

**DISCOURSE, PRACTICES AND HISTORICAL REPRESENTATIONS IN TWO GUERRILLA  
GROUPS: THE ELN AND THE MPLA, COLOMBIA-ANGOLA, 1956 -1986.**

Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra

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Brett Shadle  
Moses Panford  
Paulo Polanah

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis is to present some theoretical elements used in a comparative research that studies two guerrilla groups. The contexts of study, Angola and Colombia, in long internal conflicts during the second half of the twentieth century, witnessed the apparition of two guerrilla groups: the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional/National Army of Liberation, 1963) and the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola/Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, 1956). The goal is to provide an interpretation of the rise, transformations and uses of specific forms of *historical representations*. In the form of *discourses* and *practices*, the ELN and the MPLA constituted *historical representations* with the purpose of building new political imaginaries, in whose analysis it is possible to explain features such as the structures of power, knowledge and language, how they are constantly changing, and how guerrillas gain legitimacy within a society by using ideological paradigms. For instance, the research suggests that internal crises in the MPLA and the ELN promoted the change from a national liberation discourse, towards a more explicit use of Marxist-Leninist ideological principles. Also, such transformations are associated with the persistence of social distinctions—ethnolinguistic in Angola; rural/urban in Colombia— and their reflection in *embryonic institutions* that by the middle of the 1970s were supposed to constitute a revolutionary *New Society* in both Angola and Colombia. In a paradox, the *embryonic institutions* created by revolutionary groups let infer that they assume the role of a *New Establishment* because the deployment of power implies mechanism of control, coercion and discipline, rituals, ceremonies, practices and discourses that create truth, law, and language.

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*“Las herejías que debemos temer son las que pueden confundirse con la ortodoxia”.*

J. L. Borges. *Los Teólogos*.

## INTRODUCTION

In Cuba in November of 1963 a small group of students and union leaders swore to bring a revolution to Colombia in order to transform its structure of power and social inequity. Less than a year later, they were in the Colombian mountains walking armed through the rural area of Santander, where the political and social conditions were favorable for a revolutionary struggle. They named the group *Brigada Pro Liberación Nacional José Antonio Galán*, after the leader of a general protest in 1789 against the Spanish domination in the same area where the ELN started insurgent activities in 1964. The guerrilleros wished to make a historical link to a long chain of former protests and political effervescence in Colombia. The acronym of the group changed in 1964 to ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* / National Army of Liberation), but the name of the colonial hero was preserved as part of the regional memory.<sup>1</sup>

Some years before, around 1956 in places such as Luanda, Kinshasa, Algiers, Lisbon, Paris and London, different progressive sectors of students, intellectuals and

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<sup>1</sup> About the origins of the ELN see Carlos Medina, *Elementos para una Historia de las Ideas Políticas del ELN* (Bogotá: Rodríguez Quito Editores, 2001), chapters 1 and 2; Carlos Medina, *ELN: una Historia Contada a Dos Voces* (Bogotá: Rodríguez Quito Editores, 1997), 24-60; Roberto Sancho Larrañaga, *Violencia Política, Guerrilla y Terrorismo: una Perspectiva Comparada de Colombia y España, ELN y ETA, 1959-1982* (Masters Thesis, Universidad Industrial de Santander, Bucaramanga, 2000), chapter 1; Alejo Vargas, *Magdalena Medio Santandereano. Colonización y Conflicto Armado* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1992), 23-45; Alejo, Vargas, “Tres Momentos de la Violencia Política en San Vicente de Chucurí: de los Bolcheviques del Año 29 a la Fundación del ELN,” *Análisis Político* 8 (1989): 33-47.

European citizens promoted through different left-wing and nationalist groups an anti-colonial struggle in order to achieve the independence of Angola. It was a rather diverse group of organizations with different nationalistic conceptions. They mobilized around the purpose of overthrowing Portuguese colonial rule. After a rebellion in the main political prison in Luanda in 1961, which promoted a general turmoil in Angola's main towns, those groups converged around a radical nationalist political structure: the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola MPLA* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). Its militants operated in clandestine activities in urban areas and villages, and late in the 1960s formed a rural war front. The group endured the pressure of the PIDE (Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado / *International and State Defense Police*), and many of its leaders were exiled in Europe or African countries. As in the ELN, the MPLA insurgents responded to the call of history, a call for Angolan Emancipation.<sup>2</sup>

Both the ELN and the MPLA formed guerrilla groups, political-military organizations engaged in an irregular warfare.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning these insurgent groups shared a national liberation political discourse. Both promoted a project of *New Society* based on a transformation of the order of things in Colombia and Angola, respectively. With time, such discourses became more ideologically bound towards a revolutionary struggle as conceived in the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Cold War was a perfect international context that fostered that ideological transformation. In the ELN the goal of

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<sup>2</sup> About the origins of the MPLA: Jean-Michel Mabeko Tali, *Disidencias e Poder de Estado. O MPLA Perante si Proprio (1962-1977)* (Luanda: Editorial Nzila, 2001), Chapters 1-3; Christine Messiant, "Chez nous, Même le Passé est Improvisation. L'Expérience d'un Recherché sur le Nationalisme Angolais et l'MPLA," *Lusothopie* (1998); Carlos Pacheco, *MPLA, um Nascimento Polemico (as Falsficações da Historia)* (Lisbon: Vega, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Teoría del Partisano. Notas Complementarias al Concepto de lo "Político"* (Madrid: Folio Ediciones, 1982).

a properly socialist revolution was defined after a deep internal crisis by the middle of the 1970s, whilst in the case of the MPLA it only became evident around 1976-1977, when the organization already controlled the political structure of independent Angola.<sup>4</sup>

Several researchers have analyzed the emergence of guerrilla in Africa and Latin America.<sup>5</sup> In general, the phenomena have been studied from a political perspective. The convergence of factors such as decolonization in Asia and Africa, the crisis of the communist block after tensions between China and the USSR, and as a consequence, the emergence of a new revolutionary perspective exemplified in the successful Cuban revolution, contributed to the formation of guerrillas in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>6</sup> This is an interesting perspective because it recognizes the confluence of national liberation movements with African decolonization, and the importance of the New Left in the international revolutionary scene. However, this research will concentrate on the specific sociohistorical contexts that promoted insurgency and, within each one of the groups studied, the production of a particular set of *historical representations*.

The ELN and the MPLA promoted a *New Society*. Rejecting the Portuguese colonial domination in Angola, and the United States' involvement in Colombian affairs, the guerrillas projected a struggle based on a particular conception of the past, a *historical representation* expressed as *discourses* and *practices*. These guerrillas

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<sup>4</sup> Independence was achieved on November 11, 1975. Portugal decided some months before to withdraw its administrative authorities on that specific date, and the MPLA was since 1961 engaged in guerrilla warfare against both Portuguese colonial army and its Angolan nationalist foe FNLA (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola /National Front for the Angolan Liberation*).

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America. A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary Struggles Against White Minority Rule* (New York and London: Institute of Race Relations, 1972); Kenneth Grundy, *Guerrilla Struggle in Africa: an Analysis and Preview* (New York: Grossman, 1971). The only author who makes a comparative study of Liberation Movements and revolutionary guerrillas in Latin America and Africa is Jean Ziegler, *Contre l'Ordre du Monde. Les Rebelles. Mouvements Armés de Libération National du Tiers Monde* (Paris : Seuil, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Cuba helped directly both the ELN and the MPLA, although in the Colombian guerrilla its ideological influence became less important in 1965.

produced, besides political doctrine and pamphlets, significant documents in which the histories of Colombia and Angola were reconsidered.<sup>7</sup> This is what I will term *historical discourse*. These documents were written circa 1972 in the ELN, and 1975 in the MPLA.<sup>8</sup> I suggest that the analysis of early oral versions of the *historical discourse* — present in documents, interviews and transcripts nowadays published and available in archives and libraries— helps to reconstruct the transformations of the political representations in guerrilla groups. Oral traditions contain the first evidences of such *historical discourses*. Also, they can offer explanations of changes that occurred during and after the internal crisis of the MPLA and the ELN, mainly about the ideological shift from a national liberation discourse, to a formal Marxist-Leninist one.<sup>9</sup>

Besides this, based on several published interviews, information gathered in different libraries and personal archives, internal documents of the ELN and the MPLA, literary works written by former militants,<sup>10</sup> and the above-mentioned written versions, it

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<sup>7</sup> (Archivo Carlos Medina Gallego/Carlos Medina Gallego Archives ACMG) Ejército de Liberación Nacional ELN, *Compendio Insurrección* 1-38 (Unknown place of publication, mimeographed, circa 1972); ACMG, ELN, *Simacota, Periódico Político Interno 12*, (Unknown place of publication: mimeographed circa 1981); ACMG, ELN, *Conclusiones Asamblea Nacional 'Comandante Camilo Torres Restrepo'* (Unknown place of publication: mimeographed, circa 1986); Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola/Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola MPLA, *Historia de Angola*. (Oporto and Algiers: Edições Afrontamento, 1975); MPLA, *Angola: Documentos do MPLA*. (Lisbon: Unknown Publisher, 1977); Mario de Andrade and Marc Ollivier, *La Guerre en Angola. Étude Socio-Économique*. (Paris: Maspero, 1971); Don Barnett and Ron Harvey, *The Revolution in Angola: MPLA, Life Stories and Documents* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Early versions of this document are dated 1965, copies found are dated 1975, but the document was used before. It was established as a common textbook in the MPLA in the late 60s.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra, “Los Estudios Sobre el ELN, un Balance Historiográfico,” in Juan Camilo Biermann (ed.), *Pensatiempos*, (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002); “Fallas de Origen. La Discursividad Histórica de los Actores del Conflicto, el ELN,” in Claudia Mosquera (ed.), *La Universidad Piensa la Paz, Obstáculos y Posibilidades* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002); *El Discurso Histórico del ELN, 1963-1986* (Bogotá: Undergraduate thesis, 2003); *Les Représentations Historiques et Idéologiques de l’MPLA, Angola 1957-1990* (Paris: Masters Mémoire, EHES, 2006); *Las Prácticas Insurgentes en el ELN, 1963-1986* (Paris: Mimeographed copy, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Interviews and literature written by former militants: Jaime Arenas, *La Guerrilla por Dentro. Análisis del ELN Colombiano* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1971); Carlos Arango, *Yo Vi Morir a Camilo* (Bogotá: Colombia Nueva, 1982); Medardo Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso. Mi Vivencia en el ELN* (Bogotá: Findesarrollo, 1997); Walter Broderick, *Camilo Torres Restrepo* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1996); Walter

is possible to reconstruct some *practices*. *Practices* are the corollary where *historical discourse* is reproduced, and include rituals, ceremonies of commemoration of the past, narratives used in everyday clandestine meetings, poems and songs sung clandestinely either in the Colombian mountains or the Angolan plateau to celebrate heroes and revolutionary sacrifice.

One of the most important elements found in previous research on historical representations in the ELN and the MPLA is a pattern evident in the primary sources. I suggest that an interpretation of the *historical representations* in guerrilla groups should articulate the notions of ideology, legitimacy, language, knowledge and power, and how they promote the formation of educative and coercive *embryonic institutions*. The choice for radical political action based on the legitimacy that a discourse about the past can provide to an insurgent group is a strategy to reach the revolutionary purpose. The questions to pose might be, if both *discourse* and *practices* foster new perspectives on history within insurgent groups, what can we understand about a political revolutionary project based on their *historical representations*? How do those *representations* reflect insurgent notions of political power, the conventions of knowledge and language within a constantly disputed and transformed ideological dimension? How were the historical

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Broderick, *El Guerrillero Invisible* (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores, 2000); Medina, *ELN*; Cristina De la Torre, "Nacimiento del ELN, Revelaciones de Ricardo Lara Parada," *Revista Trópicos* 3-7 (1980); Oscar Castaño, *El Guerrillero y el Político. Entrevista con Ricardo Lara Parada* (Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1984); Marta Harnecker, *Unidad que Multiplica: Entrevistas a Dirigentes Máximos de la UCELN* (Quito: Ediciones Quimera, 1988); María López Vigil, *Camilo Camina en Colombia* (Tafalla: Txalaparta Editorial, 1990). Interviews and other useful literature from journalist and militants of MPLA in Lemba Winter, *Marching with the Fighters of the MPLA* (Dar es Salam: Unknown publisher, 1970); Carlos Pacheco, *MPLA, um Nascimento*; *MPLA, Angola: Documentos do MPLA*; Barnett and Harvey, *The revolution*; Mario de Andrade, *Liberté pour l'Angola* (Paris: Maspero, 1962); Roland Chilcote, *Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa: Documents* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972); Ryszard Kapuściński, *Another day of life* (London: Penguin, 1988).

contexts reflected in both *discourses* and *practices* in order to shape a revolutionary political imagination?

The historical experiences of Angolan and Colombian populations were expressed in the political imaginaries of each militant in the ELN and the MPLA. Each insurgent organization merged individual perspectives of the past which later became a broad political discourse. In other words, the socio-historical contexts where insurgent discourses are produced are the fields of study. It must be noted that the historical experiences of guerrilla militants do not necessarily express the entire historical representation of the Colombian or Angolan societies; they constitute just one of many dissident voices expressing perceptions about the past, perceptions from subordinated social groups generally neglected from the political spaces of power.

Different branches of nationalist groups and left wing sectors converged in the ELN and the MPLA. They gathered radicalized militants from subjugated social sectors — students, intellectuals, union leaders, peasants, political exiles, and in the Angolan case from a native educated elite — eager for transformations that could lead them into mainstream politics. The militants had a conception of the past marked by an opposition to the *status quo*, where the political structure was condemned as contrary to the interest of popular masses. Those perceptions of Angolan and Colombian realities converged around a political project of national liberation. In the case of Colombia, this would be liberation from the overwhelming domination of the United States in political and economic terms; a kind of second independence after the emancipation from Spanish rule in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In Angola, under direct Portuguese rule, the political goal was to construct an independent nation.

However, both Colombia and Angola had had quite different historical experiences by the middle of the twentieth century. Their social structures, ethnic differences, linguistic multiplicities, economic configurations that fostered different patterns of accumulation, property and labor subordination, and the spheres of international diplomatic, reflect quite different historical processes. Moreover, Colombia was a nation formed 145 years before Angolan independence, and has historical referents that build a particular national identity; its political institutions already had a long trajectory when Angola started the process of emancipation from European colonial domination. All this might suggest that their political formations do not allow comparisons.

How can two guerrilla groups, products of such different sociohistorical contexts, be compared? How can one compare two political insurgencies if their local experiences are so different? What can insurgent historical representations inform us about the notions of power in revolutionary groups during the second half of the twentieth century? The purpose of this research is to underline some possible interpretative guidelines for comparing revolutionary imaginaries in two different socio-historical contexts, in order to understand how they shaped power as a homology/parody of the establishment they fought.

In this essay I will analyze the variables that shaped *historical representations* within each guerrilla group. I have found in both cases several documents where the conception of the past is expressed. *Historical representations* appear as written texts, and in some cases as transcriptions of more individual oral narratives. These *historical discourses* were transformed between 1956 and 1986, and became more attached to the

ideological precepts of Marxism-Leninism, and the need of each group to legitimize its struggle in its specific socio-historical context. On the other hand, the *historical representations* also appear in empirical sources in the form of *practices*: ceremonies, rituals of initiation in the insurgent struggle, forms of education and transmission of ideological documents, precepts of discipline and routines, forms of integration, commitment and action, the emergence of a new conception of time and space, internal forms of justice, the emergence of paradigmatic characters and heroes, and the creation of *embryonic institutional* forms of coercion and justice.

The study of *historical representations* opens an important perspective for the analysis of insurgent groups formed under the aegis of Cold War ideologies. If considered as a product of the convergence of *discourse* and *practices* — and this is the hypothesis that informs this research — *historical representations allow us to understand how within insurgent groups, language, knowledge, and strategies of political action are useful for recognizing the nature of political power and institutions promoted by revolutionary groups in the twentieth century.*

A comparative research of insurgent groups in Angola and Colombia can contribute to the understanding of the nature of social conflicts that affect recently decolonized regions of the world.<sup>11</sup> However, the task cannot be undertaken as a conventional description of empirical material. Social sciences require comparative analysis that enhances interdisciplinary debate.<sup>12</sup> This can be achieved by the theoretical

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<sup>11</sup> This was pointed out by Jean Ziegler and his above mentioned book is oriented in that direction but in a general perspective. He also suggests the necessary location of that type of research in the realm of social theory; Ziegler, *Contre l'Ordre*, 16-19 and 173.

<sup>12</sup> The claim for comparative studies on revolution and insurgent groups can be traced back in different books. Some of them are: Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*. (Reading MA: Adwison-Wesley, 1978); Eric Wolff, "Peasant Rebellion and

reflections and propositions that can result from localized research and analysis. Besides, it is necessary to understand political phenomena by offering formal frameworks of analysis, or by testing conceptual tools in specific cases of study.

Concepts, methods and hypotheses are also necessary in the case of the research of political groups that promoted ideological conceptions of social reality. Historical sociology suggests that in the study of revolutionary contexts, a formal framework can help the researcher to avoid common pitfalls such as apologetic accounts, or the mechanical reproduction of conventional patterns of institutionalized knowledge. It means that research on contemporary revolutions is pervaded by ideological pollution, something that is impossible to avoid, and mark every form of knowledge, but theoretical reflection can diminish its apologetic effects. Decolonized contexts deserve theoretical analysis, in order to broaden the perspective of social research. To some extent this justifies my decision for a theoretical survey and a future elaboration of a formal framework of analysis.

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Revolution,” in Jack Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions. Theoretical, comparative and Historical Studies* (San Diego: Harcourt Jovanovich Publishers, 1986); Theda Skocpol and Margareth Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980): 174-197. Theda Skocpol and Jeff Goodwin, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary World,” *Politics and Society* 17 (1989).

**PART I**  
**THEORY AND CONTEXTS**

## CHAPTER 1.

### THEORETICAL ELEMENTS FOR A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HISTORICAL REPRESENTATIONS IN GUERRILLA GROUPS

This theoretical approach intends to offer tools for broad-range analysis in comparative politics. It resulted after an analysis of empirical resources that helped to identify particular phenomena in the production of *discourse* and *practices* within each guerrilla group, as well as a consideration of contemporary debates on social theory related to the *historical representations*. The study of *historical representations* in guerrilla groups offers an entree for analyzing political imaginaries in revolutionary movements, in the scope of variables such as power, structures of language and knowledge. The systematic search for a theoretical framework to explain *historical representations* in guerrilla groups led me to begin the elaboration of a new formal approach to notions that can be studied in the cases of Angola and Colombia.

Analytical categories such as power, knowledge, discourse and practices fell into the pitfalls of poststructuralist thought in the last decade. This blocked historians from assessing or creating of their own methodologies, due to the opening to interdisciplinary analytical tools that seldom presented theoretical or epistemological ‘harmony’.

Although most of my reflection started after reading texts on historical discourses written by Michel Foucault in the 1970s, the methodological trap of post-structuralism had

discouraging results.<sup>1</sup> First, complex notions such as ideology, power, language, and practices laden with meaning in the guerrillas are present throughout the empirical material, limiting the inquiry to the written sources as classic historiography suggests. Second, the historiography does not offer interesting perspectives of analysis due to its reluctance to engage in theoretical inference. Only a few exceptions deviate from the historiography, such as Gabrielle Spiegel's research about the formation of early historical representations —discourse and practices— within aristocracies in thirteenth century France.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the small amount of empirical sources required a qualitative study based on intense reading instead of quantitative methodologies of discourse analysis.

The most helpful theoretical and methodological framework is Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).<sup>3</sup> Although it does not pretend to serve as a universal model, there is no doubt that it is the best tool that allows the interaction of the main categories I want to highlight in this research. A short description of his premises can illuminate more the motivations for its selection. First, from a constructionist perspective of what social thought should be, CDA promotes the harmonious use of social theory and the necessary use of hypotheses in order to offer general interpretations that enable further comparative research. Second, in CDA the articulation between context and text production is fundamental. It is a theoretical tendency that assumes neither the radical proposals of linguistic structuralism, nor the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Foucault, *Genealogía del Racismo. De la Guerra de las Razas al Racismo de Estado* (Madrid: Ediciones La Piqueta, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Historiography in Thirteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

<sup>3</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language* (London & New York: Longman, 1995); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London, Longman, 1989) Norman Fairclough, Lillie Chouliaraki, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

collapse of rational methodologies for social research as suggested by post-structuralism, even though it uses analytical tools of linguistic theory and relies on discourse analysis. In other words, for CDA it is impossible to interpret textuality and social representations without a deep understanding of sociocultural contexts.

