

SIX POLEMIC STATEMENTS ON THE INTER-  
RELATION OF CULTURE AND ECONOMY,  
OF MATERIAL AND INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION  
- A WESTERN POINT OF VIEW

*When the White Man came we had the land and  
he had the Bible. Now we've got the Bible and  
he's got the land.*

(A saying from Southern Africa)

I. CULTURE IS NOT A DISTINGUISHED SPHERE OF AESTHETICAL CON-  
TEMPLATION, NOT THE SPHERE OF THE TRUTH, THE GOOD AND THE  
BEAUTIFUL. IT IS RATHER THE TOTALITY OF ALL MATERIAL AND IN-  
TELLECTUAL EXPRESSIONS OF LIFE IN A HUMAN SOCIETY

Culture in this sense means any form of manifestation: individual and social ones, concrete material ones as well as ideal abstract ones. It manifests itself in traditional dances as well as in media-controlled beauty-contests, in ancient stone inscriptions as well as in Coca-Cola cans. It includes the sphere of production as well as the sphere of the human being in his relationship to himself, to other human beings, as well as to nature and the supernatural. Apart from political and economic relations it comprises aspects of society which affect the immediate development of the personality.

There is no such thing as the "one" culture of any one country, but a multitude of cultures. They are dependent on time as well as on sex, they are contingent upon social classes as well as upon geographic regions. A uniform and standardized culture requires the suppression and the assimilation of other cultures. Within the framework of a dominant monoculture they usually receive a new purpose, or they continue to exist in a mutilated form as a more or less tolerated subculture (in form of commercialized folklore or handicrafts, for example).<sup>1</sup>

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1. Confer for example the relationship between northern Thai Lanna culture and the Bangkok sanctioned national Thai culture (See KEYES 1987)

## II. THE VARIOUS APPROACHES IN CULTURAL-ANTHROPOLOGY, ETHNOLOGY, AND THE POSTULATIONS OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM RARELY GO BEYOND A DESCRIPTIVE AND AHISTORICAL LEVEL

The subjugated peoples' strife for autonomy and their resistance against the colonial powers made the latter concern themselves academically with the effects of their colonial rule - in addition to the political, military and educational measures they employed. Numerous research institutes and foundations were set up and instructed to acquire more knowledge about society and mentality of the peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America in order to find solutions for the conflicts resulting from their colonial or neo-colonial rule, respectively. Those conflicts and problems were focused on in ethnological and anthropological research, and often dealt with under harmless titles such as 'cultural conflict', 'social change', 'acculturation', 'assimilation' etc.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, classical cultural anthropology and ethnology delivered numerous data about social, cultural and cognitive structures of the peoples and tribes concerned. However, they rarely made the effort of interpreting the collected data within a broader framework of research, let alone in a socio-historical or political context. It is true that the destruction of autonomous cultures through the impact of colonialism and imperialism became an object of their studies occasionally. However, the actual causes and consequences were hardly ever taken into consideration. On the contrary: the phenomena were isolated from the actual causes so that social problems appeared to be inherent to individuals or groups, seemed to be either fateful or caused by the national character. Furthermore, in their theoretical and methodological approaches they tended to transfer criteria of judgments developed in their own Western countries to peoples of alien cultures either uncritically and unquestioned or by defining their standards as universal.

The supporters of cultural relativism on the other hand have emphasized the fact that cross-cultural comparisons cannot be used for purposes of classification. However, like the representatives of classical anthropology and ethnology, they tend to ignore the obvious connections between the levels of production and technology, the forms of social organization, and the degree of rationalization of peoples' views of the world. As ROBEIRO said:

*'Through this ideology the defense of the inalienable right of primitive societies to maintain their cultural expressions and*

2. Gerard LECLERC in his well-known book (1972) gives a precise picture about the extent anthropological research was connected with colonial and imperial rule. Confer also ASAD 1973



*manifestations turns into a more refined form of appreciation of the archaic, and into a nostalgic quest for the defense of human values, which can only proliferate in a dependent and backward society.*' (Cf. HORLEMANN 1988)

Different cultural formations are comparable among each other with regard to success and quality of their adapting to their natural surroundings for securing their means of livelihood, the extent of exchange relations within their social structures, and the degree of rationalization of their symbolic interpretations of the world and the universe. In this context it should not be forgotten that the actual position of a society is not due to indigenous or invariable characteristics of its culture, but to a large extent to those economic and social conditions that can be subject to transformations.

