ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL CHANGES

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In this article, I will attempt to show the cultural changes and the factors responsible for them in a general framework. The factors will include not only those which cause or promote change but also those which are responsible for the rejection or hindrance of tendencies towards change. Influences in the first category we call the "positive factors", and those in the second "negative factors". Sometimes the positive or negative character of these depends on the situation in which they operate: e.g. the factor of novelty is a very strong positive factor in a radical or progressive society, whereas it is a negative factor in a conservative community.

Some of the factors to be mentioned are already widely recognised and accepted such as compatibility with existing culture, utility, novelty and prestige, but the principal stress will be laid upon influences which have not been adequately discussed by other investigators, and only these will be considered in detail. Furthermore we shall have to bring out additional influences which though not themselves directly responsible for the change, may do much to determine its success or failure.

We observed that innovation in rural community occurred mainly at particular points in which the culture seemed to be weak; and there was a consciousness of this fact on the part of the group, together with some anticipation of change and a readiness to accept hitherto unknown or alien culture elements. Thus the group had to discard its general conservative attitude, if it had one. It thus seemed that for the change to become possible within a group either a modification in the physical environment, or a contact with other cultures, or both, had to take place. In addition to this general condition the following factors may play an important part, namely,

(1) This paper, as seen, is only one chapter of the thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph. D. in the University of Cambridge.
the differences or similarities of cultures (which come into contact) the relation between material and non-material culture, that is the psychological aspects of material objects and behaviour, and the “understanding” of these and other relations, and lastly the attitudes of the groups concerned towards each other. In this respect there was in our particular case (rural community) nothing extraordinary in the relations between the different groups; there was neither admiration, contempt nor enmity; merely a mutual tolerance.

If, however, the situation is such that the donor culture exerts a direct or an indirect pressure on the recipient culture, regardless of the political independence of the latter, then the cultural change taking place will follow a course quite different from that described in the above case. Here the reciprocal psychological attitudes of the groups will play the decisive role in cultural change. The strong influence under which the group with an inferior technique has to modify its psychological attitudes may have varying effects. The most probable result is an admiration for the culture with a superior technique because of its efficiency, especially if the struggle has extended over a long period, and if the attempt of the inferior culture to overcome its weaknesses has not achieved expectations. If the pressure has been maintained even longer and in spite of many adoptions and imitations the society can still not stand up to the pressure and hope of a quick success has been greatly diminished, the psychological effects are much wider in extent.

After several attempts have been made, often with the same unsatisfactory results owing to the incapacity of seeing the fundamental differences, the real value and components in the culture to be imitated, it is noticed by the society concerned that the difficulties cannot be overcome so easily as had been supposed. There is hence a need for a careful study of these difficulties and a decision taken on which elements should be selected. But instead of doing this, the recipient culture, seeing only the outward differences and unaware of the fundamental ones, believes that it can overcome all difficulties by accepting more and more devices, and by imitating the donor in every particular in order to resemble it completely: such an imitation is naturally more quantitative than qua-
litative and selective. At this stage, a group with great administra-
tive dominance within the recipient society may will, promote or
impose this kind of change, and, if this is the case, it is not neces-
sary that the doner culture should have first-hand representation
within the recipient one. The recipient culture loses in time self-
confidence and fails to control or direct the course of its develop-
ment, on account of the differences between the two cultures in
technical knowledge, psychological attitudes and the enforced char-
acter of the changes. Traditional knowledge, experience and habits
are, or appear to be, insufficient and the change follows a course
markedly different from that taken under what I have called “free”
conditions.

The Ottoman Empire had kept its spiritual integrity despite
the fact that it had been in contant for a long period with societies
representing European culture.

“Nor did the spell of Italian culture produce any appre-
ciable effect upon the Turks, though they were in close and
continuous contact with the Venetians and Genoese in the
activities of trade, diplomacy, and war. The only prominent
trace of Italian cultural influence upon Turkish life is to be
found in the architecture of certain eighteenth-century mos-
quies in Constantinople.”

