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The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity

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The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity

Identifying the Past

THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION CONCERNS the relation between the practice of identity as a process and the constitution of meaningful worlds, specifically of historical schemes. Self-definition does not occur in a vacuum, but in a world already defined. As such it invariably fragments the larger identity space of which its subjects were previously a part. This is as true of individual subjects as of societies or of any collective actors. The construction of a past in such terms is a project that selectively organizes events in a relation of continuity with a contemporary subject, thereby creating an appropriated representation of a life leading up to the present, that is, a life history fashioned in the act of self-definition. Identity, here, is decisively a question of empowerment. The people without history in this view are the people who have been prevented from identifying themselves for others. Similarly, the current challenge to Western identity and history and the rapid increase in alternative, ethnic, and subnational identities is an expression of the deterioration of the conditions that empowered a dominant modernist identity. The latter entails the liberation of formerly encompassed or superseded identities. I shall be arguing that the dehegemonization of the Western-dominated world is simultaneously its dehomogenization.

In this article I present two kinds of argument. The first concerns the general relations between identity and the politics of historical construction. The second concerns the current situation of contested representations of other peoples' realities. The overriding argument is that cultural realities are always produced in specific sociohistorical contexts and that it is necessary to account for the processes that generate those contexts in order to account for the nature of both the practice of identity and the production of historical schemes. This includes the identifications "invented" by anthropologists as well as those of the subjects that we engage "out there." I argue, further, that the processes that generate the contexts in which identity is practiced constitute a global arena of potential identity formation. This arena is informed by the interaction between locally specific practices of selfhood and the dynamics of global positioning.

Positioning the Self and Constructing the Past

Making history is a way of producing identity insofar as it produces a relation between that which supposedly occurred in the past and the present state of affairs. The construction of a history is the construction of a meaningful universe of events and narratives for an individual or collectively defined subject. And since the motivation of this process of construction emanates from a subject inhabiting a specific social world, we may say that history is an imprinting of the present onto the past. In this sense, all history including modern historiography is mythology. A central theme of this discussion centers on the inevitable confrontation between Western intellectual practices of truth-value history and the practices of social groups or movements constructing themselves by making history. The latter is by no means a unitary or homogeneous process, since it depends upon the ways in which agents are situated in a larger social context. The following contrast between Greek and Hawaiian cultural identification is an exploration of the parameters

of this process, one that attempts to link the practice of self-identification in specific social conditions to the way in which the past is actively constituted.

The Past into the Present: The Formation of Greek Identity

Greek identity seems to interest anthropologists of ethnic construction, because it is so clearly a recent construct whose continuity can be easily questioned (Herzfeld 1987). Greek identity has, since the formation of the Greek nation beginning in the 18th century, been represented as truly ancient. But this representation is a European representation dating from the Renaissance, that is, the revival of Western "roots" in classical civilization in which ancient Greece played a central role as the source of philosophy, science, liberty, and democracy, which, in their turn, became ideological hallmarks of the emergence of modern European society. Now, while many recent discussions are intent on deconstructing Greek national identity, there has not been an equivalent interest in grasping the social context in which it occurred and which made it a possibility.

In the classical period, to which most discussions hark back, there was no clear Greek identity in general, since the latter was focused on individual city-states. There was, however, a distinction between people and state, between *ethnos* and *kratos*, which played a significant role in political philosophy. The notion of a Greek *paideia*, a body of cultural knowledge, appeared very clearly in the Hellenistic period, in which the notion of culture as distinct from people seems also to have emerged. In other words, there are interesting parallels between the self-representations of Classical and Hellenistic Greek civilization and that of early European modernity. The argument that there was no Greek identity is a gross exaggeration, but there is ample evidence of a violent discontinuity that ensued upon the Roman expansion, the establishment of Byzantium, and the following implantation of Ottoman rule. In this period, Greek identity appears to have disappeared. Certainly, Greek society more or less disappeared into a number of imperial structures that transformed both the demographic composition and political forms of the societies of geographical Greece. The Greek economy already had collapsed during the period of Roman expansion, and was incorporated into that empire. With the decline of the latter, the establishment of a Christian Eastern Empire reorganized much of the region. Greek came to refer to heathen, or non-Christian, and was thus low-ranked. The term *Roman* was extended to all of the Christian Mediterranean and the East was no different in this respect. The term *Romioi* was the term used to identify these populations. And this may not have been a contradiction with respect to some older ethnic identity, simply because the older ethnic identity was not ethnic in the modern Western sense, that is, defined in terms of blood or substance. Thus it is not at all clear to what extent this is a transformation of ethnicity in a deeper sense. In order to pursue such questions one would have to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of cultural identity in this time and place.

In terms of classifications imputed by state classes and cultural elites of empires, the Mediterranean was reidentified in this period, and the terms of the identification took on different values. *Roman* came to refer essentially to the Byzantine realm, to a Christian world and religious order. *Greek* still existed as a category but now referred to the state of paganism, that which was marginal to Christian civilization. This transformation was operated by the triumph of a state-based Christian order. In folktales of the period, Hellenes are represented as mythical figures, a former race that was extinguished by God as punishment for its arrogance (Michas 1977:20). Here a clear discontinuity is established in local discourse. With the Ottoman Empire's advent, the division between Islam and Christendom became organized into a quasi-ethnic differentiation instituted by the regional structure of the empire itself, all in a situation in which Christianity had spread to such an extent that all Greeks were *Romioi*. Simultaneously there emerged an opposition between the Eastern and Western churches, in which Orthodoxy represented "true" Christianity and the West represented the space of heretics and "schismatics," the territories of the Franks and Latins, an opposition that became institutionalized under the Ottomans:

What must be appreciated here is the fact that the theological disputes which had always existed between the Eastern Church and the Church of Rome assumed a totally new significance as the result of the changes brought about with regard to the redefinition of the role of the Church following the Ottoman conquest: What were before theological arguments were now elevated into "national differences." [Michas 1977:20]

It has been argued that the nationalization of Eastern Orthodoxy was the only possible basis for a Greek identity in the Ottoman system, one that opposed itself as much if not more to Western Catholicism than to Islam (Michas 1977:21). But, it might also be argued that the very organization of the empire rested on the division into territorial units based primarily on religious classification.

The *millet-Rum*, the "Roman Millet," all the Empire's Orthodox Christian subjects are given corporate identity and placed under the jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople as *millet bashi*, or "ethnarch." [Just 1989:78]

This kind of "ethnicity" is, as I have argued elsewhere (Friedman 1991b), of a different order than that typical of Western modernity. The latter is situated in the body as the vehicle or container of identity. One belongs to a group because one is a bearer of a substance common to other members, irrespective of how one lives. This is a matrix for the model of racial identity, one that, in fact, had little to do with biology before the 20th century. The ethnicity of the empire is associated with externally defined properties of social life, territory, corporateness, religion—common practices cemented by a political organization that defines the region as a segment of a larger totality. Thus the populations of Greece tended to identify themselves as *Christiani*, equivalent to the religious-political category *Romii*, harking from the Byzantine continuity with Rome. Their language, in fact demotic Greek, was called *Romaiki*.

The emergence of Greek nationality appeared in opposition to this Romioi identity. This was itself a product of the integration of the geographical area of Greece into the expanding European world economy (Michas 1977). While this is realized implicitly in other discussions, it has not been understood in systemic terms. The positioning of the mirrors in this complex process of identification is as follows:

1. The rise of Western Europe to a hegemonic position in the larger world involved a great deal of self-identification and redefinition of the larger world. Historically, the Renaissance played a significant role in raising the status of Europe to that of a civilization whose roots lay in the ancient world, ultimately Greece. Throughout European development, Greece was increasingly incorporated into an emergent European identity as a legitimate ancestor and the opposite of everything Oriental. This was a Europe of *science*, *progress*, *democracy*, and *commerce*, all of which could be traced as if they were a set of racial attributes to classical Greece. These were the signs of modernity and were opposed to the Dark Empire of the East. *Mysticism*, *stasis*, *despotism*, and stifling *tribute* are used to characterize the latter. Classical Greece, then, is a crucial aspect of the emergent identity of Europe.

