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Literacy and Emancipation -
Conditions of the Literacy Process in Two Cultural-Revolutionary Movements
(16th Century Germany and 20th Century Benin)
(Gemeinsam mit G. Elwert)

Inhalt

1. Introduction

The development of a culture of writing and reading is an unstable process. This process is confronted by several problems which appear in different historica contexts. Five of them will be highlighted as an introduction to this paper:

1)   The network of oral communication as well as a network of written communication by a dominant class in a foreign language both imply a system of attributions of prestige and of distributions of power through social control. The introduction of a literacy process ("Verschriftlichung"), i.e. the transformations of relevant parts of the communications unto written form, is likely to affect these prestige and power systems and this makes resistance by those persons enjoying prestige and holding positions of power highly probable.

2)   The use of the written forms of   ommunication creates specific fears which have to be transcended if the literacy process is not to end at an early stage. These fears are fears o "alienation", i.e., the written word does not fade away; it might be carried away and, through black magic, used by others against its author. Furthermore. the written word might bring its author under pressure to defend it, if it is later interpreted by others in a perspective of which he is unaware.[1]

3)   Written communication does not provide for visual demonstration of movements and also lacks possibilities for dialogues. Both limitations have to be transcended by linguistic transformations peculiar to the written language. One such transformation is the transformation of iconical knowledge (visual knowledge: "Gestalten wiedererkennen") and enactive knowledge (knowhow of movements, "einen Griff drin haben") into knowledge which is reproducible by words   (symbolic   knowledge). Another transformation is the sedimentation and standardisation of causative and conditional forms of argumentation into the language. Oral *explication* and argumentations can be more efficiently effected in a dialogue than in a monologue because of the possibility o feedback. But when an explication is no longer the answer to an actua   question, thi relation of question and answer which, together, make the argument, has to be sedimented into a causative or   conditional argumentation,   thus necessitating   the functional development of a standardized language form. These consequences of the literacy-process are simultaneously conditions of the usefulness of the written language and conditions of its stability. A consequence of these linguistic transformations is that there arises a written variant of the language which, while useful in communication, is more intricate and complicated than the oral variant. Thus it has constantly to struggle for its survival in an oral environment, since its use as a spoken language is implausible.

4)   When the literacy process is in its initial stages, there is no such efficient written variant o the language with crystallized causative and conditional forms and with differentiated adverbs of movement and position which might facilitate the transformation of enactive knowledge into symbolic knowledge. Written communication in the initial stages of the literac   process is thus hampered by frequent ambiguities and misunderstandings. The existing language is a tool which weakens the power of written communication; its use is highly implausible from the purely technical point of view. In order to overcome these limitations, the literacy process has to be accompanied by transcedental hopes. Optiona these hopes might be bound to a religious or magical ritual imposed by a dominant class;

they might also be bound to the impetus of cultural revolution as part of a process of emancipation. (This latter type will be analysed here.)

5) Not only technical aspects of efficient teaching but also transcedental aspects of politica "cultural-revolutionary" mobilization put the differences in types and institutions of learning which exist in a society into the forefront. The agents of the literacy process have to make a conscious choice as to which type of education - more directive or more emancipative - wilI fit into their communicative-cum-political endeavours. This applies as much to Valentin Ickelsamer in the course of German Reformation as to the Ayou "clubs for teaching to write" in presentday Benin.

The problems of the literacy process ("Verschriftlichung") noted above plus the political environment of an emancipation process may help to explain a series of striking parallels between a 20th century African and the 16th century German literacy campaigns. The traits the two campaigns have in common, at the same time distinguish them from other efforts to teach adults reading and writing. We think that the common elements, which go down even to the level of didactics, are somehow related to the political contexts to which these movements reacted and within which they, as an element of cultural revolution, contributed to the initial stages of language standardization. The projects to which we refer[2] are:
a) Adult literacy by a peasant self-help group in Ayou/Benin, and
b) the method for learning, reading and writing without formal schooling propagated b Ickelsamer in Germany, in the early sixteenth century.

We cannot present both projects in detail here. In order to acquaint the reader with them, however, we start off with a documentary section on both of them. In our presentation [3] we shalI limit ourselves to a cross-sectional examination of the obvious similarities of the two literacy movements and, furthermore, formulate some hypotheses concerning the causes o these similarities. We hope in this way to create new insights into the problems of literacy processes in a culture ("Verschriftlichung") in the Third World as well as into the developmen of standard languages.

