

Chapter One

ASPECTS AND STAGES OF THE WESTERNISATION OF A TRIBAL SOCIETY:

*The Baruya of New Guinea**

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I will attempt to describe the various aspects and stages of the ‘Westernising’ of a so-called ‘primitive’ society in New Guinea, the Baruya, who were discovered by white Europeans in 1951 and brought under Australian colonial rule in 1960. Fifteen years later, in 1975, when Australia gave Papua New Guinea its independence, the members of this small society found themselves citizens of a new State, member of the United Nations, whose political system was modelled on that of a Western parliamentary democracy — with a few accommodations to allow for the tribal and regional variations found on this the world’s largest island.

The Western model

In the years between 1967 and 1988, I had the good fortune of witnessing the changes in the life-style and thinking of the members of this society, changes that were induced by their forced entry into a new world shaped first of all by colonisation and then by decolonisation, but in all events at the instigation of the West and with the Western model in mind. The Westernisation of the world began centuries ago, intensified in the sixteenth century, and today continues, in new forms. Furthermore, there seems to be no end in sight.

Since 9 November 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, we might even say that the process of Westernisation has resumed within Europe itself. The two European blocs that had opposed each other for a number of decades are today making their way along the difficult road to unification and striving to create or to foster in the former communist countries a system that combines the capitalist market with parliamentary democracy, all of which presupposes freedom of opinion and expression for the citizens of these countries and

a multi-party political system. But as can be seen from the tragic example of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, this process may run afoul of realities that cannot be imputed to communism, but which are survivals of much older historical divisions. However modern-day 'Westernisation' no longer proceeds from the West alone. It is now a product of the East as well: of Japan and of the four or five 'little dragons'. In these cases, Westernisation no longer results from the simple expansion of the West; it also stems from societies that have retained their political sovereignty and their cultural identity, of which one major component is certainly Buddhism. Today, then, Westernisation continues, but not every aspect of the West can be exported with the same degree of success as was once the case.

What is the West? What are its essential components? Elements that occur in association in the West may be dissociated and appear in combination with different social and cultural components in other parts of the world. In my view, the West is a blend of the real and the imaginary, of achievements and standards, of modes of action and ways of thinking, which today are rolled up into a ball of energy that either attracts or repels and which revolves around three axes, three sets of institutions each with its own logic, representations and values: capitalism, parliamentary democracy and Christianity.

Capitalism is the most developed form of market economy that has ever existed. Parliamentary democracy is a system of government that, whether it takes the form of a republic or a constitutional monarchy, entrusts power to representatives elected by universal suffrage and recognises that all citizens have, in principle, equal rights and equal duties in the eyes of the law. And Christianity is a religion that emphasizes the sins and salvation of the individual and also preaches that one should love one's neighbour as oneself and render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's.

The West today derives its strength from the combination of these three components; they emerged at different points in its history and have only lately met and melded. Christianity has exerted its influence for 2000 years and predates the appearance of capitalism by many centuries. Capitalism began to develop before the sixteenth century within seigniorial and monarchical societies. In the beginning, therefore, it had nothing to do with democracy; indeed, as late as 1906, Max Weber even wondered whether there was any necessary link between capitalism and democracy. Taiwan and South Africa, only one of which is Christian, currently prompt the same question.

These examples remind us that the West has its dark side as well: the conquering, colonial, despotic West drawing its wealth from the resources of the rest of the world, closing its eyes whenever convenient to the lack of freedom and rights under some of the regimes that serve it or are associated with it, encouraging not only individualism but also self-centredness. Such denunciations do not apply to the third world alone: in the West equal rights coexist, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, with what are at times enormous disparities in standards of living, and there are still those who believe that the accumulation of capital depends in part on the legal exploitation of labour.

In short, the West is not a flawless model, but it is still today a source more of attraction than repulsion. At the same time, like any historical phenomenon, it runs the risk of one day being dismantled by history as a result of its contradictions and ambiguities. Immediately

after the events in Berlin and Bucharest, that day seemed to have been postponed for several decades or even several centuries. But today, the economic and social disparities mounting up in Eastern Europe and in the South, the struggle for the recognition of long-flouted national and ethnic identities, the appearance of political and religious movements combining fundamentalism and terrorism all raise doubts about a peaceful future for the new world order, though not about the reality of one.

Tribal societies and the example of the Baruya

I would now like to turn the Westernisation of pre-industrial societies, confining my remarks to tribal societies, which are still major components of many nations in Africa, Asia, America and Oceania. What is a tribe? A tribe is a local society composed of a set of kinship groups, united by the same principles of social organisation and ways of thinking, interconnected by repeated marriages and cooperating in the defence of a common territory and the exploitation of its resources. Several tribes may share the same language and the same principles of social organisation. What distinguishes them and sets them apart is the control of a part of nature, a territory.