Finally, CDA intends to disclose structures of power and language and its transformations in time —historicity— and in theoretical terms assumes that such structures are mutable and can be traced back by the analysis of social categories, for instance ideology, legitimacy, strategies of action, etc. It assigns an important role to the social analysts trying to discover how ideology is reflected and transformed in specific contexts where representations are shaped. This last point is an important feature of this methodological framework because it distances itself from extreme post-structuralism,<sup>4</sup> adopting contributions of authors such as Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, or Pierre Bourdieu. This framework associates different theoretical perspectives in non-normative models, basically looking for hypotheses that unveil structures of power, discursive practices, and how ideologies affect a society.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> An excellent synthesis of such dangers of extreme poststructuralist perspectives on theoretical and methodological terms can be found in Albert Bergersen, “The Rise of Semiotic Marxism,” *Sociological Perspectives* 36 (1993): 1-22.

<sup>5</sup> With CDA at least two epistemological traditions converge. First, the French historiographic school *Annales* brought to use the notions of *mentalité* and *representations*. See Jacques LeGoff, *Medieval Imagination* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1988); Marc Bloch, *Los Reyes Taumaturgos* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988). Secondly, different premises of structuralist thought that become useful in historical analysis (basically Saussure, Althusser, Barthes, Poulantzas and Foucault). For a synthesis of the debate on French structuralism in the realm of discourses and power see Albert Bergersen, “The rise,” This situation was pointed out by Gabrielle Spiegel, in her research on medieval practices among French aristocracies. That innovative perspective of research was brought to debate in the USA in her fascinating article Gabrielle Spiegel, “History, historicism and the social logic of the text in the middle ages,” *Speculum* 65 (1990). The elaboration of this research has been influenced by texts of Nietzsche and Foucault, that were highlighted by Spiegel in that article; see Foucault, *Genealogía*; Friedrich Nietzsche, “De la utilidad y de los inconvenientes de los estudios históricos, para la vida,” in *Consideraciones Intempestivas 1873-1875* (Madrid: M. Aguilar Editor, 1932).

Although part of the model relies on Fairclough's concepts, some elements have been adapted in order to analyze the historical experiences of Angola and Colombia.

Nevertheless, the core of his interpretation can be summarized as a point of departure.

*Discursive practices* are cultural processes that contribute to the constitution of the social world, and in its reproduction explain social change, identities and social relations based on the structure of power, the operation of ideological systems, some patterns of cultural production and consumption of texts, or the institutionalization of practices. *Discourse* is both constituted and constitutive of the social world, and reflects how structures change; it means that explanations can be found not only in linguistics but in history and sociology. *Discursive practices* are also dependant on the historical sociocultural context where they appear, and can be affected both by structural changes and more individual aspects of social interaction. In that sense, ideology as a fundamental element in the functioning of *discursive practices* can be studied either in an extended or a narrowed scope because social structures are equally perceivable in both large scale analyses and small processes of quotidian interaction.<sup>6</sup>

*Historical representations* are considered as the structures that shape political imaginaries within revolutionary movements. Such *representations* promoted both

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<sup>6</sup> The central notion of *Discursive practices* is suggested by Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language* (London & New York: Longman, 1995); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989) Norman Fairclough and Lillie Chouliaraki, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). The analysis of theoretical sources done for this research includes Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the past. The Rise of Vernacular Historiography in Thirteenth-century France* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993); "History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65 (1990): pp. 59-86; Michel Foucault, *Genealogía del Racismo. De la Guerra de las Razas al Racismo de Estado*. (Madrid: Ediciones La Piqueta, 1992); Friedrich Nietzsche, "De la Utilidad y de los Inconvenientes de los Estudios Históricos, para la Vida," in *Consideraciones Intempestivas 1873-1875* (Madrid: M. Aguilar Editor, 1932). An overview of these theoretical sources in Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra, "Elements for a Comparative Survey on Guerrilla Representations. Sources, Methodological Problems and Theories for the Study of the ELN and the MPLA", Paper presented in the VIII Conference on Political Theory, University of Essex, Colchester, England, June 2007.

discourses on history —*historical discourses*— and *practices* that, as ceremonies, helped to constitute the group/individual approach to the past and a political imaginary.

In that sense, the category *discursive practices* is used in this framework but methodologically I distinguish *discourse* —production and consumption of texts on history within each guerrilla movement— and *practices* —actions that rely largely on the discourse mentioned— for analytical purposes<sup>7</sup>. Although in the model they appear as separated, they are actually merged into the notion of *historical representations*, and the only reason to separate them is to discern and organize every stage of my study. The stages of analysis obey the progression of the *discourse* and *practices* towards *historical representations* as institutional formations, or as I named them *embryonic institutional formations* which synthesize the notions of power and knowledge within each guerrilla group.

The result will be presented here as a couple of diagrams. Each Diagram must be read from the bottom up. The Diagram I is the base of the Diagram II, but is collapsed for analytical purposes. Throughout the essay some paragraphs written in *Italic* represent a rationale of the model, where some generalizations are suggested, and other notions are used to identify processes, concepts, or affirmations that will be useful in the analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> About the concept of *practices* and *ritualization* used in this research see: Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: The Free Press, 1965), Chapter 1, and Book 3 on ritual activities; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 16-30, 78-96; *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Douglas Marshall, “Behavior, Belonging and Belief. A Theory of Ritual Practice,” *Sociological Theory* 20 (2002): pp. 360-380; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Chapter 2; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine, 1969. On the *teatralization* of practices in revolutionary groups see: Georges Balandier, *Le Pouvoir Sur Scènes* (Paris: Ballard, 1980). About strategies of actions see Foucault, *Genealogía*, Chapter 7-9; Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): pp. 273-86. Finally, the links among these theoretical premises can be found synthesized in: Tim Hallett, “Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 12 (2003): pp. 128-49; Bourdieu, *Outline*, 67-71; Spiegel, “History,”; Albert Bergersen, “The rise of semiotic Marxism,” *Sociological Perspectives* 36, (1993): pp. 1-22; Sánchez Sierra, “Elements.”

## A Discussion on Ritual

There are not enough theoretical sources to analyze practices from a historiographical perspective. Whilst discourse has a long tradition of analysis among historians, and the combined use of oral and written sources enables the researcher to offer plausible explanations of social phenomena, the case of *practices* requires one to undertake a theoretical survey. The interdisciplinary approach to the category *practice* involves sociology of culture, anthropology and linguistics, disclosing possible links among several traditions of thought. For instance, in sociology the some interest on the notion of practices is rooted in the analysis of primitive religions —notions of sacred and profane, ritual and religion— in the work of Émile Durkheim.<sup>8</sup> In his study, Durkheim found that belief —as thought— and rites —as action— depend on the acceptance of sacred things as containers of supernatural characteristics. It promotes devotion, trust and confidence in contexts of uncertainty where a doctrine helps to affirm a position; such acceptance also constitutes religion as a system of unified practices.

Although the religious practices cannot be confused in the realm of the profane, the muddy universe of political action, the process is quite similar to guerrilla group practices. In this case, ideology becomes the system that structures belief, and sacrifice and other ritual aspects mentioned by Durkheim are analogue to guerrilla practices. Durkheim's theoretical propositions are extended to secular contexts of social interaction

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<sup>8</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. (London: The Free Press, 1965), Chapter 1, and Book 3 on ritual activities.

by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and his analysis of fields of cultural production.<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu breaks the dichotomies theory/practice and sacred/profane by the use of the notion of *fields*, where social interactions acquire symbolic characteristics and are reflected in social change and reality. Such symbolic disputes include *habitus*, which can be understood as strategies used by the social actors to gain mobility based on interaction done by/through transactions with symbolic codes. Those codes are constantly shaped, and in the case of guerrilla groups reinvented. Engaged in the construction of a new social structure, guerrilleros adopt their revolutionary role and destiny by the re-elaboration of a symbolic universe that constitutes the political imaginaries. The transformation of a symbolic universe erodes and recreates constantly the codes used, which necessarily means the innovation of —or adherence to one existing— linguistic conventions that end up framing power and social distinctions in a society. The patterns found in both ELN and MPLA allowed me to do an analysis from this perspective.

However, Pierre Bourdieu does not construct a theory of how the political field is reshaped in terms of symbolic interaction in revolutionary contexts. A way to elaborate on that point can be the observation of social micro-contexts that pretend to reshape a society, what I try to analyze in guerrilla rituals. On the other hand, the rejection of Durkheim to use his theoretical framework for the analysis of profane and political practices — even though they might be similar to religious rituals — determines the use of anthropological theory and its possible inferences in social processes of structuration. Ritual is studied Catherine Bell, who habitates Durkheim's theory on religion as a tool

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<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 16-30, 78-96, and specially section 4. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

to explain contexts of political and ideological ceremonials.<sup>10</sup> This debate is also complemented by the innovative perspective of Douglas Marshall about rituals, observing belief, belonging and conviction as aspects that might amend Durkheim's excessive generalizations.<sup>11</sup> Marshall's research does not concentrate on the problem of religions. Instead he emphasizes the fact of rituals as symbolic action, ceremonials enacting individual/group ambitions proper of political action and full of meaning, something suggested by Georges Balandier in the 1980s with the notion of *teatralisation* in the French tradition of political anthropology.<sup>12</sup>

Bell articulates several theoretical traditions in a conception of ritual as a play where power is structured. She considers Michel Foucault's notions of body and political strategy, whilst adapting Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. Her central concept is 'ritualization' that occurs when in a group some activities receive special attention distinguishing them from other quotidian activities. It can occur at micro / macro levels, and affects the social or the individual. Not only do an individual's/group's actions become framed by a particular set of attributed meanings, but the physical body also becomes involved in a particular interaction/transaction of power. What predisposes individuals to become engaged in such power relations is a compliance with ideological principles that is similar to the process among followers of a religious doctrine. To some extent Bell's analysis operates with a notion of ritual that blurs the distinction between religious and profane realms of social interaction. Might and superiority, the supernatural strength of a set of beliefs, the knowledge and enlightenment that a doctrine incorporates,

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<sup>10</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Marshall, "Behavior, Belonging and Belief. A Theory of Ritual Practice," *Sociological Theory* 20 (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Georges Balandier, *Le Pouvoir sur Scènes*, (Paris: Ballard, 1980).

and the result of sacrifice and moral rules help Catherine Bell link her theoretical model with Émile Durkheim's evaluation of primitive forms of religion.

Now it is necessary to explain how belief and a doctrine — what Durkheim should have considered as rules — reproduce practices in a group. On the one hand, Bell presents the inefficacy of the common dualisms of theory/action for the analysis of ritual, and displaces the attention to the relational nature of ritualization. A ritual acquires particular characteristics facing common routines that are not incorporated to the symbolic structure that attribute meaning and reflects itself in language, power, subordination, and a particular type of knowledge. Ritual is a particular characterization of social practices within a larger set of activities. On the other hand, Douglas Marshall considers individual aspects of ritualization processes, such as the dependence on moral rules or doctrine experienced by the members. This is explained as a result of the operation of beliefs and belonging, two notions that help us to understand how thought and action are articulated in a specific social context. Marshall presents individuals as in constant crisis, ready to jump into the void, which explains their readiness to accept doctrines and practices. In the case of guerrilla groups, a militant lacks certainties right before his/her attachment to an insurgent group.<sup>13</sup> Douglas Marshall, more interested in the individual interdependence that creates a situation of social void, habitates Émile Durkheim's analysis of religion but in the profane realm of political action. Finally, co-presence is the situation an individual or society experiences in times of deep crisis, social change or institutional re-structuration.

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<sup>13</sup> In general is considered that a guerrillero is a being highly convinced of a political ideology, but in general that happens with the leadership, not the regular militants. Many guerrilleros become involved at an early age, because there are no options, or by social pressure.

The interdependence and ubiquitous crisis experienced by either the individual or the group has effects on their set of beliefs, promoting polarization and creation of external boundaries. Moreover, belonging intensifies such polarized distinctions, enabling cohesion and new patterns of identification based on a new factor of proximity. This explains why ritual processes in guerrilla groups are intensely enacted, reaching extremes of an almost *teatralisation* of everyday activities, where simple actions as cooking rice, waking up, and chatting assume powerful meanings and symbolic roles in the creation of political imaginaries. This happened in the context of revolutionary struggle, and is close to George Balandier's interpretations because the social interaction of individuals becomes ruled by moral prescriptions that frame behavior.

## CHAPTER 2.

### GUERRILLA, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND DISTINCTIONS IN COLOMBIA

The historical contexts that allowed the emergence and consolidation of the ELN and the MPLA guerrillas in Colombia and Angola are important to explain how historical representation became part of political imaginaries. Social phenomena reflect the structures of language and power, and how they are intertwined with forms of knowledge and political action. This chapter is not an extensive approach, and is limited to the information that can shed light on broad processes. In order to understand its relation with the theoretical elements is necessary to consider that the scope of historical explanation is concentrated to the features that affected or transformed particular aspects illuminated in the suggested framework. In other words, the historical contexts of Angola and Colombia are observed through a set of theoretical elements that explain the emergence of historical representations, the production and consumption of discourses, and the apparition of practices. The use of theoretical elements will be complemented with allusions to categories of change to enable historical interpretation; they are *ideology* and *legitimacy*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Preliminarily I want to mention that Ideology promotes a cyclic feedback that starts within the group and is intended to affect the interaction with society, where it receives either approval or rejection. That dynamic allows change in the political imaginary and historical representations of the group. On the other hand, the opposite happens with legitimacy that comes from outsiders' acceptance and approval, and generates organizational transformations, ideological nuances, and hierarchical changes in the organizational structure of the guerrilla groups, to finally complete a cycle with a new set of political propositions, strategies of action or representations. However, some groups tend to ostracize themselves, as happened with the ELN in 1969-1976, during its first stage of internal crisis. In the MPLA it was common in the East war front in the first years of the 1970s — a series of schism destabilized the regional power of the guerrilla in relation to FLNA, UNITA and the Portuguese Military forces — but the success after the Portuguese withdrawal in 1975 led to a move towards integration and power repartition in regional spheres of influence, based upon military ability and political clientelism bred during the years of insurrectional struggle.

From larger social structures to the smaller tensions within each guerrilla group, the purpose here is to offer a framework that incorporates general and particular elements. For instance, social trends can be associated with contemporary tensions within the guerrilla groups. It means that this framework comes from the general to the particular.

The first stage of explanation must be the presentation of the *sociohistorical contexts* in which the ELN and the MPLA emerged between 1956 and 1977. I introduce several aspects that allow the interpretation of guerrilla formation by looking at the social and political structures in Angola and Colombia.<sup>15</sup> The contexts where radical opposition groups emerged can be explained by pointing out *social distinctions* as a source of differentiations that obstructed processes of social mobility, and how these phenomena were reflected in the formation of the MPLA and the ELN.

Colombian violence and the contemporary guerrilla movement are the result of a persistent blockage for subordinated social sectors to access or be represented in the political system. Their exclusion from the political game has been sponsored by the elite groups and their reluctance to open spaces for the large majority of Colombian population. Although this complex process has been studied in historical research,<sup>16</sup> the purpose of my investigation is to highlight and to trace back several relevant elements in

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<sup>15</sup> My previous research on the MPLA and the ELN was conducted between 2001 and 2006, see Introduction, note 2 or bibliography.

<sup>16</sup> The analysis of Colombian violence became central in historiography in the 1960s. However the most complete reviews presenting the main tendencies appeared early in 1982. Jesús Antonio Bejarano, "Campesinado, Luchas Agrarias e Historia Social: Notas para un Balance Historiográfico," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 11, (1983); Gonzalo Sánchez, "Los Estudios sobre la Violencia: Balance y Perspectivas," in Gonzalo Sánchez and Ricardo Peñaranda, ed., *Pasado y Presente de la Violencia en Colombia*. (Bogotá: CEREC, 1986); Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia, *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia: Informe Presentado al Ministerio de Gobierno* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1987); Bernardo Tovar, ed., *La Historia al Final del Milenio: Ensayos de Historiografía Colombiana y Latinoamericana* (Bogotá: Ediciones Universidad Nacional, 1994).

the formation of contemporary political representations. First, language, knowledge, and the institutions of political power are shaped by social distinctions. Secondly, tensions produced by social mobility and popular aspirations to representativity lead to radical political alternatives. Finally, this processes of radicalization occurred in rural and urban areas, which are fundamental scenarios of political interaction in the sociohistorical contexts studied.

### **Distinctions and Political Divisions in Colombia**

Social distinctions along the classic urban/rural divide help to explain the operation of politics in Colombia. This divide paradoxically constituted the social archetype shaped by Spanish colonial rule, and by the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries activated the aspirations of an incipient elite to gain political autonomy.<sup>17</sup> The political parties and elites controlling the state after independence reproduced the rural/urban division that had been shaped in the colonial period. The institutions of power also reflected the differences that regional origin implied in terms of culture, and administrative activities.<sup>18</sup> For example, the urban design, which followed a schema organizing institutions of power around a public square, segregated common people from the political and religious institutions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> David Bushnell, *Colombia, una Nación a Pesar de sí Misma. De los Tiempos Precolombinos a Nuestros Días* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 1996), 144-145.

<sup>18</sup> Germán Colmenares, *Partidos Políticos y Clases Sociales* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad de los Andes, 1968), 102-104.

<sup>19</sup> A complete analysis from a different historiographic perspectives on politics, economics, religion and its reflection in the urbanism and other systems of domination deployed by the Spanish monarchy can be found in: Ruggiero Romano, *Mecanismos y Elementos del Sistema Económico Colonial Americano. Siglos XVI-XVIII* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 395-419.

From the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Habsburg monarchs tried to regulate their overseas possessions by a direct control of society, establishing clear-cut differences between social classes. Factors such as race, religious creed and geographic origin were markers of inclusion or exclusion in the early colonial polity. The influence of Saint Agustin's philosophy on the political formations in America helps to explain the process.

Highly influenced by the Catholic Church, the Habsburg monarchy wanted to start from scratch rather than import what in medieval Europe was a diffuse society difficult to control. The city in America should have resembled the city of god, whilst the faithful herd maintains their celestially designated role in society. As a consequence, the clear-cut segmentation of American societies after the European arrival in the fifteenth century is a corollary of the medieval ideal of social organic hierarchies.<sup>20</sup> The urban plan translated a social order desirable for the New World based on a particular segmentation of the institutions that build social order. *The colonial rule created a particular polity, in whose representations the social organization was translated, a process mirrored in the opposition between urban and rural spaces. The city was a formal representation of the symbolic power of the Spanish institutions promoting a colonial order under the rule of law, morality and coercion.*<sup>21</sup>

Since the colonial epoch negative representations of the subordinated sectors determined their political role, and institutions of power reproduced the distinctions legitimized in norms and traditions. For instance, indigenous populations were stereotyped as backward groups that only could gain self-restraint and comply with the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 35-41.

<sup>21</sup> Angel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 12-18.

law through the strict imposition of European morality. Other groups such as *mestizos* — mix between indigenous and white— or *criollos* —Spanish offspring born in America— were considered ambiguous social categories and in many cases that enabled them to defy Spanish rule.<sup>22</sup> From these images emerged exclusion as a fundamental part of political representation. Besides, the florid imagination of Europeans was populated by magic beings, beasts and other expressions of their fears and exotic ambitions. This legitimized practices of political subordination, patronizing attitudes, and linguistic misunderstanding.<sup>23</sup>

The rural represented the vacuum of order, an area dominated by ignorance and superstition, the exuberance of nature. On the other hand, urban areas reflected rationality, order and power. The notion of ‘rural’ also implied people and labor, peasants and their work in agriculture or cattle husbandry. In the rural areas particular forms of thinking predominated, promoting a diffuse relation to geographical space and the perception of the time. Also, urban administrators considered that ambiguous religious creeds proper of peasant and ingenious, weak moral principles, and a disrupted relation

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<sup>22</sup> Alfonso Múnera, *El Fracaso de la Nación. Región, Clase y Raza en el Caribe Colombiano: 1717-1810* (Bogotá: Banco de la República-El Ancora editores, 1998), 125-149.

<sup>23</sup> Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 55-57, 203; Serge Gruzinski, *La Colonisation de l'Imaginaire: Sociétés Indigènes et Occidentalisation dans la Mexique Espagnol, XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), Introduction. For instance, British and French empires created a similar imaginary about African societies during the nineteenth century. That mentality depended on medieval elements and after the French revolution and the burgeoning capitalist rationality of the industrial revolution, Africa became not only the representation of exoticism and rule of the uncontrolled nature, but example of social decay and political strife. Gruzinski explains part of this as a result of the influence of religion in Early American domination, whilst in Africa a openly economic —mercantilist— mentality and strategies prevailed. In Africa religious influence was shared by catholic and protestant sectors, and occurred later. In America the monarchies of Spain and Portugal, highly influenced by Catholic Church, depended on precepts from the philosophy of Saint Agustin. Urban design exemplifies this, and the City of God was the Utopia to build in the New World; Rama, *The Lettered*, 101-106.

with the urban institutions of power motivated their political ardor and proclivity to revolt.<sup>24</sup>

### **Representations, Citizenship and Political Culture: Towards a Modern Polity**

*The distinctions between Colombia's urban and rural habitants, in general terms, will be introduced as a process of continuous subordination operated through political exclusion in the nineteenth century, and partial inclusion during the twentieth century.*

The notion of citizenship is very useful to illuminate contemporary Colombian polity, the radicalization of popular opposition to the Establishment, and the means used to obstruct representation for the subordinated popular masses.<sup>25</sup>

It is necessary to consider how the rural/urban distinction shaped the Colombian polity. Three main aspects interest me in the process. First, the clear-cut separation fostered an overwhelming centralization of the functions of the state. This brought marginalization of provincial authority, dependency on urban functionaries, and the insignificance of political formations in provinces regions and rural areas. In other words, non-centralized institutions had a poor representativity in Bogotá, creating a chasm between the main cities and its hinterlands that promoted the economic and political marginalization of entire regions. Bogotá, the political and economic capital, was strong enough to preserve the administrative operation of the State, promoting a lethargic interaction between the society and the *res publica*.