2. Two cases of non-schooled adult literacy

2.1 The "Clubs for teaching to write"

Adult literacy through a peasant self-help group in Ayou/Benin. Beginning in late 1973 there was a movement for adult literacy in the village of Ayou in Southern Benin (former Dahomey). It was initiated by peasants and students (with the collaboration of G. E.), and later entirely run by peasants. The population of Ayou is part of the Ayizo, who are characterized by limited social and geographical mobility. Parts of the population had already experienced three waves of literacy in the past 15 years, but the success of these activities has been very limited. The literacy rate of the adult population was less than 1%. A primary school was established in 1968 but, as in all other parts of the country teaching is done exclusively in French. Neither Ayizogbe, the language of most people in the Village, nor Fongbe, the lingua franca of Southern Benin (closely akin to Ayizoba), is taught or allowed as a means of communication in the school. Furthermore, neither of the two languages existed in written form, except for cyclostyled dictionaries and grammatical handbooks meant specifically for the use of French missionaries. While the administration has meanwhile accorded verbal recognition to the loca

languages and expressed an intention to develop them as media of formal and written communication, no practical steps have been taken in this direction up to the present time.

In discussion with peasants in the course of tbe author's anthropological fieldwork, as well as with an organisation of pupils and students, the idea emerged that an adult literacy program be organized. In the implementation of the programme, the idea of self-help was considered as of central importance for organizational and didactic purposes. The rate and direction of progress in the learning process was to be determined by the peasants themselves, in accordance with a prevailing political slogan at that time namely, "reliance on our own forces." This organizational principle has antecedents in traditional Ayizo culture in the form of mutual aid societies in such spheres as swidden agriculture, helping each other with contributions to mee funeral expenses, etc., called 'gbe.'

In consonance with the notion that no culture is monolithic, Ayizo society has an alternative t the type of self-directed learning process implied by this self-help group, namely, initiation into a (religious) 'vodun'-group headed by the 'vodunno' (literally vodun-owner or priest). In a vodun-group, the learning process has to follow an established curriculum involving the learning of established rituals by heart. This type of institution of learning was consciously avoided.

The 'wema kplon gbe' (literally: book-explanation society) choose (also) a didactic medium involving a traditional element. The Ayizo handed down important elements of knowledge in the form of proverbs, songs and stories, the pith and marrow of which is summarised in aproverbial sentence, the so-called 'loo.' This sentence might also be communicated through a drawing which represents its essence in the form of stereotyped symbols. The communication of historical, juridicial and sociological knowledge also involved the use of a standardised for comprising the 'loo' and other standardised forms of communication. Because any 'loo' migh be graphically represented (forming thus a 'loo-wema'), it was possible to utilise it as a mediu in the literacy process.[4]

The literacy group itself defined the goal as being that of rendering some of the 'loo-wema' in a written form which would exist side by side with the oral and graphic forms. Four of these drawn-cum-written proverbs were produced on a leaflet. The contents of the leaflet carried an underlying political meaning (though it was hidden to outsiders), so that the leaflet could also be used for propaganda purposes.

The literacy group used the leaflet as a primer, and its members were proud of it as their own product, their "own book" ('wema miiton'). The fact that they were working with a primer which they had themselves produced helped to keep motivation at a high level. It is also wort noting that this method ensured that the adult peasant did not have to conform to the role of school children who have to repeat pre-established - and mostly quite naive-sentences. Fro the very beginning, the literacy group decided that a number of the leaflets and some posters should be reproduced. There were several reasons underlying this decision. These were that

1. each member of the group would have a copy of the primer,
2. copies of the primer would be sold out,
3. (the most important reason) this would help to get around the basic problem of any adult literacy programme, namely, the lack of interesting reading material for newly alphabetised persons.

If there is no useful written material (useful, for example, for economic purposes), it seems quite irrational to spend time and effort on a literacy programme. Thus the idea that "we w produce books ourselves" turned out to be a necessary requirement of the campaign.

The effectiveness of the idea of producing useful texts is confronted by a set of historically developed ideas and norms which might impede it. As in many other societies with preindustrial structures, there is little, if any social motivation to make personal knowledge e. g. economically relevant knowledge, accessible to the general public, to "publish" it. Normally, much of the technical and all magical knowledge is indiscriminately treated as secret! The

transmission of some types of knowledge occurs strictly within the confines of hierarchica organisations as happens for instance in the religious vodun-groups. Other types of knowledge are transmitted either on the basis of reciprocity in the context of the institution of "special friendship" ('xonton') or on the basis of pooling in kin-organised groups. And this does   not have the desired result of provoking a snowball-effect of innovation-diffusion transcending the boundaries of familial and other consumption and production-oriented groups.

That these norms were overcome, and that written material - including even a poster containing information on traditional remedies for certain kinds of sickness - was produced for public consumption, stemmed from the use of collective socio-political discussions which was an integral part of the teaching-meetings of the self-help group.

Such meetings took the following from:
1. The peasants discussed a problem of progress in its economic and ideological dimensions:
2. They chose a traditional parable which expressed the conclusions of the discussions.
3. They named the point of the parable (we call this, following Freires concept of "key-word", the "key-sentence")

When the peasants chose a proverb which seemed sufficiently progressive ('yi nukon') to them, they would draw it so that everybody could recognize it. Then a literate member of the group (a student or pupil) wrote the words in the phonetic alphabet adopted in Benin (a version of the alphabet "Africa") below the drawing, and everyone tried to copy it. Even when the literate ones were not presents, the peasants could train themselves since they had the drawing with the sentence (whose word they knew) on the wall or on a poster.

