*O*rientales

Langues, cultures, pratiques

Sous la direction de

Mariarosaria GIANNINOTO
& Abdenbi LACHKAR

1
2023

Orientales

n° 1
Langues, cultures, pratiques

Numéro dirigé par

Mariarosaria Gianninoto & Abdenbi Lachkar

Sommaire/*Contents*

Catholic Marriage and Concubinage in Seventeenth-Century China: Conflict and Compromise

Zhang Rui

(East China Normal University, Shanghai, China)

Introduction[1]

China, in a certain sense, was always fertile ground for Christianity. The Celestial Empire was ruled by the so-called "pagan philosophers" (Fitzgerald 1966, 121) more interested in the enhancement of ethical doctrine than in the promotion of religious beliefs. In the first half of the seventeenth century, China welcomed the well-known Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci[2] who adopted the concept of "inculturation".[3] Although this is a recent coinage, the enculturated message has worked to bring the Gospel, in the meanwhile to deepen the encounter between Christianity and Chinese culture. Moreover, it shaped the future directions of the culture itself and raised significant questions about the form in which the Gospel was presented (Phan 1998, 8).

In the Late Ming period (1368-1644), missionaries faced new difficulties arising from the thousand-year-old traditions of Chinese civilization, a completely different scenario to that of other cultures hitherto evangelized. While recognizing the good will of those European missionaries committed to bringing Western science

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2. For the life of Matteo Ricci, see *Atti e memorie del Convegno di geografi orientalisti tenuto in Macerata il 25, 26, 27 settembre 1910*, 1911; see also (Caraci 1918-24; Baddeley 1917; Headwood 1917, 254 segg.; Giles 1918, 367–85, Giles 1919, 19–30; Soothill 1927, 532 segg.; Bernard 1928; Hsia 2010; Fontana 2011).

3. For the history of the term "inculturation", see (Crollius 1978, 721–738, Shorter 1988, 3–16; Schineller 1990, 14–27; Arbuckle 1990, 17–20).

and Christianity, according to the Chinese mentality at that time it was difficult both to accept the Gospel and at the same time to renounce all their preexisting culture and ritual practices based on the teaching of Confucius (551 BC–479 BC) and his successors. In contrast to other religions which prescribe certain cultic acts, Confucianism[4] is more an ethico-political system than a religion. Its central virtue *ren* 仁 contains a complex of moral disposition and emphasizes the value of "reciprocity" as Confucius's saying: "Never do to others what you would not like them do to you." (*Analects*, XV, 23) Another important concept is "filial piety" or "reverence toward parents" (*xiao* 孝), a value that by late imperial times was embedded in the core of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy accepted by most Chinese (Standaert 2008, 11).

In an important historical study of Christianity in Asia, Peter C. Phan points out that "inculturation is the process whereby the Christian faith is integrated into the culture of the people to whom the Good News is preached in such a way that both the faith is expressed in the elements of this culture and transforms it from within, and the culture in turn enriches and transforms the previous expressions of the Christian faith brought in from outside" (Phan 1998, 289). Indeed, the search for a compromise between Christianity and a Chinese society steeped in the teaching of Confucianism led to forms of a "Chinese-style" Catholicism, which soon became the subject of debates among the missionaries themselves. Christian tradition is often associated with orthodoxy, while Chinese tradition is associated with orthopraxy (Standaert 2008, 182). European missionaries and Chinese converts made enormous effort and sacrifices in order to adapt Christianity to Confucianism and, more generally, to Chinese society (and vice versa). In reality, new converts to Christianity in China often found themselves in deep conflict with social and cultural values and practices.[5] Such was the case of marriage and the taking of concubines: while the Ten Commandments urged people not to commit adultery, the Confucian tradition required a couple to have a male offspring, even if it meant taking a concubine. For the Chinese women, being filial meant accepting marriage and its reproductive expectations within the patriarchal organization of family life. They were required to be obedient to their in-law and husband, though the polygamy was a common phenomenon in the Chinese society. In the Ming periods, this kind of obedience extended even beyond the spouse's death, in the institution of chaste widowhood (Menegon 2009, 304).

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4. Confucianism formed the moral basis of Chinese society and Confucius's thought was recorded as a series of ethical and political precepts. Much importance is given to culture, considered the main way for the perfection of a man's life. The so-called Confucius cult, that is, the veneration of the spirit of Confucius, was an important tradition practiced throughout the territory of the Chinese Empire. According to historian Thomas Wilson, in the imperial pantheon of gods and spirits, temples dedicated to the veneration of Confucius occupied a fundamental place in religious life in China. See (Wilson 1995; Wilson 1996, 559–584; Wilson 2002).

5. The neophytes had to be reinterpreted in a new hierarchy of meaning, dominated by the Christian god and only in a second degree by Confucius, who represented the orthodox social order and the patriarchal hierarchy. See (Menegon 2009, 355).

As Christians, the Jesuits could not but regard it as immoral; as missionaries, they made the dismissal of "concubines" the condition for baptism, since the monogamy was on the basis of Genesis's account of the creation of Adam and Eve: "they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). There is no wonder that the polygamy, viewed as contrary to the Christian faith, would constitute one of the most serious challenges to the work of European missionaries in China. The tensions that may have arisen in the Chinese Christian communities and that are directly linked with the abandon of concubinage were to a large extent caused by the "imperative" of the missionaries (Standaert 2008, 182), who wanted marriage to be brought into line with the orthodoxy of the Christian faith. In a certain sense, new converts and missionaries torn between two cultures, played a role of cultural "intermediaries",[6] and belonged to both of them and to neither of them. Therefore, the central question becomes: what happened to Catholic marriage and concubinage after the European and Chinese traditions came into contact with each other?

The present research attempts to present the complexity of the history of contacts between cultures, particularly the system of marriage and concubinage, which is ultimately founded on a specific theory of alterity.[7] It analyzes how the missionaries dealt with this issue and will focus on the paradigm shift from a mainly missiological and Eurocentric viewpoint to a sinological and Sinocentric approach, characterized by, among other things, the use of Chinese texts as primary sources for research and taking the Chinese actors as primary subjects. By looking at the texts written by Chinese authors it seeks to understand how the neophytes reacted to the Catholic values as transmitted by the missionaries. It is noteworthy that the uniqueness of the seventeenth-century China is that communication between the two parties took place in the Chinese language, and not in any European one. Finally, this article will offer a detailed case study of Wang Zheng, a converted Mandarin who was required to separate from his concubine by the Church authorities, at a time when concubinage was permitted by imperial law in order to guarantee descendants for dignitaries as was required by tradition.

The Question of Concubinage

In the final years of the Ming dynasty, faced with the Manchu invasion,[8] many Chinese literati suggested Western studies as a way to strengthen the empire. The Jesuits took advantage of this opportunity and introduced cartography, mathematics, the production of weapons and machines. Thanks to European science, the

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6. On the topic on cultural intermediacy, see (Curto 2005; Vovelle 1981).

7. Some scholars point out the theory of alterity which can be explained as the view of the human being in relation to the other. See (Standaert 2002, 28f.; Todorov 1979 and 1982).

8. The Manchu people conquered all of China and called the new empire the Great Qing 大清, with this name, they ruled China for the next three centuries. On the Manchu conquest of China, see (Crossley 2002, 310–359).

literati became increasingly interested in Western philosophy and religion, and came to consider them as a necessary tool to counter the decline of the Ming State.[9] In spite of the interest shown by the Mandarins in Christianity and Western sciences, the number of converts did not satisfy Rome. Father Matteo Ricci argued that it was a time more for sowing than reaping, and it was not possible to estimate the success of their work by the number of Christians (Venturi ed. 1911–1913, 338). He also encouraged a certain degree of compromise as a longer-term strategy for conversion, which further provoked criticism from within a Church that did not accept compromises and proposed absolute dogmas and truths. Meanwhile, the Chinese thought that there were multiple ways to reach the truth which had colored their perception of Christianity. For Chinese peasants, the Christian religion was a form of devotion imbued with magic. The Madonna and the saints were seen as thaumaturges and dispensers of graces and miracles. They converted to Christianity only when they were convinced that Western religion was a more effective form of worship than their traditional ones, or because they considered the missionaries more charitable than Buddhist or Taoist monks. In fact, baptism never prevented neophytes from retaining the former cult and protective spirits they had always revered.

One of the most significant obstacles to the propagation of the faith, especially among literati and Mandarins, was polygamy, a prominent practice in an ancient culture based on Confucian philosophy, which was described by Matteo Ricci as "a chain difficult to break". Indeed, Ricci's first and most important disciple, Qu Taisu 瞿太素, wanted to have a son from his own concubine (Fontana 2011, 229–230). In the Ming dynasty, the number of concubines to which a *jinshi* 進士 degree-holder[10] was eligible was based on social status: the Ming code established the precise age limits for cohabitation with concubines according to the hierarchy of nobility. For example, the *Qi qie shi xu* 妻妾失序 (Rules of marriage and concubinage) prescribed a "penalty" for "any man over forty who has no children and had not taken a concubine" (Huang 2005, 41). According to an official from Henan province, Fan Yongluan 范永鑾, the *Da Ming Lü* 大明律 (Law of the Great Ming empire) should be applied both to Mandarins and commoners. It asserted that those who were under forty, or those who had already turned forty but had sons, could not have concubines, otherwise they would be punished. The feudal lords of the Chinese empire could theoretically have as many concubines as they wanted without asking for permission, a rule that was changed when Emperor

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9. For example: Jiang Dejing 蔣德璟 read the book of Giulio Aleni *Xifang Da Wen* 西方答問 (Questions and Answers Regarding the West), Feng Quan 馮銓 helped the missionary von Schall to become an official of the astronomical office; Zeng Ying 曾櫻, after meeting Giulio Aleni, helped and protected the missionaries in Fujian; Liu Yuliang 劉宇亮 offered various aids to missionaries; Shi Kefa 史可法 asked Giulio Aleni to go to Macao for help, including weapons, to save the Ming empire which was in danger of falling. See (Huang 2005).

10. *Jinshi* 進士 is similar to the title of doctor in the West. It was the highest rank in the imperial exam system and awarded every three years in the capital of the empire.

Jiajing 嘉靖 (r. 1521–1567) set the limit at ten concubines. For members of the imperial family, the number and age of concubines varied according to their ranks. However, this code was often ignored and never applied in practice. The consequence was that all men were free to take as many concubines as they wished, and the practice remained widespread. In 1516, the wife and concubine of the Mandarin Yang Shen 楊慎 gave birth at the same time, when he was twenty-nine years old; in 1522, the concubine of the Mandarin Huo Tao 霍韜 gave birth just five months after his wife, when Huo was thirty-six. Due to the wife's infertility, the young Mandarin Shao Jingbang 邵經邦 took Ding 丁氏 and Li 李氏 as concubines. However, at the age of forty, in 1531, Shao still had no son, and decided to take another concubine, Liu 劉氏; the Mandarin Wu Peng 吳鵬, already married with sons, took another woman as concubine at the age of thirty-three in 1533; Wu Ti 吳悌 was another Mandarin who had a son with his wife at the age of twenty-five, but was still looking for another a concubine at the age of forty-five, in 1547 (Huang 2005, 42–43).

There were various debates within the imperial court on the laws that regulated marriage. For example: *Da Ming lü fuli zhujie* 大明律附例註解 which means *Notes on the Great Ming Law*, written by Yao Siren 姚思仁 at the end of the reign of Emperor Wanli 萬曆 (r. 1572–1620), emphasized that the law must be applied not only to commoners, but also to Mandarins of various ranks (Yao 1993, 3); instead, the governor of Zhejiang, Gao Ju 高舉, in 1610 reiterated that Mandarins should not be included in this law (Gao 1969, 10). This law remained in force until Qing dynasty and it was abolished only in 1740, under the reign of Qianlong 乾隆 (Ma & Yang 1992, 445).

In general, the Chinese tradition allowed anything that would not cause dishonor to close relatives; therefore, many types of concubinage were accepted even if the law prohibited them.[11] This was in accordance with Confucian philosophy which made individual circumstances, such as personal honor, prevail over written codifications of the law. Therefore, in practice many different forms of concubinage were allowed in China in the Ming and Qing period, demonstrating the flexibility of the traditional system. It was normal to ask someone's wife not only not to treat concubines badly, but also to help in choosing a fertile concubine. This phenomenon was widespread in Yangzhou, a historic and rich city located on the great canal, where many families raised their daughters to then offer them to a good family as concubines (Zhang 1986, vol. 5). This deeply engrained tradition to ensure family succession would, of course, cause tension and conflict between the Church and potential converts.

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11. Although the prohibition of marriages between people of different social status was established already in the Ming and Qing codes, the restrictions were never taken seriously. Taking a woman of lower social status as a concubine, even a prostitute, was always accepted in spite of the law. See (Bao 1993, 5).

The Reaction of Missionaries

From their first contacts with Chinese civilization, missionaries had to contend with and combat the issue of concubinage. After his arrival in Goa, Francis Xavier had noticed the phenomenon of concubinage among Portuguese sailors, who often took local girls as concubines. He considered this practice contrary to the Commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and required sailors to marry their concubines or to leave them. In Chinese culture, there were ancient heroes that people considered venerable men, such as the emperors Yu Shun 虞舜 and Zhou Wenwang 周文王, both with wives and concubines. When asked by Chinese scholars to evaluate the lives of these emperors, Christians had difficulty, and gave different answers: Jesuit father Giulio Aleni feared "that Wenwang would go to hell", and the Catholic Zhang Geng 張賡 did not believe that those emperors had all those women. As for Matteo Ricci, he believed that in ancient times it might have been necessary to increase the population, but once this was no longer necessary, it was better to abandon certain traditions (Huang 2005, 138). While Ricci's companion, the Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja recalled that even in Europe, concubinage was practiced "to expand the human family", according to the divine plan.[12] Finally, the French Jesuit Joseph-Anne-Marie de Moyriac de Mailla argued that the emperors Yu Shun and Zhou Wenwang were born before Christ, so they "could not follow his Commandments" (Mailla 2000, 60).

According to one of the most prestigious exponents of Confucianism, Mencius 孟子 (372 BC–289 BC), the most serious fault according to Confucian doctrine was to live without a descendant (Mencius, chap. 26). This is illustrated through an interesting dialogue between Giulio Aleni and his friend Huang, who was looking for a concubine because he did not have a son (Zürcher 2007, vol. 2, 659).[13] Aleni underlined the equality between men and women and believed that the practice of concubinage was unreasonable:

> HUANG: I have the utmost respect for the Ten Commandments! But the sixth Commandment tells us not to commit adultery, and thus forbids concubinage. I am already in an advanced age and I have no son. If I don't take a concubine, I'll end up being dishonored. What can I do?
> ALENI: But what if you marry another woman and then remain the same situation without a son?
> HUANG: That's true…

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12. See (DIEGO DE PANTOJA, 1798, vol. I, 25r-25v) which can be found in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Rac. Gen. Or. III, 183. There is a manuscript version in BAV, borg. cin. 329, 3°-6°, n°180 which is a revised edition by Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠; another version can be found in BAV, borg. cin. 332, 3°-4° which is a part of *Tianxue Chuhan* 天學初函 (First Collection of *Learning from Heaven*); and also in BAV, borg. cin. 342.

13. The manuscript can be found in ARSI (Archivum Romanum Societas Iesu), Jap. Sin. I.81, Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulüe 艾儒略), Andrzej Rudomina (Lu Ande 盧安德), *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (Diary of Oral Admonitions), vol. 2, f. 28r-29r.

> ALENI: Accept what Nature wants to give you. Marriage is the right way, not concubinage. Taking a concubine, it does not mean that you will have a son, and even if the son comes, at what price! It is true that if children do not come, it might be the fault of the women, but sometimes it depends also on men. If a man invokes the Confucian principle of *ren* (compassion) to take another woman, therefore can a woman also invoke the same principle if her husband is unable to give her a son?

Not committing adultery therefore appears to have been contrary to Chinese traditions and honor. Some missionaries, however, took a different approach to convince the literati. In a letter from the Jesuit missionary Louis le Comte to his friend François d'Aix de la Chaise, confessor of Louis XIV, one can find that some missionaries allowed Chinese men, if their wives refused to convert to Catholicism, to take a concubine, with a commitment thereafter to respect the Ten Commandments. But since Chinese society forbade the change of wives without a valid reason, these missionaries obtained few successful results (Le Comte 1698, 408–409).

Before turning to the main example of this article, it is worth noting that the Confucian requirement for descendants also meant that celibacy for the clergy caused tensions. The missionaries once hoped that married men could be ordained in the Far East, having testified to the excellent work of evangelization carried out by married converts. Celibacy for local clergy of course was and remains a contested and debated issue for the Catholic Church in many regions of the world (Rossigno 2008, 103), and the Chinese example arising from Confucian obligations was just one example of this kind. The final section of this article tells the story of how a converted Mandarin struggled with his internal conflicts and dealt with the cultural tensions between Confucian expectations and those of his newly acquired Catholicism.

The Conversion of a Mandarin

Wang Zheng 王徵 (1571-1644) was a Mandarin of the Ming dynasty who was born in Luqiao 魯橋 village in Jingyang (now Sanyuan 三原), Shaanxi Province 陝西. In the thirteenth year of Emperor Wanli (1585), Wang had just turned fifteen and married his aunt Shang's 尚氏 niece. As a child he was taught by his uncle Zhang Jian 張鑒, a famous Confucian and scholar. One of his theories stated that "the key to Confucian doctrine is to be honest with yourself". The path to holiness comes when we "think about our past and we are aware that we have no regrets for what we have done" (Song, Song ed. 2004, 4–5). Wang participated several times in the imperial examinations in Beijing, and it was there where he met for the first time the Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and subsequently received baptism. A few years later, he passed the exam and became a *jinshi* degree-holder in the second year of Emperor Tianqi 天啟 (1622) when he was fifty-two years old (Huang 2005, 144).

According to the tradition, a *jinshi* should take a concubine to be commensurate with his new social status, but Wang, having already received baptism, immediately wrote to his family that he would never take any concubines. Furthermore, he told the family that he became a *jinshi* only because of grace received from the Lord Jesus Christ and he absolutely could not disobey the Ten Commandments (Zürcher 2007, vol. 31, 647).

In June of the same year, Wang was appointed as an official of Guangping Prefecture (廣平府) in the Zhili 直隸 region and consequently the whole family moved to that city. Wang's wife gave birth to several sons but unfortunately, they all died young, and only two daughters survived. According to the tradition, the male child was considered the only legitimate heir of a family. Therefore, Wang entered in a period of crisis. His wife begged him to take a concubine, so did his brothers and nephews, and even his father ordered him to do so (Guo, Song ed. 2004, 334). On the one hand, Confucian tradition and morality imposed the responsibility of providing a male descendant for the family; on the other hand, Christian beliefs urged him to renounce concubinage in order not to commit adultery. Wang was a follower of Diego de Pantoja, author of *Qi Ke* 七克 (*Overcoming the seven deadly sins*), in which the Confucian tradition of concubinage was severely criticized in the third chapter of the book. Faced with a choice of this magnitude, the Mandarin Wang remained perplexed, as did his entourage. In the end, tradition won, although not publicly. Wang, in the following year, took as his concubine a fifteen-year-old girl named Shen 申氏 (1609–1678) and kept it quiet. If not for this choice, many Chinese Catholics would have considered him as an exemplary convert.

In March 1624, Wang's stepmother Zheng died. According to the Chinese mourning rite (*dingyou* 丁憂), Wang had to return to his place of origin, so he invited the Jesuit Nicolas Trigault to accompany him to preach the Gospel in the province of Shaanxi. Fr. Trigault stayed there for almost six months and baptized Wang's family. Thanks to this trip, Fr. Trigault became the first missionary to have visited the "Nestorian" stele of Xi'an, discovered just around that period (Song, Song ed. 2004, 39–40).

As a result of this trip to Wang's birthplace, his concubine was discovered. The Mandarin, knowing that he had committed a "mortal sin", asked the Jesuit Father for confession, but Trigault refused, explaining that the sin must be eliminated at its root. Repentant, Wang decided to let his young concubine marry another man. But Shang, Wang's wife, opposed the decision to remove the girl who was willing to convert herself even to Christianity in order not to have to leave the house. Finally, Wang did not make any decision, and continued to take responsibility for supporting both women at home (Huang 2005, 145). Wang's inner conflict was echoed in the epitaph of his father, who died a few years later in 1628. He asked his friend Zheng Man to write an epitaph showing that he himself had already taken his nephew Yongchun 永春, son

of brother Hui 徽, as an adopted son, a decision which had allowed Wang to escape from the Confucian social pressure (*ibid.*, 159).

In old age, Wang returned to his place of origin. According to *The Biography of Shen* (*Shen shi xiaozhuan* 申氏小傳) in the *Luqiao Yearbook* (*Luqiao zhenzhi* 魯橋鎮志), Wang was worried about the fate of the Ming empire, then threatened by the Manchu invasion. From that time forward, he decided not to enter his concubine's chamber anymore. In the end, the period of cohabitation with his concubine was so short that Shen had never become pregnant at all. Wang, after his retirement, became more and more reserved and devoted. In 1636 he bought a hill, south of the city of Jingyang, on which to build a monastery, where he could retire to a hermit's life to atone for his sins (Wang, Song ed. 2004, 200). The reasons why he went into retreat were explained his diary, called *Chongyi Tang Riji Suibi* 崇一堂日記隨筆 (Diary of Chongyi Tang).[14] In this writing, he recounted the meeting with Fr. J. A. Schall which had taken place a few years earlier in Xi'an, describing several examples of saints who had chosen to live a monastic lifestyle and devote themselves to prayer and contemplation of the Lord. Wang himself analyzed and reflected upon the contradictions between traditional Chinese culture and Christianity. He traced the contradiction to the Chinese devotion to the Confucian teaching to strive to be the first, the best, and the most privileged in life and in society. He was amazed at the alternative Christian teaching that the last would be first. In spite of the difficulty and required effort, the missionaries asked the faithful to leave everything[15] in order to follow the Lord, since the true kingdom would be in Heaven.

During the years of retreat, Wang wrote the *Huoren danfang* 活人丹方 (Collection of Useful Precepts for Living) to counteract his sins and vices, and to spread the Catholic faith. He invited people to love their neighbors and to follow the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, and the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Strength and Temperance. It was through baptism (defined by Wang's friend Han Yun, transliterated as "badisimo shui" 拔弟斯摩水, which is baptismal water) that one could gain access to eternal life.

At the age of sixty-six, Wang Zheng decided to end his concubinage permanently. In his writing entitled *Qiqing jie zui qigao* 祈請解罪啟稿 (Liberation from the Sins) (BAV, borg. cin. 336, vol. 3, 45r–47r.), he argued that sins must be eradicated at the root. To be forgiven by the Lord, Wang renounced the *more uxorio* bond with his concubine Shen, solemnly undertaking to consider her as a friend. In reality, this had no legal or social effect, because after Wang's death, Shen would assume, as we shall see, the responsibility for the whole family. It was Wang's own

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14. This literally means *Diary of Chongyi Tang. Chongyi Tang* 崇一堂 was the name of the Chongzhen church in Xi'an. *Chongyi* in Chinese means to venerate the One (God). In 1630, Wang Zheng stayed with Fr. Schall for ten days in the Chongyi Tang church. Wang's diary can be found today in the BAV, borg. cin. 336, vol. 3.

15. Wang in the diary confessed that adultery was the greatest temptation to be overcome (*ibid.*, 36v).

wife who asked Shen to return and to take care of the children which was the tradition of society at that time.

Wang's retired life lasted until October 1643, when the new emperor, Li Zicheng 李自成 of the ephemeral Shun dynasty, wanted him to be his official. Wang refused, ready to pay with his life in order to give himself totally to the Lord, a will that he would pass on to his adopted son Yongchun. The latter, faced with Wang's determination who awaited the arrival of the envoy of the new emperor with sword in hand, ready to die, said: "Father, you don't have to worry, your son will go to Emperor Li today and to offer him his life instead of yours." Wang replied: "I prefer to give myself death and to affirm my honor and fidelity rather than to have your life sacrificed, my son!" (Qu, Song ed. 2004, 217).

Wang's story ended with a violent inner struggle between the observance of Christian Commandments and the Confucian concept of fidelity, which would eventually prevail. Wang stopped eating and died after seven days. Before dying, he pronounced these words: "When I think of my country, tears fall from my eyes, when I turn my thoughts to my Sovereign, I am alone with a great sadness" (Zha, Song ed. 2004, 215–216). Although he converted to Christianity, the Confucian Mandarin remained deeply attached to his culture, rooted in the totally secular social context of seventeenth century in China.

After Wang's death, his wife Shang was gripped by grief. Concubine Shen refused food and wanted to die as well. Shang recognized Shen as a member of the family and asked her not to sacrifice her own life because she now had the responsibility of taking care of the family and looking after it. As a sign of fidelity to the deceased Wang, Shen cut her hair and slashed her face.[16] The life of Shen, the Catholic Wang's concubine, was really difficult. In that large family, she was considered only a mistress of the Mandarin. Wang's wife died within a few years, so did Yongchun, the adopted son, who left behind a son and a daughter. To support the grandchildren, Shen set out to work as a seamstress. When she turned seventy, her grandson Wang Tianyan 王瑱延 invited the Mandarins of the new dynasty to celebrate his grandmother's birthday, but Shen refused to accept it. She said that she was the concubine of an official from the previous dynasty and that her husband died as a result of the change of dynasty. How could she celebrate together with the officials of the new dynasty? She lived only to keep her promise to Wang's wife (Huang 2005, 155). Once she had completed her task, all she wanted to do was to allow herself to starve to death, just as Wang Zheng had done. In this way, the future generations could remember her as a second mother, instead of a concubine.