Thus tribal identity is a composite reality consisting of a cultural and social framework and identification with a territory that has been conquered or inherited from the tribal ancestors and which must be passed on to future generations. Tribal societies have always been highly diverse. In general, however, they may be classified on the basis of two criteria: whether they are still sovereign in their own territory (which is extremely rare) or already part of a State (often a pre-colonial one) governed by the members of a dominant tribe or ethnic group; and whether power within the tribe is shared more or less equally between all groups or is concentrated in the hands of a few at the top of a more or less fixed, hereditary hierarchy. In 1951 the Baruya of New Guinea were one such tribal society with their own sovereign territory in which ritual and political power was held for the most part by a number of lineages descended from conquering groups.

I will analyse the forms taken by the processes of Westernisation in that tribal society and the stages through which those processes passed. Then, rather than making comparisons with other societies, I will show that the processes operating among the Baruya have also occurred and recurred elsewhere.

The Baruya live in two high valleys (at an altitude of 2000 metres) in a chain of mountains in the interior of New Guinea. They were discovered in 1951 by an Australian officer who had heard of the 'Batiya', renowned as salt producers, and organised a military expedition to locate them. At the time, New Guinea was divided into three colonial regions: Irian Jaya, controlled by the Netherlands; New Guinea, a German ex-colony placed under Australian trusteeship after the First World War by the League of Nations; and Papua, a former British colony 'given' by Great Britain to Australia in 1904.

The Baruya population of the time amounted to some 1800 people living in ten or so small villages. The society was made up of fifteen clans, eight of which had been formed by invaders who had conquered local groups. The economy was based primarily on a form of extensive slash-and-burn agriculture, but the Baruya also practised more intensive

techniques, growing irrigated crops on terraces. Pig-raising was mainly women's work; and hunting, which was an exclusive preserve of the men, had a chiefly ritual significance and contributed to the assertion of male superiority. At the beginning of the twentieth century, their tools were still made of stone, bone or wood, but the Baruya had no good stones on their territory to manufacture their tools, so they obtained them by trading in salt, which they produced from the ashes of a plant.

The organisation of society was and still is based on the interplay of kinship relations and the general subordination of women to men. Descent is reckoned patrilineally and women are forbidden to own land, use weapons and possess the magic and ritual objects which, according to the Baruya, ensure children's growth. Marriage consists of the direct exchange of women among the men. Formerly large-scale male initiation ceremonies were held every three years, and the entire tribe, with all the villages and lineages taking part, would build a large ceremonial house, the *tsimia*, which the Baruya described as a gigantic 'body', each vertical post standing for one of the tribe's young men who was to be initiated.

In sum, then, what we have here is an example of a small local society, politically independent, with a partly autarkic economy — able to provide for its own subsistence but dependent on the salt trade for the acquisition of tools, weapons, ritual objects and other items, in short, its means of production, destruction and other objects essential for its social and cultural reproduction. It was a classless society, but not an egalitarian one. There were various kinds of inequality; generalised inequality between men and women, and another that set 'Big Men' apart from others. These 'Big Men' were 'big' by virtue of either their function or their merit.¹ They were either ritual masters who had inherited from their ancestors the sacred objects necessary to raise children or to ward off evil spirits, or they were great warriors who had killed many enemies, or they were great cassowary hunters.² The Baruya had no concept of the creation of the world. They believed that after a period when sky and earth were one and when animals and human beings lived together and spoke the same language, the present order of the world came about, when the sun and moon broke away from the earth and rose above it, pushing the sky before them. For the Baruya the sun and the moon are powers, remote deities whose actions are beneficial. For example, the sun acts in women's wombs together with male semen to make children. What concerns and frightens the Baruya are the evil spirits living in the forest and the caves, especially the spirits of the dead.

In Baruya society there was no direct link between economics and kinship, between the production of wealth and the reproduction of life: a woman could be exchanged only for another woman. In many other societies in New Guinea and in Africa, a woman was exchanged for wealth (bridewealth), and contact with the West has rapidly led to an enormous inflation in dowries. This reminds us of the great variety characterising the societies on which the West has acted.

The first changes (1951 and before)

The Westernisation of the Baruya took place in four stages under the influence of various forces that acted either separately, successively, or jointly.

The first meeting of the two worlds took place in 1951, but by that time the West had already transformed the lives of the Baruya, although there were no Europeans in the area. During the twenty years preceding this contact, the Baruya, through their salt trade, had obtained steel axes and machetes made in Sheffield and Solingen, in an industrial Europe of whose very existence they were unaware. Seeing the effectiveness of these new tools, they discarded their traditional stone tools in the forest. With their more effective steel tools they saved time clearing land, time which they spent either in fighting or in doing nothing. But to acquire the new tools, they were obliged to produce more salt. The women, who were excluded by tradition from the work of tree-felling, continued to use their wooden tools, and, inasmuch as the Baruya began clearing larger gardens and raising more pigs, introduction of the white people's tools meant more work for the women.