After some words were learned, it proved to be very usefuI to write crosstables of words containing the same letters, starting from a central core. From these tables they arrived, through sounding out ("lautieren"), at the identification of individual graphems.

2.2 The fate of the literacy movement

After the departure of the "initiators", the peasants continued to follow the motto "if there is nothing published in our language, we have to produce it ourselves" producing serigraphic posters dealing with traditional pharmacy.

The original group helped to create new groups. This process of extension was, however, slowed down because of a lack of reading material other than their own. In 1977, the government's literacy-campaign reached the region. The campaign consisted mainly in the creation of committees and the training of teachers for literacy by these committees. Of the many members of the original group who already had teaching experience, two went to such a seminar in order to become "recognized" teachers. They failed because the knew no French...! Some time later, the district's coordinator forbade what the central government officials considered as the "savage" activity of the self-help literacy groups.

2.3 "Learning to read and write by oneself" - Ickelsamer's non-schooled method in early 16th-century Germany

Valentin Ickelsamer worked in the "free city" of Augsburg, in Southern Germany. His ideological background was in the "Schwarmer" wing of the German Reformation (which included people such as Schwenckfeld, Karlstadt and Müntzer) for which the active integration of the masses into public affairs, the fight agains grading systems as part of tbe university system, etc., were part of a cultural rovolutionary impetus.

Up to the 15th century culture ("the great tradition") and literacy were a tool of the dominan feudal class. The kings, lords and bishops had their specialists dealing with written tradition, studying law texts, interpreting the bible and testifying to agreements. These specialists were to be found, for instance, in the "Canzleyen" and monasteries. They trained new clerks for these functions in church-owned schools, universities and princes' schools. The urban bourgeoisie and the peasants were in principle excluded from the system. Of course there was, from the 12th century on, a tendency to establish city-owned schools though these were supervised by the cleargy. The lower urban classes tried to establish their own schools, 'Winkelschulen', using vernacular German dialects. But these schools were rightly often associated with rebellious activities and a striving for independence and were thus prohibited. Valentin Ickelsamer was a learned scholar and might have become a professional in the education system, but, like others of his orientation, he broke off his studies in favor of political agitation (conceived partly as religious reform). He was born around 1500 i Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber where he attended the clergy supervised school of the city ("Lateinschule"). After reading for a B A. at Erfurt university, he continued his studies at the center of revolutionary ideology of the time; the university of Wittenberg, where Karlstadt Luther and others taught. His teacher, Karlstadt, left his chair at the university and founded a rural community of intellectuals in a nearby village, where they combined agricultura production, intellectual work and insurgent propaganda among peasants and the lower classes of city dwellers. Under the influence of this movement, Ickelsamer left the university without completing his doctoral thesis.

In 1524, he preached revolution against the conservative cit of Rothenburg o. d. T. A year later - during the German peasant wars - the new revolutionary city council assigned the 25year old man diplomatic and educational tasks. In a leaflet ("Clag etlicher Bruder"), he sided with the radical Karlstadt and attacked the moderate wing of the reform movement personified by the compromiseleaning Martin Luther. He had to flee after the defeat of the allied insurgen peasants and craftsmen. In later years he was subjected by the elector prince of Sachsen because of his revolutionary activities - he was supposed to have instituted a kind of schools which propagated the "Schwarmer"-ideology. In fact he collaborated closely with the "Schwarmer" Schwenckfeld.

We do not know for certain where and when he taught (Erfurt, Arnstadt and Augsburg, where his trace gets lost at 1546), but we know what he advocated in his teachings through his publications.

He advocated through his books ("Die rechte weis aufs kuerzist lesen zu lernen" 1527; "The right way to learn reading in the shortest time") *and "Ain Teutsche Grammatica - Darauß ainer von jm selbs mag lesen lernen" (1534; "A* German grammar - from which one might learn to read for oneself"), a method of learning to read and write which did not require the use of primers (although Ickelsamer's manuals included also some exercises) and which made schools superfluous - but of course did not rule out the help of a literate person.[5]

Learning began by isolating phonemes in the current of speech. Then one had to learn the phoneme/grapheme correspondence ("lautieren", or "sounding out"). Wherever the

orthography differed from the phonetic principle. Ickelsamer spoke of "faults of our alphabet" (*"mangel vnd faehl vnsers A be cees."*) He tried to explain this 'incorrectness' with etymological and grammatical features.

His target group was the common man *("gemein man"),* as can be seen from his explicit mention of people of low rank such as woodcutters and shepherds. His goal was the "publi welfare" ("gemein nutz").

