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Understanding Colonial Anthropology: On the Ethnographic Situation Approach[1]

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Abstract: I try to approach colonial anthropology as a social scientist thinking of the resources and constraints of belonging to a community, in a formerly colonized country. The issue is not to oppose a 'true ethnography' to a 'deforming ethnography,' a 'true national history' to 'a false colonial history' or 'a true Orient' to 'a mythical Orient.' On the contrary, I aim to avoid treating colonial legacy as a sui generis object and analyze it with the same approach applicable to other postcolonial anthropological literature. I tried to understand the researchers by providing as much relevant information as possible about their social situations. Relevant information is inspired by the concept of ethnographic situation that includes cultural and ideological orientations, theoretical orientations, the social position of the researcher and the colonial context. The question is how those dimensions of the ethnographic situation affect the colonial anthropology.

Keywords: Ethnographic Situation, Cultural and Ideological Orientations, Theoretical Orientations, Positionality, Colonial Context, Colonial Anthropology, Postcolonial Anthropological Literature.

Rorty distinguishes two traditions that have marked human thought: objectivity and solidarity.[2] According to the first, truth is conceived as an ideal in itself regardless of its utilitarian character for the community. It recalls the fear that philosophers of ancient Greece expressed about parochialism, that is to say, the fear of being confined within the limits of one's native community. This fear drove them to seek the nature of things regardless of the opinions of their communities. The distinctions that Plato and others made between knowledge and opinion or between appearance and reality can be understood within this framework of a thought directed towards objectivity. The objectivist tradition is centered on the idea that *we must step outside our community*. Rorty calls "realists" those who try to base the truth on objectivity. They must interpret the truth in terms of correspondence between facts and reality hence they need an epistemology. On the other hand, the "pragmatists" wish to reduce objectivity to solidarity. For them, the truth is what is good for

1. This article is a revised version of a talk (Anthropologie chez soi & pensée postcoloniale) delivered at the international Symposium: Qu'est ce que la pensée postcoloniale? Université des Antilles, Martinique, novembre 23-25, 2015.

2. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press University, 1991).

us to believe. No need for the idea of correspondence between beliefs and objects.[3]

This kind of binary oppositions should help us to chart a path but they are not the path. They should help us to get rid of the extremes and to develop intermediate combinations, flexible enough to give us a margin of freedom to adapt our questions to the studied objects. It is a way of escaping from Manichean, positivist (neutral, detached) or committed approaches, and of grasping both the complexity of the research process and the involvement of the researcher in his/her society. Against a positivist, I could have exaggerated solidarity to the detriment of objectivity, emphasizing the cultural proximity, the colonial distortion of the history of my country.

I try to approach colonial anthropology as a social scientist thinking of the resources and constraints of belonging to a community, in a formerly colonized country. Having practiced the field and being familiar with anthropological literature, with its different variations and contradictions, have helped me to develop a serene but critical look at colonial anthropology. The fact of being born at the twilight of colonization would have also favored this disposition. This double distance, theoretical and temporal, helped me to escape the bias of conventional anticolonial posture and try to understand the colonial studies based on an interpretive/participatory approach and on a critical approach that does not deny the political and ideological dimensions of colonial anthropology. The colonial literature that interests us is located within theoretical traditions. We left out provincial ethnography entangled in local jargon and issues. It certainly has an undeniable interest but for other issues related to the history of the colonial vulgate.

The issue is not to oppose a 'true ethnography' to a 'deforming ethnography,' a 'true national history' to 'a false colonial history,' or 'a true Orient' to 'a mythical Orient.' On the contrary, I aim to avoid treating colonial legacy as a *sui generis* object and analyze it with the same approach applicable to other postcolonial anthropological literature. For instance, the principle that knowledge is not an immediate process that leads a disembodied subject to an objective reality, but rather a process mediated by a socially, politically, theoretically and culturally located subject,[4] should be applied to all researchers, whether colonial or not.

3. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 21-34.

4. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology & Utopia, An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (San Diego: A Harvest Book, 1985); Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968).

Within a phenomenological and interpretative traditions, I tried to understand the researchers as I did for peasants, nomads, rural youth, immigrant women and others. I try to understand them by providing as much relevant information as possible about their social situations. Relevant information is inspired from the theoretical achievements of the sociology of knowledge and of scientific knowledge in particular. It is articulated around the concept of *ethnographic situation* which includes the cultural and ideological orientations, the theoretical orientations, the social position of the researcher and the (colonial) context. The question, I aim to answer, partially, is how these dimensions of the ethnographic situation affect the colonial anthropology.

Purging the Colonial Knowledge from its Defects

From the sixties of the last century, Maghrebi scholars advocated the decolonization of colonial literature produced on their countries. Decolonizing the colonial conceptual apparatus was a principle that any researcher should profess and eventually implement. In a context dominated by nationalist passions and political decolonization, it is understandable that researchers contribute, in their own way, to the process of decolonization, aiming to purge the national history and culture from colonial defects.

