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Cover Page Footnote

Article by the late Dr. Matthew Melko edited by Dr. Joseph Drew.

Quigley's Model as a Model Model

Matthew Melko (1972)
(Ed. from the original by Joseph Drew)

This brief reflective paper, resting quietly in obscurity for over four decades now in the archives of our society housed at Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, was prepared originally to be presented as part of a 1972 panel discussion entitled "Civilizations as Systems." However, in the notes it is indicated that the results of that conference in part informed the writing of the paper. Further, the author noted that he had not given the paper "because of a shortage of time."

It was written by the late Dr. Matthew Melko. Dr. Melko went on to become one of America's most distinguished students of the comparative study of civilizations, a well-respected author and professor, and, ultimately, a much-beloved President of the ISCSC. At the time of the paper's writing he was a young faculty member at State University College, Geneseo, New York (now, the State University of New York at Geneseo).

The paper addresses a model of looking at the history of civilization developed by another legendary scholar and professor, Carroll Quigley of Georgetown University. It also alludes to what was then an emerging intellectual division amongst those scholars interested in understanding, analyzing and explaining the broad trends and meaning of civilizations in history. Some, in America and abroad, now saw themselves as comparative civilizationalists, while others viewed themselves as scholars of "general systems."

As a result, the seventies saw the beginning of a rise to importance of "world systems" theorists. These scholars have included such distinguished figures as Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank, Christopher Chase-Dunn, and Thomas D. Hall. They are not far away in intellectual orientation from comparative civilizationalists, that is, from those theorists who are inspired principally by the points of view or methods of Ibn Khaldun, Toynbee, Sorokin, Spengler and others, who were organized as the result of a meeting sponsored by UNESCO and held in Salzburg, Austria, in 1961, and who were brought together as a permanent entity following the 1961 conference. Indeed, many of the "world system" thinkers have attended, and spoken at, meetings of the ISCSC.

Yet, as with all disciplines, although both groups are interested in much the same material, there remains a difference, however small, between their perspectives. Here, an attempt was made by Dr. Melko to see the two schools of thought as two boats – not racing but sailing together – in the same waters, heading in the same direction, with the difference being that perhaps one, the comparative study of civilizations, had been there a bit longer.

The panel for which Dr. Melko wrote this essay was to be a centerpiece of the Annual Conference of what was by then known as the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (United States), in 1972. The Annual Conference was planned to be conducted as a part of the mammoth American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Washington, which, history records, ran from December 26 to December 31, 1972. Whether the panel actually was ever held is not known to this editor.

The original idea of this paper was to analyze the civilization as a system. In what ways is it a typical general system, in what ways a typical social system, and in what ways is it anomalous? In order to attempt this (project), it was necessary to take a model of civilizations that is presented crisply and clearly, and that deals with civilizations as recurring phenomena in the tradition of Spengler and Toynbee.

One such model is that presented by Carroll Quigley in the fifth chapter of *The Evolution of Civilizations*. Then, on short notice, the problem came to me, I had to modify it. I am not qualified to evaluate a social model from a general systems perspective, although superficially Quigley's model does not appear to describe a very effective system: lines of authority are nebulous, communications erratic, functions poorly defined -- all in all an overgrown, inefficient sort of specimen.

But looking from a social systems perspective, the original question loses much of its meaning. It is almost impossible to discuss anomalies because Quigley's civilizations model is a social systems model. There is nothing in general systems to compare it to, and no amalgam of Buckley, Berrian, Monane, Deutsch or Theodore Mills can produce anything so useful to the study of social systems. With some slight modification of terminology, Quigley's civilization model can be applied to social systems almost as it is. Consider it as if it were a systems model: the system forms around an unexplained secret ingredient called "culture." It is this ingredient that gives each system its unique characteristics.

The new system emerges in an area in which there is a mixture of other cultures, often in an area in which two or more interact, but where no one culture is dominant. Usually the new system emerges in a different territory from its predecessors, because the ways of old societies are too strongly established. Whatever happens in them must happen in ways that do not violate established customs and mores.

If the new system is to grow, it must have an instrument of expansion. This instrument may take several forms, but it must encourage and permit the utilization of invention. If this happens, expansion follows, characterized by more stuff, more people, more territory, more knowledge, and more invention.

Ultimately the instrument of expansion becomes an institution, more concerned with its own perpetuation than the further development of the system. When that happens there follows a period of conflict, characterized by decreasing expansion and increasing tension, violence, irrationality and other-worldliness.

The period of conflict may be resolved either by reforming the institution so that it will work as an instrument again or by circumventing it and creating a new instrument. If neither of these resolutions takes place, the system enters a golden age for those who control it, for they have won out and can live off their past successes.

But there is no more vitality in such a system, and eventually it decays, despite all kinds of efforts by members to hold it together by changing the rules, altering procedures, or replacing leadership.

This situation is finally resolved, not from the inside, but from the outside; a new mixture takes place, and out of this mixture perhaps a new system with a new culture will be born. This sequence of mysterious origin, development, conflict, reform or dominance of vested interests, decay and external intervention is the basic model for the study of social systems. It is not one of several competing models, it is already the accepted model in social science. All sorts of social systems, including those primarily expressed in aesthetic patterns, share concerns, have "mysterious periods of origin, rapidly increasing and then decelerating development" crisis periods that are resolved by reform, circumvention, or triumph of the establishment, eventual decay, and replacement by external patterns.