The Thai advocates of developmental concepts such as the 'cultural-community' or the 'socio-cultural approach' appear sometimes to lose track of these facts (SERI et al. 1986; SERI & BEN-NOUN et al. 1988). Moreover, they tend to reject Western theories a priori simply for the reason that they are Western thoughts ('class struggle as a phenomenon of Western societies exclusively', for example). They focus their attention on issues like the recovery of cultural identity, at the expense of a careful and exact analysis of the social impact of the market economy and the related, existing dominant power relations. Among these circles of Thai intellectuals there is a propensity for a romantic and idyllic transfiguration of the peasants' life of the past. Culture and material production of life are separated, and while the first is characterized as the authentic, precious, identity-creating heritage of the good old days, the latter is rejected and considered as the realm of the evil invading forces of capitalism. Development work under such premises means creating awareness through recovery of old, forgotten social values, strengthening of identity through escaping the process of cultural alienation, which is perceived to be caused by the wicked influences of modern materialism. With reference to elements of Buddhist philosophy (SERI 1988; SULAK 1988), self-reliance, unpretentiousness, and a simple life with largely no consumer goods is propagated especially for the Thai rural areas under the slogan 'back to the roots'. (Cf. also SIMON 1987)

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III. TRADITIONAL MARXIST APPROACHES, BUT ALSO SOCIOLOGISTS FOLLOWING FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES, TEND TO CLASSIFY CULTURE AS A MINOR SPHERE OF SOCIETY'S ECONOMIC STRUCTURES. BUT, AS HISTORY DEMONSTRATES, CULTURE CANNOT BE SIMPLY REDUCED TO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, NOR CAN IT BE CONCEIVED AS DETACHED FROM THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. MATERIAL AND INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION ARE CLOSELY INTERWOVEN WITH EACH OTHER.

The term 'culture' is usually perceived by orthodox Marxist theorists as a super-structural phenomenon, which rises above the basis of a social formation and its mode of production, and is determined by the latter. They start from the assumption that the character of culture of any social formation is determined by the way the various classes and social strata participate in the production, distribution and appropriation of intellectual values, which again is dependent on the economic basis and the social stratification of the society. Thus, any economic social formation is related to a particular culture, and it is its class character in a capitalist society, which is above all emphasized by these theories. For this reason, orthodox Marxist interpretations of a theory on imperialism deal predominantly with the political and economic aspects of colonialism and imperialism, usually from a perspective which is located in the imperialistic metropolis; generally, problems of the interrelation of cultural suppression and imperialism are neglected. (Cf. the 'classical' as well as the more recent Marxist theorists: HOBSON 1954; HILFERDING 1922; LENIN 1968; LUXEMBURG 1963; BARAN/SWEEZY 1966; JALEE 1969; FRANK 1969; EMMANUEL 1972; AMIN 1976; MAGDOFF 1978 among others)

In more recent, neo-Marxist analyses (THOMSON 1978; WILLIS 1981; BOURDIEU 1982), which partially originate from LENIN (1968) and GRAMSCI (1971), class struggle is no longer considered as being limited to instrumental struggles for distribution, but is extended to the sphere of a struggle for cultural hegemony and recognition.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to see that the Marxist-inspired concept of basis and super-structure has its influence even among positivist and conservative social theories. D.BELL (1979) for example distinguishes between culture as an identity-safeguarding realm of sensibility, emotion, morality and of an intellectual ordering of all these emotions on the one hand, and a social structure on the other, which he defines as a techno-economic order. Likewise structuralist and objectivistic Marxists, also functionalist theorists like PARSONS (1948, 1971a, 1971b) and LUHMANN (1977) conceive social structure within the framework of their theory of systems as a sphere of norm-free sociality, and place aside the

3. The relevance of GRAMSCI's concept for the study of modern Thai politics and society is discussed in GIRLING 1984)



notion of culture as a cultural subsystem into the environs of the social system. HABERMAS (1984) finally has taken up DURKHEIM's and PARSONS' distinction respectively, between culture, society and the individual. He interpretes culture as hand down knowledge within the context of the 'life world' (Lebenswelt), which alongside with society and personality represents an empirical component of the 'life world' in distinction from the norm-free social system.