Most of the criticism of the colonial intellectual legacy has been in terms of truth and falsity. In 1964, Khatibi (1938-2009) wanted to contribute to the founding of a postcolonial sociology school, to "develop a true knowledge of Moroccan society."[5] According to him, "decolonization of sociology presupposes a scientific autonomy from the metropole and a critical scientific policy based on the comparative analysis of under-analyzed or poorly analyzed countries" (author's translation).[6] The essential task of sociology is to carry out a double critical task: deconstructing the ethnocentric concepts of sociologists who spoke in the place of Moroccans, and leading a critique of the knowledge and discourses developed by Moroccan (or Arab) society on itself. To Khatibi, decolonization should be "able to promote a radically critical thought towards the ideological machine of imperialism, and ethnocentrism, a decolonization that would at the same time be a deconstruction of the discourses [borrowed from Jacques Derrida] that participate, in various and more or less hidden ways, in the imperial domination (...)" (author's translation).[7]

5. Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Chemins de traverse, essais de sociologie* (Rabat: Éditions Okad, 2002), 12.
6. Abdelkébi Khatibi, *Bilan de la sociologie au Maroc* (Rabat: Association pour la recherche en sciences humaines, 1967), 42.
7. Abdelkébir Khatibi, "Décolonisation de la sociologie," in Khatibi, *Chemins de traverse*, [1981], 113-25.

Mohamed Sahli (1906-1989) criticized the ideological conventions of colonial historical literature as "the postulate of the congenital inferiority of the colonized," "its own rhetoric, its ritual formulas, its key words like the loyalty of the colonized, his fidelity, and his unwavering attachment."[8] He analyzed the uses made of geographical determinism contending that Algeria was the most closed and the most fragmented of the three Maghreb countries, that the fragmentation of the relief would have favored the particularisms and prevented the political unity and the fusion of the populations. He also criticized the sociological determinism that reduces the history of Algeria to a struggle between nomads and sedentary communities.[9]

Abdallah Laroui showed that the political principle of 'divide to rule' nourished the colonial knowledge: "The historiographical colonial production has been widely criticized. It has been noticed that it aimed openly at demoralizing, dividing the Moroccan people, that it relied preferably on foreign documents of dubious value without ever thinking of controlling them with national documents"[10] (author's translation). He noted that Michaux-Bellaire (1875-1930), told, from a Moroccan organism, that the authors of the early twentieth century could not escape the organicism, evolutionism and functionalism that were generally accepted. But these theories served colonial purposes. The use of the notion of organism avoids talking about state, society, politics: "An organism is something bastard, unfinished, which is more than a tribal federation but much less than a structured state; it moves, it reacts but it does not act in the strict sense since it never foresees. Within this perspective, Moroccans have a behavior but not politics: they are ethnographic objects but not historical one" (author's translation).[11]

Germain Ayache criticized the colonial opposition between the *siba bled* (peripheral, mountainous region where the tribes are independent) and the *Makhzen bled* (region that the sultan governs). He drew attention to the excesses and inadequacies of this opposition associated to the violence and brutality of the *Makhzen*'s power, seen as a parasitic power. To Ayache, the *Makhzen* does not just collect taxes, it has other social functions, including the arbitration function in collective conflicts. He also showed that tribes needed the Makhzen, especially in times of drought.[12]

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8. Mohamed Chérif Sahli, *Décoloniser l'histoire* (Alger: Entreprise algérienne de presse, 1986 [1965]), 135.

9. Ibid., 159-79.

10. Abdallah Laroui, *Esquisses historiques* (Casablanca: Centre culturel arabe, 2001), 10.

11. Ibid., 10.

12. Germain Ayache, "La fonction d'arbitrage du Makhzen," *Bulletin économique et social du Maroc* 138-9 (1978), 5-21.

Despite these prejudices, colonial literature was not totally rejected. Post-colonial researchers have proposed to re-examine it in order to separate the grains from the chaff, to disentangle the truth from the falsity. Mohamed Boughali wrote that "(...) we remain convinced that despite the colonial abuses that Moroccan ethnography and psychology have experienced, they can still be royal ways to recover our dynamic vestiges in order to try to penetrate them better. We are convinced that to print to a discipline like [...] ethnography, a new sap, we have to take history, mistakes and even abuses in order to straighten them out."[13]

Colonna and Brahimi talked about a possible right use of colonial science. They showed how the careful analysis of Berber groups by Masqueray (1843-1894) informed the school policy among Kabyles. Masqueray was Jules Ferry's (minister of education) personal advisor. He examined the cleavage between Berbers and Arabs that he instrumentalized by defending the principle of favoring the schooling of Berbers at the expense of Arabs[14] and choosing the precise location of schools.

Colonna and Brahimi criticized firmly the judgment of intentions made to the colonial sciences that were too quickly investigated. For them, "Colonial science is experimental, subject to the test of facts." It brings a correct answer to a wrong question. The goal was colonialist: divide the Berbers and the Arabs; but analyzis of the Kabyle society and the choice of the location of schools were relevant. "Our work is then rather to reconstruct the right questions to almost exact answers (given by the colonial science)."[15]

The analysis of the colonial knowledge is often reduced to the identification of ethnocentric and colonial prejudices that led to false knowledge. This sociology of ignorance, so to speak, is based on the following positivist postulate: knowledge is conceived as the reflection or mirror of reality in the mind of the observer who, if not blinded by his social, ethnocentric, colonial, and other prejudices, will be able to reach this reality and describe it as it is. The decolonization of colonial thought was often based on simplistic postulates: there is a true reality (culture, history, politics) which is veiled by the colonial prejudices, and it is enough to remove (decolonize) this veil in order to reach the truth. To gain access to the true knowledge of reality, it is necessary and sufficient simply to get rid of colonial thought and

13. Mohamed Boughali, *La représentation de l'espace chez le Marocain illettré* (Casablanca: Afrique-Orient, 1988), 1-2.

14. Fanny Colonna and Claude Haïm Brahimi, "Du bon usage de la science coloniale," in *Le mal de voir*, ed. Collectif (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1976), 234-40.

