

David Wilkinson
Department of Political Science
University of California, Los Angeles

Studying the History of Intercivilizational Dialogues

Presented to the
United Nations University
International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilizations
Tokyo and Kyoto, 31 July--3 August 2001

ABSTRACT

Actual "intercivilizational" dialogues, like contemporary intracivilizational dialogues, comprise conversations between persons, not cultures. Actual intercivilizational dialogues only rarely seem to have conformed to such "dialogic" ideals as equality of status, mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual and equal benefit, or shared advancement of learning. The examples they offer to contemporary intracivilizational dialogues seem mostly to be worth avoiding rather than following. Still, such examples are useful in their way, and there are exceptions. Both for their failings, and for their (fewer) exemplary qualities, there is much to learn from historic dialogues, and much to learn about them.

Studying the History of Intercivilizational Dialogues

Dialogues in general are between persons, not "civilizations" or "cultures." By "intercivilizational dialogues" we must simply mean conversations between persons from different civilizations. Since today there exists only a single, solitary, multicultural global civilization, the study of intercivilizational dialogues is necessarily historical rather than contemporary. However, such study can be of contemporary interest even so, through shedding light on the character of conversations between persons from different cultures.

Records of historic intercivilizational dialogues are erratic. What survives is often cursory, bewildering, cryptic, indistinct, muddled, even invented. Much judgement is required in their analysis. No doubt the same is true of contemporary dialogues; all the more reason to emphasize the role of interpretive and translational art in past, present and future conversations.

The record of past dialogues is also biased: persons whose words were transcribed and conserved tended to be highly select, of unusual status or with elite or idiosyncratic viewpoints; the occasions of such transcription, and the topics whose discussion was retained, were also selective. Conversations between intercivilizational traders, lovers, and casual acquaintances, far more numerous and in some ways more significant than the exchanges of the powerful and prestigious, are also far less recoverable.

Within these limits, it remains possible to characterize the accounts of dialogues past, particularly in their relation to ideal visions of intercivilizational--we would say intercultural--dialogues to come. Actual intercivilizational dialogues often conformed to the dialogic ideal of gravitas, of consequentiality; far less often do they seem to have conformed to such ideals as equality of status, mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual and equal benefit, or shared advancement of learning.

As suitable introductions to dialogic study, I have selected for this paper six intercivilizational dialogues of the more or less remote past which share, as I believe, the following two features: first, they are significant, even momentous for they bear upon such fundamental issues as domination, riches, learning, and ultimate truth; second, they are accessible, in that the records of these dialogues have already been collected by past generations of humanistic scholarship and published in forms and places which make the materials of the dialogues available to present-day students of the subject without requiring those students to have learned more than one or at most two languages foreign to them as vehicles of their study.

The six historic dialogues which I have in mind are as follows: first, the dialogue between Mongol Emperors on the one hand and Western leaders--Popes and French Kings, among others--especially in the thirteenth century, from the time of Güyük Khan to that of Kublai Khan. I list this first, though it is not the first in time, because of the abundance of material on the subject made available to us by the scholarship of Sir Henry Yule, Henri Cordier, Christopher Dawson and many others.

Second, the dialogue between Egyptian Pharaohs and the kings of Babylon and other Southwest Asian states, conducted in the 15th century BC around the time of Akhenaten, to mention the best-known name among the correspondents, and accidentally preserved for us in what are called the Amarna letters.

Third, the dialogue between an Empress of Japan and an Emperor of the Sui Dynasty in China, a brief exchange in the early 7th century AD preserved for us in the contradictory annals of the Sui dynastic history on the one hand and the Japanese chronicle, the Nihongi, on the other.

Fourth, the dialogue of the early 16th century between a Spanish conqueror, Hernándo Cortés, on the one hand, and an Aztec emperor of Mexico, Moctezuma or Montezuma, on the other, preserved for us especially in the annals of one of Cortés' companions, Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

Fifth, the dialogue in the early 16th century between another Spanish conqueror, Francisco Pizarro, on the one hand, and an Inca emperor of Peru, Atahualpa, on the other, reconstructed for us by the work of a Spanish-Inca historian of the next generation, Garcilaso de la Vega.

Sixth, the long dialogues deliberately created in the late 16th century by the Moghul Emperor of India Akbar among Muslims (Sunni, Shia, Mahdist and Sufic), Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians and Jesuits, among others, on all the great theological and metaphysical issues which united or divided them, and preserved for us in the differing contemporary accounts of the Sufi court historian Abu-l-Fazl, the Jesuit missionaries Aquaviva and Monserrate, and the Sunni ulama Abd-al-Qadir Bada'uni.

The six dialogues I have in mind range in age from about 3500 years old to less than 500 years old. In form, some are archived letters, others memoirs by participants and auditors, yet others reconstructions by later historians. Some are known verbatim, others only in summary reports.

Eight civilizations were linked by, and are represented in, these six dialogues. Seven of these civilizations are standard entities from Toynbee's or other familiar enumerations: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Mesoamerican, Andean, Indic, Far Eastern, Japanese. The eighth is what I have elsewhere labeled Central Civilization.