As opposed to the economism of the Marxist theoretical tradition, recent approaches argue that a primacy of the economy cannot always be taken for granted as an indisputable fact or be imposed as a norm of evidence. However, until now it remains unclear how the actual superiority of the capitalist economy, how the processes of cultural demolition in the course of the capitalist industrialization can be adequately comprehended without falling back on the insufficient concept of culture as a mere supplement of the dominant economic sphere.

Some recent reflections on this debate, as I see it, seem to aim into the right direction, insofar as culture and economy are no longer perceived as two relatively separate spheres in accordance with the HEGEL-MARX category of interaction between the basis and the super-structure, but instead of this interpret culture as a dimension which is also inherent to economic processes. Conflicts between the so-called First and the Third World then can be taken as conflicts between different economic and political structures and their accompanying cultural dimensions, and no longer appear as conflicts between the capitalist economy on the one hand and an old, traditional culture on the other.

Reflections on culture as a relatively independent social sphere as opposed to the 'hard' structures of economy and politics appear to be a rather doubtful conception, similar to the one defending the idea of the relatively autonomous and, as a result, underlying critical potential of culture. Both lines of thought seem to underestimate the social significance of culture, for economic processes, political power relations, and technical structures contain cultural dimensions already in themselves (BOURDIEU 1982), insofar as they require symbolic arrangements, modes of perception and schemes of interpretation. Thus, industrial processes of production do entail the norms of working and time discipline, and specific cultural perceptions of nature and the ways of its shaping will necessarily enter into the construction plans of technical procedures, like cultural perceptions about mobility are immanent to the construction of a car. Economic, technical and cultural processes are inseparably interwoven, and consequently they are the entirely opposite of independent spheres.

Along these lines culture can be conceived as dimensions of symbolic structures which are implicit to all social processes

(SAHLINS 1978; EDER 1988; WEISS 1988). According to such an understanding cultural exchange, cultural conflicts and contradictions not only take place in spheres where there happens to be an open confrontation between different values, norms, ways of life and artistic styles. Rather, the introduction of a certain technology has to be apprehended as a cultural process: already in its construction the technology comprises conceptions and ideas about the adequate forms of nature's moulding and the shaping of human labour. Thus, its application involves already economic as well as cultural conflicts.

According to such an understanding, the question no longer is, as to what value and norm conceptions are fundamental of human life experience. Such a question no longer is considered as one of mere cultural immanence, which appears to have nothing to do with the rational, efficiency-oriented, scientific logic of industrial technology and market economy. The question for example, as to what conditions would promote or subjugate human development of self-determination and self-consciousness can then be raised vis a vis technical and economic as well as against cultural structures and processes. Thus, culture can be defined as a dimension of human experience in general, which is involved in relations of power and rule, in economy and politics, in subjugation as well as in resistance.

Culture, economy and politics are inseparably interwoven with each other in the social and economic life of the individual. However, the characteristic and the critical potential of the cultural dimension is that the essence of human's conscious and deliberate shaping even of economy and politics may arise from cultural processes of understanding and mind-expansion, from conceptualizations of adequate human living experiences - beyond exploitation, humiliation and subjugation.

