summary

PLURALISM, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

Jacques Langlais
1921-2008
In Memoriam

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Intercultural Institute of Montreal

CRIDAQ

Pluralism, Here and Elsewhere

Proceedings of the colloquium organized by the Intercultural Institute of Montreal at the Université du Quebec à Montréal - UQAM, on May 30-31 2007.

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Editorial Note

While we were in the midst of preparing this issue Father Jacques Langlais, who founded the Monchanin Centre in 1963, that later became the Intercultural Institute of Montreal, passed away on January 8, 2008,. His passing, after a long and richly filled life, leaves us an immense void. Jacques Langlais, with his humility and kindness, unobtrusively shared his great faith in dialogue and peace. A man open to all forms of dialogue, he was a living example of a human bridge, of which his long list of achievements since 1950 is an eloquent testimony.

This issue of *Interculture*, which presents the diverse reality of pluralism in different parts of the world, is dedicated to the memory of Jacques Langlais. In the section, *News from the IIM*, various texts can be found under the heading, *Jacques Langlais In Memorium*.

The current issue results from the Symposium, *Pluralism, Here and Elsewhere*, that was organized jointly by the Intercultural Institute of Montreal and the CRIIDAQ (Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la diversité au Québec) on May 30-31, 2007, in Montreal.

The main objective of the Symposium was to explore, from an intercultural perspective, the question of pluralism in different societies. Too often we have a tendency to think that pluralism is a unique characteristic of modern western societies. Thus other societies must follow the same path progression, based on the democratic political system and values promoting human rights, all within the framework of the Nation-State. However, since the dawn of time, all human societies and cultures have had to deal with diversity, and to develop knowledge and pluralistic practices to foster co-existence.

In this issue, we present texts from the different presentations at the Symposium that covered the following geo-cultural areas: Quebec, Black Africa, Islam, Indigenous Nations in Canada Native people and China. The introduction gives an analysis of the proceedings of the Symposium, while the conclusion comprises commentaries from some of the participants. It is, admittedly, a small step in the enormous task of getting to know, and recognize, the collective knowledge and practices of different cultures and civilizations concerning their vision of cultural diversity. However, as the saying goes, every journey starts with the first step.

By Kalpana Das

Executive Summary of the Colloquium
Pluralism, Here and Elsewhere

Acknowledgement

Introductory remarks

This colloquium has been a pilot project to do a preliminary exploration of an intercultural perspective on the question of pluralism in various societies. This exploration is conceived on the basis of the premise that different societies across the world have acquired over the ages, collective experiences of living with cultural, ethnic, religious diversity. Today, the cultural and religious diversity has become a major issue that touches the core of our socio-cultural as well

as economic and political life. Although the diversity is inherent to all societies, in the contemporary context of the world this issue poses very complex challenges to all.

Motivating issues

Western countries are facing the challenges posed on the basis of certain sets values that are called 'modern' as opposed to 'traditional', such as democracy and human rights within the political structure of Nation-State for the governance and social order. The successes and failures of these socio-political processes to face the challenges of pluralism, need to be re-assessed and revisited. One thing is obvious that we are far from achieving the harmonious and integrative relationships between culturally diverse groups and communities. Somehow, inspite of the efforts and social policies based on the values of equality, human dignity and fareness, communities and groups are being more and more polarized and most often become the competing and adversarial forces that prove to be insurmountable obstacles to intergroup relations and integration of all groups.

On the international scene, we need to take note of the historical processes that began with the religious and political colonization of most parts of the world by Euro-christian civilizations. Then came the phase of the modernization-westernization of the 'traditional' societies by the economic and technological culture of the North. Now in the context of globalization, it is the transfer of socio-political technology of democracy, by the euro-american powers to the rest of the the globe and the expansion of the market economy as the basis for the new world order. These processes have constructed a world-view that have divided the societies in modern-traditional camps where the 'tradtional' societies are viewed to be lacking in terms of knowledge and experiences and thus have very little to offer to today's world.

This particular mode of thinking is also evident in the area of the central topic of our project, which is pluralism or the cultural diversity in societies. Academic research as well as socio-political ideologies and policies concerning issue of pluralism, are exclusively focused on the experiences of the modern-western societies and once again tend to promote the 'model of multiculturalism and/or interculturalism' as the universalisable model for all. Any society outside of the euro-american civilizational boundaries are viewed to be 'traditional' and their experiences of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity are deemed to be of little value, and thus are never explored.

This line of thinking, seemed to be very narrow to the organizers of the colloquium and it was considered that it would be beneficial for all those who are involved in research, decision making and social action, to broaden their horizon for reflection and research by looking at what the non-modern/non-western societies may have to offer on this crucial issue of diversity in societies today.

What we set out to do: objectives

Concretely speaking the overall goal of this colloquium was to address the question of pluralism in contemporary societies with an intercultural perspective, that takes into account the knowledge and practices of societies that are different from the societies in the West. This overall goal can be translated into three specific objectives:

- At the national level, to help decision-makers and other social actors to better understand the difficulties that immigrants may experience in the process of integration in Quebec and Canadian societies, as they arrive here with different kind of experiences of cultural diversity.

- At the international level, to allow people and institutions involved in foreign services and international relations, to better adapt their way of relating to their partners.

- To broaden perspective and explore new areas of research on cultural diversity, whether it be in the field of anthropology, sociology, philosophy or in legal studies.

Format of the colloquium

The one-and-half day colloquium was structured around exploring the question of diversity in five geo-cultural contexts of the world. It began with a portrayal of diversity issue in contemporary Quebec as the backdrop for our deliberation. Then four different perspectives of so-called traditional societies were presented, namely, the perspective of one of the First Nations of Quebec/Canada, followed by Islamic societies, China and Bantou culture from the Congo.

The cultural perspectives were provided by invited speakers, mostly from these geo-cultural areas, who were requested to present not only an academic discourse but also share their personal experiences. These presentations were complemented by some comments by invited discussants. After each session there was a brief period for questions and answers as well as for debate and dialogue.

Summary and discussion on papers presented

For the purpose of furthering our relection on the subject of the colloquium, it will be useful to draw out the main ideas and issues put forward by each presenter.

"Quebec, a welcoming society or a stumbling block?", by *Jacques Lacoursière*

An historical account of the attitudes of the 'majority' group of Quebec toward the 'minorities' was given by the historian Jacques Lacoursière. M. Lacoursière adopts the axis of immigration to treat the question of diversity, where he affirms that " we are all immigrants including the aboriginal or First Nations", but acknowledges the fact that aboriginal people were already here for a few thousands of years at the time of the arrival of the Europeans. Then he provides a description of the attitudes of the French majority group that marked their relationships with immigrants of diverse origins. Without going into the conquest and colonization of this land as a historical landmark of the encounter between the aboriginal nations or the first inhabitants and the Europeans, M. Lacoursière begins his story in 1627, the time of the Charter Compagnie des Cent-Associés (Compagnie de la Nouvelle France) and portrays a socio-demographic picture of people who subsequently came to establish in Quebec through different waves of immigration from the 17th century 'till the most recent years.

In terms of attitudes of the majority French towards other groups, the following features emerged from this presentation, which are specific to each historical period. In the 17th century Nouvelle France, only the Catholics of French origin were allowed to establish in Quebec, Protestants and the Jews were prohibited from settling here. M. Lacoursière paints a rather positive picture of the relationship between the French and the aboriginal Nations. Besides the conversion to Catholicism and sedentarization of these Nations, he holds the view that the relationship was cordial and there were some 'metis-sage' between these Nations and the French. The nature of immigration changes after the

conquest of Nouvelle France by England, and English, Scottish, Irish and Jews as well as the Loyalists after the American revolution, began to settle in Quebec. M. Lacoursière speaks of 'reasonable accommodation' during this period by giving the example that in 1759, a section of Ursulines monastery was transformed into a hospital for wounded English soldiers and the chapel of the monastery was also used for Protestant worship.

1950s were marked by the rise of nationalist movement among the French in Quebec. In 1951, a survey conducted by the Institut de psychologie de l'Université de Montréal, shows that 67% francophone and 37% Anglophone Quebecers opposed immigration. In 1968, Union Nationale government in Quebec adopts a bill to establish a Ministry of Immigration and this Ministry " had the role to help immigrants, who were apt to contribute to the development of Quebec, to settle and to adapt to French Quebecois society. In 1978, under the regime of René Levésque through an agreement between the Federal and Provincial governments known as "Couture-Allen Accord", Quebec obtains the power to select immigrants according to the needs of Quebec. In the context of the declining birth-rate in Quebec and in Canada in recent decades, immigration becomes an obligation in order to maintain a certain level of demographic evolution. This situation pushed Quebec government to adopt a more aggressive approach to recruit immigrants, preferably French speaking and those who are educated and are able to integrate to French quebecois culture.

Remarks

In general, this presentation provides an interesting account of the history of immigration in Quebec and throws some light on the attitude of the majority French Quebecers. The following issues and questions can be raised:

- Instead of focusing only on the government policies and decisions, more could have been said about the people's perspective on relationships between diverse communities in Quebec. It is important to hear not just the discourses of the decision-makers but also the voices of the people on matters that concern our society. The official history vs. popular history is an important issue.

- Given this portrayal of the Quebec society as being evolved through immigration and thus by the presence of diverse peoples and cultures, a few questions can be asked: Is Quebec a pluralistic society or a French society. Is it only the French majority who are entitled to be called 'Quebecois' or it is anyone who has lived in Quebec and communities who have been here for generations, are all Quebecois? What is the role of Native or First Nations vis-à-vis new immigration? Are they part of this host society?

- These questions can lead us to deepen reflection on the continued debate about the need for a 'common public culture' defined by the State and work toward sustaining a society that is diverse in its nature. How this can be done and what form can this take, are the questions for all of us as people of diverse origins and for our institutions of governance.

"Diversity, a hallmark of the cosmic circle and reasonable accommodation: indigenous perspective", by *Michael Rice*

Michael Rice, Principal of the Ratihen;te High school in Kanasatake (Oka). Presents the philosophical vision of the Iroquois culture that speaks of diversity as being inherent to the cosmos. This indicates a fundamental difference between the Iroquois-Mohawk culture and the European culture that is hard to reconcile. This divergence

consists of the nature-centered or cosmocentric conception of person of the Mohawk and the individualist view of the person of the modern West. There is also divergence in terms of spirituality: the Iroquois people try to understand rather than to convince or try to convert people as in the Catholic religion. In Iroquois social practices, each person finds an equal place in the "circle of words" and the "fire" in the middle links each one's position within the circle, during the discussion. The practice of adoption of non-Iroquois was prevalent in order to give a new belongingness to a stranger and the stranger is accepted within the kinship fold of the community or the Nation.

In terms of the relationship of the Mohawk nation with the Europeans, Mr. Rice evokes two specific experiences. First, their encounter with the Catholic missionaries which was marked by a lack of respect and non-listening on the part of the latter and by the practices of conversion. This history of disrepect for their traditions is still present and is perpetuated even today. The relationships of Quebec and Canada with the indigenous nations in general has been unequal and oriented toward assimilation. Secondly, forced schooling of indigenous children in residential schools was another way of making them unlearn their life-styles and assimilating them to European cultures.

Mr. Rice engages himself in the discussion on reasonable accommodation, by saying that the indigenous nations have been accommodating for centuries and he quotes two speeches given by Chief Canassatego in 1744, in reference to education and by a Seneca Chief named Red Jacket. Both speeches reflect the efforts on behalf of the indigenous nations to accommodate to European culture, without losing their own identity. Mr. Rice goes on to wondering if something could be learnt from these experiences of indigenous peoples of Quebec and Canada, in terms of dealing with newly

arrived immigrants. He finishes by saying "if we want to achieve reasonable accommodation with others, we must plant the tree of peace in our hearts, minds and spirits".

Remarks

- Mr. Rice's presentation gives a picture of the relationship between the Europeans and the indigenous Nations that is different from the experiences of the French in Nouvelle France described by M. Lacoursière. It is evident that the history is told with a very different kind of sensibility.

- Nature-centric (cosmocentric) worldview seems to be the approach to understand the realities of human societies and human living in these cultures. This kind of worldview seems to make room for diversity without trying to convert anyone or without being hegemonic, or by bringing everybody into one homogenized system, be it a religion or common culture or a State.

- Can there be a parallel drawn between the practice of adoption in the Iroquois society and the policy of integration in Quebec and Canadian societies? This question deserves to be further understood.

Islamic perspective: "Umma, frameowork for diversity?", by *Zakaria Rhani* and *Yara El-Ghabdan*

Two speakers shared the presentation on Islam. Both transmitted a word of caution vis-à-vis an homogenized image of Islam very often projected by radical Islamic trends. Cultural, political and religious diversity is deeply rooted in Islam. These presentations focused on two fundamental notions namely, *Umma and Dhimma.*

M. Zakaria introduces the notion of Umma which signifies the monotheistic Abrahamic

community. This is a purely spiritual notion based on faith and belief, not a socio-cultural, racial, political, nationalistic, or even geographic one. The first Islamic constitution designated Umma as a group that united the people of Medina, and considered all tribes and also the Jews being part of this Umma. This Charter of Medina was the blueprint for the construction of a society marked by religious pluralism and identities on the basis of solidarity, justice and equality in rights as well as duties within one community. Thus Umma englobes both principles of unity and diversity. After the death of the Prophet, different factions, different trends and schools of thinking began to emerge.

The notion of Dhimma signifies mainly the social and political relationship between Muslims and non-muslims. In her presentation, Yara El-Ghadban discusses more in details the notion of Dhimma. She evokes a fundamental difference between the model of pluralism in the West and that of Islam. In the West pluralism is founded on the State of law and individual citizenship. In this model there is a separation between public and private sphere, religion and politics, ethnicity and nationality. The Islamic model of pluralism is based not on this kind of separation, but on the religious and ethnic belongingness. The Islamic model of " management of diversity" can be traced back to the time of Islamic Empire and was based on Al-Dhimma. During that time Al-Dhimma signified a legal status for the Jewish and Christian communities for protection under the Islamic Empire. The Pact of Omar (in the year 636) is known as the first accord between the Muslim conquerors and the Jewish and Christian communities in the Middle East. The status of Dhimmis (non-muslims) varied from one historical era to another, from one region to another, from one political context to another as well as from one school of law and socio-cultural group to another.

This fluidity had facilitated the Islamic regimes to adapt to different cultural contexts throughout its history. The experience of Convivencia in Andalousie, Spain (711-1492) is very significant as an example of 'metissage' and transmission of intercultural knowledge, arts and culture under the Islamic regime.

This history of Islamic Empire says Ms.El-Ghadban, questions some of the most prevalent prejudices in Canadian and in Quebec today against Islam and Muslims. Moreover, she proposes some lessons can be learnt from the historical experiences of the Islamic model of pluralism. According to Ms. El-Ghadban, the contemporary model of pluralism in the West can be relativized and be open to other possibilities of living together without dichotomizing public/private spaces of social living, and without dehumanizing the citizens by transforming them into anonymous individuals having only rights and responsibilities and without having any sense of belongingness. Ms. El-Ghadban further offers some suggestions to deal with the cultural, religious and ethnic diversity in Quebec and Canada by making concrete proposions:

- Demystifying and encountering the Other

- Pluralizing knowledge and education

- Reinventing Quebecois secularity by not making it an absolute and a new religion

- Developing a Foreign Policy that will reflect pluralism in Quebec and in Canada.

- Making reasonable accommodation to be a means for inclusion and not for exclusion

- Making reciprocity as an essential element of pluralism where everybody including the host society is involved.

Remarks

- Mr. Zakaria and Ms. El-Ghadban made a very interesting and more complete presentation by responding to the objectives of the colloquium. Particularly, Ms. El-Ghadban, not only historically traced the philosophical and political approaches to deal with the diversity, external to Islamic community, she also made a link with the present debates in Quebec on reasonable accommodation. Her intention to treat the question of 'accommodation' comparatively, between Islamic traditions and Quebecois policy, was quite to the point.

- Nonetheless, certain issues regarding the encounter between Islamic culture and other cultures or civilizations have not been addressed. An investigation into the religious and political expansionsim and domination of Islam and their impact in certain regions of the world, and the contributions of coping and accommodating modes of these local cultures with Islam, could also provide other insights into the treatment of the diversity within the Islamic empire. Has there been a different treatment by Islam, of peoples and cultures that are outside of the fold of Abrahamic civilizations? For example, one participant in the colloquium raised an issue about occulting Black African Islam.

- Propositions were made for some measures to deal with the diversity issue in today's Quebec. Although these propositions deserve attention and discussion, there is a great deal of ambiguity about the treatment of the notion of pluralism. For example, the proposition of "pluralizing" the political system in Canada or the education system in Quebec, what does it means concretely?

"Diversity in Chinese tradition: modes of understanding, pratical solutions", by *Anna Ghiglione*

Ms. Ghiglione presented the fundamentals of the philosophy and the cosmology in Chinese traditions in regard to the question of diversity in society. In her presentation she spoke a philosophy based on wisdom and a mode of understanding that is very different from the western mode of understanding. According to Ms. Ghiglione this mode of understanding can be characterized by four essential dimensions, namely, a mode of thinking that is corelational, a spirit of integration, a model of 'organicism', and 'holism' which signifies that the diversity or difference is an integral part of all organisms and the relationship between the parts is more important than the entity itself. In ancient Chinese civilization the cultural differences rather than the racial differences were recognized in terms of relationship with the foreigners, and it was believed that these differences could be removed or dealt with through education and integration. Integration does not mean cultural asslimilation.

The Chinese attitude towards differences, says Ms. Ghilione, is not to radicalize differences but to integrate through a system of 'correspondance' with natural phenomena. The introduction of Buddhism in China, was given as an example. The integration of Buddhism was very transformative for the Chinese culture and it was achieved by operationalizing the principle of 'correspondance' and not through dialogue. Another aspect of the principle of 'correspondance' that was apllied, was to draw correspondance between the existing elements in Chinese philosophy and this 'foreign' spirituality that came from 'elsewhere'. Thus associating Buddhism with Taoïsm and Confucianism, was essential.

In this cosmovision a "sage" is essentially a cosmic being who lives in harmoy with nature where everything co-exists. Maintaining the balance between two extremities is at the core of this cosmovision, which incarnates in the notion of Yin and Yang (two complimentary energies), as a source of transformative dynamism, but this transformation occurs in both. This cosmology is still very much alive in Chinese mind and attitudes. Another set of correspondance is made between the 5 elements of nature that are part of a regenerative cycle: water, wood, fire, earth and metal.

Other aspects of this holistic cosmovision of diversity, as enumerated by Ms. Ghiglione, are the following:

- The sanction by the tradition,

- Search for conceptual equivalence (ex. Buddha is another name of Laozi)

- The principle of complimentarity,

- Critical hierarchization (of elements that are different and even heterogeneous),

- Syncretism of divergent doctrines

- Orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy

Remarks

- Anna Ghiglione gave a very well structured presentation on Chinese philosophy as it relates to diversity. But for many participants, it may have been too abstract for understanding the concrete implication of this philosophy in socio-historical and political realities in China, be it in the past or in the present.

- Thus it would be interesting to look into China's encounter with the West and western ideologies of science and socialism, and the inroards that are being made by capitalism at the present time. How does the holistic transformative dynamism translate into the socio-political practices of today's China in terms of the integra-

tion of differences coming from the West in recent times (particularly since the 19th century)?

- Ms. Ghiglione's presentation provides very insightful instruments to decode Chinese mentality and social and attitudinal behaviour vis-à-vis cultural diversity rather than an analysis of political management of diversity. This in itself is an essential contribution to our discussion on pluralism.

African perspective: "Once upon a time there was a spider web...and some considerations of the virtues of a knot", by *Emongo Lomomba*

In his presentation, Emongo Lomomba chose to present, not an ethnographique discourse on the question of pluralism in Black Africa, but a view from the inside of the African mind, particularly of Ntu Africa. Ntu Africa or Bantou represents the Atetelas and the Balubas of the centre of the Republic of Congo. Mr. Lomomba spoke of the Ntu vision of pluralism by way of two analogies: **the spider web and a knot.** Further more, Mr. Lomomba said that this presentation would reflect his own experience of interculturality as being and that he'll speak from his personal experience of interculturality between his ancestral oral tradition and a non-Ntu language that he learnt in school.

The analogy of spider web:

Mr. Lomomba spoke of the following characteristics of the "spider web":

a. The pinciple of interdependence: A web needs a support that not a web, but something else. Without this support of 'others' a *web* cannot create itself. The interesting thing is that these 'others' become support only when the web seeks them out. As a matter of fact, Muntu (Black African in general) recognizes the 'other' as totally other than himself.

For them the 'other' transcends everything that is in proximity and in distance: the nature, human society, the cosmos and even beyond.

b. The principle of complimentarity: two webs can never be identical or symmetrical. In the eyes of the Muntu, the fingers in the same hand are the brothers born out of the same source, but all different from each other contributing to work in their own particular way.

c. The principle of perfectibility: All webs are fragile and they break at any time but can be reconstructed differently but surely. The *web*, like everything else, transforms itself.

d. The principle of interface: The spider web is defined by its emptiness and its fullness. It finds its consistence in a two-dimensional network of pores and fibers. It symbolizes a door through which one can see inside and outside at the same time.

Teachings of the spider web on pluralism:

- In Ntu Africa, pluralism is intrinsic to the reality as it is to the web. The web evokes an image of wholeness. Pluralism integrates and exceeds all human intelligence. The human being is a very small part of this whole of reality, its intelligence is nothing but a variable of pluralism of this whole'

- In Ntu Africa, pluralism integrates and exceeds all human projects for constructing pluralism. All human construction of pluralism is here and now that culminates in the wholeness of the spider web, to which no one can add or subtract anything from it.

- In Ntu Africa, pluralism manifests in a *network of knots.*

Virtues of a knot

Equal respect to each and everything: The knot by definition, underlines differences and diversity. The Muntu respects each thing, whether it is the 'other' or himself, in the sense that he worships mainly what constitutes the rhythm of Life: the sun, the moon etc. His respect everything makes of him an integral and involved part of what exists, but without being its legatee and much less its owner or its master.

