
ABSTRACTS

Millenarianism, Religion and Society in Early India

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MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS ARE THE OUTCOME of a dissatisfaction with the present expressed in a religious idiom. They focus on a belief that a perfect society will be established through divine intervention. If the perspective is widened from just the religious idiom to include the problems which give rise to such movements, then millenarianism can be seen as part of a much larger concern with the expression of dissent.

Although the millennial idea developed in a Judeo-Christian context, the concept of the millenium was not entirely absent from other religious traditions. In Buddhism the Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha yet to come, was mentioned in early Pali texts, but the idea was developed more fully in later Buddhism. Among Hindu sects, the Vaishnava carries an element of millennial ideas in the theory of the various incarnations of Vishnu, especially in the coming of Kalki, the final incarnation.

In most cases religious movements expressing a millenarian eschatology expect "imminent, total, this worldly, collective salvation." Some of these features present problems to the non-Semitic Asian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. For example, the nature of salvation differs, for salvation lies in freedom from rebirth. Even more important, salvation can only be achieved by the individual, not a collectivity. Another difference is that the concept of time is essentially cyclical in Buddhism and Hinduism, as opposed to lineal in Judeo-Christian tradition.

Nonetheless millennial ideas, however modified, are present in Buddhism and Hinduism. Their character and function should be analyzed not just from the point of view of the history of intellectual traditions but also from that of the particular kinds of social organization in which the ideas were inserted. In the case of India, the presence of the caste system is of crucial importance. This system fostered the appearance of the ascetic or renouncer as a channel of dissent, where as in other traditions the prophet has had an analogous function. Since the prophet is a central figure in millenarian movements, his absence in India has further modified the structure of millenarian movements there.

The association of millenarian movements in India with groups which feel that they are deprived has a complex history. The Kalki cult seems to have arisen in the context of a relative deprivation suffered by those Brahmans who earned their living through the performance of sacrificial rituals. The popularity of the cult of the Buddha Maitreya seems to have derived from a more complex situation in which competition from other religions

outside of India and the decline of Buddhism within India played important roles. In more modern times millenarian movements have been associated with peasant discontent and with various expressions of antipathy to colonial rule.

SWAPO in Namibia

JUAN GABRIEL TOKATLIAN

THIS PAPER DESCRIBES IN BRIEF the historical origins of the relations between Namibia and South Africa. Namibia, a former German colony, became a League of Nations mandated territory after the First World War, and its administration was entrusted upon the neighbouring state of South Africa. In subsequent years South Africa imposed its own apartheid laws in Namibia, and opened the territory for exploitation by its mining and other industrial interests.

In 1966, a United Nations resolution terminated the South African mandate in Namibia. However, South Africa refusing to abide by United Nations resolutions continued to occupy Namibia, forcefully implementing its apartheid laws in the territory and aggressively exploiting Namibian resources in collaboration with West European and American corporations.

The author also recreates the history of the origins of the Namibian opposition to South Africa's illegal occupation of the country; particularly the historical origins of the SWAPO, the territory's national liberation front. Finally, an analysis of SWAPO's program of action and its objectives for the formation of an independent, non-racial and democratic society is provided.

The Empress Lü of the Han Dynasty in China a Reassessment

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IN CHINESE HISTORY THE EMPRESS Lü of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 25) has been treated as a malevolent and ambitious woman whose de facto rule after the emperor Gaozu's death nearly destroyed the empire. Her private life is examined by later historians with a view to consolidate this opinion about her.

However, Empress Lü's sensational private life has overshadowed the important public role she played in her own time. Recently the political role

of the Empress Lü has been recognized but a didactic overlay continues to obscure assessments of the power structure at the early court. A comparison with Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's wife has tarnished again with suspicion the image of the Empress.

The author re-examines the sources of the history of the Han dynasty and makes a new evaluation of the Empress. She gives evidence that Empress Lü was an able and effective ruler who never had total power in her hands. Her authority was only exercised through the influence she had on her husband while he was still alive —and many times he was not responsive. It was not as an Empress but rather as a Dowager that she had the authority to make full use of her skills but her position depended upon her son. Most of the intrigues she was involved in were the means she used to consolidate this position. She did not usurp authority and there is little evidence that her rule was perceived as illegitimate in her own time or that her influence exercised behind the scenes was deplored as harmful to the peace and prosperity of the Empire.