#### IV. AS HUMAN HISTORY DEMONSTRATES: CULTURAL PROCESSES AND ITS SPECIFIC HISTORICAL FORM OF PRODUCTION ARE INSEPARABLY INTERRELATED WITH EACH OTHER

In order to comprehend the interrelation of culture and economy, the material production should not be conceived as an abstract, general category, but it should rather be understood as a subject with its inevitable and definite features, depending on space and time. Only then, with the material production in its specific historical feature taken into account, we will be enabled to grasp the true character of the intellectual production, as well as the reciprocal interrelation of both sides. On the background of such a view the present situation in the so-called Third World has proven that independent cultural expressions and autonomous conceptions of value and belief systems have survived in those



areas and regions, where an agrarian system of subsistence is still the dominant mode of production. Only in connection with economic and social transformations the cultural manifestations will change likewise.

European history has given ample evidence of such a correlation: The modern European nations and the modern civil societies could emerge only when from the second half of the 15. century onward the power of the feudal lords was collapsing and monarchic systems based on nationalities could arise. The barriers of the old 'orbis terrarum' then were broken, the world was 'explored', and the foundation was laid for the world trade and the transition of the crafts into the manufacture industry of later periods, which again constituted the starting point for the modern heavy industry. In the same measure as the medieval mode of production developed into a capitalist one, culture, religious and secular values transformed likewise, and new, the whole society embracing ideologies appeared (Cf. BRAUDEL 1979; WALLERSTEIN 1974, 1980; WOLF 1982).

The national culture of present-day Thailand has developed in quite a similar way. Though it is of relatively recent date, it appears to the majority of the Thais with such a self-evidence that it is widely accepted without question. However, as KEYES (1987) has pointed out convincingly, although the Thai national culture has its roots in pre-modern Siam, its present feature took shape only during the second part of the nineteenth century in the wake of efforts to create a modern nation-state. What KEYES discreetly paraphrases as 'creation of a modern nation-state' in fact was nothing less than the gradual political, economical, and finally also cultural deprivation, subjugation and annexation of the people in the North, the Northeast and the South by Bangkok's central authority. The expansion of a Bangkok-based central administration, the formation of a national army and police, the introduction of a nation-wide unified, Bangkok-controlled juridical and educational system, as well as the creation of a centralized Buddhist Sangha organization was accompanied by the spread of a national ideology and a national culture at the expense of regional and ethnic traditions (Cf. also CHAIYAN 1984).

While in many parts of the world similar social transformations and, at the same time, comparable ideologies and cultural values have emerged, the cultures of the oare distinct from most other cultures due to some specific characteristics: To begin with, their ruling elites have developed an anthropocentrism, by which they placed themselves into the center of their world view (KIERNAN 1969). They soon started to subjugate the nature, to enslave other people and nations, to eradicate animals, and to deplete mineral resources by plundering without restraint.

From such an anthropocentrism the European ethnocentrism or eurocentrism evolved. These lines of thought are characterized by the conviction that the Western man and his culture or civilization respectively are superior to that of any other social formations. The feeling of superiority is based on the fact that only the industrial relations of productions appears to have the capacity to subject nature and environment.

In human history other cultures too had the tendency to place themselves into the center. But the simultaneous combination of anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism and capitalism was a unique feature of the European socio-historical development. The idea of global domination became manifest at a time when the ruling elites already had been commanding those power potentials necessary to enforce their claims economically, politically and militarily. This conception, which gave other cultures the status of inferiority, supported and strengthened all the well-known historical consequences. Thus, capitalist colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism made it possible to cover the whole world with ideologies of racial, cultural and civilizing superiority with all its notorious barbaric results.

**V. THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL-IMPERIALISM PORTRAYS IMPRESSIVELY THE CONSEQUENCES OF CULTURAL ALIENATION, BUT IT TENDS TO NEGLECT AN EXISTING CULTURAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND POTENTIAL OF RESISTANCE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE SO-CALLED THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES**

Whereas the term imperialism mainly refers to the political relations between the industrialized countries and the countries of the Third World (cf. III), the concept of cultural-imperialism is aimed at describing the problems of negation, repression, superimposition, conversion and/or destruction of material and intellectual manifestations of the peoples in America, Africa and Asia, a process initiated by the colonial powers (CESAIRE 1955; FANON 1967, 1968, 1969, 1972; N'KRUMAH 1964; CABRAL 1974; BIKO 1979).