Constant openness to the otherness of the 'other': The knot is an unavoidable turning point of meeting and (re)discovery of the 'other'. For Muntu in daily life, the 'other' is not a stranger, the unknown and difference cannot threaten one's identity. The 'other' is not a risk to lose one's place. The 'other' is a guest, whom we listen to, with whom we share and who we acknowledge as our 'brother' or 'sister'.

Harmony is sought in everything: The knot poses a multidimensional cultural challenge to the humans. Being in the network of knots, Muntu seeks harmony with the radical 'other'.

Remarks

- This was a philosophical reflection on Ntu African vision of pluralism presented in the language of parables and analogies, evoking cosmic images. This kind of language is very much in keeping with African oral traditions, but probably less accessible to the uninitiated persons to this cultural world.

- The messages of the two analogies of *the spider web and the knot* is clear, concerning Ntu African perspective on diversity at a philosophical plain. The presentation painted a picture of Ntu African mind regarding diversity, not in its human dimension, but in its cosmic dimension.

- The social articulation of this cosmovision of pluralism seemed to have remained unexplored.

- The main messages of this presentation that are extremely relevant to our discussion on pluralism are: pluralism is not a human construction, it is intrinsic to the rhythm of Life itself and all things are inter-related. Seeking harmony or rather re-discovering the inherent harmony with the radical difference of the 'other' becomes the challenge for the human societies.

Appreciation of the colloquium

Without getting into an in depth analysis of the results of the colloquium, it can be affirmed that the overall objective was attained. The main focus was to expose participants to different perspectives and experiences of pluralism in five different geo-cultural regions. The speakers very aptly presented their cultural views on the topic. Unfortunately, the time was limited for debate and dialogue, which was a source of certain frustration among some participants. But the participants expressed their satisfaction for new information they received about the diversity issue in different cultural contexts, which they found very stimulating.

Many considered that the colloquium has opened up unexplored questions about the cultural, racial and religious diversity within Quebec and Canadian societies. Some comments are included at the end of the thematic chapters of this report.

By Jacques Lacoursière

Quebec, a Land of Hospitality or a land of Reefs?

The historian Jacques Lacoursière has taken upon himself the mission to better make known and love the history of Quebec, whether through his lectures, his radio or television talks. He has studied the history of its Native People and different ethnic groups who have marked both the Quebecois past and present. For this he has been awarded both the National Order of Quebec and of Canada. Furthermore, he was awarded the medal of l'Académie des Lettres du Québec and member of the Royal Society of Canada.

Within the framework of the symposium on "Pluralism and Society", I was asked to discuss the question of Quebec genealogy, specifically with relation to the pattern of cultural diversity throughout its history. How did Quebec, since its inception, handle with cultural diversity? Did it respect "the Other", accept his different ways, or tend towards one's assimilation to modern society; or as some would have it, be itself subjected to cultural diversity through numerous demands for what some call or not "reasonable accommodation"? What has been our collective journey? On May 26, 2007, the event "Rondo Mondo" took place in Place d'Youville in Quebec City. According to the journalist writing for "Le Soleil, "it was the first intercultural gathering "where hundreds of people celebrated diversity by tasting exotic food, and being lulled by sounds of international music". The following day, an article by David Home appeared in "La Presse" that reviewed a recent publication, *Nostalgia and Sadness*, by Sholem

Stern, translated and presented by Pierre Anctil. The book affirms that, in the 1920s and 1930s, the most avant-gardist literature in Montreal, perhaps in the whole of Canada, was written in Yiddish. According to Home, while local poets, Francophone or Anglophone, were writing about bucolic landscapes, the Yiddish poets were inspired by contemporary themes: the city, political activism, cultural and linguistic adaptation. About what were these poets talking? It was concerning their immigrant status and their uncertainties. Today we would be speaking rather of "precariousness and exclusion". However, these people had a different perspective: they were happy to be alive, to be with their colleagues, to have access to an audience, even a limited one. Home concluded that it didn't matter if they were living in the shadow of the cross on Mount Royal, since they benefited from protection by the legal system of their new country, which they had not been able to do in their native societies in Poland or Lithuania.

Is Quebec a welcoming society or a threatening one? This is the question that we will try to address in attempting to establish a history of immigration in Quebec. The type of immigrants, and the attitudes of Quebecers towards them, varied a great deal from one period to another. There was a long progression from an almost unrestricted immigration policy to one that is now based on very precise criteria of selection.

Let us first establish that we are all immigrants, some more recently arrived than others: this includes the native peoples. Since, as far as I know, earthly Paradise was not situated on Quebecois territory, nor was it here that the first primates raised their heads to walk upright, the first human inhabitants of this country then came from elsewhere many thousands of years ago. When Europeans appeared in the St.Lawrence valley, there were already well-established Amerindian towns.

It was not before the 17th century that the first waves of French immigrants arrived. According to the Charter of 1627 establishing the Company of New France, better known as the Company of a Hundred Associates, only Catholics were allowed to emigrate to New France. Jews and Protestants could not gain permanent residence in the future Quebec, under threat of imprisonment and deportation. The second article of the Charter thus specified that the colony should be populated only by "natural French Catholics". Even if the Huguenots could not live permanently in New France, they were allowed temporary stay during the navigation season. This meant that, on the same ship for a voyage that could take two to five months and thus cover several Sundays, Catholics and Protestants had to share space for their religious services. Marguerite Bourgeoys narrates that, in 1659, when she was travelling aboard a ship that sailed from New France to France, "the ship was filled with Huguenots, and there were only five or six Catholic men other than Mademoiselle Mance and me".

The Protestants who wished to establish themselves permanently in New France had either to give up their faith and convert to Catholicism, or pretend to convert! Had King Louis XIV permitted Protestants to live in his colony following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the history of Canada, particularly that of Quebec, would have turned out quite differently. Robert Larin, in his book, *Brief History of Protestants in New France and Quebec (16ᵗʰ to 19ᵗʰ centuries)*, writes that " The revocation of the Edict of Nantes obliged New France to be even more intransigent towards Protestants; more than ever Louis XIV insisted that they be forced to convert or to quit the colony... or to hide their faith secret. From 1715, attitudes grew more tolerant. In the final analysis, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes had

few lasting effects on the living conditions of the Huguenots."

As the conquest approached, the Huguenots became more and more important in the field of commerce. Bishop Pontbriand complained of this to the French Minister responsible for the Colony. On July 15, 1755, the Minister replied to the Bishop: "The Governor and the Intendant claim that they have received no complaints against the Protestants: they respect the laws and the police, they do not hold assemblies, and they operate fourteen establishments that constitute three-quarters of the commercial operations in the country. If we expelled them, the colony would suffer since the Canadian traders are neither rich, nor sufficient in number to provide the necessities". In other words, while there was intolerance during a certain period, there was also some tolerance.

The same was not true for the Jews during the era of New France. A solitary case of Jewish presence is recorded more as an anecdote than a real attempt at settlement. During the latter years of the 1730s, Esther Brandon, a young Jewish woman, arrived in Quebec disguised as a boy. Her real identity was soon discovered. Attempts to convert her to Catholicism did not succeed so the Intendant, Gilles Hocquart, had her sent back to France. It was only after the War of Conquest that the first Jewish immigrants started to arrive.

Under the French regime, there were not only immigrants coming from France. Several other ethnic origins are also recorded. Thus in 1628, in the region of Tadoussac, a Greek settler acted as an interpreter between the French and the local natives. We do not know from where he came, or how he happened to be in that area. The Italian presence was more significant. In the 1680s there were two Crisafy brothers of Sicilian origin: they were related to the Grimaldis, the royal family of Monaco. Thomas Crisafy,

Knight of Malta, was the officer who came to the defence of Madeleine de Verchères' mother in 1690. He died in Montreal six years later. His brother, the Marquis Antoine de Crisafy, Knight of St.Louis, was governor of Trois-Rivières. He married a young fifteen-year old Canadian girl called Marie-Claire Ruette d'Auteuil. Another Italian distinguished himself during the Conquest: Francesco Carlo Burlammachi, better known as Bourlamaque, was one of the commanding officers in the army of the Marquis de Montcalm.

Again during the first half of the 18th century, about fifty immigrants of various origins, Irish, German, Belgian, Italian and Swiss, settled in the St.Lawrence valley. Although these new subjects supposedly had the same rights as others, they were forbidden to work in certain occupations. An edict from the King's Council registered in Quebec on September 17, 1729, stipulates: "The strangers established in our colonies, even if naturalized or in the process of becoming so in the future, may not become merchants, brokers, or businessmen in any way possible, under sanction of a fine of three thousand pounds payable to the denouncer, and banishment from the said colonies; we allow them only the worth of their land and habitation, and the marketing of produce from the land."

Marcel Fournier, the historian-genealogist, has tried to determine the importance of European immigration other than French during the era of New France. He concludes the following: "According to a study that I did on this subject, I estimate that between 1620 and 1765, around 1 500 European immigrants arrived in Canada. Of this number, I have been able to identify 1 502 from archives and recorded sources. With reference to the English, particular attention was paid to identify the expatriates from New England, which I estimate to number about 228 individuals in New France between 1693 and 1760. Only the English emigrat-

ing from the British Isles were analyzed in this study".

Further precisions with regard to the "New England expatriates": prisoners were taken during raids on the English colonies by Canadians or Amerindians. Approximately a hundred later applied for French naturalization. Thus, in 1710 alone, 84 individuals received certificates of their naturalization. Jean Laha or Lahaye, Jean-Baptiste and Paul Otis, Gabriel Jordan, Germain Aubry known as Larose, Charles Lemaire known as St-Germain, Jacques-Charles Stebbens, Jean Ricard, Madeleine Warren, Marie Stevens, among others, all became Canadians. When we see certain Quebecois surnames, we tend to think of them as the founding families. Take, for example, the Phaneufs. Few people know that their ancestor was Mathias Farnsworth, who was taken prisoner in New England in 1704 and brought to New France where his name took on a French consonance.

Let us take a look at the attitudes of the French and the Canadians towards native people. In 1615, members of the Recollets Order arrived to minister to the French and to work towards converting the natives to Catholicism. Ten years later, the Jesuits arrived in Quebec. After the end of English occupation, around 1632, only the Jesuits returned. Relations between the French and their Native allies were generally cordial. In 1633, the Chief, Capitanal, travelled to Quebec to meet with Samuel de Champlain, who had just returned from France, with a request to open a trading post in Trois-Rivières. He added: "You will plant wheat, and so will we, and, like you, we will no longer have to survive by living in the forest, wandering like vagabonds". To this Champlain replied: "When this great house will be built, our sons will marry your daughters, and we will become one people". Note that Frenchmen were marrying native women, not Amerindians marrying French

women! Champlain's words amused the Algonquins, one of whom replied: "you always say something ribald to make us laugh; if this comes to pass, we shall be very happy".

Some years later, Marie de l'Incarnation, Superior of the Ursuline Monastery in Quebec, wrote: "It is easier to turn a Frenchman into a Savage than have a Savage become French". The French and the Canadians who travelled the woods to trade furs often took native women as "temporary mates". There is therefore more mixed lineage among the Amerindians than among the "Whites". As well, there were few real conversions to Catholicism, even if, during a certain period, the authorities would give firearms only to those who received the sacrament of Baptism.... Finally, attempts at sedentary life had little success. According to the Governor, Frontenac, "the Jesuits converted more beavers than Savages". It is true that he had difficulties with some members of that community!

The years following the War of the Conquest saw many forms of reasonable accommodation. Following the surrender of Quebec, September 18, 1759, part of the Ursuline Monastery in Quebec was transformed into a hospital for wounded English soldiers. In addition, the 78th Scottish Highlander regiment established their headquarters in the monastery. The nuns pitied the kilted soldiers, and spent a part of the winter knitting them woollen socks. In his "History of the Ursulines of Quebec", Dom Guy-Marie Oury writes: "The winter of 1759-1760 was particularly brutal, and the circumstances forbade the Ursulines to go about their regular teaching duties, confined as they were to the third floor of their convent. At least the presence and care of the wounded provided them a replenishment of supplies. The Ursulines thus became military nurses during that winter, and their labour was repaid in kind, which allowed them to

survive". So it is not by chance that, following the death of their Superior, the Ursulines chose as her successor a nun born in New England, who spoke both English and French. "At their first regular elections on December 15, 1760", says Dom Oury, "(the nuns) elected Mère de l'Enfant-Jésus, one of their former English pupils who had been ransomed from captivity. Esther Whellright was not a young member of the order: she was 63 years old, born in 1696 in Wells. In 1703, at the age of 7, she was captured by the Abenakis, who held her prisoner for five years". For several months the chapel of the monastery was used for Protestant services. Writes Dom Oury: "Murray tolerated daily and Sunday mass, since it was about the only religious building left intact in the whole city; the chapel had served as a Catholic parish church before being left to the disposition of the military chaplains of His Majesty. (...) it continued as such until Christmas 1764". In Quebec, Montreal and in Trois-Rivières, Catholic churches also hosted Protestant rites. Such were examples of reasonable accommodation!

During the military regime, which extended from the surrender of the colony on September 8, 1760, to the cession of New France to England through the Treaty of Paris in February 1763, relations between the conquerors and the vanquished were fairly good. A few priests denounced the fact that some young single Canadian women were living with English soldiers. But mixed marriages, that is, Catholic and Protestant, were frowned upon.

The conquest of New France and the establishment of an English government altered the sources of immigration. At first, small numbers of Scots and English settled in the St.Lawrence valley. The first batch comprised primarily administrators, military personnel and commercial entrepreneurs, who saw the colony as a means to quick riches. It was also from this time on that Jews were allowed

to settle in Quebec. In Montreal, in 1768, a first assembly of Jewish faithful gathered to celebrate religious feasts, "according to Sephardic rites and customs" (Joe King). Nine years later, construction began on the first synagogue in Montreal, on the corner of Notre-Dame and St-James Streets.

The American Revolution had an important consequence for Quebec in the 1780s, in that it brought to her territory seven or eight thousand British subjects who preferred to emigrate rather than become American citizens. The Loyalists settled mainly in the area of Montreal, in the region known as the Eastern Townships, and outside of the territories under seigniorial control. These immigrants arrived with a martyr complex: they demanded all sorts of changes, as much concerning legal issues as the type of government. Another result of the American Revolution was the arrival in Quebec of 5,000 mercenaries of German extract, the famous Hesse-Hénaut regiment. These soldiers came here to fight against the American rebels. Once peace was negotiated, several hundreds of them chose to stay on in the colony. Some of them settled in the seigniory of St-Gilles de Lotbinière; others in Quebec or in Montreal, or in the seigniory of Vaudreuil.

Before the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, immigration contributed little to the demographic development of Lower Canada. The annual flow of immigrants was a mere trickle. At the beginning of the 20th century, a group of German Mennonites settled in the present-day region of Waterloo. Soldiers of Scottish origin also chose to live in Lower Canada. It must be noted that conditions that prevailed in Western Europe, after the Congress of Vienna, gave rise to massive immigration towards North America. In Scotland, the textile industry collapsed, and workers were the primary victims. In Ireland, the devastating potato harvest in 1821 caused even greater hardships to desperately

poor people. Discontent was felt everywhere and riots broke out.

In 1832, the legislatures of Lower Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia imposed a tax of 5 shillings on each immigrant that crossed the Atlantic according to the rules determined by the British government; the tax was doubled if the immigrant broke said rules. The reason for this tax was to cover part of the medical expenses incurred to treat immigrants who were ill. From 1810 onwards, with the exception of 1824, 1825, and 1838, ships arrived each year in Quebec or Montreal with a load of 10 000 immigrants, mostly of Irish origin. The total number varies from one source to another, but we are able to ascertain that, between 1815 and 1849, about 532 000 Britishers landed on the soil of Lower Canada, some to remain, others to move on to Upper Canada (Ontario) or to the United States.

The main reason why immigrants moved to Upper Canada, in addition to ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, was the easy availability of lands. In Lower Canada, the seigniorial territories were overpopulated and the land less productive. Also, political problems in the House of Assembly risked creating serious disturbances. Thus most of the immigrants preferred to go on to Upper Canada. Of the 29 630 immigrants disembarking at the ports of Quebec and Montreal in 1834, only 1 131 declared their intention to remain in Lower Canada; all the others continued on to the colony further inland. Of these immigrants, 20, 320 were of Irish origin; 5 414 were English, 3 711 were Scottish, 17 came from the Jersey Islands and 53 from "neighbouring provinces". The contingent of 1834 comprised 17 136 men and 12 494 women.

After 1815, the situation that prevailed in Ireland caused thousands of Irish to emigrate to North America. It is estimated that about 2,3 million Irish left their country to live in the United States or in the English colonies in North America. Between 1831 and 1860, the port of Quebec received 436 718. Only a small number remained in Quebec. They were blamed as the cause of cholera epidemic of 1832 that claimed 10 000 victims in Lower Canada. A certain number of French Canadians even accused the English authorities of a deliberate campaign of genocide by sending sick immigrants to the colony. Édouard-Étienne Rodier, a deputy belonging to Louis-Joseph Papineau's Patriot Party, declared: "When I see my country in mourning, and my native soil turned into a vast cemetery, I ask myself: What is the cause of these disasters? And the voices of my father, my brother, my dear mother, a thousand voices of my fellow citizens, reply from their graves: It's Emigration! It is not enough to send us avid egoists, with no other values than mercantile interests, who come to enrich themselves at the expense of Canadians and then try to enslave them; they had as well to rid themselves of beggars by tossing them by the thousands upon our shores; they had to send us these poor, miserable people, who, having shared the bread of our children, continue to live in Hunger and Misery; they had to send us as well the Plague and Death! If I am presenting to you so sad an image of the state of our country, it is because I wish to instil in you the hope that we may still preserve our nationality and avoid future calamities by building a dam against the torrent of Emigration". Rodier's remarks in no way diminished the flow of immigrants; neither did they prevent cholera from recurring in 1834, nor typhus in 1837!

Only a minority of Francophones displayed some reticence towards immigration. The majority was more welcoming, and their representatives in the House of Assembly of Lower Canada showed remarkable open-mindedness, especially towards the Jewish community. While tensions grew stronger between Francophone deputies and the colonial authorities, the deputies decided to adopt measures giving rights to Jews residing in Lower Canada, which those living in Great Britain did not even possess! In his book that deals with the main events concerning Jews, Joe King notes that in 1828, "a group of Jews from Montreal petitioned Parliament to obtain an official civic registry for their community. The law was adopted six years later. Louis-Joseph Papineau (...) helped in the passage of this law, even though, some years earlier, he had voted for the expulsion of Ezekiel Hart from the Assembly of Lower Canada". In 1830, a Bill was presented entitled, "Act to extend inherent privileges to persons professing the Jewish faith, to prevent inconveniences to which His Majesty's subjects may otherwise be exposed". The Bill was enacted in 1832. It gave Jews "the same rights and privileges as enjoyed by other subjects of the province". Adds King, "This status established the fundamental rights of Jews in Canada, many decades before similar rights were accorded to British Jews".

The British Isles were not alone in sending immigrants to Quebec between 1760 and 1867. Following Confederation, the first census, taken in 1871, places German origin as the most frequent after inhabitants of French or British extract. They numbered 7963 at the time, and represented 0,7% of the total population of Quebec. Two decades earlier, in 1850, there were barely 317 inhabitants of German descent in Montreal, out of a total population of 48 207. German immigrants at the time were mainly farmers. However, in 1861, 200 people settled in the region of Labelle. On June 29, 1864, the tiny German community suffered a terrible blow when a train transporting a hundred or so new immigrants fell into the Richelieu River, drowning 97 and seriously injuring many others. On this occasion, the registry indicates funeral rites for 52 Lutherans who were interred in a common grave in Mount Royal cemetery. In 1871, after the Germans, the next largest group of inhabitants was of Dutch extract, with as few as 798 individuals, followed by the Italians with 539, and the Scandinavians with 454.

The Canadian population increased from 3 500 000 inhabitants in 1871 to 14 000 000 in 1951. This important growth was due more to immigration than to the birth rate. As for the population in the province of Quebec, it grew from 1 191 000 in 1871 to 4 056 000 in 1951. This means that, proportionately, the population of Canada increased more rapidly than the population of Quebec, mainly due to the extension of colonization in the western territories. During the same period, the percentage of French-speaking Quebeckers grew from 78% to 82%.

From 1875 onwards, Francophone immigration began to wane. Thus, for the financial year 1881-1882, Quebec received 5 621 immigrants: 3 326 English, 1 555 Irish, 382 Scotch, 141 Swedish or Norwegian, 123 French, 36 German, 16 Danish, 10 Russian, 8 Italian, 2 Dutch and 1 Swiss. Of this number, 3 423 settled in Montreal, 276 in Sherbrooke, 122 in Brome, and 165 in Compton. The remainder was distributed among 21 other districts.

The census of 1871 enumerates the following ethnic origins in Quebec. 454 Scandinavians, of which 121 were in the electoral district of Compton, 79 in Montreal 48 in Quebec and 28 in the county of Gaspé. There were 7 Greeks, 186 Russians, 142 Spanish and Portuguese, 153 Swiss, and 283 Welsh. According to this same census, only 74 persons identified themselves as being of Jewish origin, though 549, of which 409 resided in Montreal, declared themselves as professing the Jewish faith. The numbers originating with Jewish origin increased rapidly during the 1880s with the migration of hundreds of Russian Jews. More than

6 000 Russian Jews established themselves in Montreal, from the beginning of the 1880s to the end of the century.

In 1901, Quebec had 66 citizens of Greek origin. Five years later, their population increased to 1 000, emigrating mostly from the Peloponnesus or from Macedonia. The Italian population also increased rapidly, from 539 in 1871 to 3 000 thirty years later. The wave of Belgian immigration took place between 1919 and 1929. During this period alone, Quebec received 14 095 people of Belgian extract, whose country was experiencing a serious economic crisis. The Crash of 1929 put a temporary end to migration towards North America. The census of 1941 indicates that 69% of Belgian immigrants had chosen to settle in the region of Montreal.

