CHAPTER 1

Indigeneity:
Anthropological notes on a historical variable

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The initial assumption of this paper is that indigeneity is not an absolute term but one that is necessarily relative to a larger hierarchical field. The fact that the legal context of the use of the word has tended necessarily to universalize and absolutize it, must be understood in contrast to its fundamentally relative and ambiguous character. The discourse on indigeneity is prolific in the contemporary world. It is politicized and embattled in forums on rights to resources and it is understandable that it might easily be assumed that it is something quite modern. In this discussion I shall try to situate the relativity of the term within the political representations historical and contemporary worlds.

Theme and variations

An interesting point of reference for understanding the genealogy of indigeneity can be found in the variations of representations of hierarchy in the ethnographic and even ancient historical literature. Political hierarchy in a great many kin based social formations is represented in terms of dualism of autochthonous peoples and their foreign rulers. The relative value of these two terms varies from case to case but the logic of the relation is surprisingly maintained as if a “structure of the long run”. A great many myths of the foundation of chiefly and royal polities are based on the following kind of schema.

- in the beginning there were the people. They were politically egalitarian, “ruled” by elders who were generous and caring and whose only status resided in their social age. The political was based on a ritual order for the promotion of the fertility of the land.
- then came the foreign chiefs, from overseas, across the river, from Kahiki etc. They were men, usually young men, that left their home land and came to their new hosts where they killed/subdued the local men and married the local women, establishing an alliance between their warlike function and the peace/fertility function of the local/original people.

The dualism established here corresponds to the following variable configurations:
This series can be found in variations throughout large parts of the world: In Oceania, South America, East and Southeast Asia, for example. But it is also the core of one of Dumézil’s famous studies of Indo-European representations that became basis of a well-known article by Sahlins concerning the nature of Fijian chiefship (Sahlins 1985). The structure is one of ambivalence insofar as the political power of foreign conquering chiefs is countered by the ritual power of local priest (chiefs). The ritual of investiture often stresses the power of the autochthonous via the “death” of the chief as “foreign” and his rebirth as a member of the local society (at least in part). The model of Congolese hierarchy is one that stretches from the most rooted (pygmies) to the most foreign, i.e. chiefs and kings, colonial representatives from a distant Europe. This is expressed in the modern context in the representations of power and in ritual activities such as “la sape” (below). But hierarchy may also be contested and even inverted as in the historical examples from Hawaii in which chiefs were ousted or killed, in which their foreignness (descended from Kahiki or Tahiti) is denigrated as opposed to the sacred unity of the ancient social order. In the modern context this is expressed in the assimilation of all the waves of colonization, Kahiki, England, USA, Japan, to a common denominator represented by the first chiefs (Friedman 1992). The people of the land, the maka’ainana are here elevated to the representatives of a possible revolutionary reversion to an original state of nature. This is a conflictual strain that cuts across the contemporary Hawaiian movement. Even European societies develop these kinds of discourses of local people and foreign power. This is expressed in the opposition between a people and their aristocrats who are represented as belonging to a cosmopolitan intermarrying elite who in certain periods represent the illegitimacy of rule, what in other circumstances would be called colonialism.

Indigeneity as a relative term can be said to belong to the kind of framework discussed above. While the actual internal relations involved are very different there is a certain logic or representation that is maintained. The indigenous is linked to nature, to historical precedence, to simplicity, equality and harmony, but also to the state of underdevelopment, to savagery, to the state of Warre of all against all and to disorder. These opposing sets of terms are not independent
of one another but on the contrary are merely positive vs. negative interpretations of the same position within a larger hierarchy, whether within a single polity, as in kinship based social formations, or between polities or “peoples” as in larger scale imperial orders. The usages of the term can be understood in terms of this more general framework as in the samples that follow here:

- Roger Williams one of the founders of the Baptist movement who lived part of his professional life in the American colonies said in comparing his own home country, “We have Indians at home—Indians in Cornwall, Indians in Wales, Indians in Ireland” (Williams, 1974 [1652]: 200).
- Some years ago the Afrikaners of South African attempted to participate in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. There was some clearly expressed opposition to this even if no formal decision was made and the Afrikaners were not present in subsequent sessions.
- When my wife and I first visited Hawaii in the late1970's we were told by well known anthropologists that there was little to study in the way of real living Hawaiians, that the indigenous population had been integrated biologically and culturally into American Hawaii and that in cultural terms it would be more interesting to do research on their history. That year we discovered that these same Hawaiians had occupied Sand Island in Honolulu Harbor and were engaged in a number of other actions to gain control over lands that they claimed. We discovered young people on the island of Hawaii who spoke Hawaiian and in our naivety asked them if they had learned it at university. They laughed and explained that they spoke Hawaiian at home. Things have changed since then.
- In large parts of Africa the notion of indigenous is considered an insult to the local population. In Republic of Congo there is hierarchical relationship between categories which is competitive, especially between North and South but which always places the pygmies at the bottom of the scale. The latter are often associated with the first settlers in a cosmology that is common in many parts of the word in which “little” people once inhabited the place where contemporary populations are now located. Often these are people, as in Hawaii, the menehune, who are long since gone, but in Central Africa the association is still regularly made accompanied by extreme forms of discrimination. But this is often historically an ambivalent relation, i.e. while politically low ranked they often are said to possess magical powers related to their custodianship of the spirits of the land. Among the Sapeurs of Brazzaville, who were so well known for their cult of haute couture, and where “life force” was identical with wealth and health expressed directly in and on the body,
there are invitations to parties in which this relation is made clear.\(^1\) Here the use of the word applies more generally to those of lower status but the linkages are obvious in other contexts.

- The logic of the African situation as in all situations in which the population was divided into colonists and indigenous might be understood as follows: Indigeneity is associated with peoplehood and thus, with the colonized. It is a relative term in an asymmetrical relation of dominance.\(^2\) For the colonists the different “ethnic” groups, “tribes” or “ethnicities” were all of the same category, subdivisions of the indigenous (especially in the French context where the word is used formally). In the postcolonial situation the categorization is shifted downward within the formerly colonized population, but at least in the Congolese case there is an older formal hierarchization of groups that encompasses the term indigenous. In politicized situations in which a case is made for the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa it is often vehemently stated that it is “we” who are the indigenes and no one else. But this was often a statement made by white settlers in the not so distant past.

- The logic of this situation is clearly expressed in the ambivalent conflation of indigeneity with colonial identity itself. Thus the dominant white class of colonial Hawaii claimed to be the true Hawaiians.

- A wrong impression has obtained that only those born here of the aboriginal Hawaiian stock are the true Hawaiians. A man born here of white parents who spends his talents and energies for the benefit of Hawai‘i is as true a Hawaiian as if his parents were all red, or one red and the other white. Those who benefit this country by their own good character and example and life are the true Hawaiians (Judd 1880).

- And more recently, a documentary film by Karl Slättne showed the mayor of Nouméa proclaiming, “c’est nous les indigènes” (Bergom-Larsson and Slättne 1986).

**The “modern” national context of indigeneity**

In countries that are themselves nation states or colonial extensions of such states, the logic is somewhat different. Here indigenous refers to the enclaves of minorities who pre-date the formation of the nation state (in general), associated with previous life forms and economies in a situation where the national population makes no claims to indigeneity although there is an interesting difference between immigrant based and non-immigrant based national identities.

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1. *Entrée interdite aux personnes indigènes, car la Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Elégantes (SAPE) déteste les indigènes. Venez-voir les superbes étiquettes de la plus prestigieuse haute couture (Zibélé).*

2. *But this is of course, as we suggest a replication of the general scheme of conquest in which the foreign conqueror is opposed to the local, indigenous population; where indigeneity is a colonial term expressing dominance of the stranger.*
In the former indigenous peoples are identified quite easily but in the latter there a deeper ambivalence. In Sweden, for example, there is a strong bond between “ethnic” Swedes and their landscapes and territory. The existence of the Sami represents a contradiction and this has led to interesting paradoxes and even conflicts.

- Many Swedes do not recognize the status of the Sami and the state refuses to grant them such status with rights connected to the ILO convention on indigenous populations.
- Local Swedes in the north of the country claim that they are just as indigenous as the Sami and there are innumerable conflicts concerning land use rights.
- The Sami are considered to be an ethnic minority of course, as other minorities who have the status of being official minorities, as opposed to immigrants. These groups include the Roma, the Jews, and the Finnish-Swedish inhabitants of Törnedalen and the descendents of Finnish immigrants. The Sami are referred to as indigenous, but they do not belong to a clearly separate category.

If we compare the above logic with that to be found in the United States or Australia we find significant variations. In Australia the majority population identifies with the past history of the prison colony that was Australia. Here the land itself is represented as foreign, dangerous, not belonging to the population and the Aborigines are thus associated with danger as well as magical powers (negative) just as the nature of the outback in general. Aborigines just as other indigenes were treated abysmally by colonial powers and the post-colonial nation state, but the popular imagination was quite specific.