15. Colonna and Brahimi, "Du bon usage de la science coloniale," 238-9.

its prejudices. This reminds us of what Popper wrote about the positivism of Francis Bacon and Auguste Comte, calling it an optimistic epistemology that assumes that truth is manifest and that an innocent eye can see it.[16] This process of access to manifest truth is quasi-religious, it is a purification of the spirit from prejudices that prevent seeing reality as it is. Once these prejudices are eliminated, the truth manifests itself.

In short, decolonizing the 'colonial sciences' is identifying prejudices that distort the history and culture of the colonized people. However, unlike the positivist who applies the *tabula rasa*'s principle, putting into question all prejudices including his own, most post-colonialist critics question only prejudices of others, their prejudice are either commendable (nationalist, Arabist, Marxist), or out of consideration. It is not enough to be anti-colonialist, nationalist, leftist, critical, to access the true knowledge. Good faith, disinterestedness, honesty, and other moral virtues do not immunize against error. Being anti-colonialist, nationalist also implies prejudices, probably more commendable compared to colonialist prejudices, but the fact remains that, from a methodological point of view, there are still prejudices. We noted how the nationalist passions directed the critics towards prejudices related to the cleavages affecting the unity of the country: nomadic vs sedentary, Berber vs Arab, areas subject to central government (*makhzen*) vs independent areas (*siba*). Abdelahad Sebti showed that the result of the critics of colonial history, consisted in the opposition "to the colonial vulgate a counter apologetic vulgate regarding the image and the definition of the Moroccan state of the pre-colonial era."[17]

A non-selective approach would also have taken into account the colonial studies that affirmed the existence of the Moroccan nation, the Moroccan people, a Moroccan character (Louis Brunot, Georges Hardy), a Moroccan, even Maghrebi legal spirit (Jacques Berque).[18]

On the other hand, *a colonial thought defending colonial interests does not necessarily produce only false results*. "False or bad ideas" and "unworthy interests" can inspire relevant descriptions: "A pseudo-science may happen to stumble on the truth."[19] In any case, it is not because such a theory is 'contaminated' by ideological prejudices that it necessarily leads to a false

16. Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations. Truth, Rationality and the Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge Classics, 2005 [1963]), 5-20.

17. Abdelahad Sebti, "Variations marocaines autour du moment colonial," in *Les usages politiques du passé* (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2001), 192.

18. Hassan Rachik, *Le proche et le lointain. Un siècle d'anthropologie au Maroc* (Marseille: Parenthèses, Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l'homme, 2012), 127-38, 149-58.

19. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 11.

ethnography. It is therefore not excluded that a researcher may, despite his colonialist or other prejudices, provide relevant descriptions and partial truths about the societies studied. But in this case, the identification of a partial truth is not the result of the elimination of prejudices, nor of an intellectual operation separating the grains from the chaff, but of the complex process of the research itself which is not necessarily and totally biased. The idea that behind any colonial description there are prejudices is an *a priori* that inhibits any in-depth analysis of the colonial corpus.

Theoretical Dispositions

Colonial researchers did not hide the colonial aims of their work. They were rushing to express and implement them. Michaux-Bellaire wrote: "to create the Moroccan Archives one had to do, so to speak, the catalog of Morocco, of its tribes, of its cities, of its brotherhoods, to trace its origins, ramifications, struggles and covenants (...), to recognize in one word, as far as possible, the ground on which we could be called upon one day, to enable us to act with full knowledge of the facts."[20]

The question of colonial prejudices should be examined within a more general theoretical framework, that of the cultural and ideological dispositions of the researcher which constitutes only one dimension of his ethnographic situation. By cultural dispositions, we mean the beliefs, ideas and prejudices that a researcher acquires as an ordinary member of a society. A foreign anthropologist runs the risk of understanding the subjects studied through the cultural categories of his society. In this case, we speak of ethnocentrism. By ideological dispositions, we mean a system of ideas and beliefs that refer to politics and support political action (legitimation, mobilization).

The categories of the primitive and the inequality of races and cultures are both ideological and anthropological. To say that the members of such a community are primitive is a judgment, a prejudice, which can be advanced by an ideologue, a political leader, or an anthropologist. These categories serve both to describe peoples and to legitimize eventually their colonization.

We lose essential aspects of colonial anthropology by reducing it to its ideological dimension. It is to overcome this restrictive approach that I proposed a comprehensive analysis of the ethnographic situation of the researchers in question. Whatever his interests, his social position, his worldview or his ideology, a researcher, even a colonial one, is led, by his scientific role, to place himself within the framework of a theoretical tradition that is

20. Quoted in Edmund Burke, III, "The First Crisis of Orientalism 1890-1914," in *Connaissances du Maghreb. Sciences sociales et colonisation*, ed. Collectif (Paris: CNRS, 1984), 219-20.

authoritative to his eyes, to borrow his lexicon, his postulates, his hypotheses. All anthropological knowledge presupposes theoretical dispositions that can be more or less systematic, more or less explicit. These dispositions, which are not necessarily free from ideological prejudices, inspire and guide the questions asked, the concepts used, the facts observed, the ways of observing and interpreting them. And any criticism of colonial anthropology must also focus on this theoretical dimension.