The example of the Mandarin Wang Zheng highlights the ideological conflicts, especially with regard to concubinage and suicide, between traditional Confucian

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16. The symbolic meaning of a woman's cutting her hair was unambiguous: in both seventeenth-century Europe and Ming China, it signaled a woman's unshakeable determination. See (Menegon 2009, 302).

values and those of Christianity, even for someone who was in other ways a model, indeed an ideal convert. This was particularly acute during the period of transition from the Ming dynasty to the Qing dynasty when encounters between Chinese and Western cultures were rapidly expanding.

Conclusion

During the period of transition between the Ming and Qing dynasties, European philosophy, mathematics and sciences became increasingly popular in China, and many literati and Mandarins who remained unconverted were also interested in Western religion. Missionaries and Chinese converts tried to adapt Christianity to Confucianism and, more generally, to Chinese society. However, the neophytes often clashed with a society founded on ancient traditions, not always compatible with the new doctrine. The example of Wang Zheng shows clearly the struggle he had faced after his conversion to Christianity, and in particular his internal conflicts on the issue of marriage and concubinage. On the one hand, he had to take a concubine to have a chance for a male offspring in order to honor his family according to Confucian tradition; on the other hand, he should not commit adultery because of the Ten Commandments. This struggle became acute when, having converted to Christianity, he received the *jinshi* degree title.

This article has focused on the contradictions, however, there were also some values in common between Confucian traditions and Christian beliefs. Wang believed that the key concept of Catholicism was gratuitous love of neighbor, a concept also found in Confucianism with the name of *ren*. Wang was convinced that those who truly feared heaven praised the Lord and those who truly loved the Lord could love also their neighbor. In his *Qiqing jie zui qigao (Liberation from the Sins)*, Wang criticized himself for cultivating his faith too lukewarmly; he felt that he had sincerely loved the Lord, but without enough warmth; had prayed to God often, but not always with a pure heart. Fearing heaven and loving one's neighbor constitutes the synthesis of Wang's thinking, as the master Confucius confirmed: If you want to be successful, help others to achieve success; if you wish to have progress, help others to get progress.[17]

Another characteristic of Wang's thought was inculturation, integrating the so called "Chinese style" into Catholicism. He built a pagoda in the city of Yangzhou, called *Jing Tian Ge* 景天閣, which literally means the Palace of the Illuminated Sky or the Illustrious Heaven Palace. *Jing* 景 in Chinese means light, and this was also a direct reference to the Gospel of John 8:12, where Jesus says: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".[18] In Wang's pagoda, the center of the altar of the ancestors contained

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17. See *Yong Ye* 雍也, in *Lunyu* 論語 *(Confucian Analects)*.

18. It is worth noting that the word *Jing* also appeared in the name of the "Nestorian" church (*Jing Jiao* 景教).

a tablet with the name of Jesus Christ, according to a custom handed down to him by converts who had preceded him. Wang's way of conducting his faith life could be found also in Zheng Man's 鄭鄤 *Miyang caotang wenji* 峚陽草堂文集 (The Collection of Miyang Caotang) where he reported that Wang had turned to Chinese palmistry, which was considered a superstitious practice by Catholicism.[19] Developing a "Chinese style" of Catholicism was not easy. The concept of inculturation often led to misunderstanding and perplexity. This has been clearly shown by the example of the Mandarin Wang Zheng which reflects, in a more general way, the "Chinese voices" that desired to live an authentically Christian life while maintaining their social and cultural traditions based on Confucianism. These debates[20] between Europeans and Chinese, between Christians and non-Christians would continue, lead to further disputes, and go on to figure in the Chinese Rites Controversy.[21]

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19. *Xingminpian* or *Hsing-mip'ien* 醒迷篇 (Treatise for Awakening the People), written by an anonymous author, can be found in ARSI, Jap. Sin. I 150. The version preserved in the Jesuit archives in Rome dates back to the fifteenth year of Emperor Shunzhi 順治, which corresponds to 1658. The title in Latin is: "Espergefactio coecorum, seu de Deo & refutatio idolatriae et superstitionum sinicarum".

20. It is noteworthy that in the disputes on Chinese Rites, there were various local voices. Huang Yinong used the term "neglected voices" in (Huang 1995, 137–160); Han Qi 韓琦 and Wu Min 吳旻 used the term "different voices" in (Han & Wu 2003, 455–463); see also (Standaert 2012, 8; Collani 2007, 109–150; Li 2019).

21. Pope Clement XI issued the decree *Ex Illa Die* in 1715 on the Chinese Rites Controversy which remained a fixed point for all missionaries towards the emperor. Furthermore, in 1742, the decisions of the Apostolic See were also confirmed by Pope Benedict XIV with the Apostolic Constitution *Ex quo singolari* which imposed obedience to the Supreme Pontiff on the part of all missionaries. This led to the expulsion of many missionaries from China and the transformation of numerous churches into schools or *Citang* (temples of the ancestors) (BAV, borg. cin. 516, vol. 19, 2r). It was overturned only in 1939 by the brief Instruction of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, signed by the Prefect Pietro Fumasoni Biondi and by Celso Costantini, with a reinterpretation of the content. See (Minamiki 1985, 183–203).

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« Des lettres, ou plutôt des caractères à la manière des hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens[1] » descriptions et réceptions occidentales du chinois entre le XVIᵉ et le XIXᵉ siècle

Mariarosaria Gianninoto
(ReSO, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3)

Introduction

Dans son essai sur l'écriture chinoise, la sinologue Viviane Alleton (2008, 14) affirmait qu'« au lieu de voir comme des textes ce qui est écrit en chinois, certains y aperçoivent encore des suites d'images sur lesquelles ils peuvent rêver ». Elle considérait par ailleurs ces représentations comme « les derniers avatars d'une série d'inventions conçues au cours des siècles qui ont suivi les premiers contacts d'Européens avec la Chine » (*ibid.*).

Les descriptions rapportées en Europe par les missionnaires à partir du XIVᵉ siècle semblent effectivement avoir joué un rôle important dans la perception européenne du chinois et de son système d'écriture, forgeant les éléments clé à l'origine de la représentation occidentale de cette langue. Ces informations sur les variétés de chinois et sur l'écriture chinoise, qui seront transmises au cours des siècles suivants, auront par ailleurs une incidence considérable sur le monde intellectuel européen, fournissant matière à débat sur la langue adamique ou encore sur les classifications et la hiérarchisation des langues et des systèmes d'écriture. Les représentations européennes du chinois seront ainsi tantôt forgées par ces descriptions des missionnaires tantôt influencées et déterminées par les préoccupations et débats intellectuels de l'Europe de l'époque.

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1. Texte original : « *lettere, o più tosto caratteri al modo degli Hieroglifichi degli Egittij* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. (2000, 26).

Dans le cadre du présent article, nous nous proposons de décrire les principaux aspects de la réception européenne de la langue et de l'écriture chinoises, en faisant référence aux premières descriptions et aux premières grammaires des langues sinitiques, ainsi qu'aux réactions suscitées dans le monde intellectuel européen, puis en suivant l'évolution de la perception européenne du chinois, pour en souligner les moments de rupture et de continuité. Ne pouvant pas couvrir l'ensemble très riche d'essais, de grammaires, de dictionnaires et d'ouvrages ayant trait à la langue et à l'écriture chinoises écrits par les Européens entre le xvie et le xixe siècle, cet article se focalisera sur l'analyse d'extraits de quelques textes emblématiques des représentations de cette langue et de son écriture au cours de cette période.

« Pagani qui habent litteram specialem » : les premières descriptions des langues et de l'écriture chinoises

Dans l'une des premières descriptions de première main de la Chine et de la langue chinoise, le missionnaire franciscain Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (c. 1180-c. 1252) évoquait les Chinois, « habitants du Cathay », comme des « païens qui ont des lettres spéciales » (« *Kytai* [...] *homines sunt pagani qui habent litteram specialem* », Pullé éd. 1913, 73).

Cette citation nous renvoie à un aspect central de la représentation occidentale du chinois : la curiosité, puis la fascination pour les caractères (Klöter 2011, 26), que Luca (2016, 5) définit comme une « mystique de l'écriture chinoise » (« *a Chinese-script mystique* »). Des références aux caractères chinois sont ainsi présentes dans les écrits des premiers missionnaires de passage dans l'empire du milieu, à l'instar de Willem van Ruysbroeck (c. 1215-c. 1270), qui décrivait les habitants de la Chine écrivant « avec un pinceau tel que ceux des peintres » et faisant « en une seule figure les différentes lettres qui contiennent un mot entier » (cf. Gianninoto et Casacchia 2017, 521).

Nous retrouvons cette fascination pour l'écriture chinoise dans le « premier ouvrage entièrement consacré à la Chine » (Klöter 2011, 28), le *Tractado em que se côtam muito por esteso as cousas da China* (Traité relatant en détail les choses chinoises, 1569) du dominicain portugais Gaspar da Cruz (1520-1570). Dans cet ouvrage, l'écriture chinoise et la situation linguistique du pays sont ainsi décrites :

> Les Chinois n'ont pas de véritables lettres dans leur [système d'] écriture, car tout ce qu'ils écrivent est [écrit] en figures, dont leurs lettres [caractères] sont composées, de sorte qu'ils disposent d'une grande multitude de lettres [caractères], signifiant chaque chose par une lettre si bien qu'une seule lettre signifie « ciel », une autre « terre », et une autre « homme ». Et ainsi pour toutes les autres choses. [...] dans toute la Chine il y a plusieurs langues, de sorte qu'une langue n'est pas comprise de l'autre à l'oral ; ni les habitants de Cochinchine et les Chinois, ni les Japonais et les Chinois ne se comprennent à l'oral, et tous se comprennent à l'écrit. Car la

lettre [le caractère] qui signifie le ciel, étant la même pour tous, bien que les uns la nomment d'une façon, et les autres d'une autre, elle signifie toutefois pour tous également ciel. J'ai souvent essayé de savoir auprès d'hommes avisés comment il était possible que tant de gens puissent se comprendre à l'écrit, sans se comprendre à l'oral, et je n'aurais jamais obtenu de réponse sans m'être rendu une fois dans un port de Cochinchine. Le commissaire de bord, qui était chinois, rédigeait une lettre aux *loutias*[2] [fonctionnaires] du pays, afin qu'ils demandent que nous soient fourni des vivres en échange de notre argent. Quand je l'ai vu écrire cette lettre, je lui ai demandé pourquoi il devait leur écrire, alors qu'il suffisait de leur parler de vive voix : il m'a alors répondu qu'ils ne le comprendraient pas à l'oral[3].

Dans ce passage, Cruz décrit brièvement l'écriture chinoise, en soulignant le nombre important de caractères distincts et la correspondance fréquente entre mots (ou morphèmes) et caractères, et donc la différence par rapport à l'écriture alphabétique des langues occidentales. Par ailleurs, il décrit les caractères chinois en utilisant le terme « lettre » (*lettra*), propre à l'écriture alphabétique, le recours à des catégories familières pour expliquer ce système d'écriture distant étant récurrent dans la « terminologie grammatologique européenne » de l'époque (Söderblom Saarela 2020, 187). Dans ce passage, il y est aussi question du rapport entre l'écrit et les variétés parlées au sein du pays, et du rôle de l'écrit dans les échanges avec les pays voisins. Il convient en effet de souligner la place qui est réservée au chinois classique[4] (*wényán* 文言), à côté du rôle joué par l'écriture chinoise, dans un pays marqué par une forte variation diatopique, comme le souligne Chappell (2001, 4) :

> *The use of a common script in the domain of officialdom and education has served as a culturally unifying force over many centuries. Despite the fact that this literary language — wényán 文言 — is quite distinct from any spoken form of Chinese and was a genre mainly learned by an elite [...], its unifying use as a written medium has*

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2. Dans les sources portugaises de l'époque, les termes « loutias » « louteas », « lutes » étaient utilisés pour indiquer les officiers et les fonctionnaires (cf. Zhang 2018).

3. Texte original : « *Não têm os chinas letras certas no escrever, porque tudo o que escrevem é por figuras, e fazem letras por parte, pelo que têm muito grande multidão de letras, significando cada uma cousa por uma letra, de maneira que uma só letra lhes significa "céu," e outra "terra," e outra "homem". E assim de todas as outras cousas. [...] em toda a China há muitas línguas de maneira que uma se não entende a outra por fala, nem os cauchim chinas com os chinas, nem os japões com os mesmos chinas se entendem por palavra, e todos se entendem por escritura. Porque a letra que a todos significa céu, sendo uma só acerca de todos, uns a nomeiam de uma maneira e outros de outra mas a todos igualmente significa céu. Muitas vezes pratiquei com homens discretos, como poderia ser entendendo-se tantas gentes por escritura, não se entenderem por fala, e nunca pudemos cair em como seria, se não uma vez estando em um porto de Cauchim China. O escrivão do navio que era China fazia uma carta para os loutias da terra, para que nos mandassem dar por nosso dinheiro mantimentos. Quando lhe vi escrever a carta, disse-lhe para que escrevia carta, pois bastava dizerem-lho de palavra : disse-me que os não entenderiam por palavra* » (Cruz 1569 [1996], 109).

4. Le chinois classique est la langue des textes canoniques confucéens et, par là même, la langue de formation et de sélection des lettrés au moyen des concours mandarinaux. Ainsi, « son emploi en tant que langue vivante cessa vraisemblablement avant la fin des Han (+220) mais il demeura longtemps, jusqu'aux mouvements modernistes du début du XXᵉ, la principale langue administrative et littéraire en Chine » (Djamouri 2011, 985).

reinforced the belief that the spoken varieties in China are dialects of the one language rather than related languages.

Par-delà les frontières de la Chine, le chinois classique fut un « vecteur du rayonnement de la culture chinoise […] il s'imposa jusqu'en Corée, au Japon et au Vietnam » (Djamouri 2011, 984), étant largement utilisé dans les correspondances diplomatiques en Asie orientale (Lung 2011, 37). Les caractères chinois ont été par ailleurs adoptés et adaptés pour écrire des langues non-chinoises (coréen, japonais et vietnamien, notamment), ce qui a conduit à des formes d'intercompréhension entre langues qui partageaient le recours aux caractères. Ces possibilités d'intercompréhension étaient effectivement exploitées en Asie orientale à l'époque, comme en témoigne l'expérience rapportée par le missionnaire dominicain. Toutefois, ces possibilités d'intercompréhension seront surestimées dans les écrits des missionnaires ainsi que dans les représentations européennes du chinois que ces écrits contribueront à forger (Alleton 2007, 252). L'idée des caractères comme « *scripta franca* » sera donc largement relayée (par exemple par González de Mendoza, 1585, 105 ; cf. Gianninoto et Casacchia 2017), contribuant à modeler ce que DeFrancis (1984, 133, 149) nommera le mythe de l'universalité (« *universality myth* ») de l'écriture chinoise.

Cette fascination pour l'écriture est bien présente dans les écrits des missionnaires jésuites qui seront les premiers à s'établir en Chine et qui contribueront largement à forger la vision européenne de la Chine (Harsbmeier 1998, 9). Il est important de souligner que les jésuites, tout en étant conscients de la variation linguistique dans le pays, se focaliseront sur le chinois classique et sur le mandarin (*guānhuà* 官話[5]), langues utilisées par l'élite chinoise (Brockey 2008, 14) et contribueront ainsi à faire oublier la forte variation linguistique du pays (Klöter 2011, 21, 42).

Cette centralité du mandarin se retrouve ainsi sous la plume du missionnaire jésuite italien Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) qui, tout en mentionnant les nombreuses variétés locales, soulignait l'importance du *guānhuà* et sa facilité d'apprentissage :

> Chaque province compte une langue qui lui est propre, et bien souvent plus d'une, non comprise par les autres provinces, tandis que pour tout ce qui concerne les lettres et les livres, c'est la même langue. Malgré toute cette variété de langues, il y en a une qu'ils appellent *Cuonhoa* [*guānhuà*], qui signifie langue juridique, qui est utilisée lors des audiences au tribunal et qui s'apprend très facilement dans chaque province uniquement à l'usage[6].

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5. Parallèlement au chinois classique, langue écrite très éloignée du parlé, une *koinè* utilisée par les fonctionnaires de l'administration impériale, le mandarin (*guānhuà* 官話, litt. « langue des fonctionnaires »), se développe progressivement. Entre le xivᵉ et le xviᵉ siècle, le mandarin se base sur la langue de prestige de Nankin, siège de la cour. Au xixᵉ siècle, le *guānhuà* se fonde sur les idiomes du Nord (le Nord étant devenu le centre politique et administratif du pays). Le *guānhuà* jouait le rôle de *koinè* mandarinale et coexistait avec les variétés locales. L'ensemble de ces variétés sont désignées comme langues sinitiques ou langues chinoises (cf. Peyraube 2011).

6. Texte original : « *In ogni Provincia vi é una lingua propria, e molte volte più di una, non intesa dalle altre, e con tutto con lettera e libri tutto é medesima cosa. Con tutta questa varietà di lingue ve ne è una che*

Cet extrait est issu de l'ouvrage *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina* [De l'arrivée de la Compagnie de Jésus et du Christianisme en Chine] que Ricci a rédigé en italien entre 1608 et 1610 et qui a été publié en 1615 dans une version traduite en latin et complétée par le missionnaire jésuite Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628). Cet ouvrage sera très largement diffusé et contribuera de manière importante à forger la vision européenne des langues et de l'écriture chinoises. Dans son ouvrage, Ricci décrit ainsi le système d'écriture chinois :

> [...] ses lettres, ou plutôt ses caractères [sont conçus] à la manière des hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens, étant donné que le parler se distingue beaucoup de l'écrit et qu'aucun livre n'est écrit dans la manière commune de parler ; et si certains sont écrits d'une manière plus proche du parler, ce n'est pas chose grave et dont il faille tenir compte[7].

Ricci compare ainsi le système chinois d'écriture aux hiéroglyphes égyptiens, alors perçus comme idéographiques. Nous voyons apparaître ici les prémisses de ce que DeFrancis (1984) définit comme le « mythe idéographique », alors que les composantes phonétiques sont présentes dans la plupart des caractères chinois (Sagart 2006). Cette comparaison reviendra souvent dans la description des caractères et le terme hiéroglyphe fait également partie de la terminologie grammatologique européenne relative au système d'écriture chinois (Söderblom Saarela 2020, 187). Par ailleurs, Ricci évoque une situation de diglossie et la distance importante entre l'écrit et la langue (ou plutôt les langues) parlée(s).

Ricci souligne les avantages de ce système d'écriture qui semble dépasser les barrières linguistiques :

> Ce système d'écriture, mot par mot, est d'une grande commodité, car de nombreux royaumes, dont les langues sont très différentes, peuvent se comprendre en utilisant une même écriture, composée de la même manière et les mêmes livres[8].

Ricci décrit donc les caractères comme une sorte de *scripta franca* pour l'Asie extrême-orientale, malgré les différences entre les langues à l'intérieur même de la Chine et dans les pays voisins. Si Ricci (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 26-27) insiste sur le nombre important de graphèmes compris, selon lui, entre 70 000 et 80 000 environ, il est important de souligner qu'il considère que seuls 10 000 d'entre eux sont couramment employés, la connaissance de tous les graphèmes existants étant impossible et n'étant pas nécessaire (« Il existe plus de soixante-dix ou quatre-vingt mille lettres et un peu plus de dix mille d'entre elles sont utilisées habituelle-

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chiamano *Cuonhoa, che vuol dire lingua forense, di che si usa nelle audientie e tribunali, la quale si impara molto facilmente in ogni provincia con il solo uso* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 27-28).

   7. Texte original : « *sue lettere, o più tosto caratteri al modo degli Hieroglifichi degli Egittij, conciosia che il parlare sia assai diverso dallo scrivere, nessuno libro si scrive nel modo comune di parlare ; e se bene se ne scrivono alcuni con un modo più vicino al parlare, non é cosa grave e di che si facci caso* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 26).

   8. « *In questo modo di lettera, parola per parola, vi é una grandissima comodità, che possono molti regni, di lingua diversissimi tra sé, usare e intendersi con una stessa lettera, composizione e libri* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 27).

ment ; en dépit de ce nombre élevé, il n'est pas nécessaire de toutes les connaître et personne ne les connaît toutes[9] »).

Ricci décrit enfin une langue principalement monosyllabique (« Tous les mots [...] sont monosyllabiques, même s'il existe des diphtongues de deux ou trois voyelles qui ressemblent davantage à notre façon de parler[10] ») : il se fait ainsi le porte-parole d'un autre *topos* sur le chinois, celui du monosyllabisme (le « *monosyllabic myth* » selon DeFrancis 1984, 177), largement véhiculé par les écrits des jésuites (Ineichen 1987, 264-282) en raison de l'attention portée au chinois classique (où la correspondance entre mots et caractères était plus importante).

« *Coniugationum varietatem verba Sinica non habent*[11] » : Martini et la première grammaire du mandarin

La représentation européenne du chinois sera certes façonnée par les informations diffusées par les écrits de missionnaires, mais aussi par les premiers ouvrages consacrés à la description et à l'apprentissage des variétés de chinois. L'établissement des missions entraînera l'exigence, pour les missionnaires en poste en Chine, de maitriser la ou les langue(s) locale(s) pour satisfaire aux besoins de leur vie quotidienne et pour mener à bien leur activité d'évangélisation (Paternicò 2013). Les premiers missionnaires résidant en Chine auront tout d'abord recours aux méthodes autochtones, adaptant des manuels d'apprentissage de mots et de caractères (Brockey 2008), puis commenceront à concevoir les premiers ouvrages spécifiquement destinés à l'apprentissage du chinois par les Occidentaux, tels que des dictionnaires en langues européennes, des grammaires et des méthodes. Cette production d'ouvrages missionnaires aura une grande importance dans l'histoire des études linguistiques chinoises, où les études grammaticales avaient été marginales. Ce processus de description des langues chinoises et de conception d'un outillage grammatical se fera essentiellement au moyen de l'adoption et de l'adaptation des catégories élaborées par la tradition linguistique occidentale (grecque puis latine), un phénomène désigné comme « grammaire latine étendue » (Auroux 1992 ; 1994).

Dans la première grammaire du chinois mandarin[12] du jésuite italien Martino Martini (1614-1661), nous pouvons ainsi lire :

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9. « *Le lettere più di settanta o ottanta milia, e quelle di che usano ordinariamente puoco più di diecie milia che, quanto a quel numero intiero di tutte, né è necessario né nessuno vi è che le sappi* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 27).

10. « *Tutte le dittioni* [...] *sono monosillabe, benché vi sono molti diphtonghi di due o tre vocali parlando al nostro modo* » (Ricci, Corradini éd. 2000, 26).

11. « Les verbes chinois n'ont pas de conjugaison » (cf. Paternicò 2013, 179).

12. Le mot « mandarin » désigne ici la *koinè* mandarinale de la capitale Nankin, standard du XVIᵉ siècle (Paternicò 2013). L'*Arte de la lengua chiu chio* (1632) est la plus ancienne grammaire conservée d'une variété de chinois, une variété de hokkien parlé par la communauté chinoise des Philippines (sur cette grammaire, voir Klöter 2011), tandis que la *Grammatica linguae sinensis*, conçue vers 1651-1652, est considérée comme la plus ancienne grammaire du chinois mandarin.

> Puisque tous les mots chinois sont monosyllabiques et indéclinables, il n'y a pas de déclinaison des noms, ni de changement de cas, ni de genre grammatical. Les noms sont à la fois substantifs et adjectifs et ne diffèrent souvent pas des verbes, ainsi chaque mot peut être nom, adjectif ou verbe, en fonction de sa position[13].

L'auteur revient tout d'abord sur le monosyllabisme, puis souligne l'absence de morphologie flexive par rapport aux langues européennes et donc le fait qu'un mot aura des fonctions grammaticales différentes selon sa position syntaxique. Il s'agit là d'un point qui fera l'objet de nombreux commentaires dans les grammaires et méthodes européennes des langues sinitiques. Harbsmeir (1998, 123) souligne ainsi que les premiers « sinisants » européens *reported with consternation that the Chinese freely used nouns as verbs and verbs as nouns. Chinese was found to be a most extraordinary language in this respect and quite unlike any of the Indo-European language they were used to* ».

La simplicité morphologique constituait un défi particulier par rapport à l'image occidentale des langues : « *The absence of any kind of overt morphology constituted a particular challenge to traditional ideas about what was thought to be a prerequisite for a noble, civilized language : long paradigms of regular and irregular declensions and conjugations* » (Bossong 2007, 127). G. Bossong ajoute que la rencontre avec cette structure linguistique « exotique » sera essentielle dans la naissance d'une véritable approche typologique des langues (*ibid.*).

L'absence de conjugaison verbale est également soulignée par Martini, qui ajoute des indications concernant l'expression du temps (ou plutôt de l'aspect) grâce au recours à des marqueurs (« particules » dans la description de Martini) :

> Les verbes chinois ne connaissent pas de conjugaison, même pour exprimer le temps, il n'y a pas de changement de forme ; mais les temps sont exprimés grâce à l'ajout de particules ou par le sens de la phrase, et cela seulement pour le présent, le passé et le futur[14].