- Australians do recognize the indigenous status of the Aborigenes, unlike Swedes who sometimes contest that status and provide little in the way of respect. In Australia a combination of fear and will to elimination has been a powerful tendency. In Sweden there has been competition concerning indigenous status, but no more recent will to elimination.
- Australian relations to the indigenous are relations to the foreign and since it is they who are the foreigners, all of Australian Nature takes on a negative hue.
- Australians are immigrants, forced immigrants, with ambivalent status and relation to the land, surrounded by immigrant populations on the coast and indigenous peoples in the inland.

In the United States, an immigrant country like Australia, but not founded as a prison colony, the indigenes are also an ambivalent category but in a different
way. They are accepted as indigenous but also low ranked, sometimes as noble savages and other times as barbarians. They were conquered by an expanding population and either killed them off or placed them in reservations where they often suffered major decline in living standards and health conditions.

- Americans recognize the indigenous status of the Indians but as in Australia there is an ambivalence in their association with nature, in this case of a more classical nature, the Noble versus the Ignoble Savage at least in what is called the “popular imagination”. The category Indian belongs to Nature here as well, but the latter is not negative and foreign as in Australia.
- Indians were massacred and displaced and finally placed on reservations in the expansion process, but the plural nature of the American “nation” state means that there is no clear association of a particular culture/ethnicity with the definition of the nation. The census is clear on this point. It is impossible to identify as simply an American, only in terms of origins. Only American Indians have been able to identify as Native Americans and this is a category apart rather than that associated with the identity of the state. This has made all ethnic politics rather easy to develop and in the period since the 70's this has been so not only for Red Power for most other “powers”.
- The United States, an immigrant society like Australia, maintains a very different structure of identification, one in which the land is said to have been given providentially to the newcomers, in which indigeneity is worth respect and even guilt but where the ambivalence is one in which the indigenous had to make way for progress, as tragic as this might seem, and in which indigenous politics is assimilated to minority politics in general, even if not for the indigenous peoples themselves.

If there is logic to indigeneity it can be suggested that it is within this hierarchical context that it can be fully grasped in its real relativity.
If the category itself can be said to be part of the logic of social hierarchy, it is not always marked, not always even present. It has, in other words, a historical variability that is related to the changing context which, I have suggested, is a global systemic context. The appearance and disappearance of indigenous identity is related to the expansion and contraction of hegemony. In research on
the decline and rise of indigenous identity in Hawaii we arrived at a summary statement that follows from the following model.

A very short history

The graph on the left represents the inverse relation between changing hegemony and cultural identity in the world system. In the expansion phase, local social orders are either destroyed or integrated within the larger political and economic field of expanding hegemony and local identities are either weakened or integrated as subaltern categories of a larger imperial order. This schema is applied to the history of Hawaii in the world system in order to trace the specific trajectory of Hawaiian identity and political organization in terms of the larger political-economic context. The penetration the Hawaiian political order in the first decades of the 19th century was a complex set of processes in which demand for sandalwood played a crucial role. The European connection first led to the unification of the islands under the leadership of king Kamehameha I whose success depended upon British supplies of arms and ships. The trade with British and then American merchant vessels led to a rapid depletion of forest and of commoners who were taken out of agriculture to collect sandalwood at the same time as landed chiefs flocked to Honolulu which was the collection point for foreign prestige goods. Following the unification of the islands, the king faced the new problem of control over the trade wealth and the monopoly over relations to the foreigners. The competition for wealth led to a division in the royal house itself and to the introduction of Christianity via one branch of the elite represented by the Maui based queen and wife of Kamehameha, Ka’ahumanu. A short civil war led to a shift in the direction of development, the end of the former political-religious order, referred to as the Kapu system and the introduction of Christianity under Ka’ahumanu’s leadership.