He should publish not only reports but also books and articles in specialized academic journals. He would like to be especially recognized by his peers (and possibly by men of power and the public), he has a reference group, scientific authorities, colleagues and peers, the source of his inspiration and legitimacy. It would be reductive to pay attention only to his colonial interest. There are other interests peculiar to the scientific field: the reputation, the monopoly of scientific authority, the publication in prestigious provincial or metropolitan magazine. Doutté (1867-1926), who resolutely contributed to the colonial expansion of France, was in contact with Marcel Mauss and the journal founded by Emile Durkheim, *L'Année sociologique. His* book on *Magic and Religion in North Africa* is presented as an academic book using the anthropological theories of the time. I do not see anything colonial in his application of Hubert and Mauss's theory of sacrifice to the sacrifices performed in the Maghreb and during the *ḥajj*, or his application of the laws of magic elaborated by James Frazer. Other authors have openly served the colonial power while aspiring to a scientific recognition of the metropolis' scientific field. *Les Berbères et le Makhzen* is the PhD thesis of Montagne defended at the Sorbonne University. Berque (1910-1995), a colonial official for many years, was in touch with his prestigious circle of Paris, Marcel Mauss, Louis Gernet (his teacher in Alger), Marcel Bloch. He can be blamed for not describing the colonial environment of the Seksawa tribes, but he was inhabited by academic issues related to the social morphology, the sacred, the law, the local and global history, the common cultural traits that crossed the Maghreb. It is easy to multiply examples that corroborate the importance of the theoretical foundations of colonial anthropology.[21] Understanding a given scientific knowledge should go through a critique analysis of their theoretical foundations, and show, where appropriate, that this knowledge is a rationalization of political interests. In this case, it is this process of rationalization and ideologization of a "normal science" that must be interpreted.

21. Rachik, *Le proche et le lointain*, 63-70, 107-26, 146-9.

Doutté's approach based on the issues of origin, evolution and survivals does not lead to a detailed ethnography. Within his theoretical perspective, interpreting a rite or a belief is to classify them in one of the boxes proposed by comparative ethnography. For instance, Doutté did not describe the ritual of circumcision, he drew its meaning from a single rite: burying the foreskin pleads for the theory of the expulsion of evil. That's it. He interprets in the same way the sacrifice of Christ and some French agrarian rites. This thin and partial ethnography is oriented by the search for the universal. The terror of photography is observed among primitives who attribute to drawing a magical character. The prohibition by Islam of the reproduction of animated beings is an islamization of the old fear of the image experienced by the savage.[22]

Doutté was more interested in the theoretical issues of his time than in ethnographic knowledge of Moroccan society. Any serious interpretation must then be inspired by comparative ethnography. Without this precious guide, local rites and beliefs were incomprehensible and ineffable. To interpret a local fact was to strip it of its local character and to give it a universal meaning that was authoritative in comparative ethnography.[23]

Social Position

Knowledge might be affected by the social position of the actor. For instance, the churchman would develop an understanding of money and the interest loan that would be different from that of the capitalist or the merchant.[24] Regarding the researcher, he has a general social position that distinguishes him from other social positions (priest, banker, trader, politician), and a particular position that distinguishes him from other types of researchers. Merton (1910-2003) distinguishes, for example, bureaucratic intellectuals from unattached intellectuals. He examines the intellectual effects of these different positions on the selection and the definition of problems. The bureaucratic intellectual comes to think largely in instrumental terms in relation to a specific situation defined by the policy-makers. He is under the pressure of action that influences his approach to problems. On the other hand, the unattached intellectual, freed from all bureaucratic control, feels, in principle, free to consider all the political consequences of his work. He is not obliged to give a practical purpose to his action. The choice of his object depends on theoretical and not on political considerations. He may be interested in any question he finds theoretically significant.[25]

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22. Edmond Doutté, *Merrâkech* (Paris: Comité du Maroc, 1905), 45, 89-100, 108, 351-4.
23. Ibid., 137.
24. Mannheim, *Ideology & Utopia, An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge,* trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shills (San Diego: A harvest Book, 1985), 95-96.
25. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 261-78.

The colonial researcher remains a vague category, a general social position that put all colonial researchers in one basket. We have for example the traveler, the scholarly explorer, the resident official and the academic researcher, with all the possible mixes between these positions. The question is how does a particular social position affect an observer's theoretical options, fieldwork and ethnography?

Explorers like Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916) or Edmond Doutté did not have the same type of access to people and their ideas as resident officials did. Louis Brunot was Inspecteur de l'enseignement des indigènes (1920-1939) at the Direction générale de l'instruction publique at the head of which was George Hardy (1920-1926). Both rejected the theories of James Frazer who was a central authority for Edmond Doutté. Hardy (1884-1972) criticized the (colonial) authors who sought the traits of the universal man under the Moroccan envelope: "Most ethnographers, in particular, faithful to the doctrines in progress, tend to bear their best research effort, not on the manifestations that would bring to the light the individuality of the grouping, but on those which relate this grouping to the whole of humanity, to human unity in time and space" (author's translation).[26]

In a speech addressed to the teachers of indigenous education gathered in Rabat, Brunot (1882-1965) expounded his research project on Moroccan psychology." He asks them to adapt the official French pedagogy to the conditions of the indigenous school population and to observe the Moroccan pupils: "To note the reflections of your pupils, their ordinary acts, try to understand them and to draw progressively the main lines of the Moroccan psychology. He revealed some aspects of this psychology: in principle, "the Moroccan never accepts at once what is hasty and angular; he escapes politely and does not let himself be re-grasped. Patience must be the essential quality of everyone who deals with him."[27]

It is the critical overtaking of evolutionism that studies humanity as a whole, and the adoption of a new theoretical framework, inspired by collective psychology, that allowed Hardy and Brunot to take an interest in a determined country and describe its mentality.[28] Furthermore, related to their position, the search for the universal is incompatible with the sake of empirical knowledge of colonized peoples. Applied colonial ethnography tends to favor local

26. Georges Hardy, *L'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française* (Paris: Librairie Larose, 1926), 5-6.