Si le système d'écriture ne fait pas l'objet de description dans cette grammaire, nous y trouvons une présentation assez précise et détaillée du système morpho-syntactique, ainsi que du système phonétique. Cet ouvrage propose ainsi des éléments originaux par rapport aux descriptions éparses des écrits antérieurs.

La description linguistique contenue dans cet ouvrage, et notamment l'accent sur la simplicité morphologique, auront un écho : Paternicò (2013, 71-75) évoque l'impact considérable et la large diffusion de la grammaire de Martini dans l'Europe du xviie siècle, soulignant que cette grammaire a contribué à alimenter le débat sur la langue universelle, qui animait le monde intellectuel contemporain.

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13. Texte original « *Cum omnis vox apud Sinas monosyllaba sit et indeclinabilis, nulla datur in nominibus declinationum varietas, sed nec in casibus ulla vocis mutatio, nec varia eorum genera. Nomina tamen substantiva et adiectiva sunt, et sæpe nomen à verbo non differt, eademq(ue) vox pro varia positione interloquendum, nomen substantivum, adiectivum et verbum esse potest* » (Paternicò 2013, 176).

14. Texte original « *Coniugationum varietatem verba Sinica non habent, sed nec ulla tempora quæ fiant ex vocis mutatione, sed solis additis particulis, vel ex ipso locutionis sensu tempora percipiuntur et explicant(ur) et solum habent proprie præsens, præteritum, et futurum* [...] » (Paternicò éd., 2013, 179).

« To write characters real » : la recherche d'une écriture universelle

La simplicité grammaticale du chinois, mais aussi la nature (que l'on supposait purement) idéographique de son écriture, deux éléments véhiculés par les descriptions des missionnaires, contribueront à faire de cette langue l'un des principaux candidats dans le cadre de la recherche européenne d'une langue universelle. La quête d'une langue universelle conjuguait en effet l'idée biblique d'une langue simple et exacte perdue à la suite de la destruction de la Tour de Babel, l'ambition d'une langue philosophique visée par les tenants du savoir expérimental, et était nourrie par les informations sur les langues du monde qui parvenaient en Europe au cours du xviiᵉ siècle (Gianninoto et Casacchia 2017 ; Mungello 1989, 35 ; Eco 1993, 225-230).

Si la simplicité grammaticale était évoquée dans ces débats, le système d'écriture (et sa nature supposée purement idéographique) constituait le point crucial.

Dans son *Advancement of Learning* (1605), le philosophe anglaise Francis Bacon (1561-1625) affirmait ainsi que *« it is the use of China* […] *to write characters real, which express neither letter nor words in gross, but things or notions »* (cité par Harbsmeier 1998, 9).

Comme l'affirme Hassler (2014, 251), « la prétendue capacité du chinois à représenter les choses le rendait susceptible d'être pris comme base de réflexion sur une langue universelle ».

Le chinois et ses caractères reviendront dans les écrits du philosophe allemand G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716), dans sa quête d'un *alphabetum cogitationum humanarum* (Harbsmeier 1995, 329), en mesure de représenter directement le rapport entre la pensée et les choses. Leibniz écrira ainsi par exemple que « Parler c'est exprimer une pensée par un son articulé. Écrire, c'est faire de même, sur un support permanent. Il n'est pas nécessaire de reconduire l'écriture à un son, comme le montrent les caractères chinois[15] » (Leibniz, Couturat éd.*,* 1903, 497).

Leibniz échangera par ailleurs à plusieurs reprises à propos du chinois avec les sinisants allemands A. Müller (1630-1694) et Ch. Mentzel (1622-1701), puis avec le jésuite français Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), l'un des principaux tenants du figurisme (Alleton 2008, 220).

Le figurisme peut être défini comme une « méthode allégorique d'exégèse » : « *in combination with the biblical concept of a common offspring for mankind, the figurist system allowed for the integration of non-Christian religions into a sort of common revelatory corpus shared by all races and peoples »* (Lackner 1993, 24).

Les figuristes recherchaient la préfiguration de la révélation chrétienne dans les textes chinois anciens (Rusk 2007, 112) et les caractères chinois étaient disséqués

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15. Texte original : *« Loqui est voci articulata signum dare cogitationis suae. Scribere est id facere permanentibus in charta ductibus. Quos ad vocem referri non est necesse, ut appareat ex Sinensium characteribus. »*

pour y identifier des références à la doctrine chrétienne. Parmi les partisans du figurisme, il est également possible de mentionner le missionnaire jésuite Joseph H. de Prémare (1666-1736) qui, dans son *Selecta quaedam vestigia proecipuorum Christianae religionis dogmatum ex antiquis sinarum libris eruta* (traduit en français par A. Bonnetty et P. H. Perny : *Vestiges des principaux dogmes chrétiens, tirés des anciens livres chinois*) fournira des explications « sémantiques » et para-étymologiques des caractères (Lackner 1993). L'idéographie est prédominante dans la description que fait Prémare de l'écriture chinoise. Dans sa célèbre grammaire *Notitia linguae sinicae*[16] (achevée en 1732, publiée en 1831), Prémare compare encore une fois les caractères aux hiéroglyphes (*litteris seu potius hieroglyphis* « les caractères, ou plutôt les hiéroglyphes ») et les décrit de la manière suivante :

> Les caractères chinois diffèrent de tous ceux que nous avons connus. En premier lieu, chacun d'eux a une signification définie, et par conséquent il y a autant de mots que de caractères ; et en second lieu, ils n'expriment ni le son ni le ton par eux-mêmes, mais sont de simples images et signes, parlant non aux oreilles mais à l'esprit[17]. (Prémare 1831, 8)

La représentation idéographique de l'écriture chinoise prévaut dans les descriptions du XVIIᵉ et du XVIIIᵉ siècle. Une perception très positive y est généralement associée, les caractères étant considérés comme une forme d'écriture capable de s'éloigner des contraintes des langues et de dépasser les barrières linguistiques.

Plus rares sont les visions négatives de cette écriture, à l'instar de celle du philosophe anglaise John Wilkins (1614-1672) qui, dans son *Essay towards the Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), soulignait la complexité graphique des caractères chinois et la difficulté liée à l'apprentissage d'un nombre élevé de graphèmes (1668, 450-452).

« Une cause quelconque qui l'a détourné de la marche routinière des langues[18] » : les représentations de la langue et de l'écriture chinoises au XIXᵉ siècle

La perception européenne du chinois connaîtra une trajectoire singulière : de candidate au statut de langue universelle, cette langue sera ensuite décrite comme l'une des formes imparfaites d'une évolution aboutissant aux langues flexionnelles

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16. Il est important de souligner que la *Notitia* de Prémare représente l'une des plus importantes grammaires de l'époque, un ouvrage détaillé qui se différenciait des traités précédents et qui prenait en compte, dans des sections spécifiques, le chinois vernaculaire et le chinois classique (Peyaube 2001 ; Aletton 2004 ; Lĭ 2011).

17. Texte original : « *Sinicae litterae ab omnibus aliis hactenus notis differunt, tum quod unaquaeque aliquid significet, ac proinde quod sunt litteræ, tot vocabula ; tum quod nullum de se sonum aut accentum dicant, purae sunt imagines et mera symbola quae non auribus sed soli menti loquuntur.* »

18. Humboldt (1827, 79).

et à l'écriture alphabétique. Les caractères et l'absence de morphologie flexionnelle, qui représentaient précisément les éléments ayant conduit à en faire une candidate à la langue universelle, deviendront les principaux facteurs négatifs de la nouvelle représentation.

Dans cette nouvelle perspective, les caractères chinois sont par exemple considérés par J.-J. Rousseau (1712-1778) comme l'une des formes intermédiaires et imparfaites d'une évolution menant à l'écriture alphabétique et dont la pictographie constituait la forme initiale et plus simple (cf. Gianninoto et Casacchia 2017). Dans son *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (achevé en 1781, mais publié en 1839), Rousseau écrivait ainsi :

> Un autre moyen de comparer les langues et de juger de leur ancienneté se tire de l'écriture, et cela en raison inverse de la perfection de cet art. Plus l'écriture est grossière, plus la langue est antique.
> La première manière d'écrire n'est pas de peindre les sons, mais les objets mêmes, soit directement, comme faisaient les Mexicains, soit par des figures allégoriques, comme firent autrefois les Égyptiens. Cet état répond à la langue passionnée, et suppose déjà quelque société et des besoins que les passions ont fait naître.
> La seconde manière est de représenter les mots et les propositions par des caractères conventionnels ; ce qui ne peut se faire que quand la langue est tout à fait formée et qu'un peuple entier est uni par des lois communes ; car il y a déjà ici double convention : telle est l'écriture des Chinois ; c'est là véritablement peindre les sons et parler aux yeux.
> La troisième est de décomposer la voix parlante à un certain nombre de parties élémentaires, soit vocales, soit articulées, avec lesquelles on puisse former tous les mots et toutes les syllabes imaginables. Cette manière d'écriture, qui est la nôtre, a dû être imaginée par des peuples commerçants, qui, voyageant en plusieurs pays et ayant à parler plusieurs langues, furent forcés d'inventer des caractères qui pussent être communs à toutes. Ce n'est pas précisément peindre la parole, c'est l'analyser. (Rousseau 1826, 430)

Par ailleurs, Rousseau établissait une corrélation entre systèmes d'écriture et formes d'organisation socio-politique : « La peinture des objets convient aux peuples sauvages ; les signes des mots et des propositions, aux peuples barbares, et l'alphabet, aux peuples policés » (Rousseau 1826, 98).

Toutefois, ce sera surtout l'absence de morphologie flexionnelle, associée selon le point de vue européen de l'époque au point culminant de l'évolution linguistique, qui motiveront les jugements négatifs sur le chinois.

Les échanges entre l'un des intellectuels européens les plus importants, le philosophe allemand Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), et le sinologue français Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat[19] (1788-1832) en constituent un exemple emblématique (sur

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19. Titulaire de la première chaire de chinois d'Europe (celle du Collège de France, alors Collège Royal) à partir de 1814 et auteur de l'une des plus importantes grammaires du chinois du XIXᵉ siècle, les *Éléments de la grammaire chinoise,* publiés à Paris en 1822. Sur cette grammaire, voir PEYRAUBE (2001) et CHAPPELL & PEYRAUBE (2014).

ces échanges qui se poursuivront entre 1821-1831, cf. Rousseau et Thouard 1999).

À la suite de la parution en 1823 du texte de la conférence de Humboldt prononcée le 27 janvier 1822 à l'Académie de Berlin, *Über das Entstehen der grammatischen Formen, und ihren Einfluss auf die Ideenentwicklung* (Sur l'origine des formes grammaticales, et leur influence sur le développement des idées), Abel-Rémusat écrira un compte rendu, publié en 1824 dans le *Journal asiatique*, qui marquera le début de ces échanges sur le chinois et la diversité des langues. Dans ce compte rendu, le sinologue relevait qu'« exprimer les rapports grammaticaux par la seule position des mots ou par des mots significatifs appliqués temporairement à cet usage, c'est, suivant M. de Humboldt, employer le mode le plus imparfait et le moins satisfaisant » (Abel-Rémusat 1824, 55). Abel-Rémusat soulignait pourtant que ce constat concernait « l'une des langues les plus abondantes d'Asie, celle dont la littérature est la plus riche et la plus savante » (*ibid.*).

Le point soulevé par Abel-Rémusat est central car, comme le souligne Auroux (1989, 18), le chinois représentait un « contre-exemple très fort » pour une « axiologie européano-centriste », dans la mesure où il s'agissait d'une langue isolante mais aussi de la langue d'une civilisation très ancienne.

La question est reprise par Humboldt dans une lettre-essai en réponse au compte rendu d'Abel-Rémusat, la *Lettre à M. Abel-Rémusat sur la nature des formes grammaticales en général et sur le génie de la langue chinoise en particulier*. Dans cette lettre de mars 1826 (publiée en 1827 à Paris avec une introduction d'Abel-Rémusat), Humboldt affirmait *:*

> Si l'on considère d'un côté l'analogie du chinois avec des langues grossières, de l'autre sa nature entièrement différente et à plusieurs égards égale à celle des langues les plus parfaites, on croit voir qu'il y a eu une cause quelconque qui l'a détourné de la marche routinière des langues, pour s'en former une nouvelle. Quelle a été cette cause ? comment un pareil changement a-t-il pu avoir lieu ? (Humboldt 1827, 79)

Dans cet écrit, Humboldt regrette par ailleurs un « jugement précipité que j'avais porté sur cette langue » et il se dira ébloui par la « manière rapide et isolée dont les mots, tous expressifs d'une idée entière, sont rapprochés l'un de l'autre, et de la hardiesse avec laquelle tout ce qui ne leur sert que de liaison a été enlevé » (*ibid.*, 58).

Si les spécificités de la syntaxe chinoise sont bien reconnues (« Les deux moyens que la langue chinoise emploie pour indiquer la liaison des mots, ses particules ou la position des mots, ne me semblent pas non plus avoir pour but de marquer les formes grammaticales, mais de guider d'une autre manière dans l'intelligence de la tournure des phrases » écrit Humboldt 1827, 28), le jugement porté reflète une vision clairement hiérarchique des langues : « malgré cet avantage, la langue chinoise me semble, sans aucun doute, très inférieure, comme organe de la pensée, aux langues qui sont parvenues à donner un certain degré de perfection à un système qui est opposé au sien » (Humboldt 1827, 65).

Cet essai comporte aussi des considérations sur l'écriture, tout d'abord pour reconnaître la place centrale, et parfois surestimée, qu'elle a occupée dans la perception européenne du chinois :

> Je pense que les savants qui se sont presque laissé entraîner à oublier que le chinois est une langue parlée, ont tellement exagéré l'influence de l'écriture chinoise, qu'ils ont, pour ainsi dire, mis l'écriture à la place de la langue. Le Chinois a certainement existé avant qu'on ne l'ait écrit, et on n'a écrit que comme on a parlé. (Humboldt 1827, 80)

Humboldt souligne ensuite l'altérité de ce système d'écriture et l'interaction entre ce système et la langue :

> Mais il n'en est pas moins vrai, pourtant, que cette écriture a dû influer considérablement, et doit influer encore sur l'esprit, et par-là également sur la langue des Chinois. L'imagination jouant un si grand rôle dans tout ce qui tient au langage, le genre d'écriture qu'adopte une nation, n'est jamais indifférent. Les caractères forment une image de plus, de laquelle se revêtent les idées, et cette image s'amalgame avec l'idée même, chez ceux qui font un usage fréquent de ces caractères. (*ibid.*)

Le XIXᵉ siècle voit la publication de nombreux ouvrages sur les variétés de chinois. Ces grammaires, méthodes et essais, publiés en Chine et en Europe, s'attaqueront à plusieurs postulats sur le chinois et son écriture.

Ainsi, Abel-Rémusat s'attaquera au « mythe » du monosyllabisme (DeFrancis 1984), dans son essai *Sur la nature monosyllabique attribuée communément à la langue chinoise* (1813). Il essaiera d'y montrer que le plurisyllabisme était largement représenté en chinois, en faisant référence aux nombreux mots qui « s'écrivent avec deux caractères, mais qui expriment une seule idée » (cité par Drocourt 2013, 12).

La « simplicité grammaticale » supposée de cette langue isolante et de ses variétés est démentie grâce à la parution de plusieurs grammaires de référence. Si la syntaxe chinoise est décrite dans les grammaires de J. Marshman (1814) et de Stanislas Julien (1869), les systèmes morphologiques du shanghaïen et du mandarin de l'époque sont analysés en détail dans les grammaires du sinologue français A. Bazin (1799-1863) et du missionnaire britannique J. Edkins (1823-1905) (cf. Gianninoto 2014).

L'idéographie de l'écriture chinoise est également remise en question au cours du XIXᵉ siècle.

On peut ainsi citer le *Systema phoneticum scripturæ sinicæ* [Le système phonétique de l'écriture chinoise] de Joseph-Marie Callery (1810-1862), qui argumentera en faveur de la nature idéo-phonétique, plutôt qu'idéographique, de l'écriture chinoise, ainsi que de l'écriture égyptienne à laquelle elle était souvent comparée (« *ea systemata esse autem onmino phonetica, aut saltem ideo phonetica* » ; 1841, 5), un point de vue qui sera corroboré par les études du sinologue suédois B. Kalgren (cf. Kalgren 1923) et qui est aujourd'hui largement partagé.

Cette vision de l'écriture chinoise était par ailleurs présente dans des grammaires de référence de l'époque, telles que la *Grammaire de la langue chinoise orale et écrite* (1873) du missionnaire Paul Perny (1818-1907) : « les caractères simples reviennent continuellement dans la composition des autres, soit comme éléments idéographiques, soit comme éléments phonétiques » (Perny 1873, 20).

Toutefois, il est possible de souligner l'existence d'un décalage entre les descriptions de plus en plus détaillées et nuancées des langues chinoises qui figuraient dans les ouvrages conçus par les missionnaires et les sinologues et les représentations du chinois et de son écriture qui circulaient dans le monde intellectuel européen de l'époque. Hassler (2014, 251-252) souligne cette contradiction :

> Il est étonnant que des erreurs sur la langue chinoise et ses signes puissent se répandre en Europe sans être fortement contredits. Ce n'était pas l'étude de la langue chinoise, mais l'utilisation d'une image vague pour la formulation d'une théorie des signes et de la cognition qui comptait pour la majorité des auteurs.

Pour conclure

Si nous nous intéressons aujourd'hui aux premières descriptions des variétés de chinois et de l'écriture chinoise, c'est en raison de la continuité des représentations européennes de cette (macro-)langue que ces premières informations ont contribué à forger.

Il est important de souligner tout d'abord la pertinence et la perspicacité de nombreuses observations contenues dans ces premières descriptions (pensons par exemple aux remarques des premiers missionnaires sur la variation diatopique et diastratique dans le pays). Par contre, certains aspects ont été surestimés dans les descriptions elles-mêmes ou plutôt dans la réception européenne de ces descriptions : par exemple, les formes d'intercompréhension entre langues utilisant des caractères chinois qui ont nourri l'idée de l'intelligibilité de l'écriture par-delà les barrières linguistiques.

La focalisation sur certains aspects, voire l'exagération de certains éléments, répondaient aux exigences du monde intellectuel européen plutôt qu'à un manque d'informations sur le chinois (et ses variétés), concernant lequel un nombre important d'outils linguistiques et didactiques circulaient (Hassler 2014). On peut ainsi mentionner la place du chinois dans les réflexions sur la langue universelle et sur la langue adamique (Mungello 1989 ; Gianninoto et Casacchia 2017) ou encore dans les réflexions sur l'évolution, les classifications et la hiérarchie des langues.

Dans les perceptions contemporaines du chinois et de son écriture, nous retrouvons les échos des premières descriptions et des représentations accumulées au cours des siècles.

La vision idéographique de l'écriture en est peut-être l'exemple le plus emblématique, le terme idéogramme étant encore largement répandu pour désigner

l'ensemble des caractères chinois, alors que les « idéogrammes » ne représentent qu'un nombre mineur des graphèmes, dont la grande majorité contient des éléments phonétiques (cf. Bottéro et Djamouri, dir. 2006). Au-delà de la diffusion du mot idéogramme dans la langue courante, plusieurs auteurs ont analysé comment ces représentations influencent aussi la description et l'enseignement du chinois. Sagart (2006, 52) souligne ainsi la présence dans des outils pédagogiques d'« étymologies dans lesquelles les éléments phonétiques sont traités comme porteurs de sens » tandis que Drocourt (2015) montre comment l'« approche idéographique » de l'enseignement/apprentissage de l'écriture chinoise est encore largement présente dans la didactique du chinois langue étrangère.

Alleton (2007) considère que ces représentations, de même qu'aux siècles précédents, sont liées à des réflexions européennes, qui tendent parfois à mettre l'accent sur l'« altérité » de la Chine et du chinois. Comme le souligne Hassler (2014), les multiples représentations européennes de la langue et de l'écriture chinoises à travers les époques semblent avoir été déterminées par la circulation des savoirs linguistiques tout autant que par les débats, les questionnements et les centres d'intérêt de la société européenne.

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Le Général Tcheng Ki-tong en France : un diplomate chinois très parisien[1]

Ma Ji
(Université de Ningbo, Chine)

Introduction

En 1878, à Paris, la légation du gouvernement de Chine en France fut établie. Dès lors, la Chine eut ses propres diplomates qui jouaient un rôle de négociateurs pour connecter la Chine et la France. Cependant, dans ce nouveau domaine professionnel, les diplomates de haut rang, dans l'ensemble, ignoraient tous les langues étrangères et ne pouvaient donc avoir directement accès à la société française. Tous leurs échanges avec les étrangers dépendaient de la médiation de leurs interprètes. Parmi ces interprètes, certains, en raison de leurs capacités, de leur caractère ou de motivations particulières, se sentaient parfaitement à l'aise dans la société dans laquelle ils évoluaient et exploitaient pleinement les avantages de leur statut diplomatique. L'un des plus représentatifs à cet égard fut Chen Jitong 陳季同 (1851-1907 — connu sous le nom de « Général Tcheng ki-tong » dans la société parisienne) qui fit particulièrement preuve d'initiative et d'audace dans les contacts avec la société internationale.

Enfance et formation

Chen Jitong est probablement né en 1851[2]. Originaire du Fujian, il est issu d'une famille de lettrés, sans croyances religieuses. Dans une lettre adressée au Rédacteur en chef du journal *Soleil*, il prétend que son père était « sous-préfet » et que son oncle, d'abord « commissaire impérial à l'arsenal de Fuzhou » était devenu

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2. Voir l'article « Tcheng-Ki-Tong », in *Larousse du XXᵉ siècle*, tome 6, 1933, p. 615.

ensuite « vice-roi de Nankin » (*Le Gaulois*, 17 mars 1891). Mais les documents chinois concernant sa biographie prouvent que sa famille n'était pas si éminente. Son père et sa mère moururent l'un après l'autre quand il était enfant, si bien que la situation familiale était devenue précaire.

Chen Jitong était un enfant fort intelligent, qui connaissait par cœur les Classiques confucéens. Mais il ne se présenta pas aux examens car il entra en 1867 à l'École française des constructions navales de l'Arsenal de Fuzhou, fondé par Prosper Giquel. Ce choix est sans doute lié à la pauvreté de la famille. En effet, les autorités de l'arsenal offraient aux élèves, outre le gite et le couvert, une pension mensuelle de 4 taëls, et des gratifications supplémentaires si les résultats scolaires étaient excellents. De plus, les débouchés étaient garantis après l'obtention du diplôme : on devenait officier de marine ou fonctionnaire civil.

Chen Jitong se montra très bon élève, ses progrès en français furent très rapides. Après l'obtention de son diplôme, il fut embauché à l'arsenal comme interprète de l'administration et reçut un grade militaire, de rang de commandant (*shoubei* 守備), et le titre additionnel de lieutenant-colonel (*dusi* 都司). En mars 1875, il accompagna Giquel dans un voyage en Angleterre et en France. Ce voyage avait pour but d'une part d'acheter des machines pour l'arsenal, d'autre part de préparer l'accueil en Europe de la mission d'instruction des étudiants l'année suivante. C'est durant ce voyage que ses talents se manifestèrent.

En 1876, après le voyage en Europe, Chen Jitong accompagna Giquel et l'ambassadeur Li Fengbao 李鳳苞 à Nankin, Tianjin et Yantai pour rencontrer le vice-roi des Liangjiang, Shen Baozhen 沈葆楨, et le vice-roi du Zhili, Li Hongzhang 李鴻章. On dit qu'il remit à Li Hongzhang le rapport sur le voyage effectué et que pour cette raison il fut élevé au rang de secrétaire de la Mission d'instruction chinoise en Europe.

Bien que né dans une famille lettrée appauvrie, Chen avait très bien su s'adapter aux circonstances, réussir sa formation et trouver une voie favorable à son développement personnel (Bryois 1891, 289)[1], et c'est avec ardeur qu'il débuta sa carrière professionnelle.

L'entrée dans la société française : la participation à la diplomatie

Le 20 mars 1877, le premier groupe d'étudiants de l'arsenal de Fuzhou envoyé pour poursuivre sa formation en Europe se met en route. Le directeur européen Giquel, le directeur chinois Li Fengbao, accompagnés du professeur Martin Durbel, de l'attaché Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠, de « l'étudiant et secrétaire chinois »

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1. D'après Henri Bryois, en allant voir son oncle qui travaillait à l'arsenal, Chen apprend que le lendemain s'ouvre un concours pour l'admission aux écoles européennes et s'y inscrit aussitôt.

Chen Jitong, de l'interprète Luo Fenglu 羅豐祿 et des étudiants embarquent de Fuzhou. Le 8 avril, à Hong Kong, ils prennent le paquebot français *Peï-ho* des Messageries maritimes et débarquent à Marseille le 7 mai (*Le Temps*, le 11 mai 1877). Tout en occupant un emploi au sein de la mission, Ma, Chen et Luo poursuivent aussi des études : Ma et Chen entrent à l'École libre des sciences politiques pour étudier « la législation applicable aux négociations[1] ».

En mai 1878, quand le gouvernement des Qing établit sa légation en France, Ma Jianzhong et Chen Jitong reçoivent aussi une affectation avec le titre initial d'attachés[2]. Chen Jitong, qui a à l'origine un grade militaire, devient attaché militaire. Dès lors, c'est en tant que diplomates que Ma Jianzhong et Chen Jitong déploient chacun leur charme personnel dans la société française.