Demographic collapse characterized the entire period. The sandalwood trade bankrupted the aristocracy and made them increasingly dependent on foreigners a relation mediated by the increasing presence of Calvinist missionaries. The royalty became increasingly linked to a new European-American elite leading to the transformation of the social order, the introduction of private property in 1848 a series of new economies, first Whaling which meant a boom for local production, as well as the transformation of Honolulu into a typical free port saturated with prostitution and gambling, and then the introduction of sugar production. The expansion of sugar plantations became the domain of the missionaries who used their positions to obtain large tracts of land. This led following 1850 to the massive import of foreign labor, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, being the largest groups. The world sugar market can be said to have

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been the major factor driving the politics of the white elite in this period. In order to avoid tariffs there was a constant attempt to arrive at arrangements with the United States but since the latter also had a major sugar economy in the South of the country it was difficult. This combined with the identification of the Hawaiian missionary-planter class with the United States led to increasing conflict with the Hawaiian government/royalty and ultimately to a coup d’état in 1892. The new government demanded to become a territory of the United States but this was rejected by the then President Cleveland and they instead claimed a republic for several years until they succeeded in being annexed by President McKinley’s government. This was in the same period as the United States expanded massively in the Pacific and in the Caribbean and Hawaii was strategic for its access to the rest of the Pacific and Asia, lying half way between the continents. In this period Hawaiians who were declining in demographic terms were looked down upon by the white missionary class that had come to dominate the islands, the Big Five, as they were called.

At the end of the century, Hawaiians were a minority in their own islands (40,000). Their culture and language had been forbidden and they were divided into those who populated Honolulu, primarily poor and landless of course, but with a middle class of professionals (doctors and lawyers) connected to the aristocracy in one way or another, and a rural population that had for decades been creating self-isolating enclaves for themselves in the larger landscape of ranches and plantations. There was resistance in the early decades of the 20th century e.g. the Hawaiian party the Homa Rula party whose object was ostensibly to regain power over the islands. But this was brief, elites being bought off by the plantation class Republican party. By the 30’s with the advent of the American military as part of the geopolitical developments in Asia, Hawaiians were on the way to complete marginalization. After WWII, the plantation economy had decline rapidly as the result of successful and militant unionization and global competition, and the elites had to quickly find what was called “a new kind of sugar” which turned out to be mass tourism, an industry that was the final blow to Hawaiians as even their “culture” was put on display by other Pacific Islanders and Asians while they cleaned the hotel rooms.

Throughout this period, the apocryphal model of adaptation was “marry out, don’t speak Hawaiian, but English and integrate into the American world”. This was a process of gradual identifying out that was facilitated by the high rate of intermarriage with immigrant groups. Thus part-Hawaiian (an official category) could also be part-Chinese, part-Filipino, part-white (hapa haole). In this way Hawaiians virtually disappeared from the ethic map of the United States a rapid fall from having been a kingdom recognized by most states in the world including Great Britain and France. It is noteworthy that when I myself began to work in Hawaii the academic establishment hardly recognized the existence of Hawaiians, except as a marginalized and mixed-origin group
at the bottom of American society. Hawaii had become a plural society via the import of foreign labor and throughout the 20th century this is clearly expressed in the combination of ethnically localized residence, the development first of pidgin then of neo-pidgin typical of a colonial order and of an ethnic hierarchy in which there have been shifts in position but no real leveling of or elimination of the rank order itself. Hawaii has been and still is a prime example of what is called structural discrimination in which the institutional practices of the state reproduce an ethnic division of “labor”. Japanese-Americans came to dominate politics and the education sector, Chinese-Americans were more dispersed economically but became major economic players and the wealthiest group in the islands, White Americans were divided between a minority of old and wealthy land-owning families and poorer newcomers, Hawaiians, Islanders and Filipinos gravitated toward the bottom, Filipinos in the sugar and pineapple sectors (now almost defunct), Hawaiians as either unemployed or in menial jobs. Intermarriage was and is most common at the bottom of this society while higher ranked groups, especially the Japanese, have been very largely endogamous. The white elite did make strategic marriages to the Hawaiian aristocracy, but this created, via patriline, a transfer of land title and often identity in the direction of whiteness. Only the Royalty has maintained a Hawaiian identity in the context of intermarriage, but this is a common elite phenomenon.