"Gemein" (common) was a key word of that time (comparable to concepts like "democracy and "civil rights" in the 1960s and 70s), which crystallized the innovative aspects of a new social paradigm. "Gemein" was opposed to secret – craftsmen's knowledge, for instance, was kept secret. Advocates of the idea of "gemein machen" (the public dissemination o knowledge) like the great promoter of technical sciences, Albrecht Dürer, associated "gemein" with the progress and accumulation of knowledge. But there were still opponents to these ideas who bought entire editions of books divulging technical information and burned them "Gemein" was also associated with German, the vernacular, as opposed to Latin, the language of the elite. To make something "gemein" implied its propagation to wider regions. Thus "gemein" was also associated with writing and printing as opposed to the oral dissemination of knowledge. These wider regions were seen as the German nation in the specific -democratic sense of a community of people able to communicate in the vernacular as opposed to the separatism of hierarchical organizations instituted in, the kingdoms duchies, ecclesiastica principalities and towns. Everyone should, according to Ickelsamer and his friends, be able to take part in the ideological struggle of his time. *To* "judge for oneself" (*"selbs vrteilen"),* according to Ickelsamer, requires literacy. Only then, he argued, could the common people read, for instance, God's word and its current interpretations and learn about technica innovations without the oral explanations of an expert.

Until then, reading was not regarded as a general and elementary activity of the culture. It was required only for certain professions. Literate people were educated either in Latin or in one o the German dialects, which could only be used for certain purposes and which did not qualify its reader to participate in a scientific or learned discussion.

The broad cultural revolutionary movement of which Ickelsamer and Dürer were part transformed the German language in order to make it a powerful tool for the propagation of both new social ideas and technical innovations. This implied a) a functional differentiation o the language and b) a tendency towards a standard Ianguage mediating between dialects.

The method of "lautieren" (identification of graphemes by sounding out) was invented by Ickelsamer (according to the contemporary editor of a primer Petrus Jordan).

In didactics and definition of goals and target-groups, Ickelsamer was more radical than others. But insofar as there was a wave of publications on literacy in German, and since raising the consciousness of the masses was a goal of all the "Schwarmer", Ickelsamer should be viewed as an element of this movement rather than as an isolated figure. The establishment of the Lutheran orthodoxy – viz. by Melanchthon - after the death of the "Reformator" brought all these efforts to an end; literacy courses ("Winkelschulen") based on Ickcelsamer's method were banned after 1545.[6]

The end of these "deschooled" institutions of cultural reform has of course to be seen in the wider context of the failure of the peasants and their allies in some cities to change the power balance and social structure in their favour.

3. Conditions of the literacy movements in 16th-century Germany and 20th-century Benin

Both movements for adult literacy were part of a greater cultural and political movement; they took place in a period o   social transformation. It is necessary to describe these social and communicative conditions. We believe they determined the specific strategy which was followed, in both cases, for adult literacy. The participants' subjective motivations, their appraisal of the situation, the didactical methods, and the instruments used depend on the socio-cultural context

a) The Political conditions:

National identity exists but is poorly developed. The state was either fictitious (sixteenth-century Germany) or is conceived as an alien power (Ayou/Benin). Various social and political movements with differing ideas concerning the reform of this state exist, but the political structures do not appear stabilized to the people concerned.

Participation of the masses in the organization of economy and politics of the state i minor, but changes and innovations in different realms of society seem possible. There is a widely distributed, though not general, optimism regarding the possibilities of transformation and innovation. There are high rates of illiteracy. Reading and writing are, in fact, confined to the powerful ("Herrschaftswissen"), and that constituted a specific and monopolized skill. Compulsory schooling is either non-existent (Germany) or not yet in effect (Ayou).[7]

b) The socio-economic conditions:

The organization of experience transmission seems to be one of the most important initia conditions of literacy campaigns. In both movements, experience transmission (one of the necessary conditions for the reproduction and improvement of the masses' life) is done only in face-to-face situations and not by means of the abstract medium of communication, i.e. printed texts. Learning from books is unknown. Knowledge is very often withheld as a secret. The developement of institutions and media for learning in abstract situations (school and technical literature) is still in a developmental phase. Teaching is generally done in a foreign language. The usefulness of reading and writing for general qualification is unclear. Reading and writing in the native tongue are only understood as qualifications for specific tasks. The effort to aquire literacy seems very high compared, for instance, to the economic benefit, because of the lack of literature on many economic subjects and technical issues.

c) The communicative and linguistic conditions:

Even these conditions are similar in both literacy movements. In their beginnings, the linguistic conditions are very bad. There exists no standard language in oral or written form which is universally understood. The official, written language understood in all regions is a foreign language (Latin in Germany and French in Benin). [8] No curren language on a higher level than that of local dialects exists. Most, if not all, dialects and languages are not in written form [9] These circumstances are very important for the learning process. There is no possibility to learn 'in school' an already codified and standardized system; this very system has yet to be established through the literacy movement. Thus, the movements for adult literacy were at the same time movements creating a written language. Both projects had the explicit (Ickelsamer) or implicit (Ayou) tendency to modify the language variety in use, leading to the creation of a common language mediating between different dialects ("Gemeinsprachbildung"). In other words, the development of a common language understandable for speakers of several dialects is intended as a compromise. This seems to be related to the political idea of creating a community greater then just a small region.