Various ethnic groups wanted to establish their own schools, mainly for religious reasons. The Jews sought the greatest degree of autonomy with regard to their schools. Unsuccessful in 1926, an agreement was reached on January 14, 1929, between representatives of the Jewish community and the commissioners of the Protestant School Board of Montreal. One of the clauses of this agreement stipulates: "the cost of instruction for Jewish children will be financed by Jewish taxes, in addition to transfers from the neutral category". This last refers to school taxes paid by the "neutrals" (those who were neither Catholic nor Protestant), or by commercial enterprises. After several rounds of negotiation and legislation, Jewish children attended Protestant schools, or Jewish schools which increased in number over the years.

It must be admitted that, in Quebec, the 1930s were marked by a degree of anti-Semitism; not however, to the extent that Esther Delisle affirms in her work. We cannot deny that the village of Ste-Agathe went through a crisis of anti-Semitism.

Tracts were distributed that read: "Jews are not wanted here: Ste-Agathe is a French-Canadian village and we want it to stay that way!" On telephone poles, signs were posted saying: "Christians only. Jews not allowed. Danger!" The Catholic Church continued to use the expression: "Perfidis Judeis" during the Good Friday services. The passage translates as follows: "Let us also pray for the Jewish traitors, so that the Lord our God may lift the veil from their hearts and allow them also to know our Lord Jesus Christ." It was mainly in the region of Montreal that we find some anti-Semitic groups. Fascists led by Adrien Arcand victimized Jews.

Canada's entry into War, in September 1939, had many consequences for the Germans of Quebec. Even before Canada declared war on Nazi Germany, Germans in Montreal were arrested: this action prompted a protest from the German consul in the city. When Italy joined the War in June 1940, hundreds of Italians were also arrested in the region of Montreal.

In the beginning of the 1950s, the Quebec nationalist movement started to exhibit opposition to massive immigration that threatened to decrease the importance of the French-Canadian population. In 1951, The Institute of Psychology of the University of Montreal conducted a survey that showed 67% of Francophones and 37% of Anglophones to be against immigration. Michael Behiels notes, "the delegates at a national conference on immigration were told that all of the French-Canadian Catholic movements and organizations, with the exception of the Federation of Catholic Guides, refused membership to immigrants."

This negative attitude of a vocal minority did not stop immigration to Quebec from becoming more and more diverse. The Western world, as well as Asia, was going through all kinds of fluctuations. The

same went for the Caribbean. The census of 1951 shows Jewish immigrants in first place among the non-Francophone or non-Anglophone groups. They were followed by Italians, Poles and Ukrainians. Twenty years later, the Italians outnumbered the Jews; in third place were Germans and Greeks. In 1957, Quebec took in many Hungarian families fleeing their country that was wracked by grave political problems. In that year alone, 32 000 Hungarians were received in Canada.

In 1968 the Union Nationale government passed a law establishing a Ministry of Immigration. "This Ministry has the mandate to encourage immigrants to Quebec who will contribute to its development, and to facilitate the adaptation of immigrants to the Quebecois milieu. With this objective, it will: a) collate statistics on the manpower needs of each economic region of Quebec, the jobs available, and the possibilities for immigrants to establish themselves; b) conduct research and studies on the ways by which people would be interested in coming to live in Quebec; c) inform potential immigrants about Quebec; d) establish and maintain services to receive and assist immigrants upon their arrival in Quebec, to stay in touch with them and offer them help if needed. The Ministry of Immigration may open offices outside of Quebec, staffed by civil servants."

Between 1971 and 1975, Quebec welcomed 71 880 immigrants. The most important ethnic groups were, in decreasing order: Haitians, with 9 595 individuals; Portuguese, with 5 875; Americans, with 4 930; French, with 4 015; Greeks, with 3 645; Italians, with 3 625; Vietnamese, with 3 255; Indians, with 2730; and Moroccans, with 2 185. Immigrants numbering between 1 000 and 2 000 came from the following countries: Egypt, Lebanon, the Republic of China, Jamaica, Chile, the Philippines, Trinity and Tobago. In 1978, an agreement was

reached between the Federal and Provincial governments concerning immigration to Quebec. This was known as the "Couture-Allen Accord", Jacques Couture being the Minister of Immigration in the government of the Parti Quebecois under René Levesque. By virtue of this agreement, the Quebec government obtained a veto on the selection of independent immigrants wish to settle in Quebec. It also gained the right to determine its own criteria of selection. Between 1976 and 1980, Quebec received 70 665 immigrants, and for the following five years, the numbers increased only slightly by about 1 595 people. During the decade 1980-1989, the country of origin of immigrants changed somewhat; in numerical order: Haiti, Vietnam, Lebanon, France, Cambodia, Poland, the United States, India, Portugal and Morocco.

The attitudes of Quebeckers towards immigration have changed over the years. But we must not forget that during the years 1992-1993, without immigration, Quebec, as well as Ontario, would have faced a decline in population. There was then a review of immigration policy, especially on the Federal level. In a publication at the time, entitled, *Immigration: a desirable and inevitable phenomenon*", the journalist, Pierre Vincent concluded: "First hypothesis: Quebec remains a province of Canada. To maintain its present balance of power in Confederation, it must continue to have the same demographic weight. Taking into account that immigration plays a major role in the demographic evolution of Canada, this means that Quebec must launch aggressive recruitment campaigns to attract immigrants who are rich and educated, preferably French-speaking or open to learning French. We must multiply, perhaps three, four or five times, the present immigration quotas. This will pose a serious problem to integration, especially since most new immigrants tend to be concentrated in Montreal. Second

hypothesis: Quebec becomes a sovereign country. It no longer has to preoccupy itself with demographic balance of power for federal fiscal reasons and equalization transfers. Its primary concern would be to insure that new arrivals would integrate into French society. In particular, that they establish themselves throughout Quebec, not only in the region of Montreal. Whichever way we look at it, the Quebec of tomorrow depends largely on immigrants....for better or for worse." Fifteen years later, has the situation really changed?

By Michael Kanentase Rice

"Reasonable Accommodation" in 17th Century Iroquoian Nations

I am the Principal of Ratihen:te High School in Kanesatake Mohawk Territory. I have been previously the Native Studies and History teacher at RHS since 1998 to present. I was a member of the History and Geography Task Force from 2001 to 2005 in the MELS. I was part of the MELS Provincial Committee that wrote the new Histoire et le citoyenneté course that will be implemented in the fall 2007. I hold a BA in Canadian Studies with a Minor in Northern Studies from McGill University. My B. Ed is from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Intermediate Senior in Native Studies and History. I was the Kanienkehaka team leader on The Many Stories of 1704 website constructed under the Pocumtuck Valley memorial Association in Deerfield, Massachusetts.

I would like to acknowledge *The Intercultural Institute of Montreal*, in particular Kalpana Das, Executive Director and Robert Vachon, for their persistence and patience in bringing me to speak today at the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM). It was through their kind and understanding vision that I share with the participants a Kanienkehaka perspective on the concept of reasonable accommodation in Quebec.

When I was first invited to address this conference, I immediately jumped at the opportunity to share in another educational institution, my personal and professional experiences as an Onkwehonwe educator. As a history student and history teacher by profession, I was anxious to share an Aboriginal perspective on "reasonable accommodation" of newcomers to this land. I prefer not to use the label of "immigrants" as it puts people into divisive groups of "us" versus "them".

In order to understand the Kanienkehaka perspective, one needs to understand and have some knowledge of the world view of Rotinonsion:ni people or People of the Long House. This is the term that we use to describe the Six Nations Confederacy, known as the Iroquois by the French and the Five Nations by the Dutch and later the English in North America.

In Kanienkehaka and Rotinonsiion:ni culture, making a reasonable accommoda-

tion meant incorporating outsiders into their society as members of their extended family. It has been in this train of thought that Iroquoian people have been trying to incorporate non Iroquoian people into their cultural sphere.

The roots of this family and kinship system originate in Iroquoian cosmology as evoked in the story of the Creation. In a nutshell, the principal characters are Tharoniawakon, the Holder of the Sky, who marries Aientsik, Fertile Earth, who gives birth to a daughter Tekawerakwa, Gusts of Wind. Aientsik gave birth to her daughter Tekawerakwa on the Turtle Island. It is on this island that Tekawerakwa gives birth to twins, Okwirase, Young Sapling and Thawiskaron, Flint. Okwirase is considered the right handed twin that creates the entire positive in the world. Thawiskaron is considered the left handed twin and creator of all the negative attributes in the world.

It must be noted that they are not to be confused with Western Christianity's concepts of good versus evil. They are seen more as counter balancing forces to each other that help keep the world in balance. Okwirase and Thawiskaron engaged in a contest of strength to see who would rule the day and the night. For once in his life Okwirase told a lie and defeated his brother Thawiskaron. Thawiskaron for the first time in his life told the truth and was forced to relinquish control of the earth to Okwirase. He comes out at night and influences the actions of human beings. Okwirase becomes the creator of human beings and is known as Shonkwaiiatison, literally He Who Made Our Bodies.

That is why the Rotinonsion:ni believe that no matter how evil a person may be, there is potential good in them. And no matter how much good in a person, there is a potential to become evil as well. The goal of this extended family one could say is to keep order and balance in ones life. One could see the parallels of this struggle to maintain balance in our lives in the conflicts that are currently occurring in all parts of the world. Presently the world is out of balance and in conflict because people do not take the time to understand the world view of other societies. Perhaps this is something for current world leaders to examine in their attempts to restore a new world order of peace and righteousness.

> The importance of understanding other people, their cultures and their symbolism is a fact. If Aboriginal peoples are to coexist today with people of European, African, and Asian descent, then they too must learn to understand the world view of Non-Aboriginal societies. (BLANCHARD 1980).

Please lend an ear to voices from the depths of our past. The speaker was Chief Canassatego, speaking at the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster in the colony of Pennsylvania. In the course of his speech, Canassatego was trying to show that recognition of sovereign rights implied a respect for the mode and manner of education practised by a people. For the Five (Six) Nations to be truly sovereign, the nations of the Confederacy had to keep control of the content and means of the educations of their youth:

> We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same as yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged for your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it; if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. (ARMSTRONG 1971).

When I read speeches such as Chief Canassatego's, school took on a different meaning for me. I finally heard someone and something that spoke to my heart and mind. I began to take education more seriously and saw its potential to unlock doors for me. Today I am the Principal of Ratihen:te High School, after having taught eight years History and Native Studies.

This is why I was confused about the recent debate about "reasonable accommodation" in Quebec society. We have been trying to reach a reasonable accommodation with newcomers since their arrival in the Americas that goes back over five (500) hundred years. How can Quebecers expect new arrivals to give up their languages, culture and modes of education?

Listen now to a speech given by Red Jacket, a Seneca Chief to John Cram, and a missionary amongst the Seneca. In this case the issue was not education but religion.

> Friend and Brother,

> It was the will of the Great Spirit that we should meet together this day. He orders all things, and has given us a fine day for our Council. He has taken his garment from before the sun, and caused it to shine with brightness upon us. Our eyes are opened, that we shall see clearly; our ears are unstopped, that we have been able to hear distinctly the words you have spoken. For all these favors we thank the Great Spirit; and Him only.

> Brother,

> This council fire was kindled by you. It was at your request that we came together at this time. We have listened with attention to what you have said. You requested that we speak our minds freely. This gives us great joy; for we now consider that we stand upright before you, and can speak what we think. All have heard your voice, and all speak to you now as one man. Our minds are agreed.

> Brother,

> You say you want an answer to your talk before you leave this place. It is right you should have one, as you are a great distance from home, and we do not wish to detain you. But we will first look back a little, and tell you what our fathers have told us, and what we have heard from the white people.

> Brother,

> Listen to what we have to say. There is a time when our forefathers owned this great island. Their seats extended from the rising to the setting sun. The Great Spirit had made it for the use of Indians. He created the buffalo, the deer, and other animals for food. He had made the bear and the beaver. Theirs skins served us for clothing. He had scattered them over the country, and taught us how to take them. He had caused the earth to produce corn for bread. All this He had done for his red children, because He loved them. If we had some disputes about our hunting ground, they were generally settled without the setting of much blood. But an evil day came upon us. Your forefathers crossed the great water, and landed on this island. Their numbers were small. They found friends and not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men, and had come here to enjoy their religion.

They asked for a small seat. We took pity on them, granted their request; and they sat down amongst us. We gave them corn and meat, they gave us poison (alcohol) in return.

The white people had now found our country. Tidings were carried back, and more came amongst us. Yet we did not fear them. We took them to be friends. They called us brothers. We believed them, and gave them a larger seat. At length their numbers had greatly increased. They wanted more land; they wanted our country. Our eyes were opened, and our minds became uneasy. Wars took place. Indians were hired to fight against Indians, and many of our people were destroyed. They also brought strong liquor amongst us. It was strong and powerful, and has slain thousands.

Brother,

Our seats were once large and yours were small. You have now become a great people, and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets. You have got our country, but are not satisfied; you want to force your religion upon us.

Brother,

Continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to mind, and, if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right and we are lost. How do we know this to be true? We understand that your religion is written in a book. If it was intended for us as well as you, and not only to us, but why did he not give our forefathers, the knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white people?

Brother,

You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion; why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agreed, as you all read the book?

Brother,

We do not understand these things. We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers, and has been handed down from father to son. We also have a religion, which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us their children. We worship in that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion.

Brother,

The Great Spirit has made us all, but he has made a great difference between his white and red children. He has given us different complexions and different customs. To you He has given the arts. To these He has not opened our eyes. We know these things to be true. Since He has made so great a difference between us in other things; why may we not conclude that He has given us a different religion according to our understanding? The Great Spirit does right. He knows what is best for his children, we are satisfied.

Brother,

We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own.

Brother,

We are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These white people are our neighbours. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while, and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians; we will then consider again of what you have said.

Brother,

You have now heard our answer to your talk, and this is all we have to say at present.

As we are going to part, we will come and take you by the hand, and hope the Great Spirit will protect you on your journey, and return you safe to your friends.

As the Red Jacket approached the missionary to shake his hand, Missionary Cram rose hastily from his seat. He replied that he could not take this hand because there was no fellowship between the religion of God and the works of the devil. After this was interpreted to the Seneca, they smiled and left in a peaceable manner (WILLIAMS 1866).

It has been in this context that the People of the Longhouse and the Kanienkehaka, the Keepers of the Eastern Door, have been trying to reasonably accommodate newcomers to the Turtle Island. In the process, we have been abused and insulted. We have listened and shared our knowledge of the Kaianerekowa, the Great Law of Peace. We are still waiting for newcomers to respect the Great White Roots of Peace and take shelter under the Tree of Peace.

Perhaps these lessons of the past can allow our French and English brothers, living in Quebec, to understand our European, African and Asian brothers and sisters who may have recently arrived.

With peace being more of a popular slogan, than a reality in this world, perhaps it is time that we reflect on our own world view, vision of the world, values and spiritual beliefs. It we want to achieve a reasonable accommodation with others, we must plant the tree of peace in our hearts, minds and spirits. We must make peace with ourselves before we can make peace with others. *Skennen, kanikonriio, kasatstensera.*

A Story: two Boats
By Michael Rice

It was a beautiful day on the river, sunny and the water calm. In their canoe, Okwira:se and Tiorahkwathe paddled at a quick pace in chase of a substantially larger and different vessel from theirs. After much time and effort they paddled alongside and kept pace with the large vessel.

At the sight of the strangers, the people on the vessel rushed to see who they were. The head man on the vessel spoke aloud,

Who are you?

We are messengers sent by the Creator,

answered Okwira:se.

The people burst out in laughter and ridicule at his reply, but Okwira:se kept a serious look on his face. After the people had quieted down, the head man spoke once again (with some sarcasm and doubt in his voice),

We shall listen to your message and consider it.

Okwira:se spoke to the people about the Great Law of Peace and why it was given to the Onkwehon:we people. How to live their lives in peace with one another and nature; how to help others and bring about peace amongst all nations. He spoke of how people should obey and give thanks to the Creator and respect his wishes. Next, he spoke of the importance of the ceremonies and how they, too, as part of creation, are involved in the cycle of life and respect for it and others. Many simply paid no attention to his words; some ridiculed him; a few threw stones; while others spat and cursed at him. And not one understood him.

When he had finished speaking, the head man stood up and replied,

We do not believe what you are saying is true. Why would the Creator send us two messengers in a canoe as small as yours? If

it was the Creator who sent you, he would have given you a worthy boat such as ours. Go away, we wish to have nothing to do with impostors!

Tiorakwathe stood up to reply but Okwira: se intervened,

It is no use to speak to them. We have given the message.

Suddenly, without warning, they came upon a set of rapids never before seen in the river. The current too strong, the rush of the water sounding like thunder, it was too late to avoid them. In a matter of seconds the large vessel was reduced to splinters and its passengers drowned by the turbulent waters. Miraculously, the canoe of Okwira:se and Tiorakwathe passed through unscathed. When they returned to the land of the Creator, Tiorakwathe asked.

Creator, why did we not perish like the others in the large vessel? Our canoe was not as big and sturdy as theirs.

The Creator replied,

What good is a ship if there is no rudder to guide it?

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The Umma, Guarantor of Diversity?

In order to cover the topic of pluralism in Islam, we have recourse to the texts of two different authors. Each text is autonomous with respect the other, but they complete each other, as they present different perspectives on the question asked in the title: « The Umma, guarantor of Diversity?

Pluralism in Islam: from Spiritual Bond to Politico-Juridical Connections

By Zakaria Rhani

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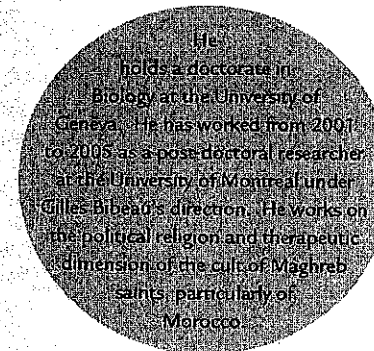
Introduction

In a book entitled, *Pluralisms in Islam*, published in 1983, the great Orientalist Henri Laoust insisted that pluralism seemed to him one of the most fundamental dimensions of Islam, a plurality that cannot be separated from the notion of unity that is strongly felt by its believers.

The author emphasizes the great cultural, political, and religious diversity that Islam has known in the course of its historical development. In reality, Laoust explains, Islam is not one single religion. This is neither to denigrate nor simply to acknowledge but, on the contrary, to give prominence to its plurality and inherent richness. (LAOUST 1983) Beyond official and theological schools of thought, the Muslim faith is expressed in numerous ways within Islam. As an anthropologist I can attest to the multitudes of

Islamic expression; the boundaries between what we call orthodoxy and heterodoxy are not always as tightly sealed off as we may believe. We can speak of Islam but also of Islams in the plural, which encompass the different cultural ways to live one's Muslim faith. As Arkoun so eloquently writes,

> We are used to describing classical Islamic civilization according to official visions perpetuated by scholarly literature [...]. In this way, it is possible to construct a homogeneous, rationalized, unified, and unifying vision of Islam which conforms to work that has already been done, [...]. But if we change perspectives and consider the expansion and functions of Islam from the daily life of people rooted in age-old and still daily practices, we discover as many Islams as there are ethno cultural groups. (ARKOUN 1984 : 96).

Certain contemporary Arab thinkers, including al-Jabri, go so far as to consider this diversity inherent to the very principle of Islamic uniqueness.[1] One of the consequences of this on a social, cultural, and political level is what the Moroccan philosopher calls sociopolitical "polytheism."

And instead of considering an equivalent relationship between the metaphysical entity and the social entity, in his thinking, theist uniqueness can only manifest itself politically, sociologically, and politically in a pluralized and multiple fashion. In addition, attempts at ideological, doctrinal or political homogenisation inherently multiply a single entity and create other divinities on Earth. This causes disastrous political and ideological consequences, such as divine royalty and minded schools of thought.

Pluralism is, in fact, too profoundly rooted in Islam and its texts for a unifying doctrine to have a chance to succeed.[2] History shows

that this great diversity has been a part of Islam since its inception. From the death of the Prophet in Medina, Islam began to branch into different parties, factions, and spiritual families or schools that confront each other more or less dramatically but that are nevertheless defined in function of each other. (LAOUST 1983)

In the same manner of these spiritual ramifications and this ideological fractioning, between the end of the 9th century and the 12th century a new rich and prolific literary genre developed that dealt with the different doctrines and parties in Islam.[3] The authors of these *heresiographies* carefully enumerated, and not without exaggeration, all the doctrinal subdivisions that emerged in the course of History. It has to be mentioned that the Arab authors of these essays were inspired by a presumed Hadith of the Prophet that stated that faith is divided into more than 70 branches, a Hadith that was incorrectly understood by the authors of the *firaq* and even modified and falsified to respond to their political and ideological objectives. The original Hadith that subdivided faith in different branches became another that divided Muslims into 73 different groups,[4] with only one that would be saved.[4] We can understand the initial concern of these Middle Age essayists to divide the Muslim community into 73 to designate a sole branch which would be the pathway to true Islam.

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1 See for example M. A.al-Jabri (1994).
2 The prophetic word itself demonstrates this Islamic pluralism. "Divergent opinions in my community," the Prophet Mohammed says, "are divine graciousness."
3 The three important texts that have dealt with this period of the question of the schism in Islam are *Maqâlât al-Islâmiyîne* (The essays of Islamists) d'al-Ash'ari (873-935); *al-Farqo bayna al-Firaq* (the differences between parties) written by al-Baghdâdi (d. 1038) and Kitâb *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Books on sects and religions) by Shahrastâni (1086-1153). See SHAHRASTÂNI (2002)
4 "My community is divided into 73 branches. Only one will be saved..." the Prophet is said to have declared. It is incomprehensible that a messenger of an emerging religion that lauds religious and social uniqueness would announce from the start a fragmentation and breaking up of his community, his *umma*, into 72 fractions that would renounce his message from then on. The specialist of Islam, W.M. Watt (1993) makes sure to highlight the disconcerting strangeness of this Hadith.

