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TOWARDS A MEETING OF MANKIND'S POLITICAL CULTURES

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INTERculture 's goals are:

- ❖ to inform on contemporary cultures from their own standpoints as living realities
- ❖ to explore the issues that are raised at the frontiers of knowledge by the plurality of cultures and their interaction, both at the world level and that of specific societies
- ❖ to identify and facilitate communication among institutionally-affiliated and independent scholars, from all disciplines and cultures, who explore alternatives to the contemporary social crisis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Editor's Note

I LIKE TO QUOTE the PANIKKAR saying: "It is totalitarianism to give no choice to Man except the one between democracy and totalitarianism." I would add: it is also fundamentalism. This totalitarianism and fundamentalism of global democracy (democratic globalization) may be the reason which prevents the West from listening to and hearing the voices of radically other existing political cultures, which feel no need to go the way of nation-State nationalism or democracy in order to play in an homeomorphically equivalent way, the function of what the contemporary mainstream culture calls the political. Just as there cannot be one universal language, there cannot be a universal politics. Hence the title of this issue.

This issue is saying: beware of the totalitarianism and fundamentalism of the political monoculture of our times, under whatever garb; global democracy, the universal necessity of the nation-State, or the notion of the political as being the unique and supreme instrument of peace. This issue would like to contribute towards moving beyond democracy—without negating the latter—and thus allowing for an authentic meeting of the different "political" cultures of mankind. It is also an invitation to discover 'political' pluralism and the 'metapolitical' as a requirement not only for peace but for a sane politics. Hence these two essays and the editor's reading notes on existing alternative political cultures:

Ashis NANDY's essay *in "The Illegitimacy of Nationalism" offers, through the eyes and eloquent words of TAGORE and GANDHI, an inkling into the deep alternative Indic political culture, at the Sanskritic and popular level, that of the political civilization of the Self (self-self and not self-other), that of* swadeshchinta, *of "unity in differences," which has nothing to do with the Sovereign Nation, the Nation-State and power (*"macht"*). In brief, it is an alternative to nationalism; it says that the concept of the Nation-State is not the principal actor in Indic political life; nationalism and nation-State are not universal. TAGORE does not want that India sacrifice*

her freedom and humanity to the fetish of nationalism, which for him is a demon.

John CLAMMER's essay "The Politics of Animism" presents the politics of Japanese folk and shrine Shintoism, as a radically alternative form with regard to the recent State Shintô Nationalism, with which the former has been too often and erroneously identified. He speaks of it as a cultural nationalism which subverts State Nationalism. He underlines the ongoing vitality of this Politics of Animism, throughout Japan, and gives an account of the struggles between bureaucratic State Shintô and Folk Shrine Shintô. He also stresses how cultural or political conflicts are, often, in fact, conflicts between ontologies.

The editor's reading notes focus on:

- *the Indigenous political culture of the Indigenous peoples of North America*
- *the political culture of Haiti-outside-the-nation-state:* "peyi Andeyo" *(the country outside)*
- *the contemporary traditional African political culture*
- *the political and interculturality.*

Robert VACHON

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THE ILLEGITIMACY OF NATIONALISM

Rabindranath TAGORE and the Politics of Self

by

Ashis NANDY[1]

The ideology

DURING THE LAST HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS, Afro-Asian reformers and thinkers have tried to reconcile three basic sets of contradictions or oppositions: that between the East and the West; that between tradition and modernity; and that between the past and the present. For some, the contradictions overlap; for others, they are orthogonal. To many, traditions and the past seem synonymous; to others, surrounded by tradition, they are very much a part of the present, politically cornered but nonetheless alive and kicking. To some, the East is by

1. A. NANDY is the former Director of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies and Director of the Committee for Cultural Choices and Global Futures, Delhi. This text is an excerpt (Ch. 1 and conclusion) from the book A. NANDY, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, published in 1994 (Oxford University Press, New Delhi).

definition traditional; to others, important aspects of eastern traditions seem more compatible with the modern western personality and culture.

The attempts to reconcile these contradictions have produced many modes of negotiating the three sets. For contemporary India, the ultimate prototypes for such modes have been provided by two persons: Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI (1869—1948) and Rabindranath TAGORE (1861–1941). Each deeply respected the other—TAGORE was the first person to call GANDHI a *mahatma*, GANDHI was the first to call TAGORE *gurudev*—and they shared many basic values. However, they differed significantly in their world views. These differences, often articulated publicly and with some bitterness, can be traced to the ways in which they handled the three sets of oppositions. To TAGORE, the oppositions could best be handled within the format of India's "high" culture, within her classical Sanskritic traditions, leavened on the one hand by elements of European classicism, including aspects of the European Renaissance, and on the other by India's own diverse folk or little traditions. In his world, modernity had a place. To GANDHI, on the other hand, resolution of the contradictions was possible primarily within the little traditions of India and the West, with occasional inputs from Indian and western classicism, but almost entirely outside modernity. Consequently, there were often sharp debates in public as well as private discomfort about what the other represented politically.

When closely examined, however, these differences turn out to be a matter of emphasis. Few Indians have used the folk within the classical more creatively than TAGORE. And few Indians have used the classical within the format of the non-classical more effectively than GANDHI. Also, despite being a modernist, TAGORE began to make less and less sense to the modern world in his lifetime. He ended as a critic of the modern West and, by implication, of modernity. GANDHI, despite being a counter-modernist, re-emerged for the moderns as a major critic of modernity whose defence of traditions carried the intimations of a post-modern consciousness . It should also be recognized that the two appreciated, and were fascinated by, each other's enterprise, and between them they offered post-Independence India a spectrum of choices in the matter of coping with India's diverse pasts and linking them to her future. However, on the whole, we can stick to our proposition that TAGORE sought to resolve these contradictions at the level of high culture, GANDHI at the level of the "low." It is fitting that independent India's first prime minister claimed to be an heir to both traditions. Being a practised politician, Jawaharlal NEHRU was aware that a durable basis of political legitimacy could be built only by simultaneously drawing upon both.

In one area, however, TAGORE and GANDHI's endeavours overlapped and ideologically reinforced each other. Both recognized the need for a "national" ideology of India as a means of cultural survival and both recognized that, for the same reason, India would either have to make a break with the post-medieval western concept of nationalism or give the

concept a new content.[2] As a result, for TAGORE, nationalism itself became gradually illegitimate; for GANDHI, nationalism began to include a critique of nationalism. For both, over time, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity. It was as if they recognized unself-critical Indian nationalism to be primarily a response to western imperialism and, like all such responses, shaped by what it was responding to. Such a version of nationalism could not but be limited by its time and its origin.

This fear of nationalism in the two most influential theorists of Indianness of our times was not an expression of the easy internationalism that became popular among the Indian middle classes in the inter-war years, thanks to the intellectual bridgeheads already established in the country by some schools of liberalism and radicalism. In both TAGORE and GANDHI, the fear of nationalism grew out of their experience of the record of anti-imperialism in India, and their attempt to link their concepts of Indianness with their understanding of a world where the language of progress had already established complete dominance. They did not want their society to be caught in a situation where the idea of the Indian nation would supersede that of the Indian civilization, and where the actual ways of life of Indians would be assessed solely in terms of the needs of an imaginary nation-state called India. They did not want the Indic civilization and lifestyle, to protect which the idea of the nation-state had supposedly been imported, to become pliable targets of social engineering guided by a theory of progress which, years later, made the economist Joan ROBINSON remark that the only thing that was worse than being colonized was not being colonized.

This essay explores, mainly through an analysis of the three explicitly political novels TAGORE wrote, the political passions and philosophical awareness which pushed him towards a dissident concept of national ideology. This concept could survive for a while as an ideological strand in India's political culture, thanks to GANDHI's leadership of the national movement. But the dissent was doomed. For in this ideology, of patriotism rather than of nationalism, there was a built-in critique of nationalism and refusal to recognize the nation-state as the organizing principle of the Indian civilization and as the last word in the country's political life.

In examining this critique, the essay follows TAGORE in his intellectual and emotional journey from the Hindu nationalism of his youth and the Brahmanic-liberal humanism of his adulthood to the more radical, anti-statist, almost Gandhian social criticism of his last years. It was a journey made by one who had been a builder of modern consciousness in India, one

2. An excellent introduction to the ideological content of Indian nationalism as it developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, is provided in Partha CHATTERJEE, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed, 1986). On the social basis of Indian nationalism, the most useful work remains A.R. DESAI, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1946).

who ended up—against his own instincts, as we shall see—almost a counter-modernist critic of the imperial West.

TAGORE's 'Nationalism'

Humayun KABIR claims that the principles of non-alignment and federalism were TAGORE's contributions to Indian foreign policy and the Indian constitution, respectively.[3] He was the first great Indian, according to KABIR, who defied the Eurocentrism introduced by colonialism into India and revived India's ancient ties with Asia and Africa. As for federalism, KABIR says, it was TAGORE who had first declared, towards the beginning of this century, that "if God had so wished, he could have made all Indians speak one language ... the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity."[4]

Neither non-alignment nor federalism are solely TAGORE's contribution to the culture of Indian politics. Both principles have been supported by Indian traditions, by a galaxy of influential anti-imperialist Indian political thinkers, and by the process of participatory politics in a multi-ethnic society. But few gave non-alignment and federalism greater legitimacy than TAGORE did within the modern sector, for not even GANDHI could ram down the throat of the Indian literati his particular awareness of Indian traditions as TAGORE did. Any modern Indian who claims that nationalism and the principles of the nation-state are universal has to take, willy nilly, a position against both GANDHI and TAGORE. And taking a position against the latter is often more painful. GANDHI was an outsider to modern India, TAGORE an insider. TAGORE participated in shaping the modern consciousness in India; his voice counted. When Jawaharlal NEHRU claimed that he had two gurus *GANDHI* and *TAGORE* —what he left unsaid was that the former was his political *guru*, the latter the intellectual. In rejecting TAGORE, one rejects an important part of the modern consciousness in India.

Nationalism Against Civilization

What was TAGORE's starting point in the matter of nationalism? In his brief, well-argued—though at places uncomfortably purple—book on nationalism, he distinguishes between government by kings and human races (his term for civilizations) and government by nations (his term for nation-states). He believes that "government by the Nation is neither British

3. Humayun KABIR, "Tagore Was No Obscurantist," *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* 1961, TAGORE Birth Centenary Number, pp. 122–125.
4. Ibid., p. 125.

nor anything else; it is an applied science."[5] It is universal, impersonal and for that reason completely effective.[6]

> Before the Nation came to rule over us (under British colonial rule) we had other governments which were foreign, and these, like all governments, had some elements of the machine in them. But the difference between them and the government by the Nation is like the difference between the hand-loom and the powerloom. In the products of the hand-loom the magic of man's living fingers finds its expression, and its hum harmonizes with the music of life. But the powerloom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production.[7]

TAGORE admits that India's former governments were "woefully lacking in many advantages of the modern governments." However, they were not nation-states—"their texture was loosely woven, leaving gaps through which our own life sent its threads and imposed its designs."[8] Squarely confronting the popular belief in the backwardness of pre-colonial India, TAGORE says,

> I am quite sure in those days we had things that were extremely distasteful to us. But we know that when we walk barefooted upon ground strewn with gravel, our feet come gradually to adjust themselves to the caprices of the inhospitable earth; while if the tiniest particle of gravel finds its lodgement inside our shoes we can never forget and forgive its intrusion. And these shoes are the government by the Nation—it is tight, it regulates our steps with a closed-up system, within which our feet have only the slightest liberty to make their own adjustments. Therefore, when you produce statistics to compare the number of gravels which our feet had to encounter in the former days with the paucity in the present regime, they hardly touch the real points... The Nation of the West forges its iron chains of organization which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man.[9]

Does this relate only to colonial India? Will the analysis hold true even for an independent society ruled by its own nation-state? TAGORE answers these questions, too. He says, to his non-Indian audience:

5. Rabindranath TAGORE, *Nationalism* (1917) (Reprint, Madras: Macmillan, 1985), p. 10
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 14.
9. Ibid., pp. 15–16.