Thus, by abandoning their old stone tools, the Baruya had unwittingly placed themselves in a position of material and economic dependence on the West. But other surprising events occurred during the years that led up to the arrival of the Whites. One day, the Baruya saw in the sky two large birds chasing each other and spitting fire. They were terrified. This was an episode of the Second World War, an air battle between Japanese and Australians that probably took place in 1943. Sometime later a Baruya named Dawatnie, who had gone to trade in salt among the Watchakes, a tribe living far to the north of the Baruya, was led by his hosts to the top of a mountain, from where he was shown in the valley below several of these large birds: beings of human form were entering the bellies of these birds. On returning home he related what he had seen and thus, before they had ever seen any Europeans, the Baruya discovered the existence of supernatural beings of human form and with light skin who lived in large firebirds.

In 1951 the first white man, Jim Sinclair, arrived at the head of a column of soldiers and bearers. The Baruya were then at war with their neighbours, whose fortified villages were positioned on top of the mountains on the other side of the same valley. The white man set up a camp, and in the centre he erected a pole on which he hoisted the Australian flag. He drew up his men and ordered them to present arms to the flag. The Baruya were dazzled by the flashing bayonets, and when the flag was raised the following morning, a warrior named Bwarinmac fell into a trance. He believed he had been possessed by the white man's power, which had revealed itself in the glinting bayonets. At that point the Baruya decided to kill the white man and massacre his troops. But Jim Sinclair, who was completely unaware of their intentions, asked for a dozen very thick shields to be brought and invited some powerful warriors to shoot arrows at them. Then he drew up a platoon of soldiers and told them to open fire: the shields shattered. This demonstration of force impressed the Baruya, who abandoned their plans for a massacre. Thus in 1951 another dimension was added to the Baruya's material dependence on Western tools: their military subordination.

Thirty years later, after independence, things would no longer be the same when the Baruya and neighbouring tribes resumed their warfare. The government sent an officer and a few soldiers to arrest the 'ringleaders', and to impress the crowd the officer made as if to order his men to fire on them. The Baruya explained to him that they were not afraid: he would not be able to kill all of them, as they were too numerous, and in any case he and his soldiers would rapidly be overwhelmed.

But let us return to 1951. The first sight of a white man in the flesh produced a great change in the Baruya. They soon discovered that he was a man like themselves and not a supernatural being, a man who was superior but certainly not a spirit or a god.

Colonisation: Introduction of Western power and knowledge (1960–1967)

Soldiers

Several years went by during which no other Whites appeared. Then suddenly in 1960 an impressive column of soldiers and bearers emerged into the Wonenara Valley on the border between the Baruya and their enemies. This was a flat area where the tribes traditionally gave battle, and because it was flat the white men decided to build a landing strip there. A patrol post was constructed at the end of the strip, and then a party of soldiers set off to identify the tribes and inform them that they no longer had the right to fight each other. The officer in charge of establishing the post and the colonial administration next summoned representatives of the various tribes to explain the new order of things. After appointing them ‘chiefs’ of their villages on behalf of Her Majesty, the Queen of England, he sent them home. Unfortunately, one of these men was captured on the way back by some warriors of the Yunduye tribe with which his own tribe had been at war when the Whites arrived. He was killed, and his body was fed to the dogs.

On hearing this news, the officer organised a punitive expedition. Three people were subsequently killed, including a woman; a column of prisoners was brought back to the post. One of the prisoners, a great shaman, believed that he could escape from the white men by flying away, since the spirit of the shaman is a bird, and he therefore threw himself — in handcuffs — from the top of a cliff. He crashed to the ground but was not killed, and was terribly disabled for the rest of his life. Another incident, this time among the Baruya, gave the local tribes a fresh opportunity to gauge the white men’s strength and determination. Following the suicide of a woman, a battle had broken out between the inhabitants of her village and those of her husband’s village. When the officer was informed, he went to the scene of the battle and on the way burned the village of the people he believed to have been responsible for the disorder, the dead woman’s village. Unfortunately for the Baruya, two of their sacred objects disappeared in this fire: the dried fingers of a great warrior who had led their ancestors in the conquest of the territory and — much more serious — the flints used to rekindle the sacred flame during initiation ceremonies, which exploded in the heat of the fire. The officer never knew anything of these losses.

Thus, within months of being colonised, the local tribes lost a major attribute of their existence: the right to lead their own lives and the right to apply their laws on their own territory. In short, they lost at one and the same time what we would call political sovereignty and cultural autonomy.

A comprehensive census of the population was begun at that time, as a State can exercise its authority only over a registered population. Peace was imposed, and the villages were forcibly relocated on the valley floor for census purposes and ease of control: the people were obliged to cooperate in the census and to submit to the law; they were prohibited from taking the law into their own hands. The Baruya had just been introduced to an institution

that has played a major role in the development of humankind and is regarded as an indication of civilisation: the State. Of course, the State that had discovered them was colonial and authoritarian, but it was seen by Europeans as a necessary stage on the way to the democratic parliamentary State that was to replace it after independence.