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<sup>24</sup> Different oppositions related to the rural/urban divide help to explain this process. For instance, community/individual. It was common, for instance, when the guerrilla relations changed leading towards a split between rural and urban militancy in both the ELN and the MPLA.

<sup>25</sup> In the following sections, many phenomena will be considered mainly but not restrictively as a mean to infer forms of language, political strategies and the uses of knowledge to legitimize a particular power structure. I will foreground three main aspects relevant for the analytical purposes of the research.

Secondly, the political power was concentrated in a few hands, with disastrous effects in the democratization of public affairs. Since the colonial era the institutions of power have been controlled by tightly-knitted elite families, who protected their own interests even though they were public affairs.<sup>26</sup> The elites managed public affairs as if the nation was their household or a personal business. The institutions of power were politically restrictive and socially exclusive by racial, economic or educative reasons. The Catholic Church held power and it was exclusive for elite sectors as well, which helped to separate the poor, the peasant or the illiterate from the possibilities of actual political representativity. This narrowed the definition of citizenship and imposed a glass-ceiling that impeded access to collective rights for people who wanted to occupy positions in state institutions without being part of the elite.

Finally, the State mirrored a segmented society through the institutions that promoted social mobility. For instance, the National Army operated as a hierarchy in which its top ranks were inaccessible for the common people. A private could not climb the military hierarchy based on his performance. Even after the emancipation wars and the concomitant civil wars throughout the nineteenth century, the military factions of each political party blocked peasants and poor men's access to the highest ranks. Education—directed by the ecclesiastic institutions—was preserved for a small minority, and its role as the main channel of social mobility in modern democracies was implemented and expanded in Colombia only late in the twilight of twentieth century.

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<sup>26</sup> In 2000 I investigated nineteenth century family linkages, and reconstructed the genealogies of Bogota's elite based on their marriages, obituaries, heritage, patrimonial alliances, and social club membership. The final register showed 106 main clusters that grouped only 187 surnames, formed by a 11% of foreign surnames, and 33 % of surnames that could be inferred as directly or closely associated to Spanish families. No indigenous or afro-colombian surnames appeared. They represented the upper crust of capital's elite, controlling business, state functions, diplomatic representations, ecclesiastic and military top hierarchies, and their offspring occupied most educational institutions. The research covered the notary registries in the period between 1840 and 1900.

These broad generalizations delineate the post-independency epoch in Colombia as a transition in the shaping of formal political institutions until the first decades of the twentieth century. However, in the long term the system did not necessarily transform the political nature of power as known under the Spanish domination. The process of national construction excluded the social base by reproducing the colonial model of social segmentation. If the transition assumed some premises of liberal democracies based on ‘freedom and order’<sup>27</sup>, a social contract, a foundational constitution, and a sovereign government, the categories were empty of meaning, whilst people were segregated from actual political participation. The social categories were narrow and included only the elites as part of the polity. It was not even a pale mimicry of modern democracies, even though the elites labeled the regime as modern and inspired by the examples of post-revolutionary France, and the United States.

Two elements remain to conclude this explanation: citizenship and radical opposition. The restrictive political system promoted an imaginary of peasants, the indigenous, afrocolombians and poor people as ‘second category’ Colombians.<sup>28</sup> The elites represented them as barbaric, uncivilized, and strange to the urban polity built upon the European principles of modern societies. In that sense, the distinction widened the chasm between the cultured and the ignorant, the barbarians and the civilized, the white and the *mestizo*. Those who did not belong to the urban polity were politically eligible for neither civil service nor the electorate. In other words, they were not distinguished as citizens and their civil rights were reduced.

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<sup>27</sup> This is the motto in the Colombian coat of arms: *Libertad y Orden* —freedom and order. It has been used in the nationalist heraldic symbolism since the nineteenth century.

<sup>28</sup> Christian Gros, *Políticas de la Etnicidad: Identidad, Estado y Modernidad* (Bogotá: ICANH, 2000), 35. Jaime Arocha and Aline Helg, *Utopía para los Excluidos: el Multiculturalismo en África y América Latina* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional CES, 2004), 49-67.

The political system opened up quite a few times during the nineteenth century, and only in the third decade of the twentieth century the category of citizen was broadened in order to include new urban workers —blue collar, manufacturers, or clerk workers— as a result of their growing capacity as consumers, and the basic education they received after struggles for fundamental rights. The 1920s and 1930s were years of peace between the two main elite groups, but the period inaugurated a moment of popular turmoil and social explosions due to claims for political participation and inclusion in the democratic system. It was the moment when the opposition turned towards the use of radical means and adequate organizational principles —unions, indigenous movement, peasant and student protests.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Educated Elites**

In spite of these problems, the Colombian elite had control over the society in several ways. First, control by a *civilized* social stratum which created a referential cultural framework and, thanks to its education, was the single group able to lead the institutions that ruled political life. It is not bizarre to find that citizenship —measured as the right to vote and be elected— was denied to poor people even those of white Spanish stock, or who had either basic literacy or little property.

Secondly, because of their *civism* the ruling class had legitimate access to the administrative instances of public life that were generally established in the cities, implying that the right to use and lead the *res publica* was exclusive for those with the ability to speak the idiom of power, the language of law. In other words, representativity

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<sup>29</sup> Mauricio Archila, *Cultura e Identidad Obrera: Colombia 1910-1945* (Bogota: CINEP, 1991), 425-433.

in the public life was only possible based on wealth, knowledge, or the belonging to the highest echelons of the ecclesiastical or military hierarchies where language, codes and rituals of *civic* life were taught, practiced, enacted and the official history commemorated.

Finally, the elite's control depended on the conjunction of the former two elements: *civilized* people who had a *civic* life were considered real *citizens*. *Citizenship* was almost a title of nobility within Colombian society, and its relevance is evident in the number of effective voters during the first century after independence.

### **Social Mobility**

Access to the *civic* codes of life, to *civilization*, to *citizenship* and the favors of public life —symbols, rituals, codes of behavior, language— was exclusive to the social upper crust thanks to the implementation of strategies to preserve elite predominance. The exclusivity over the social mobility institutions facilitated for the ruling class the patronage and stability of the political regime. The highest echelons of the educative system and the hierarchies of the church and the military were unreachable for common people. Until the second half of the twentieth century access to education, a military career, or the belonging to the ecclesiastic hierarchy, were displays of social relevance and guaranties for a better future.

These institutions were concentrated in the cities, and access was restricted by a shared belonging and identity which protected them from exogenous menaces. For instance, acceptance into the educative system, ecclesiastic career, or public life depended on recommendations, and socialization done in schools, clubs and intellectual

circles. Anyone skipping this track was considered an *advenedizo* —a pejorative term used to denominate a newcomer or social climber. Elite’s lifestyle was the symbolic display of their economic comfort, and the institutions were like small isles of opulence in a sea of misery.

A quite different picture was visible in the provinces, where the belonging to the military —mostly by compulsion— was almost a curse due to the possible retaliations from the political foe. For ecclesiastic lower ranks the simple task of being the moral leader of a small parish entailed an overwhelming amount of claims, demands and pleas of poor people excluded from a system that never attended to their problems. Even the regional elites had a hard time trying to climb the social ladder in the cities, where the social success depended on traditional ties to the Bogotá’s elite.

### **The Politics of Ignorance: Knowledge and Language in the Rural Areas**

Another aspect of the distinction between elite sectors and subordinated groups — peasants, indigenous, afro-descendants— was the early association of rural areas as the battlefield where elites’ old rivalries were settled, and its dwellers as the disposable soldiers who fought on behalf of a *terrateniente* (landowner) or *caudillo* (regional chief). The increasing political violence of the nineteenth century was also a good means of maintaining people far from the direct intervention on politics without the hand stained by blood, especially because violence meant for a peasant extreme conditions of poverty, and the impossibility of thinking beyond the simple survival.<sup>30</sup> It is necessary to use imagination to understand how difficult it could be for a peasant or indigenous to become

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<sup>30</sup> Fernando Guillén Martínez, *El Poder Político en Colombia* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 1996), 78-81.

involved in political life on an empty stomach, or to think about how to support his/her family under conditions of permanent mobility due to wars or landowners' pressure to gain peasants' newly-cleared land.<sup>31</sup>

Another proof of the inability of poor sectors to be directly involved in politics was the fact that there were no significant urban rebellions or political clashes between liberals and conservatives in the cities, and every civil war in the nineteenth century took place in the countryside.<sup>32</sup> But each civil war's actual actors were peasants pushed into combat in order to defend their patrons' interests. They were kept ignorant of the main motivations of war.<sup>33</sup> Their ignorance of what was at stake was an effective tool to keep them during several decades away from the political debate. Although it was not necessarily a rule, the political alternatives for rural dwellers were radical, and their leaders were subject to systematic persecution since the nineteenth century. This fact delayed the emergence of a public sphere constituted by citizens integrated around a national project and a social contract.

Since the nineteenth century the rural polity was associated with prejudices that portrayed peasants, indigenous and afro-descendant communities as less than human. The language and knowledge they had was perceived as deficient, explained by their

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Safford, "Agrarian Systems and the State: The Case of Colombia," in Evelyne Huber and Frank Safford, ed. *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 151-176.

<sup>32</sup> Bejarano, "Campesinado, Luchas Agrarias", 253.

<sup>33</sup> I refer here to the movements of opposition through the nineteenth century. This is a broad generalization necessary for analytical purposes. However, I do not pretend to ignore the influence of peasantry and indigenous groups in the early organization of an opposition group to the political regime. The problem is that they never were integrated or formed a coherent block. There are examples of radicalism and political action, but they are rather exceptional, marginal and their range of action and impact was reduced to a local or in the best case a regional scope. For instance, they were so rare that helped the guerrillas in the twentieth century more as memories of heroism, and as symbolic referents, than as effective influences in the formation of groups of political opposition. Initial groups that changed the trend appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, and promoted groups such as the PCC (Colombian Communist Party), the PSC (Colombian Socialist Party), and other alternative political expressions.

supposed naïve sense of the world, their inability to express themselves, and a knowledge based on a feeble conceptualization of reality. These are fundamental elements to analyze the political distinctions during the revolutionary struggles of the twentieth century as well, when the conflict was presented as ‘modern’ but in fact underlined colonial prejudices. Such prejudices reproduce the western imaginaries of deviance, bestiality and perversion, based on a frame learnt from antiquity. *Both knowledge and language link individuals and communities based on a shared perception of subjective experience.* The stereotype of uncivilized barbarians was shaped since the emergence of the polis in Greece and the citizen in Rome, a process that is also reflected in contemporary cases of restricted citizenship.

On the one hand—and here it might be useful to establish a homology with the ancient world—peasants and the indigenous people had a different language, less sophisticated than the urban one, which used analogy and simile as tools to subsidize the lack of specialized vocabulary. Their lexicon depends on the necessary transmission of meaning by use of bizarre expressions, without savvy circumvolutions, especially since rural distances make the communicative act/process necessarily direct and pragmatic, it must be effective to be useful. Peasants are people of action; they do not recreate their world in abstract constructions of meaning as intellectuals do. In the rural world language is a tool that only becomes conventional through quotidian use, and its conventions in general are excluded from the urban sophisticated classifications of language.

In opposition to urban and academic language, rural language uses autochthon turns such as simile, hyperbole or metaphors.<sup>34</sup> In the cities language follows conventions

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<sup>34</sup>Cristobal Gnecco and Marta Zambrano, *Memorias Hegemónicas, Memorias Disidentes. El Pasado como Política de la Historia* (Bogotá: ICANH-Universidad del Cauca, 2000), Introduction and Part I; Joanne

because different institutions create their own codes, jargon and expressions. This is how language establishes classifications by stressing difference, belonging and liminality — when someone is in the process of learning such linguistic codes.<sup>35</sup> In the rural world language is narrative, fundamentally oral, transmitted from person to person, generation by generation. Its meanings are so complex and shadowy for urban inhabitants because it relies on direct experience, on a construction of the world that results from living a particular reality.

On the other hand is the knowledge that such language structures. Because the world of politics follows the track opened by the Greek polis and the Roman law, anything beyond its pattern is seen as barbaric, unlawful or false. Peasant language is the result of the cycle of knowledge reproduction structured in the complexity of our perceptions of reality. In opposition, modern societies structure such a complex knowledge through a rational method of scientific enquiry. Even if such knowledge infers the indecipherable human condition, there exists a rational form to preserve such experience in language. This rational form integrates science and politics —as spheres of language and knowledge— under the aegis of institutionalization. It is when the creation of social and scientific laws occurs, that language matters as a mechanism of power.<sup>36</sup>

Both science and politics pursue truth, or something close to it. This is done through a rationally constructed language. This indicates the fragility of peasant knowledge when confronted with western institutions of power. Some features exclude

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Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory. Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14-29; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 26-47.

<sup>35</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> These elements of analysis can be found in the main argument in the books by Foucault, *Genealogía*; Jean-François Lyotard, *La Pondición Posmoderna. Informe sobre el Saber* (Madrid: Catedra, 1989); Spiegel, *Romancing the past*; Gnecco and Zambrano, *Memorias Hegemónicas*.

peasant knowledge from the modern political system: it is narrative; it has non-linear accounts of facts or processes, and uses references in a rather disrupted relation to time/space references. Besides, it depends on individual or collective memory to be transmitted and has political biases that oppose the *status quo*, its laws, language and power.

The above mentioned elements are a platform to analyze political change in Colombia, not in its specific particularity but in a broad scope necessary in theoretical enquiry. A picture of the sociohistorical contexts must enlarge this perspective until the colonial epoch, but a close analysis of the political disputes will be presented in the next chapters. The goal is to explain the emergence of a new radical discourse, which social groups fostered it, and on what elements it was nourished. The continuities of the colonial distinctions enable the analysis of the Colombian democratic system, the institutions of power, and its reflection in the very structure of the political opposition, even when it was revolutionary.

### **CHAPTER 3.**

#### **GUERRILLA AND INDEPENDENCY, THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ANGOLA.**

At first glance the historical parallels between Colombian and Angolan are not self evident. This is product of the Colombian rejection to its African cultural roots, expressed in social prejudices, racist stereotypes and the little attention they receive in social analysis. The obvious link is the use of African slaves in the Viceroyalty of New Granada in gold and silver mining, domestic services and in different activities related to transportation of people or commodities during the colonial epoch. This chapter will present important elements in the political configuration of Angola; especially factors that it inherited from the European contact and effected the emergence of nationalist movements and the social representativity of the main political groups during the second half o the twentieth century. The elements brought to the spotlight are linked to the analysis of political representations in the nationalist guerrilla groups formed in the second half of the twentieth century, analyzing language, power and political formation.

Angolan history will be analyzed by the use of some generalizations useful for theoretical inference, but also presenting details that help to identify in the MPLA some features of a cultural nature reflected in the Angolan social structure. In this case, I will introduce several dichotomies that shaped politics, institutions and social forces in constant interaction, and how the nationalist groups of the second half of twentieth century were a corollary of the patterns of organization that merged the African past with the influence of European contact.

## **Colonialism and Internal Divisions**

The rural/urban duality in Angola was different than that in South America, in several ways. The contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century was not systematic, because they never intended to formally constitute a New World as the Spanish and Portuguese tried in America; a new world where the Europeans built cities to impose order and concentrate efforts in the form of institutions and political links that stemmed directly from the monarchy. In Africa, the erection of cities was not part of the plan. Instead, the military forts or ports suggest that African occupation was mainly an economic enterprise of exploitation. The urban plan and the political enterprise undertaken did not imply the creation of permanent institutions that enabled the reproduction of the slave trade as an institution or the cornerstone of a social system.<sup>37</sup> Dutch and Portuguese traders assumed the colonial task of African occupation as a necessary step to control and secure private interest in the slave trade. The persistence of the system was not necessarily ensured by these foci of control, or the flow of wealth produced in the interchange of commodities. It grew as a result of the dependence of African social sectors on the exchange of commodities and slaves with Europeans, the availability of human beings for enslavement, and the support of local/regional conflicts for the purposes of the trade.

The urban centers developed by Europeans in Africa had functionality in the context of the slave trade and did not require political institutions like in America. The commercial and military nature of European intrusion persisted as a private enterprise,

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<sup>37</sup> Naomi Chazan et al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 57-98.

and the role of the monarchy or the church was more to maintain control over the European inhabitants in African territories. This happened in America, but lasted only until the first decades of sixteenth century when the productive system was articulated to accumulate in the urban areas the profits from private initiatives. Besides, the small towns and forts in Africa were dispersed on the seashore, and barely created the infrastructure and dependencies associated with the moment of trade, when commodities were exchanged and traders initiated once again the reproductive cycle.<sup>38</sup> If in America the idiom of the Spanish political rule was the everlasting print of urban design, in Africa it was less evident because European domination was represented in the immaterial instant of each commercial transaction and the provisional set up for its accomplishment.

When Europeans arrived to today's Angolan territories, Luanda was the point of contact, which had not been significant before. The Mbundu communities had been concentrated in the hinterland more than 300 miles away from the coast and their political structure organized around small villages as productive clusters based on kinship and cultural affinity. Around the Njinga area of influence the disputes for agricultural land between Bakongo and Mbundu determined the regional interaction of African groups long before European arrival.<sup>39</sup>

The obstruction to Bakongo influence in the Mbundu territories fostered the formation of networks based on kinship and internal alliances within the Ngondo kingdom; these networks were supported by commercial links and extraterritorial struggles with the north Bakongo communities. This determined the early concentration of social bonds and jurisdiction to impede their expansion under the aegis of the Mbundu

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<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 198-230

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 22-25, 45-50, 170-181.

initiative.<sup>40</sup> Other forms of intergroup relation were important before the Dutch and Portuguese arrived. For instance, Mbundu elites had influence on Ovimbundu and Chokwe groups, mainly in terms of trade exchange and cattle. The Ovimbundu occupied the southern area where cattle husbandry and fishing were important activities due to a poor soil and scarce resources for agriculture. However, a relation of dependency was the result of a growing demand from Ngondo communities, only lessened after a thriving dynamic of Ovimbundu production of livestock.<sup>41</sup>

The Bakongo were influenced by the power disputes in the north shore of the Congo River which displaced them to the south until limits with Mbundu areas. Their main cultural traditions differed from the Mbundu, although both groups were dependant on agricultural production whose efficient systems of production enabled them to create institutions that concentrated power in villages, and strict rules of reproduction. The main factor of differentiation was language, and among Mbundu communities there existed a tendency to envision the northern Bakongo communities as foreigners who intermittently invaded in order to control the entire southern band of the delta.<sup>42</sup> This legitimized the impediments for intercultural exchange. For instance, the contact between Bakongo and Ovimbundu was not very clear before the European arrival, but the second fell under the influence of Mbundu domination. Besides, Ovimbundu social institutions did not galvanize as a enduring state; instead, the fluidity of their social relations was a

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 153-155.

<sup>41</sup> Christine Messiant, *L'Angola Colonial, Histoire et Société: les Premises du Mouvement Nationaliste* (Paris : Doctoral Thesis, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1983), 10-15, 27-48, 128-144; Linda Heywood, 'Towards an understanding of modern political ideology in Africa: the case of the Ovimbundu of Angola,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 36 (1998): 139-167.

<sup>42</sup> Alfredo Margarido, "The Tokoist Church and Portuguese colonialism in Angola," In *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil*, ed. Ronald Chilcote (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 29-52.

fundamental feature that enabled their success in commercial activities in a large territory based on stable social reproduction.<sup>43</sup> By the sixteenth century, the rather dispersed Ovimbundu communities outnumbered the Mbundu and Bakongo social units.

Urban development in Angola was less systematic during the colonial centuries. It was product of the exploitative interest of European traders and colonizer, who found the slave trade more productive than agricultural plantations or extensive cattle husbandry. In part this was due to the dispersed population, distributed in villages that operated with certain autonomy from a centralized power before contact with the Europeans. After the European arrival in the sixteenth century, a demographic dislocation is evident both by dispersion and depletion of human beings.