The movements created their own reading material. The posters, leaflets and sma pamphlets were at the same time an effort of the movement's members to make their ideas publicly known and create teaching materials for the newcomers. The first of these results were, in Ayou, leaflets and posters on traditional herbalist medicine, and, in Germany technical literature.[10] The language used in these publications was destined for a wider public; in Germany it was mostly a conglomerate of different dialects, and for Ayou in Benin an Ayizogbe, using many semantical and phonetical elements of Pongbe, the lingua franca of the markets in this region. The leaflets and posters were the result of the literac movements. In the beginning, hardly any mass communication in written form existed.

The written varieties of dialects were used only for the very personal purposes which demand only handwriting (letters, diaries and bookkeeping) instead of print.

4. Goals for literacy

In order to understand the moving forces of a social movement, one should analyze the perspectives of the people concerned. The question is, what are the goals which motivate people to learn reading and writing

These questions, of course, cannot be answered in general, and even detailed studies are confronted with considerable methodological problems. Therefore, we shall limit ourselves to a summary of the most important and relatively easily verifiable motives for adult literacy in both movements:

- Both movements have an explicit interest in publishing knowledge which was, until then, privately monopolized. To make the knowledge public was a political as well as an economic goal. To "nationalize" private knowledge for the use of the community was one major aim.
- The means of mass communication should help the masses to become integrated into the ideological and political affairs of their country.
- The transformation of the traditional forms of transmission of knowledge and experience seems to be of great importance for the progress and welfare of the society.
- The new - written - form offers the possibility of an autonomous leraning process using written sources.

5. The educational methods

At this point, a basic presentation of the didactical procedure would be desirable, in order to describe thereafter in a contrasting analysis the important similarities and differences of the educational methods.

The didactical method is, in its particulars, so complicated that such a presentation would go beyond the purpose of this article.[11]

We shall confine ourselves here to listing the most important common steps of the didactical procedures:

Both movements start from the assumption that adult literacy can be achieved without schools, and were thus anti-institutional. The teaching is done in the locally spoken language. This is a part of the didactic principle: 'Start with the known and understandable and then proceed t more complicated affairs!' Only if words are already known, will the phoneme-grapheme correspondence be analyzed *("lautieren"*, "sounding out"). The correspondence of phonemes to graphemes is first taught in its simplest form. Only later will these correspondences be corrected following criteria of etymology and/or grammatical systematics. The didactic

procedures exclude two issues which are often combined with writing systems, viz. (a) orthography as norm, or even as subject of teaching, (b) calligraphy or calligraphic standards. Both movements insist upon the fact that adult literacy can be achieved without using a primer, but that it is even easier to learn to read and write without the frightening authority o an expert or of an expert's book.

The use of pictures in these lectures should be understood not only as a mnemotechnical device (as it may have been intended by the authors) but also as a way of teaching the interpretation of the symbolic language of drawing according to the aesthetic and symbolic standards of that very culture.

Another common element of the didactic devices of both projects is 'playing' with writing, viz. considering it not as something sacred but as something which can be used for one's own pleasure. We want to call the methods of the two literacy -movements "direct methods". One of their particular characteristics is that every pupil is himself, potentially, a teacher of adult literacy. In principle, this is the same system as that which is used for the transmission of knowledge within the family, viz. chain reaction. Other methods of adult literacy are fundamentally distinct from this mode of transmission, because with them, transmission occurs in the context of an anonymous institution - the school. The question remains whether the institutionalization of adult literacy in a larger political community is automatically linked to the fact that the standard language in its written form has to be taught according to standards and codifications. Therefore, training other people to learn to express themselves in this written form may require formal training of the Teachers. The link of the direct method to situations where the standard language was still in the making might incline us to thi hypothesis. (There are, however, counter-examples, such as the form of transmission practiced by the Tuareg in the Sahara who transmit their writing system *"tifinagh"* only by passing it from mothers to daughters and sons. [12] It might also be questioned whether a standard language for wider use necessarily demands formal institutions (like school) or quasi-institutionalized standardised (e. g. primers, or the Koran) texts in order to preserve a necessary minimum of uniformity throughout the community of speakers. If this is not the case, the discontinuance of the direct methods and their replacement with more institutionalized and more authoritarian methods could not be explained by the changing linguistic situation of an intensified standardization but by a change in the general societal climate towards activities which are carried out by "ordinary people." -This will be discussed in the following section.

6. The dissolution of the literacy movements

Both literacy movements using direct methods did not last long and, due to poiltical lntervention, came to an abrupt end. Their place was taken by more institutionalized and more authoritarian methods of adult literacy - by schools. The end of the movements coincided with the ends of the cultural revolutions of which they were a part. After the end of the Peasan War in Germany *(Großer deutscher Bauernkrieg),* the role of leaflets, of non-school learning, and of uncontrolled teaching of the basic ethical values (from the Bible), as an important factor of insurgency was clear to all, the old and new political groups.