Après la nomination de Li Fengbao en tant qu'ambassadeur de la Chine en Allemagne (en novembre 1878), Chen Jitong est affecté à la légation de Berlin. Ses succès dans la société parisienne devront attendre son retour dans la capitale française, lorsqu'il y accompagne Li Fengbao, qui y est nommé ministre par intérim en 1884, et surtout quand il remplace ce dernier comme chargé d'affaires. Tous les succès de Chen dans la société parisienne, qu'ils aient ou non affaire avec la diplomatie, ont connu un éclat considérable du fait de son statut diplomatique. Chen Jitong attirait l'attention en qualité de diplomate cultivé, plein de charme oriental, d'originalité et épris de liberté.

Chen Jitong à Paris : un diplomate chinois très parisien, écrivant avec un esprit et un goût européen

La première apparition de Chen Jitong dans la presse date du 10 mai 1877, dans *Le Petit Marseillais*. Le nom du responsable chinois Li Fengbao est transcrit « Tow-Pow », mais celui de Chen, « Tchen Ki-Tong », apparaît avec précision et exactitude. Il se peut que lors de son interview, le journaliste ait été particulièrement frappé par le français que ce jeune fonctionnaire chinois parlait couramment, et par ses goûts personnels.

Chen Jitong, qui sortait de l'école de l'arsenal de Fuzhou, avait des relations plus étroites avec la mission d'instruction, et de ce fait il participait fréquemment aux besognes administratives de la Mission et était l'interprète personnel constamment présent aux côtés du directeur chinois Li Fengbao. En emmenant Chen Jitong avec eux pour toutes sortes de prises de contact avec les organismes officiels, la presse et les écoles, Giquel et Li ont exercé leurs aptitudes aux contacts humains et l'ont aidé à se constituer un large réseau de relations sociales, lui ouvrant ainsi l'accès aux cercles de la haute société parisienne.

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1. Les noms de Ma Jianzhong et Chen Jitong sont bien enregistrés dans la liste d'inscription de l'École, conservée à la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques. Voir : *Liste des élèves inscrits pour l'ensemble des cours, 1871 à 1892-1893* (ISP 13 a) ; *Liste des élèves diplômés, 1874-1921* (ISP 13 h).

2. L'*Almanach National : annuaire officiel de la République française*, 1878, p. 41.

Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾, le premier ambassadeur chinois en France, s'est large-ment appuyé sur les services de Ma Jianzhong et de Chen Jitong. Certes, il admi-rait les acquis de Ma en savoir occidental, mais il appréciait surtout au plus haut point la capacité de Chen à « flotter au fil des événements du jour ». Guo savait toujours utiliser leurs particularités et les répartir selon le moment. Le 6 mai 1878, pour remettre ses lettres de créance, il se rendit au palais de l'Élysée accompa-gné des interprètes Zhang Deyi, Lian Fang, Ma Jianzhong et Chen Jitong. Mais il partagea le travail d'interprétation entre Ma et Chen : « Le ministre présenta sa lettre de créance, et quand il eut terminé sa déclaration, Ma Meishu (nom social de Ma Jianzhong) en lut la traduction française. Une fois la lettre remise, le président français se leva et répondit par quelques mots que Chen Jingru (nom social de Chen Jitong) traduisit en chinois » (Zhang 1986, 536). Cette manière de faire relevait en réalité de l'application inlassable de Guo Songtao à récompen-ser, promouvoir et encourager la jeune génération. Le 15 septembre 1878, en tant qu'attaché militaire, à cheval et l'épée au côté, Chen Jitong prit part à la parade militaire devant le président de la République au bois de Vincennes. Dans les rangs des militaires étrangers, comme « le roi de la fête », il attira tous les regards, on lui trouva un air de MacMahon (*Le Figaro*, 16 septembre 1878).

Bien qu'il n'ait étudié que brièvement à l'École libre des sciences politiques, Chen Jitong trouva moyen de s'y lier avec les professeurs. Un de ses maîtres, Alexandre Ribot, est resté un de ceux qu'il citait volontiers (Bryois 1887, 291). Chen Jitong s'est lié à beaucoup de célébrités du monde savant. Le 12 juillet 1878, Guo Songtao nota dans son journal : « Chen Jingru signale onze personnes très savantes en France » (Guo 1984, 451).

En novembre 1879, Chen Jitong fut envoyé à la légation de Berlin, mais il avait déjà marqué de son empreinte les cercles politiques et mondains. C'est pourquoi, en juin 1883, il put entreprendre à Paris une démarche diplomatique secrète sur la base de ses relations personnelles. À l'époque, les pourparlers franco-chinois sur le problème vietnamien étaient dans l'impasse. Sur l'ordre de Li Hongzhang, Chen Jitong essaya de prendre contact à Paris avec des personnalités influentes du monde politique français, d'ouvrir de nouveaux canaux aux pourparlers et d'obtenir des renseignements. Selon son rapport adressé à Li Hongzhang (Chen 1995, 541-561), il avait pris contact avec de nombreux éditorialistes de la presse, célébrités du monde savant et personnalités politiques, parmi lesquelles le Premier ministre Jules Ferry, le ministre des Affaires étrangères Challemel Lacour, le député Félix Granet, l'ancien ministre en Chine Albert Bourée, le chef du protocole de l'Ély-sée Armand Mollard, et l'académicien le marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys, etc. Cette activité diplomatique personnelle eut lieu à l'insu du ministre à Paris, Zeng Jize 曾紀澤, lequel, indigné, protesta auprès du Zongli Yamen 總理衙門 [1] (Chen 1995, 527). Cette action diplomatique ne fut qu'un interlude mineur dans les

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1. Littéralement « Bureau des affaires de toutes les nations », le Zongli yamen était un organisme gouvernemental chargé de la politique extérieure de la Chine à la fin de l'époque Qing.

pourparlers franco-chinois sur le Vietnam, sans aucune influence sur les événements généraux, mais elle eut quelques résultats. Tout d'abord, elle s'efforça de maintenir un dialogue pacifique avec la partie française et de presser celle-ci de chercher le contact avec Li Fengbao par son ambassadeur à Berlin. D'autre part, elle fournit un certain nombre de renseignements, notamment sur les divergences de vues parmi les dirigeants, et aida Li Hongzhang et le Zongli Yamen à analyser l'évolution probable de la situation.

En 1884, sur la demande pressante de la France, le Zongli Yamen fit muter Zeng Jize, le ministre en France dont l'attitude était jugée trop intransigeante, et fit assurer l'intérim à Paris par Li Fengbao, le ministre à Berlin, en attendant l'arrivée d'un nouveau titulaire. Comme Li Fengbao était en même temps directeur chinois de la mission d'instruction et chargé des achats d'armes et de navires pour le compte de Li Hongzhang, il n'avait pas le loisir de s'occuper des affaires de la légation de Paris. Chen Jitong devint le représentant de celui-ci et dirigea la légation avec le titre de Premier secrétaire. C'est à cette époque que durant le temps libre que pouvaient lui laisser ses nombreuses charges officielles, il commença à publier, sous le nom de « Colonel Tcheng Ki-tong », une série de dix-huit articles intitulés *La Chine et les Chinois*, qui parurent dans trois livraisons successives de *La Revue des deux mondes* (T. 63, mai-juin 1884) et répandirent sa renommée dans la société parisienne. Ultérieurement, ces articles furent publiés sous forme de livre avec pour titre *Les Chinois peints par eux-mêmes* (Chen 1884). Deux ans plus tard, il publia un autre livre, *Le théâtre des Chinois*. Il venait alors d'être promu de colonel à général (Chen 1886).

Cependant, il y a des doutes quant à son implication réelle dans la rédaction de ces deux œuvres. En 1889, Foucault de Mondion, qui avait été employé comme professeur de français par la Mission d'instruction, commença à publier dans *Le Temps* et d'autres journaux des articles où il déclarait être l'auteur des deux livres, et engagea un procès pour en réclamer les droits d'auteur et une indemnité de 130 000 francs. Chen Jitong réfuta l'accusation avec la plus grande acrimonie et dureté dans les journaux : « M. Foucault prétend être le nom littéraire dont je n'aurais été que le pseudonyme ! Pseudonyme si longtemps gardé, toléré, respecté — pourquoi ? — par ce peintre de la Chine qui ne sait pas un mot de chinois et prétend m'avoir appris à connaître et à décrire mon pays ! » (*Le temps*, 13 octobre 1889) En 1890, Foucault de Mondion écrivit un livre qui prétendait révéler la vérité, *Quand j'étais Mandarin* (Foucault de Mondion, 1890). Il reproduisait beaucoup de documents favorables à sa thèse, notamment des lettres que Chen Jitong lui avait écrites, ainsi que le certificat que lui avaient adressé Giquel et Li Fengbao lorsqu'il avait cessé ses fonctions de professeur de français. Ces documents ne prouvaient pas, cependant, qu'il avait écrit les deux livres tout seul. À en juger par le contenu des livres, même s'il avait tenu la plume, il n'aurait pu se passer de l'aide d'un Chinois connaissant le français pour lui fournir les informations de base. Henri Cordier, qui avait été lui-même secrétaire français

de la Mission d'instruction, démentait totalement les allégations de Foucault de Mondion : « Celui-ci [Chen Jitong], que j'ai beaucoup connu, était cependant fort capable de les écrire » (Cordier 1902, 70-71).

Le procès prit fin le 12 février 1891, avant que Chen Jitong ne quitte la France. Comme il était couvert par l'immunité diplomatique, le tribunal n'examina pas le fond (*Le Temps*, 12 février 1891).

Après la parution de ces deux premiers livres, Chen Jitong continua à publier activement dans la presse et en librairie. Il fit paraître six autres livres, sans qu'aucun Français ne prétende les avoir écrits. Son nom devint même une garantie de succès de librairie : « Après les Russes, les Anglais, etc., voici les Chinois qui se mettent à torturer la bonne langue d'ici. Le général Tcheng Ki-tong publie *l'Homme jaune* en terre française. Ce nom *Tcheng Ki-tong* constitue une réclame des plus solides et assure les éditions. Il est vrai que ce n'est pas la faute de l'auteur » (*La France Moderne*, 30 octobre 1890). Romain Rolland nous donne un témoignage direct de son talent littéraire et de l'éloquence de sa parole. Le 18 février 1889, au grand amphithéâtre de la Sorbonne, dans la séance de l'Alliance française, son exposé rencontre l'accueil enthousiaste de tout l'auditoire. En le comparant aux autres orateurs qui s'expriment de façon plus ennuyeuse et gauche, Romain Rolland ne peut s'empêcher de reconnaître : « Des quatre orateurs de ce soir : Gérard, recteur de l'Académie de Paris ; Gaston Deschamps ; Tcheng Ki-tong ; et le gouverneur français du Congo, — c'est, sans aucun doute, le Chinois, que Voltaire eût trouvé le plus Français » (Roland 1952, 276-277). Ses publications et conférences apportèrent à Chen Jitong une auréole de gloire. En octobre 1885, il fut décoré officier de l'Instruction publique (*Le Temps,* 9 octobre 1885), le premier Chinois à recevoir cette distinction. En conséquence de ses succès littéraires, la Société littéraire des *Palmiers* le choisit pour présider sa cérémonie de remise de prix littéraires en 1890 (*Le Gaulois*, 20 janvier 1890). Malheureusement, une grippe l'empêcha d'assister à la cérémonie, qui fut présidée par le général Rolland. Cette maladie l'empêcha également de prendre part à un autre événement mondain, le mariage de la fille de Gustave Eiffel.

Toutes les conférences et livres de Chen Jitong ont la même motivation fondamentale : essayer de dissiper les erreurs et les préjugés des Français sur la Chine, leur vanter les beaux côtés de la Chine. Il signa : « Je me suis proposé, dans ce livre, de représenter la Chine telle qu'elle est, de décrire les mœurs chinoises, avec la connaissance que j'en ai, mais avec l'esprit et le goût européens. » Sa tactique était de corriger à l'excès, et il était lui-même parfaitement conscient de son procédé : « J'ai cherché à instruire et à plaire, et, si parfois je me laisse entraîner par le sujet jusqu'à affirmer mon amour pour mon pays, j'en demande pardon, d'avance, à tous ceux qui aiment leur patrie » (Chen 1884, VII, X).

Dans les années 1880, à mesure que les influences étrangères pénétraient davantage le pays, les contradictions et les retards de la société chinoise se dévoilaient complètement devant les Occidentaux. De plus, certains missionnaires, aventuriers

ou diplomates noircissaient exagérément le côté arriéré de la Chine. Dans le regard simplificateur de beaucoup d'Européens, non seulement la société chinoise était arriérée, mais les Chinois étaient cruels, barbares et l'incarnation de la pestilence. Face à ce phénomène, Chen Jitong se sentait ambassadeur de la culture, il avait par ailleurs ses impulsions personnelles, un troisième aspect était sa responsabilité de diplomate. Quand la presse étrangère publie des rapports négatifs sur leur patrie, tous les diplomates font la même chose, ils réfutent autant que possible, même si le langage ou les exemples qu'ils utilisent sont suspectés « d'embellir » à outrance la réalité. Le langage de Chen Jitong n'était pas sans exagération, mais son esprit, son humour et sa chaleur réussirent certainement à atténuer la haine et la peur qui flottaient encore dans l'air à la suite de la guerre franco-chinoise. Quoi qu'il en soit, l'effort de Chen Jitong pour faire connaître aux Français la culture et les mœurs des Chinois eut un effet certain. *Les Contes chinois*, qu'il avait traduits du *Liao zhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 de Pu Songling 蒲松齡, plongèrent les Français dans une sentimentalité romantique et tendre. Anatole France découvrit dans ce livre « la naïveté enfantine » ou « l'innocence » des Chinois, des enfants qui avaient aussi leur Mère l'Oye. Il y trouvait aussi l'éclaircissement d'une notion : à savoir que, comparés aux Occidentaux, les Chinois avaient surtout confiance dans la force de la famille, la fonction de Dieu et de la religion était chez eux beaucoup plus faible (France 1925, 80-85).

De 1885 à 1891, en tant que premier secrétaire, Chen Jitong eut continûment la responsabilité des affaires de la légation en France. Les ministres d'alors, Xu Jingcheng (1885-1888) et Liu Ruifen (1888-1890), exerçaient concurremment des mandats dans plusieurs pays et consacraient l'essentiel de leurs efforts aux légations relativement plus importantes que la France, à savoir celles d'Angleterre et d'Allemagne. Cette époque peut être appelée « l'ère de Chen Jitong ». Tout en vaquant aux tâches de la légation, Chen Jitong se consacrait avec une énergie et un enthousiasme étonnant à toutes sortes d'activités sociales, comme les publications évoquées plus haut, des conférences, et les somptueuses réceptions mondaines de la haute société. Ce diplomate chinois bouillant d'énergie, parlant couramment le français, habillé avec faste et bardé de galons, apportait à chaque salon un nouveau parfum d'exotisme, et les portes du beau monde lui étaient grandes ouvertes. Lui-même prenait plaisir sans se lasser à passer d'un salon à l'autre : « Je suis invité tous les jours. Comme un pavillon *(sic)*, je vole de salons en salons. Jamais je ne rentre avant minuit » (Foucault de Mondion 1890, 35).

Dans les salons parisiens, Chen Jitong était comme un poisson dans l'eau. L'un des salons célèbres qu'il fréquentait était celui de Madame Marie Talabot, rue de Rivoli[1]. Madame Talabot appréciait beaucoup Chen Jitong et ses écrits, aussi Chen Jitong lui dédicace-t-il *Le Théâtre des Chinois* dans les termes suivants : « Votre souvenir, évoqué à la première page, invitera le lecteur à lire la seconde [...]

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1. Sur la vie de Marie Talabot, voir (Mercadié 2007).

et c'est pourquoi j'inscris fièrement et respectueusement sur cette page, qui sera la plus belle du livre » (Chen 1886, page de garde).

Le Temps du 18 avril 1890 rapportait la nouvelle suivante : « Samedi dernier, 12 avril, a eu lieu à la mairie de Desnes, petite commune de l'arrondissement de Lons-le-Saunier, le mariage du général Tcheng Ki-Tong, premier secrétaire de la légation chinoise à Paris, avec Mlle Maria-Adèle Lardanchet, originaire de Desnes ». S'y ajoutait la mention : « Le mariage chinois avait déjà été célébré à Pékin, il y a plusieurs années ». En réalité, il n'y avait pas eu de mariage à Pékin. Avant de quitter la Chine pour la première fois en 1875, Chen Jitong s'était marié. Sa femme, née Liu 刘, mourut de maladie en 1888 (Li 2004, 189-190). Or Chen n'était revenu en Chine qu'une fois, en 1883. La seule explication possible est que soit Chen Jitong, soit son épouse française, pour des raisons de vanité, ont forgé pour la presse cette fiction du mariage à Pékin. Le mariage de Chen Jitong et de Maria-Adèle Lardanchet a cependant un sens symbolique, puisqu'il inaugure les mariages de diplomates chinois avec des étrangères.

Zeng Pu 曾樸, le célèbre romancier de la fin des Qing et du début de la République, eut des relations personnelles très étroites avec Chen Jitong. Il décrit ce dernier de la façon suivante : « Malgré son titre militaire, son tempérament était foncièrement celui d'un lettré, il était démesurément prétentieux et arrogant, affranchi des conventions et convenances » (Zeng 1980, 313). Par coïncidence, le jugement des contemporains français sur Chen est très voisin :

> Qui ne connaît Tcheng-Ki-Tong, ce Chinois si parisien, dont les conseils sont toujours suivis à la Légation de Chine, où il remplit les fonctions d'attaché militaire ? Jamais Tcheng-Ki-Tong n'a suivi les manœuvres, il est pourtant général dans son pays mais, depuis longtemps, ce Céleste semble préférer les lettres au noble métier des armes. [...] On le voit, rien ne manque à Tcheng-Ki-Tong, qui est un homme très instruit et très spirituel ! mais qui est bien peu général. (Gérard 1887)

C'est précisément ce caractère expansif et peu pointilleux sur les détails qui lui causa des ennuis et finalement mit fin à sa carrière de diplomate.

Chen Jitong eut à faire face à un endettement critique, qui tourna au scandale diplomatique (Li 2004, 36-44 ; Cordier 1902, 68-71). En 1889, le gouvernement impérial avait décidé de construire la voie ferrée dite Lu-han, de Lugouqiao à Hankou. Le prince Chun et Li Hongzhang étaient d'avis de la financer par un emprunt étranger de 30 millions de taëls. Chen Jitong, qui avait beaucoup de relations dans le monde des affaires et connaissait bien les emprunts étrangers des différentes provinces, offrit spontanément ses services à Li Hongzhang pour effectuer cet emprunt. Il se mit en rapport avec le banquier autrichien Moritz Landauer. Pendant leurs négociations, les dépenses de Chen en communications télégraphiques avec Tianjin atteignirent des chiffres très élevés, aussi emprunta-t-il de l'argent à plusieurs banques au nom de l'ambassade et de la Mission d'instruction. Le prince Chun mourut le 1er janvier 1891, si bien qu'il n'y eut plus personne

à Pékin pour soutenir le projet. Li Hongzhang fut obligé de demander à Chen Jitong d'abandonner les pourparlers pour l'emprunt. Les dettes qu'avait contractées Chen Jitong avaient, il est vrai, servi à la négociation, mais en partie aussi à ses frais personnels, sans distinguer dans les comptes dépense publique et privée.

En mars 1890, Xue Fucheng 薛福成 prit les fonctions de ministre en Angleterre, France, Italie et Belgique, et reçut peu après des lettres des banques créditrices demandant remboursement. Il enjoignit à Chen de trouver le moyen de payer et prévint par télégramme Li Hongzhang et le Zongli Yamen, en recommandant de « démettre et soumettre à examen » Chen Jitong. Chen Jitong quitta Paris le 17 avril 1891 pour rentrer en Chine. À partir de ce moment, il n'eut plus de raison de mettre le pied en Europe, sa carrière diplomatique prit fin. Dans son mémoire d'accusation, Xue Fucheng écrivait :

> Ce fonctionnaire est ligoté par les mœurs occidentales, il n'a que les relations mondaines à la bouche, gaspille l'argent à longueur d'année, avec pour résultat un énorme déficit. Bien plus, au nom de la légation, au titre du service officiel, il rapporte un résumé puis laisse la besogne en sommeil, sans tenir sa parole envers les étrangers, c'est ce que le bon sens en cette matière a le plus de mal à tolérer. (Zhu 1984, 2997)

L'accusation n'est pas sans fondement, mais à vrai dire, elle est emmêlée de ressentiment personnel. Les deux prédécesseurs de Xue Fucheng, Xu Jingcheng et Liu Ruifen, avaient été assez tolérants envers Chen Jitong, qui en fait dirigeait les affaires de la légation en France. Mais Xue avait à la fois des capacités et une personnalité très forte, qui l'opposaient gravement au caractère de Chen. Le style d'action de Chen Jitong faisait que le public français ne connaissait que « le Général Tcheng Ki-tong » et ignorait le ministre de Chine : c'est ce que Xue Fucheng ne pouvait admettre. On en voit la preuve évidente dans le mémoire que Xue Fucheng adressa après le départ de Chen pour faire nommer Qing Chang 慶常 conseiller à la légation en France (ZGDYLSDAG 1984, 764) :

> Par ailleurs, le sous-directeur du ministère des Travaux publics Qing Chang, envoyé précédemment comme conseiller de deuxième classe en Russie, écrit et parle très bien le français, il jouit généralement de la même réputation que Chen Jitong à cet égard. Mais il est mûr et réfléchi, soucieux du réel, indifférent aux splendeurs, donc très supérieur à Chen Jitong.

En fait, la détermination de Xue Fucheng à user de sévérité envers Chen Jitong avait aussi une autre cause : l'attitude du ministère français des Affaires étrangères. Il se peut que le comportement ordinaire de Chen ait parfois exaspéré les autorités françaises, mais la raison essentielle est sa remise en cause du pouvoir de direction de la Mission d'instruction. Les archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères conservent de très nombreuses lettres d'interventions de Chen Jitong à ce sujet. En outre, il empruntait de l'argent en usurpant le nom de la Mission d'instruction (Zhu 1984, 2997). Dunoyer de Segonzac, le responsable français de la Mission, en

était très mécontent. D'une part, il en prévint secrètement le ministère des Affaires étrangères ; d'autre part, il dénonça à Xue Fucheng ces emprunts frauduleux de Chen Jitong[1]. Or, au même moment, le ministère des Affaires étrangères faisait pression sur le Zongli Yamen par l'intermédiaire du ministre à Pékin, Lemaire. L'affaire individuelle de la dette de Chen Jitong devenait une affaire diplomatique.

Après le départ de France de Chen Jitong, une fois définitivement terminée la tempête de son endettement privé, l'enthousiasme de la presse française pour sa personne se refroidit peu à peu. Bien qu'il ait encore publié quelques œuvres, sa réputation quitta le point de mire du public français. Seules quelques personnes qui l'avaient connu personnellement ou avaient lu ses livres mentionnaient encore son nom dans leurs écrits ou citaient ses livres. Sheng Cheng 盛成 (Cheng Tcheng) cite l'anecdote qui suit dans les années 1920. Si on voulait acheter un livre de Chen Jitong dans une librairie française, le libraire demandait : « Vous cherchez un livre de qui ? De Chien qui tombe ? » (Xu 1998). C'est le qualificatif le plus approprié au destin final de Chen Jitong en France. Cordier est plein de sympathie pour les malheurs de Chen Jitong : « La fin de Tcheng Ki-tong fut regrettable pour les intérêts français, car, malgré ses torts, assurément inexcusables, il nous avait rendu des services qu'il aurait sans doute pu continuer. Je n'ai jamais vu un Chinois adopter les manières européennes d'une façon aussi complète ; il est vrai qu'il les connaissait mieux que les coutumes de son pays » (Cordier 1902, 70-71).

Le sort de Chen Jitong en Chine : la tragédie des premiers diplomates formés au savoir occidental

En 1892, grâce à la protection de Li Hongzhang, Chen Jitong fut réintégré dans son grade. Cependant, il dut se contenter de commissions provisoires. En 1895, il jeta son dernier éclat dans la diplomatie. Le traité de Shimonoseki cédait Taiwan au Japon. Chen fut envoyé à Taiwan par Li Hongzhang pour aider Li Jingfang 李經方 à régler les procédures de cession du territoire. Voyant que les soldats et la population de l'île étaient résolus à la mort plutôt que d'accepter le joug japonais, il fit ses efforts pour maintenir l'indépendance de Taiwan. Avec Tang Jingsong 唐景嵩, Qiu Fengjia 邱逢甲 et d'autres fonctionnaires et lettrés, il essaya de fonder une « république de Taiwan », « ayant reçu de loin l'aveu de l'empire » (San 1999, 98). Chargé des relations diplomatiques de cette république, Chen Jitong monta à bord d'un bateau de la flotte française dans les mers de Chine pour proposer au commandant Ternet « le protectorat français sur Formose et sa jeune République[2] ». Après la mort prématurée de la jeune république, Chen Jitong se réfugia à Shanghai. Les entreprises pour réformer et sauver le pays n'y cessaient

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1. Archives des affaires étrangères, ADC 8, (1890-1891), Lettre de Dunoyer de Segonzac du 29 septembre 1891 ; ADC 9, (1892), Lettre de Dunoyer de Segonzac du 31 décembre 1892.
2. *Études* (revue bimensuelle publiée par la Compagnie de Jésus), t. 74, 5 janvier 1898, p. 746.

pas : créations de journaux, d'écoles, traductions. Chen Jitong se dévoua à toutes ces activités de l'important mouvement de réforme de l'époque.