This label, Central Civilization, may be unfamiliar to persons outside the intellectual organizations which study civilization and world systems, and accordingly warrants a few words of explanation. "Central Civilization" is the polycultural entity produced when Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations expanded, collided, fused, and formed a structure, system, and process which included both of them. This world system or civilization has persevered from about 1500 BC to the present despite an essentially total turnover of its cultural contents (e.g. languages, religions, ideologies, laws). The entities variously labeled Classical civilization, Byzantine civilization, Islamic civilization, Russian civilization, and Western civilization, were and are in fact the local or regional fields of relative coherence within this single, durable civilization. Central Civilization, having engulfed all the others, now exists as our solitary,

global, polycultural civilization, within which all dialogues are, of necessity, evidently intracivilizational. This internalization of the dialogue process of course has profoundly altered the contemporary significance of the historic intercivilizational dialogues, in ways which we shall have eventually to ponder.

The dialogues I have in mind to recommend for general study include one linking Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations (the Amarna letters), one linking Far Eastern and Japanese civilizations (the Japanese embassies to and from Sui), one linking Central and Mesoamerican civilizations (the exchanges of Cortés and Moctezuma), one linking Central and Andean civilizations (the exchanges between Pizarro and Atahualpa), and one linking Central and Indic civilizations (the religious debates sponsored by the Mughal emperor Akbar).

THE MONGOLS AND THE WEST

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD there occurred a protracted exchange between Central Civilization and Far Eastern Civilization. Prompted by the news of the Mongol invasions of Persia and Russia, and by its actual and possible consequences of a military, political, economic and religious-ideological character, there arose a flow of letters, ambassadors, traders and missionaries, hence an intense and extensive exchange of views, ideas and information.

This East-West dialogue, basically contemporaneous with the Mongol intercivilizational superpower of that time, has been well documented, and in this paper I shall indicate the most available sources for its retrieval and compilation, which any international dialogic institution that might emerge would do very well to adopt as its first scholarly project! Letters from Pope Innocent IV to the Mongol Emperor Güyük, and from Güyük back; accounts of envoys of the pope, and of King Louis IX of France, concerning their conversations with Mongol Khans on matters religious and political, religious controversies at the Mongol courts, and in the Mongol realms; ultimatums to popes and kings by Mongol rulers; discussions of military alliances between Mongol khans and Western kings: all these elemental dialogues on power, truth and force are reasonably available for dialogical study, having already been well scrutinized by researchers with different concerns.

The bulls of Innocent IV to the "Emperor of the Tartars" (1245), calling on him to become a Christian and cease invading the countries of others, are translated in Christopher Dawson, ed., The Mongol Mission (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), pp. 73-76, and summarized in I. de Rachewiltz, Papal Envoys to the Great Khans (London: Faber and faber, 1971), p. 87. They were carried by the Franciscan John of Plano Carpini (or Pian di Carpine), whose mission is recounted briefly by Dawson (xv-xvii) and more extensively by Rachewiltz (84-105).

Güyük Khan's reply to the Pope (1246), demanding that he come and submit or be treated as an enemy, brought back by the Plano Carpini embassy, is translated (differently) in Dawson, pp. 85-86 and in Rachewiltz, pp. 213-214; cf. Benedict the Pole's version, Dawson pp. 83-84.

Plano Carpini prepared a report for the Pope, proposing preparedness to resist a Mongol invasion: this is discussed in Rachewiltz (105-111) and Dawson (2), translated as "History of the Mongols" in Dawson (3-72). His interviews with Güyük Khan are related in Dawson, pp. 66-69.

Plano Carpini's companion on the mission, Benedict the Pole, produced a briefer narrative of the journey, translated in Dawson pp. 79-84.

In 1245 Innocent had sent another mission, that of the Dominican Ascelin, with the same letters; traveling a different route, and delayed, this met the Mongol envoy Eljigidei near the Caspian Sea in 1247. Eljigidei returned a reply based on Güyük's, sending envoys of his own along with it. Reaching Innocent in 1248, they were given his final communication, an appeal to the Mongols to end their slaughters, especially of Christians (Rachewiltz, 87, 115-118). The Latin account of Ascelin's mission by Simon of Saint-Quentin (Histoire des Tartares, ed. Jean Richard, Paris: Librairie Orientale Paul Geuthner, 1965) recounts material dialogues on: whether the envoys should prostrate to the local Mongol lord; whether the Mongols should convert to Christianity; whether the envoys should be executed for impudence; and which, the Pope or the Khan, outranked the other. Letters from the Khan claiming obedience from all peoples, and from his local lord demanding the Pope's submission, are included.

Aware that Louis IX (St. Louis), King of France, was planning a crusade against Ayyubid Egypt, Eljigidei sent a letter (1248) offering protection for all Christians; also envoys who proposed that the Franks' attack on the Sultan of Egypt be synchronized with a Mongol attack on the Caliph of Baghdad, adding that Güyük had been converted to Christianity. (Jean Richard, Saint Louis, Paris: Fayard, 1983, pp. 493-495; Rachewiltz, 119-121; Dawson, xix.)