> Not merely the subject races, but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are every day sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetish of nationalism... It is no consolation to us to know that the weakening of humanity from which the present age is suffering is not limited to the subject races, and that its ravages are even more radical because insidious and voluntary in peoples who are hypnotized into believing that they are free.[10]

He recognizes that the standard advice to India will be: "Form yourself into a nation, and resist this encroachment of the Nation."[11] He rejects the advice because it assumes that human salvation lies in the "dead rhythm of wheels and counter wheels" and on "mutual protection, based on a conspiracy of fear."[12] Instead, he looks back to what he sees as the real tradition of India, which is to work for "an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them, and yet seek some basis of unity."[13] The basis for this tradition has been built in India at the social level, not the political, through saints like NANAK, KABIR, CHAITANYA, and others. It is this solution—unity through acknowledgement of differences—that India has to offer to the world.[14] TAGORE believes that India "has never had a real sense of nationalism" and it would do India "no good to compete with western civilization in its own field."[15] India's ideals have evolved through her own history and if she desires to compete in political nationalism with other countries, it would be like Switzerland trying to compete with England in building a navy.[16]

Yet the educated Indian was trying "to absorb some lessons from history contrary to the lessons of their ancestors". To TAGORE it was part of a larger problem: the entire East was "attempting to take into itself a history, which [was] not the outcome of its own living."[17] India, he believed, would have to pause and think before buying the more dazzling, transient products of contemporary history and paying for them by selling its own inheritance.[18]

The author of India's national anthem, one who had so deeply influenced Indian nationalism through his poetry, songs and active political participation, was outspoken in his views. Years earlier, he had spoken of nationalism as a *bhougalik apadevata,* a geographical demon, and Shantiniketan, his alternative university, as a temple dedicated to exorcise

10. Ibid., p. 18.
11. Ibid., pp. 18–19.
12. Ibid., p. 59.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 64.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 65.
17. Ibid., p. 64.
18. Ibid., p. 65.

the demon.[19] He now declared even more directly that he was "against the general idea of all nations." For nationalism had become "a great menace."[20] TAGORE recognized the sanctity of the anti-colonial movement and the futility of the method of "begging" for "scraps" used by the early Indian National Congress, at the time a liberal institution. But he also rejected the ideals of the "extremists" which were based on western history.[21] TAGORE sought a political freedom which would not be only the freedom to be powerful, for he knew,

> Those people who have got their political freedom are not necessarily free, they are merely powerful. The passions which are unbridled in them are creating huge organizations of slavery in the disguise of freedom.[22]

Strong words indeed; spoken at a time when the spirit of nationalism had already made a place for itself in the Indian public consciousness and when some like Sri AUROBINDO (1872–1950) had already located their nationalist passions in a theory of transcendence that made sense to many Indians:

> Nationalism is an *avatar* (incarnation of divinity) and cannot be slain. Nationalism is a divinely appointed *shakti* of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came.[23]

TAGORE was probably encouraged by the entry into Indian politics of a person who openly declared that his nationalism was "intense internationalism," that it was "not exclusive" because it recognized the eternal truth "*sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas.*"[24] This new entrant, Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI, was not afraid to say, even if it meant disowning one important strand of anti-imperialism in India, "Violent nationalism, otherwise known as imperialism, is the curse. Non-violent nationalism is a necessary condition of corporate or civilized life."[25] And the Indian freedom movement, therefore, was "India's contribution to peace."[26]

19. Letter to Jagadananda ROY, quoted in Seema BANDOPADHYAYA, *Rabindrasangite Swadeshchetana* (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1986), p. 22
20. TAGORE, *Nationalism*, pp. 66–67.
21. Ibid., p. 68.
22. Ibid., p. 73.
23. Sri AUROBINDO, "The Life of Nationalism", in *On Nationalism, First Series*(Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1965), pp. 33–39; see p. 39.)
24. M.K. GANDHI, *Collected Works* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1969), Vol. 32, p.45; and *Collected Works*, 1971, Vol. 45, p.343.
25. GANDHI, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 369.
26. Ibid., Vol. 48, pp. 226–227.

CONCLUSION

The larger Crisis

Many of my observations on TAGORE's attitude to nationalism may sound strange to Indians whose own nationalism has been significantly shaped by TAGORE and his creative works. Many former freedom fighters recall how they faced police violence during the freedom movement singing TAGORE songs. Jogendranath GUPTA mentions how in 1906 the aging freedom fighter Bipin Chandra PAL once caught hold of the horse of a Superintendent KEMP, at the head of a baton-wielding police posse, and tremulously sang these lines from a TAGORE song:

> The more they tighten their knots
> The weaker will our knots be ...[27]

What is the nature of this consciousness to which TAGORE was trying to give shape, while rejecting nationalism?

One obvious answer would be that TAGORE rejected the idea of nationalism but practised anti-imperialist politics all his life. But this only leads to the further question: how did he arrive at this position at a time when nationalism, patriotism and anti-imperialism were a single concept for most Indians? One suggestion, already given, was that to TAGORE, Indian unity was primarily a social fact, not a political agenda. From the days of the ninth Hindu Mela in 1875, when at the age of 14 he was first exposed to public life, to the day he resigned his knighthood in protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in 1919, TAGORE refused to grant primacy to politics even while sometimes participating in politics. Here lay his basic difference with GANDHI, to whom politics was a means of testing the ethics appropriate to our times and was therefore crucial to one's moral life. Everyone did not have to be an active politician, but everyone, GANDHI felt, had to work within a framework in which politics had a special place.

What linked the two was, however, their continuing attempts to reaffirm a moral universe within which one's politics and social ideology could be located. This is a concept of politics which had begun to recede a little more than two hundred years ago. For the global system of nation-states—which, according to TAGORE, had made a science out of statecraft—did not recognize any link between politics and morality, unless morality was willing to articulate itself as a political force, so that it could not be ignored

27 Jogendranath GUPTA, *Rabindranath o Swadeshi Andolan*", in *Rabindra Shatabarshiki Smarak Grantha, Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, 1961, pp. 35–41.

as a significant presence in political calculation. GANDHI understood this and was perfectly willing to politicize his moral stance, though on moral grounds, not political. He was willing to live, to borrow an expression from Arnold TOYNBEE's tribute to him, in "the slum of politics." TAGORE respected GANDHI's world view up to a point but lived in a different world.

A central theme in TAGORE reaffirmation of a moral universe was an universalism that denied moral and cultural relativism and endorsed a large, plural concept of India. He said so directly:

> Because we have missed the character of India as one related to the whole world, we have in our action and thought given a description of India which is narrow and faded; that description has given primacy to our calculativeness, out of which nothing great can be created.[28]

This universalism of TAGORE was not an entirely new contribution to Indian politics. (The terms Arabindo PODDAR and some others use to describe the concept of patriotism that underpins this universalism are apt: *Bharatchinta* or *swadeshchinta,* literally "thinking about or concern with India or one's own country." Both terms convey the idea of patriotism without nationalism.) From the very beginning of the growth of Indian "nationalism," there had been a conscious effort on the part of many Indian social reformers and political activists to develop a *Bharatchinta* which would project a self-definition transcending the geographical barriers of India. The first serious political thinker of modern India, Rammohun ROY, had refused to view the problems of India in isolation from the world, and this tradition was even more alive in TAGORE's time. Despite occasional attempts to base Indian nationalism on unalloyed self-interest, "pure" nationalism had never been able to mobilize even the Indian middle classes fully. Indian nationalism still vaguely reflected, in however distorted a form, what could be called the ultimate civilizational ambition of India: to be the cultural epitome of the world and to redefine or convert all passionate self-other debates into self-self debates.

In TAGORE's case, this ambition was sharpened by his attempt to locate the problem of India in the crisis of the global civilization. He was to diagnose this crisis in a moving testament he published on his 80th birthday, a few weeks before his death.[29] It is an appropriate text with which to end this essay.

In the testament TAGORE points out that India has always been open to other civilizations and particularly to Europe, since an unique conjunction of events had fastened India's fate to England's history. As a result, even in their struggle for national freedom, Indian faith in the English people was

28. Arabindo PODDAR, "*Rabindranather Bharatchinta*", *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, TAGORE Birth Centenary Number, 1961, pp. 86–89.

29. Rabindranath TAGORE, *Crisis in Civilization* (Bombay: International Book House, 1941).

not completely extinguished.[30] Not merely the declamations of BURKE and MACAULAY; but the poetry of SHAKESPEARE and BYRON, and the English openness to political refugees from other countries contributed to the survival of this faith.[31] TAGORE mentions that, as a boy in England, he had heard John Bright speak and his "large-hearted, radical liberalism" had left such a deep impression on him that it had not faded even at the age of 80. He mentions that since the *sadachara* of MANU (the concept corresponding to civilization in Sanskrit), appeared to many young Indians of that time to have degenerated into a "socialized tyranny" of "set codes of conduct," they had preferred the ideal of "civilization" represented by the English term.[32]

Slowly, however, came a "painful parting of ways" and disillusion. TAGORE began to discover "how easily those who accepted the highest truths of civilizations disowned them with impunity whenever questions of national self-interest were involved."[33]

> There came a time when perforce I had to snatch myself away from mere appreciation of literature... I began to realize that perhaps in no other modern state was there such a hopeless dearth of the most elementary needs of existence. And yet it was this country whose resources had fed for so long the wealth and magnificence of the British people. While I was lost in the contemplation of the world of civilization, I could never have remotely imagined that the great ideals of humanity would end in such ruthless travesty. But today a glaring example of it stares me in the face in the utter and contemptuous indifference of a so-called civilized race to the well-being of scores of Indian people.[34]

This political awareness brought about TAGORE's "gradual loss of faith in the claims of the European nations to civilization."[35]

> The spirit of violence which perhaps lay dormant in the psychology of the West, has at last roused itself and desecrates the spirit of man. I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe, but today when I am about to quit the world that hope has gone bankrupt altogether...
>
> As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization. Any yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in history...[36]

30. Ibid., p. 2.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
33. Ibid., p. 4.
34. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
35. Ibid., p. 8.

Perhaps this was merely the rambling despair of an elderly pacifist confronted with two world wars within his lifetime. Or perhaps TAGORE had come full circle to GANDHI's position that Indian nationalism as well as universalism had to be built on a critique of the modern West. We only know that this indictment of the West was the context within which TAGORE sought to locate his new politics.

On the other hand, it is doubtful if he had much hope of Indian nationalism either. Once he had dreamt, like GANDHI, that India's national self-definition would some day provide a critique of western nationalism, that Indian civilization with its demonstrated capacity to live with and creatively use contradictions and inconsistencies would produce a "national" ideology that would transcend nationalism. However, even before his death, nationalism in India proved itself to be not only more universal but also more resilient than it had been thought. Today, fifty years after TAGORE's death and forty years after GANDHI's, their version of patriotism has almost ceased to exist, even in India, and for most modern Indians this is not a matter of sorrow but of pride. Only a few Indians, who have begun to sense the decline of the present global system of nation-states, perceive that the decline of that distinctive tradition of political self-awareness means the loss of an alternative basis for human and political orders.

Writing of nationalist thought, Ernest GELLNER comments that the precise doctrines of nationalist thinkers

> are hardly worth analyzing. This is because we seem to be in the presence of a phenomenon which springs directly and inevitably from basic changes in our shared social condition, from changes in the overall relation between society, culture and polity. The precise appearance and local form of this phenomenon no doubt depends a very great deal on local circumstances which deserve study; but I doubt whether the nuances of nationalist doctrine played much part in modifying these circumstances.[37]

Maybe GELLNER is right. But the question still remains: how were TAGORE or, for that matter, GANDHI able to defy the universal sociology of nationalism? And how were they able to institutionalize their scepticism of the clenched-teeth European version of nationalism in the Indian national movement itself? Was there something in Indian culture, as TAGORE believed, which allowed such play, even if it was only a temporary phase?

36. Ibid., pp. 10–11.
37. Ernest GELLNER, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 124.

This essay has not answered these questions adequately. Yet, to round off the picture and to add to the part-answers, I shall briefly consider here the possibility that questions about nationalism can be posed on an altogether different plane. On that plane, cultural and psychological issues are less inconsequential and human ingenuity is more significant. To give random examples, attempts to pose the question thus have been made by Erik ERIKSON in his study of Adolf HITLER's younger years; Sudhir KAKAR in his study of Swami VIVEKANANDA's childhood; Susanne and Lloyd RUDOLPH and Victor WOLFENSTEIN in their essays on GANDHI.[38] In this way of looking at nationalism, individual thinkers and their thoughts become crucial in ways which GELLNER may not approve of.

A simple-minded book formulates the issue plainly: Richard A. KOENIGSBERG argues in *The Psychoanalysis of Racism, Revolution and Nationalism* that faith in the absolute reality of the nation is constituted of three interrelated core fantasies: the fantasy of the nation as a suffering mother, the fantasy of the nation as omnipotent mother, and that of the nation as a projection of infantile narcissism.[39] The wish to save the nation is the "projective equivalent of the wish to restore the omnipotence of the mother,"[40] KOENIGSBERG argues, and he goes on to use, among others, the example of Sri AUROBINDO's invocation of the mother:

> Insofar as the nation is experienced by the nationalist as a projection of the omnipotent mother, the nationalist tends to feel that, as long as he is contained within the boundaries of the nation, he shall be shielded from the external world: the nation shall act as a "buffer," standing between the individual ant the harshness of reality...[41]

It is this projection which helps the religious impulse to find expression in the ideology of nationalism.

KOENIGSBERG is supported in the Indian context, and specifically in the case of AUROBINDO, by others suggesting a roughly similar interpretation.[42] But something more might have been involved for persons like GANDHI and TAGORE. They saw themselves as belonging to a civilization that refused to view politics only as a secularized arena of human initiative. While associating the country with maternity and sacredness, they insisted that the association imposed a responsibility on the individual to maintain that

38. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*; Susanne RUDOLPH and Lloyd RUDOLPH, *The Modernity of Tradition; Political Development in India* (Chicago University Press, 1967); Kakar, *The Inner World*,pp. 160–181; E. Victor WOLFENSTEIN, *The Revolutionary Personality* (Princeton University Press, 1967).

39. Richard A. KOENIGSBERG, *The Psychoanalysis of Racism, Revolution and Nationalism* (New York: The Library of Social Science, 1977, p. 2).

40. Ibid., p. 6.

41. Ibid., pp. 8–9.

42. Philip SPRATT, *Hindu Culture and Personality* (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966); on AUROBINDO see especially NANDY, *The Intimate Enemy*, pp. 85–100.

sacredness. Certainly in both there was not only a built-in critique of nationalism but also that of the social and cultural realities of the nation. It is significant that GANDHI, who dismissed Catherine Mayo's racist criticism of India in *Mother India* as a drain inspector's report, nevertheless advised every Indian to read the book.[43]

Thus, at one plane, TAGORE may be read as a perfect instance of KOENIGSBERG's thesis; his uninhibited use of the symbolism of the country-as-mother in many of his patriotic songs and poems gives them intense emotional vibrancy. However, this symbolism of the country as mother also invokes something of a peasant's or tribe's traditional, ecologically sensitive, ego-syntonic fantasy of a nurturing mother who can any moment turn less benevolent. The omnipotence of the mother is recognized but feared; it is not romanticized or defensively glorified. Nor is it used merely as a means of restoring one's infantile narcissism through identification with a nation, as probably happens in societies that have clearly broken away from or repressed or lost touch—through disasters like large-scale uprooting—with their pre-modern pasts.