En 1898, lors de la Réforme des Cent jours, le gouvernement impérial invita les lettrés à lui exprimer largement leurs vœux. Le 13 septembre 1898, Chen Jitong adressa un mémoire au trône par l'intermédiaire du Zongli Yamen, intitulé « Requête pour la désignation un envoyé spécial pour faire la liaison avec les pays étrangers et pour sa propre nomination comme ministre en Belgique ; avec en annexe une requête pour établir à Pékin un Bureau du génie civil sur le modèle occidental, chargé de l'entretien et de la construction des chaussées dans la capitale ; en complément un règlement des écoles ». Ces documents furent même transmis à l'impératrice Cixi. Mais le 21 septembre eut lieu le coup d'État qui marquait l'échec de la réforme, il n'était plus question d'innovations politiques, ni des mesures que proposait Chen Jitong (Mao 2005, 397). Sa dernière issue pour revenir à la carrière diplomatique était bouchée.

Déçu par l'absence de succès de ses entreprises, Chen Jitong tomba dans un état dépressif. Durant ses dernières années, il mena une vie très dissolue, adonnée « au bon vin et aux femmes ». Il mourut à Nankin, au Bureau de traduction du Jiangchu où il était employé au Service général des publications officielles, le 22 janvier 1907. Dans le numéro du 10 mars 1907, *Les Annales politiques et littéraires* (nᵒ 1237, 150) annoncèrent son décès : « Le plus parisien des Chinois s'est éteint à Pékin. Il s'agit du fameux général Tcheng Ki-Tong, qui jouit chez nous, il y a quelque vingt ans, d'une réelle popularité. » Ce fut le dernier hommage que lui rendit la société parisienne.

La réussite de Chen Jitong à Paris et ses frustrations dans la carrière officielle en Chine révèlent pleinement le dilemme devant lequel il s'est trouvé en changeant de statut. À Paris, il était le promoteur des échanges culturels entre la Chine et la France, et surtout le propagateur de la culture chinoise, bien que sa formation et son expérience vécue, par un effet inconscient, aient déjà rendu son comportement très semblable à celui d'un « Occidental ». À Shanghai, il fut aussi l'avocat et le promoteur de la civilisation occidentale. Il propagea avec énergie l'importation de la civilisation européenne avancée, en publiant, par exemple, le journal *Qiushi bao* 求是報, en traduisant de nombreux documents et informations d'Europe et d'Amérique, en se consacrant à la direction d'une école de filles, dont il avait fait rédiger le règlement par sa femme française. Ou encore, lors de sa rencontre avec Zeng Pu, en éclairant et guidant ce dernier dans sa découverte de la littérature française. Malheureusement, à cause de son caractère, il n'eut pas les moyens de continuer à exercer une influence dans son domaine de spécialité et devint un personnage marginal, peu à peu oublié par la société.

Le destin de Chen Jitong est au fond l'exemple même du sort tragique de la première génération des diplomates ayant un savoir occidental. La société d'alors ne réussissait pas encore à intégrer et accepter de tels précurseurs en avance sur leur temps et capables de changer les conditions sociales.

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The Trauma of Immigration in the Novel *A Shawl as Long as the Silk Road* by Mahasti Shahrokhi

Shokooh Sadat Hosseini

(Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Téhéran, Iran)

Introduction

According to the United Nations Population Division, the number of women, especially educated women, who have migrated individually or with their families, has increased dramatically around the world since the early 1980s, so that in the last decades of the last century, the number of immigrant women was almost equal to men. Women comprise half of the international immigrants today and Iran is no exception to this rule:

> According to the results of the 2016 census, during the period between 2011 and 2016, out of a total of more than 4.3 million people who migrated, 2,210,387 were men and 2,090,610 were women, resulting in a gender ratio of 105.7. In other words, for every 100 women, there were about 106 immigrant men in the whole country. (Mushfeq, Khazaei 2015, 86).

This "feminization of migration" can have a positive effect on discussions based on women's subjective expression of their lived experiences.

In the modern world, relationships and lifestyles have strengthened individualism in human society. On the other hand, the extensive networks of social relations and the process of globalization tend to blur the identity characteristics of individuals. Despite this contrast, people around the world continue to use distinctive features such as nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and even the social groups to which they belong, to describe themselves.

The most fundamental issues of immigrants relate to, on the one hand, nostalgic issues of personal and internal attachments to the homeland, and on the other, the

relationship they have with the host society. Furthermore, the action and reaction that takes place between them and that community places them in a subordinate or a superior position, or in fact, a comparative position to redefine and represent their identity.

The increase in immigration of Iranians, and especially the growing number of women, in general, is the result of many social problems an indicator that they are leaving due to political and security risks. However, from the viewpoint of gender-oriented perspectives, and especially in the field of postcolonial literature, reading and analyzing the experiences of groups in society that were previously considered inferior or marginal and have been targeted in macro-social studies in recent decades, can reveal significant changes in cultural and identity-related relations of a society which is in transition from tradition to modernity. One of the characteristics of this new identity is migration in order to achieve better living conditions.

The present study seeks to analyze the representation of identity (individual and collective) of women through the narration of specific problems of their migration experience. Using as a primary source the novel *A Shawl as Long as the Silk Road* by Mahasti Shahrokhi about an immigrant woman who has herself experienced immigration, this paper examines and critically analyzes the redefinition or reconstruction of her individual and social identity. This identity construct can be briefly divided into three areas: individual, national and gender-based. Therefore, the issue of femininity is addressed from a number of perspectives; personally or legally in the society (homeland/host country); sometimes family traditions and customs are highlighted in the form of memories and nostalgia and the issue of national identity and belonging/non-belonging (emotionally and logically) to the homeland in contrast to the host society. However, what stands out most in the novel under review is the theme of trauma of identity of the main character.

Traumatic Identity

The word "trauma", which has Greek roots, meant objective and physical wounds until the early nineteenth century. Later, through Freud's research, mental and internal concepts were also added to it, and it was defined as the recollection of repressed and untreated emotional and psychological shock, or in fact, a kind of "Delayed Memory".

According to Freud's interpretation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the state of trauma does not occur at the moment of the traumatic event, but the traumatized person experiences an emotional shock when reminded of it. On this basis, it can be said that although separation from home and family may not have much effect on the immigrant at the time of migration, after a while, the damage caused by migration may have twice as much effect on them, so that the wound of

separation gets deeper and turns into a trauma, and most importantly challenges the person's life.

"The literary text speaks of trauma, because it is the sign of absence or loss of something. If the meaning was present, there would be no need for language" (Heidarizadeh 2015, 76). Accordingly, this article investigates the effect of trauma on redefining immigrant identity in Mahasti Shahrokhi's narrative, that in addition to its personal aspect, evokes an archetypal and even mythical dimension in the reader's mind.

Introduction to the Author

Mahasti Shahrokhi is an Iranian novelist, poet, and winner of numerous literary prizes. She was born in 1976 in Malayer. After finishing her primary education and high school in Tehran, she entered the College of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran in 1980 and graduated in the field of performing arts. In 1984, she emigrated to Paris, where she studied a variety of disciplines including educational technology, Iranian studies and comparative literature and eventually she earned her Ph.D. in literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. She has published an article entitled "the Final Days of Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi in Paris" and some translations in the field of theater that have been published in Iranian magazine, Kelk.

Her novel, *A Shawl as Long as the Silk Road* attracted critical attention, and Cactus magazine (published in the U.S.) devoted its third publication to this novel. Her recent writings have been published in *Another Sea, Another Shore: Persian Stories of Migration* (Interlink World Fiction, United States), and *The Other Voices International Poetry.* Her novel *Sobh-e Nahan* (Canadian Citizen Weekly, 2008–2009) and poetry collection *Jomhoori-e Sokoot* on her weblog Chashman-e Bidar are included.

Introduction and Analysis of the Novel

A Shawl as Long as the Silk Road is a fictional narrative of an immigrant woman's experience when abandoned and left alone in a strange country.

The plot is very simple: An Iranian girl living in London has a love affair with a young man. The girl becomes pregnant and the young man leaves her. The girl is forced to have an abortion due to a heart condition that is exacerbated by the man's absence and irresponsibility.

In Shahrokhi's modern narrative, there are few traces of the past and the background and motivation of the protagonist for immigration is unknown. We only know that her father named her "Katayoun" because of his interest in the

Shahnameh[1]. "A name which is pronounced in foreign languages as Catherine or Katharina, or as an abbreviation Kate, Katie or Katty" (Shahrokhi 1995, 12). She had a boyfriend named John and at the end of the story, we find out that she met him by chance as narrated bellow by her in the first person: "I pass the painters of "Trafalgar" Square, I look at the traveling painters who are drawing portraits of tourists. Suddenly a stranger takes my hand and pulls me away before I have the slightest reaction" (*ibid.*, 134). The stranger asks the traveling painter to draw a portrait of the two, and she says objectionably:

> Sir, I do not even know your name . . . You will learn the name! My name is John! In the Bible I am called "John". In the Caribbean and Argentina, I am called "Juan". When I travel to Spain, I am called "Jorne Juan". In Northern Europe my name is pronounced "Jan", in France, they call me "Jean". In London, too, everyone usually calls me John. (*Ibid.*, 136)

John, a twice divorced man, with a son from his first wife and two daughters with his second, proceeds to impregnate Katayoun. More than half of the story relates to Katayoun's struggles to bring the fetus to term and raise the child: "As John lay exhausted, [after making love] for a moment I felt the weight of a child on my chest and abdomen. It moves like a fish in my veins and I feel its path in all my arteries" (*ibid.*, 66).

With this style which the author has chosen, female experiences are intertwined with fantasy, myth and dreams, and in the stream of consciousness, immerse the reader in a metaphorical collage of reality and imagination, such that they can feel that even before she knows for sure that she is pregnant, she senses that she is. It is the strength of the author that she can use metaphor and simile to engross the readers so totally that they themselves feel like Katayoun as she senses the imaginary foetus moving like a fish through her body.

The novel's historical-mythological reference is obvious from its title and other references made by the narrator throughout the story. The author uses the mythical references to "Penelope"[2] and "Shahrzad"[3] in order to help us to understand what is going on in the conscious mind of Katayoun, due to all three characters having a connection with the word "knit/بافتن".

The words "knitting" or "weaving" in Farsi is the same word, which can also be used to make up a story or daydreaming as well as being a handicraft. So, when

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1. According to Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Katayoun was the wife of Goshtasp, one of the famous kings of Kiani and the mother of Esfandiar and Sam, whose other name is Nahid (vol. 6, p. 330).
2. In Greek mythology, she was the wife of Odysseus. In her youth, she had many suitors because of her beauty. To avoid fights and conflicts, her father organized a competition declaring the winner as the groom. Odysseus won the competition and married Penelope.
3. The narrator of the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Following the betrayal of his wife, the king of Iran, Shahriar, decided to marry a virgin every night and kill her the next morning. Shahrzad, a minister's daughter, volunteered to marry the king and narrated a story to the king every night, leaving the rest of the story for the next night to save her life. This storytelling lasted for 3 years.

Shahrzad was telling stories, in Farsi we can say that she was knitting stories to save herself, whereas "Penelope" was literary weaving a shroud to keep her suitors at bay and Katayoun was daydreaming to stay sane in a foreign country where she has been left alone. One example of such references is the following quotation: "I do not want to weave a scarf as long as the Silk Road waiting for his return.[4] I do not know how to knit. I do not weave. I sit and dream. Long and endless fantasies, dreams as long as the Silk Road . . ." (*ibid.*,19). In fact, a mythical symbolic action by the protagonist has practically become a technique for showing the "productivity of imagination". Instead of a mythical interpretation, one can have a semiotic interpretation of the novel's name and use the "Shawl" as the symbol for "hair", which is metaphorically a cultural reference for an immigrant woman on the road to the West.

The author's desire to use a reference to the Silk Road in the title is to symbolize the journey of Katayoun from an eastern country to a western country just as the Silk Road goes from East to West and the use of the word "Shawl" is a cultural reference to Iranian women who have to cover their hair with a shawl. Similarly, the mythical references to Penelope (a Greek woman and therefore a symbol of the West) and Shahrzad (an eastern woman) are also symbols of the East to West journey of Katayoun.

As the story continues, this "knitting" motif becomes a historical-mythical reference for the narrator's Iranian identity, and the narrator's actions are similar to those of these mythical heroes: "I have been fantasizing for years. Now I am used to daydreaming. For centuries, I have been telling stories in my mind, like Shahrzad, to survive" (*ibid.*, 19). This archetypal view gives a stronger background to a woman whose displacement in another country forces her to choose between remaining a mother and being released from the bondage of being betrayed. Her situation as a wronged and vulnerable woman is exaggerated by her status as an immigrant, so not only does she represent victims of male desire and lust but also those women who have emigrated only to find that, as women, in the new country they are still victims. Indeed, in the contrast between Eastern (Shahrzad) and Western (Penelope) myth, the former is more metaphorical and imaginative than the latter.

John's scornful opinion of Katayoun, and women in general, is evident from the way he addresses her, which is in a way culturally unacceptable to her, that is because John always uses the names of animals to address her, and when she objects, his answer is that for all the women in his life, the number of which he does not even remember, he has always used the names of animals, as pet-names,

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4. During the 20 years of Odysseus's absence (during and after the Trojan Wars) Penelope remained loyal to him despite having many suitors. She cleverly disappointed her suitors every time. One of her most famous tricks was to start weaving a shrouds for Odysseus, promising her suitors that she would agree to get married again when the shrouds was finished. But every night she would unravel everything she had woven and for this reason Penelope is considered a symbol of marital fidelity.

and has called them "lamb", "wild cat", "deer" and "rabbit", etc. and according to him, they all loved it when he did so (*ibid.*, 24, 27, 30).

Additionally, the narrator engages in monologues with the baby in her womb. Although she has not seen it and never sees it, she refers to it as a boy, which in psychoanalytical terms indicates that she has an Electra Complex (castration), the only difference being that here instead of a daughter's sexual attachment towards a father, she exhibits this toward the baby in her womb. Although she does not know whether it is a boy or a girl, based on her patriarchal subconscious, she wishes it to be a boy with emerald green eyes[5] (*ibid.*, 45).

That green-eyed boy is also referred to as the "thumb-sized boy". This motif is often used as the addressee or an absent creature, and in these monologues the narrator expresses all her fears, anxieties, lack of self-confidence and complaints. She says to her unborn child:

> Now your mother is pregnant in the face of a world that has made every effort to sterilize her, but she is unable to fight to the end. Because your mom has never learned to fight. The world has taught her that the more obedient and tame she is, the longer she will survive, and in this forest of iron and cement, the first role is for your mom to fight for her own survival. (*Ibid.*, 55)

Indeed, due to its prevailing atmosphere, the novel does not reject feminist critiques based on Marxist or materialist views that target the economic system, but focuses more on archetypes that, by linking gender and biology, assert power over the male body. Katayoun herself is not a feminist but a representative of women who have grown up in a patriarchal society. This prehistoric view can be interpreted and harmonized in connection with other mythological and symbolic elements of the text: "Several feminists concentrated on Lacan's distinction between jouissance (feminine pleasure, which for Lacan is primal, contiguous and other) and desire (masculine and, for him, the primary sexual force) in order to affirm heretofore repressed female sexuality as the impetus for feminine creativity" (Makaryk 1993, 46). Makaryk further says that "Derrida's critique of Lacan's phallocentric fetishizing of the male Oedipal experience informed the feminist reclaiming of the repressed pre-Oedipal mother" (*ibid.*).

The position of the character in this novel is reminiscent of the anonymous character of the story *Zende be gūr* (Premature Burial[6]) by Sadegh Hedayat (1930- Javidan publisher), striving for a death whose motive is unknown, but certainly the motive is not poverty and deprivation, rather it is more of an existential challenge with the world; a fight over "not being". Now, decades after Hedayat, this theme is once again addressed. This time in a story in the immigrant genre,

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5. The notion is the same as "Phallocentrism" which is almost synonymous with patriarchy, denoting a certain kind of male-centered empowerment: a gender-specific system of power relations (Makaryk, 1993, 607).
6. In this story the reason for the protagonist's desire to commit suicide is not because of financial problems but has its roots in existentialism.

narrated by a young woman, whose background like the protagonist in *Zende be gūr* is also unknown, who is struggling with life due to defenselessness and has to make a choice; her own life or the life of a child she is pregnant with. This child can also be a double metaphor: a child who is the result of a failed relationship or the inner child of that woman, which was repressed within her being years ago, and now that it has woken up, has an unknown fate. As indicated in the following quote: "It does not matter anymore. I am so tired now that it no longer matters in what world would I be when the childhood of my being is taken away from me . . ." (*ibid.*, 113).

The current hallucinations of Katayoun, in her precarious state, indicate the unconscious, which, in Freud's words, "is hidden in a very dark place in the human body, which can be traced in dreams, conversations with patients and their symbolisms, as well as mythological and metaphorical texts" (Taslimi: 1388, 123). And in this narrative of the identity that is extracted from the inner depths and the mental layers of the main character of the story, there are all these manifestations. The narrator's sporadic references to linguistic differences in this novel can be the subject of long debates on the relationship between language and culture, and the relationship of these two with identity. For example, we can mention the issue of language structure in the following dialogue between Katayoun and the doctor:

> "You absolutely should not have been careless! says the doctor. Why are you pregnant?". To herself, she thinks: "It's hard to explain in a foreign language with all the names and adjectives, and the weird, ambiguous masculine, feminine, neutral articles, with all the polite formulations and the useless use of "please" that: —I had dreams and now everything is destroyed and my heart cannot carry the burden of all the difficulties I went through and it beats heavily and very slowly." (*Ibid.*, 53)

In addition to the narrator's problem with the formalist/structuralist structure of language, which he mentions in several instances, there are certainly special cultural and identity layers behind Katayoun's remarks about the destruction of her dreams that are unfamiliar or even incomprehensible to her addressee (the doctor) in another country:

> Every language, at the heart of its phonetic structure, develops a grammatical structure that carries a world of "meaning"; A semantic world that is the historical context of an ethnicity or a nation and a culture or many subcultures. . . . In other words, natural languages, according to their phonetic and semantic structures, each have a special nature or disposition like a living being. (Ashouri 1396, 26)

In fact, the author here uses a macro cultural narrative as a resource to recount her unspoken purpose and her predicament, because "in the space of human communication with the use of physical tools to produce sound . . . and the subjective language tools, in the form of its symbolic structure, which depends on the social and historical space, a semantic world is created which is called culture" (*ibid.*, 47).

A Shawl as long as the Silk Road has other psychoanalytic dimensions as well. The narrator has various inner conflicts, perhaps the strongest of which is her current resentment of a man with whom she has experienced exciting moments of love, however, from a Freudian perspective, the two instincts of love and death, whose mythical symbols are "Eros" and "Thanatos", are in struggle within her being:

> If Eros, or the instinct of life, is restrained, it will lead to friendship, love, procreation, and the preservation of essence, but Thanatos, the instinct of death and non-existence, causes hatred, enmity, and the destruction of the next generation. According to Freud, the instinct of death is superior and victorious in the end. (Taslimi, 125–126)

In her struggle with the situation in which she has to pull out the living being that love has placed inside her, in order to survive, Katayoun writes in a disturbing review of her memoirs:

> John is sleeping in complete peace. I stick to the wall. The wall is cold and icy. I look, I see that there is no distance between us. Apparently, we are both lying next to each other like before, and there is a maximum of the distance of one hand between us. I close my eyes, I see this distance stretching and turning into meters and kilometers. (Shahrokhi, 103)

Then, she immediately moves with the stream of consciousness, and the coldness of the wall and the coldness of her relationship remind her of a dream:

> I dream: I am sleeping on a cold rock. Everyone thinks I'm dead. I feel as if I am paralyzed, unable to move, but my brain is still working. A few people in white, and I can only recognize the whiteness of their clothes, pour water on me with a bucket. The pouring of water on my naked body is pleasurable, but the coldness of the rock under my body is loathsome. They are pouring water on my corpse bucket after bucket (*ibid.*).

In this quotation, the author's subconscious creates an affinity between reproduction and death, which, according to the writer George Bataille, "spontaneous physical revulsion keeps alive, in some indirect fashion at least, the consciousness that the terrifying face of death, its stinking putrefaction, are to be identified with the sickening primary condition of life" (Bataille 2009, 332).
In addition, what the narrator says about her bodily experiences in the two paradoxical states of sexual intercourse and the pleasure of feeling the pouring of water on her body at the time of death is an example of how women "can express their repressed femininity through writing . . . To express what is repressed by society, they have to start with their sexuality, and this starts from the body, which is different from the sexuality and body of men" (reference to the advice of Hélène Cixous[7]-Meqdadi 2014, 296).

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7. Hélène Cixous (1937–. . .): French literary critic, philosopher, playwright, and feminist known for her theories of critique of female authenticity. Unlike Simone de Beauvoir, she does not want to prove the

The character's long struggle to decide whether to keep or abort the baby, and the hospital scenes and the motif "Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock", exactly, give the reader a sense of identification with the character to participate in the decision that is the battle between life and death, in the female experience. "In the parallels perceived by the human mind between putrefaction and the various aspects of sexual activity the feelings of revulsion, which set us against both, end by mingling" (Bataille, 338). On the other hand, in those sections related to the hospital, the author makes the situation more visible by creating a contrast between the main character and her roommate, who wants to abort her child due to her young age and whose husband has remained with her and is by her side at all times. She also creates an intertextuality by repeatedly using idioms mentioning "lights" which reference the novel *Cheraghha ra man khamoosh mikonam* (I will turn off the lights) by Zoya Pirzad (Markaz, 2001), creating a second contrast with another woman who is the protagonist of Pirzad's novel. The idioms serve as a metaphor for the lives of the two women, who have both cut off relations with their husbands. However, Shahrokhi's protagonist finds herself in a more complicated situation because she is both an immigrant and pregnant, which Pirzad's protagonist is not.

The long night at the hospital includes another notable scene. After six o'clock in the evening, the white and colored, male and female nurses explain the preparation procedure for the two-step operation (one at eleven o'clock and the other at eight o'clock in the morning), to the narrator and her roommate. Following this, the narrator says to herself: "I do not want to sleep. I want to stay up until eight in the morning and talk to my thumb-sized boy. I only have until eleven p.m. to explain things to him" (Shahrokhi, 75). Just like a prisoner sentenced to death on the night of an execution, the narrator does not have much time to tell the child inside her womb the unspoken words, "But he does not listen and goes into a sulk" (*ibid.*). Realizing that a child is unable to comprehend her thoughts, in the need to get them of her chest, she seeks out Michel, who has previously been her university classmate to whom she has only spoken twice, once about Piaget[8] and the other time about Winnicott[9]. The cold, uninspiring telephone conversation between the two also reveals cultural as well as gender differences:

> —Now little by little I understand . . . are you pregnant? Abortion is not a problem at all . . . It's very simple.
> —No! Listen! I want to keep my child . . . But I cannot.

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sublimity of femininity and equality with men, but seeks to test the kinds of difference; The difference that manifests itself best in the written language of women (MEQDADI: 294).

8. Jean Piaget (1896–1980): The famous Swiss psychologist, biologist, and epistemologist and founder of the International Center for Genetic Epistemology, known for his theory of "cognitive development" and "natural order".

9. Donald Winnicott (1971–1986): English pediatrician and psychoanalyst and a member of the School of Object Relations Theory. The use of terms such as "the good enough mother" and "transitional object" in his developmental psychology has made him famous.

> —Ah! Well, it does not matter. I understand. But you will have other opportu-
> nities in the future. You can have children again later. Look, I'm not a girl, but I
> understand that you have many problems . . .
> . . . Listen Michael! . . . I wanted him.
> I understand . . . Although I'm not a woman . . . I try to understand."
> (*Ibid.*, 76–77)

The author's direct reference to important theorists in developmental psychology
may seem a trifle trivial in the text, but it goes without saying that the most
important point in this story is the lack of communication, of which language is
one of the foundations:

Woolf considers the first problem of a woman in expressing her existence to be
the technical problem of language, because the structure of the existing sentences
does not suit her existential character. The woman must change the structure in
a way to reflect the natural form of her thoughts and moods, without destroying
the structure of the sentence (Meqdadi, 251).

Indeed, during the narrator's monologues, the author reveals the fact that this
loneliness and exhaustion is not very gender-related, and the male character of the
story is also caught in such a conflict: "John lives 'with' people, not 'for' people.
He always makes himself busy by being in people's company to fill the gap in his
soul, but he is not successful. Then, without warning he gets upset and decides
to disperse this strange crowd, but he cannot, so he runs away again and again. . .
Just like now!" (Shahrokhi, 94).

This sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, in the eyes of Katayoun, not only
exists in men and women but also in life itself: "Sometimes filling this 'life' is like
building a house of cards or a paper palace. A multi-story palace made of 'gambling'
cards. And with a flip of your hand on one of the cards, all your life falls apart at
once. This is 'life'! Just like now!'" (96) And finally in the manifest that the victim
(narrator/child) issues, based on mosaic-like archetypes from different cultures:

> I close my eyes, thinking about how much time is left until morning. You went
> ahead and dragged me across the bridge: now I am slowly crossing As-Sirāt Bridge
> with shaky steps. A bridge between existence and non-existence, a long way as
> long as the Silk Road, a passageway as narrow as reality and as wide as the truth.
> Behind me is a tribe with an ancient awe, shrouded in mystery, who, with their
> voices, wailing and blackness, perform the ritual of sacrifice. I am the sacrifice: me!
> (*Ibid.*, 105)

The author, Mahasti Shahrokhi, also creates a conflict between two religious
rituals, and after referring to the As-Sirāt Bridge, which is an Islamic concept and
the Last Supper: "Eat this to survive, it is my meat. And drink, that is our blood
which gives your life . . . I will be sacrificed at dawn this morning and I will be
sacrificed . . . I will be crucified on a hospital bed today . . ." (*ibid.*, 106). It can
be said that the author creates a kind of borderline for religious identity, on the
one hand she references her religious, and on the other hand she is in line with

the religious discourse of the host society and expresses her humanistic dimension which goes beyond religion and ritual.

A very important point in this novel is the suspension that exists in the definition of "identity". The narrator of the story describes all things that happened to her, but we still do not know exactly, who she is. She portrays a kind of collective identity by expressing completely personal experiences. An identity that is both gender-based, has a historical background, and belongs to a nation, but at the same time is none of these:

> Today's social and cultural studies have moved in the direction that what is called identity is in fact a dynamic, multifaceted, and unique combination that shuns any understanding that seeks to reduce it to a general concept. In social and cultural studies today, the word self-understanding is used instead of identity, which also has a historical aspect, which means the historical accumulation of ideas and experiences that cannot be considered essential in nature. (Dehghani, 2020, 80)

The fact that the character is an immigrant makes this concept more meaningful: "In migration studies, the concept of a clear identity is also preferably obsolete, for example, in English literature, instead of a clear identity, the concept of inbetwee-nary or being-in the middle is spoken of" (*ibid.*, 81). Although this claim about identity cannot be fully accepted and can be one of the views that researchers have today about identity, Mahasti Shahrokhi has been able to depict a woman using features such as: language, symbol, myth and history along with the language peculiar to the female body, to prove her "being", exactly as Paul Ricoeur would put it, through "Identity Narration".

Katayoun is pregnant with a child left by a stranger inside her, and now the grief of homesickness has forced her to pull that child out of herself for her own survi-val and, consequently, to pull herself out of her own existence. In this third space (between the homeland and the host country), the narrator is constantly in a state of reciprocity: with herself, with the other (person), with the other (language), with the other (culture), and with an embryo, half of whom belongs to another. And at the end of the story, she clearly felt this trauma:

I slowly close my eyes and sink into my quilt like a warm dream. By the way, why am I so small and fragile! I'm melting like a big grain of snow. I'm melting from fever. I really want to be realistic about life, but now something in my heart is shooting right in the middle of my chest and that inner burning . . . And I still wonder why God wrote to me in His book.

> —Katayoun! My dear! My child!
> Command to destroy or create, it will happen! (Shahrokhi,141–142)

Similar to the previously mentioned mythical characters, she is portrayed as a symbolic and mythical woman who is now the mother of a universe whose children are scattered throughout the earth, throughout human history and still struggle to exist and survive.

Conclusion

The immigrant character has an active presence in the novel *A Shawl as Long as The Silk Road*. The protagonist does not just live in the past (home country), or keep her interaction with others on the surface level, but enters into serious conflict and interaction with others which, itself, is comprised of two levels. In other words, instead of dividing time into the past (home country) and present (host country), she divides the host society into two sections of past and present, and constantly moves between these two time frames. Meanwhile, the death dream also creates an additional hidden layer. The hegemony of national identity has been removed geographically but like a journey along the moving Silk Road, it is dynamic and represents its existential position. The identity of the unborn child is a metaphor for the child within herself, both of which will be subject to repression; the first will be aborted and the latter will be suppressed.

This detailed analysis is part of a study of the Iranian women's immigration lite-rature. However, the study of a few examples cannot fully represent the countless told and untold stories of migration of women, who for various motives and reasons, filled their suitcases with memories and life in the homeland and willingly or unwillingly traveled to distant and near lands. However, in general, it must be admitted that this field of Iranian women's immigration novels has yet to be enriched, and it has a long way to go to represent the voices of women whose distance from home has made them more alien.

Although immigration is not a new phenomenon for Iranians, it seems that the voice of immigrants, both men and women, is still an inferior voice, and the novels of immigration have not been able to fully represent the cries that have been repressed due to homesickness.

In this novel a traumatised immigrant from target to source destination (if any), narrates her "here" and "now" in a free and real way, relying on the individual and collective subconscious mind, despite having a fragmented identity.

In the future, it is hoped, that more narratives will reflect the identity of the people who at some point in time left Iran and dispersed.

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Innovation Semantics Towards a Conceptual Change of the Cultural Identity Theory? The Case of Artificial Intelligence in the United Arab Emirates

Abdenbi LACHKAR & Loubna Salah ZAITOUNI
(ReSo, Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3 University)

Introduction

In the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates has been the first to associate non-traditional components (such as legacy, historical roots and innovation semantic) with branding national identity around the concept and vision of the "nation of the future." The progress made in the country's infrastructure are resulting from subsequent efforts to increase the technical and innovation knowledge, the expertise in new technology, and the spread of symbolic references. It leads the society to enable and adopt a shared vision where technology and human values play a inherent and intrinsic role.

The question of the Orient or the attempt to analyze it is primarily defined from Western research and knowledge, and often associated to Oriental studies. It usually implies that the subject's relation relates to the theory of orientalism, traditionally initiated by Edward Said. Indeed, it leads to an approach of analyzing the structure of Eastern societies and describing cultures and behaviors, along with the system values of groups and individuals from a Western perspective. However, the Western scientific research mechanisms may often include subjective views such as stereotypical and built misrepresentations (Said 1978) (Amossy, Lachkar 2007, 2014, 2019), ideologies, and attitudes characterized by bias and antagonism to the East (Said, 1978, Sibeud 2004–05).

Background

The United Arab Emirates is a relatively young country in the Middle East, which has adopted various world trends faster than the rest of the region during the past ten years. Indeed, robotics, digital currency, autonomous vehicle, machine learning, and architectural futurism are a few examples of the technological developments that are visible in the country. Moreover, the high rate of implementation and social appropriation tends to turn the use of those technologies into a social norm. Recently, successive policies are planned and deployed supporting strategies to shape and endorse a precise and branded vision of a progressive, skilled, and optimistic society, leading the path to the "nation of the future." The UAE Vision 2021 (the year of the country's golden jubilee) crystallizes this will and the identification of all associated components, including the diffusion of technology and the creation of a doxa on innovation and artificial intelligence. It allowed the association of beliefs, singularizing the country in the Middle East.

In 2015, a national strategy acted innovation and future-shaping as an essential pillar for national development, citizen life improvement, and economic change. The Executive Council estimated the global investment in this sector to be up to 14 billion dirhams every year, with 7 billion dedicated to research and development. The vision is picturing the approach elaborated for the country: a definition of a public and common referential where innovation, technology, and future foresight methods are the keys to success. Indeed, the public services are revamping their relations with citizens, pulling efforts to construct and provide sense and logic to the new discourse. Becoming a vision partner, the citizen serves to develop, acquire new rules, and adopt the different communication mantra, stories, and tools.

In order to strive for disruption, six key focus areas are introduced as a compass. The one which relates and is analyzed in this article is named: "United in responsibility". The content focuses on gathering and preserving a unified society by developing and reinforcing a semantic around a solid sense of belonging and a common collective philosophy. The national policy aims to promote an inclusive environment that integrates all segments of society while preserving the UAE's unique culture, heritage, and traditions and emporwing social and family cohesion. This approach illustrates the phenomena observed in the cultural semantic and linguistic domain where cultural representations change upon the local identity structure. The social referential and language are revamped and upgraded with new words. There is a need for social and family cohesion (public and private sphere); metaphors are designed to enforce their adoption: heritage programs are built around the innovation application, such as the heritage and innovation forum held in 2019 in Dubai. This identity renewal happens at three levels: individual, personal (Hannah Arendt), and collective (Lachkar Abdenbi, 2010).

Moreover, the UAE public administration has focused on restoring and acknowledging a local and cohesive identity and culture over the past few years. The focus is on the national heritage, allowing to restore ties with the roots, and with a legacy of renewal and scientific approach in social human development and public policy. The multiplication of initiatives to support the Arabic language in the country sideways with the touristic programs and festivals dedicated to Emirati history are direct actions settled along with the race to the innovation goals. For example, the heritage festival happening all over the country includes all parts of society and involves all tribes and clans. It allows framing the Emirati identity and cultural traditions around prebuilt ideas, symbols, and meanings. At the same time, the 1001 Arabic coder's initiative is set to include this identity into the regional Arabic edges and export the idea of national skills and competence as a component of social culture. Henceforth, society is repeatedly referred to as a "family" in public discourses and scripts. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai and vice president of the United Arab Emirates launched the process by defining the national vision as a social target. The project is referred as "As we look to the future and embark on a journey of empowerment at all levels, we must steer a course among challenges on many fronts with confidence, optimism, and determination. There will be challenges to the family ties that bind us together, the strong fabric of our cohesive society; challenges to our economic competitiveness."[1] Challenges (for example, the economic shift away from oil or the rapid development of automation and digitalization) and the competitiveness of the Arabic language are risks inherent to an advanced society. The social experiments correlate the public and private spheres: in cognitive experiences. Hence, positive innovation has been introduced as a necessary tool and vector to success and to progress. The reinvention of storytelling, language, and the adoption of the new referential are final steps to reinvent and position the place of the United Arab Emirates among its neighbors in the Middle East and, later, between the East and the West. Adopting a systemic methodology is required and beneficial to ensure compliance and coverage of the entire spectra of the Emirati society components. The two fundamental approaches are the language (the semantic) and the cognitive experience of artificial intelligence. It is the first time in a modern society that performance and efficiency monitoring are applied to the implications of identity changes and language development in public policy at federal and local level. The United Arab Emirates has pioneered in turning a language change pre-requisite into public and national requirements, allowing digital competencies referencing. A standard communication and storytelling are shaped around innovation, technology, family, and identity, supported by an update and evolution of the language meanings and references. The society is a cohesive group of individualities where

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1. HH Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, www.vision2021.ae, closing speech of a Cabinet meeting, 2010.

each citizen, counted as an active member of the Emirati society, is supposedly responsible and engaged in achieving the national prospects. Each individual becomes an innovation champion, an artificial intelligence user, and a representative of the language of the future, accountable to the country itself. Furthermore, a large part of the country's innovation public policy is built around the citizens' empowerment and support of entrepreneurship. Additionally, the areas and sectors targeted by incentives and public initiatives are primarily related to new tech, specifically towards the new generations. The ministry of youth and culture, two public files joined together, are converging on leveraging business ideas linking tech and cultural identity, such as the Al Burda project. It aims to foster innovative ideas to reinforce the Emirati cultural identity.

The technological infrastructure is similarly a necessity, a proven and faster path to innovation and progress. It is the tangible representation of the language adaptation and the outcomes of the public policy performance. Over the past years, the most significant signal for innovation remains the tremendous turn the country has taken towards artificial intelligence: in terms of investments and value added, and area of implementation (specifically critical sectors involving to deal with customers and external users). From 2018 to 2030, the average annual investment in artificial intelligence is expected to increase by 33.5% for the UAE. Moreover, the scope of impact is planned to grow exponentially. Along with global innovation development and consistent societal efforts, the artificial intelligence's quick adoption and appropriation seem to impact the cultural building process.

From a perspective of research on cultures and other societies, this article looks to pinpoint the dynamics existing between the society and the social environments where high information, and communication technologies develops, particularly in the age of digital disruption. The scientific approach adopted is a continuation of the recognized work in the fields of sociology and constitutes a "progressive" approach based on science and describing reality as it is and not as it should be, with a preference for description over ideological, primarily political analysis.

Additionally, the praxiological perspective adopted in the article leads the analysis to structure both social and conceptual referential and to explore how the feeling of belonging to a common identity and culture is set up through language semantic and cognitive experience with the intelligent systems. The public policies message, initiative, and programs have provided profound tolerability and legitimacy to the era of new technology, particularly artificial intelligence, and to this revamped language and discourse sustaining the identity shift, affecting the beliefs and raising the standards of the society. The correlation between the public policy strategy and actions targets this shift to enable economic and social progress in the country. Developing strategic communication is essential to ensure acceptance and adoption by the population. To increase the diffusion: the social media intensification, the smart city transformation, and the digitalization of the society have been a great support to spread pioneering ideas, original perceptions,

and modern representations. Hence, it is making the identity process building reception and adoption more dynamic and more adjustable to the vision tools used to sponsor the country's efforts, such as artificial intelligence and intelligent cities automation technology.

Objectives

This course of action leads to the following question: in such efforts to design the contour of a futuristic type of nation, to understand how the "nation of the future" can exist? How language and experimentation could be complementary to building a public policy's reality.

Artificial intelligence, more than any current modern intelligent tool, has a significant social influence and cognitive effect on the cultural and identity-making process in the United Arab Emirates. The use and diffusion of such new technology have created a phenomenon of variation of the identity recognition and identity embracing processes and the cultural referential (Herd, 2010), creating a sort of hybrid identity and culture of digitalization and automation around new technology, traditionally given to the East Asian countries. A type of hybrid culture correlates on different levels: media, cultural contexts, discourse, and private and public organization lines. It allows the creation of a public sphere and doxa of debate, actions, definition, and introduction of new terms, logic, beliefs, and allegories.

The technology has changed the relationship between the language and the others (human and artificial agents) (virtual interfaces, online conferences, Chabot implementation, and automation in daily life). Technology crosses the hierarchies built in society. It is not linear and does not respect social conventions. The system works based on a spreading network approach similar to social media. Consequently, artificial intelligence has reshaped the ways of production, distribution, and communication of ideas, values, and vision. It becomes the bearer of the ultimate language change in public policy. Public challenges are now brought to the private sphere (Foucault 1973, Derrida 1966). Indeed, the challenges to national identity, health, and education are now a common issue and imply the responsibility of society to participate in solving those issues. The solution is induced by the concept of the nation of the future, an idealistic and blurry notion perpetually redefined. Artificial intelligence is a visible part of this nation's infrastructure, including the perspective of non-human agents.

Public Policies set the Grounds for Cultural Identity: Semantic and Sense

This part aims to describe the process that led to redefining the sense and meaning of the Emirati semantical attributes of identity and culture. This is a

crucial and starting step to positioning the country and the society together on the same edge.

The definition and execution of the UAE government's innovation and future strategy have shown the birth of a new linguistic and semantic discourse. Adjusting the vision towards a better and stronger future is an ongoing technique of fine-tuning and reframing the general terms, definitions, symbols, and codes. The foremost actions are altering the referential scheme around the government actions and initiatives: the first is associated with innovation and progress, and the second is correlated with identity and culture. It is translated as "the vision 2021 aims at empowering both the country and citizens by reinforcing the national identity; [. . .] building stable families and a coherent society that is based on authentic Islamic and Arabic values" and "building a diversified knowledgeable economy that the best competencies will power to ensure long-term prosperity for the UAE".[2]

In addition, the second significant standpoint is the citizen being recognized and bonded as a central and live piece of the strategy efficiency, reducing the traditional relation gap between the government and the social agent witnessed in some modern societies. In this regard, the citizen becomes a vector of the innovation and technological referential, a vector of distribution and consumption of the innovation and progress language. For instance, the Palmwood project is a significant illustration of such a type of reflection. The initiative intends to inseminate and mature creative capabilities in Emirati nationals, enabling new opportunities and promoting new ideas through the perspective and eye of the progressive public policy described earlier. A long list of similar initiatives and projects in the country has allowed building a referential language to label a specific types of initiatives and entrepreneurship, individual actions, and organizations' projects. Innovation and technology attribute become a cultural tradition and a social attribute. For the past three years, the meanings have been tailored to match the symbolic economic and social progress, sustaining innovation and prosperity. Providing the UAE with an "innovation" reputation as soft power, part of a 2.0 identity. Frege (1879), in his referential theory of meaning, has theorized the difference between the semantic extension of a word (related to language evolution) and its semantic intension (language building). In fact, the several shortcomings used in the general communication environment and the official governmental transcripts have permitted profound, organized, and long-term changes with associative and conceptual meanings attributed to the innovation discourse, such as innovation/progress, innovation/future, future/technology/progress, technology/nation, future/Emirati/nation, future/family, nation/future/family.

Frege (1892) theory of sense highlights the process of repetitive use to ensure the same and unique significance in order to create the truth-value of a word. It provi-

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2. Vision 2021 defined by HH Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid al Maktoum for the UAE jubilee, https://uaecabinet.ae/en/details/prime-ministers-initiatives/vision-2021; 2010.

des an identical sense at diverse levels and in multiple contexts and environments. Beyond the sole impregnation of the term and meaning of innovation as a cultural attribute, it is the connotation, the logic, and wisdom behind it which give its proper common and collective understanding: a national innovation strategy for a cohesive society that looks towards an advanced and progressive future for the next generations. The language is based on common words, referring to the ordinary frame of perception owned by all components of the society (Lachkar 2010). More to this process, an ideological and semantical referential construction, and linkage are made between the discourse of innovation and artificial intelligence and identity discourse. John McDowell (1998) enhances the semantical redefinition and reference determining roles by adding the cognitive perspective. It is a practical, influential, and adaptive self-perception practice behind the process of identity building and cultural appropriation clustered by the numerous and continuous tactics and discourses in the public sphere. In other terms, identity building is a constant dynamic process constructed and structured around our experiences, emotions, and representations. Artificial intelligence has hence provided the government with an extensive and efficient instrument and mechanisms for cognitive experience and impregnation.

In a nation willing to be labeled as innovative, artificial intelligence shall be an ordinariness aspect of the societal life, considered as an original agent with a social identity equivalence. It structures a connexion between the individual and collective identities (Snow and McAdam 2000). The systematic approaches and the societal systems ensure consistency and resilience. Gamson (1991) explained that the alignment is done by "enlarging the personal identities of a constituency to include the relevant collective identities as part of their definition of self".[3] Accordingly, two processes could bear this type of transformation: identity convergence and identity construction. Identity convergence is the merger of personal and collective identities when compatible and corresponding. Acting for the society and the collective; feels like the individual is acting by himself. The mechanism bridges a bond during the identification process to support and create convergence. Snow and McAdam (2000) have identified some of those mechanisms: appropriation of existing solidarity networks by movement organizations (organizations level: Dubai Government Excellence Program; United Arab Emirates year of Tolerance, Dubai future accelerators program). The second model is known as the "tipping model," where individuals adopt a behavior or representation that has paid off for others by adopting the collective identity. Friedman and McAdam (1992) explain that the third mechanism relates to "selective incentives" where there is initially some similar common point between individual and nation identity. The cultural and semantics layers are interrelated and added to the panel of orientations and symbolics an individual can refer to build their multiple personalities.

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3. William GAMSON, *Commitment and agency in social movements*, Sociological Forum 6, 1991, p. 27–50.

More a vector of meaning than a referent, each citizen conveys the innovation's shared values and linguistics, giving the Emirati identity an inventive, pioneering, and novel aspect mixed with the traditional Arabic and Islamic heritage. As a result, we are witnessing the birth of the next level and structuration of defined "modern societies" formed by structured and repetitive public actions in a short period.

Experiencing Conversational Artificial Intelligence sets new Habits

The diffusion of technology and artificial intelligence mainly spread the idea of change in the identity ideas process and cultural projection. Artificial intelligence is a tool to "experiment": the language, facilitating to streamline a unified and consistent national identity semantic. Under continuous regeneration, it is understood as a set of shared and common beliefs, representations, and understandings.

The focus is on human and artificial intelligence interactions and their communication channels. Artificial intelligence, mainly chatbot, is a computer engineering system based on natural language processing (NLP) to be able to read, hear, understand, and comprehend information requests from humans. The science of natural language understanding is a subfield of artificial intelligence helping identify and classify the syntactic analysis of texts and oral communications. The role is based on labeling semantic roles, detecting semantic structure and events in the language, and tracking the changes, new adoption, and adaptation. Indeed, the efforts for innovation and adoption of artificial intelligence have to be complemented by awareness and knowledge sharing, focusing on how to use the technology, and supplemented by the creation of specific semantic and communicational referential support for the initial vision. Moreover, referring to the United Arab Emirates public policies for future, technology, and innovation, and using the method of topic modeling on official documentation, a pattern shows that the terms of innovation in public speech and transcripts are essentially interrelated and attached to the referential of family, nation, progress, artificial intelligence. The documentation is public policy, national strategies, local and federal programs, published strategies, and press releases from 2019 to 2021. The individual is surrounded by a solid and repetitive semantic in order to affect the meaning and sense of terms and the perception of the artificial intelligence in the public and private sphere, framed by a consistent message and semantic routine.

In the United Arab Emirates, like commonly, in the Middle East, the notion of nation-building is a never-finished work, a dynamic process fed by the government inputs from the top and the individual's appropriation from the bottom. It needs to nurture a national myths engine; a perception builds on traditions, memories,

and symbolism. Here: the ideal around the nation of the future. The finality is to reach a positive, progressive, and futuristic society. Artificial intelligence offers the population a taste of the future, a real and touchable picture. Linking the efforts of innovation to several critical areas: politics, economics, education, and society have influenced the citizen in all aspects of their life, ensuring a positive and beneficial appropriation of the message and, most important, appropriation of the representations. Indeed, the social context and experiment, such as using and being served by an artificial intelligence, have allowed to create and diffuse different representations, symbols, and semantics through practices. It helps to reach a standard and acquire additional terms used to build a specific cultural identity. The Dubai police are one of the pioneers in technology realization by launching the first humanoid robot. Capable of understanding simple commands, the robot started its first patrolling duties around Burj Khalifa among the population in 2017. The robot looks similar to a former police officer, designed to wear a similar Dubai Police uniform. It aims to build the feeling of comfort and conformity. Later, the entity has enforced those humanoids in several places in the city, increasing the digitalization of its services and transferring them to the police robot. Observation of the language used by the press from 2017 to 2021 shows some significant evolution in the labeling of robots. From a marketing "show" to a "Robocop," the robot is slowly assimilated into a human police officer, creating a former habit of dealing with a virtual assistant. The change in the population's social behavior is induced by transforming the language semantics around this robot, especially how the individuals position themselves against the robot. It becomes the norm.

The table below describes the process used to reference and provide a meaning to a term already existing in a social environment. The functionality and the social significance are provided to the artificial intelligence, and the social context of use are key components, drivers, and enablers to characterize the national cultural identity.

Fig. 1—"The relationship between character, context, content, and circumstance in double-indexing semantic".[4]
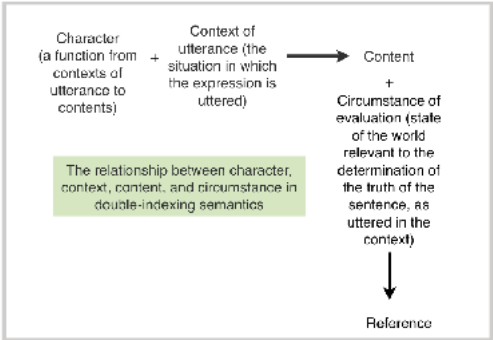
4. From: Jeff Speaks, "Theories of Meaning", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

The changes are implied from an inclusive and comprehensive context, allowing the attribution of a different reference and semantic. The entity and the context form and build the content. However, the perception of the content is indexed to the national and social environment. This cognition experiment is the key to attribute the artificial intelligence with symbols and social representations. Therefore, a resilient and structured environment through public policy must be built in order to provide a relevant and correlated reference. Artificial intelligence is the cultural identity progressive perspective of the nation of the future.

The social and national identity is a collective, shared, and agreed identity where individuals adhere to the generated idea of a progressive and innovative society. Furthermore, the government has made substantial efforts in promoting the Arabic language to add, create and develop a semantic and referent around technology, innovation, and artificial intelligence microcosm, which was missing or lacking in the original linguistic and discourse. Indeed, Arabic has become a central piece of innovative public policy. One of the several initiatives is the collaboration between Google and the American University of Sharjah since 2020 to develop a conversational chatbot in Arabic. The language was lacking in technicity to accompany the efforts in technological development, especially to chatbot and text recognition to promote social innovation and social progress. Those initiatives are feeding the progress of artificial intelligence penetration into Arabic societies. As a result, Arabic innovation models and constructs are being democratized and spread while artificial intelligence can communicate in a local language, vitrine of a more progressive and futuristic reality.

In practice, interactions with government entities are being fully automated and digitalized around the artificial agent. Individuals are forced to face the new technology and adopt new communication codes and practices. It alters behavior and traditional practices and the representation of public power and governmental entities. Public powers are set to bridge the old and the new, reinventing the national branding phase by phase far from the political agenda. The United Arab Emirates is one of the first countries to include a cognitive and perceptive approach to public policy implementation.

Artificial intelligence became the door, the interface between humans, digital and virtual models. Therefore, the emphasis on performance supports shifting individual services usage to a smoother, informal, and comfortable way, interacting with virtual agents, and avoiding behavior resistance. The shift become real while directly dealing with daily chatbots. It indirectly creates and teaches new habits. The awareness and the know-how increase in the society, leaving behind the old and outdated way of communication. The new habits reinforce and support the idea of shifting from a traditional inherited society to a social and national construct, reaffirming its uniqueness in the Middle East. The United Arab Emirates is a hub in the middle of intensive flows and connections between the two continents,

which allows an effective positioning against the continuous civilizational waves implied by the increased level of exchanges between countries.