The King of France responded by sending his own mission (1249), under the Dominican Andrew of Longjumeau. The Longjumeau mission reached the Mongol court in 1250 to find Güyük Khan dead, and his widow Ogul Gaimish acting as regent. She returned a reply (received 1251) demanding annual tribute of gold and silver, else "we shall destroy you and your people." (Account and message in the Memoirs of Jean, Sire de Joinville, e.g. the edition of Ethel Wedgwood, London, John Murray, 1906, 249-259; also Rachewiltz, 121-123, and Dawson, xx.)

Dismayed by this message, the King of France yet sanctioned, solely as a missionary and reporter, the initiative of the Franciscan William of Rubruck, who reached the court of the new Khan, Mongku. Mongku enjoyed religious disputation, and organized a debate among Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. He sent Louis a letter repudiating the mission from Eljigidei and the letter of Ogul Gaimish, mentioning neither submission nor tribute, and proposing peace and the dispatch of French envoys (Rachewiltz, 125-143; Dawson, xxi-xxii, 88). William's Itinerary, his report to Louis is translated in Dawson (89-220): it includes narratives of his audiences with Mongku (153-155, 194-197), the attempts of Mongku's secretaries to extract intelligence data from William (155-156), and the religious disputations (188-194); also Mongku's letter to Louis (202-204).

The Mongols destroyed the Caliphate of Baghdad without French help in 1258, but were in turn disastrously defeated by the new Mameluke Sultanate of Egypt at Ain Jalut in 1260, and thereafter tried to deal with Western rulers on equal terms. For some years the Mongol "subject

khans" or Il-Khans of Persia remained interested in the project of a joint Mongol and Western campaign against Egypt, as did Edward I of England. Missions or letters went one way or the other without result in 1263-1264, 1265, 1271, 1273-1274, 1276, 1277, 1287-1288, and 1291. (Rachewiltz, 151-154, Dawson, xxvii-xxxi)

The mission of 1287-1288, despatched by Arghun, Il-Khan of Persia, to Byzantium, Naples, Rome, Paris and Gascony (to Edward I), gave rise to the narrative of the envoy, Rabban Sauma, a Uighur Turkish Nestorian Christian monk of Khanbalik, who discussed his beliefs with the Catholic cardinals-regent at Rome (Rachewiltz, 157-159; E.A. Wallis Budge, trans., The Monks of Kûblâi Khân, Emperor of China, London: The Religious Tract Society, 1928, pp. 175-177).

In 1266, Monkgu's great successor Kublai Khan had requested, via Niccolo and Maffeo Polo (uncles of the more famous Marco) that the pope send him a hundred Christian religious polemicists. Two Dominicans were sent by Gregory X, but lost heart and turned back. (Rachewiltz, 156; Dawson, xxxii)

In 1289, Pope Nicholas IV sent letters to Mongku's successor, Kublai Khan, via the Franciscan John of Monte Corvino. Detoured through India by war in Central Asia, John reached the Mongol capital Khanbalik only after Kublai's death. Well received by the next Khan, Timur Oljaitu, John established a successful mission, becoming Archbishop of Khanbalik in 1307. (Rachewiltz 160-178; Dawson, xxxi-xxxiii) Two letters from John, and one each from successive Bishops of Zayton, Friar Peregrine of Castello and Friar Andrew of Perugia, recounted their interactions with the local elites and people (translations in Dawson, 224-237).

The Franciscan mission in China was visited by Odoric of Pordenone in a journey from about 1321-1330. (Rachewiltz, 171-186; Dawson, xxxiii; Yule, vol. 2, 3-13) His narrative, The Eastern Parts of the World Described, is translated in Yule, vol. 2, 97-276.

After the death of John of Monte Corvino, some of his Alan converts in the Mongol army sent to the Pope for a bishop, in a letter brought by an embassy (1336-1338) sent by the Great Khan Toghon Temur to request gifts and blessings. (Rachewiltz, 187-191; Yule, vol. 3, 177-187, translating the letters.) John of Marignolli was sent by Benedict XII in 1338 with benediction and a war-horse, reached Peking in 1342, left in 1347 bearing a request for a Cardinal, and reached Avignon in 1353. His account of the mission emphasizes the humility of the Khan at receiving the papal blessing; the Chinese account emphasizes the submission of the West, reflected in its gift (Rachewiltz, 191-201; Dawson, xxxiii-xxxiv; Yule vol. 3, 210-216, translates the relevant portions of John's Recollections of Travel in the East, extracted from his Chronicle of Bohemia).

East-West communications were then cut off, first by the Black Death, then by the fall of the Mongol dynasty in China and the rise of the Ming in a war c. 1356-1388, then by the extremely destructive warfare waged in Central Asia, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and northern India by Timur/Tamerlane 1380-1405.