2. In the 17th century, Greece became increasingly integrated as a periphery into the expanding economy of Europe, expressed primarily in the development of cotton plantations in the southern zone. This was part of a general shift of commerce from East to West in which France was the major partner, accounting for 50% of the total trade. In the 18th century, olive plantations developed in the Peloponnesus as a major source for soap production in Marseilles. The returns for these raw materials were gold and cloth from Lyons, and coffee. In this relation, the rising Greek merchant class in the Ottoman Empire began to populate the commercial capitals of Western Europe. This was feasible because the Greeks as *Romii* merchants were an institutional category in the imperial structure. But the consequences of their movement in this historical conjuncture were incompatible with the simple reproduction of the empire. In Western Europe these *Romii* became acquainted with the image of themselves as descendants of the founding civilization of the Occident. The emergence of neo-Hellenistic nationalism is thus the embodiment of the European vision of classical Greece among a new peripheral elite.

3. The return to the homeland of the new identity and the development of a nationalism based on neo-Hellenism, opposed both to Eastern Christianity and Islam, a self-fashioned European modernism whose identity is built on the continuity of the essence of Western culture in the Greek population. The nationalist movement was very much the work of students returning from the West with the new ideals, and it was supported by European philo-Hellenists. The movement took the form of the renaissance of Greek history, a practice of continuity with the past, with language, and with folklore. Throughout the 18th century the practice of giving Greek names to newborn Romii babies became common, and the names were most often of classical origin, for example, Pericles, Themistocles, Xenophon (Michas 1977:64). And this was accompanied in Europe by a virtual explosion of interest in things Greek—a fantasy of classical culture in the midst of an elegant nature. The fashion for all things Grecian knew no bounds: “Grecian odes, Grecian plays, Grecian costumes, Grecian wings, Grecian pictures, Grecian furniture” (Mango 1965:36).

The position of modern Hellas was conceived in terms of descent from the classical period and collaterality with modern Europe, from whence the Greeks received the knowledge of their true descent as primordial Europeans, bearers of civilization (Michas 1977:67–68). “We the descendants of the glorious Hellenes received from [them] our ancient heritage” (Michas 1977:67).

In order to diffuse this identity to the population, making it, for the first time, Greek national, the usual mechanisms were employed. Besides the rebaptizing of the newborn, folklore and general education played a central role.

It is known that in Homeric antiquity . . . the basic food was, according to Homer, baked barley flour. Corresponding today, the basic food of the Greek people is bread. [Kyriakides 1968:77]

The former self-classification of Hellene as barbaric and heathen, now transformed into the ultimate in civilization, could only be accounted for in terms of Eastern oppression.

But if the Greeks were degraded, this was surely because of tyranny and superstition. If only they could be freed from the Turks and from their own deplorable clergy . . . then the Greeks would immediately regain all their ancestral purity and virtue. [Mango 1965:37]

The practice of Greek identity, the continuity with the classical period, and the latter’s essence as Indo-European and especially Western, was the agenda of a rising hegemonic Europe in the larger world. Today, in the decline of the latter, it is suddenly becoming clear the extent to which Orientalism is a product of the practice of Western self-identification in a hegemonic space where the other was silent. Even the holiness of Greek ancestry has come into question in the work of Bernal (1987), who has seriously questioned the European origins of Greek civilization. While even these latter-day authors labor in the name of truth-value, it is inescapably certain that there is a connection between the clustering of such works and the dissolution of Western hegemonic identity. A further step is taken, of course, by those Western-educated Third World scholars who today, after years of engagement in modernity, argue for a reestablishment of other forms of knowledge production and rules of discourse (in Abaza and Stauth 1990).

The constitution of Greek national identity cannot be understood as a local evolution. It is the result of a complex interaction of identifications in an arena in which regions were in a process of transformation with respect to one another and, as a result, in a process of internal transformation. As a macro-process it involved the cosmological repositioning of the population of the Greek peninsula—its integration-peripheralization in the expanding polity and economy of Western Europe, which identified this area as its generalized ancestor. As this identification was transferred to the peninsula it operated a transformation of “Romans” into Greeks and the forging of a historical continuity between these populations and the image of classical Greece as the embodiment of the essence of European modernity.

Should we all laugh at this as cynical modern anthropologists? Most of us find it difficult to do so. Others, the proud and free cynics, would insist, no doubt, on the universal mystification of all national identity expressed in this kind of historical process. I would point out that, in one sense, all identity is, as the cynics might also proclaim, no more than this. I would also point out that all of this historical process is not a simple game of names and classifications, but a deeply context-bound process in which the real continuities are present in the form of identities that are construed in relation to people's immediate conditions and everyday existences. The continuity that makes the forging of social identity possible is encompassed, here in no uncertain terms, in a global process that links major socioeconomic transformation to the constitution of cultures and nations, to the reconfiguration of the map of the world's peoples.

The Present into the Past: The Hawaiian Movement

Hawaii might not appear a likely candidate for a comparison with Greek nationalism, but, in its differing position, it does shed considerable light on the problems under consideration here, the relation between the construction of identity and larger global processes. Hawaii, too, was integrated into a larger imperial structure, even if the terms of the integration were considerably different and occurred during a much shorter period of time. European contact led initially to the consolidation of the islands by means of military aid by one particular paramount chief. Following the consolidation and centralization of power, the islands were incorporated into the Pacific sandalwood trade, which totally dislocated the local economy by sending off masses of commoners to the mountains to collect the wood instead of producing food; at the same time, chiefs assembled increasingly in the port of Honolulu to indulge themselves in conspicuous consumption of foreign imports and mounting debt, which ultimately drove them all into bankruptcy. Disease and economic crisis, finally, drove the Hawaiian people into abject poverty and disaster. Under the increasing control of American missionaries, Hawaii was gradually transformed into a colonial-puppet constitutional monarchy in conditions of catastrophic population decline, the growing whale trade, experiments with sugar plantations, and a rising interest in transforming the islands into American property. The conversion of the islands into a sugar-based economy led by congregationalist missionaries providentially reoriented to the necessity of economic gain led to the disenfranchisement of the Hawaiian population, the importation of massive numbers of Asian plantation workers, and, finally, the coup d'état led by American residents that overthrew the Hawaiian royalty and rapidly led to the integration of the islands as a U.S. territory. Hawaiians disappeared from the cultural map from the late 19th century up to the late 1960s, when a number of global processes began to reverse themselves and Hawaiians began to come into their own.

Hawaiian history in the 19th century was primarily the work of missionary-trained Hawaiians and White residents. It consisted in the creation of a past set out in opposition to the Christian world of modernity. This history is what we might identify as myth, and the genealogy of the chiefs and their exploits becomes increasingly detailed when combined with recent memories of the court of the last pre-Christian paramount, Kamehameha. In Western terms, this is a work of folklore and folklorization whose contours define the demarcation of the traditional from the modern. Some of these able historians were also engaged in social debate. Malo, for example, in newspaper articles, expressed his dismay over the power of the Europeans in Hawaiian government and society (Malo 1837, 1839). While he was clearly oriented to the modern and condemned much of his own tradition, he also stressed the technological achievements of his people. In the 1850s, when disease was decimating a population that had sunk from perhaps 800,000 to 50,000 after half a century, Malo expressed the beginnings of a Hawaiian identity in opposition to the dominant American presence, but one that was fragmented by its ambivalence to the ways of the Whites. There is no clear image of a previously functioning social totality,

but there is a clear process of self-definition that develops up through the period of the overthrow.

The territorial government did what it could to forbid the practice of Hawaiian culture and language among the new minority. And it went a good deal further in the practice of identity as a White settler class by attempting to define itself as the true Hawaiian population.

A wrong impression has obtained that only those born here of the aboriginal Hawaiian stock are the true Hawaiians. A man born here of white parents who spends his talents and energies for the benefit of Hawai'i is as true a Hawaiian as if his parents were all red, or one red and the other white. Those who benefit this country by their own good character and example and life are the true Hawaiians. [A. F. Judd, *Saturday Post*, Oct. 2, 1880]

The Hawaiian double minority (classified now into a rapidly dwindling pure Hawaiian and larger part-Hawaiian population) became the subject of numerous pessimistic studies of acculturation amid scandalous schemes to provide them with homesteads in marginal areas. While the image of the noble savage still appeared in novels, music, and media representations, Hawaiians themselves were busy identifying out. Numerous interviews with older Hawaiians reveal this to be a common practice.