So while TAGORE wrote with great sensitivity and felicity about the nation as suffering mother, he also took a position against nationalism. Even the national anthems he wrote (he posthumously flouted the first canon of exclusivist nationalism by authoring the national anthems of two independent nation-states which are not always on the best terms and one of which is the only Islamic state ever to have a national anthem written by a non-Muslim) are remarkably free of any parochialism. They celebrate the contemplation of the Earth Mother in one case and the ruler of the hearts of the people on the other. But then, perhaps only in south Asia would they be chosen as national anthems.

One should not underestimate the hostility TAGORE's concept of nationalism aroused in the expanding middle-class culture of Indian politics. The modern Indian, I have already indicated, has never been happy with TAGORE's idea of patriotism. For instance, controversy has dogged the national anthem, *Janaganamana*, and claims have occasionally been made that the song was written in honour of King George V when he visited India. There is a particularly touching letter of TAGORE to the literary critic Pulinbihari SEN that expresses the poet's distress on that score, for TAGORE *did* sense that many Indians, unable directly to question his patriotism, were focusing on the supposed origins of the song. In the letter to SEN, written in 1937, TAGORE says,

> You have asked if I have written the song for any particular occasion. I can sense that the question has arisen in your mind because of the controversy in some circles of the country about the song... I am responding to your letter not to stoke the fire of the controversy but to satisfy your curiosity... That year arrangements were being made for the arrival of the emperor of

43. Catherine MAYO, *Mother India* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1927).

> India. A friend of mine well-established in the government made an earnest request to me to compose a song of victory (*jayagana*) for the emperor. I was shocked and with the shock there rose in me anger, too. In a strong reaction, I announced in the song *Janaganamana* the victory of that creator of India's destiny (*bharatabhagyavidhata*), who is the eternal charioteer (*chira sarathi*) of travellers walking eon after eon on the uneven road of declines and ascents (*patana abhyudaya bandhur-panthay yuga-yuga dhabita yatri*), a charioteer who knows the heart of the people and can show them the way (*antarayami patha parichayaka*). That that eternal charioteer of human fate (*yugayugantarer manavabhagyarathachalaka*) could not be the fifth, sixth or any George even the loyalist friend of mine understood. For however firm he might have been in his loyalty, he did not lack intelligence...[44]

TAGORE never defended himself publicly over this issue:

> I shall only insult myself if I care to answer those who consider me capable of such unbounded stupidity as to sing in praise of George the Fourth or George the Fifth as the Eternal Charioteer leading the pilgrims on their journey through countless ages of the timeless history of mankind.[45]

But he was bitter about the controversy all the same, for he knew that it was a no-win situation. He could never satisfy his detractors, as their accusations did not stem from genuine suspicions about the origins of the song but were partly a product of middle-class dissatisfaction with the "insufficient nationalism" the song expressed, and partly a response to what seemed to them to be TAGORE's own "peculiar" version of patriotism. To the chagrin of TAGORE's critics, his version of patriotism rejected the violence propagated by terrorists and revolutionaries, it rejected the concept of a single ethnic Hindu *rashtra* as anti-Indian, and even anti-Hindu, and it dismissed the idea of the nation-state as being the main actor in Indian political life. His critics guessed correctly that *Janaganamana* could only be the anthem of a state rooted in the Indian civilization, not of an Indian nation-state trying to be the heir to the British-Indian empire. They also probably sensed that *Janaganamana* was possibly the poet's attempt to moderate his earlier deep allegiance to *Bande Mataram* because of the fierce associations the latter had acquired in the course of the growth of post-Swadeshi extremism.

44. Rabindranath TAGORE, Letter to Pulinbihari Sen, 10 November 1937, quoted by Chinmohan SEHANABIS, in "*Janaganamana Adhinayaka Sangita Prasange Rabindranath*", *Parichay*, May–June 1986, pp. 20–22.

45. Rabindranath TAGORE, Letter of 29 March 1939, quoted in Prabodhchandra SEN, *India's National Anthem* (Calcutta: Visvabharati, 1972), p. 7. SEN's book covers the whole controversy reasonably thoroughly.

There might even have been some guilty recognition on TAGORE's part that, despite his long record of anti-imperialist activity and his attempts to shape the Indian cultural resistance to imperialism, he *had* for a long time avoided the responsibility of providing a developed cultural critique of the modern West. In the name of cultural syncretism, he had chosen to believe that knowledge and creativity could be neatly separated from political passions and interests, that he had pushed the line that while knowledge and the arts were universal, politics was parochial. Blinkered by that belief, he had even accepted a knighthood from the British government soon after he won the Nobel Prize in literature, presumably on the grounds that it was a reward for artistic achievement, not political loyalty. (TAGORE's acceptance of the knighthood saddened many freedom fighters. Saratchandra CHATTOPADHYAY mentions that Chittaranjan DAS (1870–1925) a respected leader of the freedom struggle, broke down on hearing that TAGORE had accepted the award.[46] People like DAS were mollified only when TAGORE returned the knighthood in 1919.) I have already suggested that, exposed to the tumultuous events of the 1920s and 1930s, TAGORE later began to move towards somewhat different concepts of creativity, intellectual responsibility and universalism. They were no longer located in a facile synthesis of India's civilizational categories and the values of the Enlightenment but in an awareness of the global politics of cultures. As he put it in a letter to Amal HOME soon after the Jallianwalla episode, "We also needed this [the massacre] to get out of our illusions."[47]

Under the circumstances, TAGORE could do little beyond accept philosophically the stray criticisms of *Janaganamana* . Towards the end of his letter to SEN, he says with a touch of resignation, "In this connection I remember an advice of Bhagwan MANU which goes, 'treat honour like poison, accusations like nectar.'"[48]

Fortunately for TAGORE, middle-class, modernized India never was nor is it now the whole of India.[49] The public space created by him and, even more, by Mohandas Karamchand GANDHI for a distinctive Indian concept of a public realm and state were never fully occupied by the nascent Indian nation-state. Some of their concerns have returned after about half a century, to haunt Indian nationalists and statists from time to time.

This is a story of divided selves, in confrontation and in dialogue. It has been told at three planes: ideological, mythic and biographical. The story

46. MITRA, *Saratsahitye Samajchetana, p. 110.*

47. Ibid., p. 109.

48. TAGORE, quoted in SEHANABIS, "*Janaganamana Adhinayaka Sangita Prasange*," p. 22.

49. The only opinion survey of the three possibilities for India's national anthem was conducted in Bombay. The results of the survey show that while on some criteria *Bandemataram* was found a superior anthem, the respondents rated *Janaganamana* to have the strongest "national characteristics" (SEN, *India's National Anthem*, pp. 55–57). TAGORE did not live to see the survey. *Janaganamana* remained the last patriotic song he wrote, although he lived thirty years longer.

tells how British colonialism in India released cultural forces which fractured the personality of every sensitive exposed Indian and set up the West as a crucial vector within the Indian self. The endorsement that was earlier available to the Indian self from the precolonial culture of public life was thus irrevocably lost.

Nationalism, being a direct product of the western past and thus an imported category, was caught in this inner tension. It consolidated the western presence on the cultural plane, while it nurtured the rebellion against the West on the political plane. This schism led to further conflicts. In a small minority, nationalism triggered off a resistance to itself. This minority distinguished nationalism from anti-imperialism and patriotism; for them it was an imposition, an attempt to mould the Indian concept of the public realm to the requirement of standardized western categories. They sensed that Indian nationalism did not merely mean internalization of an alien history, it was also an exteriorization of India's inner conflicts triggered by the colonial political economy.

Was the separation of nationalism from both patriotism and anti-imperialism viable in India? Was it a viable alternative for any Third World society which had been a victim of the West?

This question has not been answered here. Which does not mean that the alternative to nationalism which TAGORE and GANDHI hinted at was too ephemeral or fragile to withstand the turbulence of mass politics. It means that they foresaw some of the problems that are now emerging in the political culture of nation-states in both the West and the East. Perhaps the time has come to take stock of the costs of the nation-state system and the nationalism that sustains it. Such stock-taking may not alter the past but it may lead towards a redefinition of the concept and functions of the state, at least in this part of the globe.

Many years ago, at the time of World War I, a person as manifestly apolitical as Sigmund FREUD claimed that the state had forbidden to the individual the practice of "wrong-doing" not because of a desire to abolish it but because of a desire to monopolize it. GANDHI and TAGORE may never have read Freud, but they pushed this awareness into the political culture of India. That the awareness did not survive the harsh realities of international relations and the early stages of nation-building and state-formation in the southern world has no bearing on the viability of their dissent. And we, at the end of the twentieth century, may be in a position to affirm that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe did not say the last word on the subject. Time may still vindicate the vision of the two dissenters.

THE POLITICS OF ANIMISM

by

John CLAMMER[50]

ANIMISM IS A TERM that has almost entirely dropped out of anthropological discourse in the West. It has not however disappeared from the intellectual vocabulary of the East and is still evoked there in a number of guises. Discourses *about* animism abound in Southeast Asia for example where forms of indigenous religion and their expression through media such as shamanism suggest that the term still has some utility. It is in Japan however, and possibly only in Japan, that the concept of animism is still widely used as a way of explaining the distinctiveness of the culture and as a vehicle for constructing a model of Japanese society which, unlike classical western sociological theories, explicitly locates nature as part of the constitution of that society. It is perhaps no coincidence too that many strands both of "deep ecology" and of so-called "New Age" thinking in the West have begun to offer visions of society and of humanity's place in the universe that are remarkably parallel to ideas which have wide intellectual currency in Japan.

This all suggests a number of potentially fruitful directions in which the exploration of the idea of animism might be taken. It may firstly be that

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while the term itself has disappeared from usage in mainstream anthropology, it is in fact still useful, and a sympathetic reading of the history of the concept might show that it is a valuable way of organizing our understanding of a whole variety of phenomena: both those contained in indigenous knowledge systems and new social movements which are involving nature as their central principle. Secondly, the fact that intellectual discourse in one of the world's major cultures uses the idea of animism to express and encapsulate a complex of questions relating to identity, society-nature relationships and images of the self is not only interesting and worthy of exploration in itself, but should alert us to the possibility that there are indeed alternative modes of social analysis, starting from different premises about what is significant and leading to different conclusions about the actual dynamics of social organization. The increasing significance of ecological, some varieties of ecological-feminist and of New-Age thinking in effecting intellectual currents suggests that such ideas, long current in Japan, are despite their no doubt very different sources, becoming more and more widely diffused.

But a third level, and one rarely commented on, is the political significance of animism. Anthropological discussions of animism have left this dimension untouched. It is a major thesis of this paper however that animism has profound political implications: it contains a model of humanity / nature relationships beyond the sociological categories of the state; it is extremely difficult to codify or to convert it into any easily administrable theological system and when it is linked with expressions such as shamanism it can become subversive, a form of power residing in implicit knowledge, a counter-discourse (TAUSSIG 1987), and indeed a way of undermining the categories of conventional science. These qualities can be stated in the abstract. Here however I will attempt to illustrate them through the inner history of one of the major struggles in early modern Japanese history—the attempt by the state to impose a systematized and bureaucratized framework ("State Shintô") on the amorphous, localized and diversified forms of Japanese folk religion ("Shrine Shintô") in the late 19th century. This case study illustrates very well the political dynamics of animism, Shintô being interpreted here as a complex and specific form of animism, and of the problems of containing it within a model of organized and hierarchical religious categories. Given Shintô's close association with what is often glossed as Japanese 'nationalism' but is in reality somewhat closer to the idea of patrimony, an analysis of Shintô as the major indigenous religious tradition in Japan also permits an approach to the trinity of identity / land / descent which is not only basic to Japanese self-understanding, but which will also be found to underly many of the disputes between indigenous peoples and the state over land ownership and the exploitation of resources on or under that land. The logic of the Japanese case and the particular ontology that the Japanese have created speaks surprisingly, but directly, to the concerns of indigenous peoples in many other parts of the world. The continuing liveliness of debates about animism in contemporary Japan also points to a somewhat unusual form of argument which provides an alternative political language which might be of considerable interest to ecologists and to individuals and groups involved in

struggles for identities, land and for the right to be recognized as part of nature rather than as some kind of entity opposed to it.

Recovering the history of animism

The history of the concept of animism is usually traced to the definition first proffered by E.B. TYLOR in *Primitive Culture* (1871): "The deep lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy." In TYLOR's understanding of animism however the central concern was not merely with the definition of the term, but its use in an evolutionary theory of the origins of religion. Animism in this framework was seen by TYLOR as the *earliest* form of religion. The 19th century concern with origins was pushed even further back in R.R. MARETT's subsequent theory of "preanimism" or "animatism"—of a phase preceding the formulation of ideas of spiritual beings consisting of belief in or recognition of a primal force, a homogeneous and undifferentiated power not yet individualized into specific spiritual entities—a concept or rather intuition of what A. VAN GENNEP in *Les Rites de Passage* (1909) called "dynamism." In TYLOR's original theory there are two mixed elements—a characterization of animism as a system of spirit beliefs, of nature inhabited by a myriad of beings in which effectively the boundaries between the spiritual and the material are dissolved, and the evolutionary preoccupation with origins.

