**Emperor Kennedy Legend: A New Anthropological Debate**

**By Leszek Kolakowski**

This 6684th annual meeting of the Academy of Science provoked a heated controversy. The main paper presented at the meeting dealt with a little known legend of an Emperor called Kennedy who is said to have ruled two large countries in the remote past BGC (Before the Great Calamity). Dr. Rama, the author of the paper, confronted and scrupulously analyzed all the sources available. This is not, to be sure, a large collection by comparison with , say, the amount of material we have on another ruler, Alphonse XIII, who is said to have governed another country , called Espagna, sometime earlier or later, yet Dr. Rama proved that more can be extracted from the existing sources than the scholars previously believed.

As is known, after the Great Calamity,(which occurred in the years 0-72 approximately )when about two thirds of the inhabitable land were engulfed by waters and the remaining parts almost destroyed by huge explosions of unknown origin, only eight books from the preceding period were preserved in full. They are:

John Williams, *Creative Gardening*, Omaha, Nebraska (whether Omaha, Nebraska is one or two

persons is still a matter of dispute);

Alice Besson, *La vie d’une idiote racontee par elle-meme,* Roman (the book seems to have been

Produced in a country or locality called Gallimard);

Laszlo Varga, *Bridge for Beginners*, translated from Hungarian by Peter Harsch, Llandudno

1996;

Dirk Hoegeveldt, *De arte divinatoria Romanorum,* Lugduni Bat. 1657;

Arno Miller, *Neue Tendenzen in amerikanischen Sozlawisenchaften,* Hoser Verlag Erlangen,

1979;

Dinah Ellberg, *All my Lovers.*

The eighth book is omitted, as it was written in an entirely unknown script apart from one mysterious word ‘Nagoya’ printed on the second to last page; according to the best authorities it was possibly a magic incantation designed to frighten off the evil spirits coming from a foreign land. None of the books, for that matter, has been deciphered fully, but some fragments, smaller or larger, do exist now in satisfying translations. It needs mentioning that the numbers in books probably refer to years; since nothing is known, however, about the method according to which time was calculated in the BGC era or when their years began, it is impossible to properly date the events. Moreover, it is not known whether people used to calculate time forward or backwards, it is quite possible, many scholars argue, that they marked years by a number corresponding to the lapse of time still remaining to the Great Calamity, so that, e.g., the year 1657 was actually three hundred years later, and not earlier, than the year 1957.

The Emperor Kennedy Legend is mentioned only in one of the books just listed, which suggested to some scholars that it had not been widely spread or considered important among the savages. However, in almost two dozen books preserved in fragments, as well as in over a hundred and twenty journals that have been recovered so far, thirteen of them almost intact (among them *Chemical Engineering, Trybuna Ludu, Crosswords for Children* – the latter practically unintelligible *– Il Mesaggero* and *Vuelta*) the legend appears several times and Dr. Rama, after having thoroughly examined the entire material, provided for the first time a coherent interpretation. The main components of the myth, according to his study, are as follows:

1. President (a title of obscure origin, obviously equivalent to “Emperor”) Kennedy ruled simultaneously two big countries called respectively America and USA.
2. He came from a legendary island called Ireland, located in the North; whether this island was identical with another one called Iceland and mentioned in another source, has not yet been definitively established; perhaps just a typographical error made two countries of one.
3. He was rich.
4. He fought the rulers of three other kingdoms called Russia, Soviet Union, and Cuba. He, so it seems, defeated them, but then was himself defeated in a battle which took place in the Bay of Pigs. Yet he remained the emperor of both his countries.
5. One of the hostile countries called Berlin (almost certainly another name for Russia) built a huge wall to prevent the Emperor’s army from invading it, but the Emperor boldly insulted the enemies from this very wall.
6. He has two brothers; the older was killed before, and the younger after the Emperor’s death.
7. The Emperor himself was struck by his enemies and died.
8. His widow Jacqueline subsequently married a “millionaire”.

