, the
prose of Li Yu (1611-1680)’s Rouputuan, and the poetry of Tang woman poet and nun, Yu Xuanji (844-871). We shall see more in detail which of these works helped to shape Ōgai’s outlook on literature in general, on the Chinese civilization specifically, and eventually influenced him at some points in his own literature.

A major point of interest is, in my opinion, the ever increasing degree of effort that Ōgai put in an endeavour to use his knowledge of European sources and methods to try and develop a different outlook on Chinese and Japanese literature of the past, rather than reject these as completely anachronistic. This is very much like it has been said that his early experience with classical Chinese and Japanese language had not only nurtured his interest in literature, but had also provided him with a training that would reveal crucial to his future mastery of European languages.

As we shall see, Ōgai is the author of one of the most interesting – though not the only proposals (Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai, one of several historical figures that attracted Ōgai’s interest, had preceded him in formulating one) on reading Chinese language using the actual pronunciation of the contemporary native speakers. As noted before, Ōgai and his circle of friends also developed gradually a perspective that enabled them to rethink the Chinese world. They came to the point of judging masterpieces of the Chinese literature as being fundamentally a product of a culture different from both the Japanese one and the Western one. This is a far cry from the underestimation of “old school” scholars pretending that Chinese was a dignified kind of Japanese expression. The material I am going to comment on, such as the forums called Hyōshinryō Iroku (“Scattered Recordings on Notable Works”), transcribed and printed on literary magazines, clearly show that Meiji intellectuals used to hold literary debates on subjects drawn from alternatively Western, Japanese and Chinese sources. This

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4 A well-known erotic novel famous for its graphic descriptions, also available in a commented English translation, see Hanan 1990.

5 Whose activity is briefly documented in Keene B. 1998, 376. A longer essay on Sorai’s thought is to be found in Yoshikawa, Maruyama and Ienaga (1973, 629-749). More remarks on ‘kanbun kundoku’ and Sorai are to be found also Takashima 2000, 103-53. Takashima’s work also presents in translation one of Ōsaka’s earliest writings in Chinese, ‘Bokuzetsuroku’ (‘A Story [made up] from Scraps’).

tendency to rely on sources from both Western and Asian tradition is evident in several other critical essays of Ōgai, which I shall summarize throughout this article. Lastly, I will bring two concrete examples revealing how his knowledge of Chinese language and culture enabled the author to derive literary themes and techniques from Chinese fiction. These are the short stories *Yasui Fujin* (*The Wife of Yasui*), and *Gyogenki* (*Yu Xuanji*). It is clear from these premises that when it comes to talking about Ōgai and Chinese literature, to consider what impact did the traditional training in Chinese studies had on Ōgai is by no means the only question to tackle. However, since Ōgai’s early training in the Confucian classics provided the author with the opportunity of a first contact with an alien culture so early in his life, this aspect has to be dealt with first.

Even though the *gakusei* (educational system) elaborated by scholars of Western thought (*yōgakusha*) promulgated by the government in May 1872 had led to the closure of old *shijuku* (private schools) and *terakoya*, and to the abolition of *hankō* (fief’s schools), thus erasing the old scholarly system and making many scholars unemployed, the old ways were not, for many reasons, to die so abruptly. It is worth quoting what Murayama Yoshihiro points out in a recent effort: 8 people were not so prompt to accept the new educational system for the very idea of having all social classes receive the same instruction must have been hard to accept in the beginning, teachers who could give lectures using the new textbooks and materials were still very few and, in addition to that, the building of public elementary schools relied mostly on local funds, thus leaving room for general distress and suspicion towards the new system. As a result, the government was forced to modify it and promulgated a second-time educational system, the *kyōiku-rei*, in 1879. Following the publication of this new system many new private academies sprung out and *kangaku*, Chinese studies, was restored as an academic subject, along with the new sciences imported from the West. According to Murayama, actually, *kangaku* still enjoyed a wide popularity during the whole first half of the Meiji Era, up to well into the 1890’s, just before

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7 Both available in English translation, see Dilworth and Rimer 1991, 255-70 and 185-98.

8 Murayama (1999, 3-4), op.cit.
Sino-Japanese war raised new questions and scepticism on Japan’s indebtedness to China’s cultural past.

The young Ōgai acquired a solid foundation in the Confucian classics at the fief’s school, the Yōrōkan, and proved very soon to be a fine would-be scholar of Chinese. Yet, times changed abruptly, requiring him to be introduced to Western studies in order to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a doctor. He was later to acquire considerable proficiency in the German language, even before being sent to complete his study of hygiene in Germany during the years 1884-1888, mostly under the guidance of the physician Robert Koch. At this stage of his career Ōgai seems to have made out the best of his early training in order to gain the impressive skills required to complete his studies at Tokyo University, which he successfully graduated from at age 19, becoming the youngest ever to do so. Soon afterwards Ōgai started a career as an army surgeon, but he never put aside his interest in literature during his whole lifetime. Ōgai also grew to become one of the most productive translators of his age, producing an impressive amount of translations of European works of literature – mostly from German or French originals, and he distinguished himself, as a writer of fiction, for the variety of styles and literary themes he employed throughout his activity. His translations from Chinese, such as those for the poetry anthology Omokage (‘Visions’), are by no means as huge a collection as the translations from German, yet, as we shall see more in details, these too deserve a mention for the approach – unique for the time – that characterized these attempts to rewrite, rather than reproduce literally, the Chinese text in Japanese.

Ōgai derived part of his readings in Chinese prose from his several colleagues and coaches of kanbun. He himself would not call himself a specialist of Chinese studies (nor would he address himself as an accomplished writer at all, for that matter), yet, it has to be acknowledged that the very target of his interest, if not the manner of it, is anything but usual. Early enough the writer, who had previously

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9 Several articles deal with Ōgai’s formation and his experience abroad. Among them, in addition to Ōgai’s detailed biography by his brother Junzaburo (Mori Junzaburo 1942, particularly pp. 1-24 on his education) I suggest Bowring (1979, esp. pp. 1-23), and the recent and more concise Suzuki (1997, 77-127).

10 OZ, XIX: 1-66. See also Bowring (1979, 36-44), and Kotajima (1997, 33-55)
studied at the fief’s school from the age of six, would not be contented with the old practice of reading Chinese the Japanese way, and continued to seek a chance to improve his skills even further after his return from Germany under the guidance of eminent scholars such as the aforementioned Mori Kainan, Katsura Koson (1868-1938) and Yoda Gakkai (1833-1909), the latter being a rather eclectic scholar whose impact on Ōgai’s concept of “fiction” in literature happens to be great. Similarly, Sōseki was able to gain a considerable proficiency in reading and writing Chinese after taking a course in a kanbun gakkō of the period, and this background enabled him to compose many a work of ‘prose-poetry’ in Chinese in his early youth. Both writers were able to travel, though for very different reasons, to different parts of China. Moreover, as two or three anecdotes in Ōgai’s 1909 novel Vita Sexualis effectively portray, lending old books, most notably Chinese imported novels, or masterpieces of Japanese literature of the past, was still a common practice at the beginning of the Meiji Era. This environment had an impact on the life of Meiji writers.

Ōgai, who called himself a dilettante of literature, was successful as a writer mostly because he used his mastery of the classical Chinese and Japanese to shape his own styles and manners of narrations – which vary considerably throughout his entire career as a writer, from the severely masculine prose of the early essays to the plain genbun itchi style of the late fiction. Generally speaking, Ōgai’s literature is one of the clearest examples of what Meiji’s sekigaku could produce, one of its distinctive feature being – with the sole exceptions of some of the most ‘fictional’ attempts – the erudite usage of the language and the themes. Ōgai is a true sekigakusha also because his interest in literature, both Western and

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11 Murayama 1999, 142-147.
13 See the recent Brodey and Tsunematsu (2000) for a presentation of Sōseki’s experience in Manchuria which includes Sōseki’s travel account fully translated, and Shimada (1995) on Ōgai in Taiwan.
14 Vita Sexualis has been translated into English by Ninomiya and Goldstein (1972).
15 By which term I, according to Miura (1998), refer to the ever-increasing knowledge of Western and Eastern thought that steadily broadened from the Edo period all through the Meiji Era.
Eastern, expands covering the three fields of Fiction, Theatre, and Criticism. His interest in Chinese literature is no exception to that, but rather a part of it. As legendary scholar Maeda Ai points out in one of the first short papers dealing specifically with Ōgai’s interest in the Chinese novels, part of the author’s extant library displays a selection of Chinese originals which paradoxically includes about as much, if not even more, imported volumes than any of his contemporaries which were regarded as fine scholars of Chinese (Maeda 1966: 52). Most material in Ōgai’s library now at Tōdai belongs to the world of the Chinese fiction of the Ming and Qing periods, or to the florid tradition of theatre plays of the Yuan. Common themes among these works are the representation of human feelings and relationships, whether in the more romantic variety or in a more sexually explicit fashion. A feature that is shared among most Chinese fiction Ōgai had in his library, and the works by Western authors he read and translated, is that the vast majority of all these could easily fit in a somewhat more ‘specific’ category of works which portray strong female characters.

Ōgai has never been less than a sensitive reader of fiction, and this is true for his readings in Chinese prose, too. His reverence towards the Confucian classics, which also played a role in the style of his shiden (biographical literature), could be one of the less original aspects. His interest for acclaimed masterpieces of Chinese fiction like Shuibu zhujuan or Jinpingmei is a trait he shared with many other of his contemporaries, but yet, it deserves more attention because this is the field where the author rejects the traditional view of these Chinese works. And lastly, Ōgai’s ability to discover obscure texts which had neither been known before, nor would have been afterward were it not for the recent outspring of publications in English (and Chinese) language on Women studies, such as Xiqing Sanji (‘Random Notes

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16 Maeda 1966, 48-55. Ōgai’s collection of Chinese texts is listed, albeit only partially, on pp. 50-1.
17 On Ōgai’s style and the role played by his knowledge of Chinese prose, see Seki 1971, 448-58 and the more recent Fujikawa (1997, 1-32). On his biographical literature see Marcus (1993), and Watanabe (1996).
18 At this point I am going to introduce a series of works that may serve as a reference. An introduction to Chinese literature covering most of the above mentioned Chinese novellas, plays and texts is Idema and Haft (1997). See also
from *Xiqing*), or *Nuxian Waishi* (‘The informal History of a Female Immortal’), is all the more remarkable, ranking him among the most flexible and interested, if not the most knowledgeable, scholars of his era.

Apart from the peculiarities of Ōgai’s approach to the theme, it has to be noted that he would not, in any case, become the only Meiji author to refer specifically to Chinese literature in his late fiction, years after the spreading of the new literary modes imported from the West, and the rise of the Naturalist School: Kōda Rohan’s prose, such as that of the novel *Unmei* (‘Destiny’), or the collection of essays/short stories *Yūjōki* (‘Stories of secret feelings’)\(^{19}\) is just that much indebted to his knowledge in the field of Chinese studies, though his approach, if not the themes, occasionally vary from Ōgai’s or Sōseki’s. The author himself commenting on *Unmei* states\(^{20}\) that he had tried to stay close to historical facts, but also that he had intentionally included in his re-edition of the story anecdotes which had been passed on since ancient times, and which he knew would probably be apocryphal, so as to be enabled to retell his story of an exiled prince more beautifully and movingly. His thesis statement is that there is a reward for good and bad actions, and so he turned to legend in order to be enabled to portray his character more heroically. In *Yūjōki*’s preface Rohan states\(^{21}\) that he had gathered anecdotes derived from a previous story (*shussho* a vague term indicating an ‘origin’ that may not always be actual truth), and that any of his stories has one or more poem as its fulcrum. The poems, though, are often obscure and open to numerous interpretations. Rohan’s endeavour is directed towards creating a believable context for them, he is not always trying to reconstruct the facts the exact way they probably went. For Rohan, his rearranging the material is a crucial process. He respects the facts that have been told but is not trapped in the role of the objective historian. His starting point is the past which has survived in

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\(^{19}\) Both *Unmei* and *Yūjōki* are collected in Kawamura 1997.


literature, his aim being that of creating a new literature through the works of the past. This applies, in many a sense, to Ōgai’s historical fiction, too. Rohan’s historical fiction is a kind of biographical literature which is intended to serve as a showcase for both ‘(hi)story’ and ‘fiction’. Defining Rohan’s ‘shiden shōsetsu’ one could easily borrow the term ‘rekishi banare’, which, along with its opposite ‘rekishi sono mama’, has been indicated by Ōgai in a famous essay as the key element of his own historical fiction. The historical fiction of both authors deals at some point with China’s past.

Also, it needs to be stressed that the composition of kanshi retained a popularity in the first thirty years of the Meiji era, before the advent of new style Japanese poetry, and Chinese literature specialists such as Yoda Gakkai, Mori Kainan and Kōda Rohan himself, enjoyed high cultural status and could count on rather high popularity despite the obscuresness of their works, as they were clearly regarded as major contributors to Japan’s cultural life up to the first half of the Meiji period. Important writers such as Ōgai, Sōseki and Rohan kept composing kanshi even at a stage in their career when they had already stopped writing prose in Chinese. Sōseki, right at the point where he had just started the career that would lead him to become one of the most well-regarded, and perhaps the very best known writer of the period, produced a novel, *Kusamakura*23 (‘The three-cornered world’ or, literally, ‘Pillow Grass’, 1906), whose aulic style, very unique, is the effective product of an experimentation combining a *genbun itchi*-style grammar with words and compounds used in a more ‘classical sense’. Most of these are borrowed from the classical poetry of the Chinese. *Kusamakura’s* structure is that of a travelogue, a form of literature that enjoyed wide popularity in both Japan and China in the past, and regardless of Sōseki’s previous adherence to “new” novel forms, the main character herein is anachronistically portrayed as both a painter and a poet, similarly to how scholars in ancient China used to be. The first paragraphs of *Kusamakura* recall in the usage of the vocabulary, and the poetry-like vividness of expression, the great masterpieces of

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22 *Rekishi sono mama to rekishibanare (History as It Is and History Ignored, translated in Dilworth and Rimer 1991, 179-84. The original text is reproduced in OZ, XXVI: 508-11).*

23 *Kusamakura* has been translated more than once, the more recent translation is *The Three-Cornered World* (Turney 1968).
A Meiji Writer's outlook on Chinese Literature: the case of Mori Ōgai

Tang dynasty poets, as well as the epic ‘travel’ elegy *Li Sao* (‘Encountering Sorrows’),\(^{24}\) by the great Qu Yuan (?343-?277 b.C.). In the first chapter, which is a more free-form sort of “novelistic essay” sprinkled with Chinese and English poetry quoted in the original, Sōseki himself, apparently disregarding the creation of a plot, clearly takes his chance to state his point of view about the worlds of Western and Asian poetry, pointing out the differences and confirming his fondness for both. Judging from his statements, it seems that it was the contact with Western poetry which enabled the author to better evaluate the traditional Chinese and Japanese poetic forms. Likely, among Ōgai’s heroines, characters such as Otama (*Gan*), Sayo (*Yasui Fujin*) and clearly Gyogenki (*Yu Xuanji*), seem to owe much to Ōgai’s early readings in the Ming and Qing literature concerning Women and the Confucian culture I mentioned before.

I stated early in the introduction that Ōgai’s outlook on the culture of the Chinese became first apparent in his critical essays. In this respect, his literary essays become one of the central focuses of my analysis. Though not as successful, and widely known, as Shōyō’s,\(^{25}\) these papers regularly published in the second half of Ōgai’s career supply invaluable elements for a better understanding of his view of literature as a whole, as well as being a source of information on his interests in China’s past. The texts, often written in a classical, erudite language, are not always easily understandable to the modern readers, even native, who have no knowledge of the context, and this may account for them being neglected by scholars for a surprisingly long time.

Criticism (*Hyōron*) was clearly one of the main concerns of intellectuals in the Era of the Enlightenment. Ōgai took up his career as a critic of literature right after his return from a prolonged stay in Germany, with the publication of essays on the Daily Yomiuri. In shorter essays, such as *Igaku no setsu yori idetaru shōsetsuron* (‘Literary theories derived from medicine’, published in January 1889),\(^{26}\) he deals mainly with brief exposure, and criticism, of Zola’s Naturalism. Shortly thereafter, Ōgai, together with his sister Kimiko, his brother

\(^{24}\) See Yang and Yang 1953.

\(^{25}\) Tsubouchi Shōyō, the author of *Shosetsu shinzui* (*The Essence of the Novel*), see Keene, 1984, 96-106.

\(^{26}\) OZ, XXII: 1-2.
Naojiro, and a few promising intellectuals which were friends of his, such as Ochiai Naobumi (1861-1903), Inoue Michiyasu (1866-1941) and Ichimura Sanjirō (1864-1947), constituted the group Shinseisha (The New Voices Society), and in October 1889 the group founded a new magazine, Shigarami-zoshi (‘The Weir’). The group was soon to become very active in promoting the understanding of Western literary movements, especially Naturalism and Romanticism. Ōgai probably felt the urge to have his own magazine in order to be able to publish more material, as he contributed at least one article to every issue of the magazine. Shigarami-zoshi enjoyed a rather large circulation at the time, up to the point when it was discontinued due to the circumstances of Ōgai being summoned to the front during the Sino-Japanese War. Longer essays published in the New Voices Society’s magazine, such as the November 1889 issue’s Ima no shoka no shōsetsuron wo yomite (‘The recent theories on the novel’),27 show all the peculiarity of Ōgai’s approach to literary criticism as well as to literature as a whole.

Ōgai’s Shinseisha was constituted at a point of Meiji’s cultural life when magazines had begun to play a major role as media for spreading the ‘new’ tendencies in the world of literature, but is worth noting that, unlike many critics of the same age, in his early essays Ōgai deliberately chooses not to deal with criticism of one single piece of work, instead he rather tends to construct a theory of literature as a whole. Ōgai’s effort is directed, as stated by scholar Ogura Hitoshi28 in recent times, towards creating a ‘criticism of the criticism’ (hyōron no hyōron). In undertaking such a big task, he always employs references and quotations of works, even rather unknown ones, drawn from alternatively Western, Japanese and Chinese sources. He may establish a link between a French, German, or Russian contemporary author and the prose of a Murasaki Shikibu, or a Chinese writer of fiction such as the author of Shuihuizhuan (‘Water Margin’).29 The time of his rough, medieval formation as a scholar of Chinese culture at the fief’s school is over, as are the days of his solitary readings of Bakin,

27 Henceforth abbreviated in shōsetsuron, see Mori Ōgai, OZ, XX: 65-82. For a translation of a few passages see the Appendix.


29 On the Meiji debates about Shuihuizhuan, see the Appendix. See also Shaphiro (1980).
Shunsui, and of Chinese vernacular fiction at kashidashi-ya during his study at Tokyo University. Yet, clearly enough, even at such an early stage in his evolution towards becoming a more mature critic and writer of fiction himself, thanks to his mastery of a variety of written literary forms of expressions, Ōgai has an opportunity to pick up a wide range of works from both Eastern and Western sources, to compare them in a rather pioneering fashion, and to use them in order to clarify his view on literature as a whole.

It has also to be noted that, in discussing his early literary theories Ōgai displays a strong tendency to employ terms clearly derived from the Chinese tradition in a broader sense. Thus, for instance, in Shōsetsuron... Ōgai first states his opinion on the traditional distinction between ‘shi’ (poetry) and ‘shōsetsu’ (fiction), defining the latter as being the literary product in which ‘one tells things by means of prose’, and explaining how fiction has been, with a few exceptions, traditionally regarded as less valuable than the former in East Asia. Ōgai substantially rejects this traditional view, reaffirming the importance of fiction as a literary genre. Yet, he continues to refer to the world of ‘literature’ using compounds that always clearly incorporate the word ‘shi’ ([Chinese] poetry). Another example is when the author, curiously enough, while critical of both Zola’s études and the Romantic fiction, paradoxically claims as forerunners of superior quality fiction – which he calls alternatively ‘tanhai’ and ‘fukuhai’ – not only such diverse authors as Tolstoy, Beaconsfield, Jean Paul, Daudet, but even Japanese gesaku writer Bakin (in his early works), Murasaki Shikibu, and the author of Shuihu Zhuan. Ōgai himself clarifies in the text what he means by the Chinese-derived terms ‘tanhai’ and ‘fukuhai’, which are, respectively, the short story and the novel. He also uses the term ‘Saishi-Kaijin’ (chinese ‘Caizi-Jiaren’) to signify a kind of literature which portrays the chanceful, romantic encounter between the male and female protagonists. At this stage, Ōgai seems to consider, in a somewhat conventional sense, that writers of every era have to describe the joys and sorrows of love. Paradoxically, the uniqueness of his theories on literature lay in the language used to describe its stylistic features, which is either directly derived from Chinese, or Chinese-sounding. Caizi-Jiaren (talented scholar/beauty) xiaoshuo is a
kind of literature\textsuperscript{30} that was very popular in Japan since the time of the gesaku writers of ninjō-bon, and Ōgai himself was fond of works such as Yanshan Waiji (‘An unofficial account of [an story that took place in] Mount Yanshan’),\textsuperscript{31} which clearly belong to this literary genre. Yet, the author does not seem to make any specific reference in this essay, to the Caizi-Jiaren of the Chinese tradition, he rather seems to employ the term as a general umbrella definition for ‘romantic’ fiction: giving examples\textsuperscript{32} of what he thinks could fit into the ‘Caizi-Jiaren’ category, he quotes German Romantic fiction, and the yomi-hon of the Tokugawa. These essays were written at a time when modern literary criticism was making its first steps in Japan of the Renovation Era, and this could account for some of Ōgai’s choices regarding the language, yet, one can clearly perceive that his use of the Chinese language is aimed at making his dissertation the best possible sounding to his fellow scholars. If he had referred to what he regarded to be masterpieces of the world’s literature with more ‘usual’ terms, it would have probably sounded as if he had no will to conjure in a reader’s mind that these were great fiction. His usage of terms deriving from Chinese is actually aimed towards achieving the attention of the literati. In this sense, one may say that at this point Ōgai’s interest for Chinese literature retains a more conventional trait; nevertheless, it can be perceived that the young Ōgai, although a much better connoisseur of European literature than his contemporaries, was never trapped into an acritical admiration of the West, as he displays also early in his career a deep fondness for the traditional prose of both Japan and China. Anyone claiming that the interest of important Japanese novelists such as Ōgai, Sōseki and Rohan for Chinese and Japanese classical literature never got past their primary education may be trapped in too monolithic a conception to be able to fully understand how this interest changed over time and after they dedicated themselves to Western thought. In the case of Ōgai, this process will become gradually more apparent in his later works, where the writer who has read so much about

\textsuperscript{30} The first to treat organically the Caizi-jiaren genre is the great modern Chinese writer Lu Xun (1959), which had also studied in Japan. I also recommend Zhou (1995) and Miao (2004).

\textsuperscript{31} See Hiraoka 1997, 1-34, especially pp. 16-23.

\textsuperscript{32} For reference, see the quotations from Shōsetsuron translated in the Appendix.
European Naturalism and Romanticism – as well as on Freud’s psychoanalysis – will eventually display a rather unique taste for Chinese fiction and plays dealing with love, sexuality, and the condition of women, which had been at least formally disregarded by the literati of both Japan and China because of the ‘unorthodox’ matter involved.

As for the contents of Shōsetsuron, Ōgai does not make any statement that could account for a clear distinction between the value of literary products of the past and the present, of the Chinese, Japanese or European tradition: he tends to consider all these as requiring the most careful study and attention. He even looks for hints on the value of realistic narration and psychological description in the thought of the Chinese and Japanese scholars of the past. So, talking about the superiority of Shōyō’s theories on the psychological novel, he ends up quoting two Chinese critics of fiction, Yuchu Xinzhi’s and Shuihu zhuan’s compilers, stating that they both regarded fine and realistic portraying of a character the essential characteristic of good fiction, a task that according to Ōgai’s point of view Zola’s followers almost failed to accomplish in later times.

Despite occasional criticism, clearly, Ōgai displays here much more indulgence towards the literature of the past than Shōyō does, though we know Shōyō himself never stated that he overtly despised the work of writers such as Bakin. Very singularly, as a means of reinforcing his assertions on the necessity of creating a new ‘realistic novel’, Ōgai relies more than any of his contemporaries would have probably been willing to do on Chinese literary criticism trying to theorize a ‘new’ novel form.

It is rather difficult to imagine how Ōgai can have been so successful in shaping his early works of criticism on modern literature using such an elaborate classical language, packed together with foreign words, and Chinese texts, quoted in the original. At the times of these early attempts at criticism by Ōgai, the genbun itchi movement

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33 ‘The New Collection of Yu Chu’, a collection of short stories of love and supernatural events from the early Qing period (completed around 1700), by Zhang Chao, contained a version of the celebrated ‘History of Xiaoqing’ (Xiaoqing zhuan, see Idema and Grant 2004, 504-14). The collection, scarcely mentioned today, happens to have been very popular among Meiji intellectuals, as Ōgai, Gakkai and several more literati had a copy of the text in their library (Maeda 1966, 52).
was moving its first steps towards a revolution in the style of Japanese prose, yet, one cannot help noticing that even though many authors employed classical Japanese in their works, Ōgai’s prose is much more refined, sinicized, erudite, and generally obscure, than that of, for instance, Ishibashi Ningetsu’s,\(^{34}\) although Ningetsu did also use classical Japanese in his works. The comparison between Ishibashi’s criticism to Ōgai’s 1890 short novel *Maihime* and Ōgai’s replies to Ningetsu’s review marks this difference quite clearly.\(^{35}\) Though both make extensive use of classical phraseology and grammar, Ningetsu’s prose is generally simpler than Ōgai’s. In turn, while Ningetsu’s reviews may look, in the eye of a modern reader, rather primitive in the contents, the wide usage of archaic, eclectic language throughout this, as well as later essays by Ōgai makes the contrast to the modernity of most contents addressed all the more striking.

An interesting essay in which Ōgai specifically deals with the problem of reading, and interpreting Chinese prose, is *Rōdokubō ni tsukite no sō* (‘On the manners of reading aloud [texts]’),\(^{36}\) published in 1891. In this essay, Ōgai deals with the problem of interpretation of Chinese texts by means of *kundoku*, the traditional method of reading Chinese which most Japanese scholars had been following in order to read both prose and poetry up to that point.\(^{37}\)

The proposal on reading Chinese using the pronunciation of native speakers, as unusual, even pioneer, as it may sound, may have been not entirely new even to scholars of the preceding Tokugawa period. The method of *bōyomi*, literally meaning ‘reading straightforwardly’, may have been formulated for the first time by confucian philosopher Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728).\(^{38}\) Sorai’s school of *kangaku* was one of the

34 Ishibashi Ningetsu (1865-1926) was a once renowned critic of literature, now almost unknown. He wrote, under the pseudonym of *Kidori Hannojō*, a critic of Ōgai’s short story *Maibime*, (Ishibashi Ningetsu, ‘MaibimÈ, in Fukuda 1971, 262-64) in which he argued that the poor girl portrayed in the story is a passive character, so wrenched at the end of the story that she could not reasonably have been addressed by such an aulic term as the ‘MaibimÈ of the title. Ōgai, disguised as Aizawa Kenkichi immediately replied to Ningetsu’s critics in the two articles *Kidari Hannojō ni atauru sho* and *Futatabi Kidari Hannojō ni atauru sho*, see OZ, XXII: 158-72.

35 See the note above.

36 OZ, XX: 351-58.


38 See above note 5.
first study groups of vernacular Chinese in Japan, and they used to use as ‘textbooks’ the kind of Ming and Qing novels that both Yoda Gakkai and Ōgai seemed to find so interesting in the period that followed. So probably Ōgai was introduced to the school of Sorai by his teacher of kanbun, and occasionally he overtly comments on Sorai’s theories in later essays. In addition to that, copies of Sorai’s works are still present in Ōgai’s library now at Tōdai. The point of interest here is that Ōgai seems to have developed a perplexity on reading Chinese the way that most Japanese had done up to that point after his experience in Germany. This statement on the manner of reading Chinese may account for his will to consider Chinese prose as something very distinct from Japanese, a notion the academic validity of which some of his contemporaries seemed much more reluctant to admit. Presently I cannot judge how further Ōgai took his linguistic interest towards the pronunciation of Chinese, but I think it is worth pointing out that he always quotes Chinese texts in the original, or, as for the Ming poems included in the poetry anthology Omokage (‘Visions’), or the Chinese short story published with the aid of his sister Kimiko, in a translation which is intended as a work of art in itself.³⁹ His Japanese translations from Chinese are always more of an interpretation of the text than a literal translation. Kundoku, literal translation of Chinese, is limited by Ōgai to translation of his diaries and travel accounts written at a very early stage of his career, i.e. the Doitsu Nikki,⁴⁰ one of the diaries which recount Ōgai’s stay in Germany, and the only one of his memories which, originally written in kanbun, had been edited and rewritten in Japanese later on.

In the second part of Ōgai’s career as a critic the author keeps focusing on the theory of literature while concentrating on specific works or writers. After the publication of Shigarami-zoshi is discontinued, Ōgai has to move to the front, and upon his return he resumes his activity founding the magazine Mesamashikusa. At this stage of his career Ōgai becomes famous for the forums (gappyō) he organized and hosts – mostly at his house in the Kanda quarter, the Kanchoō – with many important writers and intellectuals of the period. The first of these literary debates was published in Ōgai’s Mesamashikusa shortly after its creation, and many more works

³⁹ See note 3.

⁴⁰ In OZ, XXXV: 85-192, see also Keene (1988, 56-69).
followed. *Gappyō* is a rather singular piece of criticism, the original form of which traces back to the times of the Tokugawa. Many of the forums recorded and printed in magazines were even open to the public, especially late ones. The first of these very particular reviews, *Sannin jōgō* (‘The blabbering of three people’), serialized in Ōgai’s new magazine from March 1896 on, has become famous for the appraisal of Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896)’s novel *Takekurabe* (‘Growing Up’), which earned her a firmer reputation as a writer. Also, Ōgai’s criticism towards the Naturalist School becomes sharper.

*Sannin Jōgō* was the product of Ōgai’s, Koda Rohan’s, and Saito Ryoku’u’s criticism, reorganized, revised and transcribed partly, it seems, by Ōgai himself.\(^1\) The three intellectuals seem to share a somewhat similar outlook on the freshly published literary works. In addition, they talk in turn, but changing their nickname at any turn, making it rather difficult to tell who is who, and also who’s talking about what. This funny, play-like piece is constructed so as to resemble a work of art in itself. The *gappyō* style may have definitely proved to be a good means to succeed in captivating the attention of the readers, who were becoming more and more tired of traditional forms of literary review.

This kind of criticism marks the difference also in that it is almost free from the excessive theorization that characterized Ōgai’s early attempts, and the language, though generally refined above average, is clearly derived from actual speech. Ōgai and his companions seem to have been eventually released from the cage of Aestheticism, and the letting go of the urge to judge by means of aesthetical appreciations results in an overall relaxed, vivacious, sharp and attractive tone.

Many more *gappyō* followed the first experiment, including *Unchūgo* (‘Words [uttered] among the clouds’) and *Hyoshinryo Iroku* (‘Scattered recordings on notable works’),\(^2\) whose first forum has the date of 1897. Ōgai, who seems to have been constantly in charge as an editor and publisher of the transcribed forums, joins forces with friends, colleagues and fellow scholars such as Kōda Rohan, Saito Ryoku’u, his brother Takeji (Naojiro), and many more, such as Yoda Gakkai, Mori Kainan.

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\(^1\) See Ogura 1997.

\(^2\) For reference on ‘*Hyoshinryo Iroku*’, see the original in OZ, XXIV: 473-622, and the Appendix.
The forums gather together many specialists of both Western literature, and classical fiction of China and Japan.

The title of the collection of forums reorganized as *Hyōshinryō Iroku* is a pun based on the ancient Chinese idiomatic expression *ryōi hyōshin*\(^\text{43}\) originally used to acclaim a masterpiece. The forum begins as a more ‘serious and academic’ experiment, and the names of the participants appear clearly at the beginning of their speech. It is clear that, towards the last decade of XIX century, the literati’s attention partially shifted from contemporary writings to the works of the great writers of the past. One particular reason for such shift is that these debates took place in a moment of Japan’s cultural history when acrtyical and unconditional admiration for the West often paired with strong dislike for the traditional culture of East Asia, a contempt that the finest intellectuals regarded as perilous and suspicious. Thus, proclaiming great respect for the writers of ancient China and Japan clearly served as a means to preserve them from complete oblivion. Unsatisfaction towards the mainstream contemporary fiction almost led the participants to the forums to a rediscovery of the literature of the past, but the training in criticism of the contemporary world greatly affected these scholars’ outlook on the culture of the past. This tendency towards looking back to the past will be evident in both Ōgai’s and Rohan’s shift from the contemporary world to an account of Japan and China’s past in later works. Basically, Ōgai and his circle proved to be among the finest philologists of the era. As we have seen, Ōgai was one of the first advocates of reading Chinese prose in Chinese. This view of Chinese as a foreign language involves the notion that Chinese literature was to be considered the product of an alien culture, a basic concept whose academic validity most intellectuals of the pre-modern era, impaired by the *kundoku* practice, had failed to recognize. In these forums about Chinese literature Ōgai and his mentors occasionally push this newly formulated, more ‘modern’ view on the literature of the Chinese even further: it is the case of Mori Kainan and Ōgai commenting on Chinese novel *Shuìhuízhūhuán*\(^\text{44}\) (translated below in the Appendix).

\(^{43}\) Chinese ‘*Lǐng Yì Bǐào Xīn*’

\(^{44}\) Mori Ōgai (ed.), *Hyōshinryō iroku*, in OZ, XXIV: 531.
What is most startling in Mori Kainan’s assertion is his claim that authors of great Chinese fiction such as Cao Xueqin’s\(^{45}\) *Hongloumeng* (‘The Dream of the Red Chamber’), and *Jinpingmei* (‘The Plum in the Golden Vase’\(^{46}\) could have even held their own against the likenesses of any major contemporary writer. His judgement on these acclaimed novels closely resembles what most European and American sinologists praised – and still praise – on the rediscovery of these same novels, even much later. Yet, admonishes Kainan, this is true for those who ‘ask to Chinese fiction what they generally look for in Western literature’, that is, you do not have to expect that Chinese premodern fiction will live up to the standards of any modern reader, for it is a world in its own. Ōgai completes this statement adding that ‘you must not judge a novel such as ‘Shuihuizhuan’ by means of today’s standards (‘sono zentai wa ima no hihyō no teiki wo mochite hakaru beki mono dēwa nai’). And truly, rediscovering early literature, whether Japanese or Chinese, allowed Ōgai’s circle of intellectuals to escape the otherwise ever-impending debate on the modern realistic novel. Ōgai’s subsequent statements reinforce and complete Kainan’s view, stating that the reason why one must appreciate the novel ‘Shuihuizhuan’ is that it is a fine product of the culture of China, and incorporates many elements invaluable to obtain a better insight of the mentality of the Chinese.

It should not be surprising, however, given Ōgai’s disposition towards the German language, and the amount of understanding of European culture in general that he displayed so early in his life, that he would fundamentally be willing to apply the same philologic method to the study of Chinese culture.

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\(^{45}\) 1717-1763. His long novel was completed after his death by Gao E (?1738-?1815).

\(^{46}\) Both presented in *Idema and Haft* 1997, see note 15. These two masterpieces have been discussed by many, here I will limit myself to an introductive bibliography. *Hongloumeng*, whose link to representation of Women in literature is briefly discussed in *Idema and Grant* (2004, 568-70) has been translated and republished several times, the more recent version being that of Yang (2001). *Jinpingmei* is finally going to be translated in full by Roy (1993-). Roy’s monumental translation, of which only the first two volumes have appeared in print, consists of a planned five-volumes set. A rather unconventional interpretation of the famous novel *Jinpingmei* is to be found in Ding (2002): for a summary of *Jinpingmei’s* themes and textual history see the Preface (*Ding* 2002: XI-XXXI).
Ōgai’s assertions on the Chinese traditional theater is the point where he develops a much more solid and mature approach to the theory of literature. In this respect, though they do not say much about the Chinese work in itself, recordings of his comments of the traditional Chinese play Pipaji (‘The story of a Pipa’) provide some of the clearest guidelines to understanding the author’s outlook on what should be the meaning of writing ‘fictional’ literature.47

Starting with a mere comment on one of the most renowned Chinese plays, Ōgai takes his chance to take the debate to a higher level by means of the comparison of two major plays of Chinese theater, Xixiangji, and Pipaji. Though these two plays have been traditionally regarded as expressing opposite views on the relation of love to virtue, Ōgai seems to argue that even Pipaji’s author never meant to write his own play with the sole intent of displaying the righteousness of virtue. Ōgai is clearly using the example of Chinese theatre to rectify the notion of ‘Confucian’ adherence to traditional values as opposed to love and passion, which are human emotions. Also, his tale of a man who suddenly becomes rich and tired of his old wife closely resembles the plot of what has been generally regarded as one of his most successful late novels, Gan (‘The Wild Goose’, 1911-14). The modernity of the author’s opinions regarding the role of literature is made clear when he, rejecting the old view of the literary product as a mean to ‘promote the good and discourage the evil’, peacefully but firmly states that ‘love and passion are warm (atatakai)’ while ‘virtue is cold (hiyayaka)’. Ōgai must have had a keen interest in ‘Xixiangji’ (‘The Western Pavilion’), a Yuan play of love and supernatural events that later served as a model to several Ming and Qing stories of love. Ōgai’s defense of the representation of human passions in literature can be compared with the firm apology of love by the hand of great Chinese novelist Feng Menglong in the collection Qingshi (‘A history of love’). Menglong is an author that Ōgai was so fond of as to liken Elise, the main female character of his short story Maihime (‘The Dancer’, 1890) to his Chinese heroines that ‘choose their husband by themselves’ (Jie Xia Nuzi Neng Zi Ze Pei Zhe) in his reply to Ningetsu’s review of the novella on the German dancer.48

47 OZ, XXIV: 614-18.
48 Mori Ōgai, ‘Maihimēni tsukite Kidori hannojo ni atauru sho’, in OZ, XXII: 159. See also above note 34.
Ōgai’s obsession with women that chose their husbands by wilful decision is made even clearer in one of his late short stories, *Yasui fujin* (‘The wife of Yasui’). Apart from Menglong’s ‘Wives who chose their companion by themselves’, the preference for female characters such as O-sayo, the young beautiful heroine of Ōgai’s novel was inspired by the reading of Chinese stories concerning women, such as the fictionalized account on women *Xiqing Sanji* (‘Random Notes from Xiqing’) by late-Ming scholar Shi Zhenlin (1683-1779). The reading of Shi Zhenlin’s account on his female contemporaries may have been suggested to Ōgai by his coach in Chinese prose, Yoda Gakkai, who had got hold of an extended text of the work, stil present in his library.49 Ōgai’s library holds another copy of ‘Random notes’, a 1874 edition full of annotations (approximately twenty lines) handwritten in Chinese. The handwriting is almost doubtlessly Ōgai’s. Especially Books I, II, III, IV and VII of his copy of *Xiqing Sanji* show signs of careful reading and interpreting of the text such as punctuation, underlining and notations.50 Ōgai is assumed to have completed reading the work by 1907, as stated in his notebook on literary readings, *Chiritsuka*.51 At this point I would like to introduce some excerpts from the text that show proof of having been read by Ōgai:

Once there was the young Jingliu, wife of Yu Fushi. She had a passion for knowledge, and was a gifted poet. She pitied the fact that she herself could not aspire to become a talented scholar, and she wished to become the wife of a promising young man. She did not care much about his wealth, provided that he needed to be of a sweet complexion; and so at the age of twenty-one she married Fushi. Fushi had an exceptional talent and ranked second in the imperial exams. The wedding took place in the first month of the new year [according to the lunar calendar], but in the third month the woman got sick, and in the sixth month she eventually died.52

Ōgai’s comment on the story is ‘The recurrent illness of these fine intellectuals, the sad destiny of the short-lived beautiful maidens cannot but make people shed a great deal of tears’. And ‘but isn’t this it, the Way of the Heavens (i.e. the laws of destiny)’.

49 Nunomura 1997.
50 Nunomura 1997, 56.
51 Reproduced in full in OZ, XXXVII: 39-92
52 Quoted in Nunomura 1997, 60.
One evening, I was hosted by an old man, Ruan, at his house. He called upon a young maiden, who came out bringing tea. She looked, perhaps, twenty or so. I asked the man: ‘Who is this woman?’ And he answered: ‘This is my wife’. So I told him: ‘Sir, you are well into old age; how come that you took for a wife such a young woman?’. He replied ‘Well, actually my wife is so mild and gentle as to put up with this issue’. On a wall of the cottage was hung a [strip of paper with a] poem which read:

On mountain musk a flower has fell:
New springs replace old spring
An ancient mirror, that was never polished
Bears new dust upon old dust

This dream is long, this dream is brief

And my passion is alive again
And that man from the past – he’s back
He’s back in the shape of the white clouds
The old man pointed at it exclaiming: ‘See? This has been composed by my wife: I can’t figure out its meaning, as I haven’t been given an education yet’. Shortly thereafter, I got back home. I went to visit the old man again, but by the time I got to his cottage, it was already empty. A man next door said that they had gone to Mount Nanshan. I got [a chance] to explore Nanshan some ten days later, I even had my friend Mengzhan come along, as I wanted to visit old Ruan’s place; but once I got there[I found out that] the mountain was a very wild place, and when I tried to investigate among its inhabitants [asking about the couple], there seemed to be nobody who had known them.53

When I was younger I used to carry on my studies in a solitary place outside the walls of the city. There lived there a woman who was a real beauty, very knowledgeable about literature. She got engaged to a man from a family of farmers. The man had been struck by smallpox, and had remained pockmarked by the disease. And so, before her marriage, in a moment where she should have been full of joy and happiness, she looked quite distressed and discontented instead. It seemed as if she were fighting some sort of inner grief. One night she suddenly appeared at my door. We formally greeted each other, I let her in and produced some tea. Then I asked her: ‘You are virtuous by nature, and have a gentle disposition, and you are as beautiful and talented as an Immortal; you could have easily found a handsome husband, but your fate has decided otherwise’. As I talked to her, she began wiping away with her sleeves the tears that fell incessantly from her eyes. At this point I asked her: ‘Pray tell, have you ever read the Kanyingpian?’ She replied that she hadn’t yet. So I presented her with a copy of the Kanyingpian and instructed her briefly on its contents. The woman suddenly looked as if she had realized something very important.

She took the manuscript and headed back home. After the marriage, she took the habit to chant out loud its text from morning to evening. Thus, she loved her husband, whom she never addressed with words of reproach or contempt.54

‘Xiqing Sanji’, apparently a ‘random’ fiction in the manner of Japanese zuihitsu, is mainly known by modern sinologists for its account of the life and poetry of the first peasant poet of premodern China, He Shuangqing (?1712-?). ‘Random notes’ is actually a rather obscure work, written in a classical language. It has been rediscovered and extensively studied in recent times by scholars such as Paul Ropp, and Elsie Choy (Choy 2001; Ropp 2002). At first ‘Random notes’ may resemble more ordinary Chinese fiction of love, but there must be something more to the work to raise the interest of Ōgai and Gakkai, and it clearly is the rather unique portrayal of women in premodern China. Apart from the story of Shuangqing’s life, which occupies a good half of the text,55 many more stories of women are told by the author’s, or his friends’ voice throughout the work. Many women are described, and their poetry is quoted by the author in an attempt, however fictionalized, to portray the condition of many of his contemporaries. These women’s devotion to their husbands may seem the hallmark of strict adherence to traditional values such as fidelity and piety, yet, it is unmistakable that the ladies portrayed in ‘Random notes’ all share a surprisingly great degree of self-consciousness. As in the episodes of the Old Ruan, and of the young beautiful wife of the ugly peasant with scars of smallpox, these young wives choose by themselves adherence to fidelity. In addition, these women are all fine poets. This may be accounted for as the most fictionous trait in telling these women’s histories, yet, it is clear that neither Shuangqing’s, nor these minor characters’ poetry can be wholly attributed to the hand of Shi Zhenlin. Many poems quoted in ‘Random notes’ have distinct features, and the overall impression is that, although they are close enough in form, in content they belong to a slightly different world than that of male poets. One may even be startled at first that many of these poems sound flirtatious, but it is not surprising, for they are the key to understand this eminently feminine world: the poetry of these

54 Nunomura 1997, 62.

55 And which has been presented in English several times during the last few years, see Choy 2001, Ropp 2002 and recently, Idema and Grant (2004, 521-41).
women provides them with a temporary outlet to their grief towards life, and generally, it is also the most sincere expression of their inner feelings, an outlet that can to some extent enable them to put up with their ill fate, sometimes it is even an outcome of their hopes for a better future. The unique reality of these women’s inner world, as expressed by their literary works, is something that men – with the sole exception of the male literati – fail to see. Only the literati can to some extent retell this reality by means of their own artistic creation.

Generally speaking, focusing on women’s psychology had been one of the main tasks of Ōgai’s literature from the beginning, too. Ōgai, Gakkai and whoever claimed himself interested in women’s literature in the Meiji Era must have been deeply attracted by a work depicting female writers’ condition in such a fashion. Moreover, as the recent explosion of publishing on women’s history in the late imperial China has contributed to discover, the condition of late Ming women poets and intellectuals may not have been so far from the depiction of *Xiqing Sanji*. If rethought of from the point of view of gender history, the women of *Xiqing Sanji* cease to appear entirely fictional. Shi Zhenlin’s work is a source of information about women in premodern Chinese society, as well as a piece of literature, and Ōgai was interested in the work from both sides: despite the tameness of his own remarks on ‘Random notes’, which is mostly due to the usage of a concise, unaffecting language such as classical Chinese, Ōgai, too, seems to have regarded these women as historical characters, rather than Shi Zhenlin’s invention. Documents such as ‘Random notes from *Xiqing*’, and many more Chinese works in Ōgai’s library, such as *Qingshi*, *Xixiangji*, *Yanshan Waiji*, *Hongloumeng*, *Jinpingmei*, *Nuxian Waishi*, often portray full-rounded female characters, and some of them provide us with a rare opportunity to glimpse on women’s condition in China, an opportunity Ōgai may have been by no means willing to miss. Actually, it is not at all surprising that Ōgai, whose circle of (mostly male) literati’s positive criticism had contributed to the success of important women writers of his era, such as Higuchi Ichi’yō, and who had been himself an early advocate and strong supporter of Hiratsuka Raichu’s *Seitōsha* (“The Bluestockings’), eventually ended up picking such an unusual work as *Xiqing Sanji*, among China’s literature on women. Most of all, it needs to be

56 See note 15.
stressed that Ōgai himself was the male author of a literature about women, for if male characters in his works never cease to appear, his heroines generally turn out to be much stronger characters. Especially towards the latter part of Ōgai’s career as a writer, his female characters’s portrayal steadily grows in vividness and firmness.

As far as ‘Yasui Fujin’ is concerned, Ōgai’s annotation on his copy of Xiqing Sanji offers an insight to what could be the point in shifting the attention from the main male character Yasui Chūhei, whose proper name, contrasting with previous biographies, does not even appear in the title of Ōgai’s tale, to his young and determined wife O-sayo.

One of these female characters’ outstanding characteristic is, unmistakably, their tenaciousness (kikotsu), which is one of the features Ōgai had, by his own admittance, admired in most famous heroines from Chinese novellas such as the young Xiaoqing in Xiaoqing zhuan (‘The story of Xiaoqing’). Tenaciousness is a word that applies to Ōgai’s portrait of a woman, too, as we can guess from a brief comment of the writer about his heroine towards the end of the story.

In this respect, one has to admit that, though neither ‘Random notes’ nor Yasui fujin can be called overtly provoking or contentious attempts, both works substantially succeed in providing a delicate, thoughtful portrait of women’s lives. The only major difference between Ōgai’s heroine Sayo and the women characters in ‘Random notes’ is that Sayo’s voice remains hidden, and it is the writer himself who is given the task of interpreting her story. The main reason for this difference can be explained, in my opinion, considering the fact that Yasui Fujin, as several other rekishi shosetsu (historical fiction) by Ōgai is in the first place a rather truthful retelling of historical events, and the author often avoids commenting too overtly on the facts in an attempt to be as objective as a historian should be. Yet, the fact that Ōgai chose a subject such as the history of Yasui’s wife is not to be so readily dismissed as purely coincidental. Ōgai’s portrait of Sayo includes a variety of elements derived from the female characters of ‘Xiqing Sanji’ blended into one new heroine: Sayo marries upon wilful decision a man who has scars from a past illness, smallpox. She

57 See note 33.
decides to become a scholar’s wife because of her attraction towards her future husband’s broad knowledge, the only thing she could have overheard about as they had scarcely met before the wedding. Her husband, who is destined to become a famous scholar, is about twice her age, and both she and Shuangqing, the main character of ‘Random notes’, are likened to a ‘butterfly coming out of’ their ‘cocoon’. Firmness is another feature that Ōgai’s female characters share with each other, as well as with the women of most Chinese fiction read by the Japanese author. Of course, Ōgai’s character has distinct features, and the story belongs to a world that is not that of the ill-fated beauties of XVII century Chinese fiction, yet, it is clear that many elements from this source may have, more or less consciously, influenced Ōgai’s work. Moreover, though Ōgai’s heroine Sayo is not herself a poet, the author gives us a glimpse of what an educated Sayo could have been in a funny anecdote towards the end of the work.\(^59\)

Ōgai did not want to change historical facts, yet, his portrait of a woman has more in common with the heroines he read about in Chinese fiction than one may think at first.

The last focus of my analysis is Ōgai’s short rekishi shosetsu Gyogenki (‘Yu Xuanji’). Ōgai himself wrote his own story of a Chinese woman poet, based on the historical figure of the great Tang dynasty female poet Yu Xuanji (?844-?871).\(^60\) It needs to be stressed here that Ōgai’s rekishi shosetsu are not all alike in adherence to historical truth. He may be meticulously searching for the facts in some of them, or mostly willing to retell an interesting story, in others. His ‘Gyogenki’ almost certainly belongs more to the latter type. In this rekishi shosetsu Ōgai largely employs the little historical material on the life of Xuanji, like the short biographical account of her life published in ‘Taipin Guanji’ (‘Extensive annotations of the Taiping Era’) and he is accurate and truthful in recapturing the environment in which concubines, women artists, and Taoist nuns probably lived in Tang times. Yet, one must remark that, unlike other historical novellas, this time Ōgai’s reliance on obscure, even apocryphal sources such as the Sanshui Xiaodu

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\(^59\) Dilworth and Rimer 1991, 266.

\(^60\) Yu Xuanji’s poems have been translated into English (Young 1998). Reference to Xuanji in Young 1998, 9-18 and also the article by Suzanne E. Cahill, in Ko, Jahyung Kim and Piggott 2003, 266-68.
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(‘Tablet of the three rivers’)\(^{61}\) is heavier. The decision to rely on historically inaccurate sources tells us much of his will to fictionalize the history of this rather well-known figure of a woman poet. He even ignores, though he probably had got hold of them, the poems (about sixteen compositions) about Taoist ideals of peace of the spirit which testify the historical Xuanji’s moments of bliss and serenity, and the five poems in which she tenderly addresses her master Li Yi. He does so in order to be free to shape the character the way he wants. Again, he deals with a woman whose literary talent is fully recognized and understood only by male literati. In the episode of Li Yi, which bears close resemblance to the Chinese novella ‘\textit{Xiaoqingzhuan}’, from ‘\textit{Qingshi}’, Ōgai chooses to deal again, if very briefly, with the history of a concubine and a jealous wife, such as he had previously done in \textit{Gan} (‘The wild goose’) and talking about Chinese theatre. Generally speaking, Ōgai’s aim is clearly to retell most Chinese stories adding to them what some of these may have been lacking in their original formulation: psychological introspection. His woman poet Xuanji is a fictional character, but clearly believable in the context given. Ōgai’s idea of fiction at this point is still influenced by the realistic novel he himself had defined in his early essays as the description of characters with a ‘unique [realistic] mood that would turn them into original characters, portrayed in the compelling way described by advocates of the modern realistic novel’. As an attempt at applying the ‘method of psychological analysis [...] to obtain the finest results in portraying their (his) character’s inner nature’,\(^{62}\) Ōgai’s \textit{Gyogenki} is quite successful: it is a valuable account of women’s condition in Tang China, as it portrays quite vividly, and with a fair degree of historical accuracy, three environments in which women were given the possibility of living a freer life than that of being wives of someone.

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\(^{61}\) Translated in Idema and Grant (2004, 190-93), which refer to the text as the ‘\textit{Minor Writings from Shanshui}’ (Shanshui Xiaodu) by Huangfu Mei. It has to be noted that Young (1998, introduction, p. X ) cites the same source as the ‘Little Tablet from Three Rivers’ (\textit{Sanshui Xiaodu}). In Tang/Wudai biji Xiaoshuo Daguan (Aa.Vv. 2000) the story appears as ‘Sanshui Xiaodu’ again, and is credited to a Huang Fumei of the Tang (618-907 B. C.). Ōgai refers to a \textit{Sanshui Xiaodu} in the bibliography he himself adds to his short story \textit{Gyogenki}, see OZ, XVI: 118.

\(^{62}\) See quotations from Ōgai’s essay \textit{Ima no shoka no shosetsuron wo yomite} in the Appendix.
In choosing Xuanji, the author strives to provide a glimpse of the troubles of women, or, like Wen Feiqing, whoever ends up being labelled by society as an outsider. In this respect, Gyogenki’s murder act in the story is revealing, in that it represents Ōgai’s biggest departure from the sources. Unlike the ‘Tablet from Three Rivers’, in Ōgai’s murder scene the agonising servant Lu Qiao has not a single word of contempt or moral reproach for her mistress, who, driven crazy by envy, is clearly out of control. Lu Qiao is just paralyzed by fear. Ōgai’s style towards the end of the story grows increasingly plain, almost laconic, as if he were striving to demonstrate that the facts alone, not morality, count. He chooses to tell of the murder as if it were just an accident, as if the characters involved were just too human to avoid the inevitable – and his Gyogenki, once her terrible secret has leaked out, never denies it as if she herself did not completely believe she is responsible for what happened. One could hardly argue that Ōgai condemns his characters because of their immorality, and the fact that the author himself, commenting on Chinese plays of love63 states that neither morality nor the portrayal of virtue alone, but all that is part of human nature, should be the target of fiction, completes what is left out of the concise Gyogenki. The moral condemnation in Ōgai’s story is that of the official documents despising Wen Feiqing’s work on the basis of his conduct.

Focusing on women characters which are often struck by a sad destiny mostly because they are condemned by an environment and a society incapable of understanding their aspiration towards a freer, more individualistic life, is clearly one of the hallmarks of Ōgai’s works of fiction. It is my opinion that both Chinese and Western literature played a considerable role in nurturing Ōgai’s interest for women and their representation in literature.

APPENDIX: Translations of excerpts from primary sources

1) From Ima no shoka no shōsetsuron wo yomiu:64

[....] As we [i.e. Ōgai himself, Shoyo and other Japanese contemporaries] have already stated, debate on the matter [the value

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63 See the Appendix, 3bis.
64 The text translated here refers to the edition published in Ōgai Zenshu (OZ, XXII: 71-2, 78-9. All translation, unless otherwise noted, are mine.
of Zola’s theories] leads to this conclusion: making use of Anatomy and Science as a basis for the creation of fiction may not be such a wrong idea, yet, one cannot help feeling that scientific results may not alone constitute good material for fiction, in the manner Zola has attempted to do in his *études*. Scientific results are the real world, but do writers really have to content themselves with wandering within the limited boundaries of such a world? It is my opinion that, while science may be good material to base upon for a novel, it is only through the power of imagination that best results are achieved with such [poor] material. In this respect, we have to note that writers such as Daudet and Beaconsfield are most likely two authors that succeeded in relying on Reality while respecting at the same time their pledge to Beauty, while Zola has dismissed the latter to serve the former. [...] We may assume that applying the rules of the realistic novel too strictly leads, as a matter of fact, to a mere, uninteresting imitation of the real world, with no artistic merit at all. This, in my opinion, accounts for the failure of the Naturalists’ efforts as works of art.

Nonetheless, excessive Idealism in art, which is the opposite of Naturalism, has its flaws too. We may think of Romanticism in Germany, or the *yomihon* of the Japanese pre-modern period: both these literary genres wander quite too far from the real world. In this kind of fiction, we will read of a romantic encounter between a man and a woman, but these heroes and heroines are portrayed in an unrealistic fashion, closely resembling what an *ideal* couple should be, and as such, they will doubtlessly lack the unique [realistic] mood that would turn them into original characters, portrayed in the compelling way described by advocates of the modern realistic novel [such as Shoyo]. And in addition to that, we will get to the point where several characters all look the same, and are either all-good or all-bad, virtuous, or malicious with no in-betweens. Scholar Zhang Xinzhai says in his ‘Preface to the New Collection from Yuchu’:

Among the writings of authors from past and more recent times, countless are those that rely on excessively unmannered and fictionous portrayal of characters who are either too joyful or too distressed; these authors keep writing and writing word upon word, roll upon roll, yet, their stories all share the defect of lacking a [more] detailed, genuine description [of the characters involved]. By such means and characters, they succeed in amusing the young and old, but
will say nothing about the true nature [of man]. These may make you laugh, but for matters that are not at all laughable, and make you cry, only for things which are actually not sad.

[...]

so, as we have seen, if willing to adhere to the ‘Ideal’, one sticks too strictly to it, that is, to the point of becoming abstract, it will end up as a copy of old models. [...]

Great long novels are, for instance, *Genji Monogatari*, and then, Bakin’s *Hakkenden* and *Bishonenroku*, while in China we have masterpieces such as *Shuihuzhuan*. In Germany, we find Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as well as *Titan*, by Jean Paul.

[...] The method of psychological introspection has widely spread since the end of the last century, along with the newly emerging philosophical theories on Realism; this is easily understood looking in history recordings. [...] The fact that since the very first days of the newborn realistic novel, the method of psychological analysis has allowed writers to obtain the finest results in portraying their characters’ inner nature needs to be emphasized. Yet, it is my opinion that these tendencies towards investigating human behaviour have not emerged in the literature of Asia only after the introduction of Shoyo’s theories: it has been held as an opinion by some critics (*byoika*) from both Japan and China that a few of such [fine] literary products had already appeared. As an example, let’s see what Jin Shengtan^65^ states about *Shuihuzhuan*: ‘the greater merit of *Shuihuzhuan* is that it depicts 108 characters, which are each a faithful portrayal of human nature. If we pick up another work, we will see that though the author meant [to describe] a thousand different characters, these [characters] all belong to the same type. So, the characters [of these works] will be [easily] classified only into two categories[: the good and the evil ], and they will be like [two faces of] the same [coin].

This is to prove what I just affirmed above. I believe that both categories of fiction, the short story and the novel, need to benefit from the method of psychological analysis [of the characters].

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^65^ Perhaps the most rumored (and by some, revered) critic of Ancient China, see Wang 2004.
2) From Rōdokuhō ni tsukite no sō.\[66\]

Speaking about our (i.e. the Japanese’s) method of reading aloud Chinese, I think that we had rather learn to read straight from the beginning to the end (i.e. without going back and forth to reconstruct the sentence according to the syntax and word order of Japanese) the text, imitating even the sound of the original Chinese. [...] By doing so, the meaning of both the grammar and the syntax should be instantly clarified, and besides, a modern reader would avoid reading any Western languages translating word for word and then putting the sentence together.

Yet, our current method of reading Chinese is actually not reading, but translating word for word and reading aloud this literal translation, in an attempt to grasp the meaning. When I was in Europe, I tried to explain our method for reading Chinese to some scholars that were there, and they at first thought I was making fun of them, but then claimed it such an unusual method as to sound like some strange story to their ears. [...] Moreover, this method generates an unnatural, affected style of translation that is no longer our language nor [is it Chinese]. The method of we Japanese to read Chinese should [at least] become an inner work (kage no shigoto), not something that we proudly chant out loud. We have not to make out a declamation of our reading Chinese.

3) From Hyōshinrō iroku:\[67\]

KAINAN: Let’s see now more in detail the style of Shuihu zhuan. I dare say that, if one has to have it in today’s fashion and judge its literary value, this novel scores top rank among the most finely and effectively crafted pieces of works of the entire Chinese literature, for its startling simplicity makes the text readily understandable to anyone who has received even a bit of an education. The shift from one dialect to another in the narration depends on the region [where the action takes place]. [...] This is most easily understood comparing all parts of the text. The fashion of the chapter regarding Pan Jinlian makes them different from all the rest, in that their object is an overtly explicit story. The [author of] Jinpingmei, considering this unusual part

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\[67\] Hyōshinrō iroku, OZ, XXIV: 531.
of the story the most interesting, started writing his own version of
the story to the end, in his own manner, using as an outline these two
or three chapters. The plot of *Jinpinglei* may not be as interesting as
that of *Shuijuzhuan*, but as far as subtle, accurate descriptions are
concerned, the former is even greater than the latter. The chapters
telling of the death of Li Ping’er, from the point where everyone
gathers at her sickbed, and she exhales her last breath, to the part
where she is engraved, all together make more than one hundred
pages, and are collected into one single volume; one can easily
understand why professor Gakkai has praised it stating that ‘you can’t
even imagine how accurate and realistic a description it is’. If one asks
to Chinese fiction what he generally looks for in Western literature,
the novels that go close to that kind of keen representation surely are
*Jinpinglei* and *Hongloumeng*. As for *Shuijuzhuan*, its goal is to show all
the peculiar traits of the Chinese. It is not a historical fiction and it is
not a romance of love: it belongs to a gender which is half way
between the two.

3 bis) From *Hyoshinryo Iroku*.68

[...]

ŌGAI: I think that professor Kainan has already told it all about
*Pipaji*, and I would just like to add a personal opinion I have since the
time I read the play [...]. From ancient times, *Pipaji* and *Xixiangji* have
been linked together as two of the finest examples of the North, and
South, theatre respectively. I assume then, that in order to investigate
the themes of *Pipaji*, the best way is to do a comparative analysis of
both these two plays. *Xixiangji* is a tale of Love, while *Pipaji*’s main
theme is Filial Piety. Love, that is, passion between a man and a
woman, are commonly referred to as being a low, primitive instinct,
very much like one’s longing for food when hungry. On the other
hand filial piety, which is one’s devotion towards his or her parents, is
thought of as a manifestation of a high, noble virtue. In this respect,
*Xixiangji*, regardless of how interesting it may prove, is nothing but
one of those famous *irobanashi* (“Tales of passion”) that professor
Gakkai is so fond of, and if so, it surely has got to be no match for
*Pipaji*. This is the point of view I would like to base my criticism on.
[...]

If the author’s only source of inspiration when writing *Pipaji* had been Piety, then, why shouldn’t he have felt the urge to portray a more pious (i.e. respectful of his son’s will) father, along with a pious son such as Bojie, who sticks to his father’s commands? And again, shouldn’t the author have had the impulse to give his prime minister’s character a better disposition towards others, as much as he has outlined such a devote liege out of the character of Bojie? [...] Actually, this is not at all unreasonable [...]. For if any child were constantly willing to provide care to his parents, and if any parent always tried to use every attention towards his children, never bothering them with unjust requests, and if such were the disposition of both the master and the liege towards one another, that would really be an ideal situation for administering the Good, but indeed, there would be no material for a novel or a play. By means of the *ambition* of Bojie’s father, and the *egotism* of Great Minister Niu, like a wind blowing hard among the trees ends up uttering a voice, like a rock holding back the flow, and eventually creating waves, an initial conflict is created; and thanks to how this [situation of] conflict gets more intricate, or either dissolves, we can enjoy many happy or pitiful things. I am not going to pursue the matter any further, I just intended to stress the fact that, no matter how good and righteous a subject you take, you may not be able to deliver easily a good piece of work by means of flawless characters, entirely devoted to high values.

Let’s take up the play *Xixianji* now: its content is clearly reversed to that of *Pipaji*, for as the filial devotion of Bojie is the subject of the latter, the love of Junrui is the fulcrum of the former. It is for the sake of his feeling [...] that Junrui runs into men (i.e. struggles with the traditional social values). This is the conflict that triggers such a positive determination of his. [...] And indeed, I have to note that while Bojie ends up – no matter how strict his adherence to virtue may be – being depicted as a rather weak, passive character in the play, Junrui, in spite of all his yielding to love and passion, is portrayed as a strong, active character. [...] As I said, since filial piety has been considered honourable, while love and passion, being [seen as] vile instinct, couldn’t rank as worthy a subject of narration as virtue itself, it is easily understood why literary works that have virtue as their theme has been traditionally spoken of as the greatest. Well, I would like to rethink now this superiority of Virtue, and in order to do so, I need to start from a
clear explanation of what is the relationship between Virtue and Love. When a man and a woman fall in love with one another, this is called “passion” (koi) and is accounted for as being a low instinct as the mating impulse of animals. But when this feeling is between a husband and his wife, they call it noble. Is it then a good thing, for a husband and a wife, to fall in love with each other, or not? If it is, then we have to assume that this is a case in which instinct and virtue have melted into one single piece. [...] If it isn’t, how could the two go together in such a fashion? This may give the impression of being such a simple matter as to be resolved without much effort, yet, curiously enough, philosophers have constantly applied to solve this riddle in many a way. Let’s think now of an example a bit more intricate than the one above: let’s take a man, a husband, who once was poor but now has become wealthy. He has a wife since the time he was penniless. Will he get rid of his simple, humble wife once he has been struck by Good Fortune? Indeed, if he does, he will not be virtuous, if he does not, he will be virtuous. But, I guess the point is whether he was actually in love with her or not. Talking about a ‘humble wife’ (sōkō no tsuma) tendentially conjures up in a listener’s mind an idea of someone who has a somewhat slovenly appearance, but this could be a different situation, as she could be a rather beautiful woman in her mature years, someone very active and reliable in spite of the couple’s poverty, some woman who loves caring as much as she is allowed to for her dressing and appearance. I can easily imagine the husband of one such lady longing to meet her after a years-lasting separation, and eager to give her a hearty welcome, with a sense of relief, after the sudden change of the couple’s financial conditions. But what if this wife is kind of unattractive, ill-mannered, someone her husband would have a hard time addressing as his wife in public, given his newly improved status; he could have been faithful to her up to that point just for the sake of duty, and perhaps he could even have mused secretly a few times whether to ask for divorce. In this case, he would grow even more unaffected by her after becoming a wealthy man. This is another occurrence. In the first case there is love and passion between the two, while in this latter instance, neither of both. Will both these two be cases of virtue, or won’t it be that the former is while the latter is not? Well, it looks like we have a new contradiction, a new conflict here. Yet, even in this more intricate example, one thing is clear: that there will be no problem [regarding
virtue] when that “simple wife” has been loved by her husband, and
dear to him from the start. The question is raised if, although not
completely undesiderable in her husband’s eye, she has been in such a
tame relationship to him as to leave room enough to wonder “who
cares? I might leave her perhaps, if I wanted to”. But when there is
love and passion, people won’t ask for a virtuous or non-virtuous
behaviour. It is only when love is absent, that the issue of virtue is
raised: in this case people will intrude pleading for a moral behaviour,
and blaming vice. I may say that when the warmth of Love – which
being a feeling, cannot fall under rational thinking – is gone, there
comes the detached judgement of Reason, like in the case above.
Likewise, when Love pairs with unmoral acting and behaviour, what is
blamed is the vicious behaviour – which is a failure of Reason -, not
Love itself. [...] This is my explanation of the relationship between
Love and Virtue. I stated above that “Love is [considered] a vulgar
instinct, while Virtue is high and valuable”, but this misconception [...] has a perilous hidden implication [...]. I do not intend to push the
matter further. I only wanted to affirm that, to me, Desire (yoku) is not
vile (biken), it is warm (atatakai), and Virtue (toku) is not valuable (takai), it
is cold (hiyayaka).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Il *Fiqh* delle Minoranze islamiche in Europa: il Consiglio Europeo per le *Fatwa* e le Ricerche

By Serena OSPAZI*

**Summary**

In the last decades the increasing phenomenon of Muslim people migrating outside the borders of traditional Islamic world has got into the intellectual and legal debate within Islam itself. Millions of daily experiences answer to the question how can a Muslim live in the European space? but from the intellectual point of view the debate is open: how can speculations on this issue change the *fiqh*? This essay focuses on the answer of an Islamic juridical association, which is very interesting for its role within Europe and Islamic intellectuals’ elite of the transnational umma: the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). This association tries to include the particular condition of the Islamic minorities in Europe within the *fiqh*. The ECFR’s analysis starts from the context of Islamic diaspora’s enlightened conservatism with particular reference to the birth of Islamic minorities’ right (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*) and to the movement of Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. The essay describes ECFR’s members, actions, and aims, considers its *fatwas* concerning items relevant for the interaction with European society – political participation, economic issues, marriage and divorce and the equality of the sexes – and points out its ambiguities. Through the effort of unifying the references of Muslims in Europe and under the guide of the preponderant figure of its president al-Qaradawi, this association gives the possibility of a silent orthodox reformation of Islamic law that involves the whole umma. This leads to consider an islamization of Europe not only as the first aim of the ECFR but also its starting point in a project of conquering authority and creating a leadership on Islamic world. Consequently the results of this study and the open questions about the potentialities of ECFR’s utopia make this case study relevant for further and wider considerations on the process of making a general Islamic authority.

**Keywords:** Islam – Europe, *fiqh*, *fatwa*, minorities’ right, (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*), *iğtibād* – al-Qaradawi – Muslim Brotherhood – Islamic authority.
Nell’epoca contemporanea il fenomeno dell’emigrazione dei musulmani al di fuori dei paesi tradizionalmente islamici contribuisce alla globalizzazione dell’islam e lega indissolubilmente il dibattito intellettuale e giuridico interno all’islam alla sua relazione con l’Occidente.

Le attuali problematiche relative al rapporto tra queste due entità, che si vanno sempre più definendo nell’immaginario collettivo per contrapposizione, vanno lette in particolare a partire dalle vicende degli ultimi due secoli, nei quali il mondo islamico ha cambiato in maniera radicale il proprio modo di guardare all’Europa, con nuovo interesse o piuttosto nuova preoccupazione. Questo sguardo è sfociato in una forma contraddittoria di attrazione e repulsione contemporaneamente sullo sfondo di un tuttora irrisolto complesso d’inferiorità; e le interpretazioni che il pensiero islamico ha dato nel corso di questi secoli, dal nazionalismo alla fase rivoluzionaria, alla politicizzazione dell’islam, sono quelle che ritroviamo attualmente in un sincretismo sempre più complesso.

Oggi la presenza dei musulmani in Occidente non si va soltanto ampliando ma approfondendo: sono i luoghi di emigrazione la nuova frontiera del pensiero islamico che si rapporta all’Occidente, ed è qui che nascono o decidono di stabilirsi gli intellettuali e i militanti di una moderna intercultura; così come è qui che più facilmente prende campo il proselitismo di movimenti islamisti radicali la cui chiamata alla ribellione esercita maggiore fascino su coloro che non sono

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Per la trascrizione dei termini arabi, si è adottato il metodo scientifico di norma in uso presso gli arabisti; si è invece evitata la trascrizione scientifica di termini particolarmente diffusi in italiano (come ad esempio fatwa e imam). Si è inoltre optato per una trascrizione semplificata di quei nomi propri che già appaiono comunemente in questa forma negli scritti occidentali.


riusciti ad integrarsi. La pluralità delle voci, riscontrabili a livello sia elitario che popolare, è rappresentativa di una problematica tanto attuale. Ai due estremi del dibattito si trovano espressioni del tutto differenti: le une neofondamentaliste, promotrici violente di un ritorno a pure radici islamiche e della creazione di governi islamici, le quali identificano il nemico da combattere non solo nell’Occidente, ma anche nella società musulmana che si lascia influenzare da esso; le altre progressiste, miranti a uno sviluppo alla luce dei diritti umani e che persegua il recupero e la revisione critica delle tradizioni e della storia del pensiero islamico nel contesto di stati laici.

Tra questi due poli opposti si configura una nuova umma che costituisce una transnational public sphere, una rete di relazioni e istituzioni che si sovrappongono e si estendono in Europa e oltre, raggiungendo ed includendo esperti e studiosi di tutto il mondo islamico. L’umma ideale spesso prevale sull’umma reale e in questo contesto si inscrivono nuove sapienze islamiche per l’Europa che cambiano lo scenario dell’unitarietà culturale della classe intellettuale islamica. Alla domanda “come può un musulmano vivere nel contesto europeo?” rispondono milioni di esperienze individuali quotidiane; ma a livello culturale ed istituzionale il dibattito rimane aperto, da parte musulmana e da parte non musulmana.

Cosa vuol dire essere musulmano europeo? E cos’è l’Islam europeo? Esiste veramente un islam specifico dell’Europa? Sono molti i tentativi di rispondere a queste domande a livello politico, intellettuale, giuridico, che in alcuni casi influenzano la multiforme massa dei musulmani, la guidano o almeno si prefiggono di farlo; ma in che modo tutto questo influenza sul patrimonio giuridico islamico da molti ritenuto immodificabile da secoli?

Questo saggio intende analizzare la risposta fornita che un’associazione giuridica islamica particolarmente interessante per il peso che dimostra di avere sia a livello europeo che dell’élite intellettuale dell’umma transnazionale, il Consiglio Europeo per le Fatwa e le

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4 Allam 2002, 154-5.
5 Grillo e Soares (2005, 11).
6 Su questi concetti si veda De Poli (2007, 149).
Ricerche (ECFR). Tale associazione si propone di canonizzare all’interno del fiqh la condizione delle minoranze islamiche in Europa.

L’ECFR, autorevole rappresentante dell’attuale ondata di risveglio del pensiero islamico, appare come un organo giuridico che si erge a difesa della morale islamica e porta avanti l’ambizioso progetto di riunificare i riferimenti dei musulmani della diaspora. Non mira affatto a sostituirsi ai legami parentali, ai vari centri islamici, agli imam di quartiere o a quelli del web; piuttosto si propone come loro guida al fine di inglobarli nel suo progetto, in un processo che, nel tentativo di tenere insieme le fila dell’islam minoritario, possa ridisegnare gli assetti legali all’interno dell’umma internazionale.

1. Il contesto: il conservatorismo illuminato nell’Islam della diaspora

L’approccio dell’ECFR in materia di diritto e della sua applicazione nel quadro di un compromesso con l’Occidente rientra in un più generale e diffuso fenomeno – che coinvolge figure di spicco dell’islam internazionale – teso a sviluppare un islam di stampo tradizionale, uniforme e lievemente adattabile a seconda dei contesti, inseguingo l’utopico progetto di un’umma mondiale, unificata, massificata e in continua espansione; progetto che può riassumersi nell’espressione “conservatorismo illuminato.”

Queste ambizioni hanno preso corpo e si sono sviluppate principalmente al di fuori del tradizionale mondo islamico, nell’ambiente della diaspora musulmana in Occidente; è questo un contesto che ne ha favorito non solo la creazione ma anche la diffusione, data la maggiore libertà di circolazione delle idee e la minore influenza dell’élite politica e religiosa; a quest’ultimo proposito, è vero infatti che in ambiente occidentale gli ulema sono svincolati dalle autorità statuali che nei paesi musulmani, per

7 Il nome in arabo è al-Mağlis al-Urubbi li-l-Ifta’ wa al-bubūt, e in inglese The European Council for Fatwa and Research, da cui la sigla.

8 Per il concetto di diaspora applicato ai musulmani di oggi si veda Saint-Blancat 1995 e Cesari (2003, 251-269).


10 L’espressione è ricalcata sulla definizione che Cesari (2005, 204) dà degli ulema che operano in questo contesto.
converso, regolano l’ortoprassi e detengono il monopolio della sua amministrazione.\textsuperscript{11}

Va inoltre ricordato che prima degli eventi relativamente recenti successivi all’11 settembre uno sviluppo e un radicamento musulmiano in Occidente non era monitorato né guardato con sospetto; ma spesso a suo riguardo prevaleva una sostanziale impreparazione. Ciò ha consentito alle élite di ulema di eleggere gli Stati Uniti e l’Europa quale luogo privilegiato in cui sviluppare i propri studi e quale trampolino di lancio per le proprie idee.

In questo ambito due sono essenzialmente le premesse a cui si può ricondurre l’esistenza dell’ECFR: da una parte la creazione del \textit{fiqh al-aqalliyyāt} e dall’altra il progetto universalista dei Fratelli Musulmani. A riprova di tali premesse come background fondamentale dell’associazione, basti pensare che il suo stesso presidente, lo \textit{ṣayḥ} Yusuf al-Qaradawi, è uno dei principali promotori del \textit{fiqh al-aqalliyyāt} nonché una figura di grande rilievo nella Fratellanza internazionale in ambito europeo. Inoltre, come si tenterà di illustrare in seguito, alcune linee guida riconducibili ai due ambiti suddetti sono chiaramente sottese alla politica e all’azione del Consiglio.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{1.1 Il \textit{fiqh al-aqalliyyāt}}
\item L’espressione \textit{fiqh al-aqalliyyāt} fu coniata da al-Alwani\textsuperscript{12} e probabilmente usata per la prima volta nel 1994\textsuperscript{13} quando il \textit{Fiqh Council of North America} promulgò una fatwa che permetteva ai musulmani americani di votare alle elezioni.\textsuperscript{14} Significa “diritto delle minoranze” e si tratta di una dottrina legale atta a sviluppare un diritto islamico specifico per le minoranze musulmane, in particolare quelle che vivono in Occidente, che si trovano ad avere necessità diverse dagli altri musulmani che invece vivono nelle società islamiche. Si sviluppa a partire dagli anni novanta nel contesto nordamericano ad opera dello stesso al-Alwani e con al-Qaradawi si trasferisce presto in
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{11} Sul rapporto tra le istituzioni religiose e quelle dello stato nei paesi arabo-islamici si veda De Poli (2007, 125).

\textsuperscript{12} Taha Jabir al-Alwani, professore e giurista iracheno, attualmente vive negli USA. Per informazioni su di lui si rimanda in al sito www.islamonline.net e al suo sito personale www.alalwani.net.

\textsuperscript{13} Cfr. De Angelo 2006.

\textsuperscript{14} Cfr. Fishman 2006, 1.
ambito europeo, dove si diffonde rapidamente e diventa importante materia di studio, tanto che nel 2004 è stato promosso un convegno sull’argomento a cui hanno partecipato anche lo stesso al-Alwani e Rashid al-Ghannoushi, uno dei membri dell’ECFR. Nonostante ciò le sue premesse teoriche incontrano alcuni ostacoli all’interno del mondo intellettuale islamico, rendendolo tuttora controverso tra gli ulema stessi.


Mentre l’accento di al-Alwani è più forte sulla funzione politica e sociale del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt nell’interazione tra le due parti o all’interno della comunità stessa, al-Qaradawi, più attento alla legittimazione propria e di questo settore della giurisprudenza di fronte alle istituzioni islamiche tradizionali di cui fa parte si preoccupa maggiormente della da’wa. Egli infatti vede la crescita delle comunità islamiche in Occidente come un segno e un’opportunità per il risveglio islamico mondiale, in una lettura che divide la storia delle minoranze musulmane in sette tappe; l’ultima, quella dell’azione,
sarebbe l’epoca attuale. A partire da queste premesse, una normativa che regoli la vita del musulmano in Occidente serve a ridefinirne e rafforzarne l’identità per fare del musulmano stesso uno strumento visibile di propaganda religiosa. L’Occidente è visto quindi come una terra da conquistare in termini di adesione alla fede islamica; e le minoranze musulmane che vi risiedono, anziché essere considerate una parte svantaggiata dell’umma, figurano come l’avamposto privilegiato per la diffusione del messaggio islamico essendo investite di un ruolo che coinvolge la comunità islamica nella sua totalità. Per questo motivo, non avrebbe più alcun senso considerare i musulmani d’Occidente estranei all’umma o parte marginale e deviante; a maggior ragione essi hanno bisogno di un diritto che faciliti loro un compito tanto importante, non più solo a livello locale ma anche e soprattutto a livello universale.

Entrando nel merito del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, esso nasce a partire dalla considerazione dei bisogni del musulmano che vive in Occidente, quale maniera di applicare la šari’a in un contesto in cui si rischia di non riuscire a vivere secondo i suoi canoni. Si può dunque parlare di un sistema di regole approntato per risolvere i problemi quotidiani dei milioni di musulmani che vivono in Occidente. Secondo al-Alwani ci troviamo di fronte al moderno erede del fiqh al-nāwāżīl, una giurisprudenza “di eccezione”, legata agli eventi e creata per rispondere alle necessità dei singoli nelle comunità musulmane residenti all’esterno della dār al-islām o in luoghi che, in seguito a una conquista da parte straniera, erano sì a maggioranza musulmana ma sottomessi a un governo non islamico. Le differenze rispetto al passato in fatto di dimensioni del fenomeno – ben un terzo dei musulmani vive oggi in territorio non musulmano –, isolamento dal resto dell’umma e carattere di temporaneità rendono necessario uno sviluppo di questa branca del diritto al servizio di comunità odierne, basate sul desiderio di stabilità e, nella maggior parte dei casi, anche sul desiderio di integrazione nella società; senza che questo vada a

23 Il termine nāwāżīl significa “avvenimento, evento, caso, accidente, inconveniente.”
Scapito della conservazione della propria fede e dei propri valori islamici, nel contesto occidentale odierno in cui sono garantite maggiori libertà individuali di quanto non lo fossero in passato.

In questo senso il *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* si propone come fattore di reislamizzazione e recupero dell’identità per coloro che hanno perso i valori islamici o non li hanno mai conosciuti; esso intende inserirsi nell’ambito di un progetto di (ri)unificazione dell’*umma*, facendosi portatore e garante del messaggio universalistico dell’islam in un contesto pervaso da influssi che ne potrebbero causare la perdita, senza dimenticare la comunità dei musulmani nel suo insieme.

Si tratta dello sviluppo di un vero e proprio sistema ideologico e politico che mira a regolamentare, attualmente a livello principalmente teorico, i rapporti sociali e istituzionali tra la minoranza e i paesi che le ospitano dai quali spera di vedere riconosciuta la propria legittimità in tale ambito. La complessità e la delicatezza della materia fanno sì che il *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* sia considerata una disciplina collettiva, che non può essere praticata individualmente, e obbliga coloro che lo esercitano ad essere esperti non solo nelle scienze islamiche ma anche necessariamente della società in cui questo verrà applicato.\(^{26}\) Questa importante precisazione apre la porta se non ad una nuova figura di ‘*ālim*, almeno ad un rinnovamento di quella esistente; anzi, sembra quasi voler legittimare all’interno del *fiqh* i molti ulema pienamente e perfettamente inseriti nell’era della globalizzazione, sapendo abilmente sfruttare di quest’ultima le reti e i mezzi di comunicazione.

Due fondamentali premesse stanno alla base del *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* e ne giustificano la creazione: il principio di ‘*ālamiyyat al-islām* (l’universalità dell’islam) e il principio giuridico dei *maqāṣid al-šarī’ah* (governare in accordo con le intenzioni della legge islamica).\(^{27}\)

Porre l’accento sull’universalità dell’islam porta alla canonizzazione della possibilità del musulmano di vivere al di fuori della classica *dār al-islām*, ed a partire da questo punto si costruisce un diritto che è di fatto un compromesso con la vita della società ospitante. Così facendo il *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* contraddice la teoria della *biğra*,\(^{28}\) che proibisce al musulmano di vivere nella *dār al-ḥarb* ed eventualmente lo obbliga ad emigrare verso territori sottoposti alla legge islamica; è questa una

\(^{26}\) Cfr al-Alwani (2003, 33).


\(^{28}\) Per un approfondimento del tema, si veda soprattutto Masud 1990.
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Teoria elaborata dalla tradizione giuridica a partire dalla classificazione classica dei territori\(^{29}\) e fondata sull’esempio dell’egira profetica\(^{30}\). Abolire la divisione classica tra dār al-islām e dār al-ḥarb, considerare il mondo intero come dār al-islām o comunque sostituire alla dār al-ḥarb il concetto di dār al-ṣulḥ, o concetti simili, non è certo oggi un’idea nuova o una prerogativa del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt,\(^{31}\) ma proposta in questo ambito può avere enorme fortuna e ampia diffusione anche in campo intellettuale tradizionalista, anche se la non precisa definizione del mondo al di fuori dei paesi islamici da parte del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt (sono dār al-islām o dar al-da’wa?) si ripercuote sul significato stesso del diritto delle minoranze – se infatti è dār al-islām perché dovrebbero infatti essere considerate minoranze? – generando perplessità e scatenando critiche e dibattiti, anche all’interno dello stesso ECFR.