The continuation for centuries of spiritual isolation resulted
in a kind of “mental blindness” towards Western culture and wi-
dened the differences between them. There was a deep and wide-
spread feeling of superiority based on the successes which had
resulted from a fairly high material culture and strength. This was
confirmed even a century ago by authors who had visited Turkey.
According to one writer, even the muleteers refused to walk behind
a European and when obliged to serve the latter they would from
a distance of two or three hundred yards, or take a different route,
in order not to be seen in the act of serving an alien. Thus, after
being brought up in this spiritual atmosphere of independence,
defeat at the hands of a culture which had been considered as in-

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ferior to itself produced a violent swing over from one psychological extreme to another. It seems very likely that this tremendous change of mental attitude was the most important of all the influences, leading to an indiscriminating acceptance of everything possible in the admired culture and even to a special eagerness to adopt those of its elements which most sharply differentiated it from Ottoman practice, and to destroy or discard the most distinctive features of Turkish life. Although it would be difficult to insist that the items discarded or changed were the strongest points of the culture, they were certainly not its weakest points. As has been said already, culture does not usually put up much resistance at its weak points, whereas at those which carry the symbolic value of distinguishing it from other groups or cultures, great obstinacy and resistance to change is frequently shown in early stages of transition. As regards these elements, which distinguish the society from the admired culture and are attacked in order to facilitate resemblance to it, although the term strong points cannot be applied to them, they can be called “hard” points, following Professor Sir F.C. Bartlett’s use of this term.

The precise details at those sections of a culture which constitute “hard points” are not always of vital importance for the effective continuance of the culture and they need not necessarily represent the core of the culture. On the contrary, they are sometimes details which are relatively indifferent so far as the functioning and productivity of the culture are concerned. And yet the fact that the psychological life, the tendencies and the interests of the whole group or society are based largely upon these details, which often have the symbolic character of constituting just those points in which the culture most sharply differs from others, make them the very elements of which the whole group is or may readily become most conscious and alert.

In many primitive societies, the culture appears to be centred

(2) Prof. Sir F.C. Bartlett: Anthropology in Reconstruction (The Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1943) published by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.
in some single occupation or activity, as in the case of the rural community which we have examined. It was established that in such a case the material and mental activities of the society are co-ordinated by this occupation or activity. That is, every material activity or object has at the same time a psychological (religious, moral, and aesthetic) value. In certain other primitive societies it appears that, parallel to the activities which provide the material needs of the population, there is some other activity, or occupation, or even a single object, in which are centred all the mental interests and activities of the group. Thus, according to R. Linton, although war and hunting furnish the most essential needs of the Comanche culture constituting its structural core, it is on dogs that the mental interests of the group are based. In Madagascar again, although rice cultivation forms the structural core of the culture, psychological activities and interests are based on cattle. Again, among most African tribes, although agriculture or war are popular the most outstanding permanent institutions of their culture, it is the cattle complex (Herskovits) which carries the psychological content. Even in more complex cultures, which include numerous professions and occupations, there is evidence of certain activities, occupations and objects which interest the whole society to an extraordinary degree, and can be most impressively used to distinguish the society or group from others.

Thus in every social group, besides that aspect which may be treated as forming the core of the culture, there are other equally important characteristics which set the trends of the psychological life of the community and are centre of interest and activity for the bulk of the population.

Although the course and mechanism of the changes occurring in the first part (which provides the material needs) are in line with those taking place in the rural community which I have studied (and in other places where the changes have been freely


adopted) it seems that in the second section (where the psychological interests are centred) the changes taking place are dependent more on the attitude, outlook and tendencies of the society or group concerned. Unless the necessary preliminary preparation is made in the attitude, and outlook of the group, great resistance is shown to the acceptance of changes affecting the “hard” points of the culture. If the changes are imposed in spite of this, then the result can be disastrous, as has been stressed by so many observers. It is possible, as Professor Bartlett\(^1\) has pointed out, to identify the nature of these “hard points” and to understand their resistance to any threat of change by taking into account the general attitudes, outlook and tendencies of the society; for example, if the general attitude and tendencies of the society happen to be conservative, it will resist most of those changes which are held to distinguish it from other societies. At the same time any section of a society which sets out to copy a different culture and to initiate changes within its society as a whole will often attack these hard points and try to alter them first. Hence, it is necessary to study the general attitudes and tendencies and the whole psychological make up of the society, in order to be able to predict points of resistance and to determine their types.

