

CASTE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVANT AND WARRIOR: THE SAMU-SERAH

Since Parpar society is a semi-caste society founded on war, the transitions from caste to caste are reserved for Warriors and Builders. Warriors are the first to take this "exam" through the crowning, as we have seen before. This transition is governed by a system of debt and servitude that the Parpars have used for millennia. A system perhaps also used in Mir-Uz in the early days, even before it became the megalithic city that now includes the four districts.

*This system of debt/servitude is called by the Parparmi themselves with the word **samu-serah**, a term that has such a vast value that even I tend not to understand it thoroughly.*

Like any debt system, common to some populations such as the Mommels, it presupposes an interpenetration of the two

words of which it is composed. For the Parpars, samu-serah is composed of samu (abbreviated as samu'ogal) which means "debt" or "contentiousness" and the second lemma serah (often also written as seerah or serraah) which means "servitude", but also the servant and serving as a verb.

The term serah defines a servant, not in a derogatory sense. The terms slave and servant in the Parparmi language are very difficult to distinguish. Some situations that I have been able to study make me think that they use both one and the other as synonyms. There are no concepts, as in the cities of Gaia, of slavery. A slave is in fact a servant who works in the abode of his samu, or the one who benefits from the debt in question.

In some dialects, but also in the language of the southern and eastern tribes, the meaning of debt and servant are linked. If I owe a person x I am his servant until the latter is exhausted. But when

does it happen? Two cases, one of which never or rarely happens.

- *In the first case, warrior X is defeated and the servant is freed.*
- *The second case the servant kills the warrior X and takes his place as master.*

The samu-serah binds two people by a bond of debt and liberation that cyclically changes. At each change of caste, the defeated becomes a servant and retains a debt to the victor.

When the winner loses his title, thus symbolically losing his place in the caste, he in turn becomes the servant of the new winner. This system only works for warriors, as the Parpar war society brings them the highest honors and privileges.

Let us now focus on the broader meaning of this use of Samu-Serah. This relationship, sanctioned by laws handed down orally and some written, does not apply only to the warrior caste, or rather: in the method described above it refers to

warriors, in particular the transition from the condition of Sentinels to Procurers.

The ritual of tattoos is one of many, perhaps the most evident of the Parpar clan. Combat, purely used to settle private disputes and advancement or downgrading ceremonies, takes on a very important significance for these communities.

The ritual of tattoos precedes the fight or goring, in which each warrior will become a Procurer if he manages to beat his opponent. This is where the type of debt we have already talked about comes into play. Even if defeated, the watchman retains his status even if he owes to the Procurer.

Samu-Serah is also used in Parpar households where bigamy is widely accepted. In fact, the man has two wives: one is the "biological" one, therefore the mother with whom the man has chosen to share the bed and with whom he wants to have children. The second wife takes on different connotations, devaluing her very essence: "surrogate" "complementary" "whore" are some of the terms with which the children of

the biological man and woman will call the second mother.

This woman, in that situation, finds herself having a Samu towards her husband. She, in fact, will not have power in family decisions and house rituals. It will simply be a kind of "fallback" in case the biological bride dies. If, it does not always happen, the father will have children with the surrogate, his children will be "bastards" therefore not part of the Parpar nucleus.

I think, like many scholars, that this relationship of servitude and debt is a very old tradition, when Parpar men married the woman of their clan and used the prisoners as a supportive wife.

Many sources suggest that surrogate wives were slaves or prisoners of war, homeless women or orphans.

Observing the lives of these women, one can soon understand how isolated they are from the rest of the family. They do not eat together, they cannot attend rituals with their husbands, they

cannot be seen during the day. They keep the hut clean and prepare food.

The first wife may decide to help her, and this often happens: there is greater cohesion between women.

If the woman, this aspect is very cruel but there are situations in which I have been able to ascertain the truth, is not "suitable" for her role (procreating, cleaning, cooking, respecting the rules of the hut) then she can be exiled or passed on to another man. In very rare cases they have been killed, to get rid of them. Parpars prefer to "pass" them from family to family.