Il principio dei maqāṣid al-ṣari’a, ripreso da Abū Ishāq Al-Šāṭībī,\(^{32}\) costituisce la filosofia operativa del diritto delle minoranze, e consiste nel riconsiderare il fiqh sulla base degli interessi invariabili della šari’a\(^{33}\) operando un nuovo iǧtībād che li comprenda, li promuova e li realizzi. Questo principio, oltre ad essere fondamento del modus operandi del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, ne legittima l’azione che tende appunto a realizzare gli scopi della legge rivelata in un contesto particolare in cui si rende tanto più necessario applicare quella che secondo al-Alwani è la regola

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\(^{31}\) Infatti ragioni storiche e socio-politiche hanno portato in generale ad una revisione di questa divisone, ci si riferisce in particolare all’impatto del concetto di watān sul pensiero e sugli eventi storici di molti paesi musulmani, soprattutto arabi, fino ad arrivare alla considerazione dell’assetto politico mondiale in cui la maggior parte della terra fa comunque parte di un patto, l’ONU. Su questo argomento si veda De Angelo (2002, 109-110).


d’oro nel fiqh: cambiare le regole (akhkām) è permesso nel momento in cui cambiano i tempi oltre che i luoghi. Perciò un giurista non deve applicare a priori alla situazione moderna regole che presentano una forte matrice storica senza un’attenta analisi delle circostanze e dei ragionamenti che hanno generato quelle stesse norme, ma dedicarsi all’iǧtīḥād sulla base degli interessi principali della šari’a che per al-Alwani sono tre: tawḥīd (unicità di Dio), tazkīya (purificazione dell’essere umano) e ’umrān (costruire una civiltà con valori) che sono anche i tre valori su cui è basata l’umma e che la rendono forte.

È fondamentale rilevare che un nuovo iǧtīḥād nell’ambito del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt non significa un rinnovamento nel merito della metodologia ma rientra a pieno titolo nell’uso consuetudinario di questa pratica nei secoli nonostante la sua chiusura ufficiale. Ne consegue che ciò avviene naturalmente tramite l’uso della fatwa, in accordo non solo con la tradizione di questo strumento giuridico come mezzo di sviluppo della dottrina ma anche con un fenomeno attuale di rivitalizzazione dello stesso dopo un’epoca in cui semblava cadere in declino. La fatwa nella sua forma odierna grazie all’uso di internet è uscita dai confini del mondo islamico non solo a livello di fruizione ma anche di produzione e ha visto modificare le sue caratteristiche perdendo in gran parte il suo valore legislativo, o anche semplicemente la pretesa di averne uno, rimanendo solo un mero parere senza alcuna ricaduta riscontrabile nella realtà se non quella che la sua diffusione a livello mediatico può provocare, ed è divenuta uno strumento flessibile atto al recupero dell’identità islamica e non più soltanto alla sua rivendicazione. Nel fiqh al-aqalliyyāt l’uso di fatwa collettive serve a ridare a questo strumento legittimità nell’ambito della giurisprudenza e ad evitare l’ “effetto anatema,” appianare in partenza i contrasti tra gli ulema e rafforzarne il ruolo in un epoca di

38 Tyan nel 1965 (2003) descrisse la fatwa come una pratica obsoleta e in disuso.
dispersione dell’autorità in cui proliferano imam e mufti autoproclamati nel mondo reale come in quello virtuale.

Si può quindi considerare il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt come una revisione e reinterpretazione delle norme accumulate nel corso della storia per un riadattamento all’epoca e al contesto attuale delle minoranze in favore di una semplificazione del messaggio religioso e dei suoi obblighi, in modo tale da eliminare le eccessive difficoltà che potrebbero causare l’allontanamento dei credenti dall’islam e allo scopo di fornire loro un adeguato insieme di norme che li guidi secondo i principi della šari’a. Certamente dal punto di vista dei contenuti questo processo può portare al contrasto con regole preesistenti e all’istituzione di deroghe alle norme classiche, e quindi a innovazioni di portata rilevante, ma nella pratica i teorici del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, che sono per la maggior parte ulema che provengono dalle fila del pensiero tradizionale, tengono a prendere le distanze da un’idea di innovazione e a sottolineare e ribadire più volte come questo non sia assolutamente da intendersi come un fiqh autonomo né come una revision ed una sostituzione del diritto preesistente, ma come una nuova parte di esso che va a aggiungersi alle branche del fiqh già esistenti che regolano ambiti specifici, come ad esempio il diritto economico o il diritto della medicina.39

Il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt nasce così come parte dell’intero fiqh che si occupi di facilitare una corretta vita islamica e il rapporto tra la minoranza musulmana e la maggioranza non musulmana che la ospita e si profila come una riflessione che tenta di discernere tra religione e tradizione, invoca la purificazione del messaggio tendendo, nell’universalizzarlo, ad un “neoislam” epurato e razionalizzato rispetto alla tradizione popolare.40 Inoltre insistendo sul ruolo di guida necessaria che questa branca del fiqh assume per unificare le comunità musulmane e rafforzare la loro identità per presentarsi più forti davanti alle istituzioni occidentali con le proprie richieste, il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt si presenta come lo strumento usato da un’élite di ulema per costituirsi quale autorità nello spazio musulmano occidentale, facendo leva sulla specificità del diritto delle minoranze per mantenere l’esclusiva su di esso limitando le interferenze dell’élite tradizionale.

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È questa un’operazione messa in atto dalle principali associazioni islamiche europee riconducibili ai Fratelli Musulmani, che tentano, a volte con successo, di presentarsi come rappresentative del popolo musulmano all’interno di un progetto che si gioca essenzialmente ai piani alti di politica e diplomazia a livello nazionale, europeo e internazionale e che di fatto esclude la massa musulmana la cui presenza è causa della negoziazione.

1.2 I Fratelli Musulmani in Europa: il progetto della Fratellanza e la fondazione dell’ECFR

La progressiva e poi definitiva messa al bando dell’associazione dei Fratelli Musulmani dall’Egitto, dove era nata nel 1928, e la conseguente dispersione nell’esilio dei suoi membri, invece di annientare questa corrente di pensiero, ne provocarono nuovi sviluppi, spesso maggiormente radicali a seguito della clandestinità egiziana e alla diffusione dei testi di Sayyid Qutb, e condussero ad una straordinaria diffusione delle idee di Hasan al-Banna non solo nel mondo arabo-islamico, ma anche in Europa, dove il movimento approdò già negli anni Cinquanta. A partire dalla fine della seconda guerra mondiale il radicamento dei Fratelli Musulmani nel nostro continente si concretizzò attraverso la fondazione di associazioni studentesche nei paesi europei che vedevano già allora nel loro territorio una consistente presenza musulmana, operazione che fu


44 In particolare Siria, Iraq, Algeria e poi Arabia Saudita e anche in Pakistan per le cui vicende cfr. Moten 2006, e in Indonesia.

possibile anche grazie al supporto finanziario dei paesi del Golfo\textsuperscript{46} in \textit{primis} Arabia Saudita e Kuwait.\textsuperscript{47}

Questo movimento, pietra miliare dell’evoluzione dell’islam in questo secolo\textsuperscript{48}, ha diffuso a livello internazionale idee che discendono direttamente dalla \textit{salafiyya} panislamista\textsuperscript{49} di Al-\textit{Afḡānī}\textsuperscript{50} e Muḥammad ‘Abduh\textsuperscript{51} nella corrente di Rašīd Riḍā,\textsuperscript{52} considerato appunto dai Fratelli Musulmani mentore del loro movimento,\textsuperscript{53} che auspica non più la modernizzazione dell’islam, ma l’islamizzazione della modernità,\textsuperscript{54} propugnando un islam integrale, totale e universale che coinvolge tutti gli aspetti della vita\textsuperscript{55} con l’obiettivo di costituire uno Stato Islamico che ripristini la morale musulmana combattendo il “decadimento sociale dato dalla secolarizzazione e dall’occidentalizzazione.”\textsuperscript{56} La sua fortuna in Europa si deve alle sue caratteristiche che ben si adattarono e si adattano tuttora al disorientamento e allo sradicamento del contesto migratorio europeo in cui la domanda di islam è proporzionale alla perdita dei punti di riferimento e quindi di un’identità chiara a cui appellarsi, proprio per la sua similitudine da questo punto di vista con quello egiziano all’epoca della sua fondazione. La cultura laica del suo fondatore (l’organizzazione nacque svincolata dalle istituzioni dell’islam ufficiale e i maggiori ulema del suo tempo non si unirono a lui), l’islam come ideologia politica,\textsuperscript{57} la forma militante e la natura populist della propaganda “sensibile alle esigenze del proletariato e del sotto

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{46}Vidino 2006.
  \item \textsuperscript{47}Cfr. Kepel (2004, 168).
  \item \textsuperscript{48}AA.VV. (1996, 2).
  \item \textsuperscript{49}Sul riformismo islamico del XIX secolo si vedano Branca 1997 e Shahin 1995c.
  \item \textsuperscript{50}Su di lui si vedano Branca (1997, 46, 127-34) e Keddie 1995.
  \item \textsuperscript{51}Su di lui cfr. Branca (1997, 47, 134-139).
  \item \textsuperscript{52}Su di lui cfr. Branca (1997, 48, 139-44) e Shahin 1995b.
  \item \textsuperscript{53}Nielsen 2004, 142.
  \item \textsuperscript{54}Cfr. De Poli (2007, 39).
  \item \textsuperscript{55}Cfr. il messaggio di Al-Banna per il quinto congresso dei Fratelli Musulmani in AA.VV. (1996, 14).
  \item \textsuperscript{56}De Poli (2007, 51).
  \item \textsuperscript{57}Già dai primi anni non solo politica interna egiziana, ma internazionale, a partire dalla causa palestinese, esordio dell’impegno del movimento su scala universalista in maniera concreta cfr. Branca (1997, 191).
\end{itemize}
proletariato, ma anche della piccola borghesia, fondato sulla convinzione che gli ideali islamici potessero risolvere i problemi socio-economici meglio del capitalismo e del socialismo occidentali," sono i principali elementi che costituiscono i motivi del successo europeo dell’associazione, le basi su cui questa si è andata ampliando e modificando secondo esigenze e politiche contingenti e che hanno contribuito a rilanciarla e ad ampliarne l’influenza. Oggi, infatti, rispetto all’originario nucleo egiziano del movimento, la Fratellanza internazionale corrisponde ad una “tendenza borghese o moderata” e sono ulema dalla formazione tradizionale a portare avanti il suo messaggio in Europa, mantenendo però l’approccio populista originario atto a convogliare consensi e sviluppare tra i musulmani la coscienza della propria identità e ricostruirla ove perduta. Essi propongono un islam purificato nei suoi fondamenti dalle sovrastrutture che vi si sono accumulate nel corso della storia, per raggiungere il quale ritengono fondamentale l’uso dell’iğtihād, al contrario dei movimenti di ispirazione wahabita, ma in pieno accordo con il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, strumento imprescindibile per la creazione di una giurisprudenza adatta alle circostanze della modernità, si dedicano alla da’wa per la diffusione dell’islam in Europa e investono i musulmani europei del compito di convertire le masse.


58 Donini (2005, 311).
60 Nato nel 1926 in Egitto, segretario personale di al-Banna. Prima di arrivare in Europa, e precisamente in Svizzera Said Ramadan aveva esportato il pensiero dei Fratelli Musulmani in altre parti del mondo, ad esempio in Pakistan dove il suo messaggio aveva trovato terreno fertile sulle basi dell’ideologia di Mawdudi.
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gruppo di studenti arabi a Monaco in Germania per la costruzione di una moschea, la Fratellanza conquistò così la Commissione per la costruzione di moschee, che poi divenne la Islamic Society of Germany (IGD). Sempre in Germania fondarono poi la Bank al-Taqwà. In Francia un altro membro fondatore del Centro di Ginevra creò l’Association of Islamic Students in France che costituì lo stadio embrionale dell’UOIF che oggi conosciamo e la cui fondazione deve molto all’importante intervento di Faysal Mawlawi e Rashid al-Ghannoushi.

In Gran Bretagna nel 1997 venne fondata la Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), organizzazione la cui leadership è in mano a importanti personalità fortemente legate alla Fratellanza. E in Italia l’UCOII, associazione nata nel 1990, è legata ai Fratelli Musulmani.

Lo sviluppo dell’associazionismo europeo della Fratellanza e il suo crescente peso nei rapporti dei musulmani con i paesi in cui vivono portò a sentire la necessità di riunire le fila del movimento in un organismo che raccogliesse i musulmani dell’intera Europa e ne guidasse l’inserimento nella vita pubblica: nacque così la Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) promossa da membri di UOIF, IGD e MAB nel 1989. Proprio questo anno coincise con una svolta nel dialogo a partire dal quale i Fratelli Musulmani hanno adottato in maniera più o meno autentica i concetti di libertà e democrazia e puntano nella loro opera di riislamizzazione ad un messaggio favorevole all’integrazione che vedono come punto di partenza per entrare a far parte a tutti gli effetti delle società in cui vivono e poter così portare avanti legittimamente la rivendicazione dei propri diritti in quanto minoranza di fronte alle autorità democratiche europee.

Oggi la FIOE raggruppa ventisei associazioni nazionali in altrettanti paesi europei. Nel 1996 questa federazione ha creato European Trust, un’istituzione finanziaria, e ha promosso la

63 Per un approfondimento su questa associazione si rimanda al suo sito internet www.uoif-online.com.
64 Membri di spicco dell’ECFR.
65 Si veda il suo sito internet www.mabonline.net.
realizzazione di una parte giovanile, il *Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organization* (FEMYSO).\(^6\) La volontà di controllo e di azione su tutto il territorio europeo assume così le sembianze di un processo di creazione di organismi generali tutti legati tra di loro, di cui per ora l’ultimo e più importante anello della catena è la fondazione dell’ECFR. La FIOE sul finire degli anni Novanta si è adoperata per la creazione di un organismo generale preposto a realizzare concretamente gli obiettivi fino ad allora propugnati a livello teorico, che portasse avanti un lavoro legale che potesse costituire materia di proposte concrete nell’ambito della negoziazione con l’Unione Europea e con i singoli stati. Nasce così nel 1997 il *Consiglio Europeo per le Fatwa e le Ricerche*, in un incontro promosso dal presidente della FIOE, Ahmad Rawi, che è attualmente uno dei membri del Consiglio stesso, che nel suo discorso iniziale ne ha delineato i principi guida.

Si tratta di una maniera di unificare non soltanto le direttive, ma anche i contenuti del dialogo con le istituzioni europee, e di farsi promotori di un nuovo sistema legale delle comunità islamiche, combattendo la dispersione e l’opposizione all’interno del panorama associativo dei musulmani europei. L’intenzione è quella di promuovere un organismo nel quale l’ideologia si trasformi in produzione concreta di norme, un contenuto che vincola maggiormente i partecipanti rispetto ad un’azione di strategia politica.

Inoltre, stabilire regole chiare è il primo passo per imporre la *šari’a* in Europa mediante la contrattazione di giurisdizioni islamiche separate con le istituzioni statali, in un progetto che punta ad uno stato islamico non territoriale. La volontà di costituire delle corti islamiche per l’Europa, di cui l’ECFR costituisce il primo generico tentativo non ufficiale a livello delle istituzioni statuali dei paesi europei, si rivela argomento di grande attualità, visto il crescente dibattito riguardo all’introduzione di corti islamiche all’interno dei procedimenti di arbitrato in Gran Bretagna.\(^6\)

Rimane da considerare che la fitta rete di associazioni in Europa non è direttamente controllata dalla Fratellanza, che non risponde a rigide gerarchie, ma si presenta come un movimento o un’ideologia diffusa a cui fanno riferimento molti musulmani, intellettuali e non, in

\(^6\) Si veda il sito internet www.femyso.net.

\(^6\) ECFR (2006, 8-9).
maniera fluida e flessibile e che coinvolge non solo l’Europa ma si dirama a livello mondiale.\footnote{Ad esempio anche negli Stati Uniti sono presenti diverse organizzazioni legate ai fratelli musulmani, ad esempio Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), che include la Muslim American Society (MAS), l’Association of Muslim Social Scientists of North America (AMSS) ed altre, su cui si veda Nyang 1995. Sull’argomento cfr. anche Cesari (2005, 203).}

Il risultato di questa rete è una “versione neo-ortodossa cosmopolita”\footnote{Cesari, Pacini eds. (2005, XVI).} di Islam che, nell’ambito di un revival religioso\footnote{Su questo aspetto cfr. Esposito (2004b, 2: 186-90).}, si organizza per forme di leadership globalizzata e si propone come interlocutore delle istituzioni occidentali in una forma di monopolio mascherato. Questo è in pieno accordo con il progetto per una Fratellanza internazionale quale forza di coesione dell’intera umma rimodellata secondo i nuovi canoni di una modernizzazione livellatrice e tradizionalista. La Fratellanza internazionale punta ad un espansionismo pacifico e politico attraverso l’inserimento nei meccanismi istituzionali europei, sfruttando un campo che è ancora relativamente tabula rasa rispetto alla penetrazione di questo movimento; si prefigge cioè di entrare ufficialmente a far parte di giochi politici mondiali passando per la porta delle democrazie europee e nordamericane.

Attraverso la capillare diffusione nel territorio associativo europeo ai suoi livelli più alti, la Fratellanza si prodiga per la realizzazione di zone sotto il suo completo controllo, luoghi cioè in cui la popolazione sia musulmana e costituisca compatti stati islamici in miniatura che negozino con il paese ospitante un proprio statuto speciale.

La šari‘a, almeno in parte, in questo modo entrerebbe in Europa a pieno titolo, essendo riconosciuta da accordi con gli stati o addirittura con l’Unione Europea in nome dei diritti di cittadinanza delle minoranze non su base etnica ma religiosa.

2. Il Consiglio Europeo per le Fatwa e le Ricerche

Il Consiglio Europeo per le Fatwa e le Ricerche, nato a Londra nel 1997 per volontà della FIOE ha ora sede a Dublino, è la prima assemblea del fiqh formata nel nostro continente, e si rifà all’esempio delle varie
accademie del fiqh che si trovano nel mondo arabo,73 dalle quali dice di discendere per occuparsi specificamente del diritto delle minoranze islamiche. Insieme ad altre due associazioni parallele, il Fiqh Council of North America74 con sede negli Stati Uniti, e l'Islamic Fiqh Academy in India,75 è legata all’Organization of Islamic Conferences attraverso l’International Fiqh Academy, che ha sede a Jeddah.76

È composto da un gruppo di influenti e conosciuti ulema che si adoperano per una rilettura del diritto islamico atto alla vita in Occidente, ed essendo ispirato ai Fratelli Musulmani e contando tra le sue fila numerosi membri militanti, simpatizzanti ed ideologi del suddetto movimento, l’ECFR è rappresentativo dei due campi d’azione privilegiati di questo movimento: la riflessione teologica basata sull’īghtāhād e la produzione intellettuale e attraverso questi metodi si rivela il braccio operativo dell’interpretazione conservatrice ma illuminata a cui si è accennato all’inizio.

Rispetto alle altre associazioni islamiche in Europa, il Consiglio ha l’ambizione di voler concretizzare le premesse ideologiche della Fratellanza internazionale: nato come braccio operativo del movimento, si propone come legislatore capace di contrattare uno spazio giuridico musulmano all’interno del contesto europeo, promuovendo il risveglio islamico, concetto caro ad al-Qaradawi che lo definisce un “risorgimento benedetto,”77 con il progetto di una da’wa per islamizzare l’Europa, scopo per il quale sono giustificati compromessi con l’Occidente, che a volte comportano anche e perfino il discostarsi da principi islamici ortodossi e la devianza da

73 Come le importanti Research Council of al-Azhar, Fiqh Council of the Islamic World League e Islamic Fiqh Council of the Organization of Islamic Conference con cui al-Qaradawi sottolinea di non essere in competizione nella sua introduzione alla prima raccolta di fatwa del Consiglio, cfr. ECFR (n.d. c., 4).
74 Per informazioni su questa associazione si rimanda al sito internet della stessa: www.fiqhcouncil.org, si veda inoltre De Lorenzo, n.d.
76 Cfr. Fishman n.d.
 alcunos precetti, con scelte la cui rilevanza si nota soprattutto in campo economico.

L’autoinvestitura in questo ruolo assume maggiore rilievo se letta alla luce dei processi di trasformazione a cui la legge islamica è soggetta a contatto con le società non musulmane: il fiqh infatti, secondo una dinamica senza precedenti, viene ricostruito in Occidente in base ai principi fondamentali delle leggi occidentali, un processo lento e che comporta cambiamenti solo in minima parte, ma sorprendentemente passivo, la cui rilevanza sta proprio nel fatto che ad operarlo non è la classe giuridica musulmana.\(^7\) In questo contesto l’ECFR è un tentativo non tanto di interrompere la trasformazione in sé, quanto di ricondurla in mano islamica e precisamente sotto il controllo dell’élite di esperti del fiqh. Si tratta di stabilire unilateralmente chi ha i titoli per intervenire in tale ambito, a prescindere da quale sia la sostanza dei cambiamenti in questione, cioè di ribadire che in questo campo la detenzione del potere legislativo è prerogativa dell’Islam, chiudendo a priori la possibilità di un dibattito che entri nel merito dei contenuti, nonostante non sia per nulla scontato che i risultati possano essere in sostanza così dissimili.

L’ECFR si prefigge la progressiva unificazione del pensiero islamico almeno a livello europeo, in modo tale da poter produrre una sorta di corpus giuridico ad hoc per le minoranze musulmane che sia condiviso e quindi legittimato ad ampio raggio e di riunificare così l’umma della diaspora tramite un’operazione intellettuale che guidi in particolare i giovani e coloro che localmente sono i punti di riferimento delle diverse comunità sparse nel territorio europeo. Si tratta di imporre dall’alto, tramite l’acquisizione di un largo consenso nell’ambito dell’élite degli ulema, un modello unico, un’ortodossia del contesto minoritario, concetto, questo, espresso in maniera velata nella presentazione identitaria del Consiglio che pone l’accento sulla creazione della convergenza tra ulema che vivono in Europa, che emettano fatwa collettive, pubblichino ricerche sulla šarī‘a per realizzarne i fini e che guidino i musulmani che vivono in Europa e i giovani in particolare ad una rinascita dell’islam ortodosso.

Intendendo presentarsi come soluzione alla frammentarietà della rappresentanza islamica in ambito europeo, l’ECFR si pone come difensore delle minoranze musulmane e dell’Europa intera dal

\(^7\) Su questo processo in atto e sui suoi rischi si veda Cesari (2003a, 7).
fenomeno degli ulema autoproclamati e dalle conseguenze a cui questo può portare\textsuperscript{79} e si prefigge di mettere a tacere tali voci: questo è ciò che considera il suo ruolo e il suo dovere di guidare e correggere la via del progresso islamico in Occidente. L’accento posto sul rischio che la società europea corre a causa di questi impostori del diritto islamico, e sulla propria capacità di poterlo arginare, rivela l’attenzione nel cercare di guadagnare piena legittimità agli occhi delle istituzioni europee, proponendosi come essenziale collaboratore per la garanzia della sicurezza dei non musulmani in quanto unico organismo che possiede l’autorità di garantire l’effettiva preparazione islamica e l’integrità personale degli intellettuali che raccoglie, nello stesso momento in cui si cerca di imporre un proprio monopolio del sapere islamico del \textit{fiqh}, e soprattutto della sua rappresentanza ufficiale nel territorio europeo.

\textbf{2.1 Fonti e metodi}

Strumento fondamentale dell’attività dell’ECFR sono le fatwa, che vengono emesse collettivamente allo scopo di attuare quella convergenza tra gli ulema che sta alla base della creazione del Consiglio stesso; nei documenti che presentano l’identità dell’associazione si nota come su questo meccanismo venga posto un forte accento proprio per garantire la propria legittimità, ma allo stesso tempo per nascondere eventuali divergenze che possono provocare polemiche.\textsuperscript{80} L’auspicata uniformità di pensiero però è lontana dall’essere raggiunta in molti casi, dal momento che questo metodo collettivo spesso porta ad ambiguità che appaiono in fatwa che trattano di temi simili, o addirittura nella stessa fatwa, a causa di dibattiti su argomenti sui quale non si giunge ad un pieno accordo tra i membri.\textsuperscript{81}

In realtà il tanto sottolineato approccio collettivo alla formulazione di una giurisprudenza per le minoranze viene applicato solamente una volta all’anno, quando si riunisce la sessione ordinaria del Consiglio, ed è chiaro che in questo modo il Consiglio non risponde alle urgenze dei singoli che ad esso si rivolgono, ma che le richieste vengono riformulate in maniera più corretta e consona ad una tradizione

\textsuperscript{79} Al-Qaradawi in ECFR (n.d. c., 4-5).
\textsuperscript{80} In ECFR n.d.a.
\textsuperscript{81} Caeiro (2003b, 13).
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metodologica consolidata nella storia della giurisprudenza islamica\textsuperscript{82} e vanno a costituire materiale per svolgere studi e ricerche da un punto di vista principalmente teorico che sono poi il fulcro dell’attività dell’ECFR. Questo indirizzo appare evidente anche osservando il sito internet ufficiale del Consiglio\textsuperscript{83} che non ha una parte dedicata al Q&A come molti altri siti islamici\textsuperscript{84} ma è strutturato come un archivio: ciò è indice di come si intenda creare un corpus compatto di norme e non rispondere a necessità contingenti. In un’epoca e in luoghi in cui chiedere risposte nello spazio telematico, l’\textit{umma} virtuale, rimane l’unico e il più esplicito riconoscimento dell’autorità della persona o dell’organismo interpellato, la volontaria esclusione dell’ECFR dall’aspetto più evidente di questo fenomeno, il mercato delle fatwa private, rimanda ad uno scarso interesse per il pubblico costituito dalla massa. A questo si contrappone la viva attenzione prestata a preservare la propria immagine istituzionale e a ricostituire l’ufficialità del processo giuridico dell’\textit{iftā’}, evitando di adeguarsi ai metodi di divulgazione come i forum, secondo una scelta politica di carattere utilitaristico che coinvolge i disegni di partecipazione del Consiglio all’islam internazionale, e per nulla ideologico, dato che gli stessi ulema si propongono poi singolarmente per queste attività in altri siti. Sempre a questo scopo, in controtendenza al fenomeno di diffusione dei siti islamici e delle fatwa online, il Consiglio si vuole presentare come un organo autorevole, facendo leva nel proprio sito sull’uso della lingua araba, vero canone di trasmissione della tradizione, e proponendo quella inglese solo in secondo piano.

Le fonti e i metodi del Consiglio sono quelli del \textit{fiqh al-aqalliyyāt}, anche se inizialmente questa pratica non trovava l’accordo di tutti i membri dell’ECFR, infatti fu inserita come parte ufficiale della sua politica solo nel gennaio 2004 dopo un diffuso dibattito, che lascia traccia nel documento che lo riconosce.\textsuperscript{85} Alla base dell’interpretazione

\textsuperscript{82} Sulla riformulazione delle domande per le fatwa nello sviluppo del diritto islamico cfr. Hallaq 1994.

\textsuperscript{83} Si tratta di www.e-cfr.org, istituito da ECFR 2001a.


\textsuperscript{85} ECFR n.d. a.
giuridica dell’ECFR c’è il principio del *taysīr al-fiqh*, secondo il quale il *fiqh* serve a rendere la pratica della religione agevole per l’uomo, una semplificazione ritenuta maggiormente necessaria per le minoranze musulmane che in un contesto non islamico si trovano in una condizione di debolezza, rispetto a quanto già lo sia per tutti gli appartenenti all’*umma* che vivono nei paesi islamici.

Per operare la semplificazione del diritto, sempre tenendo a sottolineare che tutto ciò rientra nell’ambito dell’ortodossia, l’ECFR pratica l’*iğtihād*, che secondo al-Qaradawi è diventato oggi un obbligo islamico ed una necessità, e che si può distinguere in due diverse tipologie complementari: l’*iğtihād* selettivo e il nuovo *iğtihād*, che corrispondono rispettivamente alla riattualizzazione di antichi pareri giuridici e alla risoluzione di nuovi problemi sorti dalle società moderne. Il Consiglio include in questo suo sforzo interpretativo un vasto spettro di fonti e metodi, poiché ogni apporto giuridico considerato attendibile deve essere vagliato e può essere utile alla soluzione del problema, e precisamente si riferisce alle “fonti della legislazione islamica accettate di comune accordo dal popolo dell’*umma*, cioè il Corano, la Sunna, *iğmā* e *qiyyās* e altre fonti della legislazione come *istihsān*, *al-маşīha al-mursala*, *sad al-đıra*i, al-

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88 Cfr. l’introduzione di al-Qaradawi a ECFR (n.d.a 4).
89 Cfr. Caeiro (2003a, 26-7).
90 Sui metodi che sono di seguito citati e sul loro sviluppo storico si veda in generale Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh 2008.
92 Ragionamento analogico, analogia, metodo analogico, Cfr. Santillana (1938, 1: *passim*).
95 Prevenire o impedire gli espedienti illeciti usati per scopi leciti.
istīṣab,96 al-'urf97 la scuola dei Compagni, la legislazione di quelli prima di noi. Tutto ciò secondo le condizioni e le norme conosciute presso gli esperti, specialmente se è nell’interesse pubblico.”98 Fa proprio sia il metodo salafita che un suo superamento e considera sia la consuetudine adottata nella storia dell’interazione con i non musulmani nei casi in cui si trova un’affinità con la situazione attuale, sia il costume europeo. In questo secondo caso l’ECFR si rifà al principio secondo cui le regole devono cambiare in accordo con i cambiamenti di spazio e di tempo, concetto sul quale il Consiglio cita Ibn Qayym,99 e il suo maestro Ibn Taymiyya,100 spesso citati come esempio nei documenti del Consiglio e negli scritti di al-Qaradawi.

Tenendo sempre presente che il fine ultimo è quello di rispettare e realizzare l’intenzione della šarī‘a e dare priorità ad evitare che venga compiuto l’illecito, la classificazione classica delle azioni in scala, al-ahkām al-ḥamsa101 diventa una graduatoria di riferimento che in nome del supremo fine sciariatico è usata per giustificare un atto in sé illecito se è compiuto per impedire la realizzazione di uno di gravità maggiore. Si potrebbe dire in questo caso che i fini sciariatici giustifichino in qualche misura i mezzi, un machiavellismo su cui si avrà modo di ritornare più approfonditamente e che fa largo uso di


98 ECFR n.d.a.

99 Ibn al-Qaiyym al-Ǧawziyya (691/1292-751/1350) discepolo e successore di Ibn Taymiyya.


101 Ossia: farḍ (obbligatorio), mustahabb (raccomandato), mubāh (indifferente), makrūh (riprovevole), ḥaram (proibito), vedi Schacht (1995, 129-130) e Bausani (1975, 42-3).
altri due principi di fondamentale importanza per l’interpretazione giuridica: quelli di 
\textit{darūra},\textsuperscript{102} l’estrema necessità o necessità primaria che è “causa di esonero da un obbligo/dovere”\textsuperscript{103} e \textit{ḥāğa}, bisogno contingente e relativo.

\subsection*{2.2 I membri}

I membri del Consiglio sono ulema ed esperti in scienze religiose, e per la maggior parte possiedono una formazione tradizionale conseguita nelle più prestigiose università islamiche dei paesi arabi.\textsuperscript{104} La formazione legale di stampo tradizionale insieme alla conoscenza della lingua araba è in ogni caso il primo dei requisiti che il Consiglio ha adottato per eleggere i suoi membri, la cui approvazione avviene a maggioranza assoluta, e a cui seguono “la bontà della condotta e l’impegno con i principi e le tradizioni dell’Islam, la residenza in Europa,\textsuperscript{105} e che sia istruito sia sul diritto della \textit{šarī’a} che sul mondo reale”\textsuperscript{106}. Si può dire che si tratta di figure molto simili a quelle delle secolari istituzioni islamiche, ma che si mettono in gioco aderendo alle regole della globalizzazione dell’islam, non solo esponendosi ai media e alla rete dell’\textit{umma} virtuale, ma anche all’Occidente delle masse e delle istituzioni. Questi ulema sono i protagonisti di un adattamento del sapere tradizionale alla modernità globalizzata, di cui padroneggiano gli strumenti politici e tecnologici, incarnando l’ideologia del conservatorismo illuminato. Sono così allo stesso tempo rispettati ed autorevoli ulema nel campo dell’élite intellettuale del mondo islamico, ed in particolare arabo-islamico, e promotori di un rinnovamento, la cui portata appare minima rispetto a quella dei pensieri, opposti tra di loro, estremista e riformista liberale. Ma proprio perché non proveniente da queste fila, ma iscritto nel panorama tradizionale, questo messaggio può risultare più incisivo per un cambiamento effettivo dell’ortodossia in alcuni suoi punti, infatti pur non essendo immuni da polemiche e critiche da parte del

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Linant de Bellefonds 2003b e Santillana (1938, 1: 68 e. 2: 123).
\item \textsuperscript{103} Schacht (1995, 221).
\item \textsuperscript{104} La prima e la più prestigiosa di queste università è al-Azhar, dove ha studiato ad esempio il presidente dell’ECFR, al-Qaradawi.
\item \textsuperscript{105} In realtà non tutti i membri dell’ECFR risiedono in Europa, ma su questo punto ci si soffermerà più avanti.
\item \textsuperscript{106} In ECFR n.d.a.
\end{itemize}
conservatorismo ufficiale ortodosso, i membri dell’ECFR rimangono tra gli unici esponenti dell’ummah internazionalizzata ad essere credibili agli occhi delle istituzioni cristallizzate di cui sono in buona parte il prodotto. A questo proposito è assolutamente rilevante notare che la rappresentanza dei membri è nella realtà solo in parte europea e che, indipendentemente dalla residenza, vi è invece una predominanza della provenienza araba nel Consiglio;\(^{107}\) inoltre, diversamente dal Fiqh Council of North America, il Consiglio vede tra le sue fila membri provenienti dal Medio Oriente,\(^{108}\) in particolare dall’Arabia Saudita e dal Qatar, e non poca rilevanza assume il fatto che sia il presidente che il vicepresidente facciano parte di questo gruppo di ulema non europei.\(^{109}\)

Un’ “europeanizzazione” del figh non è quindi da intendersi come una riforma operata da un’élite europea, quanto più un adattamento a regole di vita secondo il modello culturale europeo, di cui si fa portatrice la parte più internazionalizzata di intellettuali musulmani che si mantiene salda nelle sue posizioni conservatrici sfruttando la modernità per diffondere il proprio messaggio e perseguire le proprie politiche.

In questo contesto e sulla base dell’analisi delle fatwa pare di scorgere due anime del Consiglio, in parte contrapposte ma non per forza antitetiche, l’una promotrice e l’altra assenziente seppur con alcune resistenze. Con questa seconda anima si intendono alcuni membri, in particolare quelli “non europei”, che fanno parte del Consiglio non perché mossi in particolare da uno spirito di riforma, nel senso fin qui definito, ma nello stesso modo in cui molti ulema “collezionano” presenze nelle varie associazioni islamiche di rilievo. Questi si interessano principalmente di continuare a studiare l’islam così come è stato fatto per secoli fino ad oggi, adoperando certo gli strumenti della modernità, ma senza un particolare progetto di fondo che prende spunto da essa. Nonostante siano ulema disposti a praticare l’iğtibād, pare preferiscano una certa immobilità del messaggio. Questa anima è più silenziosa ma si fa sentire nei momenti in cui ritiene di non poterne far a meno, per opporsi a fatwa che troppo si distaccano dalla tradizione. Il loro intervento in tali

\(^{107}\) Caeiro (2003b, 7).


\(^{109}\) Al-Qaradawi è egiziano e vive in Qatar, mentre Faysal Mawlawi vive in Libano.
circostanze è causa dell’uscita all’esterno del dibattito, e delle critiche che ne conseguono, ma non bisogna sottovalutare che è anche grazie alla presenza di questa seconda anima che il Consiglio in queste circostanze non perde la legittimazione ufficiale di fondo da parte delle istituzioni islamiche tradizionali nonostante le critiche che possono essergli state mosse.

L’anima propositiva, di cui fanno parte alcuni membri molto attivi nella rete, tra i quali Faysal Mawlawi\textsuperscript{110} e Rashid al-Gannoushi\textsuperscript{111} si può definire “spirito qaradawiano” essendo figlia del pensiero del presidente. Egli, di formazione azharita\textsuperscript{112} è ora grazie alle sue innumerevoli opere e soprattutto alla presenza in televisione\textsuperscript{113} una delle figure più carismatiche e note del panorama degli ulema a livello internazionale, definito “the unofficial theological leader of the international Muslim Brotherhood”\textsuperscript{114} e “global mufî”\textsuperscript{115} per la sua onnipresenza nella rete, è una vera e propria star dell’islam virtuale\textsuperscript{116}.

Fa parte delle più prestigiose organizzazioni islamiche mondiali e si proppiga per la costruzione di nuovi organismi con base in Occidente, in particolare in Europa, tra i quali si ricorda per la sua importanza la \textit{International Association of Muslim Schoolars} (IAMS)\textsuperscript{117} che presiede lui stesso dal 1994, un corpo non governativo che ha l’obiettivo di stabilire un’autorità islamica globale\textsuperscript{118}.

Proprio questa organizzazione è il più alto livello di concretizzazione del disegno di al-Qaradawi che risponde non soltanto al progetto della Fratellanza di islamizzazione totale e universale, la cui sfida è islamizzare l’Europa, che diviene così

\textsuperscript{110} Vicepresidente dell’ECFR, libanese, appartenente a quella parte di membri che non vivono in Europa ma che vengono eletti per la loro esperienza, dal momento che ha avuto un ruolo da protagonista in alcuni paesi europei. Su di lui www.mawlawi.net e Esposito, Voll 2001.
\textsuperscript{111} Su di lui Shahin 1995a e sulla sua visione dell’islam in occidente si rimanda a Ghannoushi n.d.
\textsuperscript{112} Per notizie biografiche su al-Qaradawi si veda quanto pubblicato sul sito www.islamonline.net e sul suo sito personale www.qaradawi.net.
\textsuperscript{113} Tra i programmi a cui partecipa è da citare \textit{al-šarī‘a wa al-hayā} emesso da al-Jazira.
\textsuperscript{114} Vidino 2006 Cesari (2005, 205).
\textsuperscript{115} Cairo 2006.
\textsuperscript{116} Cfr. Mariani (n.d. 94-111).
\textsuperscript{117} Cfr. Graf (2005, 47).
\textsuperscript{118} Cfr. Graf n.d.
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l’obiettivo della *da’wa* odierna, ma alla volontà di unificare il più possibile il mondo degli ulema in modo da poter costruire un’autorità islamica incontestata a livello internazionale di cui egli stesso mira ad essere primo protagonista. Questa è la logica che rivela il senso di quella che appare come una doppia personalità, un’ambiguità riscontrata da molte voci\(^{119}\) e che si inserisce perfettamente nel filone della dottrina della *wasaṭiya*:\(^{120}\) da una parte incarna la figura tradizionale dell’élite intellettuale rigida e conservatrice, pronto anche a giustificare gli attacchi suicidi contro Israele, dall’altra è un personaggio mediatico impegnato in prima linea nel dialogo sui temi dell’integrazione con l’Occidente, quello stesso Occidente che vuole islamizzare ponendo in realtà più attenzione a mantenere infiammati gli animi dei musulmani che a costruire un dialogo sincero con l’Europa\(^{121}\). Il progetto politico di al-Qaradawi sarebbe quello di formare una comunità islamica mondiale su modello della Chiesa Cattolica,\(^{122}\) ossia trasformare l’*umma* da una comunità fluida fondata sul comune sentimento religioso ad una comunità definita e regolata inequivocabilmente da un’autorità religiosa centrale.

È fondamentale ricordare che sia il progetto personale di al-Qaradawi che la parziale carica innovativa incarnata da quest’anima del Consiglio è controbilanciata sia dalla presenza dell’altra anima del Consiglio che dalla stessa volontà dell’ECFR di tenersi ancorato ad istituzioni tradizionaliste.

### 2.3 Le fatwa

Le fatwa emesse dal Consiglio, soprattutto quelle su temi più caldi e spinosi, sono il risultato di un equilibrio a volte precario tra le posizioni dei vari membri, e possono per questo apparire ambigue ed anche contraddittorie in alcuni punti o tra loro. In molti casi è la posizione del presidente, la più innovativa, ad essere accettata nel corso delle sessioni del Consiglio: le fatwa che ne risultano presentano sia la posizione rigida che quella del nuovo *iǧtihād*, rivelando il

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\(^{119}\) Ad esempio si veda al-Rashid 2004.

\(^{120}\) La via di mezzo tra estremismo e apostasia, teoria cardine del pensiero dei Fratelli Musulmani proposta dallo stesso al-Qaradawi e che costituisce anche il centro di una delle sue opere dottrinali (al-Qaradawi 1987).

\(^{121}\) Ad esempio nel caso delle vignette danesi, cfr. Shahine 2006.

compromesso e portando traccia del dibattito, ma esprimendo di fatto un’apertura alla libera scelta tra le posizioni. Questo accade già nella prima fatwa dell’ECFR che tratta proprio della premessa dell’esistenza stessa dell’associazione e sua ragione d’essere: la liceità della residenza permanente dei musulmani in paesi non musulmani.123 Il discorso dell’ECFR relativo a questa questione è comune al fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, ma le premesse su cui si basa la fatwa derivano solamente da considerazioni sul Corano e sulla Sunna, sulle basi legali primarie insomma, mentre non viene per nulla trattato l’argomento dal punto di vista della classificazione dei territori, infatti non tutti i membri sono d’accordo nel definire l’Occidente dār al-islām come fanno al-Qaradawi e i qaradawiani, che si esprimono chiaramente in materia se interpellati singolarmente e al di fuori del Consiglio.124

Entrando nel merito della produzione giuridica dell’ECFR, si nota che le fatwa che riguardano la sfera privata e personale della religione, come i temi della preghiera125 e delle prescrizioni alimentari,126 non si distaccano molto dalla giurisprudenza classica, mentre quelle che si occupano di argomenti rilevanti dal punto di vista politico, economico e sociale offrono soluzioni divergenti rispetto al fiqh tradizionale, che possono essere tacciate di opportunismo sia da parte degli ambienti islamici più tradizionalisti che dalla controparte non islamica europea o occidentale in generale.

A questo secondo gruppo appartengono le fatwa più famose e controversy del Consiglio, che trattano tematiche di rilevante interesse dal punto di vista dell’interazione con la società europea: la partecipazione politica, la questione economica, matrimoni e divorzi e l’uguaglianza tra i sessi. Esse aprono una via in apparente contrasto con la tradizione che pone il problema del diverso trattamento riservato ai musulmani a seconda dal contesto nel quale vivono, solo in parte in considerazione delle condizioni reali ma in realtà secondo una schematica classificazione a priori dell’ambito occidentale. Sono quelle di maggior interesse anche all’interno del Consiglio e in maniera diversa rappresentano due volti dell’azione di compromesso, sintomo

123 Fatwa 1, ECFR n.d.c.
124 Al-Qaradawi 2001 nell’ambito della polemica economica.
125 Cfr. ad esempio le Fatwa 8 e 9 (ECFR n.d.c.) e Fatwa 3 e 4 (ECFR, n.d.d).
126 Cfr. ad esempio le Fatwa 33 e 34 (ECFR n.d.c)e Fatwa 28, 29 e 30 (ECFR n.d.d).
di un certo opportunismo: un compromesso raggiunto con più chiarezza e significative implicazioni, anche se senza una completa condivisione, per quanto riguarda le questioni economiche, mentre di facciata per quanto riguarda la questione della donna. La forzatura al compromesso non sta di norma nella conclusione in sé, quanto nel contrasto dell’attitudine rigorista del procedimento con l’esplicita ammissione che il prezzo di qualche concessione si deve allo scopo della da’wa.\textsuperscript{127} Si tratta di un discorso di contabilità dell’umma e non di ammorbidimento delle norme allo scopo di rendere migliore il personale vissuto religioso, come si potrebbe anche supporre, il che trova conferma nel procedimento opposto adottato per emettere fatwa non rilevanti dal punto di vista della da’wa, nelle quali la definizione di necessità non si amplia a servizio del proselitismo. Insomma il Consiglio si adopera per applicare tutti gli strumenti del suo nuovo īgītāhād in casi di particolare utilità al suo progetto o alla sua visione dell’islam europeo, in linea con il “machiavellismo qaradawiano.”

Il dibattito sulla partecipazione politica del musulmano negli stati europei all’interno dell’ECFR è stato avviato a partire da una richiesta giunta alla sua seconda sessione e che viene risolta in poche righe, rimandando in sostanza la decisione alle organizzazioni islamiche\textsuperscript{128} e permettendo però la partecipazione politica in quanto mezzo che il musulmano ha di conquistare un suo spazio all’interno delle istituzioni europee e di fare in modo che vengano serviti i suoi interessi islamicici, ma solo nel caso in cui non vi sia un altro modo per raggiungere questo obiettivo. In realtà l’essenzialità e la restrittività di questo risponso contrastano con quanto detto in altri casi, nel trattare i quali pare che sia sottinteso che la partecipazione politica è una pratica lecita e comune, ad esempio in una fatwa che tratta della liceità dell’impiego pubblico della donna.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127} Non bisogna dimenticare che la da’wa è in realtà è uno degli obiettivi principali che devono muovere il musulmano in territorio non musulmano, secondo soltanto alla conservazione della propria identità. La propaganda islamica e la chiamata alla religione motivano inoltre la presenza islamica in quello che è considerato territorio infedele da parte dei detrattori della teoria della permissibilità della vita tra i non musulmani.

\textsuperscript{128} Fatwa 42, (ECFR n.d.c).

\textsuperscript{129} Fatwa 2 (ECFR n.d.d).
Il parere dell’ECFR sulla partecipazione politica si rifà sicuramente all’opinione personale di al-Qaradawi a riguardo, anche se ne limita la portata; egli infatti ritiene la partecipazione politica del musulmano nel paese non musulmano in cui vive un atto inscrivibile nel dovere della da’wa, un obbligo collettivo, basato sul dovere di non essere un parassita della società e di cercare tramite questa partecipazione di migliorare in senso islamico la società in cui vive, obbedendo cioè ai fini sciaraïtici. Non solo il musulmano esprimerebbe così la volontà islamica tramite il suo voto, ma sarebbe chiamato a candidarsi alle elezioni, rendendo visibile la posizione islamica e concorrendo attivamente e in prima persona al cambiamento della società, sottostando alle sue regole ma se necessario tentando di modificarle una volta conquistato il potere: l’islamizzazione dell’Europa passa anche da questa strategia prettamente politica. È questo un caso esemplare di come allo scopo di conquistare l’Europa alla causa islamica concorrano metodi paralleli: la partecipazione politica va di pari passo con la rivendicazione di un presunto diritto a spazi circoscritti per i musulmani, ossia l’autoghettizzazione con mire espansionistiche si affianca ad un tentativo di appropriarsi del potere dall’alto.

Nella regolamentazione dell’interazione con la società occidentale ad opera dell’ECFR la questione economica è sicuramente la più rilevante sia dal punto di vista del singolo musulmano che della comunità. Gli aspetti che rientrano in questo ambito sono innumerevoli ma riconducibili a due filoni: il più importante riguarda gli interessi bancari considerati riba’ e quindi proibiti per l’islam, e l’altro, che include anche il primo, regolamenta la raccolta, l’uso e la provenienza della zakāt nelle comunità delle minoranze musulmane in Europa. Le considerazioni che il Consiglio fa su questo tema si prestano a polemiche e critiche sia all’interno che all’esterno della sfera islamica, per molteplici motivi riconducibili alla grave accusa di far prevalere l’opportunismo sui principi della legge, o per lo meno di forzarli ad altri scopi, quali per esempio la da’wa.130

130 Si espressero chiaramente su questo tema rispondendo ad una precisa domanda durante la trasmissione al-şarī’a wa al-hayā del 2 marzo 1997, cfr. quanto detto in Shadid et al. (2002, 149-70).

Vi sono più fatwa che riconducono alla eccezionale permissività dell’uso dell’interesse, ma una in particolare esplicita chiaramente il parere del Consiglio che permette al musulmano di usare l’interesse contraendo un mutuo per acquistare una casa, data la mancanza di strumenti finanziari islamicamente leciti. Questa fatwa ha scatenato una polemica all’interno del Consiglio stesso, e due membri se ne sono dissociati. Per permettere questo l’ECFR si avvale dei principi di ḍadrūra e ḫağa e considera necessità non solo il bisogno primario di avere un luogo in cui vivere, ma anche che questo luogo debba essere di proprietà, dato che la condizione di precarietà di un affitto è resa più grave dalla condizione di minoranza. Inoltre soddisfare questa necessità permette al singolo di dedicarsi maggiormente all’islam e al proselitismo, con azioni che vanno a vantaggio dell’intera comunità. Se contrarre questo tipo di prestiti viene permesso al singolo, tanto più lo sarà alla comunità, e cioè alle organizzazioni islamiche per soddisfare le necessità della comunità, ad esempio costruire una moschea, sempre in caso di necessità e di mancanza di altri mezzi leciti. Questo passaggio è il presupposto implicito di altre fatwa nelle quali il Consiglio considera che le associazioni islamiche svolgono il ruolo che sarebbe del Califfo, e quindi hanno pieno titolo per raccogliere l’elemosina rituale. In questo ambito tutte le donazioni sono accettabili, anche se la provenienza del denaro è illecita, includendo gli interessi di un conto in banca, poiché se viene usato per scopi necessari alla realizzazione degli interessi della šarī’a viene meno la sua illiceità. Sulla stessa base al singolo è permesso avere un conto in banca solo se si danno gli interessi in elemosina, ed è addirittura permesso aprire un conto in banca proprio a questo scopo, infatti si dice che questo denaro non è proibito in sé, ma lo è se la persona che lo ha accumulato lo usa per il suo beneficio personale e anche le associazioni possono procurarsi questo tipo di introito ai fini della zakāt tramite un loro conto, attraverso accordi con le banche e

133 Sull’uso della necessità ECFR 1999.
134 Fatwa 5 (ECFR, n.d.d), Fatwa 10 e 13 (ECFR n.d.c).
135 Fatwa 6 (ECFR, n.d.d), Fatwa 12 (ECFR n.d.c).
136 Fatwa 11 (ECFR n.d.c).
l’uso delle carte di credito.\textsuperscript{137} Il Consiglio sottolinea però l’opportunità di evitare per quanto possibile di menzionare queste fonti particolari facendo loro pubblicità perché queste potrebbero essere coinvolte in qualcosa di illecito.\textsuperscript{138} È questo il caso pratico più esemplificativo di quanto detto a proposito del machiavellismo qaradawiano, ossia che i fini sciaraitici giustificano i mezzi.

Sul tema del matrimonio il Consiglio si è pronunciato in deroga alle norme della legge islamica lasciando intendere la validità del matrimonio di una neoconvertita con il non musulmano con una fatwa molto criticata nell’ambiente di al-Azhar.\textsuperscript{139} Si tratta di un caso in cui è particolarmente evidente quell’ambiguità che risulta dal metodo collettivo nell’emettere fatwa di cui si è parlato in precedenza, poiché questo testo non chiarisce esplicitamente quale sia la posizione del Consiglio sull’argomento, ma si limita ad enunciare le diverse possibilità riscontrabili nella giurisprudenza e adduce a ragione di una eventuale permissibilità, le cui responsabilità giuridiche gravano su “alcuni giuristi” non meglio definiti, la possibilità che il marito non musulmano non nuocca alla pratica della religione della moglie e che al contrario l’obbligo giuridico dello scioglimento del matrimonio allontani le donne dalla conversione o le faccia recedere da essa.\textsuperscript{140} La spiegazione di questa ragione equivale ad un’implicita presa di posizione dell’ECFR, se letta secondo il principio superiore delle intenzioni della šariṭa: l’importanza del proselitismo è superiore a quella di questa norma poiché esso costituisce uno dei fini ultimi, di conseguenza in caso di incompatibilità è la seconda a dover decadere.

Sempre in tema di matrimoni e divorzi in particolare in due fatwa, considerando i casi di discordanza del diritto islamico da quello del paese europeo in cui il musulmano vive,\textsuperscript{141} il Consiglio prende esplicitamente posizione a favore delle leggi europee, indipendentemente dal merito, rifacendosi esplicitamente al pensiero

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Fatwa 13 (ECFR n.d.c).
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Fatwa 7 (ECFR, n.d.d).
  \item \textsuperscript{139} Cfr. Caeiro (2003b, 28).
  \item \textsuperscript{140} ECFR 2001b.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Sui matrimoni misti e sul diritto di famiglia con riferimento al contesto d’emigrazione cfr. Cilardo 2006.
\end{itemize}
di al-Izz Ibn Abed Esalam, Ibn Taymiyya e Al-Šāṭibī a riguardo del rispetto della legge dei paesi ospitanti in nome dell’interesse pubblico e per evitare caos e disordine e come risultato di un accordo stipulato tra il singolo e la società: infatti contrarre matrimonio secondo la normativa civile vigente nel paese equivale a dichiarare di essere d’accordo sul fatto che questa stessa normativa venga applicata alla propria persona. Il discorso sul rispetto della legge viene esteso in generale, ossia si ritiene che vivere in un paese significhi accettarne le leggi, dal momento che quel paese offre protezione, ma è esplicitato solo in queste fatwa sul divorzio e sui matrimoni di convenienza, a proposito dei quali tra l’altro il Consiglio afferma che vi è accordo sulla loro proibizione tra le leggi dei paesi ospitanti e i principi della šari’a, e non è superfluo rilevare che si tratta di un tema che incide sul privato dei singoli musulmani ma non sulla comunità.

Per quanto riguarda la parità tra i sessi, nonostante le premesse in cui il Consiglio mette in bella mostra una dichiarazione di uguaglianza tra uomo e donna in fatto di umanità, fede in Dio, diritti e doveri, la questione della donna è trattata in maniera ambigua se non contraddittoria dall’ECFR. Infatti si ripete in più occasioni come in questa uguaglianza vi sia una divisione dei ruoli a causa della natura stessa dei sessi per come determinata da Dio, come la donna debba in ultima istanza obbedire all’uomo nel rapporto matrimoniale, per esempio dovendo chiedere il permesso al marito per uscire di casa, mentre al marito corrisponde il dovere soltanto di informare la moglie quando è lui ad uscire. Anche se non sufficiente a cancellare l’ambiguità espressa a riguardo della proclamata uguaglianza dei sessi si deve dire che in parecchi casi l’accento è posto sulla totale disapprovazione nei confronti di comportamenti maschili derivanti

142 (Damasco 577/1181-2 – Cairo 660/1262) giurista šāfi’īta. Per la trascrizione del nome ci si è attenuti a quella semplificata presente nei documenti del Consiglio. Su di lui si veda Chaumont 2003a.
144 Cfr. Fatwa 17 (ECFR n.d.d).
145 Cfr. ECFR (n.d.c, 11).
146 Fatwa 17 (ECFR n.d.c).
147 Resolution 5/5 (ECFR 2000b).
149 Si veda ad esempio la Fatwa 25 (ECFR n.d.c).
più da un islam intriso di cultura patriarcale, anche se di questo si parla in termini individuali e non culturali, che da comportamenti islamici.

2.4 Le ambiguità del Consiglio e suoi obiettivi

Si è già trattato di come il Consiglio usi misure diverse a seconda dell’argomento e del suo legame con il proselitismo, ma si vuole ora entrare nel merito di questa ambiguità, ossia del fatto che l’ECFR pare rispecchiare quella doppia personalità da molti attribuita al suo presidente al-Qaradawi, e si collochi all’interno delle dinamiche internazionali su posizioni che rispecchiano e concretizzano perfettamente la dottrina della wasatiyya.\(^{150}\)

Si possono distinguere a questo proposito due livelli: quello in cui si sconfina in questioni di politica internazionale, che vengono trattate con approccio più esplicito, e quello in cui si riferisce al contesto europeo mascherando una volontà di auto-ghettizzazione e di islamizzazione con una proclamata integrazione.

Quando il Consiglio si trova di fronte ad un conflitto reale di politica internazionale, interviene a favore della pace o della guerra secondo un gioco di alleanze a volte con il mondo islamico tradizionale, altre con la parte di società europea da cui può trovare un appoggio. Emblematici in questo senso sono i casi della Palestina e dell’Iraq: nel primo viene sottolineata la frattura tra i musulmani e “gli altri,” quasi a riprendere i discorsi dell’epoca della lotta al colonialismo, e si incita alla lotta per la vittoria finale dell’islam; astenersi da uno sforzo, seppur solo economico, in favore di questa causa, pur avendone le possibilità, viene considerato un comportamento colpevole, la rinuncia a Gerusalemme è ritenuta un tradimento di Allah, del suo Profeta e dei credenti che sono pertanto incitati a usare tutti i mezzi per resistere all’occupazione.\(^ {151}\) Invece per quanto riguarda l’Iraq il Consiglio esprime la sua preoccupazione per il continuo insorgere della violenza e invece di parlare anche in questo caso di lotta per liberarsi da un’occupazione, pone l’accento sulla sua


volontà di pace in accordo con i movimenti pacifisti di tutto il mondo a cui si unisce.\textsuperscript{152} Allo stesso modo l’ECFR si occupa di terrorismo con toni ben diversi a seconda delle circostanze: usando presupposti simili a quelli da cui partono i proclami terroristici tiene a sottolineare che la lotta con ogni mezzo contro forze di occupazione non può in nessun modo essere definita terrorismo\textsuperscript{153} e pone l’accento su come ġībād e terrorismo non siano per nulla connessi;\textsuperscript{154} dall’altra parte lo stesso al-Qaradawi lancia un anatema contro gli attacchi dell’11 settembre.\textsuperscript{155}

Ci troviamo in ogni caso davanti a vere e proprie indicazioni che per la loro genericità non paiono rivolte ad un pubblico esclusivamente europeo, ma all’umma intera, anche se la loro legittimità è data proprio dal fatto che il Consiglio ne parla ad un pubblico europeo e si può allora rilevare uno sconfinare in questioni di per sé al di fuori del campo di azione del diritto delle minoranze.

In altri casi uno stesso argomento è trattato in maniera diversa a seconda dello scopo a cui serve, come nel caso dell’ḥīḡāb. L’ECFR lo ritiene obbligatorio, ma è pronto a concedere deroghe nel caso in cui portare il velo sia vissuto come una costrizione che potrebbe impedire una conversione o causare l’abbandono dell’islam,\textsuperscript{156} giustificandolo cioè nella stessa maniera usata per quanto riguarda il matrimonio della neoconvertita con il non musulmano. Quando si tratta di ribadire la propria identità islamica invece il Consiglio pone fortemente l’accento sull’obbligatorietà del velo, per esempio prendendo parte al noto dibattito francese sul tema con una trattazione specifica\textsuperscript{157} nella quale spiega come l’ḥīḡāb sia un obbligo della šari’a e non un simbolo religioso, accusa la Francia di voler operare una segregazione dei musulmani attraverso questa norma che lede la libertà religiosa e si dichiara promotore di un impegno nella battaglia per i diritti umani, richiamando ad un’alleanza con i non musulmani che si battono in tal senso.

\textsuperscript{152} ECFR 2000d.
\textsuperscript{153} Cfr. Resolution 10/2 (ECFR 2003a).
\textsuperscript{154} Cfr. Resolution 11/6 (ECFR 2003b).
\textsuperscript{156} Fatwa 6 (ECFR n.d.c).
\textsuperscript{157} Si tratta di ECFR 2003c.
Per quanto riguarda il contesto europeo l’ECFR dice di promuovere l’integrazione, mentre appare più verosimile una spinta ad un processo di auto-ghettizzazione piuttosto che di incoraggiamento alla partecipazione attiva alla cittadinanza.\textsuperscript{158} Questa tendenza, o disegno, è quella che porta ad esempio a incoraggiare i musulmani a creare delle comunità islamiche non solo in senso spirituale o sociale ma anche territoriale e auspicando appunto il sorgere di ghetti desiderati in cui stabilire corpi giudiziari che si occupino del loro statuto personale e non solo dei loro affari religiosi, concedendo che tuttavia si deve rispetto alle leggi ed alle regole delle nazioni ospitanti,\textsuperscript{159} fino a che non si giunga in Europa all’applicazione della \textit{šarī’a}. In questo senso la creazione in Gran Bretagna di corti islamiche nei processi di arbitrato è vista con grande interesse dall’ECFR, che si trova per così dire al posto giusto e al momento giusto per sfruttare questa occasione e dare applicazione pratica a quanto fino ad ora costituisce per lo più speculazione teorica.

Questo però ci porta a riflettere sull’effettivo significato del \textit{fiqh al-aqallīyyāt} e sulla portata che i promotori di questo messaggio desiderano che abbia. Infatti l’auspicata creazione di ghetti porterebbe come diretta conseguenza la ricreazione di uno spazio islamico nel senso ritenuto più autentico, e a poter comparare quasi totalmente vivere in questi a vivere nei paesi islamici, negando sostanzialmente il ruolo di un diritto delle minoranze. Il \textit{fiqh al-aqallīyyāt} in questo scenario immaginato, costituirebbe lo strumento di una tappa transitoria dell’islamizzazione e sarebbe di fatto un diritto della negoziazione con le istituzioni della società maggioritaria ospitante, poiché una volta raggiunto l’obiettivo verrebbe ripristinato il diritto islamico classico. Non è escluso però che alcuni cambiamenti operati in fase di negoziazione potrebbero permanere e rivelare un volto riformista del diritto delle minoranze.

\textsuperscript{158} Questa è anche una delle critiche mosse da Tariq Ramadan, cfr. Caeiro (2004a, 57).

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Recommendations of ECFR issued in its second and third Ordinary Sessions}, (ECFR n.d.c, 11).
3. Conclusioni: un’utopia, islamizzare l’Europa per conquistare una leadership universale?

L’ECFR punta ad una sorta di ecumenismo teso a contrastare il pericolo di allineamento dei musulmani alle diverse culture europee; ciò rappresenta, di fatto, l’applicazione pratica in senso giuridico delle ideologie massificanti tipiche del movimento internazionale dei Fratelli Musulmani.

Aprendosi all’iǧtihād per la soluzione di problemi contingenti, riaccogliendo nell’ortodossia una parte di credenti che si ritiene altrimenti perduta o a rischio, è possibile che, secondo un effetto boomerang, l’azione del Consiglio finisca per modificare parte del messaggio che pure ritiene doveroso preservare.

In sostanza, si tratta dello sviluppo in senso moderno di un’ortodossia tradizionalista e conservatrice, e non di quel riformismo che parte delle istituzioni classiche del mondo arabo-islamico tacciano di devianza. Forse meno stimolante dal punto di vista teologico, esso ha però un impatto e una portata notevoli sia sulla realtà europea che su quella islamica in generale; infatti, cerca di integrare il contesto europeo nella giurisprudenza islamica – anche se sembrerebbe dover adattare questa al contesto europeo – giungendo ad inevitabili compromessi ma mantenendosi sempre nel tracciato della tradizione, secondo un equilibrio che coinvolge l’islam su scala mondiale. Se teniamo conto di questo, possiamo notare come la da’wa dell’ECFR si rivolga non solo agli europei, musulmani e non, ma anche indirettamente ad una (re)islamizzazione della comunità musulmana nella sua totalità: islamizzare l’Europa è l’obiettivo perseguito in prima istanza, tuttavia può essere il punto di partenza per ottenere autorità sul mondo islamico in generale.160

Questo appare come un progetto quasi personale di Yusuf al-Qaradawi, che mira a conquistare autorità prima in ambito europeo, sfruttando la democrazia di questo ambiente e proponendosi come partner di dialogo delle istituzioni europee alla ricerca dell’ “islam moderato”; un primo passo verso la formazione e l’uniformazione di un’autorità islamica mondiale che vada a sostituire l’attuale monopolio della leadership tradizionale arabo-islamica, anche inglobandola e non cambiando di molto la sostanza del messaggio. In questo senso il

Consiglio, pur ricoprendo un ruolo importante, è soltanto una delle pedine in gioco. Non bisogna dimenticare infatti quanto sia rilevante la IAMS, né l’attiva partecipazione del famoso šayḥ ad altre importanti associazioni-istituzioni. Mentre continua a ribadire che queste organizzazioni non sono in competizione tra loro, al-Qaradawi sta allargando sempre più i consensi sulla propria persona e ampliando il proprio spazio d’azione: coinvolge molti ulema nel suo progetto, ma sempre ponendosi a loro capo e guidando di fatto i processi di cui le associazioni si fanno portatrici. L’auspicata convergenza tra gli ulema è un metodo messo in atto per raggiungere l’islamizzazione dell’Europa, ma rivela anche un obiettivo, quello della corsa al potere che potrebbe incarnarsi in un neocaliffato oligarchico o, per impiegare termini provocatori, in un “papato islamico.”

Questo progetto di creazione di un’autorità unitaria per l’intero mondo islamico si rivela un obiettivo utopico in considerazione del pluralismo dell’umma e dell’Islam stesso, ma anche delle continue divergenze che già sorgono tra i partner della stessa Fratellanza, in particolare nel rapporto dell’ECFR con la sua parte francese legata all’UOIF. Tuttavia, gli effetti che un disegno di così ampia portata può provocare non vanno trascurati, soprattutto in un momento in cui la capillare diffusione di organizzazioni legate alla Fratellanza musulmana potrebbe risolvere il problema di un vuoto di autorità rappresentativa agli occhi delle istituzioni europee.

Ipotizzando le conseguenze di questo utopico progetto, si giunge ad un contesto in cui la comunità musulmana è retta totalmente da regole islamiche, il che porterebbe come diretta conseguenza l’azzeramento della specificità del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt, riconoscendo il diritto delle minoranze come un mero strumento transitorio che non ha importanza in sé, ma solo per i fini ai quali è preposto, come si è considerato già in precedenza.

È evidente come a questo punto il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt di al-Qaradawi assuma un significato di fondo assolutamente diverso da quello di al-Alwani. Non bisogna comunque dimenticare che anche secondo l’idea

161 Pur essendo un prodotto della stessa ideologia della Fratellanza internazionale, l’UOIF tende sempre a rivendicare una certa specificità del contesto francese e a non dare mai per scontato un allineamento a tutte le politiche per cui i Fratelli Musulmani richiedono la coesione di tutte le associazioni ad essi legate.

162 Per un’analisi recente dell’islam nell’UE si rimanda a AA. VV. 2007, e sui fattori che rendono di fatto particolare la situazione musulmana a Ferrari (2006, 57).
di al-Alwani, idea che non è un progetto ma un auspicio, nel lungo periodo si avrebbe una riunificazione del diritto, e un decadimento del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt.\footnote{Al-Alwani 2004.} La differenza fondamentale sta però nel fatto che, in tal caso, i risultati del diritto delle minoranze costituirbbero parte fondamentale di un diritto universale rinnovato del quale il fiqh al-aqalliyyāt è stato si strumento, ma di riforma.

In conclusione, ci si interroga se anche la visione più conservatrice di al-Qaradawi non apra comunque la strada ad un progressivo ingresso dei metodi e degli scopi del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt nel diritto islamico generale che lo liberi dai vincoli secolari delle istituzioni tradizionali, rispondendo ad un fermento che già serpeggia da molto tempo nel mondo musulmano, e che fatica ad emergere. In questo senso i risultati non sarebbero lontani da quelli auspicati da al-Alwani, secondo il quale il vero significato e lo scopo non dichiarato del fiqh al-aqalliyyāt è questo: creare uno spazio libero in Occidente in cui riflettere sulle basi del Corano e della Sunna, alleggerite del peso della tradizione; e magari, un giorno, trasferire i risultati di tale riflessione nell’intero mondo islamico.\footnote{Cfr. Caeiro 2003a.}

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Death Charms: Magical Mixtures from the Kakṣapuṭa

By Alex PASSI

The Work

The Siddhanāgarjunakakṣapuṭa, an undated and as yet relatively little-studied text of magical practices traditionally attributed to the 7th/8th-century (?) Siddha Nāgārjuna (no kin to the great Buddhist philosopher), is one of several Tantric texts giving some insight into the practice of extreme sorcery (abhicāra) performed within the framework of the tantric “Six Deeds” (ṣaṭkarmāṇi) of destructive or, in any case, intrusive magic.

One wonders, at a first glance, if such practices, which are purported to have been revealed by Śiva, may be in some way defined as “dharmic”. The answer, as far as one can tell, is negative. The focus here is on Siddhi in terms of sexual and monetary gain, the general acquisition of power and, at times, downright malice. As a matter of fact, the term dharma seems to have been avoided in the introductory

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1 Originally published in Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya 1915, 264-390. See also: Śāstrī 1984, Khāḍelāvā 1996 (the latter apparently a reprint with Hindi translation of the 1984 edition), Wujastyk 1984, 75, 80, 82 (MS refs. from the Wellcome Trust Library). The term kakṣapuṭa is usually translated “armpit” (as a hidden part of the body), but may actually mean “loincloth” or “jockstrap” according to Wujastyk 1984, 80, fn. 24. The kakṣapuṭa-s were apparently a category of works, according to Goudriaan and Gupta, of which only the one attributed to the Siddha Nāgārjuna is currently available; see here Goudriaan and Gupta 1981, 117-18.

2 Türstig 1985; mostly, the Tantric abhicāra practices are based on ritual and performance coupled with the recitation of mantra-s or on the production and manipulation of magical diagrams, yantra-s, where the relevant mantra-s are inscribed together with the victim’s name: the former are the ones especially dealt with in the Kakṣapuṭa, in various contexts and rituals; for the latter see f.i. Rivière 1976 and Türstig 1988.

3 Goudriaan 1978, 259 ff. There are many variants to the list of the “six acts”; Pacification, Subjugation, Immobilization, Causing Dissension, Eradication, Liquidation, Delusion, Attraction and Acquisition are the equivalents given by Goudriaan for the most frequent terms: śānti, vaśīkaraṇa, stambhana, vidveṣāṇa, uccāṣaṇa, māraṇa, mohana, ākarṣaṇa, puṣṭi.
stanzas of the works which have caught the present writer’s attention.4

Thus, while one may speak of the dharma of Theft,5 and while the cognate science of Treasure-Hunting at least nominally serves the purpose of gaining material wealth so that sacrifices may be performed,6 the actions of the “Man of Power” who is bent on harming or controlling his fellow-beings appear to be openly directed to personal gain, and do not try to gain acceptance by referring to an ethical or religious sphere.

The conscious, intentional recourse to destructive magic in India begins in the Vedic age, where it may be found from the Sāmbita-s, especially that of the Atharva-Veda,7 and continues well into the present time. Any attempt to trace its overall history would invariably lead us through innumerable layers: the strata of śruti, smṛti, itihāsa,

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4 For instance, in Śiva’s own words from the Indrajalaśāstra: “Henceforth I shall relate the peerless Net of Indra, which takes away disease and poverty, which destroys old age and death. For one who does not know the supreme net of Indra uttered by Rudra, what power (śakti) of suppression (nigraha) and bestowment of favor (anigraha) may there be, O supreme lady? No accomplishment (śiddhi) arises for such folk, whether in gotra, country or home. If he knows not the Net of Indra, what shall such a man, when angered, do? He lives not, O elegant woman! As Samsāra is an ocean of unhappiness, whence shall one who does not know the Net of Indra get happiness? For such men, whence may there be curiosity, whence pleasure, O fair-faced one? In the horrid ocean of Samsāra, men are greedy for pleasure (kāma-lubdhāḥ). What lot of happiness may be theirs if they do not possess Rudra’s Action (rudrakarman)? As all the rivers and streams come to the sea, thus do all Śāstras abide in the Net of Indra. As the Sun for all that is hot, as the Moon for all that is cool, and the Ocean for all that is deep, such is the Indra-among-Nets, my dear! So why elaborate further with many words? There was not and will not be a śāstra equal to this Indra-among-Nets!” Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 1, śloka-s 1-8 (text in Appendix below).

5 Passi 2005.

6 This is explicitly stated in the first chapter of the Nidhi-Pradīpa, a manual for would-be treasure hunters, where Śiva reveals the Nidhi-Śāstra to a group of forest ascetics too poor to perform sacrifices. See Sāmbaśivaśāstrī 1930. A modern appraisal of this pseudo-science may be found in Balbir 1993.

7 References in Türstig 1985, 69-70, and Goudriaan 1978, 219-42. It is interesting to note that, while the Atharva-Veda-Sāmbita is a veritable gold mine for the study of early Indian magic, the Rg-Veda Sāmbita most emphatically is not -- though it is made to become so in the use of Vedic mantra-s in the later Rg-Vidhāna.
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...purāṇa, kāvya (especially the kathā) and śāstra on the one hand, and the accounts and observations of travellers, officials, civil servants and anthropologists on the other. In both cases, one gets the impression that a comprehensive digest of India’s magical beliefs and practices would be a momentous if not impossible task.8

This is, moreover, a structured lore; even when the textual tradition may appear to be less than perfect, and the wording crude, one should remember that there is a great deal more to the subject than what appears to the reader’s eye. Just as a conjurer’s stage trick appears simple and smooth to the public, but actually relies on sophisticated props, well-trained sleight of hand and constant practice and rehearsing,9 so are Tantric “recipes” culled from a book no more than an outward description of something far more complex, meant to be learned exclusively through the teachings of an appropriate guru, and dependent in turn on other related areas of knowledge.10

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8 The magical hymns of the Atharva-Veda- Samhitā alone make up a sizeable volume: Sani and Orlandi’s translation is a weighty tome of well over 300 pages. See Sani and Orlandi 1997.

9 Incidentally, street and parlour magic overlap to some degree with what we are dealing with here. See Lee Siegel’s foray in the world of Indian jādū in Siegel 1991.

10 For instance, māraṇa is to be performed after taking into account the victim’s “astrological profile”: “One should undertake māraṇa after having examined the state of [the victim’s] fate; a ritual deed done without due consideration may kill one in an instant;” daśāsthitiṃ ca samvīkṣya kuryān māraṇam ātmavān / anavekṣya kṛtam karma ātmanāṃ banti tat-kṣaṇāḥ // (Ṣaṭkarmadīpikā, attributed to Kṛṣṇānanda Vidyāvāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya, in Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 255).

According to the 25th taraṇga of 16th-century manual Mantramabodabdi (“Ocean of mantra-s), each of the Six Deeds is to be practiced with precise indications with regards to nineteen different aspects. Specifically, māraṇa should be taken up (1) with Kāli as presiding deity, (2) to be honored with gray-coloured flowers, (3) in the last four hours of the 24-hour cycle (corresponding to the autumnal season, śārada); (4) facing the South-East; (5) on Tuesday, Saturday or Sunday of either the 14th and 8th day of the dark half of the month, or on the day in which there is a new moon; (6) in the bhadra position, and on the hide of a buffalo; (7) placing the name of the victim at the end of the mantra; (8) using the fire-mandala, (9) the sword-mudrā, (10) the syllables pertaining to fire, and the jāti-mantra syllable phaṭ; (11) using a breathing pattern (“arousal of the elements”) involving the upper part of the nostrils; (12) kindling the fire with khadira-wood fuel smeared with mustard-oil; (13) having a māli (“rosary”) made of donkey’s teeth with only 15 beads; (14) using a fire lit in a cremation ground and having certain characteristics; (15) using a human bone to
So far, editors have not attempted to critically constitute the \textit{Kakṣapuṭa} [henceforth \textit{KP}] or other related texts, perhaps in light of the fact that the MS situation, as presented f.i. by the \textit{New Catalogus Catalogorum},\footnote{Over one hundred manuscripts, with different titles and varying number of chapters, (most common are the ones comprised of 20 \textit{paṭala}-s). See Raghavan 1967, 111-12.} is far from simple. But \textit{abhicāra} manuals were also viewed as somewhat unwholesome; it is significant, for instance, that the 1984 Delhi edition of Mahīdhara’s \textit{Mantrambodhadi}, a textbook (Goudriaan: “digest”) on the use of magical \textit{mantra}-s and \textit{yantra}-s, appears “translated by a board of scholars” for the Sri Garib Dass Oriental Series, with no indication whatsoever of the scholars’ names. In some instances, even the texts themselves (wherein a lot of lending and borrowing has generally taken place) seem to have been bowdlerized: for instance, the \textit{Kāmaratna}, another extremely popular magical treatise edited in 1915, among various other texts, in the same volume as the \textit{KP}, is also extant in Assamese, where the part devoted to \textit{māraṇa}, the most ill-reputed practice, is seen to be completely lacking.\footnote{See also Goudriaan and Gupta 1981, 122-124. For the \textit{Kāmaratna} in the Calcutta edition, see Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 25-131. The Assamese text and its English translation may be found in Tattabhusan 1928.}

The total number of chapters contained in the \textit{KP} is 29 according to the 1915 Nāgarī edition, 31 in the 1984 text printed in the Bengali script. The six subjects which make up the controversial \textit{abhicāra-karmāṇi} are found in the Nāgarī edition in chapters 2 to 11 (\textit{vaśīkaraṇa}, \textit{ākāraṇa}, \textit{stambhana}, \textit{mohanoccāṭana}, \textit{māraṇa}, \textit{vidveṣaṇa}), and in chapters 2-14 in the Bengali recension, where \textit{stambhana} is treated more analytically. Other chapters deal with other works of magic: treasure hunting, invisibility, magical ointments, resurrection of the dead, and so forth.

The 10th \textit{paṭala}, on \textit{māraṇa}, assassination or liquidation, does not present huge discrepancies between recensions, though the num-
bering of the lines is different in the 1915 and the 1984 texts. The translation adopted here follows mainly the 1915 edition, the few references to the Bengali-character text and to parallel passages in the *Kāmaratna* in the same edition being given in the footnotes; the 1996 Hindi edition follows the 1984 text.

**The Victim**

The *KP* does not specify who the *māraṇa*-charms may or may not be used against. Such indications are however found in other texts, where one gets the feeling that the act involved is dealt with so as “reveal a hesitation on the side of the Sanskritized performers to engage themselves in it”. But in the *Ṣaṭkarmadīpikā* one reads:

The very wicked as well as the nihilists, those who despise gods and Brahmins, all those who in their ignorance are murderers (or: “those who in their ignorance kill everyone”), who perform sinful deeds; he who takes land, livelihood, wealth and women, he who causes the destruction of his family, who despises agreements, slanders, kills a king; he who gleefully does violence to living beings by poison, fire, torture, sword and the like —if one enjoins in an act of *māraṇa*-with respect to [persons such as] these, one will accrue no sin.

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13 The actual number of lines of the entire work is not exactly known and may be estimated between 2000 and 3000 *śloka*-s. Goudriaan and Gupta 1981, 117.

14 Türstig 1985, 71 ff., makes all the fine distinctions; but even if the dividing line between beneficial, “white” magic and harmful, “black”, magic is often blurred in India (given the innumerable ways the divine and the numinous have of manifesting themselves), the fact remains that, with the exception of Śānti and Puṣṭi, the ways of *abhicāra* practiced on a human being clearly establish him or her in the role of the victim.


16 Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 255:

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papiṣṭhān nāstikāṁ caiva deva-brāhmaṇa-nindakaṁ /
ajñāṁ ca ghāta-kāṁ sarvāṁ klesa-karmas tu samsthitaṁ //
kṣetra-vṛtti-dhana-strīm ābhāsaṁ kulāntakaṁ /
nindakaṁ samayānāṁ ca piśuṇāṁ raja-ghāta-kāṁ //
viṣāgna-krurā-saṣṭṛādyair himsakaṁ prāṇināṁ mūdā /
yojayaṁ māraṇe karmasy etāṁ na paśakāi bhavet //
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**Magic & Medicine**

A death-charm is, in the first place, a paradigm of the interaction with the realm of the unholy: the *abhicāra* methods and practices of *sādhaka*-s and *tāntrika*-s are usually well-grounded into the world of death, disease and the unauspicious, both directly and indirectly, through the aid of objects, charms, *mantra*-s, places of performance, etc.; indeed, if we were to look for a hint of literary awareness in these artless pages, it would have to be sought in the realms of *bibhatsā* and *bhayānaka*, the Disgusting and the Fearsome. In addition to this, not surprisingly, spell-texts seem to reflect at first glance some structured knowledge of the real world of chemicals, plants and their properties. The “virtues” of some of the ingredients of the death charms presented below are immediately obvious: scorpions, snakes, poisonous substances, noxious plants, animal and human remains and excreta. But the objective value of this plant and mineral lore, though obviously present and resulting from observation of the natural world, is often quite overshadowed by its symbolical or magical valence. No difference is made between the use of a toxic substance, however prepared, made to come into contact with the human body, and its use in an indirect, magical way: the recipe quoted in line 5 for making an enemy die of the boils — presumably from the very real infection caused by the irritants contained in the components — is probably quite effective. This specific case seems to represent more the exception than the rule. More often, it is the associative properties of the ingredients rather than their direct physiological effect that are important. For instance, the arrow made from red oleander, a poisonous plant in its own right, is effective as a negative symbol in the complex rite mentioned in verse 20, where it cannot have any physical effect on the victim.\(^\text{17}\) Though it might be obvious to the historian of religious thought, one always wonders at the fact that no attention is paid to the difference between the two methodologies used, the “directly” toxicological and the magical. The injurious process, whether physical or magical, is seamless. This is a fairly constant characteristic which may be found also in other contexts: typical, for instance, is the atti-

\(^\text{17}\) Barring the observation by Goudriaan, (1978, 381) that, in extreme cases, the effect of these practices on the mind of the victim may have been be powerful enough to bring about death.
tudes towards snakes in classical literary texts, where medicinal herbs are quoted for their capacity not to cure, but to prevent, snakebite.\(^\text{18}\)

Conversely, context associations with death and dying — i.e. with the intended result of one’s action — are omnipresent. Typical is the use of materials which may be deemed having “attractive” properties related to the “other side”: bones, both human and animal, hair (one of the parts of the human body that is most resistant to burial and putrefaction) and coals/ashes from the cremation ground, as well as wood taken from the inauspicious plants such as the vibhiṅka and the Spirit-Tree. The stage setting for māraṇarites, one should add, is normally the cremation-ground itself, where the sādhaka should practice after having mounted upon a corpse.\(^\text{19}\) Equally frequent is the reference to body-fluids: urine and especially feces are felt to be linked to putrefaction and the dissolution of the body, as well as to all that is degrading to the well-born Hindu, (and vice versa consistent with the vāma-mārga). All in all, despite the fact that not all the realia involved have been satisfactorily traced back, the picture which emerges from this rather dismal piece of traditional lore is consistent: harm, degradation, poison and death by contact with what is dead, all embedded by the unifying mortar of ritual and mantra.

**The Text**

An annotated translation of the chapter follows, wherein the mantra-s have been quoted in italics, and translated only in part.\(^\text{20}\)

1. Take a piece of human bone, four fingers in length, on an auspicious day; it will bring destruction to the family whose house you bury it in.\(^\text{21}\)

\textit{om viṃ viṃ bûṃ bûṃ viṃ phat svābā.}

\(\text{18}\) These are moreover not used for the preparation of lotions or potions, but simply held in one’s hand: Saundarananda-Kārīya, 5.31: \textit{yathauṣadhair bastagataḥ sameyā na daśyate kaścāna pannagena, tathā ... etc.}

\(\text{19}\) Goudriaan (1978, 380), quoting the 1915 ed. of the Kāṣṇapuṭa (Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 170): \textit{pretam anubhya}. See also Rivière’s note (1976, 134).

\(\text{20}\) Obviously not all mantra-s are completely meaningless, though there is much to be said for Staal’s well-known point of view on the matter.

\(\text{21}\) Practically identical to a passage of the Kāmaratna (Bhaṭṭācārya and Bhaṭṭācārya 1915, 83), v. 1, where the mantra is \textit{om brīm phat svābā.}
2. Under the asterism Aśvinī, bury a piece of horse’s bone, four fingers in length, in the house of an enemy; it will rapidly kill the family of hostile people in [that] clan.  

οṃ sura sure svāhā.

3. Under the asterism Așleṣa, bury a snake-bone, one finger in measure, in the house of an enemy; after having repeated the mantra for seven times, it will kill the enemy’s progeny.  

οṃ jaya vijayati svāhā.

4. On the 14th day of the dark half of the lunar month, one should take a crow’s nest and consciously offer it into the fire. Place its ashes with one finger on an enemy’s head. He will die, no doubt; and if [it] is spread in his house, his family will perish.  

οṃ namo bhagavate rudrāya māraya māraya namah svāhā


5. Take two six-spotted caterpillars and the poison made from the She-Monkey fruit. This powder should be applied to the enemy’s bed, seat and so on. He will develop an acute boil and death is guaranteed in ten days. 

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22 Vairiṇāṃ kule with the Bengali-script text, vs. Nāgarī version kulam. But see also Kāmaratna v. 5, which is virtually identical, and also has kulam

23 Identical to Kāmaratna, v. 6, without the mantra.

24 Sacetasā, probably meant as adverbial; in Śāstri’s edition, sacetasah.

25 Vānarī, Cowhage or common Cowitch, or Velvet Bean, Mucuna pruriens, also known as “Monkey’s itch” (see next stanza). The preparation described here is anything but harmless: the valves of the fruit pods of the Cowitch are covered with barbed hairs which are quite irritating to the touch. It is therefore likely that the animal mentioned above under the vague term vṛśčika (usually “scorpion”) is either a fuzzy caterpillar (many of these are known to irritate the skin if touched) or a centipede. See Dymock et al. 1972, 1: 447-50; Parrotta 2001, 404-05, and the main-stream botanical e-resource: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velvet_bean].