Dr. Rama discovered one more, previously unknown item of information of great importance. In half a page preserved from the journal *Ici Paris* the Emperor is called “un grand coureur des jupes”. The only plausible translation of this expression is that the often used “to run in skirts”. Since it is documented that skirts were exclusively female garments, it appears clear that the Emperor was an androgynous figure, embodying both male and female characteristics. Dr. Rama corrected as well the mistaken interpretation of the word “millionaire” which until recently was uncritically translated as a “rich man.” He found a previously neglected comment in a preserved fragment of the “Miami Star” which says: “What is a millionaire nowadays? Peanuts.” As the peanut was a very small kind of nut, a “millionaire”, far from being a rich man, is a “poor man,” a man who owns very little, just a few peanuts. This fits well in Dr. Rama’s interpretation.

Dr. Rama happens to be a disciple of the famous scholar Mr. Levi-Strauss who produces a special kind of pants used both by male and female humans and who therefore argues that everything can be seen as a structure made of a pair of opposites, so that each term of the pair is meaningless without the other; indeed, if you cut off one leg of pants the remaining leg is meaningless. Dr. Rama, employing this device, offered the following interpretation of the legend:

Emperor Kennedy’s myth was an attempt to reconcile, in mythological imagination, basic irreconcilable contradictions of human life. First, there is the opposition of dreams and reality. In one source America – one of the two countries he ruled – is called “the dream of mankind”, whereas another source speaks of the “harsh reality of USA” which clearly suggests that the “USA” was considered real. Dream and reality were thus combined in his figure. Secondly, we have the opposition North-South: he came from the North but her ruled the South, as it appears from a remark found in a preserved fragment of paper which state unambiguously that the “South is in the grip of Kennedy’s magic”. Since in this period South was hot and North was cold, both conditions being unpleasant, albeit for different reasons, the emperor’s figure, it appears, was expected to abolish, by magical means, the bad sides of both North and South.

Scholars have worried a lot about how to explain the mythological sense of wars which the Emperor had fought, but here, too, Dr. Rama came up with an ingenious interpretation. We remember that the Emperor embodied both male and female characteristics. It seems that he encouraged his subjects to become males (according to the just quoted “Ici Paris” he made many people “cocus”, which means “coq”, that is roosters. In most mythologies the rooster is a phallic symbol, but the defeat, as mentioned, was inflicted on him by pigs, and pigs, too, were a symbol of masculinity (“those male chauvinist pigs” – we read in a fragment preserved from a brochure entitled “The Unspeakable Martyrdom of American Women”). Thus, a complicated male-female dialectics emerges from the legend: the male-female figure produces males, is defeated by males, and eventually killed, presumably by a woman or on women’s order; this last fact has been established by the confrontation of two sources: in one of the few pages preserved from a booklet “True facts about the Soviet Union” we read that the “happiness of Soviet women is beyond description,” whereas in another source – a page from a journal mysteriously called “The Times” – speaks of the “utmost mystery of Soviet men;” and so, we see that at least in one of the main hostile countries women were happy and men unhappy, which suggests that this country was a king of female-centered dictatorship.

We conclude therefore that the emperor’s attempt to overcome the male-female opposition was attacked from both sides – male and female – and ended with the ultimate catastrophe. The legend is to prove that the male – female synthesis is impossible.

The last pair of opposites on which the legend has been built is rich-poor. The emperor was rich but, a source says, he was “a champion of the poor.” Clearly, he symbolized an attempt to abrogate the linguistic contrast between wealth and poverty. The fact that he was defeated and that his wife became poor (a wife of a “millionaire”) proves that his effort to bring into harmony those two terms of opposition ended in failure.

The deep, pessimistic meaning of the myth is: the basic contradictions of human life cannot be abolished; any attempt to make them consistent is futile.