27. Louis Brunot, "Aux conscrits de l'enseignement des indigènes," in *Premiers conseils*, ed. Louis Brunot (Rabat: Ecole du livre, 1934), 3-6.

28. Louis Brunot, "L'esprit marocain. Les caractères essentiels de la mentalité marocaine," *Bulletin de l'Enseignement Publi*c 45 (1923): 35-59.

differences rather than human similarities. To know the Moroccan is to show how his mentality (culture, character, soul, spirit) is different. Frazer was no longer a good compass for a public servant researcher facing concrete problems. Moreover, a long and continuous residence among the people studied would reveal, on a daily basis, the limits of speculative knowledge of a universal character. Hardy was aware of this: "It is possible that these games of the spirit (jeu d'esprit) seduce our imagination [...]; but it is quite clear, for a European living in the country, that they are confusing the cards."[29]

Let's examine another situation that shows the limits of the general colonial position of the observer in determining colonial ethnography. It is not abnormal that researchers share theoretical dispositions despite their different or even opposing social positions. The position of a Westermarck (1862-1939), a Finnish scholar, whose country was colonized by Sweden and research funded by the University of Helsinki, is clearly different from Doutté's position who led his missions as part of the French colonial expansion. However, when both are inspired by evolutionary theories, their interpretations of rituals and beliefs come closer. Whether being colonial or not, an anthropologist who is inspired by evolutionism, is oriented towards a particular type of questioning such as the origin of the phenomenon studied, the search for its survivals (pre-Islamic rites and beliefs in our case) and a linear conception of history ranging from the simple to the complex. The difference is that Doutté has an interest in going beyond and in showing the fragility of Islam relying on the strength of pagan survivals.

Any researcher has a social position that should be questioned. It would be misleading to restrict this issue to colonial anthropology.[30] Paul Pascon (1932-1985), a Moroccan sociologist, finds it normal that French researchers have put their sciences at the service of colonization. In this respect, he does not claim a privileged position. He recalls his implication, in the aftermath of Independence (1956), in the agrarian reform and wonders if he had not served the State too. He then cites the example of the question of the Sahara: "We saw our best intellectuals unite and find in the warm nationalist atmosphere [1975 ...] the delights of the sacred union. All this to put into perspective judgments that could be made about the precursors of foreign anthropology in Morocco and to show them both critical sense and fair proportion."[31]

29. Hardy, *L'âme marocaine*, 5.

30. I tried to take inspiration from the approach in terms of ethnographic situation to describe and interpret my trajectory as an anthropologist: Hassan Rachik, *Devenir anthropologue. Interpréter sa propre culture* (Casablanca: La Croisée des Chemins, forthcoming).

31. Paul Pascon, "Anthropologie et colonialisme. Le rapport 'secret' d'Edmond Doutté, 1907, Situation politique dans le Hoûz 1.01.1907," *Etudes rurales, idées et enquêtes sur la campagne marocaine* (Rabat: Société marocaine des éditeurs réunis, 1980), 242.

The link between the colonialist researcher and the colonial power is neither direct nor simple. We are not constantly confronted with sharp situations: the researcher offers his advice, and the administration is inspired by it and executes it, or the administration acts and the researcher rationalizes and legitimizes a posteriori.

Doutté mobilized his comparative ethnography to convince the colonial authority that was preparing to occupy Morocco to rely on religious leaders who had a legitimate and perennial authority in the eyes of the people and not on political leaders whose power was ephemeral: "The more primitive a people is, the more religion invades all their institutions. I do not think that this principle, one of the best established in sociology, is seriously contested today. This means that in a barbaric country like Morocco, religious forces are among the most important forces. In speaking of local chiefs (grands caïds), we have mentioned above how dangerous it is to press upon them a policy of penetration; their influence is individual and always precarious. On the contrary, the influence of religious leaders is rooted in beliefs common to communities: these beliefs are deeply rooted and have a permanent character."[32] Needless to say, the colonial policy, more pragmatic than Doutté himself could think, had recourse to both supports while largely favoring the big caïds. The nagging question we can hardly document is the following: do colonial politicians read colonial anthropology?

Dynamics of the Colonial Context

Without losing sight of the influence of the ideology which would be stronger in any colonial context where knowledge must be as scientifically valid as politically useful, it would be reductive, if not wrong, to consider colonial anthropology as a simple reflection of the colonial ideology and a nasty auxiliary to the politics of colonial domination. Postcolonial thinking tends to exaggerate the effects of the colonial context. To put a work or a system of knowledge in parallel with a global political context is a vague approach that only leads to generalities.