26 This verse also occurs in the Kāmaratna, v. 7, with the variant nimbaśadbindukau grāhyau, containing a reference to some kind of insect connected with the Nimba or Neem tree, Indian Lilac (Azadirachta indica or Melia azadirachta), a plant of great ill repute — see here Goudriaan 1978, 90, 125, 203, 367, 369, 374, 384; but cp. contra Parrotta (2001, 496): “It is considered to be an auspicious tree”) — despite its long-standing (from the Suśruta onwards) successful use in the treatment of various skin diseases. Its connection to the world of the dead might stem from the custom on the part of some castes of chewing the bitter leaves while returning home after a funeral. Botanical web resource: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neem].
6. Citron seeds,\textsuperscript{27} the critter known as “six-spotted”, the hairs from the “Monkey’s Itch” tree, gum-resin,\textsuperscript{28} the fruit of the Myrobalan,\textsuperscript{29} these, finely powdered, and the Maṇḍala-Kārikā \textsuperscript{30} as well: spread them as before, and the enemy’s death is sure.

7. A measure of sesame seeds\textsuperscript{31} and white lotuses, an equal part of red sandalwood, as well as Costus\textsuperscript{32} and rooster’s bile, made into an ointment, will bring him back to health.

\textsuperscript{27} Mātulūṅga, Citrus medica.

\textsuperscript{28} Hīṅgu, see Dymock et al. 2: 141-152. This drug may be obtained from the exudations of the stem and root of the Umbrellifera Ferula foetida, the Asafoetida — native to Iran and Afghanistan/Turkestan. Although much used in the past in Pharmacology as a mild sedative, the recourse to Asafoetida in modern medical practice is almost nil.

\textsuperscript{29} Vibhītaka, the Beleric Myrobalan tree (Terminalia bellirica), from the nuts of which dice were made. It is considered a plant of ill repute: references to it in instances of destructive magic (for instance, as kindling, in a sacrificial firepit built for evil rites: see Indrajit’s practice of abhicāra in Rāmāyana 6.60) are frequent; cp. Goudriaan, 1978, 125, 361, 382, 384. According to Dymock (1970, 2: 5) in Northern India it is associated with demons, and people are reluctant to sit under its shade. There is, however, no indication that there are any strongly toxic pharmaceutical principles in the seeds themselves, though these have some psychotropic effect when smoked. Beleric Myrobalan nuts are or were used as a source of tannic acid, for dyeing and tanning, and the seed oil is used for the manufacture of soap. Web resource: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terminalia_bellirica].

\textsuperscript{30} For Maṇḍala-kārikā the Bengali translation renders “round Costus” (for Costus Speciosus see infra, note 32), a rather vague term, for which I can find no equivalent literature. Kāri, however, is a plant name of which two varieties, kaṇṭakārī and akāryakārī are known, and for which the Raja-Nirghanta gives kārikā, kārya, gīrījā and kaṭupātikā as equivalent names; Dymock’s reference here is for Clerodendron infortunatum (1970, 3: 79-80), the leaves of which have some use in the treatment of worms. Whether any of these is identical with Maṇḍala-Kārikā is doubtful.

\textsuperscript{31} Sesame seeds and sesame oil have regularly been associated with death and death rites from Vedic antiquity onwards; see, f.i., Athava-Veda-Samhitā, 18.4.32. Here they absolve a healing function, which may be more in keeping with their use as a medical agent, much in the same way that olive oil was used in the Mediterranean world.

\textsuperscript{32} Skt. kṣṭha, Gr. κόστος, a vegetable substance known from antiquity, both as an ingredient for perfumes and liniments and as a drug to be taken internally; according to the Pharmacographia Indica, it is identified with the root of the Sanssarea lappa, a beneficial medicinal plant native of Kashmir and the Hindukush, although what was actually sold in great quantities out of India as “Costus” was often of diverse origins, and subject to much adulteration. In China it is one of the standard ingre-
8. Take a “Golden Mane”, and put some impurities from the enemy’s body in its mouth, wind a red thread around it twice over; after having stopped it up with the fruits of the marking-nut tree, it will kill an enemy. Rinse it off gently with water: from its living soul, he will regain life.

9. Place, in a snake’s mouth, a clay-substance made from the grounds of a bathing place and a latrine, wrap it with a black thread and bury it in the middle of the road, face down. The enemy will die; if you draw it out, he will get well.

10. Take the bone of an ass and the head of black boa; whoever’s door it is buried under, it will bring death and eradication (uccāṭana).

    om namo bhagavate uḍḍāmareśvarāya amukaṃ māraya māraya.
    (Oṃ, honor to the blessed, exalted Lord. Kill, kill So-and-So)

This mantra applies to the above-said spells.

11. On the 14th day of the dark fortnight, one should take a branch growing from a Spirit-tree, then burn it with Spirit-tree wood and with the [wood] which lies on the heart of a dead man. Write the mantra with the coals, and the enemy’s death will come about.

    om namo bhagavate uḍḍāmareśvarāya amukaṃ bara bara rakṣa rakṣa kālarūpeṇa svāhā.

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83 Svarṣakeśa; presumably a kind of snake, if this line is to be read in context with the following verse. For what it’s worth, Edgerton’s Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary quotes Suvarṣakeśa as the name of a Nāga in the Mahāvyutpatti. The Bengali & Hindi translations, pārbatya/pahādī jantu, an “animal from the hills”, are not much help.

84 Semecarpus Anacardium; the dark juice from the nuts was used to mark clothes meant for washing, as it was not subject to melting away in water.

85 Svanabhūmūtrabhūttāṃ: short of elegance, this may be rendered “that which has the nature of the clay of bath-grounds and urine-grounds”.

86 This animal is persistently connoted with the world of the dead: see for instance Bharata’s dream-omen of his father’s death in Rām. 2.63, in which Dhṛtarāṣṭra appears riding on a cart drawn by asses. In rites of māraṇa, asses’ teeth were used to carve the appropriate rosary (see supra, fn. 10).

87 Bhūta-taru; the most likely identifications are Terminalia bellirica (bhūta-vṛksa), and the Large Sebesten Plum or Indian Cherry, Cordia dychotoma or Myxa, also known as bhūta-druma.
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(Oṃ, Honor to the blessed, exalted Lord. Take so-and-so away, protect protect in your aspect of Death, Svāhā.)

12. Take the lower part of the left «tooth\(^{38}\) of a crab; then, with your senses under control, fashion a bow with an arrow having it as its tip. Make a bow-string from the tendons of oxen and fashion the enemy out of clay\(^{39}\); shoot him with that arrow and the enemy will die on the spot.\(^{40}\)

\[\text{ḥṃ namo bhagavate rudrāya yamarīpīne kālāṃ samśayāvarte samhāre śatrum amukaṃ hana hana dhunā dhunā pācaya ghataya hūṃ phat ṭbḥ ṭbḥ ṭbḥ.}\]

(Oṃ, honor to the blessed Rudra whose aspect is Yama, who turneth danger towards Death, Destroyer, kill, kill So-and-So, destroy, destroy, parch, kill; \textit{Hṃ, Phat}, etc.).

13. Root of iguana’s tail, lizard’s head, a gnat, the tip of a cane, the bone and the urine of an elephant, \textit{hālāhala} poison\(^{41}\) well-crushed with an equal part of human urine: at the mere touch of this, an enemy shall die of boils.

14. A six-spotted spider and a black scorpion, in equal parts: spread the powder on someone’s body and he will be dead\(^{42}\) of the boils within seven days. Pound a peacock’s tail-feather and a blue lotus together: the ointment will make him well.\(^{43}\)

15. Spread the enemy’s feces and a scorpion in the ground, after digging it. Cover it with a cloth and spread some clay over the top. He will die of constipation; take it out and he will get well.

\(^{38}\) Possibly the claw.

\(^{39}\) The witch-doll, elsewhere called \textit{puttali}, is not expressly treated in the \textit{Kakṣapuṭa}, but it appears at length in f.i. in \textit{Ṣaṭkarmadīpikā}, 261 ff., where five different kinds are mentioned, respectively made of wood, meal, potter’s clay, beeswax and salt, to be sacrificed in a complex ritual..

\(^{40}\) This verse occurs with slightly better wording in Kāmaratna v. 12, as: \textit{vāmadantāṃ kulirasya adbobbagasya cābaret / śarāge pbalakāṃ kuryāt dhunā ca citijendhanaiḥ / gavāṃ sirāṃ gnumāṃ kṛtvā śatrum kuryāc ca mṛṇmayam / tadvaįjñatena bāṇena mriyate tatkṣaṇād rūṣub //}

\(^{41}\) The poison \textit{hālāhala}, well-known from mythology from the \textit{Aṃṛta-Maṇthana} myth, was thought to reside in the plant \textit{hālāhala} which was produced during that primaeval churning. It is described in \textit{Rasa-Jala-Nidhi} 3.7.11 as a tree having fruits like a cow’s udder, bundled together like an umbrella made of palm leaves. See Mukherji 1990, 3: 299-300.

\(^{42}\) \textit{Mṛtaḥ} in Śāstri’s 1984 edition; the 1915 Nāgarī text has \textit{mṛtih}. The verse occurs also in Kāmaratna, v. 16 with the variant \textit{sphoṭanāṃ bhavet}

\(^{43}\) Occurs also at Kāmaratna, v. 14, practically identical
16. Take the ashes of someone who has died on a Tuesday under the asterism Bharaṇī, and preserve them together with the enemy’s feces in an earthenware container. Then wrap it with a dead person’s hair and hang it in an empty house. As the feces dry up, the enemy dies.

17. Take the hornless head of an ox, and scatter mustard seed\(^{44}\) on its muzzle. Take the seeds, smear them with clay and cook them in the fire. The enemy on whose body you spread them on will die of the boils.\(^{45}\)

\[\text{ōṁ namo bhagavate uḍḍāmareśvarāya amukam kālarūpena thah thah thah}\]

(ōṁ. Honor to the blessed exalted Lord; in his aspect of Death [he should kill] so-and-so.\(^{46}\), thah, etc.)

This mantra refers to the [above-]said practices.

18. For seven days make an offering of white Clitoria,\(^{47}\) Costus, the salt-poison, as well as of the bile of a hare, a boar, a peacock and an iguana, together with the leaves of the Greater Nimba tree.\(^{48}\) This will kill a hostile creature, [even] if it be a great Asura in person.

\[\text{ōṁ namo bhagavate uḍḍāmareśvarāya mama śatru grhṇa grhṇa svāhā.}\]

(ōṁ. Honor to the blessed exalted Lord, grab, grab my enemy. Svāhā.)

19. Draw a leaf together with its flower on the top of a liṅga which has been broken off from its place, using goat’s blood and poison made from the coals of a funeral pyre. After having drawn it with an angry mind,\(^{49}\) draw two hands on the remainder (taccheśam?) while sitting on a seat made of the hide of a horse; then recite the following mantra:

\[\text{ōṁ namo bhagavate rakta-varṇa caturbhujā sūrdhvakeśe vikṛtāṃ kālaratri mānuṣāṇāṃ vasāndhvarṣaṇā manuṣyprade hūm phāṭ bana bana dāba dāba maṃsāṃ udāṇa phībā phībā paca paca hūm phāṭ.}\]

(ōṁ. Honor to the Blessed One. O Night of Destruction,\(^{50}\) red-faced, four-armed, high-crested, whose face is distorted, eater of the marrow and blood

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\(^{44}\) Skt. sarṣapa. The lexica know a poison sarṣapa as well, and of a demon, sarṣapārṇa, which seizes children.

\(^{45}\) Probably not through the direct action of the mustard seeds - despite their irritating effect on the skin.

\(^{46}\) Verb missing in both editions. The mantra may be incomplete.

\(^{47}\) Śvetāparājita ; presumably, the white-flowered variety of Clitoria terneata; see illustration in Parrotta 2001, 382. For the pharmacology, see Mukherjee et al., 2008.

\(^{48}\) Mahānimba, Ailanthus excelsa, different from the Nimba or Neem tree (see above); this, like the Clitoria above, does not seem to have any overt toxic properties.

\(^{49}\) Another consistent quality: the proper frame of mind for abhicāra rites is hostility, whether natural or induced.

\(^{50}\) Kālaratrī , a form of Kāli, vividly described in the mantra.
of men, gaver of death to So-and-so, whose time for death has come! \textit{Hum, Phat}, kill, kill, burn, burn, meat, blood, drink, drink, cook, cook! \textit{Hum, Hum!}).

Recite this mantra at night, think of the enemy with an angry mind; but at midnight wipe off the top of \textit{liṅga} with your hands. When the leaf on the top of the \textit{liṅga} is erased, the enemy dies on the spot. Who is versed in this very practice is called one who has perfect Yoga.\footnote{Dṛṣṭaḥ prataya evāyam siddhayoga udāhytaḥ. Translation conjectural.}

20. Make an arrow from red oleander,\footnote{Aśvamāraja , “horse killer”, Nerium oleander, well known both in the West and the East as a poisonous plant. Its use in female infanticide continues to the present day.} a bow fashioned from a dog’s bone, a bowstring from a dead person’s hair, facing North and South. Using red lead, draw seven circles\footnote{Always an inauspicious animal in the Hindu world.} shaped like the letter “\textit{va}”. After placing a cock on the seventh circle together with the enemy’s name, pay homage to the bow and arrow in each circle with \textit{mantra}-s. In due course, after having completed the sixth circle, kill the cock; and with the \textit{mantra} the enemy too will die on the spot, even if he is far away.\footnote{The graphic elements in \textit{yantra}-s, when not triangular, are usually even in number: 4, 6, 8, 12 petals or sides, etc. The description here is not all that clear.}

End of the 10th \textit{paṭala} of Siddha Nāgārjuna’s \textit{Kakṣapuṭa}, entitled “Causing Death”.

\textbf{Textual References}

\textit{Indrajālaśāstra}, \textit{ śl. 1-8.}

\begin{verbatim}
athātah sampravakṣyāmi centrajālam anuttamam /
vyaḍhidāridryaharaṇaṁ jaramṛtyuvinaśanam // 1 //
indrasya yo na jānāti jāleśaṁ rudrabhāṣitam /
nigrahānugrahe tasya kā śaktih parameśvarī // 2 //
na teṣāṁ jāyate siddhir gotre kṣetre ṑi vā /
indrajālaṁ na hānāti sa kruddhaḥ kim kariyati // 3 //
na jīvati varārohe saṃśāre duḥkhasāgare /
indrajālaṁ na jānāti kutāḥ saukhyam bhavet tataḥ // 4 //
\end{verbatim}
kautühalaṃ kutas teṣāṃ kutaḥ kāmā varānane / 
Samśārasāgare ghore kāmalubdhasa ca mānavaḥ / 
rudrakarma na hi teṣāṃ kutaḥ saukhyam vidhiyate // 5 //
yathā nadinadāḥ sarve sāgere samupāgatāḥ / 
tathā sarvāṇi śāstraṇi indrakālasāthitāni ca // 6 //
taptānāṃ ca yathā bhānuḥ śītalānāṃ yathā śaśi / 
gambhirānāṃ yathā sindhr jālendram ca tathā priye // 7 //
tathā kim bahunoktena varṇanena punah punah / 
jalendrasya samam śāstraṇaḥ na bhūtam na bhaviṣyati // 8 //

Siddhanāgarjunatantra, Paṭṭaḷa 10.
narāsthiṅkilaṃ puṣye gṛhiyāc caturangulum / 
kīhanet taṃ gṛhe yasya bhavet tasya kulakṣayaḥ // 
om vum vum bhūm vum phat svāhā // 1 //
asvāsthikilaṃ aśvinyāṃ kīhanec caturangulum / 
śatror gṛhe nihafti āśu kuṭumbam vairīṇāṃ kule // 
om sura sura svāhā // 2 //
sarpāṣṭhyā angulamātraṃ tu hy asleṣāyāṃ ripor gṛhe / 
kīhanet saptadhā jāptaṃ mārayed ripusantatim // 
om jaya vijayati svāhā // 3 //
ḥūte kākālayo gṛhyayaḥ deyaś cāgnau sacetasā / 
aṅglyekena tadbhasma śatrumūrdhāni nikṣipet / 
mriyate nātra samdeho gṛhe kṣipet kulakṣayaḥ // 
om namo bhaghavate rudrāya māraya māraya namaḥ svāhā // 4 //
śaṇbinduvṛścikau gṛhyau viṣaṃ tad vānairphalaṃ / 
etac cūrṇaṃ pradātavyaṃ śatruṣayāsanādiṣu / 
jāyate spхоṭаki tīvra daśāhan māraṇaṃ dhravam // 5 //
mātuḷunāgasya bījāni kītaṃ śaṇbindusamjñakam / 
kapikacakharovroṃhi hinga vaibhītakam phalam / 
etāni samacūrṇāni tathā maṇḍalakārikā / 
pūrvavat prakṣipet śator māraṇaṃ bhavati dhravam // 6 //
tilaiḥ palaṃ sakumudaiḥ samāṃṣaṃ raktacandanaṃ / 
kuśṭhakukkuṭapitam ca lepanena sukhaḥvaham // 7 //
svarṇakeśam ca saṅgrāhyam tadāye śatrujam malam / 
ksiptvā tad raktasūṭreṇa veṣṭayitvā tataḥ punah /
Death Charms: Magical Mixtures from the Kākṣapaṭa

bhallātakaphalaḥ sārdham ruddhvā tan mārayed ripum / prakṣālayec chanair adbhis tajjīvat tasya jīvanam // 8 //

snanabhūmītrabhūmīttāṃ sarpaṇaktre vinikṣipet / veṣṭayet kṛṣṇasūrēṇa mārgamadhye adhomukham /
nikhanen mriyate śatrus tasyotpāte sukham bhavet // 9 //

gardabhasyāsthī cādāya kṛṣṇajagarakam śiraḥ /
nikhaned yasya taddvāre māranācātanaṃ bhavet //

om namo bhagavate udāmareśvarāya amukaṃ māraya māraya /
uktayogānām ayam mantrah // 10 //

gīrhīyā kṛṣṇacaturdasyāṃ sākhā bhūtataroḥ sthitā /

vāmadantaṃ kuliraya adhobhāgastham āharet /
śarāgre tatphalaṃ kuryād dhanuṣ ca vijītendriyaḥ /
gavīṃ śirāguṇam kṛtvā śatrūṃ kuryāc ca mṛṇmayam /

godhālān gūlamūlam kalāsaśiras tathā /

ūrnābham ca śaṅbindum saṃmāṃṣam kṛṣṇavṛścikam /

yo mṛto bharaṇībhave tadbhāmādāyā rakṣayet
ripuviṣṭam vṛścikam ca khanitvā bhuvi nikiṣipet /

yasyāṅge prakṣipet āṃṣaḥ saptāhāt sphoṭakair mṛṭhāḥ /

ripuvisṭāṃ vṛścikam ca khanitvā bhuvi nikiṣipet /

yasyāṅge prakṣipet āṃṣaḥ saptāhāt sphoṭakair mṛṭhāḥ /

yāvacchus yati tadvis tāvac chatrur mṛto bhavet // 16 //
munḍjam ādāya goś caiva tadavktre sarṣapān kṣipet / 
mrdālipya paced agnau grītvā sarṣapāṃs tataḥ / 
yasyānge prakṣipet tasmāt sphoṭakair miyare ripuḥ // 
ōm namo bhagavate udṣāmareśvarāya amukaṃ kālarūpeṇa 
ṭhaḥ ṭhaḥ ṭhaḥ / uktayogānām ayaṃ mantratḥ // 17 //

śvetāparājitāmūlam kuṣṭham lavanakam viśam / 
śaśavārāhamāyuragodhānāṃ pittakaṃ tathā / 
mahānimbasya patrāṇi samaṃ saptadinaṃ hunet / 
mārayed bhūtam śatrum yadi sākṣān mahāsuram //
ōm namo bhagavate udṣāmareśvarāya mama śatrum 
gṛṇa gṛṇa svāhā //18 //

sthānabhṛasṭasya lingasya mūrdhīnī pattamā samālikhet / 
sapuṣpaṃ chāgarketenā citāṅgāraviṣeṇa ca // 
līkhitāṃ roṣacittam lekhaṃ karau / 
asvacarmāṃsane sthitvā tato mantram imaṃ japaṃ //
ōm namo bhagavate raktavānmaṣaṇāṃ dhanuṃ rudhiram piba pica paca hum phat / 
amam mantram japed rātrau roṣacitto ripumṃ smaret / 
ardhāraṇau tu hastābhyaṃ mārjyel lingamastake // 
bhrasṭe patre mastakasthe tatkaṇān miyare ripuḥ / 
dṛṣṭāḥ pratyaya evāyaṃ siddhayoga udāhṛtaḥ // 19 //
raktāśvamārajam bāṇam śuno ‘sthinirmmitam dhanuḥ / 
mṛtakṣair guṇam kuryāt uttarādakṣināmukhaḥ // 
vākārasadṛṣaṃ kuryāt sindūraḥ saptaṁcitaṃ śatam / 
kukkutaṃ śatrunāmāṃ tu saptaṁ maṇḍale sthite // 
pratyekamāṇḍale pūjyam dhanurbāṇaṃ ca mantrataḥ / 
kramāt ṣaṇmaṇḍale prāpte tato hanyāc ca kukkuṭaṃ / 
manṭreṇa miyare so ‘pi dūrastho ‘pi ripuḥ kṣaṇāt // 20 //

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iti śrīsiddhanāgārjunaviracite kakṣaputo māraṇaṃ nama daśamaḥ paṭalaḥ

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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The *Bimaran* Casket: A Contribution to the Discussion Regarding Its Iconography

By Sofia SUNGSTROM*

**Summary**

This article attempts to re-identify the four figures which are depicted twice on the Bimaran Casket as well as open up the field of interpretation regarding its iconography. Three of the four figures have been identified as Vajrapani, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya by examining the individual iconographic features of the figures and comparing these with contemporary images.

**Keywords:** Bimaran reliquary, Buddhist iconography, Vajrapani, Avalokitesvara, Maitreya.

**Introduction**

The crossroads of Asia denotes the area where India connects with Iran and the steppes of Central Asia.¹ It was here that the Bimaran Casket was found in Bimaran Stupa 2 in Afghanistan by Charles Masson (fig. 1). The site is located on the right bank of the Kabul river a few miles west-north-west of Jalalabad.² This area in which the Casket was recovered underwent several rules from 350 B.C. to 200 A.D.³ While there have been various dates of production set for the Bimaran Casket, but they tend all to centre around 1st century A.D. At that time the Bimaran area was under Iranian rule and later under Yuezhi or Kushan rule.⁴ Before this century the local culture had experienced Greek rule as well as that of the Mauryan empire making the region a prime example of an area under several cultural influences.

On the vase that the Casket was found with an inscription in Kharoshthi stating, “Gift of Sivarakhsha, the Mujavat scion, given in

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¹ Errington 1992, 10.
² Le May 1943, 116.
³ Errington 1992, 15.
⁴ Errington 1992, 15.
substitution for the relics of the Lord, in honour of all Buddhas.” As there is a mention of ‘all Buddhas’ there is evidence that the reliquary dealt with more than just Shakyamuni. The inscription also declares the patron as the Mujavat scion, which entails that he came from the Hindukush-Pamirs region and belonged to a group that followed Scythian culture. The name itself can be translated as ‘Protected by Shiva’, which can either be interpreted as a name or a title. Art of the Scythian culture is mostly associated with metalwork, particularly with the depiction of animals. A connection with this art culture would certainly explain the quality of the metal work of the Casket.

The iconography of the Bimaran Casket and the identification of the figures depicted

That the figure in abhaya mudra is the Buddha Shakyamuni is uncontested in academic writing as he is often associated with this gesture. Taking this factor along with the usnisha and the depiction of the robes that were to become a feature in early depictions of the Buddha there is no reason to question this conclusion. The other three figures were initially described as being a religious follower on Buddha’s right and a lay follower on his left and the fourth figure was identified as a female disciple. However, the early research into the iconography represented on the Casket has concluded that the figures to the left and right of the Buddha image are Brahma and Indra, Brahma being the figure with the beard. The fourth figure was then categorised as a possible donor of the Casket and not a female disciple. Yet in more contemporary research the halo of the fourth figure has warranted him to be classified as an unknown bodhisattva.

This identification of the three figures apart from the Buddha has more or less gone unchallenged; the anomaly being seen in Huntington’s The art of ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain where the figures alongside the Buddha are simply termed bodhisattvas. I

5 Le May 1943, 120.
6 Personal communication with Manisha Simangan.
7 Wilson 1971, 71.
8 See research by Le May, Errington and others.
9 See research by Le May and Errington.
10 Huntington 1985, 115.
intend to investigate these three figures in an attempt to open up the field of identification of the iconography of the Casket. In this essay the bearded figure on the Buddha’s right hand side will be termed Brahma or the ‘second figure’, Indra being the figure on the Buddha’s left wearing a turban and will be termed the ‘third figure’. The last figure which stands facing the viewer and separates the trinity of the others will be termed the ‘fourth figure’.

**Identifying the Second Figure**

The identification of the Vedic deities Indra and Brahma appears to rest on the water vessel that the bearded character is carrying.

[...] the figure of Brahma is confirmed by his carrying the Kamandala, or water-pot, which is his sure cognisance. The image of Indra is seldom met with in Northern India, but he is usually associated with the Buddha and Brahma in this particular scene, and his identity may therefore be accepted.”11

Yet the use of the water vessel is not solely utilised in Vedic iconography, it is also a popular symbol in Buddhist art.12 As the Casket stems from an area under a wide variety of cultural influences it is likely that the iconography it depicts does not merely stem from India, but Iran, Greece and the steppes as well. Viewing the Casket it is clear that the item being held is not by any certainty a water vessel, it appears as if the figure is holding a wine glass upside-down by the foot. Therefore we need to expand the field of possible features from beyond a water vessel to include bell or possible an incense burner due to the way it is held, connecting the iconography of the image with Buddhism rather than to the Vedas.

In opening up the field of possible attributes the figure can now be linked to various bodhisattvas in the Buddhist pantheon. In connection to the water vessel Avalokiteshvara is often depicted as holding some form of water container and Vajrapani is the guardian of the Elixir of Life and possibly this is what the vessel contains.13 If the item is a bell then it is possible that the character is the bodhisattva Vajrapani as a bell is one of his attributes along with the

11 Le May 1943, 119.
13 McArthur 2002, 43.
vajra. At times the bell and the vajra are combined to form the Vajrabell, and following the outlines of the attribute it is possible that one is depicted on the Casket.

Moving away from the attribute and focussing on the physical features of the character it is the hair and beard that appear quite striking along with the way he wears his garment. Similar physical depictions including the beard and curly hair as well as the dboti hanging off the hips occurred on coins in the region in question. Yet these coins did not depict Brahma, but Zeus in the two centuries leading up to 1st century A.D. However, Zeus is not carrying a water vessel, thus it is the physical appearance which is similar to Zeus and not the attribute of Buddha’s right-hand man. Beyond the depictions of Zeus there is another character who is depicted with similar physical features as those discussed, Hercules.

Hercules was a popular image for a time and his image was assimilated in Iran into Varathragna and in Buddhist iconography into Vajrapani. As the images of Hercules were available for a few centuries before the production of the Bimaran Casket thus the imagery of the classical hero would have been well known and simple to insert in the creation of a new iconography. This bodhisattva Vajrapani represents the collective power of the Buddhas as well as being a protector of Buddha Shakyamuni, which is the way that Vajrapani is commonly depicted in Gandharan art. In reliefs he is seen close to the Buddha carrying a vajra, and can also be identified as the figure with the beard and the curly hair along with similar garments as seen on the Bimaran Casket. (fig. 2)

On the Casket the figure on Buddha’s right hand is seen not just holding an attribute, but with the other hand in abhaya mudra, which would further endorse the figure having some sort of protective function. There are depictions of Brahma and Indra together with Buddha in Gandharan art, but here both are depicted with their hands in anjali mudra, the gesture of prayer or veneration. (fig. 3) Neither are the two Vedic deities depicted with halos in the Gandharan stone reliefs as the characters are on the Casket. Taking all of these factors together, the question of the water vessel, the adaptation of Hercules

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14 Ibid.: 57.
15 Errington 1992, 74.
16 Errington 1992, 100.
into Buddhist iconography and the *abhaya mudra* it is likely that the figure on Buddha’s right on the Bimaran Casket is not Brahma as stated by various academics, but Vajrapani.

**Identification of the Third Figure**

As the character of Indra was identified by the other figure being Brahma this conclusion puts that identification under question as well. Indra, when depicted in Gandharan art, typically wears his headdress which has a flat top. In this case the headdress is similar to that of a tiara and not the headdress Indra is commonly depicted with. As this character lacks an attribute the identification of him becomes more difficult. However, he is the only one out of the four characters depicted on the Bimaran Casket who lacks an *ushnisa*.

As this was the early stage of Buddhist anthropomorphic depictions the *ushnisa* had as of yet not developed into a head protrusion, but was still depicted as a knot of hair, which is the way it is portrayed on the Casket. Due to the third figure lacking this hair knot it is possible that he represents another faith apart from Buddhism. Taking this fact along with his hand gesture, the *anjali mudra*, he could represent the patron of the casket or royalty. The main factor that would point away from this conclusion is the halo surrounding his head. However, examining the coins from the Kushan dynasty some of the kings are depicted with haloes there as well so it remains a possibility. (fig. 4) This is also substantiated by other depictions of the Buddha from around the same time period, which depict him with both Vajrapani and princes come in worship. (fig. 5)

**Identification of the Fourth Figure**

The fourth character depicted on the Casket stands facing the viewer in *anjali mudra*. He wears his garment slightly different from the others and it appears as if his long hair is only partially tied up. This hair style is similar to the way that the hair of bodhisattva Maitreya is depicted in Gandharan art. He is also wearing a range of ornamentations, such as bracelets. There are several bodhisattvas who are commonly depicted with jewellery, including Maitreya and Avalokitesvara. On the figure there is a separate item covering the left shoulder and he also appears to wear the ‘sacred thread’. The covering
on the left shoulder could be the leopard skin that is worn by Maitreya. As the figure lacks an attribute the definite identification of him is difficult, even with the physical features the identification of the figure as being Maitreya is uncertain.

However, there is further evidence of the figure being Maitreya to be found on a relic stupa. (fig. 6) Surrounding the stupa are four free standing figures, three of which bear a marked similarity with those depicted on the Bimaran Casket. Another similarity of the relic stupa and the Casket is the inscription along the base. This is in Kharoshti, the same script that the steatite vase that the Bimaran Casket was found with was inscribed. In this case the inscription states “sivaraksidakasa thube sapariane”, which has been translated in two different ways as “Of Sivaraksitaka, the Stupa for Worship” and “[Gift of] Sivaraksitaka, the stupa with people around it paying homage.”

Utilising palaeography the relic stupa’s inscription is dated to the “end of the Saka period or start of the Kushan period.” This is also the same time interval that was given for the inscription on the steatite vase, “the writing seems to be more or less on the boundary line between Saka and Kushan.” This date is usually set to 1st century A.D. and no later than 150 A.D. Hence it is likely that both the Bimaran Casket and the relic stupa were made in the same period. The name given in both inscription translates as ‘Protected by Shiva’, which is a further connection between the two Buddhist objects.

Out of the three interesting figures which are part of the relic stupa two have once again been identified as Indra and Brahma, however, it is the third figure that is interesting in identifying the fourth figure on the Bimaran Casket. The similarities between the two include the hairstyle with the ushnisa, the halo and some of the garments. Yet this figure which is part of the relic stupa has an attribute, the kamandalu which identifies him as Maitreya.

Taking all of these elements together: the similar iconographic characters on the relic stupa and the Casket, the closeness in dating,
The use of the same script and finally the same name or title occurring in both inscriptions, it would indicate that the fourth character on the Bimaran Casket is actually the Buddha of the Future, Maitreya. This identification also correlates with the inscription on the steatite vase which mentions “all Buddhas”, since this would mean that the Buddha of the Present and the Buddha of the Future are depicted on the Casket. (fig. 7)

**A Note on the Dating of the Casket**

The Bimaran Casket was found in a steatite vase along with four coins, the discovery of which was described by Charles Masson. “On removing the cover, the vase was found to contain a small quantity of a fine mould… In the centre was standing a casket of pure gold; it had no cover: its exterior was embellished by eight figures… Without the steatite vase were also deposited four copper coins, in excellent preservation, having been inserted new.”

The coins commemorate the reign of Azes II and if the statement that the coins were inserted in the stupa unused as new the date of the Bimaran Casket is given as ca 15 B.C. Other dates given have been 2nd-3rd century A.D. from studying the way the garments are draped and Le May placed it in the 1st century A.D.

If a ruler utilised the title ‘Protected by Shiva’ it is likely that he would also have produced coins with Shiva depicted on them. From the coins that have been recovered from this time period the first ruler to utilise Shiva on his coins was Gondophares, and Indo-Parthian ruler. This coin was produced in the mid-1st century A.D., towards the end of Gondophares rule. As this ruler depicted Shiva on his coinage it is possible that he was the one utilising the title ‘Protected by Shiva’. Since he was the first ruler among the Indo-Parthians in this particular area and his rule would fit in with the dating of both the vase and the stupa done by palaeography it is possible that he was the patron of both items. Especially as the
previous rulers were not known to have utilised Shiva on their coinage.

Returning to the third figure on the Casket, even though rulers such as the Kushans were depicted with haloes on coins, the same is not seen with the Indo-Scythians or the Indo-Parthians such as Gondophares. Now that Maitreya has been identified and the Casket dated to pre-Kushan, from the study of early Buddhist iconography the turbaned figure can either represent the bodhisattva Siddharta or Avalokitesvara.27 As previously mentioned the third figure does not have an obvious attribute which would identify him as Avalokitesvara, such as a garland of flowers. However, according to Chutiwong it is unlikely that the turbaned figure is Siddharta, which leaves us with Avalokitesvara.28

He is often depicted together with Maitreya in Buddhist iconography. In Gandharan art Avalokitesvara is depicted as Maitreya’s counterpart wearing a headdress, therefore it is possible that the third figure is by a process of elimination Avalokitesvara.

**Conclusion**

My intent with this essay was to open up the field of interpretation of iconography illustrated on the Bimaran Casket. The general academic understanding of the Casket was that it depicted the Buddha flanked by Brahma and Indra with an extra character possibly illustrating a bodhisattva. From my research into early Buddhist iconography I have concluded that the figure facing the viewer in *anjali mudra* in the bodhisattva Maitreya. This has partially been based on physical characteristics such as hair as well as the item covering his left shoulder. The other evidence discovered in the identification of Maitreya was another reliquary in stone dated to approximately the same time period and mentioning the same title or name that was mentioned in the Bimaran Stupa 2. With this second reliquary were figures depicted that were markedly similar to those on the Bimaran Casket, except in this case the figure with the particular hairstyle and item over the left shoulder was holding a small water vessel, identifying him as Maitreya.

The other two figures which I investigated do not have a similar comparison as once main with the second reliquary these two figures were named Brahma and Indra. However, I maintain that there is a lack of evidence for this on the Bimaran Casket and I propose that the second and third figures are actually Vajrapani and Avalokitesvara. This entails that the three figures, apart from Buddha, are bodhisattvas, something which is supported by Huntington’s theory.

While the iconography of the Casket has met with little investigation, the date of the Casket’s production has encountered much more exploration. It would be interesting to further investigate the inscription on the vase that the Casket was found in to see if the patron and its date of production could be identified. However, despite these questions the Bimaran casket remains a splendid piece of metalwork that is important to the study of the early development of Buddhist anthropomorphic iconography.

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The Turkish Dictionary of Giovanni Molino, born Yovhannês from Ankara*

By Elżbieta ŚWIĘCICKA†

To Emilia

The glossary is also a work of autobiography.

Richard Pearce-Moses‡

Summary

Giovanni Molino is known to Turkologists as the author of the Italian-Turkish dictionary Dittionario della lingua Italiana-Turchesca, which was published in Rome in 1641. It was believed that he was one of many Italians writing grammars and dictionaries for missionaries and travellers heading for Turkey. In the introduction to his dictionary he writes that he has worked for the Most Serene Republic of Venice, but it has been difficult to find information about him in Venetian Archives, in any case not under the name Molino. Maria Pia Pedani has searched out in the correspondence of the then Venetian ambassador (bailo) to Istanbul three letters, from which it results that the interprete Giovanni Molino was in fact an Armenian from Ankara, called Yovhannês/Hovhannês Ankivrac’i. Following this lead it turned out that in Armenian history the latter is a known scholar, an outstanding Armenian publisher and the translator of religious texts, whose services to the history of the Turkish language and the corresponding contribution to Ottoman Turkish culture were to date unknown.

Giovanni Molino’s Dittionario belongs to a special category of text sources called ‘transcribed texts’. This refers to the fact that the texts are in Turkish, but written by means of an alphabet different from the consonantal Arabic script used over the millennium prior to 1928. These texts are of various kinds: grammars, vocabularies, phrase books, and translations of religious texts and most often attest Turkish Balkan dialects. Their authors, who were mostly not native speakers of Turkish, have tried to record the phonetic shape of the language as they perceived it.

* The introduction is based on the Author’s unpublished paper which was given in 2000 at CIEPO (International Committee of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Studies) Conference in Izmir and the short article published in Folia Orientalia 36 (2000).
Molino’s linguistic origin was different. He was a subject of the Ottoman Empire, and had worked for many years in Constantinople and Smyrna for the Venetian bailo as an interprete, dragoman. Moreover, he had spent many years in Rome and Venice, and thus one may say that he was trilingual.

According to his employer, Venetian bailo, he spoke Turkish well, ‘not the learned language, but that spoken by the common people’. He was to write one of the first depictions of Turkish grammar complete with a lexicon of Constantinopolitan Turkish numbering approx. fifteen thousands entries, a useful extensive appendix to the grammar itself.

With the help of a specially designed computer program the Author has reversed and reorganised the material of the lexicon from Italian-Turkish to Turkish-Italian.

The paper deals with Giovanni’s/Yovhannès’ life, his method of presenting the lexical entries and their importance for reflections on the standard Ottoman-Turkish of the 17th century.

Keywords: Turkish Lexicography, Turkish Language, Ottoman Empire, Armenian culture, Italian Lexicography.

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Foreword and acknowledgements

Since 1982, I have had it in mind to compile a reversal of Giovanni Molino’s Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca published in Rome in 1641. Dittionario contains nearly 9000 Turkish words and is an excellent source of information about the Turkish language of the 17th century. The Turkish – Italian version, which I have created, is in the best possible way identical to the original.

I would like to thank all those who have shared with me their time and knowledge. In the process of creating the reversal of the original Italian-Turkish lexical content, I have obtained the support of different, though equally talented, computer specialists. The first to get down to the task of reversing this dictionary was Valentina Rosén. The first to transform the entire dictionary into a Turkish-Italian counterpart was Mikolaj Gałczyński and subsequently Agnes Kilár. I would like to express my particular appreciation to all of them.

I am deeply indebted to the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow for the possibility to publish the digital edition of Molino’s original Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca.
Many friends have encouraged me and backed with moral support: first and foremostly Stanislaw Stachowski, Wolfgang E. Scharlipp, Anna Krasnowolska, Leszek Stawiarz, Ewa Balicka, Witold Witakowski, Claudio Carrillo, the late Pawel Świderski and Frithiof Rundgren. I am very grateful to Artsvi Bakhchinyan, Tzortzis Ikonomou, Clara Święcicka-Williams and David Williams, Guy Torr, Maria Walecka-Garbalińska, and Anna Wolodarski and for their opinions in the matter of language difficulties. And a special thanks to Artsvi Bakhchinyan for providing me with material from Matenadaran. I thank them most sincerely and would like also to express my gratitude to all those who I have failed to mention here, including my family who will meet the fact of this publication with delight and great relief.

It is nevertheless with the greatest pleasure that I can thank Maria Pia Pedani, for her support since we met in Venice in 1994 and Gianclaudio Macchiarella for his patient encouragement and generous editorial assistance.

I must confess that, having planned a substantial monograph, I imagined the end of my affaire de coeur with Molino would have been somewhat different. I probably belong to that special category of people who like travelling, not necessarily arriving, but as I had no intention of leaving it as ‘my unwritten book’ I am endeavouring to publish for the moment the reversal of his Italian-Turkish dictionary and an extended introduction. So I invite everyone to join the journey.

**Introduction**

Many years ago, during my studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow I became acquainted with a couple of Turkish texts written in alphabets different from the consonantal Arabic script used in Turkish until 1928. These were Johannes Herbinius’ *Horae Turcico Catechetica*¹ and Giovanni Molino’s *Dìttionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca*. These texts were written in the Latin alphabet but were much varied with regard to language. Molino’s *Dìttionario*, one of the first larger Turkish dictionaries, was written by a person who knew the Turkish language as a native speaker and who consciously had chosen

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a colloquial variant, the Constantinopolitan tongue. He has presented us with a document of Turkish usage of the 17th century and his dictionary has its established place in Turkish lexicography. It is not only an interesting source of information about the Turkish language but it is also an example of a description of the contrastive relationship between Italian and Turkish.

While *Horae Turcico Catecheticae* was its own form of text that arose as a result of the necessity to convert to the Christian faith two members of a delegation from the Crimea to Sweden in 1671, who had decided to ‘apply for political asylum’. The condition to remain in Sweden was the conversion to the official faith in force in the Kingdom of Sweden – Lutheranism.

Johannes Herbinius was a Protestant priest, a Polish-Silesian-Swedish intellectual. As was the case with many theologians of the time he was interested in the language of the Bible, Hebrew and also in Arabic. He was an eminent specialist in the field of art and philosophy. When he headed a parish in Wilno (Vilnius) he became acquainted with the local Karaims and Tatars, as well as with the problem of purchasing Christians taken captive by Tatars or Turks. It was then that he started his interest in Turkish grammar, both as an intellectual challenge and as a tempting project to spread the Christian faith among the Muslims.

He was helped in the formulation of the catechism text by the colonel Zachariasz Gamocki, a Polish Armenian who came from the multilingual areas around Kamieniec Podolski, and went to Sweden during the reign of Queen Christina. Gamocki decided to serve the Swedes and from time to time he was commissioned to act as translator on the occasion of the Tatar diplomatic missions to Sweden, as far as his knowledge of kaba türkçe enabled him.2

It seems that Molino’s *Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca* partly arose as a result of a similar intent – reaching potential Christians, but chiefly as a practical dictionary intended to serve foreigners who found themselves in the Ottoman Empire.

Both *Horae Turcico Catecheticae* and Molino’s *Dittionario* belong to a special category of text sources, which are called “transcribed texts”, it means that the language of the texts is Turkish but the texts themselves are written in an alphabet other than the consonantal

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Arabic script used in the Ottoman Empire during almost a millennium until 1928. Most often an alphabet used for the notation was the Latin alphabet but several other alphabets were used too such as Brahmi, Syriac and Cyrillic.³

The transcribed texts are of different kinds: grammars, vocabularies, phrase books and translations of religious texts. They most often illustrate the Turkish Balkan dialects. Their authors, who were not native speakers of Turkish, have tried to record the acoustical shape of the language, as they perceived it. They were of various professions and origins: clergymen, prisoners-of-war, travellers, merchants and diplomats.⁴ In many cases the authors were dragomans - translators of legations, recruited from ethnic minorities, Ottoman citizens as equally the Westerners who, for different reasons travelled to the Ottoman Empire. Their works are in the first place kept in the libraries and archives of all those countries which maintained relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁵

The text of the catechism is written by someone to whom we might refer today as an ‘Orientalist’, while the text of the dictionary was composed by a ‘native speaker’ who, as it turns out, was an Armenian.⁶

**Ottoman culture – Turkish language**

Turkey has a rich history. The past was different from that of the present. Turkey today seems to be subjected to a sense of false uniformity. After the collapse of the Empire there remained only traces of the cultures of Armenians, Greeks, Syrians and Kurds. Turkish culture, in as far as it admits to be a continuation of the great Ottoman past, could be something greater than a product for sale to

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³ The Bibliography of all the Turkish grammars and dictionaries published 1530-1794 in Deny 1959, 222-238. Bibliographic information about the transcriptional texts in: Hazai 1990, 68-73 but see also among others Majda 1976; Kun 1936; Lewicki 1936; Zajączkowski 1953; Marazzi 1982; Aleksandrovič-Miškiniene 1995; Adamović 2001; Rocchi 2007.

⁴ Faroqhi 1999, 110-143.

⁵ Reychman and Zajączkowski 1968.

⁶ See the detective story in my previously published article about his life and intellectual activities, ‘Interpreter Yovhannes Ankiwrac’i also called Giovanni Molino’ in FO, VOL. 36, as Studia in Honorem Stanislai Stachowski Dicata.
tourists; the modern Turkish culture could arouse reflection and incorporate thought on the past contribution of the absent compatriots of the Empire.7

The culture of the Empire was multinational, formulated through the joint input of many different cultures. Of great influence on the shaping of Ottoman culture was the religion and art together with literature that were closely connected to Persian and Arabic cultures. Both these cultures were the lungs of the Turkish identity. Already Mahmud from Kashgar in his work Diwān Ḭūlāt-tūrkh (1074) manifested the close political-cultural connections between the Persians and the Turks, illustrating the intimacy between them with a proverbial phrase: “Tatsīz Türk bolmaz, ṭīsīz bōr bolmaz” which means - there is no Turk without Pers, as no head without a hat.8 However, Persian literature witnesses also a more ambivalent, ‘love-hate’ attitude towards the Turks.9

Knowledge of one’s culture takes place through knowledge of one’s inheritance. The identity of the citizens of the Empire was different from that of modern day Turkey. In the Empire, adherence to religion was important and secondary affiliation was to a professional group. In the nineteenth century Turkish peasants were unaware that they were Turks. In the modern opinion, national identity can effectively be supplemented by other identities, because “Identity is chiefly built upon culture and that is always heterogeneous.”10

In the Ottoman Empire, as in many other countries a high and a low form of the language was used. The contemporary Turkish language has developed, besides its Turkish core, as a result of contact with many other languages: with Italian through which words concerning diplomacy, sea and land trade were acquired; with Greek, Slavonic languages, Armenian,11 Kurdish and several others, on

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7 Interview with Norman Davies, Dzieje własne. Jak je opowiedzieć? [How to tell about one’s own history]. Gazeta Wyborcza, POMOCNIK HISTORYCZNY, nr 29 (2563), 2006.
8 Zajączkowski 1953, 51.
9 Maciuszak 2005, 239-249.
10 Anna Wolff-Powęska, Gazeta Wyborcza 23-24 września 2006, Jak dziś być patriotą [How to be patriot today].
11 A number of Armenian words were borrowed into Turkish, see Blässing 1992; Dankoff 1995 with relevant bibliography.
matters of various daily activities. The Hungarian Turkologist, J. Nemeth, has called the sum of influences Mischsprache,\textsuperscript{12} using a term which to various degrees and in different ways applies to all languages.

We call subjective act of description – a narration, and there are various narrations – the one we are indirectly going to make acquaintance with is the Ottoman-Armenian, by way of the author of the Turkish dictionary from 1641. And this equally from the point of view of archive studies as that of Turcology because “The memory of society is not a dead record but a tool in the continuing reinvention of the culture. The record is the seed of a developing culture; it is the source of identification that individuals feel to their state and their society.”\textsuperscript{13}

In the case of the Ottoman Empire – high culture was the Ottoman one, while the colloquial language which represented everyday culture was the Turkish language. Certain foreign words entered into the vocabulary and the morphological and syntactical elements were conspicuous – due to which it could be difficult to understand the written Ottoman. Molino’s contemporary, 17th century Ottoman poets created the refined verses according to the requirements of Arabic-Persian metre, but on a daily basis in all probability they used the vocabulary as described in his \textit{Dittionario}.

A. Tietze has written that “The tradition of the Turkish dictionary is of the learned type; when it comes to the vocabulary of practical life, of the bazaars, of the various trades, sports and games […] little preliminary work has been done and the lexicographer has to be himself an explorer.”\textsuperscript{14} Giovanni Molino was such an explorer and his dictionary gives us an opportunity to follow his path.

\textbf{The Armenians and the cultural inheritance of the Ottoman Empire}

In the Muslim Spanish province al-Andalus, after the Moorish conquest, the followers of various religions: Muslims, Christians and Jews created the common, Castilian culture, which held in trust the heritage derived from Greco-Latin civilisation. The Muslims not only

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\textsuperscript{12} Németh 1953.
\textsuperscript{13} Bearman 1989, 2.
\textsuperscript{14} Tietze 1962, 270.
\end{flushleft}
tolerated both religious minorities, but also cooperated with them within the field of culture, undertaking translations, discussing the problems of science.\textsuperscript{15} This concept of moderately peaceful coexistence, called today by the Spanish scholars \textit{Convivencia}, functioned both during the time Armenia was under Arab occupation and equally in the Ottoman Empire.

When a considerable part of Armenia was conquered and transformed into an Ottoman dominion, Mehmed II created a special social and legal order with self-government to gain the support of Armenians and other non-Muslim minorities, which was called \textit{millet}. The Christians and Jews were subject to the jurisdiction of their religious leaders. In 1461, Mehmed II appointed the new Armenian Patriarch and the Armenians found themselves organized in the \textit{arnani millet}. Those who lived in Constantinople could feel safe as long as they did not come into collision with the Muslims. The Armenians and other Christians who lived in the Anatolian province did not enjoy such a comfort and could suffer personal insecurity.\textsuperscript{16}

From the early seventeenth century Armenians had begun to arrive in Constantinople in large numbers, fleeing rebellions and wars in eastern Anatolia.\textsuperscript{16}

The situation in the Armenian \textit{millet} was difficult for several reasons. On the one hand there existed rivalry between the Catholicos in the Mother See of Ejmiatsin (Echmiadzin), representing the Eastern Armenian Church, and the Catholicos of Cilicia in the See of Sis, associated with Rome. On the other hand there was a conflict between the See of Ejmiatsin and the Patriarchal See in Constantinople subordinated to it, which was mostly pro-Rome. Both of the latter used to send their messengers to discuss Papal support. The Holy See considered the eastern Armenian Church heretical and strived to subordinate all Armenian Christians under the Vatican and pursued its own diplomacy, which served the Catholic Church’s own goals, the chief one of which was the re-Christianisation of the Mediterranean in a Roman-Catholic way.

\textsuperscript{15} The \textit{Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture}, Jerrilynn Dodds, Maria Rosa Menocal, Abigail Krasner Balbale, Yale University Press ROK, 2008.

\textsuperscript{16} Mansel 1997, 127; Atsız 1977.
The Patriarch of Constantinople and *Catholicos*, the head of the Church residing in Ejmiatsin, had a different view as to what could be *ritus armeni*, with both trying to win over the Pope for their cause.\footnote{Schütz 1971.}

Armenians who spread within the whole of Europe, with certain exceptions, notably in Constantinople, Nicomedia (Izmit) and Smyrna (Izmir), were going to lose their native language. In large towns it was easier than in the province to build up cultural life. Parallel to literature in Armenian, the Armenians created a literature known as Armeno-Turkish. The different kinds of texts were composed in Turkish, but were written in the Armenian alphabet.\footnote{See bibliography according to Armeno-Turkish (H. Berberian) and also Armeno-Kiptchak literature (J. Deny and E. Tryjarski) in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* 1964; Sanjian and Tietze 1981, 9; Tryjarski 1989.} “It is estimated that during 1600-1840, there were more than four hundred Armenian minstrels; most of them composed their lyrics both in Armenian and Turkish, and some only in Turkish.”\footnote{Sanjian and Tietze 1981, 10.}

The majority of Armenians who preserved their Armenian also knew Turkish well. One of the key individuals was Ereyma Chelebi Kömürjyan, author of *The Jewish Bride*, an Armeno-Turkish Poem, and of the history of Istanbul, *Istanbul Tarihi*, among many other books. There was room within the Ottoman culture for the Armenian contribution including creators of documents of the Turkish language itself – literary texts of such writers and translators as Hovsep Vartan Paşa\footnote{About Hovsep Vartan Paşa (H. Vartanian) and his book and the bibliography connected to the subject, see Scharlipp 2005, 1-8: “Vartan Paşa (R. Vartanian) was the author of the first Turkish novel. [...] A bibliography of Turkish books [...] in Armenian letters lists 1167 titles. [...] These books were printed in the “nearly fifty different towns, in more then two hundred printing houses.”} and Hovhannes Balıkçyan, dictionaries and grammars written by Giovanni/Yovhannès Molino, Don Giovanni Agop, B. Kerestedjian, Agop Dilâçar and Diran Kélékian. There were many others,\footnote{Krikorian 1978. *Armenians in the service of The Ottoman Empire 1860-1908*.} among them the eminent personage of Mouradgea d'Ohsson, a Swedish dragoman and diplomat, who published a monumental work about the Ottoman Empire’s history, *Tableau Général de l’Empire Ottoman*. 

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17 Schütz 1971.  
18 See bibliography according to Armeno-Turkish (H. Berberian) and also Armeno-Kiptchak literature (J. Deny and E. Tryjarski) in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* 1964; Sanjian and Tietze 1981, 9; Tryjarski 1989.  
19 Sanjian and Tietze 1981, 10.  
20 About Hovsep Vartan Paşa (H. Vartanian) and his book and the bibliography connected to the subject, see Scharlipp 2005, 1-8: “Vartan Paşa (R. Vartanian) was the author of the first Turkish novel. [...] A bibliography of Turkish books [...] in Armenian letters lists 1167 titles. [...] These books were printed in the “nearly fifty different towns, in more then two hundred printing houses.”  
21 Krikorian 1978. *Armenians in the service of The Ottoman Empire 1860-1908*. 
Venice was in contact with the Ottomans from the very beginning, employing professional dragomans-translators and gathering from 15th to 18th century a huge quantity of documents. Giovanni Molino was one of them, with an Italian first name and surname, the dragoman and author of the Italian-Turkish Dictionary published in Rome. Before I published, nine years ago, the material about his background, nobody had imagined that Giovanni Molino was not an Italian.

Dictionaries tell stories of many kinds…

Let’s have a look at what stories it tells

**DITTONARIO Della Lingua ITALIANA, TVRCHESCA**

The format of the dictionary is 8°.

On the first page of the dictionary there is the title, the surname and professional position of the author,

**Raccolto DA GIOVANNI MOLINO INTERPRETE**

and the information about the Turkish words index and a short Turkish grammar:

*Con l' Indice delli vocabuli Turchesi, e breui Rudimenti di detta Lingua*

An exposed place is taken up by the dedication for His Eminence and Most Reverend Sir Cardinal Antonio Barberino of the Holy Roman Church, treasurer of the papal Court:

**DEDICATO All'Eminentissimo, e Reuerendissimo**

**SIGNOR CARD. ANTONIO BARBERINO DELLA S. R. C. CAMER-LENGO**

The place of edition is given at the bottom of the page:

**IN ROMA**

Printing house:

**Apresso Antonio Maria Gioiosi**

The year of print:

**MDCXLI**

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23 Święcicka 2000.
The licence for printing:

*Con licenza de' Superiori*

The names of the censors of the See of Rome are given on the next page under the formula:


Page two, in double Garamond, contains a plea to Cardinal Barberino to patronise the edition of the work and Molino’s motivation for the necessity for its publication, as some kind of tribute to the Catholic Church, when he designates the Turkish language as *satiriche*, one of this mocking languages which make fun of those who uses them.

Page three, four and a half of the next page, in Garamond, are directed to the Gentle Readers – *ALLI BENIGNI LETTORI* and contain a more or less detailed description of the range of the use of the Turkish language indicating its Biblical origin – the Tower of Babel, and a besides the required thanks and acknowledgements, a convincing explanation as to why he wrote the dictionary.

The dictionary has 247 pages. The entries are arranged in numbered columns – two columns on each page, which make 494 altogether. The lexical entries, words and idioms, are indexed according to alphabetical order. Each column contains 28-33 entries with decimal numbering of the lines in the column. This makes for about 15,000 Italian entries and many more Turkish equivalents. The author has marked some of the Arabic, Persian and Greek loanwords. Not always correctly and not all of them.

The Italian renderings have various phonetic representations, usually literary Italian-Tuscan forms are given, but dialectical forms, probably of Venetian origin, also occur. Molino adopted the Latin graphic system and Italian orthography to represent the phonetic

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\(^{25}\) S. R. C. - Santa Romana Chiesa [The Holy Roman Church], Imprimatur, si videbitur [allowed to publish, if accepted], P.- Padre [Father], Mag.-Magister [Master], Palatij Apostolici [Vatican the Holy See], Episc.-Episcopo [Bishop]; Io.- I, the undersigned; Cam. – Camerale [head manager], Vicesg.- Vice segretario [Vice secretary]; Socius [assistant/attendant].
system of Turkish, to record the pronunciation. Ending the introduction, Molino gives the orthographic rules, stated by him for the notation of Turkish sounds. The index of Turkish words, INDICE DEL DITTIONARIO, constitutes the second part of the dictionary. It comprises forms, which in an interesting way differ from the corpus’ words. After the index, he enumerated 33 languages used within the borders and all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire – LINGVAGGI CHE SI PARLANO per tutto il dominio Ottomano. Finally a short outline of Turkish grammar, a grammatical sketch was appended to the dictionary, BREVI RVDIMENTI DEL PARLAR TVRCHESCO which according to the author should help one to learn Turkish, or in other words give every potential user access to grammatical description.26 On the last page Molino inserted his errata: Errori - Correttioni.

There is no information on how many copies were printed, but on the continent, 400-500 copies of an ordinary book were a fair average.27 A number of respectable libraries in the world are in possession of this dictionary; it seems that several copies of Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca have been preserved. In the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow I became acquainted with a copy which, judging from the provenance notes, was in the possession of ‘Georgius Francus de Frankenau, Hafniae 1700, later on - very likely to Daniel Gantsmann and before the Jagiellonian Library purchased it, and according to the seal on the original, to the eminent orientalist Tadeusz Kowalski (1889-1948). It is a pleasure to present a digital edition of the Jagiellonian Library’s Dittionario, signum 591115. While working on the present study I have used a photocopy of Giovanni Molino’s Italian Turkish Dictionary – Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana, Turchesca from Uppsala University Library, Carolina Rediviva, signum 58: 495, which belonged to the Swedish scholar and interpreter, Carl Aurivilius (1717-1786).

26 This part is extensively described by Adamović 1974.
Giovanni Molino - author of the dictionary

All we know today about Giovanni Molino’s life is based on a few sources:

- the records from Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), the three letters, written by the Venetian ambassador, bailo, describing his person in the context of the professional function he held as a dragoman for the Venetian Signoria
- the colophons to the books Molino published (figs. 2 and 3)
- a couple of references in the Soviet Armenian Encyclopaedia
- the references and information excerpted by nersessian and Kévorkian in the books devoted to the Armenian art of printing, who quotes the books of Galémk’earan, Amanuti and Zarbhanalean, containing copies of archive records and some of Giovanni’s/Yovhannês’ letters.28
- the list of Molino’s original works and translations from the Latin, French and Italian, about different subjects from geography and cosmography to precious stones and amazons, which are kept in Matenadaran.29

We have also as a source of information the introduction to his Italian-Turkish Dictionary. On the basis of glimpses from his life, we are able to attempt a reconstruction of his fate.30

From early ages, talented Armenians and other non-Muslim students were sent to universities in Europe, most often to Italy because Italian was so widespread then and was used as the language in official contacts with the powerful Ottoman Porte and the Crimean Khanate.31 The Armenian Church sent young boys to learn theology

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29 Anasjan 1959, 502-503.

30 In the present text I expand on the information contained in my article from 2000. I have approached Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide, but “despite an extensive research it has been impossible to find any document regarding Yovhannês Ankivraci (Giovanni Molino)” as archivist from Congregatio Pro Gentium Evangelizzazione informed me. Hopefully it will be possible to obtain some further information from the Archive of Mechitarists of St. Lazzaro.

31 Minervini 55, 56 with an extensive bibliography with works of Pedani, Bruni, Skilliter and others.
and the languages in which the Bible and Patristic texts had been written, such as Syriac and Latin, and to be able to translate these works into Armenian. This was a continuation of an old tradition of five-centuries standing when around the question of alphabet there had even arisen a special group of priests, the Holy Translators.\textsuperscript{32}

It is possible that Molino had been to some Italian city before 1618. His journey to Venice in 1619 is documented in “le journal de l’eglise de Sainte-Marie-l’Ègyptienne.”\textsuperscript{33} As we know from the letter of the bailo to the Senate,\textsuperscript{34} when Molino applied for the job in 1626 he was 34 years old; this means that he was born in 1592. He had previously “offered his services to the doge Priuli 1618-1623, when he was in Rome”, in other words he had been and most likely studied in Rome or another Italian city earlier than 1618. The bailo writes further on that in his youth he studied in the “Accademia di codesta città e poi in Roma nel Collegio di Neofiti” in Rome. Collegio di Neofiti (Academy of the Neophytes) was created in 1635 mostly for those who had been converted to Roman Catholicism. This was the work of Cardinal Antonio Barberino, the brother of Maffeo Barberino, later Pope UrbanVIII. Molino could have undertaken studies at the Academy of the Neophytes (Collegio di Neofiti) only from 1635 onwards i.e. as a mature man. Apparently he had attended another Academia, prior to the formal opening of the Collegio di Neofiti, or Jesuit College in Rome and it is that particular school that bailo had in mind.

Pope Urban VIII in 1626 had expanded the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith – Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, an important institution which had existed since 1572 as cardinalatial commission, with the aim of promoting the Union with the Oriental Christian Churches. The Congregation had trained missionaries in the own college, Collegio di Propaganda Fide, and printed the textbooks required to teach the Catholic faith in various, even the most exotic languages. Their printing house had type for all conceivable languages which made an impression on Björnståhl, a Swedish Oriental scholar who visited the Vatican in 1776.\textsuperscript{35} Many

\textsuperscript{32} Papazian 1987.

\textsuperscript{33} Kévorkian 1986, 35, quoting Galémk’earean 1915, 308-309.

\textsuperscript{34} ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, filza 102, 10 agosto 1626.

\textsuperscript{35} Björnståhl’s opinion, in his Brev från en resa i Europa, ed. by Callmer 1960.
grammars and Oriental dictionaries that are known to us were devised and printed in their printing house. Urban VIII partly changed the aims of the congregation’s activities; activities which were first and foremost to propagate the “right” faith amongst Protestants, Armenian and Greek ‘schizmatics’ and in isolated cases - Muslims.\textsuperscript{36}

The Eastern Armenian Church with its See in Ejmiatsin was seen in the eyes of the Rome Curia as heretical. Presumably because Molino arrived in Rome from the East, from Ankara, he was placed in the \textit{Collegio di Neofiti} for freshly converted heretics. The dedication in the Dittionario points to the fact that even then Molino could have became acquainted with Cardinal Barberino, the founder of the Collegio. When bailo, in connection with his search for work as a dragoman, writes to the Senate, he presents him as an Armenian of the Latin rite.

It is not impossible that as a kind of exam paper he could have drawn up a preliminary Italian-Turkish wordlist, which could be mentioned as the first version of his Dittionario, although for certain with an incorrect date of publication, 1607\textsuperscript{37}.

The dedication found in the dictionary bears witness to two things, that one of the reasons for the compilation of the dictionary was for the needs of the Catholic Church - for the benefit of missionaries and the missionary aim\textsuperscript{38}, and that Molino required the “shield” of Cardinal Barberino’s name in order to ensure that he was not accused of sympathising with the Turks – an enemy of Christianity – by the Catholic theologians. The Roman Catholic Church had condemned all writings about Islam in 1603, but this unintellectual attitude was changed within a couple of decades.

Molino’s studies were not the only reason for his appearance in Rome. Both divided factions of the Armenian Church canvassed for support in Rome for the publication of religious works in Armenian. Molino appears to have been involved somehow in the ecclesiastical struggle.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[36] Kowalski 1936, 2.
\item[37] If the dictionary had really been published in 1607, Molino would have been 15 and would have had to have resided in Rome about which we know nothing. See the other hypothesis in Święcicka 2000.
\item[38] As in Hamilton and Richard 2004; Kowalski 1936.
\end{footnotes}
It appears that after 1623 Molino returned to Ankara, where presumably his parents lived, his father Mourad, and his mother whose name was P’ašamelik. His father was an archdeacon, sarkawag.  

The parents’ names sound very Turkish, as many Armenians’ who lived in the Ottoman Empire. Did his parents have other, more Armenian sounding names? As many Armenians living in foreign countries, Giovanni could have translated his ancestors’ name, have changed his family name and have become Giovanni Molino. Was this new surname a translation of the family name into Italian, something that was common for Armenians? Mulino/Molino in Armenian is aghorikh/jaghatskh. In any case the surname Molino was a good name, one that could be easily associated with the aristocratic Venetian family name of Molin.

In the colophons to the books published by him, Molino explains the matter in the following way: Interpreter Yovhannēs Ankivrac’i, by Europeans called Jovanni Molino (Č’iwani Mōlinō) and Me, Yohannēs Mulina, the Armenian translator have seen and read this book in Armenian and Latin of the humble translator Yovhannēs, called Čiuanni Mōlinō.

We do not know when he became a priest, whether he was already a priest in 1618 when he was in Rome, or whether he had married in Ankara before his departure for Constantinople. Kévorkian writes about him: - le prêtre – the chaplain/priest. In the Armenian Church a married man could become a priest although this closed the route to consecration as a bishop. Bishops were consecrated from amongst hieromonks - vardapets – who had the right to teach and had to live in celibacy. Molino had a family, according to the bailo’s letter, a wife and two sons (young sons Mik’ayēl and Gabriēl) and decided to leave.

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39 sarkawag – a clerical degree in the hierarchy of the Armenian Church, archdeacon, in the Colophon of ‘Jesus the Son’ by Nersēs Shnorhali, Venice 1643. Particular thanks are due to Zekiyan Boghos for his helpful comments on the background terms.
40 Nersēs Shnorhali’s ‘Jesus the Son’ 1643.
41 Pataragatetr (Ordo Divinae Missae armenorum), Rome 1642.
43 Kevorkian 1986 uses the form Yovhannēs Ankivrac’i.
Ankara in order to find employment as a dragoman so making use of the language skills.  

Eastern Anatolia was in the 16th century and beginning of the 17th century a troubled place as a result of the Turkish-Persian wars, plagues, uprisings and roadside bandits. Many inhabitants moved to Constantinople/Istanbul or further through the Crimea to the territories in southern Poland at the time – in Lwów/Lviv and Kamieniec Podolski.

In Constantinople in 1626 he approached the Venetian bailo (ambassador) for the job of dragoman, translator, presenting himself as Giovanni Molino. The bailo despatched a letter to the Senate of the Republic describing Molino as follows:

I think at present, that a person just arrived from Ankara may be useful for this job. His name is Giovanni Molino, he is an Armenian of the Latin rite, 34-year old, fine looking.  

Further he adds:

The other ambassadors are already thinking of using him, but he prefers Venice. In fact when he was in Rome, he offered his services to the doge Priuli (1618-1623) but then/at that time we had many interpreters.

The bailo does not mention that Molino could have been a priest. But the fact, that Giovanni Molino was educated in Rome, aroused suspicions against him by his future employer, the Senate of the Venetian Republic:

On fearing he was in contact with the Jesuits when he studied in Rome, I asked the help of our merchant Agosti who had known him in Ankara […]

The letter raises another question: is it possible to trust someone who was brought to Rome, in the state which had been the Republic’s opponent for ages. Venetians feared that he would be disloyal, but upon checking presumably in their own archives and through their contacts – the Ankaran merchant Agosti, mentioned by the bailo,

44 He has no money, has a wife in Constantinople and for this reason he will accept the sum the Republic used to give to her interpreters, besides the usual gifts. The first document, the letter from bailo to the Senate of the Republic is dated August 10, 1626. (Il bailo al Senato. ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, 10 agosto 1626, filza 102).

45 I partly repeat the quoted documents published in my article in RO 2000: ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, filza 102.
Elżbieta Święcicka explains that the reason of seeking work as a dragoman was the desire to guarantee the family money to live on.

Consequently the ambassador is pleased that Molino is from Ankara:

I think he is the right man, since he is not from Pera, as all the others interpreters.

The Venetian embassy did not either want to employ an interpreter from Pera. There was a widespread opinion that they had poor qualifications and a tendency to serve various masters at the same time.46

It took four years for the Senate to accept him as a dragoman for the Venetian Signoria in the Ottoman Empire. The Senate in the letter to the bailo gave utterance to an alarm over Molino’s contacts with Rome.47

During these four years, waiting for his clearance, in 1630 Molino moved to Constantinople. He was probably working for the French embassy as a dragoman48 and with the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Zak’aria Vanec’i, who was known for his pro-Vatican sympathies.49 What the Venetian Senate apparently did not notice, was that Molino, by the Patriarch’s order stayed in letter contact with the Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith, informing the Council of Congregation about the political and religious situation in Constantinople, and persuading the Congregation to make possible the publishing of the Bible in Armenian.50 It seems to have been his

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46 See Reychman 1959, 55-97, quoting Businello 1770, Olivier 1801 and several historical Polish sources; Minervini 2006, 52, gives also different sources and quotes an appropriate proverb: Dio mi guardi dei Dragomani/lo mi guardero dei Cani (from St. Clair 1988, 87, 356).

47 ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni Constantinopoli, dated September 16, 1626. reg. 17, cc.113v-114./II, c 65.

48 Molino raised this fact in his introduction. However his name is not on the list of dragomans working for France, Liste alphabétique des dragomans de France à Istanbul du XVIe siècle à 1914 in Hitzel 1997.

49 According to Kévorkian, 1986, 35, Catalogue des <Incunables> Arméniens ou Chronique de L’Imprimerie Arménienne, Molino played “un role considerable, avec l’aide du patriarche de Constantinople, Zak’aria Vanec’i.”

50 Kévorkian 1986, 35-36. Ankiwrac’i – Molino “was one of these prelates and merchants who time after time required of the Roman authorities the creation of an Armenian printing house and an Armenian school.”
highest desire to publish the important religious works in the Armenian language, in following his vocation as a priest and his feeling of obligation as a member in the Armenian community. In the colophon to the Book of Psalms, *Salmos I Dawit*, Molino explained the reason for his desire to provide the Armenians with the books:

je voyais la pénurie de livres de notre nation arménienne et hésitais en mon esprit, me demandant quells moyens il y avait de multiplier l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testaments, car la raison de cette pénurie était que l’on pouvait à peine se procurer un livre, ou deux, ou trois, au prix de beaucoup de frais et de difficultés; n’en parlons pas, s’il en fallait beaucoup!

He stressed moreover that this publication is indispensable for teaching “children of the Church of all the Christians.”

After his clearance Molino was able to start to perform his duties as a translator for Venice in 1630, and as an interpreter-dragoman in Smyrna/Izmir (Fig. 1). Working as a dragoman for the Italian or French embassy must have appeared attractive because of the possibility to obtain a berat, a special document guaranteeing civil protection, a form of diplomatic immunity. Yet the Sublime Porte treated dragomans in accordance with the relations between states in force at a given moment. They could be favoured by fortune or meet a cruel fate of losing one’s life by strangling when Porte disliked their services. Molino succeeded in surviving seven years as a dragoman and had finished his duty by 1637, when Patriarch Zak’aria decided to send him to Rome as his representative, to exert pressure on the Roman authorities, after years of fruitless correspondence, concerning the publication of the Bible. His task was “to ask (the Pontiff) to exam, correct and publish the Armenian Bible for the sake of the needs of Armenians, who are under his rule.” He was to have taken with him Hovhannes Patriarch's books. We can assume that the

51 Colophon of *Salmos I Dawit*, See 41.
52 Berat, a letter of privilege, could be achieved within the ‘Capitulations agreements’, between some Europeans states and Ottoman Empire, containing guarantees of extraterritoriality for these states subjects and for those who worked for them. For the historical background of capitulations, see Pedani 1996; Pélissié Du Rausas 1902.
54 Patriarch Zak’aria decision was harmonized with co-Catholicos Srapion Urhayec’i in Ejmiatsin, who was an encourager of publishing activities. According
books belonging to Hovhannes Khul, the former Patriarch of Armenians in Constantinople, were the Armenian text of the Bible and Psalms to be published in Rome.

Molino spent the years 1637-41 in Rome. It is possible that during the same time his son Mik’ayel studied in Rome in the Collegio, called in the protocol, Collegio di Roma. Molino had succeeded in persuading Curia Romana to establish a special committee, consisting of two missionaries, Clément Galano and Paul Piromalli and his own person, which should determine the Armenian translation of the Bible, true to the official Vulgate-version. The assigned missionaries were too busy with other duties and Molino decided to learn the art of printing and to continue his efforts in Venice, taking with him the “all necessary material.”

But before the project to publish the Bible had fallen through, as he wrote – “because of many reasons,” on the 1st of March 1641 Molino published in Rome his Italian-Turkish Dictionary. In September of the same year “he left Rome for Venice in such a discreet way that the Council was convinced that Molino had died.”

Anyhow, it seems that in Rome he ordered tools and constructed the movable Armenian typefaces for Armenian characters and turned to the protocol 1634, 32.3 (March 6): there was a decision “to write to the Armenian priest Molin, (sic!) to give him permission to go to Rome and send Hovhannes Patriarch’s books” (with him), maintained Galemkearean, 1915, 305, according to Kévorkian 1986, who writes further on: “Mais, jusque-là, il faut donner l’espoir que la Bible sera imprimée à Rome, pour que Giovanni Molino fasse arrêter les pourparlers de ces Arméniens avec les hérétiques hollandaise.”

55 Protocol 1637 388.7 (November 14): “[...] it was informed that Armenian Zak’aria Patriarch has sent Hovhannes Molini an Armenian catholic priest to the Pontiff. They asked also that Mik’ayel, the son of Hovhannes Molini, an Armenian Catholic priest, will be taken to the Collegio di Roma.” op. cit. 308.

56 “…que je me mis en tête (d’apprendre) l‘art de l’imprimerie. […] Je me rendis (donc) avec espoir et désir dans la ville de Rome, où pendant quatre ans, avec beaucoup de travail, de peines et de tourments – qu’il n’est pas possible d’expliquer par écrit et que mon Créateur connaît, lui qui sait les secrets - je me procurai des poinçons et des matrices, des ornements et des lettrines florales, avec un grand labour.” Colophon of Salmos I Dawit', see Supra 41.

57 Kévorkian 1986, 35. It seems that during his waiting in Rome for imprimatur for the Armenian Bible, he prepared the bilingual, Latin-Armenian publication of Ordo divinae missae Armenorum, which was published by Propaganda Fide in 1642. According to Nersessian. 1980, 15, in the colophon to this book, Molino presents himself as “interprete di Ordine della Sacra Congregacione de Propaganda Fide.”
to the Venetians, as before him the priest Apkar from Sivas, who was “the founder of the first Armenian printing press in the Ottoman Empire.”58 As early as the middle of the thirteenth century, the Armenians had at their disposal a house in Venice.59

Why did he publish the dictionary then? What was the condition for the publishing of the Bible? It is something we simply do not know today.60 What we may suspect is that the compiling and publishing of the Italian-Turkish dictionary was part of his religious project.

In Venice he had translated and published the Salmos i Dawit’, printed by Saligat’au the Greek’s Printing House in 1642 and the following year Nersēs Shnorhali’s Jesus the Son 1643, describing himself in the colophon (Figs. 2-3) as ‘nuast ankivratsi tark’manich yohannesin or jiuanni Molino kochi’ – a poor translator Hovhannes from Ankyoura who also calls Giovanni Molino.61 In the same colophon he mentioned gratefully his friends and benefactors: Giuseppe Aromatari, also known as Yovsephos Arōmatarios, (1587-1660) and Angelos Beliselo (d’Angelos Pēlisēlos d’Athènes). Aromatari was a physician and an eminent scholar, active in Venice during the last years of his life. The relatively large number of medical terms in Molino’s dictionary can be explained by working together with doctor Aromatari.

Molino’s types and poligraphic file were used by an Italian printing-house-owner G. or S. J Bovis (Bovis was also called Giovanni


60 I have approached, up to now without result, Archivio Secreto, the Vatican Archives.

61 “This is the first publication of this book printed to a high standard with high poligraphical art” according to Kévorkian 1986, 36; Levonyan, G., 1958: Hay girk’ə ev tpagrul’yan arvesto, patmakan tesut’yun skzbi’min’ev XX daro [The Armenian book and publishing art, a historical theory from the beginning until the XX century], Yerevan: Haypethrat, 91.
Battista), during the second publication of Jesus the Son.\textsuperscript{62} Several authors emphasise the fact that thanks to him the publishing of many important Armenian books could begin in Venice.\textsuperscript{63}

As I have mentioned before, the colophons of the books printed by Giovanni/Yovhannêś are the source of information about his life. In the colophon to Jesus the Son, not only his parents – father Mourad and mother P’ašamelik’, his sons Mik’ayël and Gabriêl and the both his friends were mentioned but we also learn that his typefaces were used to print the book Yalags k’nûnt’eân srti [About the Examination of Hearth].\textsuperscript{64}

The last information about Giovanni/Yovhannêś dates from 1644. He seems to have returned to Constantinople, there trying again to establish an Armenian printing house.\textsuperscript{65}

During the period which covers the majority of Yovhannêś’ life, from 1573 to 1645, relations between Venetian Signoria and the Sublime Porte were relatively peaceful. Selim II refrained from aggression in exchange for receiving Cyprus. The Ottomans wanted to have a free hand in the conflict with Persia and also concluded a peace with the Habsburgs in 1606, after decades of battles and raids into Austro-Hungarian territory and the taking of thousands of captives. The peace treaty was renewed in 1615 and 1625. The Turks also concluded a peace treaty with Poland where, as in many other treaties, two points were agreed: the Ottomans promised to hold back the annual raids of the Tatars, Ottoman vassals, in the Polish south-eastern territories, while thousands of people were abducted, - the Poles promised the same in the similar cases of Cossack pillage on Ottoman lands.

In 1640, the doge Francesco Erizzo and Sultan Ibrahim concluded the treaty, \textit{abd-nâmê}. The doge’s name was gratefully mentioned two

\textsuperscript{62} Ishkhanyan, R. Sovjet Armenian Enc. 1980, VI, 556; Nersês Shnorbalí’s ‘Jesus the Son’ was later reprinted by Eremya Chelebi, see Kômurjian, Sanjian and Tietze 1981, 17.


\textsuperscript{64} According to Levonyan 1958, 91, the date and the place of publication of \textit{Yalags k’nûnt’eân srti} is unknown.

\textsuperscript{65} Kévorkian 1999, 173-185.
years later as benefactor in connection to Giovanni Molino’s publishing activities in Venice.\(^{66}\)

The Turks still depended on finances derived from expansion. Many of the states mentioned by Molino in his dictionary paid tribute based on agreements – annually, every three years, every five years.

Both sides were engaged at sea in piracy.\(^{67}\) Both sides published texts accusing the opposite side of expansionism and cruelty.

Anti-Turkish texts written by Christians of various denominations were numerous up until the time of the Enlightenment. They almost always referred to religion. First and foremost they had the support of the Holy See, which throughout the entire 16\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\) centuries attempted to organise a united front against the Turks. But during the Thirty Years War Europeans started to fight each other: Protestants with co-religionists such as Evangelicals, and Lutherans on many occasions acted against Catholics but sometimes against Calvinists. The battles were bloody and pillaging. In the 17\(^{th}\) century a large number of libraries changed ownership. Rivalry occurred amongst Catholic states. Venetian Signoria acted against the Habsburgs, who were from time to time allied with Rome.\(^{68}\) France was an opponent to the Habsburgs and was particular about the good relations with the Sublime Porte.

The year Molino published his *Dittionario* war broke out between the Pope, Urban VIII, and Parma, Tuscany and Venice. Before the war of Candia breaks out, he has faded out of our sight for good.\(^{69}\)

**Molino’s Introduction to his dictionary**

*Giovanni Molino*

*Your Eminence and Most Reverend Sir and Most Honourable Lord*

*On putting myself under the shadow of Your Eminence’s patronage, I want to reassure myself. In this way I will be neither ill-treated by the storms of mocking\(^{70}\) languages, nor*

\(^{66}\) Belin, 1876, 395 and Colophon of *Salmos I Dawit*, see Supra 41.

\(^{67}\) Setton 1991, 2.

\(^{68}\) For historical details on the Ottoman context see Setton 1991, with an extensive bibliography.

\(^{69}\) Turkish – Venetian war for Crete, 1645-1669.

\(^{70}\) Lingue satiriche = languages which make fun of those who uses them.
burned by the fierce beat of my sun-like presumptuousness. Thus, holding tightly Your Eminence’s safe shield, I will be protected from every sinister attack and I will produce a good harvest and I will make sweet the fruits of the scanty efforts sown by this unskilled Farmer. I wanted to render Italian words into Turkish not because I was pushed by many lords’ several demands, but because I eagerly desired to make known the shout of the devotion that I feel for You. I beg Your Eminence to forgive my impudence of this newborn that comes out of the Press. Since it will be received by Your Eminence’s most courteous hands, it will not appear indecent. And with reverence I bow before you.

Rome 1 March 1641

Of Your Eminence
Most humble and most indebted
Servant
Interpreter Gio. Molino.

To the benevolent readers.

The Turkish Nation is one of the Ancient Nations that spread throughout Asia after the confusion of languages (which took place at) the Tower of Babel. (The Turks) settled in Scythia in the countryside below Mount Imaù. For a long time they lived in tents with their herds, changing place and setting their camp where they found the best grazing land and, as the Nation grew, they chose various leaders to govern the People. Thus, many Princes appeared to rule this People, and since Power brings along envy, many differences emerged among them. Thus, many times they fought one against the other, and those who had bad luck, had to exile themselves from those lands. That is the reason why many Princes fled to other countries and went to live in different places, i.e. in Persia, Caldea, Syria, Armenia, reaching even Jerusalem. Among these very important families there were two most noble Houses that, in different moments, took possession of very large Regions and great States. The first Family was that of the Seldjucks who, for a long time, ruled Asia Minor, and the region of Iconium. They established their Royal throne in the ancient city of Iconium where, today, one can still see the remains of many Buildings, and the Fortresses of Cesarea in Cappadocia, Amasia, Sebastia, the Pontic Cumana, Ancyra in Galatia, and many other places which had been strengthened by king Alaeddin, belonging to this Family. When he ruled these places, he spread the Turkish language so much that the people of those regions forsook the Greek language and used the Turkish one.

After the end of the Sedjuk family, the Ottoman one began to reign and its first Ruler was Ottoman, or rather Osman. In less than 400 years, this family controlled the best and most habitable part of the World, stretching its Empire to the East, as far as Persia, Armenia, Media, Georgia, at the 85th longitude West; to the West as far as the borders of Croatia, Dalmatia, Hungary, Italy, at the 35th longitude; to the North, as far as the

71 Però = perciò = per hoc (Latin) = for this reason.
72 Unskilled - in the reference to the writer.
73 The land within those borders.
river Tanai (Danube), and the Muscovite ruler and Russia and Poland until the 50th latitude; and to the South as far as the Mount Atlas, the king of Engele, Tekrur and others (where gold arises which caravans bring in great quantity to the great Cairo), and the kingdom of Nubia and Abexia, as far as Suqueten, at 14th latitude. This Empire borders on the Kingdom of Szeilan and Yemen and it reaches Baghdad and Basra. Within these borders there are 55 Kingdoms and Principalities and 33 Nations and languages, but people usually speak Turkish and, for this reason, I have considered necessary to work hard and to accomplish this work, to help the persons who are curious about this language and those who are interested in these lands.

Nowadays, spoken Turkish is made up of several dialects because in whichever country the Ottoman ruler arrived, he introduced his language there and picked up the best ways of talking of the conquered countries. For this reason, Turkish is under the influence of Arabic, Persian, Greek and Tartar, and to satisfy the curious better, I pointed out the Arabic, Persian, Greek and Tartar.

What's more, since many ways of speaking Turkish exist, I've left out all the others and taken into consideration the dialect of Constantinople, which is now the best, since it is the residence of the sovereign. For this reason, my Turkish has to be perceived as the purest language now spoken throughout all Turkey, since I learned it in the Royal Court, where I served as Interpreter for His Most Christian Majesty and for the Most Serene Republic of Venice for many years, finding the true translation and the real meanings of the Italian words into the Turkish language.

But since there are many ways of pronouncing Turkish, which are different from the European languages, and since it is very difficult to use the right pronunciation without reading the Turkish letters, to satisfy the persons who want to learn it, I did the best I could to give the true pronunciation by means of Latin letters.