The transformation is happening at another level, societal, where the impact of artificial intelligence is much visible. Indeed, the social identifications and collective representation attributes play a role for all categories of individuals. Furthermore, each group of agents in the society defines and manages its attributes. Furthermore, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins demonstrated in 2009 that even parts of the same category could have a different understanding and, henceforth, behavior towards a societal occurrence, leading to positive or negative engagement towards "identity appropriate" or "identity threatening."

Two movements are nurturing this semantic evolution. First, artificial intelligence has involuntary pushed the citizens and users of the technology to learn and adopt new habits and behaviors. It is shifting the beliefs and representations to alternative referential. In the meantime, a constant process of refurbishing the semantics is sustained by a constant exchange: from cultural, economic, political, and human levels which have allowed the country to recognize and adopt storytelling and symbols from different sources.

The Language is an Activation Key

The concept of renewal of the national identity understood as a definition of collective identity is reviewed and rethought into a more fluid and concrete concept. Building in the imagination requires more visible outcomes and actions. It is built on the language and an automated knowledge transfer. The concept seems to integrate more technological, modern references gripping into the world and region trends in an attempt to modernize the collective cultural identity. It allows extensive and resilient support to the economic and foreign policy, acting as the country branding, moving the debate and discussions around the type of soft power that such a model implies. Indeed, language, semantics, and the contextualization of meanings have become crucial assets and strengths in current public policies. It is a mainly visible phenomenon that has permeated the relationships and trade connections on the Silk Road. Indeed, in this case, this definition and diffusion of a specific language and semantics have been the architect and the starting point of creating and designing virtual space. For example, the social and economic space of the "New Silk Road" opened the door to the integration of countries that were not traditionally part of the geographic road, such as the United Arab Emirates.

Belonging to the society involves a secondary level for the modernization and evolution of the cultural identity. Indeed, society involvement is gained by focusing on and understanding the individual identity evolution and changes. The imbrication of the language and cognitive experience directly affects the individual's

relationship with the public power and the national cultural identity. This one serves as a compass for individuals to navigate society, especially regarding society's speed and path. The foundations of the nation's future are hence inseminated into the individual's identity, who will be able to perpetuate and pass it on to the next generations. This model is based on the individual and public power relations between society and leadership. In the United Arab Emirates, we can observe that this relationship is direct, traditionally, and culturally impregnated, where social media technology plays a significant role in communication and dialogue between the two entities: society and leadership.

The adoption of robots and artificial agents has affected those interactions, the communication vectors, and the cultural references. The current practices open the path to renewing the traditional glossary and modeling of human-agent interactions in society, adding another layer to the combination of behavioral enablers to explain human decision-making.

The direct impact and main changes are visible through society's evolution. The digitalization of society drives certain hybridity of cultural representations. Indeed, it adds additional attributes to their recognition, making them touchable and virtual at the same time. The hybridity is implied from the character non-human of the digitalization. Even though hybridity is not a new phenomenon, it is the associated characteristic that is new to the Emirati cultural society and new to the Middle East. *Hybridity* is defined here as the reception and integration of external content, giving it a tailored meaning. It takes into consideration several global cultural dynamics in our specific context. It is not related to transnationalism but culture and identity evolution. Indeed, the whole environment has been transformed and changed to integrate artificial intelligence at all human levels: personal and public life.

In many cases and with the speed of implementation in the Emirati society, identity building and cultural adoption will primarily be due to a process of alignment to create and identify cognitive bonds between individual identities and collective identities. It can affect one's self-definition. Snow and McAdam (2000) & Robnett (2005) have identified four courses of variation: identity amplification; identity consolidation; identity extension and identity transformation. Those mechanisms are supported by framing processes and engagement in collective actions related earlier in the hypothesis.

The alignment could be processed by identity convergence towards a shared vision and objective and identity construction to include consistency in self-definition. There is a mixing of cultural representation collections between traditional and new, futuristic, with a tendency to deterritorialize the symbols and their meanings. The concept of hybridity covers a cultural mutation with a specific range of linguistic frameworks and historical and social backgrounds. It provides legitimacy to an upgraded or added social symbol. Hence, the Palmwood project described earlier is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The name is taken from the legacy

and traditional heritage of Emirati history. The palm tree is a widespread tree used and part of the country's identity.

On the other hand, while framing the program into a legacy and heritage cover, it aims to identify and develop innovative and advanced initiatives to develop the country and empower individuals. It merges and aligns with the definition of Emirati cultural identity empowered by the government. The initiatives bring together heritage and technology to the same edge and integrate notions that have seemed to be intrinsically distinctive.

The hybridity theory discusses the nature and the cultural aspect of an object. An object can be e has many opponents, highlighting the significant openness of the concept and what it can undertake. Indeed, the culture has an intrinsic dynamic of change and adaptation; however, what we consider here are the nature of the cultural features and how artificial attributes have become traditional such as language expression and images. Furthermore, the nature of culture and the link individuals used to have seem to be evolving with the communications tools deployed, such as robots or artificial intelligence, made at their disposal.

Conclusion

The article aims to identify the critical aspects of the public policy regeneration in the Middle East, focusing on the United Arab Emirates. Indeed, the country is keen to structure a national strategy and objectives, including official mandates and ministries around artificial intelligence and new technology. In the United Arab Emirates, the social and cultural referential changes could lead to a conceptualization of new standards. They are described in the national public policy related to the development of cultural identity and language conceptualization.

The diffusion of innovation language; the nature of communication funnels used have highly influenced the social identity and cultural markers: altering the process of individual identity building and adding and transforming additional objects and cultural perspectives to the drivers of social fitting and national identity. Indeed, citizens can refer to a higher number of references structuring the national cultural identity: the ministry of culture's role and mission is to foster and empower an environment enabling the birth of a progressive nation. It opens the door to a different matrix, introducing technology such as artificial intelligence and its diverse traits: social, political, and economic factors that lead to the construction of a diversity of social realities.

Where the United Arab Emirates is an example, the Middle East is "re" replacing the Arabic language in the heart of the critical public policies. The language is not only a mean or a tool for communication but a vector of influence and representations, especially in the case of being used for the social media and digital communication platforms and systems. Multiple and diverse initiatives are intended to

develop the Arabic language network of users, developing Arabic based chatbot or machine learning system. It tends to act and work on the diffusion and semantical gap between the English and the Arabic language in the new technology area such as developers, programming, and in the areas of artificial intelligence. The Arabic language has become a part of the national, social, and individual identity. Its semantics are being modernized, and new words are created to fit the current reality, primarily in the domain of computer science and digital humanities. Therefore, the human decision process and behavior are defined through this eye of the Arabic language fitting and can be considered an additional attribute for the decision-making process and behavior choice tendencies in the human behavioral map.

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"Why do we speak like them?": Constructing Identities and Contesting Ideologies Through the Use of Pronouns

Brahim CHAKRANI

(Michigan State University, USA)

Introduction

This study explores the nature of the language situation in the North African with a focus on Morocco. Looking into what has traditionally termed in Western literature as the Western part of the "Orient" allows us to understand how language has been central to the ideological discourses that arrange the relationships between the different linguistic communities present in the Maghreb. This paper examines how the discourse of the "West" and the "Rest" (Hall, 1996) sustains the presence of ethnolinguistic communities with diverse linguistic profiles. In this article, we will investigate how the ideology of modernization and those who propagate it sustain a monolingual profile, while imposing multilingualism onto local citizens. Of import to our analysis is how pronominal use indicates how Moroccan youth establish their identities, while they negotiate and contest the ideological ascription of modernity (Chakrani, 2013). This hegemonic discourse sustains an asymmetrical relationship of linguistic dependency (Viguier, 2020) reminiscent of recent Western colonial expansionist discourse, in which the West and its representative codes have become self-prescribed instruments for accessing modernity (Hall, 1996). The analysis shows how an understanding of multilingualism in Morocco and the nascent interest and emergence of English in the Moroccan linguistic market, gives us an introspection as to how Moroccans, Maghrebi communities and the Arab societies in general (dis)align themselves with the presence of exogenous codes, driven purely by market incentives. This article elucidates how respondents oscillate between the negotiation and contestation

of the market rationalization that drives the instrumental motivation of French language acquisition.

The Moroccan linguistic landscape is characterized by the presence of exogenous and endogenous codes. The Amazigh language, traditionally known as Berber, is one of Morocco's native languages, with three main varieties with different geographical locations. Amazigh has historically served as the Lower (L) code until its codification in 2003, followed by its introduction into the educational domain in 2007, in order to revitalize and maintain it (Hammoud 1982, Errihani 2007, Soulaimani, 2016a and 2016b). After long debates regarding the status of Amazigh as a national language, it gained a co-official status in Morocco in 2011, opening vistas for the language to be more visible in the Moroccan landscape.

Standard Arabic (SA) is regarded as the High (H) code in Morocco and in the remaining Arabic speaking countries. It served as the official language of the Islamic empire, as the language of erudition. Serving in this capacity, and as the language of education, overt prestige is injected in its use. SA maintains its position as the language of instruction in the precolonial era, played a counter-colonial role during the colonial and postcolonial eras, resulting in the Arabization of public education in 1983. Although SA has had popular support in the educational sector, the ruling political elite have undermined its position through the enactment of language policies that support its use in the economic and scientific sectors (Grandguillaume, 1983 and Hammoud, 1982).

The local Arabic variant in Morocco is Moroccan Arabic (MA). This Low (L) variety is the primary code of communication for all Moroccans and is reserved primarily for informal and semi-informal functions and daily interactions. It is used exclusively in the home domain but has recently been appropriated to semi-formal domains. As a regionally diverse language, MA's speakers have diverse varieties and lexical choices. MA represents the local culture and, in many ways, shares similar grammatical, phonological and lexical features with other varieties in the Maghreb, including Algeria, Tunisia and Libya forming a distinct, regional, Maghrebi variety that differs from other regional varieties in the Arab World.

As an exogenous code, French was introduced to the Moroccan society during French colonialism (1912-1956). As is the case in ex-colonial French colonies in the Arab world and Africa, France sought to displace local languages. Be it in the Levant, Maghreb or in Sub-Saharan Africa, France pursued a cultural colonialism (Haeri, 2003), with the aim to impact the social fabric of its colonies and define local identities (Suleiman, 2006). France mobilized the educational system to exploit the Moroccan market for its benefit (Segalla, 2010). To achieve this the instruction of science and technology was appropriated exclusively to the French language, creating a French-educated Moroccan elite that France mobilized for political and cultural influence (Viguier, 2020; Chakrani, 2011), to carry the legacy of the colonial enterprise in the post-independence era (Salhi, 2002).

Alongside French, two more exogenous codes exist in Morocco. Spanish is another ex-colonial language that was introduced in Morocco during the Spanish colonial era at the beginning of the 20th century. Morocco and Spain have an established relationship that dates to the 7th century, which witnessed the Moorish presence in the Iberian Peninsula until the 16th century. Spanish has exerted less influence on Morocco as compared to French. In fact, the Moroccan government enacted a language policy that curtailed the use of Spanish in northern and southern Morocco, in favor of promoting French as Morocco's foreign language. Although Spanish is also viewed as a colonial language, intensive language contact with Spain, including the two Spanish occupied cities of Ceuta and Melilla, continues to affect the northern region linguistically and economically.

While French and Spanish tie Morocco to its recent colonial past, English is a recently emerging code that, for Moroccans, is not connected to a colonial history. Due to this and because of English's close relationship with global mobility, entrepreneurship, and STEM subjects, Moroccans ascribe positive attitudes to its acquisition. Increasingly, the medium of instruction, reserved for elite membership, has bifurcated Morocco into a class-stratified society, based on language of education (Chakrani, 2017). Similar to French and Spanish, English serves as a code of instruction for affluent members of society, outside the economic reach of the majority of Moroccans.

Literature Review

In analyzing the use pronouns, it is important for us to examine the intertextual construction of discourse is the notion of voicing (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2005). Since intertextuality is constructed through the incorporation of different texts within a stretch of discourse and indexes the dialogical and interactional nature within which different texts are presented and represented, shifters indicate the voices used in the texturing of a given moment of discourse to indicate how interactants positions themselves in relation and juxtaposition to one another and the discourse of that text (as well as the text itself). This section will describe definitions of voicing, heteroglossia and shifters, then will discuss the use of shifters to index voicing within the focus group data. First, the shifters and the speaker roles invoked will be detailed, then I will discuss the voices attached to these shifters. According to Davidson (2007), the meaning of shifters depends on the immediate context of interaction as they "emerge naturally from a circumstance of immediate shared experience" (213); she further claims that allows us to see how respondents order time and space, their conscious and unconscious attitudinal positioning toward the stance object.

The interactants take us through enacting the following social voices: the interviewer, interviewee, French language teacher, student of the French language,

medical expert, Westerners, and locals who stereotype Morocco and Moroccans, and the teacher. Using shifters, interactants move through these voices to discuss language attitudes and to contest and naturalize linguistic accommodation.

The notion of voicing was originally introduced by Bakhtin (1981) and I will be using Keane's (1999) analysis of voice as the "linguistic construction of social personae"; he further describes the utility of the notion of voice as a linguistic element which highlights how different "social identities are represented, performed, transformed, evaluated, and contested" and allows speakers to align themselves with, comment on, or disassociate themselves from given identities at various moments within the discourse of the narrative (p. 271–272).

This construction enters a dialogical relationship with other voices in a heteroglossic relationship with other linguistic forms representing other social voices. Bakhtin (1981) defines heteroglossia as "*another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (p. 324). The notion of heteroglossia in the novel, similarly to that used in daily narratives, invokes different voices, which represent different social identities that enter into a heteroglossic relationship with one another, indexing thus, the stratification of languages and the discourses to which they represent.

Silverstein (1995 [1976]) defines pronoun as a "kind of referential index [which] has also been called a shifter, because the reference 'shifts' regularly, depending on the factors of the speech situation" (p197). Pronouns are a means to demonstrate how a subject moves between positions to articulate 'shifts' between intricately complex social voices. Personal pronouns, or shifters, show how speakers perform different social voices in the narrative and demarcate different constructions of attitudes present in the interactional exchange. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2005) identify hybridity as a strategic use of voicing to index how interactants resist discourses of power or as a means with which they dialogue between different social positions, discourses, and the voices that they index.

Pronominal use has been shown in the literature as having the ability to show a speaker's attitudinal disposition. In Lebanese gossip conversation, interactions, for example, the dative pronominal construction of first and second pronoun can be strategically used to signal of someone's stance toward a stance object (Haddad, 2013). Additionally, Chakrani (2016) analyzes how speaker use deictics to organize identities in a spaciotemporal order that indexes different identities. He shows how the deictic shifts allows to see how the speaker play different interactional roles to index his stance toward a language. This, we will explore further in the analysis below to show how Moroccan multilinguals position themselves vis a vis the French monolingual ideology.

Method

This study was part of a larger research study that I conducted in Morocco in the years of 2007 and 2008, which included a Matched Guise Test, language attitude and use questionnaires, personal interviews, and ethnographic observations. The current study discusses the analysis of a focus group conducted in Summer 2008 to investigate language patterns, use, and attitudes among Moroccans youth. There are three key points that focus group data can generate, such as "providing access to participants' own language, concepts and concerns; encouraging the production of more fully articulated accounts; and offering an opportunity to observe the process of collective sense-making in action" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 181). As qualitative research, the focus group is a group interview of respondents from similar backgrounds that relies on the dynamic nature of interaction to yield powerful insights with regards to people's actual feelings and thoughts, which illuminates their stance on ideas (Jarvis and Barberena, 2008). The dialogic nature of the focus group allows us to explore current ideologies of language attitudes and use in Morocco and how respondents make sense of the multilingual nature of Moroccan society. Focus group participants were students at the same English language center where the Matched Guise Test was conducted. Recruiting participants was approached as follows. Before entering the classroom, students were informed by their teacher about my class visit. When I visited the classroom, I was introduced to the students by the teacher and had an informal conversation with the students about studying overseas. This informal discussion provided an opportunity to get to know the students, helped to lessen the asymmetrical researcher-respondent relationship, and increased familiarity with the respondents. Following this discussion, I invited students to participate in the focus groups.

This paper utilizes one such focus group with four participants of at least 18 years of age and a mean age of 22.5 years, three were university students (R1, a business school student, R2 a recent university graduate working in the service industry, R3, a medical school student, and R4, a science major student) and one who had recently graduated, and all are from middle class families, which characterizes the socioeconomic classification of the students at this English language center. To ensure neutral and unbiased participation, students studying in language departments at universities were excluded. Each focus group was comprised of four student participants to ensure familiarity among participants and a natural flow of topics. Additionally, each group studied together from one class at the English language center.

The language I used during the focus group matched students' observed language use in the pre-interview and was conducted in MA, with some codeswitching to SA and French. The language used in the interview mimics that of the youth. Speaking in one language would have biased their responses, bearing in mind the role of topic in language use. I chose some standard questions to initiate

and maintain the conversation, yet the topics that the participants delved into during the focus group were investigated further to see respondents articulate their rationalization of language use and attitudes, as well as how they evaluate the presence of these different languages in Morocco and the different domains in which Moroccans use them. The focus group method allows us to further explore students' answers to create a debate among the student participants, providing richer data. In this focus group, which lasted one hour and four minutes, respondents were asked to describe the language situation in Morocco. The focus group data is analyzed to show how Moroccans discursively construct their local identities and their stance toward the stratification of languages and the different domains to which they are assigned.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The most prominent trend found in shifters is that of "us"/"we" versus "them"/ "they", where the first-person plural pronouns index Moroccans and the third person plural pronouns index Westerners and/or French expatriates living in Morocco; these are found in 20 turns. The use of shifters to index voicing within the focus group data will be discussed below. The pronouns detailed above give us an insight into the different voices and social events, as well as the discourses attached to them, which these Moroccan youth encounter in various social practices. We will see how the different social spheres are drawn upon to legitimize students' linguistic attitudes and normalize their linguistic practices. The social spheres of formal, informal, global and local will be discussed below to describe these voices. The conversation begins by discussing the professional domain, using education as an example. Language sanitization practices within the school (Chakrani and Huang, 2014) are extended to the professional, business domain as standard French, a language cultivated in Moroccan schools, is regarded as the 'accepted,' normative code that should extend to the professional and formal domains. Here, school as a market is presented as a rewarding institutional setting for producing 'correct' forms of speech, and the social capital attached to it. Additionally, "the educational domain has become a site for political, socioeconomic, and cultural struggle, and a domain for the definition of local histories" (Abi-Mershed, 2010). In previous turns, R1 and R2 both step into the role of the student to bring a sharp juxtaposition between speech forms attached to formal and informal settings and the social values ascribed to them. The voices of Moroccan speakers invoked in the shift to first personal pronouns indexes a shift from the narrative mode and are invoked in the students' performance of utterances of standard and colloquial French.

These examples index the use of French in accommodating practices that often occur between Moroccans and French speakers in professional and informal

settings alike. The third person plural pronoun, "they" and object pronoun "them" are invoked to refer to native speakers of French, the French expatriates living in Morocco (Chakrani, 2021), as recipients of accommodating speech practices. The respondents describe "they" and "them" not as Moroccan, juxtaposing these pronouns to the second person interlocutory "you", Moroccan. The data presents how respondents use pronouns to construct different identities, only identifiable in the context of this interaction.

Excerpt 1

9   R2: *Il a bqet e kat goul lihoum dakshee kemmaa smit ou katssdak bhal la professional bezzaf koul haja oufash katst aamal haa.*
"But if you (1) continue speaking to them (2), as, what do you call it?, too professionally. Everything has a time in which you (3) use it.

Kanarfou fouqash nanst aamlou el haja bhal f'un ash kaygoul oulih? Goul nnt aya avant t raining
"We (4) know when to use it [formal French], like in, what do you call it?, tell me, the before training thing?"

10   Brahim. Int erview
"Interview?"

11   R1: *mashi l'int erview*
Not [media] interview

12   R3. Ent ret ient
Job interview.

13   R1. *Entretient ya'ne ghetaraf tahdarr ya'ne ghathdarr m'aah mashi ghatahdar m'aah chuis laa chuis kada*
"Job interview. This means, you will know how to speak, I mean, you will speak with him, not like, you will not speak to him like, 'I'm like this, I'm like that'."

14   Brahim: *"alash li'anna kat koun proffet ionelle, yaak?"*
'Why? Because you are professional in this instance, aren't you?"

15   R1. *Voila ya'ne htta hnna wlennaa kantabaouhoum fhdarrthoum.*
R1: "That's right, I mean, we (1) [Moroccans] too, have started following them (2) [French] in their speech."

16   Brahim: *Naaam*
"I see."

17   R1. *Je sais pas wash vous êt es d'accord wulla walakin. . .*
R1: "I (1) don't know if you [participants] (2) agree or not, but. . ."

18   Brahim: *shoufou ant oum ya'ne hassab el yaqdar ykoun*
"What do you [all] think? I mean, it depends on [what] you [think]. It could be."

In this segment of the interview, the respondents used 128 pronouns as they position themselves via a vis the use of French expatriates living in Morocco language in Morocco. Respondents discuss a job interview to highlight appropriate speech patterns in the professional setting (turns 9–18). In turn 9, "you" and "we" both index Moroccan speakers of French as they transition from an informal to a

formal domain of the interview. R2 indicates a change from the two types of accommodating patterns to French expatriates (turn 9), from informal to formal contexts. Then R1 establishes a direct relationship between R2's use of "them", the voice of French expatriates (turn 9), and "him", which represents the voice of the interviewer (turn 13). Although not given a direct voice, the presence of the interviewer serves as an icon for regulating speech forms and plays the role of a gatekeeper who provides direct access to the professional field through the "appropriate" uses of language. R1 then continues the contestation of accommodating practices by furthering the direct relationship between "them" (French expatriates, turn 9) and "him" (the interviewer, turn 13), where the interviewer takes on this persona, in turn 15. In these turns, the interviewer is presented in the informal domain of language use outside of work (turn 9), to the formal domain within the professional field.

R1 uses direct reporting to take us into the interview as a speech event (turn 13). Here, R1 demonstrates using informal speech by taking on the voice of an interviewee within the context of the interview, shifting into the first person using informal speech, "I'm like this, I'm like that." R1 shows how Moroccans continuously shift between formal (standard) and informal (colloquial) French speech norms, using their knowledge of appropriacy as to which forms should be utilized in each contextual framework. R1 indicates in turn 15 that the interview narrative as a speech event highlights that in order to gain access to professional work, Moroccans need to command of both standard and colloquial French to demonstrate their ability to accommodate in both professional and outside, in everyday settings. This implies that language accommodation is not strictly instrumental, limited to the professional domain, but it has reached beyond to casual interactions. This indicates that native French speakers' monolingual hegemony extends beyond the bounds of the professional domain, explaining their ability to remain monolingual within Morocco. Economically driven language accommodation can secure the vitality of a language beyond its traditional borders of France. French expatriates in Morocco constitute the largest French community in the African continent (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr).

France has claimed defense of linguistic rights and cultural diversity, although this is not supported by the monolingual existence of French expatriates in Morocco, nor by the imposition of its language over "African vernaculars and vehicular languages during the colonial period, which led to the deculturation of generations of Africans" (Vigoroux, 2013, p. 389). In fact, by enforcing a century-long language policy in Morocco (Chakrani, 2022), France profited from multilingualism for its ex-colony in order to exploit the multilingual skills of Moroccans while inscribing material and symbolic resources only to French. This multilingual/monolingual dichotomy was aimed to exploit the language skills of workers, creating a "process [to] produce and reproduce long-standing and newer forms of social inequality on the basis of language" (Duchaine, 2011, p XXII).

Excerpt 2

19   R1. *Wash mumkann l inna naaawdo u nrajao u l had l qadeya l l i g al na dyal bhal hnaya bhal
kantabaouhoum htta hnaya fhdarrthoum*
"Is it possible for <u>us</u> (1) to go back to the issue of, like, <u>we</u> (2) follow <u>them</u> (3) in <u>their</u> speech?"
R1. *alash manhadrroush kemma krrawha linna nhadrrou mgad alash kantabaouhoum. Nab-
ghew nbaynou lihoum que on'est bhalhoum fhdarrthoum*

"Why don't <u>we</u> (4) speak [French] like it was taught to <u>us</u> (5), correctly? Why follow <u>them</u> (6)
[French expatriates]? <u>We</u> (7) [Moroccans] want to show <u>them</u> (8) [French expatriates] that <u>we</u>
(9) are like <u>them</u> (10) in <u>their</u> [French expatriates'] speech."

20   R2: "*Non mashe ghade nbaynou lihoum on'est bhalhoum ya'ne ila knna kanhdrrou loughthoum
ya'ne kantcommenecaw m'ahoum*"
R2: "No, <u>we</u> (1) [Moroccans] do not want to show <u>them</u> (2) that <u>we</u> (3) are like <u>them</u> (4). If <u>we</u>
(5) speak <u>their</u> (6) language, it means, <u>we</u> (7) communicate with <u>them</u> (8)."

21   R1: *Loughthoum heya lfrancais walakenn 'lash nhadrouha bhalhoum?*
R1: "<u>Their</u> (1) [French expatriates'] language is French, so why do <u>we</u> (2) speak it like <u>them</u> (3)?"

22   R2. *La ila wletee katgoulee kada je ne suis pas maa kat, katjee . . .*
"No, if <u>you</u> (1) start saying 'I am not [standard French],' like this, it's not, it feels. . . ."