Sahli reproached the colonial history with describing the Berbers, the eternal Berber, apart from any chronology. We can repeat the same reproach with regard to the post-colonial critics who mostly approach the colonial science in a timeless way. We should insist on the dynamic and change of the colonial context that implies not only the general conditions common to a country (colonization, insecurity, public policy, infrastructure) but also

32. Edmond Doutté, "La situation politique du Houz au premier janvier 1907," *Bulletin du comité de l'Afrique française, Renseignements coloniaux* 10 (1907): 252.

those peculiar to the production of the anthropological discourse (subsidies, academic networks, cooperation, competition).[33]

We must at least distinguish between three phases corresponding to the pre-colonial investigations, the launch of colonization and the established colonial order. At these phases correspond successively the explorer ethnographer (de Foucauld, De Segonzac, Doutté), the resident researcher (those involved in or having lived the "pacification" of the tribes, Emile Laoust, Robert Montagne, Hardy), the resident researcher (Brunot, Berque).

Moreover, the context, whatever its content, can be taken into account only if it is inscribed in the works and the ethnographic situation of the observer. In other words, we reject the idea of a context defined in a global and external way, and consider it as a set of resources and constraints effectively affecting the social position of the researcher and his work. The colonial context is not an identifiable thing outside the experience of actors. Any contextualization of a research, on pain of being abstract and arbitrary, must find an anchor in the anthropological studies in question.

During the precolonial phase, dominated by evolutionism, Moroccans were described by Doutté, and others as primitives. The early years of colonization, marked by political tension, instability, tribal resistance and uprisings, make it difficult to maintain continuous and intensive interactions with the study population. There would be ways to see, to conduct the fieldwork, to approach people and their practices that require the stability of a colonial domination. After the settling colonization and the criticism of evolutionism, colonial scholars opted for other theories, some of which treat Moroccans as a people (one people), a nation, with a specific mentality and a distinct culture. As we have just seen, the colonial administration cannot be satisfied with abstract and general knowledge. There is a stage in the history of colonization that favors the posture of the resident researcher, the overcoming of speculative and conjectural knowledge about human nature, and the adoption of approaches that take into account concrete and local issues (education, peasant modernization, Muslim and Berber justice).

Ethnographic Encounter

The concept of ethnographic encounter involves essentially face-to-face relations between the anthropologist and the subjects studied. The standard

33. Edmund Burke, III, "La mission scientifique au Maroc," in *Recherches récentes sur le Maroc moderne*: actes 1977 Durham (Rabat: Publications du Bulletin économique et social du Maroc, 1978), 37-56. Edmund Burke III, "The First Crisis of Orientalism 1890-1914," in Collectif, *Connaissances du Maghreb. Sciences sociales et colonisation* (Paris: CNRS, 1984), 213-26.

of this ethnographic encounter has emerged with the academic scholar as follows: to respect (understanding, empathy) the groups studied, to speak their language, to reside among them for a reasonable period of time (one year or more). In this sense, Edward Westermarck (Malinowski's teacher), a pioneer of long-term fieldwork, has set an early model of intensive ethnography.

The ethnographic encounter involves all the dimensions of the ethnographic situation. The content of an ethnography depends on the theoretical and ideological dispositions, the social position, and the length of the field mission, the type of interaction with people, the mastery of their language, etc. Learning the language of the colonized people is a must. To penetrate and be recognized by peers, the colonial researcher had to master the Arabic language and/or the vehicular dialects. Even with those garantees, the degree of observer acceptance, the interaction with people and the length of stay were problematic.

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916) is an emblematic figure of knowledge based on travel (June 1883-May1884). The country's insecurity often forced European explorers to disguise, like Foucauld as a Jew for exemple. His detailed geographical description (hydrography, cartography) largely outweighs the ethnographic description. Sociocultural phenomena are described but externally. In this type of ethnography, eyes are working, ears are resting. Foucauld summarily noted what was available to his sight: the type of crops, the extent of the pastures, the dwellings. The ethnographic situation of Foucauld characterized by the insecurity of the country, the disguise, the realization of a precise practical objective (survey of the routes, the rivers, the relief), and the absence of any theoretical preoccupation affected the knowledge produced on Morocco. It did not allow prolonged relationships with people, nor a thorough description of social and cultural phenomena. The interaction with the natives was weak, but it was the ideal situation for a disguised explorer. All his notes were taken in secret, stealthily. This mode of interaction with people only results in external knowledge that is not, I must say, futile, uninteresting, or easy to produce. By external knowledge, I mean a mode of knowledge realized without any significant interaction with the people concerned who are almost excluded from the knowledge process.

For an explorer, the path is, somehow, his fieldwork. His ethnography retains only aspects observable from outside, notably dwellings, the physiognomy of the people, the costume, the armament. From these external elements he could infer the wealth or strong devotion of a social group. Speaking of a tribe he crossed in one day, he wrote that it seemed rich to see the quantity of its villages, the fertility of the country, the number of the

people met on the way. The tribe was also very devout, judging by the number of sanctuaries (*koubbas* and *zaouïas*), by the immense detours that the natives made to remove him from the holy places.