Interestingly even as scholars of Shintô have carefully avoided the animistic dimension of their subject, so critics of the original anthropological formulation of animism have largely ignored its potential significance (and revolutionary implications for ideas of the self, matter, human-nature relationships) in favour of concentrating on the shortcomings of the evolutionary model proposed by both TYLOR and MARETT. In the entry of animism in the usually-considered-authoritative *Encyclopedia of Religion* (ELIADE 1987) the whole idea is considered to be of interest only because of its role in the intellectual history of religious studies, is considered to be wholly contaminated by its association with an anthropology arising from colonialism, and is regarded as a form of pre-scientific, positivist, reductionism, to be classified as one of a class of competing late 19th century theories of primal forms of religion (Spencer's ancestor worship, FRAZER's magic, SCHMIDT's primal monotheism and DURKHEIM's totemism). The author of the entry, one Kees BOLLE, considers that

> "The theories of animism and animatism are difficult to take seriously in our own time, given the psychological sophistication that has come to be taken for granted in intellectual circles since Freud... At present, prehistorians and anthropologists would agree that TYLOR's theory has little bearing on any thing they would consider a religious phenomenon" (BOLLE 1987: 297-8).

This depressingly narrow-minded reading of animism, which sees the whole phenomenon only in terms of a now discredited 19th century

anthropological theory not only entirely overlooks the vitality of the concept in contemporary anthropological, Japanological and neo-ecological discourse, but does substantial violence to TYLOR's conception of what he felt was involved in animism. If we can for a moment bracket the question of origins, it is important to remember that TYLOR was concerned with two additional things. The first was the establishment or delimitation of the concept of there being an approach to reality which regards that reality as non-material, or nature as spiritualized. While TYLOR was indeed exercised by the task of arguing that this approach was the source of religion, he was also committed to arguing that while "primitive" this dimension was real to those who held or hold to it, and to arguing that this dimension, while supplanted in great measure by the advance of the dominant literate world religions, was never entirely suppressed, as any scholar of even contemporary Buddhism or Islam will willingly attest.

The second was the linking of this phenomenon of an animated or panentheistic cosmos not to the hypothetical question of its putative original status, but to a range of other phenomena which provide the idea of animism with a context, indeed even a rational context. There are two primary phenomena here: dreams and death. And neither are exactly explained more satisfactorily now than they were in the 19th century, despite the "psychological sophistication" so lauded by BOLLE. Dreams, which have exercised the imaginative and professional capacities of many 20th century anthropologists and psychologists, not to say mystics and New Agers, do indeed seem to many people, and not only "primitives," to provide a door to realms beyond mundane experience. Since dreams appear to be no less than the waking world, this does suggest a world beyond the confines of normal time-space constrictions, in turn suggesting a vision of the universe somewhat beyond ordinary materialism. Death, which to many suggests the continuity rather than the cessation of being, in almost all cases involves spirit beliefs of one kind or another. When combined with the almost universal belief, including in many segments on the industrialized West, in nature spirits or beings (fairies, gnomes, spirits and so on) TYLOR not unreasonably supposed that animism, far from being an irrational or sub-scientific view actually has quite a good theoretical and experiential basis.

The association of animism with what we now considered passe intellectualist theories of the origins of religion (which, by the way, actually remains an entirely legitimate and perhaps vital field of intellectual inquiry) has deterred most subsequent generations of anthropologists from making much use of the term (although it does surface almost inevitably, even if in a disguised form, in studies of more currently respectable themes such as shamanism). From the complex and tortuous history of the term in late 19th and early 20th century anthropology certain valuable ideas however do emerge which still have major theoretical implications. These can be briefly summarized as follows:

i) The question of animism raises the issue of its relationship to its close cousin totemism—the classification of social groups in terms of animals or natural objects or phenomena. Interestingly while the notion of animism has

fallen out of general anthropological usage, rather more (although not a lot of) attention has been paid to totemism, including an important book in the development of anthropological structuralism by none other than LÉVI-STRAUSS (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1962).

ii) Animism, embodying as it does an experiential, active and everyday relationship to creatures and things on nature, does not diminish "religion" to its point of ("primitive") origin, but in the contrary expands it by including nature, dissolving the boundary between the animate and inanimate, spiritualizing the mundane and by locating the core of religion in praxis rather than belief and in social-experiential forms rather than in theology.

iii) Because of the variety of forms of relationship between humans and animal and plant species (including their relationship to totemic animals) animism is closely linked to taboo and to sacrifice—also major themes in the intellectual history of anthropology. Through taboo animism is linked to yet a wider range of issues—some, such as the motion of *mana*, being of central anthropological significance and others, such as the links between animism and vitalism, of rather wider philosophical interest. These themes in turn are related in a very organic way to the position of ancestors—of ancestral totemic animals, of ancestors as the focus of a spiritist form of religious observance or of ancestors as a constitution factor in corporate kin groups and as forming the epistemological basis for the continuity of such groups (lineage in particular). As some scholars of totemism have also suggested, animistic beliefs are also functional to the preservation of the ecology—reverence precludes destruction of natural species.

iv) Animism in some of its forms involves a theory of souls: either that natural phenomena have autonomous souls, or that the souls of "dead" humans now inhabit animals or other natural phenomena. Such a belief further ties animism both to ideas of ancestralism and to ideas of existence after death, and in some cases to practices of taboo.

Two points need to be made here. Firstly, the theory of animism, far from being a defunct 19th century aberration, is both of profound interest in itself, and proves to have close ties with many other dominating themes in what might be termed the 'classical' tradition of anthropology. Secondly, acquaintance with Shintô suggests that many of these same themes may very fruitfully be brought to bear on a reading of a "religion" that is centrally concerned with the world of spirits, both animal, natural and deified humans (*kami*) , with ancestralism and the constitution of micro-social groups (corporate households or *ie*) and with a macro-social group (Japan itself) and with ideas of taboo, refracted through concepts of pollution and purity.

Shintô: the alternative politics of nature

Where and how does this rethinking of animism connect with the Japanese experience?... Here I will argue that there are two ways that this connection can be made: through a re-reading or reinterpretation of Shintô

from this perspective and from understanding of the political implications of immanent religion.

Shintô is probably one of the least understood of the world's major religions. Scholarly attention to it has been weak probably because of its diffuse and somewhat hard to systematize character on the one hand, and its associations with pre-war and wartime fascism and ultra-nationalism on the other. Shintô however does comprise the basic substratum of Japanese religion, it is actively important and utilized in relation to life-cycle rituals in contemporary Japan, it has modified and even transformed the other major religious traditions in Japan (especially Buddhism) and it has been the major inspiration for many of the so-called "New Religions" which have proliferated in Japan since the late 19th century. It is in other-words very much a living religion, but studies of it, especially those available in languages other than Japanese, have tended to concentrate on its architecture, its rituals or its connections with ultra-nationalism. Few have attempted to interpret its inner cosmology. Here I will attempt briefly to do that, and in so doing argue that Shintô does indeed have close links with politics, but in reality with a radical form of alternative politics that has little to do with the forms of state nationalism with which it has so often been associated. That it is indeed connected with forms of cultural nationalism there is no doubt, but I will argue here that these forms actually directly subvert state nationalism. The continuing vitality of animistic discourse in Japanese intellectual, especially anthropological, discussion suggests a widespread diffusion of animistic thinking through a wide range of Japanese institutions.

The point to start this analysis will be through an account of the struggles between "Shrine" or localized folk Shintô and "State" or government directed bureaucratized Shintô. At issue here is not only a history of a periphery / centre conflict, but of attempts to define what Shintô is and to represent that definition as the only correct or possible one—the struggle for definitions is actually that of attempting to achieve or resist ideological hegemony, and as such is inevitably deeply political.

Shintô in its most general meaning refers to a complex of beliefs and, more importantly, practices encapsulating an understanding of human-cosmos relationships. Historically it has never been a single thing, but rather a loosely connected set of localized behaviours Japanese in its specific configurations, but with many parallels to nature based religions elsewhere and sharing with them some of their typical manifestations such as shamanism. There was consequently no concern with "defining" "Shintô"—no intellectual, religious or political reason—until in the late 19th century, following the Meiji restoration of 1868 and the subsequent national project of modernization-without-westernization, governmental attempts to systematize and control religion and direct it to nationalistic ends led directly to the contestation of the meaning of the "way of the gods" (Shin-tô). It is only then that Shintô begins to be seen as a "religion"; prior to the late 19th century it can be better seen as an ecology—an expression of human-nature relationships in the context of an animistic universe.

While the origin of the term Shintô itself is unclear, by the late 19th century two broad categories of contested meanings had emerged: nationalistic ones stressing ancestor worship, the religious systematization of patriarchy and the recognition of the emperor as a living *kami* or deity; and ones arising from the ethnography of actual practices stressing Shintô as

> "hylozoism or pan-psychism, a point of view wherein *kami* is taken to signify the 'psyche' which exhibits itself in all the forms and forces of nature" (HOLTON 1922 / 1965).

The former definition is, to use Srinivas' term, a "Sanskritized" version deriving its legitimacy from its connection to an ancient literate tradition—the belief being that the origins and essential nature of Shintô (including the pantheon of distinctively Japanese deities, the position of the emperor and the ancestral links between the Japanese people and this mythology of divine origins of the country and the race, is to be found in the founding charters of Japan, the *Kojiki*, the *Nihongi* and the *Norito*. The latter definition of course has less claim to formal legitimacy, being rooted in what much contemporary literature persists in calling "nature worship" (a complete misnomer as I will later argue) and ancestralism lacking any systematic "theology," and without any administrative or organized intellectual apparatus for negotiating as a body either with the state or with the imported and powerful Buddhist and Confucian traditions. Indeed the structure of "Shrine" Shintô (so called because of its localization in specific centres of practice) reflects its cosmology: diffused, immanent, processual.

These characteristics partly explain why so little attention has been given to the content and practice of shrine Shintô: it is simply harder to study than the organized and bureaucratically managed State and Sect (Shûha) Shintô. Indeed today shrine Shintô has assimilated so many features of the other two that in many cases, except for its concentration on the celebration of local festivals (*matsuri*) it has come to resemble them. But there seems to be an ideological factor too: state propaganda against local expressions of Shintô, together with the powerful association between pre-war ultranationalism and Shintô, have established an almost complete scholarly hegemony of views on what constitutes the field of Shintô studies. The effect has been to a great extent exactly what the state intended after the Meiji restoration when it disestablished Buddhism and set about the active revival of an officially approved version of Shintô—the denaturing of folk religion and its neutralization as a political force. Despite this the fundamental nature of "basic" Shintô has not been entirely eradicated and it is to the implications of this that we will now turn.

Between 1899–1900 the Japanese government promulgated a number of measures designed to bring Shintô under direct bureaucratic control, and in doing so to declare that these reforms were separate from any concern with "religion": to eliminate the religious character of the official shrines and instead to link Shintô to an ideologically constructed version of Japanese history in which loyalty and patriotism became the essence of morality (HOLTON 1922 / 1965: 31–32). The principal *kami* became those of the imperial line, beginning with the sun-goddess Amaterasuomikami, now

redesignated as the divine ancestress of the imperial family. Politics, ethics, education, religion, a sense of distinct ethnicity and global purpose were all united under the notion of *Yamato Damashii*—the "great way" or perhaps Japanese "spirit" or "soul," identified in the reforms with State Shintô. Folk religion thus became converted into a national-ethical system with the emperor at its centre, and took on universalist and expansionist over tones as a new generation of bureaucrat-theologians began to expound the theory of Shintô as the basis of all religions, or rather, to separate this idea from that of TYLOR, as the best expression of all religions—as an inclusive system embracing and subsuming all the other major religions. Paradoxically in asserting this "basic" quality it became necessary for these theologians to, in very Tylorian fashion, equate Shintô with "primitive" religion elsewhere (e.g. KAKEKI 1912) in claiming the unity of religion, law, politics and ethics in these systems of belief and practice. Parallel to what Carol GLUCK (GLUCK 1985) has called the "denaturing" of politics in Meiji Japan, went the denaturing of religion.

While in GLUCK's terminology 'denaturing' is meant metaphorically, in the case of the suppression of Shrine Shintô we might use the term quite literally. To illustrate this we need to briefly sketch some of the key cosmological elements in shrine Shintô. Shintô has been described by some as homocentric rather than deo-centric (HOLTON 1922 / 1965: 114), but this is only partly true. *Kami* can be forces of nature, and they can also be humans, and while Shintô clearly has a notion of deities in the plural, there is no single supreme Being. All religions in practice are more or less human-centred in that the people who follow them seek protection, health and benefits, and this is equally true of Shintô. A major difference between Shintô and most other major systems of belief is that the boundaries between human / natural / divine are extremely permeable. The father of *Kokugaku* or "National learning," the Shintô inspired nativism of 18th century Japan, MOTOORI Norinaga, in his attempt to define the essential characteristics of Japaneseness, emphasized the "primitive" supernaturalism of Shintô in which *kami* are not only heavenly deities and *mitama* or the tutelary spirits of shrines, but also humans, animals, birds, plants, mountains, rocks, oceans, lakes and in particular spectacular manifestations of nature such as waterfalls. Emperors may be *tôtsu kami*: "distant *kami*," but even they are or were human, and every locality, village or even family contains their own "close *kami*," in the case of the *ie* the ancestors. Thunder is *naru kami* "sounding *kami*," foxes are *kami*, and indeed a whole cult of the fox as tutelary deity of shrines (*Inari* shrines) exists in Japan. Unusual phenomena may also be *kami*—the *kodama* or echo being a good example, although the term *kodama* itself actually means 'tree spirit.' *Kami* then are not just deified humans: 'nature spirits' or *kami* of nature may also reflect or refer to each other. The result is a dense network of spiritual influences at work in nature giving rise to a cosmology much closer to the occult vision of such modern seers as Rudolf STEINER (e.g. STEINER 1995) than it is to anything conceivable in western materialism or positivistic science. The notion of *kami* then has parallels with notions found in other cosmological systems—*mana* in Polynesia, the *Manitou* of the Algonquins or the *kalou* of the Fijians (on the latter see CLAMMER 1976). Early 20th century studies of shrine Shintô confirm this plethora of *kami*—including the mythical

founding parents of the Japanese race *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, the moon god; the harvest god; *Ukemochi no kami* the great food goddess, and the *kami* of the five elements, of the sea, trees, mountains, grasses, rivers, wells, kitchens, privies; the *kami* of trades, protectors of the comings and goings of ships, phallic *kami, kami* who bring intelligence and happiness, these who bring illness and misfortune, spirits of foxes and badgers and the spirits of enemies living and dead (SUZUKI 1920).