Following World War II, the declining sugar industry was increasingly supplanted by mass tourism, which became the new staple of the economy. Hawaii was incorporated as a state of the union in 1959. Trade-union-based democrats and the Japanese-American population became ever more dominant in Hawaiian affairs. Hawaiians were now totally marginalized in this multiethnic paradise of the Pacific, rife with simulacra of tropical fantasies, a hula often performed by Tahitians and other islanders, staged hotel luaus, night cruises, Hawaiian statuettes of the gods Lono and Ku from workshops in the Philippines, and other paraphernalia of tourist imagery. Hawaiians, lumpenized and marked by the stigma of class, filled the ranks of the unskilled hotel labor force and, more especially, a growing pool of welfare recipients.

The tourist industry began to stagnate in the mid-seventies as the United States as a whole, following defeat in Vietnam, increasing competition from both Europe and Japan, entered a steep decline, a process that we have previously analyzed in terms of a general decentralization of capital accumulation in the world economy and a consequent breakdown in American hegemony. This was a period of student movements, the explosive advent of Black and Red power. It was also the period of the Hawaiian cultural revival, a process that has culminated in the formation of a nationalist organization that has gained increasing support from a local population that has increasingly begun to identify, or reidentify, as Hawaiian (Friedman 1992a).

I have discussed the development of the Hawaiian movement elsewhere (Friedman 1992a, 1992b), so I limit myself here to some remarks on the relation between the reconstitution of Hawaiian identity and the reconstruction-repatriation of the Hawaiian past. Much of the identity that has emerged is by opposition to Western society and is rooted in a historical distinction between Hawaiian life forms and those that became dominant in the islands. This is a life-and-death issue in cultural terms since the Hawaiian population, following decimation, was thoroughly integrated into the margins of a plantation society and then into the modern capitalism of the 50th state. Many, not least of whom are anthropologists in quest of exotic wholes, have assumed that there are no Hawaiians at all. They have gone to the libraries and archives and are suspiciously perplexed by signs of cultural continuity (and "where did you learn your Hawaiian . . . at the University"?). The continuity of Hawaiian culture that can be found among urban, semiurban, and rural Hawaiians, who form numerous enclaves throughout the islands, is not the kind of "culture" either the anthropologists or the tourists had in mind. The Western opposition defines Hawaii as pre-Cook Hawaii, an ancient paramount chiefdom or kingdom, with grass huts, fish ponds and taro fields, and feather capes and all the items to be found in the Bishop Museum. Hawaii has already been folklorized by Western scholars, a project that, in the past century as in this, has included numerous native intellectuals. But

this is the past defined and controlled by the West, the objective past. And for the knowledgeable expert, modern Hawaiians as well as tourist simulacra are equally unauthentic. This is so even for those who have been supportive of Hawaiian rights.

The positions of the mirrors involved in the recapture of Hawaiian identity by Hawaiians express a relation of conflict over the right to appropriate the past in the name of contemporary identity.

Modernist versus Hawaiian Constructions of Hawaiian Identity

From the modernist point of view, Hawaiian culture is already defined academically as the social order that predated contact with the British. This culture has been written and fashioned throughout the 19th century and is enshrined in a number of classical volumes and museum collections.

Hawaiian society disintegrated and its population practically disappeared as a political reality with its integration into the American hegemony. In such terms, Hawaiian culture, in its authenticity, ceased to exist shortly after the turn of the century.

There is, thus, an absolute and unbridgeable gap between modern Hawaiians' self-designated culture and the true culture that they have lost. Their only access to this culture is via the Western and missionary Hawaiian texts of the past, or the synthetic works of modern anthropologists and/or archeologists.

The Hawaiian movement harbors its own constructions of the past that are fundamentally at odds with those of official representations. While for some it is a question of reinstating the past, for most there is an essential continuity that has been increasingly culled from the mouths of the elders, *kupunas*, and which stresses three fundamental related complexes:

1. *Ohana* is the extended family, based on a principle of sharing and solidarity. Here there is no exchange, since one gives oneself to the others, and expects the others to do likewise. This is a question of the merging of selves in a larger collective life project and not of balanced reciprocity.

2. *Aloha* is the principle of committing oneself to the needs of others and is the principle of organization of the *ohana*, but it can also be understood as a general strategy of personal relatedness.

3. *Aloha aina* expresses the principle when applied to the land. Love of the land is the relation of man to a sacred nature upon which he is totally dependent and for which he has to care; the concept of *malama* or caring, as in stewardship, is central to *aloha aina*.¹

These complexes are instrumental aspects of Hawaiian identity today, and they are clearly continuous with what might be described as tendencies toward Hawaiian closed-corporateness that may have emerged in the 19th century and that might be accounted for as social defense mechanisms in face of an encroaching plantation society. Whether the *ohana* predates the colonial period is difficult to ascertain. It might be argued that this closed corporate culture is itself generative of the principles of sharing, love of the land, and extended family, although I would argue for a good deal more historical continuity here. But this need not imply an opposition between pre- and postcontact Hawaiians. These complexes were more probably merely accentuated and elaborated in the process of social transformation and reaction to crisis and oppression. They are disauthenticated only by a discourse predicated on the opposition between pristine and colonial, just as potent as that between traditional and modern. While academics discuss the degree to which Hawaiian chiefs were despotic murderers and are convinced that Hawaiian militants have an entirely idyllic representation of their past (Linnekin 1990:22), my experience is that Hawaiians are quite aware of the nature of chiefly power and regularly discuss it among themselves. There are those who oppose chiefly power as contrary to the ideals of *ohana*. There is a common opposition between good and bad chiefs, between those with and without *aloha*. This is often combined with an opposition between pre- and postcontact Hawaii, between traditional chiefs and sellouts. The great chief Kameha-

meha is often depicted as either a prototypical modern paramount or a more ambivalent figure who shied away from the consequences of the encroaching Western realm.

One indigenous reformulation of the Hawaiian past consists in the projection of the essence of Hawaiian culture onto the precontact period. This is combined with migration stories to further differentiate Hawaiian history in a way that accommodates the undeni- ed fact that the Hawaii of the 18th century was not a simple expression of the above principles or complexes. The original society—based on these principles, possessing no images of deities and only two gods, Hina and Ku, and whose chiefs practiced true *aloha*—predated the first invasion from *Kahiki*, or Tahiti. The latter installed the principles of warfare, class power, and human sacrifice as well as numerous *tiki*, or images of gods. The successive onslaughts of British, Americans, and now Japanese are reenactments of the same scenario. This is not a mere invention, as some anthropologists and historians might assume. The representation expresses what might be argued to be a deep division in Hawaiian society that may have existed in late precolonial times, if not earlier.

It is worth comparing the representation of the relation between people and rulers in Hawaiian mythology with the similar structures that are found in many other parts of the world. The myth of sovereignty based on the invasion of foreign, youthful chiefs from overseas or from a distant land is not an unusual phenomenon. The scenario, found in Western Polynesia, Fiji, Indonesia, and Central Africa, to name a few examples, contrasts an indigenous people ruled by generous ritual chiefs to conquering political chiefs who represent politico-magical power and military violence and who are associated with external relations. In these latter cases the myth seems consistently to correspond to a polity organized in terms of exogamously ranked aristocracies, a relative lack of exploitation *between* lineages, and open exchange of prestige goods between ranks connected by marriage. The Hawaiian elite of the late precontact period was, by contrast, highly endogamous, exploitative, and the adamant enemy of regular exchange between ranks. It is reasonable to suppose that the image of the “stranger king” would embody a real conflict in such situations. The notion of sovereignty in Western Polynesia was based on an alliance between the chiefs of the land, representatives of the people, and the foreign chiefs of the sea. This alliance is ambivalent, pitting the encompassing ritual status of the “land” against the aggressive conquering power of the sea. In Hawaii, however, there were no chiefs of the land and the people—not, at least, in the late period. Rather, the war chiefs literally incorporated, by sacrifice, the eternally returning image of Lono, god of the land and “people.” If, for example, the ritual of chiefship includes the defeat of the sea chief by representatives of the land in Fiji, the opposite is the case in Hawaii. If, in the former, political power is encompassed by ritual status, in the latter, ritual status is incorporated into the being of the political chief (Friedman 1982, 1985). That Hawaiian society became truly class-divided as a result of contact is evident in numerous examples of real conflict and exploitation. Descriptions from the 1820s reveal the extent of aristocratic power in the postcontact situation.