Cultural-imperialism is based on quite obvious as well as on more concealed economic and political interests. It covers more or less all spheres of social life: the sphere of material production, i.e. destruction of crafts, or introduction of the plantation economy for instance, the sphere of social and political organizations, i.e. religious and secular missionary work, introduction of alien legal, educational (CARNOY 1974; ALTBACH & KELLY 1977; DALE 1982), and health systems, the sphere of relationships among the members of society, i.e. between man and woman, parents and children (BOSERUP 1970; ROGERS 1980; ETIENNE & LEACOCK 1980), employer and employee etc., the sphere of lan-



guage, art (PAZ 1972), nutrition habits, housing, means of transportation, etc.

Colonialism and imperialism, often accompanied by the proceeding destruction of traditional cultures, are closely associated with more or less open forms of racism (ZUBAIDA 1971). From such a perspective the peoples of the Third World countries are perceived as underdeveloped, primitive, emotional, childish, naive, but as being inclined to aggressive and violent forms of conflict-solving, and with regards to their intellectual competence they are characterized as retarded, deficient, clumsy, not motivated by achievement, and not being able to think in abstract, logical categories. Such stereotypes form the ideological basis of economic, political and cultural subjugation.<sup>4</sup>

On the level of social groups imperialism in its cultural manifestation results in material, social and intellectual pauperization, in social disintegration, alienation from the inherited culture, lack of orientation, split of personalities, apathy, passivity, autism, fatalism, superstition, crises of identity, psychosomatic symptoms, delinquency, paranoia etc.

The theories of cultural-imperialism are mostly restricted to an analysis of the impacts of cultural alienation on a social or psychological-individual level, and they are likely to ignore, that from the very beginning of the colonial era there had been actions of non-cooperation and resistance, boycotts, strikes, riots and even attempts of political and military struggles for liberation. Among a large number of resistance movements the call for cultural self-determination played an important role besides the demands for economic and political independence, cf. the Negritude<sup>5</sup>, the Black-Consciousness Movement, the Islamic Movement (HODGKIN 1980), the American Indian Movement for example.

No matter what its appearance was like - economic, military or cultural - imperialism and colonialism have always evoked anti-colonial or anti-imperialist reactions of resistance. However,

4. Personal characteristics of this nature are not seldom eagerly accepted by the elites of Third World countries, integrated into their dominant national ideologies, and turned against own social strata, minorities or neighbouring countries.

5. Authors of the Negritude like C.A.DIOP (1959), A.CESAIRE (1968), L.S.SENHOR (1961) among others describe in their numerous scientific and literary publications their painful experiences of cultural uprooting: The domination of the White Man, which has penetrated even into their dreams and sexual lives, into their thoughts and languages. In their analysis of the impact of colonial rule they finally want to create an economic, political and ideological framework for the preservation and even developing of a new society based on its own traditional values.

the past and present history of resistance was and is full of contradictions. As the examples of many countries have shown, anti-imperialist resistance was and is in no way tantamount to an overcoming of the oppressor's culture, and does not necessarily imply the establishment of a new, just and more humane system of values<sup>6</sup>. The complicated relationship between material and cultural production, as outlined above (III.), suggest that for societies and nations under colonial and imperial rule the main question is as to whether they have the ability to develop their own, positive material and cultural structures as early as during the course of their struggle for independence, in the fold of the old society already. As FANON said:

*'While the masses confront their colonial situation with their heterogeneous traditions, while the style of handicrafts increasingly becomes a victim of a stereotyped formalism, the intellectual desperately and frantically plunges into adopting the occupant's culture. In doing so he does not fail to depreciate his own national culture, or he takes shelter behind*

*a detailed, methodological, passionate, but sooner or later sterile enumeration of the values of his own culture. Both attempts end up in intolerable contradictions. Whether as a defector or a consolidator, the colonized subject remains ineffective, because he has not undertaken a serious and precise analysis of the colonial situation.*