Let's compare him briefly to Doutté who carried out his missions between 1900 and 1910. He frequently noted the scorn, the feelings of antipathy that Moroccans showed towards him as a Christian. He felt that the natives perceived him as an impure, repugnant, unusual and dangerous person. To these feelings he found a deeper primitive root, namely the fear of the stranger. Primitives are shocked by racial dissimilarities and are afraid of anything new. The hatred of the disbeliever itself is only an Islamization of the primitive fear of the stranger. The question is to know how in such an unfavorable context does an observer produce knowledge about the studied people and what is the nature of a knowledge based on antipathy? In this climate of general hostility, Doutté seldom spoke to the natives. Moreover, as it was a quick trip, the questions were randomly asked to guests and people of circumstance. To speak to the natives, to conduct interviews (which has become a banal reflex) depends on a number of theoretical and ethical dispositions that Doutté lacked. For him, there is little to learn from natives whose beliefs are primitive and false. On the theoretical level, a traveling scholar is supposed to bring local illustrations to universal theories. To do so, short-term visits and an external, fleeting and eclectic description are appropriate. This illustrative method and external ethnography does not require continuous interaction with the studied people. An extended stay is disproportionate to the type of the questions asked. The travel or the scientific mission are elementary forms of fieldwork that involve only ephemeral interactions with the natives. Doutté did not need to multiply his interviews, nor to prolong his stay to conclude that the rites of circumcision or the stone throwing (including during the pilgrimage to Mecca) are rites of expulsion from evil. Framed by the comparative ethnography, a fleeting observation is better suited to the search, for an original meaning ready to wear. The interpretation is already given by his predecessors (Edward Tylor, James Frazer). In this theoretical framework, knowing the natives and their point of view is superfluous.[34]

To better contrast, let us have a glance on Berque's encounter characterized by his composite social position as a resident civil servant and

34. Edmond Doutté, *Missions au Maroc. En tribu* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1914), 139; Doutté, *Merrâkech*, 28-29, 35, 71, 83, 138, 270, 272; Rachik, *Le proche et le lointain*, 71-78. At the same time, Westermarck (1862-1939) conducted in Morocco fieldworks based on long stays (seven years, two continuous) and an empirical and intensive ethnographic approach intensive that was respectful of the groups studied, voir Rachik, *Le proche et le lointain*, 87-105.

a researcher. Compared to the first generation of colonial researchers, he had the advantage of starting his career twenty-two years after the imposition of the French Protectorate. He described his efforts to reach out to people, to take an interest in their ideas and practices as a key to get their sympathy. By virtue of his role as an officer, he had a direct and a continuous access to places, people and archives. For the resident colonial observer, the space in which he circulates is first of all a space of authority, a place linked to an administrative function before being a 'fieldwork' in the anthropological sense of the term. The people he studied are also the object of his rule. His administrative authority and his scientific authority are deployed on the same fieldwork that did not require a travel but a simple move by a jeep or a horse. Compared to the 'standard' anthropologist, he could not claim the position of a distant and detached researcher. His function obliged him to take sides in the social and political local life. In the field, he could not simply describe conflicts, he had to help solve them first. Berque said, years later, that his situation was similar to that of the British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard who was also an administrative officer.[35]

This kind of fieldwork was beyond a deliberate inquiry, it facilitated access to information outside the formal channels of investigation. Speaking of the field, he wrote that "Anyone who has practiced this peasant knows how foreign the notion of limit is to him *antipathical.*"[36] To practice a peasant is not to observe him, it is not to speak to him, it is all of these interactions but repeated in time and without being always deliberate. The information is not caused by a specific question prepared in advance. On the contrary, it is captured in daily and routine relationships: "Abandoning the suspicious method of "the informant" and the questionnaires, I let the problems and the facts come to me [...]. The best of my materials (*ma provende*), I collected it almost at random, thanks to the tours in the mountains, long talks on the roads, judicial debates, feasts, evenings gatherings. Thus friendship and knowledge were deepened simultaneously."[37]

Berque described his relationship with people in terms of collaboration, communication, dialogue, friendship, friendly exchange, and trust.[38] For him, gaining the trust of people allowed access to more precise and nuanced

35. Jacques Berque, "Aux sources d'une thèse universitaire," Entretien réalisé par Bernard Traimond. (In Berque, *Opera minora II*. Saint Denis: Bouchene, 2001[1988]), 434-5.

36. Jacques Berque, "*Etudes d'histoire rurale maghrébine,*" in Berque, *Opera minora II*. [1938]), 76.

37. Jacques Berque, *Structures sociales du Haut-Atlas* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1978 [1955]), ix-x; 218.

38. Berque, *Structures sociales du Haut-Atlas*, ix; 475.

information.[39] Could we know, in a colonial situation, what was the content of this people's trust? Berque thought that he was respected as a learned man who could decipher Arabic texts with the cadi.[40] But, he does not completely retract the contradictory facets of his status as an *importunate host,* his roles as a civil servant and a researcher:

> "[...] the task I assumed with passion brought me closer and away from the native mass. I deeply lived (jusqu'aux moelles), I will live a long time this proximity of the importunate host who came to sit at the home of Islam, but as a master. The contradiction could only be dissipated by knowledge, the service to be rendered, the taking of sides."[41]

However, the ambivalent definition of his social position remains one-sided. We don't know exactly how people perceive him, we generally lack the local point of view on the ethnographic encounter. In the case of Berque, we are fortunate to have a testimony of Jean Orieux, a novelist and Berque's friend (hosted in 1949). Berque circulated in Jeep driven by a local driver, but he often climbed on a mule. During his travels, the villagers welcomed him in pomp. Tambourines, ululations, songs and dance. People should salute him militarily.[42] He confessed, much later, that he did not know, in the 1950s, the notion of empathy.[43] But this did not stop him from wanting to understand the concepts and behaviors of people. He wanted to seize the practices by being as close as possible to the people (*une description au ras du sol*). He asserted, for example, his desire to understand the point of view of the Moroccan jurist and to avoid applying to him the Western categories.[44] He unequivocally denied knowledge of societies based on informants. It is the dependence on these informants which explains, according to Berque, why the works of Doutté and Laoust exaggerated the role of magic and religion. By contrast, it is the importance given to direct observation that revealed to him that local rituals are mainly turned towards profane concerns, an approach that minimizes the idea of a hegemony of the sacred in Moroccan culture.[45]

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39. Ibid., 63.