Missionaries

In 1966 another component of the West, Christianity, entered the Baruya's territory in force. Lutheran missionaries came to settle near the patrol post and built both a mission and a school. They brought with them evangelists from the coastal tribes, which had been converted to Christianity long before, and they placed one in each village, to preach the word of the Lord. They preached in Pidgin English, the language taught at school, together with the rudiments of arithmetic and writing. The Baruya and the neighbouring tribes welcomed this move, and soon more than one hundred children were attending the school. Two years later the best pupils were sent to one of the mission's secondary schools in a town in the interior. One of the boys in this first class later became a forestry engineer, another a mathematics teacher, and a third, a policeman; one even became a Protestant minister.

Throughout the students' secondary schooling, the missionaries forbade them to return to their tribe to take part in initiation ceremonies. They were told that their ancestors had worshipped false gods and that they and their parents had previously been living in sin without knowing it. A split developed between those boys who were to remain 'bush-Kanaka' like their parents, and the minority, the 'school boys', who had begun to 'evolve'. Some of the latter declared at that time that the customs of their ancestors should be abandoned and that they 'spat on the loin cloths' of their fathers. Fifteen years later, however, nearly all of them returned of their own accord to take part in the big initiation ceremonies. We shall now see why.

Kanaka comes from the French word 'canaque', which is used to refer to the tribes of New Caledonia. This term had been taken over by the Australian administration to refer to the scarcely pacified bush tribes. The Baruya had therefore become 'bush-Kanaka', primitive people living in the forests. Yet it was these same 'bush-Kanaka' who had decided to send some of their children to school, thereby demonstrating their determination to join the new world that had been imposed or proposed, a world which, as they quickly realised, they could no longer avoid. The soldiers, evangelists and bearers, black like themselves and coming from unknown tribes, were proof of that. They therefore sent their boys to school either without initiating them, or limiting their initiation to several hours and a few rites, whereas tradition demanded that boys be separated from their mothers and the world of women by the age of nine and that they should live in the men's house up to the age of twenty, when they would marry. The Baruya's leading shaman also sent his own son to the school. Twenty years later the son, now a Protestant minister, returned to his tribe and was made deputy to the German missionary in charge of the Lutheran mission. At the time two Baruya clans had decided, with government encouragement, to establish a sort of sales and purchasing cooperative, and they entrusted its management to him. He was expelled from the mission, however, for making his wife's mother pregnant. Later, under suspicion of having misappropriated the shop's funds, he was obliged to give up his other position. Today he lives in his village, has taken a second wife and still enjoys undisputed prestige.

Civil servants

In 1965 the administration began to recruit up to thirty per cent of the men in certain villages for work on coastal plantations. Many Baruya who wanted to 'see some country' volunteered for this work and went off for a period of two years. At the time, the administration did not allow indigenous people to renew their contracts, as it was afraid they might begin to form organisations if they remained for too long at the same plantation. The men were housed in barracks, fed and paid a few dollars a week. At the end of their contract, they were given roughly two hundred Australian dollars each, which they could spend as they wished. Most of them spent part of this sum on tools, blankets and umbrellas, which they distributed when they got back to the village. The Baruya thus became wage-earners who freely sold their labour.

In fact the money they earned and the food rations they received did not amount to a real salary. They had experienced the discipline of continuous piecework under the supervision of foremen, an experience that was completely foreign to their traditional forms of labour. They had seen the ocean (of whose existence they had not dreamed) and ships and planes. But on their return in 1967 many declared that they would not leave again even if asked.

In 1967, following the soldiers, the missionaries and the civil servants, an academic anthropologist arrived: myself, bringing the Western presence up to full strength. Following Western forms of authority, here was now a Western form of knowledge. After a few months, I was asked by the patrol officer to tell him who the true fight-leaders, the real 'ringleaders', were, since it was obvious that the Baruya had put forward men without importance as their village chiefs. The missionaries, for their part, would have liked to know what went on during the shamanist ceremonies and who the 'sorcerers' were. Like any doctor, I invoked professional ethics to justify my silence.

'Makim bisnis'

In 1968 the administration, in its preoccupation with development, organised huge campaigns to encourage the tribes to plant coffee and distributed thousands of coffee plants free of charge. Agronomists came to explain what types of soil and what exposure were suitable for the crop. Coffee fetched a good price at the time, since Brazil was going through a production crisis, something of which the Baruya were completely unaware. As producers of salt, they knew what it meant to produce for exchange or for sale. But their salt was at one and the same time a commodity and their currency. In the case of coffee, they were producing a commodity that they did not consume themselves, and which brought in a currency that was produced and controlled by others.