This transition involves a Samu from one family A to that B: this means that if nucleus A needs a favor, nucleus B will have to accept without reservation.

Another example in which the Samu-Serah is used is in the exchange of objects and gifts. By exchange of objects we mean utensils of all kinds and gifts are the gifts, voluntary and not, that

families or individuals exchange. Gifts are of two types:

- *Materials: wooden figurines, small totem poles, necklaces, jars, food, textiles, decorations, pottery, weapons, animal care items, home and veranda décor, earth care tools, clothes, and more*
- *Intangible: oaths of union, gifts made from the heart, symbolic gifts, ceremonial vestments, animals for sacrifices, various personal gifts*

As we can understand, every single individual, willingly or unwillingly, contracts a debt that is then paid off easily. In the case of material gifts, the debt can be paid off by giving something material in return.

An economic transaction similar to barter, but with an implicit social bond. In the case of immaterial objects, the question is more abstract and distorted. I happened to see two young

people betrothed in love: they were very taken with each other. The woman gave the man a gift, a small erotic figurine depicting sexual intercourse between Musheen and Korakkan.

With this gesture, the boy had contracted a Samu and would have to give his Serah in return. Note that here the sense of Serah (slave) is not as literal as in the warrior caste.

If among the warriors the servant does everything to please his master and works as a servant like his surrogate wife, in the economic exchange the Serah takes on the value of a "counteroffer". In exchange for the object A that I offer you, made with my heart, you will have to give me an object B made with the heart.

What changes with respect to material exchange? The interpretation of gifts is different. If in the first case the gift is material, therefore quantifiable on an economic level, the second case is not: I cannot quantify how much a person of mine loves, much less put a price on friendship or family.

The solutions that man has, in this case, are many and I will try to collect them in a synthetic way trying not to give the interpretation of every single gesture which, I admit, becomes obscure even for me in some cases.

- 1. Subject A (man) will be able to give subject B (woman) something back done with all his affection: a figurine or a dress are the gifts that lend themselves to the settlement of the debt.*
- 2. Subject A can wait a few months to think about how to pay off the debt. Person B in that period of time can give gifts to other men and thus settle the debt of subject A with a subject C or D. this is because there is a "debt" at stake, only in this case, he can fill it with someone else's gift as long as it is a very generous gift to make up for the lack of A.*
- 3. Subject B pays off the debt by making two gifts. In this case, subject A contracts a*

debt that he will have to pay under the same conditions.

- 4. The debt can be "frozen" for a few years, in the case of rites of passage or events of particular importance. After that period of time, subject B must give a large gift (two horses and a figurine) to subject A.*
- 5. A subject C can compensate for the lack of B by giving a gift to A, contracting a debt to both.*
- 6. A can sexually repay A but over two consecutive nights.*
- 7. A can pay off the debt by proving his worth with a hunting trip or a fight, so that he appears in the eyes of the A family to be a good match.*
- 8. If B does not repay the debt, A can report it to the warrior caste who will punish him with exile or a very large payment (the hut itself and all the land on which it is built).*

9. *If B does not consider A's gift to be valid, he passes the debt to A himself who must do something to his liking.*
10. *If A's gift offends B and his family, subject A will have to repay B and his family with his domestic services and by giving some objects dear to him/her.*
11. *If A and B break their promise of love, the debt is extinguished with their love.*
12. *If B repays the debt with a stolen object, he is punished with exile for three days in the woods, naked and without weapons to hunt or defend himself.*

I mentioned the main cases, things that I was able to see and study closely. When it comes to being human, things become very abstract: I can appreciate or not what you give me, I may like it or not, I can despise or appreciate that gesture.

I can dispute your choice of taste or I don't consider the gift suitable for me. However, I cannot refuse what you give me: it would be like

not incurring a debt and it is not possible in the Parpar society.