40. Jacques Berque, *Mémoires des deux rives* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 130; Berque, "Aux sources d'une thèse universitaire," 436.

41. Berque, *Mémoires des deux rives*, 67-68.

42. Jean Orieux, *Kasbahs en plein ciel dans le Haut-Atlas marocain* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), 15-19, 25, 94.

43. Berque, *Mémoires des deux rives*, 434.

44. Jacques Berque, "Les Nawāzil al-muzara'â du Mi'yār Al-Wazzānī: étude et traduction," in *Opera minora I*, ed. Jacques Berque (Saint Denis: Bouchene, 2001 [1940]), 277.

45. Berque, "Aux sources d'une thèse universitaire," 431-2. Berque, *Structures sociales du Haut-Atlas*, 279.

It should be noted that social positions are flexible. Thus a scholar can respond to a bureaucratic request. This was the case of Doutté. The opposite is also possible: Berque, who was a colonial civil servant, conducted his research in an academic perspective. Taking into account the flexibility of the social position of a researcher makes it possible to understand the possible facets of his work. While aspiring for academic recognition (publications in specialized journals, reference to scientific authorities), Berque could not conduct his fieldwork as a scholar would have done.[46]

The ethnographic situation is complex, and bringing it back to prejudices and colonial interests is highly reductive. Taking it into account we have tried to go beyond absolute judgments, as the colonial ethnographic method is an "external" method,[47] or "The officials of the protectorate seem to have lived in great isolation, and what they call the science of the Moroccan milieu was, very quickly, rather a screen that made them blind to any intellectual and social innovation."[48] We show that external ethnography is associated with the hasty and hurried ethnographer who neglects theory or reducing theory to the search of universals. Detailed ethnography based on a kind of understanding of the groups studied (the Moroccans, the Moroccan child, the peasant), depends on a long residence and a theoretical or a pragmatic orientation that values the first hand data. In view of all of this, the ideology of a researcher, his social position, his material or intellectual interests, can be decisive, but not to a point that they indicate in detail a content and a method.

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46. Rachik, *Le proche et le lointain,* 139-62.

47. Abdellah Laroui, *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* (Paris: Maspéro, 1982), 5-7.

48. Abdellah Laroui, *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain* (1830-1912) (Paris: Maspero, 1977), 15.

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فهم الأنثروبولوجيا الاستعمارية: على نهج الموقف الإثنوغرافي

ملخص: أحاول التعامل مع الأنثروبولوجيا الاستعمارية كباحث يفكر في موارد وإكراهات انتمائه إلى بلد كان مستعمرًا. وليست القضية هي معارضة "الإثنوغرافيا الحقيقية" و"الإثنوغرافيا المشوهة" أو "التاريخ القومي الحقيقي" و"التاريخ الاستعماري المزيف" أو "الشرق الحقيقي" على "الشرق الأسطوري." على العكس من ذلك، أهدف إلى تجنب معاملة الإرث الاستعماري ككائن فريد وإلى تحليله بنفس المنهج المطبق على الأدبيات الأنثروبولوجية ما بعد الاستعمار. وقد حاولت أن أفهم الباحثين من خلال تقديم أكبر قدر ممكن من المعلومات ذات الصلة حول مواقفهم الاجتماعية، معلومات مستوحاة من مفهوم الوضع الإثنوغرافي الذي يشمل التوجهات الثقافية والأيديولوجية، والتوجهات النظرية، المكانة الاجتماعية للباحث، والسياق الاستعماري. والسؤال هو كيف تؤثر أبعاد الوضعية الاثنوغرافية على الأنثروبولوجيا الاستعمارية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوضعية الإثنوغرافية، التوجهات الثقافية والإيديولوجية، التوجهات النظرية، المكانة الاجتماعية للإثنوغرافي، السياق الاستعماري، الأنثروبولوجيا الاستعمارية، الأدب الأنثروبولوجي ما بعد الاستعمار.

Comprendre l'anthropologie coloniale: Sur l'approche de la situation ethnographique

Résumé: J'essaie d'aborder l'anthropologie coloniale en tant que chercheur réléchissant sur les ressources et les contraintes d'appartenir à un pays anciennement colonisé. Il ne s'agit pas d'opposer une "véritable ethnographie" à une "ethnographie déformante," une "véritable histoire nationale" à "une fausse histoire coloniale" ou un "véritable Orient" à un "Orient mythique." Au contraire, je vise à éviter de traiter l'héritage colonial comme un objet sui generis et à l'analyser avec la même approche applicable à la littérature anthropologique postcoloniale. J'ai essayé de comprendre les chercheurs en fournissant autant d'informations pertinentes que possible sur leur position sociale. Ces informations sont inspirées du concept de situation ethnographique qui comprend les orientations culturelles et idéologiques, les orientations théoriques, la position sociale du chercheur et le contexte colonial. La question est de savoir comment ces dimensions de la situation ethnographique affectent l'anthropologie coloniale.

Mots-clés: Situation ethnographique, orientations culturelles et idéologiques, orientations théoriques, position sociale de l'ethnographe, contexte colonial, anthropologie coloniale, littérature anthropologique postcoloniale.