The Baruya set to planting coffee trees in the belief that they would be able to make money without leaving their valleys and without subjecting themselves to the discipline of plantation work. But a problem soon arose: certain families had good coffee-growing ground, and others did not. Initially the old rule of reciprocity between families allied by marriage applied, and the lineages that had a large area of good land allowed their brothers-in-law to plant coffee trees there. But a coffee tree has a life of some twenty years. Allowing someone to use one's land to plant coffee was therefore entirely different from allowing him

to plant sweet potatoes or vegetables, which are harvested at the end of a single season. Economic differentiation began to develop between lineages and between individuals, a phenomenon that had not existed with subsistence agriculture, with the exception of salt-producing land. In short, the Baruya began to *makim bisnis*, to do business in the way the administration did, which was widespread in those regions that had been colonised for a long time. But *makim bisnis* meant selling to the Whites, not — yet — to one's brother, to a member of one's own tribe, to a Baruya.

That threshold was crossed the day the Baruya decided to sell the meat of a pig they had killed. Among the Baruya, pigs had always been exchanged as gifts between relatives, allies, initiates, and so forth. The selling of pig meat meant turning a gift into a commodity; it meant accepting the idea that anyone with money, even someone with no personal link with the pig's owner, could apply to purchase that commodity. Impersonal commodities and an abstract *Homo economicus* made their appearance in a society that had traditionally operated on the basis of personal relationships.

Independence: learning about parliamentary government, involution, recombining models

At the end of 1968, Australia decided to organise countrywide elections in order to establish an assembly of representatives drawn from the various regions, the first step towards the parliamentary democracy that was to replace the colonial administration after independence. A number of parties already existed, including the PANGU party, which was nearly the only one demanding independence; its secretary, Michael Somare of the Sepik, was to become Prime Minister of the first government of the independent State of Papua New Guinea. But in 1968 the Baruya were entirely unaware of the existence of these parties and of the significance of the elections. By a stroke of luck, I was present when they took place.

The various tribes of the region were assembled at several easily accessible points in the mountains. A European officer arrived with his interpreters and set up a polling station in a tent. He explained that all the registered adults should vote and that by so doing they would send to the capital people who would speak up for them to the government. Then, as hardly anyone could read and therefore choose between ballot papers, the crowd was shown posters with the pictures of nine candidates, black and white: all were unknown to the tribes. The officer provided some information about the candidates and their programs. Each man and woman was then called by name and asked to point to one of the photos. The men were bashful, and the women were terrified. For example, one of them who placed her finger between two photos was shouted at; she then pointed to one photo at random. She had 'voted'. Such were the Baruya's first lessons in parliamentary government. Since then the Baruya have come to be perfectly aware of the importance of having their own representative in the National Assembly. But they have encountered two problems, which they have not yet solved. It is essential to win a seat for lineages to agree on a single candidate and that other tribes be prepared to back that candidate. But each tribe wants to be represented by one of its own members, and each lineage would prefer to choose the representative from within its own ranks.

In 1975, without asking, the Baruya became citizens of an independent nation that immediately became a member of the United Nations. This was the end of the of decolonisation period, and independence was granted to them by Australia, then governed by the Labor Party. The colonial period had been extremely short, just fifteen years. A further twenty-five have now passed since independence. Where do the Baruya now stand?

Since independence (1975–1995)

Several months before the proclamation of independence, Dick Lloyd, a missionary from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who, from late 1951, had been the first European to live continuously among the Baruya and learn their language, returned with the first book printed in that language, a remarkable translation of the Book of Genesis. At the time only two of the small number of Baruya who knew how to read and write had become Christian, since in order to be baptised it was necessary for polygamous men to repudiate all but one wife. But repudiating a woman meant breaking an alliance with people to whom a man had given his own sister; it also changed drastically the status of the children of the woman concerned. The Baruya found this too difficult; they also did not really understand why the white missionaries from the various Protestant denominations — the Seventh Day Adventists, the Lutherans and the New Tribes Mission — fought among themselves to recruit them.

At that time the Lutheran mission, run by a German who had escaped from the German Democratic Republic, opened a trading post beside the mission. A sum of two hundred dollars was invested to purchase the usual range of goods: knives, rice, umbrellas, etc. When this first batch was sold, the money was reinvested to buy a second batch, and so on. At the end of the year, the missionary had \$14,000 worth of cash and stock. He was criticised for running this flourishing business by the American missionary from the New Tribes Mission, who prided himself on living in poverty. True, the rate of profit was appreciable, but it was nothing compared with that of the large Australian commercial companies in the towns, Burns Philips and Steamships.

Fresh elections were held to elect the first parliament of the independent New Guinea. The Baruya voted successfully for a brilliant young man, Peter, a medical assistant who was a member of a traditionally hostile tribe, the Andje. They also provided him with a wife. Unfortunately Peter was killed three years later in an air crash, and his successor came from a tribe with which the Baruya traditionally had little contact.