Dr. Rama’s interpretation, though applauded by many scholars, was by no means universally accepted. The strongest attack was launched by Dr. Gama, a follower of the famous Dr. Sigmund Fraud who was the found of another (so called analo-psychic) school. Dr. Gama questioned virtually all the points in Dr. Rama’s interpretation and the entire framework of Mr. Levi-Strauss’s pants-doctrine. Dr. Fraud’s theory says that the only thing people want to do all the time is to copulate but, in order to survive, they compel each other to do other things as well, which makes them unhappy; as a result of this unhappiness some write poems; others commit suicide, still others become political leaders, etc. “I admit,” Dr. Gama said, “that Dr. Rama found some interesting facts which throw new light on the legend; his fantastic interpretation, however, is utterly untenable; new facts confirm clearly, once again, that only the Fraudian theory is capable of explaining the story. The true meaning is indeed transparent to any unprejudiced mind. The pig, far from being a symbol of masculinity, symbolized a castrated male; it is known that people in those time castrated male pigs which they used subsequently as food. The expression ‘those male chauvinist pigs,’ far from bearing out Mr. Rama’s speculation, fit perfectly in the fraudian doctrine; the expression is an insult, to be sure, but it means castrated males, males unable to produce offspring. The word chauvinist is not yet properly explained but most likely it is to cognate to ‘chauve’, mean bald, hairless, and baldness was another sign of emasculation, whereas hairs stood for male prowess (this can be seen from a sentence in one of the books preserved intact: this hairy beast tried to rape me). The interpretation is thus clear: the emperor was defeated in the land of castrated (pigs) and then he had to run in skirts not because he was an androgynous figure, as Dr. Rama would have it, but because he was clearly half-male; in other words he was almost certainly castrated. He tried indeed to restore masculinity to other males – presumably castrated as well – but he failed. If in one of the hostile countries women were in fact happy and men unhappy, this was probably because in they mythological land men were castrated. Having gotten rid of the source of their penis envy, the women were happy. What other explanation is more plausible? Consequently, the legend is an expression of the universal human fear of castration and the failure of the emperor symbolizes the fact that castration is irreversible. Once again the theory of Dr. Fraud was confirmed.”

This was not the end of the meeting though. Another scholar, Dr. Ngama, attacked both pervious interpretations. Professor Ngama is a disciple of the great Dr. Calamarx; the latter’s theory states that there are poor people and rich people and they fight against each other, and in the course of their struggle they invent various mythologies; the mythologies of the rich were to convince everybody that rich should remain rich and the poor must stay poor, whereas the mythologies of the poor stood for the opposite. In the future- Dr. Calamarx proved- the poor would slaughter all the rich and everybody would be very, very happy ever after. “I should be obvious to anybody in his sane mind,” Professor Ngama argued, “that, scientifically speaking, both ‘theories’ produced in this meeting are not only false but reactionary as well. Mr. Rama’s pseudo-theory, it amounts to stating that the alleged ‘structures’ he concocted are perennial, in other words that wealthy people will always be wealthy and paupers must remain paupers. As to Mr. Gama’s pseudo-theory, it states that, instead of fighting against injustice, poor people should only worry about the possible loss of their sexual prowess. Meanwhile, the real meaning of the legend is quite clear. That the emperor himself was rich is irrelevant to the story; as all the emperors in the past have been rich – only in the universal happiness of the future the emperors will be poor. What is relevant is that the emperor was ‘a champion of the poor’, as even my adversaries had to admit. One must therefore conclude that these enemies were champions of the rich, because all the struggles are ultimately reduced to the conflict between rich and poor. All known elements of the myth clearly confirm this interpretation. The emperor was defeated by pigs but pigs, far from being this or that sexual symbol, as the theories of my adversaries purport to ‘show’, were symbolic representations of wealth. Indeed, both speakers preferred to overlook a leaflet signed by the “Absolutely Revolutionary Invincible World Liberation Movement of Toiling masses’ which clearly says: ‘kill those wealthy pigs!” This noble emperor, champion of the poor, was treacherously murdered by his foes but Mr. Rama himself proved that his widow subsequently married a poor man. The message of the legend is: one great warrior for the cause of the poor has been killed but the struggle still goes on. The legend obviously belongs to the folklore of poor people and the truth of Dr. Calamarx’s invincible theory has been once again vindicated.”

Faced with three conflicting theories, the Academy had to find the truth, as usual, by voting. After four ballots which yielded no clear majority, most fellows in the fifth voting finally opted for Dr. Gama’s explanation and so, the truth of Dr. Sigmund Fraud’s theory was definitively and scientifically established. Dr. Gama was delighted while the two defeated scholars, whose errors had thus been exposed, wept bitterly. To defend a wrong anthropological theory might be punishable by death.