

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Proceedings of the 17th Quinquennial Congress
of the **International Association for the History
of Religions (IAHR)**

Mexico City, 5-12 August 1995

organised by the

**Sociedad Mexicana para el Estudio de las Religiones
(SMER) and the Asociación Latinoamericana para el
Estudio de las Religiones (ALER)**

at the

Claustro de Sor Juana

edited by

Yólotl González Torres and Michael Pye

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Preface

A considerable time has now passed since the 17th Quinquennial Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, generally known as the IAHR, took place in Mexico City in August 1995. This was the first time that the world congress of the IAHR was held in a Latin American country, and it is generally agreed that it was a great success, organisationally, socially, and academically.

The publication of the proceedings has been delayed for various reasons. Nevertheless we feel that it is important, even if late, to publish a general record of the congress. This will not only be of interest to many who attended it, but will also assist librarians and specialists in the history of the subject. The first congress in the series was held in Paris in 1900. Following the 17th congress in Mexico City in 1995, the 18th congress has since taken place in 2000 in Durban, South Africa. The proceedings of the Durban congress are expected to appear shortly in a companion volume, thus completing a clear view of the sequence throughout the whole of the twentieth century. More details about the conferences and proceedings of the IAHR will be found below.

In this volume we present a formal record of the congress. This includes various introductory materials relating to the congress and documents relating to the ongoing work of the IAHR. Of special interest may be the decision taken at the General Assembly, following an extended discussion during the preceding five years, not to change the name of the association. At the same time, as on previous occasions, the social scientific dimension of the subject was widely recognised and it was agreed that this should be given prominence as part of the profile of the IAHR.

It has unfortunately proved impossible to give an authoritative list of all the individual papers which were presented, many of which have been published in the meantime. However we have included a survey of the numerous academic panels or symposia which took place at the congress, giving their subjects and the names of their coordinators. In addition we would like to draw attention to three volumes designated by the IAHR as “adjunct proceedings”, of which further details will be found below. These volumes together contain more than fifty, thematically selected

papers from the congress. In the present volume we are able to publish the four key-note lectures given at the congress and we are very grateful to the authors for reserving them for publication here. These four authors represent four different native languages and four continents, and each has addressed topical aspects of the general congress theme “Religion and Society”.

The Editors

Congress Arrangements

THE CONGRESS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE IN MEXICO

President: Yólotl González Torres

Executive Secretary: Elio Masferrer Kan.

Academic board: Felix Báez Jorge, Mercedes de la Garza, Gilberto Giménez, Isabel Lagarriga, Benjamín Preciado, Sylvia Marcos, Noemí Quezada, Rosa del Carmen Martínez Azcobereta, Doris Heyden.

Coordinador Operativo: Roberto Mejía

Coordinadores Internos: Elizabeth Diaz Brenis and Francisco Albar Cabeza de Vaca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organisers would like to help the following cultural and research organizations in Mexico which supported the congress financially and in other ways:

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH)

National Institute of Anthropology and History

Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas d la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (IIA, UNAM)

Institute of Anthropological Research of the National University of Mexico

Centro de Estudios Asianos y Africanos (CEAA) del Colegio de México

Center of Asian and African Studies of the College of Mexico

Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI)

National Indigenous Institute

CER Universidad Ibero-Americana (UIA)

Center of Religious Studies of the Ibero-American University

Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana

University of the Convent of Sor Juana

Centro de Documentación y Estudios de Mujeres A.C. (DEMAC)

Women's Studies and Documentation Center

IAHR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1990-1995

President Prof. Ugo Bianchi † April 1995 (Rome, Italy)

Vicepresident Prof. R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem, Israel)

Vicepresident Dr. J. Leclant (Paris, France)

General Secretary Prof. Michael Pye (Marburg, Germany)

Deputy General Secretary Prof. Lawrence Sullivan (Harvard, U.S.A.)

Treasurer Prof. Armin W. Geertz (Aarhus, Denmark)

Further members

Prof. R. D. Abubakre (Ilorin, Nigeria)

Prof. Peter. Antes (Hannover, Germany)

Prof. Michio Araki (Tsukuba, Japan)

Prof. Louise Bäckman (Stockholm, Sweden)

Dr. Yólotl González Torres (Mexico City, Mexico)

Prof. Donald. Wiebe (Toronto, Canada)

IAHR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1995-2000

The following were elected to the incoming Executive Committee of the IAHR during the congress:

President Prof. Michael Pye (Marburg, Germany)

Vicepresident Prof. Peter Antes (Hannover, Germany)

Vicepresident Dr. Yólotl González Torres (Mexico City, Mexico)
General Secretary Prof. Armin W. Geertz (Aarhus, Denmark)
Deputy General Secretary Prof. Rosalind I.J. Hackett. (Knoxville, Tennessee USA)
Treasurer Prof. Donald Wiebe (Toronto, Canada)

Further members

Prof. Michio Araki (Tsukuba, Japan)
Prof. Giulia Sfameni Gasparro (Messina, Italy)
Dr. Gerrie ter Haar (Utrecht, Netherlands)
Dr. Helena Helve (Helsinki, Finland)
Prof. Jacob K. Olupona (Davis, California USA)
Dr. Abdulkader Tayob (Cape Town, South Africa)

LOCATION AND FORMALITIES

The main programme of the Congress was held in the beautiful building of the University of the Convent of Sor Juana (Claustro de Sor Juana). The excellent facilities included a series of seminar rooms, covered cloister passages suitable for exhibitions, and a very large central quadrangle in which congress participants could meet freely. The keynote lectures, the General Assembly of the IAHR, and the closing ceremony were held in the old chapel of the convent, with its beautiful baroque altar as a background to the raised stage.

The Convent of Sor Juana (Claustro de Sor Juana) was founded in 1585 for Catholic nuns of the order of the Jeronimas. The first nuns were Spanish or of Spanish descent and they were served by Indian servants and slaves from Africa. The convent grew in size until it housed 200 women altogether, including the nuns together with their servants and slaves. The famous poet nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who lived in the 17th century, was secluded and later buried here. In 1867, on account of a legal reform which prohibited cloistered convents, the Claustro de Sor Juana was expropriated by the Government and a considerable part of its land and buildings were later sold to private buyers. For a long time the main buildings were left in a dilapidated condition, but in 1976 they were restored and brought into use again as the University of the Convent of Sor Juana.

The inaugural session of the congress took place on the 5th of August in the auditorium of the National Museum of Anthropology in the presence of several hundred scholars. Greetings were given by a representative of the Secretary of the Ministry of Education of Mexico, María Teresa Franco, Director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Luis Vargas, Director of the Institute of Anthropological Research of the National University of Mexico, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Vice-President of the IAHR, Michael Pye, General Secretary of the IAHR, and Yólotl González Torres and Elio Masferrer Kan, the joint leaders in the organisation of the Congress.

The official languages of the congress were, in accordance with IAHR policy, English, French and Spanish. (IAHR conferences are usually held in English, French and the language(s) of the country where the conference is held.)

The congress provided the context for the formal meetings of the IAHR, that is, the meeting of the International Committee (which is the main governing body), the General Assembly and the outgoing and incoming Executive Committee. Details of these will be found below.

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

The cultural programme for participants included an exhibition of painting on religious topics and a concert inspired by the pre-hispanic musical tradition of Mexico given by the group Tribe. There were also visits to the National Museum of Anthropology and to the archeological sites of Teotihuacan and Cacaxtla. On the final evening a buffet with typical dishes, accompanied by Mexican music, was served for all participants in the magnificent cloister of the Convent of Sor Juana.

THE IAHR CONGRESS TRADITION IN BRIEF

The decision to hold the Congress in Mexico was taken by the International Committee of the IAHR at its meeting during the 15th Congress in Rome in August 1990. World Congresses for the history of religions had previously been held throughout the twentieth century. The sequence of these major congresses has been as follows:

- 1) 1900 Paris
- 2) 1904 Basle
- 3) 1908 Oxford
- 4) 1912 Leiden
- 5) 1927 Lund
- 6) 1935 Brussels
- 7) 1950 Amsterdam
- 8) 1955 Rome
- 9) 1958 Tokyo
- 10) 1960 Marburg
- 11) 1965 Claremont
- 12) 1970 Stockholm
- 13) 1975 Lancaster
- 14) 1980 Winnipeg
- 15) 1985 Sydney
- 16) 1990 Rome
- 17) 1995 Mexico City

In 1950 the IAHR was constituted as a continuing organisation, since when the major congresses have normally been held every five years, hence the traditional designation “quinquennial”. In the meantime the designation “world congress” has been coming into use. Special and regional conferences of the IAHR have also been held from time to time.

OPENING ADDRESSES

Professor Ugo Bianchi

Before the opening addresses were held the assembly was requested to stand in silence in memory of Professor Ugo Bianchi. Professor Bianchi had died in April 1995, during the year of the Congress, while holding office as President of the IAHR.

Opening addresses were then given as follows.

Yólotl González Torres

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH)

We are honoured to host the first Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions to be held in Latin America since this series of academic

congresses was begun in Paris in 1900, just a short time after the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago at which representatives of various religions participated. The Paris congress enabled the best known historians of religion of the time to meet with each other and was especially meaningful because at that time important new archaeological discoveries had been made in Egypt and Mesopotamia. From then onwards the international congresses were held approximately every five years, except during the two world wars. The fact that the present congress is being held in Latin America is without doubt a result of a transformation of the IAHR and of the International Congresses themselves.

I myself attended my first IAHR Congress 30 years ago at Claremont, California, encouraged by my Professor Dr. Paul Kirchhoff. That was a much smaller meeting and there were fewer official national associations at that time. After my return to Mexico I cherished the idea of founding a Mexican association for the study of religion, an idea which was realised concretely in 1971. This society was formed by prominent scholars like Dr. Kirchhoff, Dr. Bosch Gimpera, Prof. Jiménez Moreno (all of whom have died in the meantime) and many others who in those days were interested in the scientific study of religion. In 1975, at the 13th Congress at Lancaster, England, the Mexican association was admitted as an affiliate member of the IAHR.

At the last International Congress, which took place in Rome under the presidency of Dr. Ugo Bianchi, recently deceased and whom we remember with special respect, it was voted that the XVII International Congress of the History of Religions would take place in our country, Mexico. That is the reason we are all meeting here tonight to start this event, which has been made possible by the great support given by several Mexican institutions of culture. Among these I would like to extend especial thanks to the National Institute of Anthropology and History where both the Executive secretary of the congress and I myself work, and which is tonight hosting this opening session. Other sponsors are mentioned in the congress documentation. I would also like to thank all the students who have been giving their help in the organization of the Congress.

When we started the organization of this Congress one of our main concerns was to try to bring as many scholars as possible from countries which have less economic possibilities, and therefore a special effort was made - in spite of the difficult economic situation of our own country - to obtain sufficient funds to finance their trip. I believe that in this regard we have succeeded. Another im-

portant aspect of this conference is the significant presence of women, as can be seen not least in the section on gender which is one of the largest.

In Mexico the study of religions has not been given enough attention until quite recently. Except for the study of Christianity at the theological colleges, the systematic study of the history of the great religions, and of religions in general, was practically non-existent. Yet in spite of this lack of interest, religion has been an important element in the study of prehispanic and indigenous cultures. In recent years there has been a flourishing of the studies of religion which is reflected in the great number of papers presented by Mexican scholars at this Congress, papers which deal mostly, though not exclusively with subjects centred around phenomena which have occurred in Mexico from prehispanic times, through colonial times down to the present. During the last four decades, due to the great socio-economic changes within the country and to globalization, there have been inevitable changes in Mexican society, which was previously 98% Catholic. Of importance here are the laws of the country which protect the liberty of independent cults and of laicist teaching. The proliferation of various different Christian and para-Christian denominations, especially in the Indian communities, and the activities of the different sections of the Catholic Church on the background of this new phase of evangelization and the general social situation have become important topics of study for many scholars.

At a world level, the topic of the Congress, "Religion and Society" is of primordial importance. One has only to see or hear the daily news on the radio or in the newspapers, to realise how theories which had predicted that a time of "reason" would be reached and that atheism would be imposed over religion, have proved to be false; Indeed it is evident that the opposite is happening. In the countries of the ex-socialist bloc religion is taking on new strength. At the same time ethnic religion has become a pretext for genocide, as in the pitiless example of the destruction of Bosnian Muslims which the powerful countries of the world do nothing to stop. In the Islamic world there are worrying cases as when, in Egypt, a court in Egypt convicted a university professor of apostasy, ordering his wife to divorce him in accordance with the *sharia*, while a young woman in Bangla Desh whose parents had just joined a fundamentalist sect was murdered because she dared to lift her veil. No less striking is the awakening of Hindu fundamentalism in India and the proliferation of various cults in leading capitalist countries like the USA and Japan. The cases of Wako and Aum show dramatically how necessary it is to analyse the reasons for such social phenomena.

We hope that the Congress will live up to the expectations of all the participants, that the many papers to be presented will be of great value, and our guests will take back home with them an excellent memory of the Congress and a fine image of our country.

Elio Masferrer Kan

**Presidente de la Asociación Latinoamericana para el Estudio de las Religiones
Secretario Ejecutivo del XVII Congreso Internacional de Historia de las Religiones.**

Religión y sociedad. Nuevos contextos para los estudios religiosos

En nombre de la Asociación Latinoamericana para el Estudio de las Religiones y del Comité Organizador del XVII Congreso Internacional de Historia de las Religiones queremos darles nuestra mas cordial bienvenida y expresarles nuestra convicción de que los trabajos de este Congreso serán de suma importancia para el desarrollo de los estudios científicos de los sistemas religiosos, tanto en términos históricos como contemporáneos.

El tema Religión y Sociedad que eligiéramos como tema central de trabajo para nuestro Congreso no es casual. Cerramos el Siglo XX con un contexto social y político donde los sistemas religiosos y los sistemas identitarios étnicos-nacionales de base religiosa, adquieren cada vez mayor ingerencia en los procesos sociales y en muchos casos son simultáneamente la expresión orgánica de los distintos grupos humanos, expresan los sistemas emblemáticos de las respectivas sociedades, a la vez que representan las nuevas propuestas de reorganización social, nuevas utopías religiosas, sociales y políticas.

A nivel internacional encontramos procesos dinámicos y contradictorios en el mundo, procesos de secularización en las sociedades con religión de estado que indican el agotamiento de viejos modelos de estado teocrático y el desarrollo de nuevas fuerzas sociales que pugnan por mayor autonomía y un papel importante en sus respectivas sociedades. Sin embargo, en los estados de modelo liberal occidental la discusión sobre las fuentes que desarrollan y consolidan los sistemas éticos, morales y de valores, junto con la crisis de las propuestas generadas en los años sesenta nos permiten observar una rediscusión sobre el papel de los sistemas religiosos en este nuevo contexto histórico, a la vez que el fortalecimiento de los mismos. En este contexto es muy importante comprender la dinámica de los llamados *nuevos movimientos religiosos*, que por sus características son un desafío a los conceptos de pluralidad, de libertad religiosa

y de un conjunto de valores sintetizados en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos del Hombre, comprender, convivir, tolerarnos, respetarnos son cuestiones que atañen tanto a unos como a otros. Sin que podamos olvidar que representan de algún modo nuevas tendencias en el desarrollo de las ideas religiosas.

En los países que ensayaron los modelos marxistas encontramos una suerte de “retorno a los orígenes”, con un fortalecimiento del papel de los sistemas religiosos y de las iglesias en la vida social y política. Pareciera en estos últimos que el fracaso de las utopías marxistas producen un efecto de mirar hacia el pasado para construir el futuro. Aunque evidentemente ese futuro no se construirá sin una síntesis adecuada de las distintas experiencias históricas, una síntesis de los sistemas religiosos tradicionales con la experiencia del marxismo como propuesta utópica y cuasirreligiosa.

Por su parte en los países africanos que en el proceso de descolonización ensayaron los modelos de socialismo africano o de partido único, cuya estrategia era de algún modo consolidar nuevas élites políticas de base secular con ideologías occidentales, la cuestión no es sencilla. En muchos casos la fortaleza de los sistemas étnicos o tribales, basados en las religiones tradicionales o en nuevas propuestas religiosas que implican una síntesis del cristianismo o el Islam con las tradiciones culturales africanas, obligan a repensar los sistemas sociopolíticos creados en los procesos de descolonización y de los movimientos de liberación nacional de los sesentas y setentas de este siglo, que en muchos casos eran la imitación de los modelos europeos.

Algo similar sucede en los países de tradición musulmana que en su mayoría se independizaron en esta segunda mitad de siglo. En este caso las dificultades de los modelos de estado secular han llevado al resurgimiento de propuestas religiosas en muchos casos fundamentalistas. Nos parece muy importante una discusión sobre el surgimiento de los fundamentalismos, que entendemos no puede hacerse al margen de un análisis de los procesos sociopolíticos y religiosos en los que se desarrollan. La propuesta fundamentalista siempre existió, el desafío que tenemos como científicos sociales es comprender porqué se consolidó.

En América Latina, la tendencia mas visible apunta a la consolidación de modelos plurirreligiosos y multirreligiosos. Observamos la complejificación del Pluralismo Católico, la afirmación de nuevas denominaciones religiosas de origen cristiano, el fortalecimiento de las propuestas religiosas de origen afroamericano, la consolidación de propuestas nativistas basadas en las religiones indias

americanas, el surgimiento de nuevas instituciones religiosas y su búsqueda de nuevos espacios. Por su parte la crisis de los estados latinoamericanos, permiten a las iglesias una mayor presencia en muchos aspectos de la vida nacional y regional que hace años era impensable. Pero en América Latina no puede confundirse religiones con iglesias. Las creencias religiosas son compartidas por la inmensa mayoría de los latinoamericanos, por su parte las estructuras institucionales y eclesiales desarrollan sus propuestas, generando así una relación dinámica que debemos analizar.

Complica aún mas el panorama la crisis de muchos de los estados multiétnicos y plurirreligiosos creados en este siglo. Esta situación que involucra a la mayoría de los estados plurales, cualquiera haya sido el modelo político ensayado obligan a una reflexión sobre las mejores estrategias para definir la convivencia humana, en un mundo que cada vez se hace mas pequeño, tanto por los procesos de globalización como por la expansión de la especie humana en términos demográficos. Este proceso de *globalización* parece tener como respuesta procesos de *singularización, particularización y de intolerancia étnica y religiosa*.

Esta situación contemporánea reafirma aún mas la importancia de los estudios sobre la historia de las religiones, los estudios sobre los sistemas religiosos no pueden hacerse al margen de su dinámica histórica, tanto en periodos de larga duración como de larguísima duración, que Braudel llamaba el tiempo estructural. Los aportes de los historiadores de las religiones a la comprensión de los grandes problemas contemporáneos son de vital importancia.

Aunque cabría preguntarse si esta globalización basada en el neoliberalismo y los llamados *mercados emergentes* no implica la consolidación del modelo occidental primermundista sobre los demás sistemas socioculturales y políticos. Cabe preguntarnos como latinoamericanos si los modelos neoliberales no son simplemente nuevas formas de hegemonía, de neocolonialismo, que implican transformarnos en exportadores netos de capitales, sin que las potencias financieras asuman una corresponsabilidad con los modelos que nos imponen. En esta situación las cuestiones religiosas y étnicas juegan un papel singular, base de los fundamentalismos, mecanismos de resistencia etnicoreligiosa, formas de reorganización social, instrumentos para crear grupos sociales leales a los *nuevos conquistadores*. Un estudio científico de la cuestión religiosa es clave para entender las perspectivas de este mundo de las reglas de la convivencia humana.

Religión y Sociedad, temas centrales de este congreso, quedarán marcados por mucho tiempo en la memoria histórica de nuestros pueblos, confiamos como

científicos sociales realizar un aporte desde la historia de las religiones, desde las distintas disciplinas que estudian los sistemas religiosos elementos que sirvan para una mejor convivencia entre nuestros pueblos, desde nuestras diferentes perspectivas teóricas, metodológicas, ideológicas y filosóficas, desde perspectivas plurales y con una conciencia universal.

Queremos agradecer a la Asociación Internacional de Historia de las Religiones la confianza dispensada en Roma 1990, donde se nos invitó para organizar este importante evento, permitiendo que este congreso se realizara por primera vez en un país del Tercer Mundo y de América Latina. También felicitamos a nuestra institución hermana, la Sociedad Mexicana para el Estudio de las Religiones por este esfuerzo compartido y exitoso de organización. Agradecemos a las instituciones públicas y privadas de México, de América Latina y organismos internacionales el decidido apoyo que recibimos para organizar este Congreso.

Estimados congresistas que vienen de países tan diversos, bienvenidos a México, bienvenidos a América Latina, están ustedes en su casa. Muchas Gracias.

Professor Michael Pye

General Secretary of the IAHR

Ladies and Gentlemen! It is my pleasure to add my greetings of welcome to you all, a numerous gathering indeed from all parts of the world. Our Congress is being held for the first time in Latin America and it is quite clear from the participation on this first evening, and from the outline of the programme to come, that it is going to be a remarkable success. Our thanks go to those who have just spoken, and to many others who have aided them, for preparing such a wonderful occasion.

It is with sadness on the other hand that I have to mention here the most unfortunate death last April of our esteemed president, Professor Ugo Bianchi, of the University of Rome (La Sapienza). He is held in affectionate memory, by all those of us who knew him, as a tireless defender and promoter of our discipline. Our sympathies have been extended to his wife and family and full appraisals of his work may be found in various places.

My opening address will be quite brief, because I wish only to do two things. First there some announcements to be made concerning the formal procedures of the IAHR during the Congress. Second I will simply highlight a few matters which are documented more fully in my report on the work of the IAHR over the previous five years. This report has been made available in writing. (For the

full text, see the IAHR organizational record in a later section of these proceedings.)

As to the practical points, Professor Zwi Werblowsky, one of our vice-presidents, will preside over the main part of the International Committee meeting which will be held later this week, and during which elections will be held for the new Executive Committee. Also, please note that the agenda of the General Assembly to be held at the end of the Congress includes the important matter of whether or not to change the name of our association. This matter has been prepared with great care, and in order to ensure that the vote taken on the day is valid, arrangements have been made to check the membership of those present and to provide voting cards accordingly. Your cooperation with these arrangements would be appreciated.

I come now to a few points which I would like to highlight out of my written report. The integrity of the IAHR is of great importance in the contemporary academic world. It is the only religiously neutral, widely international body devoted to the study of religion in all its aspects. In my report, therefore, I emphasise the need for the IAHR to remain independent of religious standpoints. I also emphasise the need for specialists in the study of religion to develop not only an international but also an intercultural perspective.

The five years which have elapsed since the XVIth International Congress (Rome 1990) have seen various interesting and important developments for the IAHR. Of the conferences held during the five year period, it will be seen that one was in the United States, two in Europe, one in China and one in Africa. Our quinquennial Congress is now being held in Latin America. The conferences in Beijing and in Harare (both in 1992) may be considered to have been of great historic significance for the IAHR, as they were the first ever to have been held in these areas. For the same reason, our present Congress in Mexico City is certain to be regarded in future as a major landmark in the story of the IAHR.

The conference in China followed the reconstitution and affiliation of the Chinese Association for the Study of Religions. The conference in Zimbabwe for its part was the birthplace of a new regional association for the whole of Africa, namely the African Association for the Study of Religions, the affiliation of which is on the agenda for the General Assembly at this Congress. The Congress here in Mexico is organized along very different lines from the one held in Rome. This is excellent. There is no need to be afraid of such differences. On the contrary, they are to be welcomed.

At the same time, with over thirty different countries now participating, it is important to maintain some cohesion. It is of great value if the International Committee can meet at least once between the major Congresses. During the last ten years the International Committee has met in 1988 (Marburg) and in 1993 (Paris), between the congresses. Each time it has been able to take decisions of far-reaching importance without waiting for the quinquennial Congress to take place. I strongly recommend to the incoming Executive Committee that this pattern be maintained, and that the next meeting of the International Committee be held in 1998. It will be seen from the above considerations that the conferences of the IAHR are not just miscellaneous events but important parts of a continuing policy which has the welfare of the association at its heart. Since the IAHR has no permanent, full-time secretariat, the helpful goodwill and support of colleagues all around the world is crucial, if a smooth flow of arrangements is to be maintained. The affiliated associations are therefore called upon to ask not so much what they receive through membership, but what they can *contribute* to the future development of the IAHR.

My report contains considerable detail about publications relating to the IAHR. The journal *Numen* is the flagship publication of the IAHR and much gratitude is due to the current executive editors, Professor Hans Kippenberg (Bremen) and Professor Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo) for their excellent work. The Editorial Board of *Numen* is identical with the Executive Committee of the IAHR. This means that the meetings of both these bodies can be held during a single conference. During the period under review, the long-standing arrangements with the publisher of *Numen*, E.J. Brill of Leiden, have been formalized by means of a contract, providing a secure framework for all parties. Three new journals sponsored by associations affiliated to the IAHR may also be mentioned here. They are *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (Canada/NAASR), *Revue pro Religionistiku* (Czech Republic), and *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* (Germany). The IAHR also has an indirect relationship with the bibliographical journal *Science of Religion*.

At the General Assembly in Rome the Executive Committee and the International Committee were requested to set discussions in motion with a view to making a recommendation for a change of name for the association. This has been done, and at its meeting in Paris in 1993 the International Committee voted to *recommend* a change of name. This recommendation therefore comes before the General Assembly during the Mexico Congress for a final decision. The inte-

rest in this matter has been great. The discussion has been open, detailed, and courteous (for details see IAHR bulletins and my full report). Now it has come to the time when a vote will be taken. It will be important that the decision, whichever way it goes, is respected by all parties and is positively assumed by the incoming president and other members of the Executive Committee. The precise resolution before the General Assembly will be found on the agenda sheet. In view of the importance of this decision, steps are being taken during the Congress to ascertain membership and voting rights.

During the period 1989 - 1990 and the period 1994 - 1995 the electoral arrangements have also been carried out with great care. This itself has led to increased interest in the democratic process within the IAHR. Thus in 1990 the membership of the Executive Committee was electorally contested, and the same process is taking place now in 1995. I consider the transparency and correctness of electoral processes to be of the greatest importance. The rules are set out in the Constitution of the IAHR, which is published and also available here to all present at Congress.

During recent years the IAHR has seen (1) a number of interesting new affiliations, (2) a radical broadening of its geographical base, (3) an increase in the number of meetings throughout the world, and (4) a rationalization of its organizational procedures. The increase in structured activity means however that the amount of regular work required from the Executive Committee, especially from the officers, has increased dramatically. Looking ahead, therefore, it would seem that a period of stabilization is now required. In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those, both in the professional and in the private sphere, who have given me patient and understanding support in the carrying out of my tasks as General Secretary during this past period.

The most important matter just now however is the enjoyment of the congress itself which, once every five years, is the high point of all the activities of the IAHR. This time there is a very special Mexican flavour which we all appreciate and which will ensure that it will never be forgotten. So once again I would like to thank the Mexican organisers of our Congress most heartily for all their preparations, and to wish all participants every success and happiness in their discussions and debates. Thank you.

The Academic Programme

The academic programme found room for 1025 papers by scholars from 57 different countries, including most of the countries of Latin America. These were organised in 88 different sessions during a nine-hour programme running between 10.00 and 19.00 o'clock over the four days Monday to Friday. Wednesday was an exception, being reserved for the meeting of the International Committee and an excursion to the archaeological monuments of Teotihuacan and Cacaxtala.

While the keynote lectures, delivered by scholars from Asia, Europe and Latin America, were directed in particular towards the congress theme, so too were many of the other academic presentations. This was not obligatory however, and it will be seen from the general outline of the programme that papers were organised according to particular topics of research with an emphasis sometimes on theoretical and methodological questions, sometimes on the internal dynamics of religious systems and sometimes on religions in their changing social and cultural contexts.

In a congress of this size it was not possible to ascertain with certainty whether all the sessions took place exactly as announced. It is also known that a number of planned or provisionally proposed papers were not actually presented because of illness or similar reasons. Unfortunately there is no definitive record of all the participants at the Congress, estimated to have numbered about eight hundred. The overview given below is therefore restricted to the titles of the sessions and the names of their coordinators. A complete list of participants giving presentations would be much larger, and apologies must be extended to all those who made contributions which are not individually listed. Some of the further details can be found in the "adjunct proceedings" already mentioned, but it should be remembered that these are devoted to particular themes while other important subjects covered at the congress have not been published in special volumes. Even the listing of the session titles below is not comprehensive, since various important subject areas such as the religions of East Asia were included

in a manner which does not find expression in the titles of the sessions. Even so, while complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed, the overview of the sessions presented below gives a relatively reliable impression of the style and contents of the congress. Those present at the congress have very positive recollections of the range and dynamism of the sessions, made possible by the open-ended planning of the organizers who did all they could to facilitate participation on a broad basis.

SYMPOSIA AND PANELS

- The philosophy of the Kyoto School (Agustín Jacinto)
- Cosmology and representational systems (Anatilde Idogaya Molina)
- The preservation and restoration of cultural treasures as a source for the study of the history of religions (Luciano Cedillo, Blanza Noval, Sandra Cruz Flores)
- Global perspectives on methodology in the study of religions (Armin Geertz)
- The history of religions and the social sciences: cognition, culture and religion (Tom Lawson, Don Wiebe)
- Syncretism among the Latinos in the USA as a transculturation phenomenon (Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo)
- Evil entities and the conceptions of evil in Latin-American religions (Iris Gareis, Elio Masferrer Kan)
- Central American rituals of conquest (C. Bonfiglio, Miguel A. Rubio)
- Progress and society in Kierkegaard's thought (Abraham H. Kahn)
- Religions in the Middle-American codices before and after the contact with Europeans (Joaquin Galarza)
- Permanence and metamorphosis of the Holy Spirit between the old and new world (Marion Aubree, Tristan Platt)
- Religion and music (Fernando Nava, Yolanda Lastra)
- Theogony and native Mesoamerican liturgy (Marie Odile Marion)
- World ethics: a task for civil society or for the churches? (Jose Luis González Martínez)
- Religion in the border regions (Silvia Ortiz Echaniz)
- Devotional literature in medieval India (David Lorenzen)
- Western esoterism and the science of religions (A. Faivre, K. C. Voss, X. J. Hanegraaff)
- Medicine and religion (Isabel Lagariga Attial)
- Feminine spirituality: comparative perspectives (Jordan Paper)
- Religion and sexuality (Noemí Quezada)

- The history of religions and the social sciences: methodological and institutional problems for the study of religion (Tom Lawson and Don Wiebe)
- Religious syncretism in South and South-east Asia: an historical appraisal (Amarjiva Lochan)
- La Cristiada: religion, society and rebellion in the formation of modern Mexico (Robert Shadow)
- Laity: historical perspectives and the present situation (Fernando González, Renee de la Torre)
- The international spread of non-conventional religions (J. Gordon Melton, Armin Geertz and Mikael Rothstein)
- Art and religious iconography (Benjamin Preciado)
- The evangelizing work of Fray Maturnino Gilbert (Francisco Miranda)
- Ethnic religious movements (Jorge Hernández Díaz)
- Messianic movements through history (Eva Huchmay, Jonathan Israel)
- Gender and corporality: perspectives from various religious traditions (Silvia Marcos)
- Looking for structure: Judaism, Christianity, Islam (J. Waardenburg)
- The history of religions and the social sciences: conceptualizing and studying religion (Tom Lawson and Don Wiebe)
- Popular religion and ethnicity (Elizabeth Diaz Brenis)
- Similarities and differences in Native American religions north and south (Elizabeth Baquedano)
- Magic (Mary N. MacDonald)
- Religion and religiosity in colonial Brazil (Fernando Torres Londoño)
- Symbolic geography and its transformations through time (Ingrid Geist)
- Charismatic groups (Eva Pizano Cejka)
- Prehistoric religions of the old and the new world (Henryk Karol Kocyba)
- The notion of person or its equivalents in the different religious systems (Alejandro Ortíz Rescaniere, Carlos Miranda)
- Religions of the Mediterranean and the Near East (Rosa Martínez Ascobere)
- Shaiva Vaisnava sectarian rivalry in medieval Tamilnadu: social transformations and artistic representations (Raju Kalidos)
- Messianic movements throughout history (Eva Uchmany, Jonathan Israel)
- New utopias (Bertrand Meheust)
- Science and technology in post-modern religious thought (Teresa Porzecanski)
- Studies on Latin American religions: the present situation (Elio Masferrer, Isabel Lagarriga)

- Ethics and religion (Juliana González, Greta Rivara)
- Children and religion (Anna Britta Hellbom)
- Buddhism (Minoru Hara)
- Afro-american cults (Rita Segato)
- Religions in the Spanish empire (Juan Manuel Perez Ceballos)
- Religion and medical assistance (Martha E. Rodriguez, Ana Cecilia Rodríguez)
- Syncretic movements and the construction of new identities (Patricia Fortuny, Carlos Garma, Cristina Gutierrez)
- Theory and method in gender and religion (Patricia Galeana, Sylvia Marcos)
- The repression of traditional religions and the emergence of new religious systems (Iris Gareis)
- Ruptures and re-approach: the religious experience in the new anthropological texts (Rita Segato)
- The history of religions and the social sciences: syncretism in historical and critical perspective (Tom Lawson and Don Wiebe)
- Popular religion and ethnicity (Elizabeth Diaz Brenis)
- Religious pilgrimages in Mexico (Beatriz Barba Ahuatzin)
- American-Indian theology (Eleazar López, Marinella Miano)
- Religion in the post-modern era (Miguel Martinez, Tomas Martínez)
- History of settlement and the impact of conversion to protestantism in the third world (Artemia Fabré)
- Religion and intolerance (Gilberto Gimenez, Yolotl González)
- Mayan religion: Themes, problems and alternatives for its study (Alfonso Arellano)
- Gypsy religion and ethnicity (Nelly Salinas)
- New dimensions and approaches to Hindu religion in India (Kameshwaar Prasad Sing)
- Religion, state and society in Africa (Jacop Olupona, Abkulkader I. Tayob)
- Time, deification and history (Ileana Chirassi Colombo)
- Women and religious innovations (Rosalind L. J. Hackett)
- New approaches to the sacred: anthropological structure, ontological reality, cultural strategy? (Silvia Mancini)
- Discourse on the two cosmologies: European and nahua theologies in colonial Mexico (Susan Schroeder)
- Recent research on fundamentalism (Hans Kippenberg)
- Agricultural rites and peasant religion (Miguel Martínez, Tomás Martínez)
- Eternal femininity in the divine (Jorge Canseco Vincout)
- Myth, history and mythification (Anatilde Idogaya Molina)

- Religions, law and the construction of identities (Winnifred F. Sullivan)
- Religious practices, cargo systems and popular myths in Mexico (Vania Salles, Maria Ana Portal)
- Should the IAHR become the World Academy of Religion? (Ninian Smart)
- The mystic experience (Elsa Cross)
- Shamanism (Luis Eduardo Luna)
- Religions in Hispania (Roma Martine Azcobereta)
- Social change and ideological evolution in pre-hispanic Mesoamerica: interrelationships and alternatives (Henrik Karol Kocyba)
- Religion of the Mayan groups (Mercedes de la Garza)
- The Andean religions (Mariusz S. Ziotkowski)
- Religion in the socialist countries (Jan Szmyd)
- Afro-Christianity: schism or ideological renewal for societies in crisis in Africa and the Americas (T. K. Biaya)
- The role of women in religion and society (1565-1994): power lost and power regained (F. B. Mangahas)
- Religion, derecho y la construccion de identidades / religion, law and the construction of identities (Elia Nathan, Isabel Cabrera)
- Religion and politics (Silvia Benare)
- Devotion and devotional movements in India (A. R.V. Joshi)
- The mosaic of religion and society in South Africa (Johan Kinghorn)



Keynote Lectures

THE FOUR KEYNOTE LECTURES WERE GIVEN BY:

Yólotl González Torres

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City

Michel Meslin

Collège de France, la Sorbonne, Paris

José Jorge de Carvalho

Department of Anthropology, University of Brasilia

Ashis Nandy

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi



Yolótl Gonzalez Torres

Nativism in Mexico

Mexico is the new centre of spiritual force, not because the 18th International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions is taking place here, but because that is what the movement for Mexicanidad (Mexican-ness), the subject of the present paper, believes. This is a relatively recent and heterogeneous movement which up till now has not been very well organised and is practically unknown to most of the population. But it is taking strength, profiting from the climate created first by the 500th anniversary of the so-called encounter of two worlds, and later by the appearance of the Zapatista guerrillas in Chiapas, with whom the groups of Mexicanidad have no connection but who have influenced people of certain strata of the Mexican population who have become more aware of the marginality in which the Indians have been sunk for centuries.