(F.FANON, in: 'Gegenseitige Begründung von Nationalkultur und Befreiungskampf, quoted from: HORLEMANN 1988)

The struggle for liberation cannot return to the old values and features of the traditional culture. If it aspires to bring about a basic reorganization of human relations, it cannot leave out forms and substance of culture. Yet, as the example of many countries demonstrates, there is no uniform result. Whether independence was 'granted' or achieved through a struggle of liberation, signs of 'cultural heterogeneity' in the sense of a loss of 'cultural identity' became apparent in many Third World countries of today. Their societies are characterized by a co-existence of sometimes contradictory cultural conceptions, which in most cases move into a direction of an increased disintegration as a result of internal social contradictions or/and external affects (BERGER, BERGER & KELLNER 1974; CONSTANTINO 1978). Studying the historical example of Europe it becomes evident that the question as to whether those countries will develop substantially or remain in a state of 'underdevelopment' does not depend in the first place on the influence of so-called development-promoting or development-retarding cultural elements, but will rather be contingent upon the societies' and regions' socio-cultural and

6. Most prominent horrible example of recent times: Iran



institutional conditions of growth.

The cultures of the industrialized countries have not ceased to dominate the cultures of the African, Asian and Latin American countries despite the latter's' formal political independence. The continuing exploitation of natural resources, the export of industrial plants, modern technologies, as well as social forms of production, and the expansion of trade and of markets for industrial products result in constantly renewed arrangements, agreements, and contracts between the industrialized and the so-called developing countries. These relations do not only stand for the Western culture's continuing domination of the Third World countries, but also imply an increasingly stronger hold of more and more areas of their societies. Not only machines and medicine are imported, but also consumer goods, which alongside with a control of the mass media exert their influence upon life style, language and mentality.

As it seems, the prospects of a new combination of material and non-material resources, a release of hitherto obstructed development stimuli, and thus establishing a basis of a new material and intellectual production will emerge only through the struggle for political change.

*'Whenever the process of colonization with its dominant culture has been initiated, the local culture is swallowed up and a bastard pseudo-culture is left behind, which is allowed to grow to such an extent and at such a pace as it is conceded by the dominant culture. It is finally called a subculture, because in the urban centers the Africans imitate the White Men without shame.*

*However, by rejecting the values of the occident, we not only reject values alien to us, but also decline to accept that what attempts to destroy our dearest ideals, namely, that man in all his diversity is the cornerstone of society, and not simply his physical well-being. We reject the power-oriented societies of the occident, which seem to work hard and persistently on the completion of their technological knowledge, while at the same time their inner life is losing continually.'*

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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7. Steve BIKO (1979), who was a theoretical and organizational leader of the Black Consciousness Movement until he was murdered by the South-African Government

VI. 'CULTURAL EXCHANGE', 'CULTURAL AID', 'INTER-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION' ETC. ARE CONCEPTS OF A CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE THIRD WORLD, WHICH HELP TO DISGUISE THE FACT THAT CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE IS ALWAYS DETERMINED BY THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POWER RELATIONS OF SUPER- AND SUBORDINATION

Demands for 'opening' and 'openness' in international cultural relations, for 'exchange of experience', for 'lifting of restrictions', and 'overcoming of barriers' - like the ideology of 'free trade' claims that both sides involved in such an exchange will benefit in the end. However, just as the call for 'open markets' will be profitable only for the economically powerful, the industrial nations' quest for a 'lifting of cultural barriers' is nothing but an attempt to get the developing countries' markets ready for an overall cultural export of the industrial nations. Yet, another aspect of such an unequal relationship is the expropriation of 'profitable', 'marketable' cultural achievements of Third World countries - and this is the reason why the emphasis is put on 'exchange' and 'partnership'.