Around the sixteenth century Luanda became the urban space that concentrated the slave trade, the commercial activities that blossomed by the flood of commodities from Europe and the demand from a growing population engaged in the slave trade, and the political administration that ensured the good functioning of both. In fact, from Luanda emerged the European disputes for the predominance on commercial routes, supply of slaves, and the maintenance of the fleets ready to send them across the ocean. The city also contributed to the development of a circulation of agricultural products and the solidification of local elites.<sup>44</sup>

If the city grew and became the centre of Angolan activities, it was the result of the distribution of African populations, the adaptability of their political institutions to the

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<sup>43</sup> John Thornton, "The Slave Trade in XVIII Century Angola: Effects on Demographic Structures," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14 (1980): 417-428. Linda Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola: 1840s to the Present* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000), Introduction.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Miller, *Way of death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 137. Thornton, "The Slave,": 424-425; Linda Heywood, "UNITA and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27 (1989): 49-51; Heywood: 'Towards,': 146-148.

changes brought by Europeans, and pre-existing distinctions. These three factors will be observed considering the influence of cultural aspects that changed after African/European interaction —*i.e.* ethnolinguistic differences, religions and ideological influences. The goal is to illuminate the emergence of a political culture with pre-colonial roots, until the early nationalist upheavals for self-determination in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In the analysis of contemporary guerrilla representations I will rely on some of the classic differentiations presented by most of the social researchers studying Angola in the last decades. I consider that African history must be detached from western categories of analysis that barely resemble its historical experience; I also agree with the fact that comparative research is possible only after the delineation of broad process that in this case must associate Latin America and Africa in a theoretical framework. However, in order to convey meaning for academic research purposes, a general picture of both sociohistorical contexts will be necessary and will be based upon certain generalizations. This does not ignore particularities and its influence in long range process, and promotes an organization and selectivity that can be unfair and incomplete, but is helpful in order to construct the model above mentioned.

### **Social Mobility and Distinctions in Angola**

The societies that occupied today's Angola long before European occupation were culturally varied and organized around political institutions, patterns of territorial mobility, and social forms of organization expressed in different lineages. This shaped patterns of identity that persisted even after the deleterious slave trade and concomitant

civil wars sweeping the territory. After European arrival, the contact with the Ngondo kingdom in the Luanda hinterland enabled the Mbundu to establish a close relationship of economic and political dependence. For instance, the Mbundu elites became intermediaries for the slave exchange, especially those slaves destined to America. The implications of this were diverse. Agriculture and other economic activities were now directed towards supplying Luanda's growing market. On the other hand, slave trade developed an internal trade of humans and agricultural products, fostered the social mobility of early Mbundu elite by the formation of hierarchies among the communities based on their role as intermediaries in the Portuguese slave trade, and the establishment of specific activities related to manhunt or mobilization of captives brought from central Angola or beyond.<sup>45</sup>

The slave trade benefited Mbundu only partially. Their involvement with the slave trade was a strategy to avoid their own deportation or cultural extinction, and represented only an instrumental inclusion into the colonial Portuguese society. The formation of elites within the Mbundu communities engaged in commerce with European fleets was a matter of Portuguese concern. For instance, the administrative authorities and slave traders wanted to avoid the emergence of groups that opposed their political control.<sup>46</sup> The exclusion was promoted by the systematic separation of black Africans and *mestizos* from administrative positions, and the limitations of the profits they could accumulate in economic activities. However, the Portuguese had a weak control over their overseas territories, and many Africans —especially Mbundu in the Luanda region— thrived as a result of their engagement in manhunt and enslavement, exchange

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<sup>45</sup> Miller, *Kings*, 155

<sup>46</sup> John Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624-1663," *Journal of African History* 32 (1991): 27-32.

of products, the possession of small number of slaves. The participation of the Mbundu in manhunts, where their role was to guide and fight on behalf of the Europeans who dare to get into the territories beyond the Luanda or nearby entrepôts, enabled them to establish close relationships and learn European languages.

This role as soldiers and guides marked the Mbundu as the link for slave trade, especially in the eighteenth century. When Portugal had military and administrative control over the port of Luanda, and this position was no longer menaced by other European private fleets, the commercial alliance between European traders and Mbundu intermediaries was signed. For instance, in the first half of eighteenth century the Ovimbundu populations were both dispersed and separated from their former role as cattle and meat suppliers due to the increasing demand of slave labor throughout America, and the flourishing of Luanda and Angola as the cornerstone for the trade of human beings across the ocean. The Mbundu then became a significant purveyor of slave labor in the southern African territories, and they created the conditions for the early formation of a *mestizo* elite merging African descent and European stock. This was tackled by the Portuguese authorities, who established social and racial distinctions by classifying the role of Africans in the slave trade, commercial activities, and domestic services.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution. Vol 1. The Anatomy of an Explosion 1950-1962* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), 98-107; René Pelissier, *La Colonie du Minotaure. Nationalismes et Révoltes en Angola 1926-1961* (Paris: Pelissier, 1978), Chapter 2 and 3; Messiant, *L'Angola Colonial*, 170-209; Thornton, "Legitimacy," : 38-40.

## **The Constitution of Distinctive Boundaries: Race, Language and Identity**

Although prior to European arrival rivalries existed among the societies present in today's Angolan territories, they were not absolute forms of political enmity. A system of co-dependency prevailed that nurtured some distinctions or types of dominance, but they were not so clear-cut or overwhelming as after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The lines of ethnic distinction existed, but it was and after European contact that they became practical in the political sphere, and self-reproductive in cultural terms. The divisions between Mbundu, Ovimbundu and Bakongo became the idiom of any embryonic political formation in Angola, and only became evident late in the nineteenth century with the first steps for self-determination and emancipation, after the disputes between European powers in the 1880s.<sup>48</sup>

Those who benefited from such distinctions were the slave traders. A small local elite also profited from the few privileges given by the Portuguese such as education, the possibility of maintaining some cultural aspects of their lives, and the closer contact to activities that became central in the economic life in Angola —agriculture and cattle husbandry. There was not a specific ethnolinguistic group privileged or destined to be the emergent Angolan African elite, but the system of social segmentation created by the Portuguese rule benefited in particular the Mbundu. It is necessary to consider this closely, as it can be the element that helps to explain the use of ethnic distinction as a mean to gain positions in a social structure that disable systems of mobility or impeded the accumulation of wealth in non-European hands.

Mbundu elites historically controlled Luanda's hinterland, which gave them a deep knowledge of the population, and the productive capacities of the land, and they

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<sup>48</sup> Heywood, "UNITA," 57-62; Heywood, *Contested Power*, 12.

constituted a vast majority of the population in the region. Even though white settlement disrupted the land rights and there existed pressure from the northern Bakongo group to possess productive land by opening new settlements, the Mbundu had a precedent of territorial control and rights of occupancy. In the period of the Ndongo kingdom — fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries— the Mbundu gained experience in the administrative affairs of large territories encompassing diverse ethnic identities. Joseph Miller suggests that the Mbundu learned how to integrate social groups by the deployment of institutional bonds. It was not product of economic and political affinity, dependency or straight subjugation, but the creation of a polity that integrated the African groups. Such integration was a particular political arrangement rather unique in a context of rivalries among African communities after the European arrival. The previous existence of institutional frameworks among Mbundu communities established the infrastructure of power and the legitimacy to assume social control.<sup>49</sup>

The Mbundu were not harshly affected by the slave trade in part because of such institutional bonds that promised internal stability and cohesion, helped them to benefit from the trade to the detriment of others, and finally enabled them to promote new patterns of distinction within Angola’s colonial society even though they suffered social and political exclusion. If compared to the decimated Ovimbundu ethnic group or the Bakongo who only managed to persist under the aegis of foreign regimes —Congo, Belgian, Portuguese, or Mbundu— the Mbundu had a relative advantage.

The experience of an institutional trajectory was reproduced in the ability to understand the idioms of power. In a context of crisis, this enhanced the emergence of

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<sup>49</sup> Miller, *Kings*, 24-27, 77-79.

strategies of subtle action regarding future rewards.<sup>50</sup> For instance, the Mbundu were more directly involved in intensive agriculture, commerce and slave trade. This facilitated the fast learning of the Portuguese, English and French, the knowledge of European trade rules and some basic aspects of the administrative tasks. The Mbundu ties to power in Angolan society were temporarily separated from the effective mechanisms of social control. Besides, their closeness to the Portuguese implied a process of miscegenation and the formation of a new social breed eager to exercise effective economic and political power in the nineteenth century. The racial mix promoted the whitening that so often is mentioned in the guerrilla sources as a reason for Mbundu mistreatment of the Ovimbundu or the Bakongo in Angolan society. Now it is necessary to analyze how exclusion of other ethnic groups was institutionalized and ended up benefiting certain social layers in Angola in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **Religion, Education, and Social Mobility**

The change in the administrative role of the European monarchies was essential to transform their presence in African territories. In the Portuguese case, during the eighteenth century the slave trade and commercial companies had the effective control over the political affairs, and after the French revolution the transition towards a modern colonial management was affected by the Independency in Brazil, the decline of Angola as main provider of slaves, and the crisis of the trade in the second half of the century. The failure in the colonial administration was accompanied by the meager results of the

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<sup>50</sup> Patrick Chabal, ed., *A history of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), Introduction; Patrick Chabal and Jean Pascal Daloz, *African Issues. Disorder as a Political Instrument* (London: The International African Institute-Indiana University Press, 1999), 11-43.

Catholic Church building institutions of control. This was due to the more direct intervention of protestant churches through missionaries. In part, the slave trade brought Dutch, British and American missions as part of a moral crusade to expand the influence of western values that could facilitate the social control or expanded the economic jurisdiction of each European empire in such weakly administered African territories as the Portuguese colonies.

In hand with the traders came the possible expansion of agricultural products in demand in Europe. In Angola the missions had a fundamental role bringing innovative agricultural methods, expanding the settlements, and establishing private land tenure for Africans or Europeans who were ready to transform the political face of Portuguese colonies. The missions had good reception in towns and villages throughout Angola, and in urban areas around productive projects that represented possibilities of future investment for British, Dutch or American industries. The wane of Luanda as the core of economic dynamics in Angola was a result of the construction of infrastructure in Benguela, and the opening of new extractive economies in the territory, especially mining and agriculture.<sup>51</sup>

This process was possible thanks to elements such as the investment of European capital, the adaptation of moral principles of labor among African communities under the aegis of protestant churches and missions, and the influence of European and American churches to facilitate the technical training of Angolans. These three aspects contradicted the mandates of Portuguese colonial doctrine and fostered trust, receptivity and support of protestant churches by African populations. This bond galvanized as Portuguese rule

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<sup>51</sup> Didier Peclard, "Religion and Politics in Angola: the Church, the Colonial State and the Emergence of Angolan Nationalism, 1940-1961," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (1998): pp. 160-186.

weakened and declined after the nineteenth century, a process that was parallel to the dynamism of investments from other European powers especially after the 1885 scramble for Africa, and as a result of the need for rough materials during the I and II World Wars. The investment was not as significant as in other African territories, but at least helped to create the elite and technocracy that hand in hand with other educated sectors created the upper crust of Angolan society in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup>

The final component of the emergent elites came from the Africans closest to the political structure of Portuguese colonial administration. Although Africans were unable to act as administrators, in the few cases that happened it was rather exceptional symbolic acts of Portuguese political deference, and were the elder and elite's top ranks who occupied positions of notability. However, it was not significant and very few families reached a place close to the dominant white sectors. Instead, they amassed wealth and invested it in education for their children. In general, *mestizos* used education and assimilation for social climbing. This option was limited to a very few families due to the omnipresent exclusion of Africans from political power. The educated elite that emerged in the 1920s opted for the exile in Britain or France, and some *asimilados* stayed in Portugal promoting the decline of the colonial rule. This was the intelligentsia that in the 1950s created the political groups in whose labyrinth of acronyms several historians have attempted to explain the emergence of nationalist aspirations in Angola.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Messiant, *L'Angola*, Chapter 3; Pellisier, *La Colonie*; 259-301 ; Marcum, *The Angolan*, 198-215.

<sup>53</sup> Jhon Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution. Vol 2. Exile, Politics and guerrilla Warfare 1962-1976* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), 35-70; René Pellisier, *Les Guerres Grises. Resistance et Revolées en Angola 1845-1941*(Paris : Pelissier, 1977), Chapters 2-6.

## **The Utopia of Intellectuals in Power**

The corollary of social distinctions in the Angolan society is represented in the emergence of an intellectual elite as the force that mobilized urban upheavals through the first half of the twentieth century. It might be necessary to avoid the common pitfall of historical explanation which attributes to the ethnolinguistic features the emergence of nationalist ambitions and its relevance in the formation of the three main political groups in the second half of the twentieth century. To attribute the direct connection of the MPLA to Mbundu, the FNLA to the Bakongo or the late formation of the UNITA by a majority of Ovimbundu may be convenient for generalizations, but impedes envisioning the process of elite formation. Easy generalization may obscure as well the analysis of elements that nurtured the political and historical representations, the symbolic tissue and all the mechanisms that gave a minority the legitimacy to hold political power.

The study of guerrillas might offer a perspective to analyze how in a vastly illiterate society, knowledge and language became the idioms of power and enabled the fast establishment and reproduction of ethnic and linguistic distinctions that were fostered by the Portuguese administration, and ended up profiting the small elites emerging during the epoch of colonial decline. Nationalist projects generally appear in the imagination of just a few enlightened individuals through enticing melodies of feats that glorify a pursuit of freedom, but can this happen in a society that is illiterate and eminently rural? The MPLA represented the core of the Angolan intelligentsia, sponsored by liberal Europeans and echoed by the convulsed nations throughout the former colonial societies. Of course here the nation was invented as happens in many historical episodes and contexts, and the leaders were educated in other languages and countries. The leadership of the MPLA as a guerrilla force was formed by poets, journalists, writers, and

white collar enthusiast of the nationalist cause who had minimal touch with the concrete effects of Portuguese domination.

What makes Angola an interesting case for the study of historical representations and revolutionary processes is the origin of its militancy. The MPLA had difficulties creating rural war fronts, and connecting the village with the militants in the bush. Also, their triumph obligated them to create institutions to ensure the regime's endurance.

When the MPLA became the new state party, the new establishment, two factors affected its legitimacy. First, the low representativity of its leadership and militancy compared to the wide range of ethnic groups in Angola. Second, the weak linkage between the group and the broad non-urban, non-literate population that wanted to occupy a place in the political structure, but arrived too late to central Luanda the day that Angola awake as a nation in November 1975.

**PART II**

**DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES: TOWARDS EMBRYONIC  
INSTITUTIONS**

## Ideology and Legitimacy in a Study of Historical Representations

Guerrilla movements are military organizations involved in a social transformation via political struggle and cultural production.<sup>54</sup> Both the cultural and the political will be analysed as formations of language, knowledge and power, closely attached to ideological principles (National Liberation and Marxism-Leninism) that promote *strategies of action*. Two aspects are fundamental to explain *change* here: *ideology and legitimacy*. These help to articulate insurgent cultural reproduction of *discourse* and *practices* as *representations* either individually or organizationally in a complex socio-historical context.

The first, *ideology*, was a principle of convergence for militants with different backgrounds, and preceded the specific definition of a political purpose. *Ideology* here functions in an early or embryonic phase. In the origin it was a *perspective of the world, a form to articulate experience in a political context, envisioning national liberation as the main goal for each organization*. After the 1970s, in both the MPLA and the ELN the ideology transformed from a national liberation towards one with a clearer revolutionary nature. This *ideological change* is evident in the acceptance of Marxist-Leninist precepts,

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<sup>54</sup> Guerrillas are mainly organizations; they struggle against other organizations for resources such as legitimacy, political support, territory, supplies, etc. Their consistency depends also on how they resist the strength of their opponents, and that is as much an objective as a subjective factor. For instance, guerrillas depend on the support from communities in the local scenario, and there their ability to create firm links with political leaders not engaged in warfare, clientelist relations, or international support—for instance, to gain the status of belligerency that makes audible their voice in the international community. This can be associated with what Pierre Bourdieu and Tim Hallett call *dispositions*. Power is negotiated within and outside the organization, and its balance depends on material and subjective aspects. A symbolic struggle for devices of power occurs, and legitimacy spring from that internal and external negotiation. These disputes of symbolic power change as the organizations progress in time, so they promote what Ann Swidler calls *strategies of action*. This notion is not very far from that illuminated in the 70s by Michel Foucault. What is interesting is that this research can merge two traditions of social theory; one in terms of political utility of cultural artifacts such as discourses and practices—Michael Foucault—and the other on the influence of organizational dynamics and symbolic disputes of power in micro-level see Ann Swidler, “Culture,”; Hallett, “Symbolic,”; Bourdieu, *Outline*, 66-67; Foucault, *Genealogía*, Chapter 8-9.

the use of historical materialism as a method of action and thought; it is present in documents with political purposes, oral sources, or informal texts dedicated to express guerrilla's version of history.

At the same time, both guerrilla groups also looked for acceptance within their own societies, so they promoted *strategies of action* in order to gain social *legitimacy*. In other words, *legitimacy is the justification of guerrilla struggle based on specific motivations of a historical nature, and is framed by ideological principles of action and thought*. The past was assumed as a source of *legitimacy*, along with a close interaction with communities subjugated by the establishment or a colonial power. In other words, *ideology* and *legitimacy* constituted the lens and focus of the guerrilla approach to the historical experience within each society. This necessarily had to be presented in a formal language, so it emerged as a discourse.

Then, *historical discourse* and *practices* galvanized in different forms. First as explanations of reality—an instance of ideological transformation based on contextual necessity—and secondly in the form of political imaginaries; finally, *discourse* and *practices* assumed the form of *embryonic institutions*. The *New Society* was in gestation. Structural anthropology conceives this process as linguistically formative, and a necessary instance for the consolidation of a historical thought in traditional societies. However, the case studied here show that they were reproduced in *practices*, and also occurred in contemporary societies. This might suggest that the process is apparently natural in the emergence and formation of institutions and social bonds. For instance, among the guerrillas in Colombia and Angola a *discourse* either written or oral about the past was necessary, and it was only institutionalized after the acceptance of a unique

cohesive ideological framework —as happened after the 1970s internal crisis in both groups.

The *historical discourse* in the guerrilla movements studied was preserved in documents or transmitted by quotidian forms of insurgent interaction. *Two conventions of language clashed in the process of creation and transmission of a historical discourse: the oral and the written. They were an allegory of the inherent distinctions between rural or urban militants (Colombia, ELN), or differentiated the social origin of each militant based on ethnolinguistic patterns of identity (Angola, MPLA).*

The *historical representations* found in the documents allow a classification of *discourse and practices* in features that can help to introduce an interpretation: *historical representations promoted embryonic institutional formations useful for linking guerrillas and the social contexts due to its legitimacy, and the coherence they gained for the support of an ideological framework.*<sup>55</sup>

## **About the Sources**

It is necessary to mention that sources on guerrilla groups are very scarce, and this limitation obligated me to start comparative research. Most of my data came from narratives found in interviews obtained by journalist and social researchers. For instance, the reconstructed names of the ELN guerrilleros were gathered from at least six different accounts about the first ten years of insurgent war. Oral traditions from ELN's militants

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<sup>55</sup> It is necessary to explain how *historical representations* articulate. I will use interpretative categories in order to build upon the main argument of this essay. *The categories to discern the problematic will be: ideology and legitimacy, in a scope of how they structure social experience, in forms of power, language and knowledge.* Although they are closely intertwined, here they are presented in a list; this list should not be considered as an arbitrary typification. Instead, it is an order given for explanatory purposes. The classification relies on the patterns found in the empirical sources.

do not abound, but contemporary studies on the peasant traditions, and rural storytelling fostered the use of oral sources from available interviews. This might be a weakness in the research, but most of the inferences are backed by written sources such as the “proper” historical version of the past written by both guerrillas. The historical discourse that enabled most of this analysis is constituted by the following documents.

The *Compendio Insurrección* gathers documents used by the ELN during its first ten years as its ideological framework. It is formed by two types of sources written between 1964 and circa 1972. First, the pamphlets written for an specific purpose, such as the *Manifiesto de Simacota* (1964-1965) written to announce the existence of the ELN in January 1965; the *Proclama al Pueblo Colombiano*, written by Camilo Torres, in which he informed the public in Colombia of his incorporation into the rural war front. The *Principios Programáticos del ELN* was the main ideological document until 1974, when the internal crisis touched bedrock and promoted the entire reformulation of the ideological perspective of the group. A second type of document found in *Compendio Insurrección* is a long analysis of the context of guerrilla war, explanation of strategies and tactics, or documents commemorating paradigmatic characters of the guerrilla or the left in Latin America.