The orthodox wing of the reformation, represented by people such as Melanchton, became very influential, and institutionalized schools with trained teachers and prescribed textbooks, with emphasis on learning the catechism by heart, while regarding reading and writing as a secondary matter.

In Benin the influence of the rural youth movements which supported adult literacy and the general raising of consciousness among peasants in different parts of tbe country, declined

considerably after their banning became effective and some of the leading cadres became progressively integrated into the state apparatus. In both movements, adult literacy was understood by the protagonists primarily as a tool. For them, literacy was not a "social indicator" which might show the general progressiveness and stage of development of the country; it was an instrument which was to be used in the interests of the cultural revolutionary movement. It was to be used for the production of leaflets, for making publi practical knowledge, which had been private in character before, to make it a social force o production. The publication of medical knowledge played an important role in these movements, since they started from the values of uses relevant for the people at the basis, who were concerned more with their own quality of life than with more abstract values. The posters and books were "do-it-yourself" books, that is, they were useful for laymen without further oral explication.[13]

With the end of these cultural revolutionary movements, adult literacy by direct method ended, too. From then on, adult literacy became a schooled form, and the didactic methods were transformed. As a consequence, in the German example, the rate of illiteracy increased.

7. Particularities of the "direct method"

In this section, we shall discuss some common elements of both literacy movements which distinguish them from those structural settings where a "schooled" method is used to promote literacy. Furthermore, we shall introduce hypotheses concerning the reasons for these distinctions.
First, however, we would like to summarize the common situation that existed at the beginning of the literacy movements.
Both movements had their drive in the motivation to transform the existing social, economic, and communicative conditions. The transmission of experience and knowledge was bound to demonstration and the non-institutionalized chain reaction of orality within the family or within the craftshops. There was no general school enrollment and no generally known standard language. The written standard language was part of a foreign language group. Oral communication was based on several dialects of the same language or language group. Reading and writing were restricted up to this point to specific groups for whom they, were of professional use.

a)   Development of a standard language:
In this situation, adult literacy meant at the same time development of a written standard language. The impetus to transform the societal conditions based on the integration of the masses, and, to produce a setting for democracy, did not allow for the use of a foreign language. Written communication with the possibility of feed-back through dialogue was ver limited. Therefore, in order to allow immediate understanding in spite of linguistic differences, there was a need for standardization.

b)   Educational situation:
The educational situation was unique. The learners in these adult literacy movements were not only the first producers of written material but also the ones who created the codified language. This occurs only in these types of movements, i. e. in the very beginning of adult literacy. The didactical situation gave ever participant in such movements considerable freedom of action, because participants were not confined to any standards but could create the standards by their own efforts. In any later situation the pupils not only have to learn to read and write, but they also have to learn the rules of codification, rules of orthography, and so on, which were established by the first transcriptors.

c)   Standardization:
In order to achieve general understanding and interregional diffusion of a standardized written language, certain conditions have to be met. Thus, the standard variety should not stand as a symbol for any antagonistic or law-status social group. Concentrating on linguistic aspects, we can figure out several norms of standardization:
-   The meanings of words have to be standardized in such a way that they are also accessible to someone who does not use a certain word in his own speech. The simplest method of doing this is to fix the meaning by dictionaries.
-   The orthography has become more rigid, since a greater variety of dialects has to be integrated into the standard language.
-   A system of punctuation has to be introduced. Since the European forms of writing do no transcribe syntactic tone and stress by means of graphemes (in contrast to the transcription of semantic tone and stress by means of accents or orthographic rules), the punctuation b means of stop, question mark, and so on would partially compensate for this lack of information.

- The lack of syntactic tone and stress as vehicles of syntactic meaning in the European forms of transcription necessitates more rigidity in the syntactic structure of the word order within the sentence to allow general understanding.
- The grammar should not vary more than common understanding allows for.
- Even more important is the development of stylistic standard forms which permit the reader to have specific expectations on the kind of information he will get. The limited possibilities for feedback in written communication necessitate several new forms of style which go far beyond the written monologue of the letters. These new forms have to be learned, and they should be predictable and as such understandable for any reader, and therefore need some standardization.

d)   Common base of paralinguistic knowledge:

Indirect communication with an unknown receiver, which is typical under conditions of general literacy (and which was, of course, also the goal of the two movements we analyzed) requires a common base of knowledge including stylistic standard norms, orthography, and so on, as has been said above. The common base of knowledge must have the two characteristics of order and stability. Stability is needed to make the effect of any act of communication, especially of printed communication, foreseeable, and order is needed to exclude ambiguities and to explore the unknown starting from the known without the help of oral communication (by means of reference to learned rules, dictionaries, and so on). Such an ordered space can be produced by a network of institutions which define rules and meanings and guarantee their transmission to the new learners. Part of this network may be institutions that use control and sanctions as part of the learning process. Institutions in this sense we classify as "schools." It is an open questions for us whether a common base of knowledge might be produced also by other types of institutionalization. The use of one long text of reference like the Koran in the first stages in Islamized Arab culture is a different form of institutionalization. But when the generally used language develops in areas not covered by the reference text, and when speakers with different languages are included into this linguistic community, the reference tex is not sufficient and has to be imbedded into a network of schooled institutions, which transmit the meanings of the words and develop (as a byproduct of ethics) rules of correspondence between the established standard text and the new realms of life. Another - still untested - hypothesis concerns newspapers in a non-fragmented public community *(Öffentlichkeit);* they might fulfill the function of an institution guaranteeing the common base of knowledge concerning the use of language.