Since Turkish can be pronounced in six different ways, I tried my best to record some rules for a good pronunciation in the easiest possible way. The first way of the pronunciation is the aspirate sound, which comes from the throat with an impetuous breath, and to render this first sound well I used the H; when it is found together with a vowel, it is always pronounced as aspirated; for example: haget, hegier, hismet, honkiar, husun. The second way is the guttural sound, and to render it in a good way I used the CH; for example: chaste, chiar, chosc-ab, churt. The third way of pronouncing is the velar sound

74 Probably near Tekrur.
75 Kingdom and city of Senegal, in the 13th c. Tekrur became part of the Mali Empire.
76 Abyssinia.
77 Sawakin.
78 It sounds like the ancient name of Ceylon (Saylam) but it can mean Hijaz which is in front of Sawakin.
79 I.e. the king of France.
80 Gorgale is a word indicating guttural pronunciation.
and to render it better I used the letter K; for example: Kasaba, Kesc-isc, Kisc-nisc, Kusc-ak. The fourth way of pronouncing is the middle of the tongue, and to render the above-named pronunciation, I’ve used the SC together with this sign — [dash]; for example: Sc-arab, Se-ekier, Se-irden, Sc-oile, Sc-umia. The fifth way of pronouncing is to put the tongue near the teeth, and to render it I used the simple S; for example: asar, eser, isleme, osman, ustra, and this S can be pronounced also in a sweeter way, almost like a Z, and for this reason S will be followed by Z (and they will be used) together; for example: szati, szeid, szingief, szulum. The sixth way of pronouncing is between the teeth and the lips, and to pronounce it well there is no need to change any letter since the Latin letters are pronounced the same way. And what’s more, the benevolent reader is informed that the GZ and the CZ at the end of many words must be pronounced as GE and as CE; if not, the Z will be stressed; for example: Arghagź, Papugź, Kiregź, and for the cź, Sacź, Kacz, Acź, Bicź, and many others alike.

**Possible publications made use of by Molino**

According to Collison, “Part of the fascination of studying the long history of dictionaries is that each dictionary relies to a certain extent on its predecessors, so that for each dictionary compiled today it is possible to construct a kind of genealogical tree […].” The same refers to dictionaries compiled a long time ago. It is of interest to discuss to what extent Molino benefited from previously published grammars and word lists. Since the 14th century many different prints, descriptions of journeys and polemics with Muslims had been published in Europe. In many of them appeared Turkish words or they were supplied and provided with shorter or longer word lists. Possibly they were difficult to obtain or hard to read in languages that Molino did not know. One of these prints was Leunclavius’ historical study or *Tractatus de moribus conditionibus et nequitia Turcorum* of 1480, written in Gothic letters by an anonymous former prisoner-of-war from the town of Mülbach, but there were also many other works.

The Venetian legation could have had a collection of documents translated by various dragomans like, for instance, the letter from

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81 Collison, 1982, 19.
82 Stein 1979; Kellner-Heinkele, ed. 1985, 13; Stachowski, 1988 see also footnote 43, Supra.
83 Published by Foy 1901, recounted by Kowalski XXX; Tekin 1987, 367-287. See bibliography of the texts written in other alphabets than Arabic.
The Turkis\textit{h Dictionary of Giovanni Molino}

terci\textit{man başt} Ibrahim Beg, the Polish Joachim Strasz, to the Venetian dragoman, Michele Membre.\footnote{Bombaci, 1949; see also Zajączkowski 1936 about another letter written by Ibrahim Beg in the Latin characters, from Suleyman I to Zygmunt August of 1551.}

The Venetians giovani di lingua, students of language, had probably access to grammars and dictionaries which were purchased and collected by their teachers in Constantinople with the intention of ensuring the education of future translators. We know that the Ragusan dragomans’ library had a rich collection of such publications,\footnote{They are preserved not in Dubrovnik but in the Austrian Royal Library, according to Miović-Perić 2001.} and also French,\footnote{Kalus, 1997;} Venetian\footnote{An interesting list of books for the school of giovani di lingua by Lucchetta 1983.} and Polish ones.\footnote{Reychman 1950; Majda 1997, 125.}

Did he approach his task by studying what had been done before him? Did he copy his predecessors? Some of the Turkish grammars had been published before 1641 and were probably available to him during his studies in Rome. It is possible to take it for granted that he, in his lexicographical research, had both read the relevant works, had observed and studied language use, and deduced from it regular structure. And he could also have studied lexicons between other languages as the famous \textit{Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca} (1612)\footnote{Marello 1995, 171: “Actually, anyone who was interested in discussing the Italian language was obliged to measure himself with the lexicographic description of Italian contained in \textit{Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca}, since, outside of Tuscany, Italian was solely a written language, lacking a collective control by a speaking community.”; Collison 1982, 77; Tancke 1984.} or John Florio’s \textit{A Worlde of Wordes}, an Italian-English dictionary of 1598, which was “far ahead of its day in many respects.”\footnote{Landau 1984, 39.}

He could have used other word lists and works while writing his dictionary, but it is possible, as he has written in the Introduction, that he could not obtain any help while working on this task: \textit{I tried my best to record some rules for a good pronunciation in the easiest possible way.}

Molino might, in theory, have seen some of the following titles, in Rome or in Venice, as for instance:

— An anonymous Italian -Turkish parlour, Opera a chi se delatasse de saper domandar ciascheduna cosa in turchesco.
Con la geonologia di villain cosa noua, 1525-1530, with about 500 words.  

— The Florentine bailo’s secretary Filippo Argenti’s *Regola del parlare turcho*, of 1533, with grammar and vocabulary of ca 4000 words. Argenti’s manuscript describes in Latin the Constantinople language.  

— One of the thirteen different works by Bartolomeus Georgiević of 1544-48, including many editions of *De Turcarum moribus epitome* 1553: 68-73, *De Turcarum ritu et caeremoniis* 1544 or *Pro fide Christiana* 1548. In most of his writings there are Turkish-Latin word-lists.  

— Vocabulario Nuovo. Con il quale da se stessi si può benissimo imparare diversi linguaggi, cioè Italiano e Greco, Italiano e Turco, & Italiano, e Todesco, by an anonymous writer, published in Venice by 1574 and then in 1580, 1587 and 1599.  

— Guillaume Postel’s *De la republique des Turcs*: et là ou l’occasion s’offrera, des meurs et loy de tons Muhamedistes from 1560 and L’instruction appended to *Histoires orientales* of 1575 with the list of words and a grammar. Postel has added French equivalents to the Latin and has improved Georgievich’s word list, or, as is the evaluation of others, is —“heavily indebted to Georgievich.”  

— Traveller Reinhold Lubenau’s glossary of 1587, based on Filippo Argenti’s unpublished manuscript.  

— The historical work of Johannes Leunclavius of 1591 containing about 800 historical terms and proper names.  

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91 Adamović 1975.  
92 The title coined by Bombaci 1938.  
93 According to Adamović, Argenti could be considred the first Turkologist. Argenti’s vocabulary was published by Adamović 2001 and by Rocchi 2007.  
94 Heffening 1942; Aksulu 1993, 1-8; Stein 2001.  
95 Adamović 1976, 43-69.  
96 According to Hamilton and Richard 2004, see the chapter ‘The Turkish language’ in their elegant book about Du Ryer, with comprehensive bibliography of the subject; see also Drimba 1966.  
98 Supra 78.
— Padre Pietro Ferraguto’s *Grammatica Turca* of 1611.\(^99\)
— German polyglot Hieronimus Megiser’s work of 1612, *Dictionarium latino-turcicum. Institutionum linguae turcicae libri quatuor*, containing grammar and Latin-Turkish and Turkish-Latin vocabulary of ca. 1,100 entries, written with Arabic and Latin characters or his works published before 1612.\(^100\) Also Megiser seems to be indebted to Argenti.\(^101\)
— One of those curious and well educated travellers to the Holy Land, Pietro della/De la Valle’s *Viaggi*\(^102\), a work describing the Constantinopolitan language, with a grammar published in 1620, and subsequently 1650-58? De la Valle made a note that when he had written the grammar he met Enrico di Poser in Ispahan, in 1635. Poser showed him then Megiser’s grammar. He added that another (future) author of an Italian-Turkish dictionary, Maggio had asked him for Turkish lessons. De la Valle, in a similar way to Molino, used to write his surname in a number of ways.
— A lost Turkish Grammar in Latin letters by the missionary Jacobus Stephanus, which might have existed when Molino was in Italy.\(^103\)
— Du Ryer’s manuscript copy of his grammar called *Rudimenta gramatices linguae turcicae* of 1630, published again in 1633. Du Ryer was convinced that he had written the first Turkish grammar. He had been a diplomat from 1616 and knew Turkish well. The grammar was written in Latin, examples were given in Arabic script without a transliteration into Latin script. The intended thought was the writing also of a dictionary. *Dictionarium turcico-latinum* of ca. 2,500 entries exists in manuscript form *Dictionarium turcolatinum*, and probably was compiled in the early 1650s. Du Ryer might

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\(^99\) Bombaci 1940.

\(^100\) According to Tietze 1991, III: 2399-2407; Stein 1999 and Hamilton and Richard 2004 declare 2,500 entries. See also Stein 1975, 1979, 1984, 1993, 173-179. I wish to address my heartfelt thanks for her articles about the Ottoman-Turkish lexicography.


\(^102\) Rossi 1938; Stein 2006.

\(^103\) Kenessey 1974, 120-121.
consult the Arabic-Turkish dictionary of Ahteri. There are a couple of copies scripted with Ottoman characters as in de Paris’ vocabulary. Did Du Ryer acquaint himself with Megiser’s linguistic works is an open question as well as the question of if Molino came across these works. It is believed that ‘the distribution of Megiser’s grammar seems to have been limited and there is no evidence that Du Ryer knew about it.104

**Molino’s competency as a translator and future lexicographer**

From the letter of Venetian Bailo105 we learn that:

He knows the Italian language and writing very well...he has wit and speech, he is quick in understanding and answering, has good morals and speaks Turkish well – not the learned language, but that spoken by the common people.

The bailo had a wish that M. should refine his Turkish and possibly learn Ottoman, the language of ‘high culture’. In the same letter the bailo has added that:

But being intelligent and with a great desire for learning, he might refine his language…and also learn the written language.

The second document comprises the answer from the Senate to the bailo, dated September 16, 1626106 and repeats the information about Molino’s Armenian provenance, and considerations as to whether Molino is able or not to learn the cultivated Turkish language:

[…] one must also consider that he is an adult man that is to say it would be difficult for him to learn the cultivated Turkish language, formed by so

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104 Hamilton and Richard 2004, 64-65, 67 do not value the dictionary of Giovanni Molino, but in the context of Du Ryer’s grammar they consider Molino’s grammar to be “obviously inadequate.”


106 ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni Constantinopoli, reg. 17, cc. 113v-114, answer from the Senate to the bailo, dated September 16, 1626.
many languages, [all of them] refined, used by the great persons of the Porte.\textsuperscript{107}

The \textit{bailo} was of the opinion that a dragoman should not only speak perfectly but also read and write in Ottoman but was also aware of Molino’s skills which \textit{giovani della lingua}, educated by Signoria from the middle of 16\textsuperscript{th} century did not possess. Molino was exposed to the Turkish language over the course of many years and his picture of colloquial Turkish was quite complete. He was well aware of the status of the language of the capital city. As a tri-lingual scholar he was aware of the diglossia or triglossia of the Ottoman Empire, with the big differences between the literary and colloquial language.\textsuperscript{108}

Molino writes in his preface, that his choice of Constantinopolitan Turkish was deliberate:

\begin{quote}
Di piu ritrouandorsi diuersi modi di parlare in Turchesco, ho lasiato indietro le molte, e mi sono accostato al parlare Constantinopolitano, il quale al presente e il migliore, essendoui la residenza della persona Reggia, pero il mio modo di dire lo riceuino oer piu polita lingua Turchesca, che si parla per tutta la Turchia, hauendolo preso dalla propria Corte... [What’s more, since many ways of speaking Turkish exist, I’ve left out all the others and taken into consideration the dialect of Constantinople, which is now the best, since it is the residence of the sovereign. For this reason, my Turkish has to be perceived as the purest language now spoken throughout all Turkey, since I learned it in the Royal Court]...
\end{quote}

Looking at his recording of the Constantinople dialect of Turkish it seems that in his dictionary he has used his own colloquial variant of Turkish, possibly something in between the Anatolian Turkish of his childhood, the vernacular of the Constantinople streets and to some degree the language used at the Sublime Porte, although he was mainly stationed in Smyrna, not in Constantinople, (at that time in the Porta’s official documents called \textit{Konstantinyye}), he had contact with the Ottoman bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{109}

The \textit{Bailo}’s letter to the Senate gives evidence of his very good knowledge of Italian. Molino’s Italian was the Italian of Tuscany, by the sixteenth century already used as the Italian standard language. It means that two of Giovanni Molino’s vernaculars, Armenian and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Op. cit.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Charles Ferguson conceptualised this phenomena. After Zgusta 2006 151.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Minervini 2006; In Molino’s \textit{Dittionario} the three toponyms are mentioned: Costantyane, Stambol and Isdambol.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Italian influenced and inspired him to finding the phonetic equivalents of the pronunciation of sounds as he perceived them in his third language, Turkish, adopting the Italian orthography in the Latin graphic system to represent the phonetic system of Turkish. Although his Italian orthography and pronunciation differ from today’s literary forms, they still are not so distant as to create an obstacle in deciphering the entries of the dictionary. Molino rather consequently employed the rules of spelling current in his time.

Another question is how the Italian orthography has influenced Molino’s way of noting the Turkish sounds. Many Turkish phonemes are relatively close to Italian phonemes, so to find the adequate graphemes was easier for him than for authors with vernaculars possessing a more complicated orthography.\(^{110}\) Theoretical sources of errors: graphemic interference caused by the author’s familiarity with the Ottoman and Armenian writing systems, which means, for instance, “peculiarities of the Armenian writing system which obfuscate the distinction of voiced and voiceless consonants in final position”\(^{111}\) and phonic interference. “The main issue is always whether or not the transcriber’s phonetic inventory is compatible with that of the language being transcribed to a degree that acoustic perception is not compromised.”\(^{112}\)

Molino explains in his preface that as a versed translator who […] he had ambition to find the most adequate interpretation of the Turkish sounds.

He stated the orthography for the notation of Turkish sounds, reduced the adjustment of the orthographic system and the phonetic transcription of Turkish words to six rules, to make it easier for the readers to learn the complicated Turkish pronunciation.

1. Marking of the aspirated sound by \(h\)-

Adunque il primo modo di pronuntiare vi è l’ aspiratiua, la quale viene dalla gola accompagnato, con vehementia di halito, e per proferire bene, questo primo modo, mi sono seruito del \(h\), con la quale ritrouandorsi

\(^{110}\) Gilson, 1987.

\(^{111}\) op.cit. 1987, 49.

\(^{112}\) Gilson’s commentary, based on Jaspersens’ observations, 1987, 21.
accompagnato qualfiuoglia vocale sempre si proferirà aspiratamente, verbi gratia, haget, hegier, hismet, honkiar, husuri.\textsuperscript{113}

2. Marking of the guttural velar fricative /h/ by \textit{ch} -

Il secondo modo è la guturale, il quale per pronunziare bene mi sono seruito del ch, verbi gratia, chaste, chiar, chier, chosc-ab, churt.

3. Marking of the velar consonant /k/ by \textit{k} -

“Il terzo modo di pronunziare è la gorgale per bene esplicare, mi sono seruito della lettera \textit{K}, verbi gratia, Kasaba, Kesc-isc, Kisc-nisc, Kusc-ak.

4. Marking of the palato-alveolar fricative /\textit{š}, \textit{š}/ by \textit{sc} -

Il quarto modo di pronunziare consiste nel mezo della lingua, e per aggiustare detta pronuntia, mi sono seruito del \textit{sc}, con il presente segno verbi gratia, sc-arab, sc-ekier, sc-irden, sc-oile. sc-umiz.

5. Marking of the dental-alveolar sounds /s/ and /z/ by a ‘simple’ \textit{s} or \textit{∫} and \textit{ş} or \textit{∫} -

quinto modo di pronunziare consiste nella propria lingua accostato alli denti. È per aggiustare detta pronuntia, mi sono seruito del \textit{∫} semplice, verbi gratia, a∫ar,er, isleme, o∫man, u∫tra, il qual \textit{∫}, si pronuntia anco con più dolcezza, quasi come z, però farà accompagnato\textit{∫}, z, insieme verbi gratia, izati, izeid, izingief, izulum.


Il sesto modo di pronunziare è intra li denti, e le labra, per proferire bene detta pronuntia, non vi occorre alternazione di lettere, poiche con le lettere Latine si pronuntia compitamente. Di più auertisca il benigno Lettore, che il \textit{gz}, il \textit{cz}, nel fine di molte parole si deue pronunziare per ge, e per ce, mentre saranno asswgnati con l’accento sopra, verbi gratia, Arghaz, Papugz, Kiregz, il \textit{cz}, Sacz, Kacz, acz, Bicz, e molti altri simili.

It would be interesting to read more of Molino’s orthographic explanations but he does not clarify his way to render the other sounds/phonemes. We could suppose that he was able to catch /\textit{ı}/, /\textit{ö}/ or /\textit{ü}/ but did not try to render them. Generally one could expect a more deliberate choice of graphemes, but probably he did not know any other language than Turkish and Armenian which had the back vowel /ı, \textit{i}/, and its graphic representation. If he had known a way to render this sound he could have ordered or cut himself the

\textsuperscript{113} For the translation to English, see Molino’s Introduction to his dictionary.
type-faces for Turkish /y/ or /ö/. It is also possible that his work with the dictionary was performed in a hurry, because at the same time he was preparing for publication of two other works which he, in all probability, evaluated as more important.

His younger colleague probably from the same Jesuit College\(^{114}\) in Rome, Franciscus à Mesgnien Meninski in his works has rendered both the velar vowel /ï/ by the Polish grapheme ‘\(y\)’ and used also special graphems for \(ö\), and \(ü\).

\[
\text{Litera y UTOR ad exprimendam vocalem, ante & post consonantes duras supra designatas, estque medio quodam sono efferendum inter e & i quod facile fiet, si volens proferre i non applices linguam dentibus inferioribus, sed eam potius retrahas, & fine compressione oris proferas, & paulò quidem vehementiorem emittendo spiritum, quam Poloni faciant in prolacione sui y proximè ad hoc Turcicum accendentis.}\(^{115}\)
\]

In Meninski’s NOTAE, written as both \textit{laudatio} to Podesta and commentaries to Podesta’s \textit{ASSERTIONES},\(^ {116}\) there are a great deal of orthographic examples, with the unquestionable existence of \(ö\), \(ü\), and \(ï\) written by the Polish grapheme \(y\),

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ghiöl Hisari (p. 149) Karaghiöz Beg, ghiöz vel göz (p.168)
  \item Iüzün Kará olsun (p.168) Dönüp (p. 156), Kief saghyrnun, Aaly Pascha (N 2).\(^ {117}\)
\end{itemize}

The problem will not to be explored here.

\(^{114}\) Both Molino and Mesgnien were educated in Rome, see Bailo’s rapport August 10, 1626; and Baranowski, B. \textit{Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce}, Łódź 1950, 113.

\(^{115}\) \textit{Institutiones Linguae turcicae} MDCCCLVI; Bergsträsser (242) makes the comparison to the Russian \(ы\).

\(^{116}\) Meninski explained in the preface to NOTAE that the notes were written by a friend, interpreter of oriental languages, who keeps his own name secret, only having the wish to publish these notes (commentaries). See bibliographical description.

\(^{117}\) Deny 1955, 59: ‘À Istanbul également, on trouve, surtout dans la prononciacion des suffixes, une voyelle mixte i (ï), intermédiaire entre l’ \(i\) antérieur et l’ \(ï\) postérieur, qui s’écrit comme l’\(i\) antérieur […]; Membre employed ‘e’.
**Transcription system**

The Turkish vowels rendered by Molino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>atesc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ā/</td>
<td>a, aa, ia</td>
<td>kitab, baasi, nighiar ≠nigār,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>edep/edeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ē/</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ei≠iyi, egeti≠iğreti, endurmek, indike Index: indiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ı/</td>
<td>o, i, y</td>
<td>srcia, ciblak, aciklighylhe, aghrylmak, tamghry (Index tanghrî)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ighne, ghemije, ghiendi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/o/</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>orugz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ö/</td>
<td>o, io118, oe</td>
<td>ghiolghesinde, ghioghergin, kior, ghıormek, dord, os, oelmisc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>u, v119</td>
<td>kadun, vnnap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ū/</td>
<td></td>
<td>vsul,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ü/</td>
<td>iu120</td>
<td>kıupe ≠küpe, vsghiudar, ghiul, dusgliuni, seughiuli cekiuzziuk (‘little hammer’), diusemek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Turkish consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>opusc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>bairak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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118 If i does not have any other function.
119 v is written as u in the initial position. Probably it was difficult to print u in this position. In the final position v is rendered by u.
120 Probably rendered by iu.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>phoneme</th>
<th>examples</th>
<th>notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>temis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>dai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>c, ck, k</td>
<td>lockma, nocra, iacut, kitap, achsine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k'/</td>
<td>ki</td>
<td>kiesmek, sirkie, askierilhe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/q/</td>
<td>q, k</td>
<td>scascqun, baluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>g, gh,</td>
<td>iorgun, iorghun, gabul, acikligh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g'/</td>
<td>ghi</td>
<td>ghieik, ghielursin, ghietmek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>g, gh, ə</td>
<td>agri, iagma, deghirmi, aghagz, oghlan, deghil, oulak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>habesc, hala,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kh/</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>chamlik, chudurmak, nochut, achrinde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>Aguestos, sesde, musluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>s, sz, z, zs¹²¹</td>
<td>Coniza sehir, dus, sahmeti, sziade, iasmak, zsaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>cift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>u¹²²</td>
<td>eu, delu, haiuan, euelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/š/</td>
<td>sc-, ss</td>
<td>sc-isc, assagha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/č/</td>
<td>c, ci, cc, ce, cž</td>
<td>acuk, aciuk, ciblak, ciok, accimasden, iceri, sacž¹²³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/c, j/</td>
<td>gi, gz, gź</td>
<td>agagz, borgz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹²¹ According to Adamović 1974, it is difficult to detect a clear tendency.
¹²² In the intervocalic position and to some degree in the final position not or weakly pronounced.
¹²³ Z is written actually with the grave accent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/m/</th>
<th>m</th>
<th>meichane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>nighiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/œ/</td>
<td>n, ng, ngh, g, ø</td>
<td>ianlisc, angmak, dongmak, song≠son, bangha, denghisi/deisi, ogha, oghi, sogra, ieilik≠yenilik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>aialet, latif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>dord,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>s/f (graphem f as variant of s)</td>
<td>Aguestos, sesde, musluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/y/</td>
<td>i, j, y</td>
<td>vilaiati, dai≠dayı, minasibetijlhe, seir, zyadhe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>d, s, x, sz, z, zs</td>
<td>kada, Iex sehir (Yezd), Coniza sehir, dus, sahmeli, sziade, iasmak, zsaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/œ/</td>
<td>double vowel, h, Ø</td>
<td>baasi&lt;ba’zi, amma&lt;âmâ, sahet&lt; ساعة ≠saat, tain&lt;ta’yin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graphemes used by Molino**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>abanos, alma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aa</td>
<td>/œ/ ayn, length, accent baasi ≠ bâzi, aai</td>
<td>baasi ≠ bâzi, aai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ae</td>
<td>/ā/</td>
<td>faesce ≠f āhiše</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>baluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>/ç, ĕ/</td>
<td>acuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>curuna, Cpris, nocta, docunmak, conuscmak, capitan capanmisc, muctasergie (sporadic occurrences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci</td>
<td>/ ç, ĕ /, /çī, ěi/ aciuk, aurat saci</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>k, h</td>
<td>pronunciation</td>
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<td>ck</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>lockma</td>
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<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>lokma</td>
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<tr>
<td>cz</td>
<td>/ç, č/</td>
<td>sacz (sometimes with a grave accent marker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>dusen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>egri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>/ê/ or /ey/, accent?</td>
<td>teeze, eeller arasina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>/ŋ/</td>
<td>ir ê gh, argéto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>faida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>/ď/</td>
<td>saghanak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gg</td>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>aggha (a double consonant to mark very accurate pronunciation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gh</td>
<td>/ɡ/, /g/</td>
<td>ughur, leghien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghi</td>
<td>/g'/</td>
<td>leghien, ghieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gi</td>
<td>/c, ĵ/</td>
<td>gian, gieus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gz</td>
<td>/c/ţi/</td>
<td>tegzribe(with a grave accent marker), cekiuğz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>/Ø/, /h/</td>
<td>evhe, evimhe, habesc sahet (18/25) ≠ saat iptidahden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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124 Heffening 1942, 2, positively evaluated Molino’s system to render the sounds of Turkish: “Es folgen einige überraschend gute Bemerkungen über die Aussprache der türkischen haute und der verwandten Umschrift, besonders über die Buchstabenverbindungen: ch=ranhes h, sc=š, sz=z, gz=ğ, ğ=Argenti had employed another system.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Vowel Plus 'Ayn</th>
<th>Sahet (18/25) ≠ Saat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Vowel (Plus)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or 'Hamze</td>
<td>Iptidakhsen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (iy/iyi/yı)</td>
<td>Duimak, soilemek, aidin, iusugh, kolailik il, dai, tain, itimek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II (iıy/iıy)</td>
<td>(Khiibin) kiimak, terbielhenmisc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J (y)</td>
<td>Minasibetije, efrikjali, iktjjarlanmak, Index: ikdijarlanmak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ (i/i+accent?, /i/ or /ı/?/ıy/ /ıyn/</td>
<td>Ghemij, lakirdij, saij, sijr (sinir)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (k)</td>
<td>Karpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki (k’)</td>
<td>Kiupe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM (‘ajn, length)</td>
<td>Amma etm. (7/7) - a’ma, âmâ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (n)</td>
<td>Nimet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ng (ŋ)</td>
<td>Songra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngh (ŋ)</td>
<td>Bangha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nn (n)</td>
<td>Unnutmak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q (q)</td>
<td>Scascaqun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S (s/, /z/)</td>
<td>Saimak, hasil, hasir, (Southern Italy used to pronounce s unvoiced, Northern Italy – voiced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sc (ş, ş)</td>
<td>Karghasc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ss (ş, ş¿)</td>
<td>Assagha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sz (s/, /ş, ş/, /z/)</td>
<td>Szamanlik, szaimak, deurisz, szaman, szehir (often with a grave accent marker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s/f</td>
<td>/s/, /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egh</td>
<td>/ň/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>õgh</td>
<td>/ň/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>/k/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>/u/, /long ū/ v/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/v/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ú</td>
<td>/v/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>/u/ /v/</td>
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<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>/ts/?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zi</td>
<td>/ ç, č /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zs</td>
<td>/z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>/z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>/y/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/iy/, /ɪ/, /ıy/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>indicates a reduction of the vowel e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>/ɪ/, /h/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>/n/, /m/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Molino’s lemmatization, system of presentation and ordering the senses

Let’s have a look at one of the first pages of his dictionary, at some elements of his lemmatization. The Italian headword, which is to be translated into Turkish, always starts a new line and is demarcated from the Turkish equivalent or equivalents by a sign which looks like half of a pair of square brackets:

Acetosa, cioé erba] Tere

The Italian headword is completed by a further explanation introduced by: *cioé* – ‘it means’, as ‘sorrel, which means herb.’

The capital initial is almost always used to distinguish the equivalent Turkish headwords:


Molino’s principle of arrangement of the Italian head-entries is both alphabetical and etymological, but he is able to disarray the alphabetical order when he starts with the stem or other basic term, and then recursively develops the main conception with intention to conform the semantic context. He begins with the headword’s entry, lemma, applying a number of different rules to the same lexical entry:

Cauallo] At
Caualla] Ksrak
Caualletto, cioé Polledro] Tai.
Polledrotto] Taigigas.
Cauallo castrato] Ighdisc at.
Cauallo, che porta le bagaglie] Seis chane.
Cauallo, stallone] Aighir, at.
Cauallo, portante] Iorgha, at.
Cauallo spautentoso] Vrkiar at. Korkak at.
Cauallo saluatico] Iaban ati.
Cauallo sfrenato] Iaus at.
Cauallo di buona razza] Kiohalian at.
Molino used to multiplicate the meanings associated with a particular item. Finally his method produced the semantic sets of words/morphemes or kinship terms. The reversal of the Dittionario offers a similar set for the Turkish equivalents, showing word-formation relations, when one entry which is the output can be the input to another, thanks to the recursiveness applied to the Italian headwords:

- Beraber, beraberlik
- Iaghmur, iaghmurluk
- Iad, iadluk
- Iol, iola, ioldasc, ioldasc-lenmisc, ioldasc-ler, ioldasc-sus, iolden, iolgi, Ioli, iolina, ioline, iolinmisc, iollamak, iollari, ioline

Extra examples are often added, word formation is for Molino an important guiding rule, Molino listed for instance all the occurrences of compound verbs with etmek. He seems to pay attention to a variety of derivative senses, not only forms, which is one of the aspects of the etymological principle.125

He most often used the comma to separate the compound verbs:

- Eda, etmek;
- Achr, etmek or Achr etmek - with or without the comma

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125 We can discern some similarities in the approach to the method applied by Thomas Blount in his work *Glossographia*, 1656, description by Hayashi, 1978; Using the expression of Leech 1978, 157, we find “a natural logic reconstruction of semantic representation” of the Turkish language.
The headwords are sometimes followed by equivalents in Arabic, Persian. About 30% of all Molino’s headwords are themselves of foreign origin.

**New senses**

Moreover Molino’s list contains a number of items constructed by him, because lexical rules make the lexicon so called open-ended. He sometimes derives new senses for established words:

- Iaklasmalik ‘approaching’ (also in the sense of sexual approaching)
- Unudigi<unutmak, Hisab edigi, Tangriluk<Tangri
- He also constructed something like Imperativ Futuri\(^{126}\).
- Okui alum ‘leggiamo noi’

**Synonymy**

Many entries are supplemented with synonyms, related lexemes:

- Arte] szenaiat. Pesce
- Asino] Esek. Char. Persiano
- The synonyms represent different grammatical forms:
  - Asinello] Supa. Esc-ekgiuk (non-diminutive and diminutive in juxtaposition)
  - Sometimes the Turkish equivalents do not adequately correspond to the Italian headword:
    - Animo, coraggio] Iurak, Gian
    - Animo corresponds well to Gian, but not to Iurek
    - Animo in meaning ‘corragio’- should be rather rendered by yüreklik
    - The absence of a correct equivalent can be explained by cultural differences. This category comprises not only the so-called culture – bound words, but also differences in the pragmatic and ethnography of speaking:\(^{127}\)
      - Cattolico] Islam
    - Very seldom idioms or clause of comparison are added:

\(^{126}\) Described by Adamović in “Giovanni Molino und seine Türkische Grammatik,” 1974.

\(^{127}\) Zgusta 2006, 92.
A kind of meaning transfer

Molino uses common words in a different sense:

Astuto, malitioso (malicious) [elucidation] Fitne; Kiam fikirli; Ciok billigi

Cedro, albero: Kaun aghagi

Mascis: Caun agac

Meninski: Melon but also cedre, citrone

Redhouse: kavun agaci ‘papaya tree’

Today cedro means both citron tree and cedar tree.

Homographs

It happens, but it is exceptional, that not all homonymous words are written in the same orthography:

bis ‘an awl’ and bis (ghiendimis) ‘we’

tarik ‘road, manner’ and tarik ‘history’

olmisc < ölmek ‘to die’ (collaterally with oelmisc) and

olmisc<olmak ‘to be’

agh ‘fronte’ [forehead= alın], pronounced aŋ and agh ‘rete’ [net=ağ] 128 pronounced as ag

It is on this occasion when he was unable to render the adequate sounds, and found the solution with the help of the Arabic alphabet, where the letter Kiaf (kef) can be transcribed as: k, g, n, ğ.

Another example is aghagiak (= anacak< anmak ‘to remember’) where /ŋ/ is rendered by gh.

The words of foreign origin, as originally Arabic ‘adäd (‘numero’ [number]) were written by Molino as it was certainly pronounced – adet. There are two occurrences of adet forms and six of aded. One can assume that Molino followed the original orthography of this word.

128 Mascis: ‘al’ i ‘agh’
**Homonyms**

The homonym seems to be written in the same way, although Molino made efforts to mark different senses by altering the spelling:

- ada ‘isola’ [island]
- ada adu ‘mortal enemy’ - âda plural form of adu(v) ‘enemy’
- ai/aai/aij ‘mese’ [month]
- aij ‘orso’ [bear]
- agi olmak ‘amaregiare diuenire amaro’ [to make bitter]
- agz olmak ‘affamare hauer fame’ [to starve]

**Corpus and index**

The entries in the main corpus (*Dittionario*) and in the index (*Indice del Dittionario*) sometimes differ from each other in interesting ways.

Sometimes Molino presents two stages of morphophonetic development presenting the different forms in the corpus and in the index, quite often the older forms in the Index:

- Corpus: ghios aciklighi  Index: ghios aciuklighi
- Corpus: iaklascmalik  Index: iaklasemaluk

Sometimes the both variants are displayed both in the corpus and in the index: Kuuetlu/Kuuetli

Occasionally the entries alter orthographically:

- Corpus: sogmek  Index: soghmek

**Occurrence of morphophonemic variants**

It seems that Molino consciously presented the variants of the phonetic and morphologic forms. Having arrived from Ankara he could easily have been sensitive to the ‘otherness of the language of the capital’. His own linguistic sense defined ‘linguistic norms’ but he diligently noted down the variants which appeared during the 17th century in free variation.

- barmak/parmak
- gholai/kolailik
- ghiemik/kiemughi
Existence of the voiced /ğ/ written as gh indicates the Anatolian provenience of the pronunciation.

In many cases Molino repeats the same Turkish equivalent under different spellings, probably with purpose, to show that there were variants of the same word:

rengh/irengh - with an epenthetic vowel
fikir/fikr; kisz/ks/ksz - with vowel reduction
ordegh and ordek (also the same form in his Index)
inad/inat, naib/naip – displaying media consonants
eksi̱klık/eksi̱klük, kusc-lar/kusler
anakder/anakdargi
kilisa/kilise
Arabistan/Arebistan
ghioghiergin/ghioghiargin
iaruk/iarik
para/pare
iardim/iardum

Errors

Molino added the Errori - Correttioni but his corrections are not comprehensive. It contains only 65 entries and is not free from one or two misprints. I have taken into consideration his Errori - Correttioni, marking such occurrences by abbreviation Corr. I also have turned a couple wrongly written words, as in: Corpus: aemiyetgi, into the Index form: gemyetgi; intifak into ittifak, but I did not interfere when the Corpus form and the Index form of the Turkish entry were essentially the same:

Corpus: irsale, Index: irsalhe instead of risale.

He seldom had forgotten to part the two different catchwords:
Imaginarsi] Fikir etmek dusc-unmek

The meanings of mensur could have confused him:
Index form is mescur, does Molino mean mansur or meşbür?
Errors were inevitable, but proportionally to the input of the work undertaken during the compilation of this dictionary, they were few:

The words are rendered in unusual way:

cafas by ç, which he otherwise has not used to indicate k

Sometimes ‘h’ is missing:

gios/ ghios giommek/ghiommek, aghaz/agaz

In other instances we can discern some orthographic inconsequences or mistakes:

acimas komak/aczmas koigi, koci/kocz

ioruisc written as ior+visc (133/14- corrected by me)

(i)asc - missing letter (corrected by me)

ksghenge (150/1) instead of isghenge (149/32)

Aroab instead of Arabo (169/15)

Molino was probably in a hurry or he simply could not check the erroneous pagination: page 131 follows page 192 page 246 instead of 446, still maintaining the correct alphabetic order.

He made certain mistakes in the Italian:

ingnobile instead of ignobile

But I will not undertake an analysis of these. What else may be said about his Italian I will leave to the experts.

The way Molino’s material is registered and standardization of Molino’s way of spelling

My reversal of Molino’s Italian-Turkish material is not the first dictionary reversal of a bilingual dictionary which regards the Turkish

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129 Collison 1982, 17.

130 It was pointed up by Jenisch in his edition of Francici a Mesgnien Meninski Lexicon MDCCI XXX 1780, I:CLV

Neque tamen opus istud clodii verba magnopere commendant, qui grammaticam hanc deformem esse annotat ac mutillum factum, characteribus Turcicis destitutum ac foedis erroribus, aut sphalmatibus typographicic scatentem.
language. P. F. Viguier’s French-Turkish dictionary, which is an integral part of his Éléments de la langue turque has been reversed to Turkish-French and has been published by Stachowski, without any help on the part of a computer program.\textsuperscript{131}

The electronic version of Molino’s Dittionario Della Lingua Italiana Turchesca is identical with the original kept in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow. The scanned electronic copy as well as my own reversal of the dictionary are accessible as two separate annexes to this issue of Phoenix in domo Foscari.

I have moved the corpus of the 83 823 Italian and Turkish words into a computer, using a special program designed for this material, created in 1983. There are special standard requirements according to input information, to make the material intelligible to the computer. I tried to be as faithful as possible to Molino’s recording – his orthography and his way of thinking.

All the Italian headwords have one or more Turkish equivalents. The Italian entries and expressions were separated from the Turkish equivalents by an asterisk. The Turkish entries and expressions, both the stem-forms and the citation-form of the lexems,\textsuperscript{132} were separated in proper order by a semicolon:

\begin{quote}
*Forestiere* Misafir; *Accettare, cioé approvare* Kabul etmek; Sahi etmek;

*Forestaria* Misafir ieri; *Accettare per amico*Dostlughe Kabul etmek;
\end{quote}

All Italian entries within asterisks as well as Turkish entries and expressions after an asterisk are written with a capital letter, likewise geographical designations. The type-setter’s deviations from this principle are corrected, as with all the entries beginning with m, between columns 259-265 in Molino’s Italian Turkish dictionary.

Molino’s synonymous explanations are transferred into the main entry:

\begin{quote}
62/18 Assaffinare] Soimak. Che vol dire spogliare >

*Assassinare, che vol dire spogliare*Soimak;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131} Stachowski, 2002.

\textsuperscript{132} The terms stem-form and citation-form were used by Lyons in Semantics, 1986:2, 513.
In a number of cases it has been necessary to repeat this part of the synonymous expression which is missing, to make it understandable for the computer program, reversing the dictionary:


419/17 Spegazzare] Kiaghidi murekeblemek. Karalamak>*Spegazzare* Kiaghidi murekeblemek; /Kiaghidi/ karalamak;

If there is another phonetic form in the Index, it may have the annotation: **Index**.

I have added the forgotten words using the Index. The missing part is parenthesized:


Sometimes it is difficult to follow Molino’s way of thinking:

Homo nouo] Sograden peydah. Iei adem. Sograden peydah /adem/?

I have left out the author’s redundant explanations like ouero – ‘that is to say’

10/12 Acconcia botte] Fieigi. Ouero Fici iapan >*Acconcia botte*Fieigi; Fici iapan;

We can see a repetition of the same Turkish equivalent under different spellings.

Corpus: Sa Kilesa ada, Sakilesa , Index: Szakilesa’Zante isola’

In many cases the orthography seems to reveal Molino’s way of thinking:

Fakir.lik

Bir olmisc and birolmisclik

Kuuet lu/Kuuet Lu

Dosc-emeler/seni ilhe/senijhe

There are particular standard requirements according to input information, to make the material logical to the computer in the process of reversing from Italian- Turkish to Turkish-Italian. I had to solve some of the problems by standardising the orthography of a number of suffixes, numerals and postpositions, which are written in different ways. The suffixes such as –dir, –lu are generally written by
Molino independently, but postpositions together with the preceding substantive as well as higher numerals and pronominal.

Molino writes most often compound numerals together. I have preserved such forms as they possess a greater value written together than separately: 133

ombirinci next to on bir

For Molino the postpositions and pronominals seem to be problematic. I split up/set apart these both categories:

ademiciun > adem iciun, ademierine komamak > adem ierine, ademkibi > adem kibi
bisbisum > bis bisum, birisinedek > birisine dek

Some of the casus suffixes and postpositions are written together with the foregoing substantive, with the exception of the auxiliary – dur:

Dur
Aian dur
Dahi dur

Although not quite consequently:
sahidur, kaczdur, gherekdur, ghereklidur, ildur, eidur, etc.

He also writes -lik and even -lamak as separate parts of an entry, however these suffixes are not mentioned in his index:

Fakir. lik 453/10

Or even from two entries he makes one:

Akleuel, Balmumi, ombir

In one case Molino presented the word *liman*, of Greek origin, with an assimilated form of the Arabic definite article *al*, - as *illiman*.

The given quotations generally preserve Molino’s specific orthography but in some cases it was necessary to normalise Molino’s way of spelling, to make the material accessible for the computer.

The spelling of *s* and *ſ* is standardised, because it is without relevance for the phonetic interpretation.

I interfered in the spelling of *v* and *u* to avoid too much chaos in alphabetical order, but only in the anlaut:

133 Mascis also writes compound numerals as a single word.
The Turkish Dictionary of Giovanni Molino

uermek > vermek, uekialem > vekialem, vghur > ughur, vcz > ucz, Vnut-misc>unutmisc

but not in Italian: vsare remains vsare.
I preserved the u/v variation otherwise.
In one case I have changed vua to uva.
I have left the form sabov/u (instead of sabun), which reflects nasality.
For the moment I did not interfere in the spelling of i/I, which stands for /i/ and /y/ as it was used in Latin.
Capital letters and lowercase letters are left in the original spelling even if they are inconsistently used, as I have also left Molino’s spelling with regard to lower case and capital letters, commas and full stops.
Most of punctuation marks, which mark the input, have been most often removed, even if they were used by Molino with purpose:
Cioghalmisc. Sù.

A large number of words are marked with the accent grave marker. Molino’s application of accents in both Turkish and Italian became normalized, which means removed, because the existence of the accent mark increases alphabetical disorder and creates understanding difficulties for the computer. The vowels e and a provided with accent grave simply disappear during conversion between the programs as in ciòè, città, fà. Sù should appear in the reversal not after su, but after sz$_{7}$ almà aghagi after almisc etc.
I have left b even though it does not play a role, as in his marking of dative E: be
And the sign for nasality in the case of superscript (tilde) ê is also normalized, as in:
finimèto>finimento, accorgimèto>accorgimento of the same reason.

Besides at times Molino writes both trenta and trêta.
The sign = written after sc, not always but in most cases, is for the moment preserved
tutusc-turmak,

In some places the printing-ink is not preserved, in these particularly few places I have inserted the missing letters:

(47/29) asc-sus> tasc-sus,
Sometimes in such cases I have taken the form to be found in Molino’s index:

449/14 Rari? > Index Raia (It.

Obvious mistakes are corrected as in:

167 Aroab> Arab
149, 150 Ksghenge /Isghenge

but not at uncertain occasions:

eenmek/Index enmek
edtmek/Index Ø
elea bildirmek/Index elebildirmek
eminilik/Index eminlik

Though I have not intervened in Italian orthography, I have corrected the obvious mistakes which are rather rare:

Bddolorante – I have changed to Addolorante
17/12-15-19 Addolcire
Bddolorante
Addoloratamente

There are cases when Molino made obvious spelling mistakes, for instance omitting h in such entries as giommek, giogh, gieri etc. I have changed the spelling in his corpus, choosing the orthographic forms from the index: ghiommek, ghiogh, ghieri. In all the cases I have marked the choice by adding the comment Index next to the Turkish expression. I have used the Index as a kind of his Errata, knowing that first of all it contains the alternative morphophonetic forms, characteristic for 17th century Turkish.

On a few occasions I have felt it necessary to shorten information in too long Italian explanations. In a few cases, I cannot see another way than to cut off both the Italian entrance and the list of names of months, which are presented without the Italian counterparts: (Molino’s cursive)

I nomi delle Lune Turchesche, preso dall’Arabo, che si seruano per Mesi del l’Anno]

This list is followed by the information: I nomi delli Mesi Romani in Turchesco which I remove, and then by properly presented entries. As well as in 177/34: ‘Parti, o membri dell’huomo, & della donna.’

The entries of Arabic or Persian origin are presented by Molino in different ways and my approach to them also divers. Usually they are rendered according to Molino’s orthography:


(In this case I remove the additional information: ‘tutto’.)

When Molino most often did not separate the ‘less well-acclimatized phrases’, I have intervened in his spelling, to expose the discrete elements of the compounds:

Equinotiale] Chatistiua (in column 134, wrongly denoted as in 194) is transformed in the reversal to chat istua, <Ar. ḥaṭṭ-i istiwā ‘Equinoctial’; ehli berat, ehli elim etc. is changed to ehli berat, ehli elim; madilnahar <madi’l nahar is displayed in the reversal as madi and nahar.

It is difficult to make similar decision when the vowel of the Arabic definite article is replaced by the final vowel of the preceding word: bei tullah, matikatelbrugz, etc.

On the other hand I neither separate nor expose the vowels i/e of the Persian izafet, linking Arabic as well as Persian words, as in ehli < Ar. āhl-i, hak-i pai, written as ehli, haki pai etc. in a number of compounds. However I have revised the spelling of such compounds as takt ereuan to expose two correct entries: takt-e and revan, written takte and revan as individual entries in the reversal.

Composition of dictionary reversal

The structure of the dictionary reversal is as follows:

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134 The term ‘dictionary reversal’ after Geisler 2002, who refers to other studies on dictionary reversal: ‘The term dictionary reversal should be distinguished from the more common terms “reverse dictionary” and “reverse-order dictionary” which denote a dictionary with headwords alphabetized in reverse order of the letters.’
Thanks to this way of presentation the common stems are distinct and it is easy to discern the lexemes. If we look at the letter A – there are 586 entries in the reversal which begin with this letter, and within these entries 193 lexemes to be found. Molino’s Dittionario contains 8184 headwords, including all the cases of inflections, derivations and different orthographic representations. I have not assembled the orthographic variants of the entries, or followed any other criterion in my intention to present the faithful reversal of the original dictionary. The same words written with different orthography are situated close to each other and easy to find.\footnote{We have no satisfactory access to the phonetics of the Ottoman language of 17th century. I present the reversal of Dittionario deliberately without taking a decision about the phonetic interpretation, nota bene, following an old piece of advice given by Lars Johanson, who was involved in one of the first stages of my Molino journey, for which I would like to thank him.}

It is most likely that I will design an improved, multi-purpose corpus with the help of the new corpus-based analytical techniques for historical investigations, for instance to approach the problem of how to mark and detach foreign words from indigenous ones.\footnote{Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998; Nevalainen, and Kahlas-Tarkka 1997.} It would be also desirable to attach the English equivalents to the Molino’s Turkish and Italian entries in the future.

As I mentioned, Molino also compiled the index of Turkish words. However, in contrary to the vocabulary part, the index is not very precise in providing the numbers of entries, which makes it difficult to use. The Index is not incorporated into the main corpus, but is accessible in the scanned original.

Looking at the material, it seems that Molino’s intention was to construct a kind of mixture between a ‘theoretical dictionary’ and a lexicon, a highly practical one, with everyday entries which could be used as an appendix to his short grammar.\footnote{Leech, 1978, 206.} A lot of different dictionaries for various languages were being compiled at this period e.g. French-English dictionaries etc. and Molino’s dictionary was not delayed in relation to them.
His pragmatic approach was directed in the first hand towards Italian senses and meanings but our focus will be on the Turkish part. Molino did not feel indebted to any predecessors. He had made his own selection for the expected public. What kind of lexical items did he chose? It seems that the criteria for choosing the words were pragmatic, as he wrote in his Introduction – his work had a concrete aim in mind – to aid communication.

What’s more, since many ways of speaking Turkish exist, I’ve left out all the others and taken into consideration the dialect of Constantinople, which is now the best, since it is the residence of the sovereign. For this reason, my Turkish has to be perceived as the purest language now spoken throughout all Turkey, since I learned it in the Royal Court, where I served as Interpreter for His Most Christian Majesty and for the Most Serene Republic of Venice for many years, finding the true translation and the real meanings of the Italian words into the Turkish language.

He did not endeavour to present all the words, only the ones he considered necessary from the point of view of the Italian user of the lexicon. Albeit there were words connected to situations and phenomena not previously known to a visitor to the Ottoman Empire. There is no certain stylistic register for official correspondence or official visits with the exception of: evet belli sultanım, but the linguistic categories correlated to society.\textsuperscript{138}

We have entries connected to nature, the universe, geography – a tremendous number of names for landscapes, islands, cities, among them Krakou, Siambol and Ipsala. We can learn the names for plants, animals, and insects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aghostos bogiaghi, dudi kuse-i, giamus, chasc chase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The human body, both male and female is described in every possible way. The first phrase of the reversed dictionary ‘speaks volumes for’ the fact that a woman’s and man’s state of mental health and bodily needs; from conception to death, have an important place in Dictionario such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auretlerin aii bascisi, Ai basc-i chani Aghis kiopughi,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suerginare una donna-kslighi bosmak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oghlan taze. Tasc-kler szijri, Adem tochumi, Pust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And also

\textsuperscript{138} Zgusta 06, 102.
Dar aghaginden kurtarmak ‘to cut off from the gallows’

Basc kiesmek

Doctor Aromatari who was his friend, apparently helped him with words which are self-evident today but could hardly be expected in a dictionary for the pious representatives of Christianity.

There are a lot of words for occupations:

Aghardigi ‘he who whitewashes walls’

And also

Ghiege chrsisi

Ghiunden chsisi

Deghis chrsusi

Tools

Agharsc-ak

Burghu

Usenghi

And a lot of practical words for Food and drink, measures, weights, money, material things.139

Religious terms are modestly represented:

Hacz ‘croce’

Hagie ghietmek ‘to go on a pilgrimage’

Dinsis, dinsislik

Allah ‘dio’ [God] with ten expressions

And also such words as ‘to exorcise’ and the already mentioned word ‘Cattolico’ translated as Islam. Possibly connected to the religious themes:

Ciamurden adem

Ekmeghilhe sc-arab

Molino’s dictionary does not contain entries that insult Islam.

We can find in Molino’s dictionary all sixty universal conceptual, semantic primes, reflecting “the irreducible core of human

139 The entries of Molino’s dictionary were ordered into categories by Siemieniec-Gołaś in her publication 2005.
thought." Molino appears to have assumed like Leibnitz that if something did not exist as a self understood entity then it would be impossible to include in a dictionary.

When the dictionary was reversed we have obtained derivates based on the productive morphemes and thus a full presentation of the Morphology system of the Turkish language of 17th century.

**Molino and a short history of Turkish dictionary compilation**

Information about the Turkish language published between the 15th and the 18th centuries reflected the attitude of their authors to the Ottoman-Turkish state and to its importance. The Turkish conquest of Byssans, the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, of Persia, of the Middle East and the rest of Anatolia shocked the authorities and population of their neighbours: ‘When at long last the Turks did succeed in taking Constantinople, in May 1453, the news was received with horror and foreboding, especially in Rome and Venice.’ The Christian countries tried to arrange various alliances, leagues in the fight with the Turks in order to take back the annexed territories on which the majority of the population was Christian. Also Venice acted to stop the Ottoman expansion with the concurrence of the Pope in Rome. All these factors created during the Middle Ages a negative attitude to the Turkish language.

Europe knew the East from the *peregrinations*, pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Arnold von Harff from Cologne noted down and brought from his pilgrimage of 1496-1499 a few sentences in Arabic and Turkish. Prince Mikolaj Radziwiłł Sierotka brought back from similar travels an interest in the Orient. He published twice his *Peregrynacja albo pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej*, in Latin in 1601 and in Polish 1607. And many others. The information about the Orient reflected the intellectual predisposition of the travellers - creators of grammars, dictionaries, journey descriptions and memoirs.

140 Wierzbicka 2006, 18.
141 Leibniz, after Wierzbicka 2006, 29.
144 *Peregrinatio or pilgrimage to the Holy Land*, Reychman 1950, 8.
Initially there was no absence of serious studies about the Orient in Christianity.\(^{145}\) Arabic conquests were forgotten, Hebrew and Arabic were of interest to many theologians from European university circles but not as living languages. Johannes Herbinius’s and other scholars’ interest in Turkish was from the beginning a theoretical one, but the development of events made them to switch track. Knowledge of Turkish was important in order to discuss the redemption of prisoners, to guarantee spiritual care for the Sultan’s Christian subjects, to bring Christians of various denominations to ‘a common home’, and also to cherish the hope of converting Muslims. This final postulate was more than likely a form of propaganda weapon.\(^{146}\) The contacts of citizens of Protestant countries decreased significantly as a result of a ban imposed on visiting the Holy Land. Such a ban was introduced in Sweden by the king Gustav Vasa.

While the Turks were still victorious there arose prophecies that Rome, (in Molino’s dictionary\(\text{Ksil alma or Remi}\)) and the rest of the Christian world equally fall.\(^{147}\) One of these prophecies, which were rightly believed to be of Turkish origin, is preserved for us by Bartholomaeus Georgievich who spent almost a decade as a Turkish slave. He tried to escape but was captured punished and sold seven times. Some of his texts are coloured with his tragic memories. Georgievich wrote bitterly “I have added these few words of the Turkish language not for your use, gentle reader, but for your entertainment, so you may know how gross and barbarous they are: may the Almighty grant that they have more need of our language than we of theirs!”\(^{148}\) At the same time we obtain a lot of accurate information about the Turkish religion, culture, the organisation of the empire with the taxes and devşirme and about many aspects of everyday life.\(^{149}\)


147 In Setton 1992 a bibliography on the subject of prophecies of Turkish doom in the West, and about a Christian reconquest in the Ottoman Empire, with Deny, “Les Pseudo-Prophéties concernant les Turcs au XVIé siècle,” Revue des études islamiques, X (1936).


149 See detailed information and bibliography in Setton 1992.
Not only in Europe also over the old Iranian domains, Persian literature bears witness to the negative picture of the invaders—dangerous, barbarous Turks. In Denkard, the sacred book of Zarathustra, from among the different enemies of the Iranians, the author enumerates that “there are Turkish demons with dishevelled hair.”\(^{150}\)

This attitude was not shared by the thinkers of the Renaissance who re-evaluated their relations with Turkey. One of them was the before mentioned Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), an erudite, humanist, an adherent of ecumenism. In Republique des Turcs,\(^{151}\) he gave an objective picture of the Turks and had an ecumenical attitude to all religions.\(^{152}\) He was three times tried for heresy by the Inquisition, died in a monastery and his works were placed on the Prohibitory Index.\(^{153}\)

Hieronymus Megiser had a decisively negative relationship to the Turkish language, although one marked with pragmatism. He defines the Turkish language as barbarian, \textit{linguae hujus quantumvis barbarae}, none the less he considers knowledge of the language to be a positive thing when there is the need to buy prisoners-of-war or to support Turkish-speaking Christians.

An enlightened diplomat, Du Ryer Du Ryer had to present his works—above all his Turkish grammar and his translation of the Quran—as having been composed for the benefit of the missionaries in the Levant. ‘He would seem to have had to attack Islam to perpetuate an anti-Islamic mythand pay tribute to the Church authorities, writing: \textit{Turcica Lingua inculta est et barbara}.\(^{154}\)


\(^{151}\) Poitiers 1560.

\(^{152}\) Atkinson, 1969, 245 “[…] l’érudit Guilame Postel avait eu le courage intellectuel et l'espoir fantastique de démontrer à ses contemporains, et surtout á ses compatriotes, que les trois grandes religions, le Judaïsme, le Christianisme et le Mahométisme, renfermaient beaucoup de similarités communes. […] Mais Postel, fort de la vérité qu’il avait découverte par ses études linguistique, n’hésita pas. Il publià en français, dès 1560, une apologie de la religion musulmane, incorporée dans un livre qui eut plusieurs impressions et qui valut à son auteur la haine féroce de beaucoup de ses contemporains.”


\(^{154}\) Hamilton and Richard 2004, 71.
Molino does not feel forced to repeat the anti-Turkish litany employed to date. He writes only that he counts on protection, and puts himself ‘under the shadow of Your Eminence Patronage’, which means that of Cardinal Barberino. He does so simply to express his devotion to the Cardinal. He is under the impression that he is fulfilling the Cardinal’s wishes. Further on in the foreword to his readers he describes with admiration and respect the buildings of the Empire and the propagation of the Turkish language. He provides an interesting interpretation as to why there are so many borrowings in Turkish:

Nowadays, spoken Turkish is made up of several dialects because in whichever country the Ottoman ruler arrived, he introduced his language there and picked up the best ways of talking of the conquered countries. For this reason, Turkish is under the influence of Arabic, Persian, Greek and Tartar, and to satisfy the curious better, I pointed out the Arabic, Persian, Greek and Tartar.

We can have the impression that he is proud to speak the purest Turkish, the language of the Ottomans who ‘In less than 400 years, […] controlled the best and most habitable part of the World’.

Another contemporary author, Giovanni Battista Donà (Donàdo) in the letter to his bellicose brother, the abbot Andrea Donà, to whom Agop dedicated his grammar, had presented another interesting explanation:

The necessity of teaching the Qur’an for the purpose of their own instruction as well for other aspects, very easily facilitate not to allow universal error (our ES) that they are totally ignorant. To be able to understand this truth better, however, one should consider that the Turkish language is, like it is in provincial Italy, where every person speaks with the forms, the pronunciation and the accent of his own locality. However it [Turkish] becomes embellished by Persian, as we do with the Tuscan language.\[155\]

Molino’s opus was continued by scholars for whom the Turkish language was a learnt language to a very varied degree. Many of them were clergymen. Some of them as Maggio, Meniński, Illésházy, Vaughan, gratefully mentioned his Dittionario, others such as Mascis, did not.

**Francesco-Maria Maggio** was a member of a missionary Teatine order, from Palermo. He acquired proficiency in languages from

\[155\] Soykut 2005, 54.
Pietro della Valle, and was trained in Oriental languages at Propaganda Fide in Rome. Pietro della Valle gave him also a summary of his grammar in 1620 and he published his own SYNTAGMATΩN LINGVARUM in 1643. The examples presented are in Arabic letters with a transcription in Roman letters. The data show the characteristics of the Constantinopolitan dialect. Maggio used sources, quoting and with gratitude remembering a member in the same order, Jacobus Stephanus. Maggio gave references, to Molino and Du Ryer, praising their knowledge of Turkish. Presumably Stephanus had also written the vocabulary for Turkish, for Maggio calls Jacobus Stephanus’ work <lexicon turcicum.>”

Maggio, with Pope Urban VIII’s blessing went in 1636 to many places in the East. He also arrived in Constantinople but probably not at the same time as Stephanus, who had spent many years in the capital of Ottoman Empire. Presumably Stephanus’ activities went beyond simply the religious care over Christians in Constantinople for he was sentenced to death by the Turks and appears to have been rescued along with other members of the order by “a certain Rogerus de Harlai de Cesi”. Maggio was expelled from Constantinople for some reason at the instance of the Venetian ambassador and went home 1641, taking with him Stephanus’ bones.

Undoubtedly it was safer to teach Italian to the Ottoman converts in Venice, as Don Giovanni Agop, another Armenian author, Sacerdote Armeno, did. He published RVDIMENTO Della Lingua Turchesca, dedicating it to Andrea Abbate Donà, the abbot, who was a brother of Giovanni battista Donà, Venetian senator and author of Della Letteratura de’ Turci. Agop did not curse the Turkish language. But he expressed a strange impression that the Turkish Empire was

156 SYNTAGMATΩN LINGVARUM ORIENTALIVM QUAE IN GEORGIAE REGIONIBUS AUDIVNTVR LIBER SECUNDUS COMPLECTENS ARABVM ET TVRCARVM ORTHOGRAPHIAM A C TVURCICAE LINGVAE INSTITUTIONES, AVTORE D FRANCISCO-MARIA MAGGIO, CLERICO REGULARI, PANORMITANO, ROMAE Ex Typographia sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide. Schola turcica, qua unusquisque facile thurcarum sermonem legere, scribere et loqui discere opus Hieropoli scriptus posit.

157 Scripsero adhuc Andreas du Ryer, & Ioannes Molinus, ille francorum Regis, bis venetac Reipublicae interpress; vterque lingue huian peritiam exornatissimus.

158 Kennesy 1974. 121 after Mira, Rossi.

weakening and Venice was predestined for reconquest of the Christian territories. This could be a good reason for the Venetians to learn the Turkish language.\(^\text{160}\)

**Bernard de Paris**, a Capuchin brother, compiled a French-Turkish dictionary, which was translated into Italian by his friend, **Pierre d’Abbeville**. *Vocabolario Italiano-Turchesco* was published in 1665 by the meritorious for Turkish lexicography, *Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*. The vocabulary was written with vocalised Arabic characters, without Latin equivalents. In the preface Bernard de Paris stressed that in dealing with Turkish and Turks there is nothing which could be regarded as opposing the Catholic religion and not accepted (by Church). On the contrary it could be characterized “by good morals.” He attributed aversion towards Turks to the impossibility to communicate – something that his book was to rectify. He was deeply convinced that missionaries should follow in the path of Jesus and preach the Gospel to the entire world.

Another of the authors who used Molino’s dictionary was **Nicolaus llésházy**,\(^\text{161}\) compiling his *Dictionarium Turcico-Latinum* by 1668, but not **William Seaman**. Seaman was also a chaplain of the Levent Company in Constantinople, spent some years in Ottoman Turkey and published *Grammatica linguae turcicae* in Oxford 1670. In his unpublished dictionary he mentioned one of his predecessors—Bernard de Paris.\(^\text{162}\)

There existed speculation as to whether **Antonio Mascis**, *Napoletano Interprete*, borrowed Molino’s idea of a grammar and dictionary without mentioning a word. It seems that as always continuators always have a debt to their predecessors, but Mascic seems to be presenting his own observations concerning grammar.\(^\text{163}\) Mascis published *VOCABOLARIO TOSCANO, E TURCHESCO Arricchito di molte Voci Arabe, Persiane, Tartare, e Greche, Necessarie alla perfetta cognizione della setessa Lingua Turchesca. Con la giunta di alcuni*

\(^\text{160}\) Many thanks to Maria Pia Pedani for providing me with a copy of Agop’s book.


\(^\text{163}\) Drimba 1992.
The Turkis

He wrote in the introduction to his dictionary, that “it is important to know many languages just like Cleopatra.”

Francisci Mesgnien Meninski, the trained lexicographer, in the laudation to the honour of his colleague-translator Johannes Baptista Podesta pointed at rather many typing mistakes in Molino’s dictionary, but appreciated his work higher than an unpublished Turkish- Latin dictionary of the orientalist Golius. Meninski can be called an Orientalist in the best meaning of the word. He was probably trained in oriental languages first at the Jesuit College in Rome, where he had studied philosophy and then in Constantinople by the talented teacher Ahmet and by the master of masters, Ali Ufkî or Albertus Bobovius – Wojciech Bobowski. Meninski had command and described a literary and bureaucratically elegant Turkish, full of words of foreign origin. For this reason his dictionary, published in 1680 is called Thesaurus linguarum orientalium, turcicae, arabicae, persicae.

In the course of time, before the defeat at Vienna in 1683, the attitude to the Turkish language changed. Meninski dedicated his monumental dictionary not to the Church dignitary but to the secular superior although then it was considered that this authority equally derived from God. Nevertheless, thanks are directed with Baroque emphaticness towards Sacratissime Majestati Leopoldi Romanorum Imperatoris Semper Augusti...etc. as if this fact could shift the burden of responsibility to a mighty secular authority. All subsequent authors of Turkish grammars and dictionaries benefited from Meninski’s works. Meninski wrote in the preface to his Thesaurus, that there were many dictionaries for Arabic, few for Turkish and even fewer

164 Mascis in dedication to Cosimo III, Gran Duca di Toscana: ‘Di questi non fù men lodeuole Cleopatra Regina d’Egitto perch’oltre le bellezze, con cui si comprò di Marc’ Antonio gli affetti, fù ancora di molti linguaggi perita’.

165 Meninski, Notae/Assertiones 1670, 7.


still for Persian. He mentioned the dictionary of *P. Bernardi à Parisii* and noted down that there were grammars of: *Maggiì, du Ryer, Seamani, &c.* In *Thesaurus* he does not mention Molino, but in *Notae*, published 1670. A hundred years later Janitsh published the new edition of Molino’s dictionary, *Lexicon*, with a misstatement about an alleged existence of Molino’s *Turcico-Italicum lexicon*.168

The Jesuit father Jean Baptiste Daniel **Holdermann** wrote one of the most popular handbooks to Turkish, *Grammaire Turque ou Méthode courte et Facile Pour Apprendre La Langue Turque*. He published his work anonymously in 1730 at the Müteferrika printing office, as the first print in Turkey with Latin letters.169 For some time it was falsely suspected that the grammar had been written by Björnståhl, but he was born a year after the publication of *Grammaire Turque ou Méthode courte*.170 The secret of, ‘yazar adı bulunmayan kitap’, dedicated to Cardinal De Fleury, at last was out.171 His grammar owes much to Meninski.

Another clergyman, missionary Pierre François **Vigieur** from the order of St. Lazar, encourages the study of Turkish in order to understand the spirit of the Turkish vernacular, which is clear, direct and exact – “juste & précise du genie de la langue Turque usuelle.” in the introduction to his grammar, parlour and vocabulary - *Éléments de la Langue Turque, ou Tables Analytiques* [...] This work was also dedicated to a secular authority, King Luis XVI (*Au Roi*) and published under the auspices of the French embassy. Vigieur addressed his *Éléments de la Langue Turque* to young pupils who are to be the future translators, and to missionaries, negotiators, seafarers, scholars and every possible sort of ‘curious individual’.

One more author for whom Meninski’s grammar was a model was Jochannes Christianus **Clodius**, author of *Compendiosum Lexicon Turcico Germanicum*, which was published at the same time, in 1730, as

168 MDCLXXX: Molino Dictionario della lingua Italiana Turchesca, sive lexicon Italico-Turcicum, & Turcico-Italicum, (sic!) cui subjuncta est brevissima grammatica Turcica, omnia latinis tantum characteribus expressa. Editum est hoc opusculum Romae 1641 in forma quae vulgo dicitur 8 va.

169 Babinger, Stanbuler Buchwesen im. JHt., Leipzig 1919, 14-15; Heffening, Die türkische, 2.

170 Reychman 1964, 245. with reference to A. K. Czartoryski, lover of the Orient and author of the dictionary of Turkish words in Polish, from 1828.

171 Tütengil, 1962; Reychman 1964, 244-245.
Vigieur’s work. In his neat little book the Turkish examples are written in the Arabic alphabet and are completed with transcription. Clodius continued the tradition of dedicating books to royal sovereigns, in this case to Serenissimo, Potentissimo Regi Poloniariae Frederico Augusto.

The attraction of Turkishness started in Europe a lot earlier than turquerie in Rococo in 18th century, a long time before the Turks appeared in Europe as diplomats and intellectuals. It is significant, that in particular those nations who had constant and close contact with Ottoman had a more positive attitude to Ottoman Turkey and its culture than those who did not have such close ties. In the states as Poland, 172 or Venice173 and also France174, which for many centuries had close contacts with Ottoman Empire, the oriental influence can be discernible in the design of costumes, architecture, the interiors of houses, food etc. From the beginning of the 16th century different kinds of royal festivities were organised with participants dressed up in Turkish costume. Turkish weapons, tactics in fighting, Turkish horses, fabrics and carpets were highly valued for instance in Poland and in Sweden. The co-translator of the catechism mentioned at the beginning, lieutenant colonel Gamocki, took part in the Swedish king’s, Charles XI’s coronation parade in 1671 while the Swedish aristocrats and musicians were dressed in Turkish garb.175 Elements of clothing entered into ordinary European dressing and words entered European languages.176

The contacts, especially trade contacts were continued both in war and peace. Fondaco dei Turchi in Venice from the 16th century to the 18th century had many visitors from the Ottoman Empire. In Venice lived and worked Guillaume Postel, in Venice studied Erasmus from Rotterdam. The courage of Erasmus’ opinion, that a Turk is also a human being and also a brother, was known in the whole intellectual

172 Majda 1977; Reychman 1964.
175 Święcicka 2005, 51 about Ehrenstrahl’s Certamen Equestre; Nordin 2005.
176 Stachowski 2007. His book contains more than 2700 Turkish words, inclusive of their phonetic variants which during different periods found their way into the Polish language.
Europe. Such individuals as these started to talk about freedom of expression and religious tolerance long before the Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{177}

Many researchers have emphasised that the breakpoint in attitudes towards that Orient occurred after the publication in 1704 of Galland’s translation of \textit{Les Mille et Une Nuit, contes arabes}. \textit{[A Thousand and One Nights]} subsequently translated into many other languages. The fairy tales of \textit{A Thousand and One Nights} gave rise to the image of Romantic Orient and inspiration to many European literary works.\textsuperscript{178} There developed also a huge interest in the Turkish language and the mass compiling of dictionaries started. In Trübner’s \textit{Catalogue} from 1882 there is an imposing list of 50 Turkish dictionaries, grammars and phrase books.

The Turkologists valued Molino’s dictionary for it presented the everyday Turkish language. W. Heffening defines the language as that which:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
die man in der ganzen Türkei spricht. Es folgen einige überraschend gute Bemerkungen über die Aussprache der türkischen Laute und der verwandten Umschrift” [...].\textsuperscript{179}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Milan Adamović writes enthusiastically about the dictionary that the noting of the words in Latin letters is the first but by no means the only advantage of the dictionary:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
die latenische Schreibung ist zwar ihr erster aber nicht ihr einziger Vorzug. [...] Molinos Tätigkeit auf dem Gebiet der türkischen Lexikographie verdient ohne Zweifel jede Anerkennung. Sein Wörterbuch ist das erste türkische Wörterbuch in Europa. In der Zeit vor Meninski war es auch das beste und das meistgebrauchte Werk dieser Art im Westen.\textsuperscript{180}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{177} See Atkinson 1935, reprint 1969 about the new philosophical and political ideas during Renessance in France.

\textsuperscript{178} See Rudnicka 1970, about the significance of Galland’s Polish edition of 1768 for Polish poetry and prose; P. Martino, \textit{L’Orient dans littérature française au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle}, Paris 1906 ; J. Fuck, \textit{Die arabischen Studien in Europa}, Leipzig 1955; see Almond 2009, about the various mutual Muslim-European influences in the course of history; and see Kalinowska 2004, and her outstanding analysis of the Romantic Orient’s importance for the self-definition of Polish and Russian cultures, by virtue of Mickiewicz’s and Pushkin’s poetry. I am indebted to Johan Heldt for drawing my attention to Almond’s and Kalinowska’s books.

\textsuperscript{179} Heffening 1942, 2.

\textsuperscript{180} Adamović 1974.
And further that Molino’s activities in the filed of lexicography are undoubtedly worthy of praise. His dictionary is the first Turkish dictionary in Europe. Judging by the number of libraries in which it was found it was the most widely used dictionary of its type in the West prior to the appearance of Meninski’s.

Heidi Stein also joins in with similar laudable praise where she writes that “As oppose to the more conservative data written down later by Meninski, Molino shows the actual state of the colloquial language /Umgangssprache/. In as far as I see there are in his work almost no phonetic peculiarities, oddities, strangenesses which would need to be ascribed to the influences of dialects or foreign languages.”

For these self same reasons Asım Tanış, considered Molino’s dictionary important and worthwhile in publishing his own form of rewritten dictionary: Giovanni Molino’nun Italianca-Türkçe Sözlüğü ve Halk Türkçesi.

The language presented in the dictionary is definitely not a prestige variant of the Turkish language. It presents the language of ordinary people with a rather large portion of foreign words, which had entered into the language in a natural way. Molino’s linguistic competence seems to have been good enough to conduct such a dictionary project. Our knowledge about his life and deeds is limited, but he seems to be well prepared for more than his duties as viva voce translator. His Dizionario is scholarly in nature and could be used as a reference book, as well as having practical character of a flesh-and-blood dictionary. It could not have been written in a very short span of time, although it displays errors in spelling, which probably was due to preparing it in a hurry.

Molino’s own language, Armenian, belonged to another, Christian culture. These two cultures did not overlap with each other, but there might have been some links between them. The Dictionary is based on his very concrete linguistic competence and thus represents the spoken language. The author was not an orientalist. His education and interests were somewhere else. His aim was to explain the existing language. In contrast to older works, Molino created a lexicon which is incomparably extensive. The graphic structure of the lexicon points

182 Tanış, 1989.
to the fact that Molino probably did not learn Ottoman writing well, although he could have been familiar with it. This is additional proof that Molino’s Dittionario is a record of colloquial language. But he was aware of borrowings and tried to indicate the etymology of foreign entry words. Dittionario exhibits an amount of loaned words, which seem to constitute a natural part of the standard Ottoman-Turkish of the 17th century. These loaned words adhered to the Turkish lexical corpus seem to be fully integrated without radically changing it. During the centuries of contacts a range of loaned words, such as *kitab*, *edebiyat* etc. simply entered into the cultural heritage. And together with the indigenous Turkish words and with the forms introduced in the Republican era, they constitute the very basis of modern literary Turkish.

Difference between the literary ‘high’ language and the colloquial ‘low’ language “had been known since time immemorial.” The colloquial Turkish language had been heading towards literature a lot earlier than the decrees of the Republic ordered. Turkish writers were aware of this phenomenon and since the time of *terciime odası* deliberately developed *saf türkçe* - Ziya Paşa, Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat, Tevfik Fikret or *öz türkçe* - Mehmet Emin, Ziya Gökalg Ömer Seyfettin and Vartan Paşa. The Ottoman lexicographer and Turcologist, the Albanian Sami Frasheri, known in Ottoman as Şemsettin Sâmi wrote articles on the subject of the simplification of the language, (*sadeleşme*), claiming that language can be purified of foreign words but it follows to leave those that have become an integral part of Turkish. He compiled and published many important dictionaries, among them, in 1901, the extensive *Kâmûs-ı Türkî*. Şemsettin Sâmi made use of earlier published dictionaries, in Turkish or foreign languages, especially of James Redhouse’s

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184 about Carles Ferguson who conceptualised such a situation and gave it the name of diglossia. Zgusta 2006, 151, Bonelli 1901.


186 G. Lewis in his book *The Turkish Language Reform* quotes his friend’s words, referring to the innovated official Turkish opinion, which displays a new attitude: “Turks have throughout history always had a written language understood by all.”
dictionaries.\textsuperscript{187} Redhouse, for his part in the preface to his \textit{A Turkish and English Lexicon} of 1890, recounted among several authors Golius and Meninski.\textsuperscript{188} Not that I know if Şemsettin Sâmi had become also acquainted with Molino’s \textit{Dizionario}, but he and other intellectuals contributed to the rising from the ashes of the new standard form of literary Turkish.

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List of abbreviations

AOH Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
ASV Archivio di Stato di Venezia
Men. Meninski 1680
FO Folia Orientalia
MSOS Mitteilungen des Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen
RO Rocznik Orientalistyczny
R Redhouse, A Turkish and English Lexicon
STC Studia Turcologica Cracoviensia
TD Türk Dili
TDAYB Türk Dil Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten
WZKM Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
Corr Correction after Molino’s Errori – Corretioni
Index Correction after Molino’s INDICE DEL DITTIONARIO della lingua ITALIANA, E TVRCHESCA

/* The missing part of the Turkish entry is parenthesized

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**Odyssey and Sirens**: A Temptation Towards the Mystery of the Iso-polyphonic Music Regions of Epirus. A Homeric theme with variations

By Vasil S. TOLE*

Summary

The research – a theme with variations “Odyssey and Sirens…” originates from a long-standing desire to show the ancient origins of Albanian Iso-polyphony as a prodigious conceptual occurrence of music itself. Theses and hypotheses on such symbolism are interlaced and, furthermore, sufficient motives can be found to substantiate the existence of Iso-polyphony from antiquity.

It has been a great pleasure to deal with this subject, though quite frequently, during the difficult task of defining the research, we had to delve into matters beyond our competencies and desires in order to make this ethno-musicological interpretation of Homer’s “Odyssey”.

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Keywords: Albania, Iso-poliphony, Epirus, Iliad, Odyssey, Ethnomusicology.

Variation 1. Politropos, Polichromos and Polyphonos

Absque alis volucres, et cruribus absque puellas,
Rostro absque et pisces, qui tamen ore canant,
Quis putat esse ullos? Iungi haec Natura negavit:
Sirenes fieri sed potuisse docent.
Illicium est mulier quae in piscem desinit atrum,
Plurima quod secum monstra libido vebit.
Aspectu, verbis, animi candore trahuntur,
Parthenope, Ligia, Leucosiaque viri.
Has Musae expluant, has atque illudit Ulysses:
Scilicet est doctis cum meretrice nihil.
Alciati, Emblematum liber
Emblema CXVI “Sirenes”
One of the main reasons in undertaking this study has undoubtedly been connected to the fact that the *Odyssey*, this masterpiece of the world’s cultural heritage, deals, among other things, with the hardships, or better to say, tribulations, that Ulysses — that great hero of the ancient world — had to confront in Hades while returning to Ithaca. As by an ironic twist of fate, this has nothing to do with Poseidon’s grudge against neither him nor his decent into Hades, rather, it has to do with an apparently simple fact: Ulysses wanted to hear the intriguing music of the Sirens who supposedly used to live and sing on a promontory. But the question is: who the Sirens were (fig. 1)?

In ancient Greek mythology, the Sirens appeared as half-birds and half-women. Homer’s *Odyssey* was the first work to help in perceiving the Sirens as real beings. According to the poem, the Sirens lured mariners with their bewitching songs, destroying their boats on the shore rocks. According to Homer, there were initially two (*Odyssey*, Book XII, 52), later they were believed to be three or four in number, while Plato numbers eight of them. It was also believed that their father, Phorcys, came originally from the sea, while their mother was Gaia-Gea, which is the earth. Meanwhile, there are other hypotheses that their mother might be one of muses, so this is where their special talent in singing comes from. After this last assumption, these Sirens are believed to be daughters of the Muse of Dancing — Terpsichore — and were called Parthenope, Lygeia and Leucosia, while those of the Muse of Tragedy - Melpomene - were called Thelxipea, Aglaope and Peisinoe. With their songs they were able to entice the sailors and then killed or ate them. This is proved by the fact that the shores of the island of Anthemoessa (situated between Sicily and Italy) where the Sirens were believed to stay were littered with the bones of their victims. Oddly, Anthemoezë means: “filled with flowers.”

Initially the Greeks imagined them to be beautiful girls resembling the muses. However, the most widely held version in the visual arts,¹ was that of beings with a woman’s head and breast and a bird’s body, with a musical instrument in their hands mourning for the dead over their tombs. The voices of the Sirens were conceived as being very

Odyssey and Sirens

seductive, and it is for this reason that, in the VII century B.C. they were linked to the Muses as much as they were linked to Hades precisely because of their melodious voices, etc.

According to Robert D’Angeli, the Trojan Wars took place about 1250 B.C. and thus, as Herodotus asserts, Homer was not contemporary to the events of that battle, for he lived four hundred years later (around 800 B.C.) (fig. 2).

Robert D’Angeli further asserts that, even the subject of Homeric epics began to be compiled and sung in the Pelasgian language, since old Greek had not been completely shaped at that time in Greece and furthermore, this kind of Greek language did not yet exist in Asia Minor, since the Ionian and Aeolian colonies landed several centuries later. Only after 500-600 years were the epics translated into Greek by Homer and his followers who knew very well both the Greek and the Pelasgian languages.

Homer² wrote:

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many devices,
driven far astray after he had sacked the citadel of Troy.
Many were the men whose cities he saw
and whose minds he learned.

It is not new to say that, like many other researchers, we find in Ulysses a human image of a God, messenger of the Gods and, at the same time, known as the God of Changes. According to Moikom Zeqo, numerous colours of Ulysses go along with his features: hard character, lover and liar, his ability to declaim, to bewitch, and to transform.³ During his return journey, Ulysses discovered the great world, often more cruel than the Trojan Wars, but a sublime world – Paradise-like as well, which the hero entered, leaving magic testimonies of this pre-biblical trip. In this light, the Odyssey seems to be essentially a theme with variations where the theme is the return home of Ulysses and the variations occur as Politropos, Polichromos and Polyphono in different situations leading towards the final goal. Kavaphis, in the verse Ithaca,⁴ reminds everybody that all that Ulysses learned, suffered, and won on his return journey to Ithaca was, in essence, what Ithaca itself could not give to Ulysses. Everything

⁴Kavaphis, Poezi, Tiranë, 1997, p. 45.
surrounding Ulysses with its *multi-colours, multi-forms and multi-voices*, is precisely a superlative demonstration of the vital and cultural mosaic accompanying all variations of his return home.

The symbolism of the tying of Ulysses to the mast of the boat is significant to us. This mast resembles, in a figurative way, a vertical tombstone and Ulysses tied up to it is the shade of himself; the boat is nothing more than old Charon’s boat delivering him to Hades, under the grey backdrop of the mourning Sirens’ music. Symbolically, the Sirens’ music has been, and remains, the code of annunciation of Ulysses’ death. Thus, in the pre-Homeric and post-Homeric folkloric realities, the flowering of “mourning” emerges and is shaped within a very close range between mourner and the object, which, in all cases and regardless of reasons, are the unburied dead. This is the case in Albania, as well as in other countries; the Mediterranean area in particular, where mourning has become a ritual.

It is an interesting fact that Ulysses had been prepared during a preparatory trip to Hades. As different researchers affirm, the preparatory trip is a typical structure by which one is acquainted with an unknown world, where divine creatures or demigods often take the function of guides. To make this trip to Hades initially, Ulysses had Circe as a guide, while at the end of the trip he was able to foresee the future only due to prophecies of Tiresias. Here we see clearly an interweaving of the preparatory trip with Circe and with the ritual of predicting the future with Tiresias. Such a scheme is masterfully prepared by Homer, who puts Ulysses in this confrontation with the third dimension of transformation, musical polyphony, unknown to him at that time. The connection of the preparatory trip of Ulysses with the prophecy of Tiresias saying that he would confront the Sirens is another proof of the link between the Sirens and their song with the origin and real basis of the phenomenal musical occurrence of Iso-polyphony. It seems that in the case when Ulysses passed near the Sirens, for the first and last time in life, he was given the chance to listen, just for a moment, and later to recall that extraordinary musical magnificence of polyphony. The Sirens’ mourning polyphony coincides with the occurrence of the mourning or lamenting for Ulysses, leading to his certain death.

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As Ulysses experienced multi-voiced polyphony, it caused within his psyche a frightening extension of music as art, an art to which he could be sacrificed, not by the sword or the grudge of Poseidon, but from within himself. Nothing more than this music, Iso-polyphony of the mourning Sirens (more even than their feminine beauty and bird legs), would make Ulysses learn this third dimension of transformation: multi-voiced Iso-polyphonic lamenting.

In fact, the voices of Sirens⁶ are described as *wondrous* (*Odyssey*, Book XXIII, 326), and *perpetual* (Book XII, 158). It seems that the definition *wondrous*, has to do with the acoustic beauty of the voices, while the definition *perpetual*, means at least the interwoven and extended polyphonic singing.

Regarding this sonorous feature of the Sirens, we are pleased to assert that there exists an approximation among the most popular thoughts on some features of Albanian Iso-polyphonic singing. Faik Konica (1875-1942) reminds us that usually voices are loud, that baritones and contraltos are very few, while a bass voice, known in the local language as “donkey voice”, is so rare and unusual that its presence is somewhat surprising.⁷ This observation of his is also confirmed by other Albanian researchers,⁸ who have discovered the trend of loud voices in performing the Iso in the folk music of South Albanian Iso-polyphony (fig. 3) (audio 1)

His direct and sudden experience of hearing this “polyphony” lead Ulysses to later state that this was an event equal to, or more important than, the blinding of the one-eyed Polyphemus or even landing in Hades. Centuries later Nietzsche affirms: *There is music that we can never truly understand.*

In Albania the word “mourn” is understood to refer to the lamenting for the dead. G. Meyer considers it a word of onomatopoeic origin, where the noun comes from the sound of the expressive of the expletive and it remains its identifying sign. According to Çabej: the formation of *vaj* [mourn] with the suffix of the acting person –*tor* for a male and –*tore* for the female –*vajtore* “a woman who is mourning for the dead”; in the North also *vajtojcë*,

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⁸ See also Beniamin Kruta (Vlorë 1940-† Tiranë 1994), ethno-musicologist.
coming from the verb *vajtoj*, and adding *-çë-* in the dialect. It results in being used in every dialect of the language, Buzuku (e.g. XXXVIII/2, Mateu 8, 12) “and they were mourning and grinding their teeth”; “ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium.” Budi (SC 384) *suffering and lamenting*. In the North mourning is called *gjamë*, which is a collective mourning, while in the South we find Iso-polyphonic mourning. One of the oldest forms of mourning in Albania is that of the heroic ballads sung with the accompaniment of the ‘lahuta,’ e.g.: “Ajkuna mourns Homer” etc.

In the Homeric geographic areas we also find examples of other artistic or musical duels but none quite like that of Ulysses and Orpheus and the mourning Sirens. A typical “artistic duel” in an interpretation contest, was that between Apollo and the flute player Marsias. The flute that Marsias played had been thrown away by the goddess Athens somewhere in the plains of Phrygia, because, while he was playing it her face had became ugly. It was precisely with this flute that Marsias had the audacity to compete against Apollo. At the end of the contest, Marsias was skinned alive and his skin was hung in an abandoned cave near Kilin in Phrygia. It is said that this skin wriggled about and jumped whenever the sounds of a Phrygian straw-flute reached the cave; however, when the magnificent sounds of the lyre were heard in the cave, the skin remained quite still.