To re-evaluate a glorious past and to invent traditions is not a phenomenon particular to groups in Mexico but, as Hobsbawm and others have written, is repeated in other parts of the world and is used not only by oppositional groups but also by groups in power and by the State, precisely as an instrument of power. The groups of Mexicanidad have special characteristics which place them in a world current as well as within particular autochthonous practices, in which religion and religious conceptions play a major role. These are the characteristics which we shall try to describe, placing the movement in its historical and cultural context.

As the main discourse in these groups is the revindication of an Indian past, it seems important to me to present a panorama of the history of Mexico, with particular emphasis on the sense of identity of the Mexicans, as well as the great breach within the population between those who identify themselves as Mexican and those who identify themselves as Indian.

It is well known that the Spanish conquerors wiped out the ancient Mexican Empire, earning for themselves the well-deserved fame of the “black legend”: exploitation as well as the new diseases brought by the Spanish, so far unknown

to the inhabitants of the Americas, reduced the population by half. Tenochtitlan, the city which had been so much praised by the Spaniards when they first saw it, was razed to the ground; its temples, palaces and markets disappeared to give place to the churches and other buildings built by the Spanish in what became the capital city of the New Spain.

Temples, gods and books having been destroyed, the priests and the wise men dead, very little remained of the great Mexica culture. There was a first brief attempt of the Spanish friars to learn and evangelise in the autochthonous languages, but after a while the Spanish government imposed a policy of Hispanicisation.¹ In the sixteenth century some Spanish conquerors wrote chronicles of the conquest, mentioning the customs they observed. Several priests like Father Sahagun also wrote about the Indian customs, taking a special interest in the religion in order to fight what they believed was the devil's work. They based their information on what the Indians told them or on what they saw, or on the Indian manuscripts, most of which were unfortunately destroyed. In the sixteenth century some Indian noblemen made attempts to write histories about their elders and their lineages, in which they included aspects of their customs, but it was not until the eighteenth century that the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavigero wrote the first full history of Mexico in which he included the Indian civilisation and the Spanish conquest.

To the decrease of the Indian population was added the immigration of Spanish people, as well as black Africans who had been brought with the Spanish. And all of them started to mix in such a way that a Spanish-speaking mestizo population and culture arose alongside the majority Indians and a small group of Spaniards who were the ones who held power.

The Catholic religion was imposed by the sword on the whole of the Indian population, who adopted it in various degrees. Thus a rich variety of Catholicisms developed, from the most orthodox in the cities to the merest veneer of the new religion in the faraway villages, while in the remotest places the old beliefs were preserved.² According to the opinion of Octavio Paz, in spite of this imposition and due to the terrible events which had happened, Catholicism came to fill an empty space which had been left by "the flight of the prehispanic gods, as

¹ This can be observed from 1550, when the diffusion of Spanish was ordered, to the Royal Cedula of 16 April 1770 in which Indian languages were forbidden, "so that once and for all the different Indian languages spoken in the same dominions become extinguished and only Castilian is spoken" (Aguirre Beltran, p. 67, citing Velasco de Ceballos).

² In a recent lecture on "the Indian Catholicisms" Yuri Escalante gave examples of four modern Indian Catholicisms: the Tpehuanes, the Mayos, the one from a Maya community of Campeche and the one from a Nahuatl Nativist group from Veracruz, which show the great variety of beliefs and rituals of these peoples who nevertheless think themselves Catholic.

it gives them back the sense of their presence on earth, feeding their hopes and justifying their life and death” (p. 43).

In 1821, after three centuries of Spanish dominion and eleven years of struggle the independence of Mexico was accomplished. But this movement of independence, in which several Catholic priests had actively participated, was organised and directed by a group of minor officers of Spanish descent who had felt discriminated against by the peninsular Spaniards, and even though several groups of Indians had also participated, most of them remained isolated in their communities, in such a way that their general situation remained the same and in some ways even worsened. Samuel Ramos (p. 54) describes the Mexican population after independence had just been obtained as a “heterogeneous race geographically divided by the great extension of the territory. A mass of population miserable and uncultured, passive and indifferent, used to bad life, and a dynamic and educated minority.”

The years that followed independence were critical and hard for the country, which suffered several attacks by some European countries and the United States, causing the loss of more than half of its territory. But at the same time, a new consciousness of belonging to a nation started to develop, and to a certain extent the pre-Hispanic cultures started to be revalued in an attempt to search for autochthonous origins. It is at this time that the Museum of History was created and the study of the ancient cultures began. But all these efforts were undertaken by the groups in power – Creoles and mestizo, absolutely distanced from the Indian mentality and with clear and overt political motives. Some Indians transcended their “Indianness” and even successfully became prominent members of Mexican society, as was the case with President Benito Juárez, who achieved a liberal Constitution and the Laws of Reformation which abolished the privileges of the Church, destroyed its material power and gave new foundations to the nation.

Paz says of the Reform movement that “it consummated independence, imparting a real meaning to it, as it set in motion an examination of the very foundation of Mexican society and of the historical and philosophical assumptions in which it was sustained. This examination ends with a triple negation: of the Spanish heritage, of the indigenous past and of Catholicism – which affirmed the first two in a superior affirmation” (pp. 113, 114). On the other hand he adds (p.115) that “Reformation was the project of a very reduced group of Mexicans who voluntarily detached themselves from the great mass of the passively religi-

ous and traditionalist. The Mexican nation is the project of a minority who imposed their scheme on the rest of the nation against another very active traditional minority.” All this happened within a creole mestizo society which on the one hand was trying to recover an ever more distant and ever more mythical past, while on the other hand they were trying to “civilise” the Indians, teaching them the “national” language – Spanish – and aiming to homogenise the population (Aguirre Beltran p. 71).

By the end of the nineteenth and beginnings of the twentieth century, General Porfirio Díaz, also of Indian origin, who had fought against the French invaders and later adopted a French way of life, tried to industrialise the country through a dictatorship under which the peasants and the Indians were the most badly affected. In spite of the ill treatment the Indians were given, the people in the government searching for a symbol of the Mexican nation found it in the practically forgotten figure of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec Emperor, for whom a statue was erected in one of the main avenues of the city. The bronze statue of the young Indian dressed in the manner of the prehispanic people with a loin cloth, a cloak and a feather head-dress contrasted with the signorial houses of the rich landowning families.³

After the Díaz dictatorship followed the “Revolution”, another armed movement of peasant origin, which lasted from 1910 to 1921, and whose demands included the redistribution of land and the betterment of the social situation, above all that of the peasants. Zapata, one of the main leaders, included, for the first time, the Indians as interlocutors in his political discourse (S. Rueda, personal communication).

Although the following governments tried in a sense to revalorise what was Indian, with an indigenous discourse, they also tried to modernise the country

³ It is practically impossible to make a history of the ethnic composition of Mexico, in particular, how it was transformed from being 100% Indian in the 16th century to a mere 20 % today. This does not mean that the 80% is not Indian, but rather a mixed population, qualified mostly as mestizo, speaking Spanish, but with various hues of skin color and a culture homogenized by radio and television. Even if it is not possible to have an adequate census of the population who spoke Indian languages, it can be said that most of the Mexican population spoke them at least till the time of the Revolution and that Spanish only was spoken only in some of the big cities. In 1910 62 languages and dialects were registered. In 1909 Molina Enríquez (op. cit. p. 154) speaks of a population of 14 millions out of which 50 % were mestizo, 35% Indians and 15 % white and of 62 languages and dialects (Aguirre p.71). In 1921, 49 Indian languages were spoken by 30 % of the population, in 1927 Alfredo Uruchurtu provides data which raises to more than 50 % the population which was catalogued as Indian (Ibid p.91,92). By 1954 Jiménez Moreno and German Parra wrote (Aguirre pp.91-92) that “there are 4 million Indians out of which one can say that two million do not speak Spanish. The census gives the number of 1,092 453 speakers of Indian languages for a population of 25,781,70, that is 10%.

by introducing literacy to the countryside as an instrument of development and of civilisation. This literacy was in Spanish, and in teaching this language to the people who did not speak it they aimed to homogenise the country. During the thirties, despite the fact that there had been two presidents of Indian origin, it was still thought necessary to prove that the Indians were as capable of learning as the whites:

The real nucleus of Mexican life consists mainly of a middle class whose whole existence is defined according to European lifestyles. But in so far as the majority of this population is of Indian derivation, their mental consciousness does not permit them to detach themselves from the primitivism current in the surrounding population. (Samel Ramos 1934)

The events which followed the Revolution led middle-class Mexicans to feel that knowing who is a Mexican had become “a problem of life or death” (Paz, p. 12); that is why Samuel Ramos wrote his book “Perfil del hombre en la cultura en México” in 1934, which has been considered the first anthropology of Mexico and the first philosophy of Mexican national culture. Twenty years later Octavio Paz wrote his famous essay “El laberinto de la Soledad” in which he analyses the personality of the Mexicans. In both books and in several others which appeared during the fifties the common denominator is a deep feeling of inferiority and even self-incomprehension: “Mexicans are not only enigmatic for foreigners but for the Mexicans themselves” (Paz, p. 63).

The character of the Mexicans is a product of the social circumstances which rule the country; the history of Mexico which is the history of these circumstances contains the answers to all these questions. The situation of the people during the colonial period would thus be the root of our closed and unstable attitude. Our history as an independent nation would also contribute to perpetuating and to making more neat that servile psychology, as we have not managed to suppress the social misery nor the exasperating social differences, in spite of a century and a half of struggles and constitutional experiences. The use of violence as a dialectical resource, the abuse of authority by the powerful, a vice which has not disappeared so far, and finally the skepticism and the resignation of the people – now more visible than ever due to the successive post-revolutionary disillusion – would complete this historical explanation. (Paz, pp. 64–5)

With the opening of new ways of communication, modernisation was introduced into the most remote communities; education entered through it but so did beer and Coca-cola. Poverty in the countryside produced a great migration to the cities, which grew gigantically.

The divide between the indigenous peasant population and the mestizo urban population opened more and more; to the latter were added immigrants from other countries (Europeans: Spanish and Eastern European Jews; Lebanese; and a very small number of Japanese and other nationalities⁴) who were almost always incorporated into the middle class.

Even if Mexico did not participate actively in the Second World War, it was affected by it in various ways. For example, the “oil expropriation” of 1938 increased the patriotic sentiment of the population and the search for Mexican identity.

It was in 1959, in this urban atmosphere, that the lawyer and journalist Rodolfo Nieva along with other people founded the Movimiento Confederado Restaurador del Anahuac (Confederate Restoration Movement of Anahuac), MCRA, which would become the antecedent and starting point of the present movement of Mexicanidad. Nieva was surely influenced, as many other middle-class Mexicans had been, by Samuel Ramos’ statement in the book we have already mentioned: “it is indispensable to revise the conceptions about Mexico which have passed into the text books (which are read in schools), falsified by an inferiority complex. It is necessary to encourage interest in and respect for Mexican things” (p. 163). It is curious nevertheless that in the same book Ramos always speaks of belonging to the Hispanic race and clearly states that “the inhabitant of the capital of Mexico frequently forgets that within the country two different worlds coexist which barely touch one another. One is primitive and belongs to the Indian, and the other is civilised and is of the dominion of the white man” – he of course assumed himself to be a Mexican belonging to the world of the white man.

This particular vision of Ramos must have influenced Nieva, who identified himself first as *criollo*, maintaining that the *criollos* were the true Mexicans, later opted to be a mestizo, and finally decided on his assumed Indian identity. According to the data recorded by Lina Odena Guemez⁵ in her pioneering work on

⁴ The Chinese brought in as a cheap labor force at the end of the nineteenth century mainly for the construction of railways were savagely deported and repressed during the Revolution and in 1934.

⁵ All facts concerning the emergence of MCRA and the life of Nieva are taken from the two essays by Lina Odena Guemez which appear in the list of references.

the movement of Mexicanidad, Nieva had a revelation and then the “council of elders” of Xochimilco (a town near Mexico) called him and other young men – among whom were Tlacaelel and José González Rodríguez, about whom we shall speak later – to give them the order which Cuauhtemoc had left before his surrender in August 1521, asking his people to hide all their knowledge until it was time to divulge it.

In 1957 Nieva abjured his Catholic religion, probably adopting some form of Indian religiosity, and in that same year he founded the Mexicanist movement or “mexikayo ahcomanalli” and started the doctrine of Mexicanidad, of which one of the main proposals was to restore the Nahuatl language in Mexico to the exclusion of any other.

Nieva was a very active person who knew many people, including people in the government. He had been at university with the later President of Mexico, had been employed as secretary to the Regent of the City, and he wrote a column in *El Universal*, one of the most prestigious newspapers of the country.

In 1959 he founded along with other people, among them Tlacaelel and José González Rodríguez, the Movimiento Confederado Restaurador del Anahuac, MCRA. He became acquainted with people and Institutions of other countries and founded in 1960 the newspaper *Izkalotl* as an organ of his association. He promoted the celebration of Cuauhtemoc’s birth and fought for the suppression of the day of the race, or the anniversary of the “discovery of America” by Cristóbal Colon, and even though none of them except José González Rodríguez knew Nahuatl, he organised the teaching of this language⁶.

In 1967 he founded the political party of Mexicanidad, one of its main objectives being the reestablishment of Nahuatl as the official language of the country. He also proposed the exclusion of all non-Indians from government jobs. But not all who had formed the MCRA with him agreed that it should be converted into a political party, and they therefore broke with Nieva, who died a short time later – there were rumours that he was murdered.

There is another version of the founding of the MCRA in which José González Rodríguez⁷ plays a crucial role. He was born in 1927 in Sta Cruz Acalpixca on the edges of Xochimilco lake, and his parents were Nahuatl-speaking peasants. In those days Nahuatl was widely spoken in many of the villages

⁶ In spite of Nahuatl having been the language of most of the inhabitants of Mexico, it was not taught anywhere except to a few specialised students in the School of anthropology and the History section of the National University of Mexico.

⁷ The information about José González Rodríguez has been taken from his daughter Anahuac González (p. 56) and her personal information.

which surrounded the capital, most of which have now been absorbed by the urban sprawl so that only a few elderly people still speak the language nowadays. According to his daughter, he was born covered by the amniotic membrane and this qualified him as an exceptional being. At thirteen he was appointed by the council of elders as Capellantlaca or depositary of traditional knowledge, knowledge which he tried to preserve and to promote all his life. In 1954 he founded, along with other Nahuatl-speaking teachers from Milpa Alta and other towns from the states of Morelos and Puebla, the Movimiento Restaurador Confederado del Anahuac, the same that Nieva registered as a civil association and of which he became president. This shows that the mysterious meeting of the council of elders from Xochimilco to which Nieva was summoned was his own invention, probably after his meeting with the young Nahua teachers who had already formed an association to recover their old culture. It is very likely that José González Rodríguez introduced him to the council of elders of Xochimilco, who became Nieva's mythical council of elders. It was also to José González Rodríguez that Clemente Rivera from Santa Ana Tlacotenco – another village from Xochimilco – gave the famous Cuauhtemoc's consigna in which he ordered the Mexican people to preserve their knowledge in secret until the time came to make it public. González Rodríguez lived in Chicago for some years, which intensified his identity as a Nahuatl-speaking Mexican.

In 1949, a newspaper published the news that a manuscript had been found which proved that Cuauhtemoc's remains were buried under the great altar of the church of Santa María in the town of Ichcateopan in the state of Guerrero. The teacher and archaeologist Eulalia Guzmán was charged by the Government with the investigation and the excavation of Cuauhtemoc's remains, and as in those days most of the inhabitants of Ichcateopan spoke Nahuatl, she asked González Rodríguez to help her as a translator. The research about the authenticity of Cuauhtemoc's remains became an ideological issue and even though most of the specialists who were hired by the government concluded that the remains were not Cuauhtemoc's, Eulalia Guzmán and all her followers declared that they were, so that from then on Ichcateopan became a pilgrimage site charged with meaning (Barba de Piña Chan 262). González Rodríguez dedicated all his life to recovering his culture, especially that of his own village. He was involved in protecting the archaeological remains of Cuilama near Xochimilco, and he also promoted the teaching of Nahuatl. Towards the end of the sixties he founded, with his family and some friends, his own group of traditional dance.

He was one of the people who disagreed with Nieva when the latter founded his political party of Mexicanidad, as his aspirations were cultural and not political.

It was during the two decades between 1950 and 1970, when Nieva was most active, that the population of Mexico increased from 25,791,017 to 48,225,238 inhabitants, with 59 per cent of them living in urban places. From being a basically rural country it also underwent rapid industrialisation and consequently saw the accentuation of regional and social differences and the increased concentration of income. There was also a development of the middle and professional strata and a growth in the groups of workers and bureaucrats who had access to various goods and to a network of services and infrastructure. A series of commodities became available which the previous generations had not had: electric light, telephone, television, contraceptive pills, all of which produced a sense of hope for obtaining a better world. There was also a sense of idealism: young people believed in a utopia, they thought that everything was possible and they fought against intolerance and the alienating capitalism of the third world, against the colonialist and imperialistic wars, against racism and the South American military dictatorships, but also against the bureaucracies of the countries with an authoritarian socialism in East and Central Europe. At the same time the discovery of the contraceptive pill allowed more sexual freedom, which led to the emergence of the feminist movement, and as a corollary to the anti-racist struggle emerged the Afro-American and the Chicano movements in the United States, all of them in search of identity and of a revindication of their rights.

After Nieva's death, the MCRA itself entered a period of crisis, even though his sister Ma del Carmen Nieva continued the publication of the *Izkalotl*. The developments mentioned above led to the formation of new groups which were directed by some of Nieva's old collaborators or by younger people. The a period of prosperity was followed by one of great social disturbances and the corresponding repressions of the government, which came to their worst expression in October 1968 with the massacre of students in the Plaza de Tlatelolco in the centre of the city of Mexico on the eve of the celebration of the 15th Olympic Games. The reaction of the government to the social demands of the students was disproportionate. Nobody knows for sure how many people were killed. The newspapers did not publish what actually happened and it is still in question to this day. The following years were of terror; many leaders were put into prison. In 1971 the massacre was repeated, urban and rural guerrillas emerged

and an atmosphere of frustration and hopelessness was created. The middle class was unsatisfied, which led to the appearance of escapist movements and causes, from Marxism to oriental doctrines. There was a real social crisis, of values and of identities, above all a sense of impotence in face of the pitiless repression of the social and student movement, as well as the continuous pauperisation of the peasants and the ensuing migration to the cities and their gigantic growth. Giménez (p. 41) links the generalised social crisis to psychological problems of uprootedness which lead to changes in identity and religion.

To all this must be added the phenomena of globalisation – including spiritual globalisation – which produced on the one hand a loss of identity and on the other a retrospective search for it. In Mexico there was a clear sign of the crisis of values: the Catholic church's monopoly started to break and massive conversions to various protestant denominations of Indians to the south of Mexico and in the urban centres took place, the intellectuals flirted with oriental doctrines, especially those from India, popularising terms like karma, chakra, energy and so on. On the other hand, also as a direct product of hippy culture, ecological movements emerged, as well as movements for the recuperation of Indianness, especially North American Indianness. People were attracted for example by shamanism and alternative medicines. Many aspects of the new cultural orientation were discovered in books written by anthropologists like Castaneda⁸. All this agrees with the conditions defined by Hobsbawm (1992, p. 4) as conducive to the invention of new traditions. One such situation would be that marked by social dislocations: when a society is undergoing rapid transformations, the same forces which weaken or destroy the social patterns for which "old" traditions have been designed, produce new ones to which they are not applicable; when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove to be sufficiently adaptable they are eliminated. This formulation may be added to the one of social tension (Geertz 1973 p. 205) with a notion of the role of the traditional and organic intellectuals in the formation of history and culture (Gramsci 1971). The invention of tradition is intimately linked to the structure of society and reflects in one way or another the potential of the cleavages within it. It is an expression of the history of the differential patterns of incorporation of populations (Smith 1991, p.8) and of their sectional interests.

⁸ It is not to be forgotten that there was, and perhaps is also a hidden Mexico history of manipulation and ignorance, which is illustrated by the lynching of a group of workers from the University of Puebla by a group of Indian peasants. The peasants were incited by their Catholic priest who accused the workers of being communists.

Hobsbawm (1992, p. 9) identifies three types of invented traditions which overlap: the ones that establish and symbolise social cohesions and group membership; the ones that legitimise institutions, status and authority relationships; and those whose main purpose is socialisation. He is concerned with what those traditions do in connection with social units and processes and not only with part of the processes by which the subjects are transformed into objects, these traditions become united to these objects and ensure their continuity. The integral elements of the socio-historical configurations give to the individuals and to the collectives distinctive identities and new opportunities (Bond and Gillian p.12).

Increased massification leads to the emergence of micro-groups which Maffesoli (1988) calls tribes and which he places on an intermediate level between Weber's "emotional communities" and multiculturalism. He considers religiosity as an essential part of tribalism (p. 14). He also thinks that as the masses are in perpetual restless motion and the already crystallised tribes are stable, the people composing these tribes may evolve from one state to the other (p. 17).

In this Mexican broth of groups in search of identity, groups of people make themselves visible by dressing in white or in folkloric or semi-folkloric Mexican costumes, with a red ribbon on their heads. They begin to congregate in archaeological monuments and in the lectures of specialists on Prehispanic Mexican culture, contesting what is said there to make clear their disagreement with the prevalent interpretation of Pre-hispanic history. The *concheros* or traditional ritual dancers, which used to be seen on the name-days of the saints in the Catholic churches, now appear in the Zocalo and in the archaeological monuments. Who are these people? They are precisely the members of the Mexicanidad movement, many of them inheritors of MCRA and others who have emerged later, apparently after 1968. Even though they are very heterogeneous, all of them have as a common aim the reestablishment of Prehispanic values.

In spite of the complexity of their composition and even if they are also quite heterogeneous in their organisations and beliefs it can be said that they sustain that:

1. The data on which Prehispanic history are based are false or partial, because they were written by the Spanish conquerors or by Spanish priests who came to evangelise.
2. There were no human sacrifices.

3. They had no gods, instead they believed in forces, concentrations of energy which received the names of Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli⁹, etc.

4. There were no pyramids , but teocalis.¹⁰

5. There were no kings but tlatoanis.¹¹

6. The Mexica had a peaceful state, ruled in a democratic way, which was based in organized groups called calpulli¹² “perhaps the most perfect system in the world”.

7. There is no Prehispanic epoch but precuahtemica.

8. There is no Mesoamérica but Anahuac.¹³

The members of Mexicanidad, Mexicayotl or Mexica Tiahui, hold cosmic ceremonies in the archaeological monuments, in the solstices and equinoxes and civic ceremonies on the important historical dates like the birth of Cuauhtemoc or the fall of Tenochtitlan. They hold rituals in front of images like Coatlicue at the National museum of Anthropology, to awaken the collective unconscious of the Mexicans. They change former Christian names to Nahuatl names. One of their most important demands is to learn the Nahuatl language and to impose it as the national language. They worship Cuauhtemoc.

It is important to emphasise again that the great majority of the members of the Mexicanidad movement are *criollos*-mestizo¹⁴ inhabitants of the cities, from the middle class, including primary and secondary school teachers, members of

⁹ Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli are two of the main gods of the Mexicas.

¹⁰ Teocali means in Nahuatl “house of god” and most temples were erected on pyramidal bases.

¹¹ Tlatoani “ the one who talks” was the name given to the Mexica governor or leader which has been freely translated as king, even though he was not a king in the European meaning of the word.

¹² In my own detailed study of the written sources I concluded that it was an economic administrative unit, formed by a number of apparently nuclear families and an administrative chief (1981 p. 73); on the other hand Lopez Austin apparently leans toward a lineage relationship between the members of the calpulli (1974 p.519). Carrasco gives data which may show that members of several non related generations may exist in the calpulli. Katz suggests that it was a self sufficient unity and Monzón (1949 p.71) says that it was an ambilateral clan, etc. (Y. González , ibid. p.73).

¹³ Mesoamerica or Middle America is a term used by anthropologists to refer to a particular cultural area, while Anahuac means in Nahuatl “around the water”.

¹⁴ Criollos is or rather was the name given to people of Spanish descent, while mestizo are the people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, though other “bloods” may be included.

liberal professions like journalists, lawyers, and so on, and there are many young followers studying at the school of Anthropology. None of them had Nahuatl or other Indian language as their mother tongue, even though at a certain moment a group of Nahuatl speakers teachers was incorporated into the movement. Several of the leaders of the movement have learnt well the language which they now teach.

In 1993 Tlacael, one of the old members of the MCRA and one of the most charismatic spiritual leaders registered his Kalpulli in Kaltonal or House of the Sun in the “Administration of Religious Affairs” of the Ministry of Interior as a religious association, for which he had to provide documents containing the fundamental basis of his doctrine, and listing his associates and cult ministers. This document (Izkalotl p.15) therefore contains a basic statement of doctrine and in general the religious conception of Mexikayotl — Mexicanness. In his declaration of principles he states that: “It looks for the relation of identity with the cosmic energy of existence which leads human beings to spiritual excelling, to harmony and conviviality with nature. It considers that man is born free, but being mortal, transitory and relative, his life is a function of the permanence of the collectivity, independently of the social position in which he was born but always with the possibility of overcoming it according to the welfare of humanity. As an organisation it teaches that all human beings are brothers.”

It describes the ceremonial which is to take place to recover *mexikayotl*, “designed for our grandparents by the Great Spirit of Creation” which consists of the *tonalpohualli*¹⁵, the *temaskal*¹⁶, the search for a vision, the sacred pipe and the dance.

Some of the mentioned elements are of Mesoamerican origin, others have been taken from the North American Indians. Still others are shared by both, for they include as a fundamental and indispensable element of their ceremonies for becoming priests of the Inkaltal the dance of the sun, learnt from the Lakota Indians.

Tlakaël tells us in his autobiography that he came from a very poor family of Indian origin who lived near the city of Mexico. He specifies that his maternal grandmother spoke Nahuatl and that his father was a peon of the hacienda Molino de las Flores, but that he was a descendant of the poet-king Netzahualcoyotl.

¹⁵ Tonalpohualli or “count of days or of destinies”, is a ritual “calendar” of 260 days formed by 20 signs and 13 numerals which combined give certain “dates” giving the destiny of individuals.

¹⁶ Temaskal is the native steam bath used throughout America.

According to his version it was his father who took him to the council of elders. He says that as a child he lived for some years as a shepherd of goats and sheep with his maternal grandmother. It was there that he had his first extrasensorial experiences when, from the hill of Moctezuma, the same place where the Catholic sanctuary of the Virgin of Los Remedios is now (the place where the Spanish were defeated), he saw a flourishing old Indian town, talked to its inhabitants and received the food which they offered him. When he was nine years old he went to Chihuahua where he “started to have a different perception of what surrounded me. I saw for the first time the energy which emanated from people, animals, plants and even minerals”. (Tlacaoel p. 64). Years later he met Niño Fidencio, a miraculous healer who lived in Nuevo León. Four times he was struck by lightning, which qualified him as a *granicero*, a “rain maker” who could influence tempests and call down rains. This is what he did in the United States where he went to work as a *bracero*. There he was not only converted to Protestantism but even became a pastor, only to abandon that religion later. Still later he worked on a boat, and on his return to Mexico joined the army.

After his return to Mexico he became acquainted with the German Juan Spel who not only cured him of an illness but also introduced him to people believed to possess psychic power. Among these were some old men from Tepoztlan from whom he learned traditional knowledge. In the end he established himself in Coacalco, where for fifteen years he prepared himself through diet and meditation for the attainment of altered states of consciousness. He frequently experienced states of ecstasy. His behaviour was evidently found to be strange in the community, for the local Catholic priest tried to exorcise him. An Indian lady called Elenita was his guide who helped him to understand what happened in his states of trance. She taught him to know people, to increase his sensibility, to recycle it and convert it into blood. She also taught him how to create a magic egg around himself for protection.

He became increasingly interested in the life of his Indian ancestors. “I accumulated force to bring to life the remembrance of the events of my life and of our historical past. I analysed the philosophy, the languages, the religion, the Indian history”. (Ibid. p.110)

Very soon answers came up to the questions which he posed about the religion of his elders. “What it is said about it is a construction, improvised by ignorant people, primitive, who imposed on us the idea that there were gods of the sun, of the water, of war. I reflected on what a religion means, namely, a re-encounter

with the origins. I concluded that Mexicayotl, the Red Road, the path of the grandparents, is a religion”.

After that he began to attract followers, to have students and to teach, forming the Kalpulli Coacalco “ Centre for the studies of Anthropology and of social indigenous communication ”, according to the order of the last *tlahtoani* Cuauhtemoc and of the council of elders. “We wanted to show that the *kalpulli* still is an alternative form of social, political and cultural organisation. The principles of this centre of teaching are autonomy, autharchy and self sufficiency”.

As part of their task of “throwing the four arrows”, that is, taking the message to the four quarters of the American continent or Itzachtlan, he visited a great number of North American Indian peoples: the Pimas, Navahos, Mohawk, Taos, Creek, Lakotas, Sioux, Apache, etc. establishing contact with their leaders. During one of this journeys he was initiated by the Lakota in the red path of the warrior, in the dance of the sun “the dance of the white eagle which represents the human being from his beginning till he reaches plenitude” (p.111).

In 1975 he summoned a congress which he called “New Fire 1975”¹⁷ in the old School of Medicine of the National University of Mexico and later he repeated the ceremony of the New Fire in the Coatepetl hill, which he says he has identified with the mythical mountain of the serpent where Huitzilopochtli fought against the Huitznahua. As previously mentioned, in 1993 he registered In Kaltonal as a religious organisation, which already has a great number of followers including a number of foreigners.

Another important leader of Mexicanidad is Miguel Angel Mendoza, a journalist. He is the son of a famous ethnomusicologist and folklorist who founded in 1977 the Centro de Cultura Preamericana or Cemanahuac Tlamachtiloyan, whose objectives are the study, research, teaching and diffusion of the traditions of “our pre-american forefathers”.

Miguel Angel Mendoza changed his name to Cuauhcoatl and surrounded himself with a group of “people of knowledge” who, according to him, had not received proper acknowledgement from the Academy. Among them was Romerovargas Iturbide, who according to Cuauhcoatl, spoke many languages, had been a librarian at the Vatican University in Rome. Romerovargas wrote several fundamental books for the Mexicanidad movement, one about Moctezuma, presenting him as a very good ruler, which was rather different from what standard histories said about him, and stressing the savage and inhuman treatment of

¹⁷ The Mexica believed that once every 52 years the sun may not rise again and so they made a ceremony in the night at the top of a hill, where a new fire was kindled.

the Indian nobility and of the population in general by the Spaniards after the conquest. In his book about the social organisation of the Aztecs, he describes the *kalpulli* as the ideal form of organisation of communal work of the Mexica. Cuahcoatl says that somehow somebody gave Romero Vargas' book on the *kalpulli* to Mao Tse-tung in China, and he was so impressed by it that he invited the author to his country, where he spent some time explaining it, thus giving Mao ideas for the organisation of communes.

Cuahcoatl has learnt Nahuatl very well and has dedicated himself with passion to the mission of teaching this language. He also delivers lectures, organises guided tours to the museums, especially the National Museum of Anthropology. Here he performs "cosmic ceremonies" with which he pretends to be "driving the genetic memory which functions in the collective and social unconscious of the Mexicans". He also participates in the cosmic rituals which take place at the archaeological sites and places where historical anniversaries are celebrated, like the fall of Tenochtitlan and the birth of Cuauhtemoc or of Cuitlahuac (another Aztec hero), or the triumph of the Mexicas against the Spaniards in the so-called "Sad night" (for the Spanish). In addition he officiates as a pre-cuauhtemic priest, performing marriages or the "taking of duality", as it is known.

In 1982 Cuahcoatl organised on a massive scale the anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan on the 15 August 1525, for which occasion he summoned all the traditional dance groups to get together and dance for the first time in 500 years in the great plaza of the city of Mexico. Even though there were some problems with the city authorities, apparently because they heard that the dancers were going to bring their "arms", which was true because they call their musical instruments their "arms", more than 200 dancers got together.

Cuahcoatl continued Nieva's fight against the celebration of the "Day of the Race", an official holiday on which a civic ceremony is held in honour of Cristóbal Colon in front of his statue. This statue is in one of the main avenues of Mexico City just two blocks from the one of Cuauhtemoc.

At the same time other leaders of the movement emerged such as Bernardina Green, Tlakatzin Stivalet, Mariano Leyva, Arturo Meza, all of them members of liberal professions (primary and high school teachers, lawyers, dancers, engineers, medical doctors), who had learnt Nahuatl and studied books about prehispanic culture. They wrote their own accounts of prehispanic history and culture purveying the common ideology of Mexicanidad. A great number of groups called *kalpulli* have been formed, leading to the coining of the term *cal-*

pulcratia (Rodríguez p. 205). Even though the *kalpullis* of the Mexicanidad movement claim to have a democratic base of organisation, they vary a lot in their organisational forms and in their objectives. We have already mentioned Tla-kael's *kalpulli*, there are some whose main objective is dance, while others teach the "real" history of Anahuak. Yet again, the "calpulli" of San Bernardino California had its origin in the ecclesial base communities of Indian theology (ibid p.218). It was founded by the Catholic nun Martha Zárate of a Catholic Communitary Chicana organisation, where they teach not Nahuatl but English and run a library and various cooperatives.