e)   Political motives and the link to political movements:

The political motives for the movements were not only to enable the individual to use writing for his own private purposes, but to develop a national network of communication based on printing. Therefore, it is not just a written language but a standardized written language that is the goal of the movement. This language should be understood by speakers of all dialects and therefore has to mediate between them.

This democratic intention might have been another reason for creating the "direct method" of adult literacy. It begins with the assumption that it is sufficient to be a member of the "people" as part of the linguistic community in order to define what has to be learned, and, furthermore, to teach others according to their refined needs, which implies ideas of the emancipation of the individual, and equality. These types of adult literacy also reinforce the ideas of emancipation and equality, because the appropriation of that time unknown competence produces a particular pride in oneself, a consciousness which will be relevant for other self-help activities.

Obviously, a low degree of standardization and codification o language is of great help for these types of movements (even if this were not a necessary condition, an issue which still has to be debated), because everyone can then become a learner/teacher with out mastering

beforehand the defined common base of knowledge concerning the notation of language. The more the standardization and codification of the written language is developed and the more i distances itself from the common language of the learner/teacher, the less the sequence o learning steps can be defined by pupil and the more every teacher needs specific training. In this respect, things also work the other way around; the more the creation of a standard written language is part of a cultural revolutionary movement where every pupil can start t produce his own "literature", the closer the newly created standard language will be to the language of the masses, thus hindering its transformation into a symbol and instrument for the separations of an elite.

The creation of a standard common language needs to be a mediation process. If not, oppressed linguistic minorities will be created which are still linguistically excluded fro participation in the public discussion. The degree to which the common people are able to introduce their knowledge into the body of knowledge which is transmitted through printed material has an important impact on the cultural evolution of society

f) Counter-reform - politics and didactics:

The linguistic reasons mentioned above (e) which make the direct method less plausible for adult literacy in more advanced stages of standard language development should not make us to forget that in the situations discussed in this paper, the direct method was banned for political reasons. But this does not necessarily imply that these movements died because o political reasons, since it might well be that another fact weekened them so that they could no survive political attacks.

We see three aspect- of this political fight against the "direct method:"

- There is a fight against grass-root journalism. Not every ("uncivilized") person should be able to express himself in the form of written publications; the self-esteem stemming fro this grass-root journalism of popular leaflets and so on is dangerous far beyond these publications, and it is a dangerous root for any self-organized process.
- The political power needs codified concepts. Those in power want to control the meaning and the connotative field of words in order to control political consciousness. Not everyone should be allowed to define words which fit his purposes, and to give them connotations fitting his goals.
- The equation of teacher with revolutionary has to be broken. The teachers in these movements are seen as (potential) revolutionaries. The fact that the status and the role of the teacher (which had been transmitted only by institutions controlled by those in power) now can be acquired simply through the basic learning process itself threatens the legitimacy of the institutions of those in power.

Since the structure of the mode of acquisition of literacy is as much bound to these politica conditions as to the aforementioned communicative conditions, the political motives and reasons can be hidden by "didactics." The resurrection of the institution "school" after the end of the literacy movements thus has a double origin: on the one hand an interest in political control[14] and on the other hand the necessity to develop and stabilize the standard language. Whether the "school" is a *necessity* for literacy is still an open question.

8. Differences between the literacy movement in 15th- and 16th century Germany and in the present day Benin; conclusions

In addition to the striking parallels of the two literacy movements under discussion, we also wish to call attention to some differences. The major differences are linked to the medium of communication and notation.

a) In the 15th and 16th century, we find a tradition of hand written literature in the native tongue in Germany. We know of legal documents, recipes, Bible translations, and even fiction (e. g. *"Minnesang.")* AIthough the number of authors and readers of this literature was very small, we nevertheless have to note a difference to the situation in Benin, where a comparable written background does not exist. (For references to history of native language reading and writing in medieval Germany, see Giesecke 1975.) [15]

b) With respect to the initial linguistic conditions, the government and the population of Benin are confronted with a number of more serious problems than were the Germans in the Reformation period: It is true that in 15th-century Germany, too, a number of different dialects were spoken; but these were part of language systems with similar structural qualities. In Benin (as a whole), however, totally different language groups are confronted. The difficulties involved in creating a standard language under these conditions are tremendous.