Changes which occur in materials culture sometimes have a great bearing on changes in the whole social organisation and structure. As an example of this, R. Linton\(^2\) cites the change which took place when the Tanala tribe in Madagascar went over from the dry cultivation of rice to the irrigation method. The organisation of the tribe had been based on the joint family; but when rice cultivation by the irrigation method threatened to change many tribal institutions, especially in family structure, some of them returned to the old method of cultivation. Moreover changes in psychological aspect of a culture such as those affecting predominant interests may be of little importance in regard to the culture


as a whole, but any society concerned cannot remain indifferent
to such changes, but will as a rule resist them strongly. Reformers
who directly and openly try to institute such changes are often
treated as aiming totally to destroy the culture concerned. The
objects of this attack are regarded as symbolic of the differences
between the indigenous and the invading culture and if they are
yielded, the whole independence of the indigous culture will be
lost. Hence it is no mere chance that most radical reformers have
attacked at these points; examples being furnished by Peter the
Great's ordering the peasants to alter their dress and to shave their
beards; and Mahmut II and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk banning the
wearing of the turban and the fez, and introducing wine-drinking
and dancing. Both the turban and the fez had been worn by the
Muslem Turks in order to distinguish themselves from the non-
Muselms, and the latter were in fact forbidden to wear them. In the
same manner, dress, wine-drinking and dancing were considered
to be sings which kept the two cultures distinct, and although many
other elements of European culture were adopted, resistance was
shown at these points. The fact that these possessed symbolic value
is borne out by the same resistance which had been shown when
the turban had been replaced by the fez as when the fez was
replaced by the hat. Those very people who had been so much against
accepting the fez showed equal resistance to getting rid of it, since
in time the fez had taken over the part played by the turban. The
following quotation may give some idea of the resistance and
dislike shown by the Turks for these changes:

"The dislike of Moslems to the hat may account for the
aged dames having singled them out as objects of vituperation.
In the eyes of the people, a hat and eternal condemnation
are identical. A Turkish gentleman, wishing one day to test
the forebearance of one of his servants, poured out a glass of
gooseberry syrup and said, 'Here, Osman, drink this wine!'
The man hesitated, and then, in a lamentable voice, replied
'allah, allah!' I suppose my lord will next ask me to wear
a hat!'"

(1) Charles White: Three Years in Constantinople, or, Domestic Manner
Another citation relating to dress and fez by the same author is as follows:

“These changes have not taken place without causing dissatisfaction and disquietude to the Porte. They have been considered as attempts on the part of Rayas to abolish the distinctions of dress, which at once point them out as dependents on the dominant race. It was in consequence of this that Izet Mohammed, Grand Vizir in 1842, issued a firman, forbidding all Turkish subjects not authorized by civil or military rank, and especially Rayas, to wear coats ornamented with frogs or braiding, and commanding those Rayas who had adopted the fez to resume the kalpak.”

An analogous example is provided by a similar study recently made among the Nilgiri Tribes:

“A third bar to inter-tribal diffusion is the matter of prestige symbolism. A unique tribal trait tends to be interpreted as a symbol of group status. Any attempt to imitate it by another group is violently resisted. For example, Badagas wear turbans, Kotas do not. When a few Kotas once took to wearing turbans, the Badagas felt that the Kotas were getting above themselves. Some of the Badagas ambushed and beat up the Kota offenders, tore off their headgear, and effectively blocked the borrowing of this trait.

This situation is typical of conditions which prevail throughout India.”

When items of this kind are forcibly destroyed, the result may be disastrous, since they may be considered as the knots holding together all the cultural activities and comprising the core of their psychological content. Side by side with the loss of cultural balance in such cases we can observe that mental balance has gone as well. The culture is then no longer capable of controlling itself, and its members exhibit uncertainty, hesitation, nervousness, an

(2) Ibid., vol. III, p. 188.
unbalanced behavior and attitude or an apathy which results in indifference. In all such instances, again, those who first accept the new importations are likely to be the most despised and looked down upon elements of the population, and this makes any general acceptance of the changes all the more unattractive to the rest of the society. Sometimes this part is played by halfbreeds or members of the lower classes, at others by minorities or by opportunists trying to gain influence through the group which directs the change. Although the particular course taken by cultural change in this psychological atmosphere cannot be forecast, it usually ends in failure. Complete disintegration of the indigenous culture may indeed be averted mainly through the retention of the older practices by the most important elements of the society, possibly by means of passive resistance to, and non-participation in, movements designed to effect change. Through this passive resistance by the bulk of the population, the partial disintegration or deterioration in some parts of the culture, the incoherence in social organisations and inconsistency in social values and individual behavior may last only for a period, which can be called the "transition period". Throughout this period, there is, below the surface, a struggle taking place between the more radical tendencies and the conservative resistance, which finally as long as the society retains its political independence, resolves itself into a new resettlement, which is a modification of both attitudes and demands. Whether the transition period is long or short will depend on the variation in the degree, the depth and the extent of the changes over which the struggle is taking place.