A second movement within Mexicanidad may be called the New Mexicanness or Regina's followers, or as they are called colloquially "the reginos". This movement has its origins in the book *Regina. 1968 no se olvida* by Velasco Piña which tells the story of Regina, a young edecan of the Olympics murdered in Tlatelolco in 1968. According to the novel this young girl was born at the foot of the Iztacihuatl and Popocatepetl volcanoes in the Valley of Mexico, from a Mexican Indian mother and a German father. Destiny leads the father to go to work in Tibet, taking with him his wife and daughter, but there the parents are killed during the Chinese invasion. The girl is saved by a Lama who takes her to an isolated valley where he gives her a spiritual education. After a time they are discovered by the Chinese who kill the Lama and take Regina as a prisoner to China. During her captivity she also receives esoteric teaching from a Chinese master. In 1968, Regina is able to get back to Mexico with the task of awakening the country spiritually. For this she gets in touch first with the "guardians of the old traditions": Olmec, Toltec, Maya and Nahuatl. Along with them and with the followers whom she has been gathering around her, among whom the "witness" is Velasco Piña, she performs a series of rituals, which are aimed at opening the path of spirituality in Mexico. The first of these involve a millenary tree in Chapultepec park and the Metropolitan Cathedral. She then goes to Teotihuacan where she also performs rituals first at the Pyramid of the Moon and then at the Pyramid of the Sun. Being unable to finish all her rituals, she decides to immolate herself in Tlatelolco along with 400 of her followers, but before that she announces that some Tibetan monks will come to open the last locks which were holding back the spiritual energy of the pyramids.

Velasco Piña says in one of his books that even before the monks came to Mexico some followers of Regina started coming to the pyramids of Teotihuacan during the equinoxes. Later, in 1989, the Dalai Lama came to Mexico at the invi-

tation of the Tibet House of Mexico. He performed rituals in Teotihuacan and participated in a ceremony in the Cathedral of Mexico. In 1991 six monks from Ganden Shartse monastery performed a ceremony in the spring equinox, succeeding, as Regina had announced, in opening the last seal which was holding the free flux of the world energy (Velasco Piña 1995 p. 12). At the same time the members of Wirikuta Bridge were holding a similar ceremony in Copan (Ruz p. 261). So in march 1993 “the most powerful and subtle energies from the cosmos and earth were united in the Pyramid of the Sun, to generate a light with which all human beings of good will in every part of the world who wish to profit from the realisation of the highest purposes can connect themselves. (Velasco Piña 1995 p. 66).

Wirikuta Bridge is a group which was formed in the Sierra Huichola by Alberto Ruz and Emilio Fiel with the aim to “lay a spiritual bridge between Spain and Mexico”. Ruz was the son of a famous Maya archaeologist who, disillusioned after the 1968 students’ repression, left Mexico and established himself in the United States, getting in contact with underground groups. Along with other young people of different nationalities he travelled around the world as far as India in a mobile commune bus, playing music and acting in the places they visited. While in Europe, they became acquainted with alternative movements like the German Commune Ein und Zwei in Berlin, and Probo and Kibantur in Holland, the libertarian groups around Pinelli in Italy. They were also involved in the occupation of Christiana in Copenhagen and with the situationist Bauhaus of Drakabygeet in the South of Sweden. Back in America they established themselves for a time in California, where they made contact with native American groups and with the tribe of the Rainbow – from which they have since separated – and they participated in happenings, rituals, theatrical plays, festivals and sessions of group healing.

In 1980 they returned to Mexico and in 1982 founded an ecological commune in Huehucoyotl in the state of Morelos, a place which has become a centre of alternative and New Age movements¹⁸. In the same year Ruz linked up with Ve-

¹⁸ Armin Geertz (1994, p.307) says that “The term ‘New Age’ covers an incredible variety of groups, attitudes, and philosophies. The New Age is many different things and yet it is perceived by its exponents as containing one holistic world view which is characterised by its exponents as “an amorphous cultural transition” without creed, dogma or leaders, but which integrates such concerns as “environmentalism, holistic health, women’s rights, social responsibility, and personal spirituality (Graves 1988; cf. Adolph 1988). J. Gordon Melton wrote that “the New Age movement was and is the attempt to find the social, religious, political, and cultural convergence between the new Eastern and mystical religions and the religious disenchantment of many Westerners” (1986:107). The New Age is openly eclectic and apocryphal. It is a search for universal meaning, but it should be noted that it is essentially an American per-

lasco Piña's group in a ceremony in Tlatelolco in which "a circle of women re-constructed with rose petals the form of the goddess Coyolxauhqui"¹⁹, in the ceremonial centre" after a march of silence led by one of the leaders and by Velasco Piña himself. He took all the participants dressed in white and headed by four warriors playing conch shells to the very centre of the City of Mexico. Marching in the opposite direction were "more than 500,000 people bearing the red flags of the "Revolución del 68", militants of the new and the old left, workers and peasants, followers of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, taking also the black flags of mourning for the people who felt in 68' (Ibid p. 249).

In 1986 Ruz answered the call of José Arguelles for a "harmonic convergence" in which 144 000 human beings from the planet Earth should get together on the 15th and 16th August of 1987. These days, being 25 years before the critical year of 2011 when the great Maya cycle ends "would be a trigger point when we shift gears, or miss the opportunity (Geertz, cit Barsol and Abrahmson 1987 p.50). "...if 144,000 people can get together, hold hands and hum on those two days in August then the earth will have an easy transition to the harmonic convergence" (Geertz pp. 312, 313).

In 1989 Ruz organised a ceremony of "reopening of the ceremonial Maya centres in which around 200 people from different parts of the world participated, among them Velasco Piña, José Arguelles and Humbatz Mem. At the spring equinox of 1991 he organised a meeting at the Ceremonial Centre of Temoaya which he called "Council of visions: guardians of earth". According to Ruz more than 150 representatives of 30 countries of the world came, and the major success was to bring together during one week Indian representatives of several Mexican and Guatemalan ethnic groups, organisations of Mexicanidad, New Age, Aquarians, ecologists, pacifists, human rights workers, feminists, anti-nuclear campaigners, promoters of personal growth and representatives of the Rainbow in the Americas". (Ruz p. 265)

As the 500 anniversary of the arrival of Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus) in America was getting near different preparations were taking place to celebrate it. In Spain a great celebration was being prepared with much

ception of what is "universal" and what is to be "transcended". It is this disregard of cultural uniqueness that turns what seems like universal liberation into a new form of imperialism, especially towards minority, ethnic, and tribal groups. It is what I have called a self righteous "spiritual imperialism" (ibid:107-108)

¹⁹ Coyolxauhqui is Huitzilopochtli's sister, whom he killed. Her beautiful dismembered portrait was found several years ago at the foot of Tenochtitlan's Great Temple. She has been interpreted as the image of the moon and somehow has been adopted by feminists and, apparently, by New Age people.

anticipation, but the Indian and the alternative minority groups (feminists, ecologists and gays) had something different in mind. Their idea was to manifest a protest against the massacres and exploitation to which the American Indians had been subjected, and they were successful to the extent that in America and Europe too people started to organise their own protest and created a Committee against the Fifth Centenary.

In 1991 the Menéndez Pelayo International University of Spain organised a “seminar on the neglected knowledge of Indian America” to which were invited Fiel, Velazco Piña, Ruz and others, and at which attitude to be taken towards the forthcoming celebration of the encounter of two cultures was to be discussed. They decided that one of the actions would be a pilgrimage from the city of Leon to Santiago de Compostela. When this took place, with the participation of the persons already mentioned, they also invited the female “captain” of the “dance of tradition” who initiated Fiel as captain of a dance group in Spain. Besides this pilgrimage in Spain, there was at least one other in Italy from Genoa to Asissi. October 12th 1992 was the culmination of an anti-celebration in different parts of America. The events in Mexico on that date, in front of Colón’s statue, were registered by the newspapers (Melo Ruiz, Javier, cit Plasencia pp. 40, 41):

“More than revive the Prehispanic past it was revered, the nostalgia of a mystified past was the norm, the past became a simulacrum, a portrayal; the Mexicans performed spiritual rituals of “universal fusion”, people dressed entirely in white with a red ribbon on their heads took their hands in order “not to break the energy”, and they raised them to receive waves of *copal*. On the other hand Quetzalcoatl was being invoked for the re-founding of the Great Tenochtitlan...

...While some inaugurated the “Era of the Sixth Sun”, others were meditating...

The general slogan seemed to be “let every one chose its own tradition”. And if it is not found, so much the better, it is invented...

The different Indian marches converged at the Zocalo, though they were few, as many of them decided to culminate their march at Teotihuacan, where an act against the celebration was also held...

The only coincidence between so much diversity was the repudiation to celebrate a what had been qualified as a genocide. On the 12th October of 1992, the monumental bronze statue of Cristóbal Colón was literally painted and crowned with a cardboard ornament”.

The third group of promoters of Mexicanness is the oldest, namely the “dancers of tradition” already referred to, popularly known as *concheros*, a name derived from their musical instrument which is made from the conche or shell of an armadillo. Its members, until very recently, came from the most marginal groups of Mexico: masons, small craftsmen, etc. Though their history is not well known, their mythic origin goes back to 1531, only ten years after the conquest and the same year as the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, when a group of Otomí Christian Indians fought against pagan Chichimec Indians at what later was called the hill of San Gremal in Queretaro. During the pitched battle Santiago and a bright cross appeared in the sky. This stopped the battle and convinced the pagan Indians to become Christians. From then on, they celebrated their conversion through dance, a ritual expression by which these religious groups have since been known.

We know that dance was a very important religious expression for Prehispanic peoples and that in spite of the fact that the church tried to suppress it, considering it a pagan reminiscence, it continued to be practised in honour of different Christian Saints. There are references to these dances in the historical archives, but nevertheless little is known about the history of the *concheros* or similar groups, and they can only be traced as such to the end of last century²⁰.

The “dancers of tradition” are a sort of brotherhood, which received the name of “Brothers of the Holy Count”. Their members were organised hierarchically in grades of the Spanish army: generals, captains, lieutenants, sergeants and soldiers, plus a special office occupied only by women known as the Malinches. The smaller groups are organised in *mesas* or tables, referring to their altars which are set on tables, and which are called by Anahuac Gonzales “dance lineages” (1991 p. 215), led by a captain, whose position is usually inherited. The *mesas* are represented by a standard which has a sacred character and plays an important role in the ceremonies. They have their own theological concepts, apparently variants of popular Catholicisms, accompanied by very complex rituals which centre around dance. Traditionally the dances were held in honour of the Catholic saints, but recently they have also been held for Prehispanic personages and at wakes in honour of their dead.

²⁰ Gabriel Moedano (1984) has proposed that these dancers had their origin in Otomí groups of the region of El Bajío. He refers to chronicles which describe Indian dances with headdresses in El Bajío and, in a source dating from 1839, to a “caudillo... de danzas de arco y flecha y de varios otros “capitanes” de la danza que pretenden descender de una de las mesas fundadoras desde la batalla de San Gremal”.

To become a member of the *mesa*, it is necessary to pass through an initiation and to commit oneself to attendance at all the ceremonies, these being known as obligations.

At present the “dancers of tradition” are divided into three sections or schools, the *concheros*, the Chichimec dance and the Aztec dance. Traditionally it is claimed that many of the dance and other ritual elements have a prehispanic origin even though such antecedents do not show up in most of the research which has been done. (Warman, Moedano). Nevertheless with the ideologisation which is presently passing through the groups of Mexicanidad, this origin is claimed more and more frequently, and Mexicanidad groups such as the Mexica Tiahui have created their own dancing group, rejecting any Spanish influence.

One of the main ceremonies of the dancers takes place at the church of Santiago Tlatelolco in the city of Mexico. Santiago is the saint who, according to the myth, appeared to them when they were fighting against the pagan Indians. He is considered the “messenger of the four winds”, the cosmic centre of a cross or quincunce which marks the four directions in which are located the four churches to which they have the “obligation” to go and dance on the saint’s day. These are: the sanctuary of Guadalupe to the North, the Virgin of Los Remedios to the West, Chalma to the South and the Sacromonte in Amecameca to the East. All of these were important Prehispanic worship sites. It is important to note that annually, during their pilgrimage to Chalma, all the Catholic groups of dancers get together to deal with various organisational matters. They also hold a special event for the erection of crosses on a specific hill. Recently a pilgrimage in November from Tlatelolco to Guadalupe has been started, during which which relics and standards are carried.

A series of strict ritual formulas rule the dance. They always dance in one or several circles. The musical instruments, the standard of the *mesa* and the most important personages are placed in the center while the soldiers and the students dance at the periphery. In many of these dances the participants reach an altered state of consciousness.

A very important part of the ritual activity of the *concheros* is the wake, which takes place in the night, in private spaces to which only members of the *mesa* or other dancers have access. It is a ritual in honour of the dead, mainly of the dead generals and captains who are called “conquerors of the four winds” and the main activity consists of the devotional songs or praises (*alabanzas*) which are repeated incessantly.

In 1967 the anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil with Alfonso Muñoz and others filmed the documentary about the dancers called “El es Dios” (He is God), a sentence used when the cross of light appeared in San Gremal and which has been used as a greeting and as a ritual sentence thereafter. Through this film, the *concheros* and their rituals were “discovered” by the general public who had seen and still see them only as a show in the atriums of the churches during popular Catholic festivals and not as an important autochthonous spiritual tradition.

When the film was shown many artists and intellectuals who were in search of spiritual experiences and identity were attracted by this aspect of autochthonous spirituality, unknown till then, and they asked to be admitted as members of the *mesas* or brotherhoods. At the same time the strict rules of admission to the *mesas* were relaxed to be able to admit these new members. Some of them changed their composition to include on the one hand people of a completely different social extraction, while on the other hand some of the children of the old members were rising on the social scale as they studied and became teachers or professionals, while remaining within the dance tradition.

The rules of the *mesas* were very strict and implied a total fidelity and a great physical effort, for example in staying awake for long periods. If the rules were broken, the punishments were very severe sometimes including whipping. In addition, the captains and generals had esoteric knowledge including witchcraft. All this was now changing and in some cases being relaxed. The musical instruments became more varied, sometimes excluding the *conchas* and introducing prehispanic instruments. Costumes also changed, becoming a version of what was thought to be prehispanic. The places where the dances were performed were extended from the atriums of churches to archaeological sites and the occasions to the commemoration of important historical events such as the birth of Cuauhtemoc or the fall of Tenochtitlan.

The dress of the “dancers of tradition” is one of the exterior elements which has changed most through time, judging from the descriptions we have of their dresses in the twenties when “most men wore gay ballet dancers skirts trimmed with beads, cotton shirts, long colored stockings, heavy leather sandals, with a small bag adorned with shells hanging at the waist” (Toor p. 326). Nowadays only the most traditional group, the *concheros* — men as well as women — wear a long skirt which is known as a *nagüilla* and headresses made of ostrich feathers. They are also the ones who stick to their traditional classical instrument,

the *concha*. The other groups use a very eclectic costume, most of them based on what they considered to be prehispanic dress: men wear a *maxtlatl* or loincloth, with or without a cape, and usually ornamented with sequins. Except when they belong to the fundamentalist groups of Mexicanidad they have embroidered images of Saints and especially of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and wear huge head dresses with feathers from all kinds of precious birds. The women's dress is also interpreted as prehispanic, namely a tunic which is open at the sides and sometimes they even wear a loincloth. All of them wear on their ankles seeds called *acocoxtles* which rattle when they dance, while they also hold a rattle in their hands.

A group of dancers who call their dance *chitontequiza* has appeared rather recently. They have learned the dance from traditional groups but they are linked to the previously mentioned Mexica Tiahui. They reject all "Spanish colonial" influence and therefore all Catholic influence, and for this reason they reject the *conchas*, saying that they are of Spanish origin. Equally they do not dance for the saints in churches, but only at archaeological monuments. They are organised in *kalpullis* and not in *mesas*, and instead of using the key word "El es Dios" they use Tloque Nahuaque which is the equivalent of "God" in Nahuatl.

There is some uncertainty about just when the more drastic changes among the "dancers of tradition" took place, but they must coincide, more or less, with the emergence of the movement of Mexicanidad into which they were incorporated, or be due to the same motives which made this emerge.

In 1984 Moedano wrote that he thought that there had been influences of the official nationalist ideology, with the exaltation of the Aztec as the *summum* of Indian virtues and a symbol of Mexicanness. As we have already mentioned, in 1985 Cuahcoatl Mendoza convoked all the dance groups to dance in the Zocalo. Already previous to this Segura, who had been a member of the Mexican ballet of Amalia Hernández and who was the captain of the dance group Xinachtli, had professed an ideology of Mexicanidad. What is not known however is just when they started to incorporate new personages, places and monuments of worship and just when they made the transition from praising having being conquered by Christianity to assuming the role of warriors against "cultural invasion".

The earlier phase can be illustrated in what an old dancer, the Captain of the Concheros of Queretaro, said in the 1940's to Justino Fernandez:

“I am going to tell you something of what we understand with these dances which people take as a ”diversion”(enjoyment); it is not enjoyment, we dance because the heart becomes joyous because we were conquered by God Our Lord.” (Fernández p. 9).

It can also be seen in one of the most common hymns used during their ceremonies which runs:

Vamos humildes soldados
Vamos a hacer ejercicio
(danzando)
Para que el día del juicio
Estemos bien preparados
Que esta es la conquista
De la Santa Religión

Forward, humble soldiers
Forward to our drill
(dancing)
So that on the day of judgment
We will be well prepared
For this is the conquest
Of the Holy Religion

Anahuac González, anthropologist and *conchera*, and daughter of José Rodríguez, says (in an article she wrote in 1998) about the Concheros:

“The concheros consider themselves a resistance front to westernisation, who through several sectors of society are spreading through out the country...for the concheros dance is a sort of ‘fight’ combate struggle against supposed cultural enemies. In this urban context of the city of Mexico, the groups act in defence of Indian values, see for example, the marches, the festivals and the ceremonies which are made in honour of Cuauhtemoc, or the ones which are executed to remember the Aztec warriors who died in Tenochtitlan’s siege in 1521, one and the other with manifestations of protest by the cultural penetration of the values of the Mexicans.”

The “dancers of tradition”, in their different modalities, have proliferated not only in central Mexico, where they are supposed to have originated, but also in other regions and in foreign countries. Thus there are *mesas* and *kalpullis* in the United States and in some parts of Europe. We have already mentioned the *mesa*

from Spain, whose captain is Fiel, but there are many others who exchange their knowledge and their steps with American Indians.²¹

We have tried to stress the fact that the MCRA, as expounded by Nieva and several of his followers, was not a reclamatory claim by oppressed Indian groups. Rather, it was praise of a presumed Indian past, represented basically by the great Aztec Empire, in the interests of a later nationalist state and without any real concern for the welfare of the oppressed Indian population. This was the situation reflected since the time when Cuauhtemoc was exalted by Diaz, then in the construction of the National Museum of Anthropology, and still later in the manipulation of the populist regimes who started programmes like bilingual teachers and the Supreme Indian Councils (Valiñas p 169).

When those who support Mexicanidad seek to impose Nahuatl as the national language, they ignore the other Indian languages which are still spoken, as well as Spanish. It cannot be overlooked that Spanish is spoken by most of the population and not only brings together all Mexicans but almost all Latin Americans, having acted as a lingua franca between most of the countries of this continent.

As one can see, the three religious urban movements we have referred to are of different origin even though they have converged, coinciding in certain external cultural manifestations and in the desire to reassemble an idealised Prehispanic past in which spiritual values play a preponderant role. Even though this movement has a nationalist character related to clearly Mexican values, it nevertheless emerged from within more universal phenomena such as a disenchantment with the values of capitalism, the recovering of American ethnic identities and an awareness of social injustice towards minorities such as Blacks, Latinos, Indians, women, gays and lesbians in every country according to their own ethnic composition and their own history.

Mexico has seen the mixture of the Spanish and the Indian population and at the same time discrimination against the latter, the emergence of state nationalism, historical events such as the Revolution of 1910, the 1968 student revolt and its subsequent repression, the 1985 earthquake which showed human fragility in the face of the wrath of nature, and over against disgrace the possibility of solidarity. The anniversary of "the encounter of the two worlds" led a large group of people to become aware of 500 years of subjugation of the Indian peoples, a fact which even the Pope recognised. All of this culminated in the appearance of

²¹ Recently a group of Lakota Indians came to Mexico and met with people from the Mexicanidad, both the Lakota and a group of dancers of tradition performed in a theater, first each group by themselves and then altogether, ending with the public joining in the dance.

the EZLN, resulting in the diffusion of an Indian movement, which was in turn adopted by some groups of Mexicanidad.

The oldest group with a complex organisation of “dancing lineages” and an elaborate form of worship through dance in honour of the saints and other nocturnal rituals for the souls of their leaders, which may have originated in a crisis cult, was the movement of Mexicanidad or Mexica Tiahui. This had its origin in a group of mestizo professionals who were in search of a reclamation of a devalued Mexican identity through the exaltation of a glorious prehispanic past. From among these there emerged religious groups who fused some of the old Mexica beliefs and rituals with others of the North American Indians and finally with a New Age movement with planetary, ecological and universal ideals. Ascribing a fundamental significance to the spiritual paths of the ancient Mexicans they posited a shift of the centre of spiritual energy from Tibet to Mexico and sought to promote the brotherhood of all humanity through the spiritual leaders of the world.

Two of them emerged as an answer, at a time when the Mexicans had a crisis of values and a spiritual and identity void, creating new traditions and forming “new tribes” copying the far away and old civilisations and adapting and co-opting traditional organisations like the *concheros*.

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ADDENDA

Since this paper was delivered several B.A., Masters and PhD theses, articles and a book on the subject have been published:

- Ayala Serrano, Lauro Eduardo
2000 Tiempo Indígena: la construcción de imaginarios prehispánicos. Tesis para obtener el grado de M.A en Antropología Social. Universidad Iberoamericana. México.
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Michel Meslin

Les mutations actuelles du sacré

Lorsque s'est tenu, il y a un siècle déjà, le premier Congrès International d'Histoire des Religions la notion de sacré était communément définie selon un double paradigme, celui des sociétés dites encore "primitives" et celui de la religion juive. Le sacré, pensait-on, est, dans le premier cas, étroitement mêlé au quotidien de la vie; dans le second il se trouve immédiatement lié à la Loi du Dieu jaloux. Depuis, notre connaissance des mécanismes régulant le sacré a fortement progressé. Oui, "que les temps ont changé...": c'est pourquoi je voudrais analyser les mutations du sacré qui se produisent actuellement sous nos yeux. Volontairement je me situerai dans la perspective d'une anthropologie du croire et du faire, me refusant à formuler tout jugement d'ordre théologique: ce n'est pas ici le lieu. J'ajoute que je ne peux parler que de ce que je connais le moins mal: je limiterai donc mon analyse aux sociétés occidentales jadis structurées par le judéo-christianisme, m'attachant à cinq aspects de ces changements religieux: la situation paradoxale dans laquelle nous vivons; l'éclatement du croire; le processus d'individualisation de l'identité religieuse; le primat de l'expérience vécue, la religiosité populaire. Il va de soi que cette analyse, forcément limitée, serait différente si nous examinions des sociétés d'Afrique noire ou d'Asie.

LE PARADOXE ACTUEL

Nous vivons un moment de l'histoire religieuse de nos sociétés qui est paradoxal. Au plan de la réflexion philosophique Dieu n'apparaît plus comme nécessaire à l'homme, alors que celui-ci demeure toujours un être marqué par la finitude et soumis à toutes les contingences. La nouveauté de notre temps c'est qu'en face de lui l'être humain n'éprouve plus la nécessité de concevoir un Etre suprême, infini, éternel, qui soit en quelque sorte son contraire et son ultime recours. Avec l'explosion des sciences de l'homme, c'est désormais celui-ci qui se place au centre de sa propre interrogation. L'homme est celui qui pense, qui agit, qui se pen-

se et qui s'explique à lui-même, en allant toujours plus avant dans la découverte de soi. Comme l'a très bien souligné P. Ricoeur, toute réflexion sur le divin et sur la transcendance ne peut plus désormais ignorer cet "anthropocentrisme thématique". Mais alors Dieu tient-il encore une place dans notre monde? Il est absolument nécessaire de poser cette question avant toute analyse, car nos contemporains découvrent chaque jour que l'on peut être pleinement homme sans se référer à un Dieu conçu comme un antidote tout puissant à leurs faiblesses et à leurs désirs. Une telle attitude remet en cause toutes les représentations trop utilitaires d'un Dieu qui n'existerait, en somme, que pour combler nos manques et nos besoins. On peut donc déjà se demander si l'autonomie de l'homme, fortement revendiquée de nos jours, est compatible avec la croyance en un Dieu-Providence et juge ultime de toute existence...

En même temps que s'effectue cette remise en cause philosophique nos sociétés démocratiques modernes se sont émancipées de la tutelle religieuse. Ce n'est plus la référence à une religion précise qui régit désormais le fonctionnement du politique, du social, ni même de l'éthique. La sécularisation a ainsi comme résultat de reporter sur l'Etat et le corps social le devoir de trouver des réponses aux interrogations, parfois angoissées, suscitées par ses divers dysfonctionnements. Or le paradoxe se révèle en ceci que nous constatons qu'en même temps que se produit cette émancipation du religieux, un "élément sacré", pour reprendre l'expression de Marcel Gauchet, perdure dans le domaine privé et semble constituer une strate subjective qui se situe dans l'affectif et l'imaginaire, et qui est l'une des causes du retour d'un sacré ambigu et sauvage. Car notre époque marquée par une sécularisation croissante des mœurs, et par le sentiment partagé par beaucoup, de l'inutilité de Dieu, est en même temps traversée par un retour anarchique du religieux. Ou plus précisément, le retour d'un sacré qui ne puise plus son autorité dans des institutions ecclésiastiques, qui ne se réfère plus à des dogmes, mais qui suscite la formation de micro-groupes dont l'éclosion est un fait religieux incontestable, révélateur d'un bouleversement et d'une indéniable fermentation. Un tel retour conduit donc à penser que la crise que traversent les Eglises institutionnelles, la baisse de la pratique et l'indifférence religieuse du grand nombre ne prouvent pas nécessairement que nos contemporains soient foncièrement irréligieux. En fait, nous nous trouvons devant l'un de ces déplacements du sacré dont l'histoire a donné déjà plusieurs exemples. De nouvelles formes de religiosité, mais non de religions, apparaissent et se développent sous nos yeux, dans lesquelles se mêlent l'affectif, le non rationnel, le désir d'une

communication plus immédiate et plus directe avec le divin, et qui témoigne d'interrogations et d'inquiétudes que n'apaisent plus les Eglises ni les dogmes. Ce "réenchantement du monde" sous-tend les Nouveaux Mouvements Religieux (N.M.R.), mais autant, car tout sacré est ambivalent, la multiplication des sectes, et le retour offensif des fondamentalismes et des intégrismes.

Or ceci correspond très certainement à une angoisse, souvent inconsciente au début, causée par la perte du sens que donnait la foi et le recours à un Dieu-Providence. La perte du sens du divin a développé un nouveau besoin d'un sacré diffus, situé hors des Eglises et des médiations institutionnelles, mais qui assume une identique fonction protectrice d'un Dieu que l'on imagine comme un Père ou comme une Mère, et que l'on croit atteindre en recourant à des pratiques corporelles, à des techniques psychosomatiques réputées conduire l'individu à des états supérieurs de conscience.

L'ÉCLATEMENT DU CROIRE

Dans toutes les grandes traditions religieuses le sacré en délimitant, par rapport au divin, les êtres et les choses, informe à la fois le dire et le faire, l'énonciation des croyances et les comportements rituels et moraux de tous les membres d'une même communauté de croyants. Or les notions de sacré et de profane ne sont pas intangibles. Le sacré n'est jamais un état de conscience mais il est le fruit de la rencontre de croyances religieuses et de données culturelles particulières. L'histoire des religions nous montre que la frontière entre le sacré et le profane est mobile et qu'elle est toujours construite par les humains (cf. M. Meslin, *L'expérience humaine du divin*, pp. 94-7). Tenir compte de ce fait est indispensable pour l'analyse des faits religieux de notre époque, car cela permet d'éviter une double impasse: soit de croire que la sécularisation de nos sociétés est l'aboutissement logique et inéluctable d'une évolution culturelle qui aboutirait à la disparition progressive du sacré, soit de penser que les notions de sacré et de profane restent toujours immuables, invariables. Actuellement les représentations du monde dans lequel nous vivons ne sont plus informées par un sacré institutionnalisé qui réglerait autoritairement les comportements de chacun. Le croire se réfère moins à un magistère fondé sur une tradition que sur l'utilité et la valeur d'expériences individuelles qui varient selon le moment, l'âge, la culture, les difficultés rencontrées par chacun. L'individualisme de plus en plus affirmé aboutit, même chez les croyants, à une privatisation du religieux et à un relativisme des conduites morales qui témoignent d'une disjonction possible et souvent effective entre religion et société.

Mais un second élément doit être pris en compte: la conscience religieuse de nos contemporains repose à la fois sur l'idée d'un pluralisme et d'un certain relativisme religieux. Longtemps le christianisme a joui d'une situation prééminente et privilégiée. Il se trouve maintenant situé à la même place que les autres religions, y compris dans une identique indifférence de la part d'un grand nombre. "Toutes les religions se valent puisque chacune sert à faire vivre psychologiquement ses fidèles" est un argument souvent répété. Ce qui implique qu'aucune d'entre elles ne puisse prétendre détenir la vérité absolue. Cette parité des religions perçues, dans une volonté de tolérance, comme des créations historiques collectives, induit à les considérer comme égales, et donc, pourquoi pas, comme interchangeables. Elles possèdent en commun des valeurs spirituelles souvent proches. Elles assument, certes par des moyens différents, la relation avec un Réel suprême, avec un Absolu infini, que tout être humain aspire à connaître en raison même de sa finitude. D'où me semble-t-il, cet aspect éclaté du croire à travers le foisonnement d'un religieux polymorphe. Cet éclatement provient aussi du refus, chez certains, des instances régulatrices du sacré que sont les Eglises établies. Pour les comportements individuels il existe de moins en moins de modèle unique de piété défini par des pratiques que la tradition rendait obligatoires. Nos contemporains ont de plus en plus de mal à accepter une orthopraxie. Les conduites religieuses se relativisent parce que chacun estime avoir le droit de rechercher successivement diverses expériences spirituelles qui, naguère, eussent été jugées incompatibles avec l'appartenance à une Eglise. En d'autres termes, Il semble exister une dissociation de plus en plus grande entre l'appartenance à une communauté croyante et la recherche d'une expérience personnelle du divin, où chacun réinvestit sa subjectivité dans un croire mouvant mais toujours à la recherche d'un sens. En l'espace d'une génération le glas est bien sonné d'un engagement militant du type "Action Catholique", sous la stricte tutelle des autorités ecclésiastiques qui *mandataient* des laïcs pour un apostolat propre aux divers milieux socioprofessionnels. Maintenant, l'engagement religieux se fait, se défait, se recompose au rythme de la vie personnelle, dans une exigence bien plus grande de la liberté individuelle, liberté d'appréciation de la cause à défendre, liberté de justification de l'action entreprise. Les notions d'appartenance et d'engagement sont déterminées d'abord par un choix personnel, en dehors ou par delà les frontières institutionnelles et canoniques.

Mais la contrepartie de cette liberté c'est, bien entendu, la responsabilité du choix. Est-on irrémédiablement fixé dans sa propre tradition religieuse ou

peut-on aller voir ailleurs si celle-ci ne vous satisfait pas ou plus? Quelle que soit la réponse, on soulignera la permanence du croire dans une sorte d'éphémère des croyances qui déplace les frontières du sacré. Ainsi la modernité, caractérisée par une individualisation du croire aboutit nécessairement à une recomposition du sacré et à une réinterprétation des données traditionnelles. Nous assistons, en effet, à l'apparition de nouvelles croyances coexistant avec celles de la tradition. Ainsi Dieu est-il perçu moins comme une personne, - ce qu'affirme le christianisme après le judaïsme -, que comme une dimension mystérieuse et cachée du Cosmos, ou comme la meilleure part de la collectivité, voire de soi-même (63 % d'adultes et 58 % d'élèves québécois). Ce qui autrefois était défini, catalogué comme faute grave, pêché, est vécu d'abord comme une erreur commise; l'âme est perçue comme une entité immatérielle. On pourrait multiplier les exemples qui montrent que la croyance apparaît comme un fait de langage dans lequel le sujet fait passer sa propre expérience de la recherche d'un sens nouveau. Les balises d'un sacré régulateur s'estompent et les croyances n'acquièrent de légitimité que dans la mesure où elles se révèlent utiles à l'individu.

De même peut-on encore évoquer le glissement de la notion chrétienne de résurrection vers celle de réincarnation. La croyance actuelle en cette dernière ne se fonde pas sur l'héritage de l'antiquité grecque ni sur la conception hindoue, -quoique celle-ci ait exercé une influence indéniable. Elle se présente en réalité comme une sorte de révolte romantique contre un christianisme qui semble ne pas tenir ses promesses de salut. L'étude d'A. Couture (*La réincarnation*, 1992) montre clairement qu'il s'agit là d'une forme de dualisme, de la résurgence d'une conception fondamentale, celle du primat de la vie au-delà de chaque existence personnelle. Dès lors cette croyance en la réincarnation est bien une affirmation anthropologique, tandis que la résurrection est une affirmation d'ordre théologique. Le fait que pour nombre de chrétiens l'immortalité de l'âme se manifeste en se réincarnant, et que, pour eux, accepter la réincarnation n'implique pas nécessairement l'adhésion à une autre religion non chrétienne, montre la discordance entre les représentations religieuses individuelles et celles définies par les Eglises affirmant que la résurrection est précisément le dépassement d'une immortalité conçue comme un destin particulier.

Un autre aspect, et non des moindres, de cet éclatement des croyances se situe dans le développement d'une nouvelle culture de l'infra-religieux qui atteint parfois jusqu'à l'engouement, par le canal fréquent de divers médias. Le spiritisme, la parapsychologie, l'astrologie, la vie dans l'au-delà. "une vie après la vie", la communica-

tion avec les morts, l'astrologie en sont les aspects principaux. Certes tous ces thèmes ne sont pas neufs mais ils révèlent une constante interrogation des humains sur l'après-trépas et sur le déterminisme réglant toute existence. Toutes ces croyances témoignent à la fois d'un archaïsme certain, marqué par un retour vers des formes religieuses très anciennes, une sorte de permanence dans l'imaginaire de l'étrange que sous-tend une inquiétude foncière pouvant conduire à recourir à la magie, laquelle n'est pas autre chose qu'une manipulation dégradante du sacré. Ces croyances ésotériques ne sont, en fait, qu'une reconstruction dramatique, angoissée d'un sacré jugé trop lointain, mystérieux et porteur de dangers. Les études de Fr. Champion sur *la Nébuleuse mystique ésotérique* (ASSR 67, 1989) montrent qu'il s'agit d'abord d'une revendication de l'individualisme qui s'exprime à travers une mentalité émotionnelle et fusionnelle indéniable. Dans ces groupes et ces réseaux presque informels, et qui ont commencé à se développer depuis moins d'un quart de siècle, l'individualisme est le fait majeur: chacun doit faire sa propre expérience et trouver sa propre voie en privilégiant le "ressenti affectif personnel", comme mode exclusif de connaissance du divin.