Another source used is *Simacota, Periodico Político Interno*. It was published in 1981, and constitutes the first complete document dedicated to an analysis of Colombian history. In 222 pages the ELN presents its ideological framework preceded by 75 pages on Colombian history that span at least the last three thousand years. There is very explicit the use of Marxist language and Leninist principles of organization, tactics and revolutionary strategies of struggle. Finally, the *Asamblea Nacional Camilo Torres* is a

longer document dedicated to presenting both the ELN's version of Colombian past, and the explanation of the tactics and strategies necessary for a successful revolutionary process. This last document appeared in 1984-1985 reproduces almost exactly some parts of the above-mentioned 1981's written version. I found that this reproduction was systematic because it happened once more in a document of the same nature in 1990. This suggests that the ELN did not revisit the text very often after the internal crisis. The poor revision within the guerrilla of the ideological and historical sources written is a process simultaneous with the increase of both military activity and of the size of every war front, whilst actual political support from the communities declined.

The MPLA's sources used were the following. Interviews published by European writers where a perception of the past is shown, narratives written by guest journalists or militants, and several compilations edited by social analysts, former MPLA militants, or political followers of the group. Two documents are considered as the written version of the past. The first, *Historia de Angola*, is a book that explains Angolan history with a heavy Marxist language. This document was initially edited and published by the *Centro de Estudios Angolanos*. This centre was a producer of ideological documents by militants in Europe and African countries, which gathered financial sources to sponsor left wing publications to support the MPLA. Tracing back its origins, some sources mention it as used by MPLA's leader as early as 1965; however, there are not consistent proofs of its existence, and the language used is quite different to the one commonly used in other documents of the 1960s, which suggests that it was a late version. However, similar documents were used and distributed among urban militants and leaders.

The MPLA oral version of the past is not compiled in a unique set of interviews. Instead, tracking it I looked up every book published by European supporters, because often they transcribe long quotes from militants. The only documentary source that is compiled is a group of narratives made by Axel Fleisch.

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

The purpose in this chapter is to show how *historical discourses* emerged and transformed in both guerrilla movements. They passed from oral to written forms of textuality.<sup>56</sup> This change is the result of a simple conviction among the leaders in the guerrillas: that a scientific form of explanation could increase the *legitimacy* of the groups, enhancing their political aspirations to the power. Marxism was considered both a scientific path to reach knowledge, and the appropriate ideological source of power enabling the creation of social laws that predicted a desirable communist future.

The transition of the *historical discourse* from an oral version to a highly sophisticated written document depended on changes in the process of internal interaction, which progressively privileged formal education instead of traditional forms of sharing knowledge common among many societies in Africa and rural communities in Colombia. Although it is difficult to make an extensive analysis of the content of these versions of the history written by the ELN and the MPLA, it is important to mention that they were created during the processes of internal crisis experienced by both organizations. They reflect internal discussions that defined their ideological lineage merging both national liberation principles and international Marxist ideas current by the 1970s throughout the world.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Fairclough, *Critical*, 27-29.

<sup>57</sup> Before the creation of ELN and MPLA, the *historical discourse* of the communities functioned more like what Foucault calls 'counterhistory'. This reference can be found in Nietzsche and Foucault, but methodologically is difficult to analyze. Among its characteristics, counterhistory is a politically biased version of the past used and legitimized in the struggle for power among those social sectors historically excluded from the structure of power and segregated to secondary and subordinated roles.

Some other aspects are of interest. First, authorship faded away and was replaced by anonymous texts that aseptically followed dialectics and historical materialism as the method and philosophical source of knowledge. Secondly, they become the common textbook for militant's formation in the War Fronts, and in its creation were used empirical resources generally dismissed in the official version of the history held by the Establishment. The case of Angola deserves special attention, because some sources are apparently apocryphal or just were copied from studies written by ideologues in Europe or Northern African countries.<sup>58</sup> These sources were constantly rewritten in order to attribute to the MPLA important facts and dates of the insurrectional upheavals in Angola in the 1960s, favoring the fragile legitimacy of its leadership among communities and other political groups in Angola.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the *historical discourse* in the MPLA and ELN took the form of written texts in order to accelerate the indoctrination of new militants. New formal meetings oriented to teach ideological elements to new militants displaced the highly ritualized process of night talks. This happened especially in the early years of 1970s when both military actions and recruitment of new militants grew steadily.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> It was found that many of the data and figures used by Mario de Andrade in two documents published in France were adopted as the official sources for the later written versions of the historical discourse in the MPLA. See De Andrade, *Liberté*, 23-65; De Andrade and Marc Ollivier, *La Guerre*, Introduction and chapters 1-3. The figures, productive estimates and demographic data were used by the MPLA in the book *Historia de Angola*. Its use continued in official textbooks on history when the MPLA became the party state in Angola after 1976. The use of Andrade's work also can be noticed in the organization of the historical process that does not have important differences to a similar study for the Algerian history. See: Frantz Fanon, *Sociologie d'une Révolution. L'an V de la Révolution Algérienne*. (Maspero: Paris, 1975), 5-15. Similarities can be observed in another anticolonialist document written by the leaders of the PIAGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde / African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), *Document. L'an VIII de Notre Lutte Armée de Libération Nationale. Rapport d'Amilcar Cabral, Secrétaire Générale du PAIGC*, (Unknown place of publication: mimeographed, circa 1971).

<sup>59</sup> Messiant, "Chez nous," 181-182; Carlos Pacheco, *MPLA*, 25-58.

<sup>60</sup> Medina, *ELN*, 33-36, 51; López Vigil, *Camilo*, 25-27; Castaño, *El Guerrillero*, 46; Arango, *Yo Vi*, 83-94, 99-111. Mabeke-Tali, *Disidencias*, Chapter 4 and 5.

## **Knowledge**

The ELN and the MPLA considered themselves to have privileged perspectives of the world and the reality they were about to transform. They assumed their analysis of reality and history as a truth —like in every political unity, they had a version of history ideologically conceived— that enable them to impose a new pattern for social organization. Social change —either national liberation or socialist revolution— was a stimulus to create the better conditions towards a new stage, a stage where Colombia and Angola evolved as *New Societies*. This is proper of teleological ideologies, and is natural of western political systems of thought based on a particular philosophy of history. A new historical consciousness was about to blossom, bringing a new framework to produce truthful knowledge.

The *New Society* represented a new pathway towards knowledge and the enlightenment brought by its shining truth. For instance, the texts where the *historical discourse* appeared in the 1970s and 1980s helped the ELN to create several new editions of the texts both for internal use and to inform journalists and social analysts. In the case of Angola, the written version of the past was published clandestinely in Europe in 1965-1975, and distributed in the rural war fronts and urban militant groups in Angola, and served as the model for most of the textbooks used for teaching history in schools after 1976. After this date, during the stabilization of Angola as an independent nation, the MPLA's *historical discourse* became institutionalized as the official version of the past. The ELN have not reached the power, but a similar process happened in a local/regional scale during the late 1970s and 1980s where small schools, teachers and peasants

discarded the official history<sup>61</sup> replacing it with narratives with their own perceptions of the past and oral versions of the ELN's *historical discourse*.

## **Transmission**

Knowledge about society was considered a form of emancipation from traditional forms of oppression. It was an alternative approach to social experience that also created meaning and fostered consciousness. In order to transcend the conditions of political oppression it was necessary to articulate new forms of cognitive interaction. The ELN and the MPLA adopted forms of education to transmit that ideologically framed knowledge within communities and among its militants. The forms of transmission of the insurgent *historical discourse* were originally traditional means used by peasants such as oral narratives, songs, myths, collective memories and the reading of texts aloud. Progressively —around 1968 in Colombia and 1975 in Angola— the transmission of the *historical discourse* changed towards written texts as the privileged means for knowledge transmission. This phenomenon is important because it helps to recognize the existence of social distinctions in Angola and Colombia.

For instance, in Colombia the ELN leadership intended to indoctrinate its militants with a written version of the *historical discourse*, but rural militants ignored the meaning of concepts such as ‘historical materialism’, ‘class struggle’, ‘class consciousness’, ‘alienation’ or ‘exploitation’. The ELN was formed by two main types of guerrilleros. The urban militants had good educational qualifications and in general

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<sup>61</sup> About the official version of the history in Colombia see Darío Betancurt, *Enseñanza de la Historia a Tres Niveles* (Bogotá: Editorial Magisterio, 1998); Germán Colmenares, *Las Convenciones Contra la Cultura* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1987), 15-47; Miguel Aguilera, *La Enseñanza de la Historia en Colombia*. (México: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1951), 48-66.

constituted the ELN's 'political' leadership, whilst rural guerrilleros, mostly illiterate, became the core of its 'military' structure. The militancy had had a different access to the understanding of Colombian history. The rural guerrilleros knew about history after their own experience of suffering whilst the urban militants learned history in schools and universities thanks to books written by or lectures given by scholars who used sophisticated concepts and methodologies in their analysis.<sup>62</sup>

The ELN's rural militants preferred narrative forms of historical explanation. Also, they understood historical facts based on the actions of particular characters, heroes or foes whose feats were narrated in legends that mixed reality and fantasy. This was a creative process nurtured by social memory, in opposition to what western historiography considers as 'historic.' In part this explains why peasant's knowledge is associated in social sciences with 'myth.'<sup>63</sup> However, after 1974 the militancy's access to a certain version of history become homogenized by the use of mimeographed textbooks where the history of Colombia was presented in simple categories that formed a basic linguistic infrastructure to understand more abstract texts of ideological nature. The ELN's *historical discourse* is a good example of the change of ideological principles because of the concepts and classifications of historical periods it used. Ideological adscription was important in the 1960s and 1970s, because it was an identity marker for political groups in relation to other left or centre-left organizations in Colombia.

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<sup>62</sup> De la Torre, "Nacimiento," 14-18, 105, 125; Medina, *ELN*, 43. López Vigil, *Camilo*, 35, 121; Harnecker, *Unidad*, 31-32, 44-45, 52.

<sup>63</sup> Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory. Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *El Pensamiento Salvaje* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 110-25, 217-30; Moses Finley, "Myth, Memory and History," *History and Theory* 3 (1965): pp. 281-302.

In Angola, the use of texts on history within the rural war fronts was interrupted by the fast progress of the warfare, the early difficulties of the MPLA to educate guerrilleros with its doctrine, and the impediments for teaching the militancy in everyday meetings. The educated militants clustered in the top ranks of internal hierarchy as political cadres, and there were few rural militants interested in learning whilst fighting. However, in the bush the militants were trained on politics by the use of oral versions of the past, and this continued until the moment when the MPLA triumphed in the dispute for the control of Angolan independent state in 1976. After this, a text became central in the production of historical interpretations,<sup>64</sup> and the urban pamphlets that circulated clandestinely in the countryside became small samples of the official version of Angolan recent past. Oral traditions were the main source for historical reconstruction of processes that happened since the first contact with Europeans, and the first decades of twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> It is important to notice that such historical version was elaborated without undermining the nature of the ethnic divide fermented during the colonial period, and most of the sources for its reconstruction were influenced by similar ideological precepts. To some extent, the history written about Angola reproduced the means of domination that prevailed since the sixteenth century, but were translated to the ideological language of contemporary politics.

Either in oral or written production of narratives, the *historical discourse* grew and developed mainly after 1965, year of the initial publication of the main version of the past used by the MPLA militancy. The traditional means of transmission were reorganized to comply with the political needs of the new regime after the independence.

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<sup>64</sup> MPLA, *Historia de Angola*.

<sup>65</sup> Inge Brinkman, Axel Fleisch, (ed.) *Grandmother's Footsteps: Oral Tradition and South-East Angolan Narratives on the Colonial Encounter* (Cologne: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 1999).

This process was simultaneous with the solidification of educative institutions that appeared in an embryonic form during the years of guerrilla warfare, and silent clandestine activism due to the oppressive Portuguese administrative authorities in Angola.

## **Language**

During the first years of political activism the ELN and the MPLA interacted with communities and indoctrinated militants by using specific conventions of language. Both national liberation and Marxist-Leninism, as every ideology, rely on a particular use of language and categories of meaning that explain the world and experience. Such language evolved hand by hand with the ideological adscription of each group during the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, the early stage of nationalist struggle in both guerrillas was characterized by a national liberation language developed after contributions of different intellectuals engaged in the collapse of colonial domination in Africa and Latin America.<sup>66</sup> It merged local perspectives for the African context written by Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Lucio Lara and Mario Pinto de Andrade. On the other hand, the ELN had an indirect liaison with such international movements, but as part of the tide of decolonization movements it created a particular ideological adscription. In this case the influences were Ernesto Guevara, Mao Zedong, Liberation Theology, Antonio Larrota and the Vasquez brothers in Colombia: everything was merged in a particular conception of liberation struggle.

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<sup>66</sup> Several books are good examples of this, for instance De Andrade, *Liberté*; De Andrade and Marc Ollivier, *La Guerre*; Ulises Casas, *La Rebelión Latinoamericana. De Tupac Amará y José Antonio Galán, al "Che" Guevara y Camilo Torres Restrepo* (Bogota: Ediciones Bandera Roja, 1976); Ernesto Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961) among many others.

Another aspect of the early language in both guerrillas was the clash between a sophisticated language, ideological and formalized, against traditional forms of historical explanation of experience/reality used by militants from rural areas —*i.e.* narratives, oral tradition, songs. The crisis in the ELN (1969-1978) was product of the difficult interaction between rural and urban militants, evident as an impossibility to reach an intelligible dialogue. The early stages were marked by meetings where sharing was the principle of interaction.<sup>67</sup> However, as the group grew and the military activity increased, a rivalry emerged between the political and military branches of the organization. The political branch was led by educated urban militants who controlled part of the hierarchy but in actual terms had little influence on the accomplishment of everyday tasks. The military branch promoted the reduction of academic tasks —required for militancy's qualification, the political formation of cadres, and the discussions of ideological topics in the group. This crisis oriented the ELN to give more importance to military tasks in detriment of political initiatives. Also, the crisis promoted excesses in the use of internal power, the almost annihilation of the urban leaders in the rural war front after summary trials, or the concomitant exposure to death of political cadres in military operations.<sup>68</sup>

In Angola, the MPLA failed during the 1960s to create a consistent rural war front so its networks in villages were rather weak. However, the group had an urban structure that controlled the Luanda region. When the rural areas became its rearguard and the leaders could access Angolan territories clandestinely either via Zambia or Congo (1970-1974), the MPLA rushed to create liaisons with communities. However several linguistic differences affected the process. First, many leaders ignored the local languages, either

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<sup>67</sup> López Vigil, *Camilo*, 121.

<sup>68</sup> Urban militants were sent to combat with basic training or rudimentary weaponry, a strategy to get rid of them used by the military cadres especially in the years 1969-1973.

because they belonged to the ethnic group but never dwelled in their regions, or because they had never learned the nuances of the language —*i.e.* colloquialisms, idioms, and oral traditions. Second, their use of Portuguese showed more characteristics of a European background instead of an African one.<sup>69</sup> This poor attachment to local traditions was due in part to long periods of exile or a western education. Third, many MPLA's leaders belonged to the upper echelons of the Mbundu elite, and since the nineteenth century the ethnic group had a rather scarce contact with rural sectors in Luanda's hinterland. The corollary of these difficulties was a general misunderstanding; the MPLA chiefs had a language too sophisticated for peasants, so the interaction generally was mediated by a local elder, or fostered by the youth who supported the nationalist struggle although in general disregarding the nuances of the organization's political ideology.<sup>70</sup>

*In both the MPLA and the ELN the crisis was a process that oriented towards the settlement of internal disputes, the organization of the hierarchy within new parameters, and the construction of legitimacy within rural communities in Angola and Colombia.* The crisis also shaped the *embryonic institutional* infrastructure that each organization assumed as the point of departure for the constitution of the *New Society*, and especially a *New State*.<sup>71</sup> By the 1970s, in both groups the use of Marxist concepts and a more abstract language became a rule in internal processes of education, but such

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<sup>69</sup> Mabeko-Tali, "Tribalisme, 'Régionalisme', et Lutte de Libération Nationale : la Question Tribale et ethnique-régionale dans la Dissidence au Sein du MPLA dans l'Est Angolais en 1969-1974," *Année Africaine*, Bordeaux, (1992-1993): pp. 465-467; Mabeko-Tali, *Disidencias*, Chapter 7 and 8.

<sup>70</sup>Inge Brinkman, "Violence, Exile and Ethnicity: Nyemba Refugees in Kaisosi and Kehemu (Rundu, Namibia)," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (1999): pp. 417-39; Messiant, "Chez nous,": 170-171.

<sup>71</sup> About the crisis in both groups see Medina, *Elementos*, Chapter 5; Medina, *ELN*, Chapters 3 and 4; Eduardo Pizarro, *Insurgencia sin Revolución. La Guerrilla en Colombia en una Perspectiva Comparada* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo-IEPRI, 1996), 97-118, 205-17; Mauricio Archila, "¿Utopía Armada? Oposición Política y Movimientos Sociales Durante el Frente Nacional" *Controversia* 168 (1996): pp. 25-53; Fabio López, *Izquierdas y Cultura Política, ¿Oposición Alternativa?* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1994); Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 79-120; Correa, *Sueño*, 45-88; Messiant, "Chez nous,": 189; Mabeko-Tali, "Tribalisme,": 480; Mabeko-Tali, *Disidencias*, Chapter 6.

homogenization occurred after a long crisis and internal disputes for power. This can be explained as *a transition towards more explicit organizational strategies of individual coercion, and the embryonic institutionalization of a system that envisioned integrating new militants in urban spaces*. The *historical discourse* of the MPLA and the ELN structured an early form of internal education that legitimized the existence of the group because it included its role in the national history as a fundamental stage of transformation.<sup>72</sup> This helped to entice and involve young militants who rapidly identified themselves with the political role of the group, learned part of its codified ideological language, and found a chance to become part of the transformation of their countries.

It is also important to examine how political groups create a particular logic that explains history, in this case a teleology which articulates past and present with the insurgent project for a *New Society*. *Ideology* is both language and knowledge, and is reflected in political action. It must convince people about the uniqueness of a perspective in order to explain the world. This is evident in the use of linguistic codes. For instance, Marxism was largely accepted in societies in transition during the second half of the twentieth century, in part because it is an entree to a basic understanding of socio-historical processes. Even individuals without a deep knowledge of the historical materialism, dialectics or the philosophical pedigree of Marxism could comprehend its basic ideas. Marxism helped to entice people —especially young people— thanks to its

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<sup>72</sup> Such embryonic educational system relied on the ideological principles adopted, and promoted the legitimization of the group by historical linkages to traditions of social struggle. That was also useful in order to entice young people because it was a fast path to a language that in general is identified with high education, intelligence and sophistication. In other words, the ideological language was a good display of fast social climb, and gave abilities to the militants to explain social processes from a general perspective. This generally offers social recognition, distinction and can empower individuals within a community.

effective framework and reliable explanation of the world.<sup>73</sup> Besides, such linguistic structures are facilitated by the mnemonic devices that frame almost every political discourse. Although these are interesting aspects about the operation of ideologies and *historical discourses* in the social imaginaries and the individual mind, unfortunately there are not available studies about this process.

### **Hierarchy and Social Mobility**

In the ELN and the MPLA, *ideology* operated also as a pattern of internal organization based on a hierarchy. If there were two main branches—one ‘political’ the other ‘military’, the first urban, the second ‘peasant’—it was because they reflected the social context, and how language, knowledge and power intermingle to shape a guerrilla organization. As mentioned above, ideology changed, and also affected the internal hierarchy in the ELN and the MPLA. In other words, *internal hierarchies observed from an ideological perspective help to explain social mobility of the militancy within each group (promotion) and change over time for the organization (progression). The internal distribution of power—military and political branches—allows one to infer the nature of social mobility and the role of institutions if the guerrilla movement takes power. For instance, it is evident that social distinctions and the institutions of social mobility reproduce themselves in a micro-scale, based on a prevalent type of polity which operates in the society.*

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<sup>73</sup> Also, political groups direct their discourses to young people who normally need to find their own place in the world. This is quite common in western societies and is evident in military and anti-establishment organizations.

The military branch was in charge of the struggle and quotidian activities of subsistence. The political branch was mainly committed to the elaboration of documents, doctrine and the continuous construction of an ideological identity. This was fundamental in order to create a political identity in the face of the establishment—or the colonial Portuguese rule in the case of Angola—and other left-wing political groups.<sup>74</sup> If considered in an abstract perspective, each branch corresponds to one of the classic institutions of social mobility—*i.e.* the school, the military. *The convergence of both branches of internal organizational matters is evident in embryonic institutions that legitimated a hierarchy in the group.* These were *embryonic institutional formations* of educative and disciplinary nature.

Every one of the elements enunciated here are closely attached to ideological convictions, and those convictions were historical, affected by change, and passed from nationalism to Marxist-Leninist between the 1960s and 1970s. Although the internal transformation in the MPLA and the ELN has been explained as a result of factors such as military improvement, regional power, size, and support from civil communities,<sup>75</sup> the theoretical framework privileges the analysis of internal aspects of institutional and ideological nature fundamental in the construction of revolutionary imaginaries with the use of *historical representations*. Some examples can help to illuminate the process.