It is quite evident that Apollo won the contest because he was able to simultaneously play the lyre and sing. There is a similar case with the competition between Apollo and the *Syrinx* (pan-pipes) of Pan on the mountain of Tmol (fig. 4).

It is understood that the lyre was again declared the winner in this “duel.” Athenaeum (about 200 A.C.), in his work *Deipnosophistae*, Book XIII, describes the duel between Olympias (mother of Alexander the Great) and Eurydice. According to Athenaeum, Olympias entered the battle in an underhanded manner with drums, while Eurydice was armed in the Macedonian way.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that “artistic duels” of ancient times have been legitimated with the creation of Pythiac festivities, similar to those in honour of Dionysus, as we see below. This is the end of Variation 1 (fig. 5).
Variation. 2. *Odyssey and Sirens*, an incentive towards Isopolyphonic regions

‘First Circe bade us avoid the voice of the wondrous Sirens and their flowery meadows. Me alone she bade listen to their voice; instead you must bind me with harsh bonds, that I may remain fast where I am, upright in the step of the mast, and let the ropes be made fast at the ends to the mast itself. And if I implore and command you to free me, then tie me fast with still more bonds’.

“I did, you must know, rehearse all these things and tell them to my comrades. Meanwhile the well-built ship speedily came to the island of the two Sirens, for a fare and gentle wind bore her on. Then quickly the wind ceased and there was a windless calm, and a god lulled the waves to sleep. My comrades stood up and furled the sail and stowed it in the hollow ship, whereupon, sitting at the oars, they made the water white with their polished oars of pine. But I with my sharp sword cut into small bits a great round cake of wax, and kneaded it with my hands and soon the wax grew warm at the bidding of the strong pressure and the rays of the lord Helios Hyperion. Then I anointed the ears of all my comrades in turn. And they bound me in the ship hand and foot, upright in the step of the mast, and made the ropes fast at the ends to the mast itself, and themselves sitting down struck the grey sea with their oars. But when we were as far distant as a man can make himself heard, when he shouts, driving swiftly on our way, the Sirens failed not to note the swift ship as it drew near, and they raised their clear-toned song:

“Come hither on your way, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans; stop your ship that you may listen to the voice of us two. For never yet has any man rowed past the island in his black ship until he has heard the sweet voice from our lips; instead, he has joy of it, and goes his way a wiser man. For we know all the toils that in wide Troy the Argives and Trojans endured through the will of the gods,
and we know all the things that come to pass upon
the fruitful earth.”
So they spoke, sending forth their beautiful voice,
and my heart desired to listen,
and I commanded my comrades to free me,
nodding to them with my brows,
but they fell to their oars and rowed on.
At once Perimedes and Eurylochus arose and bound me
with yet more bonds and drew them tighter.
But when they had rowed past the Sirens,
and we could no longer hear their song,
then quickly my trusty comrades took away the wax
with which I had anointed their ears
and freed me from the bonds.
[...] We had left the island.

A question may be raised: What does this music represent? Music
with such a strong effect as to force the legendary Ulysses to
surrender and consequently risk his life and the lives of his comrades
on unknown shores? Did the Sirens’ sing a cappella, or did musical
instruments accompany their songs? In what language did the Sirens
sing for Ulysses?

It is not easy to give an answer to these questions. However, we
surmise that the sounds of the Sirens’ impressed Ulysses, first,
because their song lacked musical instruments. We stress this fact
since it was not unusual for Ulysses to listen to music accompanied by
musical instruments, regardless of its peculiarity.

There was very much with which he was familiar. For example: the
charm of the songs of rhapsody of Phemius and those of the blind
Damocles which were accompanied by the musical instrument ‘the
phorminx’; he had experienced in his own home in Ithaca and

9 Literature on Sirens: Apollodore, Bibliothèque. I, 3, 4; I, 7,10; I, 9, 25; Homère,
Odyssee. XII,1; Ovide, M étamorphoses. V, 512; Pausanias, Pé r iégè se. IX, 34,3; X,5,12;
X,6,5; Enciklopedia e madhe sovjetike, Vol. 30, p. 204; Fraser M. P, and Ronne T, Beotian
and West Greek Tombstones, Lund, C.W.K. Gleerup, 1957, p. 48, 64, 90, 102, 178, 191-4,
etc.

10 Musical instrument with four strings. See Odyssey, Book I, and VIII. It is
mentioned also in the Iliad, when Achilles uses the phorminx while singing. Hesiod
and Pindar use the phorminx to describe the musical instrument used by Orpheus.
Another instrument mentioned in the work of Homer is syrinx or “fife of Pan.”
We find it also in the form of auloi in Iliad, Book X, when Agamemnon listens to
the Trojans playing the auloi and the syrinx. See also Abraham Gerald, The Concise
elsewhere during his life of tribulation. It seems that the songs of Sirens were not accompanied by instruments (Book XII, p.463) and this was the peculiarity of their bewitchment.

So they spoke, sending forth their beautiful voice and my heart desired to listen.

Their song is, in essence, a music that emerges from the sobbing and mourning of those creatures – the Sirens, who endlessly wait for the tragic end of the renowned hero, Ulysses. It is them singing, not only to his valour (Book XII, p. 463), but also implying his terrible end, predicted by Circe if he approached the Sirens, Evidence that has described the Sirens as having musical instruments in their hands seem to be outside of the Homeric context of the Odyssey. We believe that such descriptions relate to a later period, which contradicts their origins as creatures that mourn using only their voices.

Regarding mourners, they are a very common occurrence within the lamentations found in Albanian folk music as well\(^{11}\). Prof. R. Sokoli,\(^{12}\) has long recognised the existence of Sirens in the mythology of our ancestry, known locally as kshetat or flockat e detit (with very sweet voices) and has surmised as being very original, the oscillations of the voice by the movements of the jawbones in some coastal mourners in south-west Albania. There are two classes of singers in lamentation: the professional and the ‘instant improvisers’. The first use simple forms, while among non-professionals there are some magnificent improvisations. Therefore, we believe that the voice of the Sirens was characteristic, not only because of its beauty in itself, but, more importantly, because of its mourning Iso-polyphonic texture, a particularity we find still in today’s Lab Iso-polyphony in the former territories of ancient Epirus. Quite typical is borobitja Labe [Lab cheering] (bearer of “hidden iso-polyphony”), as well as the singing of two or three persons in the iso-polyphony of Dukat (audio 2).

In the opinion of Ismail Kadare, the use of present day mourners in Albania is not that far removed from the chorus of antiquity at

\(^{11}\) Vajtojcat [mourning women] are called also britmegare [crying women]. In Lumë they are called migatore.

which time, during the lamentation, comments were made about various deeds and virtues of the deceased.  

Come hither on your way, renowned Odysseus,  
great glory of the Achaeans; stop your ship  
that you may listen to the voice of us two.

We bring to mind here the inherent link between lamentation and burial in tombs among the Illyrians and Epirotes. As it is known, tombs are massive burial monuments, where, it is believed; ancient oral poetry began, accompanying the ceremonies in honour of the dead. Hammond quickly brings to our minds the whole ritual performed by Achilles while honouring the dead Patroclus (Iliad, Book 23). According to him, Homer himself links it (this method was used then only in Albania and the distant North) with the origin of oral epic poetry and naturally with the lamentations for the dead.

_Iliad_  

She uttered a shrill cry, and shouted throughout all the town:  
“Come, men and women of Troy, and look on Hector,  
if ever, while he still lived, you rejoiced at his coming back from battle;  
since great joy was he to the city and to all the people.”  
So she spoke, nor was any man left there  
inside the city, nor any woman,  
for all came in unbearable grief;  
and hard by the gates they met Priam,  
as he brought home the dead.  
First Hector’s dear wife and queenly mother  
flung themselves on the light-running wagon and,  
clasping his head, wailed and tore their hair  
and the people thronged about and wept.

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13 In the ancient Greek art both mourning and early compositions had a common source where tragedy and comedy represented the same musical-dramatic basis, merged in a unique syncretistic manifestation. It is admitted frequently that alternated lamentation between actors and collective characters composed of chorus may be considered as a perfect type of those noble, poetic and musical architectures, where Aeschylus was distinguished as well.


15 See also N.G.L.Hammond, “Varrimi me tuma në Shqipëri dhe problemet e etnogjenezës”, Kuvendi i parë i studimeve ilire, V.I, Tiranë, 1974, 153-161. See also Hysi, F. Estetikë në tri pamje, Tiranë, 2005, p. 188.

16 Homer, _Iliad_, Book 24, 615, 617.
And now the whole day long until the setting of the sun
would they have made lament for Hector
with shedding of tears there outside the gates,
if the old man had not spoken among the people
from the chariot:
“Make way for the mules to pass through;
then shall you take the fill of wailing,
when I have brought him to the house.”
So he spoke, and they stood apart and made way for the wagon.
But the others, when they had brought him to the glorious house,
laid him on a corded bed stead,
and by his side set singers, leaders of the dirge,
who led the song of lamentation – they chanted the dirge,
and to it the women added their laments.

Achilles himself has been accompanied after his death to Hades
with the same ritual. In the “Odyssey,” in Book XXIV, the Muses
weep all together over the death of Achilles. According to Homer, they
sang by turn death songs with their clear-toned voice so that every
Greek would shed tears. For seventeen days and nights both humans
and gods ceaselessly wept and lamented.

Furthermore, all the findings in Albanian archaeology and
musicology related to the Sirens show them without accompanying
musical instruments and with a distinctive behaviour of mourning
creatures. Typical examples are: the “Mourning Sirens” of Apollonia
(without musical instruments), of which Praschniker\(^{17}\) speaks; the
Sirens of Durrës\(^{18}\), of Antigone, and Vlora, etc. This coincides with
their description in Greek mythology as monsters of death, similar to
Erinyes (of which there were twelve and who were known as the night
virgin girls) who lived underground and symbolize revenge for crimes.
The Sirens, unlike the invisible vindictive Erinyes, stay still on their
symbolic island of Anthemoessa, and on grave stones, as figures
closely connected with the Underground Kingdom, taking care of the
dead. (figs. 6 - 7 - 8 - 9).

\(^{17}\) Praschniker C, “Musekhia und Malakstra”, \textit{Archäologische Untersuchungen Mittelalbanien Oster. Jahreshefte}, Bd. XXI-XXII, 1, Wien, 1922. We refer among
others to stele of “Parmeniskos”, with two mourning Sirens, the stele “Coronation
of Bull”; again with two mourning Sirens, the stele “Floral motives and Siren”, etc.
For more details see also Pojani, Iris, “Relieves of Apollonian funerary steles of

Thus, the song of the Sirens is vocal polyphony in the process of mourning and, at the same time singing: singing to lure Ulysses, and mourning because they know he will escape their claws and their song. The Sirens will save their anger and take their revenge on Telemachus when they learn that he is the son of Ulysses and Penelope.\textsuperscript{19}

Some may say that symbolism of the musical origin of the Sirens is connected also with the “music” created by the crashing of the waves of the sea and the echoes of the wind against the rocks and straits. Acoustic events have been observed and raised in theory from antiquity because of the role that they have played in the lives of people. The Chinese philosopher Chuang-Tzu (365-290 BC) believed that there were three kinds of sounds, starting from the “divine sound,” the “human” and the “earth” sounds, referring thus to all sounds coming from it. In Asia the concept of sound took the shape of an “earth symphony” very similar to the concepts of Pythagoras and later of the Roman Vitruvius\textsuperscript{20} on music, who considered it as a “universal harmony,” both large and delicate. Pak Che-Sang mentions that sound was born in “Magosong” (an imaginary land, that, according to him, was the highest point of universe) and sounds descending from there reached people. In the cult of the Holy oak tree of Dodona, “music” and symbolic interpretation of the rustling of its leaves as well as the symbolic flights of birds are elements of such concepts, related to initial mythological interpretations of natural occurrences.

With regard to the Albanian musical tradition of Iso-polyphony and its performance by people; it is still regarded as mysterious, instinctive and, in general, as an occurrence containing within it reflections of nature as well as night and earth voices. This popular approach has been mentioned in some earlier researches, holding that, in the songs of mountaineers, especially in the South, there are still preserved elements of pastoral life, imitation of bells and the resounding cries of nature.\textsuperscript{21} Habitually they say that in Labëri there

\textsuperscript{19} Photius, \textit{Myriobiblon}, 190. Quoted after Ptolemy \textit{Hephaestion} Bk7.


exists a “dry polyphony,” which means a polyphony that they sing in the mountains and on the coast”. Çabej also asserts that in the villages of Vlora they sing with thrusts and jumps, something like waves and similar to how they sing in the villages of Himara and Dukat, with their deep-voiced melodies, Kurvelesh, Delvina, Gjirokastra, Lunxhëria have their own local colour in Lab songs.22 (audio 3)

The top of one of the hills between Pojana and Radesh in the south eastern part of the Albanian Alps is called “The clinking Top” because of the natural acoustic occurrences which produce typical sound effects. At the crown of mount Dajti we find the occurrence of “Populus Tremules” [shivering poplars], trees that produce a kind of roar when the wind blows. Konica speaks also in his literary works about voices of nature.

It is known now that Iso-polyphonic music is spread along the geographic territory where most of Southern Albania is included. As much as an ethno-cultural approach is concerned, two huge ethnographic areas are distinguished in this geographic territory: Toskëria23 and Labëria.24 A general overview on Iso-polyphony25 of

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23 According to Rrok Zojzi, Etnografia Shqiptare 1, 47, 49: “Regional division of the Albanian people” by Toskëri is understood “…entire South of Albania, from the river Shkumbini extended to the South, beyond political borders up to the ethnic border of the Albanian people, deep in the Greek territory.” After Zojzi, division of Toskëria in smaller groups is as follows: Tosknia, situated on the East of southern Albania; Myzeqeja, in the west; Labëria, in south-west; Çamëria, situated in extreme south, beyond political borders. For details see also Fjalori Enciklopedik Shqiptar, Tiranë, 1985, p. 1105.

24 As people say it is situated between three bridges: bridge of Dragoti, that of Drashovica and the bridge of Kalasa, found respectively in districts of Tepelena, Vlora and Saranda. For details see also Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar, Tiranë, 1980, p. 933.

these two territories shows that Lab Iso-polyphony is set up in a “vertical multi-stage” while Tosk Iso-polyphony occurs as a “horizontal multi-wave.” (audio 4)

No doubt such features of Iso-polyphonic music are intrinsically linked to the characteristics of the inhabitants of Torskëria and of Labëria in their respective geographic environments. Pouqueville says that Tosks are the most beautiful race among Albanians, while the Labs living in the area of Acroceraunia and along the wild shores of the Adriatic, and differ due to their rough character. These natural features of those inhabitants are reflected in their musical product; Torskë and Lab Iso-polyphony. (fig. 10)

We find also a difference between Lab and Torsk Iso-polyphony, which derives from their essential features. Referring to the Iso (drone), we would say that, in general, the three-voiced Torsk polyphony, unlike three-voiced Lab polyphony, is not syllabic, but a “cluster pedal.” This “cluster pedal” starts the song in the three-voiced Torsk mode - an occurrence we find in no other region. It is likely done in order to produce the tones of accurate pitch and also to start the song from the lowest point and then to continue. The nature of the Iso is the most significant element to understand on what basis, the other voices are set up in multi-voiced26 Iso-polyphony. Such a form mainly defines the “horizontal multi-wave” of Torsk polyphony and the “vertical multi-stage” of Lab polyphony. This particular nature of the Iso reminds us of another principal feature of the sounds of the Sirens as being ceaseless voices. (audio 5)


Faik Konica in 1897 speaks in *Letërsia shqipe*, of an interest inspired by the laments and the tremors of that rhythmic crying-yelping improvised by the women in southern Albania. Prof. R. Sokoli explains that the quivering in the voice of some folk singers from Himara derives from a kind of inner agitation or from their breathing techniques; a singing technique he classifies as a leftover of an ancient vocal tradition.  

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) in his work *Child Harold* (second canto, verse 71), has described almost the same musical effect as above:

> On the smooth shore the night-fires brightly blazed,  
> The feast was done, the red wine circling fast,  
> And he that unawares had there ygazed  
> With gaping wonderment had stared aghast;  
> For ere night’s midmost, stillest hour was past,  
> The native revels of the troop began;  
> Each palikar his sabre from him cast,  
> And bounding hand in hand, man linked to man,  
> Yelling their uncouth dirge, long danced the kirtled clan.

Conducive to the extended flavour is the verse itself, which, while being sung, is smoothed and further prolonged. The normal measure of the verse in such songs is six-foot trochaic with an interruption after the third foot, while the measure of the verse of the Lab song is usually four-foot trochaic, eight-syllable. It is observed that *Tosk* isopolyphony is horizontal, in both men and women’s songs.

A large number of Albanian archaeological-musical findings relate to these ethno-cultural territories, since archaeological music tends to explore and to bring into light both the musical and ethnomusicological tradition in Illyria and Epirus, to the benefit of the continuity of the inhabitants. Among the most important Albanian

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28 *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Lord Byron George Gordon, Byron George Gordon, Publisher: Kessinger Publishing, released: 30 March, 2004


archaeological musical findings that could be mentioned are: “Cult of Nymphs”\textsuperscript{33} about wind instruments including \textit{horn, flutes, bugle, double-fife, hydraulicon, syrinx, lyre}; a “Statue of an Actor,” found in the antique theatre of Bylis; a ceramic showing a woman with a finger in her throat, found in Durrës; young musician playing the lyre (III c. B.C. found in the castle of Bixëllenja in Elbasan); “Drunken Pan,” found near Butrint (III c. B.C.), “Dancing Athlete,” found in Irmaj-Gramsh (III c. B.C.); “Dancing Nymphs of Apollo,” “Mourning Dance,” engraved on an ashes urn; the dance around Nymphaion on some Apollonian coins of III-IV c. B.C.; “Pan with Dancing Nymphs,” bas-relief found in Durrës; and the “Dancing Illyrian lady,” on Illyrian tombs of Treberishta, \textit{etc.} (fig. 11)

Furthermore, we believe that there is a common structural layer that preserves a similar set-up of numeric conditions for the mourning Sirens and for the arranging of the voices in southern Albanian Iso-polyphony. The subject of numeric conditions is a structural feature, which should not be neglected. It expresses both the unity of features and the frequently hidden links between them. It is known that the number 3 was a numeric condition for the Illyrian Pelonas, who, while defending their city from Macedonians, sacrificed 3 boys, 3 girls and 3 black sheep. Number 3 is related also to the last trip of Ulysses to Epirus, where Tiresias asks Ulysses to sacrifice to Poseidon precisely three animals: \textit{a ram, a bull and a pig}. Three times Ulysses extended his hands wishing to embarrass his mother down in Hades, and three times the shadow of his mother slipped away. Three is also the number of Sirens, the daughters of Melpomene, as well as those of Terpsichore, \textit{etc.}

The etymological observation of the names of the Sirens shows that Lygeia, the daughter of Terpsichore, is the bearer of lamentation (grief audibly expressed and related to weeping), while the etymology of the daughters of Melpomene shows that Thelxiepeia is \textit{magic}, Aglaope is \textit{special}, and Peisinoe \textit{obedient}. Considering such etymological particularities, we should find in their features as singers also a structural lining similar to that established in the placement of voices.

\footnote{We are reminded here of the antient city of Buthrotos “Cultural Heritage Site under Unesco Protection,” where there is a water spring related to the cult of nymphae and a note by a citizen of Buthrotos, who had to pay for the renewal of the spring in the II century BC. The full note is \textit{Junia Rufina, mim i nimfave [friend of nymphae].}
in Albanian folk Iso-polyphony. Definitely: voice I, Marrësi [leader of the song, who “throws the voice” or “takes it”] as magic; voice II, Kthyesi [second soloist, who “waits for it” or “cuts it”] as special; and voice III, Iso [who makes the drone or “holds the voice” or “fills it”], which is nothing more than the voice of the obedient Peisinoe.

The reason why we are emphasizing this relationship between the features of the Sirens and Iso-polyphony is related, no doubt, to our thesis that the value and originality of an ancient culture (besides surviving and developing in another time and by new bearers), continues indefinitely to be itself. This is evident in the case of identical geographic environments, the language of singing and genetic features of its bearers as well, which are difficult to be identified at a first glance. Without focusing on the secrets contained in the structural set up of such numbers in folk musical polyphonic folklore, we are presenting, in a general table, some combinations resulting from studies made from poetry, Iso-polyphony (voiced and with instruments), and from the Lab men’s dance.34 (audio 6)

**Structure of numbers:**

1-2  marrës [“takes it”], pritës [“waits for it”] in Tosk Iso-polyphony,
1, 2, 3  marrës [“takes it”], kthyes, [“answers it”], bedhës [“throws it”] in Lab Iso-polyphonic song,
5-7  preference for the number of Iso-keepers in Tosk regions
5-7-9  preference for the number of Iso-keepers mbajtësve in Lab regions varying according to subject of the song,
1, 2, 3  -clarinet, fiddle, lute, or marrës, pritës and Iso in the line up of folk orchestra with instruments,
7  rhythmic constant of the line of dancing,
3  the first singing foot syllable, e.g.:
   *When you did*
   *when you did*
   *when you did*
   *twenty years reach*

3:7  is the inner set-up between two trochaic accents of the Lab dance,

34 For the observation of numbers in the Lab dance we have been assisted by the research made by the poet Fatos Arapi.
When you did twenty years reach

3:7
1:4:7
1:5:7
2:4:7
3:7
1:4:7

(audio 7)

The interpretation of anointing the ears of the comrades of Ulysses is quite interesting. The first and simplest explanation is that it was done in order to prevent them from hearing the music and the marvellous voices of the Sirens, while the other hypothesis is related to the “incomprehensible language” of the Sirens to other mariners – comrades of Ulysses. We believe that they sang in a language that only Ulysses could understand, a language through which he could experience the Iso-polyphonic symbolism of their music, and at the same time the fear and anguish of death, far away of his land because of the frightening beauty of the mourning Sirens of Hades.

It is worth mentioning here that the greatest second-rate musician of Greek antiquity, Orpheus, had used the action of anointing the ears of comrades with wax to escape bewitchment by Sirens long before Ulysses\textsuperscript{35}. Furthermore, with his lyre and his songs he competed with the Sirens so saving the Argonauts and their ship \textit{Argos}, during the

\textsuperscript{35} Orpheus was the son of the Muse Calliope and of the god Oiagros. The role of the musical art, as a multidiimensional art, is insolubly linked with the figure of Orpheus. The descent of Orpheus into the kingdom of Hades to take his beloved Eurydice, is the only case in the history of antiquity when an artist manages to confuse, by the strength of bewitching musical interpretation, the rules of the world beyond the grave. This was Orpheus, who bewitched with his voice, the boatman Charon on the river Acheron, and the god Pluto, the underworld, Hades. The only one who confronted him was Heracles, the hero of human strength, who managed to take the three-headed dog Cerberus from Hades, thus performing one of his brave feats on the surface and underground. Orpheus was killed by \textit{Bacchae}, the followers of Dionysus during a Dionysian festivity in Thrace. It is said that the first stone to strike him was so bewitched by the interpretation of Orpheus, that it fell to without striking him. Then \textit{Bacchae} dismembered his body and broke his dear instrument and threw the pieces into the river Evro. The lyre appeared on the shores of the island of Lesbos, where the prominent poets Alceus and Sappho were born. The art of inspiration should be looked for first in the Dionysian orgies rather than in the cult of Apollo.
adventure of 1400-2000 B.C., to obtain the skin and Golden Fleece of Cholkis.

**Variation 3. Location of Hades and Iso-polyphony:**
Sirens –weepers and the legend of the death of Pan

In our opinion, there has been no explanation until now on the relationship between the song of the mourning Sirens and their geographic location with regards to the location recognised nowadays. Though there are different opinions as to the habitat of the Sirens, geographically it is recognised to be somewhere near the island of Sicily. All the same, we are of the opinion that it is very likely that the location of the Sirens was close to the present Albanian coastline in view of the relationship of the substance of the mourning Sirens to their role as a front door to Hades, and even more, to their polyphonic singing in the context mentioned above. The localising of Hades is very important in determining the place where the Sirens were found. As it has been mentioned above, the Sirens have always been considered monsters of death and closely connected with Hades. Conceptually, their localisation has a relationship with musical occurrences of Iso-polyphony and the mourning of the dead.

Like Hades itself, the location of the Sirens is near the seashore: *for never yet has any man rowed past the island in his black ship until he has heard the sweet voice from our lips.* In this context their site is likely to have been in the same geographic and symbolic space as described by Homer for Hades. Thucydides, in the Book XI of “The Odyssey”, for the first time uses the word *Cimmerians*, a name chosen for the people living by the border Okeanos, at the stream of Oceanus. Thucydides\(^\text{36}\) (460-400 B.C.), in *Historia*, mentions it as: the coast of *Chimaera* of Thesprotia. Strabo (63-20 A.C.) mentions the coast of *Chimaera*; while Stephen of Byzantium (VI century A.C.): *beimerion*, cape of Thesprotia, ethnic name *beimeries*. Pliny\(^\text{37}\) (24-79 A.C.), says that Epirus\(^\text{38}\) begins at the Acrokeraune mountains). (fig. 12)

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\(^{36}\) Ilirët dhe Ilira te autorët antikë, Tiranë, 2002, p. 27.


\(^{38}\) See Mid’hat Frashëri, Çështja e Epirit, Tiranë, 1998, p. 27. For the ancient Epirus see Thucydides (460-395 B.C), “The Peloponnesian War”, 2 vol., University of Michigan Press, 1959; Strabo (63BC-AD 19), “The nations of Epirus are Pelasgic”
Hasan Ceka affirms that there is no doubt about the ancient origin and etymological relationship between Himara and the ancient city known as Chimaera. The word Himara itself, besides its etymological link, has another symbolic relationship to the mythological figure of Chimaera, and the latter one with Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Hades, who was his brother. Furthermore, we should mention the mountains of Acrokeraune (known as Acrokeraunet, Acroceraurion, Acroceraunia, Acroceraunio, Akrokeraunion, Ceraunia, Ocroceraunia) in the area of Himara, and near to the sea, where one of the peaks is named Thunderbolt Peak and this is closely connected with one of


40 See Ugo Bardi in *Chimaera: The origins of the myth*. According to Homer, the Chimaera was “in the fore part a lion, in the hinder a serpent, and in the middle a goat.” Hesiod uses almost identical words, although he specifies that the creature Hades had three heads. Both also says that it was capable of breathing fire. All authors describe the Chimaera as female, and that may be something related to her name, which in ancient Greek means “young she-goat.” Despite this rather humble name, she was of divine origin. Her father was the giant Typhon and her mother the half-serpent Echidna.

41 For details see also *Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 553.
characteristics of Chimera: spouting flames. It is believed that chimera personifies the mountain that spouts flames.

According to Prof. Sh. Sinani: the name Himara may be identified in Indo-European etymology from “hima”, from the Sanskrit: “cold”, and where the word “Himalayas” comes from. Albanian geographers define Himara as a zone with strong tectonic characteristics. Among other things they have found on the peak of the mountain range, AkroAcrokeraune, traces of ancient ice that have never thawed and which have created holes (known in the local language as cirqë). These icy conditions have been described by Homer in most impressive verses about the panorama where the Cimmerians lived; a panorama which is nothing else than an ante-chamber to Hades, the cold kingdom of death:

[...] the land and city of the Cimmerians, wrapped in mist and cloud. Never does the bright sun look down on them with his rays either when he mounts the starry heaven, or when he turns again to earth from heaven, but instead, horrid night is spread over wretched mortals.

In Book XIV of the Odyssey it states that Ulysses also went to Dodona in Epirus to read through Zeus’ leaves of oak when it was preordained for him to return to his homeland. There are two hypothesises about the location of ancient Dodona and both refer to Epirus. The first is localized on the mountain Tomorr, in Berat, and the second is in Ioannina, on the mountain with a significant name - Tomorica. According to A. Kola, in either case, the centre of the Pelasgic world and its religious centre were to be found on these mountains of the north-western Balkans. It is also mentioned that Ulysses visited Thesprotia, before his final return to Ithaca. Homer presents the description of Epirus by Ulysses in one of the most accurate and concrete extracts:

As he was when I first saw him in our house drinking and making merry,

44 Kimerët, our note.
46 “Odyssey”, Book I, p. 44.
on his way back from Ephyre, from the house of Ilus, son of Mermerus.
For thither, too, went Ulysses in his swift ship
In search of a deadly drug

From the geographic point of view, the southern coast of Albania
long ago has been described as, the most frightful coast for ships and
travellers. According to Pouqueville, many scientists assert that
Acrokeraune is the location that Circea mentions in the instructions
given to Ulysses:

I will tell you of both ways. On the one side
are beetling crags, and against them
roars the great wave of darkened-eyed Amphitrite;
the Planctae the blessed gods call these.

It was almost the same scene, a scene of a coast full of rocks and
waves, which Ulysses had to face when passing near Scylla and
Charybdis:

We then sailed on up the narrow strait with wailing.
For on one side lay Scylla and on the other divine Charybdis^47.

This part of the Albanian coast is very well known, especially from
the writings about the clash between Cesar and Pompey. Mariners of
the seas mention the cliff of Gradate in particular for its thousand-
year-old inscriptions graven on it. Pouqueville\textsuperscript{48} quotes Horace in
defining \textit{Akro Acrokeraunen Cliffs /frequently known for destruction of ships.}
Lucian (39-65 A.C.), in Book V of \textit{Pharsalia”} describes almost
the same horrible coast during the landing of Cesar in Paleste of Himara.

Homer relates that, on reaching the coast, Ulysses walked up the
shore to the place where, according to Circe, the location of Hades\textsuperscript{49}
was, in order to get advice from Tiresias, fortune-teller of Thebes.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{48} Poqueville, “Në oborrin e Vezirit të Janinës”, Tiranë, 1999, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{49} Hades in \textit{Odyssey}: 03.410...\textit{At his home, Nestor sat on the same stones that his father Hades sat upon before he was taken to the house of Hades}; 04.834...In a dream, Penelope asks Athena if her husband, Odysseus, is in the house of Hades 06.011...The founder of the Pheasant city, Nausithous, died and went to the house of Hades 4; 09.524...\textit{Odysseus tells the Cyclops, Polyphemus, that he wants to send him to the house of Hades}; 10.175...On Circës island, Odysseus killed a large stag and encouraged his hungry men by telling them that they were not yet fated to go to the house of Hades; 10.491 Circe tells Odysseus that he must go to the house of Hades and Persephone to seek out the prophet, Tiresias; 10.502...Odysseus weeps and tells Circe that no ship has ever found the way to Hades; 10.512...\textit{Circe gives Odysseus instructions on how to find the
mouldering home of Hades; 10.534... Circe tells Odysseus that, when he reaches the abode of Hades and Persephone, he must not let the dead drink the sacrificial blood until he has questioned them; 10.560... Elpenor died when he fell from the roof of Circe's palace and his soul went down to Hades; 10.564... Odysseus tells his men that they must go to the house of Hades and Persephone; 11.047... After making an animal sacrifice at the entrance to the Underworld, Odysseus prays to Hades and Persephone; 11.065... Odysseus meets the ghost of Elpenor and he tells Odysseus how his soul went down to Hades; 11.069... The ghost of Elpenor says that, in order to avoid a curse by one of the Immortals after Odysseus leaves the house of Hades, he must return to Circe's island and give proper death-rights to the body of Elpenor; 11.151... After giving his prophecy to Odysseus, the ghost of Tiresias returned to the house of Hades; 11.164... Odysseus explains to the ghost of his mother, Anticleia, that a duty brought him to the house of Hades; 11.211... Odysseus laments that he cannot hold his mother, Anticleia, while she is in the house of Hades; 11.277... While in the Underworld, Odysseus learns that the mother/wife of Oedipus, Jocasta, went down to Hades because she hanged herself; 11.426 [...] In the Underworld, the ghost of Agamemnon tells Odysseus that he came to Hades with his eyes and mouth still open because his murderous wife, Clytemnestra, did not care enough for him to give him that simple dignity; 11.475 [...] In the Underworld, the ghost of Achilles asks Odysseus how he could bear to come to the house of Hades; 11.571 [...] In the Underworld, Odysseus saw the ghost of Minos passing out judgments to those who were seated and standing at the house of Hades; 11.625 [...] In the Underworld, Odysseus saw the ghost of Heracles and the hero told Odysseus how he once had taken Cerberus from the place of Hades into the light of day; 11.627... 11.635 [...] After speaking to Odysseus, the ghost of Heracles returned to the realm of Hades; Odysseus feels genuine fear before he finally leaves the Underworld; he fears that Persephone will send the head of the Gorgon from the house of Hades to attack him; 12.017 [...] After returning to Circe's island, the goddess did not know that Odysseus come from the house of Hades; 12.021 [...] Circe addresses Odysseus and his crew and tells them that most humans only have to go to the house of Hades once but that they will have to return there when they die; 12.383 [...] Helios threatens Zeus that he will go to Hades and shine his light on the dead if Odysseus and his crew are not punished for killing his cattle; 14.156 [...] The disguised Odysseus tells the swineherd, Eumaeus, that he detests the gates of Hades as much as he detests a poor man who lies to gain favour; 14.208 [...] The disguised Odysseus lies to the swineherd, Eumaeus, and says that his father is in the house of Hades; 15.350 [...] The disguised Odysseus asks the swineherd, Eumaeus, if Odysseus' parents are alive or in the house of Hades; 20.208 [...] The cowherd, Philoetius, meets the disguised Odysseus and says that he hopes his master (Odysseus) is not in the house of Hades; 23.252 [...] Odysseus tells his wife, Penelope, about his encounter with the prophet, Tiresias, at the house of Hades; 23.322 [...] Odysseus tells his wife, Penelope, about his encounter with the prophet, Tiresias, at the house of Hades; 24.204 [...] Odysseus tells Penelope about the ghosts of the dead he saw at
Thus, the definition of the area in both cases coincides: on the surface, where the Sirens played, and underground, where Persephone was taken by Pluton-Hades. Here we are encouraged to think also of the Sirens as half-bird and half-woman, who were punished by Persephone for not warning her that she would be kidnapped by Pluton-Hades. It should be mentioned here that one of the reasons of such an ambiguity in their punishment is the fact that, being friends of Persephone, the daughter of Demetra, they failed to prevent her kidnapping. The Sirens themselves told Ulysses, in Book XII, that they knew all things that would come to pass upon the fruitful earth!

Any man [...] goes his way a wiser man,
for we know all the toils that in wide Troy
the Argives and Trojans endured
through the will of the gods

And the truth is that, only those seeing off the dead to Hades could know everything about them, including the dead from this war. So true is this, that Ulysses himself had to go down to Hades to learn about “the news” of that world, because no other way of learning about it existed. It is also quite understandable; the initial hesitation of Ulysses to go underground, and who later tells Circe that, no other ship before him could find the way to the Underground Kingdom.

Showing the way to Hades, Homer mentions the word headland:

When, in your ship, you have now crossed the stream of Oceanus/ where there is a headland and the groves of Persephone/tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit/there beach your ship by the deep eddying Oceanus, but go yourself to the dank house of Hades.

We should remember that in the area where the Sirens were located (on the southern Albanian coast from Himara to Butrint and further to Thesprotia, up to the bay of Ambrakia), there are several headlands.

Ptolemy (II century B.C.) in his work “Geography”, mentions also the headland of Poseidon, situated in the territories of Thesprotia. There are also; the Headland of Tongue near the bay of Vlora, the Headland of Qefali, near the bay of Kakome, the Headland of Gollovec facing Vlora, the Headland of Triport near Narta, as well as the headlands of Lera, St Theodoros, St Demetrios, Alpun-Prato, Niqifor, Kavadon, the gates of Hades; 24.264 [...] Odysseus speaks to his father and makes a reference to the house of Hades.
Panorama, Spinaras and St Demetrios-Suga in Himara and up to Butrint. According to M. Kabo the main morphologic elements of the Himara coast are rocky shores, bays, abysses and pebbly beaches. The headlands of Himara reach from 200 m to 2.5 km into sea. (fig. 13)

Today’s studies also locate Hades in the area of Himara-Çamëri (ex- Thesprotia). Among Albanian archaeological findings one is impressed by the fact that, in the morphology of Apollonian steles, there are vertical types of steles, which do not coincide at all with Greek art, from both the architectural point of view and the iconographic treatment. We may refer here to the stele of the scene “Descent to Hades.” (fig. 14)

In Albanian mythological prose, “the upper world” and “the lower world” are talked about in a natural way. It speaks about “the small brother”, who descends to “the lower world” and then ascends to “the upper world” carried by an eagle that crows and carries him on its wings. Quite interesting is the etymological analysis of the name Hades=ha-and Cerber=qen-var [dog-grave] by A. Kola in the work Language of Gods, as well as the effort of French researchers Eric Fouache and François Quantin in the article “Presentation of geographical reality of the entrance to Hades of Thesprotia” published in 1999, localising the entrance to Hades in the region of Gliqia, on the mountains of Suli.

In favour of the thesis which places the Sirens close to the present-day Albanian shores is also the testimony of Plutarch who, in the legend of the death of Pan, relates that his death was announced

54 “La nature et ses représentations dans l’Antiquite”, France, 1999
56 Part of the Dionysian crowd was also the god Pan, son of Hermes and of the nymph Dneope. Pan who, from birth had goat’s legs and horns and a very long beard. After Prof. A. Uçi, when Dionysus accompanied Panin with goat’s legs to Olympus, gods laughed at him. The divinity Pan is known as protector of
near lake Pelod, the present lake of Butrint. According to Plutarch, from a ship, after having been informed of the death of Pan near the above-mentioned lake, group lamenting was heard, giving the impression that many people were weeping at the same time.

He (Plutarch) writes:

The father of Aemilianus the orator, Epitherses, said that once upon a time in making a voyage to Italy he embarked on a ship carrying freight and many passengers. It was already evening when, near the Echinades Islands, the wind dropped, and the ship drifted near Paxi [this is the name of the islands near Corfu even in the present-day]. Almost everybody was awake, and a good many had not finished their after-dinner wine. Suddenly from the island of Paxi was heard the voice of someone loudly calling Thamus, so that all were amazed. Thamus was an Egyptian pilot, not known by name even to many on board. Twice he was called and made no reply, but the third time he answered; and the caller, raising his voice, said, ‘When you come opposite to Palodes, announce that Great Pan is dead.’ On hearing this, all, said Epitherses, were astounded and reasoned among themselves that it were better to carry out the order than to refuse to meddle and let the matter go. Under the circumstances Thamus made up his mind that, if there should be a breeze, he would sail past and keep quiet, but with no wind and a smooth sea about the place, he would announce what he had heard. So, when he came opposite Palodes, and there was neither wind nor wave, Thamus, from the stern, looking towards the land, said the words as he had heard them: ‘Great Pan is dead.’ Even before he had finished there was a great cry of lamentation, not of one person, but of many, mingled with exclamations of amazement. As many persons were on the vessel, the story was soon spread abroad in Rome...

For us, the relationship between the announcement of the death of Pan and the weeping is clear. We also believe that this has to do with the major role of the Sirens linking them to Hades, and thus, with the weeping for the dead. Nevertheless, the Iso-polyphonic mourning remains the most complete requiem for both the death of the celebrated Pan and for the symbolism implying the end of the times of the Olympic divinities. It is quite impressive that both Homer and Plutarch have almost the same description of the route and the timing when the ship of Ulysses and that of Thamos pass near the location of the Sirens. This is what Homer says:

Meanwhile the well-built ship
speedily came to the island of the two Sirens,

shepherds. In memory of the love for Syringe, Pan created a fife with a sweet sound naming it syringe.
Odyssey and Sirens

for a fair and gentle wind bore her on.
Then quickly the wind ceased
and there was a windless calm,
and a god lulled the waves to sleep.

So Plutarch says:

[…] Thamus made up his mind that if there should be a breeze, he would sail past and keep quiet. But when the vessel came opposite Palodes and there was neither wind nor wave, Thamus, looking toward the land said loudly that the Great Pan was dead.

Regarding the location of the Sirens in the area between Himara and Butrint, another legend – that of the Argonauts – can be used. The journey of the Argonauts included passing by that area. In this particular case Orpheus confronted the music of the Sirens by playing his lyre. It seems as if by chance (lucky or unlucky) that people such as Ulysses and Orpheus, who descended into Hades at different times and remarkably came out alive, as though they had been taught a lesson, had to face the Sirens above ground because death did not make any exception for them.

In the oral tradition, especially that of Himara, we still come across the portrayal of beings similar to the Sirens. In this area, monsters are mentioned, who have a body; half human and half fish. These creatures, half-human and half-fish lived in caves along the seashore. Like the Sirens they were sly and they cried out. If someone approached them, they stood at the entrance of their cave and people ran away terrified.\(^{57}\) According to N. Papeka, in the tradition of Himara, the coastal people held a white belt made of sheep’s wool with nine holes, called *prokozon*, to catch sea jinns. In the case of Ulysses, while passing in front of the Sirens, he held a similar belt keeping him bound fast to the mast. Atheneus (200 B.C.) reminds us that when Illyrians drink, they bind their bellies with wide belts and the more they drink, the more they tighten their belts\(^ {58}\). We should not fail to remember also the undersea sources called “undersea mills”, which are typical along the Himara seashore and appear in the sea causing vortexes.

We have mentioned above the different representations that the Sirens (initially mourning beings like Erinyes) and later looking more

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and more like muses, have suffered. We believe that such changes have influenced the theories as to their location as well. Later, such changes became violent due also to the process followed by the Latins in the collection and publication of all Homeric materials, which, according to Kadare, remained as such even after the fall of Rome. Without any particular reason the location of the Sirens was changed from Hades to the Cimmerian barbarians, neighbours of the Greeks on the Italian shores of Sicily.

It is well known, that years later, Italy, and Southern Italy in particular, was colonised by the Greeks. Regardless of this, because of its economic and cultural development and of its role in the development of Greece itself, everyone has considered Southern Italy as the “Second Greece”. Didn’t great Aeschylus emigrate from Athens to Sicily where he died on the eve of the seventies?

**Variation 4. The Odyssey, as pan-Mediterranean ethnography and folklore**

*Song and tale have no god*

This chapter deals closely with how the Homeric subject has been collected through years into a single text. It is true that ancient Greek art passed from the idea of chaos to the idea of an harmonic world, from cult and adoration of nature to the cult of the human being, from the idea of destiny to the idea of freedom, from the idea of god to the idea of man glorified as god, from enigmatic figures to determined and individualised figures. Four or five centuries separate Homer from his stories. The “Iliad” and the Odyssey represent the first written historic documents describing the bravery of the pre-Hellens in this epoch. It is strongly emphasised that the Odyssey was written and translated long after the Iliad, and it required some 150 years melding with the Greek of the Odyssey. It is correct to consider

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59 Among works of painters that have given an image of the Sirens resembling Muses: there should be mentioned William Etty (1787-1849), Theodor Van Thulden (1601-1669), Nicolas Mignard 1607, Ogilby 1669, Bernard Picart 1730, Johna Flaxman 1805, Charles Edward Boutibone 1883, Herbert James Droper 1909, Pablo Pikaso etc. Quite significant is the musical description of the Sirens in the musical work “La Mer” of Claude Debussy.

60 Uçi, Alfred, *Mitologia, folklori, letërsia*, Tiranë, 1982, p. 100. Study quoted
Homer as the most prominent representative of Apollonian art, and a mirror of the epoch and people that shaped the Olympic Pantheon. It coincides also with the opinion of other researchers, both foreign and Albanian.

Lamartine, answering a letter of De Rada (1814-1903), admitted that, after reading the Albanian verses translated into Italian, he appraised them and considered that the poetry originated from Albanian shores, implying that it was from (after M. Frashëri) Homer. Dh. Kamarda (1821-1882) has revealed similarities between mountain Brides and the Nereids of the Greeks, horses that speak and the immortal horses described by Homer; Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) asserts that Homer can be found in names in present day Albanian territories, e.g.: Aqilehtin-Achilles and, referring to Herodotus, he claims that words of faith and divinities have their roots in the Albanian language (geg dialects) such as: Teta-Deti [sea]; Aphrodite-Afërdira; Diana-Hanë [moon]. Furthermore, the researcher D`Angeli, referring to the *Odyssey*, focuses among other things on the etymology of the word “Outi”, which has been translated as “nobody,” regarding the name Ulysses utters to Polyphemus to identify himself. For D’Angeli this word coincides with the Pelagic or Albanian word īti = tëndi [yours], in the meaning that still exists in Albania. The answer īti-yyi-tëndi, given to the questions: “Who betrayed you? Who did harm to you?” have the same meaning as those in the case of Ulysses.

Regardless of the thousands of years that separate us from the time of Homer and Homer’s followers, the writer and researcher Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975) during his travels in Northern Albania, in a place called Krasniqë, mentions the brotherhood, Qorrat e Kolgecajve [The Blind ones of Kolgecaj], who were a real folk song ‘mill’. Naturally none of them was blind, but people used to call them blind because of the trend from Homeric times that assumed that poets were beggars and also blind. In this regard, he has also noted the similarity in the

63 See also Frashëri, Mehdi, *Kujtime të viteve 1913-1933*, Tiranë, 2005, p. 39. Study quoted
way that Albanian anonymous rhapsodists render a free form to the common Balkan epic material, by creating once again a new subject in accordance with their soul and taste.

According to Çabej “…the localisation of the myth of Ulysses in Ithaca means that Ulysses is rather a hero of Northern Greece or of a territory that has been in permanent contact with the Illyrian-Albanian tribes.” This assertion is readily acceptable considering the geography of the journey of Ulysses and the places with which he was acquainted and is frequently quoted by researchers. It is now clear that the places Ulysses visited include; Ismara in Turkey, Lotophages in Northern Africa, Circe in Italy, Lestrigons in Corsica, Eolin in Malta, Calypso in Spain, etc. His spending most of the time on the water and very little on the land is affirmed in the following lines:

Poseidon, the earth-shaker
so astoundingly willed his pain,
making waves up and down
giving no chance to reach his native land.
So was my voyage
by ship, with many friends,
sailing on the wild sea,
towards unknown peoples.

Various researchers have observed that Homeric poetry originates from ancient legends and songs, transmitted by oral folk traditions. In support of this assertion we quote some other approaches based on the colourful Albanian folkloric heritage.

1. In Book I of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus, the son of Penelope, says to his mother regarding the sorrow that “It is not minstrels that are to blamed.” This assertion seems to be in the same vein as lines in the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini, article 1200 which says that: “The go-between is not to blame.”

And a herald put the beautiful lyre
in the hands of Phemius,
who sang among the suitors?
under compulsion;
and he struck the chords in prelude
on his sweet lyre.
For them the famous minstrel was singing,

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and they sat in silence, listening.
And he sang of the return of the Achaeans,
the woeful return from Troy
which Pallace Athene laid upon them.

This is also all confirmed in Book XXII of the *Odyssey* where the
minstrel Phemius was the only one left alive after the revenge of
Ulysses:

Now the minstrel, son of Terpes,
was still seeking to escape black fate,
namely Phemius, who sang perforce
among the suitors.
He stood with the clear-toned lyre in his hands
near the postern door and he was divided in mind… (fig. 15)

2. A quite evident similarity with regard to the passage of Ulysses
near the Sirens is found in the *Cikli i Kreshnikëve* [The Cycle of
Knights], in the epic poem *Ora e Bjeshkës* [Ora of the Alpine Pasture]67.
As in the case of the Sirens who killed any mariner passing near their
island, in the epic poem *Ora e Bjeshkës*, Ora, the mountain wood
nymph68 petrified any travellers in the alps with her singing. This is
how Muji cautions his 300 wedding guests when they are sent to get
the bride:

Do you get it, told he the guests,
those alps you have to reach,
no singing, no howling you need,
for a nymph there is,
and if you dare to sing
all of you stones will become
and nobody can save you.
Do you get it, do you?

We shall quote below the advice that Circe69 gives to Ulysses,
regarding the moment when he and his comrades would pass near the

68 The Albanian mythological figures-hyjneshat of the Albanian mountains.
According to *Fjalori enciklopedik*: the strong cult of “Zana” in Albania and
throughout the Ballkans, leads us to believe that in this case we have to deal with
local pre-Greek goddesses. F.Konica conseders Zanas as friends of Albania. Other
Albanian mythological figures like *shtojzovallet* and *jashtësmet* are included also in this
category.
island of the Sirens, and which is quite similar to the caution of Muji to the wedding guests:

And now listen to what I shall tell you,
ad a god shall himself bring it to your mind.
First you will come to the Sirens,
Who beguile all men who come to them.
Whoever in ignorance draws near to them,
and hears the Siren’s voice,
his wife and little children never stand beside him
and rejoice at his homecoming;
instead the Sirens beguile him with their clear-toned song,
as they sit in a meadow and about them
is a great heap of bones of mouldering men
and round the bones the skin is shivering.
But row past them.

The Ora of the Alpine Pasture, after petrifying the careless wedding guests who had forgotten the caution of Muji, took the bride hostage. Muji revealed through his wife that the power of the Ora was contained within a dove and only after catching and killing the dove could he release his comrades from petrifaction. Like the Sirens, the Oras-Nymphs were two or three in number. We also come across them in the song “The Marriage of Muji”:

Elder nymph sings up the mountain
Younger nymph sings on the cliff,
hand in hand both of them:
Nymphs we are, nymphs will be,
Word of honour, swear we!
Woman a woman and nymph a nymph,
nymph a sun, woman a moon:
poor wretch who woman trusts!

According to Jokli, the name “Zana” comes from Latin: Diana. While others are of the opinion that “Zana” comes from the name za=zana, [voice]. In the North it is pronounced Zana, in the South Zëna. Çabej believes that Zana is the voice of nature and human conscience. Usually “Zana of the mountain” is a girl from the mountains with supernatural powers, and with particular abilities in singing and dancing. According to R. Sokoli, the name itself, Zana or Shtojzavalle [nymph, beautiful maiden], of such transparent creatures made of light and sounds and dance movements, is significant. They have children that they rock, that play instruments, and sing and dance People have the saying: “Sing like the mountain Zana” (fig. 17).
Since Zanas go out at night, they are also called “The Blessed of the Night”. Although there is no recorded evidence as to the tunes of their songs, “mountain Zanas” are also considered as the inspiration for Albanian rhapsodists when they are playing their lutes or the karaduzen and, in this case, they can be likened to the Greek Muse of music and poetry, Evterpi, who inspired singers of ancient times. We frequently come across references to mountain Zanas in Albanian epic rhapsodies accompanied by the lute. When one of her guardians is killed, Zana starts mourning as a mother for her son. Ernest Koliqi\textsuperscript{70} has earlier noticed the relationship between the Cycle of Knights and the epic of Ulysses. He writes:

he sang that night about an adventure of Halili, which was surprisingly similar to the Homeric motive of Penelope of Prochos. A girl ruined her father by not accepting to choose a bridegroom among 300 suitors, who were enjoying their long anticipation in her father’s house by being richly entertained. At last she comes before the guests and promises to become engaged to the man who will take revenge on the person who killed her brother. But the killer was a daring man and only Halili was able to win the duel and marry the girl.

It has been accepted that both the Sirens and the Muses have similarities with the Oras of the Alpine Pasture. According to Grimberg,\textsuperscript{71} muses have always been considered as divinities of the mountains and they were supposed to live on peaks such as the Helicon or the Pindus in Northern Greece, on the border with Southern Albania near Përmet. Zef Jubani\textsuperscript{72} (1818-1880), referring also to G. Hahn, asserted that the Albanians bestowed to the god of music, the city of Apollonia where the inhabitants of those areas are still called Myzeqarë, meaning having an aptitude for music. The weight and importance of muses in the arts of antiquity has been great. The \textit{Odyssey} and “Iliad” start with verses: \textit{Sing, Muse}. According to Naim Frashëri: \textit{“Apollo was the first Muse, which were nine, with each one being a master of something or a teacher”}. Muses were all daughters of Zeus and of the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne. (Among them: Calliope—muse of epic poetry, Melpomene—muse of tragedy, Euterpe—muse of

\textsuperscript{70} Koliqi, Ernest, \textit{Vepra}, 4, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 23-24. Study quoted
lyric poetry and music, Erato—muse of lyric poetry and mime, Talia—muse of comedy, Terpsichore—muse of dance, Klio—muse of history, Urania—muse of astronomy, Polymnia—muse of sacred song and oratory.

While one of the nine muses, Euterpe, represented lyric poetry and music, another daughter of Zeus, the muse Calliope, inspired ancient rhapsodies before singing epics. (fig. 18)

3. In Book XII, when Circe cautions Ulysses, she mentions among other things the passage of Odysseus and his comrades to the island of Trinacia, where the Sun’s droves of cows and sheep pastured. Circe says that there were seven herds of sheep and seven herds of healthy cows survived with no births or deaths. Two goddesses, Phaethusa and Lampetia guarded them. Circe says that such herds should not be touched and that it was on this condition that Ulysses and his comrades could return to Ithaca safely. Otherwise his ships would be destroyed and they would die.

Herodotus73 (484-425 B.C.), in his work Historiae, in Book IX, describes a similar story that happened in the city of Apollonia. According to him, in Apollonia there are sheeps dedicated to the Sun; they pasture near the river Aoo-Vjosa, which springs from the mountain Lakmon and traverses the territory of Apollonia, flowing into the sea near Oricos (according to Scymni CHII74, Oricos was a city built by Euboeans, upon their return from Troy). As in the “Odyssey”, the sheep were savaged, not by people, but by wolfs and for this the Apollonians punished their guard Evenios by blinding him; his fault was that, instead of guarding the sheep, he was sleeping. Years later Aristotle (384-322), in his work De Animalum Historia, Book III, 20.522, b writes about the cows of Epirus in particular, as selected kinds of animals. He mentions also large sheep called Pyrrhic, after the name of king Pyrrhus.

Within the framework of this Variation of “The Odyssey and the Sirens…”, we cannot fail to mention the survey related to the musical legend, which strives to explain the emergence of the city of Durrës, the ancient Epidamnus.75 Anna Comnena in her book Alexiad, asserts

74 See Ilirët dhe Iliria tek autorët antikë, Tiranë, 2002, p. 73.
that Durrës was re-built in ancient times by Amphion and Zethus. As it is known, the twin brothers Dioskuri of Thebes, were illegitimate sons of Zeus and Antiope was their mother. Amphion was the king of Thebes and a noted musician. They say that his power was so great that he built the walls of the town only by the might of his lyre. We are interested here mostly in the fact that Zethus, his brother, had participated in the famous expedition of the Argonauts and was witness to the confrontation between Orpheus and the Sirens, long before Ulysses was there. It is said that Zethus had wings, and was thus able to fly. (figs. 19-20)

**Variation 5. Prophecy of Tiresias and the last voyage of Ulysses**

Regardless of the fact that the *Odyssey* is an epic-legendary poem and reading through it is rather difficult to understand the geography of the places mentioned, we believe that in some cases some general geographic notions linked with the structure of the work itself, can be identified. Among them we consider very important the prophecy of the shadow of Tiresias, the fortune teller of Thebes. Here is how it is described in Book XI, when Ulysses is being addressed:

But when you have slain the suitors in your halls,  
whether by guile or openly with the sharp sword,  
then go abroad, taking shapely oar  
until you come to men that know nothing of the sea  
and eat their food unmixed with salt,  
who in fact know nothing of ships with ruddy cheeks, or of shapely oars,  
which are a vessel’s wings.  
And I will show you a most certain sign,  
Which will not escape you:  
When another wayfarer, on meeting you,  
shall say that you have a winnowing fan  
on your stout shoulder,  
then fix in the earth your shapely oar  
and make handsome offerings  
to the lord Poseidon – a ram and a bull,  
and a boar that mates with sows,  
and depart for your home  
and offer sacrifices  
to the immortal gods who hold broad heaven,  
to each one in due order.  
And death shall come to you away from the sea,
The gentlest imaginable, that shall lay you low
when you are overcome with sleek old age,
and your people shall be dwelling
in prosperity around you.
This is the truth that I tell you.

Ulysses will tell the same story to Penelope, as we see in Book XXIII:

Tiresias bade me go forth,
To a great many cities of men,
carrying a shapely oar in my hands,
till I should come to men
that know nothing of the sea,
and eat their food unmixed with salt,
who in fact know nothing of ships with purple cheeks,
or of shapely oars which are a vessel’s wings.

Evidence from the work Urhibus et Populis by Stephen of Byzantium (VI c. A.D.), shows that in the depth of mountains of Epirus, Ulysses, fulfilling the instructions of the oracle Tiresias, built the city of Bunima and offered to Poseidon a ram, a bull and a boar near Trampyas, at the place where people did not know the sea. The above is confirmed also by Apollodoros (180-109 B.C.), in his work Bibliotheca, where he writes: Ulysses, after making offerings to Hades, Persephone and Tiresias, walked through Epirus and reached Thesprotians and, following the advice of the oracle Tiresias, made offerings to Poseidon and eased his anger.

Making an effort to shed light on the issue of the location of places visited by Ulysses and taking into consideration the etymology of names, we would like to remember that, in the Albanian language, the root of word Bunima is bun, buni, bune, bunet, means a small hut covered with wood and leaves, erected by herders of dairy farms in summer pastures. Another meaning of this word is a house built with dry walls and lime. The other word bunishtë means a diary farm in the alps, where herders built bunet during the migration of animals to their summer pastures. Such a description of the environment is out of the context of a sea scene, it represents the infrastructure of people living in the mountains, who know neither salt nor sea. Regarding the word

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76 Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë, Tiranë, 2002, p. 76. Study quoted
77 Fjalor i gjuhës së sotme shqipe, Tiranë, 1980, p. 197.
Trampyas, we would like to emphasize that Prof. E. Çabej\textsuperscript{78} classifies the word \textit{tram, tramtë} as, exchange, illustrating it with the expression \textit{bëjmë tram}, meaning exchanging one item for another item. (i.e.: bartering) It is likely that the city of Trampyas represents symbolically the location where the word and the goods might take different meanings, i.e. where the oar of Ulysses’ vessel is called also a spade for grain. Isn’t this a sign that Ulysses fixes the oar in the earth and makes handsome offerings to Poseidon?

In relation to this issue we should note that Ulysses, in accomplishing the prophecy of Tiresias, traversed non-Greek mountainous territories. Considered quite early by Çabej as a hero of Northern Greece, thus of a country in permanent contact with Illyrian-Albanian tribes, Ulysses is believed to have certainly known with and to have used the common Pellasgic language of those areas and of Epirus in particular.

\textbf{Epilogue}

Polyphony is still one of the miracles created by man for his life and his death. Based on Mediterranean Iso-polyphony and traditional songs, the Byzantine liturgy and melurgy lamented and still lament the death of Christ and his revival as well. By with polyphony, J. S. Bach accomplished the real evolution in music reaching its climax with the comprehensive polyphony of Ligeti in the XX century. Polyphony will always remain a magic song of the Sirens or a \textit{kaba} on the clarinet, performed by Master Laver Bariu, which not everyone will have the chance to listen to even once during the voyage to eternity.

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\textsuperscript{78} Çabej, Eqrem, \textit{Studime gjubësore}, Prishtinë, 1976, p. 191.
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The *Regierungsberater* in Damascus.  
The expertise of the German Democratic Republic in Syrian state-building: 1965-1972

By Massimiliano TRENTIN*

**Summary**

The article investigates the activities of the economic experts and political advisors from East Germany working in Syria from 1965 to 1972. The German Democratic Republic actively supported the different Ba’thist leaderships that came into power since the early Sixties and offered its expertise with regard to economic and administrative reforms. In the Cold War struggle throughout the so called Third World, the GDR focused on Syria in order to gain diplomatic legitimacy, access to domestic market as well as to drive the Arab country along the “Non-Capitalist Road” to development. Far from introducing any major element of the GDR-style socialism, the Regierungsberater contributed toward reforming some of the central state institutions and they eventually strengthened the Ba’thist rule over Syria. However, the East German engagement was also deeply affected by domestic and regional dynamics and stand as a major case-study for the influence which external actors may have in reform-projects in Syria.

**Keywords**: German Democratic Republic, Ba’thist Party, Syria, Regierungsberater, al Infitāḥ

1. **Introduction**

When Syria gained independence in 1946, numerous debates arose over which models should be taken as a suitable reference for domestic development, and many political élites referred to the ideological framework of *modernity*.¹ In harsh contrast with their conservative counterparts, the emerging radical nationalists pressed for a more equal redistribution of wealth, as they increasingly opened their political constituencies to rural peasants and industrial workers. Even though they did not adhere to marxism and they often disputed with the Arab Communists, the Ba’thist leaders tried to elaborate an

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¹ Westad 2005, 86, 97; Rist 1996, 155-180; and Engerman 2003. Except for names of cities and states, the transliteration of Arabic words follows the Scientific Transcription System.
original theory which would couple liberalism and socialism in the context of Arab culture and politics. Once they got in power in 1963, they had to face the question of state-building and they conceived it both as the main engine for rapid industrial growth and as a powerful tool to marginalize opposition forces. Still struggling to reform the state institutions they inherited from the late Ottoman era and the French Mandate, they turned to Moscow and East Berlin as points of reference for economic and political modernization: actually, the bipolar competition for “guns, hearts and minds” provided a useful alternative for those forces locked in the struggle against Israel and its western allies.\(^2\) This was the case, too, for the particular Cold War between the two German Republics established after World War II: the German Democratic Republic’s (GDR) quest for international recognition and the Federal Republic of Germany’s (FRG) efforts to contain it.\(^3\) The Arab nationalist leaders did not think twice about exploiting such a conflict, which was seen more as an opportunity rather than a problem. “Tough” and selective Arab negotiators proved successful in forcing bipolar champions to respond to their demands and to commit into local or regional politics, if those respective champions wanted to preserve or gain influence; at least, in as far as both camps could sustain the costs and burdens of massive foreign interventions.

The rise in power of the Ba’th Party in 1963 favoured the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in transferring its organizational models for state-building in Syria. From 1965 to 1972 the GDR enjoyed quite a high status in Syria and sent several advisors both at technical and ministerial levels: most of their suggestions were later translated into law and included the enhancement of the Council of Ministers, the establishment of the State Planning Commission, the Central Statistic Bureau, the improvement of the Ministry of Finance, as well as those of Industry and Economy. All their efforts aimed at consolidating and centralizing state power (Staatsmacht) and setting up a more consistent framework for state interventions both in the economy and in social services. However, their contributions were deeply affected by Syrian domestic dynamics: the nationalizations in 1965, the June 1967 defeat, the izdiwāğya al sultah (power dualism) and the eventual success of

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\(^2\) See Tibi 1997; and al Malek 1970.

\(^3\) See Gray 2003.
Hafiz al Assad and his “Corrective Movement”. The Syrian Ba’th Party has always been highly fragmented and such divisions translated into different visions and processes of achieving modernization. For the time being, state-building and industrial growth featured the core of their of their efforts, whereas the centralization of power and the priority attached to political rationality were their major strategies.

1.1 The Theory of the Non-Capitalist Road to Development

The German Democratic Republic played a distinct role in international politics. Excluded from any direct military engagement abroad, it focused foreign intervention on technological and capital transfer and vocational training for political and administrative elites. Such issues merited great attention from Arab leaders who were struggling to set up viable economies and strong state institutions. East Germany was an industrial country with a high reliance on technological progress, though at a less advanced level compared with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The GDR’s partnerships offered a model of development which was based on its own experience as well as its political and economic interests in the region. Particularly in the Fifties and Sixties of the XX Century, the GDR leadership gave priority to political and diplomatic goals as far as its activities in the so called Third World were concerned. The GDR economy was heavily anchored in the socialist bloc, whereas its relations with the Non Aligned states were still marginal at that time. East-Berlin decided to use the growing economic and technological leverage to serve its quest for diplomatic recognition. However, since the late Sixties and particularly after the Recognition Agreement with the FRG in 1972, foreign trade was conceived and conducted according to more sound economic and financial considerations. Only in the Eighties, the relations between foreign economics and diplomacy reversed and politics were to serve the dire financial needs of the GDR.4

As juniorpartner of the Soviet Union, the GDR leadership shared the latter’s overall policy towards both the capitalist camp and the so called Third World. In particular, it agreed with the theory of the Non Capitalist Road to development (NCR), promoted by Moscow in 1961.

4 Wippel 1996, 3-6, 28; Gray 2003, 53, 175; see also Winter 2005; and Cleveland, 2000.
This tried to elaborate a coherent approach to the problems and dilemmas concerning development and socialism which affected left-wing and progressive forces in non-industrialized countries: actually, the NCR tried to match the marxist theory of socialism as the ultimate successor of industrial capitalism with the development of socialist regimes in countries far less industrialized by comparison with the European ones; moreover, the NCR was supposed to provide a theoretical and practical tool for the assertive foreign policy of the socialist camp in the early Sixties, as well as for its current and potential partners in developing countries.5

Similar to the W.W. Rostow Non-Communist Manifesto, the NCR held an historicist theoretical approach to development, whose final outcome would be the industrial civilization as experienced by the Soviet-led socialist camp: time and development could not but be linear, as the society was to move from tradition to modernity.6 The NCR model was conceived as a road-map to independence and socialism for those “progressive” forces of the National Liberation Movements which had seized power. Above all, it advocated the primacy of politics over economics, since the latter was the main “battlefield” for contending forces and, as such, the historical result of social struggle. The centralization of the state administrative and coercitive apparatus functioned first to consolidate the control of National Liberation forces over society, in order to face “conservative” opponents. The latter would have to be marginalized because their ties to western imperialism would thwart social reforms as well as drain national resources away from the country. The state would have to be strengthened to become the main agent for domestic capital accumulation and industrialization: actually, it was supposed to be the best engine to match the efficient use of scarce resources with equitable patterns of wealth redistribution. Private entrepreneurship had to survive, but more as functional to the public sector, rather than as a driving force for growth. Developing states should first protect domestic industry and only at a later stage should they be integrated.

5 See Graf 1989; and Arrighi 1982, 57.

6 Arrighi, Silver 2003, 243. For the debate over the linkage between theories of modernization, development and politics, see Engerman (2003), Berger (2004), Gilman (2007) and Tomba (2008). As far as the Middle East is concerned, see the excellent analysis of Citino 2008 about the US development policy, as well as Lutsky (1975) for a marxist approach to the history of the Arab States.
into the world market: that is, only when their bargaining power was strong enough to face foreign competition. The socialist states could grant bilateral cooperation through long-term credits, technological transfer and professional training, mostly on the basis of “buy-back” and clearing agreements.7

East Germany adopted the Non Capitalist Road to development because of both political agreement and economic convenience. On the one side, the SED leadership saw the decolonization process as a major opportunity to extend socialism all over the world: the eventual political and economic orientation of the newly independent states would shape the balance of forces between the socialist and capitalist camps because it would heavily condition their respective economic viabilities in the long run. Since the political balance of forces inside the Third World was far from being as consolidated as in Europe or in Far Asia, the GDR and its socialist allies should support the “progressive” and “nationalist” leaderships in their struggle for independence and sovereignty. Only through a gradual and partial delinkage of national economies and political leaderships from Western influence, those states could better enhance their resources and finally turn to socialism or, at least, provide the socialist camp with a viable partnership and market. On the other hand, since 1963-1964 the GDR experienced fast rates of industrial and agricultural growth, which enhanced projects for further technological specialization and the gradual integration of the GDR economy into the world market. However, its trade mainly occurred through state firms and agencies, so that the expansion of the state sector in the recipient partner would match with the GDR preference for long-term agreements, stability in prices, trade and finance.8

Syria was one of the few countries which hosted the GDR advisors for a considerable length of time and used their consultancy to reform central and local government institutions. According to both East Berlin and Damascus, the Regierungsberater would provide the theoretical and practical experience to reform Syrian state institutions

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7 Graf 1989, 27-52. Most of the payment agreements were based on “buy-back” and clearing deals: they forestalled a partial or total repayment in the form of resultant products stemming from “complete plants” which had been installed with the related credits. Despite hard pressures from the GDR to pay in hard currency since 1967, Syria always succeeded in holding on with the clearing system.

both at central and local levels: actually, that intended to support the Ba’thist projects to concentrate power in a new state based on ideology and collective party institutions. As such, the so called Regierungsberater were one the most important channels through which the SED leadership could export its institutional experience abroad, as well as to get the international legitimacy needed to face the containment policy of its bitter rival, West Germany.

1.2 Goals and Structures of the GDR Technical Assistance in Syria

The German Democratic Republic structured its Foreign Economic Relations on foreign trade and the Wirtschaftliche und Technische Zusammenarbeit (WTZ, Economic and Technical Cooperation). The latter stood for the western “Aid to development” toward the so called Third World Countries. The WTZ was meant to underline the equal and cooperative relationship between Berlin and the recipient partner: the official aim was to support its sovereign independence and to relieve it from the burden of international asymmetry in economics and politics. Nevertheless, the boundaries between foreign trade and WTZ were not clearly defined at all and increasingly overlapped to serve the economic and political interests of the GDR.9

One peculiar feature of the GDR presence in Syria was the dispatching of the so called Regierungsberater: a group of advisors which worked in the central government in Damascus. These experts enjoyed a particular status, which was quite different from other personnel working in the context of the WTZ. In summer 1968, Otto Winzer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, wrote to his colleague Horst Sölle, Minister of the Economy, in order to set up a more consistent framework for the coordination of the Regierungsberater’s activities:

Als Regierungsberater gelten alle in Entwicklungsländer entsandte Kader auf verschiedensten Gebieten, wenn sie in ihrer Tätigkeit mit beratenden Charakter in ausländischen, staatlichen, zentralen Dienststellen tätig sind und ihr Aufgabengebiet von gesamtstaatlicher Bedeutung ist.10


10 “The Regierungsberater in Developing countries are the cadres from different sectors, whose activities in the foreign state and central administrative institutions have a consulting feature and their works are of nation-wide significance”,
In Berlin, the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade held responsibility for the coordination and activities of the technical experts sent in the context of the WTZ, whereas the Regierungsberater answered directly to the Foreign Ministry. Actually, their presence implied a close political relationship between the GDR and the host country; their activities were highly scrutinized by the leaders of the SED Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands), in particular by the Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, which was responsible for the external relations of the Party.11

In Syria, the Regierungsberater enjoyed diplomatic immunity and they worked under the tutorship of the different Syrian Ministers they cooperated with; the ultimate responsibility for their activities rested with the Syrian President of the Council of Ministers. The Regierungsberater answered directly to one coordinator (Leiter), who held responsibility for monitoring their work as well as to give them a unitary orientation: usually, he worked in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. As far as any political aspect of their activities was concerned, they answered to the GDR Consul General and later to their Ambassador in Syria. The latter nominated an official who got in touch with the Coordinator and collected any information which could be useful for diplomatic and economic issues.

After the radicalization of domestic politics, the so called “radical” factions of the Party took the upper hand in October 1965 with the new Government led by Yūsuf al Z’ayyin: its Socialist Transformation program aimed at centralizing the state institutions as well as to reform Syrian society through the political mobilization and mass organisations. In his speech to the National Council, the 25 October 1965, the same al Z’ayyin openly made an argument for the cooperation with the socialist states:

Er (Dr. Z’ayyin) hob den Mangel an Technikern und das Überangebot an Nichttechnikern hervor. Auch fehlte es an Verantwortungsbewusstsein,
During his first preliminary trip to Damascus in November 1965, Klaus Sorgenicht met with President Z’ayyin: according to him, Syria still suffered from the heritage of the Turkish dominance and French colonialism; the state structure had not changed since 1946 and all attempts to reform it just vanished or never achieved any continuity; activity in the Ministries still depended on individual senior officials, who usually banked on clientelism and personal friendship; the very same educational system did not provide any competence except for lawyers, and the few cadres they had were often appointed in roles not suited to their competence. For the new Syrian Prime Minister, “Das Gesamtsystem des Staatsaufbaues und der staatliche Leitung von oben nach unten” (the whole system of state building and the state top-down decision-making process) should be the main pillar of national reform: that implied the expansion of state power and control over society “zum Hauptinstrument des sozialistischen Aufbaues” (“as the main instrument for socialist building”); the functional training of cadres to the new state institutions; the reform of local autonomies and the related institutions; a new definition of the relationship between the Party and the state. Eventually, he related to referred to the German Democratic Republic as a useful point of reference, thanks to its own experience and competence:

Ich bitte Sie, ihre Erfahrungen in die Köpfe dieser Leute einzupflanzen, damit sie alles wissen, wenn sie weggehen.13

During one of his first meetings with the State Minister Khānī in October 1967, the first coordinator of the Regierungsberater mission, Doctor. Albrecht, explained that:

12 “He (Dr. al Z’ayyin) stressed the lack of technicians and the overabundance of non-technicians. Also these lacked the sense of responsibility, discipline and initiative. The presence of advisors and experts especially from the socialist states would be much more useful for the government”, PAAA B34IB6, 202, Bericht Nr. 688/65, Regierungserklärung vor dem Syrischen Nationalrat, SIBRD Damaskus an AA, October 25, 1965, Pfeiffer.

13 “I kindly ask you to introduce your experience into the heads of Syrian people, so that they know exactly where they are heading for when you are leaving”, Sampo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Niederschrift Nr. 2, Gespräch mit dem Ministerpräsidenten Dr. Yūsuf al Z’ayyin, GK der DDR in der SAR an ZK der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, November 25, 1965, Sorgenicht.
With certainty, that was a huge task, and the SED leadership was well aware of the risks of such an entanglement in Syrian politics: actually, the reform state was far from a politically neutral issue and the Ba’thist regime still suffered from a lack of legitimacy and organized constituencies. For such reasons, the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Gerhard Weiss, recommended the Consul General of the GDR in Damascus to handle the activities of the Regierungsberater with extreme caution and prudence:


14 “Our main task is the organization and the development of the leading and executive powers of the state: a unitary guide for the activities of the different ministries and in particular for the close cooperation among the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Bericht, Die Arbeit der Beratergruppe beim Ministerrat der SAR, GK der DDR in der SAR an ZK der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, October 14, 1967, Albrecht. See also, MfAA/C 527/73, Bericht über die Arbeit der Regierungsberater der DDR beim Staatsapparat in Syrien, Grunert und Albrecht an Stellv. des Ministers, Dr. Weiss, GK der DDR in der SAR, November 11, 1967.
If the reform and centralization of state power were considered a prerequisite for modernization, its political aspects carried as much importance as the economic ones. For both the SED and Ba’th Party, the state was the main tool to secure the monopoly of power in their respective countries. As was the case in the GDR, the Ba’th Party and all other “national progressive” forces should take control of administrative institutions and as well as of the main productive activities: only by eliminating the “conservative” or opposition members inside the state, could the Party secure an effective and unitary leadership on reforms and modernization processes. Moreover, the Ba’th Party would make explicit its presence and role in the army and in state administration, and create the related official Party cellules.16

15 “In particular, you must follow the advice of Comrade Stoph: the activities should have a consultancy feature and the advisors should not assume any state executive function. […] In order to let them elaborate their own proposals, the comrades should act as advisors and they will influence their Syrian partners through the representation of the development path of our country […] We might show our positive as well as negative experiences, so that they could work out the suitable solution for the current stage of development in Syria. […] The structure as well as the division of labor of the different Ministries can be handed over but with the explicit mention that they fulfil the specific development of our state and the state of the GDR economy. The Syrian requests for proposals for their state-building should not be accepted. Once they get explained the working methods of our Institutions, it is up the Syrians to elaborate the most suitable for them. When the Syrian partners submit their proposals, comrades could make comments on them. On Syrian legislative drafts, comrades could take a position only orally and always in connection with the GDR experience; whereas, advice should be handed over only as personal opinion”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20 874, Kurzprotokoll, Über eine Beratung beim Genossen Dr. Weiss am 30.12.1965, MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten an Stellv. des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der DDR, Dr. G. Weiss, Mitteilcr: GK der DDR in der SAR, Generalkonsul Grunert und Genossen Sorgenicht, December 31, 1965.

16 Since since mid-1965, the SED leadership held regular meetings with the Ba’th Party. For the exchange of delegations between the SED and the Syrian Ba’th Party, see Sapmo-Barchiv, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, DY 30 A2/20 Bände 381, 871-876. For the relations between the respective Trade Unions, see Abteilung Internationale Verbindung der FDGB, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY 34 Bände 4173, 7959, 7963, 7965, 7974, 7976, 7983, 14028, 14194, 14195. For the relations among the GDR and Syrian Youth organizations, see Sapmo-Barchiv, Abteilung
The analysis of the activities of the GDR’s Regierungsberater cannot lay outside Syrian politics. Far from being just technical issues, state-building reforms constituted a “hot” and controversial issue for domestic debates and power-struggles. With certainty, their proposals found an audience much wider than the Ba’thists and often proved suitable both for liberal and radical forces: the rationalization and empowerment of state activities was not an exclusive feature of the GDR nor of the socialist countries. However, the Regierungsberater were deeply affected by the unstable and changing balance of forces inside Syria and the Ba’thist regime. For such a reason, their contribution can be better appreciated by connecting the chronology of their activities with the contemporary Syrian one. The engagement of the GDR in Syrian reforms started in the summer-autumn 1965 and came to a conclusion in late autumn 1972.


The Ba’th Party grasped power by a military coup d’État on March 8, 1963. The Ba’thist leadership overthrew the government led by the so called “secessionists”, that is the conservative and liberal forces who rebelled against the Syrian merger with Egypt in the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) and the rule of Ġamāl ‘abd al Nāssir.

The very same Ba’thist leadership had suffered from the authoritarian rule of al Nāssir over the Syrian “province” and such a failure led to an overall reappraisal of their Pan-Arab projects. The Party leadership was still in the hands of the so called old guard or moderates, such as the funding fathers Michel ‘Aflaq and Salāh al Dīn al Bīṭār, who strongly advocated for a Pan-Arab unitary project. They held a more liberal approach and favoured a pragmatic attitude towards the opposition: they thought they could not rule and reform the country without the consent of the Syrian majority, as well as without some sort of cooperation with the neighbouring regimes, and Nasser first of all. Quite differently, the rank-and-files and especially the military members gave priority to the control of the Syrian “region”, as the first step or bulwark from which to unify the “Arab

homeland”. The regionalist faction gathered up most Ba’thists who were sympathetic to socialist ideas and programs, as being experimented in the socialist camp and in other Non-aligned states. They polemically opposed Nasser and his “hegemonic, conservative attitudes” and favoured a confrontational approach vis à vis the opposition forces: on the whole, according to them, Pan-Arab unity could not but be socialist and forged in the standing political struggle against conservative and imperialist forces.

The first two years of the Ba’thist rule over Syria were characterized by a sharp conflict between the regime and the opposition forces: the latter were a heterogeneous coalition of liberals, conservative political leaders linked to big landlords, urban merchants, as well as the Islamists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. They all shared a resolute opposition to the rhetoric and programs of the Ba’th Party and its allies: they accused them of being “puppets of Moscow”, to risk destroying the traditional values of Muslim society and to open the country to atheism and “foreign” cultures.

One major challenge the Ba’thist governments had to face was the lack of financial and economic resources. Much property and capital was still in the hands of private owners, namely big landlords and urban merchants, who sharply opposed the regime. Since March 1963, these businesses started to expatriate capital and economic activities to neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan or Europe, as well as to boycott deals with state institutions or public services. On May 2, 1963, the Government nationalized all the credit institutes of the country, in order to stop the capital outflow, and it laid the ground to build the state-controlled SIMEX (Syrian Import-Export) which would manage foreign trade for the state sector: in fact, chronic shortages of foreign currency hit primarily the state sector, which had halted most of its contracts. In order to obtain other resources, the Ba’thist

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17 Devlin 1976, 218, 223, 291

18 Another line of fracture inside the Ba’thist regime concerned the civilian and military members: the latter held the ultimate power, since the Party and the regime still did not have any large and organized constituency. However, this division should not be overestimated, since military officials split along political or clientelist lines, too, (Samarbakhsh 1978, 16, 68).

19 Lobmeyer 1995, 172, 347

20 *Oriente Moderno* 1963, n. 6-7, 440.
government tried to reassure foreign capitals which invested in Syria: for example, it reassured the FRG concerning the contract for the Dam over the Euphrates.\(^{21}\) Despite the overall preference accorded to Western states and investments, Prime Minister al Bītār approached the socialist camp with new requests for trade and infrastructural aid: as they had done in the short period from 1956 to 1958, Syrians tried to fully exploit the international competition, and in particular the one between the so-called capitalist and socialist camps; from such a point of view, they fully endorsed the Active Neutrality policy promoted by the Non-aligned Movement.

Already in summer 1963, the diplomatic and economic representatives of the GDR reported a gloomy picture of the Syrian economy and of the related Government policies. According to trad-attaché Clausnitzer, political instability, terror and uncertainty over the economic projects of the Ba’th Party led the bourgeoisie to take its capital abroad, particularly in Lebanon; the agrarian reforms actually strengthened the right wing forces and the Government nationalized banks only under popular pressure. On the whole, he had the impression that such measures had been taken in order to appease and gain consent from very different social sectors. According to Clausnitzer, this did not exclude any further move against the big bourgeoisie but, at the end of the day, the private sector and the relations with the West would still retain their preminence.\(^{22}\) This situation did not change for the next few months, and the two Germanys refrained from major activities or engagements: in fact, nobody could anticipate what would happen next and so they preferred to take a cautious stand.

Meanwhile, internal conflicts in the regime escalated and witnessed the gradual rise of the so-called “radical” or “regionalist” forces, led

\(^{21}\) Situated in north-central Syria, the dam and the related hydroelectric station were built later between 1968 and 1977 by the Soviet Union and supplied irrigation water and electricity for central and north-east developing areas, see *Abschlussbericht*, Damascus, 12 October 1972, Griesbach, Ministerium für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten (MfAA) B1212/75. See also Amin, 1982, 13-43; Amīralāy 1971; VV.AA. *Les principales réalisations économiques syriennes* 1974.

by Nūr al Dīn al Atāṣī, Yūsuf al Z’ayyin, Ibrāhīm Mākhūs and general Șalāh al Jadīd. At the Sixth National Congress of the Ba’th Party in Damascus (October 5-28, 1963), these forces succeeded in sidelining the old guard and elected General Amīn al Ḥāfiz as Prime Minister, Head of State and President of the powerful Council of the Revolutionary Command.

The decisive breakthrough came in Spring 1964 when the opposition forces called for a boycott and rebellion against the regime: strikes, street demonstrations and riots occurred in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Abu Kamal; merchants stopped their activities and closed down their shops to claim for greater economic freedom and accused the regime of “communism”; ulemas in the mosques accused the Ba’th of “heresy” and “atheism”. The representatives of the Chambers fo Commerce and Industry halted the negotiations with the Government and supported the strikes.23 President al Ḥāfiz faced the challenge by resorting to massive repression and by deploying the army along the streets; he established martial courts to judge the opposition for “conspiracy against state security;” he ordered the merchants to relinquish their activities, under threat of confiscation; he arrested and bombed a mosque in Hama where Muslim Brothers’ militants had formed armed resistance. Clashes started in February and came to an end only in May 1964.24 Although the regime had the support of the newly established General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), its ultimate pillar remained the army, which was now predominantly filled up with officers loyal to the Ba’th Party.

Once the regime proved successful in crushing the opposition campaign, al Ḥāfiz tried to strike a compromise and to coopt the main private sector representatives in the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. However, mutual distrust and tensions still ran high and dissent grew inside the Ba’th Party, as well. In order to show its willingness to compromise, the Revolutionary Command appointed Salāh al Dīn al Bīṭār as new President of Council of Minister in May 1964: such a move was sharply criticized by left-wing forces and the

23 Lobmeyer 1995, 111, 144.
24 Oriente Moderno, 1964, n. 2, 137.
so called “radicals”, who were determined to strike a final blow to the opposition.25

Quite interestingly, the commercial and diplomatic representatives of the GDR in Damascus were deeply concerned by the Ba’thist policies: the trade-attaché, Clausnitzer, openly asked East-Berlin to get in contact with the opposition and the “grosse Bourgeoisie” (big bourgeoisie), since the Government was not reliable and stable enough;26 to sum up he had no doubts in labelling the Ba’th as “reaktionäre”.27 Quite to the contrary, the FRG Ambassador in Syria, dr. Mangold, was much more cautious in his evaluation, and seemed to be struck by the harsh resistance made by the private sector. After all, he was persuaded that al Hafiz adopted “die pragmatische Politik des improvisierten Sozialismus” (the pragmatic policy of an improvised socialism), which could not last for a long time”.28

In October 1964, after failing to reach a compromise with the opposition, the President of the Council of Minister, Salāh al Dīn al Bītār, resigned and was substituted again by Amīn al Hāfiz: now, the radical Ba’thists could exert more pressure on the Presidency. In fact, the Syrian Government nationalized the mining and extractive sectors in December with the law no.133 of December 22, 1964: “any physical or juridical person” would be allowed to get concessions for the exploitation of natural resources, foreign companies included; on January 2 and 3, 1965, more than 100 productive industries were nationalized. The nationalizations concerned textile, cement, sugar and food processing factories.29

25 PA AA B36 IB4 125, Telegramm Nr. 120, Botschaft Damascus an AA, May 11, 1964.
28 PAAA B36 IB4, 125, Bericht Nr. 83/64, Bericht über die Unruhen in Hama, Botschaft Damascus an AA, April 16, Mangold.
29 al Aḥṣan 1984, 312.
Table 1-Features of the private companies nationalized by Syrian Government in 1964 and 1965.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>% of Nationalization</th>
<th>Capital in Syrian pounds</th>
<th>Banking Credits</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>111,620,000</td>
<td>51,864,000</td>
<td>5,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>26,373,000</td>
<td>14,145,000</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>22,478,000</td>
<td>16,537,000</td>
<td>3,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On January 11, President al Ḥāfīz instituted the General Institute for Electricity, which would centralize all energy productive and distribution activities. At the end of the same month, almost 85% of Syrian industrial activities passed under state control. In February, the whole foreign trade sector formally came under control of the state-owned company SIMEX, which comprised more than 45 private trade companies. Eventually in March of the same year, oil and gas distribution facilities were nationalized.30

On the one hand, the Government of al Ḥāfīz planned to control some core, productive sectors, like mining and transport, in order to give a boost to long-term investments; on the other hand, it wanted to give a show of strength to the opposition and let it come back to the negotiating table; in which case, they might regain their properties and assets. However, the left-wing, “radical” Ba’thists had quite different plans: they were determined to exploit such an opportunity to wipe out the opposition and gain a free hand to rebuild Syria according state power, socialist ideology and mass organizations.