So broad and deep was this lengthy intercivilizational dialogue that it had what we might call "globalization potential"--for had its consequences been fully realized, the fusion of the several extant civilizations into a single global civilization--which ultimately did occur, from say AD 1500 to the First World War--might conceivably have been accomplished hundreds of years earlier. In the event, both the dialogue between civilizations and the fusion of civilizations were deferred, and ultimately renewed only on very different terms.

THE AMARNA LETTERS

There was an exchange of letters between the Egyptian New Kingdom Pharaohs Amenhotep III (Amenophis III) and Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) on the one hand, and several Southwest Asian rulers (Kassite Babylon, Assyria, Mitanni, Arzawa) on the other in the early 14th century BC; these were preserved as "the Amarna letters," and are translated and published in a book duly titled The Amarna Letters (ed. and trans. William L. Moran; Johns Hopkins, 1992). See for instance, EA 1 (1-5): the Pharaoh rejects a litany of complaints by the Babylonian King, asserting that all these misunderstandings have been caused by the Babylonian ambassadors, that pack of shameless liars. EA 19 (43-46): the king of Mitanni recalls that his father received gifts of gold from the Pharaoh, and requests ten times that amount. EA 20 (47-50): the king of Mitanni expresses disappointment in the inadequacy of the Pharaoh's gifts of gold. EA 31 (101-103): the Pharaoh negotiates for an inspection of, and bride-price for, a daughter of the king of Arzawa, a potential ally against the Hittites.

Technically speaking, the Amarna letters are really early intracivilizational exchanges, Egypt and Southwest Asia having by about 1500 BC collided and joined, but there is always an element of chance and contingency in such collisions, which frequently do not produce adhesion. The Amarna letters in fact document the regularization and internalization of relations between recent strangers, and as such might be said to be of interest as representing Dialogues of Civilizational Fusion. In them we find arrangements for alliances against the interests of a third party; complaints about ambassadorial misrepresentation; even requests for an enormous increase in foreign aid! Perhaps this dialogue points us to the famous dictum of Alphonse Karr, "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

JAPAN AND SUI SEVER RELATIONS

There was an exchange of embassies between the Japanese Empress Suiko, or her Prince-regent Shôtoku, and the Sui Emperor Yang Ti, AD 607-608, which produced what might be labeled a Dialogue of Civilizational Divorce. Its records may be found in L. Carrington Goodrich, Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories, South Pasadena: P.D. and Ione Perkins, 1951; W.G. Aston, trans., Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the earliest times to A.D. 697, 2 vols. in 1, Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1972; see also Masaharu Anesaki, Prince Shôtoku, the Sage-Statesman of Japan, Shitennoji Temple, 1959. Goodrich gives the account from the Sui dynastic history (32-33); that of the Japanese chronicle is in Nihongi vol. 2, pp. 136-139.

The relevant passages in the two sources are only partly in concurrence. According to the Nihongi for 607: "The Dairai, Imoko Wono no Omi, was sent to the land of the Great Thang." (Nihongi, 2: 137) Aston tells us that Dairai was a Japanese official of the 5th rank, and that

"China is here called Thang [T'ang] retrospectively, as that dynasty did not come into power until 618." The Japanese history thereby effectively erases the Sui dynasty from the annals of Japan.

The Sui history records that in 607, the king of the "Eastern Barbarian" state of "Wa" sent an envoy "with tribute." (Goodrich, 32) No tribute is mentioned in the Nihongi. Aston notes that "Wa" was the Chinese and Korean label for Japan, one which the Japanese did not themselves use, and disliked enough that Wono no Imoko (per the Shaku-nihongi) requested, in vain, that the Sui Emperor replace it with Nippon. (Nihongi 2:137)

The Sui history quotes the Japanese envoy thus: "Having learned that the Bodhisattva Ruler of the West of the Sea is promoting anew the Buddhist cause, this envoy has been sent to pay respect." (Cf. Goodrich, 32, Anesaki, 41) No response by the Sui monarch is recorded, on account perhaps of indecision as to whether the message was conspicuous flattery (a Bodhisattva being one of very superior power and virtue) or blatant insolence (was his sway of the world to be contained by the sea? and was the sender claiming equal status?)

The ambiguity was resolved by the letter of the Empress. "The Son of Heaven in the land where the sun rises addresses a letter to the Son of Heaven in the land where the sun sets. We hope you are in good health." (Goodrich, 32) Not only were the same characters used for the title of Suiko and Yang Ti--implying equality--but the contrast between sunrise and sunset might even imply supersession.

"When the Emperor saw this letter, he was displeased and told the chief official of foreign affairs that this letter from the barbarians was discourteous, and that such a letter should not again be brought to his attention." (Goodrich, 32)

Anesaki (41) makes the delicate point that the Emperor was merely "displeased" but not "enraged" by the Japanese letter. Indeed, the Sui history goes on to record that, the year following (608), the Emperor "sent Secretary P'ei Ch'ing as envoy to Wa-kuo." (Goodrich, 32)

The Nihongi notes for 608: "Imoko, Wono no Omi, came back from the land of the Great Thang," in company with an envoy from "Great Thang" named P'ei Shih-ch'ing. Imoko declared that he had been given a letter from the "Thang" Emperor, but that it was taken from him in Paekche (Korea). (Nihongi 2:136-137.)