Two thirds for the proceeds of any thing a native brings to the market, unless by stealth, must be given to his chief; and not infrequently, the whole is unhesitatingly taken from him. . . . The poverty of many of the people is such that they seldom secure a taste of animal food, and live almost exclusively on taro and salt. A poor man of this description, by some means obtained the possession of a pig, when too small to make a meal for his family. He secreted it at a distance from his house and fed it till it had grown to a size sufficient to afford the desired repast. It was then killed, and put into an oven, with the same precaution of secrecy; but when almost prepared for appetites, whetted by long anticipation to an exquisite keenness, a caterer of the royal household unhappily came near, and, attracted to the spot by the savoury fumes of the baking pile, deliberately took a seat till the animal was cooked, and then bore off the promised banquet without ceremony or apology. [Stewart 1830:151–152]

A famous revelation of the last prophet of the kingdom Kapihe announces the overturning of the Hawaiian polity, the end of the *kapus* of the gods, the downfall of the *ali'i* and the rise of the *maka'ainana*, the commoners. This has been carried over into current

Hawaiian identity in an official statement of the Protect Kaho'olawe Ohana regarding the dispute over the military's right to control and bomb the island of Kaho'olawe. The opposition lives on in the current Hawaiian situation and in the construction of the Hawaiian past today. Interviews with grass-roots members of the movement reveal a historical vision that places paradise well before the advent of the Europeans. In reference to the first priest to arrive from Kahiki, one militant proclaims:

He brought the *ali'i*, he brought the class system, he brought *tikis* (idols), he brought human sacrifice, separation of man and woman, war and *heiaus*. He also brought gods who were against Hawaiian gods. [interview, 1985]

And in reference to Kamehameha's relation to the rebellious district of Ka'u on the island of Hawaii:

Kamehameha never conquered Ka'u. . . Never win this place . . . kill him if he come here. Didn't like him . . . he was a turkey. You no can say you are king without *aloha*. [interview, 1985]

Now this is not evidence for an Edenic vision of a precolonial past, even if it is part of a strategy of opposition between the Hawaiian and the Western. It is a more elaborate illustration of a subaltern discourse that, I think, can be traced backward in time, one that was and is generated by a systematic class relationship. The opposing of the complex of *ohana* and *aloha* to the oppression imposed by the projects of dominant elites would appear to be a historically embedded practice rather than a mere invention of the past decade.

The construction of the Hawaiian past by Hawaiians is an aspect of a project of delinking from the larger world that has obliterated a population and absorbed its history into the projects of Western academic historians and anthropologists. While anthropologists entertain an opposition between a pristine precolonial chiefly system and a Western-imposed modernity, Hawaiians construe their history as a series of usurpations by foreign conquerors opposed to the original unity of love and generosity, "man" and nature that characterized the pre-Tahitian era. And that original unity is the core of their contemporary identity, the core of Hawaiian community, and the antithesis of the negative reciprocity of modernity in which they are engulfed.

The Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge. [Kame'eleiwiwa 1986:28-29]

Comparing Constructions of Identity

In the Greek case, a past defined by outsiders is used to forge a viable cultural identity in the present. In the Hawaiian case, the past defined by outsiders is denied, and a cultural identity of the present is employed to forge a viable past. At one level this is simply a question of positioning and strategy. The Greek elite was working its way into the West and extricating itself from the Ottoman Empire. The Hawaiian movement represents an attempt to extricate itself from the West and establish a self-centered autonomy. This is a difference between a politics of integration and a politics of disintegration. While neo-Hellenism discovered its identity in the gaze of the other, Hawaiian nationalists seek theirs within themselves, in reaction against the other's gaze. As a play of mirrors, the two strategies would appear to be opposed to one another, the former assimilating another's image of its own past to become what it is not, the latter projecting what it is onto a past whose image belongs to another. But, as I have stressed, this is not a game in opposition to real life. It is deadly serious, as might presumably have been discovered by a certain, perhaps mythical, French psychoanalyst who delighted in peeling away the identity of his patients until they discovered, rightly, in the intellectual sense, that they were nonexistent and committed suicide. Not just individuals, but populations have been known to mysteriously eradicate themselves from the face of the earth after losing their ontological foundations. So this is not a question of semiotics, of sign substitution, of the

intellectual game of truth-value and museological authenticity. It is, rather, a question of the existential authenticity of the subject's engagement in a self-defining project. The authentically constituted past is always about the transition from today to tomorrow.

The Space of Modernity

The contrast between Greek and Hawaiian constructions of their histories details the relation between different kinds of identity formation. An important aspect of the distinction between the two cases is located in the historical and systemic positions of the two populations. Greek nationalism was an aspect of the incorporation of Greece into an expanding West and into a world of modern Western values of which classical Greece was the appointed ancestor. Greek identity was simultaneously a product of its separation from the Ottoman Empire. The process was one of global reorganization of the economic and political map of Europe. Hawaiian identity has reemerged in a period of declining Western hegemony. It does not participate in the establishment of modernism but is opposed entirely to the latter. Greece had a favored position, ideologically, in the emergence of a new imperial system that simultaneously eliminated many previous cultural identities from the face of the map. In this current era of roots, "Dances-with-Wolves," and the ethnification of college curricula, emergent cultural identities represent alternatives to a modernism that has apparently failed. If Greece might be said to have represented the future in the past, Hawaii has come for many to represent the past in the future.

The purpose of the contrast was not simply to establish an interesting comparison but to suggest a global systemic connection, an articulation between local and global processes in a definite temporal dimension. The same connection provides a framework for examining the current crisis in anthropology. The confrontation of anthropologists with native self-defining groups is not a hazard of the ethnographic endeavor but a reflection of a deeper transformation of the world in which we live. I suggest that this current situation in which authority to represent others is threatened is a systemic product of cyclical and tendential movements in the world system.

Reactions to the Current Crisis

Anthropological practice, in its ethnographic format, consisted in the classification of the "peoples" of the world, the attribution of specificity to bounded populations. This kind of activity is no longer unproblematic. It has exploded from the inside and imploded from the outside (Friedman 1991a). There would seem to be a growing skepticism if not disbelief in our identifications, while "they" are busy identifying themselves and making their own histories.

The reactions to this situation and the ensuing discourses are of several different kinds. The self-reflective postmodernist reaction appears to have consisted in concerted attempts to capture the ethnographic experience if not that which the ethnographic experience was supposed itself to have captured in a previous era. This has been variously reproached as narcissism as well as back-door attempts to retain ethnographic authority without the benefit of a tame ethnographic object. Another, more earnest attempt to come to grips with the problem has consisted in a self-consciously dialogic ethnography, or even attempts at providing methods of working in contemporary global realities (Marcus 1989, 1992). A third reaction, more modernist in tone, has consisted in a kind of negative retrenchment. If anthropologists previously defined the world in terms of Western cultural categories, these can now be attacked at the same time as it is shown that ethnographic modernity is truly modern, that it bears only superficial resemblance to a past that many previous ethnographic "objects" are attempting to revive in a newfound subjectivity. The "invention of tradition" is a double-edged sword that criticizes the assumptions of cultural continuity while implicitly reprimanding those who would identify with such cultural fantasies today.