After independence, increasing numbers of children were sent to the school, including girls, who, for the first time in the history of the Baruya, competed directly with the boys in learning to read, write, count and even run. Many young men went off to work on the plantations or sought employment in the towns. The older men remained in the village and continued to plant coffee. But much was now changing in the country. Many of the coastal plantations had been sold by their European owners, who were wary of the consequences of independence and left the country *en masse*. The plantations were bought up by the Big Men of the local tribes. The number of Europeans actually living in the country was dwindling. In the towns, insecurity and delinquency increased. Alcohol, which had formerly been reserved for the consumption of Whites or for the few natives allowed to enter their pubs, was now freely on sale.

The initiation ceremonies — which had never been discontinued among the Baruya during the colonial period, but had merely been held far from the eyes of the missionaries and the soldiers — increased in scale, albeit still without the rituals associated with war, which was now forbidden; and the practice of ritual homosexual relations began to decline. At the same time, the few Baruya who had studied and become policemen, nurses and teachers returned to take part in the initiation ceremonies. These were the very people who, twenty years earlier, had poured scorn on the customs of their ancestors. And it was one of them who in 1979 publicly explained to all the men of the tribe and the young initiates that the initiations had to be continued because strength was needed to resist the life of the towns and the lack of work or money; people had to depend on themselves. In my presence he shouted, ‘We must find strength in our customs; we must base ourselves on what the Whites call culture [the word was spoken in English].’

Things continued to develop in this contradictory fashion, with the Baruya drawing on certain elements of their culture and abandoning others. They began to combine what they retained with ideas and practices from the West. Thus, in 1980, the Baruya decided to initiate new shamans and organise large-scale ceremonies, which are usually held every eight or ten years. There were few volunteers, since a person who becomes a shaman among the Baruya must remain in the tribe to protect it from attacks by evil spirits and to conduct the nightly struggle against the sorcerers of neighbouring tribes, who seek to lead the spirits of the Baruya astray or to devour their livers. The young men preferred to travel and they had less confidence than their elders in the powers of their shamans. Even the shamans themselves admitted that their powers had not been the same since the Whites had come. And yet a compromise was reached with European medicine. People attended the small medical post for the treatment of broken bones, wounds and infections. The shaman was consulted for internal ailments, which were signs of poisoning by means of sorcery.

That was the situation in 1986, when a problem unresolved during the colonial period suddenly resurfaced, a problem concerning some good coffee-growing land lying along a river. The Yuwarrunatche, neighbours and enemies of the Baruya, who had just lost a war and the land in question at the time Jim Sinclair arrived, decided to recover it by force of arms once they realised that the new State lacked the strength of the colonial administration. War broke out once more. The enemy tribe burned the Baruya village nearest to their border and fatally wounded a Baruya warrior with arrows; they shouted insults at the corpse, telling him to return to the land of his ancestors who had taken this land away from them. School closed down, and the villages were moved back to the mountain tops and surrounded by impenetrable stockades. The hospital and the airstrip could no longer be reached by the Baruya because of the proximity of their enemies, who maintained a permanent presence in the area. No aircraft would agree to land to load the Baruya’s coffee. The road built by the colonial administration with the labour of the Baruya and their neighbors was cut by the latter and the bridges destroyed; the road became unusable after the first rainy season. A kind of involution then set in and continued until 1988.

Six or seven Baruya were killed in various battles, and four of their enemies, including their great fight-leader. But it was not the same kind of war as in the old days. Women and children were no longer killed, because that usually led to police intervention. Indeed the

police came on two occasions by helicopter to arrest the ‘ringleaders’, but each time the villages were found empty, and the police merely burned down a few houses.

Finally, in 1988, although a genuine peace had not been established, a long truce set in. The airstrip became accessible once more, but the Baruya had drawn a lesson from the war and had started to build their own landing strip in 1987, in the vicinity of the village furthest away from their enemies, on a high mountain terrace. This strip became operational in 1990. In short, life began again, and the changes briefly interrupted by the war resumed with a new momentum. I shall now review some of these changes.

The latest changes

The Baruya planted more and more coffee, which is men’s work. But the bulk of the subsequent work — harvesting, drying and hulling the coffee berries — is done by the women and young girls. Some men also perform this work though, those for whom coffee production and moneymaking have become a sort of passion. Several of them have already managed to save the equivalent of 500 to 1000 dollars. They have learned to sell at the right time and they use transistor radios to keep in touch with the coffee prices in Goroka, a town half an hour away by air. Until now they have done practically nothing with their money. In order to prevent it being stolen, the administration has advised them to place it in savings books, which it supplies. The money is then taken into town by the pilot of the administration plane.