The *Umma*: a Community of Believers

After this introduction, it is time to ask the central question of our discussion: What is the *umma* at the heart of this diversity? In the Koran the concept of *umma* has various usages, even animals and birds are considered, following the example of humans, to be part of the *ummam*[5].

According to the Tunisian historian Talbi (1998 :9-37), the notion of *umma* is of Semitic origin. For the same meaning is present both in the Koran and in the Bible. In the former we can read: Abraham was an *umma* and in the latter, God says to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great."

According to Talbi, the *umma* then designates this community of monotheism that descends from Abraham. It is above all a community of faith and belief.

"Abraham is an *umma*." Also, he and he alone is the Patriarch of the community because he is the point of departure for all monotheisms. The Islamic *umma* is only an extension of the umma founded by Abraham, the father of believers.[6]

From this perspective, the *umma* is purely a spiritual issue. Its organization is then neither racial, nor nationalistic, nor socio cultural, nor patriotic, nor even geographical; but rather a spiritual connection with Father Abraham. It is more a vertical relationship between God and Man that Muslims share with other believers. (TALBI 1998) The semantics of the notion account for this motherly and spiritual verticality. *Umma* is derived from the root *umm*, which literally means "mother"; the Koran speaks of *umm al-*

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5 Plural of *umma*.
6 This goes back to Noah. It says in the Koran, "For you, he proclaimed a religion that he recommended to Noah, and our revelation to you and what we recommended to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: to implement religion and not to let it be cause for division."

kitâb, to say the original, the archetype and the essential part of the book; it also speaks of *umm al-Qûra*, the mother of cities. To say that Abraham was an *umma* reflects the motherly and maternal dimensions of the Patriarch; all monotheisms were indeed born from him. We understand, consequently, why the first Muslim Charter, dictated by the Prophet himself, promulgates that "the Jews and the Muslims form a sole *umma* of believers. The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have their own. This applies to those they interact with as well as themselves, with the exception of a person who acts badly or commits a crime, as they only bring evil upon themselves and those in their house." The Charter also specifies, "The Jews will pay their expenses and the Muslims their own. They will mutually help each other against anyone who declares war on them. There will be a sincere relationship between them based on loyalty, not treason."[7]

The first Muslim constitution therefore designates the *umma* as a unified group of people from Medina, and considers all tribes, including the Jews, as being a part of this *umma*, recognizing diversity as a founding trait from the onset.

This first Medina Charter, affirms Talbi, foreshadows the creation of a society marked by religious and personal pluralism based on solidarity, justice, and reciprocal equality of rights and responsibilities within a single community. The subsequent status of the *dhimmis* was then a deviation from within the interior of the legislator. (TALBI 1998)

The *dhimma*: from Spiritual to Legal Link

Throughout Muslim History, different concepts, notably that of the *umma*, have become more rigid and stripped of their malleability and dynamism. In contrast from

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7 Quoted in Talbi M., *op. cit.*

their original fluid and holistic dimension they have become very politically and ideologically charged. Like the notion of *umma*, the first use of the term *dhimma* was the spiritual and moral relationships that existed at the heart of religious societies. And from there it became a mere legal concept used to designate a religious minority under the power of a Muslim state.

The very first Arab dictionary of al-Jawhari (*Tâj al-logha al-'arabiya*) defines *dhimma* and *dhimmâm* as *horma*, a sacred space, by *amân*, security, and *himâya*, protection, and above all *'ahd*, pact.[8] We read in another Arab dictionary (*Lisân al-'arab*): "the *dhimma* are called in this way because they are protected by and form an alliance with Muslims."[9] The Koran uses the word *dhimma* with an Arab pre-Islamic meaning that designates a sacred relationship, a pact. This notion is therefore not at the core of organizing the relationship between individuals and societies but takes the value of a moral law, a spiritual relationship. This is probably the reason why neither the Jews nor Christians are designated in the Koran, neither for that matter by the first Muslims, by the term *dhimma*. They are the "People of the Book."[10]

The *dhimma* system is then not an article of faith or creed but only a product of a historical context. From this sacred and moral relationship, the term gradually became a judicial concept that strengthens the relationship between Muslims and people of other faiths. (TALBI 1998)

Minorities in Islam

The History of minorities in Islam is filled with periods of tolerance and periods of discrimination during which the "*dhimmis*" endured their share of suffering and numerous humiliations. The relationship between religious minorities was therefore not systematized or unified. The Muslim State of the first two centuries, for example, was very interested in Christians as they were an important economic factor. Not only did they fill agricultural roles but they also managed financial administrations. Discrimination was rare during this period thanks to a Central State power that protected these minorities for, above all, political and economic reasons. In the vast geographical space that Islam occupied, the *dhimma* system was not unified either; as the 14th century historian, al-Maqrîzi, describes. A Moroccan vizir travelling through Egypt, was shocked to see that the *dhimmis* enjoyed a great deal of freedom and held important public office (e.g. judges, vizirs, and administrators), to the point where he complained to Sultan Ennasser Mohammed Bnou Qalayoun.[11]

One has to be careful about exaggerations from one side or the other. As Charfi says so beautifully: "Minority status is complex. It is made of remarkable tolerance considering the historical period and unacceptable discrimination from our viewpoint today." (CHARFI 1998 : 76). In the *dhimma* system, these minorities benefited from the enjoyment of their property and freedom in their religious practices. Priests and rabbis, churches and synagogues were generally protected. What is more, the ecclesiastic and rabbinical tribunals were maintained and permitted to apply their respective rights to their followers. (CHARFI 1998)

It is true that these minorities, throughout History, had suffered from much affliction and social, political, and judicial discrimination. But they were only persecuted during periods of crisis; during the Crusades for example. These humiliations never reached limits of collective extremism and systematic elimination. Islam, as Talbi (1998) affirms, never carried out an Inquisition.

To understand the status of *dhimmi*, it needs to be compared with other minorities within Islam itself. These essays on the Muslim schism that I cite in the introduction are more *heresiographic* treaties. For example, the book of *al-Farq* is essentially a politico-juridical treaty; that is to say, he proposes, after having brought out the heretical aspects of a sect or a school, to define their juridical status and thus enlighten those in power regarding what policy to follow with respect to these schismatics . This doctrine also had an immediate value at the time by legitimizing in advance all the repressive measures against one sect or another.[12]

Fighting against these sects is not only, in *al-Farq*, a State duty, but also a duty of the whole *umma*. Because these schismatics are Muslim by certain choices in their faith, but they cease to be according to others, they will not be considered by the heart of the community as full-fledged Muslims. Therefore they are allowed to enter mosques but it is forbidden to pray behind them. They will be buried in Muslim cemeteries without the prayer of blessing for the dead. The animals they sacrifice are not lawful. It is also forbidden to marry them. Only commercial transactions are permitted. (LAOUST 1983) They nearly have the status of a *harbi*, a war enemy; contrary to the *dhimmi*, who are a part of the *umma* and have the right to protection and religious freedom.

Conclusion

Starting with these two fundamental Islamic concepts, *umma* and *dhimma*, I discussed and analysed the notions of diversity and pluralism in Islam. I then followed the evolution of these terms from their textual, semantic, and historical origin to their theological and legal theorization. All this to say, in conclusion, that it is absolutely necessary to situate the status of *dhimma* and the notion of *umma* in their semantic and historical context and above all to differentiate between concepts and their political instrumentalization.

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8 There is another meaning of the word *dhimma* which designates hospitality and the wedding ceremony.
9 For a more developed discussion of the meaning of the word *dhimma* in Islamic texts see, for example, Ayyoub M., 1983, "Dhimmah in Qur'an and Hadith," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, AAUG and the Institute of Arab Studies.
10 Do I need to mention here that the book is always is the singular? This indicates yet again the meaning of a sole revelation.

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11 Quoted in R. Sayyed (1996).

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12 In the treaty of al-Baghdadi, the *batiniya* is designated as the most extreme sect. We can easily understand this designation if we know that this doctrine was, at the time, one of the most influential and politically active. Its missionaries managed to implant themselves in all the Eastern provinces of the Muslim world and they looked to establish new schismatic dynasties. Al-Baghdadi violently denounces these *batiniya* infiltrations and their ever-growing influence in the Muslim world. (LAOUST 1983:135-175)

Re-thinking Conviviality in Quebec

Par Yara El-Ghadban
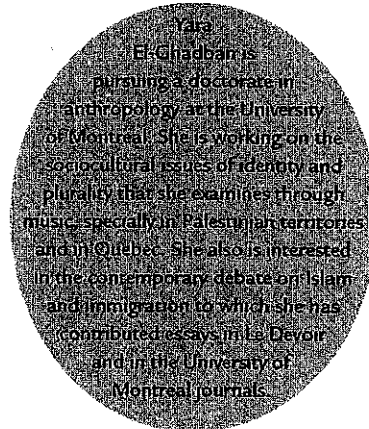
Yara El-Ghadban is pursuing a doctorate in anthropology at the University of Montreal. She is working on the sociocultural issues of identity and plurality that she examines through music, specially in Palestinian territories and in Quebec. She also is interested in the contemporary debate on Islam and immigration to which she has contributed essays in Le Devoir and in the University of Montreal journals.

Some media discourse tends to give the impression that the pluralism in Western societies is a unique phenomenon in the history of humanity. Some researchers have no qualms about asserting that tolerance towards the Other is a fundamentally modern notion that did not exist before the Renaissance.

Yet it is not new. Pluralism, globalization and tolerance have always been part of humanity's history. They date from long before the advent of modernity. In fact, human beings have never ceased reinventing social ties and rules for living with those who are similar and those who are different. Consequently, the various societies in the world have developed a wide range of constantly changing codes and practices that reflect

- their life experiences, conflicts and frameworks of reference,

- the many contexts in which internal and external differences are encountered,

- the ideas that they have of themselves and of other nearby and distant societies.

We thus have to approach the various forms of social pluralism on their own local terms, taking into account their frameworks of reference and internal and external social dynamics. Instead of an evolutionary or ethnocentric perspective, we need an anthropological and dialogical point of view, in other words, a relativist stance that is both critical and self-critical.

It is in this spirit that I will examine the issue of pluralism in Islam. In the first part,

I will present, from a historical perspective, the pluralistic concepts and practices that developed under Muslim power until the nineteenth century. In the second part, I will take inspiration from an important period in the history of Europe and the Arab-Muslim world, the *Convivencia* (from the eighth century to the end of the fifteenth century) in Andalusia (which included the northwest of Africa and the south of Spain), to look at the challenges that have to be met in a pluralist society such as Canada. I will also focus on Québec since it is the province where the debate over reasonable accommodation causes much ink to flow. I will conclude with a series of proposals that I hope can be used as avenues for thinking about and cultivating in a positive manner intercultural relations in Québec and Canada.

Pluralism in Islam

The Western model of pluralism is relatively recent. Indeed, it can be seen as dating back to the Renaissance with the establishment of humanist and rationalist thought, though that had been developing for a long time in social and political systems. However, the system in which we live today did not become concrete until the nineteenth century, and became truly plural only after the colonial countries had changed into countries of immigration following decolonization. Today's system is based on rule of law and civil and individual citizenship involving a separation of the various spheres of social life, in particular the public sphere from the private sphere, politics from religion and nationality from ethnicity. What form could social plurality and open, functional citizenship take if it were not based on these divisions? Let us look at Islam.

At its apogee between the seventh and fifteenth centuries, the Muslim empire spanned much of the globe, from China, across Africa and into Spain. Muslim principalities and caliphates had to deal with

great ethnic and religious diversity, as well as the Crusades, which were in full swing, and tensions among different currents in Islam. Out of this developed a complete vocabulary and series of legal practices and principles for managing this plurality and, above all, promoting means for Muslim and non-Muslim communities to live together peacefully, including in cases where the non-Muslim community was in the majority.

Islam's expansion occurred over a short period (around 100 years). Given this rapid development, the populations of the new Muslim communities in conquered areas were sometimes smaller than those of the non-Muslim communities who were already living there, and this led Muslim authorities to create a very pragmatic set of rules for living together that did not force the local people to convert. The rules also reflected the trade relations that were already well-established in Islam between the communities and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. In this way, the Muslim conquerors were able to establish trust with non-Muslim communities, and so could flourish and live peacefully with others in the newly conquered lands. Later, when the expansion stopped along the French border, Muslims flocked to Spain, and remained there for eight centuries. Andalusia became a great crossroads of cultural interface, despite the tensions caused by the Crusades.

The system that resulted led to a long period of prosperity, dialogue and cultural, philosophical and scientific mixing, of which we are now the direct heirs. Among the concepts involved, the most important is probably that of *al-dhimma*.

The political and social origins of *al-dhimma*

Al-dhimma refers to a protective legal status established through an agreement between a Muslim ruler (prince, sultan, caliph, governor, etc.) and Jewish and Christian commu-

nities (the people of the Book in the Koran). The status involves three basic principles:

- Protection from outside enemies;
- Internal autonomy;
- Payment of a certain sum to the Treasury.

On the legal and theological level, *al-dhimma* as a concept and practice is much more ambiguous and flexible than this reductionist list might lead to believe. As Makram Abbes (2005) points out, the "term *dhimma* is mentioned twice in the Koran [...] In those passages, it does not apply to the people of the Book but to polytheist Arabs." William M. Watt (1980: 49) says that the "system is a development of the Arab practice whereby a strong tribe 'protected' weaker tribes and groups." The financial and administrative aspects of the status were based on Imperial traditions already established under the Sassanian and Byzantine empires (ABBES 2005). Abbes highlights the fact that only one verse (IX, 29), which does not use the term *al-dhimma*, makes an allusion to the head tax: "it seems to refer to relations between Muslims and the people of the Book, not generally, but specifically at the end of an armed conflict."[1] (ABBES 2005) (*Ibid.* [Our translation.]) This was the case of the Umar Pact, which I will discuss below. Moreover, if the central power does not protect the *dhimmis* (those with *al-dhimma* status), the contract is null and void, and the *dhimmis* no longer have to make payments to the Treasury.

As Timur Kuran (2004) points out, from this perspective we can trace the first political application of *al-dhimma* status back to the Umar Pact (around 636), which is acknowledged as the first agreement between Muslim conquerors and Jewish and Christian communities in the Middle East. Concluded in the seventh century, the Pact guaranteed

the communities' safety, freedom of religion, protection of places of worship and exemption from military service in exchange for payment of taxes and a series of promises (such as not to expand, not to collaborate with enemies and to offer hospitality to Muslims). While such conditions might seem intolerable today, it should be noted that, at the time, the sanguinary Crusades were underway, entire communities were being massacred after battles, places of worship were systematically being destroyed and people were being forced to convert. The Pact was thus an utterly remarkable gesture of willingness to cohabit with and tolerate the Other.[2]

Moreover, the Pact was amended under various representatives of Muslim power. The more rigid and discriminatory conditions were gradually abandoned. A change in mentality perhaps occurred, from a form of 'negative' tolerance (through which the Other was tolerated in order to keep civil peace) to a form of 'positive' tolerance (by which the Other and the Other's difference were wholly accepted). Thus, Abbas (2005) affirms,

Much more than in the text of the Koran, it was in the practices invented to deal with situations, which gradually came to acquire the force of law, and in the caution of tradition that we find the legal and political codes of the dhimma.[3]

Of course, the status reflects the criteria that were specific to the time, when religion and ethnicity contributed largely to the identity construction of groups and individuals, both in the West and the Middle East. Moreover, as the first example shows, *al-dhimma* was first and foremost a political agreement that was determined by the context and the signa-

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1 Our translation.

2 Note also that the Pact was concluded even before the Muslims entered Jerusalem. Thus, since the Jewish and Christian communities had accepted the Pact, they opened the city gates to the Muslims with no conflict or violence.

3 Our translation.

tories. For instance, in the first Umayyad dynasty (661-750), *dhimmi* status clearly demarcated Arabs and non-Arabs, and not differences between religious groups. Thus, Egyptians were initially given *dhimmi* status even though they were Muslim! Moreover, the Arabs of Nadjran, who were Christian, rejected *dhimmi* status on the grounds of their Arab heritage, which made them more like Arab Muslims than non-Arab Christians (ABBES 2005).

The empire's expansion during the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258) decentralized power and caused a positive change in perceptions of the Other. The borders between identities that used to be based on dichotomies between Arabs and non-Arabs, and between Abrahamic and polytheistic believers, and which were formerly reflected in the status of *dhimmi*, gradually blurred. Non-Arabic-speaking Muslims were integrated into the *Umma*, and *dhimma* status, formerly reserved for Christians and Jews, was given to other religious communities under Muslim power, in particular, to Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists.

This massive pluralization on the socio-cultural level went hand-in-hand with decentralization of power such that the ancient dichotomies between "us" and "them" disintegrated. Thus, the status of *dhimmi* varied depending on the period, political context, school of law and socio-cultural nature of the group in question. The various Muslim principalities and governments scattered across three continents experienced mixing and cohabitation that reflected their specific circumstances. Thus, the Hindu-Muslim encounter in India, African-Arab-Muslim encounter in Africa and European-African-Arab-Muslim encounter in Spain all occurred in different ways and produced different social systems.

In addition to being reappropriated in different ways depending on the region or culture, *al-dhimma* was constantly re-interpreted

and reworked within Muslim case law. This is why there are variations between schools of law with respect to the rights and obligations of protected non-Muslims (*dhimmis*). For example, the Hanafite School, which was dominant during the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) was more liberal, and provided for complete equality between Muslims and non-Muslims in criminal and property law (KURAN 2004).

Moreover, as in any complex and essentially political society, social dynamics also influenced the interpretation and implementation of *al-dhimma*. Thus, those who belonged to the ruling classes (courtiers, notables, scholars, scientists, etc.) and those who belonged to the masses did not experience *al-dhimma* in the same way. For example, many Christians, such as those who had become doctors, scholars, secretaries and viziers, had the same privileges as the Muslim authorities. In contrast, the *dhimmis* who belonged to the masses were, like other groups, including those belonging to the politically dominant religion (Islam), socially and politically marginalized (ABBES 2005).

In short, far from being a fixed or ideological frame of reference, *al-dhimma* constantly oscillated between citizenship, ethnicity and religion. It was also subject to social power relations and reappropriation and reinterpretation dynamics at the levels of identity, culture and law. Its flexibility enabled Muslims to constantly adapt to the contexts and groups that they encountered, and to thus create intercultural links that always reflected the special nature of the society being integrated into the Muslim empire. This was an indication of some openness to the Other and to the Other's influence.

The Andalusian *Convivencia*

Consequently, the period extending from the seventh century to the first period of European colonialism was a time of fruitful

exchange among religions and traditions of thought under the series of Muslim empires. We should probably not idealize the situation, imagine the cultural convergence produced paradise on Earth, or attribute the socio-cultural success exclusively to Islam and the *al-dhimma* policy. Yet, something remarkable did occur, and this can be seen from the deep marks left by this period. For brevity's sake, let us confine our study to Andalusia between 711 and 1492, a period known in the history of Spain by the emblematic name of the *Convivencia*.

During the period, which spanned nearly eight centuries, Muslim Andalusia (which covered Spain and north western Africa) was a true melting pot for ideas brought from the Arab-Muslim east, through part of ancient Greece, Persian lands, the Middle East and North Africa. At each step, notions changed and gave rise to new ideas, which resulted in a remarkable scientific and cultural renaissance. Andalusia was where the Judeo-Christian, Arab-Muslim, African and Greek traditions met. It is important to note a few historical facts that tend to be omitted from conventional discourse on the history of medieval Europe (DELAY 2004).

The *Convivencia* was the forum for an extraordinary transmission of knowledge, arts and culture. Note first the Arabs' translation of Greek scholars, such as Aristotle (384-322 BCE), Euclid (in the fourth century BCE) and Ptolemy, who had long been neglected by the Europeans. At the same time, there was a broad movement to translate Arab works into Latin and Romance languages, in particular by Jews and Christians living in Islamic lands. Both Arabic originals and Arabic translations of Greek works were translated. Thus, as Haïm Zafrani points out, Islam was a mediator for the Hellenization of Jewish thought: "Just as Jewish translators had conveyed Arab science and philosophy to the Christian world, it was through Arab

literature that Greek science and thought entered the Jewish world." (ZAFRANI).

Toledo was a major translation centre in the twelfth century. It had its own translation school, and Caliph Al-Ma'mun established the House of Wisdom there in the ninth century. The House of Wisdom was an institution responsible for translating Greek philosophical and scientific heritage, and was headed for many generations by Christians: first by Hunayn Ibn Ishaq and then, after his death, by his descendents (REY).

European visitors to Muslim Spain included Bishop Gerbert, who became Pope Sylvester II (999-1003). One of the pioneers of Church reform, he also introduced Arabic numerals into Europe.

There was also dialogue among Jewish, Christian and Arab scholars. Thus, Western scholars and philosophers knew those of the Arab world, such as Ibn Sina (Avicenne) (370-428 H/950-1037 CE) and Ibn Rouchd (Averroès) (who died in 520 H/1126 CE). It was at that time that the rationalist and humanist thought which had long been germinating and circulating throughout the Mediterranean finally took form. Averroès (Ibn Rouchd) showed that there was no contradiction between faith and reason, but that they were simply two forms of devotion to the same truth. As Pierre Philippe Rey points out, according to Averroès, "revelation, therefore, when it enters into contradiction with reason as set out by philosophers, has to be reinterpreted until the contradiction disappears." (REY).

Averroès' thought was part of a long intellectual tradition and put into concrete terms ideas that were shared by other philosophers who were his contemporaries, such as Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Maïmun, who was of Jewish origin, (and known in medieval Europe as Maimonide). This rationalist thought was conveyed and spread in Europe through the "Latin Averroists," who included St.

Thomas Aquinas, both the primary critic and primary conveyer of Averroïst theories in Christendom.