The identity space of modernity might be described in terms of two sets of polar relations: modernism/postmodernism and traditionalism/primitivism (see Figure 1). This

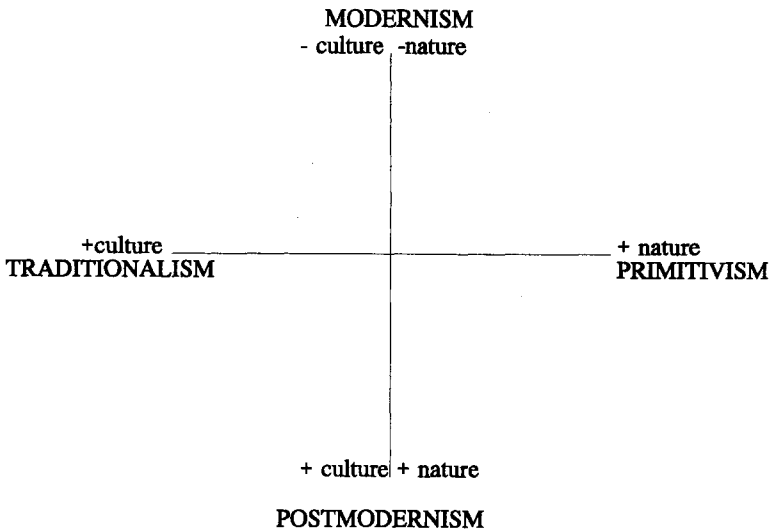


Figure 1
Polarities of modern identity space.

scheme is not designed to categorize people or any other substantive social actors but to delimit a hypothetical field of available identifications specific to Western modernity and to allow a clearer understanding of reactions to modernity as internal to it. The following description is admittedly oversimplified for the purposes of illustration rather than argument (Friedman 1988).

Modernism embodies a strategy of distancing from both nature and culture, from both primitive or biologically based drives and what are conceived of as superstitious beliefs. It is a self-fashioned strategy of continuous development in which abstract rationality replaces all other more concrete foundations of human action. Traditionalism, I have argued, is, in statistical terms, the most attractive solution for a Goethean always-on-the-move subject who no longer has anywhere to go. It opposes the alienated freedom of modernity and attempts to reinstate the values and cultural fixity of a supposedly lost world. Primitivism opposes modern existence as a form of social control to the free creativity of nature, the human potential expressed in the form of libido, the traditionalist's "pornotopia" (Bell 1976:51). All culture in such a view is envisaged as a form of power. Postmodernism is an intellectual reaction against the anti-culture and anti-nature content of modernism. It is positively inclined to all forms of wisdom, libido liberation, creativity, lost values, and communion with nature. While modernism is hegemonic in periods of real hegemonic expansion, there is a tendency to trifurcation in periods of crisis. In such conditions modernism tends to extremes of rationalism and developmentalism in a desperate attempt to ward off the two great enemies of human progress, superstition and self-gratification, which loom ever larger as the future begins to close in on the present and the past takes on a nostalgic aura of sanctuary.

Anthropologists are, I assume, as real subjects in the world, as much a part of this quadruple polarization process as any other member of our "declining" civilization. Since anthropology is located at the defining edge of Western selfhood, it is especially sensitive to the vectors of identity formation that characterize the space of modernity, even though, as a "scientific" discipline, it strives to maintain an objective distance from its ethnographic reality. The reactions discussed above can be distributed within this space. Primitivism and traditionalism have both been evident throughout the history of anthropology. Traditionalism can be associated with the early reaction, as it appears in

the Boasian framework, to classical evolutionism. Cultural relativism often harbored a critique of modern civilization, and it sometimes moved in the direction of primitivism (Sapir 1924). But it has also tended to envisage modernity as yet another culture, most often as national culture, sometimes as capitalist culture (Sahlins 1976). In primitivism the modern appears as the structured and disciplining power of the state (Clastres 1977), as the absence of a holistic relation to nature (Bateson 1972), and as the loss of meaning and authenticity (Sapir 1924; Diamond 1974). In contrast to traditionalism, the primitivist argument tends to interpret primitive culture as an instrument of basic human needs or an expression of a human (natural) essence. Some of the self-declared postmodern discourse is in many respects a self-conscious primitivism (Friedrich 1982; Tyler 1984). Traditionalism is expressed in the form of value-laden relativism that emphasizes the special merit of cultural difference and defends the latter against the homogenizing power of modernity. Its intellectual expression takes the form of cultural determinism, and a relativism that is positively enamored of reducing differences to cultural essences.

Postmodernism as such is best expressed, perhaps, in the work of Clifford, who has systematically distanced himself from any form of fixed meaning, although there is evidence of a nostalgia for a former order that has been dissolved by a globalizing modernity. He finds hopeful refuge in the notion of creolization, that the homogenizing spread of Western culture articulates with the rest of the world in the production of yet a new generation of cultural differences; "Westerners are not the only ones going places in the modern world" (Clifford 1988:17). His nostalgia concerns the decline of pure cultures, if there ever were any such animals. It is reflected in his line, "The pure products go crazy" (1988:1). He is also clearly cognizant that the situation today concerns the decline of the authority to represent in the postcolonial world (Clifford 1988:8).

Clifford is clearly cognizant of the larger context (partly a function of distantiation) of the anthropological enterprise in today's world. There is no clear resolution to this problem. None, certainly, is offered, nor even a glimpse of a possibility. If I designate Clifford's discussion as quintessentially postmodern it is because he presents his situation in terms of the decline of a modernity of authoritative discourses and accepts, even promotes, the multivocality of identifications and self-identifications that have begun to crowd a formerly hegemonic and homogeneous field of representation. No solutions are available here, only the contemplative distancing of the observer of observers of actors observing one another and acting accordingly. Clifford survives the crisis by retreating to the contemplation of acts of representation while at the same time being careful not to propose any representation of his own other than the polyphony of others' representations.

But the usual situation in which the anthropologist must find himself is the modernist impasse described earlier. This is because modernism is the dominant condition of academic praxis. It is in the nature of scholarly investigation that the scholar becomes convinced of results, not being fully aware of the presuppositions of the academic or research strategies involved. But what, after all, are anthropologists doing when they write the history of the X? What kind of meaning is being constructed and for whom? This must be investigated if we are to escape the hubris of self-evidence that characterizes much of the anthropological discourse surrounding the confrontation with "native" visions of their own culture and history.

As indicated above, no individuals or schools can be simply classified in terms of the four polar types. The latter represent significant points in a larger space, a space that allows us to chart variations in identity as well as clarifying the logical content of modernity as a cultural construct. Traditionalism, in the anthropological form of culturalism, and modernism both partake in the ethnographic authority that is today under attack, while primitivism and postmodernism relinquish that authority in principle, at least, by accepting the legitimacy of the voice or text of the other (see Figure 2).

Modernism versus the Construction of Social Selfhood

The specificity of modernist discourse regarding the making of history is based on objectivism—that there is a real, narrative history, documented or not, but which is the

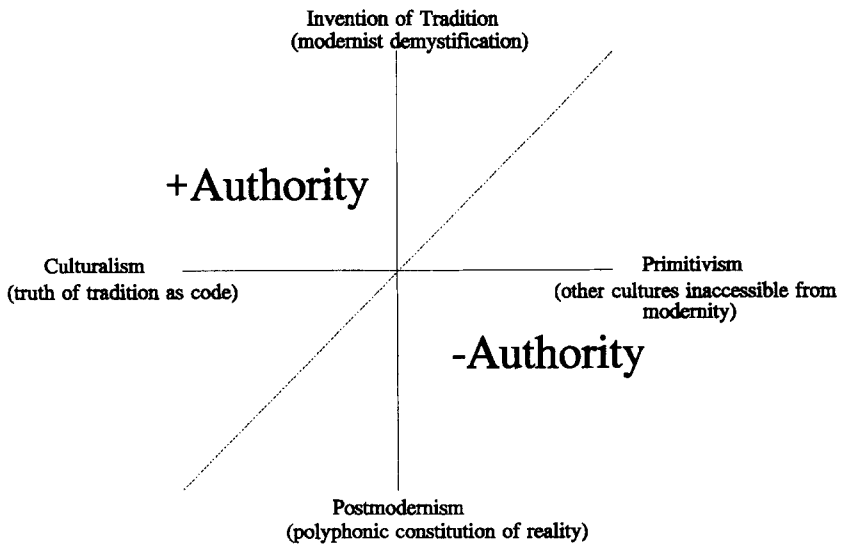


Figure 2
Polarities of anthropological identity.