In this historical process indigeneity was absent. At the end of the period of hegemonic expansion Hawaiians were simply the remnants (mixed) of a former independent polity. There were, of course, representations of Hawaiian culture, in Museums and in tourist displays, but they were hardly associated with the contemporary Hawaiian population. In the 1970’s this process began to reverse itself. Declining American hegemony in and following the Vietnam War and internal opposition were paralleled by the flourishing of identity movements, black and red power. These were primarily ethno-political in character but they implied the elaboration of cultural parameters; history, language and religion. A number of groups emerged in this period making land claims and attempting to stop the advance of the tourist based building industry on what were seen as Hawaiian property (which was legally the case). This was the period of left wing student revolt and the latter groups supported Hawaiian demands, just as they did with regard to other minorities on the mainland. From the mid to late 70’s this began to change as Hawaiians decided to go it alone. As one spokeswoman said, “We don’t want socialism. We don’t want to be workers! Socialism is simply the continuation of capitalism.” They wanted “out”. Here the model of a past social existence became central. The “return” to the land as a background figure was a major force and many Hawaiians did return to the land. The Hawaiians were emerging as an indigenous people with a culturally distinct identity that stressed a set of core values opposed to the society of which they were a part. This process has continued since the 1980s. It has
become complex with the emergence of different sorts of movements, some royalist, others commoner based. And there has also been a consolidation of a new set of leaders which might be referred to as an elite or congeries of elites increasingly connected to the institutional structure of the state, to the media, but where actual class formation is embryonic at most, unlike e.g. the situation in New Zealand.

This very bare sketch is meant to illustrate the process summarized by the above graphs. What occurred in Hawaii occurred in many parts of the Western world. In the Pacific (Maori), in the Americas and in Europe (e.g. Sami) there was a generalized revival of the indigenous. And this was of course categorized as such and institutionalized at a global level within the United Nations with the founding of the World Council for Indigenous Peoples which became an important venue for alliance making and a global construction of identity, at least for those representatives of indigenous groups who became part of the global community). This revival of indigenous identity is paralleled by a broad re-identification in the Western dominated sector of the world system. Where a number of relatively successful struggles have been mounted by various self-identified indigenous groups, “indigeneity” has moved from being a hierarchical classification to a locus of “subaltern” struggle. But it must be understood as always within this hierarchical field.

It can be suggested that indigenous awakening is part of a larger process of indigenization, one that applies to those populations that we usually associate with “real” indigenous but also with many national and other populations. The practice of rooting in general has created a series of parallel intensifications of local identity and it has occurred as part of a generalized ethnicization which generates the following series: indigenous populations, regional minorities, national populations, immigrant minorities. This is expressed in the above graphic as a product of declining hegemony in which the homogeny of national or state based identity dissolves into its fragments, creating the basis of a plural social order which is fraught with internal conflict. Indigenization as practice accounts for the emergence of certain forms of neo-pagan movements, of new American Indian tribes such as the Washitaw (Friedman 1999) who are black, have an internet site, a empress, arms and are allied with right-wing militia groups and for some members of the New Right which is actually multicultural and against the current form of the nation state.

The model suggested here implies as well that while indigenization and ethnicization occur in the West and its dependencies, the inverse process is occurring in South and East Asia where there is certainly conflict and violence, but where the tendency is toward the integration of minorities within larger state units rather than fragmentation. Integration is of course a violent and even bloody process but that which distinguishes it from declining hegemonies is the outcome. Recent study of the Mongolian language issue is revelatory. Here a
long struggle for cultural autonomy led to the establishment of Mongolian lan-
guage and culture at the same time as the generation that had struggled for this
liberation began to send their children to Chinese schools. Nothing succeeds
like success!

The fact that one can describe such processes as indigenization in general
and even global terms, does not mean that indigenous movements are mere
inventions as has often been argued. In my own work I have found that the
identification process works very much because the images created in such
movements resonate with those who participate and that this is because they
are grounded in specific shared experiences. The notions of *aloha* and *malama*
and ‘aina among Hawaiians are connected to interpersonal forms of sociality in
which exchange is denied, in which a kind of community fusion is practiced, in
which the experience of broken relations is traumatic if not deadly, and which
can all be traced back in time into the 19th century. The formation of closed
communities, of an inward looking endosociality etc., these are products of the
historical logics of power in Hawaiian society in which commoners built walls
around themselves, both literally and figuratively.

I have suggested that the denial of historical continuity by anthropologists
is the product of an anthropological vision that would compete with “natives”
for the control over culture or the identification process itself (Friedman 1994).
Hawaiians have been involved directly in such battles with respect to “inven-
tionists” such as Keesing (1989) and Linnekin (1983; 1992). It pits anthropolo-
gists against those that they study in a situation where the latter begin to identify
themselves, thus contesting the anthropologist’s own power of categorization.
Yet this is precisely what could be the object of analysis, and in the approach
suggested here it is to be expected that this kind of conflict should arise. The
argument for historical continuity in the constitution of indigenous movements
is an important recognition that the local really exists and is not a mere product
of the global as is often suggested in globalization discourse (i.e. Appadurai
1996) and here there is a significant overlap between the modernism of inven-
tionism and the cosmopolitanism of globalization. In the current situation there
is an extreme polarization in which self-identified cosmopolitans or globalizers
see fit to criticize indigenous populations precisely on the grounds that they are
indigenizing, this is essentialist for such anthropologists and contains the seeds
of nationalism and racism (Kelly 1995, Malkki 1992) and which is expressed
in an opposition between nomads and autochtones, between cosmopolitans and
indigenes.