After their experience with the cooperative, the Baruya have once again begun to band together and open small shops in which they resell at extremely high prices the usual range of goods — rice, soap, kerosene and matches — which they have flown in on the mission aircraft. But these businesses often go bankrupt, as the people working in the shops help themselves or give presents for which they do not pay. Increasingly the Baruya kill pigs in order to sell the meat, this at extremely high prices as well. The rule is to make as much money as possible, *makim bisnis*. The women too have entered the market economy. Almost every day a hundred or so of them come to sit near the medical centre, laying out in front of them several kilos of sweet potatoes and bananas and exchanging recent gossip while waiting for customers. Towards midday they return to their villages, most having sold nothing. They then eat what they had come to sell — which had not, in any case, been produced for sale. Economically these exchanges are marginal, but at the social and psychological levels they demonstrate a desire to imitate the Western world and even to become a part of it, if more in symbolic than in real terms.

It is this same desire to integrate that, I believe, explains a new phenomenon of major importance. In 1975 no more than two Baruya had been baptised. Since 1988, however, although there are no longer European missionaries in the region, *Haus Lotu*, churches made of wood and thatch, have been built in nearly all the villages. Many young people and a number of old women gather in these churches on Sundays. Someone who can read Pidgin English ‘recites’ the Bible and people sing in Pidgin or in Baruya, thanking God for having brought ‘light and life’ and asking him to ‘forgive the sins of his creatures’. In 1988 I was shown long lists of the names of Baruya who were preparing to be baptised.³ Among these

recruits were many polygamous men. When I expressed astonishment, I was told that polygamists could now be baptised. I do not believe this is true, but the Baruya themselves think it is, and it seems to make their conversion to Christianity somewhat easier.

What is the explanation of this increasing desire for baptism? The Baruya do not seem really to understand the concept of sin, and their new Christian feelings do not prevent them from applauding when their enemies are killed, their villages burned or their pigs stolen. I see in this another aspect of their wish to become a part of the Western world, the world of their time. It is perhaps significant that the Baruya put on European dress when they go to pray, and that the women hide their breasts under a blouse bought in one of the local shops. Those preparing for baptism give much thought to the Christian name they are to receive: John, Samuel, Mary, and so on.

What has certainly changed most among the Baruya are the relations between men and women and between generations. Although the boys who remain in the villages are still initiated and live in the men's house, which they are supposed to leave only to go into the forest, avoiding all contact with women, they can now be seen walking around the village and talking to girls. Remarkably, the girls in one village have even put together a basketball team like the boys and practise on the same playing ground on the edge of the village. Jokes and glances are freely exchanged, something that would have been impossible five years ago.

That is where the Baruya stand forty years after that day when a white man leading a column of soldiers and bearers appeared on one of their mountain tops and planted his flag in the middle of their valley. Their society has not collapsed: it is still there, and the Baruya have even increased in number. But their life-style and ways of thinking have been transformed, turned upside down, and the process is irreversible. The Baruya have not submitted meekly to these changes. They have 'acted' and have been partly responsible for them, both the great shaman who sent his son to school and the orphan who became a mathematics teacher at the University of Port Moresby after having studied in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland. But although they know how to adapt and thus to 'produce society', the Baruya no longer control the development of their own society. It is subject to enormous external forces that have penetrated and now direct it, forces that have come from the West and have already drawn the small society into the logic of the West's relentless expansion. But in the Pacific, 'the West' is no longer synonymous with Europe or the United States, for half the goods sold in New Guinea now come from Japan.

Conclusion

Let us briefly recapitulate the various aspects of these now irreversible processes of submission to the West and integration with it. The Baruya no longer produce their own tools and would no longer be able to make or use the old stone tools. They utilise a currency that is not their own and, in order to earn money, they must become either unskilled and poorly paid wage-labourers or small producers of coffee, which they do not consume and which others export to the world market.

The Baruya have become citizens of a State whose principles and models are of Western origin. Indeed it was the West that introduced them before granting independence to this

artificially produced nation. Since independence, Australia has continued to provide a third of the budget of the new State, however this does not mean that the latter simply takes orders from its former colonial master.

But all this still sails way over the heads of the Baruya. We should note in passing that it is probably the existence of over 750 tribes of different sizes and speaking different languages — in a country of mountains and jungles where travel has always been extremely difficult — none of which had ever been able to establish its hegemony, that has made it possible to establish and maintain a parliamentary democracy. Elsewhere, in Africa and Asia, in places where one ethnic group wielded power over others before or after the period of European colonisation, many one-party states and puppet parliaments have grown up after independence.

But the very factors that facilitated the introduction of parliamentary democracy in New Guinea curb its effectiveness. The post-colonial State does not have the material and human resources necessary to maintain a universal presence and to enforce its laws. The tribes quickly realised this and have returned to the use of warfare to settle their problems with their neighbours, as in the good old days. The war between the Baruya and the Yuwarrunatche is an example of this general trend. The State is seen both as an abstract and remote power that is best avoided and as a mysterious near-inexhaustible source of money and various forms of assistance to be exploited as much as possible. Each tribe invokes its right to obtain as much as the others, and each attempts to obtain more than the others. The Baruya too have learned the rules of this game.