The success of this pattern-phase approach has opened up so many promising areas of research that we are devoting ourselves less to debating its validity and more to its modification and applications. In the study of civilizations, the forties and fifties were characterized by repeated and seemingly divisive attacks on Spengler, Toynbee and Sorokin, but by the end of the 1960's Rushton Coulborn, in one of his last published articles, pointed out that the study of comparative civilizations appears to have entered a normal phase of its paradigm. He was applying, as so many others have this past decade, Thomas Kuhn's approach to scientific paradigms. For Kuhn's work, as C. P. Wolf has observed at a recent general systems conference, has become the "paradigm paradigm."

Now it is interesting that Quigley published in 1961 and Kuhn in 1962, for it is probable that neither had read nor heard of the other, a common experience in history when a new pattern is emerging. For Quigley's model and Kuhn's correspond closely, even though they are writing about totally different subjects. Kuhn could easily be interpreted in terms of mixture, development, conflict, decay and re-mixture. Kuhn's work has received greater attention, possibly, because it may be more readily applied to specific social movements, as Coulborn has applied it to the study of civilizations.

But Quigley's approach seems to be right at the heart of the study of holistic systems, which is why it provides a better model for the study of social systems at all levels than either Kuhn or various studies of social systems that have attempted to apply general systems theory. It is easy to place the main development of the phase-pattern approach in the study of civilizations. Spengler provided the first widely read model, although he too had his predecessors. Sorokin, I think, gave impetus and respectability to the idea of alternating normal and crisis periods. But A.L. Kroeber made the most significant contribution in pointing out how social development was limited by style-patterns. What Quigley has done is to show us how these patterns apply to total systems. (Kuhn, by contrast, has given us an appealing special case that we are now wildly applying in all directions, which demonstrates, as Kroeber suggested, that style-patterns have ubiquitous applicability.)

While this theory has been developed over a period of time, and modified by spirited opposition, civilizations theory has been blessed by a series of writers who could communicate powerfully across disciplines. General systems theorists, by contrast, have had to work from natural systems theory compounded by the developing of cybernetics. They have had to apply natural science theories and terminology to social systems, and they have had to express themselves through a system of notational expression that is highly efficient if you can understand it, but which does not communicate so effectively to a general audience.

When, under the stress of this situation, they have had to fall back on the English language, they seem to be a bit out of practice. What they do communicate often constitutes the elements for a system without the connecting, testable element of a theory.

And, coming out of natural science, the secret ingredient, culture, is still missing. Small wonder, then, that the most recent meeting of the Northeastern Division of the Society for General Systems Research (Geneseo, September 1972) was largely devoted to discussion of methodological approaches that might be taken when someone wants to approach something and the means of communication to be employed when there is something to communicate (Ed.: language missing here) rather than to the presentation and modification of working models.

It would be ungracious, certainly, to appear to be initiating a conflict between students of general systems and students of civilizations, especially since many, including Quigley, are involved in both areas. I think of sailboats coming around a buoy, not in a race, but sailing together in a fleet. With *The Evolution of Civilizations*, the civilizations boat came about and is sailing a fair wind on the next leg. The newer general systems boat is among those just reaching the buoy, feeling the crisis of the cross wind, and preparing to come about and follow the others into another phase of clear sailing. Both are good boats manned by capable, earnest, hard-working crews.

But since the civilizations boat has come about, it provides a model that would be useful to the crew of the general systems boat. And while the crew of the civilizations boat may watch with interest and empathy the struggles of the general systems boat, it may be that there is not much they can learn that will be useful to them in solving the problems of normal sailing they are now encountering.

Notes

The Idea of a General Systems Analysis of a Civilizations Model

Despite the argument of this paper, which of course many will not accept, this still should be done. T. Downing Bowler of Bradford College was to have attempted the analysis, but he was unable to attend the AAAS conference in Washington.

Quigley's Model

See the section of the model described that appears on Pages 78-93 of *The Evolution of Civilizations* (Macmillan, 1961). The papers Quigley presented at the 1972 AAAS conference were all modifications and developments of the 1961 model. He is practicing normal science himself. (Ed.: Note that, apparently, Dr. Melko was commenting here in hindsight.)

The Nature of Culture

If we could discover why a particular pattern takes the form it does, we would have the key to the nature of culture. The question of why patterns form this way rather than that way remains unanswered. "For one reason or another," Kroeber said somewhere.

The Replacement of Leadership During Decay

A minister was pressed to submit his resignation recently by trustees who recognized that general declining church attendance was a phenomenon for which he was not responsible. But, as one of them explained, "if your team isn't winning, you fire the manager."

Rushton Coulborn on the Civilizations Paradigm

"A Paradigm for Comparative History?" *Current Anthropology*, (X: 2-3) 175·178.

Thomas Kuhn

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, University of Chicago Press, 1962. The title refers to the period of decay and origin, but actually Kuhn, like Quigley, concentrates primarily on the "normal" period of expansion and conflict.

Kroeber's Conception of Style-Patterns

Developed in *Anthropology*, Harcourt, Brace, 1923, 1948 and (in) *Configurations of Culture Growth*, University of California Press, 1944.

The Style of Kroeber and Kuhn

Anthony Wallace has noticed the resemblance between the approach of Kroeber and Kuhn in the second edition of his *Culture and Personality*, 2nd ed., (Random House, 1970) 138, and he develops the relationship more fully in an article on "Paradigmatic Processes in Culture Change, *American Anthropologist* (June, 1972) 467-478.

Has the Model Been Tested?

This paper was not actually presented at the AAAS session because of a shortage of time. The title was challenged however, on the ground that Quigley's theory had not been tested sufficiently to be called a model, but the point here is that the theory in its present form contains the main elements of a set of theories that we are currently testing in many ways. This is why it can be perceived as the model model.