Moreover, this period saw the birth of the discipline of comparative religions, which has been attributed to Ibn Hazm. Historical and literary study of Christian monasteries also emerged. Fascinated by these institutions and their social role, Muslim scholars gathered tales and songs about them. The desire to learn about the spaces of the Other went hand-in-hand with a tradition of religious discussions and theological controversies among scholars and theologians.

The *Convivencia's* heritage is also that of aesthetic mixing in the arts, in particular in music, poetry and architecture. To see this, one need only listen to the Arab-Andalusian music still alive in North Africa today and the secular poems written by Dunash ben-Labrat, a Jew, in Hebrew but according to the poetical rules of Arabic literature (ZAFRANI).

What is even more astonishing about the *Convivencia* is the pluralism that existed not only on the cultural but also on the political level. During this long period, *dhimmis* entered the halls of power, and had high-level roles (as viziers, secretaries of state, personal doctors of caliphs, representatives who attended official audiences with the caliphs, etc.). For example, Caliph Abderrahman al-Awsat's First Secretary, Gomes ben Antoun, was a Christian, and Samuel Ibn Nagrila and Hasday Ibn Shaprut, were both Jews. The former was Vizier of the Maghreb in the eleventh century, while the latter was the Vizier of Caliph Umayyades Abd-al-Rahman III and his son Caliph al-Hakam, in Cordova in the tenth century. (ABBES 2005)

These were far from isolated cases, and belong to a historical tradition that led to the formation of lineages of Jewish dignitaries and politicians, for example, in Morocco. Moreover, the Christian presence was so strong in the public service of some

caliphates that Sundays were days of rest for the government! If we compare this pluralism with the homogeneity that still characterizes the public service in Canada and Québec, there is certainly food for thought. Muslims also attended Christian celebrations, such as the celebration of the Nativity.

Furthermore, interethnic and inter-religious marriages were not only possible but increasingly common in the upper spheres of power. As Abbes points (2005) out, in the ninth and tenth centuries, eight out of ten caliphs were sons of Christian mothers. [4]

Yet, it cannot be denied that hegemony plays a role in all expansionist movements, even those that are tolerant. Under Muslim rule, interethnic and interconfessional relations could involve violence and discrimination, including displacement of populations in extreme cases. Such problems were generally provoked by external and internal political and ideological crises, challenges to government representatives by other currents of thought in Islam, the Crusades and ongoing attempts to conquer lands under Muslim control. Such periods of crisis resulted in a hardening of attitudes towards and tightening of practices applying to *dhimmis* (for example, tax increases, a return to marginalization and sometimes humiliation).

These periods of hardening attitudes are similar to the change in attitudes towards some communities and the tightening of government policy in the name of security during the two World Wars and after the September 11 attacks. In any society, challenges to power and the feeling of insecurity can easily cause a reflexive reaction that takes the form of marginalization and contempt for the Other, especially others who are closest to us (e.g., fellow citizens whose ethnic

4   Unfortunately, this was to change in the last years of the Muslim empire in Spain, with the rise of ethnic and religious tensions due in part to the gradual conquering of Europe by Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile and their allies, and the withdrawal of the Muslim empire in upon itself.

origins or religion suddenly become problematic). In an essentially political pluralist society, it is often plurality that, rightly or wrongly, becomes the scapegoat of sociopolitical internal and external conflicts.

Given this, under Muslim power, the hardening of attitudes similar to the discriminatory treatment of some cultural communities during World War II was temporary. Note also that the government was not more tolerant of dissident Muslims. In contrast, as soon as the political atmosphere relaxed and the crises ended, stigmatizing measures were abandoned. It should also be noted that in the worst cases such hardening of attitudes never gave rise to acts of collective violence in the name of the Muslim religion or against a specific group, as happened, in contrast, following the reconquest of Spain by Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1492.

Alas, after eight centuries of pluralism and openness to the Other,[5] the reconquest led to the homogenization of Spain. One religion, one language and one absolute ruler were imposed, and Jews and Muslims were expelled or forcibly converted. Finally, one of the most violent periods in the history of Europe occurred, the Inquisition, in which uncountable individuals and communities were persecuted for their difference or dissidence.

Given the history of Andalusia before the reconquest and the cultural heritage shared by the West and Islam, in particular, Greek humanism conveyed through the intermediary of Islam, the rationalism that was literally born out of intellectual dialogue spanning the Mediterranean, and the principles of tolerance that were applied many centuries before the emergence of the notion of rule of law and pluralist, multicultural, intercul-

5   *Al-dhimma* continued to be practiced in various forms in India and under the Ottoman Empire until its abolition by the new European colonial powers in 1839.

tural and republican forms of government, it is difficult to justify the discourse on Islam omnipresent in the media today, especially that which claims that civilizations are in conflict and Western and Islamic values are incompatible.

Intercultural Pluralism and Religious Belonging to Canada and to Quebec

In light of what I have presented above, let us begin by challenging some prejudices about Islam and the tolerance and secularism of contemporary Western societies. The most prevalent prejudices are that:

- Only the West has theorized about and conceptualized tolerance;

- The history of tolerance begins only with the advent of modernity in the West;

- Only a separation between religion and politics in a state ruled by law can guarantee tolerance.

As we saw above, at a time when communitarian belonging prevailed and criteria for identity were constantly shifting among citizenship, ethnicity and religion, the Muslim pluralist approach was able to adapt to and fit with such aspects while at the same time allow a tolerant pluralist society to flourish. The contemporary Western pluralist system has to be seen in relation to others, and our eyes need to be opened to other possibilities for living together that do not schizophrenically dichotomize the various spaces of social life and dehumanize or de-historicize people by transforming them into anonymous individuals with membership in nothing outside of their civil rights and responsibilities.

Let us take the example of laicity and secularism, which has generated the most debate in the polemic about reasonable accommodation in Québec.

Secularism developed in a special context, namely, the history of the West, and because of specific events, in particular the religious wars, the superposition of regal and religious power, which made the latter so absolute that it was almost impossible to oppose it, and, of course, the Inquisition.

These events did not necessarily occur in other places in the world. Indeed, in most societies outside the West, the separation between religion and politics, and between private and public space did not occur. Religion and politics are not irreconcilable, even in a pluralist, secular society such as Québec's. Western secularism has been adopted and reworked throughout the world with many different results reflecting the special features of each situation.

Some proposals relative to the crisis of reasonable accommodations in Quebec

Towards symbolic mediation of public and private spaces

Religion, politics and pluralism refer to practices and values that are situated in an intermediate area between public and private spaces, and that cannot be confined exclusively to only one or the other. In the contemporary imagination, every individual has a "divine" component that has to be humanized, contextualized and relativized. In other words, we must:

- desacralize secularism (not make it an absolute value or a new "religion")

- secularize religions (give them room in the public space)

- recognize plurality as a fundamental component in the construction of contemporary social identity.

In this dynamic, religious and cultural symbols play extremely important roles as mediators. Symbols in the public space are

dangerous in only two cases: when they are invested with "too much" meaning and when they are made banal.

Symbols are dynamic and their meaning is constantly changing. This makes it possible to relativize them and put them in context in order to give them a truly local, perhaps even Québécois, meaning. This requires first trying to understand them and seeing where their multiple meanings come from, then respecting their history and accepting that they are never stable. Banning them arbitrarily from the public space could transform them into emblems invested with too much meaning and tied to a set idea that would be difficult to alter, or into generalizations that could lead to a feeling of marginalization and a lowering of esteem for the Other and the Other's world of meaning.

From this point of view, I would like to conclude with some proposals and thoughts for a plural Canada and Québec. Since this text is about Islam, I will take Québec's Muslim community as the example, but it seems to me that the proposals could be applied to all cultural communities, including the French-speaking majority.

Exploding the myth of the Other

Islam is now part of Québec imagination and identity. It is neither separate from nor foreign to Québec identity. It is not a temporary phenomenon. Québec has 100,000 to 150,000 Muslim citizens. They form a highly diverse group with members from every Muslim movement (Shiite, Sunni, Sufi, etc.), country (from Pakistan, to the Maghreb, etc.) and tradition.

The group is growing demographically, but is also highly diverse in terms of religious worship. (Québec Muslims include both strict observers and non-practisers.) In fact, only 15% of Muslims in Québec attend mosques. Worship occurs largely in private,

which is also the case for many non-Muslim Québécois.

Wearing the veil is not an "Islamic excess." The veil is standard in Islam. In Arab countries, the veil is part of a fundamentalist movement that cannot be reduced to a "regression" of the religion or rejection of the West. It has been re-adopted and individualized by the middle class, in particular by educated women on the labour market, as a cultural symbol of femininity and cosmopolitanism in a world that is increasingly mediatized and where women's bodies are increasingly seen as commodities. In most cases, it is from this perspective, namely that of cosmopolitan feminism, but anchored in a history and sexuality that is both their own and in harmony with the pluralist circles in which they live, that Muslim women in Québec, particularly those who are young, wear the veil.

There are as many ways to wear the veil as there are to be Québécois or Muslim. Young Western Muslim women have demonstrated great creativity in their dress to reconcile their Western and Islamic sides.

The burka has nothing to do with Islam. Its roots are in the traditional dress of some countries. As Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod points out, in many countries where the private sphere is associated with women, the burka is a way for them to carry the private sphere with them in the public sphere. (2006) This aspect, if it is understood, can be used as a tool for mediation and negotiation in situations of cultural conflict. Yet, it is often overlooked in "feminist" discourse, in which the private sphere is often undervalued. By associating the veil with an "Islamic excess" that can lead only to the burka, we are basing our thought on many conflations, prejudices and a complete misunderstanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of Islam in the Arab world and the West. By thus ostracizing women who wear the burka (of

whom there are nearly none in Québec) and treating them as submissive or as having no will, we risk excluding them from the public sphere. (ABU-LUGHOD 2006)

Reach out to the Other

Encourage individuals (and not just politicians) to visit mosques and contact community organizations to learn more about a group that is often misrepresented and misunderstood. Places of worship are part of the public sphere and should not be seen as inaccessible or as exclusively for the communities that use them. On the contrary, the communities would like to be understood. People should not visit only one place or organization, but several, so as to be confronted with a wider range of perspectives.

Pluralize knowledge and education

Introduction to different religions in the school system and ntroduction to neo-Québécois and foreign literature. Offer optional third language courses to encourage parents who want their children to retain their mother tongue to keep their children in the public school system. Introduce intercultural awareness courses and training into the school system, health care system and work environments (in particular the public service). Instead of "neutralizing" religious celebrations, pluralize the calendar by organizing activities that allow students to participate in and learn more about them, for example, by designating intercultural weeks. These initiatives have already been undertaken to various degrees, but should be supported and developed.

Re-invent Québec secularism through intercultural and interconfessional dialogue

In Québec, secularism has gone through major changes. Long considered one of the consequences of the Quiet Revolution and

a sign of modernity, secularism has been "raised" to the level of "criterion for identity" and basic value of contemporary Québec society, thereby gaining the same status as language. This change has made critical and relativist analysis more difficult.

Of course, it is politically correct and less complicated at the level of policy to promote absolute secularism and laicism, but an anthropologist's work consists in observing individuals and groups and trying to understand their day-to-day reality, beyond official, cultural and civil categories. In truth, individuals and groups move constantly among the civil, ethnic and religious aspects of identity, which is why we have to develop a system that is not exclusive but inclusive. Cultural policies need to reflect this reality. In order to meet this challenge, we must:

- Collaborate with community organizations to develop social and cultural government policies;

- Increase the number of training and information workshops offered by government and non-governmental organizations in order to prevent debates from occurring exclusively in the media, with all the problems and sensationalism that such treatment can engender.

- Turn views on reasonable accommodation for religious minorities upside down.

Demands for reasonable accommodation are not attempts at isolation but at integration. Take the example of the veiled girls recently excluded from a Tae Kwan Do competition, and focus on the following facts:

- They were doing an extremely demanding sport that breaks down stereotypes that divide sports into categories that are supposedly feminine or masculine;

- They could speak French perfectly and were probably tri-lingual;

- Their trainer was Québécois, not from their community, and they were participating in a national competition, so there was no ghettoization;

- They were helping to change perceptions about Muslim girls as submissive and were acting as examples for their fellow Muslims and Québécois with respect to keeping active and mixing the values that they have inherited from their countries of origin and adoption;

- Faced with the decision of their sports federation, the girls obeyed the rules, withdrew from competition and followed their federation's complaint and appeal process as would any conscientious citizen who respects his or her rights and responsibilities.

We must not remain blocked by the simple fact that they wear veils, which is a minor detail since it does not prevent them from doing the things I have just mentioned.

Pluralize the political system

Make it easier for people of all origins to run for office at all three levels of government.

Work to develop a public service more representative of the ethnic diversity in Québec and Canada.

Develop foreign policy that reflects the pluralism in Québec and Canada

Current government policies do not necessarily reflect the contemporary life histories and migratory profiles of Canadians and Québécois. In principle, the policies are based on dated events, in particular,

- the migration to and colonization of the New World

- forced migrations of slaves and workers to the colonies

- diasporas, such as Palestinians and Jews

- immigrants who are refugees of natural disasters or the two World Wars.

In these frameworks, immigrants are treated as individuals in precarious situations, cut off from their history and, in order to integrate, forced to leave everything behind aside from a few vestiges of their culture of origin.

Yet, Canada's immigration policies tend to favour educated, middle class families. Moreover, owing to many trips to the country of origin during vacations, maintenance of contact by telephone and Internet, and the fact that for the majority of new Canadians and Québécois many family members still live in the country of origin, immigrants often experience the history of their country of origin in all its colour and with all the accompanying anguish, despite the geographic, cultural and temporal distance. When a child dies of AIDS in Africa because medication is too expensive, an old blind man is killed in Iraq, a young man is imprisoned in Syria, a woman gives birth to a deformed baby because of pollution or a young girl is sold to tourists for sex, there are good chances that these people are the "less lucky" cousin, uncle, father, wife or sister of a Canadian citizen.

Canada is a plural society, and its history is not only that of Aboriginals and two colonial regimes. It is also the history of different groups that have been living here for at least a hundred years. Yet, at the level of foreign policy, Canada still acts like an ethnically homogenous country without sufficient consideration of those who will be the majority in the future: its various citizens from the four corners of the Earth.

In order to avoid alienating its own citizens, as a pluralist country Canada should:

- Refocus on Canada's role as an international mediator and on maintaining peace;

- Consult communities and integrate their knowledge of their countries of origin into foreign policy development;

- Take into account the effects of policies on citizens from the cultural communities concerned.

Concluding thoughts

What lessons can be learned from the Andalusian example of pluralism in Islam, its development, successes, failures, flourishing and the violence that followed its demise?

If we adopt an evolutionary or ethnocentric point of view, this example will teach us nothing about tolerance and pluralism because it is based on religious and ethnic membership (which are categories that have become intolerable to us as contemporaries) and not on national and civil allegiance.

However, if we return to the historical summary that I presented earlier, it seems that the Andalusian example was based on recognition of "humanity's universal dimension without negation of the affirmations of identity that flow through that identity." (ABBES 2005)

Along the same line, it seems important to note that Canada is a society born out of the encounter with the Other (Aboriginal peoples, the French, the English, immigrants). Canada's history and the interethnic relations that have marked it over the last 500 years can be described only by articulating the issues and events in this way, without erasing the history of any of these peoples or forgetting that the encounters did not occur at the same time, in the same situations or without conflict and violence.

A space has to be made for each of these histories. This means recognizing English Canadian and French Canadian political and cultural contributions to the foundations, but without assimilating or effacing other histories, such as the ancestral and original

histories of Aboriginal peoples, without whom there would never have been either New France or Canada, and the mosaic of histories shared by many young Canadians.

Being Canadian today means being inhabited by all of these worlds and memories. It means accepting that one is constantly destabilized by the Other and welcoming the continual shift that forces us to always revise our certainties. It means acknowledging that Canada did not come into being the day the first immigrant arrived and seeing the role played by the history of the peoples that preceded it. Likewise, being Canadian means recognizing the histories of immigrants who want to insert their histories into one's own.

Excesses? They will always occur. We should not turn them into existential crises. Discontent? A society like Canada has no choice but to always be a little uneasy, and it is for the best! Unchanging truths and values? You won't find any here. Secularism? Do not turn it into a religion. Symbols? Do not strip them of their meaning and history: understand them. Do not reduce them to slogans or caricatures. Symbols are the best window onto the world of the Other, that of the Canadian and the new Canadian.

Reasonable accommodation? It is nothing more than a fetichization of what we all do every day in Canada when we meet our neighbours.

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By Lomomba Emongo

Once Upon a Time there was the Spider Web... Comments on some Virtues of the Knot in Ntu Africa
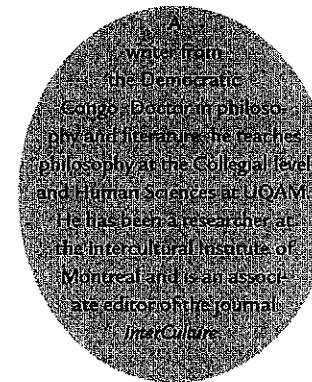
Pluralism in Black Africa is not exhausted either in the description and the understanding of the communitarian practices observed during a scientific inquiry, nor in this counterpoint to practices from somewhere else especially in the context of the meeting of this young Africa with the West. We need to raise our sights toward its complex background and get used to listening to the word that dares to question. And thus, pluralism emerges in the circularity of the whole of Life before going through the ambiguity of a tradition not subjected to the narrowness of our space-time, and then translate itself into a multidimensional cultural test of the Other in, among others, our time. Witness: the spirit of the spider on the horizon of the virtues of the knot.

In lieu of introduction: the audacity of speech

My comments bear on pluralism in Africa. It would have been easy for me to be satisfied with an approach if not ethnographic, at least ethnologic, one furthermore guided by the question of knowing what are and what one must understand of this or that cultural African practice bearing on pluralism. It would have been equally easy for me to culminate in the conflictual meeting

between Africa and the West and that, for example under the sign of an African tradition that falls under the blows of Western modernity – according to the words of Elungu Pene Elungu (1986).

Instead I have chosen the multiple echoes of a word conscious of not being able to economize on a certain daring. Firstly, the domain of my reflection: Africa. First, in the following pages, Africa is to be understood to refer to Black Africa. The effort to reduce the culturally multiple faces of Africa to a single one has always been in vain, whether Mediterranean, maghrebian, sahelian, white, black and others, ntu, to only mention those. As far as Black Africa is concerned, when spoken of in the singular, turns out to have to be read as being fundamentally plural. From this follows that, secondly, Black Africa in my comments is to be understood as ntu Africa – others would say Bantu – and here it limits itself to what is nearest and dearest to me: the Atetela and the Baluba of the centre of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On the one hand, I accept the personal challenge to extrapolate, mutatis mutandis what will be said about the Atetela and the Baluba to the whole of the ntu African world; on the other hand I make mine, until proven otherwise, the conclusions of Sheikh Anta Diop (1964) concerning the cultural kinship of this ntu Africa.

After that comes the echo of the word that I intend to enunciate on the pluralism in this ntu Africa. I will indeed raise my interrogating gaze beyond just the African cultural practices and of course, beyond the recent meeting between Africa and the West. So much so, that neither a simple description nor comparison will suffice to my goal. The elaboration of a reflection that wants to go "beyond the facts" and of the recent history and that simultaneously refuses to ignore not only the facts of African culture nor that of the cultural domination of the West (among others) in Africa, cannot be carried out

without a certain daring. It is thus not only necessary to want to do this, but to cultivate an effort as sincere as it is innovative as far as possible, at the confluence of description and comparison of the African cultural facts and of the western omnipotence in Africa. However, such an effort at articulating this takes notice that the first and last term of these two couples do not go together without conflict and that neither a marriage of convenience between them nor some form of intellectual subterfuge about them belong here.

Why still engage in such daring? One might be tempted to object. And one could cite many existing studies on the fundamentally plural character of the ntu being. On the list of proofs are found communitarianism, socialism, primitive communism, and I know not what else. Unless one evokes works of transcription and/or restitution, among which one can certainly count the immense word of Ogotêmmeli, gathered by Marcel Griaule (1966), and not least that no less high word of the bakole luba recorded by Fourche and Morlighem, to say nothing of the controversial pretensions of ethnophilosophy. Even though I am not indifferent neither to the ones nor to the others, I nevertheless need to innovate in order to escape the failings of both of them. Given this, my comments take place in a theoretical and practical region that I have named elsewhere, the Between-Traditions. In order not to repeat what I have said more than once on this topic, suffice it to recall that in the Between-Traditions rules the norm of reciprocity between the object and the questioning of the human sciences, the human object being always and already a questioning having taken place in an other epistemological context that reduces all current questioning about itself to a new questioning. So much so that you do not have knowledge on the one hand and the object on the other, but rather mutual enacting, encounters

of cultures and traditions, reign of truths presumed to be represented by these co-present traditions, an epistemological circle that does not eradicate but rather force the word uttered to first be a word received from that about which it speaks.

Daring, must one say it once again, consists at the end of the day, in assuming my intercultural condition of a child of Africa and student of others, user in a non ntu language of an interrogative word in the style of elsewhere but careful before all else to train itself to listen to things African, promoter no doubt of a reflection that ally, I dare to hope, faithfulness and transgression at the hour of enunciating Africa in the era of postmodernity.

What are those African things that speak of pluralism in the ntu world, and in particular among the Atetela and the Baluba? That is what the spirit of the spider will teach us. From the lessons that we will try to draw will emerge the intuited enunciates on the virtues of the knot, since the knot , it seems to me, sits at the heart of pluralism in the ntu world. Such are the two major articulations of the present essay.

The spirit of the spider

Once upon a time....