Despite such plans, Syrian authorities immediately faced major challenges. In fact, they had to elaborate as soon as possible a program to reorganize the productive sectors which they now controlled as well as to provide an efficient and competent management for both state institutions and factories. The opposition reacted immediately: it called for a strike in Damascus and the ‘ulemas

30 Oriente Moderno 1965, n.1, 8-9; Oriente Moderno 1965, n. 5-6, 457; Mubayed 2005, 616. Among them, there were: Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, S.A.; Shell Company, S.A.; Esso Standard, S.A.; Société Générale des Pétroles, S.A.; Société Syrienne pour le traitement et la distribution des pétroles, S.A.; Société Arabes des Pétroles et des Essences, S.A.; Société de pétrole Douahy et C.ie.
resorted to Ġihād against the Ba’thists. However, the Government successfully repressed any actions. As usual, after a period of repression, al Ḥāfiz returned to a compromise because of financial deficit, hard currency shortages and managerial incompetence undermined any Government decision.\footnote{31}

The western capitalist states did not approve of the Syrian economic policies and for a considerable time they entered on a collision path with Damascus, both on international and regional issues. Given the bipolar international order, the Ba’thist regime turned to the socialist camp for help. In the wake of the nationalizations, economic and managerial experts from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria arrived in Syria; and other deals were signed with the USSR for oil exploration projects.\footnote{32}

Meanwhile, the relations among West Germany, Syria and other Arab states soured because of the parallel improvement of friendship and cooperation between Bonn and Tel Aviv. Beside the traditional financial and technical aid, secret negotiations were held in 1964 between Washington, Israel and Bonn: the latter would financially support Washington in its military deliveries to Tel Aviv and pay for no less than 100 M-48 tanks.\footnote{33} Hence, it was no surprise that the rival

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\footnote{32}{Quite interestingly, every negotiation round was preceded by meetings between Syrian Communist Party representatives, in order to prepare the ground: the Syrian communist supported cooperation even to improve their status at home. However, they always proved as tough as their Ba’thist colleagues during negotiations. Sampo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 868, Aktenvermerk, Gespräch zwischen Gen. K. Bakdaš und P. Markowsky im Haus des ZK des KPdSU, Moskau, Botschaft der DDR in dem UdSSR an MfAA, April 24, 1965, Grabowsky; PAAA, B36 IB4, 202, Bericht Nr. 42/65, Annäherung Syriens zu Moskau, Botschaft Damascus an AA, april 15, 1965, Mangold.}

\footnote{33}{Conservative Parties in the FRG increasingly supported aid to Israel for several reasons: aid to Israel was agreed in principle but particularly to appease demands from Washington “to share the burden” and strengthen the transatlantic alliance; the radicalization of Arab politics and the greater involvement of the socialist states in some Arab countries nurtured suspicion and mistrust towards regimes such as the Ba’thist one; moreover, the military support of private FRG experts in Egypt was the cause of bitter accusations in the US as well as in Europe. However, the}
GDR tried to exploit every opportunity in the Arab region to challenge the containment policy of Bonn (usually known as the Hallstein Doktrin). As usual, Egypt and al Nāssir played the major role in the Middle East policy of the GDR: it was one of the "Schwerpunktland", that is a country where it is a priority to focus major diplomatic efforts and investments.\(^{34}\) Algeria and Iraq followed suit, whereas Syria was still considered too unstable.\(^{35}\) As far as diplomacy was concerned, the GDR leadership was perfectly aware that the Arab regimes were not so much interested into the intra-German rivalry, which they saw mainly as an European internal dispute; nor did they attach any confidence as to the future orientation of the Syrian Ba’thists:

Es wurde eingeschätzt, dass im allgemeinen die Deutschlandfrage für die derzeitige syrische Regierung von wenig Interesse ist und nur versucht wird, die Probleme zweckbestimmt für Detailfragen in syrischem Interesse auszunutzen. Offiziell ist die Grundhaltung der syrischen Regierung zum sozialistischen Lager positiv [...], jedoch fehlt es bisher an aktiven Schritten und konkreten Massnahmen. Jedoch gibt es für weitere Schritte, wie Statusfragen, keine Bereitschaft von syrischer Seite.\(^{36}\)

FRG still remained one of the major financial and trade partners for the Arab countries, so that economic rationality should match with political priorities.


\(^{36}\) “At the moment, Syria does not show any interest for the German question, and they try to exploit the question for Syrian interests only. Officially, Government policies favour the socialist camp, but they fall short of any concrete step. However, for the foreseeable future and for the diplomatic status, we do not see any disponibility from the Syrians”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IV2/20, 878, Protokoll über die durchgeführte Versammlung zur Auswertung des 5. Plenums und zur Vorbereitung der Wahl, Konsulat der DDR in der SAR an ZK der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, April 20, 1964, Clausnitzer.
In December 1964, Egyptian President al Nāsṣir publicly denounced the FRG military cooperation with Israel and threatened to break diplomatic relations; still worse in the eyes of the FRG he formally invited the SED Secretary-General, Walter Ulbricht to Cairo.\(^37\) The reaction from Bonn was outrage and it retaliated by announcing the formal establishment of diplomatic relations with the state of Israel.\(^38\) From 24 February to 2 March 1965, W. Ulbricht landed in Cairo and though not formally a state-visit, he was welcomed with all the requirements for a head of state. Economic, financial and scientific deals for 100 million Us$ were signed and proved to be a success for the GDR diplomacy, tough quite expensive, too.\(^39\) Moreover, the Arab Foreign Ministers gathered in Cairo in 14 March and thwarted to break diplomatic relations with the FRG, if it recognized Israel: Egypt and Syria succeeded in rallying up

\(^{37}\) He argued that he resorted to such a “provocative” action, after failing to convince its FRG partners to refrain from upgrading direct military aid to Israel, AAPD, 1965, ZB 6-1/705, geheim, Botschafter Föderer, Kairo, an Staatssekretär Carstens, January 26, 1965.


\(^{39}\) Oriente Moderno 1965, n.2, 104-105; see also Lorenzini 2003.
a meaningful majority in the Arab League. Eventually, on May 13, 1965, the FRG and Israel established diplomatic relations and opened Ambassades in Tel Aviv and Bonn; the FRG had not directly purchased tanks for Israel but instead financed the US to purchase them for Tel Aviv, and, additionally, offered more technical and economic aid. Such a decision struck a heavy blow to the long-established, friendly relations between Germany and the Arab world: on the same day that West Germany and Israel established diplomatic relations, the majority of the Arab states broke theirs with Bonn.

Such an event had far-reaching consequences on the relations between Bonn, East-Berlin and Damascus. The FRG still enjoyed a predominant role in trade and investments; however, the rising force of the “radical” Ba’thists gave priority to cooperation with the socialist states, as the final resolution of the Extraordinary Regional Congress of the Ba’th Party, held in Damascus in June 1965, clearly stated. The GDR leadership took the offensive and sent several delegations to the region, in order to strike deals on economic and political cooperation. In particular, they thought that the situation in Syria was turning in their favour: already on May 20, the Präsidium of the Central Committee of the SED approved the concession of Regierungskredit

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41 FRUS, XVIII, 1964-1968, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964-1967, Telegramm From the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State, 1152/65, Text of Signed Memorandum of Understanding, Tel Aviv, March 11, 1965; FRUS, XVIII, 1964-1968, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964-1967, Telegramm From the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State, 1142/65, Tel Aviv, March 10, 1965, Barbour; Telegramm From the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State, 1151/65, Tel Aviv, March 11, 1965, Barbour; Memorandum From the Joint Chief of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, JCSM-337-65, Impact and Area Arms Balance of Military Sales to Israel (S), Washington, May 6, 1965, E.G. Wheeler.

42 Oriente Moderno 1965, n.5-6, 434.

43 Devlin 1976, 221, 283.
(Government-credit) amounting to 25 millions Us$, which would finance the related *Wirtschaftliche und Technische Abkommen* (WTZ, Economic and Technical Agreement).\(^\text{44}\) Obviously, this was meant to lay the ground for diplomatic recognition, as the GDR Consul Alfred Marter wrote:

> Natürlich werden wir nicht heute, morgen oder in absehbarer Zeit eine Botschaft hier haben. Jedoch haben wir heute eine günstige Situation, wie seit vielen Jahren nicht mehr, insbesondere seit 1957.\(^\text{45}\)

Indeed, the GDR saw the Syrian nationalizations as an opportunity for its import-export capacities, as well: its planned economy needed stable and long-term agreements and the state sector was supposed to grant such conditions, especially for infrastructural and development projects; the enlargement of the state sector economic activities would supposedly promote the Ba’thists’ hold on power. The granting of a credit was nonetheless considered a precondition for trading, since Syria did not have enough financial resources to buy products and machinery both in western and eastern markets: trade and finance were deeply connected, just as in the comment “the two faces of the same coin”\(^\text{46}\).

On June 17, a delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, led by Director Kattner arrived in Damascus to start negotiations for a Commercial Agreement (*Handelsabkommen*), Payment Agreement (*Bezahlungsabkommen*), Shipment Agreement (*Schiffahrtsabkommen*), Economic-Scientific Agreement (*Wirtschaftliche und Technische Abkommen*, WTZ). All of these were connected with the granting of


\(^{45}\) “Obviously, we will not open an Embassy today, tomorrow or in the near future. Nevertheless, now, there is a favourable situation which has not occurred for many years, in particular since 1957”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY 30 A2/20 877, Protokoll der Grundorganisation in Damascus, 28.04.1965, Marter. The latter referred to the period in which progressive forces took power in Syria and established the GDR Consulate in Damascus. See Ramet 2000.

\(^{46}\) K. Zubeide, former member of the Syrian Communist Party, graduated at the Hochschule für Ökonomie at Karlshorst, and economic advisor of the Syrian Council of Ministers, interview with the author, Aleppo September 19, 2006. For the economic division of labor in the socialist camp, see Buttino, *Comecon* 1980, 12.
the Regierungskredit.\textsuperscript{47} During discussions, the Syrian Minister of Economy highlighted the significance of the GDR cooperation for Syrian authorities:

Das Bestreben des Staates ist die Einführung der Planung des Aussenhandels im staatlichen und privaten Sektor. Wir hoffen auf die Unterstützung der befreundeten Länder für den Austausch der Erfahrungen. Wir sind erst am Anfang der Planung und haben den Aussenhandel noch nicht beherrscht (…). Die Ergebnisse der Abkommenverhandlungen werden Einfluss auf die Industrie Syriens haben, da sie gegenwärtig bei der Ausarbeitung des 5-Jahresplans sind. Die Syrische Arabische Republik hat von den Kapitalisten ein schweres Erbe übernommen: zu viele kleine Betriebe, die nicht nach ökonomischen Gesichtspunkten arbeiten. Eine Reorganisation des bestehenden Wirtschaftssystemes ist unerlässlich, da gegenwärtig nur 100.000 Menschen in der Industrie beschäftigt sind, die 16\% des Nationaleinkommens umfasst.\textsuperscript{48}

Minister Sölle was eager to reply:

[…] Dazu kommt, dass wir Interessantes als 10. grösste Industriemacht den Entwicklungsländern anbieten können. Unsere Erfahrungen stellen wir gern der syrischen Seite zur Verfügung, wenn sie aber auch selbst entscheiden müssen, was sie wie machen.\textsuperscript{49}  

\textsuperscript{47} The senior official delegation of the GDR arrived in Syria from 27 July to 3 August and was led by the Minister for Foreign Trade, Sölle: on August 2, all the four Agreements were signed; the GDR ratified them the 1 October 1965, whereas Syria waited until the 15 march 1966. For all the negotiations regarding the different agreements, see Sapmo-Barchiv, DL2 1586.

\textsuperscript{48} “The main effort of the state is in the introduction of planning in foreign trade both in the public and private sector. We place great hopes on the support of friends state for a useful exchange of experiences. We are just at the beginning of such a path and we still do not have full control over foreign trade (…). The final outcome of all such agreements will have influence on the industrial development of Syria, since it is now elaborating the 5-Year Plan. Syria suffers from the heavy heritage left by capitalists: too many small industries, which do not work suitably, according an economic point of view. We urge for a reorganisation of the current economic system because there are now only 100.000 workers in the industrial sector which contributes 16\% to the GNP”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DL2 1586, Vermerk, \textit{I Gespräch mit Minister al Bītār}, Handelsvertretung der DDR in der SAR an MAI, July 28, 1965, Dreisch; Sapmo-Barchiv, DL2 1586, Vermerk, \textit{II Gespräch mit Minister al Bītār}, Handelsvertretung der DDR in der SAR an MAI, July 28, 1965, Dreisch.

\textsuperscript{49} “We (the GDR, n.d.t.) are the tenth industrial power and we can offer something interesting to developing countries. We put at your full disposal our experiences, but ultimately it is up to you to decide what and how to make it”, \textit{Ibidem}. 
On August 21, Nūr al Dīn al Atāsī, the “radical” member of the Syrian Presidential Council proposed to open the General Consulate of the GDR in Damascus, which eventually occurred on the 23rd of the same month.50

Other decisive steps for the Syria-GDR relationship occurred in Autumn 1965: on September 23, the new Government led by Yūsuf al Z’ayyin immediately adopted an ambitious program labelled the Socialist Transformation, and he started negotiations for the Regierungskredit three days later with the GDR Vice-President of the Council of Minister, G. Weiss. The Agreement was signed on the 17 October 1965: it amounted to 25 million Us$ with a 2,5% interest rate; it was based on the clearing system and it would finance most bilateral trade and economic cooperation from 1966 to 1970.51

The second al Z’ayyin Government was a major event for Syrian domestic and foreign politics: it represented the institutional outcome of a long series of struggles where left-wing and radical tendencies prevailed in politics and set the framework for Syrian political discourse for a long time. Although the so called “radical” Ba’thists never enjoyed mass support and stood in power for less than five years, their policies proved to be a major fracture in Syrian contemporary history. The Socialist Transformation program and the bilateral Agreements with the GDR set the framework for the activities of the Regierungberater in Syria. As far as the international policies were concerned, the Government held true to the principles of Active Neutrality. However:

Though respecting the principle of Neutrality, we consider our right to improve friendship with those states and liberation movements which, like us, believe in the national and socialist struggle and support us in our effort to liberate Palestine.52

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As far as state-building was concerned, it promoted the new Supreme Council for Planning, which would hold the ultimate responsibility for economic and social policies; it pressured for the epuration of opposition members from the state sector; the immediate reform of the powerful Ministry of Finance; the conclusion of the agrarian reform with the final distribution of land plots and the rapid increase of farmers’ cooperatives; the improvement of labor productivity as the main factor for economic and production growth; the development of an “ideological army” which would serve and defend ba’thist policies, while the Party would promote the “patriotic” role of the Army throughout society.53

In his annual report, the GDR Consul General, Horst Grunert, made a comprehensive picture of the current political trends in Syria: young intellectuals and medium-rank officers eventually came to power; they got support from workers, who on their own pressed for more “sozialistische” policies. According to Grunert the ideals and principles of socialism were currently deep rooted, whereas the “reactionary” forces had lost their attraction; economic measures went along this direction, even though they also responded to the urgent need of the Ba’th Party to build its own mass constituency. He reported that the Syrian Communist Party supported the current Ba’thist policies, though it still suffered from a marginal position: in fact, Grunert conceived the Ba’th Party as the only force being able to enforce reforms for the time being. As far as Syrian foreign relations were concerned, Grunert wrote that the government firmly condemned western neocolonialism and portrayed its own policies as equal to those of the socialist states.

On the whole, Syrian relations with the socialist states enjoyed a new momentum and for the German Democratic Republic the year 1965 proved to be a major shifting point. The Soviet Union which had at first been very sceptical about the Ba’th Party, now gave it massive support. Eventually, the GDR Consul General ended his report stating that possible further shifts in the Syrian international stand might result from domestic instability and the lack of coherence in Syrian politics.54

53 Ibidem.

The Ba’thist Government urgently needed a competent and expert staff to run the state-led sectors as well as to elaborate a suitable institutional framework for the Socialist Transformation program. Between May and June 1965, several Syrian Ministries asked the GDR to send some of their experts, in order to demonstrate their experience and provide consultancy for reforms: the Ministry of Finance planned to reorganize the relations among banks and the newly nationalized enterprises, as well as to reform the state budget and the taxation system.55 The financial and banking sectors were some of the most urgent issues at stake, since the Syrian Government showed some difficulty in managing efficiently all the enterprises it had nationalized in the previous January: the GDR acted swiftly and sent Dr. Schneider in early June. The senior official of the Ministry of Finance was the first advisor of the GDR in Syrian central government and he set some sort of standard conduct for succeeding advisors.

On July 12, 1965, Schneider reported his activities to the Syrian Finance Minister, al Büchi, and the Budget Director, Dr. Murād: in the first week, he met with ministerial officials and collected information about their working procedures as well as their reform programs; then, he demonstrated the GDR experience in “socialist reforms” and the related ministerial working procedures. In the second week, he visited some state-owned enterprises to assess their situation. The third week was devoted to meeting local ministerial officials in Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Finally, in the fourth week he worked with his Syrian partners on several reform bills, regarding: unification of the state budget, funding of state enterprises, vocational training for ministerial cadres, reform of the Ministerial organisation; and eventually, the possible reform of the old and inefficient taxation system. In his final report, he mentioned some of the obstacles Syria would have to face: the resistance and resilience by the opposing

conservative cadres; the persistence of “capitalist” standards of management in state enterprises, which prevented any meaningful change for workers and employees; the fragmentation of the state budget, which prevented any unitary, central control over expenditures because Ministries and local authorities were almost independent; adequate training for local and central administrative cadres.

A feature which turned out to be typical of the GDR experts in Syria concerned their support for their fellow countrymen during economic negotiations with the Syrian authorities. In fact, they provided a useful insight into the different sectors and institutions: for example, the Director of the Ministry of Trade, Kattner, reported that he made full use of the information provided by dr. Schneider when he negotiated the four economic Agreements in June and July 1965.

Although the Syrians could not but be aware of this, the presence of the Regierungsbetreter proved an asset for the GDR, at least, compared to other allies or competitors.

The mission of dr. Schneider proved successfull in the eyes of Syrian authorities, because they soon asked for more advisors. Because of the wide range of sectors the Syrian were asking for help, the GDR leadership decided to send Klaus Sorgenicht to set up a comprehensive plan for the East-German consultancy works. He

56 The Syrian government was to sign an agreement with the GDR to send 10 of his financial officials to study and train. At the time, other foreign experts from the Czechoslovakia and the United Nations worked at the Finance Ministry for the reform of the taxation system. Dr. Schneider reported also that the Syrian authorities were especially interested to know how the GDR handled relations with industrialists, artisans and merchants, as well. MfAA A/13.676, Information, Über den Stand der Durchführung des Auftrages zur Beratung des Ministeriums der Finanzen der SAR bei der Reorganisation des Ministeriums und Neuordnung der Finanzen der nationalisierten Betriebe und des Staatshaushalts, Ministerrat der DDR, Ministerium für Finanzen and MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Dr. Kiesewetter, Berlin, August 21, 1965, Mager. The Agreement for vocational training in the GDR Finance Ministry was included in the WTZ-Agreement of August 2 1965 and started from the 1st November 1965 to the 30 April 1966: the courses and activities dealt with all the issues reported by Schneider, MfAA C/527/73, Vereinbarung über die Ausbildung von Mitarbeitern des Ministeriums der Finanzen der SAR im Ministerium für Finanzen der DDR, MfAA, Abteilung Wirtschaftspolitik, Berlin, November 12, 1965, Barth.

spent 3 months in Syria, from November 1965 to February 1966, and his main tasks was:

Die Vorbereitung von Reformen in der Leitung des Staates und der Wirtschaft zu beraten und ihr die Erfahrung der DDR zu übermitteln.\textsuperscript{58}

The mission was relevant because the GDR delegates and their Syrian partners determined the targets and the sectors upon which the further \textit{Regierungsberater} would work until 1972. These concerned:

\begin{itemize}
\item The reform of the Council of Ministers and the overall central decision-making process
\item The transformation of the Ministry of Planning into the Commission for Planning
\item The reform of the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade and the reorganization of the state-led foreign trade
\item The reform of the Central Statistical Institute
\item The overall rationalization of the state-led economic sector and the building of the Unions of the nationalized enterprises.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{itemize}

The program met the requests of President Yūsuf Z’ayyin.\textsuperscript{60}

During his meetings with Syrian officials, Klaus Sorgenicht stressed the tasks and obstacles that reforms would encounter. First, the urgent need to include and coopt into state institutions the representatives of the new rising social classes: namely, workers, peasants and small employees and artisans; according to him, the state should become their main point of reference for political debate and participation. Secondly, the need for extensive vocational training for “progressive” state officials, who would replace the “conservative” cadres, which were still hegemonic in state apparatus. Sorgenicht

\textsuperscript{58} “To advise on the preliminary works for reforming the management of state and economy as well as to introduce the experience of the GDR,” K. Sorgenicht was a senior official of the Commission for the Planning and arrived in Damascus with Rudolf Brauer, senior official of the Planning Commission and Guenter Bischoff, Director of the Office of the Council of Ministers, MfAA B/1.214/75, \textit{Bericht über die Beratertätigkeit in der SAR}, K. Sorgenicht an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, February 12, 1966, Sorgenicht.

\textsuperscript{59} MfAA B/1.214/75, \textit{Niederschrift Nr. 2, Gespräch mit dem Ministerpräsidenten Dr. Y. al Zuain}, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, 25.11.1965, Sorgenicht. During his mission he had more then 50 meetings with different Syrian officials and he gave lectures on several topics concerning state-building in the GDR. See Anlage n.1 Dsc: Hauptgruppe 6, 06701 and 06702

\textsuperscript{60} Ibidem, 4-5.
pointed out two related aspects: on the one hand, the traditional and current civil service was highly inefficient and corrupt; labor productivity was very low among workers and cadres; on the other hand, civil service apparatus seemed highly unaffected by political changes in the country and became a relevant source of resistance and resilience to major reforms. On the base of Sorgenicht’s reports, the SED leadership met on the new year’s day eve to set the guidelines for the Regierungsberater.

The East German delegation arrived in a time of crisis for the new Ba’thist regime. Once the al Ḥāfiz Government got rid of the opposition forces in 1964 and early 1965, Syrian politics mainly followed the inner disputes inside the Ba’thists regime: the difficult economic situation radicalized the debates and the fractures inside the Party. On the one hand, the so called “radicals” led by Nūr al Dīn al Atāṣī, Yūsuf Z’ayyin, Ibrahim Mākhūs were on the rise, and their military allies, Generals Şalâḥ al Jadīd and Ḥāfiz al Asad gained control on most of the armed forces. Moreover, this faction could bank on the active support of the Trade Unions, as well as of the nascent mass organizations of youth and students. On the other hand, the so called “moderate” led by Michel ‘Aflaq and Salāḥ al Dīn al Bīṭār suffered major setbacks: the “moderate” did not approve the “improvisation, the superficiality, the isolation” of the Socialist Transformation program and they particularly feared the shift of allegiance from the Arab world toward the socialist camp. In a last show of strength, the “moderate” faction succeeded in ousting the Z’ayyin Government, on December 22, 1965. On January 2, 1966, a new Government was led by Salāḥ al Dīn al Bīṭār: his main guidelines concerned the rapid reapproachment of Syria toward Egypt and other “progressive” Arab states, as well as the cooption in the regime of some elements of the big bourgeoisie, in order to face economic

61 Later on, Ba’thist cadres were reported to give much attention to themes like the “denazification campaigns” led in the GDR, as well as the relations between party and state institutions, MfAA B/1.214/75, Niederschrift Nr.2, Gespräch mit dem Ministerpräsidenten Dr. Y. al Zouayen, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, November 25, 1965, Sorgenicht.


The Regierungsberater in Damascus

However, the moderates’ calls for the “demilitarization” of Syrian politics exacerbated the tensions in the Army, much to the advantage of the “radical” faction of the Ba’th Party. Eventually, the latter led a military Coup d’état on February 23, 1966 which ousted and exiled President Amīn al Ḥāfiz and the whole old guard of the Ba’th Party, founding fathers Michel ‘Aflaq and Salāh al Dīn al Bīṭār included. Soon after, Z’ayyin was back on the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, whereas Ibrahīm Mākhūs was appointed at the Foreign Ministry and Nūr al Dīn al Atāṣī became the President of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Once back in power, the so called “radical” Ba’thists tried to speed up the Socialist Transformation program and they resorted heavily to the socialist states for support. From a purely quantitative point of view, the period stretching from 1966 to 1970 did not experience other major nationalizations. However, the “radicals” faced the challenging task to manage and govern the situation they had inherited. The cooperation with the GDR resumed immediately. The new Minister of Economy, Murād asked the GDR Consul General, Horst Grunert, to dispatch new experts on foreign trade: the Government planned to improve and extend the competence of the SIMEX (State-owned

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66 The “radicals” accused them of “deviating from the revolutionary course adopted by the Ba’th Party in 1965” and particularly from the Socialist Transformation program Al Ba’th, 24.02.1966, cit. in Oriente Moderno, n. 1-4, 1966, 57-58; Devlin 1976, 302. Despite such tensions, and the fact that the presence of the GDR Regierungsberater was an important element of the Z’ayyin program, the short-lived Government of al Bīṭār seemed to equally appreciate the activities of Klaus Sorgenicht, MfAA B/1.214/75, Zwischenbericht Nr. 4, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 10, 1966, Sorgenicht.
67 In press conference, the Transitory Command of the Ba’th Party which held power after the Coup stated that the new Government would exert both legislative and executive powers, in order to implement the reform program. PAAA B36 IB4, 252 Bericht nr. 24/66, Regierungsumbildung in Syrien, SIBRD Damaskus, March 10, 1966, Pfeiffer.
Syrian Import-Export Society), in order to “free” the nationalized industry from the private middlemen who still enjoyed a monopoly.69


Despite the urgency the new Government attached to the reform process, it took quite a long time for the GDR to dispatch its experts.70 Actually, the Ba’thist regime had to confront other immediate challenges which delayed the arrival of the Regierungsberater.

First of all, the regime tried to become legitimized among its members, its social constituency and its allies, too: but that was not to prove an easy task at all. Trade Unions and workers, which had defended the regime from possible “counter-revolutions,” now asked for more influence in decision-making and for a more radical shift in domestic economic policies: though they supported the Ba’thist socialist projects, up until that time they did not see any relevant improvement either in wages or in working conditions.71 Though the Syrian Communist Party was still in competition with the Ba’thists and its allegations could be somehow biased, its leader Khālid Bakdāš

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69 Minister Murād confirmed that harsh resistance was made by “bureaucrats” inside the Ministry; however, the GDR could bank on the presence of some officials who graduated in East Germany to spread its proposals, MfAA C527/73, Telegramm nr.52/66, Gk der DDR in der Sar an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Dr. Kiesewetter, Damascus, February 27, 1966, Grunert.

70 In fact, once Syria ratified the Agreement for Technical and Economic Cooperation, it could negotiate the related Protokoll (Protocol), which would set the legal and practical framework for the advisors’ activities. The negotiations took place in Damascus between October 17 and 30, 1966. Most discussion occurred over the costs for the envoy of the experts: like in other negotiations, the Syrians put much emphasis over the international solidarity of the socialist camp, as well as the rising costs for defence that Syria should face to counter Israel and its western allies. Eventually, both parts signed the Protocol of the WTZ cooperation for 1967: 35 GDR experts would work in Syria, whereas 67 Syrians would study and train in East Germany. Every partner would take charge for the costs of foreigners once they were abroad, MfAA C527/73, Protokoll über die 1. Tagung im Ministerium für Planung beim Staatssekretär Khayat, Gk der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, 3.AEA, October 17, 1966, Friedrich; Bericht, Verhandlungen für den Abschluss des Protokolls über WTZ für die Jahre 1966-1967, MfAA, 3.AEA an Stellv. des Ministers, Dr. Kiesewetter, November 9, 1966, Müller.

71 See Longueneusse 1996.
told his German partners about the overall approach to labour forces of President Z’ayyin:

Vorsitzender Yūsuf Z’ayyin glaubt, dass er die Arbeiterklasse und die syrischen Kommunisten von einem Tag auf den anderen beseitigen kann, “so wie einem Menschen das kranke Blut entziehen und ihm neues zuzuführen.”

At that time, one of the most important leaders of the Syrian left was ‘Abd al Karīm al Jundī, then the Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). The Ba’thist leadership feared any political competition and made everything possible to replace him. The Syrian Communist Party was still illegal and though its senior leader Khālid Bakdāš was back in Damascus from exile, he could only speak privately and as a single person. The mediation efforts of the socialist states to build a “National Front” among progressive forces aimed at widening the political constituency of the Ba’thist regime as well as to legitimize the Syrian Communists; however, the Ba’thist leadership was adamant in its refusal because it considered the Ba’th as the only real “avantgarde” which could rule the country without external support. Nevertheless, they agreed to include a senior SCP member, dr. Murād, in the second Z’ayyin Government and offered the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication. TheSCP accepted to share government

72 “President Yūsuf Z’ayyin would believe that he could get rid of the labour class and the Syrian Communists from one day to another, just like “you draw from a man his sick blood and inject him with the new”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30, IVA2/20, 871, Bericht nr. 23/67, Gespräch mit Genossen K. Bakhdash und Einladung zur Parteitag der SED, GK der DDR in der SAR an ZK der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verb.indungen, February 6, 1967.

73 Eventually, in early 1967 they appointed other senior officials who proved more prone to compromise with the Ba’thist leadership Sapmo-Barchiv, DY 30IV A2/20, 875, Bericht, Einschätzung der Politik der Ba’th Partei bis dem IX Kongress, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Berlin, October 22, 1966; PAAA B36IB4, 254, Telegramm nr. 72/66, SIBRD Damaskus, April 25, 1966, Pfeiffer.

74 Khālid Bakdāš reported that it was only a “symbolic act”, since its powers were contained by the ministerial General Directors, who supported the Ba’th. Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 A2/20, 871, MfAA, Abteilung Information, Streng Vertraulich, Information nr. 14/1V, Zum Kongress der Ba’th Partei, Brief des Genossen Grunert, vom April 2, 1966 and den Stellv. des MfAA, Gen. Dr. Kiesewetter, Berlin, April 5, 1966. Similar views were expressed by the rival FRG representatives, PAAA B36IB4, 252, Telegramm nr.40/66, SIBRD Damaskus, February 26, 1966, Pfeiffer.
responsibility on the basis of Gleichberechtigung (equality) between the two Parties, but Khālid Bakdāš made plain his scepticism about the current Ba’thist leadership. According to him, Z’ayyin believed that scientific socialism could not equate with marxism: marxism could be valid only for developed states. On the contrary:

Die Ba’th aber entwickelte mit ihrem, wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus das theoretische Fundament für den Befreiungskampf der Entwicklungsländer. Die Liquidierung des Imperialismus, die endgültige Befreiung der Welt werden durch die Völker Asiens, Afrikas und Lateinamerikas erfolgen.75

According to the opinion of General Consul Horst Grunert, the current leadership of the Ba’th Party wished to cooperate with the SCP, in order to extend its mass base without enhancing the latter’s role; whereas, the SCP struggled to strengthen the cooperation, in order to shift the Ba’thists towards “dem wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus” (scientific socialism) and to boost its own stand in the country’s politics.76

Another matter of concern for the Syrian regime was the state financial deficit. The first 5-Year Plan of 1960 was not implemented and domestic production was soaring because of lack of investments and mismanagement in the nationalization process. On the one hand, investments from Western, Arab states and international financial institutions came almost to a halt because they did not trust the current Syrian leadership or openly opposed it for political reasons; on the other hand, the increasing financial support from socialist states could not alleviate Syria from its structural deficits. The lack of funds was particularly problematic since the Government approved the second 5-Year Plan for 1966-1970, on August 3, 1966. It was an ambitious and far-reaching plan, which was based on the fast development of infrastructures and heavy industries: the first concerned above all the Euphrates Dam and the new international

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76 MfAA/C13626/7, Blitz-Telegramm nr. 232/66, Gk der DDR in der SAR, October 17, 1966, Grunert.
airport of Damascus; the second was based on the processing of natural resources, such as oil and minerals.77

Table 2- Investments for the second 5-Year Plan, 1966-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Sector</th>
<th>Investments (Syrian Pound millions)</th>
<th>% total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Drainage and Irrigation</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>32.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry, Mining, Geology</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy and Fuels</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Communications</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>32.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Services, Construction</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3- Use of International Credits, 1960-1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>International Credits.</th>
<th>Actual State Expenditures.</th>
<th>% of 1 and 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-1961</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1962</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-1963</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-1964</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1965</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1751</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In order to get the necessary resources, in Autumn 1966 the Syrian regime started a tough campaign against the international consortium Iraqi Petroleum Company, which ran its pipelines from the Iraqi oilfields to the Syrian port of Banyas in the Mediterranean sea: Damascus claimed for more royalties and did not restrain itself from shutting


down the pipelines in order to achieve a better compromise. On the whole, Syria could bank on the favourable international context where developing countries made sovereignty over natural resources one of their main political claims. Moreover, the dispute with the IPC had a regional impact, too: the confrontational attitude against western interests in the region would enhance the stature of the Ba’thist leadership against the docility or compliance of other Arab regimes. Negotiations continued until March 1967, when Damascus and the IPC stroke a compromise which fulfilled most of the Syrian requests.78

Parallel to such domestic and economic issues, the Arab-Israeli conflict catalyzed most of the attention and resources of the Ba’thist regime. The Syrian leadership championed itself as the most “progressive” and “revolutionary” regime in the Middle East and adopted a vocal confrontational policy against the state of Israel and its western supporters. It is not within the scope of this document to give an account of the events which led to the 1967 June War. It would be enough to say that Damascus fully endorsed the attacks of the Palestinian *fidā’īyīn* against Israel and refused any sort of political compromise: it provided safe haven, logistics, training and political backing to the *fidā’īyīn* but stopped short of letting them strike at Israel from Syrian territory. Indeed, it exercised a tight control over Palestinian activities inside Syria, because the Ba’thists would not allow them to meddle with, or become entangled in Syrian domestic politics.79 However, tension escalated along the Syrian-Israeli border, with heavy clashes from Autumn 1966 to Spring 1967.

The GDR and the Syrian Communist Party leadership feared the eruption of a full scale war which would put the Ba’thist regime at risk and disrupt the reform program. From such a point of view, the SED leadership seemed to support the faction in the Soviet Kremlin which was sceptical about the actual strength of Arab states vis à vis Israel, and feared the possible outcomes of a war.80 In fact, war started on

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79 Clashes erupted occasionally and military officials of the Ba’thist regime did not think twice in jailing or expelling the Palestinians who did not stand in line with their policies. See, Batatu 1989, 169.

80 Ramet 1990, 46.
the on June 5, 1967, and marked the most sounding victory of the Israeli army over its Arab enemies: after occupying the Sinai peninsula, Israel invaded the West Bank, East Jerusalem and before the cease-fire took place, it controlled the strategic Golan Heights on Syrian territory. Eventually, fighting stopped in evening of June 11.81

The conflict heavily conditioned Syrian domestic politics as well as much of the regional events for the next decades. Despite the military defeat, the Ba’thist regime in Damascus did not collapse; on the contrary, it demonstrated quite a high degree of cohesion in the face of external threats. Much the same occurred to the other Arab regimes directly affected by the war. Nevertheless, in late 1967, fractures emerged in the Ba’th regime which concerned the choice over different strategic priorities: external security and defence or domestic development? al Qunaytra aw al Furāt: that is, the recovery of the capital of the Golan Heights or the financing of the Euphrates Dam and the related development projects?

Among the socialist states, the GDR was one of the staunchest supporters of the Arabs after the 1967 defeat: it immediately dispatched civil aid and some military equipment, too.82 Like other socialist states, the GDR feared that the June 1967 defeat could led to the collapse of the Ba’thist regime in Damascus, as well as to push Syria towards renewing relations with western states and especially the FRG.

The GDR reacted by stepping up pressure on Schwerpunktländer.83 Indeed, already in early 1967, the GDR had to counter the West Germany diplomatic offensive which led to mutual recognition with Romania and to restore full relations with Jordan, as well.84


82 In fact, Secretary General of the SED, Walter Ulbricht offered to send to Syria some MIG-17 military aircraft: the Syrians soon agreed, but the proposed dispatch encountered major logistic difficulties, so that the aircraft only arrived in 1968, Cfr. Sapmo-Barchiv, Nachlass W. Ulbricht, DY4182 1334, S.24, cited in Winter (2005, 22-23); Gray 2003, 202.

83 Ibidem.

84 GDR Vice Foreign Minister, Dr. Kiesewetter, rushed in early March 1967 to Damascus, in order to struck a deal. However, his Syrian colleague, Ibrahim Makhūs, refused any diplomatic move and noted that the Romanian move made it more difficult for Syria to champion the GDR among Arab states, Sapmo-Barchiv,
promising decision by the Ba’th Congress to establish diplomatic relations with the GDR was frozen because of internal disputes in the Syrian regime. Foreign Minister Ibrahim Mākhūs spoke out frankly and said that the implementation of the resolution was currently impossible: according to him, if Syria was to recognize the GDR, West Germany and its allies would step up their support to Israel, without Syria receiving equal support from socialist states. The Syrian leadership feared such a move could further isolate the country and linked it to the decisions of other Arab states, like Algeria and Egypt. Given the refusal, the GDR opted to expand its presence and personal network inside Syria, even to counter the public or veiled criticism towards the socialist camp. However, Dr. Gerhard Weiss was adamantly critical of the Syrian approach to the German question:

Wie hoch soll der ökonomische Preis für die Anerkennung der DDR sein?
Welche Garantien können die Syrer geben, wenn wir ökonomische Hilfe leisten?

The GDR were fully aware that the Ba’thists exploited the intra-German conflict for their own purposes, and especially to obtain as much economic aid as they could. Already in late 1966, Consul General in Damascus, Horst Grunert, had summarized the Syrian position to the SED leadership as following:

Es ist auch so, dass die syrischen Politiker dazu neigen, Formulierungen in der Frage der Beziehungen zwischen beiden deutschen Staaten zu einer Art –entschuldigt das etwas große Wort - zu einer Art Kuhhandel zu machen über Formulierungen zur Israelfrage. Sag ihr etwas schönes zu Israel, dann sagen wir euch auch was schönes zu euch! Dieser Kuhhandel ist unseriös, politisch falsch und entspricht durchaus nicht den richtigen verstandenen

DY30 IVA2/20, 875, Information nr.59/XII, Zum Besuch Dr. Kiesewetter in der SAR, an Minister O. Winzer, Berlin, March 10, 1967, Kiesewetter.
85 MfAA/C511/73, Aktenvermerk, Gespräch mit Aussenminister Makhūs, GK der DDR in der SAR, October 2, 1967, Grunert.
87 “How high should be the economic price for the recognition of the GDR? Which guarantees can the Syrians give us, in case that we concede economic aid?”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Vermerk, Über ein Gespräch am 19.10.1967 beim Genossen Hermann Axen über die weitere Beziehungen der DDR mit der SAR, Zk der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, October 20, 1967.

Certainly, many Syrians assumed the North-South divide to be more relevant than the East-West one. For his own part, G. Weiss suggested freezing negotiations for diplomatic recognition, because Syria was currently isolated in the region and even Moscow was distancing itself from the “militant” policies of Damascus. Given the impasse on diplomacy, East-German officials who advocated for a major rationalization of economic ties seemed to become stronger.

Given the June defeat and the diplomatic impasse, Willy Stoph, President of the Council of Ministers, made the GDR political line clear in October 1967: to keep on supporting Syria but pressuring Damascus to face primarily economic issues rather than engaging in “hazardous” military adventures:

88 “I am sorry for the rough expression, but Syrian politicians wish to link their positions on the two German states with their bargaining over the Israeli question: say something good against Israel and we would do the same for you. Such bargaining is not serious at all; it is not politically correct and it does not match with the actual interests of Syria. The real problem lies deeper in the underestimation of the class content in the German question. [...] but we should let them realize that the very existence of a socialist state on German soil, even in just one part of it, already constitutes a relevant progress, which deserves to receive support in the context of the struggle against imperialism”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 877, Protokoll, Erweiterung der ökonomischen Zusammenarbeit mit dem Gastland Syrien, Zk der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen Berlin, November 26, 1966. See also Wippel 1996, 6.

Wir sollten alles tun, um den antiimperialistischen Kampf Syriens zu unterstützen und nicht riskieren, dass das Regime gestürzt wird. Wir müssen den Syrern klar machen, dass sie sich in erster Linie mit ihren ökonomischen Problemen beschäftigen müssen und nicht mit militärischen Abenteuern.90

The general guidelines for their activities were set by the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Gerhard Weiss: the aim was the establishment of an institutional structure which would be functional according to the theory of the Non Capitalist Road to development and would eventually strengthen the power of Syrian progressive forces. Such a structure should help Syrians to tackle the economic and social challenges the regime had to face.91

The first official mission of the GDR Regierungsberater arrived in Syria in mid-July 1967 and soon faced the challenges of the June defeat. The Regierungsberater mission for 1967 and 1968 was eventually composed of the following experts:

- Office of the Council of Ministers: Albrecht, Petzold and Anton
- Ministry of Planning: Pilz and Brossman
- Ministry of Finance: Schneider and then Gaden und Grimm
- Central Institute for Statistics: Dürrwald
- Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform: Heid
- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: Poplushnik
- Ministry of Energy and Oil: Gebauer
- Ministry of Economy and Trade: Niederberger.92

Already in January 1967, the East-German Presidency of the Council of Ministers had appointed the main referees for the mission:

90 “We should do everything to support Syria in its antiimperialist struggle and we should prevent it from being overturned. However, we also must make it clear that they must primarily face their economic troubles rather than engage in hazardous military actions”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Vermerk, Über ein Gespräch am 19.10.1967 beim Genossen Hermann Axen über die weitere Beziehungen der DDR mit der SAR, Zk der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, October 20, 1967.


- H. Albrecht: main person responsible and coordinator for the 
Regierungsberater activities; he was Vice-minister for “Staatskontrolle” and 
he would work for the reform of the Presidency of the Council of Min-
isters of Syria.
- R. Christoph: he was a senoir official at the Budget Department of the 
Planning Commission and he would work in the Syrian Ministry of Plann-
ing.
- G. Schneider: he was an official of the Ministry of Finance and, thanks 
to his recent experience in Syria, he would keep on working in the Syr-
ian Finance Ministry.93

On their arrival in Damascus, on July 19 1967, the GDR Consul 
General, Grunert, reported to Berlin that Syrian authorities had 
expressed the intention to replace all the FRG experts still working in 
the country. In particular they mentioned: the important veterinary 
center in Dar al Hajjar, directed by the Ministry of Agriculture. 
Grunert offered to replace the experts at the Institute for Technical 
Training in Aleppo, which was one of the most successful examples 
of the FRG cooperation for development in Syria; the same for a 
geological mission run by the FRG and which aimed to discover water 
and oil reserves in central Syria. Consul General H. Grunert hoped 
that the much trumpeted calls for a boycott against Israel’s allies 
would open the door to the GDR. However he was soon 

disappointed: his Syrian colleagues reported that the boycott did not 
apply to the Institute in Aleppo because this was formally directed by 
GAVI, an NGO, and not by an official FRG state agency. Actually, 
this was not true, since GAVI was funded by Federal Ministries of the 
FRG and worked closely with the Foreign Ministry in Bonn. Even in 
the difficult aftermath of the June defeat, such an event proved that 
Syrian authorities still banked on international competition to get 
the best deals, as well as the fact that they refrained from cutting all 
relations with Western countries.94 Nevertheless, like its western rival, 
the GDR attached much importance to vocational and technical 
training, and sent several professors and experts to Syria in order to

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93 Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Beschlussentwurf, Bestätigung von Beratern 
beim Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der SAR, Sekretariat des ZK der SED am Präsi-

94 MfAA B1207/75, Bericht Nr. 329/67, GK der DDR in der SAR an Stellv. des 
assess the latter’s needs and to update local competences, as well. The university of Damascus and Aleppo hosted professors and lecturers on medicine, industrial engineering, physics and natural sciences; still, they worked in the secondary technical schools, which were reported to be totally unsuited to train the kind of labour force required by the “ambitious” industrial projects: despite the good enrolment capacity, schools suffered from old equipment which proved useless, and most of teachers had spent their whole career in the very same institutes without getting any further professional training. The Regierungsberater reported to East-Berlin, Syrian requests for training cadres in oil industry, transport, and electricity production as well as agriculture.95

In early November 1967, Consul General, Horst Grunert and the coordinator of the Regierungsberater, Dr. Albrecht, wrote a full-length report on their activities.96 They highlighted their results and the difficulties they had encountered, as well as the current the political situation in Syria. Their report shed light on the political dynamics affecting the activities of foreign advisors and the latter’s attempt to adapt their theoretical framework to the local context.

Their activities focused on the enhancement of the central institution concerned with economic development. They recorded as a success the endorsement by the Syrian Government of laws n. 147 and 150: the first issued the new competences of the Council of Ministers and the second established the Office of the Council of Ministers (Büro für Ministerratsangelegenheiten); both laws expanded the powers of the Council of Ministers, and they tried to better coordinate the activities of the different Ministries under the leadership of the Presidency; the reform was depicted as a necessary precondition to centralize power and implement planning in Government policies. Of paramount importance were the reforms of the Supreme Council for Planning, which would coordinate the different Ministries concerned


96 MfAA B1207/75, Bericht 329/67, Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Regierungsberater in Syrien, Gk der DDR in der SAR an Stellv. des Ministers, Dr. Weiss, Damascus, November 8, 1967, Grunert and Albrecht.
with the 5-Year Plans, as well as the replacement of the existing Minister of Planning with the new State Planning Commission, which would elaborate the plans and act under the direct tutorship of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Albrecht reported that the new legislation fully endorsed the suggestions offered by the Regierungsberater in their drafts, and President Z’ayyin even asked dr. Albrecht his opinion about the appointment of the new Director of the Office of the Council of Ministers. Albrecht wrote that after an initial diffidence towards the Regierungsberater, now they enjoyed the leadership’s confidence and Syrian officials paid much attention to their lectures and proposals: quite often, they endorsed them without changing any words. The GDR representative suggested a further intensification of contacts and exchanges, in order to let the Syrian partners better analyse their proposals; actually, he feared their drafts could prove unsuitable and impossible to implement, if they were not fully understood by the Syrian officials.

Though such promising results, the Regierungsberater faced major difficulties, too. In September 1967, dr. Schneider wrote back to East-Berlin that Syrian Government adopted all the necessary measures to implement the financial autonomy of state-enterprises (legislative decree n. 21, May 1, 1967): following his advice, the central Government retained the power of general planning, whereas actual implementation and financial responsibility was accorded to the different Unions of State Enterprises (Vereinigte Nationalisierte Betriebe). However, the fundamental problem lay in the absence of a unitary state budget, which prevented any accurate assessment of the financial situation of the country; moreover, the June 1967 emergency halted the approval of the year-budget, so at that moment, nobody had a precise account of state expenditures and neither could anyone could precisely know how many resources the state could afford. Dr.

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Schneider said that he could not work anymore in such conditions.\textsuperscript{99} He reported that in such a critical situation and without any effective control over national finances, the neighbouring Lebanon was a safe haven for smuggling, money laundering and capital outflow; this contributed to rising inflation which proved to be a heavy burden for ordinary citizens, who actually could not afford to pay all the taxes they were supposed to pay. Dr. Schneider compared the economic relations between Syria and Lebanon with the critical situation in Berlin before 1961:

Der Libanon und Syrien kann verglichen werden (was die Geld- und Währungslage betrifft) mit unserer Situation zu Westberlin vor dem 13. August 1961.\textsuperscript{100}

The senior German advisor accused the Syrian Government and the very same President Z’ayyin for not “facilitating” the reform process: instead of rallying public support, the leadership continued to adopt a confrontational attitude towards public officials. For example, on November 15, 1967, Z’ayyin told him he was to publish an article against civil servants, whom he labelled “Kaffeetrinker”. Dr. Schneider advised him not to stir up their resistance with such a provocation, because he needed their support to implement reforms.\textsuperscript{101} He wrote that Z’ayyin arguably complained about the lack of coordination among Ministries and accused the directors of state enterprises of collusion and with private trade intermediaries. He felt that state power was still not sufficiently concentrated and expressed determination to take direct control of financial issues:

Die jetzige Etappe nenne ich immer die Telefonetappe. Ein Staat kann nicht am Telefon geleitet werden (…). Jetzt gibt es keine einheitliche Linie aber ich will nur einen Staat, der alles leiten muss (…). Unser Staat kann in


\textsuperscript{100} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{101} Later on, Z’ayyin asked the director of the journal The Economy (al Iqtisād) to retract the article, MfAA B/1.1210/75, Vermerk über die Aussprache beim Ministerpräsidenten der SAR, Dr. Z’ayyin, am 15.11.1967, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, 18 November 1967, Schneider.
Dr. Schneider commented that, through much effort, President Z’ayyin had not behaved so differently from other leaders in the developing world, and believed that development mainly involved control over “money and finance”; he labelled such positions as “die falschen extremistischen Versuche, alle ökonomischen Probleme mit den Finanzen und nur über das Geld zu lösen” (the false, extremist attempts to solve every economic problem by responding only with financial and monetary measures). In such a way, he said, Syrian leaders misunderstood the complexity of reforms and particularly the urgent need for competent administrative cadres which would use “efficiently” public finances:


Beside the supposed “misconceptions” of the Ba’thist élite, a long-term blow to the “socialist” reforms came from the Arab-Israeli

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102 “I would define the current situation as the “telephone-phase” (Telefonetappe, n.d.t.); and a state cannot be governed by the telephone [...]. There is no unitary political line, yet. But there must only one state, which must rule everything [...]. In its organisation and structure, our state can become the best organised state in the Third World”, Ibidem.

103 “In Syria, too, it could be judged as typical the tendency to see all efforts to build central state planning and management, in the broader sense of the terms, just as a question of how to use monetary instruments and to manage the monetary and financial procedures for planning (...). The Plan for investments exists only as “development budget” to support the search for financing. Still, in previous and latest statements, the main slogan is: “Get the Finance in Our Own Hands”, just like the President of the Council of Ministers said in the last conference”, MfAA B/1.1210/75, Bericht über den Einsatz als Finanzberater beim Ministerpräsidenten der Syrischen Arabischen Republik vom 24.07.1967 – 20.12.1967 und 09.02.1968 – 30.03.1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung arabische Staaten, Damascus, April 5, 1968, Schneider.
conflict and the June 1967 defeat. After the June war, opposition and resistance to the Socialist Transformation program could bank on the regional shift toward moderation in Arab politics: the conferences in Khartūm in August 1967 marked the end of Nasserism (al Nāṣiriyya) as an hegemonic force and discourse in Arab politics, and witnessed the relative ascendancy of the conservative Gulf States.\textsuperscript{104} However, the decline of Nasserism did not imply the end of political radicalism: on the contrary, new nationalist, secular and left-wing oriented forces, grasped the opportunity to compete for Arab leadership: among them, the Palestinian fīdā‘īyīn, and the Syrian and Iraqi branches of the Ba‘th Party. From a period of relative hegemony of secular Arab nationalism, the al Naksa paved the way for a more fragmented and competitive context.\textsuperscript{105}

As usual, events occurring in the region also affected domestic politics. The shift toward moderation favoured those forces in Syria which advocated for a more balanced approach in international, regional and domestic politics. After the débacle of June 1967, the left-wing Ba‘thist regime showed quite an unexpected unity towards external threats; but internal differences and disputes gradually emerged, and directly affected the Government reforms. GDR advisors reported that they currently faced more resistance from senior ministerial officials who opposed the Ba‘th or supported factions different from the radical one: they saw the Regierungberater as politically connected with the ruling group and they tried to boycott their activities by denying them access to databases and information, by delaying lectures or preventing officials from adopting the GDR proposals. Particularly, they highlighted the Ministry of Agriculture as a bulwark of “conservative and reactionary forces” which prevented the “young” Dr. Heid from working. The financial crisis affecting the Syrian state sector boosted such resistance. Dr. Schneider reported that “an atmosphere of resignation and resilience prevailed in the state sector”.\textsuperscript{106} “Conservative” forces inside the Ba‘thist regime pressured

\textsuperscript{104} Corm 2006, 263, 296.
\textsuperscript{105} Hinnebusch 2003, 29-32,, 161-163, 173.
to retain relations with states like France and Italy, as well as with other Arab states like neighbouring Iraq or Egypt: actually, many Syrian goods for the European markets languished in storehouses, and Damascus now tried to sell them on the Iraqi market. Indeed, industrial production diminished and the deficit of the balance of trade increased because of the arms deliveries from the socialist camp and the shortfalls of bad harvests; inflation soon rose to a high level and hit hard all the fixed-income citizens. The state financial budget of 1967 was still not approved and the Government faced troubles in finding enough resources to finance it.107

Inside the Ba’thist regime, positions increasingly differed over which priorities to focus on: Albrecht and Grunert labelled as “Extremisten” the Ba’thists who wanted to prepare Syria for a new war against Israel, whereas “moderates” were those who preferred first to consolidate inner stability and economic development and secondly to resume force against Israel. During the IX Extraordinary National Congress of the Ba’th Party, in August 1967, no definitive position prevailed, nor had any clear policy been elaborated to face the economic crisis: the final resolution called for financing both the Socialist Transformation and the mass re-armament program.108

President of the Council of Ministers, Z’ayyin asked dr. Albrecht for help in the re-elaboration of development projects. Both Grunert and Albrecht repeated that the Syrian Government should focus first of all on the economic and social problems and only later to engage Israel in a possible war:

Die staatliche Arbeit sollte sich auf die Lösung der wirtschaftlichen Aufgaben des Landes orientieren.109

As a consequence, the Regierungsberater took a definite stand on the domestic debate in Syria and, as Syrian politics got more polarized,
their activities could not help but become politically charged, too. In fact, in November 1967, Consul General, Horst Grunert wrote that the Z’ayyin Government came under harsh criticism, and a slander campaign attacked the GDR’s advisors. In order to secure their activities, Grunert suggested accepting Z’ayyin-s requests for more support in technical training for ministerial officials, agriculture projects and foreign trade.\(^{110}\) The Regierungsbetreiber were scheduled to complete their first phase of activities by March 1968. Now, the challenge was to support the Syrian partners in elaborating the new legislation for economic development and planning. Syrian authorities asked the GDR not to modify the Regierungsbetreiber staff, since they held confidence in the personal contacts they had established since late summer 1967.\(^ {111}\) Quite interestingly, Dr. Kampf, who was a senior diplomat in the GDR General Consulate in Damascus, suggested to proceed with caution, because there was an actual risk of giving the impression that there was a GDR “shadow cabinet” working behind the scenes in Damascus.\(^ {112}\)

Before leaving Syria, Dr. Albrecht eventually met President Z’ayyin on April 26, 1968: he strongly advised him to improve mass participation in the reform process and suggested to him a more comprehensive use of mass media and television. He told Z’ayyin that the main challenges facing state reform were the elaboration and implementation of planning and the construction of a power “Leitungspyramide” (guiding pyramid): that is, a very short and effective decision-making process which would stretch from the ministries to the Unions of Enterprises and ultimately to the single productive unit. In order to prevent beaurocracy from taking the upper hand, he suggested simplifying as much as possible the decision making procedures, and to identify clearly those responsible at every level. Dr. Albrecht also made a strong argument for more coordination among the different ministries, and he vehemently


accused the Ministry of Defence of acting alone without any commitment to state planning. Although President Z’ayyin completely agreed with his German partner, he warned that political struggle inside the Ba’thist regime would further escalate in the near future, so that the Regierungsberater’s help was urgently needed.\footnote{MfAA B1207/75, Protokoll über die Besprechung der Beratergruppe am 26.04.1968, GK der DDR in der SAR and MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, 19 May 1967, Rippich.}

On his way home, Dr. Schneider, \textit{Regierungsberater} in the Ministry of Finance, made a last few suggestions to his German and Syrian colleagues. He stressed the need to centralize the financial policy into the hands of the Council of Ministers; he suggested making Ministries and state-enterprises more responsible for the use of resources they have been allocated. According to Schneider, Syria badly needed to reform the very same Ministry of Finance, which should suit the new planned economy, become more efficient in allocating resources and eventually give priority to financing the state sector.\footnote{MfAA B/1.1210/75, 2. Studie zu den Hauptaufgaben der Struktur und Aufgabenverteilung des Ministeriums der Finanzen, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische StaatenAbteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, October 25, 1967, Schneider.} Actually, his drafts to reform the Syrian financial system had been adopted with the laws n. 92 and 93 of July 19, 1967: however, now they needed to be implemented.\footnote{MfAA B/1.1210/75, Bericht über den Einsatz als Finanzberater beim Ministerpräsidenten der SAR vom 24. Juli bis 20. Dezember 1967 und vom 9. Februar bis 30. März 1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, April 5, 1968, Schneider.} Last but not least, he urged to train a new competent group of civil servants which would face the huge economic challenges: obviously, Schneider pressed President Z’ayyin to ask the GDR for support.\footnote{MfAA B/1.1210/75, Vermerk über die Aussprache beim Ministerpräsidenten der SAR, Dr. Z’ayyin am 29. Februar 1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, March 30, 1968, Schneider.}


Once the \textit{Regierungsberater} had a clear picture of the situation in Syria, they entered the so called “legislative phase”: that is, they
actively supported Syrian Ministers and officials to elaborate laws and decrees which would institutionalize reforms. However, such a phase occurred in a difficult and chaotic period. The consequences of the al Naksa, the economic slowdown and the end of Nasserism favoured a broader political differentiation inside the Ba’thist regime.

On the one hand, the Ba’thists who had governed Syria since February 1966 still rallied up around Prime Minister Yūsuf Z’ayyin, Foreign Minister Ibrahīm Mākhūs and Ba’th Deputy Secretary and senior officer Śalāḥ al Jadīd. They still supported the Socialist Transformation program and the need to enhance the role of mass organizations, in order to mobilize people and resources. Moreover, after the June defeat, under the label of the “people’s war” they fully endorsed the guerrilla strategy of the Palestinian fidā’īyin; this matched with their vocal, “militant” criticism against other Arab regimes which they accused of collusion with western imperialism and Israel, too. As far as the economy was concerned, the GDR General Consulate reported the public speech of Z’ayyin on the 1st of May 1968 in Tartous: he reiterated that his program was in line with the Non-capitalist Road to Development and that much effort was focused on industrialization, agricultural mechanization and technical and vocational training, as well. Consul Rippich noted that Z’ayyin perceived the security concerns as a long-term challenge which could not be restrained by military issues alone.117 However, the prevailing trends in Arab politics did not prove suitable for Damascus’ militant stand. Hence, President Nūr al Dīn al Atāsī, himself a so called radical, tried to balance and compromise Syrian claims both with the Arab neighbours and the socialist partners.

On the other hand, the current “radical” leadership became increasingly counterbalanced by those who advocated more caution in foreign policy and active cooperation with other Arab states; they also supported a slowdown on domestic reforms, in order to strengthen national unity and possibly coopt opposition forces. Senior Ba’thist official and Minister of Defence, Ḥāfiz al Asad, became the leader of the so called nationalist or “realist” faction of the Syrian regime. He emerged gradually as the leading voice advocating the preminence of

the “national question” over the “social one”: that is, the utmost priority of national security and the recovery of the Golan Heights. This could only be achieved by strengthening national unity among different social and political forces, because it would ease the recovery of resources at home and abroad. Eventually, al Asad called for rallying up more support from Arab states, in order to face the Israeli “challenge.” Such an approach to domestic and foreign policy would involve the slowdown of the domestic reforms which had further antagonized opposition forces, particularly the religious establishment and the private sector.\(^{118}\) Domestically, al Asad and his colleague General Muṣṭafa Ṭliās succeeded in rallying up support among the most important military officers but faced more difficulties inside the Ba’th Party and the related mass organizations: in fact, Ba’thist members or supporters usually favoured more radical and confrontational approaches.\(^{119}\)

However, one of the main pillars of the regime still resided in the form of the army and, between 1968 and 1969, the two factions tried to expand their constituencies among senior officers. As Communist leader Khālid Bakdāš told his German partners, the rivalry between al Asad and al Jadīd put at risk the very unity of the armed forces:

> The army has no more discipline; while the ‘alawi officers actually controlled the army, the Ba’th Party was trying to curb their power and, in doing so, it was undermining the morale of the army and its crucial relationship with the Government and the Party, as well.\(^{120}\)

Even the Regierungserater reported the extensive, rising influence of the military officers in Syrian politics and economics. In fact, despite

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\(^{118}\) See Batatu 1999, 279-287.


\(^{120}\) Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 868, Information nr. 21/68, Über das Gespräch zwischen Genossen Axen und Grüneberg mit Bakhdash am 18.03.1968, im Hause des ZK, Zk der SED, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, April 9, 1968.
resistance from civilian Ba’thists, many resources were devoted to security and defense; many engineers and technicians in the Ministry of Energy and Oil moved to institutions controlled by the army; and military officers secured senior ministerial appointments, for example in the Ministry of Finance and of Economy and Foreign Trade. On the contrary, the radicals’ attempt to strengthen the Party’s grip on the state did not prove effective because their members, once they got appointed to high-level positions, often fell short of implementing their Party resolutions.121

As far as economy was concerned, the June 1967 defeat had long-term consequences for Syrian economics. According to Gerlach, GDR economic attaché in Damascus, the material impossibility to engage in military warfare and the necessity for Syria to rebuild its armed forces shifted the priority from economic development to a development which would be functional to the defense of the country and to the struggle against Israel.122 In February 1968, President Ž’ayyin confessed to the SED official Horst Grüneberg, that it was almost impossible to balance re-armament and economic development; so that, much of the latter got sacrificed to the imperatives of foreign currency accumulation and military build-up:

Auf uns allein gestützt ist es unmöglich, eine Übereinstimmung zwischen militärischer Stärkung und ökonomischer Entwicklung zu schaffen. Gegenwärtig konzentriert sich die Regierung Syriens auf die Steigerung der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion, vor allem der Exportprodukte und auf die Steigerung der Industrieproduktion, vor allem der exportintensiven Zweige (…). Wir können keinen Rüstungswettlauf mit Israel durchführen, denn Israel erhält seine militärische Ausrüstung und zum Teil sogar seine Rüstungsmittel von Imperialismus geschenkt.123


123 “It is almost impossible to find an equilibrium between military strengthening and economic development. Currently, the Government focuses on increasing agricultural production, export products, and industrial production, especially in the export-oriented sectors (…). We cannot afford to engage in a re-armament-race with Israel, because the latter receives technical equipment and part of its arms as a present from imperialism”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 874, Vermerk, An-
The Regierungsberater in Damascus

Financial constraints and the rising influence of the “realists” led to the modification of the Second 5-year Plan (1966-1970): in order to earn as much foreign currency as possible, the Syrian regime gave priority to export-oriented productive sectors and put much emphasis on improving efficiency and productivity: actually, it freed from major restrictions the private trade intermediaries who traditionally held relations with western European markets; it supported the medium-sized land owners who could produce for both domestic and foreign markets, and marginalized the small peasants who worked almost only to feed themselves and their families. Moreover, it kept down wages and dismissed the labour requests made by Trade Unions. As in previous cases, the Syrian Communist Party reported on the workers and left-wing activists’ disillusionment toward the regime’s much trumpeted “socialism.”

The search for funds and capital was matched with a more balanced approach to international politics and economics. At the regional level, the priority attached to security concerns led the “nationalists” to reject the militant stand adopted by al Z’ayyin Government and to renew ties with most of Arab regime, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, as well: they advocated for unity to counter the...
Israeli refusal to leave the occupied territories within the foreseeable future and believed that military actions should act in parallel with diplomatic efforts. Hence, they supported al Nāṣṣir in his War of Attrition against Israel in the Suez Canal, as well as coordinating with Jordan and Iraq on the so called “western” and “northern” fronts. Like Egypt, Syria needed Soviet and Socialist military support, so that al Assad was careful to maintain warm relations with the Kremlin. However, contrary to Z’ayyin, it favoured a more balanced approach, because the socialist camp could not totally replace the capitalist one either as a source of economic revenue or of diplomatic influence: at best, it was a complementary market which had the merit to grant stability to trade and economic exchanges: actually, the very same Regierungsberater Dr. Niederberger, recognized that Syria should keep its relations with Western and Arab markets, otherwise it would not have any chance to develop its productive forces.

The rising political competition between the two rival factions inside the Ba’th Party marked the IV Regional Congress and the X National Congress, held in Damascus in October 1968. On both occasions, Minister of Defence, Ḥāfiz al Asad, succeeded in striking a heavy blow to the radical faction: he dismissed Yūsuf Z’ayyin and Ibrahīm Mākhūs from the Regional Command and from any Government functions, and replaced them with his loyals in the new Government led by Nūr al Dīn al Atāsī: among them, Mustāfa Ṭlās as General Chief of Staff of the armed forces and ‘Abd al Halim

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126 Corm 2006, 328-337.
128 Al Atāsī was still President of the Republic and Secretary General of the Ba’th Party, as well, PA AA B36IB4, 304, Bericht 516/68, SIBRD Damaskus, October 22, 1968, Schwartze; Oriente Moderno, 1968, n. 11-12, 745.
Khaddām as Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade. The first al Atāsī Government was elected on October 29, 1968 and his program focused on: a flexible regional policy toward all other Arab states; the diversification of military and political partnership, in order not to depend exclusively on the socialist states; the slowdown, or “moderation”, of the reforms envisaged by the Socialist Transformation program. Most foreign and domestic observers commented on the “fragility” of the compromise and labelled the current phase as one of “power dualism” (izdiwāğiyya al sultah).

In late February 1969, Şalâh al Jadīd and his colleagues decided to engage Ḥāfiz al Asad in a show of strength, as they tried to remove from office some Ba’thists in the ‘alawi region who were loyal to the Defence Minister. Al Asad reacted harshly: he deployed the army in the major cities and placed in custody much of the Ba’th Party and Trade Unions senior officials, including al Z’ayyin and al Jadīd. However, he could not yet run the country without the support of the Party, so he soon released all the officials and negotiated another compromise under the good offices of the Soviet ambassador Mukhtidinov, on March 6, 1969. Although al Asad eventually retreated compromised, he showed that ultimate power still resided in his control of the armed forces.

In Syria, the GDR representatives strove to find suitable partners, and that was not an easy task at all: they continued to support the so
called “radical” faction led by Z’ayyin, Mākhūs and al Atāsī, because of the priority they gave to the “social question” and to cooperation with the socialist camp. However, the GDR did not share their stand in regional politics: actually, although the GDR and the whole socialist camp vehemently accused Israel of siding with “western imperialism”, East Berlin always supported a political solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such a position was consistent with its stand on international conflict resolution and obviously with its German policy, too: peaceful negotiations should lead to international recognition of the existing borders and state legitimacy.\textsuperscript{133}

Eventually, the GDR leadership aligned with the Soviet Union and continued to support the Ba’thist “radical” faction, while striving to mediate with al Asad. Despite divergences, the SED leadership decided to step up the political and organizational cooperation with the Ba’th Party, hoping that this would strengthen its progressive members. For this reason, in 1968, the SED and the Ba’th Party increased the exchange of delegations and East Berlin sent some of its most influential officials, such as senior staff of the Department for International Relations of the SED, Horst Grüneberg and Paul Markowsky. According to them:\textsuperscript{134}

Der Weg zur Sicherung einer fortschrittlichen Entwicklung in der Syrischen Arabischen Republik führt gegenwärtig über die politisch-ideologische Stärkung der Arabischen Sozialistischen Ba’th-Partei im Sinne ihrer progressivsten Mitglieder. In diese Richtung beabsichtigt die SED ihre Beziehungen zur Arabischen Sozialistischen Ba’th-Partei zu entwickeln.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} See Muth 2001.


\textsuperscript{135} “Today, the way to guarantee the progressive development of the Syrian Arab Republic involves the political and ideological strengthening of the Ba’th Party and its most progressive members. In such a direction, the SED Party wishes to improve its relations with the Ba’th Party”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 872,
Despite all difficulties, the GDR’s advisors scored a good result in Damascus. The Foreign Ministry in East-Berlin wrote to the Vice-president of the Council of Minister, Gr. G. Weiss, that the influence they enjoyed in Syria was exceptional, compared to other Arab states: on the whole, on September 1967, the GDR had 295 experts working in Egypt, Syria, Irak and Algeria; but only Syria effectively reduced to a minimum the presence of Western advisors.136

On 19 March 1968, the Consul General of the GDR and the Syrian President of the Council of Ministers signed the Protokoll-Abkommen (Protocol-Agreement), concerning the II phase of the Regierungsberater mission. Later on, on November 6, 1968, the Syrian and GDR authorities signed the Protokoll-Agreement for the Economic and Technical Cooperation for 1968-1970, which set the general framework for the experts working at technical and ground levels.137

Table 4 - Technical Experts and Advisors of the GDR in Syria, 1968-1971.

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<td>Sector-Ministry for Energy and Infrastructural investments</td>
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<td>Ministry</td>
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<td>Societies for the realization of big projects</td>
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<td>Sector-Ministry for Local Municipalities</td>
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<td>Department for Cities</td>
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137 MfAA B/1.1218/75, Protokoll für die Regelung der Beratertätigkeit in der Syrischen Arabischen Republik, GK der DDR in der SAR and MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, April 2, 1968, Rippich.
In April 1968, senior government officials of the GDR met in Berlin to discuss the details of the II phase of Regierungsberater in Syria: they decided to agree to the requests made by the Z’ayyin Government and to extend the activities of the GDR advisors. So, the GDR mission was composed of:

- Office of the Council of Ministers: Dr. S. Petzold. He would work on the working procedures of state administration.
- Office of the Council of Ministers: Anton. He would work on professional training for state cadres.
- Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade: Niederberger. He would work on planning and management procedures
- Ministry of Industry and Ministry for Oil: Ing. H. Gebauer. He would work on planning and management for big infrastructural and industrial projects
- Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform: Heid. He would work on planning and management of projects on socio-economic development in rural areas

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<td>Food Industries-Flour Mills sector</td>
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<td>Food Industries-Cereal sector</td>
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<td>Porcelain Factory in Damascus</td>
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<td>Tile Factory in Hama</td>
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<td>Central Department for Research</td>
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<td>Planning</td>
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<td>Finances</td>
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| Total         | 49 | 42 | 41 |

− Central Institute of Statitics: Dürrwald. He would work on management of the new institute and its cooperation with other ministries
− Ministry for Domestic Trade and Supply: Popluschnik. He would work on planning and management procedures
− Ministry of Planning (later on, State Planning Commission): Brossman. He would cooperate in tackling general problems connected to economic planning.\[138\]

From autumn 1967 to early spring 1969, the Regierungsberater helped their Syrian partners to elaborate the new laws and the related executive decrees which would improve planning and management in different state-led sectors.\[139\] *Democratic Centralism* was meant to be both their theoretical and practical reference: it was deemed to be the best safeguard for “eine einheitliche und zielgerichtete Führung” (a unitary and goal-oriented management) of a modern and complex Government;

Der Demokratische Zentralismus bedeutet, alle Grundfragen der staatlichen Führung von einem Zentrum aus – in der SAR vom Ministerrat – auf der Grundlage und in Durchführung der Beschlüsse der Partei zu entscheiden und zugleich die Verantwortung und die Initiative aller Elemente und Glieder des Staates, d.h. insbesondere der Ministerien und der anderen zentralen Staatsorgane sowie die schöpferische Arbeit der werktätigen Massen der der Lösung der Aufgaben der sozialistischen Transformation immer stärker zu entfalten.\[140\]

\[138\] The decision was taken by former Regierungsberater coordinator, Dr. Albrecht, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Kiesewetter, the Vice Consul in Damascus, Rippich and the Director of the Ministry of Economy, Kattner. F. Rippich, who was nominated Consul of the GDR in December 1967, was appointed as coordinator of the Regierungsberater for the General Consulate, Protokoll der Arbeitsgruppe unter der Leitung des Stellv. des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates, Dr. Weiss, Berlin, April 15, 1968, Seidel. See also, MfAA B1207/75, Letter an Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der SAR, Dr. Yusuf Z’ayin, GK der DDR in der SAR, Damascus, March 13, 1968, Grunert; MfAA B/1207/75, Konzeption für die Weiterführung der Tätigkeit der Gruppe von Beratern der DDR bei der Regierung der SAR nach der Durchführung des Ba’th-Kongress und der erfolgten Regierungsumbildung, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, 3.AEA, Damascus, December 17, 1969, Rippich.

\[139\] Such duties compelled them to work deeper and more extensively in the different Ministries, that is “to decentralize” their presence, MfAA B1207/75, Protokoll über die Besprechung der Beratergruppe am 26.04.1968, GK der DDR in der SAR und MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, May 19, 1967, Rippich.

\[140\] “Democratic Centralism means that, all the main questions of state policy should be decided by a unique centre – in Syria by the Council of Ministers – on
Since 1966 the GDR Regierungsrat helped Syrians to elaborate a new institutional framework for the relations between central government and local authorities. The Ba'th Party gave much relevance to the issue because it would allow it to exert more control over the provinces as well as over major urban centers, like Damascus and Aleppo. Finally, in March 1968, Dr. Albrecht submitted a draft which based on the experience of the Popular Democracies in Eastern Europe:141 in June 1968, the Syrian government adopted the Basic Principles for the Law on Local Administration, which set up a new territorial administrative division, as well as elective bodies whose majority should be composed of labour forces and small bourgeoisie; such elective institutions were however assisted at every level by Ba'th Party officials who would “guarantee popular control.” As the FRG diplomats noted, ultimate power rested in the hands of the Ba’th Party and central Government in Damascus.142 Dr. Petzold, who replaced Dr. Albrecht, worked on the further elaboration of the law, and had the opportunity to travel all across Syria and to meet provincial and local authorities. Moreover, his work concerned the new law for the re-organization of the ministerial and administrative civil service: that was quite a hot issue because it was meant to rationalize and

the basis and on the implementation of the Party resolutions; at the same time, it involves the responsibility and the initiative of all elements and members of the state, in particular Ministries, other central state institutions as well as the creative activities of the working masses, which strongly contribute to provide solutions to the needs and tasks of the socialist transformation”, MfAA B1.1216/75, Einschätzung der Vorschläge und Gedanken über die weitere Entwicklung der Tätigkeit des Ministerrates und über die Aufgaben und die Arbeitsweise des Büros für Ministerratsangelegenheiten der SAR, GK der DDR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 2, 1969, Petzold. As we note, there was hardly any distinction between legislative and executive powers; for a general overview on Socialist state institutional framework, see M. Duverger, I sistemi di potere and I Partiti Politici.


standardize procedures, to start an extensive program of professional training and eventually to replace the officials, who supposedly opposed the Ba'thist regime. Interestingly enough, his drafts were widely discussed in the IV Regional Ba’th Congress and highly-rated by the new al Atāsī-led Government: that is, despite political differences, more conservative Ba’thists seemed to appreciate Petzold’s suggestions, as well.\footnote{MfAA B/1.1218/75, Protokoll für die Regelung der Beratertätigkeit in der Syrischen Arabischen Republik, GK der DDR in der SAR and MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, April 2, 1968, Rippich; MfAA B1.1215/75, Bericht über die Beratertätigkeit für den Zeitraum vom 28.02.1968 bis 31.03.1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, April 2, 1968, Petzold; Schlussfolgerungen für die Verwaltungsreform der zentralen Regierungsgremien der Syrischen Arabischen Republik, S. Petzold and den Leiter des Büros für Ministerratsangelegenheiten, Herrn Mūrrī, Damascus, August 18, 1968, Petzold.}

Other activities of the Regierungsberater always concerned the centralization and expansion of the role of the state in economy. Ing. Niederberger worked at the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade and elaborated a new draft for the new law establishing state monopoly over foreign trade; at the Ministry of Industry, Ing. Herbert Gebauer worked on a draft for the improvement of management in state factories, the role of trade unions and their relations with the competent Ministries; advisors Brossman and Dürrwald trained Syrian officials on economic planning according to the socialist experience; their activities focused on the Planning Institute for Economic and Social Development; Dr. Popluschnik focused on domestic trade, consumers’ cooperatives and the legislation concerning the relations between state-sector and private trade; eventually, dr. Heid overviewed the reform of central Government institutions concerned with agriculture.\footnote{Heid faced the staunchest resistance in the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and elaborated a statute which would guarantee the Ministry major executive powers of control and planning, Ibidem.}

Such tasks compelled the Regierungsberater to work contemporaneously in different institutions: their decentralisation offered the GDR more visibility and provided an excellent opportunity to establish more contacts: in May 1968, Consul Rippich wrote that the GDR advisors were frequently asked to discuss matters directly with the Ministers, which favoured a better acknowledgement
of the current situation. On the one hand, according Rippich, much of the debate in Syrian Ministries followed the German proposals: for example, he cited the drafts for the reform of the Ministry of Agriculture and Industry, as well. On the other hand, in September, the Foreign Ministry praised the meetings held by the Regierungsbotschaft in state factories because they provided a clear picture of Syrian industrial development. If the Dezentralisierung (Decentralisation) of the German advisors was a necessary step, it nonetheless implied several risks. First, the disruption of a consistent approach to national planning, because every advisor had to adapt to the very different situations affecting the various single sectors. Secondly, the same Presidency of the Council of Ministers opposed the decentralisation of German advisors: the Head of the Office of the Council of Minister, Dr. Mūrrī, told Petzold that they feared they would lose control over the Regierungsbotschaft’s activities as well as their “monopoly” over the reform process. Moreover, the foreign advisors’ circulation would offer their rivals a major argument to accuse Z’ayyin of handing sovereignty to foreign states; that would disrupt the leadership’s claims for independence. Hence, President Z’ayyin and his colleagues tried to further centralize the decision-making process into the hands of the Office of the Council of Ministers. Rippich and Petzold reported that the Regierungsbotschaft should not undermine Z’ayyin; but the latter actually put at risk the reforms’ sustainability: according to them, now it was time for the reforms to get implemented in the Ministries; as a consequence, resistance would increase and “progressive” cadres should engage opposition directly rather than to retreat into isolation in a few central “bulwarks.”


146 For such a reason, the Vice-Consul Rippich stressed the need for better discussion and coordination among advisors during the weekly meetings at the General Consulate, MfAA B1207/75, Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Berater in der SAR im Zeitraum April/Mai 1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, May 19, 1968, Rippich.

As a matter of fact, the Z’ayyin Government was facing a very tough situation. In order to consolidate the regime and boost industrial development, the regime mobilized all the available resources, and planned a strict austerity program which would increase capital accumulation: more coordination and planning were needed but, as the Regierungsberater reported, success was far from obvious: Ministries still acted as mere administrative centres rather than effective planning and management ones. For example, Rippich noted that the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Industry still had only a loose control over state enterprises and could hardly implement any planning policy. Despite much effort, the very same licenses for import-exports were granted to factories without much accurate control. The same occurred to the management of the Unions of State Enterprises, because the export-oriented state factories acted almost autonomously and this prevented any major increase in exports. H. Gebauer reported that even the state-led import-export society, SIMEX, could not exert monopoly over foreign trade as it was supposed to do: actually, it was just an import society for the state sector. Clashes over competence for custom clearance erupted between the Ministry of Finance and the special Commission for Foreign Trade of the Council of Ministers; several GDR advisors had worked on this, but Niederberger concluded that their activities had not beared any fruit.


150 As a consequence for such mismanagement, he reported that increasing prices on textiles and medicines in the Syrian market contradicted the decreasing prices in international markets, MfAA B1207/75, Bericht, Die Problematik beim Aufbau des Ministeriums für Ökonomie und Außenhandel und der staatlichen Außenhandelsgesellschaften der SAR, GK der DDR in der SAR und MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, June 26, 1968, Rippich, Niederberger. Administrative chaos seemed to affect the Planning Commission, too; see MfAA B1207/75 Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Berater in der SAR im Zeitraum von Mitte Mai bis Mitte July 1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, July 18, 1968, Rippich.
According to advisor Popluschnik, similar concerns affected domestic trade, too. Here, the state was far from exerting any effective control: most of the shopkeepers and trade dealers were very small-sized; the state could not monitor their accounts and smuggling was still a major source of revenue; cooperatives were just too few in number, and in rural areas the barter system was still common practice. On the contrary, the so called *Grosshandel* (big trade) still enjoyed a prominent role: it focused on exchanges among enterprises and often resorted to speculation, in order to keep high prices and revenues; still, most of the small traders and state enterprises depended on big merchants for purchase, deliveries and sale, and private traders still enjoyed wide contacts with the Lebanese and Western markets. As far as their political orientation was concerned, Popluschnik reported that they did not support unanimously either the Ba’thist regime nor the opposition forces, rather they adopted a “abwartende Haltung” (“wait and see” attitude). As far as the state was concerned, Popluschnik wrote that the Ministry for Domestic Trade and Supply lacked professional cadres and still played a mere coordination role rather than a planning one: actually, he argued that the priority attached by the regime to foreign trade left the domestic market in the hands of private and market forces. Given the situation, Popluschnik recommended to elaborate a new framework for cooperation between the state and the private sector.¹⁵¹

Gerhard Anton faced the challenging task of providing professional training for state officials, and his reports offered a gloomy picture of the Syrian civil service. He harshly criticized the current wage system for its absence of any incentives for labour productivity: salaries based on age rather than competence; senior appointments were made on general educational level, without any...
regard to sectoral competence, which implied that most of the senior cadres were lawyers or medical doctors. Politically, Anton reported that civil servants were quite sceptical over the Ba’thist reforms, and often assumed passive and resilient attitudes:

Wir haben schon viele Minister und Regierungen erlebt, wir werden auch die jetzigen überstehen.152

Similar dynamics affected the state-led industrial sector. Regierungsberater Gebauer, who worked in the Ministry for Oil and in the Ministry of Industry focused his consultancy on the new law concerning the relations among central Ministries and the Unions of State Enterprises: according to him, “conservative” General Directors at the Ministry resisted the ascendancy of the Unions’ managers: these seemed to be better trained and more competent, and consequently asked for more autonomy in running their enterprises. Ernst Gebauer advocated for standing consultations between both sides, because the poor standard of information sharing among Ministries and state enterprises hindered better coordination and directly caused cumulative delays.153

In mid-July, Consul Rippich summed up the current situation as follows:

Entsprechend den zwischenzeitlich gesammelten Erfahrungen muss eingeschätzt werden, dass der Widerspruch zwischen den sich in der materiellen Produktion entwickelnden Ideen und dem Herangehen an die Lösung der Aufgaben und dem Beharrungsvermögen der Alten auf die Masse der Mitarbeiter in den Staatsorganen nicht geringer, sondern eher grösser wird.154

152 “We have already experienced several ministers and governments, we are going to survive the current one, as well”, MfAA B1.1214/75, Analytische Einschätzung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes des Personelbestandes der zentralen Organen der SAR, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 25, 1969, Anton.

153 Gebauer was quite pride to report that most of the debates centered of the drafts he had submitted to his Syrian partners, MfAA B/1.218/75, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit bis Februar 1970, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, February 17, 1970, Gebauer; Bemerkungen zur Arbeitsweise des Ministeriums, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, November 22, 1970, Gebauer.