For a number of years, with regards to the so-called cooperation of development between the First and the Third World, the so-called cultural aid has assumed a permanent place, and the 'socio-cultural dimensions' were added to the official development policy, because in the course of the implementation of various development schemes socio-cultural development obstacles had been found. Hence, the discussion turned to new developmental approaches which seemed to be apt to incorporate social, cultural, and, very recently, also ecological variables. Nevertheless, as a theoretical pioneer of the West-German policy of development aid has lately explained quite frankly:

*'Development, as we understand it today, and as it is of course also understood by the developing countries, these days is to a great extent identical with the transfer of our technology, the transfer of our way of life, the transfer of our Western rational logic and structures of thought.'* (KOEHLER 1978)

In fact, the policy of development by the First towards the Third World is determined by the conviction that science and technology are products of the West, and consequently also the Western value system has to be taken over by those who want to apply the achievements of modern technical sciences.

If, thus, culture is conceived as the totality of all material and intellectual manifestations of life, it becomes evident that the official governmental measures of cultural exchange, as outlined above, (in Thailand the language courses of the British Council or AUA, the movies and concerts of the Alliance Francaise or the Goethe-Institut, the allocation of funds for the restora-



tion of an old temple, for instance) constitute only a small part of an overall cultural confrontation which is dominated by the economic relations between the industrialized countries of the First World and the developing countries of the Third World. Not a guest concert by the London Symphony Orchestra in Bangkok expresses the cultural exchange between Thailand and the Western world in the first place, but rather it is represented by BMW and IBM, by Coca-Cola and McDonalds. Not the cultural institutes of the Western countries in Bangkok stand for Thailand's cultural relations to the European states or the USA, but rather the consumer goods in Maa Bukhrong and Central Plaza, the aura of entertainment places like Happy Land, Silom Plaza, or Nasa. Not a sociocritical movie presented by AUA or the Goethe-Institut form the Thais' picture of Western societies, but Rambo and Schwarzenegger, Dallas and Dynasty, or Asian soft operas produced following the model of American ones. Not Beethoven or Shakespeare are Western ideals, but rather marketing products and advertising columns like Madonna and Porn-tip. The Government's cultural policy of the Western industrial nations is only the lubricating paste of a plastic-, pop-, fast-food- and Video-TV-culture, a cheap version of the glitter-glamour consumer world of the West, which is increasingly flooding the markets of the Third World countries.

The cultural relations between the First and the Third World are a reflection of the economic conditions of dependence. Nowadays, the cultures of the developing countries are totally flooded by short-lived junk products of the West. This process is pushed ahead by the organization of the mass media and means of communication (SMITH 1980, 1982), by advertising and transfer of technology, all being inspired and dominated by Western examples.

Within the circles of the Third World countries' ruling elites the described development leads to a disintegration of consciousness and culture, which end in what I have called 'cultural heterogeneity' above (cf. IV.): On the one hand cultural elements of Western societies are eagerly adopted by at least parts of the elite, while on the other hand a consolidation of traditional values and behavioural orientations are provoked in order to establish protective measures against a threatening loss of identity as a result of the cultural foreign infiltration. The economic crisis is accompanied by a crisis of mentality. An expression of this crisis is the propensity of parts of the elite and other strata of the population to welcome apodictic and dogmatic theories of secular or religious contents.<sup>8</sup>

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8. In Thai urban areas the increased popularity of Buddhist sects and the revival of Animistic practices may be seen as an indication of such a trend. (MULDER 1985)

A true cultural exchange, based on equal relations, should imply on the side of the Western industrial nations their readiness to develop a self-critical appreciation of all relevant international problems and to accept their historical responsibility for the damage to man and nature that has been caused by the international capitalist world order in the course of several centuries. The discussion about the culture of Third World countries cannot be separated from a fundamental criticism of the capitalist societies' culture. Moreover, only a glance forward and beyond the limits of a capitalist social order will provide prospects for a global cultural dialogue, based upon mutuality and equality.

Besides, a true dialogue with a foreign culture requires mutual acknowledgment and respect for the other's particular features. This is not to deny the necessity to find an understanding about basic values (human rights, for example), which will not tolerate a cultural development that is linked to the barbarism of colonialism and imperialism. It also implies a rejection of the theories of cultural relativism, which proliferated in modern anthropology and ethnology.





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