The globalization discourse refuses the validity of any local identity on the
grounds that the latter is a mere global construction, but there is rarely any
research to back up such statements. The opposition between those who move
and those who don’t however is clearly expressed in statements like the follow-
ing:
Across the globe a romance is building for the defense of indigenes, first peoples, natives untrammeled by civilization, producing a sentimental politics as closely mixed with motifs of nature and ecology as with historical narratives...In Hawaii, the high water mark of this romance is a new indigenous nationalist movement, still mainly sound and fury, but gaining momentum in the 1990’s (...) This essay is not about these kinds of blood politics. My primary focus here is not the sentimental island breezes of a Pacific romance, however much or little they shake up the local politics of blood, also crucial to rights for diaspora people and to conditions of political possibility for global transnationalism. (Kelly 1995:476)

The statement seems to suggest that one must choose between natives and diasporas, and the choice is clear. It is best captured in an ideology that in one sense can be said to desire a return to the hierarchical vision of a past in which indigeneity was safe as a mere category rather than an active political force. But this is not a mere question of discourses. The realignment of identities is a real social phenomenon in the contemporary world, one that has led to increased
polarization as a process in which indigenization is the complementary opposite of cosmopolitanization, a process that is complicated by the fact that real populations with real histories are implicated in this process. While the global processes involved are indeed powerful, they are articulated with the specifics of local lives and strategies that imply that the latter can never be seen as mere products of the global. To do so is to practice a kind of intellectual imperialism in which local actors are pacified objects who have no strategies of their own. It remakes some anthropologists into latter-day colonialists.

Figure 3: The dialectic of cosmopolitanization and indigenisation
This new alignment is a significant reconfiguration of the arena of representation even if the basic structure is invariant. There is still a cosmopolitan or national top and an indigenous bottom, but intellectuals have been drawn in increasing numbers to the top itself, and the top has become increasingly cosmopolitan just as the bottom has become increasingly indigenized.

A second round: the threat to cosmopolitanism
The conflict that I have described above has taken on explicit qualities in the debate surrounding Adam Kuper’s recent onslaught on the notion of “the indigenous” (Kuper 2003; 2006). The argument that the notion is not scientific warrants a discussion in relation to what I have outlined above. The entire discussion hinges presupposition that the notion should have a scientific value as a definition. Kuper links the use of the word “indigenous” to earlier notions of “primitive” and has little trouble demonstrating that the idea is a construction and that in certain respects it can be understood as parallel to earlier constructs in anthropology that have been abandoned. But this overlooks a certain social reality that is crucial in this respect. The indigenous populations of the world are of course constituted in the formation of states and/or of colonial regimes that rank and categorize their inhabitants.

Guha provided important insights into this issue in his subaltern studies of Indian history, where a dominant representation all but eliminated other subjectivities and intentionalities from the understanding of the sub-continent (Guha 1982-7). But real social history demonstrates clearly that such intentionalities have existed, that peoples have been reduced, marginalized and eliminated either culturally or physically by the expansion of hegemonic powers, a story that is as old as civilization, of course and not merely a modern or capitalist phenomenon, nor a mere expression Western culture as some postcolonial thinkers would have it.

It is not necessary to argue for the primordiality of a population in order to accept its status as indigenous although the verbal battles have often been confused. The Sami of Sweden need not argue that they were on the land before the Swedes in order to argue that they had a distinct way of life on the land
before the advent of the Swedish state. Swedes are defined by the existence of the state in an important way even if there is a strong cultural continuity-in-variation that needs to be taken into account. That there were Scandinavian populations (more precisely: “populations unknown in respect to ethnic identity”, see Hansen and Olsen 2004) in the north of the country prior to the Sami does not really contradict the argument if it is enunciated in relation to a state rather than to other populations. It was state power that often in a violent way, marginalized and compartmentalized the population. This is a different kind of argument than that assumed by Kuper.