The "Thang" guests were summoned to Court and introduced. "Now the presents from the Land of Great Thang were placed in the courtyard." (Nihongi 2:137)

The Sui history, but not the Nihongi, records the following greeting from the Japanese ruler: "We have heard that to the west of the sea there is the great civilized country of Sui. Therefore I have sent tribute to the court. We are an uncivilized people, living as we do at the far end of the waters, with no knowledge of civilization. We have remained shut up within our borders, without appearing at the Court. Now we have made ready the way and adorned the guest-house to welcome your ambassador here. We beg that you will inform us regarding the new order of things in your great country." (Goodrich, 33)

The Nihongi says: "Then the Chief Envoy, P'ei-Shih-ch'ing, bearing in his own hands the letter (of credence), made obeisance twice, and declared the purport of his mission. He then stood up." (Nihongi 2:137)

The Sui history records no obeisance, but gives Ch'ing's words: "Our Sovereign combines the virtue of the two poles and his beneficence overflows the four seas. It was because of Your Highness' appreciation of our government that an embassy has been sent here." (Goodrich, 33)

The Nihongi, but not the Sui history, gives the text of Yang Ti's letter. "The Emperor greets the Sovereign of Wa. Your Envoy, the provincial governor, the Dairai, So In-ko and his suite have arrived, and have given us full information.

"We having reverently received the precious command (of Heaven), rule over the universe. It is Our desire to diffuse abroad Our civilizing influences, so as to cover all living things, and Our sentiment of loving nurture knows no distinction of distance.

"Now We learn that Your Majesty, dwelling separately beyond the sea, bestows the blessings of peace on your subjects, that there is tranquillity within your borders, and that the manners and customs are mild.

"With the most profound loyalty, you have sent Us tribute from afar, and We are delighted at this admirable token of your sincerity.

"Our health is as usual, notwithstanding the increasing warmth of the weather.

"Therefore We have sent P'ei-Shih-ch'ing, Official Entertainer of the Department charged with the Ceremonial for the reception of Foreign Ambassadors, and his suite, to notify you the preceding. We also transmit to you the products of which a list is given separately." (Nihongi 2:137-138)

Aston notes that this letter addresses the Japanese Empress merely as Kô, while calling the Sui Emperor Kô-tei. (Nihongi 2: 137)

After being entertained, the "Thang" guests departed, accompanied by a second Japanese mission under Wono no Imoko no Omi. They took this letter:

"The Emperor of the East respectfully addresses the Emperor of the West. Your envoy, P'ei Chih-ch'ing, Official Entertainer of the Department of foreign receptions, and his suite, having arrived here, my long-harbored cares were dissolved. This last month of autumn is somewhat chilly. How is Your Majesty? We trust well. We are in our usual health. We now send the Dairai, So-In-ko, the Dairai, Wonari, and others to you. This is respectfully presented, but informal." (Nihongi 2: 139)

Aston notes that the two titles both translated as "Emperor" were, in Japanese, in the first case Tennô, in the second Kô-tei. (Nihongi 2:139. Aston also identifies this letter with the one

rejected as rude by the Sui Emperor, implying that the first mission carried no letter, and that the Sui history mistakenly placed the Japanese reply before the Yang Ti's letter; it seems more likely, however, that each Japanese mission carried a separate letter.) Anesaki (42) proposes to translate the salutation thus: "The Tennô (Heavenly Ruler) of the East sends words to the Huanti (Great Emperor) of the West."

No Japanese letter is acknowledged in the Sui history, which says instead that "a delegation was ordered to accompany Ch'ing and visit the Court with tribute. After that, intercourse came to an end." (Goodrich, 33) Indeed, no return embassy from Sui is recorded in the Nihongi. A final embassy was sent by Japan in 614 (Nihongi vol. 2, p.145), but the Sui history indicates none was received after 608 (Goodrich, 33).

The Japan-Sui exchange well illustrates the difficulties facing the student of historical dialogues. Although recorded from both sides, the records differ substantially. Nevertheless it seems likely that what we have here is a dialogue of divorce: Japan claims equality; Sui partly rejects and partly ignores the claim, and offers an opportunity for its retraction; Japan rejects the offer and restates its claim; Sui, unable to enforce its own claim of superiority, cuts off communication and ignores further messages.

It is however an exchange of some subtlety and indirectness, with a positive aspect too. The message from Japan to China, completely unstated yet fully implicit and comprehended, was "We claim equality and independence in the political sphere, but not in the intellectual realm"; the return message from Sui, again entirely implicit, was "We are ignoring your political claims, but you may send students to learn from us." Not every sensitive discussion ends so accommodatingly; but here is proof that tragic finales can be averted, even when ultimate disagreements remain unresolved.