ultimate source of all historical discourse to which the scientific subject has access. The modernist strategy is based on a clear division of space into the real and the represented. The latter implies that statements about reality can be measured in terms of their truthfulness, their degree of correspondence to real events. The notion of invented tradition, culture, or history in such an approach is simply the application of this model to our own representations; that is, the demystification of our own history. Whatever form this exercise may take, it always results in the demonstration of the constructed character of representations and therefore the assertion of their falsity and, by implication, their mystificatory character. When applied to any form of human identity, this is powerful medicine. Marx practiced it on the representation of wealth in capitalism. Freud practiced it on the myths of individual identity, and more recently Lacan has made the demystification of all ego identity the cornerstone of his work.² Modernist approaches to social and cultural identity have followed suit. Besides Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), there are such clear positions as Gellner (1983), for whom cultural identity is a kind of false consciousness that cannot endure the secularization-rationalization of modernity. In a different vein, Anderson (1983) construes the modern nation as an imagined community, as a symbolic organization creating a collectivity for which there is no concrete social basis. The spate of articles and collections on ethnicity in the past few years reflects not only the logarithmic growth of new and revived cultural identities, but also the modernist deconstructionism of intellectuals who have reacted to the tidal wave of ethnicity and roots that has engulfed their identityless, if not alienated, existences. We must grasp this as a social reality in order to understand why the interest looms so large. The very fact that the modernist intellectual stance has been under such severe attack is proof enough that not everyone subscribes to such an approach to reality. I have suggested, above, that it is only one of three polar strategies in a modernity in crisis. But its internal logic seems to harbor two very definite characteristics. First, it ascribes truth and therefore authority to itself, the scientifically knowing subject. Second, on this basis, it divides the world of representation into objective truth versus folk or ideological models of the world. And the objective world represented in the work of the scholar is, in essence, a transparent image, whereas all other images are opaque, transfigured, and, by implication, false. This approach may work in periods of hegemony, when anthropologists can speak or write the

Other. But in periods of dissolution of hegemony, when the others begin identifying themselves, conflict must arise as to the authority to define, demystify, and debunk others' constructions of themselves.³

Modernism in the Field

A modernist ethnographer notes, with a certain dismay, the shift in attitudes in the West: "Those who used to mock the backwardness of 'savages' in the name of Progress and Civilization are now (verbally) the fiercest defenders of primitivity and archaic values" (Babadzan 1988:206).

It is this inverted discourse that, according to Babadzan, is the root of the Kastom movement in Melanesia, a Manichean inversion of the signs of colonial domination that is internalized by the natives themselves. And since the Western representation of local identities is organized by such structures, it must also be false. Thus, from this point of view, the critique of Western values is pointless, since it "makes the criticism of Westernization and the apology of primitivity nothing but false criticism and false apology" (Babadzan 1988:206).

And this is so simply because it consists in a "*Western criticism of Westernization*" (Babadzan 1988:206, emphasis in original). These modernized populations, emanating "from the most Westernized social classes, those most removed from traditional lifestyle and values" (Babadzan 1988:206), could not possibly know what their real cultures and traditions are all about. Babadzan cements his position by invoking not only "we moderns" but even the "true" natives.

This paradox, striking for an outside observer, is even more so from the perspective of traditional populations, who have not yet relinquished their culture, and who are referred to by the philo-archaic discourse. [1988:206]

Here is the clearest expression of the view that movements aimed at the reconstruction and reestablishment of cultural models are necessarily the work of modernized charlatans who select and folklorize true culture in terms of misinterpretations generated by their modern interests. And when such neotraditionalist ideologues get their polluted claws on their own past, they produce a mythological paradise lost, rather than the true history of the "people without history."

More than a negation of history or a sudden and incomprehensible (because total) cultural amnesia, it is a refusal to grasp the historical dimension of the relationship native societies have sustained with the West since cultural contact. [Babadzan 1988:208–209]

This is an extreme position, perhaps, but it exemplifies the fundamental traits of the Western modernist view of knowledge, which might be summarized as a series of propositions about the world.

1. The Truth is singular. There is but one true version of the past.
2. The past consists of an arbitrarily chosen segment of a temporal continuum ending with the present moment.
3. The structure attributed to this past is the product of a specific kind of research carried out by those competent in the field.
4. This structure is objective and corresponds to proposition 1, that is, it is singular.
5. All other structures or interpretations attributed to the past are, by implication, ideological in the sense of misrepresentations.

The "native's point of view" is thus a mere folk model that is the royal road, perhaps, to the native unconscious, to the deep structures of the alien culture, but is never of any scientific value as defined in terms of the above paradigm.

This is not a mere question of a personal point of view, but a structurally positioned discourse. While Babadzan represents something of a pure form of this discourse, the less hardened variants to which we shall refer clearly belong to the same family.

Keesing, for example, has, in his engagement in the political conditions of Melanesians, attempted to grasp the positive aspects of culturally defined power struggles by

pointing out the specifically political aspect of cultural movements such as *Kastom*. He invokes Gramsci as well as Guha (1982–87) in analyzing such movements as subaltern phenomena that involve the reversal of signs attributed to a single classificatory scheme imposed by a once-dominant colonial power. Similarly to Babadzan, he stresses the colonial classificatory origin of the categories of identity in terms of which Melanesians struggle today. But, while seeking to understand the terms of struggle, he also argues for a more purely modernist stance.

A deeply radical discourse (one that questions basic assumptions) would aspire to liberate us from pasts, both those of our ancestors and those of (colonial or other) domination, as well as to use them as political symbols. [1989:25]

Here again is the notion that representations of the world, both past and present, must be transparent in order to be serviceable in political terms.⁴ There is, of course, a truth in this, the truth that implores us not to engage in witchcraft accusations in times of colonially or postcolonially generated crisis, but to engage the true enemies, the real problems. But this is also a normative engagement, one that appears rational since it is based entirely on the premise of context-free rationality in a universe that does not exist, not even in our own corners of the world. People engaged in reconstituting (or constituting) themselves do not want to be liberated from their pasts (Trask 1991:164), and it might be argued that the transparency required by Keesing (1991a, 1991b) is totally incompatible with the forging of cultural identity. In any case it must lead to confrontation due to the necessary emergence of conflicting definitions of reality where the anthropologist, like it or not, is representative of the center of authority as against those who are engaged in constructing their own identities.

For Hawaiians anthropologists in general are part of the colonizing horde because they seek to take away from us the power to define who and what we are, and how we should behave politically and culturally. [Trask 1991:163]

The importance of this conflict lies in its structural properties, not in the personal characteristics of those involved. Keesing has for years been engaged in the struggle for the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific and was one of the few who made the issue of the colonial transformation of traditional societies a central part of general anthropology. Yet we sense that there is an absolute incompatibility between the disauthentication of culture implied in the demystification of cultural-historical constructs and the identity of those doing the constructing.

F. Allan Hanson, writing of the “making” of the Maori, has also tried to demonstrate the way in which the construction of myth or history is an invention, or in his terms, a “sign substitution” (Hanson 1989:899). Hanson explicitly adopts the kind of postmodernist line referred to above, that is, he refuses to accept, at least in principle, a fixed criterion of truth-value, which he interprets as “logocentrism,” following Derrida (1967; Tyler 1991). While the argument explicitly stresses the uneventfulness of inventions, which he equates with the normal course of cultural change, the brunt of the discussion cannot be interpreted other than as a demonstration of the fact that various traditions, including “the great fleet” story of the immigration to New Zealand and the cult of Io as the supreme god, are relics of Western missionaries and that their current place in Maori self-identification is somehow nothing more than the internalization of foreign representations of the Maori. In one sense, the endeavor of the anthropologist is to demonstrate that the categories that inform our ethnography are not based in empirical data but are imposed by our ideology’s classification of the larger world. But the text itself cannot be interpreted in any other sense than as a falsification of the constructions of Maori self-identification. It is based on an absolute distinction between something aboriginal and something impure, mixed, Westernized, and while the general argument is that there is no difference, the effect of the article is to reinforce precisely such a difference. One reason for this is that the process of invention is never in question. If foreign representations are assimilated to Maori self-identification, the process by which this occurred is not an issue,

only the product, as if a story such as the Hawaiiki, or a migration from ancient Israel, were a discrete object like any other ethnographic object. There are neither motivations, nor a strategy of appropriation-transformation, nor a process of identification that might make sense out of this apparently neutral process that simultaneously harbors the connotation of falsity. Needless to say, this article provoked a reaction that found its way into the pages of the *New York Times*, to say nothing of the numerous local newspapers of the region.⁵