Of course there are and have always been conflicts between different populations occupying the same territory, but this is not the real issue in the current argument. Nor does it contradict the suggestion made above that indigenisation can be understood as the practice of roots in any population. It is important here to maintain an intellectual distance to these issues in order to understand the mechanisms at work, before taking a moral position, but much of the discussion as been the other way around. That is, it has been imperative to take a stance on weather indigenous peoples should be allowed to speak, what they can say, and whether they should be allowed to exist as self-identified indigenes. One might say the same for all social phenomena, whether class, ethnicity, race, gender. Race is interesting in this respect. While it is trivial that the category has no biological reality, it certainly does in certain societies such as the USA, have a real social existence etc.. Social facts, after all, are not the product of scientific procedure. They are the realities of our investigations. The ensuing debate around Kuper’s articles is from the point of view of the current discussion, a confusion concerning the social realities of the terms involved.

The implicit understandings of Kuper’s argument are similar to those of Keesing, Linnekin and others. Ingdigenity is merely a construction that has no reality where the populations concerned no longer live the lives associated with the precolonial existences that they are assumed to have led in the past. Turner, in his reply insists on the fact that it is irrelevant whether or not those struggling for their rights as indigenous peoples practice their traditional life styles or not (Turner 2004). This is also the position that has been taken by IWGIA. Contrary to Kuper, indigeneity does not refer to a particular kind of society or even life style, but to a political identity that is, as we have argued here, a product of the structure of the state itself. Indigenous peoples are not primarily self-defining populations, but categories that have been imposed by colonial orders, at least in the past centuries of the modern state (even if, as has been shown, there are similar categorizations in previous and other imperial worlds). The category is, however, subaltern and it implies thus that claims

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4 Personal communication with Andrew Gray. He discussed this in relation to Cultural Survival which he criticized for taking a human zoo approach in which indigenous peoples ought to have a “traditional” life style.
can be made in its name, that such populations can claim autonomy of one kind or another. And since it is a socially institutionalized category it can give rise to new identifications and even political claims by “outsiders” to indigenous status (as with the Afrikaners).

Kuper goes much further in his critique than do the previous inventionist anthropologists who merely attacked the authenticity of indigenous movements. He argues that the category “indigenous” is itself a misnomer that should be entirely eliminated. And our answer to this is, likewise, an extension of the earlier argument against the inventionist position, that the category is not an intellectual construct but a political-institutional reality, that has a very strong life of its own. The deconstruction of categories does not imply their elimination, especially when they possess an emic reality. More important for us here is the understanding of the position occupied by this kind of discourse. Kuper has also argued for certain cosmopolitanism in anthropology, one that reveals the relation between his critique of indigeneity and his own self-identification. This is not, I would argue, an example of a particular individual choice, but of a positioning within an already established social order, one described in figure 3, and which implies an opposition to the indigenous by definition.

Kuper’s attack on indigeneity appears, paradoxically, to express a certain desire for authenticity, for a lost authenticity of which anthropologists were the masters. The apparent emotional engagement in this argument is related to the feeling of loss, a loss of order. The world that the anthropologists have lost is a world of ordered hierarchy in which the peoples that we studied were positioned clearly in their subservient positions, silenced and on display for our intellectual gaze. This is the heart of the crisis of “ethnographic authority” and of the issue of authenticity, defined as an objective phenomenon. But authenticity is an existential and not a museological issue, something that inventionists, modernists and globalizers consistently overlook. (Friedman 1994).

The recent emergence of indigenous movements is not an intellectual phenomenon but one that is deeply embedded in the lives of individuals. I do not seek here to simply take sides in a debate. It is more important to situate the debate as a whole within the larger structure of Western hegemony and its decline. This might sound alarmist to those who refuse the possibility that such declines can occur, especially now and for us. But I allow myself the opportunity to argue such a position since it does make sense with respect to the current debate. Kuper’s quandary is ultimately founded within the larger transformation of western hegemony. The latter’s decline with all the occidentalism and self-hate involved, is still an expression of a real loss of authority that is accompanying the decline itself as well as being its principal expression. It is not only some indigenous groups that claim the right to a voice with respect to their social position in the world. The entirety of postcolonial discourse is
imbued with this politics of culture. It is in turn reinforced by a culturalization of a former critique of imperialism. Now it is western culture itself that is the core of the problem. “Hey Hey ho ho Western culture’s gotta go” as a popular postcolonial campus chant would have it. This embodies a reversal of values or better an inversion of those values that is related in turn to the increasing decentralization of voice and even of real power in the world system. And while this is a piecemeal process it has resulted in some areas in a real inversion of ideology.