CONQUEST AND DIALOGUE IN MEXICO AND PERU

In AD 1519-1520, a dialogue of invasion, hegemony and conquest was conducted between Central Civilization (or rather the Spanish conquistador Hernándo Cortés) and Mesoamerican Civilization (or rather the Aztec emperor Moctezuma or Montezuma). One contemporary record is The True History of the Conquest of New Spain, by Bernal Díaz de Castillo (ed. Genaro García, trans. Alfred Percival Maudslay; London: Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, Second Series nos. 23-24, 1908-10). His accounts of the diplomatic and personal interchanges between Spaniards and Mexicans, and especially between Cortés and Montezuma, are both particular, extensive, and poignant, especially chs. 72-127 (vol.1: 264-vol. 2:241), from the first Aztec embassy to the death of Montezuma. The work as a whole also abounds in conversations between Spaniards and Tlaxcalans and other Mesoamerican groups.

In this case what I view as most significant is the individuality of the views and character of the dialogists, which militates against the idea that intercivilizational dialogues represent exchanges between coherent collectivities. On the contrary, they are here seen to be exchanges between unique individuals, not collectivities, and individuals whose positions are often internally inconsistent or changeable.

In AD 1531-1533, a dialogue, similar in being ultimately one of invasion and conquest, was conducted between Central Civilization (or rather Francisco Pizarro, leader of a Spanish private syndicate for discovery and conquest) and Andean Civilization (or rather the Inca Atahualpa, usurping emperor of Tahuantinsuyu). Some seventy years after the event, the son of a conquistador and a high-ranking Inca, Garcilaso Inca de la Vega, composed what became the Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru (trans. and intro. by Harold L. Livermore, University of Texas Press, 1966).

Part Two, Book One, Chaps. 17-40 (pp. 665-726), gives an account of the chief events and conversations of the period: an embassy from Atahualpa to Pizarro, and one in return; crucial mistranslations; a discourse to the Inca by a Dominican religious, ordering him to surrender and believe, its misunderstanding and his response; the slaughter of the Indians by the Spaniards, and the seizure of Atahualpa; Atahualpa's imprisonment and offer of ransom; his destruction even while imprisoned of his overthrown half-brother Huáscar; Atahualpa's trial on many charges; the dispute among the Spaniards over his death sentence; his execution, and the discussion of it afterwards; and the Indians' changing opinions of the Spaniards.

Different versions of some of the conversations within this dialogue were given by different historians, and Garcilaso takes issue with them on several points. Perhaps even more interesting than the conversations is the attempt to reconstruct their history by Garcilaso, which seems to me itself an exemplary product of an intercivilizational dialogue, constructed from his inquiry into Spanish and Inca written and oral sources. Indeed he himself, son of a Spanish father and Inca mother, must both have presupposed and embodied such a dialogue.

Garcilaso's most poignant insight into these catastrophic discussions is his finding (ch. 23, 681-684) that the translator who intermediated between the principals was incompetent in both the languages he tried to interpret, and that the messages mutually misunderstood contributed to the massacre which destroyed the discussions. Potential translators of intercultural dialogues might want to take notice.

THE DEBATES BEFORE AKBAR

From 1575 onward, the Mughal Emperor of India Akbar organized an inquiry, first among Muslims, then expanded to include other sects, among them Jains, Zoroastrians and Jesuits, in which religious issues were candidly and vigorously debated.

There were many participants in Akbar's discussions, and they have left records, in the form of a court history, a dissident memoir, and letters of report. The court history is by a partisan of Akbar and of the discussions, Abu-l-Fazl (The Akbar Nâma, trans. H. Beveridge, 3v., Delhi, Ess Ess, 1977). The dissident memoir is that of the Sunni ulama Abd al-Qadir ibn Muhuk Shah Bada'uni (Muntakhab al tawarikh, 3v., Karachi: Karimsons, 1976-1978, vol. 2, ed. and trans. W.H. Lowe). The letters of report are from Jesuit debaters, e.g. Antony Monserrate (The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J., on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, trans. J.S. Hoyland, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992); see also John Correia-Afonso, ed., Letters from the Mughal Court, Bombay: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1980; and Pierre du Jarric, Akbar and the Jesuits, trans. C.H. Payne, New York: Harper, 1926.

Because Akbar is a towering figure in the history of India, and because of his ties with many sects, much has been written on his enterprise: e.g. Makhan Lal Roy Choudhury, The Din-i-Ilahi, or the Religion of Akbar, 2nd. ed., Calcutta: das Gupta, 1952; Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, Akbar the Great, vol. 1, Political History, 1542-1605 A.D., Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala, 1962; R.P. Karkaria, "Akbar and the Parsees," in B.P. Ambashthya, ed., Contributions on Akbar and the Parsees, Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1976; Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, Akbar: The Architect of the Mughul Empire, Karachi: Ma'aref, 1978; S.M. Burke, Akbar, The Greatest Mogul, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989; Pushpa Prasad, "Akbar and the Jains," pp. 97-108 in Irfan Habib, ed., Akbar and his India, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; K.S. Mathew, "Akbar and the Europeans," pp. 114-131, and Surendra Gopal, "The Jain Community and Akbar," pp. 160-167 in Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., Akbar and His Age, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1999.