In this time of another time, the spider was the most unhappy animal on earth. Why? The fairy-tale invariably answers: due to its weakness. It so happens, that the spider did not possess swiftness in the race in order to attack in one jump or to pursue its prey until exhaustion; she did not have any claws, fang or razor beak to catch or tear its preys... That is why the spider had a hard time feeding herself. From the big and terrifying animal she had been originally, she became a puny beast. And the spider went everywhere crying. The spider complained to the animals that go on their bellies, to those that

walk on two or four legs, to those who go in the air, even to the spirits that live in the valleys and the mountains, to the trees at the crossroads and the caves in the depth of the forests, all the way to the first ancestor and to the creator in person. Nowhere, unfortunately, did she obtain even a beginning of consolation to her unhappiness.

One day, the Voice, the only one to whom she had forgotten to tell her unhappiness, made itself heard to the spider who was at the edge of death, so hungry was she. And so, the Voice taught her a ruse which was about to change the course of things on this earth: how to make a trap, how to hide it well, how to lie in wait, how to be patient and wait until the wounded prey exhaust itself before feasting to satiety. It is from that day forth, in the time of another time, that the spider weaves a web. In order to make sure of everything, she draws from within herself the material used to weave her web. In this manner, she is able to catch at times prey twice as big as she is.

Ah! I almost forgot a last secret of the fairy-tale. Indeed, it is from its encounter with the spider, a long time after these events, that a certain animal with two legs learned in its turn to use its brain much better than the other animals. It is this very animal who became the ancestor of the human being.

Reading

I will be told: here you have an etiological tale explaining the origin of the cunning of the spider and, incidentally, of that of the humans. I would reply: without a doubt. And even more so! Because beyond the spider taught by the Voice and, incidentally, beyond the human being who later inherited this teaching, the spider web as such offers itself as a symbol rich in teachings; before all else, teachings on the pluralism of ntu Africa. The key of such a symbolism? I venture to say: the knot. Below, I endeavor to observe

our spider web in the hope of decoding some principles at the root of pluralism in ntu Africa. Among others I would retain four principles as follows:

The principle of interdependence

There is no spider web that does not depend in order to be what it is, on what it is not. When it is not branches, it is leaves lying around or any other preexisting object that becomes its support. The support underlines, from the start, a double lack: it speaks of what is not of the spider and simultaneously what is not of the web as such. And then, the support transforms this double lack into a double dynamic: by its participative dynamic the support enables the spider to deploy its web; by its distinctive dynamic the support enables the web to hold and to maintain itself but without ever becoming the web. To this kind of relational destiny of the spider web can be added, dare I say, the relational destiny of the support, to always be in its nature and its form as plural as diverse, to respond to the criteria of the election of proximity but never following a pre-established order.

In this way I learn that beyond the opportunism of the spider one discovers the non-autarchic character of things as well as the fundamental inscription of each of them in the economy of their ecology. The environment appears here as the immediate Other of the web, but an Other that responds to it at least as much as it calls it, the Other that becomes only in its such relational adventure with the web, one never going without the other but neither becoming the other. Openness and welcome accompany call and response of the web and its environment; two couples sworn against any sort of aspiration of things to autarchy. I read very clearly in this a *principle of interdependence.* And I am no longer astonished that the Muntu, by pushing opening and welcome, call and response to their ultimate possibili-

ties, applies the principle of interdependence at a more than planetary scale. Indeed, the Muntu makes of the Other something altogether different from him; the Other, for him, transcends the near as much as the far: nature, human society, the cosmos and much beyond it.

The principle of complementarity

There is no spider web identical to another. Just as the basic material of each one, the fibers, are of different lengths or strength, so its general form is generally not at all symmetrical. Although such an elementary characterization may seem quite common place, it seems that only the aesthetic of the asymmetrical has here right of citizenship. The plurality and diversity of the basic material are transcended in the construction under way. The key to this transcendence is the following: difference, it seems to me! Not so much the realization of the difference of things but rather the constructive dynamic that emerges from it and that simultaneously takes it upon itself; no longer is it about the difference of colors that is rediscovered in the very harmony of the work produced, but rather of that one which governs the construction while taking care, to say it thus, to valorize each component of the whole in its very difference even in terms of principal reference.

In this manner, I learn that the spider web reveals a primary order of things to which all desired order of things obey, accessorily and only *a posteriori*. In the desired order, harmony and symmetry have right of citizenship; whereas the primary order seems to attend only to things as they are, so much so that its harmony and symmetry, if they exist at all, are the very ones of this Other discussed above with the Muntu that include nature, society, the cosmos and so forth. I for one read in this a *principle of complementarity.* The fingers of one hand amply confirm this: all brothers born of the same root, all

different however, all work companions when necessary, but always, each one in its own manner.

The principle of perfectability

There are no spider webs that are not made of fragile weft. Such are things that they are born and die or rather, transform themselves; such is the spider web that often and for many diverse reasons, it breaks. It is not infrequently that one comes across whole sides of spider webs that sadly hang, or are carried away by wind, rain, or some heavy object falling upon it or by a prey much bigger than anticipated. The web, like things, transforms itself, returns the Other to itself, undoes itself as the aesthetically asymmetrical construction that we know. Suddenly, the ruined web calls for its regeneration, a new transformation of things in view of a renewed web, maybe of a new web, without doubt a more solid one.

Given this, I learn how much their fragility speak of the unfinished character of things, of their possible transformation under the sign of reconstitution or regeneration. It's because all history is multiple history, what now exists as now it has existed, who knows, differently before. It is because fragility, which speaks of what is unfinished, refuses the exclusion of the after by the before, of the ancient by the new and vice versa. In this understanding of things, the ambiguous regimen of rupture and continuity, of transgression in fidelity, seem *de rigueur.* Do we not see here what I call the *principle of perfectability?* The Muntu knows perfectly well that there is no beauty without stain, just as their myth of origin teach that any creation contains a defect "forgotten" by the creator who, however, is himself perfect.

The principle of interface.

The spider web exists by its voids as much as by its plenums. To touch a spider web is to encounter much more emptiness than matter; it is visible due as much to the one as to the other. Already owing what it is to what it is not, it turns out that our spider web finds consistency in a double dimension at once porous and fibrous. I said consistency because we are dealing here with much more than a simple latticed or perforated structure. Yes, consistency because there really is a spider web even if it appears to me only in detached pieces, to say it in those terms. From whatever angle I approach it, she is there, always itself, but always and before all else, as this network at once porous and fibrous.

From this I learn that there is no existant that exhausts what appears, neither in its form nor in its content. In themselves, things are more than themselves, they are intrinsically multiple, at once both this and that. Certainly a multiplicity is made up of what conforms it, but especially a depth multiplicity, deep in the things that constitutes it. These therefore transcend the mere visible world so that they touch in particular the invisible world; they culminate in the essential multiplicity of reality, embracing its characteristic ambivalence: to be fundamental unity and simultaneously fundamental unities. Here is what I would call the *principle of the interface.* The Muntu reads it clearly in seeing a door, the one that sees both inside and outside at the same time.

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What we just brought to the light of day is that the spider is a bringer of teachings. That these teachings bear on pluralism in ntu Africa, that is what remains for us to clarify. In order to do this, a reading through analogy calls another, we say. I would place this second reading under the sign of the knot.

The virtues of the knot.

Concerning the bridge.

Let us here transition toward the issue of pluralism. First, let us make a complementary experiment on our spider web: if one touches only one of its fibers, the whole web vibrates! Which I understand as follows: the spider web is this whole bigger than itself, but nevertheless attentive to each of its constitutive units, to its immediate and distant environment, to all its intrinsic dimensions. We are dealing here with a whole that knows no center nor periphery, nor beginnings nor ends and that does not exhaust itself neither in a constituting unit nor in the sum of its constituents. Is this a sibylline formula? In truth, not very much. And to say it in other words, let us note the following three lessons from the genius of the spider concerning pluralism in ntu Africa:

- Pluralism in ntu Africa gives itself in a massive fact that is intrinsic to the spider web: the whole that evokes what is as it is. As such, pluralism integrates and exceeds any human understanding of it. Not only is the human only an infinitesimal part of this whole, but its very understanding is worth no more than an internal variant of the intimate pluralism of this whole.

- Pluralism in ntu Africa proposes itself in a project about itself of what is as it is. As such, pluralism integrates and exceeds any human project of pluralism, any human construction of a pluralism of here and now; it culminates in the whole intrinsic to the spider web, whole to which nothing nor anyone can add anything, subtract anything.

- Here as there, pluralism profiles itself as a network of knots, significant locations that assume the characteristics and dimensions of what is as it is, in other words of this whole intrinsic to our spider web.

Here is a prelude to the virtues that were intuited to lead to the understanding of pluralism in ntu Africa and undoubtedly to any project of pluralism deployed on this basis. Here is especially what determines our choice and trajectory toward the knot. And so we will let the knot itself light our way.

Concerning the knot

A knot can be made from two elements initially separated one from the other. This common case is not the one that interests us here. Not that it lacks any interest, quite the contrary; but rather because we will look for the virtues of the knot in another example of a design, a much more complex one. In fact, a knot can also be made from a single initial element, a liana for example. At first sight, this example seems no less banal than the first one. However, looking more closely one quickly realizes that this is nothing of the sort and that from the liana to the knot and from the knot to the liana, appearances waste no time in sliding into complexity.

And thus, our knot in some way doubles the initial unity of the liana. It institutes a first intrinsic and multiple dynamic, at once centrifugal and centripetal: much more than what it lets appear at first view, there it goes dividing while reconstituting the initial unity of the liana. It is because the liana enters into the complexity of the knot and presents itself as made up from now on of two "pieces", one beginning or ending where the other begins or ends and vice versa. It is as well, that is a point given to the very complexified unity of the liana, the knot is no less a point of convergence and/or divergence, of entrance and/or exit, of coming together and at the same time of distancing.

In this conjuncture, the knot reveals a doubtless ineluctable instability. In this manner, it institutes a second dynamic as intrinsic as multiple, resonating with the first dynamic: against its apparent fixity as a given point on

the liana itself, the knot slides on itself sometimes toward one, sometimes toward the other end of the latter. It is because the knot that divides and reconstitutes, also decenters and destabilizes. It is tension that pulls in one direction or in the other, it is energy that reinforces one side and de-energizes the other side. It is that the knot at once ceaselessly calls for a new equilibrium, an equilibrium renewed on the basis of this liana.

If the knot be read in this manner, at least from an initial unity, what lessons are we able to draw from it? My option is that we are dealing with virtues to which the genius of the spider has introduced us and that are revealed to us by the complexity of the knot. I will retain three virtues of the knot, among many others equally deserving of interest.

Concerning virtues

Respecting all things.

The knot is the *marker by definition of difference and diversity* on the very whole intrinsic to the spider web. Difference and diversity justify each of the principles discovered earlier: interdependence, complementarity, perfectability, interface. It is appropriate to say: the Muntu is profoundly a natural being! Not in the sense that he lives close to nature, but rather in the sense that he gives an equal respect to everything, as much to what is altogether different from himself as to himself, in the sense that he dedicates a real cult to what is through its significant places, above all to those that mark the rhythm of flowing life: the sun, the moon, etc. Nothing surprising in the fact that his spirituality is founded on the sacrality of this very nature of which he is part and even more, on the whole of what is! What can be seen as more normal than this mode of essential fraternity that he believes he recognizes in things, since in his eyes they all enjoy an equal dose of dignity, according to the primary order discussed above!

He shows a repugnance toward all manner of centrality, hegemony and deference other than those of the primary order, [he is] for isolation and solitude; attraction toward harmony, conciliation, good action, that is action in consonance with the primary order of what is, an 'is' that is the good *par excellence*. Even when the Muntu raises a chief, for example, he does it in reference to this order transposed into the symbolism of the leopard; he in fact institutes a knot via the figure of the leopard, between the first ancestor and the community, between the invisible world and the visible world. Here, chieftainship is Pontificate. How else to understand his culture that aims to neither transform what is nor dominate it, but rather strives to prolong it and to conciliate it? What else is such a culture if not, really, a culture of the knot? What else is this preponderance accorded by the Muntu to relationship to the extent of recognizing in any other than himself a brother or a sister, be it the wind or the rain? Briefly, his respect for all things makes of the Muntu an integral and receiving part of what is, but never its heir, even less its master.

Opening oneself to the Other

The knot is the *unavoidable hinge of the meeting and the (re)discovery of the Other.* As such, the knot acts on at least two levels: it links different constituents of what is, taken individually, and through only one of them, it connects each constituent with all the others – in the manner of the spider web that feels involved by only one fiber that vibrates. Must one repeat it? The Muntu is fundamentally openness to the Other. Not only in the sense of being naturally welcoming, and hospitable, but in the sense that he knows to be intrinsically linked, indissolubly so, to what is. Nothing of what is, in this sense, is indifferent for him, as much the wind and the rain (I cannot not repeat myself here), the dream or the gaze of the neighbor, etc. It is

simple: everything, in his view, is connected to everything else, not only the sky and the earth, reality and dreams, but also life and death, the visible and the invisible, the end and the beginning.

In everyday life, the Other for the Muntu, is not the stranger, the unknown person whose difference could threaten my identity, he is not the one who might take my place. The Other is the Sent One, the host toward whom his duty is to welcome, to listen, to share, to unconditionally recognize in him a "brother" or a "sister". Even much better, the Other is not limited to the specie of the humans (I already said it), but extends to any other than the Muntu himself: nature, society, the cosmos, divinity, etc. Whatever its specificity, the Other calls the Muntu to an encounter, to a communion as much as possible, to the fashioning of the knot of this essential fraternity evoked above. What ntu ritual does not summon here and now, symbolically that is, all constituent of what is whose presence is desired? And here is the key of what I have called elsewhere "total healing": an ankle sprain becomes the occasion of a healing process that implicates, besides any human and any human community, all the positive and negative forces of the visible and invisible worlds. That is so because any event is never isolated from the rest, since no solution dwells in solitude. And this in the name of the essential fraternity hailing back to the primary order of what is.

Seeking Harmony

The knot proposes itself as a *multidimensional cultural test for the human being*. Integral to what is and receiver of what is, the human being embraces each principle learned from the genius of the spider: interdependence, complementarity, perfectability, interface. To Be, for the Muntu, resembles a desire and an effort to find response to the call of the initial unity. It is appropriate to state that caught in the network of knots intrinsic

to what is, the Muntu is fundamentally in search of harmony with all that is other than him! Does he not project himself as knot at the hinge of birth and death, as ancestor from whom he descends and ancestor toward whom he aspires? as sacred and profane, as immemorial past and as future culminating into eternity?

Doubtless, that is why the Muntu is profoundly moral and profoundly religious in his relationship with his fellow creatures, even with those altogether different from him, seeing himself as subject to the test of the initial unity. We are speaking of a cultural test according to the culture of the knot. To prolong nature, to conciliate oneself to it, not to transform it, not to dominate it – for example, belongs to this cultural test. Have I already said it, additionally nature, as all that is, is sacred, entailing that the relationship to nature is necessarily a spiritual relationship, or at least of a spiritual type, the good *par excellence* resides in the primary order of what is. Indeed, the Muntu knows that he can fail and that, as the myths of origin tell it, the primary order has been broken or al least perturbed in particular due to the "lack" that the creator "forgot" in it. From this derives the idea of the quest, of the effort, of the test that pervades his whole culture. Witness; as much as rituals, at least some of them, constitute keys that enable one to momentarily reconnect the constituents of what is, so the taboo is this suspended word, in fact an *inter-dit* [1], among the constituents of what is; it is a knot that prevents tensions and worse, situations of rupture. Fear of reprisals is a secondary and practical aspect of the Muntu. But the taboo *[interdit]*, or rather the *inter-dit* functions less as tinsel or moral precept than the significant expression of the cultural test ordering the Muntu to

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1 In French the word for 'taboo' is 'interdit'. Here the author is playing with the word 'interdit' dividing it between the suffix 'inter' meaning 'between' and the ending 'dit' meaning 'spoken', i.e. the words spoken in-between.

seek harmony. Even when everything seems to go as well as possible, the taboo watches at the intersection of things. It is well known that the past is never past for the Muntu, no more so than the dead are ever really dead.

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All this will no doubt be conceded to me. The question nevertheless remains, still not answered: what about, in the end, pluralism in ntu Africa? To answer this, or at least to attempt to answer this, is no more and no less than to conclude the path undertaken up to this point.

To conclude: Pluralism in ntu Africa

I do not pretend to deliver here what, in the end, constitutes pluralism in ntu Africa. Nevertheless, in light of the genius of the spider and of the virtues – at least some of them – of the knot, I would evoke without much commentary three high places of what one should understand as ntu pluralism.

- Total Life: not only does the Muntu affirm that everything is life, is alive, but he speaks much better of what I have elsewhere called the "Total Life". It is from her that the creation of the first ancestors in the invisible world comes from; it is from her that the visible world that includes our existence from birth to death comes from; and finally it is in her that culminates the return of all things visible into the invisible world. So much so that total Life is circularity, she is what we have tried to show through the spider web: nothing can be added to her, nothing can be subtracted from her. Her intrinsic dynamic expresses itself in creation and the return of all things in her. Her fundamental knots link the visible and the invisible via space and time, birth and death. As for her other major expressions,

they let themselves be read through the prism of the sacred: the mediums that are the natural sites, or humans suddenly invested by the invisible, initiates progressively consecrated to the high practices of the knot, individuals or communities punctually raised to the pontifical dignity on the occasion of punctual or seasonal rites...

- Tradition: the Muntu sees it simultaneously as this chain of life coming from the ancestors through biological procreation and culminating in the ancestors through the good biological death. And more: the Muntu conceives at the same time of tradition as the accumulated heritage from the origins, lost in the immemorial past, and called to be transmitted again and again, from generation to generation until the end vanishing into the eternal. For the Muntu, tradition is transmission, act of transmitting, and content of this transmission, the transmitted. Behind and ahead of us, but no less alive here and now, tradition for the Muntu follows the very circularity of total Life. As such, it is the vital knot *par excellence*, the place of communion of the Muntu with the whole of what is alive, in other words in its assertion of things, with what is.

- Culture: the Muntu lives his tradition, here and now, as culture of the knot. Knot, first of all, in the fundamental relationship between the Muntu and total Life via the ancestor from whom he descends and in which he culminates. Here the ntu culture is lived in the strict respect of the vital knot that is tradition. Knot also in the relationship either punctual or specific of the Muntu with all others than himself in the sense that we have indicated above. Ntu culture strains then to reinvent itself in the light of the total Life, in particular through welcoming, listening, recognizing in fellow creatures a "brother" or a "sister", etc. It strains,

principally through symbolism and anal-
ogy, to reinvent in a human scale the
circularity of total Life and the ambiguity
of tradition that is the knot *par excellence*.
And if there is anything left for me to say,
it is certainly the following: any type of
cultural practice of the Muntu is evidence
of this cultural and multidimensional test
of the knot.

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By Anna Ghiglione

Religious Diversity in Chinese Tradition. Ways of Thinking and Practical Solutions
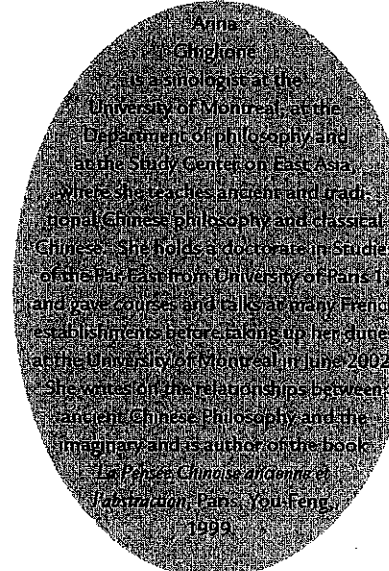
Anna Ghiglione is a sinologist at the University of Montreal, at the Department of philosophy and at the Study Center on East Asia, where she teaches ancient and traditional Chinese philosophy and classical Chinese. She holds a doctorate in Studies of the Far East from University of Paris 1 and gave courses and talks at many French establishments before taking up her duties at the University of Montreal in June 2002. She writes on the relationships between ancient Chinese Philosophy and the imaginary and as author of the book *La Pensée Chinoise ancienne et l'abstraction* Paris, You-Feng, 1999.

Three major traditions had an impact on
Chinese civilisation, notably Confucianism,
Taoism, and Buddhism. These three systems
of belief and values initially appeared sepa-
rately. The first two began in China under
the Zhou Dynasty (11th century BC – 256
AD), a period where China constituted an
independent universe with respect to other
great Ancient civilizations. The birthplace
of Buddhism, on the other hand, was the
Indian subcontinent. This faith did not
spread to China until the 1st century BC,
many centuries after the death of Gautama
Sâkyamuni (approximately 560 – 480 BC),
the historical Buddha.

Although, in China, the boundaries between
these three religions, which include one of
foreign origin, do not always seem clear.
There is no reason to see them in terms of
incompatibility at the heart of a people's
religious faith. Indeed, Chinese religion is
characterized by a certain doctrinal flexibil-
ity, which can be seen above all at the level of
popular worship. The ease in which hetero-
geneous beliefs from different traditions are
integrated and united constitutes in many
ways a Chinese specificity. This contrasts
with the attitude and political vigilance
connected to dogmas and orthodoxy that
we find, on the other hand, in Abrahamic
religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam).

The objective of this brief study is, first, to define and explain the syncretistic orientation that characterises religious life in China as an example of cultural integration. Then we will analyse the relationship this phenomenon has with certain modes of intelligibility in Chinese thinking. In other words, we will validate the hypothesis by which syncretism does not only constitute a social practice, an effective measure which permits to manage the new by reconciling heterogeneous elements, or even a plan of cultural integration. It is also a concrete reflection of amply attested reasoning in the Classics before the introduction of Buddhism in the Middle Empire and plays a role at the level even of the structuring of ideas and conceptualisation.

Religious Syncretism

A terminological and conceptual clarification seems indispensable: it must be noted that the term « syncretism » is used here without the derogatory connotation that it is often given. In Western intellectual and religious history, indeed, this concept generally evokes confusion or unstructured juxtapositions of heterogeneous and dissociated factors. In addition the term is contrasted with well-developed systems, with coherent and balanced syntheses of different elements but with unique well-defined guidelines.