Some of these *kami* are still active—as in the phallic cults or festivals that centre on a number of well known shrines in contemporary Japan. Rather than opposing this kind of religious praxis to religions in which a personal deity is the centre, shrine Shintô should be seen as a radical personalization of the universe: the heavens and in particular the earth are subject to a personification which interestingly links Shintô clearly to North American and Siberian religions, from which it may have indeed received early influence (IRIMOTO and YAMADA 1993). The earth-as-mother motif, widely distributed in world ethnology, appear in shrine Shintô not in abstract form, but in particular as food-giver. This has led at least one Japanese anthropologist to argue that rice, the central staple of the diet for a long time, constitutes what is in effect the central *kami* of Japanese cosmology, and from this derives the basis of the Japanese image of the self (OBNUKI-TIERNEY 1993). While this view is very oversimplified in that it both ignores other features of what is actually a very complex and dynamic religious worldview, and while it only takes one aspect of images of the Japanese self for the whole (cf. ROSENBURGER 1992) it does correctly point to the central role of nature and of the products of nature in the constitution of the Japanese sense of self (CLAMMER 1995). In interpreting or re-interpreting shrine Shintô, I would argue that this permeable sense of human / nature boundaries, the regarding of nature as sanctuary and source of true being, and the effects of these on sense of self are actually the keys to understanding. The distortion of elements in Shintô for nationalistic political purposes (such as the cooption of the sun *kami*, now the symbol on the national flag) should not blind us to the radical epistemological implications of this form of cosmology, in which its central concern with purity and the avoidance of pollution represents not an empty ritualism, but a set of techniques to break through into that world parallel to and interpenetrating with the quotidian to pass through the permeable boundary and to ensure that the positive forces that exist on the other side of the boundary in turn pass through into the human realm. Shrine Shintô should as such be seen not, as in functionalist explanations, an attempt to control nature, but rather to achieve something closer to LÉVY-BRUHL's now widely retarded as discredited notion of 'participation' (LÉVY-BRUHL 1933).

It is against this background of folk Shintô—*Minzoku Shintô* that two major issues can be raised. The first of these is that of politics. Why was the Meiji government so concerned to bring shrine Shintô under its heavy handed bureaucratic control? If Shintô is merely 'nature worship' it should be harmless enough to the organs of government in a modernizing state. The desire and indeed the practice at the turn of the century of ruthlessly suppressing what for centuries had clearly been the native religion suggests

some deeper level dynamics than merely the desire to bring ever wider zones of society under bureaucratic control. The second of these is understanding the continuing vitality of animistic thinking not amongst the 'folk,' but amongst Japanese intellectuals. What does this probably unique trend mean and why does it exist? These two issues will prove in practice and conceptually to be closely linked, and it is to them that we will now turn.

Minzoku Shintô—popular or 'folk' Shintô possesses several characteristics which make it difficult to manage or bureaucratize: it is highly polytheistic, and is inherently pantheistic to boot. Originally it appears that there were no shrines even, but that shrines grew up at sites, often of great natural beauty, where *kami* were supposed to reside and /or where agricultural, healing or purification rites were carried out. Today there are shrines, although the number is much smaller than it was at the end of the Edo (Tokugawa) period after which the new Meiji government set about their systematic destruction and amalgamation. Religious sites need not be shrines at all, but are today often rocks or in particular trees, marked by a straw belt or *shimenawa* tied around them to mark them as *kami* or the residences of *kami*. The rites of popular Shintô—purification, honouring home and field deities, the divination of dream—do not require formal sites for their performance. In some cases whole vast natural features may become such sites as in the case of mountain worship such as practiced by the Fusôkyô sects which worship Mt. Fuji or the Ontakekyô which worships the Mt. Ontake in Nagano prefecture. Purification sects which undertake water purification for the cultivation of mind and body centre on waterfalls.

The diffusion and localism of popular Shintô makes it impossible to organize bureaucratically, a challenge to the Meiji and all subsequent governments with their strong centralizing, bureaucratizing and state building sentiments, and equally impossible to organize into a coherent conceptual system which can be classified, systematized and theologically controlled. The ethics of popular Shintô, centering on the idea of *makoto no kokoro*—sincerity or the 'heart of truth' are essentially individualistic. The conversion of State Shintô into a system embodying nationalism, loyalty and Emperor veneration was something of an ideological triumph (or disaster given its long term historical consequences) for the Meiji and subsequent governments. The pilgrimage tradition in which large numbers of peasants left their homes and travelled in huge groups to the major Shintô centres, and especially to the Grand Shrine at Ise, as much for travel and for pleasure as from any religious motives, meanwhile neglecting their fields and causing crowd control problems for the government along the pilgrimage routes posed yet further security problems for a state bent on the very Foucaultian project of classification, control and order. The diffused and localized nature of popular Shintô make it a potential source of resistance, implicitly if not explicitly to the centralizing tendencies of the state.

Parallel to the political unification of Japan and the literal colonization of the periphery (Tohoku and Hokkaido in particular) went an attempt at

ideological unification and colonization. And just as in very different geographical and historical contexts—shamanism and the control of everyday implicit knowledge emerge as foci of ideological resistance to colonialism (e.g. TAUSSIG 1987) in which cults of healing, purification and ancestralism became the vehicles for subverting ideological hegemony, so too in Japan the cosmology of popular Shintô stands over against the state directed ethics and politics of official Shintô. The sense of land—of a physical and inalienable patrimony—is interesting too in this context. State Shintô had as one of its major objectives the identification of land not with particular localities, but with Japan as a whole. Popular Shintô on the other hand is intensely local: *kami* are very specific to a particular place. While this does indeed foster identification with land or territory in a very restricted sense, it does not create a sense of 'land' in any abstract way. Ancestral association with particular places is strong, but under the conditions of premodern feudalism this identification was not with the land as property but with land as *resource* and with land as *numinous*—as the site of and source of the spiritual and regenerating forces of nature. This is an important distinction: peasant movements in Japan, and indeed later industrial movements were not so much struggles for *rights* as for *benevolence*: the recognition of a 'great chain of being' in which peasants or workers, while remaining as such, had expectations not only of relief *from* overburdening taxation and the like, but also *for* their in effect spiritual rights to be observed by those with power (SMITH 1989: 89)

'Animism' then has many implications, all of which in the broad sense are political: it represents an alternative ontology, it constitutes an 'ecology' as much as a 'religion,' it has implications for the nature and sources of social conflict, especially when they involve an animistic paradigm coming into contact with a rationalizing one.

Misunderstandings of native claims to land rights is perhaps one of the best illustrations of this, but it is by no means the *only* one, a point worth making as conflict between modern state governments and indigenous peoples often seems to be phrased purely in terms of land disputes. Conflict over land rather than the source difficulty should really be seen as reflecting deeper ontological disagreement. The historical conflict between popular and state Shintô and its long term fallout illustrates the range of these ontological issues very clearly and likewise demonstrates that competing ontologies are not only cultural, but also political.

And in some important ways too the implicit politics of popular Shintô were and are more realistic than those of the state, which assumed that by organizing religion it could control modes of coherence—that by shaping religious institutions it could control thought. In fact this can never be done. As Geoffery BENJAMIN has aptly expressed it in his suggestion:

> "That religion constitutes a phenomenologically distinct area of human action that we enter into largely as a result of the way in which consciousness is organized in our species. That religious traditions (the "religions" of world) are institutionally shaped so as to *prevent* the articulated expression of the key

> coherence-imposing relationship on which the embedding 'culture' (by which is meant cultural regimes) and 'societies' (i.e. politics) are based" (BENJAMIN 1987: 3).

Popular Shintô, by refusing or being unable to systematically articulate its theology and practice, actually allows a dynamic and constantly reconceptualized set of relationships or interpenetrations to take place between people and cosmos that any bureaucratic variety cannot. The relative lack of *language* (prayers, chants, scriptures) to articulate popular Shintô means precisely that the entrapment in language, the difficulties of communicating and the resulting "essential loneliness of the human subject" (to use Jan VAN BAAL's words) is bypassed.

This does not entirely banish existential anxiety or doubt about the mental representations used to organize life, but it does very definitely mean that this 'anxiety,' where it occurs, is of a radically different kind and is resolved through radically different channels. After a brief discussion of the continuing role of animism in contemporary Japanese intellectual life it is to this fundamental question of relating the politics of the self to the politics of the state that I will return.

It is probably true to say that in no other major industrialized country is there still, or has there ever been, widespread discussion of animism as part of ordinary intellectual discourse. However in Japan this is the case and has been at least since the beginning of this century. In a discussion of this TSURUMI Kazuko relates this vitality of the idea of animism to three important thinkers of the early modern period: the folklorist and ethnographer YANAGITA Kunio, MINAKATA Kumagusu who combined a career in microbiology with a reputation as a folklorist and is considered a forerunner of the environmental movement in Japan, and IMANISHI Kinji, an ecological biologist who later turned to anthropology (TSURUMI: 1992). TSURUMI sees these pioneers as both rediscovering the animistic views of nature held by ordinary rural Japanese, and as creating on the basis of this a view of science as some thing that should be symbiotic with nature, and indeed joins the debate herself by explicitly suggesting that

> "It is my contention that animistic views of nature hold significant potential to contribute to the search for such relatively non-violent science and technology" (1992: 3),

a view which she expounds at length in her paper.

In pursuing this thesis TSURUMI argues that

> "Just as Christianity destroyed 'Pagan animism' in Europe (following the analysis of Lynn WHITE, Jr.), so it was the emperor ideology in the name of State Shintôism, that attempted to destroy animistic belief in nature in Japan at the incipient stage of modernization" (1992: 4).

The work of YANAGITA in describing in detail the ethnography or regional cultures in Japan in the early years of the 20th century did much to resist this trend, and the recent rediscovery and popularity of YANAGITA in Japan and amongst anthropologists of Japan (e.g. KAWADA 1992) suggests the

resurfacing of a whole tradition of ideas in early modern Japan, contemporary with and parallel to those of E.B. TYLOR and others in Europe. The movements which grew out of this included both critiques of modernization, the concept of ecology and an early version of the environmental movement in Japan, and some distinctive rejections of Darwinian theories of natural selection and their replacement by alternative views not at all well known outside of Japan (IMANISHI 1970).

These ideas are still alive and well. One contemporary example is the work of the anthropologist IWATA Keiji, much of whose writing (e.g. IWATA 1989, 1991) has been devoted to exploring the idea of animism, examining its manifestations in a range of societies especially in Southeast Asia, and in considering its application to the understanding of Japanese culture. In his work IWATA argues that animism is not an early or underdeveloped form of religion, but sees it rather as a cosmic sense, or sense of the cosmos, analysis of which helps us to reconstruct the relationship between human beings and nature. This argument is partly that when born we have a natural animistic vision (a view interestingly supported by a number of recent articles in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* and in *Developmental Psychology* and elsewhere: for example KENNEDY 1987); this is diminished by the process of adult socialization, but return in old age when the categories created by socialization tend to diminish and a 'natural religion,' which IWATA associates with the character of Zen, reasserts itself (IWATA 1991: 262).

IWATA's theory is of particular interest to anthropologists since he relates it to a range of other cultural phenomena. One of these is the close association he detects between animism and shamanism, which he sees as the technique for detecting the voice of the *kami*. Another is his theory of naming which he theorizes comes not from an arbitrary linguistic relationship between object and name, but because naming is the technique of "how to recognize things"—inside the name there is a 'spirit.' His theory of intercultural relations is interesting in this respect too as he argues that when groups confront one another in any form of communication each group is forced to face the "*kami*" of the *other* group. Even this though at a fundamental level and in a very Buddhist way IWATA sees as being a provisional characterization, since his view is ultimately a vitalist one: that animism is not just the theory that animals and plants have a spirit, but is the view that there is actually one spirit that embodies itself in form, but which itself exists infinitely beyond shape (IWATA 1991: 181).

This finally leads IWATA to a view of the universe as pervaded by the numinous and to the view that intellectual discussion of animism ultimately misses the point: to be understood it must actually be *encountered*: it constitutes what he calls "The Third Mirror"—a meeting with oneself through the stripping off of one's cultural clothes (IWATA 1991: 182). This finally results in both a critique of deep ecology as a movement which is still too materialistic because of its unwillingness or inability to penetrate to deep enough levels, and to a theory of the formation of Japanese society in which he contrasts Western societies constructed on the ultimate basis of history

and the culture of human beings and Japan as having emerged organically from an animistic view of the cosmos (IWATA 1989: 250).