In 1575 Akbar constructed a house of religious discussion, the Ibâdatkhâna, inviting first only Sunnis of the various schools for weekly theological discussions. Displeased by the character of their dialogues, he next invited the more diverse orders and sects of Muslims (Shias, Sufis, Mahdists) to argue before him, on such pressing issues as whether his myriad marriages were legal under Muslim law (Abu-l-Fazl, v. 3, 157-160; Bada'uni, 2:203-207, 262-263; Choudhury, 43-50; , Srivastava, 171-175; Burke, 93-106).

Still finding the contentions of the selected disputants (e.g. Choudhury 129-137) unpersuasive, in 1578 Akbar opened the dialogue to Brahmans, Jains, unbelievers, Christians, Jews, Sabaeans, and Zoroastrians (Burke, 106; Abu-l-Fazl, vol. 3, 364-372; Bada'uni, 2:264-268; Choudhury, 50, 58, 73-128; Srivastava, 235-236, 252). Issues such as "the authenticity of the Quran, the finality of Quranic revelation, prophethood of Muhammad, the concept of God in Islamic thought, resurrection," forcible conversion, outward vs. inward religiosity, the effects of various creeds on the behavior of their adherents, were now freely discussed. (Srivastava, 236-238)

One issue is mentioned as raised but not debated. Akbar seems to have been much taken with the Hindu practice of suttee, referring to its practitioners as "flaming torches of love and fellowship," to the astonished silence of the discussants then present (Abu-l-Fazl, vol. 3, 372-373).

In 1579 Akbar was proclaimed spiritual as well as temporal lord of the world for the age by an assembly of the enlightened, in order that he might resolve the confusion of religions and creeds by selecting therefrom (Burke, 107-108; Abu-l-Fazl, vol. 3, 390-400); alternatively, he declared himself chief interpreter of Muslim law, so as circumvent the checks and restraints of the ulema on his arbitrary power (Qureshi, 152-162; Srivastava, 241)

Desiring more learned Christian participation in his discussions, Akbar solicited Jesuit missions, and received three, in 1580, 1590, and 1595 (Burke, 112-121). The Jesuits at once entered into the ongoing religious dialogue.

The first Jesuit mission (1580-1583: Rudolf Aquaviva, Antony Monserrate, Francis Henriquez) discussed Akbar's doubts concerning such articles of faith as the Trinity, how God could have a son, the Paraclete, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the divine and human natures

of Christ, the passion and death of Christ on the Cross, monogamy, celibacy, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, apostles, images and miracles, and Christian objections to harems, and suttee (Correia-Afonso, 34, 59, 64, 68-69; Monserrate 38, 118-120, 126-134, 136-138, 157-158, 172; du Jarric, 20, 27, 29-30, 37, 40; Burke, 114-117, 129-130; Srivastava, 255, 257-258). At Akbar's instance, the Jesuits disputed with the Muslim ulema over some of these points; also their respective scriptures' authenticity and quality, their doctrines of paradise, the virtues of their prophets, the consistency of their laws, the conduct of their followers, their registers of miracles, the necessity of circumcision, etc. No one was persuaded. (Correia-Afonso 42-44, 57-58, 61, 67-68, 73-76, 82; du Jarric, 20-22, 27, 34, 41; Monserrate, 37-38, 39, 50-51, 56-60, 176-182; Mathew; Burke, 115-116.)

An interesting episode involved a challenge for the Jesuits to take the Gospels in their hands, the Muslim Ulama the Koran, and both to climb onto a pyre, the survivor to be accounted truthful. Either the challenge was issued by a Jesuit, and refused by the ulema (Abu-l-Fazl, vol. 3, 369), or issued by the Muslims and refused by the Jesuits (Monserrate, 39-43, 50; Correia-Afonso, 44): in any case, the "test" was never taken.

In 1582 Akbar called a General Council to resolve all religious differences; it did not do so. Instead, having pointed out the defects of the rival creeds to their satisfaction, the scholars of the various faiths dropped out. (Monserrate, 182-184; Burke, 110-112; Srivastava, 304-305)

Akbar had already commenced that task of rectifying religious differences on his own. Step by step he constructed, out of existing materials, a new syncretic and pluralistic cult, or perhaps religion, the Din-i-Ilahi "Divine Religion," with a fairly generic creed of abstinence, meditation, beneficence, politeness, and mystical monotheism. He prostrated to the sun, kept a perpetual flame, and rose when lamps were lit, in accordance with Zoroastrian sun and fire worship; he kept Christian, Hindu and Muslim holy days; he prostrated to pictures of Jesus and Mary; he restricted animal slaughter on Jain holy days, accepted prostration before himself, and sought to perform miracles of healing. (Monserrate, 184; du Jarric, 68, 72-73, 84; Correia-Afonso, 58, 114-115; Bada'uni, 268-272; Choudhury, 177-197; Burke, 121-125; Prasad; Gopal; Qureshi, 165, 267, 275-276; Srivastava, 249-250, 255, 264-267, 303-311, 398-400, 504-511, 520-525, 528; Karkaria.) Akbar however did not enforce his positive innovations on others, but tolerated all creeds while repressing violent intolerance (Srivastava 311-315; Burke 127-128).