The ELN and the MPLA each used a national liberation discourse until the first half of the 1970s as a strategy to gain public attention nationally and internationally, and

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<sup>74</sup> In many cases the rivalry between left radical groups was harsher than their hatred of the establishment. This promoted divisionism and instability among insurgent groups.

<sup>75</sup> About the crisis in both groups see Medina, *Elementos*, Chapter 5; Medina, ELN, Chapter 3 and 4; Pizarro, *Insurgencia*, 97-118, 205-217; Mauricio Archila, “¿Utopía armada?”; López, *Izquierda*; Walter Broderick, *El guerrillero invisible* (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores, 2000); Medardo Correa, *Sueño inconcluso. Mi vivencia en el ELN* (Bogotá: Findesarrollo, 1997); Messiant, “Chez nous”; Mabeko-Tali, “Tribalismo”; Mabeko-Tali, *Disidencias*, Chapter 6.

as a tactic to involve militants and social support in a local and regional scope of analysis.<sup>76</sup> An early Marxist discourse could have discouraged militants to incorporate into guerrilla groups, especially in a moment marked by polarized politics and internal schisms in the international socialist movement. Instead of Marxist jargon, the national liberation ideology was more adaptable to rural communities. This tendency was reflected in the social support of guerrilla's hierarchy, the popularity of some of its charismatic leaders, something that promoted autonomy for each group whilst rejecting alien intervention. Proof of this can be found in the high contrasts of the *historical discourses* and other ideological documents studied, in parallel to the subtle arrangements that the organizations reached in their first decade in order to gain international support. In this case Angola had complex international compromises, and the MPLA —like both the FNLA and the UNITA— was quite cautious not to commit to a single ideology in the period before 1975, in order to accumulate support, resources and diplomatic recognition from other nations regardless of their ideological orientation: USA, Britain, the USSR, China, Cuba or countries in southern Africa.

The use of a specific Marxist Leninist language and the obedience to its ideological principles occurred only after 1976 in the MPLA and 1978 in the ELN. In both cases, some scholars argue, the ideological adscription had existed previously, but had been disguised in order to attract broad support. Although the acceptance of this process of hidden agenda is matter of controversy especially among scholars and political supporters attached to institutions of social research, in the case of the ELN the leaders admitted in several interviews in the 1980s that it was necessary, especially since

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<sup>76</sup> See for the ELN's case in Medina, *ELN*, 176-190. Harnecker, *Unidad*, 229-231. López Vigil, *Camilo*, 45, 119-20, 170.

peasants constantly feared landowners' or National Army's counterattacks on isolated groups of communist resistance after 1964.<sup>77</sup> In the case of the MPLA in Angola, the ideological decisions of the group were generally a concern of the leadership, and in such affairs lower rank militants had little opportunities to oppose or express inconformity.<sup>78</sup> An exception was the schism in the east war front, and the Ciboya revolt in the Luanda front, but these had more to do with participation within the top ranks of the MPLA hierarchy than ideology.

### **Legitimacy**

Ideology was a fundamental principle in the construction of a *historical representation* in both groups because dialectic materialism conceives 'communism' as a *telos*. It presupposes stages to reach it, which can be associated with periods of time. In other words, historical facts and sociocultural experiences of a community can be explained by classifying its trajectory of social struggle in different epochs. The classification of time changes depending on the ideological system of thought involved. Here ideology meets social action, represented by a group or individuals in a broad social context. In consequence, Marxism can be used in a *historical discourse*, and constructs *historical representations* in order to build the very cement of political action. *Legitimacy* ties up the unities of meaning in a social context giving them coherence in an ideological struggle. It is when thought meets action. It is also the bond that unifies an insurgent hierarchy—internal cohesion—and articulates it with the communities—social

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<sup>77</sup> See, Medina, *ELN*, 90, 94; Correa, *Sueño*, 145; about the violence promoted by landowners, and guerrilla fears of political retaliations against the communities see Eduardo Pizarro, *Las FARC 1949-1966. De la Autodefensa a la Combinación de todas las Formas de Lucha* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo-IEPRI, 1991), 188-90; Pizarro, *Insurgencia*, 56, 224-25.

<sup>78</sup> Messiant, "Chez nous," 176-178.

interaction. What empowers a guerrilla group is the use of violence to bring about social change and the *legitimacy* of its struggle evident in social support and a historical tradition. The legacy of such tradition dwells in the communities and is expressed by *historical representations*.

I suggest two types of *legitimacy* for the analysis of guerrilla warfare in the Angolan and Colombian contexts. The first, *legitimacy as a form of power*, was operated within the guerrilla groups as the principle that affirmed the construction of power in a rigid hierarchy that included forms of social mobility in a micro-level. They were evident in the *embryonic institutional formations* of military and education—social mobility markers. The second, *legitimacy as a product of knowledge*, was evident during the re-organization of each group after the internal crisis in the 1970s, and operated outside the guerrilla's boundaries. *Legitimacy as a product of knowledge* enables each group to create, maintain and transform the interpretations of social experience, by the use of language, and its transmission/democratization through institutions or social practices. In that order of ideas, an ideology is shaped as a form of knowledge useful to explain social processes by using a particular and scientific terminology—a version that deserves trust— laws and predictable results in social and economic aspects.

Eventually, the very structure of a *New Society* becomes the guarantee of social mobility and stability. It resembles the guerrilla hierarchy because social climbing, individual control, security and trust are enshrined in the *embryonic institutions* promoted. They contribute to the formation of what would become the *New Establishment* thanks to the existence of *legitimacy*. This supports the cliché that who controls the past controls the present, and determine what can be expected in the future.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE PRACTICES

*Discursive practices* are actions that structure *historical representations* and political imaginaries in contexts of ideological disputes of power and knowledge. Although *discourse* and *practices* should not be distinguished, by separating them is possible to understand how they are reproduced as cultural objects —*i. e.* texts, rituals, customs. In the guerrilla groups studied here, such *practices* are articulated to *embryonic institutional formations*. Also, individual aspects related to guerrilla warfare such as commitment, group attachment and a particular political identity are of special interest in this research for they represent the relevance that ideological convictions gain by linking personal experiences in the construction of a revolutionary *New Society*. Here the analytical scope is narrowed to consider the group as a social unity or political entity that, separated from society, reflects and reproduces social imaginaries. *Practices* are routines and ceremonies constantly enacted, where values such as heroism, sacrifice and martyrdom promote a particular moral conviction among guerrilla militants. Whilst *discourse* exists as a result of its necessary use and transformations to reflect a socio-historical context, it is in the *practices* that such abstract linguistic inflections, patterns of ideological attachment and social *legitimacy* become meaningful. In other words, *practices* are useful to explain the liaison between action and thought in contemporary revolutionary struggles.

### **Creating Belief for the *New Men***

Every social group necessarily creates identity boundaries. They shape belonging and distinctions based on proximity to the group. The insurgent group is located in a complex social universe. Although guerrilla groups isolate from society, clandestinity does not sever its members from social bonds. It is in social reference that group shapes its boundaries. In both the ELN and the MPLA the process by which a civilian joined the clandestine insurgency depended on the his/her engagement and conviction with ideological precepts, acceptance of guerrilla conditions of quotidian life, and the reverence of its ideology as truthful, and finally the submission to its organizational hierarchy. These parameters are similar to a religious creed mainly because attachment is based on belief.<sup>79</sup>

Almost every action within the ELN and the MPLA was associated or underlined by a remembrance of the past. This was also a form of ritualization of insurgent engagement, and appears in the documents as ceremonies, commemorations, or subtle allusions to the past. Every action framed by such reminiscences is evidence of the specific moment when *historical discourse* becomes enacted, when its existence is completed, and when its goal is achieved. Every *practice* laden with a historical meaning can be traced back to understand the origin of insurgent political imaginaries. These *practices* as enactments of a historical conception of the world legitimize political struggle whilst promoting a reformulation of cultural patterns of identity by attaching individuals to the insurgent political project. In that way the patterns of civilian inclusion are innovative ceremonies that involve members —*New Men*— as New Citizens in the new polity.

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<sup>79</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary*, Book 3.

These principles for integration to a guerrilla war front operated since the early stages of insurgent activity, but progressively lost continuity, especially during the 1980s in the ELN. In both cases either military activities changed decisively, or the functionality of such *practices* became much more than simple enactment. In the case of the MPLA, the frantic speed of nationalist struggle made less important its continuous enactment compared with the highly ritualized process in the ELN, so a link with the past was sometimes relegated to a secondary position. This is a fundamental phenomenon that can help to explain the MPLA's schisms and leadership crisis that occurred during the 1970s. Moreover, the MPLA took political power in 1976, and after that moment became the party-state: every ritual was then converted to a ceremony that legitimized its hold on power. When the MPLA gained power, its military structure became the official military forces, the leader a president, and the rituals became institutionalized as civic or military acts. In other words, their *practices* and *discourse* as insurgent representations became traditions, so their political nature transformed significantly. Every ceremony became the official reproduction of the MPLA's power as it emerged as the *New Establishment*.

The goal of this section is to consider the *embryonic institutions* that can be detected in quotidian activities, and how they shaped belief, behavior, and discipline within the guerrilla movements. The information found in interviews, literary works, pamphlets and historical discourse helps to create a classification of the main practices within the MPLA and the ELN. They constituted routines and customs, and integrated informal examples of coercion within the group. If the *historical discourse* became the infrastructure of the ideological principles integrated in a type of legitimized knowledge,

the *practices* were the effective deployment of mechanisms of control, coercion and discipline that articulated power in terms of force and ideological conviction.<sup>80</sup>

### **New Identity, Heroes and *Pantheon***

The construction of *historical representations* ends up in *a number of personages that legitimize insurgent struggle*. Human paradigms of action and engagement formed around significant names used to baptize militants, commemorate their struggle in rituals, and record their existence in a *historical discourse*. As it happens in the formation of a modern nation, within the MPLA and the ELN heroes become immortalized in a *Pantheon*. A *pantheon* creates a place for the group in history, but as an attempt to build up the bases for a *New Society*. In the case of the ELN, those heroes reflected local, regional and national historical preferences, and situated guerrilleros who died in combat as martyrs. Their actions became ‘paradigms’ for the militants. In the case of the MPLA, leaders in local areas identified themselves with old traditions of struggle against Portuguese rule, and even familiar lineages were invented or supernatural powers attributed to modern guerrilla militants and political leaders.

Individual engagement was established by precepts based on paradigmatic personages who stimulated an imaginary of correctness and proper behavior. Their acts were constantly remembered in quotidian activities of clandestine life. They were part of the doctrine taught, and their lives were ritually enacted in order to shape individual actions. For instance, in clandestine insurgency the change of personal identities was

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<sup>80</sup> Michael Foucault, *Vigilar y Castigar. Nacimiento de la Prisión* (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1985). The mechanisms of discipline and coercion are mentioned by Foucault in the analysis of historical discourses in contemporary totalitarian systems, see: Michael Foucault, *Microfísica del Poder* (Madrid: Ediciones la Piqueta, 1992); *Genealogía*.

common, and in doing so many guerrilleros assumed new names in reverence of paradigmatic heroes of the past. The characters were selected from the national *pantheon* or from regional history. The characters were constantly mentioned in meetings, in narratives that merged facts with legends. In the narratives —like in the myths— facts were changed to comply with the community’s imagination of heroic feats.<sup>81</sup>

The first element that must be illustrated is the radical change represented by the incorporation in the war front. In that moment, the individual separates from his/her social context, and is grafted into a new milieu where his/her individuality changes radically. The identity is changed with a new name and the loss of aspects that marked individuality as a pattern of social recognition. In insurgent warfare homogeneity is a fundamental aspect. The *esprit de corps* grows as individuality fades away, and the sense of communality and interdependence overtakes independence and free will. The change of identity by the adoption of a new name represents the aspirations of the individual and the influence of former experiences.<sup>82</sup> The new name is a first display of agency within the new insurgent world, and also may help as a reference for interaction within the group as a marker of hierarchy among other guerrilleros. It is also a display of commitment to the political group.

In the ELN that choice was important. The baptism was a type of ritual ceremony where the new member was incorporated into the military body, to the activities and intimacies of the group. By adopting a new personhood the militant established a close dependency to the other members. The adoption of a name depended on different

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<sup>81</sup> Harnecker, *Unidad*, 29-34; Medina, *ELN*, 56-78; Vargas, “Tres momentos,”: 43-44; Sanchez Sierra, *Las Prácticas*, 9-11, 14-17.

<sup>82</sup> Foucault, *Vigilar*, 53, 67, 118; Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d’État. Grandes Écoles et Esprit de Corps*, (Paris: Minuit, 1989), Introduction, 70.

possibilities, and generally happened in a festive and highly ritualized environment, like in a religious baptism. Choosing the name was a last chance for individual imagination. Militants opted for pseudonyms based on historic personages, a character in a book, or an intellectual or ideological alter ego. Others chose their name to pay homage to a family member, generally a dominant figure who initiated the militant in the political world. Some others chose a name based on a physical particularity, a form of mocking themselves gaining a closer relation to the others, or simply for the use of a traditional pseudonym. Finally, many guerrilleros allowed the leaders to choose a name on their behalf. It was a display of high deference, or simply resulted because clandestine activities determined the use of a particular name in an ordinary or informal change of the individual identity.

Some examples can help to understand name and identity change as a process laden with meaning for the guerrilleros. Fabio Vásquez Castaño chose several pseudonyms randomly, like ‘Carlos’, ‘Helio’ and ‘Alejandro’, this last after the ancient Greek whose feats he used to read and influenced his own profile as a leader. Medardo Correa, a guerrillero from Valle del Cauca, described common names guerrilleros chose, such as ‘Geronimo’ (the native American leader), Antonio (after Antonio Larrota, a MRL instigator in the 1950s, an inspiration to radical students), ‘Emiliano’ (after Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican guerrillero), ‘Guadalupe’ (after Guadalupe Salcedo, a peasant guerrillero in the 1940s civil war in Colombia), ‘José Antonio’ (after José Antonio Galán, instigator of a revolt in Santander in the late colonial epoch), or ‘Ernesto’ (after the iconic hero of Cuban Revolution, Ernesto ‘El Ché’ Guevara). Medardo Correa’s choice, in an attempt at being original and to celebrate something different and relevant for himself,

was ‘Anibal’ (after Hannibal, military leader of the Carthage civilization), not only based on his feats fighting the Roman Empire in the antiquity, but also as a tribute to his hometown named Cartago, after that city in North Africa.<sup>83</sup>

There was an urban militant who chose as pseudonym ‘Clemente’, after the name of a heroic cowboy mentioned in the book *La Voragine*. This choice could be in order to highlight abilities that he wanted to contribute to the organization. This was quite common in the case of the MPLA in Angola, where urban militants were inspired by a rich political literature. In the ELN the use of a nickname or the selection of a pseudonym that started with the first letter of the actual name was quite common. For instance, Pedro Gordillo was called ‘Parmenio’ (a common peasant name); Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, today’s military leader of the group, used to be called ‘Norberto’, ‘Darío’ (probably after the Persian emperor Darius I) or ‘Gabino’. He also received in 1964 the name ‘Comején’ (a bug that slowly eats the toughest timber).<sup>84</sup> Hernán Moreno went by ‘Chiquitin’ (young boy) or ‘Pedro David’; Paula González was called ‘La mona Mariela’ (Mariela the blond), and Manuel Pérez, a Spanish priest engaged in the ELN, was known as ‘El cura’ (the priest) or ‘Poliarco’, this last to honor a peasant who helped him to find its way back to the guerrilla war front after he got lost in the jungle after escaping a military skirmish. Ricardo Lara, a unionist from Barrancabermeja, used the name ‘Marcolino’ (a common peasant name) besides some others for urban clandestine activities. Finally, Camilo Torres used the name ‘Alfredo’ (a common urban name) in his correspondence.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See Sánchez Sierra, *El Discurso*, 34-48; *Las Prácticas*, 5-11.

<sup>84</sup> It was a pseudonym used by his father, a well known activist regionally associated with a substantial political work among peasants in San Vicente de Chucurí, a formerly PCC leader since the 1930s. About his father see: Vargas, “Tres momentos,”: 42; Medina, *ELN*, 47-49.

<sup>85</sup> In general a good formula was the adoption of the first letter of the name to create an alias as in these examples: Silverio Afanador used the name ‘Silverio’; Domingo Leal, another Spanish priest who turned guerrillero, was baptized ‘Delio’ by Fabio Vasquez Castaño; Salvador Leal was ‘Saul’, Jorge González was

In Angola the examples are quite similar. The guerrilleros changed their names as soon as they were integrated into the rural war front, and in clandestine activities in cities or villages they used pseudonyms as well. Many names belonged to long familiar traditions, and were a subtle reminder of a genealogy, a place of origin, and/or a social status that was meaningful only among Africans. In some cases those names could not be understood by the Portuguese authorities, so it was a good form of local reference and an identity marker difficult to uncover or trace by the Portuguese Army or the PIDE. Secrecy was a fundamental part of quotidian guerrilla life, and the generic word ‘*camarada*’ (comrade) or ‘*hermano*’ (brother) was used to avoid identification. In that sense, the case of MPLA in Angola, as the above-mentioned of the ELN are similar to the homogenized categories used in armies, schools, religious congregations, and compartmentalized political parties. The *esprit de corps* had primacy. However, some cases suggest that individual choice played an important role in naming practices in MPLA.

Inge Brinkman offers a classification that links the importance of languages and political aspirations in the nationalist context of war in Angola. To summarize, she mentions how some names came from the need for anonymity, artistic pseudonyms used by the many writers involved in the MPLA, or the aspiration for regional or international recognition.<sup>86</sup> This was quite common among the leaders, who wanted their names widely known, and also promoted the cult of their personalities among militants and civilian followers. Although it might seem contradictory of the strict rules to maintain

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‘Jose’, Luis Jose Solano Sepulveda was ‘Leonardo’; Salomon Amado Rojas was ‘Segundo’; Manuel Muñoz ‘Miguel’; Ciro Silva ‘Conrado’; Avelino Bautista was ‘Abelardo’. See Sanchez Sierra, *Las Prácticas*, 9-10.

<sup>86</sup> Inge Brinkman, “Language, Names and War: the Case of Angola,” *African Studies Review* 47 (2004): pp. 143-63.

clandestine, leaders were more involved in creating links by the adoption of a charismatic aura; besides, many leader in the MPLA lived abroad, so their security was a secondary concern. Naming practices involved many other activities of ritualistic character, such as praise songs, speeches, narratives and honorific ceremonies, so the aspect of memory and cult is integrated to the political aspirations to fame or wide national recognition.

Heroism and honor were also present in names that praised historic figures.<sup>87</sup> They could be expressed in the local languages, or in European languages, especially Portuguese.

Another MPLA naming patterns explained by Brinkman were the use of pseudonyms to underline negative or positive aspects of a militant personality, to honor role models as part of soldiering life, or simply to reproduce youth culture.

The names also were chosen to express personality traits, such as temper, temerity, skills useful during warfare, or aspects of personal history. The guerrilleros wanted to attract attention by the use of fearful similes, mocking associations or a pun useful to create a fluid interaction within the group. Finally, some names were chosen to cause fear in the enemy, a traditional practice in religious rituals and politics in African societies. Although those names were not exclusively selected in proper African rituals, they were intended to threat or intimidate the enemy, to discourage them in the battle field in war cries, songs, transmitted by rumors, or based on the conviction that its mention or simple use was an omen or warranty of protection. African names were used also to foster morale among militants, and were used in many cases by experienced people revered by other militants, youngsters who received their '*baptism of fire*'<sup>88</sup> in the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>88</sup> The practice of a baptism of fire was also present in the ELN. About the ritualistic component of this process of initiation some theoretical aspects have been found in Turner, *The ritual*, Introduction.

war front, or as part of the linkage promoted by some leaders to connect the MPLA with local communities.<sup>89</sup>

Practices of naming in guerrilla groups is probably the clearest evidence of *historical representations*, and it was generally accompanied by commemoration of feats, the assumption of heroic paradigms as moral and ethical guidelines, and the constitution of customs that in its reproduction reached the form of norms, traditions, and *embryonic institutions of law and justice*. In the eventuality of a revolutionary triumph the guerrilla groups this *historical representations* evidence the emergence of forms of political coercion, and the institutionalization of the monopoly of violence in the hands of a group that progressively becomes the *New Establishment*.

### **Discipline, Morale and Individual Behavior**

The base of guerrilla sustainability depended on the harmony between its hierarchy and its *ideology*. It was generally reflected in strong bonds between militants and leaders, promoting stability and a steady growth. The value of ideological principles was also represented in a set of values that appeared soon after the group's consolidation, and gave profile to the guerrillero as a willful fighter.<sup>90</sup> Such insurgent values resulted from the combination of moral principles that govern each society —culturally dependant— and the contextual features that elevated the guerrilla's struggle as historically necessary. The leaders were supposed to embody venerable values and to have a straightforward behavior in order to create the necessary *legitimacy* of its

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<sup>89</sup> Brinkman, "Language, Names," 150.