This is a significant, even massive, political change within the world order and cannot be reduced the kind of moralizing discourse that seems to have imbued what needs to be understood in terms of “social facts”. Kuper is struggling against a real process of change as if it were a mere intellectual error. And he does so from a position that he calls cosmopolitan but which is, even more so, modernist. And it is the latter order which is disintegrating today. If this implies liberation for some minorities if not all, not by any means, it is not reducible to a mere intellectual phenomena. Now one may wish to struggle against what might appear to be intellectual surrender on the part of academics, but this must be understood as a Western intellectual phenomenon and not be confused with the movements of indigenous peoples to which it is linked.

Thus one may readily agree that in a purely intellectual sense, the category of indigenous is an essentialized and non-scientific construct. Durkheim argued something quite similar for the concept of ethnicity, an argument which fit the republicanism of the French state like a glove. This may account for the fact that when his student Halbwachs visited the Chicago School he discovered an ethnic diversity that was the basis of the entire research program of the school and which he contrasted to the homogeneous national societies and especially cities of Europe (Halbwachs 1932). He overlooked, as a demographic sociologist (!), the fact that Marseilles was in many ways the equivalent of Chicago, and that France had a higher percentage of immigrants in the 1930’s than the United States (Noiriel 1996). The absence of immigrant ethnicity in France was a state imposed social fact that organized perceptions as well as politics. It might be argued that the nature of the state, including the culture that it produces, has a powerful effect on the way in which people identify, whether they

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5 This was a slogan chanted by students at Stanford University in the 1980’s against the existence of required courses on Western culture.
6 This analysis overlaps in some respects with that of Alan Barnard (2006) but with very different emphasis. He is more focused on the actual debates concerning Ur culture, which are not an issue here even if Kuper does make this an essential part of his argument, assimilating in this way the concept of indigenous to the anthropological concept of the primitive. This is due to his situating of his discussion within the debate concerning the San, i.e. as representatives of a primordial hunter-gatherer social form or a product of a wider regional and even global system of power relations within which they have been forced to specialize.
are regional populations predating the advent of the state or immigrants antedating the advent of the state. Our object of analysis would benefit greatly from a reflective distancing from the categories of political order that in their historical vicissitudes seem to penetrate our own categories of interpretation.

**Divided we stand?**

Kuper’s call for a cosmopolitan anthropology and his onslaught on the category indigenous dovetails with the globalization approaches less modernistic cosmopolitanism. The overlap concerns the politics of native or local identity and the way it threatens the master voice of the anthropologist.

But this threat is very much related to the ethnographic aspect of anthropology, to the mastery of the meanings and actions of indigenous peoples as of all peoples. And the general revolt against this mastery, which applies across the board of emergent identities of all types, ought not to represent the kind of threat that it apparently poses. The threat is a product of the anthropological subject rather than of its subjects, even if the latter have become increasingly empowered. The inventionists reject the authority of those that they study. The globalizers reject the validity and morality of the indigenous populations that get in the way of globalization itself. There is a convergence here toward a modern consensus but it is not equivalent for globalizers and inventionists-modernists. The former see the truly modern as hybrids, as alternative modernities that combine elements of past and present in what is conceived as equivalent to Western modernity, thus the modernity of witchcraft (which means simply the contemporaneity of witchcraft). The inventionists-modernists, claim that indigenous peoples are not real because they are actually modern but refuse to recognize it on political grounds, i.e. instrumental (modernist) grounds. The globalizers oppose indigeneity because it negates the obvious and morally progressive tendency of globalization. The modernists oppose the indigenous on objectivist rather than moral grounds, i.e. that they are not really indigenous at all, but simply playing power politics with their identities. The two positions are also opposed to one another in another sense, at least to the extent that globalizing anthropology is culturalist while modernist anthropology is quite anticulturalist. Thus the modern for globalizers can contain all kinds of phenomena that inventionists might claim to be false representations.

But the differences recede on closer examination. For both, indigeneity is a false construct, a global product localized by political practice, a dangerous denial of global modernity, dangerous for modernists because a denial of the truth of a false tradition, dangerous for globalizers as a reactionary negation of globalization itself. In both cases anthropology can easily survive this threat by returning to its own tradition of holism in which theory was central, where reality was to be explained rather than engaged by the anthropologist as a participant.
in a morality play. Even that quintessential politician, Lenin, understood that political action was only conceivable on the basis of scientific understanding of the situations in which we find ourselves.

References


Cited in Williamson.