The syncretic phenomenon shows the tendency, in Chinese civilisation, to not see different doctrines or ideas as being mutually exclusive, to translate the logical contradictions that concern the intellectual or conceptual level into situations of compatibility, coexistence, integration, and reciprocal incorporation in the real world. In certain cases, syncretism is also seen to have a pragmatic side, since it offers practical solutions, which allow to manage potential ideological antagonisms.

In the area of religious beliefs, a similar cultural trend is reflected in the presence of forms of religiousness, in popular religion, where elements originally from doctrines that were born independent from each other and which, at the level of cult specialists (the clergy) and particular institutions, seem to be distant are incorporated. In this way, devoted piety towards a saint figure or a particular person (a bodhisattva, a deity, a sage, a patriarch, etc.) does not mean that the corresponding beliefs are unique or that they exclude others.[1] This flexible doctrinal attitude is both the cause and effect of the absence, in Chinese history, of a predominant and institutionalised monotheistic tradition. On the one hand, polytheism quite naturally encourages the adoption of new faiths and the spread of beliefs. On the other hand, politically speaking, the Middle Kingdom was never able to impose a single church and therefore exerted control on its vast territory without favouring religious paths.

James L. Watson (1988: 10-11) offers clarification on the subject. Analysing the structure of funeral rites practiced in the last phase of the Imperial Period (1750-1920),[2] the American anthropologist observed that public officials (the « mandarins ») did not so much try to defend an *orthodoxy* (correct belief) in order to control society. The adopted standardization measures aimed rather at consolidating a kind of *orthopraxy*, notably an appropriate practice of rituals. Such a policy, that did not pretend to transform different beliefs or values, therefore permitted to integrate diverse ethnic and regional groups into a global and coherent social system by limiting tensions that an ideological conflict would have otherwise triggered.

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1 DuBois (2004 : 842) rightly insists on the relevance of differenciating belief and religiousness.
2 These dates have been rounded off, as the Qing Dynasty ended in 1911.

Is the notion of religion then pertinent to describe Chinese religious practice or piety? This question fuels much debate at the heart of contemporary Sinology. The question also concerns the choice of lexicon for such Chinese terms as *jiao* « teaching, doctrine [moral, spiritual, etc.] », *jia* « family [of thought], royal blood, [philosophical] school », and the neologism from the Japanese *zongjiao*, where *zong* in the strictest sense of the word means « ancestors['s temple] ». This *binomiale* expression is used today to translate the word « religion », whose Latin etymology was already controversial in Ancient Times.[3] It is therefore preferable to translate *zongjiao* by « ancestral doctrine » in order to keep the possibly opaque meaning that the two characters *zong* and *jiao* have in Chinese.[4]

Historically, the collective expression *sanjiao* « the Three Doctrines » indicates Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism dates back to the 5th century. The following assumption that « the three Doctrines can be traced back to only one » root (*Sanjiao guiyi*) was progressively imposed at the level of cultural practice(s). It was consolidated as well thanks to scriptural bases that were edified to be seen as legitimate. Around 434 AD, the Buddhist monk Huilin wrote for example an *Essay on Equivalent Value (Junshanlun)* of the three teachings (KAMENAROVIC 1999: 147). Syncretism has a relatively high value then in the conscience of religious thinkers. In popular religion, this tendency began to spread in the 10th

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3 Three etymologies of the Latin word *religio* are considered in the Ancient World: 1) *relinquere* « leave, abandon » secular life, profane for the sacred (cf. Macrobe, ca. 395-423 AD, *Saturnalia* III.3, who attributes this derivation to Serve Sulpice, 1st century AD) ; 2) *relegere* « reread » the liturgical rules to correctly practice them (cf. Cicéron, 106-43 AD *De natura deorum*, II.28) ; 3) *religare* « link, connect » the link between God and Man (cf. Lactance, ca. 250-325 AD, *La Ville de Dieu*, X.3 ; Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274, reuses this meaning).
4 Thoraval (1992 : 37-44) believes that the expression *zongjiao* means specifically « sectarian teaching » and should therefore be used with caution. Cf., same author, 1999 : 77.

century and gained importance during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

This doctrinal malleability did not fail to impress the Jesuit priests who had ventured into the Middle Kingdom at the beginning of the 17th century. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) lamented this custom in particular in his *History of the Christian Expedition in the Kingdom of China* (1582-1610) that Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) revised and translated into Latin from the original into Italian. The absence of clear-cut boundaries between the three religions seemed to fascinate Christian missionaries more than other cultural diversity:-

> [...] it happens that no sect is allowed to work for the extinction of another. The rulers make it a practice to cultivate the devotion of all three of them, using them in their own interest when need be and conciliating each in turn by renovating their old temples or by building new ones. [...] And they finally end up by accomplishing something altogether different from what they have expected. In believing that they can honour all three laws at the same time, they find themselves without any law at all, because they do not sincerely follow any one of them. (RICCI, TRIGAULT 1978: 173)

In the contemporary environment, the syncretic orientation of the Chinese survived the socio-political disruption and antireligious movements that transformed the country from the middle of the 19th century until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Since the 1980s, with the transition of China towards a market-driven economy and the progressive abandon of martial law, the religious phenomenon has known a certain revival. Religious practice, and popular beliefs in particular, remains nevertheless monitored by the political elite who are bent on composing on Chinese society religious ways of life that are easily controllable.

If certain Sinologists hesitate to use the term religion to describe Chinese reality, one of the reasons that they mention concerns precisely syncretism. As Vincent Goossaert explains,

> For the large majority of Chinese, religious loyalty is not to one of the three religions [Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism], but to worshipping communities, to which one adheres to in a compulsory fashion (territorial communities, lineage, and craft guilds) or more voluntarily (pious associations or sectarian groups whose variety is immense). (GOOSSAERT 2007: 187)

Yet these cultural communities collectively call on officials and specialists of the three aforementioned traditions to celebrate rituals. Considering local idiosyncrasies that gravitated around village or neighbourhood temples as points of reference of patrilocal communities, it is syncretism precisely that constitutes a unifying social factor which counterbalances, according to compensatory logic, a fragmented doctrinal configuration.

Correlate Thinking

This «inclusive» way of thinking that the concrete phenomenon of syncretism supposes is not only found in religious life or in ritual. In terms of formulating ideas, it predates the diffusion of syncretic cult: its roots seem to date back to Ancient Times.

Chinese thinkers of the Classical Period (4th – 3rd century BC), in fact, had a tendency to explain causal links according to an analogical model. In other words, they linked disparate elements of the world by establishing, often meticulous, correlations, on a basis of similar factors, either real or symbolic. Following the law of similarities, they developed a correlative chart which associated different fields of knowledge, notably with musical notes, colours, flavours, scents, cardinal points, moral virtues, body organs, etc. This type of procedure does not represent a Chinese specificity, but it does constitute a widespread mode of intelligibility in archaic and ancient civilizations. It is not necessary to radically contrast this with scientific reasoning, as it represents a fundamental intellectual step, presumably unavoidable, in the history of Science.

In China, correlative logic had a considerable continuity and dissemination, while coexisting with other forms of intelligibility. The school of cosmologists, that the historiographers of the Han period (206 BC - 220 AD) called the « School of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements (*Yin yang wu xing jia*) », especially contributed to reinforce this manner to describe and control the real by integrating diverse, and often new, elements into pre-established moulds. The vision of Nature, in classical and traditional China, corresponds essentially to a cosmology: the universe was thought to be a well-ordered whole (in the strict sense of the word *cosmos*, in Greek, means precisely « order ») thanks to an intrinsic, spontaneous, and immanent coherence (therefore not following from any external intervention, even divine). The cosmologists then were looking for a key to access the natural order of things by elaborating classification systems following an associative approach.

The results of the, often complex, correlate spirit, were moreover codified by the written tradition and integrated into scientific developments. Chinese medicine, for example, fully benefits from this analogous way of thinking. After the gained importance of the Five Elements, the classification model that was imposed from the end of the Warring States Period (453-256 BC, according to the chronology established by the historian Jacques Gernet, 2005, vol. 3: 146) to the beginning of the Han Dynasty is copied on a quinary template. The Five Agents correspond to five natural resources (according to the so-called cycles of generation) Water,

Wood, Fire, Earth, and Metal.[5] The notion of inert matter is foreign to Ancient Chinese thought. These five elements were then seen as dynamic breaths, influx, natural energies in perpetual transformation rather than in a state of stasis, from where comes the choice to designate them, in French, by the term of « Agents » that expresses the Chinese word *xing* « process ». Correlative thinking works regularly in this way to define relationships between different phenomena through a powerful conceptual system of automatic integration. Religious belief does not escape this tendency.

Buddhism represents the first great foreign doctrine that, when introduced in China, interacts in a significant manner with local traditions. It spread via North-Western branches of the Silk Road, most likely following trade expeditions, settlers, and political refugees. As soon as it reached Pengcheng, Taoist centre north of Jiangsu (65 AD), Buddhism was associated with practices related to the quest of immortality, the ultimate aspiration of Taoist masters. A memorial addressed later to the throne (middle of the 2nd century) affirms that the designation of Buddha only refers to Laozi (6th – 5th century BC, according to legend). The Old Master, legendary figure to whom tradition attributes the creation of the Taoist faith, said to have converted Barbarians in the Western regions. According to another hypothesis, Buddha was nothing but the reincarnation of the Taoist sage. One way to justify the equivalences consisted in returning to the same origin figures, ideas, or different value systems. This mode of reasoning inserts itself into a scheme that can appropriately be called *genetic paradigm*.

The quarrels over doctrine, however, did not fail to oppose different social and religious forces. The values of learned Confucianists, such as filial piety, the sense of family, individual commitment at the heart of society, clashed with the convictions of followers of Buddhist Law (*Dharma*). In order to reconcile the new with the familiar, Zhiyi (538-597) – one of the first theorists of the Lotus School (*Tiantai*) – adopted, in collaboration with other monks, a system of correspondence dictated by correlative logic and founded on the doctrine of the five Agents. These agents, or elements, were elevated to the status of conceptual categories from then on. Then hence, Buddhist ethical interdictions (*sīla*) became associated to Confucianist virtue by way of traditional cosmology. The correlation chart reproduced here below is eloquent and illustrates well the syncretic phenomenon at the conceptual level (CH'EN 1973: 57):

Buddhist taboos	Murder	Theft	Adultery	Lying	Alcohol and Drug Use
Confucianist virtues	Humanity(*ren*)	Insight (*zhi*)	Equity (*yi*)	Sincerity (*xin*)	Rites (*li*)
Cosmological Agent	Wood	Water	Metal	Earth	Fire
Cardinal points	East	North	West	Center	South

5 There is a vast bibliography on Chinese cosmology. A clear introduction is found in Rochat de la Vallée (2001). For a more specific study on correlative thought, see Graham (1986). On the relationship between Chinese cosmology and Gaston Bachelard's categories of material imagination (1884-1962), cf. Ghiglione (2006).

It is pointless to rationalize at all cost or to look for empirical or logical reasons or logic explaining the links that truly exist between, for example, Water and Insight or between

Earth and Lying. We would be quickly disappointed and would wrongly come to hasty conclusions about Chinese intelligence. In reality, the objective of this exercise of corresponding elements is less intellectual than pragmatic. This correspondence game does not seek to establish an epistemology but to point out affinities between the two value systems that, otherwise, would have been in conflict. To borrow a Buddhist concept, this manner of proceeding represents a kind of *saving expedient*, a legitimate moral trick permitting a new doctrine to make its way in a foreign land and to rise above cultural obstacles. Doctrinal flexibility, in addition, is especially inherent to Buddhist faith. Buddhism recommends in fact to relativize even the values that it supports to avoid excessive attachment, which would be in contradiction with the quest for deliverance (*nirvâna*). This detached position intrinsic to Buddhist teaching could only reinforce Chinese disinterest for absolute dogmas.

Correlative thinking does not only inspire the definition of interreligious or interdoctrinary relationships. It is also common practice to resolve controversies within a single system of belief. The juxtaposition of heterogeneous and potentially conflictual elements can take the form of a horizontal comparison, as the one we just mentioned, or the one that of a hierarchisation. This process is common in the detailed ranking of Buddhist precepts that certain spiritual authorities developed to reorganize a large scriptural corpus in function of favourite chosen founding texts. Zhiyi's critical hierarchy of the *sûtra* is a famous example of this paradigm: Buddhist beliefs are differentiated (*pan jiao*) with regards to the presumed phases of Buddha's life according to eight levels of profound doctrine (MAGNIN 2003: 414, 441). The *Sûtra of the Lotus of the True Law* (*Saddharmapundarîka sûtra, Miaofa lianhua jing*, thought to have been compiled at the beginning of the Christian era), vener-

ated within the School, is then ranked as the apotheosis of the Enlightened. Buddha is said to have transmitted its content during the last period of his historic experience, after recontact with the human condition. However, the *Flower Garland Sûtra* (*Avatamsaka sûtra, Huayan jing*), that inspired the school of the same name, is connected to the period immediately following the enlightenment of Buddha, whose word had not been made accessible to ordinary people. So instead of censuring the writings by calling them heretical, the spiritual leaders simply identified them according to a scale of values. This pragmatic method quelled tensions between religious groups, while a severe and definitive condemnation of a series of texts, and therefore of beliefs and relative values, would have only intensified sectarian identities

Concluding remarks: beyond the law of non-contradiction

Are syncretism, integrative thinking, and correlate logic the expression of a culture of tolerance? Do they systematically divert the dangers of intercultural and interreligious conflict? It is undeniable that doctrinal flexibility, in China, did not develop either dogmatic views or fundamentalist deviance that ravaged other cultures. Of course, religious-related conflicts are not lacking in the country's history. These issues, however, generally stem from politics and not doctrine. During certain historical phases, for example, Buddhist monasteries had acquired excessive power that escaped government control. From 842 to 845, under the reign of Emperor Wuzong (Tang Dynasty, 618-907), for example, the clergy and Buddhist institutions were subjected to violent persecutions that ended their prosperous period. A type of « concordat » established between the political elite and religious institutions guaranteed however a certain stability until the middle of the 19th century. (GOOSSAERT 2000 : 83).

The popular revolt of the Taiping (*Way of Great Peace*), instigated by a Society founded in 1851, in Guangxi province, began a devastating process that must have shaken the base of Chinese culture. The movement truly professed a syncretistic doctrine. The creed of Hong Xiuquan (1813-1864), who initiated the movement and of his followers was relatively protestant, puritan, quasi-feminist, anti-dynasty, and anti-Manchu, and anti-Confucianist it said that (the Chinese have venerated God before Confucius). Official Christian institutions characterised him as a heretic. The rebels advocated indeed utopian collectivism following the example of other peasant revolts of Taoist or syncretistic derivation that the country had previously known:

> If Hong Xiuquan, who governs by divine inspirations, proclaims to be the younger brother of Jesus-Christ, it is in the same way as other rebellion leaders and other usurpers were considered as reincarnations of Maitreya, Buddha the saviour. Buddhism, Taoism, classical traditions of *Mengzi* and of *Zhouli* marked the Taiping movement [...] (GERNET 2005, vol. 2 : 314-315)

Temples, local places of worship and Buddhist monasteries were destroyed and ravaged by the Taiping armies. Therefore, as André Laliberté[6] observes, syncretism does not necessarily go with tolerance. The absence of absolute religious dogmas, however, reduces the length of conflicts which have religious connotations. Instead of becoming endemic social curses, these clashes only break out occasionally, following particular political circumstances where the religious factor is only subsidiary.

It should be noted again that certain forms of syncretism are spontaneous, sometimes unconscious, and correspond to real beliefs.

Before the spread of Buddhist writings in Chinese, meditation practices from Indian origin were actually seen as being analogous to psychophysical experiences of Taoist culture. Other manifestations of syncretism are, on the other hand, the object of study in that they are deliberately dictated by political will in response to criticism and to resolve interreligious tensions. The boundary between the different forms of syncretism is, nevertheless, far from being precisely delineated. The interpretation of attempts at reconciliation, in practice, of incompatible fundamental theories or simply heterogeneous theories that spiritual leaders of the past had made proved to be arduous. It is nevertheless important to underline that their objectives, in any case, were nonviolent. So, from an ethical viewpoint, there were sufficient legitimate arguments. The system of correspondence of Zhiyi and his acolytes could even offer ideas for educators and teachings of today who, in the Western world, have to face the problem of religious diversity in multiethnic schools. The search for affinities between one value system and another may shock philologists, but it can only facilitate intercultural dialogue. It is an understandable political choice even if it is debatable intellectually speaking.

Syncretism, however, does not go hand in hand with pacifism and democracy. Looking through the new constitution adopted by the Chinese government in 1992 and revised in 1993, 1999, and 2004, one notices striking series of aberrations[7]. The inconsistencies are not only theorical but practical as well. Since the 1980s, the popular Republic of China has moved into a new phase characterised by a politico-economic process, which distances itself from politico-economic Maoism. Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), leader of the Communist Party and protagonist of the political scene at the end of the 1970s until

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6 This questioning provoked an interetsing debate after our presentation at the conference *Le pluralisme d'ici et d'ailleurs (Pluralism from Home and Abroad)*, UQÀM, Montréal, 30-31 mai 2007.

7 Chen (2004) compared the different versions and the evolution of the Chinese Constitution.

the beginning of the 1990s, established a new directing principle: « Socialism with Chinese characteristics ». It is a clever, new syncretic ideology that favours a market economy while legalising private property under the banner of Marxism-Leninism and the thinking of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), a divine-like figure from then on, venerated and playing, in the social imaginary, a role similar to that of a mythic emperor.

The term « syncretism », of Greek origin, brings to mind a famous paradox that is traditionally attributed to the poet Epimenides the Cretan (600 BC). The inhabitants of his island had a reputation of lying, and he is thought to have formulated a controversial affirmation, which one must ask if he is lying or telling the truth: "All Cretans are liars". The « liar paradox » here represents a challenge to the law of non-contradiction. The Greek etymology of « syncretism » - derived from *sun-kritizein* « union of Cretans », that is to say, to be like a Cretan, to be dishonest, to lie – describes wonderfully then certain recent political measures that the last version of the Chinese Constitution sanctions.

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Participants' Commentaries on the Colloquium

André Laliberté[1]

Wednesday evening, Miss. Kalpana Das, Executive Director of the Intercultural Institute of Montreal (IIM), explained the themes of the conference and, more particularly, the need to reflect on the concept of interculturalism. She noted that Quebec has long been a land of immigration for newcomers of European culture whose values are Judeo-Christian, but she also underlined that now, and even more so in the future, immigration in Quebec will be increasingly Asian and African. She is worried about a refusal of this pluralism and it is urgent to ask ourselves if pluralism, democracy, and human rights are solely Western concepts. She raised the point that throughout the history of other cultures, other conceptions and other radical differences have emerged. What are the consequences of these differences for modern societies and to what extent does this present a problem for integration within society? Miss Das has raised the fact that there are many ways for understanding integration and she brought out how trying to draw lessons from that, specially with respect to our collective relations with the foreigner can be an enrichment and also an encouragement to seek new ideas. Miss Das invited the participants to reflect on the following questions during the colloquium:

- How is pluralism seen and understood outside the West?

1 Associate Professor in the School of Political Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Ottawa University.

- What are the spiritual foundations and cosmovisions that constitute these approaches?
- What are the actual practices?
- What are their social consequences?
- What are the points of convergence and divergence with the West?

Mrs. Das concluded her presentation with the example of Canadian and African indigenous cultures, which favor oral traditions, in order to underline the importance of cultural differences.

The presentations of Historian Jacques Lacoursière and the Director of Ratihen'te High School in Kanasatake, Michael Rice, reminded us to what extent the expression "québécois de vieille souche" ("old-stock Québécois") has become absurd. The term was first used to define a population confronted with immigration. Even though the expression is understood as designating the descendants of French and English settlers vis-à-vis later waves of immigrants from other parts of Europe and other continents, Mr. Rice nicely reminded us that Quebec History had begun long before the arrival of the first colonists.

Historian Mr. Jacques Lacoursière began with a joke, wondering to what extent the province was a "welcoming land" ("terre d'accueil") or rather a "land of pitfalls" ("terre d'écueil") and reminded the audience that the attitudes of Quebec inhabitants have varied considerably throughout the decades both in their views on immigration and the divisions by which they distinguished themselves from each other.

The relationships between communities were defined by distinctions between different indigenous peoples, then between them and new European immigrants, between English and French, but also between Catholics, Huguenots, Protestants, and Jews. This is an important reminder to help us understand that diversity is constructed according to many types of distinctions, and that nothing is set in stone.

Michael Rice and his commentator Pascal Galvani, professor in the Department of Social Sciences at UQAR, also increased our awareness of the different way the indigenous peoples of Canada envision otherness. We were reminded of the importance of oral tradition in the Mohawk culture, and also of the pluralism of cosmovisions regarding creation myths. There are many versions of the origin of the world within a single community and we learned that a consensus regarding a single origin myth has never succeeded in imposing itself.

But the conference also took into account the present and the future and was of course interested in the conceptions of diversity specific to civilizations whose citizens are increasingly choosing Quebec as a land of refuge. Islam, China, and Africa represent three distinct ways to portray and understand diversity.

The presentation "Islam: Umma, diversity guaranteed?" by *Yara El-Ghadban* and *Zakaria Rhani*, and commented on by *Samia Amor*, on the one hand, spoke of the diversity of cultures at the heart of the Muslim world and, by doing so, questioned a dangerous simplification often used by radical islamists and their adversaries – the idea of a unified Islam. A good part of the discussion dealt with diversity through relationships with the « dhimmis » (The People of the Book, either Christians or Jews), and then addressed the question of secularism. This last point drew many responses from the audience, especially about the Millet, who oversaw community diversity at the heart of the Ottoman Empire, the concealment of African Islam, and the recognition of secularism as a factor of integration in the welcoming society for new immigrants of Muslim faith, of whom only 15 percent go to mosques.