Apparaissent en même temps de nouvelles ritualités séculières; de nouvelles idoles, de nouveaux cultes se développent proposant un sacré sur lequel les institutions religieuses ont peu ou pas de prise. L'analyse toute récente et pleine d'humour que Cl. Rivière vient d'en donner (*Les rites profanes*, 1995) montre l'existence, dans la vie quotidienne, de comportements rituels qui sont totalement détachés de tout sacré religieux. Qu'il s'agisse de divers rites du sport, du bizutage comme initiation professionnelle, de certains rites d'exhibition chez des adolescents marginalisés ou encore des rites propres au monde de la production manifestant une forte symbolique sociale (stages et séminaires, arbre de Noël pour les enfants, fête pour le départ en retraite, etc...). Tout se passe comme si certains aspects et secteurs de la vie sociale provoquaient des interrogations parfois anxieuses auxquelles précisément ces rites tentent d'apporter un élément de solution concrète. Ainsi à la place d'une vision religieuse holistique se découvre, sous nos yeux, tout un champ de croyances faisant coexister plusieurs visions du monde chez un même individu. Et le moindre paradoxe n'est pas que cet homme de la modernité, qui a proclamé il y a plus de trente ans la mort de Dieu, cherche toujours à s'appuyer sur un faisceau de croyances plus ou moins rattachées à une ou plusieurs traditions religieuses. Il les expérimente selon un processus d'individualisation du croire qu'une récente enquête éclaire remarquablement (R. Campiche et alii, *Croire en Suisse*, 1992).

INDIVIDUALISATION ET IDENTITÉ RELIGIEUSE

Cette individualisation se caractérise par le fait que chacun construit, ou reconstruit son identité religieuse à partir d'un système de croyances qui lui est personnel. Ils s'ensuit une modification des rapports avec l'institution ecclésiale, tant au niveau des principes qu'à celui des conduites sans pour autant qu'une rupture avec la collectivité croyante en devienne la conséquence logique. On peut dire que, subjectivement, il existe une religion "pour les autres" qui peut être différente de ce que l'on considère comme "sa" religion. Le rapport avec cette dernière est avant tout pragmatique et utilitaire: la bonne religion est celle qui apporte les bonnes réponses au moment même où l'homme en a besoin. Un tel comportement résulte d'une perméabilité du système de croyances à l'environnement socioculturel autant qu'à la situation affective du sujet. Or il est évident, nous le savons tous, qu'au cours de chaque existence l'environnement culturel, psychologique, imaginaire de chacun se modifie. Le religieux est désormais vécu à travers une certaine vision anthropocentrique, plus que selon les définitions dogmatiques qu'en donnent les Eglises. Le fait de croire, apparaît, dans toutes les récentes enquêtes, plus important que le contenu doctrinal traditionnel. On peut donc avancer l'hypothèse que l'éclatement des croyances et le pluralisme des références se manifestent dès que joue le refus de régulation des institutions d'Eglises. L'enquête concernant les croyances individuelles des Suisses fait apparaître clairement la pluralité de leurs sources. Or le fait important est que ce pluralisme religieux, qui prend son bien où il le veut, n'est pas seulement constaté objectivement, mais qu'il est admis. Il devient une réelle valeur au point que l'institution ecclésiale ne maîtrise plus la régulation des croyances et que le sacré se modifie afin de correspondre à de nouveaux comportements (voir les tableaux significatifs, ASSR 81, 1993, p. 122 et s.). Ce phénomène se vérifie aussi dans une enquête récente effectuée en Belgique (L. Voyé et alii, *Les valeurs des Belges dans les années 90*, 1992): on passe d'une religion instituée et fondée sur une tradition quasi immuable à une religion recomposée par chacun. Peut-être conviendrait-il mieux de parler d'une religiosité qui continue de vivre malgré un désintérêt pour les Eglises et leurs règles, et qui se manifeste dans les préoccupations quotidiennes par certaines formes spontanées, inédites, personnelles, de prières et de méditation. Faut-il aller jusqu'à penser que les croyances qui perdurent sont plus des habitus culturels que la preuve d'une appartenance à une religion institutionnalisée? La réponse doit être nuancée. Car le constat des mutations actuelles du sacré n'implique pas forcément qu'il y ait incompatibilité

entre religion et modernité. L'analyse du changement religieux qui s'est effectué depuis cinquante ans aux Etats-Unis (David Roozen, Jackson W. Carroll, et alii, in *ASSR* 83, 1993) fait ressortir deux points importants: le changement a affecté le contenu des croyances et des engagements religieux ainsi que l'expression de plus en plus subjective qu'en donne chacun; mais en même temps s'est effectué un changement de certaines institutions des Eglises établies sous la nécessité de s'adapter à une situation nouvelle provoquant une décentralisation croissante des centres de vitalité religieuse. Il est clair qu'un tel changement s'explique par l'existence d'un pluralisme religieux admis par tous mais aussi par le fait que la société américaine est une société mobile où le changement rapide reste un but recherché et espéré.

PRIMAT DE L'EXPÉRIENCE VÉCUE

Ces diverses analyses nous permettent de mesurer l'ampleur de la mutation du sacré. Il n'est plus défini par rapport à une doctrine religieuse transmise par la tradition d'une communauté de croyants et ne découle plus d'une relation étroite avec le divin qu'il n'inscrit plus dans les comportements précis et obligatoires pour tout croyant. Mais il devient une qualité appliquée de plus en plus à une expérience subjective de chacun. En effet l'expérience spirituelle vécue dans l'intimité se révèle être un critère d'authenticité et de vérité religieuse. Car notre époque insiste fortement sur le primat de l'expérience personnelle comme mode d'accès à une connaissance plus immédiate du divin, et qui est sentie comme plus valide et plus vraie qu'une connaissance reflexive et conceptuelle. Faut-il rappeler ici la phrase célèbre: "Dieu existe, je l'ai rencontré"? Cette affirmation de l'expérience religieuse directement vécue dispense souvent de l'analyse et de toute critique: ce qui est, ou a été vécu, apparaît comme un donné que l'on reçoit comme tel, et qui semble au sujet qui le vit constituer l'expression même de la vérité. Car ce qui compte finalement ce sont les résultats immédiats que l'individu en tire, même s'il confond connaissance de Dieu avec une perception sentimentale, affective, émotionnelle plus ou moins confusément ressentie. Les sens fournissent ainsi les matériaux d'une connaissance que la raison pourrait, ensuite et à la rigueur, transformer en un système logiquement cohérent. Il est sans doute possible que ce retour en force de l'expérience immédiatement vécue marque une profonde réaction à une approche du divin jugée trop speculative, trop dogmatique et, disons le trop intellectuelle, et qui ne paraît plus répondre aux questions fondamentales de l'existence humaine. Mais on ne peut nier qu'il s'agisse

là d'une religion expérimentée par chacun selon un mode tout personnel. Une telle expérience n'est-elle pas alors purement subjective? Où se situe la relation, la communication entre l'homme et Celui qu'il expérimente, un Dieu infini et tout puissant qui est totalement distinct du sujet qui vit cette expérience? Il semble bien que cette immédiateté de l'expérience de Dieu ne puisse pas être assimilée à une authentique expérience mystique, même si elle explique le recours à des formes nouvelles et charismatiques de piété. Le cas du New Age, dans lequel beaucoup croient trouver une sorte d'effusion mystique, me paraît révélateur d'un tel danger. Cette nébuleuse de techniques et de thérapies, de croyances sommaires empruntées à diverses religions, exprime les déchirements, les contradictions, le déracinement et les espoirs fous de notre temps. Résumé grossier des tensions actuelle, ce New Age ne renvoie malheureusement l'individu qu'à ses propres errances. En enlevant toute altérité à Dieu, lui déniait donc toute existence, en affirmant que les différences entre l'homme et Dieu sont illusoire ou très secondaires, ces théories et pratiques psychosomatiques renvoient à l'homme sa propre image. Elles donnent corps à des désirs imaginaires d'une croyance sans exigence morale et à l'illusion d'un chemin facile et sans embûches. En prônant la négation de sa propre sexualité elles incitent l'être humain à entrer dans un monde fusionnel dont on vante la transparence immédiate pour mieux parvenir à se fondre dans une totalité présentée comme le summum de la sagesse et de la vérité.

Dès 1970 R. Caillois remarquait que "le sacré devient intérieur et n'intéresse plus que l'âme", expliquant ainsi que la privatisation du sacré se manifestait au fur et à mesure que s'affirmait le primat de l'individu et la valeur de l'expérience personnelle. Mais alors le sacré devient plus difficilement observable; son analyse est plus difficile car il se manifeste moins extérieurement, moins socialement, bien qu'il soit toujours vécu dans une existence privée. D'objectif et d'obligatoire qu'il était, car fondé sur des "commandements" de Dieu ou de l'Eglise, le sacré devient immanent. Il n'est plus seulement le lieu où s'expriment les valeurs d'une société religieuse, mais celui où se manifestent des valeurs qui touchent à l'individu. Il devient un sacré subjectif, personnel, au point que le mot même de "sacré" qualifie, en dehors de toute référence religieuse, ce qui compte le plus aux yeux de l'individu. On peut dire qu'en s'intériorisant et en s'individualisant le sacré devient alors une attitude de la conscience. Est sacré ce que je tiens pour tel, alors que dans le cadre des diverses traditions religieuses n'est sacré que ce qui est en relation avec le divin. Dès l'instant que l'homme, à la

recherche de soi, est devenu le lieu de son interrogation et de sa propre vérité, le sacré et l'intime se rapprochent, et parfois même se confondent. S'il n'existe plus de vérité absolue et objective mais seulement des convictions intimes, alors chacun se sent libre de fonder ses certitudes sur sa propre expérience. L'intimité recouvre alors le champ du sacré, mais ce sacré est-il encore lié au religieux?

L'AMBIGUÏTÉ DE LA RELIGION POPULAIRE

Dernier élément du paradoxe actuel: Malgré le déclin de la pratique religieuse et une certaine indifférence vis à vis des Eglises une religiosité populaire ne cesse de se manifester, attestant un besoin réel chez nos contemporains d'établir des relations plus directes entre eux et la divinité qu'ils implorent, par delà les médiations officielles du clergé. Les nombreuses études faites, tant dans les pays de l'Europe méditerranéenne qu'en Amérique latine, montrent que cette religiosité populaire n'oppose jamais la nature à la culture, mais qu'elle suscite une interpénétration d'un sacré dans ce que peut avoir de profane la vie quotidienne (cf. M. Meslin, *L'expérience humaine du divin*, 1988, p. 286 et s.). Ceci implique évidemment la certitude d'une correspondance entre l'homme, la nature et les puissances supérieures qu'il invoque. Foncièrement la religiosité populaire est une anthropologie qui dit avant tout le besoin de l'homme. L'exemple tout récent (fév. 1995) d'une statue de la Vierge, à Civitta Vecchia, pleurant des larmes de sang à de nombreuses reprises, est tout à fait typique: il montre à quel point dans cette dévotion populaire le merveilleux intervient comme facteur de proximité de la Madone. S'agit-il d'une revanche d'une foi populaire brimée par un clergé qui ne croit pas, ou répugne à croire, en une telle manifestation physique de la puissance divine, sans doute. Mais il faut encore plus tenir compte de l'attachement à la figure maternelle, à l'unique fonction reconnue à la femme, être mère, dans une société méditerranéenne. Ce rapport empathique, très prononcé, se trouve inconsciemment transposé au plan du surnaturel.

Ainsi se dévoile l'ambivalence de toute religiosité populaire, qui vise à l'efficace et qui nourrit la croyance en un pouvoir surnaturel immédiat. On sait combien la théorie marxiste a insisté sur le rôle aliénant de cette religion populaire qui favoriserait la résignation des pauvres et des opprimés en leur proposant des protecteurs encore plus puissants que ceux dont ils subissent la domination: Dieu, la Vierge, les saints, mais aussi bien des esprits ou des fétiches. Ceux-ci leur fourniraient par miracle ce que la société leur refuse ou bien leur laisserait espérer un monde à venir où leurs souhaits seraient enfin comblés. En

d'autres termes la religiosité populaire constituerait un puissant facteur d'adaptation à une situation de pauvreté et d'aliénation, en suggérant la résolution symbolique des difficultés de la vie présente. Une telle explication reste pertinente dans de nombreux cas, comme le montrerait l'examen attentif des formes contemporaines de la religiosité populaire en Amérique latine. Vieille de plusieurs siècles cette religion se révèle toujours aussi croyante; elle se revitalise dans la mesure où elle fonctionne comme un facteur d'identité et de protestation. Sans ouvrir ici le grand dossier des théologies de la libération je rappellerai que celles-ci s'enracinent dans la praxis de communautés populaires de base. Or ces dernières ne sont, en réalité, que la réactualisation, aussi bien dans des zones rurales éloignées que dans les *favelas* des grandes villes, de formes de dénonciation et de protestation déjà présentes dans l'occident chrétien des XIVe et XVe siècles. Car, maintenant comme jadis, la religiosité populaire exerce une fonction critique face aux contradictions d'une Eglise officielle qui paraît plus liée aux riches et aux puissants qu'aux pauvres. Dans un désir de s'adapter à cette situation des clercs, depuis la réunion de Puebla de 1979, ont reconnu l'existence d'authentiques valeurs religieuses dans ces formes populaires. Ils ont en grand nombre pris le parti missionnaire d'adapter leur pastorale et d'*acompanar a nuestro pueblo* (H. Ribeiro, *Religiosidad popular na Teologia latino-americana*, 1984). Là aussi cette nouvelle attitude a modifié les frontières du sacré, en réintégrant dans des cérémonies religieuses de vieux rites jadis refoulés comme païens.

Ainsi, dans la multiplicité des formes qu'elle revêt, la religiosité populaire est le témoignage vivant et direct de la conscience d'un groupe humain; elle constitue son autobiographie spirituelle et l'histoire de ses rapports variables et nombreux avec les puissances divines. Elle est ainsi un lieu où s'élabore une nouvelle expérience collective de foi, qui s'exprime concrètement en parfaite adaptation au contexte socioculturel qui lui est propre. Elle témoigne donc du désir profond d'humaniser le divin afin de le rendre plus proche et plus facilement accessible à tous. Ce qui autoriserait sans doute à la définir, au sens strict du terme, comme un intégrisme religieux.

CONCLUSION

Au terme de cette analyse trop brève il apparaît que, dans nos sociétés modernes, ce que l'on appelle "le retour du sacré" renvoyait le plus souvent à l'homme qui est à la recherche d'un sens pour sa propre vie, alors que dans les grandes traditions religieuses le sacré est défini par son rapport avec le divin. Telle est la grande mutation actuelle du sacré, qui a deux conséquences importantes:

- La référence suprême de toute action humaine ne réside plus forcément dans une vérité révélée reçue à travers une tradition religieuse, mais dans une expérience à vivre, personnelle. Le religieux n'est plus un héritage plus ou moins socioculturel que l'on reçoit, mais il devient l'objet d'une recherche individuelle où chacun élabore, dans les profondeurs plus ou moins conscientes de son activité, sa propre religion. Peut-être au risque de n'y trouver finalement que sa seule image, car le désir n'obéit qu'à ses propres besoins et peut n'aboutir qu'à la clôture sur soi-même et non pas à la rencontre d'une Altérité absolue.
- Recupéré par l'individu le sacré affleure dans des comportements jadis impensables. Tout ce qui dans nos sociétés sécularisées interroge l'homme sur son destin, tout ce qui parle au coeur des hommes et des femmes d'aujourd'hui revêt cette qualité de sacré. C'est, essentiellement, la non-violence, les droits de l'homme, la dénonciation de la torture, la protection de la création et l'écologie de l'environnement, la bioéthique. Tels sont les lieux où se manifeste positivement un nouveau sacré, et qui expriment les innombrables facettes d'une expérience intérieure chez des hommes et des femmes qui refusent de n'être que des producteurs et consommateurs de biens matériels, mais qui découvrent, dans l'inquiétude de leur coeur, qu'ils sont aussi des êtres de désir, capables d'aller au-delà de leur désir même, dans cette zone du sacré où ils pourront, peut-être, apercevoir un peu la lumière de l'Altérité.

José Jorge de Carvalho

The Mysticism of Marginal Spirits

*Yo, más cuerda en la fortuna mía,
Tengo en entrambas manos ambos ojos
Y solamente lo que toco veo.
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*

This is the highest honor that I have yet received in my academic life: to have this opportunity to speak about spirituality in this chapel still flooded, after exactly 300 years, with the spirit of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, “la peor (y mayor) de todas” – “the worst (and greatest) of all.”¹

In mosaic form I intend to offer a panoramic view of certain aspects of the intense religious life that one observes in Brazil and in practically all other Latin American countries. My reflections are part of a wider effort of a group of Brazilian scholars, the majority of whom are anthropologists, but who are however, in constant dialogue with theologians, sociologists, and religious historians seeking to develop a conceptual framework, one that begins with a dialogue formed of ideas proposed by thinkers from other continents for a better understanding of the rich and complex universe of religious phenomena. Here I have chosen to put lesser emphasis on the Christian universe, simply because its spiritual fulfillments are already sufficiently known to the intellectual public such as those present at this World Congress. In this light, I hold that if there is creativity in Brazilian religious activity, it is above all manifested in the syncretic and popular spheres, in exactly those places where the dominant pattern is given neither by official Catholicism nor by Protestant sects.

In *The Banquet of the Sorcerers* (1987) Carlos Rodrigues Brandão formulated one such thorough sociological framework for interpreting religious affliction and the various types of organized religious agents that provided an answer to

¹ This text was originally written in Spanish as one of the four keynote addresses delivered at the XVIIth International Congress of the History of Religions, in Mexico City, in August, 1995. I thank Jesse Samba Wheeler for the careful revision, with suggestions, of the present English version. I am also grateful for the help.... Sérgio Ferretti, Lélia Rodrigues and Rita Segato.

this necessity. From the issues of mental disorder, relationship with the deceased, personal and collective vows, divinations, and pilgrimages, among others, the Brazilian religious community finds at its disposal a vast religious universe that includes the official Catholic church; centers of Kardecism or spiritualism; traditional Catholic fraternities; temples for *umbanda*, *candomblé* and other forms of Afro-Brazilian religious practices²; religious movements from Japanese origin; numerous Protestant sects and churches; New Age movements, etc. There is a clear articulation between practically all these religious institutions that operate simultaneously according to a structural relationship – of, on the one hand, cooperation, and on the other, open conflict.

Something that stands out, practically all over Latin America, is the idea that we are facing a plural religious world. However, this idea of plurality as something recent is actually misleading, for from the religious point of view Brazil has been a diverse country since the beginning of the twentieth century. What is more recent is the discursive production of that plurality. In my view, the real novelty in this national religious landscape is the ever increasing expansion of Protestant sects, especially in the last thirty years, and which has certainly provoked a rupture in the self-image of Brazil as a mono-religious country.³

I have emphasized the issue of spirituality in the first place because I am interested in understanding the strictly religious side of experience and, if possible, the individual side of participation in Brazilian popular religious groups. One should always bear in mind that all religious movements we call popular are, in fact, much more dependent upon the individual spiritual participation of their practitioners than the hierarchical movements and institutions we call “great religions”. To clarify thus: for me, religion refers to any articulated systems of beliefs, ritual practices, and explanations of the world, that can be expressed, in those more ethnocentric cases, in dogma; or, in the most open and flexible cases, following the dynamics of collective representations. On the other hand, I conceive of spirituality as the way in which a given individual internalizes, absorbs, develops, in a manner which is always idiosyncratic, the particular path or model of union (or of re-connecting, if we want to remember the origin of the term religion, from the Latin *re-ligare*) proposed by the religious movement to which he belongs. Thus, spirituality implies a dimension of cultivated subjectivity, of religious experience that may even transcend the norm or the formal expectation

² For a basic information on *umbanda*, see Brown (1994); for *candomblé*, see Bastide (1980).

³ Bearing in mind these transformations and continuities, I have tried to formulate a general synthesis of the Brazilian religious plurality (Carvalho 1992, 1994a and 1999).

of the community of followers. In a way similar to the art world, spirituality is always something carried out under the sign of uniqueness, or singularity. And it is precisely of this dimension of the singularity of spiritual experience, seen simultaneously with the sociological, ideological, aesthetic, and political dimensions of religious movements that I would like to make sense.⁴

I insist on this point because there is a kind of division of labor partially established in academic studies of religion that needs to be overcome: scholars who study the spirituality of the so-called “world religions,” or “great religions” tend to concentrate themselves on the biographies and the concrete experiences of the leaders, masters, saints, or mystics representative of the traditions studied. On the other hand, those researchers who focus on the religions of the so-called primitives, or of popular religion, or of the predominantly oral religious traditions (generally anthropologists or sociologists), often distance themselves from individual achievements and tend to concentrate on problems of collective memory, myth, or ritual; by doing so, they almost invariably stress the role of the collective in the dynamics of the religious movement they analyze. However, it would be quite difficult for these movements to expand if they did not provide a space for individual experience beyond the communitary participation.

Putting it in other terms, it could be argued that this division of labor certainly has its consequences, for the greatest prestige was always granted to religious traditions that were capable to receive, on the part of their authors, a personalized treatment. Anonymous treatises rarely reach the degree of fame and influence achieved by the writings of well-known authors. This way, spiritual traditions placed marginally within the official history of religions are twice undermined: firstly, because they are interpreted mostly as the result of social experiences and collective representations; secondly, because they continue to rely basically on oral circuits of communication for their expansion and reproduction. Moreover, not all researchers of oral traditions are interested or capable of producing mystic-literary corpi. Most of them choose to concentrate themselves in offering their interpretations, but of materials which were collected with the ethnographic aim of understanding them and not with an interest of proposing, signalling or even generating what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls eminent texts⁵. The strategy of ethnographers turns out to be exactly the opposite of the one used by most scholars of the so-called world religions, for their main activity

⁴ I have proposed a theory of styles of spirituality somewhere else (Carvalho 1994b).

⁵ See Gadamer (1986).

ends up being the promotion of the textuality generated by the leader and mystics of their historical currents: they are all the time producing editions, commentaries, comparisons, exegeses, analyses, etc.

To simplify the argument, one already has then an expectation of how to assess the spiritual content of a religious movement based on the nature of the texts that are produced about them. If they are not individual texts, they are at least collective; if they are not written, they will at least be structured oral texts, as, for example, the corpus of *Ifa* oracle amongst the Yorubas, or cosmogonic myths, recited in ritual contexts, such as the ways of Muu of the Kuna, etc.⁶ And if there are no linguistic texts, there should be at least images, rich in allusions and formal content. What is really difficult to admit, in this universal repertoire of historically established spiritualities, is the existence of religious traditions that are not manifested through these conventional ways of expression whose parameters of excellence were developed after the studies of the “religions of the book.” This leads me to my main subject of inquiry: we have a theory of spirituality that does not recognize or that does not know how to recognize the individual experience of a vast number of religious movements, many of which are dominant in Brazil and in other countries of Latin America.

When we situate this discussion exclusively within the field of theory, we find that the majority of the analytical models of apprehending the spiritual world are taken from the largely Western canon of interpretations of the world spirituality. Here a number of first class studies can be found, such as those of Henry Corbin on Sohrawardi, Ibn Arabi and Avicena; Izutsu’s comparison between the paths of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and that of Ibn Arabi; Rudolf Otto’s classic comparative study on Shankara and Meister Eckhart; Gershom Scholem’s studies of Jewish mysticism; Louis Massignon’s monumental study on Al-Hallaj; Suzuki’s essays on the Zen Buddhism and its connections with Meister Eckhart’s teachings; Mario Satz’s study on the influence of Sufism in the sixteenth-century Spanish mystics; and recent works, such as Michael Sells’s outstanding proposal of how to read the great mystics of various traditions, languages, places and epochs.⁷ On the other hand, when one approaches the study of popular, indigenous, Afro-American, and even New Age religious movements, one almost always ends up discussing the collective production of meaning, group ideology, ethnic identity, therapeutic function, social integrati-

⁶ For information on the mythic-literary corpus of *Ifa* see Bascom (1969) and Abimbola (1976); for further readings on the corpus of the Kuna see Holmer & Wassen (1947) and Sherzer (1990).

on or rejection of the social order. As a consequence of the way academic disciplines dedicated to the study of religion have been articulated and differentiated since the nineteenth century, popular religious movements do not seem to attract the same abstract questions that scholars address when they study literate spirituality. It is easy for anthropologists to accuse comparativists and phenomenologists of ethnocentrism; it is easy for the latter to view the ethnologists as people unprepared to penetrate the subtleties of the language of the “great” religious teachers and traditions. Putting it as a theoretical problem, how are we going to unify the studies of the “great religions” with anthropological and sociological studies of religions, without one having to borrow or to lend its prestige to the other? This is the general theoretical issue that underlies the following interpretation of popular religions in Brazil.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN BRAZIL

In a brief synthesis, it could be said that Brazil is a great laboratory of creative and intense religious movements. Here the practices range from the most remote Catholic traditions, such as brotherhoods of flagellants, however forbidden by the Vatican; a number of variants of Afro-Brazilian traditions, present all over the country; New Age communities; new forms of Japanese religions; Islam, which is expanding rapidly in the state of São Paulo; Spiritualism, or Kardecism; a vast profile of esoteric movements, some of which began in the nineteenth century; the unique mystical panorama of the capital, Brasília, where I live, which offers a wide variety of Third Millennium religiosity; and, above all, the extraordinary expansion in the last three decades of Pentecostal Churches, a phenomenon which is causing a dramatic change in the traditionally syncretistic character of the Brazilian religious universe. However, as I have already argued, more than Catholic (or now simply Christian), Brazil is, in a broader sense, a spiritualist country.

According to a survey carried out in 1992 by the Institute for Study of Religion (ISER) of Rio de Janeiro, 64% of the Brazilian Catholics believe in reincarnation and relate, to some extent, to the Afro-derived religious world, or to the Kardecist and other types of Spiritualism.⁷ Even the most dynamic segment of the Pentecostal movement – specifically, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – has chosen to exercise a direct confrontation with the Afro-Brazilian

⁷ See Corbin (1958, 1976 and 1979); Izutsu (1983); Otto (1932); Scholem (1991); Massignon (1975); Suzuki (1949, 1950, 1953 and 1957); Satz (1991).

⁸ See Carneiro & Soares (1992).

religious tradition by practicing, in their rituals, exorcisms of supernatural beings worshipped in cults of an African origin. Thus, by using symbols of negation, they also participate in the dominant spiritualist space. In other writings I have called this complex field of religious groups living in close contact and constantly influencing one another a “quarrel of the spirits.”⁹

Since the middle of the nineteenth-century, two movements of quite distinct cultural and social origins have been simultaneously growing and influencing each other, challenging the image of Brazil as a predominantly Catholic country: Alan Kardec’s Spiritualism, imported from France at the time of its creation in the 1860s; and *candomblé*, being a restructuration of the African model of religiosity within the hostile environment of slavery.¹⁰ *Candomblé*’s main focus is possession by the gods; Spiritualism’s main goal is the development of mediumship, understood as the incorporation and consequential communication with disembodied beings. *Espiritismo* is a literate tradition, stemming out of the scientificist and evolutionistic context of the nineteenth-century, and, as such, a tradition already born within a rationalist framework. As well as in France, spiritualism arose in Brazil within the stratum of the white population. On the other hand, *candomblé* emerged on the opposite pole, that is, out of the African myth of oral tradition reconstructed by the slaves and their descendents on American ground. Recent historical investigations have recurrently demonstrated the early cross-fertilization between these two forms of religiosity. It is probable that spiritualism was organized in Brazil, simultaneously with its doctrinal development in France, by assimilating the style of orthodox Afro-Brazilian religions, which were already structured in cities like Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and São Luís as early as the first half of the nineteenth-century.

Ubiratan Machado quotes a poem called “Naive Brasília” (Brasília Ingênua), published in the journal *Bahia Ilustrada* (1867:23), in which someone makes fun of the spiritualist doctrine, at that time already established in the state of Bahia. In the two final strophes of the poem a daughter warns her father not to believe in what he observed in a spiritualist seance: “Papa, forget about all that confusion\if you don’t want to go wrong\ ... \don’t believe in that hoax\ this is nothing else\ but a memorable *candomblé*\ prepared for the white men of this land.”¹¹

⁹ See Carvalho (1992 and 1999). For this expression, “quarrel of the spirits”, I have drawn inspiration from the title of the essay by Desiderius Erasmus, *Querella Pacis* (The Complaint of Peace) and also from the structure of his Colloquies, such as the delightful “The Religious Feast”, where many characters and their shadows exchange perspectives on Christian doctrine (see Erasmus 1989).

¹⁰ For an ethnography of *candomblé*, see Bastide (1958).

This short poem is quite a revelation, because within it one can capture the kernel of Brazilian syncretistic religiosity. The girl's father is obviously a member of the elite (or at least aspires to be so) and as such supposes that he should not be associated with religious practices that pertain to the descendants of African slaves; however, everything suggests that such a familiarity had already existed for him. Granted that we can see how spiritualism also functions as an intelligent social alibi: one engages in popular trance, but announces publicly that it is in fact Alan Kardec's literate and "scientific" doctrine. The daughter, interested that her father be always associated with the European status in Brazil, warns him that that type of spiritualism is actually nothing but a *candomblé* ceremony for the whites. The color white signifies not so much a racial feature, but rather a metaphor for social status; that is to say, a kind of possession polished enough not to confront openly the Catholic Church.

Here a third religious current that has also been restructured in an underground manner should be included: the indigenous shamanistic traditions, incorporated by the mestizo populations. These fusions resulted in the syncretistic cults called *jurema* and *catimbó* in the Northeast and *pajelança* and *cura* in the North.¹² The format of these cults is also similar to other Afro-Brazilian syncretistic models that will be discussed later on: the *pajé* or "master" is possessed by a series of entities, all of them related to some cosmic realm and in charge of the cure for illnesses and mental disturbances.

From a sociological and ideological point of view, we already have excellent works that answer questions of a structural, functional and political type regarding spiritualism and Afro-Brazilian cults. However, these movements are only able to grow if they provide the possibility for a spiritual experience that is transmitted by the leaders and absorbed by the neophytes. And what sort of experience is that? Is it possible to understand such an experience as an outsider, in order to place it in the universal catalogue of spiritual experiences? In other words, I would like to include some forms of religiosity currently practiced in Brazil within the field of comparative mysticism. I seek to do so because there is an absence of references to Afro-Brazilian religions in recent encyclopaedias and readers on world-scale religions.¹³ This absence is especially regrettable if

¹¹ "Papai saia da embrulhada\Se não quiser ficar mal\...\Não creia nessa armadilha,\Que outra coisa não é,\Que dos brancos desta terra\Memorável *candomblé*." (Machado 1983:101).

¹² For basic information on *jurema*, see Carvalho (1990a); for *catimbó*, see Cascudo (1951); and for *pajelança* and *cura* see Mundicarmo Ferretti (1993 and 1994).

¹³ See, for example, the monumental *World Scripture: A comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts*, published in 1995, which only included, apart from the established prestige of the "great reli-

we consider the richness, creativity and intensity of these mystical practices that have been developed for centuries in this part of the world.

Spiritualism: mediumship and psychography

The experience offered by spiritualism allows for an expressive form that is more easily adaptable to scholars' proposed questions of what are known as great religions, due to the fact that the mediumistic experience is rendered in speech and in writing. Moreover, it is treated as a process of non-personalized verbalization, which works almost as another form of the famous experience of transverberation of St Teresa of Avila, though not through the angel's flaming arrow, but through the word of the spirit.¹⁴ While the angel's fire spreads through Teresa's body, the words of the spirit pass through the medium's mouth or pen and are thus spread throughout the community.

The spiritual fulfilment of the medium seems to be measured first by the fidelity of its mediation – that is to say, to be able to filter it in the most perfect way possible to its personal channel that permits a passage into incorporation – and, above all, for the evolutionary stage of the spirit that incorporates. Psychographic mediums produce constantly a vast literature, expressed in several literary genres – novels; historical, philosophical, and moral texts; poems; biographies; as well as commentaries and reflections on the spiritualist doctrines. Undoubtedly spiritualism is not confined to the spiritualistic literature; there are also painters, plastic artists, musicians; and finally it is the practice of charity and of love for one's neighbor, parameters of spirituality that allows spiritualism to be presented socially as an entirely compatible spiritualistic movement with Catholicism.

One event which illustrates the importance of spiritualism to Brazil took place in the 1970s on the occasion of the first satellite transmission of Brazilian television. Instead of transmitting the message of a Catholic priest – given the traditional self image of the country as the greatest Catholic nation of the world – the television filmed Francisco Cândido Xavier, the most popular Brazilian spiritualist leader writing, through the act of psychography, a message of peace, pro-

gions", "African traditional religions", Maori traditional religion and the religion of the North American Indians. Inexplicably, neither the religions of the South American Indians nor the Afro-Brazilian religions are referred to within this grand world portrait. The same can be said of the anthology edited by Beverluis (1995), where Afro-Brazilian religions are also absent.

¹⁴ The word transverberation has been associated almost exclusively with St Teresa's mystical experience told in Chapter 29 of her autobiography (Teresa 1957:210). The OED defines it thus: "a striking through... The room in which Teresa received her mystical transverberation - the piercing of her heart by a fiery dart" (1979:3385).

gress and hope sent from the beyond to the whole nation. That remarkable event, which was meant to be a celebration of Brazil's symbolic inclusion into modernity, can also be understood as the fulfillment of the initial promise of spiritualism, which defined itself, since the nineteenth century, to be the scientific doctrine of the spirits, capable of joining science and religion together. Thus, a spirit living in outer space sent a message to all via a medium; and the TV broadcast it to the whole nation via electromagnetic waves. Given the all-pervasive belief in spiritualism in Brazil, many people who saw the broadcast may have drawn an analogy between Francisco Xavier's power as a medium for extra-physical messages and the technicians's powers as men of science, capable of controlling the satellite as a source for physical communication of messages. In this way Francisco Xavier could publicly reclaim the relevancy of the title of one of his more famous books: "Brazil, Heart of the World, Homeland of the Gospel."

Common amongst Brazilian social scientists is a certain aesthetic-ideological rejection of spiritualist psychographic literature, because it describes distant planetary universes which, surprisingly, are run as a kind of utopic society of civil servants, all practicing the good and accumulating a kind of merit called a bonus, similar to the way terrestrial officials accumulate bonuses and points in their professional career on their path to retirement. Such an interpretation is valid, obviously, but it does not exhaust in any way the creativity of the Brazilian spiritualist literary fiction.

The greatest figure in Brazilian spiritualism is, as we have already indicated above, Francisco Xavier. He has been psychographing for almost seventy years and has published more than 300 books, mostly novels. However, some of his texts are substantial contributions to the doctrine and cosmology of Western spiritualism. One could say that Francisco Xavier embodies the Christian ideal of a compassionate life, one entirely devoted to comforting the heart-stricken through his mediumistic powers¹⁵. If we assess him as a religious writer, his work is evidently uneven, although he does have moments of great subtlety and of a certain spiritual poetic reverie. Here is one phrase dictated to him by André Luiz, one of the spirits that he has psychographed, indicating the path to the great realization of sanctity:

"The saint's ecstasys was, one day, a mere impulse, like the cut diamond – a celestial drop chosen to reflect the divine clarity – he li-

¹⁵ For a current biography of Francisco Xavier, see Souto Maior (1995).

ved in the alluvium, ignored in a brute state among common stones”¹⁶ (Xavier 1973:158).