154 “On the basis of the experience we gathered up to now, we might say that the contradiction between the ideas which have been developed in material production
In the Ministry of Industry, H. Gebauer wrote that medium-level cadres who supported reforms complained that senior officials and directors tried to avoid any proposals which would increase their responsibility. Moreover, there was a widespread belief that socialism just equated with economic nationalization, and it did need many changes in labour, management and planning organisation. For such a reason, Consul Rippich made a strong appeal to his Syrian partners for the rapid and extensive appointment of young officials who had trained in socialist states and “knew” what planning was. However, as advisor H. Niederberger reported, Syrian cadres trained in socialist states were not an inherent guarantee for a high-level competence: actually, once they got back to Syria, most of them ceased to continue to study or train, so that they fell short of getting in touch with the real situation that affected their country. Besides clientelist and political reasons, all of that prevented them from reaching high-level appointments or, once there, to play any effective influence over strategic decisions.

Another major problem involved the abiding mistrust of the regime towards popular direct participation in reforms. In fact, a sense of superiority and contempt toward peasants or small traders often

and the solution of problems and the inertia of the longer serving personnel in the mass of civil servants has not diminished, rather it has increased”, Ibidem.


prevailed inside the “radical” faction of the Ba’th Party, who accused
them of being inherently “reactionary”.\textsuperscript{158}

As far as rural areas and agriculture were concerned, Syrian
Governments did not follow the suggestions made by the GDR and
refused to concede private land ownership to poor peasants because
of two main reasons: first, because they feared that production would
decrease; secondly, because they needed the rent from land-lease to
finance the state-budget. According to Regierungsbücher Heid, after ten
years the agrarian reform was almost accomplished, at least as it was
planned in 1958 and 1965. However, big landowners still retained
control over one third of the most fertile land, the direct ownership of
means of production and the strategic access to credit, as well: indeed,
“die ehemaligen Feudalen und Agrarkapitalisten” (the old feudals and
capitalist farmers) still exerted hegemony over rural villages and
peasants; even religious land property (\textit{waqf}) had not been seriously
compromised by reforms.\textsuperscript{159} Regierungsbücher Heid reported that one
major problem concerned the difficulties encountered by peasants’
cooperatives: as far as the few existing ones were concerned, Heid
criticized their rigid and vertical structure which prevented any real
participation and engagement of peasants:

“Die Nachteile dieser Bildung der Genossenschaften “nur” von oben liegen
vor allem darin, dass die Bauern sich zur Genossenschaft inaktiv verhalten;
kaum arbeitsfähige Vorstände vorhanden sind und die Leitung der
Genossenschaften durch die Bauern selbst auch wenig gefördert wird; die
staatlichen Berater die Leitung ersetzen”.\textsuperscript{160}

The result was a major dissatisfaction of the peasants, who
maintained a distance from cooperatives and resorted to the so called

\textsuperscript{158} MfAA B/1.1211/75, \textit{Analyse und Bericht über die Tätigkeit im Zeitraum von Mitte Okt
tober 1968 bis Mitte Januar 1969}, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung
Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 4, 1969, Popluschník.

\textsuperscript{159} MfAA B1.213/75, \textit{Bericht über einige wichtige Seiten der Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft
in der S.AR, über meine Tätigkeit in der S.AR im IV. Quartal 1968 und über die Schlussfolge
rungen für die weitere Arbeit}, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabi
sche Staaten, Damascus, January 26, 1969, Heid.

\textsuperscript{160} “The disadvantage of such an exclusive top-down development of cooperatives
is the fact that peasants behave passively towards the cooperative; there are almost
no competent managing directors and the peasants do not ask to have a stake in
the direction of the cooperatives; state assistant supervisors replace the manage
tment”, Ibidem.
old “feudal” practices for credit and material support. Heid reported that the Ministry of Agriculture was actually undermining any efforts to fully implement or extend agrarian reform; however, he noted that the newly founded Peasant’s Union could be a major asset for the mobilization and participation of the rural citizens. Advisor Heid agreed on the need to radically increase national production by mechanization and structural linkage to industry: only peasants and state cooperatives could achieve such results, and the state should satisfy their demands for a better life and working conditions.

In the industrial sector the regime staunchly refused to coopt trade unions into factories’ management. Trade Unions pressed for active engagement in running factories and got support by Regierungsberater H. Gebauer and S. Petzold. Despite the GDR and the Syrian Communist Party’s suggestions, the Ba’th Party and factories’ managers preferred to rely on modern machinery or to grant unilaterally higher salaries, rather than involving labour in management: Gebauer suggested that a better labour organization should anticipate rather than follow the introduction of new modern machinery, otherwise losses would inevitably occur. He reported that workers still mistrusted current state managers because they did not experience any major improvement in their condition or status. Actually, most of the current managers were the previous factories’ owners, who got reappointed after the enterprises got nationalized and faced massive financial losses. Consequently, advisor Gebauer said that traditional and “capitalist” patterns of management and industrial policies still prevailed. As far as labour organization was concerned, Regierungsberater Gebauer and Petzold suggested the Government and the Trade Unions apply more control over labour discipline under the slogan: “Jedem seine Aufgabe im Kampf” and

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161 Ibidem.


“Die gesamte Arbeitszeit für die revolutionäre Sache”. However, such suggestions did not seem to find much success, since production and labour productivity did not rise as expected, and created many obstacles to the export-oriented sectors, which were supposed to provide foreign currency for the languishing state reserves.

At the end of the day, Z’ayyin faced a major contradiction: he planned to mobilise those forces with high social expectations and, at the same time, to implement an austerity program which would hinder major capital redistribution; he relied on export revenues from the state-led enterprises, but these performed badly because they could not match the highly competitive international standards concerning costs and quality; he needed massive investments in the economy, but most resources were diverted to military expenditure. Obviously, opposition forces inside and outside the Ba’thist regime exploited the critical situation and successfully dismissed Z’ayyin and his colleagues during the Ba’th Regional Congress in October 1968. Although the compromise set out with the new al Atāsī-led Government proved short-lived, a major reappraisal of the late Socialist Transformation program of 1965 was now under way.

All the Regierungsberater reported that their activities were deeply affected by the ongoing political struggle in Syria. During the Ba’th Congresses in October 1968 and the March 1969 crisis, activities in the Ministries almost came to a halt, because officials waited to see the outcome of the political struggle, so that they could later adapt

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suitably. Moreover, as the Regierungsbereiter deepened their activities in the Ministries, they faced the resistance of those civil servants who considered them as the arm of the “radicals”: in the Ministry of Economy Dr. Niederberger was told that all the GDR advisors would leave, as soon as the current Government was dismissed. The state-company SIMEX for foreign trade was harshly criticized for ineffectiveness and mismanagement, and opposition forces inside and outside the Ba’thist Government depicted it as the “actual face of socialism”: consequently, conservative forces argued of the impossibility of enforcing socialism in Syria. For his own part, Niederberger pressed his Syrian colleagues to improve the performance of SIMEX, in order to face such “politically motivated allegations”. Shortly before the Ba’th Regional Congress in October 1968, the Head of the Office of the Council of Ministers, dr. Mūrrī, summed up that the Regierungsbereiter and asked for their help in improving effective coordination among Ministries. Consul General, Horst Grunert, agreed to cooperate, but later suggested his German colleagues to adopt a low-profile role and focus exclusively on economic issues, in order not to harm Z’ayyin and the GDR status, as well. In December 1968, the GDR General Consulate in Damascus wrote that the Government reshuffle and the ousting of President Yūsuf Z’ayyin, implied a reappraisal of the Regierungsbereiter mission. In fact, his dismissal curbed the power of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and consequently eliminated a major point of reference for the Regierungsbereiter.


169 In order to guarantee the continuity of their works, the General Consulate strongly suggested to move the Regierungsbereiter mission from his special status to the normal framework of the Economic and Technical Cooperation (Wirtschaftliche
Facing such a situation on the ground, East-German experts tried to adapt their consultancy to the current trends in Syrian politics, while safeguarding most of the legislative and organisational results they had achieved so far. Regierungsberater H. Niderberger adapted to the export-oriented policy of the Government and suggested conforming Syrian production to the standards of international market competition: first of all, Syria needed to increase labour productivity in agriculture and industry, if it wished to satisfy both domestic consumption and exports; secondly, the state should impose higher standards of quality for export-oriented industrial products; third, the state should subvent port-oriented production by lower taxation. All of that, for sure, should occur under strict state control, in order to guarantee independence from foreign capitals.  

Despite all attempts, the Regierungsberater’s consultancy experienced major difficulties to adapt to the current situation in Syria. Consul Rippich reported that some advisors did not prove suitable because they handed over projects which did not take into account the obstacles facing reforms, especially the political ones: actually, they acted as if Syria was on the verge of adopting the same development models of the socialist states in Eastern Europe, which was not the case. For example, he wrote that advisor Niederberger had suggested introducing socialist planning management directly into factories, but Rippich doubted the project had any viability since theory about planning was far from clear in central institutions, too. In mid-October, Consul Rippich reported that advisor Brossman at the Planning Commission was not aware of the internal disputes arising from his proposals: he labelled them “unrealistic and not agreed with the Syrian partners”, so he suggested to replace him when the mission
was due to expire in early 1969. However, the GDR advisors could not be entirely blamed for partial success or failures. Actually, they often found themselves at odds with Syrian contradictory requests: for example, dr. Rağay, a senior official at the Office of the Council of Ministers and a close partner of Z’ayyin, asked Petzold what they could ration further in domestic consumption, in order to finance the military build up; unfortunately, he directly referred to the Nazi experience in planning the war-economy:

Im Verlaufe der Gespräche bezog sich Dr. Rağay auch auf die Erfahrungen Hitlerdeutschlands, das den Krieg auch lange Jahre konzentriert vorbereitet hätte.173

Petzold soon replied that they had no concept, or experience, of how to build a war-based economy; instead, he told him that socialist defence was better assured by a strong and viable agricultural and industrial development, as well as on building a closer relationship with population.174

6. The Diplomatic Recognition of the GDR and the Reassessment of the Regierungsberater Mission

The year 1969 marked a turning point in its search for diplomatic recognition in the Arab world, and the normalization of its status had direct repercussions on its entanglement on Syrian politics, as well. European Détente and Arab “fragmentation” offered the suitable context for the GDR breakthrough in the international arena and, more specifically, the Arab regimes grasped the opportunity of the Ostpolitik offensive led by Chancellor Willy Brandt. Iraq was currently ruled by a strong and assertive Ba’thist leadership which competed with other neighbours both in regional and international politics: in

172 Indeed, disputes increased also because Syrian central Government began to set the guidelines for the Third Five-Year Plan (1970-1975) just as the Ba’th Party was experiencing a major reshuffle in occasion of the Regional Congress, MfAA B1207/75, Bericht, Bildung eines Hohen Rates in der Plankommission, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, October 1, 1968, Kämpf; Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Berater in der SAR im Zeitraum von Mitte Juli bis Mitte Oktober 1968, GK der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, October 14, 1968, Rippich.

173 “During the discussion, Dr. Dajaj related also to the experience of Germany under Hitler, which also had prepared the war for many years before”, Ibidem.

174 Ibidem.
order to get legitimized by the socialist camp, Baghdad played on the inter-German competition and decided to grant diplomatic recognition to the GDR in April 30, 1969: as a reward, it received generous economic and military aid.\textsuperscript{175} Syria and Egypt could not stand still: Damascus established diplomatic relations with the GDR on June 5, 1969 and received a 50 millions $ loan to finance the new Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (WTZ).\textsuperscript{176} Despite much rhetoric about economic boycott and retaliation, Bonn did not apply the \textit{Hallstein Doktrin}, and instead tried to contain possible repercussions.\textsuperscript{177}

In Syria, the main consequence for the GDR was a marked shift toward \textit{Realpolitik}. At economic level, Berlin tried to adapt bilateral relations to international standards and apply more sound financial rationality. Already in 1968, the GDR leadership planned to speed up the productive specialization of the national economy: that is, to focus on exporting “complete plants” (\textit{komplette Anlagen}) and importing more agricultural products, raw materials and semi-finished goods.\textsuperscript{178}

As far as Syria was concerned, the GDR envisaged concentrating on exports for the pharmaceutical, electric and petrochemical sectors, in order to “guarantee the maximum increase of the national income”:\textsuperscript{179} that meant, to reverse the much favourable trade and financial

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conditions offered by the GDR since 1965. Indeed, exports in the Arab markets could provide the capitals needed to buy technology in the West and oil in the Middle East. In the contemporary Arab context, that meant to focus on the promising Iraqi Ba’thist regime, whereas Syria was to be handled more carefully because of its inner instability and the setbacks experienced recently by its local partners. From such a perspective, in April 30, 1970, Berlin tried to consolidate economic relations by establishing the Joint Committee for the Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation of the German Democratic Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic (Gemeinsamer Wirtschaftsausschuss, GWA): this would coordinate the sectors where the two countries already cooperated and would solve possible disputes. As far as the Regierungsbücher were concerned, the trade attaché, Gerlach, had already suggested to fully exploit their “economic” potential:

Der WTZ-Experteneinsatz sollte in Zukunft so gelenkt werden, dass unsere WTZ-Experten auf Investitionsvorhaben Einfluss nehmen können, die im Sinne unseres Exportes liegen. Diese Einflussnahme sollte so weit gehen, dass sie die Spezifikationen ausarbeiten im Sinne unserer Liefermöglichkeiten und, falls ein Tender nicht zu umgehen ist, in der Tenderkommission mitarbeiten. (...) In diesem Sinne verstärkter und langfristiger Einsatz von wissenschaftlich, technisch und ökonomischen Experten in einflussreichen Positionen soll sie gleichzeitig mit einem wirksvollen Beitrag zur Entwicklung der syrischen Volkswirtschaft der Aussenwirtschaft der DDR Hilfestellung geben können, unmittelbar oder in der Perspektive effektive Marktpositionen aufzubauen.

180 Sapmo-Barchiv, DL2 VAN 677, Information, MAW, Direktionsbereich Übersee I an HV der DDR in der SAR, December 9, 1968, Clausnitzer.
182 “In the future, the appointment of scientific and technical experts should be structured in such a way to influence the investment projects which are compatible with our export capacities. That would let them elaborate everything necessary for our deliveries and, in case we should succeed with a tender bid, it should cooperate with the Commission appointed to evaluate the projects. (...) In such a perspective the effective and long-term presence of the economic, scientific and technical experts in influential positions must significantly contribute to the development of both Syrian national economy and the international economy of the GDR, in the sense of providing a sound market position”, Sapmo-Barchiv, DL2 VAN 1586, Vorstellung des HV für den WTZ-Abkommen und den Einsatz der Berater, HV der DDR in der SAR, an MAW, Direktionsbereich Übersee I, May 25, 1968, Gerlach.
Former GDR Handelsattchéd Klaus Gädt, who worked extensively in the neighbouring Iraq, differentiated between “field, technical experts” and “ministerial experts” and stressed the latters’ economic relevance:

Experts on the ground were very useful for the construction and maintenance of plants, but they did not have any meaningful economic use: they did not enter in contact with those responsible for planning and tender bids. The experts in the central institutions, and in particular in the central planning commission, had far more access to information, so that they could help our enterprises. However, the economic assets of their activities for the GDR were never direct and guaranteed at all.183

Quite an important example was the Regierungsberater H. Heid, in the Ministry of Agriculture: in early 1970, he worked on the development plan for the fertile Oronte river region near Hama, and the GDR could later export several machinery and technical personnel for the agricultural mechanization process.184

Nevertheless, despite much efforts, East-Germany was not successful in extracting profits from Syria, because financial rewards for diplomatic recognition still let Syrians enjoy very favourable conditions.185 According to Dawd Ḥīdū, former student in the GDR and Director at the Department of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Economy:

“The GDR planned to restructure its international economic relations. However, Syria was always an exception: until the very end, we gained favourable conditions for clearing, long-term credits and exemption from monetary transactions”.186

186 D. Ḥīdū, former Director of the Foreign Trade Department and President of the Department for Energy at the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade; member of the Politbüro of the Syrian Communist Party (Faīṣal), interview with the author, Damascus, June 7, 2006.
At the political level, the Syrian regime was still disrupted by the so-called *izdīwajjyyat is sultāb* (power dualism). The difficulties and the political decline experienced by the “radical” Ba’thists matched with the ascendency of Ḥāfīz al Asad and his “nationalist” loyals. However, none of the Ba’thist faction was able to rule the country all alone: the radical leadership of President al Atāsī and Ṣalāḥ al Jadīd enjoyed the support of the majority of the Party as well as of the related Mass organisations; the “nationalists” controlled most of the armed forces and got support from external forces, like religious authorities and the private sector; these latter seemed to prefer anything else to the radical Ba’thists. In March 1969, the IV Extraordinary Regional Congress of the Ba’th Party sanctioned the exclusion of the “radicals” from high-profile appointments. However, the new al Atāsī-led Government of May 29 was still based on a compromise, and each faction rushed to consolidate its hold on the respective constituencies. In particular, the radicals tried to balance the military power of the nationalists by supporting different armed militias, notably the pro–Ba’thist Palestinian al Ṣā‘īqa. In 1969 and 1970 the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab politics witnessed the rise of Palestinian militias, which often acted outside the control of Arab regimes. Meanwhile, the War of Attrition in the Suez Canal (March 1969-August 1970) and the “Eastern Front” enhanced coordination among the regular armies of Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The “nationalist” Ba’thists, Soviet Union and the socialist states actively supported such a strategy.

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188 PAAA B36IB4, 488, Bericht Nr. 316/69, 317/69, 357/69, SIBRD Damaskus, April 28, 1969, Ernst. The activities of the Palestinian *feddayen* sparked a major crisis in Lebanon and only the Egyptian mediation brought to a fragile compromise in November 1969. See Oriente Moderno, 1970, n. 3-5, 159.

189 Despite their support for the Palestinian cause, the latters feared the militias’ actions would spark another devastating assault from Israel, Oriente Moderno, 1969, n. 4-5, 240; Oriente Moderno, 1969, n. 6-7, 305-306; Oriente Moderno, 1969, n. 9-10, 522.
The very same divergence over the UN resolution n. 242/1967 did not seem to prevent cooperation between both partners.¹⁹⁰

At that time, in Syria the socialist camp faced a major dilemma: all the forces supporting progressive measures in domestic politics as well as cooperation with the socialist states had “unrealistische” (unrealistic) positions in the Near-East conflict. On the contrary, those forces which were not interested in the Non Capitalist development and kept contacts with the West assumed a realistic policy in the conflict.¹⁹¹ Eventually, the GDR continued to support the “radicals” and other “progressive” forces inside the regime but, actually, most of its positions converged with those of the nationalists: so, Realpolitik suggested taking a more balanced position in Syrian domestic politics and particularly to develop better connections with Ḥāfiz al-Asad and his colleagues.¹⁹² Consul Rippich suggested extending cooperation to other forces and named dr. Muhammad al Imādy as a major referee: he was a senior official who graduated in New York and later became Minister of Economy under Ḥāfiz al-Asad; well-known for being a liberal economist, at that time, he believed that planning would be well suited to Syrian economic development. For this reason, when he got appointed as General


¹⁹² For example, the GDR supported him in the establishment of the Office for Political Training in the Ministry of Defence, which supposedly controlled relations between military officers and political organisations, Sapmo-Barchiv, DY30 IVA2/20, 872, Information Nr. 150/IX, Über die neue Krise in der Bath Partei, MfAA, Abteilung Information, September 24, 1969.
Secretary of the Syrian Planning Commission in late 1968, he seemed to value highly the Regierungsberater consultancy.\textsuperscript{193}

In mid-1969, the GDR had 44 experts working in Syria:\textsuperscript{194}

- 20 experts at technical level in industrial sectors as part of the WTZ-Protokoll of November 26, 1968.
- 10 experts worked in the veterinary sector.
- 7 experts in the cultural sector, including German-language lecturers and professors at the Universities in Damascus and Aleppo.

7 Regierungsberater

The other way around, Syria sent 26 Praktikanten to the GDR for training and studying: 22 of them worked in the agricultural sector and 4 in the management of the state central institutions, particularly the Council of Ministers. Another 30 Syrian experts would be trained in the GDR textile sectors as well as in the related management of economic planning.

Since February 1969, Berlin had planned to rationalize the “special mission” of the Regierungsberater: first of all, they should concentrate their consultancy mainly on economic sectors, like industry, agriculture, planning and finance; the latter was still deemed as strategic and as a guarantee for the financial viability of reforms.\textsuperscript{195} All


\textsuperscript{194} As far as the economic functionality of the GDR experts and Regierungsberater was concerned, the East-German Handelsattaché, Gerlach still stressed their need in order to stabilize the bilateral trade cooperation. Sapmo-Barchiv, DI.2 1593, Analyse des I. Halbjahres 1969, HV der DDR in der SAR an MAW, Direktionsbereich Übersee I, June 30, 1969, Gerlach.

\textsuperscript{195} MfAA B/1.208/75, Konzeption für die Weiterführung der Beratertätigkeit, MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter an GK der DDR in der SAR, Generalkonsul Marter, Berlin, February 4, 1969, Kiesewetter; Vorschlag für die Weiterführung der Beratertätigkeit beim Ministerium für Finanzen, GK der DDR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, June 26, 1969, Marter. Another important asset for the GDR influence was reported by the Regierungsberater E. Gebauer in the Ministry of Energy and Oil: in June 1969 he reported that the new Minister dr. Hassan was eager to cooperate with the GDR and suggested a proposals for sending geological experts to map Syrian territories and possible natural resources, MfAA B/1.218/75, Bericht über die Tätigkeit in der Zeit vom 15. Januar bis 15. Juni 1969, GK
the rest of consultants should end they work and withdraw from Syria, including the experts working in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. On the whole, the GDR aimed at consolidating its influence in the state apparatus and regime, rather than to keep on expanding it.\textsuperscript{196} In early 1970, the GDR ambassade in Damascus elaborated a new plan for the \textit{Regierungsrat} mission for 1970-1972, which was to be negotiated in accordance with the Protocol-Agreement of April 30. The strategic lines followed the principles set in 1969 and the GDR advisors were to support their Syrian partners in the transition period which saw the temporary coexistence of laws and institutions with the previous ones. The so called “\textit{transitory period}” was deemed to be a long and “\textit{langweilig}” (boring) one: there was no “passendes Wort” (key-word) to work out problems. However, at the same time, they also considered the next phase as strategic for the future of reforms because only in the daily practice could one test the viability of the new legislation, as well as to arrange the necessary adaptations and eventually test its supposed “superiority” compared to the previous institutions. As Ambassador Marter and the newly appointed responsible for the \textit{Regierungsrat} mission, doctor Lange, said:

\begin{quote}
Viel schwieriger ist es, einen jahrzehntelang angelaufenen Verwaltungsapparat unter den hier herrschenden Bedingungen des Berufsbeamtenums umzumodeln und die neue festgelegte und beschlossene Methode der Leitungstätigkeit durchzusetzen. Ich bin der Auffassung, dass diese dritte Etappe unserer Tätigkeit und unseres Wirkens hier die schwerste und langwierigste, aber auch die entscheidenste ist.\textsuperscript{197}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{197} “It’s much more difficult to change the current, long-established administrative apparatus under the current conditions of the civil service tenure as well as to push through the new methods of management we agreed and established, so far. I think that the current third stage in our presence and influence is both the most serious and lengthy; at the same time, it is the most decisive”, MfAA B/1.208/75, \textit{Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Beratergruppe der DDR in der SAR}, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, 17 February 1970, Marter, Lange; see also \textit{Konzeption für die komplexe Erfahrungsvermittlung auf dem Gebiet des Aufbaus, der Organisation un der Arbeitsweise des Staatsapparates für den Zeitraum von
In the long-term perspective, much attention was placed on the professional training process for the new state cadres and the GDR pressured to become the main partner for Syrian on this issue.198

Yet, the izdiwāğyya al sultah (power dualism) was still a matter of concern for the GDR: still, in June 1969, E. Gebauer wrote that senior officials in Ministries fell just short of implementing any decisions in order to “wait and see” about political developments; actually, they acted only under the threat of being fired. The whole result was a general “Stagnation” of ministerial activities.199 Still, the very presence of the Regierungsberater was actually questioned during the Party Congresses or other political crisis: for example, in June 1969 and in June 1970, as the formation of a new Government and the preliminary debates for the next Congresses were on their way, the presence of foreign advisors was a matter of dispute because it was an important asset for the country’s domestic and foreign orientation.200 However, the fact that their presence was a matter of public dispute only during major crisis just meant that their criticism was more functional to the regime’s power struggle rather than being an issue in itself. Still, quite problematic for the GDR was the rising influence of the Minister of Economy, ‘Abd al Halim Khaddām, who was a close


ally of Ḥāfiz al Asad and was reported to actively oppose any foreign presence in Syrian economic state institutions:

Wir sind der Auffassung, dass sich die syrische Seite auf dem Gebiet des Außenhandels abschirmen und keinem Ausländer Einblick in ihre Problematiken geben.201

In fact, the “nationalist” camp comprised ‘Abd al Halim Khaddām, the new Minister of Economy, who was a close supporter of al Asad and staunchly advocated relations with Western states; according to GDR officials, he was undermining cooperation with the socialist states by accusing them of insufficient support in time of crisis, so that the regime could later turn back to western markets.202 According to former GDR Ambassador in Syria, Wolfgang Konschel, Minister Khaddām was never trusted as a reliable “socialist” partner:

We never believed Khaddām was a socialist; maybe a patriot, but never a socialist. Actually, one of his principle aims was to let western capitals to come back to Syria. However, he had limited success, so that he had still to turn to the socialist camp.203

7. The Corrective Movement and the Political Economy of Ḥāfiz al Asad

Eventually, the fragile compromise of “power dualism” fell under the radicalization of Arab politics. In autumn 1970, Damascus got involved in the crisis between the Jordanian monarchy and the Palestinian fidā’īyīn, well known as Black September.204 With the unofficial support of the al Atāsī Government, Syrian-based Palestinian militias entered Jordan to support their comrades in

201 “In our opinion, the Syrians protect themselves in the foreign trade sector and prevent that any foreigner has a clear picture of their problems”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Regierungsbereiter in der SAR für den Zeitraum Juli bis Oktober 1969, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, November 16, 1969, Marter.


Amman. However, Minister fo Defense Hāfiz al Asad refused to let the Syrian air force intervene and the Palestinians were defeated by the Jordanian army; despite the fact that al Asad mistrusted the neighbouring Monarchy, he was not willing to risk an Israeli retaliation which would disrupt Syrian forces still on the recovery; moreover, a possible *fidā’iyīn* victory in Jordan would spark direct consequences in Syrian politics, too, since it would embolden the radicals’ stand. Soon after, disputes and reciprocal accusations erupted in Damascus, and President al Atāsī resigned and convened the X Extraordinary National Congress, in late October 1970: long negotiations failed to reach a compromise and, according to GDR Ambassador, “power dualism” was now over:


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207 “In the last weeks heavy disputes inside leadership of the Party moved to open confrontation. The military faction takes advantages of the negative results of the “civilian” policies in the inter-arab arena: for example, their unconditional refusal to achieve a political solution in the Arab-israeli conflict, their criticism of al Nasser’s approval of the Roger Plan; all that in order to strengthen their own position inside the Party, the army and in state apparatus; one particular serious fault of the
In a last show of strength, General Secretary al Atāsī decided to remove al Asad and his loyalists from any party and state positions and easily gained a vast majority. Al Asad reacted with a Coup d’état in the night between November 13 and 14, 1970: he seized control of all the central Government and Party institutions and jailed his Ba’thist rivals without much resistance: merchants in the sūq and religious authorities were reported to have descended into the streets and greeted the “radicals” being overthrown.

Despite their rhetoric, one could argue that the “radical” Ba’thists mainly failed to get popular support because they always conceived mass movements just as being functional and contingent to their power struggle: quite often they first supported and later repressed them once they felt they could become a source of competition. So, they eventually lost support from the very constituencies they were supposed to represent and which actually had much to gain from the Socialist Transformation. The very same marxist-leninist institutions they wished to introduce in Syria soon lost any emancipatory feature and gradually became mere instruments for political control.

In the long run, the “Corrective Movement” marked the end of the long period of social and political transformation which had started in the early Fifties. Prof. Işām al Za‘īm argued that the new balance of
forces between the provincial élite and the traditional urban one started to consolidate:

Al Asad realized that economic prosperity and stability still resided in the city. From such a point of view, a new agreement between the province and the city was much needed: al Jadid wanted to destroy the urban economy and its bourgeoisie, whereas al Assad wanted to reconcile with them. However, such a new “agreement” between the city and the province was to be struck at al Assad conditions and not to the urban bourgeoisie’s ones. His priority was power control and its maintenance: everything else could be negotiated. As a matter of result, al Asad succeeded to take Syria out of isolation: at the national level thanks to the compromise between urban and rural areas; at international level, through the resumption of relations with Western and Arab states.211

Al Asad immediately legitimized his military Coup d’etat by appointing a Provisional Regional Command of the Ba’th Party and by labelling his new program as the “Corrective Movement” (al Ḥarakat al Tašihyya):212 actually, he intended to leave untouched most of the reforms aimed at state and Party consolidation but, at the same time, to coopt external forces, such as communists, nasserists and various conservatives as well as to grant the private economic sector more economic freedom. The GDR Ambassador, Alfred Marter, reported that the new situation was quite contradictory to his view: on the one hand, positive aspects included plans to establish a National Assembly as well as to boost the Government role over the state sector; on the other hand, the economic ouvertures to the private sector and to foreign capitals could prevent the further implementation of previous reforms.213

211 ʾĪṣām al Zaʿīm, former Director of Arab Center for Strategic Studies, President of the Syrian Economy Society, former Minister of Industry and Director of the State Planning Commission, interview with the author, Damascus, August 22, 2006.


The Coup d’état in early November 1970 could not help but affect the Regierungsberater mission, as well. Ambassador Marter reported that there was much discussion at the State Planning Commission to keep on the German advisor: his extromission would be a major, strategic setback for the GDR. On the contrary, the new Minister of Finance, Nūr Allāh, soon confirmed the previous request for consultancy, which Berlin was eager to accept immediately.\footnote{MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über die Beratertätigkeit nach der Regierungsumbildung im November 1970, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Scholz, Damascus, December 1, 1970, Marter; MfAA B1.217/75, Bericht über die Beratertätigkeit im Jahre 1970, Botschaft der DDR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 10, 1971, Petzold.} Now, the GDR had to adapt to the new current leadership and to the different priorities set out in Damascus. In order to win the trust of the multifaceted and plural Ba’thist élite, the GDR stressed further its engagement for more efficiency and effectiveness in the bilateral partnership and especially in technical cooperation: as a consequence, the Regierungsberater would avoid any reference to the political aspect of their activities; instead, their advice on reforms would be characterized as impartial and exclusively functional to the improvement and enhancement of the state sector. Still, in January 1971 the situation was quite uncertain, so Ambassador Marter suggested they display a high degree of disposition toward the new regime, and he harshly criticized the GDR bureaucratic delays in dispatching experts and materials: that could really disrupt the East German image in the eyes of the new Ba’thist leadership, since the latter had already questioned bis zur Einschätzung Israels als modernen Staat, von dem Syrien viel lernen und profitieren könne, reichten. Von den meisten Gesprächspartnern wird erwartet, dass sich Syrien dem Var-Standpunkt annähern werde” (There are very different views over the conflict in the Near East: from those who believe in an inevitable military confrontation, to those who deemed useless any social development before reaching any conflict solution, and eventually to those who see Israel as a modern state from which much could be learned, as well. However, most partners expect Syria to converge on the Egyptian positions), MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über den Gespräch mit Genossen Faīṣal am 24.03.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, 25 March 1971, Marter.
whether the GDR was shifting its attention to other Arab states, such as Iraq.\footnote{MfAA B/1.208/75, Information über die Erfüllung staatlicher Verträge und Vereinbarungen und dabei auftretenden Probleme, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 11, 1970, Marter.}

\section{The Institutional Reform}

From November 1970 to early 1973, Syria experienced an intense period of institutional reform. A provisional Government led by al Asad was appointed in November 21 and soon gained regional and international recognition. In parallel with major overtures to western states, al Asad signed a new Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement with Moscow which guaranteed bilateral partnership.\footnote{OAPD, Rapport sur l’économie 1970-1971, Damas, 01.09.1971, p. C. 22. The Agreement got ratified on February 10, 1971, that is very soon for Syrian standards procedures. See Ramet 1990, 56 and Smolansky 1991, 15, 280.} Hafiz al Assad was then elected President of the Syrian Arab Republic in February 22, 1971; soon after, on March 5, the Ba’th Party, the Syrian Communist Party and other Arab nationalist forces formed the new National Progressive Front (NPF); the Ba’thist \textit{leading role} in the NPF as well as in every state institutions was enshrined in the new Constitution of March 13, 1971.\footnote{MfAA B1.217/75, Zu Arbeit: Fragen der Demokratie und des Staates, Damascus, December 3, 1971, Petzold.}

Despite formal power-sharing mechanisms, the institutional reforms introduced by al Asad further centralized power in the hands of the Presidency: now it held the ultimate say on strategic issues like security-defence and foreign policy, as well as on general economic planning. Syria developed a \textit{patrimonial} system, where a tiny ruling élite held ultimate power which irradiated on subordinate levels more often than not along clientelist lines; cooption and/or repression were the main policies to integrate into the regime, whereas institutional structures increasingly assumed corporative features.\footnote{Hinnebusch 2001 and Perthes 1997. For a general introduction over different institutional models see Duverger (1978) and Maraffi (1981).} The very same Ba’th Party experienced major changes, too. Ḥāfiz al Asad and his colleagues were actually defeated in the November 1970 Extraordinary Regional Congress and, once al Asad got in power, he...
took care to marginalize the Party inner opposition by opening up the Ba’thist membership to moderate forces. This “inflationary” process was not to take place easily, because also some of the senior Ba’thist officials who were close to al Asad feared it would ultimately prevent the enforcement of any political discipline and ideological consistency into a Party which made claims to a national “leading role”. The cult of personality and the centralization of ultimate power in the hands of the Presidency of the Republic involved the weakening of other state institutions, first of all the Council of Ministers; in the long term, the need for direct control over revenues to be redistributed among constituencies prevented the institutionalization of the state. Already by late 1971, Regierungsberater Petzold highlighted the rising power dualism between the Party and the Presidency, as well as between the latter and the Government: the Presidency was clearly taking the upper hand and, in such a way, it undermined the progressive forces’s strategy to control state institutions. In fact, Petzold reported that since 1970 progressive forces inside the regime had encroached on those very institutions which got reformed along the lines of the Regierungsberater’s advice, in particular the Office of the Council of Ministers.

At institutional level, the GDR supported the establishment of the new National Assembly and of the National Progressive Front: according to Berlin, these long-awaited institutions would guarantee popular control over executive centers and would be the main assets for “democratic and anti-fascist” forces inside the Syrian regime. The Regierungsberater still advised for the adoption of the Democratic Centralism’s principles, which should enhance state central capabilities on management. President of the Council of Ministers, General ‘Abd al Raḥman al Khlayfāwī, was reported to have implemented most of

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219 Among them, the most important official was ‘Abdallah al Aḥmar. The GDR representatives referred to this process as a real “Umstrukturierung” (deconstruction) of the Party organisation, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über das Gespräch mit Genossen Y. Feyesal am 24.03.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, March 25, 1971, Marter.

the GDR advice concerning the establishment of several Commissions inside the Council of Ministers. For example:

1. Kommission für Fragen der Leitung, Organisation und Finanzierung des staatlichen-nationalisierten Sektors
2. Kommission für die Verwaltungsreform
3. Kommission für das Genossenschaftsgesetz des Handwerks
4. Kommission für die Umgestaltung des Justizapparates

According to Petzold:

Einer Reihe dieser Kommissionen, insbesondere die unter 1), 2), 3) genannten stützten sich dabei auf Empfehlungen von DDR Beratern, die selbst zum Teil in diesen Kommissionen direkt mitarbeiten (...). Trotzallerdem, insgesamt ist es jedoch noch nicht gelungen die erforderlichen Veränderungen in der Tätigkeit des Staatsapparates herbeizuführen.

At the same time, much attention was placed on the legislation reforming local institutions: parallel to the central government, the legislative assemblies should empower popular participation along professional affiliation. The new laws reforming the Local Authorities entered the legislative process on May 1, 1971 and was definitly approved in October: according to Regierungsberater Petzold, it followed suit their previous suggestions: “Alle diese Massnahmen beruhen in wesentlichen Teilen auf Vorschlägen der DDR-Berater”.

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222 “Of such commissions, in particular the ones labelled 1, 2, 3 are based on the proposals of our experts, who partly worked in the same commissions (...). However, on the whole we did not yet succeed to introduce the necessary changes in the activities of the state apparatus”, Ibidem.


224 “All these measures move in great extent along the proposals of the GDR-advisors”, MfAA B1.217/75, Zu Arbeit: Fragen der Demokratie und des Staates, Damascus, 3 December 1971, Petzold. From this perspective, Petzold focused on the reform of the administrative structures of the Capital, Damascus. He singled out as strategic points the low productivity of civil servants and he consequently provided detailed suggestions to improve it: first of all, by establishing a wide-ranged system
The evaluation of the new power structure differed much among Syrian “progressive” forces: according to its critics, the NPF was the one of the “institutional structures to control Syrian left-wing forces”; on the contrary, current Syrian communist leaders appreciated it, because it offered major opportunities for progressive forces to gain political influence while keeping their organisational autonomy. Quite interestingly, the latter reported that the GDR institutional model was a source of inspiration during the long negotiations which led to the NPF and the new Constitution:

For sure, we took into consideration foreign experiences, like the GDR one; however, most of the elements came out of the Ba’th Party and of Syrian Communist Party’s proposals: we might say that theory came from the GDR, whereas practice from Syria.

7.2 The Economic infitah (liberalization)

As far as the economy was concerned, the liberalization program (ouverture, infitah) actually rewarded those elements in the business community who recognized the regime of Ḥāfiz al Asad. However, such infitah did not diminish state intervention in the economy. On the contrary, the security imperatives and planning for the 1973 war helped to rationalize and to define clear targets and priorities: most of the public investments of the Third five-year Plan now got directed to strategic infrastructures, like Oil prospects and the Euphrates Dam, which would satisfy the growing energy demand; in order to increase agricultural production the regime favoured and subventioned middle-

of control and salary incentives, as well; secondly by organizing “Arbeitsbrigaden” on the GDR-model, whose leader would be directly responsible for production results and labour discipline; finally, dismissal as the last option to bank on, MfAA B1.217/75, Vorschläge für die Erhöhung der Produktivität und Arbeitsdisziplin der Arbeiter der Stadtverwaltung Damascus, Damascus, September 11, 1971, Petzold.

225 Rizq Allāh Hīlān, former Economic Advisor at the Council of Ministers, interview with the author, Damascus, Damascus, September 21, 2006; Jamīl Qaḍrī, General Secretary of the Committee for the Unity of Communists in Syria, interview with the author, Damascus, August 17, 2006.

size land-owners and farmers. In May 1971, the new President of the Council of Ministers, al Khlayfāwī, outlined the guidelines of the new economic policy:

The Governmental policy bases itself on the principle along which it is necessary to gain maximum profit from the private sector; we need to provide it with the best possible conditions to let it play a suitable role in the context of our general economic policy. Henceforth, the government will work to improve its activities and functioning in cooperation with the public sector; but we make it clear that it is the public sector which assumes the responsibility for the direction of the private one. The Government will offer the private sector all the incentives to invest in productive sectors and to move into a productive, industrial and non-monopolistic sector.

Prof. Iṣām al Za‘īm briefly described the political economy of al Asad as follows:

The Correction Movement did not aim at reestablishing the old economic structure. Rather, it established a new economic pluralism based on a new agreement between the public and private sector. The private sector resumed its activities, as functional to the financial support of the public sector. At parallel, the state kept control and leadership over those sectors it considered as strategic.

The same was true for former Ministerial Director, Dawd Ḥidū:

The Correction Movement was not a radical change in Syrian economic policy (...). Economic overture to the private sector in the Seventies was a clever choice. It was some sort of Syrian NEP aiming at mobilising domestic capital and regaining the foreign one (...). Syria was a poor country, underdeveloped and with many troubles, first the Israeli one. We needed to exploit every opportunity to strengthen our regional standing. Assad was very flexible: he was pragmatic, far from being ideological or doctrinaire. In the end, al Assad moved to the socialist camp only because of the Western policies and their support of Israel.

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228 OAPD, 1971, A. 7.
229 Iṣām al Za‘īm, former Director of Arab Center for Strategic Studies, President of the Syrian Economy Society, former Minister of Industry and Director of the State Planning Commission, interview with the author, Damascus, August 14, 2006.
230 Dawd Ḥidū, former Director of the Foreign Trade Department and President of the Department for Energy at the Ministry of Economy and foreign Trade; member of the Politbüro of the Syrian Communist Party (Faṣal), interview with...
By its own, Regierungsberater E. Gebauer reported that all the provisions made by the new leadership to improve the state sectors came from the GDR advisors:

Diese Formulierungen zur Festlegung der Grundrichtung der Wirtschaftspolitik der neuen Regierung und die Zielstellungen für die Industrie lassen den Einfluss unserer Beratung und der von uns unterbreiteten Vorschläge erkennen.231

However, there was a fundamental difference between the Regierungsberater and the new Syrian leadership on the meaning of such a compromise: the first conceived it as a temporary phase which should lead later to a massive reengagement on socialist reforms; the second established the new agreement as the basis and the fundamental pact upon which to build the entire regime.

The GDR Ambassador worried that, if not halted, the ongoing transition would cause a major blow to the Regierungsberater’s activities and as well as to the ongoing Third five-year Plan (1971-1975).232 Moreover, the 1970 Coup d’état led to a widespread replacement of all those Ba’thists who actively supported the so called “radical” faction; so that, senior positions in the newly reformed institutions were filled up with unexperienced officials, particularly the Council of Ministers; much of the same was true for managers of the main state

231 “Such phrasing of the new Government about the laying-down of the basic lines for economic policy and the industrial targets demonstrate the influence of our consultancy as well as of the proposals we had submitted”, MfAA/B 1.218/75, Abschlussbericht über meine Tätigkeit als Berater für Industrie in der SAR, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, March 25, 1972, Gebauer.

enterprises. For example, Regierungsrat Gebauer reported that “conservative” officials felt much emboldened after the November Coup in their resistance to reforms, so that he found it more difficult to submit his proposals to the Ministry of Economy. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues continued to participate in conferences and to make proposals, which still found quite receptive ears in the Ministry of Oil and Energy and in the Ministry of Industry.

The GDR representatives understood well that the al Asad’s regime was to strike a new deal with the private sector, so they tried to offer an organisational framework which would come up with the latter’s empowerment but would not endanger state-sector reforms. On the whole, in their suggestions to Syrian officials the Regierungsrat stressed the need to exploit first domestic resources and then rely on external revenues, like Arab capitals or those of the socialist camp, too. Moreover they warned about the increasing contradiction between military and civil expenses, which would prove unsustainable for the existing domestic resources.

Regierungsrat Gebauer provided some advice on industrial development which would cope with the new economic policy of the Ba’thist regime. First, the main sectors to focus investments should be oil and natural resources, textile production, cement and construction. The most pressing issue was a more efficient use of machinery and national resources: he warned on the limits of exporting natural resources and raw materials, and suggested to processing them in Syria as well as to improve quality standards for domestic manufacture. This would provide higher revenues from exports and

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233 The very same Prime Minister, Gen. al Khlayfāwī, was held as a progressive partner who upheld most the Regierungsrat advice. However, the strategic decisions were in the hands of the Presidency as well as in the rising powerful Minister of Economy ‘Abd al Halim Khaddām. As usual, the latter was labelled as “ungeschicklich” (inept-clumsy), MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über das Gespräch mit Genossen Yūsuf Faṣṣal am 24.03.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, March 25, 1971, Marter.

234 Both new Ministers had successfully cooperated with Gebauer when they were previously appointed as Directors of the Unions of State Enterprise, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsrat für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascus, November 3, 1971.

235 MfAA B/1.218/75, Die nächste wichtige Aufgaben für die industrielle Entwicklung in der SAR, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, June 20, 1971, Gebauer.
would satisfy part of the national market, too. Secondly, the regime should coordinate more efficiently industrial policies with the labour market: in state-led enterprises managers and workers had the “same interests;” so, the latter should get better training as well as to participate actively in the management, in order to increase productivity. Third, state institutions should be the main traders for industrial production: this would drain revenues from the long-established monopolies of big merchants.\textsuperscript{236} Economic planning was deemed to be a major test for the new leadership: in early 1971, Rudolf Dietrich wrote that it was no more a question neither of introducing further elements of “socialist economy” in Syria nor of conceiving economic planning as a political act. Rather, the \textit{Regierungsrat} could help to improve the effectiveness of the existing economic structures, which were still based on capitalist and market dynamics:

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\textsuperscript{236} For the time being, the state still retained partial control on imports of machinery and raw materials, MfAA B/1.218/75, \textit{Vorschlag zur Durchführung der Plan diskussion zur Vorbereitung des Planvorschlags für das Jahr 1972}, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, October 18, 1971, Gebauer.

\textsuperscript{237} “The systemic set up of the Third 5-Year Plan is still conducted in the framework of the bourgeois national economy. The setting up and articulation of the plan is taking place along the advice of the UN nomenclature (…). We must recognize that in the activities related to planning, the latter is conceived as an instrument for help rather than a political need. The political connections and findings between planning and social development are still not recognized as such (…). We think that, even in the coming years, we will not succeed to introduce to a great extent the principles of the socialist political economy in the planning system of the
Since late 1970 one of the most important issues at debate was the elaboration of a suitable framework which would connect the state sector with the private one. Since the latter could not guarantee sufficient capital accumulation, a new compromise was to be set: the private sector provided almost half of the national revenue and held monopoly over the small and medium entreprises (SME), which were usually based on a single, large, family network. Currently, the new leadership in Damascus hoped to gain their loyalty and to turn them into one of the regime’s economic pillars.\footnote{MfAA B/1.208/75, \textit{Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsberater für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971}, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascenus, November 3, 1971.} Regierungsberater Gebauer suggested singling out the sectors where the SME proved better qualified, and consequently to embed them in the national planning. However, he clearly stated that the private sector should come under state control: first, the state and private actors should work in different sectors in order not to compete and the latter should be confined to the production of consumer goods; second, private capital ownership should be limited to 500 Million Syrian pounds, in order to prevent the emergence of any big private monopoly; third, the establishment of a Union of industrialists and tradesmen should undermine the still existing monopoly of big trade merchants; fourth, the state should promote a viable and sustainable mix-sector.\footnote{MfAA B/1.1212/75, \textit{Einschätzung zur Ausarbeitung der Hauptaufgaben und der Zielsetzungen des 3. Fünfjahresplanes der SAR für den Zeitraum 1971-1975}, Botschaft der DDR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascenus, February 1, 1971, Dietrich.} Similar proposals were submitted by his colleague Popluschnik at the Ministry of Internal Trade: he reported that domestic consumers’ cooperatives were expanding throughout the country with relative success, but they still did not provide a structural, viable alternative to

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Syrian Arab Republic. However, we can mark as a positive outcome that they started to build a budget system and over that they introduced the socialist principles of effectiveness in the planning”, MfAA/B 1.1212/75, \textit{Einschätzung zur Ausarbeitung der Hauptaufgaben und der Zielsetzungen des 3. Fünfjahresplanes der SAR für den Zeitraum 1971-1975}, Botschaft der DDR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascenus, February 1, 1971, Dietrich. The latter worked in the State Planning Commission as technical advisor and was later re-appointed in March 1972 in the framework of the new agreement with President al Khlayfāwī.
\end{quote}
the traditional trade channels which were still monopolized by big merchants; actually, he reported that the new regime seemed prone to support the latters’ interests, while trying to ease the working conditions for the small and medium traders. According to the GDR advisor, all this would prevent any major investment to establish state monopoly over trade; the maximum he expected would be a tight control over consumer prices for primary food commodities, like bread, rice and tea.  

Accordingly, the regime in Damascus soon established the Union of Merchants and Tradesmen and appointed a Ba‘th member at its Presidency; the Union rallied up almost 50% of Syrian tradesmen but it staunchly refused to support any viable trade cooperative.

According to R. Popluschnik, the new leadership quest for legitimacy among the private trade sector would be to the detriment of the peasant and labour forces because it would ease control over prices and let them increase over fixed salaries. The steady expansion of salaried labour in the textile, construction and industrial sectors should have involved a major role for the related Unions; but that was not the case. Their exclusion from management, the absence of salarial incentive to productivity led them to look for a second or third job with evident, dire consequences on productivity levels. Regierungsberater E. Gebauer pressed for a major improvement of wages and training for labour forces. In the agricultural sector, the medium-size land-owners were the main beneficiaries of the agrarian reform: they gained most from the establishment of peasants’ cooperatives since they got appointed to leading roles and could exploit such positions to acquire privileges. On the contrary, small

land-owner and landless peasants still worked seasonally in Lebanon or for medium-sized farmers, and could not enjoy so much the advantages of the cooperatives since they mostly got excluded from decision-making process. The same was true for state farms. Indeed, the Government did not show any deep commitment to develop further the cooperative movement, except as a support for the medium-sized farmers who were deemed to be the main engine for agricultural growth. 

Another major point of contention concerned the role of foreign capitals in the Syrian economy: that is, how and to what degree Syria should integrate into the international capitalist market economy. Most of the Regierungsbereiter adamantly opposed the way Syrian Government was handling its infitah (opening, liberalization) policy, arguing that it would prove a major opportunity for Syrian conservative forces to come back to the country, particularly from Lebanon and the Gulf states. The increasing internationalization of the Syrian economy mainly based on the steady inflow of Arab and foreign capitals; as Petzold reported, the Syrian state sector constantly suffered major budget deficits, particularly in state industries; these had no more money either to pay salaries nor to invest, so that they run into debt with state banks; but the latter were already engaged on financing infrastructural projects. Later on, foreign capitals financed infrastructural projects, whereas banks increasingly covered the debts of the state-led sectors.

In November 1971, E. Gebauer outlined the challenging prospects for Syria as “Industrie-agrar Staat”: it would continue to develop domestic industrial, construction and transport sectors, as well as agriculture and food production. However, such a trend would rely more on foreign capitals rather than on domestic ones. From 1967 to

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1970 state indebtedness increased by 44% compared to a 25% increase in the industrial production, whereas the external trade deficit rose more than 50% from 1967 to 1972. Yet, *Regierungsberater* reported that the government showed no hurry to contain such dynamics and only resorted to issuing more Syrian currency on the market.\(^{247}\) M. Gentsch, the new advisor at the Ministry of Finance warned of the dire consequences of the state indebtedness and the unbalance of payments; he suggested that the state should conceive credits to public enterprises and monetary policy as “Hauptinstrumente” (major tools) to control and lead both the public and private sector.\(^{248}\) For the same reasons, his colleague Gebauer praised the “virtues” of the Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation of the socialist camp, which was based on trade stability rather than on competition. He argued that Arab capitals would foster regional cooperation but they would probably affect negatively a long-term and independent planning over development.\(^{249}\)

Although *delinkage* from international economy would not be a viable solution, foreign capitals did not prove much an incentive for raising domestic production and incomes because they were neither constant nor on a long-term basis. After the 1973 October War major economic liberalization measures occurred in parallel with the flowing-in of Western investments and oil-rent from the Gulf states. Prof. al Zaˈim highlighted one major negative aspect of such “geopolitical rent,” particularly the one related to the Gulf states:

> After the oil-boom in 1973, financial aid from the Arab Gulf countries replaced the domestic capital accumulation process. However, their aid was based on single projects and not on a “line of credit: in such a way, they prevented the development of coherent and planned industrial policy in the

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medium term (...). In fact, it was not by chance that industrial activities slowed particularly after 1982.250

Hafiz al Assad provided Syria with some sort of “triangular system” of “geopolitical capitalization”: that is, it gained capitals from the Arab Gulf States and later from Iran, too; Soviet Union and the socialist camps provided arms and infrastructures, whereas Western states offered the main import-export market for Syrian products.251 Accordingly, as far as foreign policy was concerned, al Assad’s priority was to diversify Syrian international relations, in order to safeguard as much as possible national independence and the internal decision-making process. He made much effort in favour of inter-governmental cooperation among Arab states and tried to establish good neighbourhood relations with all regional powers: actually, the strategic priority al Assad attached to the Arab-Israeli conflict led him to cast aside other regional disputes, which became functional in confronting Israeli power.252 From such a perspective, he made efforts to reestablish contacts with Western states and found receptive ears particularly in France, Italy, the UK and the US, as well. Relations with the Federal republic of Germany took more time to normalize because Bonn attached priority to the Ostpolitik dossier and basically mistrusted the Ba’th for its close partnership with the SED; moreover, it did not want to endanger its privileged relationship with Israel at that particular point. Both states resumed full diplomatic relations in 1974, that is after the inter-German negotiations successfully ended in December 1972 as well as after the October/Yom Kippur War in 1973.253

Realpolitik prevailed in relations with the socialist camp, too: both Moscow and East-Berlin soon accepted the pragmatic foreign policy

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250 In 1982, Gulf states decisively sided with Iraq in its war against the revolutionary Iran, whereas Syria allied with Teheran. Išām al Za‘īm, former Director of Arab Center for Strategic Studies, President of the Syrian Economy Society, former Minister of Industry and Director of the State Planning Commission, interview with the author, Damascus, July 7, 2005.

251 Samīr al Ṭaqī, Director of the Orient Center for International Affairs, interview with the author, September 21, 2006.

252 As far as Pan-arabism was concerned, Syria supported projects for Arab unity along models of federation or confederation of sovereign states. See Tibi 1997 and al Ayubi 1996.

253 See Gerlach 2006.
of al Assad and provided massive support in crucial moments. The very same economic liberalization and the Third V-year Plan significantly offered the GDR chances to consolidate and stabilize its role in the Syrian market. However, contrary to previous experience, the GDR partnership lost most of its ideological features and was now welcomed in Damascus as functional to strengthen Staatsmacht (state-power) over society. According to former General Secretary of the Syrian Communist Party, Yusef Faysal:

“Al Assad was a real “political animal”, whose main strength was his ability to manage relations with all actors involved at domestic and international levels. Relations with the socialist camp should be sound but not so much as to transform Syria into a socialist state or to integrate it in the socialist bloc. Meanwhile, Syria should keep good relations with the West or at least never reach the point of rupture”.


Partly because of the new political situation in Syria, and partly because the Regierungsberater ended their activities, both Ambassador Marter and President Khlefwāi agreed to revise the GDR advisors’ mission. Negotiations started on June 1971, speeded up since November and eventually ended in April 1972: the decision to put an end to the GDR special mission was reported to have come directly from the al Asad Presidency, which meant that little could be done to reverse it:

“Es wird angenommen, dass die Weisung zur Beendigung der Beratertätigkeit unmittelbar von Präsidenten bzw. seiner Umgebung ausgegangen ist”.

On the whole, al Khlayfawī fully supported the reforms prompted by the Regierungsberater and regretted that their suggestions were prevented from running more efficiently by the relinquishing of the

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254 Yūsuf Faīṣal, President of the Syrian Communist Party (Faīṣal) interview with the author, Damascus, September 21, 2006.

255 “It is assumed that the instruction for the conclusion of the consultancy activity comes directly from the President and his circles”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über das Gespräch mit Genossen Y. Faīṣal am 24.03.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Damascus, March 25, 1971, Marter.
“Ottoman heritage”. However, President al Khlayfāwī asked the GDR to send other experts upon single, specific and punctual requests but not more according to a general plan. The sectors he wanted to focus on were economic planning, the reform of the Ministry of Finance and professional training programs. According to al Khlayfāwī, the GDR advisors would remain in Syria for a shorter time than in the previous phases: institutional reforms were supposed to end and now, it was up to the Syrians to practice and consolidate them. Syrian authorities asked for GDR experts to be more on the technical level, because they encountered more difficulties on the “ground” rather than in high-level positions. As far as future new legislation, advisors should limit to provide drafts rather than assisting the Syrians in the executive implementation. By its own, the GDR pressed still to keep its advisors in the Council of Ministers, in the Ministry of Industry and of Agriculture, since the latter matched with its export and expertise capacities. Indeed, the GDR Foreign Ministry admitted that the Regierungsberater access to the state apparatus had sometimes raised Syrian sensibility:

“Es gab auch Anzeichen, dass nationalreformistische und reaktionäre Kräfte auf eine Beendigung der Berater-Tätigkeit drängten […]. Möglicherweise spielte auch eine Rolle, dass die Berater in den Augen der syrischen Seite

\[256\] From such a point of view, he reiterated the same argument of his “radical” predecessor, Yūsuf Z‘ayyin, showing a greater display of continuity in the Ba’thist regime than one would expect, MfAA B/1.208/75, Aktenvermerk über eine Unterredung mit dem Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates, Gen. ‘Abd al Rahman al Khlayfāwī am 14.11.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, November 14, 1971, Marter; the same was reported by Petzold after several meetings with al Khlayfāwī, MfAA B1.217/75, Vermerk über ein Gespräch mit dem Ministerpräsidenten al Khlayfāwī am 14.04.1971, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, 20 April 1971, Petzold; Bericht über die Beratertätigkeit im Jahre 1970, Botschaft der DDR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, January 10, 1971, Petzold.

\[257\] MfAA B/1.208/75, Aktenvermerk über ein Gespräch im Ministerrat am 02.02.1972, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Damascus, February 3, 1972, Stehr.

The Regierungsberater in Damascus

bereits über zu viele detaillierte Angaben über die Lage im Staatsapparat Syriens verfügten”.\(^{259}\)

At the Ministry of Industry, E. Gebauer, noticed the tendency to limit his activities to other institutions or state enterprises; he suggested that the Syrians were trying to prevent him from getting a general overview of the domestic economy or over the changes occurring in the state apparatus:

Dabei gibt es von bestimmten Kräften die Tendenz, die Beratungstätigkeit mehr auf die Betriebe zu beschränken und alles zu unterbinden, was dem Berater erlaubt, einen umfangreicheren Überblick über die Probleme und Arbeitsweise der zentralen Organe zu erhalten.\(^{260}\)

The East-German Ambassador in Damascus soon agreed on the Syrian requests since they provided a good compromise for the GDR, too: in fact, it was not the case that they would continue working in Syrian central government as they had done before November 1970: their political influence would be judged more on the basis of effectiveness and functionality, rather than on ideological convergence; so, in order not to loose all the influence they had carefully built up so far, Ambassador Marter opted for a well defined cooperation based on pragmatism.\(^{261}\) He conceded that most of the Regierungsberater had already concluded their activities, so that it had no practical sense to keep them in Syria:

\(^{259}\) “There were indications that national-reformist and reactionary forces pressed for the conclusion of the presence of the advisors (...). Quite probably, a relevant role was played by the fact that in the eyes of the Syrians the advisors enjoyed too much full-detailed information about the state of art of the Syrian state apparatus”, MfAA B1.209/75, Zur Tätigkeit von Regierungsberater der DDR in der SAR, MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Berlin, 23, Oktober 1972.

\(^{260}\) “By certain forces, there is the tendency to contain the activity of the advisors at the level of the factory and prevent anything that allows the advisor to have an overall view of the problems and working methods of the central institutions”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsberater für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascus, November 3, 1971.

\(^{261}\) The opinion of Ambassador Marter were shared by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kiesewetter who directly monitored the Regierungsberater dossier in Berlin, MfAA B/1.208/75, Die Neue Regierung in Syrien und die unsere Beratertätigkeit, Letter von Stellv. des Ministers Kiesewetter an Stellv. des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates, dr. Weiss, Berlin, July 19, 1971, Kiesewetter.
From such a perspective, Marter and Regierungsrater Pertzold stressed again the need to present the Regierungsrater’s activities as “entpolitisiert” (depoliticised), and in particular not to be too closely linked to the GDR interests: they should avoid to look as “als Angestellte der Botschaft oder als verlängerter Arm der Botschaft” (as employees of the Ambassade or as the long arm of the Ambassade); the same ongoing support for progressive cadres in the state apparatus and in the Ba’thist regime should be handled with more attention, in order not to antagonize the current leadership.

Quite interestingly, Ambassador Marter’s convergence on Syrian requests initially ran counter to the position of Gerhard Weiss, Vice-President of the GDR Council of Ministers, who strongly pressed to maintain all the Regierungsrater on the same conditions; actually, he seemed to be more interested not to lose any position in the international arena during negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany; despite all shortcomings, Syria was still supposed to be a GDR stronghold in the Middle East:


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For such a reason, the GDR should not offer any opportunity to the Syrians to refuse their offers, even if that would mean to give up requests for a more equitable cost sharing. Nevertheless, facts on the ground proved compelling and at the end of the day Weiss could not but accept the Syrian line, as the Foreign Ministry had carefully suggested:

Obwohl auf der Seite der Syrischen Arabischen Republik auch andere Motive vorhanden sind, besteht zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und Syrien prinzipiell Übereinstimmung, dass ein gewisser Abschluss in der Beratertätigkeit erzielt wurde.

These suggestions depicted the conclusion of consultancy as a success for the DDR-Syrian partnership, and not as a Syrian unilateral blow to East Germany’s influence.

As a matter of fact, Syrian requests mainly responded to al Asad’s policy not to link Syria exclusively to any camps of the Cold War. In fact, Syrian requests for consultancy did not lead to an end of the GDR presence; on the contrary, the new advisors who started to arrive in March 1972 got appointed in those sectors and Ministries which followed the GDR wishes, that is:

M. Gentsch, at the Ministry of Finance
R. Dietrich, at the State Planning Commission
Dr. Fleck, for professional and vocational training programs for state cadres
Several technical experts for agricultural and farming institutes

263 “[…]. rather we prefer to lead through (the withdrawing of the Regierungsberater, n.d.t) gradually and not all at once, as was said in the letter of Comrade Dr. Scholz of July 19, 1971. In consideration of the current political situation, there is the actual risk of loosing our political assets. We must struggle to prevent it”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Letter, Ministerrat der DDR, Stellv. des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates an Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Berlin, July 26, 1971.

264 “Though there are other reasons for the Syrian Arab Republic, the German Democratic Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic agreed in principle on the conclusion of the consulting activity”, MfAA B1.209/75, Empfehlungen für ein Gespräch des Stellv. des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates, Dr. Weiss mit den Regierungsberatern, die in der SAR eingestellt waren, MfAA, Abteilung Arabische Staaten, Berlin, June 7, 1972.

On the whole, what the new Syrian leadership aimed at was to avoid any major opportunity for establishing a long-term foreign presence which would disrupt their claims for independence and autonomy in domestic politics. According to financial consultant, Samir Seifan, diffidence towards foreign presence grew wide:

Syria has always needed experts and foreign advisors; and has always used them. However, after 1970, the regime liked preferred them to stay for short periods of time. Indeed, we (the Syrians, n.d.t.) have always been very sensitive to foreign influence and we have always tried to prevent it. Since then, it has been almost a state of mind. Only in recent times, the regime has made major ouvertures. Nonetheless, it cannot rely exclusively on the advice of people who later go back to their homes.

Under the current circumstances, the GDR could not do much to change Syrian political-economy and its support for local progressive partners still suffered the latter's marginalization. On the one hand, at least until late 1972, real power in the Ministries resided in Vice-Ministers and General Directors: according to the Regierungberater, these “old” state officials got trained in the West and opposed socialist reforms because they favoured the “bourgeois ideology”:

[...] wird zwangsläufig die Stellung der hohen Beamten, der ehemaligen Generalsekretäre und jetzigen stellvertretenden Minister gestärkt, die sich in der übergrossen Mehrheit aus der alten Beamtenbürokratie rekrutieren. Sie sind die eigentlichen Beherrscher des Verwaltungsapparates”.

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267 MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über die Tätigkeit von Regierungsbreiter der DDR in der SAR in der Zeit von Februar bis Maerz 1972, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Minister Winzer, Damascus, April 15, 1972, Petzold.

268 Samīr Sāifan, private financial consultant for the energy sector, interview with the author, Damascus, July 24, 2006.

269 “(...) the position of senior Officials, of the General Directors and of the current vice-ministers, who in great majority recruited from the old state bureaucracy, inevitably become strengthened. They are the actual rulers of the administrative
Sie sind potentielle Träger der bürgerlichen Ideologie. Sie besitzen einflussreiche Positionen auf allen Gebieten und konnten diese vor allem im Wirtschafts- und Finanzapparat in letzter Zeit noch ausbauen.270

Another major obstacle for the GDR influence proved to be the high turn-over which affected Syrian Ministers: the frequent change of Government prevented the long-term planning of their activities as well as the ability of the Regierungsberater's to build effective connections to them;

So wichtig der Kontakt mit den Ministern zur Ausnutzung ihrer Autorität und Entscheidungsbefugnis, so wenig kann man darauf eine kontinuierliche Arbeit aufbauen, da die Minister häufiger wechseln als alle anderen Leitungskader.271

On the other hand, many competent cadres still held low or intermediate positions in state apparatus; worse, increasingly they decided to work abroad or in the private sector, where there could be enjoyed better wages and more personal authority. According to former trade-attaché, Helmut Monsees:

Many workers and cadres who got trained in the GDR or who attended our professional training courses in Syria, later emigrated to the Gulf states. Hence, both we and Damascus lost their competence and energy.272

apparatus”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über die Tätigkeit von Regierungsberater der DDR in der SAR in der Zeit von Februar bis März 1972, Botschaft der DDR in der SAR an MfAA, Minister Winzer, Damascus, April 15, 1972, Petzold.

270 “They are the potential representatives of the bourgeoise ideology. They are appointed in influential positions in every sector, and recently they could consolidate the ones in the economic and financial apparatus”, MfAA B1.217/75, Zu Arbeit: Fragen der Demokratie und des Staates, Damascus, December 3, 1971, Petzold.

271 “The more important the contact with the ministers to exploit their authority is, the less we can keep on with our activities because the turn-over affecting ministers is much higher than the one affecting other cadres”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsberater für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascus, November 3, 1971. For such a reason and despite major differences in political orientation, Regierungsberater Poplushnik suggested to keep close contacts in all echelons of the Ministerial structure, not only to Ministers, MfAA/B 1.1211/75, Abschlussbericht über meine Tätigkeit als Berater für Fragen der Versorgung in der SAR, an MfAA, Stellv. des Ministers, Kiesewetter, Berlin, May 5, 1972, Poplushnik.

The ones who remained were reported to suffer from “Depression und Mutlosigkeit” (depression and discouragement). Only later, the “progressive” state officials could reach senior positions but, as we said, their ultimate power and fate still depended on their loyalty to the Presidency of Ḥāfiz al Asad. Nevertheless, the Regierungsberater tried to offer a privileged support to the young progressive cadres, in order to boost their competence and possible, future careers:

Es wurde versucht, unter Berücksichtigung der konkreten Bedingungen die Tätigkeit der kommunistischen Genossen in den Staats- und Wirtschaftsorganen zu unterstützen und eine gute Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen zu pflegen.

Despite all difficulties, Regierungsberater Ernst Gebauer praised their cooperation at the Ministry of Industry because they provided him with much useful information for his work:

Eine gute Unterstützung erhielten wir durch die in unseren Bereichen tätigen Genossen der Kommunistischen Partei Syriens. Wie bemühten uns, gute Kontakte mit ihnen zu unterhalten, sie in ihrer Arbeit zu unterstützen und so ihre Position zu festigen ohne sie zu gefährden. Durch sie wurde ich oft eingehender als es mir arbeitsmässig möglich war über Probleme informiert, deren Kenntnis für unsere Arbeit und die Qualität der von mir unterbreiteten Vorschläge wichtig war.

Increasingly, the GDR opted for a more pragmatic and self-interested approach to Syria, whose aim was to stabilize and

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274 “In consideration of the actual conditions, we tried to support the activities of the communist comrades in state and economic institutions as well as to foster a good cooperation with them”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsberater für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascus, November 3, 1971.

275 “We enjoyed the positive support of the comrades of the Syrian Communist Party who worked in our sectors. We tried to keep good contacts with them, to support them in their activities, in order to consolidate their position, though without endangering them. Thanks to them, I could get detailed information about different issues, whose acknowledgment was of much importance for our works as well as for the quality of the proposals we submitted”, MfAA B/1.208/75, Bericht über meine Tätigkeit als Regierungsberater für den Bereich der Industrie in der SAR im Jahre 1971, E. Gebauer an Ministerpräsident der SAR, Damascus, 3 November 1971.
consolidate its economic position in the local market by focusing on those sectors which proved more profitable: in particular, agricultural mechanization, the textile industry, construction and professional training; for all these, the GDR could provide machinery and expertise on competitive conditions. Despite all shortcomings, according to former Minister of Economy, the liberal Muḥammad al Imādī, the GDR economic presence proved quite useful for Syria:

The GDR assets depended on which sector you consider. For example, the irrigation system connected with the Euphrates Dam was excellent, as well as the geological mapping of Syrian territory. On the contrary, the negative aspects concerned the delivery of spare parts and the quality of imported goods, which was decisively inferior to those of Western Germany. Much like the FRG, the GDR too wanted to sell its products: some were useful, some not at all; nevertheless Syrian Ministers used to buy them as well, even if they did not match either their needs nor their standards of quality. Obviously, such choices were based on political criteria. However, on the whole, inconsistency, lack of coherence and short-term goals in Syrian economic planning caused the main problems affecting relations between Syria and the two Germanys.

Eventually, the Regierungsberater mission came to an end because of the convergence of the parallel processes: on the one hand, the Regierungsberater actually concluded their activities with regard to their programs in hand and now the task was up to the Syrians to implement the new legislation as well as to run their new institutions on a daily basis; the Syrian Ba’thist regime grasped the opportunity to close down this phase of the partnership, and to strengthen political autonomy from socialist influence. On the other hand, the GDR and the whole socialist camp recognized the new balance of forces inside the Syrian regime, which actually prevented any major move to socialism; so, according to Realpolitik, they opted for a more balanced partnership. Such are the main arguments of former GDR Ambassador in Syria, Wolfgang Konschel:


In 1971, there was not any more need for government advisors in Syria: Syrians could run the new institutions on their own. Indeed, even according to our judgement, we did not have many illusions on the possibilities of transforming Syria into a socialist state. Nonetheless, Syria fully exploited the opportunities offered by the GDR for scientific and vocational training and successfully upgraded its professional competence in different sectors. At the end of the day, one might wonder what the GDR actually gained: according to me, not so much.278

The same was true for Heinz-Dieter Winter, former GDR Ambassador in Syria and senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The relations between the GDR and Syria were a “marriage of convenience” for both countries: the socialist camp was an obliging and necessary ally against Israel, but the Ba’th Party did not want to become a “natural” ally of the East against the capitalist West: actually, there was no common ideological base between the SED and the Ba’th Party [...] Especially after 1973, we realized that there was no chance that Syria would turn into a socialist state or would even follow the Non-capitalist Road to Development. The parasitic and bureaucratic bourgeoisie had already consolidated. Hāfiz al Asad himself was not a socialist and it was first up to him to decide not to renew the mission of our government advisors. Later on, some of them still remained, but only upon the single requests of individual Ministries and not in the context of an organic and systematic reform program. Eventually, maybe that was the best choice: actually, the Yemenite experience bore witness to the risks and damage of overestimating the strength of local progressive forces. On the contrary, the role of the technicians and engineers working on the ground were very useful both for Syrians and for our (GDR, n.d.t.) trade.279

Eventually, from a systemic point of view, former Minister Prof. al Za’īm evaluated as being profitable the economic relationship among Syria, the socialist camp and the GDR, too:

In the Fifties, Syria turned to the East to buy the arms that the West did not want to sell it; moreover, Western capitals played with conspiracies against Syrian governments. In the Sixties, Syria moved to the East, because of the influence of socialist ideas, which came along with Realpolitk and the regional balance of forces. In the Seventies, Syria related to the East not for ideology but for al Assad’s “machiavellism”: he kept a sound distinction

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between the domestic role of communists and the international role of the socialist camp. Actually, the latter was the intermediary and the guarantee for national independence vis-à-vis the diktats of the West in the region. To sum up, the socialist camp and the GDR were very important for Syria for the following reasons: arms delivery; mutual profitable business; almost unconditioned political support.280

9. Conclusions

In mid-1964, former FRG Ambassador, Dr. Mangold, labelled the Ba’thists’ politics as “die pragmatische Politik des improvisierten Sozialismus.”281 Although he made no secret of his disdain for the Ba’thists, he was correct in the sense that major transformations rarely if ever followed linear paths; rather, they are always open to the forces and contingencies of political struggle. In order to evaluate the activities as well as the legacy of the Regierungsbüro mission in Syria, one should take into account that both Germans and Syrians changed goals and strategies during the course of events.

First of all, the presence of the Regierungsbüro should be considered according to the plans and interests of the GDR’s authorities: that is, to gain international legitimacy and to promote its own economic interests. As far as diplomacy was concerned, the Regierungsbüro effectively helped the GDR to establish privileged contacts with the Syrian and Ba’thist leaderships; as a consequence, they enjoyed a direct channel through which to campaign for diplomatic recognition. Despite their support for the loosing faction, their activities contributed in portraying the GDR as a “normal”, “independent and sovereign” partner, even in the eyes of the so called “nationalists”. With certainty, inter-arab competition and Chancellor Brandt’s Ostpolitik cleared the path for the June 1969 diplomatic recognition. Nevertheless, it was highly significant that no Ba’thist factions considered the German Question a “hot” issue anymore; rather, it was a matter of economic bargaining. On the whole, the

280 Iṣām al Za’īm, former Director of Arab Center for Strategic Studies, President of the Syrian Economy Society, former Minister of Industry and Director of the State Planning Commission, interview with the author, Damascus, August 14, 2006.

281 PAAA B36 IB4, 125, Bericht Nr. 83/64, Bericht über die Unruhen in Hama, April 16, 1964, Mangold.
contribution of the *Regierungsrat* proved very useful, though not decisive.

At an economic level, Berlin required the *Regierungsrat* to establish privileged contacts and channels of information which would provide better chances and opportunities for trade with Syria. Since the mid-60s, the GDR planned for a deeper integration in the world economy, however its domestic structure required preferential cooperation with foreign state sectors as well as being able to bypass international competition and public bids for contracts. The *Regierungsrat* effectively provided a privileged access to up-to-date information concerning Syrian economic needs and its investment policies, so that the GDR could provide the suitable offers: namely, which sectors to develop, and which machinery and training courses were needed. However, Syrian officials, and even the closest supporters of the GDR, proved to be very “tough” to deal with. In fact, they were very determined to pursue their priorities and interests and did not lose any opportunities to exploit international competition to pressure the GDR for better terms. In fact, despite the GDR pressure, Syrian never conceded to give up the profitable system of international public bids for contracts. Moreover, for the time being, many close partners of the *Regierungsrat* still held medium-rank positions, so that they couldn’t have the ultimate word over contract awarding. Eventually, neither the GDR nor the Syrian state sector ever enjoyed the stability nor efficiency the *Regierungsrat* hoped for, in order to establish a long-term and mutually beneficial relationship. So, despite the vigorous activity of the GDR advisors, trade with Syria still had to rely on financial credits and aid. At the end of the day, the *Regierungsrat* proved to be a valuable asset for the GDR, but they could not get round the structural limits affecting both East Germany and Syria.

Perhaps more importantly in a long-term perspective, the mission of the *Regierungsrat* should best be evaluated on the influence they exerted on the Syrian development process. At first, the Ba’thist leadership asked for GDR consultancy in order to rationalize and implement the *Socialist Transformation* program in late 1965. The latter followed the principles of the Non Capitalist Road to Development and East Berlin was eager to transfer its experience. The Ba’thists wished to engage in a state-building reform which would centralize economy and politics under *Staatsmacht* (state-power): the state was
supposed to be the main asset in their struggle against “imperialism”. As far as the political institutions were concerned, they planned to enhance the role of the central government apparatus, in particular the Council of Ministers and its Presidency. First this involved closer and more efficient coordination among Ministries and the related institutions; secondly, if the central government in Damascus should play the pivotal role in Syrian development, the same relationship with the latter and the provincial, local institutions would need to be reorganised in favour of the capital. Last but not least, if all of the system was to work, new cadres should train and act along the criteria of efficiency and effectiveness. As far as economics were concerned, the state should expand its intervention and get the upper hand over private forces; it should become the preminent engine for growth and capital accumulation, and central planning was supposed to provide a suitable mechanism to manage all resources and improve their exploitation. Here, central planning matched with a centralized decision-making process because it required a closer coordination among Ministries, between them and the Unions of State Enterprises and, down the line, among the latter and the single productive units. The State Planning Commision had the primary task to collect all detailed information from the different units and levels and then to organise a coherent and systemic plan for development; however, the ultimate decision centered on the Council of Ministers and its Presidency. As stated in the NCR, the overall aim was to provide progressive forces with an effective engine to get the upper hand over the conservative forces, and to enter a fast-growth development path.

On the whole, the Regierungsberater effectively helped Syrian authorities to reform the central state apparatus along the principles of centralization and economic planning. They were particularly successful in influencing the new legislation about the role and organization of the Council of Ministers, its Presidency and all the related Commissions; the same applied to the statutes of several Ministries, like the Ministry of Finance, Industry, Economy, and the State Planning Commission; they reorganised the nationalized enterprises along the lines of sectorial units and laid the framework for their relations with central authorities. Last but not least, they provided an effective model for the Law on the Local Authorities, as well as for the Constitution of 1971. All the related legislation followed the drafts previously submitted by and discussed with the...
German Regierungsrater. So, as far as the legislative phase was concerned, the GDR advisors scored quite an effective result. Only in those sectors, like agriculture, where the opposition was much stronger and the Ba’thist leadership more uncertain, did the Regierungsrater fall short of influence.

A major weakness of the radical Ba’thists concerned their authoritarian approach toward the people and the classes they claimed to represent: namely, labour forces, peasants, intellectuals and state employees. Their claim to be the vanguard Party favoured mass “mobilization” practices, rather than “participatory” ones: in practice, they were much more concerned with appointing their loyals to top and senior positions in ministries, enterprises, cooperatives and unions, rather than profiting from people’s expertise and competence. Obviously, the top-down, authoritarian approach was not a Ba’thist peculiarity and affected the GDR, too: the same architecture of Democratic Centralism suffered heavily from such a deficiency. As the Regierungsrater soon reported, this prevented people from participating and pledging their hopes and allegiance to the regime: the German advisors pressed for the active engagement of labour unions and peasants in state enterprises or cooperatives, as well as for the appointment of young “progressive” cadres to senior positions. The lack of direct popular control over those institutions supposed to run the country left people exposed to the risks and sufferings that industrialization and modernization implied. However, that is a common feature of “modernization” theories and practices in contemporary history.

These aspects combined with regional instability and the long-term effect of the June 1967 defeat, which marked the end of the political hegemony of secular, nationalist forces in the Middle East, and eased the recovery of moderate and conservative ones. The latter and their sympathizers among the Ba’thists found quite an easy way to regain control over the state and dilute its power. Ḥāfiz al Asad’s take-over in November 1970 changed the fundamentals of Syrian requests to their German partners and the Regierungsrater could nothing but adapt to the new political context. Indeed, the Corrective Movement definitively obliterated the political features of the Socialist Transformation program: the state and the party collective institutions would play a pivotal role in Syrian society but not an exclusive one; the Ba’th Party and the government were two of the main pillars of
the regime, but not the only ones; the state sector should expand, but not to the detriment of the private one, and it should rather consolidate on efficiency and effectiveness; though under the rules set by the regime, the private sector would continue to act autonomously. Ultimately, Syria established a new economic pluralism, still in the framework of a capitalist structure. Despite all attempts to hold their line, the GDR adapted to the new balance of forces and accepted the relative decline of the Regierungsberater’s role.

The power-system which President Ḥāfīz al-Asad had established since November 1970 and his “Correction Movement” struck a major blow to the initial plans of the Regierungsberater. The neo-patrimonial power-system centered around the Presidency was a major obstacle to the difficult process of state institutionalization. If the Presidency was held-up as being the ultimate guarantee among different social forces, left-wing forces conceived the state sector as the bulwark from which to spread and implement their claims. Although the Correction Movement of November 1970 and the related al infīṭāḥ were far from being able to contain state intervention, they actually put an end to any pretention that the state sector could ever become the axis of Syrian capital accumulation. It was not by chance that already in 1971-1972 the new central Government gave priority to monetary and banking policies to regulate the economic system while they showed no hurry to heed the Regierungsberater’s calls to improve coordination, efficiency and effectiveness in the state-led industrial sector or in the peasants’ cooperatives. The same central authorities prevented the establishment of artisans’ cooperatives, since they might challenge the still powerful urban traders. Rather, the Ba’th often appointed its men to top-echelon positions, in order to oversee and control state enterprises, unions and cooperatives. Actually, under the rhetoric of stability, the development priorities of the regime changed significantly according to the constituencies it wished to coopt. At the end of the day, the Regierungsberater duly followed their orders and provided the expertise they were required; but there was hardly anything they could do to reverse the new balance of forces.

Far from introducing any major element of the GDR-style socialism, the Regierungsberater contributed toward reforming and rationalizing some of the central state institutions. Power-centralization was widely held as the best strategy to boost development: the expansion of social services and economic activities
required a much more complex administrative apparatus than the one inherited by the Ottoman empire or the French Mandate. As a result, despite all rhetoric and wishful thinking, the Regierungsberater contributed toward setting Syria in line with contemporary trends in international development and state-building; that is, a strong central state which could intervene extensively in economy and society in order to warrant a high degree of capital accumulation, social development and political stability. One could, arguably, wonder whether a strong central state could effectively establish itself over a highly plural and fragmented society, such as the Syrian one. Nevertheless, State and Party institutions offered real opportunities to improve social mobility, and challenged effectively both traditional identities and power structures.

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Les Communautés religieuses Turques en Belgique: la Communauté Gülen

By Müserref YARDIM*

Summary

Although Gülen movement presents differences with other branches nurcu, its notional domain draw its inspiration from Nursî works, the Risâle-i Nûr. By the use to its advantage of means of communication, by the importance granted to education, to interfaith and cross-cultural dialogues, and by its wish to realize a synthesis between modern and religious, the Gülen community became the most important community, not only in Turkey, but also in Belgium.

Keywords: Gülen movement, Nursî, Risâle-i Nûr, Belgium, Turkey

Le mouvement Gülen

1. Le mouvement nurcu et la communauté Gülen

Le mouvement de Fethullah Gülen est actuellement le mouvement le plus marquant en Turquie, mais aussi en dehors. Par le fait qu’il se base majoritairement sur la Risâle-i Nûr, le mouvement Gülen peut être considéré comme l’une des branches du mouvement nurcu ayant fait son apparition après la mort du maître, Said Nursî. Mais lorsqu’on y regarde de près, on s’aperçoit qu’il existe de nombreuses divergences entre le mouvement Gülen et les autres groupes nurcu. La seule et unique source pour ces derniers reste la Risâle-i Nûr, alors qu’elle n’en est qu’une parmi d’autres chez le mouvement Gülen.

Même si son mouvement acquiert un autre aspect, les idées de Fethullah Gülen et le cadre notionnel de son mouvement s’inspirent des œuvres de Nursî, fondateur du mouvement nurcu. Bien que Gülen et Nursî ne se soient jamais rencontrés, Gülen partage avec ce dernier trois objectifs:
1. Élever la conscience des musulmans.
2. Redéfinir les relations entre la religion et les sciences afin de réfuter les discours intellectuels matérialistes et positivistes.

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1 Yavuz 2003a, 3.
2 Valkenberg 2006, 269.
3. Réactiver la mémoire collective³.

Étant donné les désavantages dont l’image du *nurculuk* se teint en Turquie⁴, Fethullah Gülen n’exprime pas explicitement son appartenance au mouvement *nur*, c’est-à-dire qu’il est un « étudiant nûr » (*nur talebesi*). Il se préoccupe dans les années qui suivent de structurer son mouvement au lieu de s’affirmer sur les problèmes politiques⁵. La communauté de Gülen est un réseau social qui est différent des confréries traditionnelles. L’héritage de Nursî pèse très lourd, notamment en ce qui concerne les principes d’association. La célèbre phrase de Nursî, “notre époque n’est pas celle des confréries,”⁶ a joué un rôle déterminant dans la façon de se percevoir et de se présenter, pour la communauté de Gülen⁷.


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³ Yavuz 2000, 7.
⁴ Said Nursî et les *nurcu* ont été, durant la période républicaine, accusés de fonder une confrérie, même si Nursî a prétendu à maintes reprises le contraire. Le fait que Fethullah Gülen ne se dit pas partisan du mouvement *nurcu* à cause de son “mauvais image” ne doit pas être vu comme la seule et unique raison de sa non appartenance au mouvement. Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
⁵ Ergin 2001, 178.
⁶ Nursî 2001 (II), 1416.
⁸ 2003, 208-237.
⁹ Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
¹⁰ Özdalga 2000, 91.
¹¹ 2004, 295.
L’action positive, constructive, qui revêt une grande importance chez Nursî\textsuperscript{12}, devient également un pilier important dans la pensée de Fethullah Gülen, pour qui le principe directeur d’un individu devrait être d’élaborer une attitude positive dans tous les domaines\textsuperscript{13}. La technique de persuasion consistant à utiliser ingénieusement ses idées est également approuvée par Fethullah Gülen, qui refuse tout conflit\textsuperscript{14}. Ahmet Sirhindî, dont Said Nursî mentionne le nom très fréquemment, occupe aussi une place importante chez Gülen. Appartenant à la tradition nakşibendi et traitant du renouvellement de l’enseignement spirituel de cette tradition en insistant sur la voie suivie par le Prophète, l’ouvrage \textit{Maktubat} de Sirhindî est enseigné aux élèves qui participent à son cercle d’étude\textsuperscript{15}.