Linnekin represents an interesting case of a longer-term confrontation with native activists. In an early article (1983) her position is clearly in the camp of the "invention" school (Handler and Linnekin 1984). Tradition is here envisaged as a constantly changing product of current circumstances, which would imply that it is necessarily "false" insofar as it is a socially organized projection of an ever-changing present onto a supposed past. But in discussing the Hawaiians she suggests another definition of tradition where it "properly refers to the precontact era" (Linnekin 1983:242). The implied criteria of falsification thrust her into a sustained critique of the cultural content of the Hawaiian movement. She has recently begun to question, however inadvertently, this doublethink:

how do we defend the "real past" (Keesing 1989:37) and "genuine" traditions (see Babadzan 1988; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) if we accept that all cultural representations—even scholarly ones—are contingent and embedded in a particular social and political context (see Haraway 1989)? [Linnekin 1990:3]

Linnekin is now apparently aware of the multiplicity of interpretations involved in representing "tradition" and the difference in the positions of anthropologist and the self-defining native and claims that authoritative realists or objectivists, such as Keesing, have not understood that in today's world of contested realities, "It is folly to claim definitive standing for a particular representation of a precontact culture" (Linnekin 1990:23). But standing for what one is in the negotiation of other people's culture is "likely to entail some unease" (Linnekin 1990:23).

She tempers her approach in such a way that Western authority is not definitive but negotiable while never succumbing entirely to indigenous self-representations, "a discomfort that we may have to live with" (Linnekin 1990:25). It represents, as such, a compromise (for her) where some categories can be deconstructed but not others, or at least where one should be expected to be attacked by some militants, if not by all, for one's interpretations. But in her examples, the former and apparently still dominant vision of the opposition between the knowing scholar and the excited student or militant re-emerge—as when ancient gourd helmets, very unlikely associated with warfare, are depicted today as part of a warrior-hero, bodybuilding, pit-bull owning image of "tradition," at least as it all occurs on T-shirts (Linnekin 1990:24). The merits and faults of Hawaiian paramours are similarly discussed, and Linnekin assures us that she presents an image to her students that is neither euphoric nor damning, although she does "lean to the Edenic" (1990:22), and this, evidently, as the result of objective research. Thus, in spite of cautions and a certain unease concerning the whole academic project, the latter discourse is still fashioned by authoritarian parameters. And the problem is not one of attitudes, but of structure. If one is engaged in "negotiating culture," that is, involved in the construal and interpretation of ethnographic or historical realities, then one is bound on a collision course with others for whom such realities are definitive. Culture is supremely negotiable for professional culture experts, but for those whose identity depends upon a particular configuration this is not the case. Identity is not negotiable. Otherwise, it has no existence.

In all of these cases, modernism has come into direct confrontation with others' construction of their identities. This is not an error, a misinterpretation by the media or by the "natives" themselves. It is a necessary structural relation between professional anthropological identity and those segments of the world that are concerned to produce their own identities. One cannot combine a strategy of empirical truth-value with a sensitive politics, simply because the former is also a political strategy. I am not arguing

against science here, but against an inconsequential posture, itself an outcome of the confusion of academic and real politics. Only Keesing has adopted an openly consistent position. For the others the confrontation takes the form of a conflict between the academy and the street. An anthropology that is engaged in the lives of other people and takes seriously the political conflicts involved in struggles for cultural identity ought not perhaps to be concerned with defining other peoples' cultures by means of independent interpretations of gourd helmets and historical texts. The engaged modernist may come into "authentic" conflict with others in seeking to demystify the world. The academic modernist is more concerned to preserve the authority of the scholar, the monopoly of the truth about the world for the sake of knowledge itself. One critical anthropologist has recently responded by asking, "Is anybody out there?" (Sutton 1991:91).

My argument has consisted in trying to demonstrate the relation between Western modernism and the construction by anthropologists of other peoples' identities and histories. I have been especially concerned to show that the crisis of modernity has generated a number of variations on this identity—postmodernism, traditionalism, primitivism—which are not external to Western identity space but its defining polarities. It is among the modernists and the culturalists (neotraditionalists) that the question of authority looms largest, and it is among such practitioners that the question of the right to represent the past has become such an important issue. As we have implied, the question of ownership is a question of who has the right to define another person's or population's culture. In a global perspective, this question has arisen because the hegemonic structure of the world is no longer a reality, and with it, the homogeneity that was its cultural form is also dissolving. This is a world-systemic phenomenon, rather than the result of an internal development in anthropology or in Western culture as such.

Identity and the Construction of History

In *Islands of History*, Sahlins dismisses, with great flair, the assertion of Hindess and Hirst, self-reformed structural Marxists, that

Historical events do not exist [in] and can have no material effectivity in the present. The conditions of existence of present social relations necessarily exist in and are constantly reproduced in the present. [Hindess and Hirst 1975:312]

Sahlins invokes the counterassertion that "culture is precisely the organization of the current situation in the terms of a past" (Sahlins 1985:155).

Our argument has rested upon the assertion that the past is always practiced in the present, not because the past imposes itself, but because subjects in the present fashion the past in the practice of their social identity. Thus "the organization of the current situation in the terms of a past" can only occur in the present. The past that effects the present is a past constructed and/or reproduced in the present. Mythopractice in such terms is not the realization of myth in practice but the practice of mythmaking. None of this, furthermore, should be conflated with historical process, that is, the continuous and transformational process of social reproduction over time. The imposition of a model of the past on the present occurs as a willful act in socialization and in social movements, and in both cases the relation between the constitution of identity and the identification of the past are strongly systemic (Alberoni 1984).

The constitution of identity is an elaborate and deadly serious game of mirrors. It is a complex temporal interaction of multiple practices of identification external and internal to a subject or population. In order to understand the constitutive process it is, thus, necessary to be able to situate the mirrors in space and their movement in time. I have argued that a global historical perspective is necessary in order to grasp the formation of Greek and Hawaiian identities. Until recently, anthropologists may have been most familiar with the dissolution of cultural identities brought on by imperial expansions. The history of Western expansion is littered with examples of the combined destruction of cultural identity and its psychological aftermath. But the construction or reconstruction

of identity is just as violent and dangerous a process for all involved. The emergence of cultural identity implies the fragmentation of a larger unity and is always experienced as a threat. It is often criminalized and often punished. I have argued that it is primarily in periods of declining hegemony that such outbursts of cultural identification become a genuine possibility. The political conditions of global process are such that cultural heterogeneity is inversely related to political hegemony over time. And since history is the discourse of identity, the question of who "owns" or appropriates the past is a question of who is able to identify him- or herself and the other at any given time and place. If the fragmentation of a world order implies the multiplication of cultural identities (Friedman 1989a:67), the latter is expressed in the proliferation of histories. Multiple identities imply multiple histories.

The Samoan author Albert Wendt has made the argument poignantly: "A society is what it remembers; we are what we remember; I am what I remember; the self is a trick of memory" (Wendt 1987:79). And while he is surely aware of the class or elite manipulation of tradition, he has made the strategic decision to take this up on his own ground. In order to do this he has to locate and criticize the mirroring that might easily affect his own self-construction.

For most of us, our memories are not a curse because our remembering reorders our memories and spares us most of the pain and suffering. . . . Margaret Mead's Samoa continues to stereotype us Samoans and cause senseless wars between egotistical non-Samoan academics; hopefully some of my creatures will live on after me to entertain the machines-who-think who will be saving my great grandchildren from themselves. [Wendt 1987:81]

For Wendt, the problem is how to extricate oneself from the field of discourse of a dominant Other. One has been described, characterized, and represented to the world—some world, at least—a world that exists as an image, an imaginary world of information or misinformation that returns home with a vengeance and stereotypically forces issues that may have never before existed in such terms.

So we can say that history is a papalagi [outsider] history of themselves and their activities in our region; it is an embodiment of their memories/perceptions/and interpretations of the Pacific. And when we teach that history in our schools we are transmitting their memories to our children and consequently reordering our children's memories. Perhaps it is fortunate that in our colonial systems of education we weren't taught any Pacific history, not even the papalagi versions of it. . . . However, my children and I all got an overdose of the histories of Europe/America and England as prescribed in the School Certificate and the University Entrance. [1987:86–87]

Is this the model of "Europe and the people without history" (Wolf 1982)? If so, then it is a practice of speaking, or writing the other from the side of the hegemon. In the breakdown of the authority that generates such a possibility, a new voice appears. This is not the voice of reversal, not even, necessarily, of subaltern power, but a complex understanding related to the internalization of a Western discourse that can now be placed in a perspective that encompasses and supersedes the former situation.