It should be apparent from the foregoing that there are several things going on in Japanese discourses of animism. At one level there is the concept to rediscover and propagate a cosmology—a vitalistic model of the universe with deep roots in folk Shintô modified by certain strands of Buddhism, especially the very Japanese theory of the ultimate or potential Buddhahood of all things—not only people, but also animals, plants and so-called "inanimate" objects (LAFLEUR 1974). (This also helps one to understand why, at the same time as the Meiji government set about suppressing shrine Shintô it also set about suppressing Buddhism, not only because a large number of Shintô shrines were administered by Buddhist priests, so close had the symbiosis between the two religions become, but because Buddhism had so fully accommodated itself to the demand for a theory of nature. Even today many a Buddhist temple contains a small Shintô sanctuary within its precincts.) This cosmology has numerous implications—including such ideas as Japanese theories of the body being one with the mind and as reflecting *ki* or universal energy in their composition and activity (YUASA 1987, 1993).

At the second level there is a sociology: not only a negative one in the sense of a critique of modernity, but also a positive one—a vision of how society should be organized to reflect the vitalistic forces that underly it. YANAGITA Kunio's own work reflects this, even if not in a fully developed way. His ethnographic studies of folklore and local level religions led him to a variety of conclusions about the way in which Japanese society should develop. These included a critique of modernity in the senses of the spiritual effects of individualization; belief in the necessity of a non-aggressive economy and agriculture; the theory that the *ie* or extended family was the basis of social solidarity in Japan and that land tenure should be linked to the *ie*, to kinship groupings, rather than to individual ownership; that ethical principles are embodied in folk Shintô which balances individualism and localism with society and kinship in a way that nothing else does, and as such saw it as a way of harmonizing horizontal ties and hierarchy. YANAGITA indeed was critical of Buddhism precisely because he saw it as being too individualistic and correspondingly weak in its ethical and social dimensions.

These considerations point to the third level: that of politics. Here again YANAGITA is a good example. His sociology led him directly to politics: if his theory of Japanese society is correct he believed that it pointed to the view that State Shintô is superficial because it is only political—it does not speak to the actual spiritual lives of the Japanese; and that it is possible, indeed desirable to have nationalism without the State—nationalism being understood as a form of solidarity based on shared values, which in his view are the values of folk Shintô. Shintô in this sense is the basis of Japanese nationhood, but in ways undreamed of by the architects of State Shintô. Folk Shintô is politically subversive because it points to a mode of thinking, organization and rootedness in the universe beyond politics. This having been said we can now turn to developing a more synthetic account of

the deep politics of animism: something that necessarily lies beyond the concept of politics as normally received.

Self / Other: Nature / Nation

Shintô (at least folk and shrine Shintô) as is well known lacks a systematic theology, although a certain class of scholars have worked hard to provide State Shintô with one. There is a reason for this which lies somewhat beyond the dubious explanation that folk religions, being informal and local have no institutional mechanism for systematizing themselves. This is that they are essentially not pre-reflective (i.e. primitive), but are organized in such a way that reflective verbalization (language) is much less necessary to their practice than it is in centralized religions, especially the "religions of the book." Ritual, music and dance constitute the important expressive performances rather than rhetoric. Tacit knowledge in such contexts is not so much hidden (pace BENJAMIN: 6), but as with TAUSSIG's shamans, becomes articulated (in appropriate contexts) and hence the source of power. BENJAMIN does indeed seem to suggest that this is true of animism:

> "The result is that, unless our consciousness has been severely subverted in some way by other modes, we will prefer always to treat the world as relatively undifferentiated and as possessing subjectivity. In its basic manifestation this preference constitutes classical animism" (BENJAMIN 1987; 6–7).

Beliefs in such a context are rarely articulated or even articulable, except in some condensed and apologetic form after the event. This is not simply to assert the rather obvious fact that animism is practical (or experiential in IWATA's terms) rather than theoretical or theological, put to point to some thing deeper in the structure of animism itself as a mode of relating to the world.

What this also implies is that the relationship between self and other has to be reformulated in that the animistic world view calls into question the essentialist assumptions of many western views of the self or the individual (MORRIS 1991). Self is transformable and mutable. This is true both at the level of the Japanese (and Chinese) preoccupation with self-cultivation understood not as narcissism but as a moral activity and at the cosmological level: the human self of today becomes a *kami* tomorrow. In the vitalistic world view all selves are in a sense manifestations of the "Great Self (a view also found in some varieties of Japanese Buddhism). The 'other' in this context has to be radically redefined. It is not nature as in many western traditions, nor is it necessarily people, especially those not bound in to the same set of kinship or quasi-kin relations, particularly as the sphere of kinship is linked to the sphere of cosmology. Just as the human realm and that of animals interpenetrate, so do cosmos and kinship, the particular link between them being the ancestors—those who have become *kami* and in return influence mundane human life. The 'other' rather becomes the person outside of this circle of participation. While logically in Shintô (given its vitalistic world-view) there should be no outsiders, in practice the nexus

between racial identity, place or territory and the specifically Japanese expressions of animistic religion have given rise to the image of the Japanese as homogenous and as exclusive—a charmed circle which none may enter except by birth. As one well known expounder of modern Shintô puts it: "Shintô is racial religion" (ONO 1990: 111). This specific dynamic of exclusion, structurally in some ways similar to that operating in the caste system (DUMONT 1980), has its origins not in racialism, but (also like caste) in a cosmology, a fact that helps exceedingly in interpreting Japanese culture, its constant insider / outsider dialectic (AKASAKA 1987) and the role that this has played in Japanese history. Significantly too recent studies of Japanese identity have used metaphors from nature including those of rice and of the monkey as mediator between the human and animal because of its closeness to people biologically and socially which also allows it so become a medium of critique and challenge to the assumptions of Japanese culture and society (ONUKI-TIERNEY 1993, 1987). Coherence then exists in the Shintô mode of orientation to the world through a two part process: through, in a way somewhat parallel too, but given its animistic assumptions also different from the Buddhist viewpoint, involving the self intimately with the other *within* the system but drawing a clear boundary between those socially classified as outside of the system: weak boundaries within, but strong boundaries without. The result is a strong emphasis on communality: hence the major significance of the 'group' in Japanese society.

All this has major implications for a number of cultural areas beyond the very fundamental question of the identity of the self. One of these is that nature becomes part of the constitution of society, not its "other" (CLAMMER 1995: 59–81). Another is directly political. As BENJAMIN notes in his seminal but little known paper:

> "Because the different modes of orientation generate different modes of interpersonal attention and different interactional styles, in any one polity (i.e. a social network institutionalized or thought of as a power dominated domain) those who wish to achieve and maintain power for themselves will strive to establish just one of the orientational modes as the overt over-arching mode in the culture of the people they wish to dominate. This they will do by actively (although not necessarily thinkingly) relating those patterns of action and communication that generate the different orientational modes in the dominated individuals' ontology" (BENJAMIN 1982: 13).

This exactly encapsulates the process of the suppression of shrine Shintô by the modernizing Meiji state. Interestingly rather than just encapsulating folk Shintô and separating it from the 'legitimate' concerns of the State, the Meiji government clearly saw folk Shintô as a threat: if left alone as an autonomous area of life it would not in practice remain apart from the interests of the government, but would interfere with them: it *would in* fact subvert the centralizing, State building and attempts to achieve 'Modernity' (with all its attendant transformations of the self) embarked upon by the holders of political power. To prevent this 'escape' from modernity folk Shintô had to be suppressed: its implications are too powerful for the

modernizing ("transcendental cultural regimes" in Benjamin's terminology) and centralizing Japanese state, involved as all states must be in the constant construction of itself and the persuasion of those to whom the idea of the state is not at all a natural one, that it is the only legitimate framework of reality and politics. Animism is not easily digestible by the modern state, not least because the view of the self that it propagates is incompatible with the systematized classification and surveillance characteristic of modern polities.

Animism, Ontology and Multiculturalism

Animism, of which I have suggested Shintô is a sophisticated example, creates a world view in which humans are a product of nature and nature in a sense is a product of man—both through the literal intervention of man in nature through activities such as agriculture and through the activities of *kami* as former humans. This perspective, which transcends the sterile categories of the social constructivists is not just a Durkheimian attempt to see culture deifying itself through nature. As such it is necessary to reject the organizing idea expressed by the early TAUSSIG in his study of Colombian plantation workers and Bolivian tin-mines, much of it organized around an idea about nature:

> "Appealing to nature, to the paradoxical extreme wherein certain lifeless things are seen to be animated, is merely one historical specific manifestation of that probably universal tendency whereby any culture externalizes its social categories onto nature, and then turns to nature to validate its social norm as natural (TAUSSIG 1980: 33).

The picture I have been suggesting goes far beyond this, and hence the displacement of the point of conflict between modernity and animism to nature from society. Animism is not the worship of nature, and the function of ritual in Shintô is not so much to get things done (there is very little petitionary prayer) as to affirm, exemplify and to continually keep open the channels to a metaphysical and ontological reality.

Rather the somewhat abused concept of animism actually reflects a deep ecological consciousness: one which sees the environment not merely as an object, but as something inseparable from the species-being of humanity. A rethinking of the relevance of animism also has substantial theoretical implications for anthropology and allows old topics—totemism, shamanism, ancestralism, "participation" to be approached in fresh ways. In the specific context of Japan, it allows both a fresh reading of the nature of Shintô and of the role of Shintô in modern Japanese history. The powerful reemergence of animistic ideas in "New Age" thinking should also be taken very seriously, as whereas the New Age tends to be treated as beneath notice by many sociologists, I would see it as a genuine and far reaching social movement struggling with the issues of the reform of consciousness in a world increasingly in economic, political, ecological and epistemological crisis. In turn it has connections with the ecological movement proper, with revival of interest in Asian systems of thought, in the rediscovery of American Indian spirituality, with mainstream religion through media such as the 'creation spirituality' movement (FOX 1991) and

with a widely read popular literature on what was once called the "occult" but which now deals openly with theories of such things as the animate life of objects and their power (e.g. WATSON 1991). As such animism connects with a whole field of issues that have emerged or been rediscovered in the contemporary cultural scene—concern with selfhood, the body, death, animal liberation, dreams, alternative medicine, organic farming, macrobiotics and meditation, to name a few of the prominent ones.

Of course not all 'animisms' are the same, and as with all other phenomena that have a social expression, a comparative approach is necessary. The animism of the Iban, the animism of Shintô and the animism of New Agers who wish to argue for the retention of the 'wild' in an industrializing world, are not necessarily identical, but they are likely to share many common features at the level of basic ontological and epistemological assumptions. Also important is the fact that this 'world view' also constitutes or implies a politics. The study of the history of Shintô in modern Japan illustrates this very clearly, and no doubt parallel cases could be invoked, such as that of indigenous people in East Malaysia struggling against logging and deforestation, in which what appears to be, in the conventional sense simply a political or ecological movement, is actually an ontological struggle. Habitat reflects cosmology, and what is occurring in such instances is the struggle between modes of being, a view reflected in insightful fictional form by Daniel QUINN in his novel *Ishmael* (QUINN 1992). The politics of nature is actually ontology. It is for this reason that struggles over land rights between governments and indigenous peoples, or struggles for cultural recognition (such as with the Ainu in contemporary Japan) often seem so irresolvable. Usually the two parties are talking at entirely different levels: their epistemologies are radically different. When these cases come to court the problem becomes even more acute, since the language and categories of the formal legal process can rarely contain such possibilities, being largely predicated upon a rationalistic world view in which a positivistic model of cause and effect is in use.

This casts some interesting light on the currently hotly debated issue of multiculturalism. For the most part argument about multiculturalism has been phrased in terms of gender, race or 'culture' itself and the differences between groups posed in these terms. Here I am suggesting that in many cases this debate could fruitfully be recast in terms of ideas of nature and people-nature relationships. Conflict between groups that appear to be 'cultural' in many cases actually turn out to be ontological.

The recent 'rediscovery' of Shintô in certain circles in Japan reflects this, especially as there is sign of a shift in the definition of Shintô itself. In a fairly recent book available in an English translation FUJISAWA has the following statement:

> "Shintô means the Way (Tao in Chinese) of kami, designating the cosmic vitality generative of all beings, animate and inanimate. We understand by the Way a permanent centre of the universe to be apprehended with incessant mutations. Kami

> is taken to mean the productive power of *Taiichi*: the Great Ultimate or Great Void" (FUJISAWA 1977: 27).

In the same book, FUJISAWA relates Shintô to the metaphysics, of Zen, to western depth psychology, and defines Shintô as "metaphysical realism" (p. 60) and as "cosmic Vitalism" (p. 65) and argues specifically against the "perversion of Shintô theory and beliefs into militaristic and ultra-nationalistic propaganda" (p. 55). The other strand in the re-evaluation of Shintô is very explicitly its connection to nature and its presentation to the world, still suspicious of its old nationalistic leanings, in these terms (*International Shintô Foundation* 1995).

A rereading of the significance of Shintô coincides with and sheds light not only on the perennial question of self / other and insider / outsider relationships, but coincides also with the expressions of animistic ideas in contemporary social movements (the New Age and Creation Spirituality movements being amongst the best examples, together with alternative healing and the fact that in any bookshop today one can find books on the "Tao" of everything from management to Winnie the Pooh). Most significantly however it is in the deep ecology movement that a seriously rethought re-evaluation of animism has occurred, centering on the concept of hylozoism—a "scientifically formulated animism" which regards life as one of the properties of matter (FOX 1990: 40).

