

DISCUSSION

MOTOMITSU UCHIBORI

At the Fourth Session, entitled Changes in the Multi-ethnic and Pluri-linguistic Societies and Nation States, Robin Cohen and Katsuhiko Tanaka presented the papers printed in this volume, on which two other discussants, Takashi Miyajima and Onghokam, made comments as prearranged and prepared beforehand though, to varying degrees. The other proposed discussant, Harsja Bachtiar of University of Indonesia, could not regrettably come up because of his pressing official duty. Fortunately for us, Onghokam, being timely in Tokyo as visiting lecturer, accepted our supplication made only a few days before the opening of the symposium and played superbly what he jocosely called an *ersatz* role.

Discussion at the session began with two themes; the problem of immigrant labourers in industrialized and oil-producing countries during the last couple of decades, which was first discussed by Cohen, and the reflection on the determinant role of languages in the formation of nations and states, which Tanaka proffered based on his criticism of the ideology inherent in certain concepts of modern linguistics. These two themes are interrelated to the extent that the most underprivileged of foreigners living in a host country—*helots* in Cohen's terminology—face discrimination in the most acute way in their linguistic life; both when they speak their host country's language in an awkward fashion and when they try to preserve their native languages for their offspring. Tanaka improvised the term "linguistic *helots*" to describe this situation.

Miyajima, mainly commenting on Cohen's paper, took up the topic of cultural problems concerning both host nations and minority groups. He emphasized, more than Cohen did, the fact that the preventive factor in enhancing the formation of tolerant multi-cultural societies consisted in negative cultural attitudes of the host nations—particularly of Japan—towards resident minorities and foreign workers. As Miyajima contended, Japan's disinclination for accepting of immigrant workers should be explained in these terms no less than in purely economic-technological terms as Cohen attempted to explain it. He referred in this connection to the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage of resident Korean within broader Japanese society as an index of more egalitarian and culturally tolerant future Japan.

Onghokam informed the audience of some historical features of Indonesian nation-building and especially of the adoption as the national language of modified Malay which, itself not being the language of the majority, had been widely accepted as the common market language during the colonial period. He pointed out also the multi-linguistic colonial circumstances under which Indonesian intellectuals had been brought up.

In response to Miyajima's comments, Cohen expressed a relatively pessimistic opinion concerning the prospect of egalitarian integration of underprivileged foreign minority into

a host community. According to him, it was exactly by the impossibility of this sort of integration that the very notion of *helot* was necessitated. Tanaka responded to Onghokam in reinforcing his argument about the imposition of state languages and the formation of monolingual nations, giving historical cases of France and Japan. He showed also an appreciative interest in Indonesian case of adopting as the state language of a language mainly spoken in market places and in army, which he saw as an ideal experiment in the field of language policy.

Noticeably, throughout the discussion thus far, very little attention had been paid to the problems of social and economic classes. Manuel Castells's comments, made from the floor, took up those points. Concerning immigrants' destiny in host countries, Castells pointed out two determining factors: their class origins in their native societies, on the one hand, and the institutional features of the countries accepting them, on the other. As he mentioned, successes of the immigrant Cuban in the United States were largely due to their middle class origin, which could be contrasted with the peasant origin of most Mexican immigrants who had shown much lesser degree of success. As to the second factor, Castells compared European countries with the United States, saying that the former were far less ready to accept immigrants, who would thus be treated as *helots* rather than new integral elements in society.

Immanuel Wallerstein made the final remarks about politics of language, echoing Castells' class point of view of immigrant problems. Quoting examples of power struggles of Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans and Chicanos for recognition of Spanish in the United States and of French-speaking Quebecois' socio-political movements to gain the legal status of French in Canada, Wallerstein reminded us that languages were not simply a given but that they should also be an object as well as means of struggles in class-based societies.