During such transition periods one of the main characteristics of the disintegration process is an inability of the culture to control itself and a failure to direct innovation by judicious selection. A kind of negative selectivity may be observed. Unlike the case of the rural community whose changes we tried to follow step by step, many unnecessary and incidental elements (such as alcohol, and drug-addiction, etc.) are incorporated while others which could perfectly well be fused with the existing culture are ignored or abandoned after brief trial. In this connection an example given by A. Slade is very striking:

"In puerile dread of every usage reminiscent of Janissa-
Ottomanism, i.e. — of Ottomanism, in servile admiration of every European fashion, Turkey abandoned much of what was suitable in its own system and borrowed much of unsuitable from Europe; and — singular coincidence — while travestyng itself, Europe took up many of its cast-off habits. Its military garb, with slight variation, has been adopted by France for her Zouaves, and will probably become the pattern for all armies; cannon of large calibre (of Turkish origin) are now cast in the foundries of every state; transport, army works, and police corps, in other days exclusively Turkish, are now considered essential by every war office."

Many of the useful arts and elements which are lost may be re-adopted; if such arts and elements win the approval of members of the admired culture, which led to a revival of the Turkish manufacture of ceramic ware, or again if it is seen that arts and elements of its own which have been discarded form an actual part of the model culture. The lowering of passive resistance in one area and an increase in the number of those favoring changes results in an ever increasing number in favour of imitation and novelty, a result often to be ascribed to the mounting of an admiration for the model culture. Thus on the one hand everything pertaining to the admired culture is accepted in an effort to resemble it completely, while on the other hand everything characteristic of its own culture is disdained and rejected. When this happens and frantic imitation and a fever for novelty are in vogue, many strange and ridiculous events take place. How deep these tendencies toward imitation and novelty and the inferiority feeling have gone can be seen in the following examples: by law, everybody in Turkey had to adopt a new Turkish family name (Surname). Those people who favored the changes blindly, especially among the educated class, adopted names which, though made up from Turkish words and sometimes possessing a meaning in Turkish, bore an outward resemblance to European surnames; that this had been done intentionally is obvious to anyone with a knowledge of the Turkish language, but even without this knowledge, the resemblance to Euro-

(1) Rear-Admiral Sir Adolphus Slade, K.C.B., Turkey and the Crimean War, 1867, p. 194.
pean names is quite clear. A second example is provided by the practice of those people who bought European goods indiscriminately, without knowing that they were often buying native products bearing a European stamp — cloth made in Smyrna for instance was at one time being sold by a firm in Istanbul under an English trade-mark. The government enacted a new law to prevent this subterfuge.

Travellers visiting Istanbul and Ankara are now often surprised to see the large number of new and luxurious taxis in these cities. When I questioned several taxi-drivers as to the reason for this, they stated that since the customers would not take anything other than a new taxi, cars had to be changed every few years. If the car is not new, the customer somehow feels that his prestige will suffer. Numerous examples of this kind could be given.

Another point to be considered is whether certain kinds of deteriorations and difficulties met with in imposed cultural change are the result of the imposition itself or whether they are due to the lack of ability of the group directing the change. The fact that in such cases many unnecessary elements are the first ones to be imposed, despite the confusion which they cause, does not militate against the possibility of an imposed cultural change giving positive results if well directed. It is not possible to give an a priori answer to this question either, but merely to point out that such deterioration has taken place in all the cases of enforced cultural changes that have been recorded and that this does appear to be due to the incompetence of at least one of the cultures concerned by the group which directs the cultural changes. Those who direct or control these kinds of changes are usually administrators who know often little or nothing about the function of culture change or about culture in general. It is to be expected, therefore, that many of the harmful effects observed during enforced changes are the result of wrong actions rather than a consequence of the change itself. An important condition for the success of an imposed change is that those who direct and control the change should be like a good trans-

(1) For obvious reasons, no examples can be given without involving the names of actual personalities.
lator. Just as a good translation needs somebody well versed in both languages involved, so is it incumbent upon those controlling and directing cultural change to be familiar with each of the two cultures and at least to be able to foresee and understand the implications of the social and psychological phenomena which will occur during the changes.