The implications are many. Firstly the necessity for a reevaluation of 19th century anthropology and the recognition of the fact that it saw, even if through a glass darkly and in an environment where certain ideas of evolutionism and imperialism were major factors, depths and connections in human cultures beyond the ken of later generations of positivist anthropologists for whom disputes about religion were simply not part of the context. The wider organization of society and the micro-organization of the professional life of intellectuals has much to do with what can be conceived, as BAUMAN has recently so cogently argued with respect to ideas of death (BAUMAN 1992). Secondly the timeliness of a fresh reading of Shintô, both to better understand its place amongst the major religions of the world, and to rescue its essence from the politicizing efforts of its reformers so that it may speak again both to issues of broad human interest—ecology being a principle one—and to the question of the relationships of self / other, self / nature, self / nation, and nation / nature. Thirdly, the reconsideration of the position of animism in human thought opens a dialogue between 'religion' and ecology and suggests models of the universe beyond those of conventional science. Practical issues such as multiculturalism and the struggles of indigenous peoples for land rights are aspects of this. Finally, and at root, shrine v. state Shintô illustrates very clearly how conflicts at the political or cultural levels are often in fact ontological ones. What blocks communication is the attempt of two groups of people to speak to one another from differing world views—something, often not recognized or which quite literally cannot be seen in many well meaning attempts at dispute resolution or legal mediation. Animism suggests that there is no pure object world. Nature then remains enchanted. For the Japanese nature is indeed part of social self-image: there is no gap

between humans and the rest of creation or when society, especially urban society creates one, the recovery of humanness requires a return to nature, a lesson that might well be taken to heart as we progress towards a world that some are already calling "post-materialist."

Beyond the immediate scope of this essay, but certainly suggested by it, are convergences both with some interesting strands of contemporary social theory and with some of the perennial preoccupations of Japanology. A major commentator on the emergence of 'postmodern' cultural and social forms is the French sociologist Michel MAFFESOLI, who has developed an argument about the 'end of individualism' posed in a form that resonates in a remarkable way with the position being expounded here. MAFFESOLI sees the collapse of the 'great collective values' and the current preoccupation with the self not as a retreat from the world, but as signalling a shift to "a sort of tribalism which is based at the same time on the spirit of religion (*re-ligare*) and on localism (proxemics, nature)" (MAFFESOLI 1996: 40). The context of MAFFESOLI's study is the decline of individualism in the West. But in Japan an age of individualism has never begun, for reasons that are parallel to those identified by MAFFESOLI as indicating the shift to a new era in the West:

> "There is no longer a separation between the cosmos and society, nor within the social whole. On the contrary we are witness to what might be deemed *the culturalization of nature and the naturalization of culture*" (MAFFESOLI 1996: 66).

Japan, as many observers have noted, appears to western eyes to be a highly eroticized culture, themes of sexuality pervading both popular culture and classical literature, The erotics of culture in Japan are closely related to Shintô through the link between sexuality and nature reflected in ideas of fertility, phallic cults, symbolism (for example of water) and through understandings of the body and of body / mind and body / cosmos (for example the theory of *ki* energy) and their mediation through notions of pollution and purity. The formal patriarchy of Japanese social structure is in practice modified by the occupancy of women of two vital sacred spaces: the area of shamanism and the area of the household or *ie*. The view that the *ie* is simply a sociological family or household is now widely challenged, and it has been suggested that a better translation would be "sacred familialism" (HEINE 1995) in which women, as the agents of reproduction, link the sociological and the natural. The *ie* in stressing continuity over time integrates memory and nature through the cult of the ancestors. The *ie* in practice brings together decentric and horizontal lines of authority with centric and vertical ones. The *hiden* or 'concealment' lying at the heart of the *ie* expresses its character as a group organized around the preservation of an identity which externalizes itself in a sociological form while not being itself entirely a sociological entity, but rather the meeting point of nature and culture.

The postmodern concern with aestheticization finds its prototype in Japan but in an unexpected form, one which far from separating art and nature relates them in an intimate way, a synthesis rooted in Shintô. Here is the

context in which immediate experience, *naka ima* (the 'eternal present') is synthesized with the demands of actual everyday life and the need for continuity in the *ie*, the 'sacred family.' The liminality of persons in relation to the cosmos and the silences and spaces (*ma*) of Japanese aesthetics (PILGRIM 1995) are seen to be part of a single complex. Aesthetics and politics indeed turn out to be aspects of the whole in traditional Japanese thought, a fact which underlies the utopian expressions and aspirations of Japanese nativism past and present (NOSCO 1990) and helps to explain some of the deep structures of Japanese thought and action, and in particular the permanent tension between Statism and its desire to coopt nativist thought and to direct it to its own nationalistic ends, and the resistance to this stemming from an indigenous vision of humanity's place in the cosmos, a view which still expresses itself in Japanese social movements (e.g. the anti-nuclear movement) and which keeps alive a form of animism difficult to assimilate to the rationality and abstractions of modernism. The Japanese project this century might be seen as the struggle between those desiring to "overcome modernity" (*kindai no chokoku*) through the enterprise of nationalistic state building, and those who seek to overcome it through its subversion: a modernity whose roots in nature are left uncut.

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Editor's reading notes

ON THE INDIGENOUS POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF NORTH AMERICA

Taiaiake ALFRED,[51] *Peace, Power Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto* (Oxford University Press, Canada, 1999) 174 pp.

THE INDIGENOUS MANIFESTO is a timely and inspiring essay that calls on the Indigenous peoples of North America to take the core traditional wisdom and teachings of their ancestors, as the basis for Native "self-government" and politics, beyond the incorporation of modern administrative techniques and technologies. It is also a strong case for the recognition today by the Native peoples themselves of the core values of traditional Indigenous political philosophy and culture. "We must rebuild our foundations of nationhood by recovering a holistic traditional

51. Taiaiake ALFRED is a leading Kanien'keheka (Mohawk) scholar and activist, from Kahnawake, and Director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria B.C. Canada. He is the author of *Heeding the Voices of our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

philosophy, reconnecting with our spirituality and infusing our politics and relationships with traditional values."

It is a question of "self-conscious traditionalism." "Returning the politics of Native Communities to an Indigenous basis means nothing less than reclaiming the inherent strength and power of Indigenous governance systems, and freeing our collective souls from a divisive and destructive colonized politics... The greatest myth is the idea that Indigenous peoples can find justice within the colonial legal system... The book is not concerned with the process through which self-government is negotiated, but with the end goals and the nature of Indigenous governments, once decolonization has been achieved."

Beyond notions of state, taxation, citizenship, sovereignty, etc.

The author affirms that "the European notions of state, power, taxation, citizenship, executive authority, sovereignty" must be eradicated from politics in Native communities... Our politics must shift to give primacy to concepts grounded in our own cultures, such as Kayanerekowa which is not the Great Law of Peace but the Great Harmony which promotes coexistence among all elements (all powers) of creation. It is the Sacred Circle of Life which is common to all Native traditions, however different they may be. We, Natives, must be faithful to our traditions and go beyond divisive electoral politics, beyond Western-style political institutions, beyond the notion of dominion (human and natural)..."

"The Indigenous concept of governance respects individual autonomy but precludes the notion of sovereignty: the idea that there can be a permanent transference of power or authority from an individual to an abstraction of the collective called 'government.' The Indigenous tradition sees government as the collective power of the individual members of the nation: there is no separation between society and state. Political identity is not surrendered to any external entity such as the representatives of the majority, whose decisions on what they think is the collective good are then imposed on all citizens."

The extended family, consensus, clan.

The foundation order of Indigenous government is the extended family, the clan which cuts across the nations and unites them. Its basis is not majority but consensus-decision, conflicts are not solved by punishment but by restoring peaceful coexistence and community, it does not allow for the exercise of coercive authority, it is a non-coercive, participatory, transparent consensus-based system based on the extended family, the clan, the community.

Other notions of power, leadership, empowerment

He argues for "an Indigenous approach to the notion of empowerment, not predicated on force, coercion, or inducing other beings to fulfill imperatives external to their own nature. It is an approach that is non-conflictual and does not require a contractual surrender of power, for that leads to continual tension between the individual and the state. Native peoples must reclaim retraditionalized notions of Native leadership that satisfy Indigenous cultural criteria, not Western mainstrean ones. Success to us is not defined by mainstream society criteria."

"The Indigenous notion of justice is not based on individualistic / materialistic equity and sameness, but on balanced interdependency of differences (harmony)... We need to realize that Western ideas and institutions can do nothing to ease the pain of colonization. We must return to the notions of harmony, balance and peaceful coexistence that were and are the ideals envisioned in the traditional Indigenous philosophies." "We need to reconnect Native power-wielders to their communities and traditions."

"We must promote Indigenous empowerment. We must deconstruct the notion of state power to allow people to see that the settler state has no right to determine Indigenous futures." The Indigenous view of power has nothing to do with competition or status vis-à-vis others but focuses on whether or not power is used in such a way that contributes to the creation and maintenance of balance and peaceful coexistence in a web of relationships" It is not an oppositional concept. Some call it *shagoon* (Tinglit people), others *sumaaga* (Havasupai people), *diyin* (Navajo). Power is gained through balancing the diverse aspects of our being... harmonization with the natural forces outside of us, respect for the integrity of others... land, etc." It is a "spirit in certain living things and natural phenomena".

Notion of nationhood

"The Indigenous concept of nationhood is not the statist concept based on a sovereign political authority. It is self-determination unbounded by state-law. Sovereignty has no relevance to Indigenous values. It is an inappropriate concept, although it is being used sometimes by traditional Native peoples as a defence mechanism in a rhetorical and political way. As Vine DELORIA said: "The Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) arrangement of *rotiyaners* (entitled leaders) in their meetings is a very good way of ensuring that the political actions of a people reflect their consensus. We should think a lot more about the process they developed."

Resist the notion of Western superiority

"We should not subordinate nor be subordinated to the culture of the West and of modernity and should not maintain the superiority of Western /

modern knowledge over one's traditional and Indigenous knowledge. This is coopting and becoming coopted. Native leaders should adopt a contentious posture of non-cooperation in relation to the State and its methods of cooptation. The ongoing crisis of our communities is fuelled by continuing efforts to prevent us from using the power of our traditional teachings. Not to recognize this is to be blind to the State's persistent intent to maintain the colonial oppression of the first nations of this land."

Indigenism, cohesion, solidarity

The author distinguishes between the *cohesion* of concrete Indigenous communities / nations on the one hand, and the *solidarity* between all of them on the other. He seeks "to prepare the philosophical ground for the eventual development of a broad Indigenous (Indigenism) as opposed to a narrow tribalist critique of politics and the State. But organizations like the AFN (Assembly of First Nations of Canada) consistently fail because they are predicated on the notion that a single body can represent the diversity of Indigenous nations. We need a broad-based intellectual and political movement away from prevailing beliefs and structures."

"Indigenism brings through words, ideas and symbols from different Indigenous cultures to serve as tools for those involved in asserting nationhood. It does not, however, supplant the localized cultures of individual communities. Indigenism is an important means of confronting the State in that it provides a unifying vocabulary and basis for collective action. But it is entirely dependent on maintenance of the integrity of the traditional Indigenous cultures and communities from which it draws its strength. The confederate ideal, so prevalent in history, is the best example of a political tradition among Indigenous peoples."

Rooted in real community

The author stresses the importance of remaining rooted in a real community and of living traditional culture. We need to restore our Indigenous political culture within our communities. It is not a question of preserving tradition but of living it. It means valuing our traditions as powerful, real and relevant, finding answers to our contemporary problems, within these traditions, and being answerable to our Indigenous communities and nations. "My guiding vision is of a retraditionalized politics and the reestablishment of our nations and relationships on the basis of the sacred teachings given to us by our ancestors."

The author acknowledges the paucity of his own knowledge of traditional teachings. He says that he does not want to jettison the structures in place today in Native communities for a return to a pre-European life, but to leave room for the core of traditional values of government and to translate traditional government into a form that can be seen as a viable alternative to imposed structures. It will be necessary, in time, to adapt those traditional answers of ancestors to contemporary reality and to create an Indigenous based politics and governance and to add rafters to the

traditional Longhouse. "However this," he says, "is secondary to the primary task: to grasp the deep meaning of the traditional teachings."

Robert VACHON

Editor's reading notes

ON THE CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONAL AFRICAN POLITICAL CULTURE[52]

J.B. FOTSING, "Le pouvoir fiscal local au Cameroun : le défi du système traditionel au système moderne" in *Bulletin de liaison du laboratoire d'anthropologie juridique de Paris*, No. 15, Nov. 1989, pp. 41–86.

"THE POLITICAL SYSTEM introduced through the establishment of the State in Africa does not affect as much as one would like us to believe, all of the political space of society. There exist, side by side with the modern political system a certain number of structures of a political character whose disappearance has been decreed a little too quickly..."

52. Editor's note: this French title is translated in English by "Local fiscal power in Cameroon: the challenge of the traditional system to the modern system."

The author describes how "in spite of the pretentious integrationistic and assimilationist claims of the Leviathan State, there is, at the local level, a coexistence of two power systems in fiscal matters: the *communal power* which seeks to exclusively impose itself upon the *traditional power* which resists." The author tries to show how these two systems articulate, interact, and to bring out their strategies and logic... He does so through an anthropological approach which is rarely used in the study of fiscal phenomena. He does so in a very structured and enlightening presentation that I shall not try to synthesize here.

I shall only underline some points he makes in the text, which throw some light on the nature and practise of contemporary traditional African political culture (which is "disorganised by modernity") with regard to the system imported and imposed by today's Western and African modernity, (itself "unbalanced and dispersed").

Resistance

"When African countries adopt a Western-inspired system, one cannot assume that they have also adopted effectively the system of values which serves as its basis. This new type of organization constitutes a break with the traditional system. This is what explains why rural societies do not yet accept the 'commune' as an authentic structure."