Here the implicit conception of sanctity is clearly Christian, although the idea of reflection of divine clarity points to the role of the mediator, as a mirror or a surface plane crossed by divine light; and that makes him close to the Kardecist goal of spiritual development as the capacity to transmit the divine essence. From the point of view of this religious conception, deeply disseminated among the Brazilian population, Catholicism is understood as a special form of spiritualism.

I am convinced that Francisco Xavier deserves much more attention on the part of scholars of other continents who research spiritualism. For example, texts such as *No Mundo Maior (In the Larger World)* and *Evolução em Dois Mundos (Evolution in Two Worlds)*, with their rich description of planetary homelands and with precise descriptions of how the universe was formed, are equivalent of classics such as *Heaven and Hell* and *The New Jerusalem* by Emmanuel Swedenborg, or *The Book of Spirits*, by Alan Kardec. Moreover, one could perfectly think of a compatible dialogue between Francisco Xavier and Teilhard de Chardin on the evolution of man as a spiritual being. It would also be worthwhile, for those who study North American Channeling (such as, for instance, the group that produces the books of the spirit Michael), to read Xavier.¹⁷ As I see it, it is not a lack of quality in his work which has prevented him so far from attaining more scholarly interest outside Brazil, but rather the way international prestige is currently constructed through legitimizing academic circuits.

Moving now to an assessment of popular Catholicism, special attention should be given to various appearances of the Virgin Mary in many parts of Brazil, many of them described by followers through the language of possession. In many cases, such as in *umbanda*, the model of Afro-Brazilian religion most open to incorporate new entities to its pantheon all the time, the Virgin is treated as just another entity of this vast supernatural pantheon. A special and creative case of appearance is the one happening in the town of Piedade dos Gerais, in the state of Minas Gerais.¹⁸ In the beginning of that phenomenon, the Virgin would write ethereal words in the sky, that vanished immediately after the visionary girl read them. Some time later, both the seer and the Mother of God devised an

¹⁶ See Xavier, *No Mundo Maior* (1973:158); transl. mine.

¹⁷ On channeling as a new spiritualist model, see Riordan (1992), and the directory of channelers prepared by Robin Westen (1998).

¹⁸ See Almeida (1994)

elegant system of lip synchronization among themselves: the Virgin would move her lips silently and the girl would vocalize what the divine Lady was indicating, thus uttering the words of the Virgin. The young visionary continues to be merely a messenger that speaks for, but is not possessed by Mary. However, the visual synchrony seems to work like a semiotic transposition of other synchronic arrangements used in Afro-Brazilian possession cults, which demand more somatic activity. A whole community has been formed out of these appearances with synchronous messages. Equally extraordinary, and to some degree similar to the world “of the spirits,” is the capacity of the young woman who sees the Virgin and delivers her messages to reproduce the phenomenon daily: without routine, yet repetitive.

Another tradition of the mystic type that continues to grow in importance is that of the diversified cult forms based on the ingestion of the *yagé* plant, better known in the Brazil as *ayahuasca*. They demonstrate very well this aggregating, syncretistic and fusionist character of the Brazilian religious pattern. While on the Hispanic side of the Amazon – be it Peru, Ecuador or Colombia – shamanism structured around *ayahuasca* has remained until recently confined to the indigenous populations and their own cosmologies, it was reorganized into a mestizo kind of cult as soon as it crossed from Bolivia into the state of Acre on the Brazilian frontier. One of the first of these cults is the well-known *Santo Daime*, founded in the 1920s by Master Raimundo Irineu Serra, from the state of Maranhão. In his youth Raimundo was a practitioner of the *mina* cult, which is a fusion of the original vodun religions from Benin with pajelança, a form of worship of nature spirits (a kind of mestizo shamanism) that have the capacity to cure. So, the *mina* of Maranhão was already a coalition of African religious traditions with those of Brazilian natives with Catholicism. When later Irineu Serra created the Sacred Daime, he developed a second synthesis of that first synthesis with the Andean-Amazonian tradition of the *ayahuasca* cult. In this way, even the shamanic complex of *ayahuasca* was incorporated in Brazil under the sign of syncretism, though in this case through a double fusion: simultaneously compatible with the African-American-Brazilian language of spirit possession, and also with Christianity.¹⁹

From the point of view of reconciling distinct religious practices, another unique case is that of the priest Miguel Fernandes of the Brazilian Apostolic Catholic Church, who lives in a suburb of Brasília. After performing the Mass,

¹⁹ For information on Santo Daime see Alverga (1984), MacRae (1992) and Froes (1986); on the *ayahuasca* cult in the Andean area see Luna & Amaringo (1991).

Fernandes becomes possessed by a friar spirit named Fabiano, and then he cures his parishioners' physical and mental illnesses. Here we are no longer dealing with syncretism understood as a fusion or amalgam of beliefs or religious practices of distinct traditions brought into contact. This is rather a creative or two-fold symbolic arrangement: from the priest's point of view, this syncretism may be called biographical, closer perhaps to a case of multiple consciousness, or of an internal plurality of the subject. According to him, what the Bible calls charisma, is identical to what is called mediumship in Spiritualism. Thus, he translates himself for two different religious publics, the Catholics and the Spiritualists. From the point of view of official Christian Theology this arrangement is understood as incommensurable. From the point of view of the parishioners, however, they simply experience peaceful and complementary intimacy between two religious universes divided by different principles and corresponding to very different spiritual necessities.²⁰

Xangô, candomblé and other traditional African-American-Brazilian cults: radical apophysis and the displacement of oneself²¹.

While Spiritualism concentrates itself on textualizing the specific experience that it offers, traditional Afro-Brazilian religions present us with some truly radical challenges, namely: the silence regarding the internal world; the suspension of all dimensions of textual writing; and strict control over oral expression. In spite of the vast literature extant on *candomblé*, *xangô*, and *tambor de mina*, their unique style of spirituality has not been discussed.²² Firstly, they form a complex and intense religious movement that has already expanded into other countries, like Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, the United States, Portugal and Morocco. The various styles of *orisha* cults in the New World, whether from Brazil or from Cuba, have experienced an expansion of immense magnitude resembling, in style and geographical width, that of Buddhism 2000 years ago. The starting point of this formidable expansion has not been the glorious historic kingdoms of West Africa, such as those of Oyo, Dahomey, Asante, etc, but the dramatic experience of slavery. Less than two centuries after their reinte-

²⁰ On this mixture of Catholicism with spiritualism see Dioclécio Luz (1989).

²¹ I am using the expression as a translation of the Portuguese "saída de si". I chose displacement, instead of departure, exit, dislocation, or deposition, to mean that control of oneself has been transferred to a supernatural being wilfully, and as a result of a ritual practice. For a detailed analysis of the complex composition of the self in *xangô* religion, see Segato (1995).

²² For basic information on *xangô*, see Carvalho (1990b); for *tambor de mina*, see Sérgio Ferretti (1985).

gration, Afro-Brazilian religious practices can already be found on five continents, and their expansion is not credited with any economic base or politics nor with any significant support of it in written form; its strategy is based strictly on conversion, or of conviction.

It is common to find analyses of world religions that speak of *umbanda*, *macumba*, *candomblé*, etc, as types of possession cults. However, the spiritual trajectory of a *candomblé* practitioner is qualitatively different from that of an adept of *umbanda*, or of *jurema*. Moreover, I believe it is also quite different from the spirituality of a Yoruba or of an Ewe person who worships his\her divinities on the West Coast of Africa. To begin with, the internal world of the Brazilian adept is full of expressions formulated in an exclusively sacred language, unknown to him and very distant from the Portuguese that is spoken daily.²³ The fundamental experience of the religiosity of *xangô* is trance induced by the *orishas*, gods that represent the forces of nature. There is constant demand for a great performance in terms of dance, body posture, facial expression, etc. The *orisha* hardly speaks and even has difficulty in communicating to the audience through gestures. The person depends greatly on the ritual community during the occasions that she receives the divinities. No one is able to break free from the trance state; the possessed one is taken to the sacred room and awakened under close supervision of her colleagues. Many times she remains asleep or resting for a while, and there is a feeling of shame or avoidance, a sense of being uncomfortable in the moment of returning to ordinary consciousness, when she will once again share the festival with her fellow worshippers. Furthermore, one has to learn how to administer this trance state with proficiency, and control the impulse of getting into trance, so as not to banalize one's own *orishas*. A fully initiated son a saint, with years of familiarity with the *xangô* world, will not receive his *orishas* more than a half dozen times per year; and people of greater status receive them in general no more than three times per year. Initiates learn the social art of creating in the community an anticipation as regards the gods who control their heads.²⁴

The most radical and demanding case of this trance state is probably that of the orthodox *tambor de mina* temples of São Luís, in Maranhão. In order to be ac-

²³ I have been able to edit and translate a corpus of sacred songs in Yoruba of the *xangô* cults of Recife and could confirm the nearly absolute lack of knowledge of the literal sense of the content of those songs in Yoruba language on the part of the current generation of adepts (Carvalho 1993).

²⁴ For an interpretation of *xangô*'s archetypal psychology and the different possession patterns of the *orishas*, see Segato (1995).

cepted as a neophyte in one of the centuries-old temple houses (the one called House of the Minas), one must attend a public party in honor of the voduns and, from the audience, fall into trance in the presence of everyone. One will then be taken to an isolated room and it will be subjected to a true test of recognition (naturally of the semiological type) in order to know if the supernatural entity received is in fact one of those worshipped in the House. This absorption, without rehearsal or practice, of a somatic image as complex yet precise as a vodun is, demands enormous mental and performative command, even more difficult if we consider that each person faces this challenge entirely alone. This aspect of traditional Afro-Brazilian religiosity, which is quite obvious for those who live it from the inside, has surprisingly not been discussed so far in the literature. Perhaps researchers have been more interested in studying the concept of person, or the cult's representation of the world and the individual, or the polytheistic structure of the pantheon, or the social and political allegories of the divine personalities, etc. Unfortunately, they have not dealt with the complexities of how synaesthesia becomes necessary in order to carry out with beauty, elegance, and control of the scene, the always unique and unrepeatable spectacle of possession by *orishas* and *voduns*.²⁵

We are dealing with a style of spirituality that can only be revealed during its climax, that is, in the exceptional and premeditated moment of total surrender. After that moment the adept should repress entirely any compulsion to speak about her experience. Higher priests and priestesses never conveyed any important detail of their subjective life through written form; neither do they vocalize it for the benefit of a fixed or privileged witness. The greatness of a *pai de santo*, or a *mãe de santo* is measured, on one hand, by his\her gifts of intuition, capacity for leadership, self-control and surrender to the community's needs; and, on the other hand, by both his\her aesthetic skills and those of the *orishas*: the way s\he dances during possession; the way s\he dresses and his\her body expression; the messages and divinations s\he is able to give. In short, his\her greatness or, to use a native term, "majesty."

Public possession is, in fact, the summit of that extremely demanding and punitive religious road. After the trance one is forbidden to make commentaries with anyone. It is a completely private experience that is not to be admitted to or divulged. Not only is it prohibited to mention that one entered into trance, but neither can one hear any comments on one's performance. During trance, the

²⁵ An exception is the discussion of the "psychic soma" proposed by Segato (1995).

divinity that possesses the adept's body gives advice and solutions for those who request his\her help. Furthermore, the divinity can even leave messages for herself through the artifice of referring to herself in the third person. However, that mediator-interlocutor of the divinity almost always changes, allowing the diffusion, throughout the whole community, of the memory of its *orishas*. This way, not only is the individual biography fragmented, but that of the *orisha* also. Here biographies are collectively constructed, even if full of censored materials; the biography of the *orisha* is narrated, partly by the person that receives her in trance, and partly by fellow members. The two histories of the spirit remain therefore severed. Nobody has the whole truth, neither about her own ecstasy nor about that of her fellow members; possession continues to be at the same time a reality and a mystery. If hermeneutics reminds us that to understand always means to affirm a partial vision, in the world of *xangô* such a statement seems part of the common sense.

Maybe the amount of slander, intrigue, and interpersonal tensions so common among fellow members provides an outlet for the need to externalize images of the other, denied by the taboo of the trance itself, about which only a third person can speak with some other member. To speak, good or bad, of the *orishas* that descend upon fellow cult members (who are called brothers of saint and sisters of saint) is a way of dominating the ghost of the silence of their own experiences, which are the most important personally and at the same time the least negotiable socially.

Put in terms of the mysticism of the so-called "great religions", while the literate apophysis possesses its own dynamism capable of generating displacements of signifiers that respond to sensory stimuli, visions, and internal processes that only come to life when externalized in a written text, in the case of spirit possession the dynamism consists of growing deeper in silence about the experience itself – emotional, somatic, psychic, and spiritual. The tension of accumulated silence is resolved in a new ecstasy by the adept, until a complete maturity is reached in this life "in and out of the mind," to borrow an expression taken from Ruth Padel's essay on the tragic Greek self (Padel 1992). Once it is conquered, this profound control over one's internal unfolding is passed on to the young adepts, normally without uttering a single word. Once again the renouncement of speech is one of the pillars of orthodox Afro-Brazilian devotion.

Although this tradition counts on a gallery of men and women considered to have achieved a high degree spirituality, there are no written records of their spi-

ritual life. Various biographies of *pais* and *mães de santos* exist, but they are always disappointing, in this sense, because they never discuss this hidden dialogue²⁶, this gnosis grown through their personal relationships with their *orishas*; there is a systematic refusal of verbalizing that type of hierophany. If we allow ourselves a momentary digression, this Afro-Brazilian refusal to openly affirm that which is experimented, may remind us of the fascinating biography, written by Jonathan Spence, of Kang-Hsi, who was emperor of China for sixty years in the 17th century. Spence tells us how difficult it was to arrive at the concrete man, with his unique personal world, because Kang-Hsi was always hidden behind the protocol and the stereotyped language of the court.²⁷ Even if it sounds heterodox, this comparison underlines that aristocratic attitude so characteristic of the religion of the *orishas* in Brazil. This refusal to give one's word to outsiders is also political: no Theology, or Theological Anthropology, capable of expropriating the devotion of members of traditional Afro-Brazilian cults, has been possible up to now.

What is really surprising is the capacity to resist, year after year, in spite of the intensity and rigor of this religious way, talking about that experience. One's relationship with the "owner of one's head" is truly dramatic and passionate, and it is the source of many headaches, both literal and symbolic. The philosophical problems of this relationship, when projected into an individual conscience, are certainly vast and deep. What is the truth of such a phenomenon? Even the practitioners themselves may not be able to explain it very well; or perhaps the question itself may be a false one. The *orisha*, absolute being, a force of nature, that knows it all and can make it all, the one who descended into my head and became my *orisha*... can I make sense of it? Maria das Dores da Silva, a prestigious *mãe de santo* of the religious community of the *xangô* of Recife, a daughter of the *orisha Shango*²⁸, told me more than once that oftent she had the impression that the *orisha* was with her all time – all day and every day, and not only during the ritual moment of possession, which occurs very few times during the year. I have heard something similar from her and from other adepts in regards to their *caboclos*, or "earth spirits", that will be mentioned below. This intimate relationship with the divinities is a characteristic of this type of spirituality that

²⁶ For this notion of hidden dialogue, and for dialogism in general, I took the conceptual framework of Mikhail Bakhtin and adapted it to the case of trance religions (see Bakhtin 1981 and 1984)/

²⁷ See Spence (1974).

²⁸ To avoid confusion, I have kept the local Brazilian spelling *xangô* to refer to the religious cult; and *Shango*, to refer to the god of thunder, since this is the current spelling in English.

has been developing parallel to Christianity. The play between having everything under control and at the same not being able to possess rational control over one's acts; between being centered into oneself and being always outside oneself; between dominating the *orisha* through her desire and being dominated by her through possession: there lies the intense spirituality of traditional Afro-Brazilian religions. The issue here is not to formulate a general theory of religious trance, but rather of pointing out the difficulty of recovering, for an academic discipline that is fundamentally comparative, the signs of spiritual fulfillment offered by Afro-Brazilian cults.

We are faced here with a classic dilemma of mysticism, recently discussed by Michael Sells in his book *The Mystical Languages of Unsayings*: the problem of apophatic language.²⁹ What is so striking, if we use Sell's model, is that the Afro-Brazilian spiritual tradition is based on the radical apophasis. Instead of the Tomist solution, or of the textually creative apophasys, which was developed, for instance, by Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Chuang Tzu, Ibn Arabi, among others, the *xangô* people chose the concentrated weight of absolute silence. In spite of the silence, the intensity is obviously there, and it can be observed in the majesty of the body behavior and in the capacity of self-control on the part of leaders, precisely that attribute that allows them to pass on their *ashe*.³⁰ There is no dialogue possible, nor a third person that can act as guarantor, through language, of the truth of one's experience. This resistance to make one's psychic life socially semiotic (as Mikhail Bakhtin would have it³¹), is a strong characteristic of this spiritual path, and one that has, until recently, been poorly understood by specialists. The truth, or the quality of one's possession, is ostensive, to use Wittgensteinian terminology (it "shows itself"); and its rhetoric is entirely performative. We tend to interpret spirituality precisely on the basis of autobiographical documents, of confessions of tribulations and progresses of the soul in search of its liberation. It is the model of the seeker, which is present in the writings of St Augustine, Plotinus, Jacob Böhme, St Theresa of Jesus, St John of the Cross, St Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton. It is here where lies the difficulty of the comparison attempted by Roger Bastide in his essay "The interior castle of the black man", between the stages or mansions crossed over by the

²⁹ See Sells (1994).

³⁰ *Ashe*, a term similar to *mana*, refers to the force or magical power that emanates from the deities or that can be activated by means of ritual invocations.

³¹ For a development of these Bakhtinian notions of the third in a dialogue, and of psychic life as semiotic, see the thorough essay by Gary Morson & Caryl Emerson (1990).

soul in the *Interior Castle* of St Theresa of Avila and the various dimensions of trance in *candomblé* religion³² (Bastide 1976).

The hermeneutic model generated by this refusal of speech is extremely complex. First, it is not a kind of “Rashomon effect,” constructed with several versions of a well-known fact³³; neither is it the model of the Kwakiutl shaman Quesalid, analyzed by Lévi-Strauss, according to which during a certain moment in his career Quesalid was not able to know whether in fact he did have or did not have the power to cure³⁴. I cannot affirm that someone who enters into trance with an *orisha* does not know what is happening to him\her; perhaps s\he does know, if not everything (this we do not know about ourselves even when awake), at least something basic. But the experience of possession (that is to say, even this specific knowledge) would be destroyed if it was externalized. A steady complicity, a strong pact of silence, from the inside to the outside, is necessary. Ultimately, even if one knows what is happening and how it is happening, the energy accumulated from the constant effort to remain silent is liberated only during the experience of another trance and helps one to reproduce the experience in an equally intense way.

It is highly probable that this spiritual structure of the apophatic silence has been conditioned by the repressive and violent experience of slavery and the conditions – not much better – of the post-abolition period. Anyway, we must not look at this spiritual style merely from the perspective of what it does not show: it has been conditioned by a historical context, in the same measure that all other styles of spirituality have also been and are still being pressured and conditioned by their own political, ethnic, racial, or religious contexts. In other words, the decision to remain silent has generated (or reinforced) a specific spiritual technique, much in the same way that the decision of worshippers of the *ayahwasca* cults, to voice every detail of their internal visions has also generated another unique style of spirituality. So deeply engrained in Brazilian society is this Afro-Brazilian spiritual structure that it has remained practically unchanged for generations since the 19th century. A hundred years ago most of the leaders of Afro-Brazilian cults were illiterate, whereas nowadays many of them have managed to attain a secondary school education. Moreover, many priests

³² See Bastide (1976). His pioneering inquiry into Afro-Brazilian mystical experience is only consistent with his intellectual career: two decades before visiting Brazil for the first time Bastide had already published a book on the mystical life (Bastide 1934).

³³ Here I am referring to the short story by Akutagawa, *Rashomon*, which was also made into a precious film with the same title directed by Akira Kurosawa.

³⁴ See the classic essay on shamanism by Lévi-Strauss (1963).

are now writing books on their religious traditions, sometimes with assistance. Nonetheless, this new access to writing for some leaders does not seem to have affected the style of spirituality developed by the present generation of adepts.

Negative Theology derived from the apophatic discourse is a kind of refusal to speak which is creative: it builds traces, frontiers, thresholds. It delimits the external side of the unspoken, and this unspoken is precisely the spiritual goal of the subject, whose desire is to merge or fuse with it. The very presence of this unspoken ends up being confirmed: since it cannot be affirmed, it is confirmed by the text that denies it. By denying it, it brings it into existence. But this unspoken already existed, logically, before it was denied; were it not so, the whole effort would simply be meaningless.³⁵ On the other hand, the refusal to describe one's relationship with the *orisha* differs from the literate apophasis in at least one important aspect. In classic apophasis, the mystic proposed, with his\her text, a dialogue with a reader that would be able to understand the apophatic character of his\her speech; or, as Michael Sells puts it, someone who was capable of following the mystic in his\her path of "de-ontologizing" the world and reality. That is, of undoing the set of reifications and substantializations which guide everyday consciousness. However paradoxical this discourse may seem, the reader tends to follow this "rational" necessity of transcending rational language in order to emphasize, performatively, yet in words, the ineffable.

In the case of the religion of *orishas* and *voduns*, which is a type of spiritual path dedicated basically to the displacement of oneself, whatever little the adept reveals of his\her own trance, s\he reveals it to someone else who also enters into trance. In other words, they cannot establish an inter-subjective agreement on a rational basis among themselves because all of them – s\he who is now expressing his\her experience and those fellow members who receive it and pass it on –, according to the conventions that shape this practice, are partially and fundamentally alienated from what happens to them when they receive an *orisha*. Maybe the classical apophasis (which is ultimately the apophatic discourse originally formulated by Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite), used as an analytical category by Michael Sells, is an apophasis of the Apollonian type, or a variation of the *jñana* yoga, the intellectual side of mystical experience according to the classical Vedanta typology³⁶. The apophasis of half-silence among the half-silenced is the apophasis of the displacement of oneself, of the avoidan-

³⁵ This is the approach of dissemination that Derrida explores in his creative discussion on Negative Theology (see Derrida 1989 & 1993).

³⁶ For a discussion of *jñana* yoga, see the classic book by Vivekananda (1970a).

ce of any rational systematization, even if it is about what one knows that cannot be said. It could possibly be an apophysis of a *bhakti* or Dionysiac type³⁷. Plotinus writes for a reader that will supposedly understand his language; and he is ready to say all that formal language allows him to say. Through this way of writing, Plotinus says everything to say nothing. A mature adept of *candomblé* does not put him\herself in a position to try to say all that the language would allow him\her; perhaps so that his\her experience will never be expropriated from him\her. Whatever s\he expresses, with little or nothing to say, is the complicity of the community of those who get possessed.

Macumba, jurema, quimbanda: the mystic lyricism without frontiers.

While the model of cult of *shango*, *candomblé* and *tambor de mina* is centered on the worship of African divinities, the model I call syncretistic concentrates on the worship of divinities whose history is linked to the Brazilian side of the Atlantic coast. Mingled with the shamanic and indigenous traditions in general, these cults are devoted to the entities which represent, allegorically, the historical experience of the peoples who lived in Brazil before, during and after the Portuguese colonization; from thousands of years ago to recent times. The main groups of deities are: a) “caboclos”, entities that symbolize the spirits of the Indians that lived in the country’s forests as well as all those who live in Brazil –: blacks, whites, mestizos and, obviously, Indians; b) “Pretos Velhos” (Old Black People) that symbolize the blacks, both those who were slaves and those that lived in the country in the condition of ex-slaves or of post-slaves. Like the *caboclos*, they also represent any Brazilian, including the whites, who also get possessed by their Pretos Velhos; and finally; c) “Mestres and “Mestras”, that symbolize those men and women of great supernatural power who lived in the interior of the country during its colonial, imperial and republican history and who practiced the typical shamanic rituals performed by the Indians, especially those related with to the cult of the *jurema*, a plant which is prepared as a drink capable of inducing trance and visionary states. The *Mestres* would be mythically mestizos, not unlike the image of Don Juan, the main character in the books by Carlos Castañeda.

The biggest contrast, however, with the African model, is that the songs for *orishas* and *voduns* are sung in African languages that are basically unknown by the adepts of *xangô*, *candomblé* and *tambor de mina*. Whereas the repertoires of

³⁷ For the way of *bhakti* see also Vivekananda (1970b).

the syncretistic cults *jurema*, *pajelança*, *candomblé de caboclo*³⁸ and *umbanda* are sung entirely in Portuguese. This implies a considerable change in the construction and expression of the religious experience provided by the cult. However, when one sings in an unknown language, all the historical world which surrounds us, the entire horizon of Dasein³⁹ becomes excluded from the symbolism now generated. On the other hand, when one sings in Portuguese, the effect of the religious experience in one's consciousness is traceable, because there is an unavoidable contiguity, as well as a semiotic contamination, between the religious expression and that of ordinary non-religious experiences. There is a necessary displacement of signifiers from the domain of the profane to that of the sacred – and not only of the sacred as collective representation, but also of the horizon of the person. Readers familiar with the essay by Michel de Certeau on Baroque mysticism, above all on the sixteenth century Spanish saints, will understand how the regime of language changed precisely at the moment when the so-called mystics performed the originary semantic displacement of the terms they chose to use to describe their experiences.⁴⁰ In the case of the popular trance religions in Brazil, we can see exactly the moment when poetic metaphors, built on a lyrical tone, begin to be used in the construction of a doctrinal, although still open, corpus dedicated to this African-Indian-Christian spirituality. Here I will provide a few examples of those sacred texts to illustrate the originality and intensity of this spiritual model that may be referred to as typically marginal.⁴¹

1. Song for Caboclo Tupinambá

Três pedras, três pedras
Três pedras dentro dessa aldeia
uma maior, outra menor

³⁸ For information on *candomblé de caboclo*, see Santos (1995).

³⁹ I use this Heideggerian expression here rather loosely, only to insist on the role of language in framing (as well as generating) one's own religious experience. A general background of this subject can be found in Gadamer (1993 and 1994).

⁴⁰ It is worth quoting a bit of de Certeau: "These manners of speaking, whether they fit foreign terms into a canonic language or quietly introduce the terminology of a legitimate science into a new form of speech, are translative processes. They are metaphorical activities (the metaphor is a *translatio*). They effect displacements; they attract words and change them. The logical interplay that was carried out within one stable linguistic system is now replaced by "transformations" from one system to another and by innovative uses or reuses of words in every field" (1992:119).

⁴¹ In another article I attempted to provide a comprehensive reading of this mystic-literary corpus in the Portuguese language (see Carvalho 1997).

a mais pequena é que nos alumeia
(Three stones, three stones
three stones inside this village
one bigger, another smaller
the smallest of them is the one that gives us light)

This song has circulated throughout Brazil since at least 1941, when it was recorded in Salvador, Bahia, by Frances and Melville Herskovits. As with the *caboclo*, the *aldeia* or “Indian village,” is a polysemous term. Firstly, it is the actual place where the Indians live; secondly it is the mythical place where the supernatural entities called *caboclos* reside; thirdly, it is also the sacred space where the cult takes place. Apart from the lyricism of the images, the text alludes to a mystical dimension of understanding the cosmos and the individual soul. There is initially an allusion of the triad, which by itself opens a vast field of comparative symbology: from the Christian triad to the “great triad” of René Guénon. The village, a confined space, may refer both to an external sacred center as well as to an internal center, to a space one constructs while experiences possession and develops a dialogic and existential relationship with one’s entities. It also reminds us of the image of the castle in a famous Sermon of Meister Eckhart’s.⁴² According to Ilse M. De Brugger, this castle, understood as an “inexpugnable redoubt of the soul”, may also be termed “little village”. The light that shines from the smallest of the stones suggests the power of the smallest over the biggest, a theme which is common to many mystical traditions, including Alchemy. Let us think, for example, of the remora or *echeneis*, the small fish that halts the ship in the middle of the ocean. Here we can also recollect an alchemical proverb: *multum in parvo* – abundance in little.⁴³ Furthermore, this minimal stone that shines can be equivalent to the philosopher’s stone of the alchemists and to the Fünkelein, or internal light, the uncontaminated center of the soul formulated by Meister Eckhart. The stone that shines is the title of the main treatise of the Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroek (*Van den blinkenden Steen*), who interprets the white stone of San Juan’s Apocalypse as a small stone that shines. She can also be associated with the *Étoile Internelle* (the eternal star) analyzed by L. Charbonneau-Lassay (1940).

⁴² See Eckhart (1977).

⁴³ I offered a systematic presentation of this alchemical symbolism in my edition of the *Mutus Liber* (see Carvalho 1995).

From the Hindu tradition, the small stone can be understood as the *Hiranya gharba*, the golden embryo or golden womb, image of the divine body located within the innermost part of the heart. Another possible analogy would be with the *Bindu*, divine point, seed of consciousness and ipseity, one of the basic symbols of the traditional Tantric Buddhism.

Here, the reader may ask how can I justify such a radical departure from the Afro-Brazilian cultural horizon to which that sacred song belongs. I shall respond very briefly to this perfectly reasonable concern. Firstly, we should be reminded that the present song text and the following ones are not entirely alien to the Christian mythopoetical horizon. Three stones inside this village: syncretic as *umbanda* is as a religion, we can guess that the Christian trinity is also implanted inside the gongá (shrine for the gods of *umbanda*). Put another way, adepts of *umbanda* and *candomblé de caboclo* participate in the Christian imaginary through popular Catholicism, and also as someone who experiences trance by supernatural entities. In this and in the next song, it is the *caboclo* who expresses his condition of transcendence.

2. Song for Caboclo Pedra Preta (Black Stone)

Pedrinha miudinha de Aruanda ê
Lajeiro tão grande
tão grande (longe) de Aruanda ê
(Little stone minimum of Aruanda eh
Huge stone so big
so big (far) from Aruanda

Here, two types of mythical spaces are united: the paradise of the Indians (*caboclos*) is described with the name of a place in Africa (Aruanda, or Luanda), which is associated in Brazil to one of the ports of departure of slaves coming from the regions of Bantu language: São Paulo de Luanda. We can follow the symbolism constructed in the previous song and consider that when the word “far” is changed into “large”, the image of the *multum in parvo*, that is, of the power of the smallest, becomes even more clear. While the big rock which stands out in the landscape becomes distant from the mythical kingdom of Aruanda, the smallest stone becomes the big stone that can support me (the rock of Psalm 18). Surely the stone is something hidden, of a dimension analogous to

that of the “smallest” stone we talked about earlier. Moreover, we should not forget the name of the *caboclo* to whom the song is dedicated: Black Stone.

This pebble\boulder of Aruanda is clearly an *imago mundi*, equivalent, for example, to another stone very dear to specialists of Greek culture: the *omphalos*, the oracle stone of Apollo in Delphos. This symbolic association can also grow to include other well known centers of the world: mount Meru of the Hindu tradition; Montsalvat of the medieval legend of the Holy Grail; mount Qaf of classical Persian mythology; and also the Beth-el, or house of God, the stone that Jacob put his head on to sleep and dream of the stairway where the angels ascended and descended. The small stone that recurs can also be assimilated to the stone of the Grail itself, the *lapis exillis* that appears in the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach⁴⁴.

3. Song for a Water Spirit

A rã preta é dourada
a rã preta é dourada
mas eu moro é no balseiro
do olho d'água
(The black frog is golden
the black frog is golden
but I live in the *balseiro* [fluctuating island]
of the spring)

This is a song I recorded in 1977 in a ritual of *cura* in a *mina* temple house of São Luís, Maranhão state. According to a priest, this song talks about the spirit of a frog, worshipped in the *pajelança* of São Luís. *Olho D'água* (eye of the water) is literally one of the names for a spring, a source of pure water. Apart from that, it is also the name of a beach on the island of São Luís, believed to be one of the places where the *encantados* (enchanted ones, usually nature spirits) can be seen by worshippers in *pajelança* or *cura* rituals.⁴⁵ It is, therefore, generic and metaphorical at the same time as it is literal. *Balseiro* is a word which describes a curious Amazonian geographical phenomenon: it refers to a fluctuating island formed by old pieces of vines which intermingle and break free from the banks

⁴⁴ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, Chap. 9 (1980:239).

⁴⁵ Mudicarmo Ferretti enlists the Olho D'Água beach as one of the visible places where the *encantados* live and can be seen (Mudicarmo Ferretti 1993:170).

of the rivers or creeks. Sometimes the *balseiro* reaches the sea, as is the case in this song. The water stays underneath the floating structure of branches and vines, and it is there below where the frog lives. The *balseiro* is thus a liminal element, an island which moves, connected with a spring of sweet water which reaches the sea (salt water). In that beach called Olho D'Água there used to be a channel to capture the clean water coming from the spring. The priest explained to me that there is a kind of black frog that shines with golden reflections when the rays of the sun pour over her at sunset. The description is therefore, in a certain plane, exact, precise. The question posed by the analyst, as s\he recognizes the poetic character of the text and decides to inquire about its sacred dimension is: Why did the author decide to highlight such a particular scene and transform it into an element of worship? Probably because s\he identifies an analogy with a spiritual experience and tried to express it with that scene, while others expressed their experiences with analogies extracted from other scenes. It is quite obvious that the author of this song did not read alchemical or other kinds of mystical treatises; but a transmission of these general symbols through the Christian tradition may have existed⁴⁶.

The first verse expresses an idea of a challenging complexity, built on an antithesis that obey a perfect symbolic structure, if compared with Alchemy or esoteric symbolism. The black frog (as being inferior) is the same golden frog (the superior); but I live in a fluctuating island – a river island, which sometimes can reach the bay, as is the case of this one in Olho D'Água, which contains crystalline water. Put in alchemical terminology, the black frog is the *opus nigrum*, the imperfect and degraded material, that is subjected to putrefaction (probable allusion to the *balseiro*, where the dead vines and branches are concentrated); and the golden frog is the *rubedo*, or *iosis*, the work in red, or gold, which is the gold that resulted at the end of the alchemical process. Thus, the *prima materia*, brute and dense (the black frog), is the same *lapis philosophorum*, final realization of the *opus*, the work of transmutation (the golden frog). In the Emblem V of the classic alchemical book *Atalanta Fugiens*, by Michael Meier, of 1612, the black frog is taken to the woman's breast so that she can extract, through an operation symbolically analogous to what is described here, the pure white milk.

An analytical mind could have separated the two processes here described and mentioned two animals: the black frog lives in the *balseiro*; the golden frog lives in

⁴⁶ I have discussed the epistemological and theoretical issues behind these comparisons in another essay (Carvalho 1997).

the spring. By using a paradox, however, the author overlapped these predictable oppositions and proposed an integration that brings to mind the Taoist figure of the *pa-kwa*, in which the white color mingles with the black and vice-versa: black mingled with golden, sweet water mingled with salt water are seen from the point of view of an object of synthesis: the *balseiro* carrying a frog. Synthesis is also implicit in this idea of the Olho D'Água, simultaneously sweet and salt water.