<sup>90</sup> Schmitt, *Teoría del Partisano*, 51.

hierarchy. There were conventions for leader's behavior, and when that morality was break, the organization's stability or its hierarchical structure was shaken.

A good proof of the phenomena is the crisis occurred within both the ELN and the MPLA in the early 1970s. They might help to understand internal splits and ideological reformulations. Although the guerrillas never had a hierarchy based on a single leader, a leader's misbehavior was regarded as a harmful betrayal to traditional deities or revolutionary heroes, a rejection of a legacy of struggle that affected the enthusiasm of the militancy. In the international socialist block the left wing radical groups had different principles of morality, adopted on regards of each society, and by the same token internal discipline in guerrillas depended on specific contextual conditions. However, some general treatises were assumed almost as rules of thumb in the ELN and the MPLA. A good example was the wide reception of guerrilla handbooks written by Ernesto 'el Ché' Guevara and Regis Debrays.

In its first ten years, the ELN suffered from scarcity of resources, desertions, military attacks, climatic difficulties, and the constant dismantling of its urban structure. The urban ELN structure was both clandestine and compartmentalized, but the intelligence services of the establishment were able to block their work, imprison or kill many students and union sympathizers, and by intercepting their documents and correspondence with the rural leaders organized military operations that decimated the ELN's morale and resources. In the mountains the guerrilleros suffered boredom and the constant movement in order to escape from the National Army. This happened whilst food supplies dwindled and internal divisions increased. The lack of resources promoted disputes and revenges, and sometimes the communities suffered the consequences

because the guerrilla viewed the lack of food donations as a sign of peasants' lack of commit to the struggle.

The guerrilla leaders then became judgmental of outsiders, urban militants, and specially developed strict methods to keep control on every militant within the rural fronts of war. Along with it, punishment grew harsher as the leaders intended to show political or military achievements to other leaders. It was at expense of the very militancy's discipline. For instance, if a militant had eaten more than what actually corresponded to its regular meal, punishment could reach excesses such as summary trials or capital punishment depending on the situation of scarcity suffered by the war front. The stiff application of a vague code of behavior promoted fear and disrespect from the low ranks to the cadres during the early years of revolutionary struggle.

For example, in 1969 an ELN guerrillero stole a *panela* (a concentrated sugar energy bar) and ate it alone. After having been judged by the entire group, the leaders found that future theft could only be deterred by extreme application of justice. He was condemned to death and executed by a firing squad formed by his own companions. It was a ritualized act that included the guerrillero's recognition that the punishment was appropriate for his mistake. In other cases, starving guerrilleros who complained for a small ration of food, or ate a bit more than the others, were sent to guard a position overnight (*la posta*), given burdensome physical exercise, or kept unarmed for a considerable period of time—a risky situation to be in, and one of the worst humiliations to receive in a war front. Because the punishment was removed by a petition of the whole group, this was the seed of an endless chain of shame, humiliation and punishment.

For instance, militants tried to avoid cooking, an activity often left for female *guerrilleras* or beginners. It was often a position used for punishment. The reason of shame in cooking activities was twofold. First, it was degrading to be given a chore otherwise reserved for women or beginners. Second, due to the constant mobility of guerrillas the transportation of pans, supplies and foodstuff was burdensome and loud, and required the cook to move slowly through the forest. A cook was thus an easy target during an attack. In the ELN men forced to be cooks were mocked with the name of ‘*blindados*’ (armored) because of the weight of the supplies and the noise they made whilst walking through the thick jungle.

The abuse of power by leaders psychologically affected men and women as well. In a war front the common guerrillero endured solitude and affective deprivation whilst the cadres pitted themselves in order to have sexual contact with the few women present in the war front —*guerrilleras*. The few women in each front promoted promiscuity and sometimes fostered sexual contact outside the war fronts with peasants. In some cases the militants engaged in sentimental relationships guerrilla were separated forcefully by leaders. The leaders looking forward to start an affair with the woman imposed their authority in order to profit a militant’s absence and obtain sexual favors from the women. This enhanced hatred and lowered confidence in the leadership, whilst promoting disputes and intrigues among leaders, and eroded the trust upon which internal hierarchy was based.

Such behavior destroyed many affective relationships increasing distress and depression in the militancy. The subordinated militants, full of pain and wrath, kept silent to avoid retaliations from leaders. Obedience and privileges for the leaders were common

forms to overwrite norms and customs despite the needs and respectability of subordinates. On the other hand, it was common that *Guerrilleras* disputed the company of a leader because they could gain a special status and privileges within a war front. For instance, leaders' companions had fewer duties, enjoyed flexible schedules, treated the leaders with small parties, enjoyed more food and other so called 'urban pleasures', such as condiments, soap, alcohol and better sleeping conditions.

The above mentioned examples illustrate rather psychological factors in the dramatic changes in the quotidian insurgent life, especially in the period 1969-1973 when both the MPLA and the ELN experienced deep crises. The epoch of an open camaraderie and communality faded away quickly. The internal crisis became more complex when ideological distinctions served as reason to maintain subordination and disrespect. For instance, urban militants in the ELN were more affected by the strict norms of insurgent life in comparison to rural guerrilleros. The ideological differences that framed the binaries rural/urban, military/political, intellectual/peasant were an excellent excuse for the leaders to legitimize subordination and the promotion of individual interests. Yet when the group created and applied its harshest methods of discipline and punishment, the unity and integrity of the war fronts weakened. Authoritarianism did not produce mutual respect or fraternity among militants, but just the opposite: it decreased and eroded the group's internal cohesion. These situations worsened thanks to the progressive restriction of discussions, the use of urban/rural distinctions to marginalize sectors within the militancy—for instance, stereotypes emerged based on ignorance, language and costumes—helped to justify privileges in the hierarchy's top ranks. Finally, the ELN leaders recognized that the failure to maintain the guerrilla active in warfare impeded that

guerrilleros could release pressure in the battlefield against the enemy instead of fighting each other.

The MPLA also had a system of discipline and justice, but its implementation was rather different. First, the late creation of rural war fronts delayed the imposition of strict rules of behavior. Although in the urban clandestine groups the compartmentalized structure was a tacit form of hierarchy, and internal behavior followed unpredicted patterns hard to ignore, the MPLA's disciplinary codes were used specially as a security measure to secure clandestine activities. Although discipline and respect for the hierarchy was important, the codes were not created to restrict militancy's freedom or punish harshly misbehavior. Second, the MPLA's militants in exile and those captured by the Portuguese authorities —both formed the leadership of the guerrilla since the 1960s— had a natural rejection for strict systems of justice, and this prevented or delayed the deployment of means for individual repression. This can be illustrated by the fact that a large majority of the MPLA leaders were writers, journalist, students or poets, so they had a link with groups that struggled for individual self-determination.

In the same vein, when the MPLA formed rural war fronts by the end of 1960s, forms of discipline emerged to preserve its political and military hierarchies, but they were less strict than those of the ELN. Several factors explain this. First, the MPLA appeared in a moment when most of the Angolan population was involved in political activities, which implies that the militancy —at least in urban areas, where the group had regular presence— was aware of the rules. A second reason was the complex political environment marked by a high mobility among groups. This provoked hierarchical volatility. Not only low rank militants but also leaders changed from one organization to

the other at will, even though the ideological differences appear to have been clearly marked and irreconcilable. Although a sudden change to the FLNA or the UNITA was considered a serious concern, the MPLA was probably less strict prosecuting its traitors compared to the ELN in Colombia.

Two motivations can help to illuminate the volatility of leadership in the MPLA before 1975. The MPLA was led by a Mbundu elite, but some of its militants came from other regions or had different ethnic backgrounds. The vast majority of Angolan population belongs to the Ovimbundu ethnic group, but the MPLA's leadership was not prepared to share power in its top ranks. The option was to enlarge the number of leaders to reduce tensions, or allow the withdrawal of cadres separated from the group's mainstream.<sup>91</sup> For instance, the leadership of the East front was challenged several times by militants over ethnic homogeneity at the top of the organization, or by ethnic disparities. However, when militants escaped the MPLA the ambiguous borders between ethnic groups blurred because generally they found a place either in the FNLA or UNITA, and for leaders there were no ethnic restrictions in any group. This shows how clean-cut distinctions were not necessarily a pattern that shaped every war front, or the designation of its cadres. In that sense, the ethnolinguistic divide created during the colonial domination does not fully explain the complex processes of power dispute within the upper ranks of the nationalist groups in Angola. In many cases cadres changed from the MPLA to either the FNLA or the UNITA over power disputes instead of concrete ethnic or ideological motivations.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See Mabeko-Tali, "Tribalisme," 470-82; Mabeko-Tali, *Disidencias*, 134-160.

<sup>92</sup> Messiant, "Chez nous," 161.

The MPLA also faced serious complications in creating a hierarchy or rules of behavior legitimized by a consistent support in villages and isolated areas. This promoted continuous demission of leaders, and massive erosion of the patterns of belief in its lower ranks. In general, those who separated from the group became harsh detractors of it, but the MPLA did not systematically punish them. Phenomena such as divisionism and splits were a permanent threat for the stability in each guerrilla's war front, but their promoters were not punished by strict practices of discipline and justice. The fluidity and dualism of political and ethnic categories that shaped the nationalist movements impeded the operation of such systems, especially in the upper ranks that needed to galvanize. It does not necessarily mean that the MPLA's discipline was relaxed or mild. It rather means that it was different and aimed at different goals, so it should be traced back in different sources if compared to the ELN's case.

The main elements of the MPLA justice system can be studied in oral traditions gathered by Axel Fleisch on colonial historical experiences, and also the interviews obtained by Inge Brinkman among Angolan refugees in Namibia.<sup>93</sup> These sources are the best example of the non written *historical discourse* in the group, and are a marker of the guerrilla systems of justice and discipline. The group deployed its code of conduct among village dwellers in southern Angola. When the MPLA created its rural war front, the Portuguese authorities had already started a strategy of continuous concentration of rural populations in protected areas. A kind of concentration camps was the solution for the

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<sup>93</sup> Inge Brinkman, "Ways of Death: Accounts of Terror from Angolan Refugees in Namibia," *Africa* 70 (2000): pp. 1-24. See also Inge Brinkman and Axel Fleisch, *Grandmother's Footsteps: Oral Tradition and South-East Angolan. Narratives on the Colonial Encounter* (Cologne: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 1999). These oral sources also inspired an article that studies excesses in justice exercise in villages in Inge Brinkman, "War, Witches and Traitors: Cases from the MPLA's Eastern Front in Angola (1966-1975)," *Journal of African History* 44 (2003): pp. 303-25.

Portuguese authorities to prevent the populations from a direct contact with the MPLA, discouraging peasants to support them in their massive mobilization against European rule. To some extent, the MPLA rural war fronts were itinerant concentration camps as well, promoting the Angolans to desperately fled the country and try to find refugee abroad. Inge Brinkman made a complete study of the political dimension of such human mobilizations. I am less interested on the analysis of political ambitions to control populations by locking them behind barbed wire, mines, traps and armed guards,. Instead, I wish to observe how a human tragedy of displacement can be legitimized in a discourse of freedom, revolution, national emancipation and respect of traditions.

However, the population exiled in Namibia and Zambia chose to escape both the Portuguese concentration camps and the MPLA rural war fronts because of the harsh rules they imposed upon civil populations.<sup>94</sup> The justice and discipline of the MPLA affected directly the communities, so an analysis cannot be done by inference from documents written by the organization. The massive refugee camps in northern Namibia, Zambia, and even Zaire illustrate the MPLA's waning social support beyond Luanda, and the traumatic transit from a guerrilla towards a concrete regime after 1976 when became the ruling state-party. Finally, disputes in the local scope were solved in many cases with the excessive use of force by the MPLA's cadres, even though a code of behavior or rules to follow were not explicit. Whilst attending demands from the village leaders, the MPLA leaders applied justice on individuals responsible for activities that the group judged with a bare grasp of the local conditions of life. For instance, cases of healers and witches were often matter of discussion and decisions from the MPLA's cadres; in many

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<sup>94</sup> Inge Brinkman, "Violence, Exile and Ethnicity: Nyemba Refugees in Kaisosi and Kehemu (Rundu, Namibia)," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (1999): pp. 417-39.

cases middle rang guerrilleros had to solve local problems with guerrilla mechanisms of punishment, which resulted in ambiguous positions of the MPLA in relation to topics proper of local traditions and beliefs. In many cases guerrilla cadres punished witches at the request of the village elders, and not as a result of MPLA's political decisions or a consistent management of matters such as religious customs, rules or local traditions.

The emergence of rules of behavior, and its application by punishing or disciplining militants or the members of communities illustrate how in both the ELN and the MPLA embryonic institutions of coercion evolved into more strict rules. Even though these practices were common in everyday guerrilla life and affected differently the individual, the guerrilla group, or the communities, they are difficult to trace back in written sources. However, I presented them as useful to explain aspects such as internal disputes for power, the use of ethnic, ideological or the background or origin of the militancy as motivations for internal divisions and hierarchical volatility.

### ***Ephemeredes***

The *historical discourse* shaped a thoroughly new perception of time. *Ephemeredes* is a concept used here to refer to specific ritual practices related to notions of time, and its constant enactment/reactivation through ceremonies where reminiscences of the past marked the present in a historical perspective. Both the ELN and the MPLA continuously celebrated rebellion and emancipation under colonialism which served as examples for the present. Time was continuously re-signified through the enactment or reverence to the past, its personages, and their heroic actions.

For instance, both guerrilla groups celebrated their dates of foundation with military attacks or cultural festivals in small towns. Within the war fronts the ceremonies acquired a military nature, solemnity and refined ritualism. In general, the names adopted by guerrilleros constituted a link to the past to gain legitimacy in society, and in the case of the ELN the region of Santander was a rich source of historical references.<sup>95</sup> A matter of controversy among guerrilla militants was the reverence of certain figures and historical processes. By rejecting national myths and the traditions that constituted the status quo, the ELN eroded the legitimacy of the establishment's heroes and feats.<sup>96</sup> *The intention was to create a new temporal framework to be used as reference*; in it, the ELN and the change it was bringing about—its new feats, dates to commemorate, and heroes to celebrate—have a central role. However this new notion of time was not as radical as in other revolutionary experiences. For instance, in France and post-czarist Russia the revolutionaries either instituted a new calendar with new names for the days, months and seasons, or the Julian pattern was removed or considerably changed. The ELN never took power, but important dates of its calendar were changed. For example, the national civic rituals were ignored or transformed for the purposes of the insurgent struggle.<sup>97</sup> Ecclesiastic feasts including Easter or Christmas were never celebrated. In some cases, even the mention of such events was harshly punished because it was considered a petit-

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<sup>95</sup> About such references and regional traditions of storytelling and historical rituals of revival, see Vargas, "Tres momentos"; *Magdalena*, 44-56.

<sup>96</sup> Castaño, *El guerrillero*, 46.

<sup>97</sup> The dates to keep and celebrate with new rituals grew steadily during the first decade of insurgent action. The meaning of several civil feasts was changed preserving only the dates marking the emancipation from the Spanish rule (July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1810, and August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1817), the independence of Cartagena (November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1811) a date that coincided with the oath that in Cuba founded the embryonic ELN in 1963. The ELN adopted the regional tradition of struggle as part of its historical continuity, and celebrated the uprising of the *Comuneros* (it lasted several years, between 1780-1790, but was celebrated by the ELN on March 16<sup>th</sup>) the movement of the *Bolcheviques del Líbano*, an early communist rebellion set in 1929 in San Vicente de Chucurí, (Santander, celebrated around September), and the mobilization of students and unions instigated by Antonio Larrota (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1959). Other new dates celebrated the incorporation and death of Camilo Torres (February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966) and the death of Ernesto 'El Ché' Guevara (October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1967).

bourgeois tradition that reified the Colombian society from its real problems, cultural roots and deterred the respect of its own traditions.<sup>98</sup>

But it was not only a question of what and when to celebrate, but how. Most of the dates consecrated had a sad motivation, such as the dead of a charismatic leader, or dramatic moments as antecedents of the revolutionary struggle. The leaders tried to inspire the militants by the elevation of their lives and feats to the level of paradigms. This fostered their morale to keep them fighting under conditions of deprivation. The *ephemerades* were in general an opportunity for display and reverence. For instance, several military actions were planned to coincide with the date of a particular event in the past, so the moral of militants increased by the stimuli of their imagination in favor of the guerrilla success in each attack. Otherwise, a public feast with the community was used as an opportunity for propaganda, distribution of pamphlets, educative meetings, a necessary haircut, dancing and sharing with peasants, a short rejoining with parents and relatives, and other activities that released the accumulated tension within the groups.<sup>99</sup> Always the festivity was presented as a form of reverence to former fighters, dead guerrilleros, political mentors or paradigmatic figures brought from a past that the ELN started to narrate, celebrate and engrave in the rural mentality of Santander's communities.

Some examples can illustrate it. The first military action, a siege of a small town called Simacota in January 1965, was prepared carefully to coincide with the anniversary of a mobilization organized by Antonio Larrota on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1959. As a coincidence —

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<sup>98</sup> Ibidem; see also Harnecker, *Unidad*, 52.

<sup>99</sup> About the tension and stress within the guerrilla war fronts see Lopez Vigil, *Camilo*, 57-59, 137-40; Messiant, "Chez nous," 171-178; Mabeko Tali, *Disidencias*, Chapter 7 and 9; Mabeko Tali, "Tribalismo," 465-478.

or maybe careful strategic planning— it was a Sunday in the morning right after a long Saturday of celebration of *Día de los Reyes* —a religious tradition kept in rural areas— and the day of rest for the privates in a nearby command of the National Army. That day of glory for the ELN was a nightmare for the soldiers and local authorities who found the central square without a policeman, under control of young armed peasants singing anthems, cursing the establishment, and crying out the name of Antonio Larrota. That Sunday the local farmer’s market opened surrounded by streets paved by thousands of pamphlets announcing the awakening of Colombian society from a millenary lethargy represented in the traditional gathering after Sunday’s mass.

With this action several commemorations started. First, the public announce of ELN’s existence, the first tragic death of a guerrillero in action—‘Parmenio’, since that date elevated to the military rank of Captain—the public announcement of the ELN *Manifiesto de Simacota*, and the influence of Antonio Larrota as a paradigm for the group. A year later, in January 1966, Fabio Vásquez made public announcement about the incorporation of Camilo Torres Restrepo, who died five weeks later on February 15<sup>th</sup> in a disastrous attack in Patio Cemento. The combat was planned by Vasquez as part of the ritual ‘*baptism of fire*’ for the former priest.

Every year February 15<sup>th</sup> became another date to commemorate Camilo Torres participation in the ELN. A year after the ELN’s urban militants published the political journal *Frente Unido*, created and directed by Camilo Torres, and in 1970 the ELN celebrated the anniversary of his death announcing the incorporation of a new priest— this time from Spain—to the rural war front. He was also killed, during his Baptism of Fire on February 20<sup>th</sup> 1974. A few years later, a new war front in Arauca was names in

his honor. Camilo Torres posthumously received after few years the posthumous military rank of ‘Commander’, and his name was used for the First ELN’s National Assembly in 1984. The death of Ernesto ‘el Ché’ Guevara in Bolivia also inspired some actions. The most renowned happened in Bogotá in 1971, when Alvaro Valencia Tovar, a General of the National Army in charge of the command of the military institution in Colombia, was attacked in his way to work in an action planned by the urban structures of the ELN.<sup>100</sup> Every year the public universities in Bogotá celebrate October 7<sup>th</sup> with riots against the public force, inspired in Ernesto ‘El Ché’ Guevara, and as part of a ritual that has not extinguished after several decades.

The Angolan case was very different. There are not enough sources to reconstruct a complete group of *ephemeredes*, mainly because the interviews given by the militancy do not present as many examples as the ELN. It also can be explained because its period of proper guerrilla fighting was comparatively shorter—around 10 intermittent years. However, the case is also provocative because of its nuances. In the MPLA the reverence of past facts followed a different framework, based on ideological principles and the rejection of Portuguese commemorations. Besides, the new dates to celebrate were not as many for the MPLA as for the ELN. The MPLA instituted progressively the moments of victory of its struggle as ritual dates for the nation, and they were kept during the fifteen years of its clandestine existence under a lower profile. On the other hand, a disrupted activity in the rural war fronts inhibited these processes that are generally an activity that

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<sup>100</sup> Alvaro Valencia Tovar also was involved in a sabotage organized by the ELN in Bucaramanga—capital of Santander— on March 16, 1966, when appeared a big slogan announcing a bomb treat in the main public place of the city, right before the regular civic celebration of the Comuneros struggle. Valencia was the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Army battalion in Bucaramanga called by coincidence ‘Los Comuneros’. Finally, a small dissidence of the ELN adopted the name ‘16 de marzo’ and kidnapped in 1982 to Jaime Betancur, brother of then President of the Republic Belisario Betancur. The dissidence was rejected and dismissed by the ELN’s commanders, and the president’s brother released after international mediation. See Medina, *ELN*, 77.

contributes to the group's cohesion. The fast development of the war, the impossibility of hiding or concentrating a large number of militants in the bush, and the efficient counterinsurgent action of the Portuguese army reduced the chances of ritual guerrilla meetings and commemorative enactments.