I'm not arguing that outsiders should not write about us, but they must not pretend they can write from inside us. . . . I would never try to tell a novel from the viewpoint of a papalagi. If I have a papalagi as a major character I will view him in the novel through the eyes of a Samoan character-narrator. [Wendt 1987:89]⁶

Conclusion

I have, as stated from the outset, investigated two aspects of the relation between social identification and the making of history. The first concerned the relation between the social conditions of identity formation and the production of culturally viable pasts. The second introduced modern so-called scientific constructions of other peoples' pasts into the same frame of argument. "Objective" history in this discussion is just as much a social construct as any other history, and it cannot be simply accepted at face value. If, as we have suggested, all constructions of the past are socially motivated and have, thus, to be

understood in positional terms, then we can begin to come to grips with the currently agonistic relation of anthropology to the contested realities of formerly silent others. This necessitates a comprehension of locally specific logics of self-construction as well as the interaction and even constitution of the latter in a larger arena. Since the attribution of meaning and construction of cultural models is a motivated practice, our own purported truth-value vision of history and ethnography must be understood in terms of the way in which it is produced, if we are to place it alongside the way other people produce their own visions. The ideas that culture can be negotiated and that invention is a question of sign substitution, a kind of cognitive exercise in pure textual creativity, are linked to a structure of self and of culture that is perhaps specific to capitalist modernity. Elsewhere, I, among many others, have argued that these concepts are dependent upon a prior experience of the division between subject and role (identity) reflected in the division between private and public and expressed in notions, such as representativity, in which symbols "stand for" something other than themselves, as opposed to a situation in which they are immediate realities (Friedman 1989b; Campbell 1987; Sennett 1974). This is the difference between the ritual mask that contains the power of the god and the theater mask that is a mere representation, a symbol or image of that which it represents. Modernity implies the separation of symbol from that to which it refers. The notion of culture as code, paradigm, and semiotic is very much a product of modern identity. Some of the cynical dismissal of other peoples' constructions of their pasts is merely a product of modernist identity in defense of itself.⁷

Similarly, contemporary roots, ethnicity, and even racism are various forms of traditionalist reaction to the above. It has not been my purpose nor my interest to pass judgment on the relative value of the discourses involved, although my own objectivist position ought to be obvious in the endeavor to grapple with the confrontation between modernist anthropologists and their subjects from the outside, so to speak. That position is a product, as I most readily admit, of a specific Western social context. The global perspective embodies a self-conscious avoidance of the polar identifications discussed. In maintaining a strict identityless position, it also strives to understand the constitutive processes of social identity and the cultural structures generated by the latter. This must include the simultaneous attempt to understand the modern identity that produces our own discourses. In a world where cultural fragmentation has taken on extremes that might be seen as alarming, the kinds of phenomena addressed here ought to be of crucial importance. The current campus revolt against what is seen as Western hegemonic representations of the world is evidence of the kind of global process detailed in this discussion.

Despite the opposition of the historian Carl Degler and a few others, the Stanford Faculty Senate by 39 to 4 voted in 1988 to drop the term Western and substitute a requirement of a three-course sequence of cultural mixtures. [Woodward 1991:33]

The affirmative action programs at the universities and the general increase in the power of minority voices has been deplored by some as "the fragmentation of our culture into a quarrelsome spatter of enclaves, ghettos and tribes" (Schlesinger 1991, quoted in Woodward 1991:37). Other researchers see the fragmentation as a positive return of the local and even a new tribal *gemeinschaft* (Maffésoli 1986). I have tried to suggest that such conflicts must be placed in a wider perspective. More specifically, I have suggested here that they are an expression of the real fragmentation of a formerly hegemonic world system.

The establishment or, as nationalists would argue, the reestablishment of Greek identity and history was an immediate and necessary aspect of the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire and the integration of the Greek peninsula into a rising Western hegemony. The current fragmentation of the world system is a larger-scale phenomenon. It might also represent a transition to a new hegemonic structure. In any case, in order to understand such processes we need, I think, to gain the broader, global perspective I have

proposed. The motivation for this approach is the aspiration to comprehend where we have come from and where we are going. And it would appear that we are all actors in this process whether we like it or not. In the absence of such a perspective we might well be plunged into the very identity struggles that we most urgently need to begin to understand.

Constructing the past is an act of self-identification and must be interpreted in its authenticity, that is, in terms of the existential relation between subjects and the constitution of a meaningful world. This relation may be vastly different in different kinds of social orders. It is also a practice that is motivated in historically, spatially, and socially determinate circumstances. The latter in their turn are systemically generated in a larger global process that might help us to account for the vicissitudes of identity contests that have become so pervasive in this period of global crisis and restructuring.

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Notes

¹Other well-known concepts, such as *kapu* (sacred/forbidden), *mana* (life-force), and *ho'okipa* (hospitality), are closely related to the above concepts. The *mana* of the land and sea, the *kapus* that must be observed in relation to it, the *ho'okipa* that founds community, are all intimately related to the relations of encompassment, dependency, and unity that are expressed in *ohana* and *aloha*.

²Hegel was, of course, first in this endeavor, in attempting to demonstrate the alienation of any specific or concrete identity, but his holism belies a project that is quite the contrary of objectivist demystification.

³Anthropologists have taken great pains to distance themselves from the project of disauthentication implied in their discourse (Linnekin 1991a). But no disavowal adequately redresses the effects of demystification. That all societies and most individuals tend to mystify themselves in constructing pasts based on present conditions, motivations, and desires ought to imply that the truth of a particular representation of the past is important only in relation to a clearly defined baseline, an "objective" reality. The modernist universe is one in which contestation is central to the accumulation of knowledge about the word, objective knowledge in the Popperian sense (Popper 1972). But if representations have other functions than that of representing, the modernist must necessarily appear as a spoiler. The truth of histories is only relevant in a universe of discourse based on comparison with alternative versions. By adopting a modernist (i.e., falsificationist) paradigm, one has also engaged oneself in the politics of other peoples' self-representations.

⁴The notion of transparency refers to an implied absence of distortion in the relation between that which represents and that which is represented.

⁵Since this article was written, a number of debates have blossomed among anthropologists themselves as to the nature and political significance of the identification of other people's invented traditions. That ethnographic identity or authority is truly in jeopardy in these discussions vindicates our argument (Levine 1991; Linnekin 1991b; Hanson 1991; Jolly 1992). Those who would support Hanson's position can do so only in terms of the expertise of the anthropologist as ethnographer or historian. The problem with the defense of the invention thesis is that it is self-contradictory. If all culture is invention then there is nothing with which to compare a particular cultural product, no authentic foundation. It implies a serious contradiction between the often-asserted commonality of cultural creativity and a discourse that consistently attributes inauthenticity to modern cultural products.

⁶In a deeper sense, our ultimate goal as human beings ought to be to grasp precisely cultural production from the inside, on the basis of a project of the unification of humanity in its diversity, at least at the level of understanding. But this should only make sense for those trying to understand, not for those who become the object of that understanding and whose problems might be totally irrelevant to this anthropological project. What must, however, be eliminated, as Wendt puts it, is the pretension to such an understanding without the benefit of dialogue. Only other people can know ultimately what is going on inside of them. It would be absurd to presume otherwise, as absurd as it is implicit in authoritative discourse itself.

⁷We have implied that there are different ways of attributing meaning founded on different practices of self-constitution. Identification with the Lost Tribes of Israel, for example, which has oc-

curred among a great many societies under the influence of certain missionary denominations, cannot be dismissed in terms of our own views of world history and of the Bible. It must be understood in terms of specific acts of attribution of meaning in definite historical contexts. The power and status of missionaries in many societies has rendered them and their sacred books sources of life-force and well-being for societies in disintegration, most often as the direct and indirect result of their presence. Coming from the Holy Land, descended from the People of the Book is a source of sacred identity in a situation where the Book itself is the expression of the strength or *mana* of the superordinate colonial power.

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