4. Song for Caboclo Cirilo

A mata virgem relampeou
Cidade do Juremá
Caboclo Cirilo abaixou no reino
Saravou seus filhos
Encruzou gongá
(A lightning struck the virgin forest
Village of Juremá
Caboclo Cirilo came down in the kingdom
Greeted his children
and drew a cross in the temple)

This beautiful *umbanda* song was sung by a popular painter and fisherman, Antonio de Gastão, from Cabo Frio, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁷ The text is paradigmatic of the model of building a symbolic enclosure, typical of syncretic cults (such as *jurema* and *macumba*): the “state”, an individual equivalent of the castle of the soul of medieval mysticism as I mentioned above. A relationship of synchronicity is here described: the *caboclo* comes down in the temple, appears physically to everyone by entering the body of an adept; at the same time he “comes down” into a human being by taking possession, albeit partially, of his consciousness, and in this sense one can conceive of his head as the virgin forest, as a city, a kingdom, or as the *gongá* (the temple). Thus, the text expresses the passage from the celestial to the terrestrial domain: *Caboclo Cirilo* departed from the distant place where he was and, by descending, inseminated the once profane space of the *terreiro*, making it co-extensive with that of the virgin forest; or rather, with the city of Juremá, the enchanted Kingdom of the *caboclos*, now transformed into a *gongá*, a temple, a shrine, a sacred space in the earth.

⁴⁷ Text extracted from the book on the life and works of Antonio de Gastão (1989).

From the musical point of view, this melody is perfectly iconic. The first two verses rest on the tonic and the third of the major scale on which the song is constructed, on a low tessitura. At the beginning of the third verse there is a modulation to the subdominant and after the word *abaixou* (came down), which has the highest note of all, the melody begins falling or “coming down” by continuous grades, reproducing iconically the process which the text describes: *Caboclo Cirilo* comes down from the high, from the sub-lunar space, from the Kingdom of the *juremá*, arrives at the human level, of his children’s, and finally descends to the level of the earth, of the *gongá*. This jump from one plane to another is experienced as commotion, a trembling, a revolution in the apparent disposition of things. Seen from the point of view of individual consciousness, the sudden presence of the divinity for everyone, in the temple, is equivalent to a possession, to a trance.

THE WORLD OF *MACUMBA* AND *QUIMBANDA*

However, not all these song texts are so evidently sublime. Let us examine the spiritual complexities of the following text by Preto Velho:

5. *Song for Preto Velho*

Meu pilão tem duas bocas
trabalha pelos dois lados
na hora do aperreio
valei-me pilão deitado.
(My mortar has two poles
it works by the two sides
in the hours of trouble
help me, resting mortar)

I recorded this song in 1976 in the *umbanda* temple of Mário Miranda, in Casa Amarela, Recife. This quite extraordinary text condenses several levels of experience into a metaphoric language which capitalizes, to the extreme on the power of ambiguity. To start with, it should be remembered that symbolically there are two kinds of mortars: the large, or normal sized mortar, used for domestic tasks, capable of evoking the kitchen of the house of the slave (and also of the post-slave) master, where the Old Black Man and the Old Black Woman

performed, historically and mythically, their domestic tasks. Apart from that, there is also a small manual mortar or artifact used exclusively in the Afro-Brazilian ritual context for grinding herbs and other elements which are used in the preparation of several types of baths, offerings and magic potions. In its capacity as a sacred song, the text evokes as much dualism as it demonstrates the ambivalence of the divine power: the little mortar can work for the good (i.e., for supernatural protection) as well as for the bad (harming an enemy). However, since the song concludes with the image of the laid down mortar, it can indicate the return to the unity and to a state of stability and equilibrium, as if the subject would be saying: out of necessity I present myself ambiguously, but I am fundamentally whole.

This song is still paradigmatic of some aspects of Brazilian social psychology. Its powerful language is transferred from the supernatural realm to the world of social and racial relationships of discrimination: the poetic subject is ready to face what may come to him\her, regardless of whether it is something good and peaceful, or if it is an invitation to open conflict, in case he\she feels threatened, pressured, discriminated against or with the back against the wall. Moreover, this text also reflects a fundamental aspect of the Afro-Brazilian spirituality: the integration of good and evil. The being that is constructed with this worldview is not exclusively good in the Christian sense of the term; and from the point of view of the pedagogy of the soul, the ambiguity is even more extreme, because it implies taking distance from the contrasting tendencies of the individual psyche. It also favors a warring and dynamic attitude of the soul, quite the opposite of the practice of *dejamiento* (letting go) of a Miguel de Molinos, or from the *Gelassenheit* (detachment) of a Meister Eckhart.⁴⁸

There is also a sexual allusion in this text that points to a way of living that is open both to heterosexuality and to homosexuality. If the poetic subject is pressured to position himself\herself in the world of sexual identities, (s)he chooses a strategic distancing, a neutrality, an impartiality which leaves, however, no space for omission: in the moment of excitement (the “shivering” – *aperreio* – that can also be heard (or misheard)⁴⁹ as the “shivering” – *arrepio* – in sexual urgency), s(he) is able to function either passively or actively.

Finally, I would like to present something of the tradition that has been most criticized and censored in the literature on Afro-Brazilian cults. Some of the fol-

⁴⁸ I have offered a model of analysis of the role of violence and chaos in Afro-Brazilian religiosity in another essay (Carvalho 1994c).

⁴⁹ For a theory of mishearing in songs see my essay (Carvalho 2000).

lowing images may be, for some, surprising or even shocking. They are two songs dedicated to *Pomba Gira*, a powerful entity associated to the “heavier” or evil side of *jurema*, *macumba* and *umbanda* cults. *Pomba Gira* is the female counterpart of *Eshu*, the famous trickster god, similar to Hermes and to Loki, in their role as guardian and messenger of the gods. An adulterous woman, prostitute, archetype of sexual love without barriers, owner of the cemetery, she commands infernal entities and is at the same time the great protector and the great avenger. The following texts are absent from all the anthologies of *umbanda* songs that I could find. Here is one that I recorded in Recife:

6. *Song for Pomba Gira*

Deixei meu marido no aeroporto
e fui com outro
(I left my husband at the airport
and went away with someone else)

The sociological landscape of this text seems clear. As far as I know, this is one of the few religious traditions that still expresses spiritual contents through explicit or “immoral” sexual images. Beyond this more obvious level of reading, we may imagine that the airport transmits an idea of modernity, something that can still be treated as a novelty and is satirized here by those who live in the squalid neighborhoods of Recife. As far as it was sung by women of the periphery, it could be saying that: to leave the husband in the airport and depart with another, doesn’t concern me, but the women whose husbands take airplane trips. If we identify the subject of the song with *Pomba Gira* herself, she is telling us that she does not merely circulate in the lower classes of society, but also amongst higher class members. In sum, according to the moral optics with which the dominant society is represented – the Western and Christians – *Pomba Gira* affirms that the world of the rich is also a depraved world.

Beyond these more explicit moral and sexual dimensions, there are still others, if we accept that it is a sacred text. Let us think of a law that is not only psychological or social, but also cosmic. First, it is necessary to define what is the husband. The husband is the convention, the norm – to go with another is to surpass the common law. The husband plunged in a flow (the airport) and she plunged in another (she went on a trip with another person). Or it could also be exactly

the opposite: she left the husband, who is, on another, totally different level – a level which is superimposed on the social – The Husband. To be liberated from the husband can mean to be liberated from oppression, from control. All of the possible abandonments are condensed there, like in a crystal that shines according to the light that illuminates it. The first and greatest of all abandonments is suffered by the one who flies: he left. When I say: I left my husband, it can also be that I was left and I had to go with another.

This is a perfect example of the change in discursive *règime* to speak of the sacred in circumstances of preference for marginal forms of cult. *Pomba Gira* is a goddess with a mundane biography: she was the wife of seven Eshus, a woman of the street; that is why her language draws analogies taken from the mundane plane.

7. *Song for Pomba Gira*

Essa puta é minha e ninguém toma
quem quiser puta gostosa
vai buscar na zona
(This whore is mine and nobody takes her from me
whoever wants a lovely whore
go to the brothel and get her)

This sacred text is one of those rare examples of sacralization of non-conjugal sex, of a utopia of carnal pleasure. Today, in almost all spiritual traditions (obviously, I am not referring to the past) sex has been degraded and relegated exclusively to the obscure parts of the profane world. However, in a world where there is no repression, as in the world of this divinity, the “savoury prostitute” is something positive, desirable, and without any notion of sin or shame. In the first place, the text emphasizes the great sexual power of the goddess, known to be the woman of seven men, and that will find resonance in a desire for identification on the part of those individuals who are possessed by *Pomba Gira*. One of the main messages of this text is that it invites us to meditate on the symbolism of the brothel. A term which turns out to be clearly polysemous in this context, it seems to alert us to the existence, beyond the social brothel, of a psychic brothel and even of a spiritual brothel. One of its perplexities is that, as a principle, the prostitute is someone who belongs to everyone; why does the subject in-

tends to become her exclusive owner? There are numerous prostitutes in the brothel; he who knows how to search will end up finding his savoury prostitute there. So, besides celebrating Pomba Gira, and highlighting her capacity of seduction, the text can also shed light on the necessity for individuation, i.e. for the encounter with one's personal desire. Although the poetic subject is, from the literal point of view, masculine, the place of identification with the situation of encounter proposed by the text can also be occupied by a woman in search of equivalent pleasure, even if her desire is not symmetrical to that of a man's.

As long as the man has not developed the capacity of tuning himself to achieve individuation, we can say the prostitute belongs to all; from the moment that self-awareness has been attained, she is then owned by him alone. This way, the prostitute assumes the symbolic function of the archetype, that is to say, of the general principle of identification. In other words, she becomes a mirror of the self. And then the brothel can be transformed into a kind of "realm of the mothers" of *Faust II* by Goethe, a place where all archetypes live in a potential state.⁵⁰ It is also a place of plurality, of transit, of the illusion caused by seduction; place of abandonment, of servitude. The text seems positive because the author seems to say that he found his Pomba Gira in the brothel and in that sense the key word of the text is "search". Nobody finds his savoury prostitute free; neither can one request her from others. Whoever can say: "that prostitute is mine and nobody will take her from me", has finally found himself, at some profound level of his being. In other words, besides the social brothel, there is also the psychic brothel and finally the spiritual brothel. In the brothel are found all the prostitutes, that is, all the Pomba Giras: you have to go there and look for yours (prostitute, that is, Pomba Gira). The poetical subject addresses Pomba Gira and calls her "my whore". This is an expression of worship to the deity, similar to saying, "my goddess": I identify myself with Pomba Gira and do not desist from this identification, even if it means social degradation.

These are new sacred metaphors, generated by an extremely alive and intense spiritual tradition. They are mystical texts produced in the urban contemporary atmosphere of large cities filled with peripheral areas and shanty towns. In spite of this wealth of images and new metaphors of the spiritual world, the Afro-Brazilian religious tradition continues to be, unfortunately, neither well-known nor valorized. Here is how Robert Torrence, in his book, *The Spiritual Quest*, assesses Brazilian *umbanda*: "What is missing from spirit possessi-

⁵⁰ On the Mothers in *Faust*, see the remarkable study of Janz (1969).

on in *Umbanda*, for all its spinning mediums and batteries of gods, for its elaborate spiritism and ostentatious spirituality, is precisely its spirit: the continual possibility of a never wholly predictable alteration of the given human condition through the overpowering intrusion of the divine” (Torrence 1994:116).

One of the possible explanation for Torrence’s pessimist conclusion is that he had to rely exclusively on texts published in English and, more specifically, on authors who were not at all interested in or at least prepared to read, the inherent spirituality of *umbanda* songs, like some of those I have discussed. Lesser known authors like Serge Bramly (1977), Pedro McGregor (1966), Esther Pres-sel (1977), and even authors that carry more weight, such as Roger Bastide, Diana Brown, and Ruth and Seth Leacock, have reproduced a certain Weberian stereotype, according to which syncretistic cults, such as *macumba* and *umbanda*, would represent the routinization of trance experience, as opposed to *candomblé* or *xangô*, which would still be able to transmit charisma.

All these Afro-Brazilian traditions use histories, biographies, songs in lyrical mood, and they avoid systematically any direct confrontation with the canonical religion, that is, with Christianity, the religion of the book. To maintain illiteracy; to always stay near oral tradition; to choose to follow a pattern of acephalous organization; to be politically fragmented: here is a reflexive way of preserving an alternative world of religious experiences. All the practitioners of the various marginal religions we have discussed know the great power of Christian religions and are conscious that they could not compete with them on their own terrain, that is to say, if they attempted to offer the same things they offer. If we allow ourselves a small digression, this Brazilian process may, in fact, help us to understand, from another angle, that which Michel de Certeau defined as the “mystical Marranism” of the Christian Baroque spirituality.⁵¹

Although I have used the expression “marginal spirits” throughout this essay, I must clarify that by marginal I do not mean being inferior, or incomplete, but simply less socially exposed and less powerful. Moreover, there is a specific cognitive lucidity which comes precisely from looking at the world from its margins, where often many possibilities lie hidden or repressed. Maybe one day, after these religions are better known and respected, we may not call them marginal anymore, but simply Brazilian, or Afro-American, or New World religions. To conclude, my intention has been focused on trying to understand the complex social, racial, and ideological predicaments faced by adepts of these

⁵¹ See Certeau (1992)

movements; to accept the eminently mystic character present in their texts and histories; and to inscribe them in the universal movement of spiritual traditions of humanity, to which I am convinced they belong.

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Ashis Nandy

The twilight of certitudes

Secularism, Hindu nationalism and
other masks of deculturation¹

INTRODUCTION

What follows is basically a series of propositions. It is not meant for academics grappling with the issue of ethnic and religious violence as a cognitive puzzle, but for concerned intellectuals and grass-roots activists trying, in the language of Gustavo Esteva, to 'regenerate people's space'.² Its aim is three-fold: (1) to systematize some of the available insights into the problem of ethnic and communal violence in South Asia, particularly India, from the point of view of those who do not see communalism and secularism as sworn enemies but as the disowned doubles of each other; (2) to acknowledge, as part of the same exercise, that Hindu nationalism, like other such ethnonationalisms, is not an 'extreme' form of Hinduism but a modernist creed which seeks, on behalf of the global nation-state system, to retool Hinduism into a national ideology and the Hindus into a 'proper' nationality; and (3) to hint at an approach to religious tolerance in a democratic polity that is not dismissive towards the ways of life, idioms and modes of informal social and political analyses of the citizens even when they happen to be unacquainted with or inhospitable to the ideology of secularism.

One qualification at the beginning. This is the third in a series of papers on secularism, in which one of my main concerns has been to examine the political and cultural-psychological viability of the ideology of secularism and to argue that its fragile status in South Asian politics is culturally 'natural' but not an unmitigated disaster. For there are other, probably more potent and resilient ideas within the repertoire of cultures and religions of the region that could ensure religious and ethnic co-survival, if not creative inter-faith encounters. Few among the scores of academic responses to the papers — some of them hysterically hos-

¹ This is the final revision of a keynote address for the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions held in Mexico City, 5-12 August 1995. It has also appeared in an earlier form in *Alternatives*, Spring 1997, 22, and in a revised form in *Postcolonial Studies*, 1998, 1(3).

² Gustavo Esteva, 'Regenerating People's Space', *Alternatives*, 1987, 12(1), pp. 125-52.

tile — have cared to argue or examine that part of the story, which I once foolishly thought would be of interest even to dedicated secularists. They were more disturbed by my attempts to identify the spatial and temporal location or limits of the ideology of secularism. Evidently, for some academics, the ideology of secularism is prior to the goals it is supposed to serve. Much less provoked were those who had some direct exposure to religious or ethnic strife either as human rights activists, first-hand observers or victims, for whom the papers were written in the first place. For even when uncomfortable with M. K. Gandhi's belief that 'politics divorced from religion becomes debasing,'³ they seemed to intuitively gauge the power of Raimundo Panikkar's pithy formulation: 'the separation between religion and politics is lethal and their identification suicidal.'⁴

THE PARADOX OF SECULARISM

Secularism as an ideology can thrive only in a society that is predominantly non-secular. Once a society begins to get secularized — or once the people begin to feel that their society is getting cleansed of religion and ideas of transcendence — the political status of secularism changes.⁵ In such a society, people become anxiously aware of living in an increasingly desacralized world and start searching for faiths, to give meaning to their life and retain the illusion of being part of a traditional community. If faiths are in decline, they begin to search for ideologies linked to faiths, in an effort to return to forms of traditional moral community that would negate or defy the world in which they live. If and when they find such ideologies, they cling to them defensively — 'with the desperate ardour of a lover trying to converse life back into a finished love', in the language of Sara Suleri. What sometimes happens to communities can also happen to sections of a community or to individuals. Thus, in recent years many expatriate South Asians in the West have become more aggressively traditional, culturally exclusive and chauvinistic. As their cherished world becomes more difficult to

³ M. K. Gandhi, in Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 374.

⁴ Raimundo Panikkar, 'The Challenge of Modernity', *India International Centre Quarterly*, Spring-Summer 1993, 20(1/2), pp. 183-92; see p. 189.

⁵ The decline of faith I am speaking of has its rough counterpart in the erosion of beliefs surveyed in a somewhat different context by Mattei Dogan, 'Decline of Religious Beliefs in Western Europe', *International Social Science Journal*, 1995, 47(3), pp. 405-17; and Ronald Inglehart, 'Changing Values, Economic Development and Political Change', *Ibid*, pp. 379-403. See also Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1991).

sustain, as their children and they themselves begin to show symptoms of getting integrated in their adopted land, they become more protective about what they think are their faiths and cultures.

The enthusiasm of some states to aggressively impose secularism on the people sharpens these fears of deracination. Already sensitive about the erosion of faiths, many citizens are particularly provoked by a secularising agenda imposed from the top, for that agenda invariably carries with it in this century a touch of contempt for the believers. Such secularism is:

essentially a religious ideology, not based on any scientifically demonstrable propositions. ... It is the religion of a divinized human rationality of a particular kind, making critical rationality the final arbiter. This religious ideology is then imposed on our children in schools — from which all other religions are proscribed. ... This religion spread in the UK and the USA for two generations. Sunday schools were established. Catechisms of the new religion were published. With the rise of Nazism and the Second World War it fizzled out, and merged with modern liberalism, which is also the religion of the new civilization now sweeping Europe. ... Secularism creates communal conflict because it brutally attacks religious identity, while pretending to be tolerant of all religions.⁶

When Indian public life was overwhelmingly non-modern, secularism as an ideology had a chance. For the area of the sacred looked intact and safe, and secularism looked like a balancing principle and a form of legitimate dissent. Even many believing citizens described themselves as secular, to keep up with the times and because secularism sounded like something vaguely good. Now that the secularization of Indian polity has gone far, the scope of secularism as a creed has declined. For signs of secularization are now everywhere; one does not have to make a case for it. Instead, there has grown the fear that secularization had gone too far, that the decline in public morality in the country is due to the all-round decline in religious sensibilities. Many distorted or perverted versions of religion circulating in modern or semi-modern India owe their origins to this perception of the triumph of secularization rather than to the persistence of traditions.

⁶ Paulos Mar Gregorios, 'Speaking of Tolerance and Intolerance', *India International Centre Quarterly*, Spring 1995, 22(1), pp. 22-34; see pp. 24-5, 27. On the contempt for the believers that lies at the heart of secularism and the capacity this contempt has to legitimize western dominance over all traditional societies, see Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair* (London: Grey Seal and Kuala Lumpur: Berita, 1990).

As part of the same process, many 'non-secular' ideologies and movements have become more secular in style and content. They *do* try to look religious, for the sake of their constituency, but they can pursue political power in a secularized polity only through secular politics, secular organizations and secular planning. They increasingly resemble the jet-setting gurus and *sadhus* who, while criticising the 'crass materialism of the West', have to use at every step western technology, western media and western disciples to stay in business. A popular way of recognising this in India is to affirm that the politicians misuse religion. But that affirmation usually fails to acknowledge that only a person or a group at least partly repudiating the sanctity of religion can 'misuse' religion or 'use' it only instrumentally.⁷ In this sense, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Shiv Sena, though called fundamentalist, are two of the most secular parties in India, for they represent most faithfully the loss of piety and cultural self-doubts that have come to characterize a section of urban, modernising India. While other parties observe, even if by default, some limits in their instrumental use of religion, there seems to be no such restraint in the BJP or the Shiv Sena. The people these parties mobilize may sometimes be driven by piety — in Shiv Sena's case even that is doubtful — but their leaders view that piety as only a part of their political weaponry.

Even religious riots or pogroms are getting secularized in South Asia. They are organized the way a rally or a strike is organized in a competitive, democratic polity and, usually, for the same reasons — to bring down a regime or discredit a chief minister here or to help an election campaign or a faction there. Some political parties in India today have 'professionals' who specialize in such violence and, like true professionals, do an expert job of it. Often these professionals, though belonging to antagonistic religious or ethnic communities, maintain excellent personal, social and political relationships with each other. Fanaticism, they apparently believe, is for the hoi polloi, not for the serious politicians playing the game of ethnic politics.⁸ It is not difficult today to find out the rate at

⁷ The great European witch-hunt, it has been frequently pointed out, peaked not during the period when the European Christendom and the Church were secure, but when modernity had weakened their bases. Speaking of the belief in witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, H. R. Trevor-Roper says, 'it was not, as the prophets of progress might suppose, a lingering ancient superstition, only waiting to dissolve. It was a new explosive force, constantly and fearfully expanding with the passage of time.' H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The European Witch-Craze in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *The European Witch-Hunt in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 90-192. See also Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York: Basic, 1975).

⁸ In the context of the films of Woody Allen, Barbara Schapiro speaks of the 'clever, manipulative technique by which Allen attempts to control his critics by demonstrating an awareness of

which riots of various kinds can be bought, how political protection can be obtained for the rioters and how, after a riot, political advantage can be taken of it.

There is even a vague consensus among important sections of politicians, bureaucracy and the law-and-order machinery on how such specialists should be treated. Despite hundreds of witnesses and detailed information, hardly anyone has ever been prosecuted for complicity or participation in riots in India and, for that matter, in the whole of South Asia. The anti-Sikh riot in Delhi in 1984 was only a more dramatic evidence of such consensus. Though more than 3000 Sikhs were killed in the three-day pogrom in India's capital, till 1995 the instigators and active participants in it have not only escaped prosecution but have risen high in the political hierarchy. At least two have been in the Union cabinet and another three have been Congress Party MPs from the capital. It does not need much political acumen to predict that the same fate awaits the self-declared instigators and perpetrators of the anti-Muslim violence in Bombay in January 1993.

On the other hand, though by now human rights activists and students of communal violence have supplied enough data to show that riots are organized, they have rarely pushed this point to its logical conclusion. Riots *have* to be organized because the ordinary citizens — the 'illiterate', 'superstitious' South Asians, uncritically allegiant to their primordial identities — are not easy to rouse to participate in riots. To achieve that end, you need detailed planning and hard work. It is not easy to convert ordinary citizens into fire-splitting fanatics or killers; they may not be epitomes of virtue, but they are not given to blood-curdling Satanism either. Not even when lofty modern values like history, state and nationalism are invoked.⁹ South Asian loves and hates, being often community based, are small-scale. In the case of communal violence, the most one can accuse them of is a certain uncritical openness to the rumours floated before riots, which help them make peace with their conscience and their inability to resist the violence.

his own potential weaknesses. ... The character displays awareness of his problem while in the very act of demonstrating the problem, and that self awareness, of course, creates the humour.' Barbara Schapiro, 'Woody Allen's Search for Self', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Spring 1986, 18, pp. 47-62. I am speaking here of an analogous process which produces, instead of humour, tragedy for millions.

⁹ Probably the rational-legal values of an individualized, mass society have not yet made inroads into the interstices of South Asian personality and the values and faiths most South Asians live with cannot be mobilized that easily for collective action cutting across sects or denominations. Urbanization and massification is changing this profile, but the changes as yet affect a minority.

Yet, they do resist. Each riot produces instances of bravery shown by persons who protect their neighbours at immense risk to their own lives and that of their families.¹⁰ Often entire families and communities participate in the decision to resist. There is no empirical basis whatever to explain away this courage as a function of individual personality while, at the same time, seeing the violence it opposes as a cultural product. In South Asia as much as in Nazi Germany, those who resist such violence at the ground level derive their framework from their religious faith.¹¹ I have been hearing since my childhood literally hundreds of caustic accounts of the victims of the great Partition riots about their suffering in 1946–47. In most cases, the experiences have made them bitterly anti-Muslim, anti-Sikh or anti-Hindu. Despite the bitterness, however, most accounts include a story of someone from the other community who helped the family. The loves and hates of everyday life, within which usually are fitted ethnic and religious prejudices and stereotypes, may be small-scale but they are not always petty.

The resistance is stronger where communities have not splintered into atomized individuals. Not only do riots take place more frequently in the cities, but also they are harder to organize in villages. The village community is breaking down all over the world, but it has not broken down entirely in South Asia. Even the smaller towns in South Asia have often escaped massification. It is no accident that, despite the claim of some Hindu nationalists that more than 350,000 Hindus had already died fighting for the liberation of the birthplace of Rama, Ramjanmabhumi, during the previous 400 years, the residents of Ayodhya themselves lived in reasonable amity till the late 1980s. The Sangh Parivar sensed this; till the mid-1980s, the case for demolishing the Babri mosque at Ayodhya was not taken up by any of the noted Hindu nationalists, from V. D. Savarkar, Balkrishna Munje and Keshav Hedgewar to Bal Thackeray, Lal Krishna Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi. The Babri mosque was turned into a political issue only after India's urban middle class attained a certain size and India's modernization reached a certain stage.¹²

The first serious riot in the sacred city of Ayodhya took place on 6 — 7 December 1992. For seven years, despite all efforts to mobilize the locals for a riot,

¹⁰ For instance, Tariq Hasan, 'How Does it Matter Who is the Victim?', *The Times of India*, 3 April 1995. Also, Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedy, Shail Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Cf. Eva Fogelman, 'Victims, Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers in the Face of Genocide and its Aftermath, in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Eds.), *Genocide, War and Human Survival* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), pp. 87-98; see p. 91-2.

¹² Nandy, Trivedy, Mayaram and Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality*.

no riot had taken place.¹³ This time, it was organized by outsiders and executed in many cases by non-Hindi-speaking rioters with whom the local Hindus could not communicate. These outsiders were not traditional villagers, but urbanized, semi-educated, partly westernized men and, less frequently, women. They broke more than a hundred places of worship of the Muslims in the city to celebrate the 'fall' of the unprotected Babri mosque.¹⁴

In the final reckoning, the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992 was a proof that the secularization of India has gone along predictable lines.

THE POLITICS OF SECULARISM

Over the last fifty years or so, the concept of secularism has had a good run. It has served, within the small but expanding modern sector in India, as an important public value and as an indicator of one's commitment to the protection of minorities. Now the concept has begun to deliver less and less. By most imaginable criteria, institutionalized secularism has failed. Communal riots have grown more than ten-fold and have now begun to spread outside the perimeters of modern and semi-modern India.¹⁵ In the meanwhile, the ruling culture of India, predominantly modern and secular, has lost much of its faith in — and access to — the traditional social and psychological checks against communal violence.

In this respect, one is tempted to compare the political status of secularism with that of modern medicine in India. Traditionally Indians used a number of indigenous healing systems, and did so with a certain confidence and scepticism. These systems were seen as mixed bags; they sometimes worked, sometimes not. But they were not total systems; they did not demand full allegiance and they left one with enough autonomy to experiment with other systems, including the modern ones. Slowly well-meaning reformers broke the confidence of their ignorant compatriots in such native superstitions. In the second half of the nineteenth century, modern medicine was introduced into India with great fanfare. It was introduced usually with the backing of the state and sometimes with the backing of the coercive apparatus of the state, not merely as a superior science but also as a cure for the irrational faith of the natives in the traditional systems

¹³ In the case of both Kashmir and the Punjab, despite the bitterness produced by the militants and the agencies of the state and despite some determined efforts to precipitate riots, there have been no communal riot till now.

¹⁴ Nandy, Trivedy, Mayaram and Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality*, passim.

¹⁵ Ibid., Ch 1.

of healing.¹⁶ People were constantly bombarded with the message that the older systems were bogus or, at best, inefficient; that they should, therefore, shift to the modern, ‘truly universal’ system of medicine.

Once the confidence of a sizeable section of Indians in the older, more easily accessible healing systems were destroyed, the inevitable happened. Most of those who converted to the modern medicine found it prohibitively costly, more exclusive, often inhuman and alienating. They also found out that their proselytizers had other priorities than to give them easy access to modern medicine. In the meanwhile, the converts had lost some of their faith in the traditional systems of healing. Many of the practitioners of the traditional systems, too, had lost confidence in their vocation and had begun to pass themselves off as deviant practitioners of modern medicine; they had begun to copy the allopaths in style and, more stealthily, in practice.

Similarly, the concept of secularism was introduced into South Asian public life by a clutch of social reformers, intellectuals and public figures — seduced or brainwashed by the ethnocidal, colonial theories of social evolution and history — to subvert and discredit the traditional ideas of inter-religious understanding and tolerance. These traditions had allowed the thousands — yes, literally thousands — of communities living in the subcontinent to co-survive in reasonable neighbourliness for centuries. The co-survival was not perfect; it was certainly not painless. Often there were violent clashes among the communities, as is likely in any ‘mixed neighbourhood.’ But the violence never involved such large aggregates or generic categories as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Tamils or Sinhalas. Conflicts were localized and sectorized, and were almost invariably seen as cutting across religious boundaries, for such boundaries were mostly fuzzy.¹⁷ More

¹⁶ See for instance Frédérique Apffel Marglin, ‘Smallpox in Two Systems of Knowledge’, in Frédérique Apffel Marglin and Stephen A. Marglin (Eds.), *Dominating Knowledge: Development, Culture and Resistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 145–84.

¹⁷ See Kumar Suresh Singh, *People of India: An Introduction* (New Delhi: The Anthropological Survey of India, 1992). Vol. 1, part of a voluminous and authoritative survey which almost incidentally shows that even in the 1990s, nearly 50 years after the Hindu–Muslim divide has become the most dangerous cleavage in the subcontinent, of the 2800 odd communities identified as Hindus and Muslim, more than 400 cannot be identified as exclusively Hindu or Muslim. There are probably something like 600 such communities which live, not with multiculturalism without, but with multiculturalism within in South Asia. In a personal communication Singh estimates that the proportion of such fuzzy-bordered communities had been much higher in earlier times. For a fascinating case study, see Frédérique Apffel Marglin, ‘On Pirs and Pandits’, *Manushi: A Journal about Women and Society*, 1995, (91), pp. 17–26. Also, Shail Mayaram, ‘Representing the Hindu-Muslim Civilizational Encounter: The Mahabharata of Community of Muslims’, Jaipur: Institute of Development Studies, 1996, unpublished ms; and ‘Ethnic Co-Existence in Ajmer’, Project on Culture and Identity, Colombo: Centre for Ethnic Studies and Delhi: Committee for Cultural Choices, 1995, unpublished ms.

important, both the conflicts and their resolutions were explained and negotiated in languages that were reasonably transparent to a majority of the peoples living in the region.¹⁸ To the reformers, thinkers and politicians — brought up on the colonial state's classification of Indians into broad European-style religious categories — this 'living past' looked like an anachronism, an embarrassment and a sure prescription for ethnic and religious strife. To them, some of the clashes between sects, denominations or ethnic groups in the earlier centuries began to look in retrospect like clashes between entire religious communities. Simultaneously, the categories that sustained such inter-religious adaptations or tolerance — or, to put it modestly, the categories that contained communal animosities within tolerable limits — were systematically devalued, attacked and ridiculed as parts of an enormous structure of irrationality and self deceit, and as sure markers of an atavistic, retrogressive way of life.

In place of these categories, the concept of secularism was pushed as *the* remedy for all religious conflicts and fanaticism, something that would do away with the constant religious violence and bloodletting that had reportedly characterized the region from time immemorial. 'Reportedly' because no one produced an iota of empirical evidence to show that such conflicts existed in a large scale and involved religious communities as they are presently defined.¹⁹ That did not cramp the style of the properly educated South Asian liberals and progressives. They seemed convinced that the data did not exist because their societies were ahistorical; had a proper scientific, objective history existed, it would have shown that pre-modern South Asia had been a snake pit of religious bigotry and blood lust.

That innocent social-evolutionist reading today lies in tatters. Yet, the dominance of the ideology of secularism in the public discourse on religious amity and ethnic plurality in India continues. Why? Why do even the Hindu nationalists uphold not religion but genuine secularism (as opposed to what they call the pseudo-secularism of their political enemies)? Above all, who gets what from secularism and why? Any attempt to even raise this question triggers deep anxieties; it seems to touch something terribly raw in the Indian bourgeoisie. As if secularism was a sacred trans-historical concept, free from all restraints of spa-

¹⁸ Ashis Nandy, 'Time Travel to Another Self: Searching for the Alternative Cosmopolitanism of Cochin', Written for the Multiculturalism Project of the International Centre for the Ethnic Studies, Colombo, 1999, unpublished ms.

¹⁹ For a concise, if non-committal coverage of this part of the story, see C. A. Bailey, 'The Pre-History of "Communalism"? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860', *Modern Asian Studies*, 1985, 19(2), pp. 177-203.

ce and time, and any exploration of its spatial and temporal limits was a reminder of one's own mortality. As if those disturbed by the questions knew the answers, but did not like to be reminded of them. I shall risk political incorrectness here and obstinately turn to these very questions.

First, once institutionalized as an official ideology, the concept of secularism helps identify and set up the modernized Indians as a principle of rationality in an otherwise irrational society and gives them, seemingly deservedly, a disproportionate access to state power. After all, they are the ones who have reportedly freed themselves from ethnic and religious prejudices and stereotypes; they are the ones who can even be generous and decide who among the majority of Indians who do not use the idiom of secularism are 'objectively' secular. Secularism for them is often a principle of exclusion. It marks out a class that speaks the language of the state, either in conformity or in dissent. At this plane, secularism is emblematic of a person or group willing to accept two corollaries of the ideology of the Indian state: the assumption that those who do not speak the language of secularism are unfit for full citizenship, and the belief that those who do have the sole right to determine what true democratic principles, governance and religious tolerance are.²⁰ The main function of the ideology of secularism here is to shift the locus of initiative from the citizens to a specialist group that uses a special language.

To be more generous to this sector and those mentoring them in the mainstream global culture of scholarship, secularism has become mainly modern India's way of 'understanding' the religious tolerance that survives outside modern India. It has become a concept that names the inexplicable and, to that extent, makes it more explicable. Its necessity depends on modern India's loss of touch with Indian traditions and loss of confidence in the traditional codes of religious tolerance that constitute an alternative vantage ground for political intervention in a democratic polity. Hence the modern Indian's fear of the void that the collapse of the concept of secularism might produce.