However, the creation of civilian and military rituals after 1976 gives significant clues about the role of celebration of *ephemeredes* and historic characters —*pantheon*— based on the MPLA's version of the past. Whilst the case of the ELN is rich in specific allusions to historic figures, in Angola independency was celebrated by reminiscence of historical African feats, and the creation of public holidays to mark the MPLA struggle. Both types of dates were rather ambiguous. First, the MPLA had difficulties fixing the date of its own creation thanks to the diverse groups that claimed the use of its acronym, the diverse ideological sources that inspired autonomy from Portuguese domination, and the disputed responsibility for the urban radical nationalist protests. For instance, the precise dates of its initial documents are vague and their authorship imprecise; the engagement of exiled leaders accessing Angolan territory from Zambia and Congo, or the clash with Portuguese military in the rural areas are not clearly announced facts and were for a long time matter of controversies.

Secondly, the date that marks the begins of the nationalist struggle —February 4, 1961— has been claimed by different nationalist groups, and its sponsorship disputed by diverse parties in the ideological spectrum. Today the date is celebrated by every political group and has lost most of its meaning. This represented an unfortunate ambiguity for an emergent political group thirsty for identity and singularity in a complex political context. In 1976 the MPLA had few elements who could claim responsibility for sparking the

prisons' uproars and the nationalist struggle in 1961 in Luanda, so the date was dismissed as part of its *ephemeredes*.

In terms of its insurgent struggle, the nature of the guerrilla warfare in Angola also affected the use of dates as a reminder of commemorative feats. It happened too fast, and the victories and setbacks lined-up in so short periods of time that dates became less and less representatives of military achievement. Besides, victories were rather small, dates were quickly forgotten, and the meager achievements were not enough for inspirational purposes even though the number of casualties and the heroism of some cadres was exaggerated. Also, the fact that there was not a final decisive moment of Portuguese defeat, and instead its withdrawal was scheduled several months in advance, spoiled the moment of a long awaited feat. Instead of this, the instant chosen for evacuation of the last representatives of colonial rule emptied the moment of its symbolic significance. Instead of a celebration, each group was engaged in a fast occupation of territories to get the lion's share in the moment of power void. The symbolic ritual of power succession was postponed, or rather replaced by the furious rush of the nationalist groups to get into Luanda and occupy the place of the Portuguese. This 'invasion' of the city of power in Angola was an ominous prophesy of the civil war that was about to start. At least for the purposes of institutionalization of civil symbols, the push for power was obvious and omnipresent, and instead of ceremonies of inclusion, freedom and peace, the pursuit of power demonstrated the voracious interest of the elites leading their respective guerrilla groups.

If the symbolic power of a unique bloody victory over the oppressor was missing, the aspiration of a revolutionary *New Society* came to fulfill the void by the imposition of

innovative moments to celebrate. For instance, carnivals came to replace traditional religious celebrations, and were laden with traditional African meanings. It was not an easy process, because the party-state had to create a political religion by carefully manipulating both the religious legacy of Portuguese rule and the African traditions.<sup>101</sup> The catholic practices meticulously hidden and rejected during the independence struggle—mainly because they represented the face of Portuguese tyranny, and the strict domination during the epoch of fascist rule in the metropolis—emerged from the hidden memories of a vast population that was not represented by the protestant churches that influenced the MPLA, the FNLA and the UNITA.<sup>102</sup> However, the past was celebrated in a profuse number of carnivals and *ephemeredes* that were filled with meaningful elements to institutionalize and legitimize the MPLA in power after 1976.

### **Commitment, Conviction and Utopia: Rituals of Heroism and Martyrdom in the ELN**

Death was a permanent risk in guerrilla's life. The revolutionary project required total commitment: a change of name, deprivation from mundane pleasures, and the distance from loved ones. A guerrilla's life-style was a challenge to the basic bonds created by an individual in society. Sacrifice was the price for building a *New Society*, and its point of start was the *New Man*. The ELN started developing this notion of *New Man*—also notions such as *Popular Power*, and *New Society*—after the crisis in 1974-1978, but the seeds were present in the influence of Liberation Theology, the stiff

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<sup>101</sup> David Birmingham, "Carnival at Luanda," *The Journal of African History* 29 (1988): pp. 93-103.

<sup>102</sup> Didier Peclard, "Religion and Politics in Angola: the Church, the Colonial State and the Emergence of Angolan Nationalism, 1940-1961," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, (1998): pp. 160-86.

standards of moral behavior, and the fundamental role of an internal system of revolutionary justice as early as 1966. These elements will be considered as *practices*, and its analysis will help to introduce an interpretation of the emergence of *embryonic institutions* in the ELN. Its analysis will be based mainly on the experiences of Camilo Torres and Victor Medina.

The baptism into the rural militancy was both nominal and real. The first, as it was mentioned, was the change of identity, the adoption of an alias, and after that the integration in guerrilla's quotidian activities. However, a more important step was the commitments with guerrilla's real goal, the use of violence to bring about change. Urban militants continuously mention in the sources the fears of going to the rural war front. The danger of death was the image of absolute commitment, and those guerrilleros who chose the rural front were constantly confronted to that reality. Many guerrilleros escaped, other did not endured the hardship of rural life, but the greatest fear for each was the moment of the *Bautizo de Fuego* or *Bautizo de Sangre* (Baptism of Fire/Baptism of Blood), when they have to confront the enemy to kill him, and obtain a gun. In general this baptism was done a few months after incorporation, after training and military exercises. The *Bautizo de Fuego* had the characteristic of a ritual process of initiation, with stages of separation from the group, learning of particular skill, the very ritual of blood, and finally full inclusion.

*La Escuela Palito* (Wooden-Stick School) was a training required of every militant before going on an attack. It was a tough period that resembled the first three months of training in any military academy in the world. It was a period of liminality because the militant lacked the distinctive mark of a guerrilla's belonging—a gun—but

he was no longer part of civilian society either.<sup>103</sup> The *Escuela Palito* intermingled mockery and respect, and experienced militants helped the new ones in an environment of camaraderie and reciprocity. The distinctive mark of the new militants was a wooden “machine gun”, a *Palito*. They exercised, trained, and studied military tactics, always with the *Palito* hanging from a strap on their shoulders. They received some explanations about how to clean and take apart a real weapon, but the *Palito* was always there, until the long awaited day of the appointed attack. Then the opportunity was to take a weapon, to own it and take care of it. The *Palito* was just a dummy replacing the real weapon.

This situation was very common, and is full of meaning. For the militant, enduring of the difficulties of guerrilla life-style was a first step to become part of the revolutionary project. It represented commitment and strength, will and endurance. For the leader that was necessary to assess the militants ability to withstand psychological stress, to display submission and respect to the organization’s hierarchy, and a good strategy to maintain a good amount of weapons and militants able to use them properly in the eventuality of an attack.

Why did every guerrillero run, work out, cook, sleep, read doctrine, and suffered in silence whilst carrying a humble wooden-stick representing a deadly gun? The reason is that the process was a warranty of belonging to the group. Some elements might help to understand this process as a *practice*.

The first reason is commitment. Camilo Torres, a well documented example of an urban, fine-mannered guerrillero who died trying to replace the *Palito* with a real machine gun. He was always thinking during his training about how he could improve his abilities to be more helpful and less bothersome, more independent and less whiny, in the

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<sup>103</sup> Turner, *The Ritual*, 22-35.

war front. He saw the poverty and inequity, the wealth in the middle of muddy towns, the displacement of peasants to the cities, the luxuries of institutions that neglected access to the common people. His interest was to learn from scratch how people manage their lives without the comfort he enjoyed whilst ignorant of the conditions of life among the poor. As a former priest, Camilo Torres' commitment in the ELN reflects features of the Catholic Church's ideal of sacrifice necessary to gain access to a spiritual elevation in the afterlife, to gain the heaven after death.

The second reason is conviction. Peasants and urban militants, dedicated to transforming society, had to refuse other forms of bringing about change. Insurgency depends on violence as a means, and the rejection of everything that is embraced by the political structure they want to replace—that is why they consider it must be replaced without mercy. Confidence rests on the promise of creating something good enough to justify the sacrifice and the blood spilled by the martyrs. In other words, conviction springs from the hatred of the establishment and from the trust and hopes invested in the project of *New Society*.

The final answer is the promise of making real a utopia, and the chance to participate in its construction. Here the scope is narrowed in order to observe the individual. The possibility of creating a revolution rests on the imaginary of change and a *New Order*. But that imaginary is not the same as the specific political structure or project of *New Society*. It is the individual illusion of being part of that change in a dynamic, participative, and maybe heroic form. In political processes the individual matters, and choice and desire are part of the influence that human condition plays in a revolution. The conviction and commitment cannot operate if there is not an expectation of future for the

individual. Fame and glory are for the survivors. However, those who die in an attack might deserve a place in the political *pantheon* of the *New Society*, a role in the history and its unstoppable change. It is common place to hear that guerrilleros have nothing to lose. It might be more interesting to find an answer if what is at stake is actually the possibility to overcome anonymity, and the sacrifice of been part of a revolution is the promise of a better life in the future or the price for a place in history —the new version of the history.<sup>104</sup>

The sacrifice and martyrdom of Camilo Torres was a choice after his incorporation to the ELN. This is a good example of how guerrilla practices sublimed individuals by giving to every quotidian act a meaning. Before his death Camilo Torres was conscious of the danger he was about to face, the consequences of his possible death, and the difficulties of the upcoming battle in Patio Cemento. His intellectual qualities represented an invaluable asset for the ELN in political more than in military terms. However, such intellectual qualities were not enough to dissuade him from merging commitment, conviction and heroism in a perfect assemblage of ritualized action. He died trying, and provided us a great example of how some elements of heroism operate in highly ideologized contexts of revolutionary struggle. The path of revolutionary struggle

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<sup>104</sup> Balandier, *Le Pouvoir*, 78-97.

is paved with such examples, which explains why Camilo Torres and Ernesto ‘El Ché’ Guevara are paradigms for the rebel youth in Colombia and the world.

Another form of heroism is useful to consider guerrilla internal affairs. Victor Medina was subject of the revolutionary justice deployed by the commanders of ELN in response to his mistakes and supposed links with USA intelligence services. Victor Medina was introduced in 1964 to the rural front as the second commander, responsible for political tasks, but he skipped the *Bautizmo de Fuego* (blood baptism) when he received a machine gun without fighting for it. He had problems interacting with peasant militants because of his jargon and urban background, besides a rather shy personality. The peasant militants soon compared his abilities with those of Fabio Vásquez, the military leader and head of the group. Victor Medina became involved with Heliodoro Ochoa and Julio César Cortes in a supposed plot against Fabio Vasquez. The details of this complot are not clear, but the ELN assumed that Medina wanted to escape abroad or create a new dissident movement. A revolutionary trial started. The three guerrilleros were convicted of high treason to the ELN, and condemned to death. Two elements are interesting here. First, the early emergence of a form of justice within the group, and the clear homologies it has with other revolutionary contexts, paradoxically with the establishment. Secondly, the fact that these three guerrilleros were convinced that their mistakes were serious enough to deserve death as a fair punishment. Even though they claimed to be innocent, and afterwards was revealed that they were indeed innocent and that the treason they planed was a false plot. The main motivation, based on different sources, depended on the envy they awakened —as urban militants— among peasant

guerrilleros and other leaders eager to occupy high positions in the ELN. Their death was considered for years as an example of high commitment.

Commitment, conviction and heroic spirit appear here in a form that leads to a dead in martyrdom, and altruism as a standard of practice. This is the example of sacrifice as a way to show the militancy the high price of a mistake. Whilst Camilo Torres represented a positive paradigm, Medina and his companions were identified as a negative example, although after the clarifications uncovered during the ELN's crisis, they became heroes and their death an example of the limits of blind power ambitions.

### **Towards a Form of Justice**

The moral patterns that shaped belonging to a guerrilla group became conventions of action, but they needed to be somehow institutionalized. The ELN and the MPLA as military political organizations promoted *internal rules, dictated by a strict discipline. Individual drives and group behavior was framed by specific principles of discipline, and with normal processes of quotidian interaction they promoted embryonic systems of justice.* This was a kind of *embryonic institution* operating within each group, creating channels for discussion and resolution of internal conflicts among militants. The correction of misbehavior depended on mechanisms of coercion and a conscious subordination to a hierarchy. These precepts were redefined in the crisis endured by the groups in the 1970s, and became patterns for militancy's engagement, belonging and belief.

If guerrillas were about to constitute a *New Society* formed by a *New Man*, the systems of coercion, discipline and punishment were an *embryonic mechanism* to deploy

the power that in political terms legitimized the deployment of its force as a *New Establishment*. Mutatis mutandis, the revolution became the epiphany of a once contested oppressor power.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis shows how *historical representations* in guerrilla groups promote *institutional formations* that reflect the social structure in a micro level. Such institutions have been divided into institutions of power and knowledge. The first, *power*, identifies *practices* that constitute the civility of a political formation. In the case of revolutionary groups, it is the aspiration to build a *New Society*, and to ritualize its existence. It is the same process that contributes to the construction of a national identity but in a micro scale. It can become real only if the revolutionary struggle is successful, and if the clandestine group can emerge as a state. An important element that emerged was the legal infrastructure attached to moral values played during the period of clandestine existence; *power* is attached to law and its imposition over a society.

Second, *knowledge* constructs the embryonic institutions that allow power to endure and change whilst reproducing itself. *Power* is preserved in the form of knowledge—for instance laws and codes of conduct—and reaches all the members of the new society in the acceptance and repetition of ceremonies of civilian and/or military life. *Knowledge* also establishes the idiom of such power, making public the principles of the social contract, limiting the access of common people to its negotiation, reform or discussion.

*Power* is also evident in the coercion and sustainability of the social forces directed towards social reproduction. In the education and military we can find the patterns of social mobility that once were structured around the *legitimacy* disputed in the guerrilla and among communities. The institutions that control social mobility are also

places where *ideology* becomes power and knowledge legitimized by symbolic practices or norms, deeds, and written rules that renovate the principles of hierarchy and social interaction. Here the law is both distributed to constrain the social forces and written to be perennial and constantly legitimize the nature of a revolutionary power.

The elements for this essay on *historical representations* converge in the different levels where power operates within an insurgent group. I have discussed patterns of internal structuration that involve language, ideology and knowledge. It does not mean that power is an abstract notion present in the model in order to articulate explanatory categories. Instead, I have presented how power operates in subjective and objective spaces of interaction, based on a pattern present in the empirical sources.

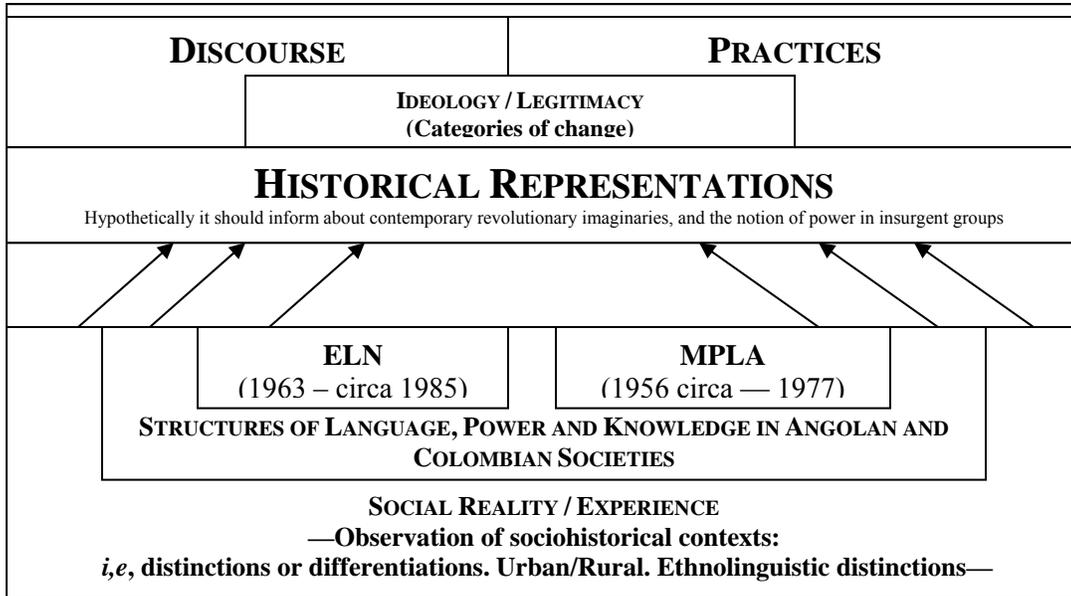
The model presented is preliminary. It is evident that it must be completed with the more detailed empirical sources and elements that enable the reader to judge it. It is also necessary to articulate large sociocultural processes with the forms how in guerrilla groups the patterns of organizational production led towards the creation of *discourses* and reproduction of social *practices*, and to what extent they are differentiated from the common rituals of civility of a nation or colony. Although the idea in this research was not to present every specific aspect of the guerrilla cultural production, the value of the diagrams and the theoretical elements is to make more systematic the organization of data, and especially articulate tools of Critical Discourse Analysis to implement in forthcoming stages of the research.

The object was to understand how in the twentieth century revolutions promoted thought and action, and how revolutions were also the object of reflection and promoted action, rituals and the production of historical knowledge under the aegis of ideological

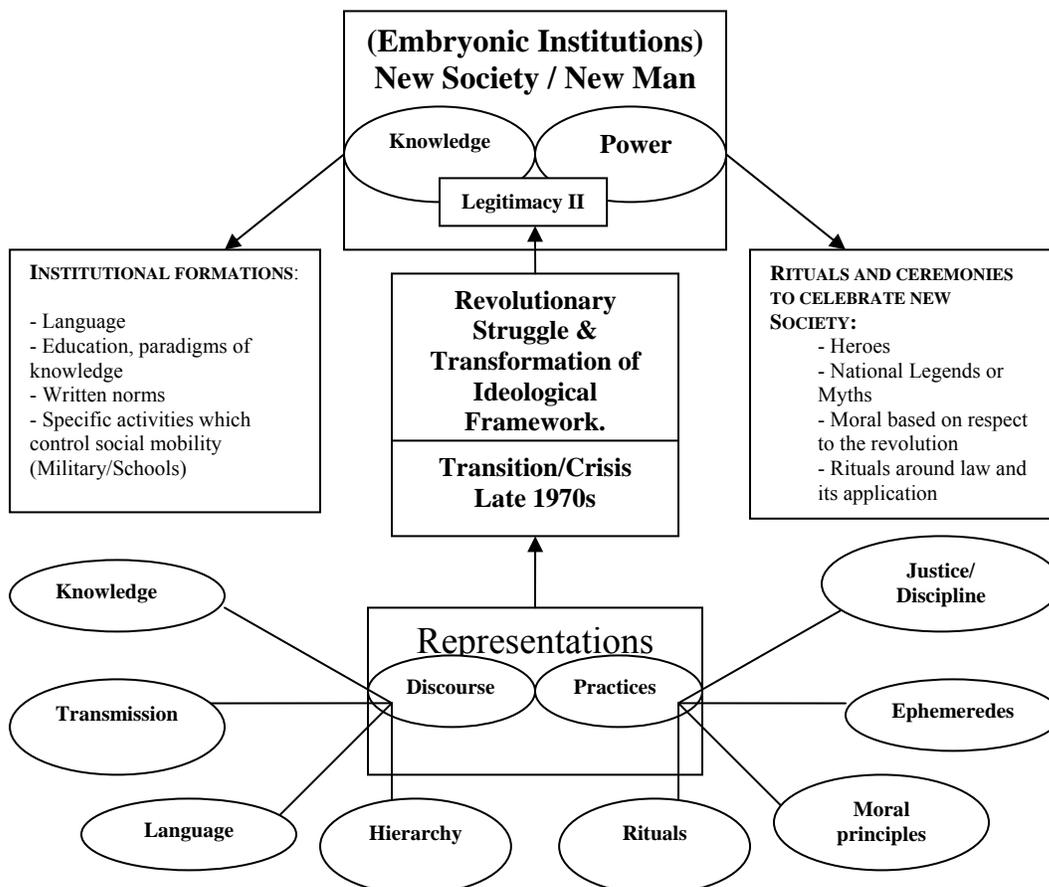
paradigms. This research intended to challenge the notion of revolution as a change in the political relations by the use of institutions and practices. It is also an attempt to recognize the notion of revolution by approaching its political nature, and is useful for understanding the contemporary imagination that inhabits every political system, especially those that constitute the western political systems that both organize and tyrannize our societies, and that can be integrated into the category of totalitarian political machines, besides fascism and democracy.

## DIAGRAMS

I. (Read from the bottom – up)



II. (Read from the bottom-up)



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