12. Truth and Territory

The previous sections have established that the ultimate aims of a totalist movement are, in using Peter Bernholz’s words, “lexicographically preferred” to all other aims. It is no surprise then that the nature of its political leaning, as well as the secular-religious distinction, may ultimately possess a secondary importance in a totalistic system.

The doctrinal core of totalist movements (and that of ideocracies in general) through its use of mythicized charismatic archetypes and rational administration is heavily dependent on ritual in order to maintain its legitimacy and inner consistency. Understanding the transformation of the original charismatic mission of a movement and the ritualization of the charismatic doctrinal core can be of tremendous importance in describing the basis of a systemic legitimization of a regime, a tradition or a worldview.

In his analysis on Schweitzer’s superimposition of a charismatic apparatus upon a regular bureaucratic system, Raphael Falco argues that the central element in such a development is to be found in the “remythicization” of the charismatic movement’s origins, since this is the only way in which the superimposition may be achieved.\(^{860}\) He goes on to define the emergence of the charismatic apparatus as:

\[\text{(...) the result or condition of routinization, consisting of “a mixture of symbols, narrative and administration, all directed toward the identical end of fashioning an enduring charismatic authority from a relatively ephemeral movement. (...) the narrative function so important to such an enterprise would be much indebted to the specifically creative force of charisma in its early stages. Such a narrative function, both as a support for the symbolic architecture – including tradition, incidentally, which is a supposedly the arch-enemy of charisma – and as a means of instilling and controlling disruption, would rise in a charismatic system to the level of what Malinowski refers to as “living myth.”}^{861}\]

For a totalist movement which has achieved political hegemony, the use of “remythicization” and of political myths\(^{862}\) in general results in the idealised embodiment of the movement’s origins and principles in what we may call an emerging ideocratic system. In such a system, where the totalist ideology demands, by its very nature, the entirety of the individual, there is no real difference between the followers of the totalist movement and the wider, passive populace, with both being affected by the principles of the ideocracy in a number of ways. Nevertheless, the penetration of the wider populace by the principles and values typical of premodern elites has usually been more or less superficial, determined by the limits in technology resources, power structures and, most importantly, political will.

As opposed to hybrid or other variants of autocratic polities, the nature of totalism ensures, by itself, that much greater efforts will be typically made to transform the passive individual and integrate him as much as possible within the ideocratic order. This integration can be accomplished by the – at least nominal – acceptance of the soteriological-simplifying principles which guides the totalist doctrinal core towards its ultimate aims.

The following sections will focus, first and foremost, on the ideological importance of the concept of truth for totalist heterodoxies which make the fewest compromises upon achieving hegemony. In such a case, one may call these conquered, or dominated polities an

\(^{860}\) Falco, Charisma and Myth, 69.
\(^{862}\) The importance of political myth should not be understated, regardless of the type of political regime in question. See Chiara Botici, A Philosophy of Political Myth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
emerging ideocratic system. This emerging ideocratic system may preserve or even harden the features of the original totalist, charismatic core, manifesting itself as a totalist ideocracy. It may also gradually evolve – by achieving part or most of its ultimate aims – into a mature ideocracy.

Furthermore, the enduring presence of ideocratic features across different historical eras and different cultures means that one must also consider the legacy of the premodern world, especially since the idea of truth functioned as a pillar of authority for the many divine monarchies which flourished throughout the greater Eurasian heartland. To exemplify this, the following sections will briefly mention the interconnected nature of truth, space and power in the Assyrian, the Achaemenid, and the Roman cosmocratic polities. In this reconstruction, one may be aided by Voegelin’s comments on the importance of truth for cosmocratic empires, as well as by fields such as Assyriology, Achaemenid studies or ritual studies.

The following sections will also contain an excursus on the concept of the spatiality. This meant approaching the way in which various polities understood and imagined their territory as a political and cultural entity, which either symbolically ruled over the “habitable” world or represented a lone community of the righteous, besieged by the corrupt forces of the Other beyond its borders. The chapter will also discuss the importance of spatial authority and its role in shaping the ideocratic oikoumene. Thus, the section on truth and territory serves to directly link the section which then follows it, namely, spatiality and ideocracy. The final section will portray the importance of ritual and sacrifice in the systemic apotheosis of the ideocratic polity.

12.1 Truth in Ideocracy

Their sons are carefully instructed from their fifth to their twentieth year, in three things alone, - to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth. 863

(Herodotus)

This section points to ideocratic models which were based, at least to an extent, on the notion of access to divine truth. In this respect, the function of this section is to reinforce the argument that the study of totalist ideocracies should not begin with late 18th century Europe. Indeed, several of the core, defining principles encountered in modern ideocracies – such as truth, purity, spatiality – can be found as powerful building blocks in the premodern Abrahamic polities, as well as throughout the polities of greater Eurasia. While born out of the charismatic interaction with eschatological thought or political utopianism, such features were to coalesce in a modern form with the advancement of technology and the arrival of mass politics, thus manifesting with increased intensity.

12.1.1 Truth and Premodern Cosmocratic Authority

Piekalkiewicz and Penn assert that the creators, rulers and subjects of any truly ideocratic system are meant to be free of error since they are supposed to have a “strictly

863 Herodotus, Istorii, I. 136, 56.