23   R1: *t qiil a*
"Heavy"

R1 and R2 discuss accommodation within an informal context (turns 19–23). In
turns 19–21, R1 and R2 use "us" and "we" to refer exclusively to Moroccans, while
using "them" and "their" to index French expatriates. In turn 20, R1 fronted the
personal pronoun "their" with the word "language" to describe French, emphasi-
zing that Moroccans do not see French as a local Moroccan code. In turn 22, R2
switches to the first person pronoun "I" and performs a standard French utterance,
"*je ne suis pas*" ("I am not"), in order to demonstrate the inappropriateness of stan-
dard French when addressing native French speakers within an informal context.
In response to R1, R2 quotes R1's use of colloquial French, "*on est*" ("we're"),
stating, "No, we [Moroccans] do not want to show them that we are like them. If
we speak their language, I mean, we communicate with them." It is interesting to
note that "*on est*" is the colloquial pronominal form of *nous sommes* (we are), in
which the plural, personal pronoun *nous* is replaced with the singular, impersonal,
third person pronoun *on*. The use of the pronoun *on* as an alternate to *nous* in this
interaction is strategically used by both R3 and R4 (turns 19 and 20) as it is often
used to index a negative, emotionally charged stance (Mühlhäusler and Harré,
1990) toward using French outside of its formal context.
The word choice by R1 is reflective of the dialectal use of French within an informal
context. Here, R2 negates the assertion that Moroccans' use of colloquial French
in informal communicative settings is indicative of any assimilatory desires on
the part of Moroccans to speak like French expatriates living in Morocco. R2
recasts R1's sentence in line 19 "Nabghew nbaynou lihoum *que on est* bhalhoum
fhdarrthoum " (we want to show them that we're like them in their speech) in a

joking manner, imitating R1's intonation. In so doing, R2 signals a negative stance toward integratively adopting the use of French. In fact, earlier on in the interaction, R1 indicated that using colloquial French in relaxed, informal interaction is performed to gain social approval.

Excerpt 3

29 R1. *Tkdar tkounn kathdarr maa shi wahed khassak tahdar maaah yaʿnee kemmaa goulnaa* professionnel *khassek tahdarr mʿaah professionnel aou tnssa tgoul liih deek* chuis *ghadee ayy ayy faute derteyha f'an* interview *ash kansammiwh*

R1: "You (1) can be speaking to someone (2), I mean, you (3) should speak with him (4), as we (5) said, professionally, and you (6) forget and you (7) say that "I'm (8) [slang]". If you (9) make any mistakes in the job interview, what do we call it?"

30 Brahim: *entretien*
"Job interview"

31 R1 : *an entretien, ayy faute dirtih fiha yaqdar yetehsab ʿliik*
R1: "A job interview, any mistake that you (1) make could be counted against you (2)"

32 Brahim: *aah*
Aah.

R1 and R2 take us back to the interview as a speech event (turns 29–32), which was previously discussed in turns 9–18. In turns 27, 29, and 31, R1 steps into the interlocutory position within the interview context, where "you" indexes the Moroccan interviewee, and "someone" and "him" again index the interviewer as mentioned above. The presentation of the interviewer as a silent evaluator again brings into focus the tension of self-monitoring that Moroccans have in accessing the professional domain after language sanitization in school (Chakrani and Huang, 2014). R1, a student in a major business school, reminds us (turn 31) that speakers are rewarded or sanctioned based on adopting expected norms of language use in the business domain, where formal French use is rewarded and colloquial French use is sanctioned.

As Duchaine aptly argues that understanding the nature of multilingualism "entails understanding how languages are inscribed within a logic of competition for material and symbolic resources, as well as how the entrepreneurial logics in which we ourselves are situated regulate, instrumentalize, and exploit these skills" (page XXII). In other words, upon a close inspection of multilingualism we see that its Raison d'être is epitomized in the logic of market. What is of interest here is that language as a symbolic resource tends to favor, in the case of Morocco, those who have propagated this logic and acts as its gatekeepers allowing them to inject more value in the French language by circumscribing its access while they maintain a monolingual repertoire to the exclusion of the rest of Moroccans.

Excerpt 4

33   R4: *ana je sais pas, hada matalan ana ma kanaʿtabarsh hada l'inconvenient dla langue hada inconvénient personnel. La personne huwwa li khassu y-controler rasu u yaʿraf ash man langue yistaʿmal f ashman situation.*

"I̲ (1) *do not know.* I̲ (2) *do not consider this [as] a disadvantage of the language. This is a personal disadvantage. The person should know how to control* himself̲ (3) *and know which language to use in which situation."*

34   R1: *justement ana je cherche shnu kan sammiw ha lqadiyya yaʿni ila kan hadshi shnou yamkan lina nsamiw hna kantabʿuhum hta fi hadrathum. Maa araftsh kifash ngoul*
"Exactly, I̲'m (1) *looking for what* we̲ (2) *call this matter of* us̲ (3) *[Moroccans] imitating* them̲ (4) *[French expatriates] in* their̲ (5) *speech.* I̲ (6) *don't know how to say it."*

35   R3: "*infisaam kaytssama 'infissaam fishakhsia*
'*split personality. It is called split personality."*

36   R4: *mashi nfisam fi shakhsiyya*
'*Not split personality.'*

37   R3: *aslan maa*
"In essence."

38   R4: *maa mtafaqsh maaak*
"I̲ *do not agree with you."*

39   R3: *mambniash ʿla shi assass.*
"It [following French expatriates in their speech] is not founded on any basis."

40   R1: *tqdar tkun parce que hna shhal ma kanabghiw ntabauuhum*
"It could be possible because we̲ (1) *follow* them̲ [French expatriates] (2) *in so many things."*

41   R4: *katgeneralise koulshi*
"You̲ *generalize everyone."*

42   R3: *katssama hii balati kyna wahad luuqda aand lamgharba lihiyya taqlid al gharbiyyin. Taqlid kul man huwwa aqwa kayna ʿand bnadem fin mmaa mshiti ghariza tabiiya walakin kayqallad llii aqwa walakin fhalat ma bnadem . . .*
"It̲ *is called, just one second, there is a complex that Moroccans have, which is imitating the Westerners. Imitating all those who are more powerful. That is a complex that exists in all people, wherever* you̲ 1) *go, a natural instinct. But in the case where a person . . ."*

43   R1: *walakin shkun lijayb had attaqlid rah tatawur si tu te mets a leur place yaani 'ila ma mshtish maahum filbashum dima ghadi ygoul liik "ma mathaddarsh" dakshi danya ghadya wu katsmitu.*
"But what brings this imitation? It is progress. If you̲ (1) *put* yourself̲ (2) *in* their̲ (3) *[the Westerner's] place [shoes],* I̲ *mean, if* you̲ (4) *do not follow* them̲ (5) *in* their̲ (6) *way of dress,* they̲ (7) *will always say to* you̲ (8), *"[You are] not civilized", that's what it is, life is [progressing]."*

44   R2: *kayniin naas kaygoulou lmaghrib kaydanou baqi tanrakbou foug ((NOT CLEAR))*
"There are some people who say that Morocco, they̲ [Westerners] still think that we̲ [Moroccans] ride on ((not clear))."

Students discuss accommodation in turns 33–43. In turn 33, R4, a computer science major, comments on the accommodation that R1 and R2 discussed previously. R4 does not frame accommodation as a "disadvantage," but rather, takes a pedantic stance (Chakrani, 2016) to indicate that Moroccans' accommodation to French

expatriates is a normal process and moves the responsibility of selecting 'appropriate' French language use from the interviewer to the interviewee. Respondent R3, as a medical school student whose use of French is only in school and who speaks Berber and MA at home, injects medical discourse in the conversation by invoking the voice of the expert to label accommodation as *Infisaam fi shakhsiya* "split personality" by lengthening the /a/ vowel in *infisa:am* and lowering his intonation uttering this phrase and slowing down his speech (turn 35). R3's use of the medical metaphor from the voice of a medical expert is a means to label the accommodating as psychological illness. The use of the pronoun "it" (turn 39) laminates both accommodation and multiple personality disorder as he sees no reason for Moroccans to use French outside of the formal contexts of use. The cultural tension that is present an existing tension between Arabic and French in Morocco and elsewhere (Chakrani, 2021) and Morocco's deep-seated in its Arabic identity frames any attempts of speaking French beyond its instrumental use as having to do with one's psychological attributes. In fact, Suleiman (2006) mentioned that Rosemary Sayigh described French Arabic bilingualism symbolized Lebanon's "split personality" (1965, p. 121); she further added that despite increasing evidence to support it on linguistic, psychological or metaphysical grounds, bilingualism was "basically a political phenomenon" (1965, p. 123). This labeling of bilingualism as pathology, Koven (2007) argues, was the prevue of scientists in the first half of the 20th century such as in the work of Diebold, (1968) or Adler, (1977) and became in the later part of the 20th century, a normalized phenomenon having no psychopathological causes, but still deeply affecting the construction of identities.

Here, R3 serves to diffuse agency from Moroccans since neither accommodation nor multiple personality disorder are the fault of the speaker or patient. R4 (turn 33) blames the speaker for not appropriating the "correct" register to the right context. R3 (turns 35, 37, 39, 42) attempts to refute the assumption that links the speaker as the cause of the "damages," but rather, invokes a noun to refute the speakers' responsibility for this accommodation and the "damages" associated to incorrect language use.

R3 recontextualize the discussion using medical register that the "complex" of accommodation (turn 42) is a power asymmetry and a process which stems "naturally" from the asymmetrical relationship that holds between Moroccans and French expatriates living in Morocco. Here, accommodation is portrayed as a "natural instinct" and this relationship is portrayed as a "complex," which depicts the relationship of power, and therefore accommodation, as being a natural one. In turn 43, R1 continues the same nominalization process, presents the agentless nature of "imitation" as being driven by the natural process of "progress." The use of the word of "progress" as an agentless process positions native French speakers as also agentless, rather than as actors in a power relationship. R3's codeswitches show his ability to alternate between two language MA-SA and French so

demonstrably making the case that the "control" of switches falls on the speaker, not the language itself. He takes a pedantic stance in switching to standard French to indicate inject authority in his stance toward accommodation. The discussion in turn 43 marks a change in the international footing of speaker R1 and the interaction itself, where the speaker steps into the direct reporting mode to introduce another voice that within the stratification of languages in Morocco, namely, the Western-dominant voice toward "the Rest" (Hall, 1996). When stating, "If you put yourself in their shoes," R1 tries to rationalize this power asymmetry by adopting a Westerner's voice to justify Moroccans' accommodation. R1 removes agency from both Westerners and Moroccans and by presenting them as passive objects of progress and frames Moroccans' imitation of the West, linguistic or otherwise, as both natural and justified. R1 shifts to the voice of Westerners when stating "[You are] not civilized." R1 implies that the consequence of not speaking Western languages implies that Moroccans do not adopt a "progressive" lifestyle, which may invoke the agentless voice of the West, stating "[You are] not civilized".

Excerpt 5

46   R2: Mart khali nniit jaat lmaghrib wu tadgul lia
        "Even my uncle's wife (French), <u>she</u> *came to Morocco, and* <u>she</u> *says to me."*

47   R1: Wullah, Justement
        "By God, that's right."

48   R2: Galt liik kant aandi fikra bathatni ttiyara wu bit narkab foug jjmal
        "<u>She</u> *[uncle's wife] said to* <u>you</u>, *'*<u>I</u> *had the idea that* <u>I</u> *would get off the plane and then* <u>I</u> *would get on a camel'."*
        ((all laugh))

The discussion in turns 44-60 build on R1's "progress" as a natural process that justifies language accommodation. The shift in the interaction (turn 43) to highlight the relationship between the West and Morocco triggers a sequence of narratives about the stereotypical images that the West propagates about Morocco. Interactants here bring to life the exotic discourse that shapes the relationship of power between "the civilized" West and the "Other". The influence of such discourse comes to life in R2's shift into the narrative and comments on it, about her Western aunt's view of Morocco (turns 44, 46, and 48), by juxtapositioning "*ttiyara*" ("plane") and "*jjmal*" ("camel") (turn 48). R2 elaborates on the discourse of the West vis-à-vis Morocco, as a continuation of labeling the country as belonging to the realm of the exotic within the Western imaginary, an ideological discourse that drives the stereotypical construction of "the Other," engineered by the West to propagate its legitimacy (Hall, 1996). R2's use of the dative pronoun *liik* (to you) indicates her negative attitude toward discourse, a stance which is collectively shared by the participants in this focus group. This is also indexed in the use of the adverb *hatta* (even), showing astonishment at hearing this discourse

from a close relative. The collective laughter of all the participants not only signals participants' alignment with R2's view, but also attests to the presence of such a discourse that relegates anything non-Western to the realm of the exotic. We will see in the next section how respondents rationalize language asymmetries that the West propagates in juxtaposing itself against the "Rest".

Excerpt 6

75   R3: *tantabauhum bhal huka kimma galt*
        "<u>We</u> [Moroccans] follow them [Westerners]' like this, as she [R1] said"

76   R1: *lfrancais machi la langue kikarawha lina fl'école tbaanahum hta f dialect lalong dylhum huma kifash kayhadru binathum man ghir l'école*
        "The French language, not the way that <u>they</u> taught it to <u>us</u> in school. <u>We</u> [Moroccans] followed <u>them</u> [French expatriates] even in <u>their</u> [French expatriates'] dialect. The way <u>they</u> [French expatriates] speak to one another not only in school."

77   R4: *mashi zaama c'ést an inconvenient bnadam taybghi mzyan el Mgharba aandhum wahd l'abilité yétkalmu bzaaf dyal loughaat wakha hta tayʕarfou la langue yaʕalmu hta la langue dialectale utaalmu bzaf mazyan*

        "This is not really a drawback, the person wants well to . . . Moroccans have an ability to learn many languages, even when <u>they</u> know a language, they learn even the dialect and learn a lot [of languages] very well."
        R4: *udik saaʕ a la personne katkun aandu wahd la responsabilité bash ékun huwa capable bash ydistangue bin ashman forme de la langue lli bgha.*
        "At that time the person has the responsibility so that <u>he</u> is capable to distinguish between which form of the language <u>he</u> wants [to use]."

We notice that all four focus group participants in turns 68–77, after taking on the different voice, move back into the discussion of accommodation as a linguistic practice in Morocco. R1 articulates that accommodating linguistic practices are not only restricted to the formal (standard) French as taught in school and used in the professional domain (turn 76). She also extends to accommodating dialectal French use within informal contexts, where Moroccans use their knowledge of colloquial French to accommodate native French speakers in "their dialect" within an informal context, such as outside work and in casual conversation (turn 76). This, she describes as a desirable trait in the workplace. The command of French for the Moroccan elite and access to job opportunities entails not only mastering the formal register but, as Cohen (2004) argue, is funneled to the elite who shows acculturation to the French way of life.

We see in this interaction how students make meaning of the presence of the different languages in Morocco as a juxtaposition of two rationalizations of language use. One is represented in R2 and R4, who argue for the instrumental adoption of French, while the other three students view a hegemonic relationship in the language use dictated by the power asymmetries between ex-colonial countries. Respondent R4 takes a pedantic stance in switching to the expert voice and makes a series of assumptions, starting with referring to accommodation as a "drawback"

(turn 77), which as an evaluation, implies that it is a positive practice. The second process he links with accommodation is the word "ability," presenting Moroccans as having an exclusive predisposition to acquire languages. The third link he makes is also made by nominalization, where he describes Moroccans' need for utilizing the right language in the right context as a "responsibility". He claims that Moroccans, unlike other nations, have a linguistic advantage and a *sui generis* predisposition to learn many languages. This linguistic myth often circulates among Moroccans, implies that having such a control over languages, the onus falls on the speaker to utilize the "correct" language form within the appropriate situational context. R4 contests Moroccans' accommodation to native French speakers in formal and informal settings, is a reflection of the asymmetrical distribution of codes as a reflection of ongoing ideological discourses.

Although none of the respondents see French as a local code, we notice that R1 and R3 contest the instrumental justification of using French. R1 and R3, both from a Berber-speaking family, call into question the need for Moroccans to accommodate in standard and colloquial French. For Berber speakers, adopting French is their third language, the introduction of which impacts their ability to intergenerationally maintain Berber (Chakrani, 2017). R3 connects language and appearance as the outcome of the discourse of progress. As Hall (1996) argues, European colonial powers, in their expansionist efforts, circumscribed modernity and modern traits to European-based identities, contrasting these identities to the inhabitants in the empires they occupied. R1, a medical school student, takes a pedantic stance (Chakrani, 2016) by framing accommodation using the medical register. To indicate the seriousness of accommodation, he upshifts to SA to frame the interaction in medical terms using the expression *ghariza tabiïˈia* (a natural instinct). He signals his stance toward this accommodative behavior by codeswitching only between MA and SA. His codeswitches to SA are important here, in that he upshifts to SA to indicate the seriousness of this issue (Al Alaslaa and Alhawary 2020) and injecting credibility in his stance.

The interactants, in their description of the language accommodation practices that occur between Moroccans, invoke several social voices and their associated discourses. The interactants take us through the voices of the interviewer, interviewee, French language teacher, student of the French language, medical expert, Westerners, and the teacher. Using shifters, interactants move through these voices to discuss language use and to contest and naturalize and linguistic accommodation. What emerges from interactants shifts in pronouns is that not only do we see how the West has propagated a distinct image of itself and marketed that difference as Hall describes. In so doing, it propagated its hegemony by incorporating the "Other" in its image and "into its language, its systems of representation, its forms of knowledge, its visual imagery, even its conception of what sorts of people did and did not have access to reason itself" (Hall, 1996, p. 7).

Conclusion

By examining the use of pronouns, we see how students shift into different social voices to index what it means to be Moroccan and shows us how they negotiate the presence of the French language in Morocco. What is of import in this article is that, although French is still seen as foreign to Moroccans, this analysis allows us to see how its contested instrumental presence is motivated by and large through the hegemonic discourse of modernity, uniquely Euro-centric in its nature and rationalized in the image of the West. The analysis of shifters allows us to see how Moroccan youths position themselves vis a vis the rationalization of the subscription to the modern world through the instrumental adoption of French or increasingly English. The relationship between Moroccans and the French language, cultivated institutionally school, and extends beyond the professional domain, where the marketization of the "proper" use of French as a commodity, and now increasingly English, draws rewards or incurs encumbrances.

It is the marketization of foreign languages and incentive-driven state sponsored policies that sustain a monolingual presence of French and British expatriates be it in the Maghreb, the Gulf or elsewhere in the Arab World. Such an ideology has allowed the latter group to be identified as key actors in the proliferation and dominance of images of modernity, access to which is only imaginable and translatable through "perfect" acquisition of foreign languages. In the Moroccan post-colonial context, the emergence of European (Sayahi, 2005), especially French, expatriates as capital holders with ethnolinguistic vitality and valued linguistic traits has undermined efforts to modernize local languages in Morocco, namely Berber and Arabic, outside of the realm of a Western-defined image of modernity. Most of all, what the analysis of shifters allows is to see how, the Moroccan youth question the centeredness of the West and its civilization in demarcating the definition of what it means to be Moroccan and modern within Moroccan society.

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Auteurs/*Authors*

Brahim Chakrani, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Arabic Studies in the department of Linguistics, Languages and Cultures at Michigan State University, where he serves as the Coordinator of the Arabic program. Professor Chakrani is the Director of the Middlebury Arabic School and served as the President of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic (AATA) from 2018–2020. His research interests include Arabic sociolinguistics, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology, second language acquisition and learning, heritage language acquisition and learning, and discourse analysis.

Mariarosaria Gianninoto — Docteure en études asiatiques de l'Université orientale de Naples (Italie), titulaire d'une habilitation à diriger des recherches (HDR) en linguistique de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS, Paris), elle est professeure de langue et linguistique chinoises à l'université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, après avoir été maître de conférences de chinois à l'université Stendhal de Grenoble et à l'université Grenoble Alpes. Ses recherches portent sur l'histoire de la linguistique et de la didactique.
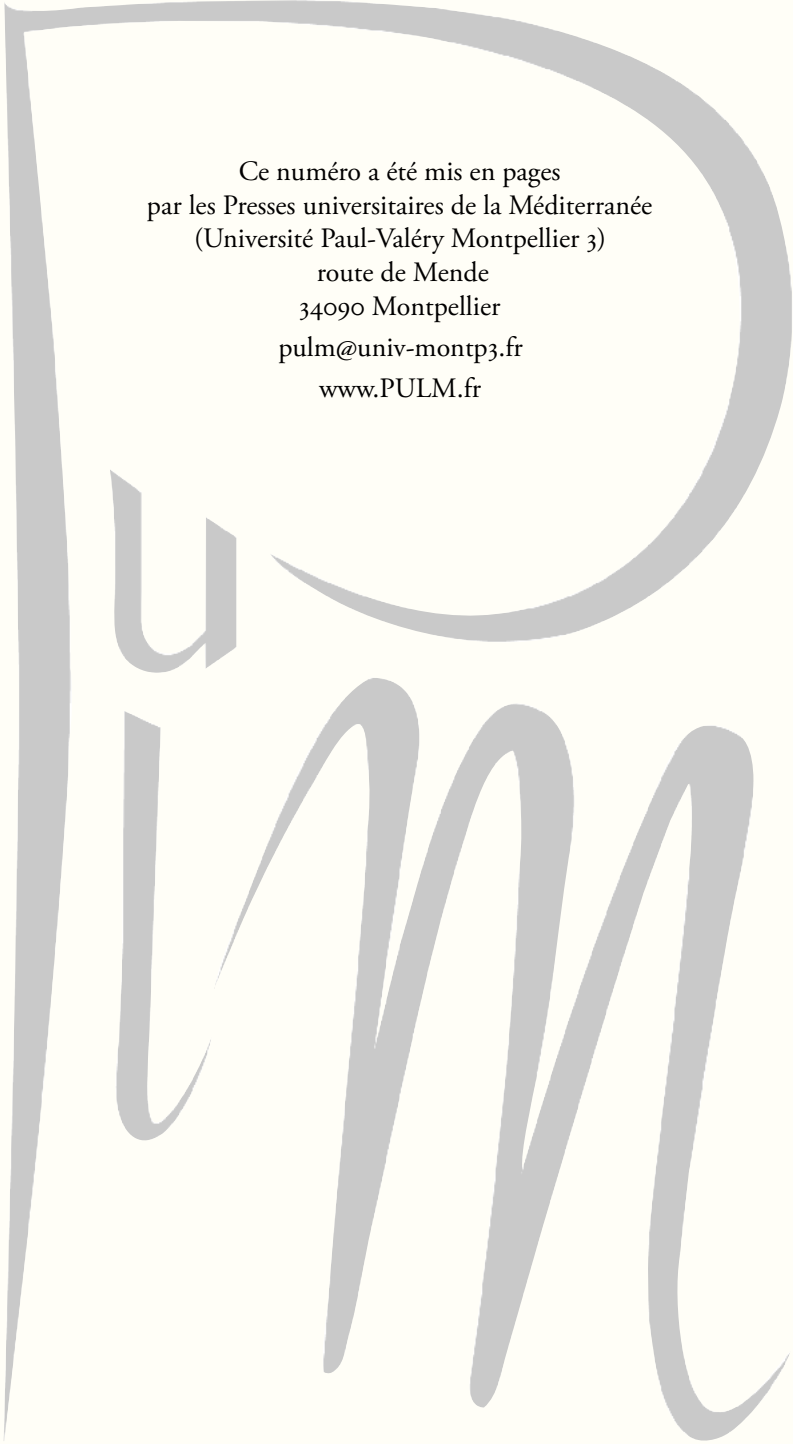
Shokooh Al Sadat Hosseini is an Assistant Professor of Women's Studies Department at the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS), Tehran, Iran. Ph.D.: Arabic language and Literature (Criticism and Comparative Literature), Damascus University (2005–2010). Her Thesis Subject: "The Development of the Short Story in Syria and Iran (1920–1970); A Comparative Study".

Abdenbi Lachkar est Professeur des universités au département d'études arabes et hébraïques, université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 où il enseigne l'arabe en tant que langue étrangère appliquée, la traduction, l'interculturalité et les stratégies de communication et de négociation. Ces recherches s'inscrivent dans les domaines de la linguistique, de la sociolinguistique et de l'analyse des discours politique, médiatique, culturel et religieux. Il s'intéresse aussi aux humanités numériques et à la géopolitique du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord.

Ma Ji, maître de conférences à l'université de Ningbo dans la province du Zhejiang en Chine, est spécialiste de l'histoire moderne de la Chine, et plus particulièrement des relations sino-françaises de l'époque. Sa thèse, soutenue à l'université Paris 7, porte sur les diplomates chinois en France à la fin de la dynastie des Qing, de 1878 à 1911.

Loubna Salah Zaitouni est doctorante à l'université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. Ses travaux s'inscrivent dans le domaine des humanités digitales, de l'analyse des discours, de la sociolinguistique et des intelligences artificielles. Elle s'intéresse, entre autres, à la sémiologie, aux analyses prédictives et aux représentations identitaires.

Zhang Rui—Ph.D. in History of Europe from Sapienza University of Rome (Italy). He is lecturer of Department of History at East China Normal University in Shanghai (China). He is the author of the monograph book, "La missione del primo legato pontificio Maillard de Tournon: All'origine delle relazioni tra Santa Sede e Cina" (Urbaniana University Press, 2022). His research interests include history of Christianity and history of Sino-Western cultural exchanges.