The third presentation, "China: Cultural Diversity in Chinese Tradition, Modes of Intelligibility, Practical Solutions" given by *Anna Ghiglione*, and commented by André Laliberté, also provoked reactions on the difficulty to manage community relations. In this case, what was brought into question was not so much the presumed incompatibility of Chinese culture as such, but rather the political culture of the People's Republic of China. Certain participants were worried that they do not know how to manage their diversity other than through authoritarian methods.

The last paper "Once upon a time there was a spiderweb... Comments on some Virtues of the of the Knot," *presented by Lomomba Emongo*, and commented on by Gilles Bibeau, professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Montréal, gave us another way to understand managing diversity. Diversity was highlighted here by reminding us of certain realities: the fact that the intercultural situation checks itself continually through oral tradition, linguistic pluralism, and through recourse to the concept of *métissage*.

In conclusion, from the audiences' questions and comments and the speakers' presentations and remarks, all the participants of the conference recognized the importance of the interculturalism, as it is understood outside the West. It was mentioned that the approaches adopted in India and all of Southern Asia, would have added an additional and much appreciated perspective. All in all, it is clear that this question of interculturalism and the acceptance of diversity by different cultures should be better understood in the coming years because current and future demographic realities are going to make the meeting of different conceptions of diversity unavoidable.

Dr. Carlo Sterlin[2]

Mr. Agustí Nicolau introduced me as a clinician... Perhaps because he felt how much I sense the fatigue that you feel at the end of this exciting but demanding day from the richness of the discussion and confrontations...

But if I have decided to be brief, it is most of all because the project of giving synthesis of the to which Miss Das invited me was efficiently carried out by Mr. Alain Gagnon. Indeed, he reminded us that we were exposed today to a large range of experience of cultural pluralism lived by humanity of the past and present; experiences by which Quebec could – or perhaps should – use as inspiration to develop an original project for Quebec Society, which could perhaps inspire a project for Canadian society...

In spite of your fatigue, permit me to briefly communicate a few thoughts that this day has inspired in me; reflections that, to me, could be pertinent above all to those in this room that identify themselves as "social workers"...

Throughout this conference, indeed, I was preoccupied with articulating what sociologists designate as micro/macro polarity. I could not help thinking that the suffering and "pathology" of individuals, couples, and families that I encounter in my daily practice could be linked to the difficulty that societies experience in taking responsibility for differences and to "manage" them in a fair and constructive fashion.

Permit me to dream out loud for a few minutes to ask for example if it would be useful and productive to consider autistic and schizophrenic people as helpless carriers of contradictory energies, internalised pluralisms, reflecting the frozen pluralism of their

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2 Psychiatrist and anthropologist, he is the founder of the Transcultural Psychiatric Clinic at Jean Talon Hospital in Montréal.

parents, their families, their social networks, their ancestors, and their societies…

I also ask myself about the value of inter-cultural approaches – especially in the area called "psychiatry" in the West – that entrusts a curative function not to an individual but to a pluralist team who bear constructive divergences.

In the same way, I asked myself if these therapeutic approaches inspired by Western scientific ideology are not be influenced by the project to control and restrain the "evil" in the "sick" person; while energizing approaches (traditional Chinese, American Indian and African medicine, etc) aim instead harmonizing pluralistic energies.

But, let us leave the clinicians to their dreams and let's get back to the macro real-ity. I will confess that the presentation of Mr. Lomomba Emongo made me think of a spontaneous remark of a "dyed-in-the-wool" friend involved in politics who – at the moment of the crisis of Hérouxville – said to me, "Sterlin, Québec has just hit a knot"… I would have liked for him to be here this evening to realize that – from the perspective of spiders and Bantus – a knot is not an impasse but an opportunity to revitalize a potentially enriching process for an entire community. Chinese tradition understood this treating the crisis (wei – ji), both as a "painful failure" and, at the same time, a chance, an opportunity. In addition by seeing profiles of different cultures before me, I wondered if they can be classified; and I was surprised that none of the speak-ers proposed to us this polarity that seems to me so heuristic between anthropocentric and cosmocentric cultures; the latter being, in my opinion more inclined to welcome difference in a climate of convivencia.

But I was above all surprised to observe during this conference that we barely mentioned two notions that seem fundamental: notions of power and enjoyment.

And please permit me to evoke the hypothe-ses of repression and denial and I'm going to leave you with two provocative questions:

First question: Is it possible that monothe-isms – regardless of their geographic loca-tion – have a natural propensity to absolute power and imperialism?

Second question: - Partially linked to the first -: of the four cultural areas brought out today, which one – in your opinion – would have a tendency to claim the monopoly of power? And which are would be most naturally drawn to identify itself with enjoy-ment?

Jocelyne Lalande[3]

Did we reach our goal of exploring different experiences of cultural pluralism?

We were able to explore and familiarize ourselves with very different visions and experiences of pluralism. The speakers of the conference provided us thorough and substantial information. The organizers have attained their goal hands down.

We were given access to a rich range of visions of pluralism especially on a conceptual level, without forgetting examples which were interesting in their application and inspiring for intercultural practices.

In the end, regarding a link between the three main elements to explain the goal of the conference, including information on the pluralistic approach in Contemporary Quebec Society could have given common parameters of comparison with the approach of the societies presented and might have facilitated the convergence of ideas.

On the other hand, widening the debate before deepening the analysis of our intercul-tural approaches seems to be a good choice

3   Health professional and anthropologist

to open our minds and promote peaceful dialogue. The road seems to be well-paved to provide a follow-up to this conference that would try to translate in Quebec reality the questions raised here.

Did we obtain our specific objectives?

With regards to specific objectives, the content of the presentations further devel-oped, in my opinion, alternatives at a national level. The international level was not directly addressed, except by one speaker. This last objective seems very ambitious and very difficult to accomplish without first present-ing the principle characteristics of globalisa-tion today. It would also be very enriching to have pluralistic views on the latter.

Jacques Langlais, *In Memoriam*

Jacques Langlais the founder of the Monchanin Center (1963) which became the Intercultural Institute of Montreal (1990), passed away at the Basile Moreau residence of the Holy Cross Congregation to which he belonged. He did so in his sleep, quietly, discreetly. Even if his departure could be foreseen because of his age and health condition, it left a void among his friends his friends and acquaintances.

As mentioned in the editorial note, we dedicate this issue of Interculture as an homage to this man who fostered pluralism all his life. The following three texts render this homage to Father Jacques Langlais:

- The story of his itinerary and many achievements, drawn from the Holy Cross Congregation's list of assignments given to him;

- The homage that was written on behalf of the Intercultural Institute of Montreal by Robert Vachon, Jacques' longstanding and close partner in his work since an early stage. The homage was read at the

funeral service by Dr. Carlo Sterlin, the President of IIM's Administrative Board.

- An excerpt from the homily that was read by Jacques' colleague father André Charron, during the funeral at the crypt of the St-Joseph Oratory.

1. Jacques Langlais' achievements

On August 15th 1941, he entered the Pointe-Claire Novitiate, and took his first vows on August 16th, 1942, his perpetual vows and mission vow on August 16th 1945. He was ordained a priest on February 2·1946 in St-Laurent, by Mgr Joseph Charbonneau. He was sent on mission to the following places:

1946-1947	Taught at the College Notre-Dame-du-Perpetuel-Secours at Cap Haitien;
1952-1962	Served as one of the animators of Amitié Canada-Orient (Canada-Orient Friendship);
1953-1969	Co-founder and editor of the Orient periodical;
1955-1956	Studied at Institut d'ethnologie et de sociologie religieuse (Paris)
1957-1958	Studied at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill;
1958-1968	Served as a member of Montreal's Ecumenical Dialogue. Between 1964 and 1967, he collaborated with the Research Committee of the Chistian Pavillion, during the 1967 Terre des Hommes (Universal Fair);
1963	Founded the Monchanin Centre (Intercultural Institute of Montreal);
1970-1972	Obtains a Master's degree at the McMaster University: concentration on India and China;
1971-1979	Served as Secretary and President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion/Société Canadienne pour l'étude de la Religion;
1976	Obtained Ph.D. McMaster University and his thesis was on the Quebec Jesuits in China (1918-1955): their perception of Chinese traditions;
1978-1995	Founded "Les Amis du Centre Monchanin";
1979	Coauthors the book "Qui est Québécois?" with Robert Vachon, Director of the Monchanin Intercultural Center since 1970;
1979-1992	Co-founder and secretary of the journal Medium, human sciences;
1980	Introduces in Montreal the World Conference of Religion for Peace (WCRP);
1987	Founded along with David Rome and Dr. Jacques Lightstone of Concordia University, the Institut Québécois d'études sur la culture juive (Institute for the Study of Jewish Culture);
1989-1993	Served as a member of the Canadian Council of Christian and Jews;
1989-1998	With Dr. Harry Goldman, Pierre Anctil and Yolande Cohen, he founded a Forum for bringing closer together Quebeckers from Jewish and French ancestry: le Dialogue St-Urbain;
1993-1998	Served as a member of the Judeo-Christian Dialogue Committee for the Catholic Church of Montreal;
1994-1997	National President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace/Canada;
1997	National Honorary President of WCRP/Canada. He participates in the International Conference of WCRP on Nov. 24-26, 1997, at Havana, Cuba;
1998	Founded, with the Conseil Québécois de la Paix, Educators for Peace groupe and participated in the organization of its first North-American congress in Montreal, August 21-23;
2002	Named Member of the Order of Canada (C.M.);
2005	Named Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Québec (C.Q.).

Father Langlais has published many articles and books, among which:

- *Le Bouddha et les deux bouddhismes* (Fides, 1976);

- *Les Jésuites du Québec en Chine (1919-1955)* (Québec, P.U.L. 1979);

- *Le Québec de Demain et les communautés culturelles*. With the collaboration of Pierre Laplante and Yossi Lévy (Edition du Meridien, 1990);

- *Jews and French Quebeckers, Two hundred years of Shared History*, in collaboration with David Rome, translation by Barbara Young (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991);

- *Les Pierres qui parlent/Stones that speak*, with David Rome's collaboration (September 1991);

- *Du Village au Monde: à la rencontre des cultures* (Mémoires) (Les Éditions Carte Blanche, 2000).

2. *The hour has come for the feast of nations.* Homage from IIM

This text was written by Robert Vachon, was delivered by Dr. Carlo Sterlin; President of the administrative board of IIM at Father Jacques Langlais' funeral, which took place in the crypt of St-Joseph Oratory, Montreal, on January 14th 2008.

The contribution of Jacques Langlais, this giant of inter-religious dialogue for Peace, cannot be confined to his work at Centre Monchanin and at the Intercultural Institute of Montreal, of which he was the founder-director from 1963 to 1970, and subsequently served as a life-time councilor at its Administrative Board. He sparked fires of inter-religious and intercultural peace everywhere.

It is in that spirit that in 1963, he founded the Monchanin Center under the beautiful motto which has always remained attached to his person "The time has come for the feast of nations".

He promoted the spirit of interpersonal dialogue between people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds based on their personal experiences. He sought an approach to dialogue that would be complimentary to what is academic.

Jacques believed in a deeply pluralistic Quebec. He was deeply rooted in his culture but open to humanity's treasures of wisdom. He was an altruist, generous, inspired and a free being.

All of his life and work has been marked by the triple seal of a faith enfleshed in

the world, of a hope which prevented him from weakening and, specially, of a charity which kept him ever open and welcoming with regard to any person who called upon him

Let us be faithful to him and, as he did, let us open together new-horizons. By reclaiming and living "the time has come for the feast of nations", i.e. quebecois pluralism, Jacques and his spirit will then continue to live on through us all; the grace of his life will continue to inspire us and to nurture our own. Thus, we will witness his resurrection and he will continue to be ever present, alive and eternal, at the very heart of our lives.

Jacques! This will also be our way of continuing to express all of our gratitude.

Robert Vachon

Montréal, January 13th 2008

3. Some information on Jacques Langlais' implication at the IIM since 1970

Jacques Langlais, after having at his own initiative, passed on the Directorship of Centre Monchanin to Robert Vachon in 1970, has remained one of its principal councilors and one of its most faithful collaborators and this at various levels. He was an active member of the Administrative board until 1998. After that he remained an honorary councilor of the Board until his death, as his health condition did not allow him to do otherwise.

Until 1998, he was co-director and co-editor of our Journal Interculture, doing among other tasks an excellent work of editing and translating the French version of the journal.

He continued to act as the ambassador of the IIM and participated in numerous inter-

religious and intercultural activities as the delegated representative of the Institute or on his own.

As for the IIM, it has supported him in many of his personal initiatives and offered its collaboration for his activities, notably the World Conference of Religions for Peace (1980), the Autobus de la Paix (1991), Dialogue St-Urbain (1993-1998), Educators for Peace (1998), among the most important ones.

It is also important to mention that in 1990, when the name of the Center was changed from *Monchanin Intercultural Center* to *Intercultural Institute of Montreal*, an initiative that is always delicate for an organization, we were able to rely, not only on the unreserved accord of Jacques Langlais as founder, but on his full collaboration.

4. Excerpt from the Homily at Jacques Langlais' c.s.c. funeral (January 14th, 2008)

We reproduce here an excerpt from the homily delivered by Jacque's confrere, Father Andre Charron, during the funeral at the crypt of the St-Joseph Oratory.

(...) He was a charming man, cultured, storyteller, humorist, sometimes poet and musician. Very faithful to his roots, he was also open to mankind's treasures of wisdom. He remained free with regard to conventions, to established securities and to institutional constraints. In many ways, he was a traveler constantly on the move, an adventurer in search of new discoveries. His studies, readings, meetings kept him in constant evolution, open to the world, to beings, to new ideas, and open to what is different and foreign.

In brief, he was basically a man of the Gospel through the witness of his

life. I have not hesitated to propose the Gospel of the beatitudes for his funeral because I think that his life has been a fine illustration of it.

- «Blessed are the poor in spirit». He has been such, he who has chosen to be simple, humble, generous, given, without pretence and without expecting anything in return. And he was happy with that.

- «Blessed are the meek». Endowed with great kindness, never aggressive, he has been proverbially patient, with always a positive outlook on persons.

- «Blessed are they that mourn». Fragile in his health and while suffering, he overcame discouragement. He practiced empathy and compassion while he accompanied and helped so many individuals suffering hardships.

- «Blessed are those hungry for justice». This is what motivated his attitudes of respect towards persons, of listening, and of defense of the oppressed.

- «Blessed are the merciful». He never closed doors. He was ready to excuse, relativize, understand and forgive. This made him happy.

- «Blessed are the pure in heart». Ever transparent, without detour, he was true. Forgetting himself, he was ready to have faith in the others, even at the risk of being exploited. A man of hope and of light, he had the optimism of a lover of life.

- «Blessed are the peacemakers». He has been a peace educator. He worked for peace by promoting reconciliation and love between people. He cultivated dialogue, understanding and friendship. This made him happy.

«The Kingdom of God» is his! (Mathieu, 5, 1-12)

Father Jacques Langlais had all the time needed to prepare for the ren-

dez-vous to the last Feast of Nations. When writing his memoirs on the eve of the year 2000, he took stock of his life. It is that — the result of his life, of his actions and of his work — which finds closure in death. And what is ultimate for God is the Kingdom. Beyond physical degeneration, breaking away from those who are nearby, bodily disappearance, his life is brought to achievement, to its fullness, in the Kingdom of God. Let us listen anew to what the *Apocalypse* says:

«I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God's abode [...]

Here is the abode of God among men

God himself will be with them [...]

I make everything new, he says,

I am the beginning and the end,

I shall give gratuitously to the one who thirsts for the water spring of life:

Such will be the heritage reserved to the victor;

I shall be his God and he will be my son» (Apocalypse 21, 1-7)

André Charron, c.s.c.

St-Joseph Oratory, Mount-Royal

IIM's Memorandum to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission

1. The Bouchard-Taylor Commission

On February 8, 2007, Québec Premier Jean Charest announced the creation of the Consultative Commission on the practices related to accommodation of cultural differences in order to respond to public discontent concerning the notion of "reasonable accommodation". The mandate of the Commission established by the decree of the government of Quebec, is to:

a) take stock of accommodation practices in Québec;

b) analyse the related issues bearing in mind the experience of other societies;

c) conduct an extensive consultation on this topic;

d) formulate recommendations to the government to ensure that accommodation practices conform to Québec's values as a pluralistic, democratic, egalitarian society.

In order to tackle the problem at its source, the Commission, known as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (taking its name from its two commissioners M. Gerard Bouchard and Charles Taylor), has defined the mandate of the government's decree in the following manner:

> The Commission's mandate, as defined, could be broached in two ways, in a broad sense or in a narrower sense. The narrower sense would consist in confining the Commission's deliberations to the strictly legal dimension of reasonable accommodation. This notion, which stems from labour-related jurisprudence, refers to a form of arrangement or relaxation aimed

at combating the discrimination that a seemingly neutral norm can bring about in its effect, usually an infringement of an individual's right to equality. In general language, the meaning of the concept has gone beyond this legal definition and encompasses all forms of arrangements allowed by managers in public or private institutions in respect of students, patients, customers, employees, and so on. The second body of practices, which we will call "concerted adjustments," differs essentially from reasonable accommodation in the strict sense inasmuch as it seeks to avoid recourse to the courts in favour of public intervention stemming from the ideal of the most harmonious possible management of our life together. It will be important to bear in mind this distinction throughout the Commission's consultations. On the same topic, we will also adopt the concept of intercultural harmonization to indicate the entire array of reasonable accommodation and concerted adjustment practices. The second approach to the Commission's mandate would be to perceive the debate on reasonable accommodation as the symptom of a more basic problem concerning the sociocultural integration model that has prevailed in Québec since the 1970s. This perspective calls for a review of interculturalism, immigration, secularism and the theme of Québec identity. The Commission has decided to follow the second course with a view to grasping the problem at its source and examining it from every angle, while taking into consideration the sometimes alarmist media coverage of the situation.

All through the year of 2007, the Commission has held consultative meetings and public forums throughout Quebec. Hundreds of memoirs have either been presented or

submitted during these consultations. One can consult the different documents, memoirs presented and submitted, as well as the history of this undertaking, in the website www.accodements.qc.ca".

2. A Brief Sketch of the Memorandum Presented by IIM to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission

IIM has participated in the Commission's undertaking, by presenting a memoir written by a work team namely, Kalpana Das, Executive Director, Agustí Nicolau-Coll, Assistant director, and members of the Administrative Board of IIM, Jocelyne Lalande, Jean-François Roussel and Robert Vachon.

The title of IIM's memoir is *Pluralistic Quebec: in the light of an intercultural practice*. Due to the lack of space here to present the 18 pages text, we reproduce the document's introduction and its table of contents. The complete memoir can be consulted through internet on IIM's website: www.iim.qc.ca

This memorandum aims at proposing a view other than the institutional one, on the pluralistic society of Quebec and on the relations of reciprocal influence and conviviality lived by its population. These have moulded and continue to mould the pluralistic culture of Quebec. We want a voice to be heard, one that is often marginalised by official, institutional, political and ideological discourses. We also want to share here our knowledge and experiences of daily life that we have acquired from our interaction with diverse communities at the grassroots since the foundation of our organization.

Our aim is not to oppose the proposition of *reasonable accommodation*, as a model that is primarily legal, for the «management of diversity» in our society. However, we are inviting the Commission to consider the fact that social relations are not only based on a social contract managed by

the State, and to listen to the knowledge and practices that have been in operation for many decades by community based organizations. In this vision of pluralism, an approach of intercultural dialogue and understanding has been favoured over the approach for diversity management in order to build a model of living together in society. The citizens partaking in this process are subjects who create knowledge and links, beyond what is manageable, all the while enriching the latter by maintaining links between these different levels of reality in our society. Through this memorandum to this Commission, we hope to contribute to the search for ways towards a real collaboration between all levels of society and creating of alternatives acceptable by all.

This memorandum presents a vision of Quebec as a pluralistic society and an intercultural approach as a way of living together in this society. This vision and approach are articulated out of an experience of reflection, research and actions that have been going on for more than four decades at the Intercultural Institute of Montreal (IIM).

Firstly, we draw a portrait of the various innovative programs and activities offered on intercultural relations to the public in Quebec and in Canada, and at the international level. Secondly, we try to present a different view on the issue the cultural and religious diversity of Quebec by underlining the dimensions that are too little explored or neglected in the present debate. Finally, we present a brief discussion on the vision of pluralism and interculturality that has been developed within our organisation, followed by some propositions as orientations for a living together.

Table of content:

InterCulture

InterCulture intends to contribute to the discovery and emergence of viable alternative approaches to the fundamental problems of contemporary Man, in both theory and practice. Its approach is meant to be integral, which means:

- Intercultural: approaching Reality and human living in light of the diverse cultural traditions of today, and not solely in terms of modern culture;

- Inter and trans-disciplinary: calling on many 'scientific' disciplines, but also on other traditions of knowledge and wisdom (ethno-sciences) as well as on vernacular and popular knowledge;

- Dia-logical: based on the non-duality between *mythos* and *logos*, *theoria* and *praxis*, science and wisdom, wisdom and love. "Wisdom emerges when the love of knowledge and the knowledge of love coalesce" (Raimon Panikkar).

Intercultural Institute of Montreal

The Intercultural Institute of Montreal (formerly Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre) is an institute for intercultural education, training, and research, dedicated to the promotion of cultural pluralism and of a new social harmony. Its fundamental research focuses on social critique and exploration of viable alternative responses to the contemporary crises. Its activities, which draw inspiration and sustenance from this research, aim at a cultural and social mutation—radical change—through a gradual process of learning: *theoria* and *praxis*. Its research and action have, from the very start, been undertaken in light of diverse contemporary cultures. It attempts to meet the challenges of our times by promoting cultural identities, their interaction in creative tension and thus their eventual emancipation from the final and most subtle colonialism: hegemony by the mind. The Institute's cross-cultural research and action is carried out through its programs in the three following modules: research and action, teaching and training in interculturalism, intercultural resources and services.

Directors

Kalpana Das, Executive Director (since 1979)
Robert Vachon (1970–1978)
Jacques Langlais (1963–1970)