Unfortunately there was apparently no routine verbatim transcription of the debates before Akbar. Most of the dialogues are merely summarized, or inferential; one, between a Sunni and a Shia, is quoted extensively in Choudhury, 129-137.

The matter and gravity of these deliberations might seem, to commend them to us as exemplary historical dialogues. On the other hand, we may note that no one but Akbar himself seems to have been converted (and Akbar was converted by nobody but himself); that the Emperor felt it necessary to deplore the intrusion of death threats into the discourses; that both the chief secretary of the dialogues and one of their most exuberant participants were later assassinated; and that the chief substantive achievement of the colloquies was the creation of a cult of personality centering on the person of none other than Akbar, the master of the debates. While there are various lessons which might be derived from this dialogue, a minimalist

principle for future dialogic ethics might be "He who strikes the first blow has lost the argument."

CONCLUSIONS

The records of these dialogic exchanges, and others, display the conversational topics of power, wealth, truth and knowledge. Power: demands for submission, claims to legitimate rule, proposals for war alliance. Wealth: demands for, and presentation of gifts or "tribute"; inquiries about, and proposals for, exchanges of goods. Truth: claims to possess the true faith; requests to receive instruction in it; denunciations of such claims by others. Knowledge: inquiries about the basis for such ultimate truth-claims; attempts to determine and compare the beliefs of others; questions designed to collect military, political, or economic information. Probably the most successful dialogic efforts (barring those backed up by force) have been the attempts to collect information; probably the least successful (again, barring those backed up by force) the attempts to procure political submission.

Even though we are currently restricted to intracivilizational dialogues by the globalization of civilization, I suspect there is a significant similarity between intercivilizational and intracivilizational dialogues, both as to their content and as to their chances of a successful outcome. On the whole, I suspect that conversations motivated by curiosity and a desire to learn are far more likely to have satisfying outcomes than those motivated by a desire to get others to do as we want them to do, to believe what we want them to believe, or to hand over their money and goods.

From these cases, and from others I have examined but not listed here, I would also derive a few more admonitory principles for the intracivilizational dialogists of the present and future: converse with individuals, not stereotypes of collectives; keep a sharp eye on your translators; moderate your ambitions; doubt that you are the first to explore your topics; provoke delicately; and remain calm.

I will conclude with some academic, practical suggestions. Dialogues, including intercultural dialogues, are going on today, and will continue. They are worth studying in a pragmatic and serious way. Although, or perhaps because, the intercivilizational dialogues of the past seem to provide us with at least as many examples of what to avoid as of what to emulate in future dialogues, they represent a subject of humanistic and practical study which might usefully be examined and judged by the multicultural body of students of the globalized society of the coming millennium. The United Nations University is one obvious, viable, legitimate and reasonable locus for the realization of such a program of study.

However, some of the basic sources for the study of past intercivilizational dialogues were published long ago, and are now out of print, rare books, difficult to obtain even for researchers working the best research libraries, let alone for those in less happy circumstances. It would be useful for the future multicultural study of dialogues if the UN, perhaps even via the UNU press, could cooperate with the original publishers of these materials--I must here insert my applause for the Hakluyt Society especially--to republish in hardback and paper the works or collections of Yule and Cordier, McCrindle, Garcilaso, Bernal Díaz and others.

Many, many more past intercivilizational dialogues than just the six I have mentioned, or the much larger number which I believe are reasonably accessible to today's students, may well be capable of reconstruction from such sources as the Chinese dynastic histories, the Arab historians, the Vatican archives, and so on. A most useful undertaking, not just for the study of dialogues but for humanistic research in general would be the recovery, collection, translation and republication of such materials. Again, since this is a project of transcultural and multinational scope, it seems to me the UN, and perhaps UNU, could usefully concern itself with the organization of this undertaking, although its and diversity scale would require the cooperation of researchers and research communities at many sites and possessing many languages--English and French being necessary but insufficient, since evidently there are also needed Chinese, Arabic, Latin for the sources just named, and in addition Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and others less widely known.

With these proposals made, let me end on a note of qualified hope. In the dialogue I first mentioned, between the Mongols and the West, I find an example of dialogic evolution over time. The topics of their dialogue move from an early exchange of demands-- generally rejected or ignored--for obedience, conversion and money, to an eventual exchange of requests--often fulfilled--for teachers, trade goods and information.

Both kinds of exchange--the peremptory and the reciprocal-- are the matter of genuine empirical dialogues, but it is the latter toward which we ought to hope that our own dialogues may progress, and the fact that these predecessors managed to make such progress is, I believe, at least moderately heartening.

All these lessons of course are pointless unless we believe that, even if Hegel was right in his time to declare that the lesson of world history was that nations and rulers had learned nothing from history, he is wrong for our time and ourselves, and that we can learn where they could not. May it be so.