At the traditional level, it is the sacred and the religious (the ancestors) which is the basis of power legitimacy and not the law and constitution:

What distinguishes traditional fiscal power (which still exists at the local level) from communal fiscal power, is that the latter springs from a law through which the legislator gives to that entity (the Commune) the power to levy taxes, while the former comes from the fact that, in spite of the modern authority's will to transform traditional chiefs into mere agents of the central administration, the chiefs continue to see themselves and act as chiefs, since their power / authority is not conferred upon them by the Constitution, nor by law, but springs from the *tribe* (and hence from the *ancestors* who are the true guardians of customs). Their authority is founded on the sacred power of myth and of the rituals of enthronement which put the chieftainship in communication with the ancestors who founded the group.

Chieftainship as a political unit

Beyond family, *the political unit is chieftainship*, i.e. those who embody the ancestors, i.e. the grouping where dwell the individual's ancestors. That is where the "gods" of one's elders dwell and where sacrifices take place. The individual, even if living abroad, continues to belong spiritually and sentimentally to his family, his tribe, his village (to the land of his ancestors): "to the sap from the old trunk." Hence, by fact and by right, one

is a "national" *of the group where the ancestors dwell*. One is bound through a kind of perpetual allegiance, to the chieftainship where lie the skulls of his ancestors.

The dependency towards the latter has no end, because it is the result of existence itself. It ends only with life (which never ends). The belongingness to one's village, to one's tribe, to one's chieftainship, to one's race, is not a matter of rational discussion. Traditional fiscal power has a sacred character.

More than a locus of belongingness, the "natural village" with its chief surrounded by a counsel of chiefs, guardians of customs, is a political entity. But there is also the "village as city," which includes the chieftainship, and the decentralised collectivities which comprise the *sub-chieftainships* (centers of particular interest) and the *neighborhoods* which are directly part of the chieftainship or of the sub-chieftainships, and are divided into sub-neighborhoods.

But there is also the *artificial village*, i.e. the reconstitution within cities, of certain institutions that have a traditional character, thus making it possible to fictitiously prolong the village into the urban zone. There, the people are regrouped according to ethnic affinities (ethnic neighborhoods). The newcomers to the city are thus integrated into the solidarity of their tribes (urban tribalism): tribal associations at different levels (neighborhood, village, department, province). The chief has therefore a spatial competence more extensive than the commune.

Safeguarding the "village identity" against the ideology of "national unity"

"Cameroon is a State and capitalistic system, a unitarian system which tries to impose itself against a plural system which resists and seeks to affirm its originality. But there is hostility of chieftainships with regard to the integrating myth of the Leviathan State. They refuse uniformity, and they take great care to safeguard the village identity as a political unit, and the national identity (of the group where the ancestors dwell) against the national identity of the State constitution and law. It is a matter of refusing uniformity, and of concern to preserve the originality of these traditional institutions, all the while entering into a civilizational model, which, without being one of imitation, or a borrowed one, will also reflect the realities of our century."

"In Cameroon, as in other African States, there is an abyss between the cosmovision projected by the Nation-State model on the one hand, and on the other hand the village universe and the will to local autonomy. The solution must aim at respecting the identity of communities. Thus, respecting the identity and responsibility of communities implies respecting also that of the State."

"At the local level, two concepts of development are in opposition. On the one hand, Western and Statist development, centralizing, generating uniformity. On the other, an animistic development, based on differentiation. Progress does not consist in submitting to the uniform law of God or for the State to adopt the best law and impose it to all, but on the contrary in mutual differentiation. The State flows from diversity not from uniformity. The village opposes the responsibility of Man to that of the State. The individual, in the former case, does not expect the Administration to design the way of his future, but he chooses himself that future and achieves, within the visible and the invisible, what is required to get there. It is because of this logic that the State of Cameroon must seek to respect the identity and responsibility of communities."

"Of course, there are fields of opposition between these two, but also spaces of complementarity, so that we are not condemned necessarily to mutual exclusion. If the commune is necessary for the village, the village is necessary for the commune."

The challenge of the African traditional system to the modern system

The author concludes: "we find ourselves in the presence of a society which tends towards a certain syncretism which is not mere juxtaposition of a double network of structures, for if the two actors can enjoy a certain autonomy, it can only be relative. In fact, the two sectors are entertaining relationships which will go on expanding.

In the light of this necessary co-relation, the challenge of the traditional to the modern system which is the commune, sees itself as a postulate of peaceful coexistence and not as a will to exclude. This postulate of peaceful coexistence at the same time hides and reveals two realities: an acceptance of the international market and a will to domesticate the means and process that lead to it... African society is not a closed society. But the way of development is not necessarily the reproduction of other societies that are organised according to different logic. For, the principle of difference which unites, causes every community to open itself up to others, whether it be communities that are by nature similar or different, and to constitute with the other a new community: going from one level to another, right up or down to the state and beyond.

The stakes of modernity should not be the Westernization of cultures, but a kind of new Africanness which should be able to escape the fascination of both the past (in its exoticism) and the West.

The concern of local peoples is to understand the process of development in order to better master and domesticate it. Modernity seems to take place through the communitarianism which expresses itself through "artificial villages" that one comes across in cities, and that some call, for lack of a better name, urban tribalism. In fact, tuning in to the system of world development need not be a cultural extraversion. One must rediscover

oneself in order to discover others, one must be oneself in order to better be with others."

E.A.B. VAN ROUVEROY VAN NIEUWAAL and Donald I. RAY (editors) "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities to Africa's Future" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, No. 37–38, 1996, 430 pp.

These are selected articles from a major Ghana Conference (1994) covering sixteen African countries whose purpose was to find a way "to overcome the increasingly threatening disjuncture between state structures and civil society in much of Africa, and to draw up a list of specific policy proposals detailing the ways in which traditional authority has or could contribute to Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection."

The major themes of the volume are presented by the editors (pp. 6–38). VAN ROUVEROY VAN NIEUWAAL asks "are chiefs mere puppets in Togo?" He argues that "chieftaincy has re-emerged as an important vehicle for more or less authentic political expression... African chiefs, if not totally uncaptured by the African state, have a great room for manoeuvre or as '*chefs de manœuvre*,' a room much larger than the formal constitutional and administrative legal models lead one to suspect... They have a double basis of power..."

VAN TROTHA in "From administrative to civil chieftaincy" examines the nature of the institution of African chieftaincy with particular reference to its future. Chieftaincy and the post-colonial state both must be transformed. He proposes eight principles: 1) the State has to recognize the *de facto* legal pluralism and to institutionalize the chiefs' independent legal system, 2) local problems must be solved locally, 3) chiefs' courts should be recognized by the State, 4-5) "chiefs not only have to be guardians of tradition but also be active agents of the present and future by promoting the well-being of the community, i.e. requirements of modern economic, administrative and political challenges and tasks", 6) chieftaincy must become "civil chieftaincy" where it becomes a forum where such issues are debated, 7) civil chieftaincy must be integrated on the level of the central state, 8) but subject to the democratic practice of checks and balances.

Another author, SKALNIK, in "Authority versus Power" (pp. 109–121) says "African notions of politics are more inclusive of social and religious elements than current European-derived notions of politics." He argues that "African Indigenous institutions were genuinely democratic but did not necessarily conform to the European conceptions of representative democracy... D. RAY in "Divided Sovereignty in Ghana" (pp. 181–201) argues that chiefs form a parallel power to the state. Not all Ghanaians see sovereignty as being held only by one structure: the post-colonial state. It is a matter of co-existence.

As for particular studies, HATT (pp. 123–154) examines chieftainship among the Berbers of Morocco who use "tradition" to maintain considerable autonomy in their lives, and how the post-colonial state shows a degree of reliance on the authority of traditional leaders who have a political culture constituted on the basis of patrimonial rather than rational-bureaucratic criteria.

LABATUT (pp. 155–181) examines traditional authority in the Sahel from the perspective of environmental protection and critiques knowledge paradigms that totally or largely exclude traditional authority in peasant communities and processes of research and policy design.

The Maroons of Surinam and Jamaica are studied by PAKOSIE and ZIPS (pp. 263–305) where they call attention to the following: (a) that forms of African based-chieftaincy exist both in Africa and in certain parts of the Americas, (b) that it would be fruitful to compare chieftaincy in and between the two continents. It could be fruitful for both sides of the Atlantic.

GESCHIERE (pp. 307–327) examines the religious aspect of traditional authority from the perspective of witchcraft in Cameroon in forests and grasslands.

KONINGS (pp. 329–346) examines chieftaincy as a mechanism of labour control for the promotion of capitalist development in the Bamenda grassfields of Cameroon (1950–1993).

DANEEL's paper (pp. 347–376) provides a major case study of how traditional political and religious authorities in Zimbabwe have successfully contributed to environmental protection. (*Editor's note: See* Interculture *issue 137 for the integral text.)*

QUINLAN in "The State and National Identity in Lesotho" (pp. 377–405) speaks of a dual structure of government of chiefs and the state. Chieftaincy is not a "solid rampart" of Basotho culture, but rather a continually changing institution being redefined by the people to meet their needs.

BANK and SOUTHALL (pp. 407–429) examine the relationship between state and traditional leaders in South Africa from a) a historical perspective b) an examination of the ways in which traditional leaders have contributed and might contribute to the democratization of the South African State, particularly with regard to local government. New ways of conceptualizing the role of traditional leaders are needed in post-apartheid South Africa, possibly by divorcing chiefs from the constitutional state's power.

The editors then present some reflections on chieftaincy in Africa (pp. 23–38). "The position of traditional chiefs, contrary to expectation, has been strengthened in the last two decades." However, they "warn against too static an interpretation of the concepts of chieftaincy which sometimes has nothing to do with 'tradition' and has been reduced to what has been called 'a neo-traditional chieftaincy,' or as GESCHIERE (in this volume) puts it: 'it is clear that in Africa the 'traditionality' of these

authorities (i.e. chiefs) is highly variable. It has a hybrid nature. The chief has become a syncretic leader who forges a synthesis between views. His behaviour is thus unpredictable. The advantage, however, is that this conduct reflects the entire social situation and cannot be identified with only one characteristic of it. He is a go-between who integrates the two political systems. This enables him to mobilize a wide variety of resources and instruments of power." *[Editor's note: it would have been interesting to hear the African traditionalist interpretation of this phenomenon: it might not have taken the form of the unitarianistic and futuristic thought form of the West, with its notions of syncretism, synthesis, duality and unpredictability.]*

The editors describe the chiefs and peasants resistance to the state and state law and its legal innovations; the peasants by passive resistance and absence of institutional frameworks (hidden transcripts) as for the chiefs, they have not degenerated to being mere puppets of the state or to a folkloristic fringe of the state.

R.V.

Editor's reading notes

ON THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF HAITI-OUTSIDE-THE-NATION-STATE: *"PEYI ANDEYO"* (THE COUNTRY OUTSIDE)

Henry HOGARTH, "The Garden and the Gods: Life from the Haitian perspective" in *Haiti or the psychology of black*, by J. HILLMAN et *al.* (In Spring Journal 1997) pp. 61–82.

BORN IN HAITI and a resident thereof, the author focuses here not so much on the independence of Haiti as a nation-state nor on a so-called failed nation-state, but on what the average Haitian countryman refers to as the "*peyi Andeyo*": "the country outside" the nation-state or *respublica*. "From this perspective, the major achievement of the Haitian revolution, though one certainly not intended by the Founders of that republic, was the creation of a society functioning outside of, if not quite against, the State. That society was not, and is not, a subculture. It embodies the dominant culture, dominant in the sense that, although denied, repressed, alienated and vilified by the elite, both national and foreign, it remains the 'ground' of Haiti's essence... Being inheritors of the ancient African tradition which has sustained their spirit, the people of the 'country outside' struggle to find their way... It is this culture and the mindset of these people that I will now present."

"After independence, the men and women living *andeyo*... were not concerned with the establishment of a state nor with a suitable form of government and its paraphernalia: constitutions ... entitlements, elections. All this left the majority of these former slaves indifferent... *Andeyo* was a social structure named the *lakou*, around the venerable patriarch... Nature being spiritualised by the *Lwa* (gods) which have invested it, there is no question of dominating it. The socio-economic structure is the *kombit* (non-salaried collective work).

The author describes the language and especially the psychology of Vodu which is at the heart of this political culture, "where everything is the effect of spiritual agencies. The people of "*peyi Andeyo*" have a world view based on *psyche* whereas Western culture is based on *techné*. They (the former) value rites / rituals that proffer the invisible and intangible as real, the latter (Westerners) value the rational, the mechanics of matter, abstract formulas as real. The "*peyi Andeyo*" values the extended family and the community (of both the living and the dead) while the Western emphasis is on the individual, the nuclear family and the corporate team. The traditional Haitian sees and knows his story as the story of the ancestors, of the *Lwa* (gods), etc.

Robert VACHON

Editor's reading notes

ON THE POLITICAL AND INTERCULTURALITY

Raimon PANIKKAR, "Politica e interculturalità" *Reinventare la politica*, Citta di Castello (Pg) L'Altrapagina, 1995.

The author invites us to take interculturality seriously at the political level. He tells us what this means, and how it challenges us to reflect on our own anthropological presuppositions with regard to the 'political,' to democracy, etc. He briefly describes the "sui generis" method that this requires, namely a dialogical dialogue which one cannot reduce to a dialectical dialogue or to cultural tourism. Moreover, he underlines that the meeting is not only one of cosmologies but of ontologies or life-worlds (which he calls Kosmologies). He challenges us to discover the metapolitical as other than a category of the political, and, in nine sutras on peace and politics, he reminds us that no one political culture—not even "the political" itself—can be the only instrument of peace. Peace, he says, is the fruit of metapolitico-religious harmony, which implies renouncing not only all sovereignty, both political and religious, but also any world system. Harmony is not the fruit of a mere political agenda. He invites us to embrace pluralism (which is not plurality).