**2. Caractéristiques**

Le mouvement Gülen, par son triomphe dans plusieurs domaines, comme celui de l’enseignement, et par l’utilisation à son avantage des moyens de communication, devient, surtout après 1980, la communauté la plus influente de la Turquie\textsuperscript{16}. Son importance relève sans doute de son désir de continuité culturelle et idéologique; alors que les autres mouvements de tendance islamique politique s’opposent à ces deux éléments\textsuperscript{17}. Sa spécificité peut être résumée en trois points:

1. Exigence d’une continuité culturelle dans le domaine religieux en mettant en avant des éléments comme la “nation”, l’“État” et les “traditions islamiques”.

2. Cette continuité n’est pas uniquement symbolique. Il y a une réelle volonté de donner vie à ces éléments à travers des fondations et des établissements. La solidarité joue dans ce contexte un rôle extrêmement déterminant.

3. La reconnaissance, non seulement des différentes fractions musulmanes, mais aussi des non musulmans.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{12} Nursî 2001 (II), 2188.

\textsuperscript{13} Entretien avec un informante (7 Septembre 2008).

\textsuperscript{14} Yavuz 2003a, 3.

\textsuperscript{15} Sarıtoprak, “Fethullah Gülen et les Gens du Livre; une Voix de Turquie pour le Dialogue Interreligieux”, in http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/29/7/.

\textsuperscript{16} Erken 1995, 18.

\textsuperscript{17} Bayramoğlu 2001, 243.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, 245-246.
Par ses relations, l'identité internationale et la mission d’un islam «modéré», la branche de Gülen a acquis une toute autre dimension.19 D’après Karpat, la notion de *cemaat* (communauté) relève purement du domaine séculaire, et est la preuve que la modernisation doit se faire en Turquie à travers la religion. Ainsi, la communauté ne tient pas uniquement à diriger la société turque vers une religiosité “tolérante”, mais permet également l’approbation de la République et d’Atatürk. La communauté de Gülen est la meilleure représentante d’une vision religieuse, avec son libéralisme, sa tolérance, son respect de la pensée d’autrui, sa position équidistante face à un musulman ou à un non musulman et sa cohésion avec la République turque, avec Atatürk et avec la Turquie actuelle. Une modernisation n’est efficace que si elle ne passe pas par la religion.20

3. Synthèse du moderne et du religieux

Comme tout mouvement missionnaire, le groupe de Gülen est également porteur d’un message, d’une idéologie qui se traduit par la diffusion d’un discours islamique moderne et légèrement teinté de mysticisme21. En effet, Fethullah Gülen et ses disciples ont essayé de mettre en place un mouvement politico-religieux optant pour le modernisme, le nationalisme turc, la démocratie et la tolérance, sans pour autant sacrifier les préceptes religieux.22

Le fait que l’Occident soit intéressé par l’élaboration d’un “islam modéré”, après les attentats du 11 septembre, a été accueilli avec une suspicion générale dans le monde islamique. La communauté de Gülen, étant un mouvement social, recherche une nouvelle manière de faire se rencontrer l’Occident et l’islam en offrant des possibilités sociales, culturelles et non militaires. Elle a créé un large processus de dialogue dans les domaines éducatifs, religieux et sociaux à travers des régions aux cultures et civilisations différentes. À cet égard, il faut reconnaître que Gülen a développé avec succès une expression positive et dynamique de l’islam, capable de faire face au monde

19 Işıklı 2007, 47.
20 Kara 2008, 320-322.
22 Pashayan 2007, 239.
moderne et de s’y engager à l’égal des plus grands mouvements sociaux et religieux occidentaux\textsuperscript{23}.

\textit{Contribution au processus d’intégration dans la société belge?}

Fethullah Gülen est persuadé qu’il est possible de former des générations qui s’appuient à la fois sur l’islam et sur les sciences modernes. À l’instar de Nursî, Gülen veut tirer parti de l’éducation moderne afin de remédier à la décadence du monde musulman\textsuperscript{24}. Ce mouvement, qui acquiert une acceptation mondiale, démontre la capacité et le dynamisme de l’islam à produire des réponses sociales et culturelles riches aux défis de la modernité, basées sur la tolérance et de saines relations intercommunautaires et intracommunautaires\textsuperscript{25}.

Le mouvement Gülen est un conglomérat de réseaux concentrés autour de quatre principaux groupes d’activités:
1. Les institutions éducatives.
3. Les rassemblements religieux (\textit{sobbet toplantili} [réunions de conversation]).
4. Les entreprises économiques, comme les compagnies de finances (\textit{İşık Sigorta} et \textit{Bank Aşya}).\textsuperscript{26} En effet, le mouvement est en quelque sorte une mobilisation colossale d’elle-même en personnes et en finance dans les domaines de charité, de solidarité, de finance, de commerce, d’éducation et du médium.\textsuperscript{27}

Aucune de ces sous organisations n’est typiquement fondée sur les rapports familiaux et/ou tribaux, mais plutôt sur la participation active et volontaire d’individus relativement indépendants. L’identité du «nous»

\textsuperscript{23} Ergene, “M.Fethullah Gülen et son Mouvement: une Approche de Bon Sens de la Religion et de la Modernité,” in http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/101/2/.
\textsuperscript{24} Agai 2003, 50.
\textsuperscript{25} Ergene, “M.Fethullah Gülen et son Mouvement : une Approche de Bon Sens de la Religion et de la Modernité, in http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/101/2/.
\textsuperscript{27} Bayramoğlu 2001, 248-249.
entretenue dans les réseaux sociaux comme ceux-là est donc différente de ce que l'on rencontre parmi les proches ou les membres de famille. La figure de Gülen a séduit les jeunes citadins, en particulier les docteurs, les professeurs d'université, et certains hommes d'affaires, qui considèrent comme un honneur de participer aux activités de ses fondations, la Fondation Turque des Professeurs et la Fondation des Journalistes et des Écrivains.

**Les centres d'études (Eğitim Merkezi)**

L'Europe devient pour les nurcu un territoire familier, voire le second pays natal. Les dershane (centres de convivialité) étant organisés horizontalement, l'accent est mis sur la solidarité, la participation et l'intégrité. L'accélération du processus d'intégration dans la société européenne est exigée par Gülen, qui conteste également les notions traditionnelles d'identité basée sur un territoire, une ethnie, une culture ou une histoire. C'est ainsi qu'une possibilité de vivre pour les Musulmans sans qu'ils soient confrontés à une distinction traditionnelle entre le dâr al-islam (pays de l'islam) et le dâr al-harb (pays de la guerre) est offerte par le nouveau concept du dâr al-hizmet (pays de service), qui prévoit de se mettre au service de l'Islam en constituant un bon exemple, c'est-à-dire obéir à la lex loci, respecter les droits des autres et être juste.

Les sympathisants du mouvement Gülen d'Europe ont fondé dans les villes européennes une série d'établissements, dont les centres d'étude, qui proposent aux étudiants des cours particuliers d'anglais, de français, d'allemand, de mathématiques, de chimie, de physique et de biologie. Ces institutions organisent également des séminaires pour


30 Ne pas confondre avec les dershane, qui sont des cours préparatoires aux concours universitaires. En effet, les dershane désignent en Turquie les cours préparatoires ou des centres de convivialité (sens propre au nurcu).

31 Yavuz 2003b, 309.

32 Isgandarov 2007, 221.

33 Weller 2007, 264.

34 Toguşlu 2007, 283.
les parents afin d’attirer leur attention sur l’importance de l’éducation. Les villes belges comptent également un certain nombre de centres d’études, parmi lesquelles Prisma, à Bruxelles. Depuis sa fondation, Prisma dispense des cours aux enfants, organise des excursions tant en Belgique qu’en Europe et participe à divers événements de quartier. Depuis quelques années, le Prisma est devenu un centre ouvert à toutes les nationalités, alors qu’auparavant, il n’offrait qu’une aide scolaire aux jeunes Turcs. L’aide aux devoirs est destinée aux élèves du primaire et du secondaire inférieur. C’est un lieu fréquenté par toutes sortes de personnes, où des cours d’alphabétisation et de langues, comme le français, le flamand, l’anglais et le turc, sont donnés en collaboration avec la municipalité. Il y a aussi des cours de peinture, de dessin, de modelage, de musique (flûte traversière, piano, orgue électrique et la guitare classique) et d’informatique.

LES DERSHANE (Centres de convivialité, de spiritualité et de discours)

Désignant littéralement la “classe d’étude”, mais fonctionnant comme des caravansérails, de nombreux dershane (centres de convivialité) gérés par la communauté de Fethullah Gülen se trouvent implantés en Belgique et visent à attirer des jeunes musulmans universitaires. Diffuser l’information, trouver un emploi, faciliter de nouvelles amitiés et permettre l’accès à divers réseaux sociaux figurent également parmi leurs tâches. On observe dans ces dershane du mouvement Gülen en Belgique, comme dans tous, la présence, en plus de la Collection Risâle-i Nûr, des œuvres de Fethullah Gülen. Ce qui est également remarquable, c’est le taux élevé de jeunes filles y

35 Demir 2007, 359.
36 Voir http://www.prismaedu.org/.
37 Entretien avec un informateur (7 Septembre 2008).
38 Voir http://www.prismaedu.org/.
39 Entretien avec un informateur (7 Septembre 2008).
40 Voir http://www.prismaedu.org/.
41 Yavuz 2003b, 309.
résidant. Des kermesses et diverses activités charitables sont organisées afin de soutenir financièrement les étudiants, par exemple.

Par ailleurs, Fethullah Gülen crée les ışık evleri (maisons de lumière) qui sont des lieux saints où sont formés des hommes à la foi solide (tabkiki iman). Ce sont des mektep qui assurent un retour à leur origine spirituelle. La seule chose exigée de ces maisons, à une époque où les tekke et les zaviye sont fermés, c’est de remplir cette fonction. En plus de cela, ces maisons jouent le rôle de medrese en enseignant les sciences religieuses et modernes. Ce sont, d’après Balci, des appartements loués par la communauté ou achetés par les hommes d’affaires de la communauté où les étudiants, généralement issus de familles pauvres, sont autorisés à résider durant leurs études. Chaque maison de la lumière est dirigée par un abi (frère), qui oeuvre pour l’éducation des élèves. Les ışık evleri (terme propre à ce mouvement) sont en quelque sorte un pont entre le moderne et le traditionnel, entre l’éducation islamique et séculaire. Bien que les dershane et les ışık evleri soient synonymes du point de vue fonctionnel dans la communauté Gülen, une différence réside entre les deux: les dershane sont des lieux où logent les abi (frère aîné), alors que les ışık evleri accueillent des étudiants qui accomplissent leur devoir religieux.

Les écoles

Fidèle à la méthode de Nursî, Fethullah Gülen privilégie l’éducation pour élargir son mouvement. Les autres branches du nurculuk, elles, comptent surtout sur l’édition et la diffusion des

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42 On peut estimer ce taux à environ à 40% dans les dershane de la communauté Gülen, alors que ce taux reste extrêmement bas pour les dershane des autres branches nurcu. Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
43 Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
44 C’est-à-dire être des centres communautaires et spirituels.
45 La medrese, de la tradition islamique classique, peut être traduite, en termes modernes, par «université».
46 Cevizoğlu 1999, 506-514.
48 Hermansen 2007, 69.
49 Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
œuvres de leur maître. Contrairement aux organisations turco-musulmanes d’Europe, qui se concentrent sur la construction et le financement des mosquées et des écoles coraniques, les sympathisants du mouvement Gülen d’Europe insistent sur la grande importance de l’éducation séculaire.

L’objectif de Gülen est de former une “génération en or,” ou une “nouvelle génération,” représentante dans les domaines scientifiques, religieux et éthique, mais aussi maître de la génération à venir. La génération en “or” joue un rôle important dans l’établissement d’un monde de paix, où les gens «s’aiment». Gülen compare la haine à un flot destructeur, qui mine la confiance entre les différents segments de la société. Grâce à son système éducatif combinant les valeurs islamiques et modernes, Fethullah Gülen a réalisé l’idéal de Nursî.


Des écoles ont été créées dans ce but, suite aux accords entre pays d’accueil et compagnies d’enseignement. Toutes les écoles sont gérées indépendamment, mais la plupart d’entre elles s’appuient sur les services de compagnies turques pour pourvoir aux dépenses scolaires.

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50 Balcı 2003, 118-119.
51 Demir 2007, 359.
52 Aviv 2007, 116.
53 Gülen 1998, 128.
54 Sarıtoprak 2007, 638.
55 Valkenberg 2006, 320.
56 Özdalga 2000, 84-85.
57 Öztuna 2001, 57.
58 Sönmez 1998, 23.
59 Ibid., 25.
et aux ressources humaines. Les autorités locales contribuent largement à la création de ces écoles en fournissant des terrains et des bâtiments ainsi qu’en allouant des directeurs et des enseignants quand cela s’avère nécessaire. Gülen pense que la voie de la justice pour tous passe par le financement d’une éducation universelle, adéquate et appropriée. Ce n’est qu’à ce moment-là qu’il pourra y avoir assez de compréhension et de tolérance pour assurer le respect des droits d’autrui. Pour ce faire, il a, depuis des années, encouragé l’élite sociale et les dirigeants des diverses communautés, les industriels puissants aussi bien que les petits commerçants, à soutenir une éducation de qualité. Grâce à leurs dons, les organisations scolaires ont pu créer de nombreuses écoles en Turquie et à l’étranger.


62 http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/2/2/.
63 Agai 2003, 48.
64 Balcı 2003, 145.
65 http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/3/2/.
66 Balcı 2003, 119.
Les écoles créées en Turquie, mais aussi à l’étranger, contrôlées par les services des renseignements des pays en question, sont sous le contrôle permanent du ministère de l’éducation turque. D’après le journaliste Ali Bayramoğlu, ces écoles n’offrent pas une activité scolaire dans un environnement religieux, comme le présument certains. Elles ont été établies sur le modèle des lycées d’Anatolie, dotées de laboratoires et d’équipements technologiques modernes. Les activités prennent place dans le cadre de la philosophie pédagogique et des lois en vigueur dans le pays en question.

Inspirées de Gülen, ces écoles n’offrent pas d’éducation religieuse, mais accordent une importance particulière aux principes éthiques, facteurs d’union. La question de savoir si les écoles “turques” créées en Turquie ou à l’étranger sont reliées à Fethullah Gülen est toujours d’actualité. Mais Fethullah Gülen a affirmé à plusieurs reprises qu’il n’était pas propriétaire d’une école ni d’une institution, et qu’il n’avait aucun lien organique ou matériel avec celles-ci. Par contre, en tant que citoyen intéressé par les problèmes d’éducation, il incite ses compatriotes à agir dans ce domaine.

**Le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux**

S’inspirant des idées de dialogues de Nursî, le mouvement de Gülen est un exemple clair de la recherche de dialogue entre les civilisations et les cultures, une recherche qui a atteint des proportions internationales. Nursî ne voit aucun inconvénient, pour les Musulmans, à entrer en relation avec l’Occident et les chrétiens. En effet, en tant que savant musulman, il a entretenu toute sa vie de bonnes relations avec l’Europe. Said Nursî a eu l’occasion de se familiariser avec les courants de pensée européens et de rencontrer des personnes qui, soit ont critiqué, soit ont été séduites par ces idées. Il faut également rappeler les voyages qu’il a fait en Europe. Ceux-ci

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67 Michel 2003, 79.
72 Agai 2003, 52
lui ont permis d’entrer en contact avec les sujets non musulmans de l’Empire Ottoman.73

L’Allemagne occupe une place importante pour Nursî, qui transmet son œuvre Zülfikar à l’imam de la mosquée de Berlin. Nursî envoie ensuite son élève Muhsin Alev en Allemagne. Ce dernier parvient à créer une communauté et à fonder une imprimerie à Berlin, où sont imprimées et envoyées en Turquie des parties de la Risâle-i Nûr en turc.74 L’Allemagne, qui a beaucoup contribué au développement du mouvement Nûr, tant en Europe qu’en Turquie, constitue le pivot dans la formation des communautés. La communauté de Cologne a en outre envoyé un message au Pape afin de célébrer la fête de Pâques. Ce message a été rédigé selon le système de pensée de Nursî. Pour montrer combien Nursî est en relation proche avec les chrétiens et la Papauté, rappelons qu’il a lui-même offert un de ses manuscrits75 au Pape Pie XII en 1950. Nursî en a reçu une lettre de remerciement le 22 février 1951.76 Il a de surcroît été le premier en Turquie à avoir rendu visite au Patriarche Athénagoras en 1953 pour développer et étalier le champ de la lutte commune contre l’athéisme et l’irréligion.77

Les notions de bases du message religieux de Gülen sont la tolérance et le dialogue interreligieux.78 Le mouvement de Gülen est un exemple clair de la recherche internationale de dialogue entre les civilisations et les cultures. Gülen renforce cette recherche par des bases religieuses, légales et philosophiques. L’un des principaux objectifs des activités éducatives qu’il a entreprises à l’échelle mondiale est de tisser des liens qui doivent conduire au dialogue entre les religions et les civilisations. Des personnes de camps politiques et idéologiques différents qui se sont battues physiquement dans les années ’60 et ’70 ; intellectuellement et socialement dans les années ’80, trouvent désormais l’occasion de se rassembler dans ces réunions et invitations amicales. La Fondation des Journalistes et Écrivains a été créée à cet effet en 1994. La cérémonie d’ouverture a reçu une large couverture médiatique. Cela a commencé avec des espoirs de

73 Vahide 2005, 53-56, 137-141.
74 Spuler 2003, 159.
75 Ibid., 159-161.
76 Nursî 2001 (II), 1834.
77 Valkenberg 2006, 273.
78 Balcı 2003, 103.
bonne volonté et de réconciliation. C’est le premier capital de l’association. Les premiers dîners ont donné naissance au programme Abant et à des efforts intellectuels à l’intérieur de l’association, avec le lancement d’une maison d’édition et de deux magazines.

D’après Gülen, pour que le dialogue interreligieux réussisse, il faut ignorer le passé et les polémiques et se concentrer sur les points communs des religions. Son effort porte sur le dialogue entre les factions représentant différentes idéologies, cultures, religions et nations. En décembre 1999, son article intitulé The Necessity of Interfaith

79 Lancé par la Fondation des Journalistes et des Écrivains en 1997, un groupe d’intellectuels turcs appartenant aux différentes tendances politiques décident d’organiser un thin tank où les problèmes sociaux, intellectuels, religieux, politiques et philosophiques en Turquie et dans le monde entier sont discutés. Une série de rencontres ont eu lieu depuis 1997:

1. Islam and Secularism.1998. Abant-Turkey
5. Globalisation.2002. Abant-Turkey


81 Penaskovic 2007 : 197
Dialogue a été présenté au Parlement des Religions du Monde au Cap, en Afrique du Sud. Il y est écrit que “le dialogue est une chose indispensable” et que les personnes, quelles que soient leurs nations ou leurs régimes politiques, ont beaucoup plus en commun qu’elles ne le croient. Étant donné cela, Gülen considère qu’il est nécessaire d’établir un dialogue sincère afin d’améliorer la compréhension mutuelle.82

Ses idées de tolérance et de dialogue ne se limitent pas aux Musulmans. Elles s’étendent également aux chrétiens et aux juifs.83 Le meilleur exemple du dialogue islamochrétien de Gülen est la visite du Pape, qui a été médiatisée tant par la presse turque qu’étrangère.84 Qualifiée de rencontre historique, la visite entre le Pape Jean Paul II et Fethullah Gülen a eu lieu au Vatican.85 Elle a été sévèrement critiquée par un groupe conservateur et ultranationaliste, qui estime que Gülen n’aurait pas dû s’humilier à ce point, mais aussi par un groupe séculaire, qui n’accepte pas l’idée qu’un imam ait pu rendre visite au Pape au nom de la République turque.86 En outre, le défunt John O’Connor, archevêque de New York, Léon Levy, ancien président de la Ligue Contre la Diffamation, l’ambassadeur du Vatican en Turquie, le patriarche de l’Église Orthodoxe turque, le patriarche de la communauté arménienne turque, le grand rabbin de la communauté juive turque et beaucoup d’autres figures marquantes en Turquie comptent parmi les plus grands représentants des religions mondiales que Gülen a rencontré dans le cadre du dialogue interreligieux.87 Il a entre autres proposé l’ouverture d’une université à Urfa, où seraient présents des érudits et des étudiants appartenant aux trois traditions abrahamiques.88

Dans le contexte belge, nous donnons l’exemple de la PDI — Plateforme de Dialogue Interculturel. D’après les responsables, il s’agit d’une association sans but lucratif, indépendante et apolitique créé à Hasselt en 1998. Composée de bénévoles belges d’origine turque et

82 http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/3/2/.
84 Işıklı 2007, 89.
85 Tezcan 2001, 38.
86 Entretien avec un informant (7 Septembre 2008).
87 http://fr.fgulen.com/content/view/3/2/.
musulmane, la PDI s’est développée dans la région flamande: Hasselt, Gand, Anvers et Bruxelles, en 2006. En 2008, cette association a effectué quelques remaniements statutaires, comme le transfert de son siège à Bruxelles et l’autonomisation de ses bureaux locaux, afin de mieux concrétiser les buts qu’elle s’était fixés.89

Avec pour slogan “une modeste contribution au tissage d’une culture d’harmonie,” cette association s’est chargée d’assurer le dialogue et la compréhension mutuelle ainsi que la collaboration entre les membres des différentes traditions religieuses, spirituelles et humaines présentes en Belgique. Convaincus de la possibilité d’une rencontre avec l’autre sans intermédiaire, les membres de la PDI insistent sur l’interrelation et l’interdépendance des cultures, sans perdre de vue leurs spécificités et leurs différenciations.90 En effet, le projet de départ est d’assurer un dialogue entre les religions, mais depuis quatre ans, l’accent est également mis sur le dialogue interculturel, qui n’est plus exclusivement religieux.91

De nombreuses activités, loin de l’extrémisme, du fondamentalisme et de la violence; respectueuses des valeurs fondamentales telles que la paix, la compréhension mutuelle et la résolution des conflits sans violence, sont par ailleurs organisées par la PDI :

Conférences et Séminaires: des conférences et des séminaires académiques sont réalisés par des experts qui traitent de divers sujets de manière plus élaborée. Des conférences non académiques sont destinées à un public plus large, où chacun trouve l’occasion de s’exprimer et de partager son expérience avec les participants.92 La Plateforme d’Abant est accueillie au sein du Parlement Européen pendant deux jours par la PDI en interaction avec la Fondation des Journalistes et des Écrivains. La candidature de la Turquie à l’Union Européenne a été traitée sous le thème Culture, Religion et Identité.93 La conférence, avec pour thème Re-Thinking Mawlana, What if Mawlana Lived in Today’s Europe, a été réalisée avec l’aide de plusieurs parlementaires européens le 26 novembre 2007.94 Une conférence a eu lieu

90 http://idp-pdi.be/.
91 Entretien avec un informateur (7 Septembre 2008).
dans le même cadre à Liège: *La dimension sociale du Mysticisme : Contribution à la cohabitation pacifique.*

**Ateliers de Rencontre:** Des rencontres dans le cadre interreligieux entre les communautés musulmanes et chrétiennes ont lieu dans des ateliers de rencontre composés d’une vingtaine de personne. Mis en place par la collaboration du *Centre al-Kalima* et *Espace*, chaque atelier se déroule sous forme d’exposé suivi d’un mini-débat.

**Les *Iftar* (Ruptures de Jeûne):** De nombreuses *iftar* (rupture de jeûne) sont organisées durant le mois de Ramadan dans diverses villes. Assistées par des politiciens, des membres du Parlement Européen, des académiciens, des représentants de différentes religions et des institutions gouvernementales et non gouvernementales et de la population locale, les soirées donnent lieu à des rencontres privilégiées entre les membres de différentes traditions dans un climat de fraternité et de respect mutuel.

**Voyages Interculturels:** Des voyages sont organisés dans le but de prendre connaissance des valeurs culturelles, sociales et historiques d’une autre civilisation. Par exemple, à Istanbul, Urfa, Mardin, Antep et Rome.

**Autres Activités:**

− Célébration des fêtes religieuses: Participation à la célébration de la fête du Sacrifice, de Pâques et du Yom Kippour.


− Visites des lieux de cultes: Des visites dans divers lieux de cultes, comme les églises, les mosquées, les synagogues et les pagodes sont réalisées par la collaboration de KMC, al-Kalima et Espace en vue d’assister à l’une ou à l’autre cérémonie.

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Conclusion

Bien qu’il soit actuellement divisé en plusieurs branches, le mouvement nurcu constitue la communauté la plus influente en Turquie. Il acquiert aussi une importance non négligeable à l’extérieur ; en Belgique, par exemple. L’Europe a toujours occupé une place particulière, chez Said Nursî. Il a non seulement encouragé le dialogue interreligieux, mais aussi proposé de coopérer avec l’Europe contre les maux de l’époque moderne.

Fethullah Gülen possède de nombreux points communs avec Said Nursî : l’importance accordée à la foi, l’action constructive (müspet hareket) etc. Les plus importants sont sans aucun doute l’apport dans le domaine d’éducation et du dialogue. L’éducation constitue l’un des pivots du mouvement Gülen. En effet, les écoles inspirées par la pensée de Gülen sont les meilleurs exemples de la synthèse de l’éducation religieuse et de l’éducation moderne prônée par Nursî. Gülen place beaucoup d’espoir dans sa génération en “or”, à même d’établir un monde de paix. Dans ce cadre, le mouvement Gülen accorde une très grande importance au dialogue interreligieux, mais aussi interculturel.

La Risâle-i Nûr n’est pas la seule source d’inspiration du mouvement. Bien qu’ayant de nombreux points communs avec Nursî, Gülen crée un mouvement indépendant qui lui est propre. Quel est donc l’intérêt de consacrer une étude à la communauté de Gülen dans le cadre du mouvement nurcu ? Il réside dans le fait qu’il serait incorrect d’ignorer le mouvement Gülen. Il s’inspire, en effet, de la Risâle-i Nûr. Le problème est donc de savoir si la désignation nurcu est suffisante pour le mouvement Gülen.

Quoi qu’il en soit, nous remarquons que la communauté Gülen diffère des autres branches nurcu actuelles. Pendant que ces dernières se consacrent à la publication et à la diffusion des écrits de leur maître, la Risâle-i Nûr, le mouvement Gülen continue à multiplier le nombre de ses adeptes et à exercer son influence dans la société belge avec ses centres d’études, ses dershane, ses maisons d’étudiants, ses associations, ses écoles, ses centres de dialogue interculturel et interreligieux. En effet, les sympathisants de la communauté de Gülen contribuent à l’intégration des immigrés turcs dans la société belge et européenne.
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BOOK REVIEWS
Sedicesimo volume della “Revealing Antiquity”, curata dallo stesso Bowersock, *Mosaics as History* propone un’analisi storico-culturale del periodo tra 300 e 800 nel Vicino Oriente utilizzando come fonte privilegiata i mosaici pavimentali. Il lavoro si inserisce in uno sforzo collettivo di ridisegnare e ridiscutere la natura e l’estensione del periodo tardo-antico che vede fissati premesse e scopi nell’opera multiautoriale *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post Classical World* (edito oltre che dallo stesso Bowersock, da Peter Brown e Oleg Grabar).\(^1\)

Il volume *Mosaics as History* nasce da una serie di letture date al Collège de France nel 1997 dedicate al “mistero di Gregoria”, nome che qualifica una vignetta in un pavimento musivo di Madaba in Giordania e che rappresenta a tutti gli effetti il filo conduttore dei vari capitoli del libro.

Il primo capitolo si concentra sulla cosiddetta “mappa di Madaba”, un mosaico scoperto a fine ‘800 che ritrae il Vicino Oriente e una parte dell’Egitto con il delta nilotico come fossero visti dal mare Mediterraneo. Raffigurati appaiono città, paesi, centri minori ed elementi geografici quali fiumi, laghi e montagne. Molto efficacemente Bowersock contesta la definizione di “geografia biblica” e la dipendenza dall’*Onomasticon* di Eusebio portate spesso a spiegazione della mappa. Innanzitutto perché la mappa originariamente doveva presentare anche parte dell’Asia minore e forse la stessa Costantinopoli che non sono territori biblici, e in secondo luogo perché dei 150 siti che compaiono sulla mappa solo un 20% sono citati nell’elenco compilato da Eusebio di città, siti e regioni menzionati nell’antico e nel nuovo testamento.

Un parallelo più vicino, secondo l’autore, è offerto dalla Tavola Peutingeriana, copia medievale dell’originale tardo-antico. Con

ambizioni artistiche moderate, in essa si ritrae una vasta area del Mediterraneo (compresa dunque l’area della mappa di Madaba) enfatizzando le vie commerciali che univano le diverse città. La Tavola Peutingeriana rappresenterebbe un esempio simile, ma non un modello per la cosiddetta “mappa di Madaba”: nella prima infatti la rappresentazione dei centri abitati è largamente a carattere simbolico e standardizzata ispirandosi a trattati più tecnici, come quelli degli Agrimensores. A Madaba, invece, le città sembrano essere più caratterizzate individualmente e inoltre l’aspetto delle vie commerciali è assente. Seppur non nella mappa, sempre tra i mosaici scoperti a Madaba nella cosiddetta “Sala dell’Ippolito”, un altro soggetto rimanda alla Tavola Peutingeriana: si tratta della raffigurazione simbolica di tre importanti città. Nella Tavola esse sono Roma, Costantinopoli e Antiochia e, pur apparendo figurativamente come imperatori, si ispirano alle Tyche, le dee tutelari delle città le cui corone ne ricordano le mura difensive. A Madaba le tre personificazioni sono state trovate nel margine alto di una cornice che racchiude due pannelli musivi a carattere mitologico: quello inferiore mostra una scena del mito di Fedra e Ippolito, quello superiore una scena con Afrodite e Adonis. A sovrintendere la scena, come detto, ecco le tre figure: in gran parte simili a quelle della Tavola, ne differiscono per alcuni attributi mentre le iscrizioni recitano: Roma, Gregoria e Madaba. Lasciando la discussione circa l’identità di queste città ai capitoli successivi, l’autore argomenta che nel contesto di Madaba il tentativo della mappa fosse quello di sottolineare l’orgoglio della comunità locale di appartenere a una rete che comprendeva altri centri urbani e regioni, uniti da motivi religiosi e commerciali. Un’altra caratteristica comune di questi centri urbani, inoltre, sarebbe stata quella di condividere l’eredità della cultura ellenistica.

Il secondo capitolo è dedicato ai miti come soggetti dei mosaici: il punto di partenza è ancora una volta Madaba con la già citata “Stanza dell’Ippolito”. Seppur con consistenti problemi cronologici forse non spiegati a sufficienza dall’autore, i soggetti ritratti in questa stanza possono essere inseriti in una serie più ampia di mosaici a carattere mitologico apparsi nel Vicino Oriente. Tra i soggetti più diffusi indicativamente tra IV e V secolo si contano Artemide, Dioniso, Teseo, Ippolito, Fedra, Prometeo, Eracle, Achille ed Europa. Così come nella letteratura tardo-antica (anche cristiana) citazioni classiche venivano utilizzate per “illustre” il discorso, anche nei mosaici in
alcuni casi l’elemento mitologico viene reinterpretato “piegandolo” a bisogni locali o personali: per esempio Cassiopea ritratta come vincente a Palmira, Apamea e Nuova Pafos, forse in omaggio a una variante locale del mito, oppure la raffigurazione della lupa di Roma in Siria nel VI secolo che, perso ogni legame con la capitale dell’impero (e quindi con il potere romano), veniva a significare solo il soccorso dato ai bisognosi, oppure un centauro a Sephoris dove il mito diventa uno “scudo” di famiglia per l’omonimia tra il patronimico e il centauro Asbolus evocato dalla figura mitologica.

Nonostante l’esistenza di queste declinazioni, nelle arti visive non avviene una revisione totale del mito come nelle lettere: trovato nella cristianissima Edessa e con iscrizioni in siriaco, il caso del Prometeo che dà vita a una forma umana, ispirato da una psiche e osservato da una “comunità di divinità” tra cui Zeus e Atena, dimostra secondo Bowersock come i temi mitologici fossero cultivati da aderenti alle diverse fedi. Tra le caratteristiche ricorrenti spiccano la nudità dei personaggi e l’inserimento di iscrizioni per illustrare i protagonisti, mentre i soggetti ripetuti più di sovente sono Eracle, Achille e Dioniso. Di Achille e Dioniso in particolare si raffigurano diverse fasi dell’esistenza, considerate in qualche modo esemplari o evocative per chi le guardava. Bowersock mette in relazione la diffusione di queste figure e storie mitologiche con quella del teatro mimico nella tardodell’antichità che seppur contrastato da alcuni intellettuali, sia pagani che poi soprattutto cristiani, trovava ancora una vasta risposta popolare. Argomentando che ritratte nei mosaici fossero scene inserite nella recitazione dei mimi, l’autore discute la nudità dei soggetti e il cambiamento di alcuni elementi del racconto mitologico che viene declinato nella performance della troupe per meglio adattarlo alla specificità del mimo messo in scena o a quella del pubblico che assiste. Queste raffigurazioni e le relative messe in scena di mimi e pantomimi mostrano come, ancora nel VI secolo, esistesse una cultura del divertimento condivisa in tutta la regione che risaliva alla diffusione delle varianti locali dei miti durante il periodo ellenistico. Allo stesso tempo i passi citati da Bowersock di Coricio di Gaza e Giacobbe di Saruj mostrano come lo strato di credenza mitologica fosse in qualche modo scivolato in secondo piano rispetto alla ripetitività della tradizione da un lato e alla sua ri-contestualizzazione nella scena teatrale ad uso e consumo della popolazione tardo-antica dall’altro (“it seems to me that Dionysus takes pity on mankind and
provides an opportunity for diversion in order to console those who are dispirited...”; così il cristiano Coricio cerca di difendere le rappresentazioni teatrali).

Il terzo capitolo approfondisce il tema delle città ritratte in numerosi mosaici dell’area. L’ultimo restauro della chiesa di Santo Stefano a Umm al-Rasas, datato al 756, mostra come la prassi di raffigurare i centri urbani abbia ampiamente sorpassato la data della conquista musulmana. La cornice del pavimento musivo della navata principale presenta un’elaborata sequenza di immagini di città. Sebbene la raffigurazione appaia per molti tratti stilizzata, alcune caratteristiche architettoniche e urbanistiche delle varie città sono riconoscibili e appaiono in diversi ritratti. Per esempio l’illustrazione della stessa Umm al-Rasas avviene attraverso una colonna eretta in uno spazio extra-muros: appare infatti, seppur con minime differenze, in un mosaico del VI secolo (dove la colonna è sormontata da una croce) e successivamente nell’VIII secolo (quando invece la croce viene tolta dalla cima della colonna). I casi di Neapolis dove si raffigura il colonnato del tempio e di Gerusalemme dove sono riconoscibili alcuni monumenti della città, rafforzano l’idea che sebbene il disegno e alcuni particolari cambiassero, il tema e la modalità di rappresentazione siano resistiti lungo i secoli, senza cioè revisioni totali dell’iconografia in concomitanza con la trasformazione dello spazio urbano. Le città non sono disposte a caso lungo la cornice, ma sembrano come circoscrivere un territorio preciso, delimitato sul lato sinistro dalle maggiori città che giacciono ad ovest del fiume Giordano, mentre sul lato destro da quelle della sponda orientale.

Secondo l’autore, la diffusione di questo tema influenzò anche la contemporanea arte musulmana, come evincibile dai mosaici del portico della Moschea Umayyade di Damasco. Il tema tanto diffuso sarebbe rimasto poi sotto-traccia tanto da riapparire nel XIII secolo in alcuni edifici religiosi mamelucchi al Cairo e a Damasco. A questo proposito è necessario aggiungere come sull’interpretazione dei mosaici della Moschea degli Umayyadi di Damasco non esista accordo tra gli studiosi – l’altra interpretazione vede nei mosaici del portico una raffigurazione paradisiaca – e come invece i mosaici del XIII secolo siano stati spiegati come un riferimento alla Moschea degli
Umayyadi di Damasco in quanto edificio simbolo dell’alto medioevo musulmano, piuttosto che all’iconografia stessa dei mosaici.\(^2\)

La logica di circoscrivere un particolare territorio sentito come proprio attraverso la raffigurazione delle città sarebbe stata seguita anche nel caso della raffigurazioni delle tre *Tychai* nel mosaico di Madaba detto dell’Ippolito, già menzionato nel I capitolo. Mentre Roma veste il cappello frigio che nella Tavola Peutingeriana è ad appannaggio di Costantinopoli (lasciando così pensare che a Madaba per Roma si intendesse la nuova Roma fondata sul Bosforo), la misteriosa Gregoria, secondo Bowersock, potrebbe essere identificata come Antiochia. Per motivi iconografici innanzitutto, giacché la *Tyché* pare appoggiare le gambe su una montagnola che normalmente raffigura l’Oronte, il fiume di Antiochia. E poi per il fatto che in quegli anni, dopo la sua ricostruzione da parte di Giustiniano, Antiochia smise di essere la città di Antioco, e fu ribattezzata Theopolis. Data la genericità del nuovo nome, è anche possibile che la città fosse conosciuta in quel periodo come “la città di Gregorio,” vale a dire il patriarca in carica durante la grande ricostruzione dopo il catastrofico terremoto del 526. In questo senso Costantinopoli e Antiochia raffigurate mentre sovrintendono lo svolgimento di due episodi di tradizione ellenistica rappresenterebbero i principali punti di riferimento per Madaba (la terza *Tyché*) che orgogliosamente rivendica di fare parte di una precisa rete urbana. L’utilizzo nei mosaici della lingua greca e della datazione locale della Provincia romana d’Arabia fino all’VIII secolo, dimostrerebbe la perfetta miscela tra l’identità locale di questa zona geografica e l’appartenenza al più vasto mondo mediterraneo.

Il quarto e ultimo capitolo è dedicato al tema dell’iconoclismo, vale a dire a quei fenomeni di avversione all’arte figurativa che attraversano

la comunità ebraica, quella cristiana e quella musulmana intorno al primo quarto dell’VIII secolo. In generale l’editto iconoclasta di Yazid II è interpretato, pur nella brevità della sua implementazione, come la prima avvisaglia dell’imminente crollo del sistema culturale tardo-antico. I dati archeologici mostrano chiaramente come sia in ambito ebraico che in quello cristiano, la rimozione delle immagini figurative sia stata portata a termine da membri afferenti alle due comunità. La cura meticolosa con cui alcune tessere sono state rimosse e risistemate con l’aggiunta di nuove per formare soggetti di tipo vegetale o geometrico, dimostrerebbe come i musulmani non ebbero un ruolo diretto nella correzione di questi mosaici. Il silenzio di Giovanni Damasceno e la disomogeneità delle rimozioni e cancellazioni, fanno ipotizzare Bowersock che l’editto del califfo al-Yazid II dovette essere ritenuto valido solo pochi mesi tra il 723 e il 724, così da non poter essere applicato in tutti gli angoli del califfato. Le caratteristiche principali identificate sono le seguenti: lo sforzo iconoclasta interessa solo i luoghi di culto, alcuni mosaici figurativi vengono stesi fino a ridosso del 720 e, seppur con pochi esempi, riprendono già nei decenni successivi all’editto, la data e la tipologia della rimozione fanno escludere un qualunque contatto con i movimenti iconoclasti in seno all’impero bizantino. Anche se il processo iconoclasta avvenuto nelle sinagoghe ebraiche è storicamente meno documentato (specialmente per l’esatta datazione e per il numero di casi), l’autore accomuna il caso ebraico a quello cristiano, insistendo sulla somiglianza della procedura di rimozione delle immagini e facendo leva sul comune patrimonio ellenistico della decorazione di chiese e sinagoghe nel periodo tardo-antico (la fondazione di una sinagoga dalla decorazione aniconica proprio nell’VIII secolo dimostrerebbe il cambio di tendenza).

Se il quadro generale è presentato magistralmente, la conclusione del capitolo lascia alcuni dubbi. Il fenomeno iconoclasta è infatti letto alla luce di recenti studi che hanno dimostrato come nel primo periodo islamico, i musulmani abbiano utilizzato alcune chiese come luoghi di preghiera. Il ragionamento logico sviluppato da Bowersock vorrebbe che a un certo punto le autorità musulmane avessero forzato i cristiani a togliere dalle decorazioni delle loro chiese soggetti ritenuti offensivi per la dottrina religiosa dell’Islam. I problemi di una simile lettura sono numerosi. Il primo riguarda le sinagoghe: l’ipotesi che i musulmani pregassero anche nelle sinagoghe è una pura speculazione;
sicuramente le sinagoghe vennero rispettate in quanto luoghi di preghiera garantiti alla popolazione ebraica, ma non abbiamo traccia né archeologica né testuale che nel primo periodo islamico i musulmani vi pregassero. Quindi l’analoga con la spiegazione offerta per le chiese non regge. In secondo luogo le fonti testuali e le poche tracce archeologiche rinvenute, mostrano come i luoghi cristiani dove i musulmani erano soliti pregare nel primo periodo fossero siti selezionati, normalmente connessi alla vita di Gesù e Maria e non le chiese dei cristiani in generale. Infine almeno in un caso, come lo stesso Bowersock riporta, la rimozione di un elemento figurativo comportò la sua sostituzione con il simbolo della croce. Come King e Griffith hanno mostrato, piuttosto che dalle immagini figurative, la prima e originale idiosincrasia dei musulmani era rappresentata esattamente dalla croce in quanto simbolo della divinità di Cristo rifiutata dall’Islam. Difficilmente, dunque, i musulmani più ostili – come l’autore definisce la corrente cui sarebbe appartenuto Yazid II – avrebbero preferito a un mosaico figurativo il simbolo della croce.

Per quanto riguarda l’iconoclasmo cristiano, una possibile strada d’indagine da seguire potrebbe essere quella delle diverse posizioni assunte dalle comunità cristiane sotto l’Islam. Teodoro Abu Qurra quando afferma nel suo Trattato di Difesa delle Icone che alcuni cristiani di Edessa avevano smesso di venerare l’icona di Cristo, lascia le discussioni in seno ai cristiani dell’impero bizantino sullo sfondo e individua invece come influente la presenza di coloro che “hanno in mano la scrittura dettata direttamente da Dio” e che “dicono che chiunque faccia un ritratto di qualcosa di vivente sarà richiesto il giorno della risurrezione di soffiare in esso lo spirito della vita”.

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intendendo con queste definizioni la comunità musulmana. Un altro testo arabo-cristiano – di un autore anonimo dell’VIII secolo – indica l’esistenza di gruppi di cristiani più accondiscendenti nei confronti dell’ideologia dei nuovi governanti e quindi pronti ad accomodare il proprio culto affinché non contrastasse con i principi della prima teologia musulmana (questi avrebbero pronunciato formule come “non c’è dio se non Iddio” ed avrebbero espresso la propria fede soltanto per “ciò che può andare d’accordo con chi governa e ciò che non provoca la loro obiezione.”). Pur escludendo (perlomeno per i testi analizzati) l’iconoclasmo ebraico, questa spiegazione avrebbe il vantaggio di conciliare l’influenza e l’editto musulmani con l’evidenza archeologica che la “correzione” delle immagini sia stata fatta solo in alcuni luoghi e comunque sempre per mano cristiana. La presenza della croce non contrasterebbe con le prime regolamentazioni musulmane che vietavano l’esposizione della croce in pubblico ma non interferivano con il suo culto all’interno delle chiese cristiane. Si tratterebbe dunque di approfondire le diverse declinazioni prese dalle comunità cristiane non rispetto alla divisione tra iconoduli e iconoclasti nell’impero bizantino, ma davanti allo strutturarsi della religione musulmana come fede dominante e all’influenza e alle sfide che il suo nuovo discorso teologico comportava.

Il volume di Bowersock si conclude nella quinta parte (“Contexts”) discutendo la natura e i limiti cronologici di un periodo (la cui definizione migliore, secondo l’autore, è tardo-antichità) che, memore della cultura ellenistica, si espresse attraverso l’ebraico, l’aramaico, il


greco e l’arabo, fu caratterizzato, nell’area analizzata, da un incomparabile periodo di pace e tolleranza tra religioni diverse e si concluse solo intorno all’VIII secolo. Circa le cause della sua interruzione, la spiegazione fornita non è del tutto esaustiva: la “personal interpretation of Islam” che comporta “violent practical consequences”, così a p. 122 viene definito l’editto di Yazid II, sembra forse essere dettata dalle urgenze del mondo contemporaneo all’autore, piuttosto che da una fedele ricostruzione dei processi in azione nel primo periodo musulmano.

Nonostante qualche incongruenza legata soprattutto alla fase musulmana della cronologia analizzata, il volume di Bowersock è un formidabile tentativo di connettere i numerosi mosaici dell’area per ricostruire la storia della cultura della tardo-antichità mediorientale. Attraverso accostamenti e intuizioni geniali, l’autore riesce a ricomporre un mosaico culturale che solo la polvere del tempo e la rigida struttura delle moderne discipline accademiche avevano condannato dapprima all’oblio e poi ad un’analisi settoriale in definitiva impalpabile nel renderne la complessità. Scritto in uno stile e con una sinteticità ineguagliabili, il volume indica autorevolmente agli studiosi sia una strada metodologica – l’approfondimento culturale attraverso manufatti artistici – che una di contenuti, perché la tardo-antichità e l’alto medioevo nell’area siro-palestinese sono in gran parte ancora da scoprire e da narrare. L’appartenenza del primo Islam al mondo e alla cultura mediterranea e la lunga durata dell’eredità ellenistica dovrebbero diventare – grazie anche a questa lezione magistrale di Bowersock – i due cardini su cui impostare ogni nuova interpretazione dello sviluppo e della fine della tardo-antichità nell’area del Mediterraneo orientale.

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*by Lucia SORBERA*

**Keywords:** Iraq, Women, History, War, Social conditions.

Nadje Sadij Al-Ali, già autrice di diverse monografie dedicate agli studi di genere in Egitto e nel Medio Oriente, con questo suo recente lavoro si addentra nel contesto iracheno, restituendo l’opportuno spessore storico a tematiche di crudele attualità.

Il terreno sul quale esercita il suo rigore metodologico è particolarmente difficile. Infatti, l’Iraq dell’epoca contemporanea rappresenta, per i politici, gli attivisti e, non ultimi, gli studiosi, uno dei contesti più carichi di contraddizioni, di problemi e di sfide, non solo all’interno della regione mediorientale, ma a livello globale.

Sul territorio iracheno sono stati esercitati poteri imperiali, coloniali e dittatoriali, nazionali e stranieri. Dal 1948 ad oggi la popolazione ha vissuto attraverso varie fasi di sviluppo economico, politico e culturale, alternate a crisi di varia entità. Attraverso questi diversi periodi, la varietà etnica, religiosa e culturale, di cui è popolato il paese, ha assunto significati molteplici. Alleanze e rivalità tra sunniti, sciiti, curdi, caldei e cristiani di altri riti sono state spesso strumentalizzate per corroborare, o mettere in discussione, le forze di governo. Queste ultime, se in certi periodi hanno propagandato il tema dell’unità nazionale, in altri hanno manipolato ed incoraggiato i sentimenti settari, in funzione di precisi interessi contingenti. Non solo, ma in più occasioni l’enfasi sulle differenze settarie ha celato e rinforzato altre linee di disuguaglianza, in primo luogo quelle di classe.

L’eccellente storiografia sull’Iraq contemporaneo annovera numerosi testi di rilievo internazionale, caratterizzati da una pluralità

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di approcci. ² Eppure il libro di Nadje Sadij Al-Ali viene a colmare un’ampia lacuna, non tanto nel campo della storia delle donne irachene, dove pure troviamo lavori importanti, ³ quanto in quello della ricostruzione del passato del paese a partire dalle esperienze e dalle memorie femminili. La peculiarità di questo testo consiste infatti nello spingersi oltre alla semplice narrazione dell’attivismo e della resistenza femminile in un contesto di asperità politiche, economiche e sociali, disegnando un quadro fatto di esperienze uniche e al contempo emblematiche, che non costituiscono un argomento in più, ma una nuova lente, attraverso la quale rileggere la storia del paese e della società nel complesso.


L’originalità che caratterizza l’approccio dell’autrice alla storia irachena contemporanea è evidente sin dalla prefazione, in cui si legge


un’ampia dedica alle due figure che più di tutte hanno determinato la sua formazione. La prima è una studiosa americana, Cinthya Nelson, scomparsa nel 2006.\(^4\) Nota storica del femminismo egiziano e docente per quarant’anni presso la American University in Cairo - dove Al-Ali fu sua allieva negli anni ’90 - le è riconosciuta un’influenza determinante nella maturazione della passione per l’antropologia e gli studi di genere. La seconda è la zia Salima, morta nel 2003, pochi giorni dopo la proclamazione della fine delle operazioni militari da parte dell’allora Presidente statunitense George W. Bush. Quest’ultima, a differenza della prima, non era un’intellettuale. Avendo perduto la vista in tenera età, rimase nella casa dei genitori, a Baghdad, a prendersi cura dei nipotini e della famiglia allargata. Al-Ali sottolinea che la vita di Zia Salima non è rivelatrice del destino della maggior parte delle donne irachene della sua stessa classe e generazione. Infatti, mentre Zia Salima riversava tutte le sue qualità e abilità all’interno delle pareti domestiche, le sue sorelle, le cognate, le amiche e, in generale, la maggior parte delle coetanee, entrava con determinazione nel mondo delle professioni, incoraggiata dalle politiche del regime negli anni del boom economico. Nel corso della lettura si ha modo di scoprire quanto questa attitudine da parte dello Stato fosse superficiale e pronta a cambiare di segno al mutare della congiuntura economica. Le donne irachene, che negli anni Settanta conseguirono i livelli più alti di professionalità e di istruzione della regione, che nei primi anni della guerra contro l’Iran sostituirono gli uomini in tutti i ruoli economici e sociali, nel corso degli anni Ottanta, col perdurare della guerra di logoramento, furono l’obiettivo di una campagna conservatrice, secondo la quale la donna ideale era la *Umm Bait al-Mubtarama* (la rispettabile madre di famiglia), capace di offrire i suoi figli alla patria e all’esercito. La situazione non ha potuto che peggiorare con l’imposizione dell’embargo, che ha portato al collasso l’economia del paese, determinando un ulteriore licenziamento delle donne dal mercato del lavoro formale. Le fonti statistiche che l’autrice cita nel corso del testo documentano ampiamente questo percorso. Il volto nascosto della storia, che emerge dalle memorie raccolte da Nadje Al-Ali, è che, se il regime adattò le sue politiche e ideologie di genere alle contingenze, ponendo delle gravi pregiudiziali sulla

partecipazione femminile alla vita economica del paese, le donne si fecero solo apparentemente da parte. Di fatto, vuoi per necessità, vuoi perché ormai abitate ad esserci e ad essere attive, esse continuarono ad agire negli spazi informali e, talvolta, clandestini, in attesa che si creassero le condizioni per un nuovo cambimento ideologico.

Forse è proprio per queste ragioni che la vita della zia Salima assume tutto questo rilievo nel variegato quadro di storie di vita raccolte da Nadje Al-Ali. La sua eccezionalità testimonia la pluralità di modelli e di stili di vita delle donne irachene, anche all’interno di una stessa famiglia. L’apparente estraneità della Zia Salima dai processi di emancipazione, che hanno coinvolto le sue connazionali nella seconda metà del Ventesimo secolo, la pone paradossalmente al riparo dai cambiamenti imposti alle donne e alle relazioni di genere dalla retorica e dalle politiche del regime nel corso degli anni. La vita della Zia Salima diviene così uno spazio in cui si rivelano le continuità e la persistenza dei cambiamenti più profondi della società, quelli che, seppur meno evidenti, vengono tramandati di generazione in generazione producendo, nel tempo, un progresso duraturo.

Cinthya Nelson e Zia Salima accompagnano l’autrice attraverso tutto il libro: la prima rimanendo tra le righe, nell’impronta metodologica e critica; la seconda manifestandosi in maniera più esplicita, come a guidare la nipote, attraverso una serie di aneddoti, nella tessitura di un intreccio sapiente tra i ricordi familiari, le memorie delle donne intervistate e la storia ufficiale.

Nadje Sadij Al-Ali è infatti nata in Germania da madre tedesca e padre iracheno. Questa ricerca nella memoria e nelle storie di vita delle donne irachene dal 1948 ad oggi per lei rappresenta un momento di riflessione sulla sua stessa storia personale e familiare. La ricostruzione dell’identità irachena come multipla e variegata le dà l’occasione di ricostruire anche la sua, nutrita di viaggi, di racconti e di silenzi.

Ogni capitolo presenta quindi almeno due livelli di lettura sul piano dei contenuti e due sul piano storiografico. Sul piano dei contenuti, il primo è la ricostruzione della storia a partire dall’incrocio tra le memorie delle donne intervistate e le restituzioni dei testi basati sulle fonti tradizionali; il secondo è autobiografico, nel senso che si nutre di continui rimandi dall’esperienza vissuta in prima persona, o narrata dai familiari, alle testimonianze raccolte nel corso della ricerca. Sul piano storiografico e metodologico, il principale filo conduttore è il nesso
fra memoria, esperienze e verità, e su come esse non sempre coincidano. Attraverso le diverse esperienze delle donne intervistate, si vede come dello stesso evento possano essere restituite verità diverse, senza che per questo sia sminuito il significato della memoria, né tantomeno l’importanza di scoprire cosa è successo “davvero” in termini di sviluppi politici, guerre e cambiamenti sociali.

Nel contesto di spirale della violenza che ha caratterizzato l’Iraq dopo la caduta del regime di Saddam Hussein e l’inizio dell’occupazione anglo-americana, con le divisioni settarie, le lotte per il potere e per la ri-definizione dell’identità nazionale, anche la storia si è rivelata un’arma molto potente, e l’autrice, nel corso del testo, dimostra di esserne pienamente consapevole, premettendo agli esiti della sua ricerca una lunga introduzione sui due modelli teorici e di prassi politica all’interno dei quali essa si inscrive: il femminismo e la storia orale.

Nadje Sadij Al-Ali dichiara che il suo lavoro accademico ed il suo attivismo politico sono radicati nel femminismo, che lei definisce come un dispositivo analitico per studiare le società, esplorare i cambiamenti sociali, spiegare i fenomeni collettivi complessi. Allo stesso tempo, il femminismo si riferisce ad un movimento sociale e politico che cerca di combattere le diseguaglianze e le ingiustizie che sembrano pervadere le vite di tutti. Esso dà origine a pratiche politiche che si differenziano sulla base di interpretazioni specifiche e di tendenze politiche. Nello specifico, l’autrice associa la sua pratica politica femminista alla lotta contro le diseguaglianze, siano esse radicate nel sessismo, nel razzismo, nella classe o nell’islamofobia, alla ricerca di forme di resistenza non gerarchiche e non violenti.

Un aspetto importante della ricerca femminista è il tentativo di restituire alle donne la possibilità di partecipare alla produzione del sapere e di fare dell’esperienza e della “soggettività” parte integrante del processo di ricerca. Sicuramente è in quest’ultimo aspetto che la ricerca di Nadje Al-Ali si qualifica come femminista. Sono infatti numerosi i passaggi in cui la riflessione metodologica è centrata sulla valorizzazione della soggettività nell’approccio alla ricerca.

Scrivere sul passato dell’Iraq, sulla costruzione e sull’uso della sua storia, rappresenta una sfida del presente. Il metodo della “storia orale” con cui si raccolgono informazioni storiche relative a specifici eventi, esperienze, memorie e modi di vita, è scelto dall’autrice proprio perché esso consente alle persone non solo di dar conto di
eventi specifici, ma anche di riflettere sul loro ruolo, la loro interpretazione degli eventi e le loro emozioni.

Il libro si articola in sei lunghi capitoli. Il primo è dedicato alla storia della dispersione di milioni di iracheni nel mondo dagli anni ‘40 ad oggi, e alla mappatura dei diversi luoghi in cui si è svolta la ricerca. Da Londra, dove prime comunità (assiri, curdi e arabi) sono giunte negli anni ‘50 e oggi vedono profonde stratificazioni generazionali, sociali e culturali; a Detroit, uno dei principali centri dell’emigrazione araba negli Stati Uniti e dove le comunità irachene (caldei e sciiti) abitano per lo più le periferie, zone molto povere della città; ad Amman che, per la prossimità geografica con l’Iraq, presenta caratteristiche completamente diverse dalle altre città prese in considerazione. Infatti, qui gli iracheni fino al 1991 costituivano solo una minoranza della popolazione di rifugiati.

Il quadro della diaspora che emerge dalle storie raccolte dall’autrice è stratificato. La repressione politica, la fuga dalla guerra, la volontà di migliorare la propria posizione economica o il proprio livello di istruzione ha portato molti iracheni a lasciare il paese sin dagli anni ‘40, dando vita a numerose comunità diasporiche. La prima generazione di espatriati era composta prevalentemente da studenti. Negli anni ‘70 e ‘80 aumentano gli espatri dei dissidenti politici. Nel periodo compreso tra il 1990 ed il 2003, il confine tra migrazione volontaria e forzata si è sfumato, poiché centinaia di migliaia di iracheni hanno lasciato il paese in un contesto di grave crisi economica e di repressione politica.

Al di là di differenze dovute all’appartenenza di classe, al livello d’istruzione e alla qualifica professionale, le diverse esperienze degli iracheni all’estero sono state caratterizzate da una serie di circostanze specifiche, come il periodo di migrazione e le condizioni sociali, politiche, economiche nel paese ospitante. Secondo la visione dell’autrice, il genere è una delle variabili che hanno contribuito alla differenziazione delle esperienze e, a loro volta, le esperienze femminili si rivelano molteplici in funzione di altre varianti. Infatti, mentre alcune donne irachene una volta all’estero sono diventate più dipendenti dalle componenti maschili della famiglia, soffrendo della perdita di reti di solidarietà e vivendo un acuto senso di isolamento, altre sono riuscite a trarre beneficio dalle opportunità e possibilità offerte dal nuovo ambiente.
Donne di tutti i retroterra etnici e religiosi sono state costrette a lasciare il paese per il loro attivismo politico. Altre per la loro affiliazione etnica o religiosa (specialmente le curde e le sciite), o perché mogli o parenti di attivisti politici.

Tra le intervistate, l’esilio rappresenta cose diverse a seconda della posizione socio-economica, del retroterra politico, dell’ampiezza delle reti sociali nel luogo che è divenuta la nuova casa.

Alla luce della storia delle diverse comunità diasporiche e di esiliati, non stupisce la pluralità di posizioni sul passato recente e sul presente, sulla guerra del 2003, sull’occupazione e sugli sviluppi politici attuali. La molteplicità di esperienze e di opinioni viene inoltre sottolineata dalla capacità dell’autrice di restituire la dialettica tra unicità e universalità delle storie raccolte. Molte di esse, non sono infatti presentate come rappresentative della maggioranza del paese, della comunità di riferimento o della diaspora, ma vengono scelte proprio perché dimostrano come, storicamente, l’orientamento e l’affiliazione politica abbiano rappresentato criteri di appartenenza trasversali alle divisioni etniche e religiose. La testimonianza di Siham, una ebrea che, dopo aver lasciato l’Iraq nel 1949, ha vissuto in Israele e, infine, a Londra, è significativa a questo proposito, nel momento in cui ricorda che i suoi fratelli non furono arrestati a causa della loro appartenenza comunitaria, ma perché comunisti. La testimonianza di Zeinab B., una sciita simpatizzante del partito islamista Dawa a Deaborn USA, corrobora la tesi: “We never thought about race, religion or anything else…Religion was part of the country. Religion was reflecting the mosaic of our country” (p.25).

I capitoli successivi sono dedicati alla ricostruzione della storia irachena contemporanea, attraverso i resoconti delle donne intervistate.

I diversi modi in cui le donne, a seconda della loro affiliazione politica, hanno vissuto gli ultimi anni della monarchia, la rivoluzione del 1958 e le sue conseguenze, incluso il primo colpo nazionalista Ba’ath nel 1963, sono l’oggetto del secondo capitolo. I rivolgimenti politici sono narrati attraverso frammenti di vita femminile dell’epoca: la scuola, il panorama culturale, la vita sociale e l’amore, così come la mobilitazione politica delle donne.

In questo capitolo risulta evidente che le divisioni settarie non hanno sempre governato la politica e la vita sociale irachena. I vincoli sociali erano determinati piuttosto dall’appartenenza di classe e dagli
orientamenti politici e culturali. Le storie delle donne intervistate (tutte cittadine) illustrano la distanza tra ambienti urbani e rurali. Le donne delle campagne non beneficiarono né dell’espansione del sistema d’istruzione, né dell’effervescenza della vita culturale degli anni ‘50 e ‘60. Anche l’appartenenza di classe era un fattore discriminante. Nel complesso, nonostante i cambiamenti introdotti con la rivoluzione, a partire dal codice di famiglia promulgato dal governo di Abd al-Karim Qasim nel 1959 e che, all’epoca, era uno dei più progressisti della regione, a dispetto dello stile di vita relativamente liberale sperimentato dalle donne istruite e dalle attiviste, i valori tribali e tradizionali patriarcali continuavano a condizionare la vita della maggioranza delle donne.


Il quarto capitolo affronta gli anni del conflitto con l’Iran (1980-1989) e le gravissime conseguenze socioeconomiche da esso determinate. Tra le donne intervistate l’esperienza del conflitto è variegata, ma tutte sottolineano che, nonostante le immense difficoltà, la vita era più sostenibile allora che non durante le guerre successive (1991 e 2003). In particolare, le donne della classe media, nelle città situate lontano dal confine meridionale, non furono così coinvolte nel conflitto, come invece avvenne in seguito. Durante i primi anni della guerra contro l’Iran, le donne colmarono i vuoti lasciati dalla manodopera immigrata e dagli uomini nel mercato del lavoro. Nonostante il loro contributo allo sviluppo della nazione, nel corso degli anni lo Stato inaugurò una nuova politica e nuove ideologie di genere. Le immagini propagandistiche mutarono e, dal rappresentare l’uomo e la donna che lavorano fianco a fianco per sviluppare una nazione moderna, passarono a raffigurare l’uomo come il difensore della terra (femminilizzata) attaccata dal nemico. Naturalmente,
secondo la propaganda del regime, il corrispettivo dell’eroismo maschile era la glorificazione della maternità.5

Il quinto capitolo tratta i tredici anni di sanzioni economiche (6 agosto 1990-22 Maggio 2003) imposte dalla comunità internazionale. La guerra e l’embargo divisero la società tra la maggior parte della popolazione, che si impoverì notevolmente, e i nuovi ricchi. Le memorie di questo periodo non parlano solo della miseria dilagante, delle infrastrutture distrutte e dello smantellamento del welfare statale, ma anche dei profondi cambiamenti sociali e culturali che accompagnarono i mutamenti delle condizioni politiche ed economiche e dei gravi effetti che essi ebbero per le donne e le relazioni di genere.

Tutte le intervistate affermano che le sanzioni hanno avuto un effetto deleterio sulla partecipazione femminile alla vita pubblica. Come succede sempre nei paesi che affrontano crisi economiche, il discorso di stato, le ideologie e le relazioni di genere slittarono a favore di norme, valori e politiche più conservatrici e tradizionaliste. Le lavoratrici soffrirono del collasso del welfare statale (asili, trasporti gratuiti) e familiare. Tradizionalmente, la famiglia allargata aveva giocato un ruolo molto importante nella società irachena, garantendo una rete di supporto sociale, economico ed emotivo. Nel periodo delle sanzioni la famiglia nucleare divenne più significativa. Questo non si tradusse nell’autonomizzazione, ma in una crescente perdita di sicurezza e vulnerabilità delle donne.

L’attitudine sociale verso il lavoro femminile cambiò. L’icona modernista della “brava donna irachena”, che era prevalsa negli anni ’70 e ’80, fu sostituita dalla casalinga e madre.

Il sistema d’istruzione fu gravemente colpito dall’embargo, con un conseguente aumento del tasso di analfabetismo, soprattutto femminile. Nelle menti delle giovani donne il sogno di diventare medico o avvocato lasciò spazio a quello di trovare un marito ricco, preferibilmente qualcuno che le avrebbe portate a vivere all’estero.

L’ultimo capitolo è dedicato agli effetti dell’invasione anglo-americana (2003) ed al presente di violenza, settarismo e sistematica

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riduzione degli spazi di azione e di riconoscimento dei diritti delle donne.

Nonostante—o forse parzialmente a causa di—la retorica statunitense e britannica sulla liberazione delle donne e i diritti femminili, dopo la caduta del regime le donne sono state respinte ancora di più in casa. Esse soffrono sia dell’attuale e crescente crisi umanitaria, sia della mancanza di sicurezza che regna nelle strade. Le forme di violenza che esse sperimentano sono di diversa natura: da parte delle forze di occupazione, delle organizzazioni e milizie islamiste, delle bande criminali e anche, in alcuni casi, dei loro stessi parenti, determinati a salvaguardare “l’onore” della famiglia. Il processo di ricostruzione è stato gravemente compromesso, se non bloccato, dall’escalation della violenza e dal caos. Le donne con un profilo pubblico, medici, universitari, avvocati, attiviste di ONG o politici, sono sistematicamente minacciate e vivono nel mirino degli assassini.

Oltre ad essere oggetto privilegiato della violenza, le donne e le questioni femminili sono state strumentalizzate da tutti gli attori politici: dalle forze di occupazione per legittimare la loro invasione e l’occupazione, dai partiti islamisti e dalle milizie per segnare una rottura col precedente regime, generalmente associato con le politiche secolariste, dalle milizie islamiste e dagli insortenti per affermare la cosiddetta resistenza contro l’occupazione americana e britannica e la supposta imposizione di norme e valori occidentali.

In questo panorama desolante, l’autrice non trascura comunque di mettere in evidenza come le donne non siano state vittime passive degli eventi, ma abbiano lavorato in maniera trasversale alle appartenenze politiche, familiari e comunitarie, esprimendo punti di vista diversi sull’occupazione e sulla resistenza, opponendosi alle ideologie islamiste conservatrici e alla violenza settaria. In particolare, le attiviste si sono mobilitate contro i tentativi di modificare in termini più conservatori il codice dello statuto personale relativamente progressista che vige in Iraq (articolo 137 nel 2003 e Articolo 41 della nuova costituzione 2005/06); per ottenere delle quote minime femminili di rappresentanza politica, per l’unità nazionale, contro l’islamismo ed il settarismo. Hanno partecipato al dibattito sulla nuova costituzione irachena, in particolare rispetto al ruolo dell’Islam e all’inclusione di un articolo che richiami le convenzioni internazionali (CEDAW). Infine, le organizzazioni femminili si sono mobilitate
contro gli omicidi mirati che negli ultimi anni hanno colpito le professioniste e le attiviste.

L’autrice conclude il libro affermando l’impossibilità di azzardare previsioni sul futuro delle donne o, più in generale, della società irachena. A più di tre anni dall’invasione, tutti gli indicatori denotano una realtà dolorosa, in cui le donne sono le perdenti. Strumentalizzate da tutti gli attori politici, essere rappresentano un obiettivo non solo per cosa indossano o non indossano, per le loro attività, le loro politiche, perfino perché guidano, ma semplicemente perché sono donne. Allo stesso tempo, e nonostante tutto ciò, l’autrice non rinuncia a credere che le donne continuino ad incarnare la speranza di un futuro più sicuro, pacifico e degno di essere chiamato tale.

Il merito principale di questo libro è quello di spostare l’attenzione dagli ambienti ufficiali e istituzionali, che sono i più indagati nella storiografia sull’Iraq, ad un corpo di storie sociali, in cui il fuoco slitta sulle narrazioni individuali e sulle voci degli uomini e delle donne comuni. Questo non significa ignorare il peso degli eventi politici, degli sviluppi economici e delle operazioni militari, ma riconoscerne e misurarne l’impatto quotidiano, attraverso la narrazione dell’esperienza delle persone.

Il libro è originale nell’approccio metodologico e apre nuove piste di ricerca in un terreno ancora non adeguatamente esplorato, invitando altre studiose ad offrire ulteriori contributi alla narrazione della storia dell’Iraq contemporaneo in una prospettiva attenta alle differenze di genere.

Dato il ruolo centrale che la costruzione ed il discorso sul genere hanno giocato nel corso del conflitto e durante l’occupazione, ulteriori studi che vadano in questa stessa direzione saranno opportuni e il volume di Nadje Sadig Al-Ali sarà una base utile a partire dalla quale sviluppare nuovi percorsi di ricerca che, come suggerisce l’autrice stessa, spostino il fuoco dai contesti urbani e delle classi medie, agli ambienti rurali, o al mondo della cultura e dell’arte.

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EXHIBITION REVIEW
Photographing Iran: stereotypes and new visions

A review of:

*Iran People Roads Landscapes*, Centro Culturale Candiani, Mestre (Venice), 28.8-14.10.2007

By Riccardo Zipoli*

**Keywords:** Iran, people, roads, landscape, photography, stereotypes, new visions

From August 28 to October 14, 2007, with the collaboration of Mohammad Reza Tahmaspur, I organized a photographic exhibition dedicated to Iran at the Centro Culturale Candiani, Mestre (Venice). The exhibition, entitled *Iran people roads landscapes* (figs. 1, 2), featured 122 images: 12 of my own works dedicated to the landscape; 70 by 56 contemporary Iranian photographers on the subject of people; and 40 (20 by Abbas Kiarostami and 20 by myself) on the theme of the road.

The exhibition had three main aims: show the beauty, originality and variety of the Iranian landscape through the interpretation of an Italian Iranist who had dedicated over 30 years of photographic research to this theme (figs. 3, 4, 5, 6); provide insights into daily life in Iran as portrayed by Iranian photographers (figs. 7, 8, 9, 10); and highlight the similarities between the works of an Iranian photographer (figs. 11, 13) and an Italian photographer (figs. 12, 14) in approaching the same theme in Iran.

In this article I will focus on the central group of works in the exhibition, i.e. the 70 photographs on the theme of people.

The celebrated filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami played a key role in the genesis of the exhibition. In his films and photographs he has forged a new and thought-provoking vision of his own country, giving greater visibility to a beautiful, intense and true Iran, without ever indulging in facile or excessive attitudes and by eschewing aesthetic or social stereotypes. He very effectively captures and describes the universal features found in the specific nature of the Iranian people and landscapes, thus facilitating our understanding and appreciation of them. The resultant image of his country is both different and close to our own world, and that partly explains why it generates so much
interest and affection. Kiarostami takes us into a familiar country, inviting us to explore the typical intimate atmosphere of the home, full of mutual understanding and also some obvious but not insurmountable differences. We can identify with his Iran as well as discover unusual aspects of it and, through the new horizon he has opened up, we learn more about ourselves. Kiarostami manages to convey this special feeling above all when he grasps and describes the real essence of Iran, as if the proximity between the country described and the onlooker were guaranteed by the depth and sincerity of a gaze penetrating beyond the barrier of appearances. Communicating with the world by describing the authentic aspects of his own country is one of the most important contributions of Kiarostami’s art. The result is a universal language which works – and this is the power of his art – at various levels, just as Henri Cartier-Bresson wished: a language that speaks to the eyes through beautiful scenes, to the mind through intelligent ideas, and to the heart through intense feelings.

This was the kind of Iran I hoped to find adequately represented in the works by the Iranian photographers.

Our first task was to establish the criteria for selecting the photographers. We wished to avoid any kind of *a priori* choices, on the grounds, for example, of reputation or official status. The challenge was to find the right kind of energy and output, giving the same consideration to any talent, regardless of whether from the amateur world or from professional photography. Consequently, the best approach seemed to be to hold a public competition in Iran.

To safeguard the project, we established a number of conditions to be included in the competition announcement. The photographers had to be Iranians working in Iran and the images had to represent events and situations in the Iranian world with an equal emphasis on content and form. For the purposes of greater clarity, we indicated a series of photographs which to our mind could be taken as a kind of model for the poetics we were after. I asked to be the only person responsible for the final choice of material. My twofold training as Iranist and photographer (with considerable experience in taking pictures in Iran) and my many visits to the country convinced me that I could carry out this role of controlling and selecting so that the aims of the project would not be deviated or distorted.

The competition announcement was published on a specially created website on December 30, 2006, and entries had to arrive by
January 30, 2007. There was a quite remarkable response. Some 314 photographers took part with a total of 3,720 photographs uploaded to the website.

A description of the overall collection of images can be found in my introduction to the exhibition catalogue (Zipoli, R., Ed., Iran people, roads, landscapes, Marsilio, Venice, 2007, 15-25). Here I would simply like to stress how my expectations were fully met. As happens in the work of Kiarostami, the vast majority of the photographs sent in were produced by sharp, informed eyes perceiving the true situation of the country and conveying a number of universal values. Facile and superficial stereotypes were eschewed and the typically Iranian elements, far from connoting distance and estrangement, became signs in an easily understood language. In short, most entries were high-quality photographs tellingly describing various aspects of the Iranian world. The works illustrate the kind of energy and approach we found in the work of Kiarostami, who is thus confirmed as the leading interpreter of a specific artistic sensibility.

I won’t dwell on my own judgement of the initiative (here, too, see my introduction to the exhibition catalogue), but wish to focus on some comments made by critics and the general public. Their views appear to be an interesting starting point for debate on how photographic representations of contemporary Iran can show up old stereotypes and prejudices as well as reveal new balanced visions. This applies both to Iranians and Westerners. In general the comments, although personal opinions, reflect fairly widespread attitudes, which are of interest for the purposes of the debate. But let’s proceed logically and in chronological order.

The first comments came from the Iranian colleagues who had collaborated in organizing the exhibition. As I mentioned earlier, I asked to be the only judge in choosing the images, aware of the possible dangers that sharing this task might have created for the project.

The initial responses were not actually very encouraging. Instead of my above-described project, the Iranian colleagues suggested dedicating the exhibition to the so-called ‘akkási-ye kballáq (“creative photography”), a fashionable current in Iran with the emphasis on subjective manipulation through effects which might be described as symbolic and often surreal (figs. 15, 16). Both projects were plausible
and would in effect represent Iranian sensibilities and situations, but started from different premises and aims.

In the first case, my idea was to stimulate a photographic representation of Iran which usually didn’t generate much interest or attention in the country. But I was convinced that it would be greeted more favorably in Italy since it would foster a greater sense of closeness between the two countries. In the second case the idea was to exhibit what most people like in Iran without particularly taking into account, or even ignoring, if this would encounter the favor of the country where the exhibition was to be held; this choice would reflect and encourage local tendencies and ambitions. My project, on the other hand, concentrated more on external concepts and criteria, and wished to a certain extent to condition and guide the photographers in their research; this project was based on a model to be followed and aimed to highlight and stimulate little-known or at least more rarely expressed attitudes and energies. Albeit in an unwitting way, I had already had experience of this kind when in 1984 I published *Verso Nondove/Tā nâkojâ*, in Tehran. I was told this book of landscape photography had two new features which attracted considerable attention at the time: the fact that the photographs were accompanied by poems (by ‘Ali Musavi Garmârudi) and the minimalist style of my photographs, which would seem to have influenced some Iranian photographers. This awareness strengthened my conviction that my new project could provide stimuli and encourage the kind of approach to photography I had in mind. The alternative proposed by my Iranian colleagues failed to persuade me and so the ‘ākkāsi-ye khallâq was abandoned. What remained of interest, however, was the discussion with my Iranian colleagues. This was informed by two notions referring to a wider and more general question: should we accept the way a country wishes to portray itself or, rather, encourage a specific representation of the country that would be of more interest to an outside audience?

The importance of this debate was confirmed a few months later when another tricky issue cropped up. Once the public competition had been closed, I set about the difficult painstaking task of establishing the definitive selection of 70 images corresponding to my criteria. After satisfactorily completing this stage, I sent the 70 images to my Iranian colleagues involved in organizing the exhibition. They responded enthusiastically but had worried objections about two
photographs, both on the delicate subject of death. The first was a photograph of two victims of the Bam earthquake: a mother clasping her child in a last vain effort to protect him (fig. 17). The second portrayed a child who had died in an accident and whose head is half covered by a piece of paper with some architectural drawings, while on the ground his blood stains the money left by people who wished to help the family (fig. 18). These were two different and significant ways of representing death: a noble anguished maternity, and a typical rite with the pain of tragedy mixed in with desecrating elements. I was convinced that the topic of death, a theme often present and portrayed in Iranian culture, was of great importance for the exhibition. But my Iranian colleagues didn’t agree. The discussion highlighted their fear that it would offer an image of a country blighted by ill luck and unhappiness, an unpleasant side that might cause negative associations and reactions. In short, despite its deep cultural and aesthetic significance in the Iranian world, death was seen as not being an “exportable” subject. Indeed it seemed to evoke, if not shame, at least a sense of inadequacy before a Western audience. This concern conditioned their choices. In fact, they seemed to be aimed at protecting what was perceived as a kind of aesthetic respectability, which otherwise would be undermined. The gap in sensibilities was self-evident. For me, those two photographs were not only beautiful and convincing but also an important part of the collection. For my Iranian friends, they represented a reality that should not be shown for fear of giving their country a bad name. I managed to convince them, however, by insisting on the fact that images of this kind would not necessarily lead to the negative judgements they feared and assuring them that, like the other works, they would be judged according to strictly artistic criteria. I pointed out that Western art is free of conventions when dealing with this theme as is testified by some very successful extreme works on the subject (such as, for example, Andres Serrano’s morgue images). My insistence was rewarded. Those two images were greeted very enthusiastically by the general public who included them among their favorites. In fact, the photograph of the mother holding her child under the rubble of Bam was often chosen as a representative image in articles dealing with the whole exhibition. Moreover, I never heard any words of criticism or accusations leveled at Iran on the grounds
of those images. All of this testifies to a substantial difference in the assessment of the photographs and their impact on the public.

This difficulty encountered with Iranians as regards certain specific themes – and the dissent with my criteria of judgment – was confirmed by similar comments, this time concerning some of the images of Iran on my website www.riccardozipoli.com. Together with photographs from other countries, the site contains 595 photos of Iran, chosen from thousands taken over a period of 36 years (1972-2008) and featuring subjects like trees, clouds, walls, animals, etc. (figs. 19, 20, 21, 22). Since the site was launched in September 2006 (there have been around 100,000 contacts so far), it has usually received very positive comments from Iranians living in various countries round the world. Some criticisms, highly significant in this context, came, however, from Iranians living in Iran. Here, too, there were only a few isolated cases, but they are very interesting in terms of the debate.

One criticism was that I didn’t accurately represent modern-day Iran and, in particular, some of my photographs contributed to fostering a negative impression in people who were unfamiliar with the Iranian world and therefore might even discourage potential tourists. According to these comments, some of my galleries might make people think they were looking at a poor, backward country. The references are to the many unsurfaced roads (fig. 23), animals used as means of transport (fig. 24), women portrayed doing farm work (fig. 25), and children photographed in village settings (fig. 26). These are in fact some of my favorite themes (but not only in Iran, as can easily be seen by browsing through my site). I don’t wish to dwell on the obvious differences between the responsibility of a photojournalist aiming to describe the reality of a country for the purposes of information and the aesthetic approach of photographers intent on simply portraying what catches their fancy. To do so would be flogging a dead horse. What is important is the fact that some other sensitive issues have come to light, similar to that of death, which, according to the criticism mentioned above, can’t be calmly dealt with or “exported” from Iran in the same way as other more “neutral” subjects. I had touched a kind of open nerve raising fears of unfair treatment due to an incomplete or even distorted representation. This defensive and protective attitude curbs the independence of artistic research by making it subservient to a political or social type vision. The specific criticisms of this kind were at times despicable (my
images of children with black skin were considered by someone as not “acceptable” because not representative of Iranian children, fig. 27), curious (my photographs of the typical mud and clay walls were seen as being “manipulative” and “unfaithful” – fig. 28) or even amusing (a civil servant, complimenting me on my works, asked how long ago I had visited the country and offered to help me return to Iran, convinced that I would be amazed by the changes that had taken place in the meantime!).

Further reflection in this sense was stimulated by another recent comment about the photographs of Iran on my site. In this comment we find side by side both attitudes I have just mentioned. An Iranian living in California wrote to me to express his appreciation of my images of Iran which gave him a pleasant, deep feeling of nostalgia. As I said, I often found this reaction among Iranians of the diaspora. But his enthusiasm was cooled by other people’s comments. In fact, on seeing my images, some of his American friends reacted along lines similar to those mentioned earlier. They claimed the photographs gave the impression that Iran was only made up of villages and countryside with no cities and thus seemed to give an overall picture of a poor, backward country. Personal convictions and affections had immediately yielded to social conventions and concerns. So much so that the Californian Iranian confessed he had decided not to encourage visits to my site for the sake of Iran’s “reputation”. The public dimension thus prevailed and stifled the private sphere. Here again this kind of reaction doesn’t bear answering. But it is worth pointing out the exceptional nature of the situation and the fact that prejudices of this kind only seem to emerge for certain countries. To stay in America, it is very unlikely that the photographs of Ansel Adams (to resort to the example of a great artist) might induce non-Americans to think that the United States is a country with no metropolises or modern cities.

I would emblematically reply to such negative criticisms by mentioning the comment of an Iranian journalist. In an article (published in Il Manifesto, March 4, 2008, p.14), she argued that my vision of rural Iran and especially its landscapes, was a kind of happy estrangement from the political machinations and influences that invaded and corrupted even the most distant villages and unspoiled nature. This position is in line with that of many other Iranians in the diaspora, who, far from being interested in modern aspects, such as
highways, airplanes, skyscrapers and city life, have often expressed their joy in seeing again what for them are pleasant distant memories in my images of a fast disappearing Iran.

There was thus an interesting series of reactions. For the purposes of a more specific enquiry, it would be interesting to associate them in greater detail with the various social, geographic and political contexts in order to try and establish possible constant factors and types.

Coming back to the Mestre exhibition, I would like to analyze another emblematic criticism, this time made by an Italian journalist. I’m referring to an episode during the press conference held before the opening of the exhibition, when a journalist claimed the photographs offered a rosy vision of Iran, blaming this on the choice of photographs I had made. Discussing the matter further, we realized that the journalist hoped to find images that in some way would confirm the vision of Iran usually pushed in the mass media, therefore focused on negative issues, such as the veil and censure. In other words, the photographs should have mainly highlighted the suffering due to the authoritarian and oppressive climate, over and above any artistic aims or aesthetic aspirations. The fact that the journalist was looking at a series of beautiful landscapes pervaded with a great sense of peace and fascinating scenes of daily life had in some way disappointed her. Those photographs had given rise to a vision of Iran which appeared artificial to her because not in line with the prevailing widespread clichés. Her objection highlighted the difficulty in offering a social, cultural and aesthetic vision of Iran which was not in some way conditioned by the commonly described vision of the political context. This kind of criticism, however, is not usually applied to artists from other countries. They are not always and inevitably called on to highlight possible violations perpetrated by their own states and in any case if they don’t denounce the local situation nobody is amazed and asks why they have not done so. In this case Iran is not given fair treatment. Even in the field of art this country is a kind of special case, urged or rather condemned to only deal with what the West reproaches it for and only in a way that will satisfy the West. But there is a second crucial point in the issue. On careful examination, the exhibition can in no way be said to offer a rosy picture of Iran. The political, social and existential hardships are presented intelligently and subtly by the photographers, who avoid, however, the kind of crude direct images expected by the journalist.
The critical power of the images emerges in two ways (see, for example, figs. 29, 30). On the one hand there are photographs in which the author’s intention is obvious. On the other hand, we have cases of documentation with no overt polemic aims on the part of the photographer; nonetheless, when these photographs are seen from a different interpretative viewpoint, they may bring to the onlooker’s mind criticisms of that world. In any case people should view all the images without seeking preconceived visions and make the effort to observe them carefully for what they portray or evoke.

Taken together these – albeit few – remarks highlight how the photographic representation of Iran is subject to conditioning from prevailing models. Any departure from these prejudices may cause difficulty and embarrassment at home and criticism and condemnation abroad. We believe a useful way of contrasting these conditionings is to propose a vision of the country which, leaving aside impositions, is attuned to the people, culture and landscape in Iran. This is exactly what we tried to do in the Mestre exhibition.

Over and above the opinions of the organizers and critics, whether Iranian or non-Iranian, the general public decreed the initiative a success. The exhibition was one of the most visited ever at the Centro Culturale Candiani. It was seen by over 7,000 visitors and more than 500 catalogues were sold. In the visitors’ book, one of the frequently used expressions was “deeply moving”, confirming the enthusiasm which I felt first-hand every time I went to the exhibition. All this is highly significant: the general public was happy to explore a vision of Iran free from the prevailing stereotypes.

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