Many secularists are secular on ideological or moral grounds. They consider their ideology to be compatible with radical or leftist political doctrines and seem oblivious of its colonial connections and class bias. Evidently, class analysis for them, unlike charity, does not begin at home. Some of them have personally fought for religious and ethnic minorities, but now face the fact that, with the spread of participatory mass politics, they are being reduced to a small mino-

²⁰ A cute, if chilling example of this attitude is Sumanta Bannerji, 'Sangh Parivar and Democratic Rights', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1993, 28(34), p. 1715-8.

rity among the very section within which they expected to have maximum support — the westernising, media-exposed, urban middle classes. Neither can they give up their faith in secularism, because that would mean disowning an important part of their self-definition, nor can they shake off the awareness that it is doomed, at least in ground-level politics.²¹ Such politics is already getting too secularized to be able to sustain secularism as a popular ideology.

Second, the ideology of secularism not merely fits the culture of the Indian state, it invites the state to use its coercive might to actualize the model of social engineering the ideology projects. Secularism and statism in India have gone hand in hand — perhaps the main reason why Hindu nationalism, statist to its core, has not given up the language of secularism.²² The goal of both is to retool the ordinary citizen so that he or she, though given democratic rights, would not exercise the rights except within the political limits set by South Asia's westernising élite, constituting the steel-frame of the region's Wog empires. Secularism too, has its class affiliations; it too, has much to do with who gets what and when in a polity. Tariq Banuri compares the dominant position of the ego in Freudian psychology with the dominant position of the nation-state in the contemporary ideas of political development.²³ To complete his evocative metaphor, one must view secularism as a crucial defence of the ego.

Banuri's metaphor also supplies a clue to the fanaticism of many secularists in India, eager to fight the cause of secularism to the last Muslim or Sikh. It is their version of a passionate commitment to interests or, if you like, irrational commitment to rationality (a typical nineteenth- and twentieth-century psychopathology in which allegiance to an ideology outweighs the welfare of the targeted

²¹ For a profile of westernising, media-exposed urban India as the site of rivalry between the secularists and the Hindu nationalists, see Nandy, Trivedy, Mayaram and Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality*.

²² Theologian Jyoti Sahi claims that both the modern state and secularism owe their origins to the Judaeo-Christian worldview and secularism particularly has no theological status outside Christianity. 'Monotheism has created its own understanding of the state and its relation to the nation. ... The concept of a nation state based on a religious identity derives from a Judaeo-Christian background, but now has been adopted by other faith systems, giving rise to a very new idea like a Hindu Nation State. ... the concept of a secular state has also come from a Christian debate on the relation of church to State. ... Hinduism and Buddhism have never discussed or defined this kind of distinction; in fact the sacred and the profane are interwoven. ... even in Islam there is no clear distinction drawn between the sacred and profane, or religious and secular.' Jyoti Sahi, 'Response to Asghar Ali Engineer's "Imaging and Imagining Religious Symbolism in Mass Media"', Paper presented at the conference on Globalization of Mass Media: Consequences for Indian Cultural Values, United Theological College, Bangalore, 29 June-1 July 1998.

²³ Tariq Banuri, 'Official Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Collective Violence', Islamabad: Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 1993, unpublished ms., p. 8.

beneficiaries of the ideology). Such romantic realism is the underside of what Banuri calls 'the overly enthusiastic pursuit of national integration.'²⁴ Thoughtfully carrying the white man's burden after the demise of empires in the sub-continent, these secularists seem particularly unhappy at the South Asian failure to internalize the psychological traits and social skills congruent with the ideology of secularism. Underlying the unhappiness, however, is a certain glee at the persistence of religious belligerency. It is a proof that the average South Asian's internship to qualify for full citizenship is not yet complete and it justifies further postponement of the day when the plebeians would be allowed to 'legitimately' claim their full democratic rights and exercise the power of numbers.

The third reason for the survival of secularism as an important ideological strain in Indian public life is for some reason even less accessible to political analysts, journalists and thinkers. Though the culturally rootless constitute a small, if audible, section of the population, to many of them, secularism is not just a way of communicating with the modern world but also with compatriots trying to enter that world. These neophytes do not have much to do with the European associations and cultural baggage of the term 'secularism'. But they have stretched the meaning of the term for their own purposes and adapted it in such a fashion that it manages to communicate something to others who have to cope, however unwillingly, with Indian realities.²⁵ They seem satisfied that such secularism allows one to break the social barriers set up by castes, sects and communities, and helps one to converse not only with the political and social élite, but also with the metropolitan intellectuals and professionals. Secularism for them is a marker of cosmopolitanism. Many Indian politicians — when they pay lip service to the standard, universal concept of secularism — have one eye on the response of the national media, the other on their clever competitors who have profited from the secular idiom.

Finally, there are the self-avowed 'genuine secularists' — political actors and ideologues who have an instrumental concept of secularism. They see secular-

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ I am afraid that much of the recent academic defence of secularism, however elegantly formulated, is totally irrelevant to South Asian political life from this point of view. See, for instance, Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity* (New Delhi: Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1995), paper no. 29, pp. 1-29; and Amartya Sen, 'Secularism and its Discontents', in Kaushik Basu and Sanjay Subramanyam (Eds.), *Unravelling the Nation: Secularian Conflict and India's Secular Identity* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1996), pp. 11-43. It is a pity that the academic viability of many ideas in the mainstream global culture of universities does not ensure their political survival in the tropics.

rism partly as a means of mounting an attack on the traditional secularists and partly as a justification for majoritarian politics. (The appeal that this majoritarianism has to an urban, deracinated minority can be a frustrating experience and this frustration probably contributes significantly to organized violence against constructed 'others' in South Asia.) These are the people who often use, participate in, or provoke communal frenzy, not on grounds of faith but on grounds of secular political cost calculations. Occasionally, in place of political expediency, they are motivated by political ideology and that ideology may *appear* to be based on faith. But on closer scrutiny it turns out to be only a secularized version of faith or arbitrarily chosen elements of faith packaged as a political ideology.²⁶ I accept the self-definition of the genuine secularists simply because their world *is* entirely secular. They use religion rationally, dispassionately and instrumentally, untouched by any theory of transcendence. They genuinely cannot or do not grant any intrinsic sanctity to the faith of even their own followers.

At one time, secularism *had* something to contribute to Indian public life. That context presumed a low level of politicization, a personalized, impassioned quality in collective violence, its expression and execution.²⁷ As ethnic and religious violence has become more impersonal, organized, rational and calculative,²⁸ it has come to represent, to rework my own cliché, more a pathology of rationality than that of irrationality. As part of the same process, the ideology of secular-

²⁶ There has been some discomfort about the distinction between faith and ideology I have drawn in this and other papers on the subject. As should have been obvious from the context, my use of the concept of ideology is not Marxian or Mannheimian but conventional social-psychological and cultural anthropological. However, I now find that at least one respected scholar-activist and a historian of religion has arrived at the same dichotomy, starting from altogether different concerns. Abdolkarim Soroush claims that 'Islam, or any other religion, will become totalitarian if it is made into an ideology, because that is the nature of ideologies.' Quoted in *Communalism Combat*, October 1997, (37), p. 24. A similar distinction informs Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). The relevance of the distinction to contemporary India is reflected in, for instance, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, 'Hollow Hinduism: The VHP's Self-Defeating Vision', *The Times of India*, 18 February 1999; Sukla Sen, P. R. Ram, Irfan Engineer, Uday Mehta and Asad Bin Saif, 'Savarkar and Hindutva' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1999.

²⁷ See Ashis Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives*, 1988, 13(3), pp. 177–94. See especially the table on p. 189.

²⁸ According to Zygmunt Bauman, 'The most shattering of lessons deriving from the analysis of the "twisted road to Auschwitz" is that—in the last resort—the choice of physical extermination as the right means to the task of Entfernung was a product of routine bureaucratic procedures: means-ends, calculus, budget balancing, universal rule application . . . The "Final Solution" did not clash at any stage with the rational pursuit of efficient, optimal goal-implementation. On the contrary, it arose out of a genuinely rational concern, and it was generated by bureaucracy true to its form and purpose.' Quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed, 'Ethnic Cleansing': A Metaphor for our Time', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1995, 18(1), pp. 1–25; see p. 4.

rism too has become ethnocidal and dependent on the mercies of those controlling or hoping to control the state. It is has become chronically susceptible to being co-opted or hijacked by the politically ambitious. Simultaneously, religion as the cultural foundation for the existence of South Asian communities has increasingly become a marker of the weak, the poor and the rustic.

As a result, modern India, which sets the tone of the culture of the Indian state, now fears religion. That fear of religion, part of a more pervasive fear of the people and of democracy (which empowers the majority of Indians who are believers), has thrown up the various readymade, packaged forms of faith for the alienated South Asians — Banuri calls them Paki-Saxons — who populate urban, modernized South Asia.²⁹ For that feared, invisible majority, on the other hand, the religious way of life continues to have an intrinsic legitimacy. For that majority seems to believe, with Hans-Georg Gadamer, that ‘the real force of morals ... is based on tradition. They are freely taken over but by no means created by a free insight grounded on reasons.’³⁰ If that religious way of life cannot find a normal play in public life, it finds distorted expression in fundamentalism, revivalism and xenophobia. That which is only a matter of Machiavellian politics at the top does sometimes acquire at the ground level the characteristics of a *satyagraha*, a *dharma yuddha* or a *jihad*.

I do not mean to identify secularism as a witches’ brew in South Asia. Perhaps in parts of the region where political participation has not outstripped the legitimacy of the nation–state, secularism still has a political role, exactly as it had a creative role to play in India in the early years of Independence. But its major implications are now ethnocidal and statist, and it cedes — in fact, lovingly hands over — the entire domain of religion, in societies organized around religion, to the genuine secularists — the ones who deal in, vend or use as a political technology secularized, packaged versions of faith. Secularism today is threatening to become a successful conspiracy against the minorities.

²⁹ These packaged forms go with various circus–tamed versions of religion, meant for easy consumption. In India, these versions are bookish, high-cultural, pan-Indian, and go well with modern cults, political skulduggery, and fashionable, jet-setting gurus—both within India and among the decultured, uprooted, expatriate Indians and the Indophiles in the West. Those given to this modern version of religion find all other spiritual experiences low-brow, corrupted and, thus, meaningless, uncontrollable and fearsome. That fear of the religion of the uncontrollable kind (to which the majority of Indians of all faiths give their allegiance) is a part of the fear of the vernacular, the democratic, and the plural. It is the fear that a majority of Indians are religious in a way that is not centrally controllable and do not constitute a ‘proper’ religion in contemporary times.

³⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted in Arindam Chakrabarti, ‘Rationality in Indian Philosophy’, Lecture given at the Devahuti-Damodar Library, 13 July 1996, mimeo, p. 15. Of course, neither Gadamer nor Chakrabarti seems aware that this is also a typical Gandhian formulation.

Is secularism doomed to political impotency in the southern world where historicization of consciousness and individuation are not complete? What is the fate of secularists who are dedicated crusaders for communal peace and minority rights. There is no reliable answer to the questions but some secularists, I suspect, *will* survive the vicissitudes of South Asian politics. They are the ones in whom there is no easy, cheerful assumption that one day they would abolish categories such as Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs, including their myriad subdivisions, and have the luxury of working with newly synthesized categories such as Indians, Sri Lankans or Pakistanis. They do what they do — by way of defending the human and cultural rights of the minorities — not so much as a well-considered, ideological and cognitive choice, but as a moral reaction set off by a vague sense of rebellion against the injustice and cruelty inflicted on fellow citizens. The social evolutionary project sits lightly on such secularists. They do not really expect the world to be fully secularized over time. Nor do they expect the ‘rationality’ of modern science to gradually supplant the ‘irrationality’ of religion (Somewhat like Sigmund Freud who, propelled simultaneously by the optimism of the Enlightenment and a tragic vision of life, hoped that the human ego would gradually win over more and more territory from the id, without fully giving up the belief that the dialectic between the two was an eternal one. I am sure Banuri will accept this qualification of his metaphor.)

Apparently, it is not much of an inheritance with which to enter the next millennium. However, I like to believe that that inheritance is not trivial either, for it has something to do both with the very core of our humanness and with the key civilizational categories that distinguish this part of the world. It cannot be written off as ethically pointless or politically futile.

I have said that a huge majority of South Asians knows neither the literal meaning of the word ‘secularism’ nor its connotative meaning derived from the separation of the state from the church in post-medieval Europe; and, sadly, in an open polity, the choices of this majority matters. I have also pointed out that most properly educated Indians love to believe that life in pre-colonial India was nasty, brutish and short; that communal violence was a daily affair till the imperial state forcibly imposed some order on the warring savages. Strangely, many secular South Asians are not comfortable with that ‘history’ either. They feel compelled to remind us, often in maudlin detail, how gloriously syncretic India was before religious fanaticism spoilt it all.³¹ Only they do not stop to ask if that

³¹ For a random example, see the superbly executed television series made by Saeed Naqvi and shown on Doordarshan between 1992–94.

syncretism was based on secularism or on some version of 'primitive proto-secularism' and if those who did so well without the ideology need it now.

These secularists seem oblivious that mass politics in an open polity demands an accessible political idiom, even when that idiom seems crude and unbecoming the dignity of a modern state or looks like a hidden plea to return to the country's brutal, shabby past. That is why, at times of communal and ethnic violence, when the state machinery and the newspaper-reading middle classes harp on the codes of secularism, at the ground level, where survival is stake, the traditional codes of tolerance are the ones that matter, however moth-eaten they may otherwise look.³²

Two formulations at the end. First, religion as the foundation of social life is true for mainly the weak, the poor and the rural. Modern India, which sets the tone of the culture of the Indian state, fears that kind of religion. Second, the opposite of religious and ethnic intolerance is not secularism but religious and ethnic tolerance. Secularism is merely one way of ensuring that tolerance. However, in societies where most citizens have been uprooted from traditional lifestyles, secularism *can* become the counterpoint of religious chauvinism, because both begin to contest for the allegiance of the decultured, the atomized and the massified. In other societies, religious fanaticism mainly contests the tolerance that is part of religious traditions themselves.

That is why in South Asia secularism can mostly be the faith of — and be of use to — the culturally dispossessed and the politically rootless. In favourable circumstances, it can make sense even to the massified in the growing metropolitan slums, but never to the majority living its life with rather tenuous links with the culture of the nation-state. True, when such a concept of secularism is made profitable by the state and the élite — that is, if lip-service to the concept pays rich enough dividends — many begin to use it, not in its pristine sense but as an easy, non-controversial synonym for religious tolerance. If such a reward system functions long enough in a society, the political institutions may even begin to protect the view that religion is essentially a drag on the civil society. The primary function of secularism then becomes the management of the fear of religion and the religious.

To function thus, the ideology of secularism must presume the existence of an individual who clearly defines his or her religious allegiance according to available census classifications and does not confuse religion with sect, caste, family

³² Nandy, Trivedy, Mayaram and Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality*.

traditions, *dharma*, culture, rituals and *deshachara* or local customs. That is, the ideology presumes a relatively clear, well-bounded self-definition compatible with the post-seventeenth-century ideal of the individual, comfortable in an impersonal, contractual-relations-dominated society. There is nothing terribly wrong with such a presumption and many people might in fact wish to live in such an individualistic society, seeing in it the scope for true freedom. Only, they have to take into account two political developments, working at cross purposes.

On the one hand the majority, impervious to the charms of the official ideology of secularism, has now *some* access to political power. And with quickening politicization in this part of the world and large-scale efforts to empower newer sections of people by parties and movements of various kinds, this access is likely to increase. So, the contradiction between the ideology of secularism and the democratic process is likely to sharpen further in the future. The secularist project may then have to depend even more on the coercive power of the state to be implemented. Not merely to keep in check the enemies of secularism, but also to thought-police history (through the production of official histories, history textbooks, time capsules, and other such sundry tricks of the trade to which both India's intellectual left and the liberals are privy).³³ This should not be much of a shock to the Indian secularists. Secularism always has had a statist connection, even in the West, and most South Asian, especially Indian, secularists are confirmed statist. As the legitimacy of the state as a moral presence in society declines, this state connection may produce new stresses within the ideology of secularism.

On the other hand, there is now a powerful force that may find meaning in the secularist worldview. Modern India — by which I mean the westernized, media-exposed India, enslaved by the urban-industrial vision — is no longer a small, insignificant oasis in a large, predominantly rural, tradition-bound society. One-fourth of India is a lot of India. In absolute terms, modern India is itself a society nearly four times the size of its erstwhile colonial master, Britain. It is — to spite Thomas Macaulay, that intrepid, romantic ideologue of the *raj* — no longer a buffer between the rulers and the ruled. It is the world's fourth largest country by itself.

³³ That is partly the reason why even the Bharatiya Janata Party, being ideologically committed to unqualified statism, is unable to shed the idiom. It has to define its position as loyalty to 'true' secularism, in opposition to what it calls the 'pseudo-secularism' of other parties dependent on minority vote banks.

This India does have an adequate exposure to the ideology of the state to be able to internalize the concept of secularism and sections of it are willing to go to any length to ensure that the concept is not questioned. But that by itself is not particularly surprising. There are a lot of Indians now who are willing to sacrifice the unmanageable, chaotic, real-life Indians for the sake of the idea of India. They are miserable that while the Indian democracy allows them to choose a new set of political leaders every five years, it does not allow them to choose once in a while the right kind of people to populate the country. Instead, they have to do with the same impossible mass of 950 million Indians — uneducable, disorganized, squabbling and, above all, multiplying like bed bugs. For in the Indianness of Indians who are getting empowered lies, according to many learned scholars, the root cause of all the major problems of the country.

HINDU NATIONALISM AND THE FUTURE OF HINDUISM

When a secularising society throws up its own versions of religion, extremist or otherwise, to cater to the changing psychological and cultural needs of the citizenry, what is the link between these versions and the faith that serves as their inspiration? The relationship between Hindutva, the encompassing ideology that inspires all Hindu nationalist movements in India, and Hinduism provides the semblance of an answer.

Speaking pessimistically, Hindutva will be the end of Hinduism. Hinduism is what most Indians still live by. Hindutva is a response of the mainly Brahminic, middle-class, urban, westernising Indians to their uprooting, cultural and geographical. According to V. D. Savarkar, the openly agnostic, westernized, nationalist who coined the term, Hindutva is not only the means of Hinduising the polity but also of militarising the effeminate, disorganized Hindus. It is a critique of — and an answer to the critique — of Hinduism, as most Indians know the faith and an attempt to protect, within Hinduism, the flanks of a minority consciousness — including the fears and anxieties — that the democratic process threatens to marginalize.³⁴

³⁴ This critique of Hinduism, often masquerading as a personological critique of the Hindus, is central to Hindutva. For a useful discussion of this part of the story, see Chaturvedi Badrinath, *Dharma, India and the World Order: Twenty Essays* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, 1991). A flavour of the intellectual and cultural climate that produced Hindutva can be had from Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular, 1966). For a succinct comment on the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh as a lower-middle-class, political expression of the ideology of Hindutva and its relationship with Hinduism, see Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr, 'The Real RSS: Not Hindu, Cultural or Nationalist', *The Times of India*, 8 July 1998.

Though I have stressed earlier the pathology of rationality that characterizes this minority consciousness, there is also in it an element of incontinent rage. It is the rage of Indians who have decultured themselves, seduced by the promises of modernity, and who now feel abandoned. With the demise of imperialism, Indian modernism — especially that sub-category of it that goes by the name of development — has failed to keep these promises. Hence the paradoxical stature of Hindutva; it is simultaneously an expression of status anxiety and a claim to legitimacy. At one plane, it is a *savarna purana* that the lower-middle class ventures while trying to break into the upper echelons of modern India; at another, it is an expression of the fear that they may be pushed into the ranks of the urban proletariat by the upper classes, not on grounds of substance, but 'style'. The 'pseudo-secularists' represent for them the ambition; the Muslims (in India, consisting mostly of communities of artisans getting proletarianized) the fear. Hence, the hatred for both.

It is as a part of the same story that Hindutva represents in popular, mass-cultural form some of the basic tenets of the worldview associated with secularism and the secular construction of the Muslim. Built on the tenets of religious reform movements in the colonial period, Hindutva cannot but see Hinduism as inferior to the Semitic creeds — monolithic, well-organized, and capable of being a sustaining ideology for an imperious state. And, being a mass cultural ideology, it *can* do to Hinduism what the secularists have always wanted to do to it. Hindutva at this plane is a creed which, if it succeeds, might end up making Nepal the world's largest Hindu country. Hinduism will then survive not as a faith of a majority of Indians, but in pockets, cut off from the majority who will claim to live by it — perhaps directly in Bali, indirectly in Thai, Sri Lankan and Tibetan Buddhism and, to the chagrin of many Hindu nationalists, in South Asian and Southeast Asian Islam. The votaries of Hindutva will celebrate that death of Hinduism. For they have all along felt embarrassed and humiliated by Hinduism as it is. Hence, the pathetic, counterphobic emphasis in Hindutva on the pride that Hindus must feel in being Hindus. Hindutva *is* meant for those whose Hinduism has worn off. It *is* a ware meant for the super-market of global mass culture where all religions are available in their consumable forms, neatly packaged for buyers. Predictably, its most devoted consumers can be found among the expatriate Hindus of the world.

I go back once again to the important question that many years ago H. R. Trevor-Roper raised in the context of the great European witch-hunt: did the inqui-

sitors discover a new ‘heresy’ beneath the faith of the heretics or did they invent it?³⁵ He reached the conclusion that, on the whole, the witch-craze did not grow out of the social and religious processes operating in medieval Europe; it ‘grew by its own momentum’ from within modernizing Europe.³⁶ The growth of Hindutva has depended heavily upon invented heresies that are organized around themes that have no place in Hindu theology: the modern state, nationalism and national identity. It has borrowed almost nothing from existing Hindu theology in its construction of the non-Hindus; it has followed its own trajectory in the matter. This is another crucial difference between Hindutva and Hinduism. It is pity that, to some extent, the same can be said about some of the more fanatical opponents of Hindutva in the modern sector, too. That fanaticism comes from a tacit recognition that, beneath the skin, they are each other’s doubles. Only, while the ideologues of Hindutva have already found Indian analogues of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, some opponents of Hindutva are still desperately looking for them.³⁷

Speaking optimistically, Hindu nationalism has its territorial limits. It cannot spread easily beyond the boundaries of urban, westernising India. Nor can it easily penetrate those parts of India where Hinduism is more resilient and the Hindus are less prone to project on to the Muslim the feared, unacceptable parts of their self. Hindutva cannot survive where the citizens have not been massified and come to speak only the language of the state.

To those who live in Hinduism, Hindutva is one of those pathologies that periodically afflict a faith. Hinduism has, over the centuries, handled many such pathologies; it still retains the capacity, they feel, perhaps over-optimistically, to handle one more. It will, they hope, consume Hindutva once a sizeable section of the modernized Hindus finds an alternative psychological defence against the encroaching forces of the market, the state, and the urban-industrial vision.

Whether one is a pessimist or an optimist, the choices are clear. They do not lie either in a glib secularism talking the language of the state or in pre-war versions of nationalism seeking to corner the various forms of increasingly popular ethnic nationalism breaking out all over South Asia. It lies in alliance with forces

³⁵ Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze*, pp. 115-27.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 119.

³⁷ For a while, they found it in M. S. Golwalkar’s book, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939). Things became a little convoluted when his disciples disowned it and claimed that Golwalkar, too, had disowned it. That was not what self-respecting fascists were expected to do and it was considered almost a betrayal by important sections of the Indian left.

that have risen in rebellion against the social forces and the ideology of dominance that have spawned Hindutva in the first place. As the world built by nineteenth-century imperialism collapses around us, Hindutva, too, may die a natural death. But, then, many things that die in the colder climes in the course of a single winter survive in the tropics for years. Stalinism has survived better in India than even in the Soviet Union and so probably will imperialism's lost child, Hindutva. May be its death will not be as natural as that of some other ideologies. Maybe post-Gandhian Hinduism — combined with a moderate, modest and, what Ali Mazrui calls, ecumenical state — will have to take advantage of the democratic process to help Hindutva to die a slightly unnatural death. Perhaps that euthanasia will be called politics.



IAHR Documents

FORMAL BUSINESS OF THE IAHR

This section of the proceedings contains the record of the meeting of the International Committee of the IAHR and of the General Assembly of the IAHR. During the course of the congress there were also meetings of the IAHR Executive Committee (outgoing and incoming) and of the Editorial Board of the official journal of the IAHR, *Numen*.

The record of the meetings is prefaced by the report of the General Secretary for the quinquennial period which was made available to all present at the Congress.

REPORT BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY FOR THE PERIOD 1990 - 1995

Introduction

This report was distributed in IAHR Bulletin No. 33, a special Congress issue for July/August 1995, and has been slightly edited for the present purpose. Also distributed, as a policy document, was an abbreviated version of the writer's paper for the IAHR regional conference held in Harare in 1992. However this is not included here because it has since been published in J. Platvoet, J. Cox and J. Olupona (eds.) *The Study of Religions in Africa* (Cambridge 1996) pp. 37-45, under the title "Intercultural strategies and the International Association for the History of Religions". The paper touches on various organizational questions of continuing interest. In particular I emphasise the need for the IAHR to remain independent of religious standpoints, while at the same time being open to receive financial support from various quarters. I also emphasise the need for specialists in the study of religion to develop not only an international but also an intercultural perspective.

The five years which have elapsed since the 16th International Congress in Rome in 1990 have seen various interesting and important developments for the IAHR which will be noted briefly below. For further information, reference may be made to the IAHR Bulletins which have been sent from time to time to the affiliated national associations (bulletins 1-33 edited by the present General Secretary). This report refers in its detail to the last five years. However, since the writer is just completing a second (and final) five-year term of office as General Secretary, there are some general points made below which refer to the whole ten-year period.

The integrity of the IAHR is of great importance in the contemporary academic world. It is the only religiously neutral, widely international body devoted to the study of religion in all its aspects. Through coherent organizational arrangements it makes truly intercultural fructification possible. It must be appreciated however that the organizational arrangements do not just happen by themselves. Since the IAHR has no permanent, full-time secretariat, the helpful goodwill and support of colleagues all around the world is crucial, if a smooth flow of arrangements is to be maintained. The affiliated associations are therefore called upon to ask not so much what they receive through membership, but what they can *contribute* to the future development of the IAHR. This is not just an economic question, though the funding of participation from countries which do not have adequate research budgets is important. Contributions to the work of the IAHR can also be made in terms of the flow of information, the readiness to share in and facilitate decision-taking, and the demonstration of steady, long-term loyalty between the various affiliated associations.

Conferences

The following conferences have been sponsored or co-sponsored by the IAHR since the 16th Congress held in Rome 1990: 1991 Burlington, Vermont, USA, 1992 Beijing, China, 1992 Harare, Zimbabwe, 1993 Paris, France, 1994 Brno, Czech Republic, 1995 Mexico City, Mexico (the present congress). The Executive Committee met annually, at Burlington, Harare, Paris, and Brno. The International Committee met at Paris, thereby confirming the concept of arranging a meeting of this important body on one occasion in between the major congresses. (A point three years after one congress and two years before the next seems to be particularly valuable from the point of view of decision taking.) Of these conferences it will be seen that one was in the United States, two were in Europe, one was in China, one was in Africa, and one is now being held in Latin America.

The conferences in China and in Zimbabwe may be considered to have been of great historic significance for the IAHR, as they were the first ever to have been held in these parts of the world. The same applies to the current congress in Mexico. Although the IAHR has always been a strongly international body, its meetings have usually been held in Europe or North America (with Japan and Australia having provided notable exceptions). The conference in China followed the reconstitution of the Chinese Association for the Study of Religions and its affiliation to the IAHR. The conference in Zimbabwe for its part was the birthplace of a new regional association for the whole of Africa, namely the African Association for the Study of Religions, the affiliation of which is on the agenda for the General Assembly at this Congress.

During the last ten years it has been IAHR policy to hold or co-sponsor one meeting each year, whether it be the major quinquennial Congress, a Regional Conference (Beijing, Harare) or a Special Conference (Paris, Brno). During the last five years there has in fact been one conference more than was strictly required. This occurred because of the special significance of the meetings at Beijing and Harare. In future it will be desirable to maintain as far as possible the rhythm of one designated conference per year, at which the Executive Committee would normally hold its annual meeting. It is also very desirable to encourage a wide range of locations, as this makes it possible for scholars from various continents to participate more easily. This diversity of participation is most important for the enrichment of the discipline of the "history of religions" or the "study of religions".

In this connection I would draw attention to the importance of holding a future conference in a country where there is a major Muslim presence. Indonesia and Turkey come to mind. Since the General Assembly in Rome, the Indonesian association has been affiliated to the IAHR. With respect to Turkey, correspondence has been proceeding for some time. Of course there are also other suggestions and plans for conferences currently under consideration. I draw attention to Indonesia and Turkey simply because of the importance which such locations could have in developing further the intercultural base of the IAHR.

The overall pattern and sequence of conferences is important as a matter of policy because it is through varied participation, and through the dispersal of responsibility to various national groups which work together with each other, that true international strength is achieved. The IAHR has never sought to extend its interests from a powerbase in one particular country. Its strength lies in

true internationalism and true interculturalism. The Congress here in Mexico is organized along very different lines from the one held in Rome. This is excellent. There is no need to be afraid of such differences. On the contrary, they are to be welcomed.

At the same time, with over thirty different countries now participating, it is important to maintain some cohesion. For this reason the annual sequence of conferences is important, through which the members of the Executive Committee can be in touch with colleagues of different countries. It is also of great value that the International Committee can meet at least once between the major Congresses. During the last ten years the International Committee has met in 1988 (Marburg) and in 1993 (Paris). Each time it has been able to take decisions of far-reaching importance without waiting for the quinquennial congress. I strongly recommend to the incoming Executive Committee that this pattern be maintained, and that the next meeting of the International Committee be held in 1998. (Editors' retrospective note: it did in fact take place, in Hildesheim, Germany.)

It will be seen from the above considerations that the conferences of the IAHR are not just miscellaneous events but important parts of a continuing policy which has the welfare of the association at its heart.

Journals

The journal *Numen* is the flagship publication of the IAHR and much gratitude is due to the current Executive Editors, Professor Hans Kippenberg (Bremen) and Professor Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo) for their excellent work in maintaining a high standard of interesting contributions. For some years now the Editorial Board of *Numen* has been identical with the Executive Committee of the IAHR. This has the extremely important advantage of enabling an annual meeting of these bodies to take place. It is to be expected that as this pattern becomes more firmly established, the Editorial Board will be able to contribute more fully to the welfare of *Numen*, without prejudice to the executive freedom of the two Executive Editors which it appoints. The Executive Editors have also been assisted, at their own wish, by Dr. Brigitte Luchesi (Bremen) and Dr. David Ede (Kalamazoo), and their contribution is gratefully acknowledged here.

During the period under review, the long-standing arrangements with the publisher of *Numen*, E.J. Brill of Leiden, have been formalized by means of a contract. This provides a secure framework for all parties. In addition it provi-

des for a modest contribution towards ensuring the regular meetings of the Editorial Board, and thereby also of the Executive Committee of the IAHR. The contract is between the publishers and (through the General Secretary and the successors in office) the IAHR. All in all, these arrangements are a most welcome development.

The IAHR has an *indirect* relationship with the bibliographical journal *Science of Religion*, which for many years was published by the Free University of Amsterdam. With the retirement of its leading editor, Drs. Remmelt Bakker, the continuation of the journal has been ensured so far by a publishing venture in Cambridge (England) named Roots and Branches. Although the journal is non-profit-making, it is appropriate to note here that the present writer is one of the current editors and owners. This involves considerable work. However it seemed better, in spite of the challenges posed by technological change especially in connection with information retrieval, to try to keep the journal alive as a hard-copy publication.

Apart from having a low subscription price, *Science of Religion* is distributed free of charge to a large number of institutions world-wide, which might not be able to afford it. This has been made possible by a modest publication grant donated by the UNESCO-related CIPSH, to which the IAHR is affiliated. It must be reported, unfortunately, that the grants made by CIPSH have been cut drastically in recent years, and indeed that future funding by CIPSH may run along quite different lines. The economic future of *Science of Religion* is therefore under review.

Several IAHR-affiliated associations throughout the world publish or sponsor their own journal. Three such journals which have been established recently are:

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion (Canada/NAASR),
Revue pro Religionistku (Czech Republic), and
Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft (Germany).

It is urgently desirable to find ways of making such representative journals better known. This would contribute greatly to the mutual understanding between specialists in the field in different countries, and in different scientific cultures. In this way the profile of the IAHR itself, on the very basis of its intercultural variety, could be strengthened. The matter could be pursued in connection with

an individual corresponding membership of the IAHR, or in the pages of *Numen*, with the assistance of *Science of Religion* or *Religion: Current Contents* (published in Turku, Finland), or with a further development of the IAHR Bulletin. I commend this task to the incoming Executive Committee.

Conference proceedings

The IAHR does not have its own series of proceedings. Rather, in keeping with its relatively decentralized form of organization, the publication of proceedings is the privilege, and as far as possible the responsibility of associations which host conferences. Of the recent conferences mentioned above, the proceedings from Rome, Burlington, Beijing and Brno have now been published.

The main volume of proceedings from the Rome Congress was edited by Ugo Bianchi († April 1990) and published by “l’Erma” di Bretschneider, Rome under the title *The Notion of ‘Religion’ in Comparative Research*. Papers from the Mithraic panel of the Congress were published in a separate volume entitled *Studies in Mithraism*, edited by John Hinnells (also “l’Erma” di Bretschneider, Rome 1994). These papers were correctly acknowledged as having arisen in connection with the Congress and may therefore be regarded as a volume of adjunct proceedings.

It is not clear in what form other papers from particular panels at Rome have been published without appropriate reference to the IAHR. There is reason to believe that such activity has taken place in at least one instance. The opportunity may be taken here to point out that the option to publish proceedings of IAHR conferences lies in the first instance with the organizers on the basis of the mandate extended by the IAHR. This does not affect the rights of individual authors. However it is not appropriate for conferences to be plundered for independent publications without permission being given by, or reference being made to the IAHR. The conferences themselves involve much hard work by many people, and this should be honoured in the publication of collected papers by the adoption of correct procedures.

The proceedings of the Burlington conference -were edited by Luther Martin under the title *Religious Transformation and Socio-Political Change*, Mouton/de Gruyter, Berlin 1993 and are on display at this Congress. The proceedings of the Beijing conference appear under the title *Religion and Modernization in China; Proceedings of the Regional Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions held in Beijing, China, April*

1992 (ISBN 0 9525772 0 8), the editors being Dai Kangsheng, Michael Pye and Zhang Xinying. The majority of the papers have already appeared in Chinese translation in the journal *Shijie Zongjiao Ziliao* (ISSN 1000-4505; 1992/4 and 1993/1). The proceedings of the Brno conference were edited by Iva Dolezalova, Bretislav Horyna and Dalibor Papousek under the title *Religions in Contact. Selected Proceedings of the special IAHR Conference held in Brno, August 23-26, 1994* (Brno 1996). It is anticipated that the proceedings of the Harare conference will be published in early 1996 by the University of Zimbabwe Press. The title will be *The Study of Religions in Africa; Past, Present and Prospects*. The editors are Jan Platvoet, Jim Cox and Jacob Olupona. (Editors' retrospective note: they did in fact appear in 1996, but they were published under the Roots and Branches imprint and distributed by Almqvist and Wiksell International, Stockholm.)