c) In 15th-century Germany a system of notation, a writing system, is basically in existance. I can be used for the notation, of the *"gemein teutsch",* the German standard language, in the following centuries. The repertoire of symbols which had been developed within the framework of both, the handwritten Latin tradition, and the tradition of literature in the native language in the Middle Ages comprehended more entries than necessary, and the use had hardly been codified: nevertheless, the authors of the 15th and 16th century were able to profit from it. Their task was first of all the selection and reduction of the repertoire of symbols. Taking, e. g., the first Gutenberg prints as a starting point, one meets a reduction of approximately two thirds of the symbols within less than one hundred years. The second task was the codification of the writing system and the standardization of the notation method. Syntactic, spelling, and punctuation rules did not exist in German dialects during the Middle Ages. Ickelsamer did pioneer work on all of these grounds. The conditions in Benin in this respect aro also somewhat different. Theoretically, it is possibl to choose between totally different notation systems due to the complete, or almost complete, lack of a writing tradition. The choice of writing system and the regulation of notation can be made by trained linguists according to rational criteria. [16]

A conscious language planning, in contrast to a longer, historical growth of a writing system, has some advantages, but it also has disadvantages. One of its disadvantages is, as has alread been mentioned, the extensive exclusion of the populace from all processes of standardization. Language is not only a tool for communication, but also the representation of common knowledge and furthermore, an important factor for national self-esteem and socia integration.[17]

9. Notes

[1] During the German colonial period, the Dschagga of Tanzania had a similar experience with local newspape in their language. This newspaper contained news which was more or less identical with was earlie communicated through the social institution gossip. in oral culture, gossip is a powerful mechanism of social control; however, it has the characteristics that the range of communication is controllable and that the gossip is protected against retaliation. But the newspaper did not provide for either. Consequently, the villagers were astounded to read in their newspaper what earlier was kept under control. The result: the newspaper soon ceased. (Communication by Chr. Winter, Bayreuth).

[2] The two movements under consideration are not only ones which might be labelled "cultionary-revolutionary". the experiences of the Protestant missionary Frank Laubach (see Medary, Marjorie, Each One Teach One: Frank Laubach, New York, 1954) and of Paolo Freire (L'education – praquetique de liberte, Paris, 1971) and the people influenced by Humbert. (Colette Humbert, 1975: Conscientisation – Experiences, positions dialectiques et prospectives, Paris, 1975), might also be cited as examples. But we prefer to confine ourselves here to the two cases we personally have analysed and studied in detail. Also in Benin there have been in the last decade an number of successful efforts in adult literacy which might be studied. Some were more of a "schooled" type (though claiming Freire as a godfather) like Gossenbacher's experience in the Borgou, some had a more cultural-revolutionary aspect as Tchitchi's effort among the Aja-people.

[3] For further information, the reader schould consult the publications quoted in the bibliography.

[4] This was suggested by Michael Ahohounkpanzon of Ayou.

[5] Johannes Müller,: Quellenschriften und Geschichte des deutschsprachigen Unterrichts bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts, Gotha, 1882.

[6] Friedrich Roth: Die Maßregelung der Augsburger Schulmeister wegen des Interims am 31. August 1551. In: Beiträge zur bayerischen Kirchengeschichte 15/5. Erlangen 1909.

[7] Rolf Engelsing, Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Stuttgart, 1973.

[8] Michael Giesecke, Schriftsprache als Entwicklungsfaktor in Sprach- und Begriffsgeschichte, In: R. Koselleck (ed.), Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte, Stuttgart, 1979a.

[9] In order to be precise, one should rather say "languages have no written variety", since the written form is never identical to the spoken form.

[10] Michael Giesecke, "Volkssprache" und "Verschriftlichung" des Lebens im Spätmittelalter. In: Gumbrecht, H. U. (ed.), Literatur in der Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters, Heidelberg, 1980.

[11] Georg Elwert, Alphabetisation in Ayou. Untersuchung einer bäuerlichen Selbthilfe-Bewegung. In: Osnabrücker Beiträge zur Sprachtheorie 12, 1979.

[12] Francis Rennell of Rodd, People of the Veil, Reprint 1966 Oosterhout, 1926, pp. 173-174.

[13] Michael Giesecke, op. cit., 1979, 1980.

[14] Levi-Strauss (1955: ch, 28) discusses the link of literacy process and domination. We agree with the tendency of the argument, but our material abaut the cultural-revolutionary literacy shows that literacy and domination are not necessarily linked.

[15] Michael Giesecke, 1975: Lesen und Schreiben in den deutschen Schreibschulen des ausgehenden 15. und beginnenden 16. Jahrhunderts. Unveröffentlichte Examensarbeit. Universität Hannover, 1975.

[16] They developed in fact a variant of the phonetic alphabet 'Africa'.

[17] Considering this fact and the experiences of the literacy movements in the 15th and 16th-century German as well as in Benin, we would recommend the slow historical development of a standard language, and stress the importance of including the masses in this process.