They are culturally subject to the West as well as being subordinate to it in economic and political terms. They learn to read and write in Pidgin, a colonial language composed of broken English and Malay, similar to the French and English Creoles spoken today by the black populations of the West Indies. Those who receive secondary or higher education must learn English, the only language that enables them — as it does us in France — to communicate with the rest of the world.

But the most important change is the general erosion and dismantling of the Baruya's innermost culture and the irremediable destruction of some of its components. This has happened in spite of the fact that many Baruya are proud of their customs and have not stood by passively or indifferently as they disappeared. Of all the forces acting on their society, two make *direct* attacks on their culture: the State, which prohibits war and assumes the right to dispense justice; and Christianity, which asserts that the sun and the moon are false gods, that all people are sinners, that the true religion is the religion of Christ, who died on the Cross to redeem the sins of people of all races and all colours. Like Islam and Buddhism, Christianity is a proselytising religion, and the Baruya will probably all be Christian in a few generations, espousing a form of third-world Christianity that may differ considerably from Western Christianity, but which still draws its inspiration from the latter's great eschatological visions and its symbols.

Some of these changes are welcomed by the Baruya themselves. They do not wish to see a renewal of constant, endemic warfare between themselves and their neighbours. But if war is no longer seen as a normal activity for men, for which they must be prepared from the time they are very young, and as an opportunity to become a 'Big Man', this means the collapse of some traditional values and of the traditional social hierarchy.

Furthermore, Baruya men no longer want to spend their entire lives in the two valleys where their ancestors lived and in the four or five others they used to visit at the risk of their lives. They like to travel by air, to stay away for several years, to play cards, to drive trucks. One of them even joined a Japanese factory ship. Two or three have married women from the coast, announcing that they would not be returning to the village and that the women who had been promised to them could be married off to other men.

But most importantly, there has been a major change in the deepest structure of Baruya society, the relations between men and women, a movement away from the traditional denial of women and the affirmation of male dominance. Not that these changes have been accepted without violence. Seven or eight women have been beaten to death or executed by husbands who could not tolerate the fact that they were no longer shown the respect and submission to which tradition entitled them. But the men today are less afraid of female pollution, and the women less afraid of the symbols of male superiority. A few young fathers can now be seen playing with their babies, even when those babies are girls. Previously the very idea would have made them spit in disgust and shame. One thing has not changed, however: marriage, which is still based on the direct exchange of two sisters between two men and two lineages. But the girls have an increasing say and are not forced to marry against their will.

That is my view of the forms and mechanisms involved in the Westernisation of a tribal society. For the Baruya, a white person is no longer a supernatural being but does remain a superior being, albeit one by whom, since decolonisation, they will no longer accept to be ordered around or whipped. But is it not, in one sense, the Whites themselves who, by granting independence, have denied themselves such liberties? And, on a more abstract level, is it not white religion that preaches that all men are equal before God?

Will these processes continue? Yes. Are they irreversible? Yes. Will they spread throughout the entire world? Probably, but here we must return to the idea that, although Westernisation will spread, its present three components will not spread with the same degree of success. Japan is today the most dynamic capitalist country, but it has achieved this without sacrificing either its political independence or the basis of its cultural identity. Indeed Japan was never a colony, and Christianity has not long been allowed to vie with Buddhism there. But the tiny Baruya society is as nothing alongside Japan, and there are hundreds of such societies.

I will make a prediction: The West's first triumph will be in Europe, where it will finally conquer Eastern Europe, a task begun in the sixteen the century, well before the advent of the communist regimes. It will also spread in the Orient and in Africa, in connection in this case with Japan and other Eastern countries. Must we join in the applause or tiptoe silently off stage? Why should silence be demanded of those in the West — not to mention the people of the Third world — who continue to believe that Christianity is not the only 'true' religion and that there is indeed no true religion; of those who see that political democracy does exist and welcome it, but know too that there is much to be done to extend social democracy and that nearly everything remains to be done to ensure that the economy and the wealth produced by capitalism, or appropriated by it, are shared out more fairly in the West itself and elsewhere? Why should we refuse to see these negative aspects?

They exist and they affect our lives. Why should we be resigned? Might it be because the end of history has arrived and we are at last living in the best of all possible worlds?

* This text is an expanded version of a lecture given in Vienna on 13 June 1990, as part of the Wiener Vorlesung im Rathaus, under the title 'Wird der Westen das universelle Modell der Menschheit? Die vorindustriellen Gesellschaften zwischen Veränderung und Auflösung'. An English translation of the lecture appeared in *The Age of Democracy. Democratic transition in the East and the South*, Basil Blackwell/Unesco, May 1991.

1 See Godelier (1982).

2 For the Baruya, the cassowary is not simply a game bird, it is a wild woman who wanders the forests of New Guinea. Women are strictly forbidden to eat its meat, which is reserved for young initiates and married men.

3 Most want to join the Lutheran church, but some prefer a recently arrived American denomination, The Church of Christ.