The name of the association

At the General Assembly in Rome the Executive Committee and the International Committee were requested to set discussions in motion with a view to making a recommendation for a change of name for the association. This was done, partly through a series of position papers and correspondence distributed in the IAHR Bulletin and partly through informal discussions at conferences. For example, Ugo Bianchi presented his recently printed position paper orally at the meeting in Brno. In Paris (1993), the recommendation for a change of name was voted on and passed in the International Committee. It therefore comes (as a recommendation) before the General Assembly during the Mexico Congress for a final decision.

For various reasons it is important to notice that a change of name would not mean that a new association has been founded. This would be quite a different matter. The IAHR, in accordance with its own constitution, is empowered to make changes to that constitution. This is what would be taking place in this case. The association would continue to be the same association, with the same affiliations and the same rules, but with a new name.

As General Secretary I would like to point out that I have not adopted any public position on the matter of a change of name. When the issue was raised in Rome, I made it clear that I regarded it as my function to facilitate the discussion, not to adopt a position. The late Ugo Bianchi, as President, felt a different responsibility, namely to defend the title of the association of which he was the

president. I found this position, for him, to be quite acceptable. In this way, I believe that the officers have each played their respective roles. The arguments have been presented, on both sides, right up to the printing of the Congress Bulletin, which includes a statement from the Belgo-Luxembourgeois association against any change. (A similar statement was received recently from the Luxembourg-based institution "Homo Religiosus", but this was not reproduced in a bulletin because this institution is not itself an affiliate body of the IAHR.) The interest, and the genuine concern, has been great. The discussion has been open, detailed, and courteous. Now it has come to the time when a vote will be taken. It will be important that the decision, whichever way it goes, is respected by all parties and is positively assumed by the incoming president and other members of the Executive Committee.

The precise resolution before the General Assembly will be found on the agenda sheet.

Relations with other organisations

The IAHR currently has informal relations with various other organisations which are active in the general field of religious studies or the study of religions. Due to the pressure of work these relations have not been developed as much as they perhaps could be. This is an area for further exploration.

During the last few years particular attention has been paid to relations between the IAHR and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), many of whose members are internationally active, not least at the meetings of the IAHR. Here, too, it would be desirable to clarify and maintain constructive relations. Academic associations can be quite different in character, and in the case of the AAR and the IAHR the main differences are fairly clear. Firstly, the AAR is a national (US) organization with a permanent office in the USA, while the IAHR is an international and polycentric organization, whose offices move in accordance with electoral changes. The IAHR is a supra-national organization, to which national associations may seek affiliation. However, affiliation has not been sought by the AAR, and indeed for various reasons might not be appropriate. Secondly, while the IAHR is dedicated specifically to the historical or empirical study of religion, the AAR, quite clearly and extensively, includes theological or religiously committed studies within its range. If these differences can be understood and respected it may be possible to work out more coherent forms of liaison, and this would be very desirable in view of the number of scholars invol-

ved in both organisations. Currently, no clear proposals for the development of appropriate structures have been advanced. It may be that some will emerge in the future, as interest increases. Such proposals should in no way be detrimental to the current North American affiliates to the IAHR. Indeed the latter might seem to be the appropriate channel for such arrangements.

The IAHR has one *formal* relationship in addition to that with its own affiliate bodies. It is in turn affiliated to the Conseil International pour la Philosophie et les Sciences Humaines (CIPSH), which is a UNESCO-related body. As a result of this affiliation to CIPSH modest travel grants have been received, over a period of many years, which have benefited participants travelling from economically weak or particularly distant countries. Without going into individual details here, it is important to understand that these grants have been of particular importance in establishing the intercultural base spoken of earlier, in connection with the sequence of conferences. Unfortunately, the mode of funding from UNESCO via CIPSH is in process of change, and it is quite possible that grants will not be available in future in the same way. Thus the new General Secretary will have a new task in this respect.

The affiliation of IAHR to CIPSH is also important in another way, namely in that it provides an institutional reference point beyond the IAHR itself. Through this affiliation the IAHR understands itself to be called to the highest standards of independent scholarship, as espoused by the other member associations of CIPSH, and at the same time to be broadly aligned with the aims of UNESCO in the promotion of international and intercultural exchange. Although CIPSH is an association of learned societies in the “humanities”, the proposed change of name for the IAHR would not affect its affiliation to CIPSH in any way, and would simply be a matter for report. This point was specifically checked during the last General Assembly of CIPSH in 1994, to ensure that no crisis would occur in this connection because of a change of name.

IAHR Bulletins

The IAHR Bulletin series was introduced in 1986 and has now been running for 10 years. Though the Bulletin may seem to be slight in size, it has served the purpose of getting basic information to the officers of affiliated associations throughout the world at appropriate moments. Usually, three copies have been sent to affiliated associations, to the president, secretary and treasurer respectively. Since these offices change, the flow of information also takes a different direction.

Very few people have a complete set of these Bulletins. In some countries the contents are made known to the general membership, but this has not always been the case. That is a matter for the national associations.

If the proposals for an individual corresponding membership are carried forward the natural result will be for the IAHR Bulletin to be sent to all those on the mailing list, at cost, whether they are officers from time to time or not. I understand that the incoming General Secretary (who will be elected unopposed) intends to continue with the publication of the Bulletin, though the format may be revised to reduce postal costs. This would mean that all long-term individual members will have a regular and direct source of information about the IAHR.

Please note that formal announcements about the IAHR are also made from time to time in *Numen*, the official organ of the association.

Formal meetings and electoral procedures

As mentioned earlier under “conferences” the Executive Committee has met once each year since 1985. The International Committee has also met, *for the first time between congresses*, in 1988 and in 1993. These regular arrangements, brought in since 1985, have proved to be invaluable. They assist the ongoing development of policy in response to the interests of member associations.

The Executive Committee consists of twelve members, of whom six are office-holders. It is not possible for all the various countries to be “represented” on the Executive Committee, though of course some balance is desirable. The International Committee is the *representative* body, and ultimately provides the democratic base for the IAHR. The International Committee elects the Executive Committee at the quinquennial congress. The results are then reported publicly to the General Assembly.

During the period 1989 - 1990 and the period 1994 - 1995 the electoral arrangements have been carried out with great care. This has led to increased interest in the democratic process within the IAHR. Thus in 1990 the membership of the Executive Committee was electorally contested, and the same process is taking place now in 1995. I consider the transparency and correctness of electoral processes to be of the greatest importance. The rules are set out in the Constitution.

It is hoped that, in purely organisational terms, the combination of:

- (a) a regular flow of information through the Bulletin

(b) the regular business meetings of the Executive and International Committees (with advance notice of agenda and detailed minutes) and

(c) the correct and transparent application of electoral procedures will be regarded as a significant legacy to the IAHR from the ten year period 1985 - 1995.

The secretariat

The IAHR does not have a “secretariat”. While procedures have been rationalized to some extent, many of the remaining inadequacies in our activities, which are painfully obvious to this writer, are to be explained by the sheer amount of work involved. It must be remembered that the officers of the IAHR also have their daily professional work to do. Tasks carried out on behalf of the IAHR are voluntary, honorary, and additional to other duties. Limited secretarial support by the universities of Marburg and Lancaster has been available during the period of this report, and is indeed gratefully acknowledged. However, the amount of work is increasing all the time. Important practical questions of organization and funding must therefore be tackled by the incoming Executive Committee.

Outlook

During recent years the IAHR has seen a significant number of interesting new affiliations, a radical broadening of its geographical base, an increase in the number of meetings throughout the world, and a rationalization of its organizational procedures. The increase in structured activity means however that there is much more work to be done on a regular basis, especially by the officers.

Looking ahead, it would seem that a period of stabilization is now required. Whatever the outcome of the vote concerning the name, the association will continue to stand for the international, religiously independent study of religions. It would not be desirable for the association to take off, unpredictably, in quite other directions, confusing its role with that of religious bodies or interreligious bodies. In general, the understanding of the aims of the IAHR has been relatively clear in recent years. Both those who prefer to keep the present name of the IAHR and those who are in favour of a change of name are in fact in broad agreement about these aims. Should there be a change of name, continuity in the present patterns of activity will be all the more important to maintain the inte-

grity of the association. This in turn requires reasonable continuity in the membership of the Executive Committee.

Thanks

Finally, I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those, both in the professional and in the private sphere, who have given me most patient and understanding support in the carrying out of my tasks.

Michael Pye (Marburg, July 1995)

MEETINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE IAHR

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Committee of the IAHR, August 9, 1995

[The minutes of this meeting and the supplementary meeting reported on below, prepared by Prof. Armin W. Geertz, were approved at the International Committee meeting in Hildesheim, May 24, 1998]

Professor R. J. Zwi Werblowsky presided as Vice-President for points 1-8. Professor Werblowsky gave a prologue clarifying the position of the International Committee as the main democratically elected body of the IAHR. He furthermore announced that organizations whose affiliation was under consideration for the coming General Assembly on August 12th were invited to sit in at this meeting as observers.

1) Membership: (i) ascertainment of membership

Prof. Michael Pye read the names of those present: Prof. Trompf & Prof. Joy for Australia; none for Belgium/Luxemburg; Prof. Paper for Canada; none for China; Dr. Horyna & Dr. Papousek for the Czech Republic; Dr. Rothstein & Ms. Christensen for Denmark; Dr. Ahlbäck & Dr. Helve for Finland; Prof. Meslins for France; Prof. Kippenberg & Dr. Luchesi for Germany; Dr. Lovász for Hungary; none for Indonesia; none for Israel; Prof. Scialpi & Prof. Carozzi for Italy; Prof. Hase & Prof. Kanai for Japan; Sister Kim & Prof. Yoon for South Korea;

Prof. Masferrer & Prof. Lagarriga for Latin America; Dr. Presiado & Dr. Ascobereta for Mexico; Dr. ter Haar & Dr. Snoek for the Netherlands; none for Nigeria; Dr. Thomassen for Norway; Prof. Szmyd for Poland; Dr. Gardaz for Quebec; none for Russia; Dr. Naidoo & Prof. Oosthuizen for Southern Africa; Prof. Bergman & Prof. Westerlund for Sweden; Prof. Waardenburg for Switzerland; Prof. Bocking & Dr. Knott for the United Kingdom; Prof. Lease & Prof. Martin for the USA.

Prof. Pye read the following statement written by the presidents of the American Society for the Study of Religion (ASSR) and the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR):

Following the Canadian initiative at the last meeting of the International Committee in Paris, correspondence and conversations have indicated that the affiliation of the American Society for the Study of Religion (ASSR) should now lapse. The reason for this is that the ASSR prefers to keep a very strict limitation on its membership which is clearly contrary to the IAHR constitution, Article 1.

Prof. Larry Sullivan asked to have brought to the minutes that he protests against this move on the grounds that the ASSR membership had not been consulted. The representative for ASSR, Prof. Gary Lease, pointed out that ASSR discussed formally, officially, and in full accordance with its regulations the proposed suspension of IAHR affiliation at two different annual meetings/business meetings (April 1994 in Williamsburg, Virginia and April 1995 in Santa Cruz, California) which, according to ASSR regulations, are the proper fora for such discussions to take place. At both meetings the discussion had been firmly and virtually unanimous that the Association should not surrender its membership selection procedures, and that it should accept suspension of IAHR affiliation if that had to be.

The statement by the Presidents of ASSR and NAASR was noted and approved by the International Committee by an overwhelming majority show of hands. The voting rights for the United States of America (two votes) therefore fell to the North American Association for the Study of Religion.

Prof. Pye then noted which members of the Executive Committee were in attendance: Prof. Antes, Prof. Araki, Prof. Geertz, Dr. Gonzalez, Prof. Pye, Prof. Sullivan, Prof. Werblowsky, and Prof. Wiebe.

A motion was proposed to consider Professor Olupona as the “representative” of Nigeria, but after a debate about procedure, it was agreed that he was welcome to attend as an observer on behalf of the African Association for the Study

of Religions, whose affiliation was anticipated. Observers were duly noted from 3 associations not yet affiliated: Prof. Olupona & Prof. Hackett (African Association for the Study of Religions); Prof. Trebollé & Prof. Abumalham (Spain); and Prof. Jha (India). Two assistants were noted without observer status: Dr. Dolevola (Czech Republic) and Dr. Arkanni (Latin America). It was proposed by Prof. Sullivan that the observers present should be given speaking rights. This was carried with 24 votes in favor, 10 against, 11 abstentions.

Membership: (ii) co-option as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Prof. Pye recommended on behalf of the Executive Committee the co-option of the two editors of *Numen*. Since one of the editors, Prof. Hans Kippenberg, already was a member of the International Committee, this recommendation concerned Prof. Thomas Lawson only. This recommendation was agreed.

2) Procedures: (i) adoption of general rules for meetings as held by UNESCO and/or UNO

Prof. Werblowsky explained the chair rules: abstentions do not count and in the case of a tie, the chair has the casting vote.

Procedures: (ii) adoption of procedures for election of the Executive Committee

Prof. Werblowsky described the nominating procedure as set up by the constitution (Article 4.c):

“A Nominating Committee, appointed by the Executive Committee, shall submit nominations for the next Executive Committee to the members of the International Committee by mail not more than twelve months and not less than nine months prior to each international congress. Members of the International Committee may propose alternative nominations not less than one month prior to each international congress. The International Committee at its meeting just preceding the General Assembly, shall elect the Executive Committee and shall report this to the General Assembly.”

Prof. Werblowsky explained that the Nominating Committee is composed of elder statesmen who no longer seek office. The constraints concerning those who are eligible for election are put forward in Article 4.c: a member may not serve in the same office for more than two terms; not more than two-thirds of

the committee (8 members) may be carried forward from one term to the next; and members of the committee should be chosen in such a way as reasonably to reflect various parts of the world where the academic study of religion is pursued. Two further considerations were made known to the Nominating Committee on the recommendation of the International Committee. First, that the International Committee desired improving the gender balance on the Executive Committee, and, second, that it was formally agreed at the International Committee meeting in Rome (1990) and recalled for the minutes in Paris (1993) that nominees for the Executive Committee should be actively in post at a university or a comparable institution at the time of the election.

The Committee for this round of elections had consisted of Prof. T. Lawson (USA), Prof. L. Honko (Finland), and Prof. N. Tamaru (Japan). They presented their list of nominees on September 30, 1994 in full accordance with the above-mentioned guidelines, and the list was duly published in the Congress Bulletin.

As noted in the Constitution, alternative nominations can also be put forward “not less than one month prior to each international congress”, which traditionally means one month before the day prior to the opening of the congress, or, in this case, July 4, 1995. This condition was published prominently in a number of IAHR Bulletins during 1994 and 1995. Four alternative nomination lists had been received by Prof. Pye in accordance with this rule. Prof. Pye had provided in the Congress Bulletin copies of the four letters of alternative nominations, an additional letter which arrived too late, as well as a total list of the nominees that were nominated on time. Prof. Werblowsky invited the International Committee to compare the list with the nominated candidates.

A question was raised by Prof. Araki, supported by Prof. Sullivan, about whether sufficient consideration had been paid in the Nominating Committee to Prof. Tamaru’s recommendations for nominations to the Executive Committee. Prof. Lawson, coordinator of the Nominating Committee, responded by confirming the fact that sufficient consideration had been given to these recommendations. After a discussion of these matters, a motion was made to proceed to the next item of business. The motion was carried by show of hands: 37 for, 7 against, 1 abstention.

3) Minutes of previous meeting (circulated in advance).

A motion was proposed and seconded calling for an adoption of the minutes. The minutes were adopted by an overwhelming majority show of hands.

4) Matters arising from the minutes.

Prof. Werblowsky thanked Prof. Pye for his handling of the whole issue of the proposed change of the name of the IAHR. He commended him for remaining meticulously neutral throughout the debate and for conscientiously carrying out the procedures as stipulated by the General Assembly in Rome and the International Committee in Paris.

5) Report by the General Secretary (circulated in advance).

A motion was proposed and seconded calling for adoption of the report. The report was adopted by an overwhelming majority show of hands.

6) Report by the Treasurer (circulated in advance).

Prof. Olupona announced that he would contribute \$100 for the annual dues of the Nigerian Association. Prof. Bocking stated that at its last meeting in April 1995, the British Association for the Study of Religion (BASR) agreed to make a further donation to the IAHR Endowment Fund. The condition attaching is that before this further donation is made, the BASR wishes to see some activity, particularly on the part of the wealthier countries, in respect of contributions to the Fund. A further donation by the BASR would be subject to the approval of its members at their annual general assembly.

A motion was proposed and seconded calling for adoption of the report. The report was adopted by an overwhelming majority show of hands.

7) Additional matters of report by the Executive Committee: Current arrangements for Numen.

Prof. Pye reported on the contract agreement between the IAHR and the publishers E. J. Brill of Leiden concerning the editorial conditions of Numen. The Executive Committee has furthermore agreed on the following procedure: each Executive Editor should in the future serve for a maximum of 2 five year periods, thus following the same rules which apply for the officers of the IAHR. A new appointment should be made every five years at a point one or two years before the main international congress. Prof. Kippenberg had been reappointed

(in 1994) for the period 1995-2000. It is to be anticipated that appointments made in 1998 or 1999, but to run for five years from 2000, would include Prof. Lawson and a new editor. The reviews section would normally be handled under the direction of the editor in a second term, as is currently the case. It was also agreed that the in-coming editor at 2000 should provide the mailing address for the journal.

A motion was proposed and seconded calling for adoption of the report. The report was adopted by an overwhelming majority show of hands.

8) Election of the new Executive Committee.

As announced in the Congress Bulletin, the election was to take place by secret ballot in two steps: (1) election of officers, and (2) election of other members.

The following nominations had been duly received by July 4, 1995:

(1) officers:

for President: Prof. Ursula King (United Kingdom)

Prof. Michael Pye (Germany)

for Vice-President (two positions):

Prof. Peter Antes (Germany)

Dr. Yolotl González Torres (Mexico)

for General Secretary:

Prof. Armin W. Geertz (Denmark)

for Deputy General Secretary:

Prof. Rosalind Hackett (USA)

for Treasurer: Prof. Donald Wiebe (Canada)

Professor Werblowsky moved that those whose candidacy is unopposed should be declared "elected unopposed". The motion was seconded and passed by an overwhelming majority show of hands. Prof. Antes and Dr. González were thereby elected as Vice-Presidents, Prof. Geertz as General Secretary, Prof. Hackett as Deputy General Secretary, and Prof. Wiebe as Treasurer.

(2) other members (six to be elected):

Prof. Michio Araki (Japan)

Prof. Giulia Gasparro (Italy)

Dr. Helena Helve (Finland)

Prof. Ursula King (United Kingdom)
Prof. Elio Masferrer Kan (Mexico)
Prof. Jacob Olupona (USA)
Prof. Jordan Paper (Canada)
Dr. Abdulkader Tayob (South Africa)
Dr. Gerrie ter Haar (Netherlands)

Dr. ter Haar suggested that in the future, the candidates should present themselves. Upon Prof. Araki's request, the countries of each of the candidates were read by Prof. Pye. Prof. Werblowsky suggested that in the future, the letters of nominations should contain justifications for those nominations. Dr. Knott suggested that the nominating committee should include two lists. No binding action was taken over these suggestions.

The secret ballot was then carried out in two stages. Tellers were Ms. Dorthe Refslund Christensen and Prof. Werblowsky. The results of the ballot for the office of president were as follows:

Prof. Ursula King (10 votes)
Prof. Michael Pye (35 votes)

Prof. Pye was thereby elected as President. Prof. King's candidacy for ordinary membership of the committee in the second ballot was therefore upheld.

The results of the ballot for the six further places on the Executive Committee were as follows:

Prof. Michio Araki (26 votes)
Prof. Giulia Gasparro (37 votes)
Dr. Helena Helve (38 votes)
Prof. Ursula King (21 votes)
Prof. Elio Masferrer Kan (14 votes)
Prof. Jacob Olupona (32 votes)
Prof. Jordan Paper (22 votes)
Dr. Abdulkader Tayob (32 votes)
Dr. Gerrie ter Haar (32 votes)

Prof. Araki, Prof. Gasparro, Dr. Helve, Prof. Olupona, Dr. Tayob, and Dr. ter Haar were thereby elected.

A motion was seconded and passed by an overwhelming majority show of hands for a vote of thanks to Professor Werblowsky for his work during this meeting and for his contribution of many years service to the IAHR.

As had been previously arranged by the Executive Committee an incoming Vice-President was to preside for the rest of the meeting. After consultation between the two incoming Vice-Presidents, it was agreed that Prof. Peter Antes would preside for the remaining points on the agenda.

9) Recommendation from the Executive Committee on individual (corresponding) memberships of the IAHR.

As noted in the Congress Bulletin, a proposal was presented during the Executive Committee meeting at Brno in 1994 concerning this recommendation. The main reasons for introducing an individual “add-on” or “corresponding” membership of the IAHR are that there is a growing interest in the flow of information carried by the association and that a reasonable subscription could help to make the production of the IAHR Bulletin economically self-sufficient. A motion was seconded and passed by a unanimous show of hands to approve the setting up of such arrangements in principle as long as they do not receive voting rights. The details of the recommendation were left to the incoming Executive Committee.

10) Proposals for honorary life membership of the IAHR.

As noted in the Congress Bulletin, a proposal had been presented during the Executive Committee meeting at Brno in 1994 concerning this recommendation. Prof. Pye explained that honorary life memberships might be conferred on senior scholars who have distinguished themselves through life-long service to the history of religions through their scholarship, regular participation in IAHR conferences, service as national or international officers, and/or other outstanding contributions. Such memberships would help to designate the range of interests current in the IAHR and would provide a wide circle of consultants in relation to IAHR-related activities. Honorary life members would be listed on the editorial cover of *Numen* and receive the IAHR Bulletin free of charge.

This recommendation was seconded and approved by an overwhelming majority show of hands. The following scholars were proposed as Honorary Life Members:

J. O. Awolalu (Ibadan); A. Caquot (Paris); C. Colpe (Berlin); L. Honko (Turku); A. Hultkrantz (Stockholm); Kong Fan (Beijing); J. Leclant (Paris); M. Marzal (Lima); G. C. Oosthuizen (Durban); J. Ries (Namur-Suarlee); K. Rudolph (Marburg); A. Schimmel (Cambridge USA); E. Sharpe (Sydney); N. Smart (Santa Barbara); N. Tamaru (Tokyo); J. Waardenburg (Lausanne); and R. J. Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem).

This list was overwhelmingly approved by show of hands and Prof. Antes presiding expressed congratulations to the above-named on behalf of the International Committee.

11) Recommendation of new affiliations

The following new affiliations had been recommended in Paris: African Association for the Study of Religions (regional association), and national associations in India, Spain (not a new request as incorrectly listed in the Congress Bulletin), and Ukraine. New recommendations were now proposed for Cuba and New Zealand, but since no written requests had as yet been submitted, no action was taken on them.

12) Recommendations for adjustments to the wording of the Constitution in the event of (a) a change of the name (b) agreement on the setting up of individual memberships.

The first recommendation “a” for adjustment to the wording of the Constitution in the event of a change of the name of the IAHR by the General Assembly was accepted by show of hands as follows: 42 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions. The second recommendation “b” for adjustment to the wording of the Constitution in the event of the setting up of individual membership led to a debate concerning the pros and cons of individual membership. As a result of the action taken in point 9, a motion was seconded and approved by an overwhelming majority show of hands to shelve the recommendation until the next International Committee meeting.

13) Future conference locations.

The following locations had been suggested as venues for the international congress in the year 2000: Cape Town, Copenhagen, Jerusalem, Leiden, and Yogyakarta. At this point, Durban was also suggested. The delegates from the Netherlands reported that Leiden was not actively pursuing its candidacy. Prof.

Werblowsky strongly advised that Jerusalem not be the venue especially during the year that the whole Christian world would be celebrating the end of its second millennium. Prof. Naidoo did not think that Cape Town was a viable venue since most of the meetings of the Southern African association were held in Durban. The Danish representatives asked for the venue among other things because it would coincide with the 100th anniversary of the history of religions in Denmark.

It was unanimously agreed that the incoming Executive Committee should pursue South Africa (most likely Durban) with Copenhagen as a second priority, and that it should report on the matter within 12 months.

The following locations had been suggested as venues for other IAHR-related conferences: Ankara, Imatra (agreed in principle for 1996), and Hildesheim. Dr. Ahlbäck noted that the Finnish Association did not officially support the proposed Imatra conference. Prof. Waardenburg suggested that Professor Azim Nanji should be contacted for help in holding a conference in a Muslim country. He recommended that it follow the model of the Beijing conference with 40-50 participants. It was unanimously agreed that the incoming Executive Committee make appropriate arrangements.

14) Any other business.

Prof. Kippenberg announced that the German Association will be holding a conference in Bonn during October 1995 during which it will host a meeting of the officers of the European associations concerning the proposed establishment of a European Association for the Academic Study of Religion.

Prof. Antes concluded the meeting by thanking the outgoing Executive Committee and its officers for the past five years.

(Minutes by Armin W. Geertz)

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a supplementary meeting held on August 12, 1995

1) Membership (by show of hands).

Prof. Werblowsky presided. 32 members were counted as present.

2) Recommendation of new affiliations.

Prof. Pye apologized for forgetting that he had indeed received a letter of request for affiliation by New Zealand. He also presented a letter delivered during the congress by representatives from Cuba requesting affiliation. Both requests were carried by a unanimous show of hands and would therefore be tabled at the General Assembly.

3) Additional proposals for honorary life memberships.

Two additional names were proposed, namely: Prof. L. Bäckmann (Stockholm) and Prof. G. Widengren (Uppsala). These proposals were approved unanimously by show of hands, and congratulations were expressed by Professor Werblowsky to those named on behalf of the International Committee.

(Minutes by Armin W. Geertz)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE IAHR

*Minutes of the Meeting of the General Assembly held
on August 12, 1995*

[approved on June 5th 1996 by the Executive Committee]

(A) Presiding: Professor Werblowsky (as outgoing Vice-President).

Prof. Werblowsky began the meeting by asking for a minute of silence in memory of the recently deceased President of the IAHR, Professor Ugo Bianchi.

Prof. Werblowsky expressed the gratitude and deeply felt thanks of the Congress participants and the IAHR to Dr. Yolotl González, Prof. Elio Masferrer, the Asociación Latinoamericana para el estudio de las Religiones, the Sociedad Mexicana para el estudio de las Religiones, and the Claustro de Sor Juana for their warm hospitality and for a well-run and highly stimulating international congress. The General Assembly applauded.

He then expressed the regrets of the conference organizers for the need to move the date of the General Assembly from Thursday to Saturday. The Executive Committee had tried to remedy this by introducing proxy voting cards. He also apologized for the confusion concerning the precise time of the meeting. Since the meeting was limited to two hours, he asked that everyone keep their comments brief and concise.

2) Brief report by the outgoing General Secretary (c.f. written report).

Prof. Pye referred to the report that was distributed during the congress, and he thanked all the many individuals and institutions around the world who helped make the organization work the last five years. The report was acknowledged by acclamation.

3) Brief report by the outgoing Treasurer (c.f. written report).

Prof. Geertz referred to the report that was distributed during the congress and he thanked the members of the IAHR for the honor and privilege of serving them. The report was acknowledged by acclamation.

4) Report on the election of the incoming Executive Committee.

Prof. Werblowsky explained the electoral procedures and reported the results. He also mentioned the excellent fact that with respect to the non-officer positions, the three highest number of votes had gone to female colleagues. He congratulated the incoming committee, and the General Assembly accepted the results by acclamation.

Public transfer of office to the incoming Executive Committee.

Prof. Werblowsky then formally transferred the office to the incoming Executive Committee and the new officers moved up to the platform accompanied by the acclamation of the General Assembly.

(B) Presiding: Professor Pye (as incoming President).

5) Brief statement by the incoming President.

Prof. Pye thanked the International Committee for its support which he considered to be a recognition of the overall policies that he had pursued in office over the past years. He thanked them for their confidence. He also thanked

Prof. Werblowsky for his dedication and steadfast defense of the integrity of the IAHR during 10 years as General Secretary and a further 10 years as Vice-President. He also praised Prof. Ugo Bianchi's dedication and energetic contribution to the IAHR and expressed sorrow for the fact that Prof. Bianchi had not been able to participate in this congress since he knew Prof. Bianchi had been very intent on attending. He stated further that he would always hold Prof. Bianchi in fond memory.

He expressed his satisfaction with the results of the outgoing Executive Committee in its efforts to extend the diversity of the IAHR regionally, culturally, racially, and with respect to gender balance. He felt that the committee had worked well together, and he thanked Prof. Geertz in particular for his part in this.

He explained that one of the important jobs of the incoming Executive Committee will be to improve the administrative procedures of the IAHR in order to ensure not only that it run smoothly and efficiently, but also that its procedures be made even more transparent to the membership at large. He hoped that these procedures will be ready for the next International Committee meeting in Hildesheim, Germany in 1998.

He concluded by thanking the Mexican hosts for a memorable and successful congress.

6) Brief statement by the incoming General Secretary.

Prof. Geertz also thanked the hosts of the congress and also extended thanks to the many friendly assistants who made sure that each participant felt welcome and satisfied. He stated that Mexico has a very rich resource in its people.

Prof. Geertz noted that the regional diversification policies of the past 10 years had given the IAHR a larger ground base and a more truer international representation, but it had also contributed to a crisis of identity expressed in two main ways: the question of the name of the IAHR and the self-critical process concerning the theoretical object of the study of religion and how to approach it. He stated that he would follow the guidelines decided upon by the General Assembly on the question of the name, and that he would continue to encourage the self-critical process, undaunted by questions of identity, since criticism is essential to the development of our science.

He expressed furthermore that his policy objectives would be to continue the diversification policy at an easy pace, to consolidate and support the members-

hip both old and new, to improve the administration of the organization, and to continue efforts to build up the Endowment Fund. Concerning the improvement of the administration, he expressed the wish to reach the membership at large on a one-to-one basis, thereby making the IAHR relevant and necessary for each individual member. He also expressed the wish to coordinate publication policies with new subscription possibilities and hopefully create a larger economical base. On a concluding note, he hoped to improve the democratic procedures of the IAHR in order to make them more clear to the international community and to stimulate a common interest in international and intercultural cooperation.

He thanked the International Committee for its support and expressed the hope to live up to its expectations.

7) New affiliations.

The following new affiliations were recommended by the International Committee:

African Association for the Study of Religion (regional association) and national associations in Cuba, Belgium/Luxemburg, the Czech Republic, India, New Zealand, Russia, Spain and the Ukraine. The Belgo-Luxembourgeois, Czech, and Russian associations are affiliated as reorganizations in continuity with previous affiliations.

There were no comments from the floor. All were accepted by unanimous vote. Voting cards were then handed out to the newly affiliated representatives. Statements and thanks were given on behalf of the new affiliates by Professor Jha (India), Professor Olupona (African Association), Professor Trebolé (Spain), and a representative from Cuba. Prof. Pye gave them as a gift the proceedings of the Lancaster Congress (1975) as a symbol of the continuity of the IAHR despite any possible change of name.

8) Proposed change of name.

Prof. Pye explained that the International Committee, at its meeting in Paris on September 19, 1993 (c.f. the minutes in the IAHR Bulletin 27, pp. 5-6), had passed the following resolution: "It is recommended that the name of the IAHR be changed to 'The International Association for the Academic Study of Religions' in English and 'L'Association Internationale pour l'Étude Scientifique des Religions' in French." This matter was now brought forward to the General Assembly for a fi-

nal decision. Since this subject had been widely discussed during the past five years, Prof. Pye explained that only brief statements would be possible at this time. He further explained that in view of the importance of this item steps were taken to ensure compliance with the constitutional requirement that only members of affiliated associations who were registered for the Congress were entitled to vote at the General Assembly. Thus, voting cards had been distributed during the week prior to the General Assembly on the basis of up-to-date membership lists made available to the General Secretary.

The first 15 minutes were reserved for opening statements by a proponent (Dr. Terry Thomas, U.K.) and an opponent (Prof. Werblowsky). These were followed by statements from the floor by Prof. Masferrer, Dr. Snoek, Prof. Araki, Prof. Bergman, Prof. Paper, Prof. Meslins, Prof. Sullivan, Prof. Kippenberg, and Prof. Abumalham.

Prof. Pye then described the voting procedure. The vote would be a simple majority vote. In case of a tie, it would not be passed. Prof. Pye stated that whichever side wins, the Executive Committee is aware of the need to take steps to ensure the interests of those who have lost. Furthermore, he stated that he had remained neutral throughout the 5 years, but today would cast his vote. Then, addressing in particular the new affiliates, he said that members should not vote for the change of name simply because the recommendation was on the agenda, but only if they were sure that they wanted the change to be made. If in doubt, members could also vote against change or abstain.

The result of the vote was as follows: 34 for, 58 against, 8 abstentions. As a result of this vote, the name of the IAHR therefore remained unchanged.

9) Other recommendations of the International Committee requiring a vote by the General Assembly.

Prof. Pye announced that since the name had not been changed, there were no further recommendations from the International Committee to the General Assembly.

10) Suggestions from the General Assembly to the incoming Executive Committee.

Dr. Snoek from the Dutch Association suggested that the General Assembly consider the following motion for adoption:

The General Assembly requests the Executive Committee to prepare a change of the Constitution to the effect that it will state explicitly that the IAHR ac-

cepts as members, organizations whose members study religions or religious phenomena from a non-ideological point of view.

Dr. Snoek proposed that this text be brought to the International Committee at its next meeting in order to decide upon a recommendation for the next General Assembly. The result of the vote was as follows: 26 for, 12 against, 25 abstentions. The motion was thereby adopted.

11) Any other business.

Dr. Yólotl González closed the Congress and Prof. Peter Antes thanked the hosts once again. Prof. Michael Pye, as incoming president, wished all a good journey and expressed the hope to see them again at the next Congress, perhaps in Durban, South Africa.

(Minutes by Armin W. Geertz, incoming General Secretary of the IAHR)



Publication announcements

ADJUNCT PROCEEDINGS

The following volumes have appeared following the IAHR Congress of Mexico 1995 and have been formally designated by the Executive Committee as *adjunct proceedings*.

PERSPECTIVES ON METHOD AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Adjunct Proceedings of the XVIIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995

Edited by: Armin W. Geertz and Russell T. McCutcheon,
with the assistance of Scott S. Elliott.

Leiden, Boston and Köln (Brill) 2000

ISBN 90 04 11877 2

GENDER / BODIES / RELIGIONS

Adjunct Proceedings of the XVIIth Congress for the History of Religions

Edited by: Sylvia Marcos

Cuernavaca, Mexico (ALER Publications) 2000

ISBN 968 7866 03 9

WESTERN ESOTERICISM AND THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Selected Papers presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995

Edited by: Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Leuven, Belgium (Peeters) 1998

ISBN 90 429 0630 8