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The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic

"Traditional culture" is increasingly recognized to be more an invention constructed for contemporary purposes than a stable heritage handed on from the past. Anthropologists often participate in the creative process. Two distinct inventions of New Zealand Maori culture are analyzed, together with the role of anthropologists in each of them. The conclusion explores the logic of culture invention and some of its implications for the practice of anthropology.

ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND HISTORIANS HAVE BECOME ACUTELY AWARE in recent years that "culture" and "tradition" are anything but stable realities handed down intact from generation to generation. Tradition is now understood quite literally to be an invention designed to serve contemporary purposes, "an attempt," as Lindstrom put it (1982:317), "to read the present in terms of the past by writing the past in terms of the present."

Those contemporary purposes vary according to who does the inventing. When people invent their own traditions it is usually to legitimate or sanctify some current reality or aspiration, be it as momentous as the Greek national identity, Quebec nationalism, or the Hawaiian renaissance (Handler 1984; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Herzfeld 1982; Linnekin 1983), or as uncontroversial as the relatively new form of dual social organization that Borofsky (1987) encountered on the Polynesian island of Pukapuka. People also invent cultures and traditions for others, and then treat them as if their inventions were the actual state of affairs. When the inventors are politically dominant, as has been the case between Western nations and their colonies, the invention of tradition for subordinate peoples is part of a cultural imperialism that tends to maintain the asymmetrical relationship of power (Fabian 1983; Ranger 1983; Said 1978).

It is becoming clear that anthropologists too are inventors of culture. The evolutionary ideas of Sir Henry Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan were major sources for the invention of the Fijian system of land tenure (France 1969; Legge 1958). Although it contains misinterpretations, A. B. Deacon's 1934 book, *Malekula: A Vanishing People in the New Hebrides*, has been adopted by the people of the region as the final arbiter of disputes about traditional culture (Larcom 1982:334). The present intellectual climate has even spawned the notion that the quintessential anthropological activities of ethnographic research and writing inevitably produce cultural inventions (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1988; Wagner 1981). This raises fundamental questions about the nature of cultural reality and whether the information that anthropologists produce can possibly qualify as knowledge about that reality.

New Zealand Maori culture forms an excellent context in which to frame these issues. The invention of Maori culture has been going on for more than a century, taking at least two distinct forms in that time, and anthropological interpretations and misinterpretations have joined the contributions of other scholars, government officials, and Maoris themselves (including some Maori anthropologists) in the inventive process. The two

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historical moments described below are the period around the turn of the 20th century—when the primary aim was to assimilate Maoris into White life and culture—and the present day, when Maoris seek to maintain their cultural distinctiveness and to assume a more powerful position in society. Following that discussion we will be ready to consider more thoroughly the theoretical implications of the invention of culture for the enterprise of anthropology.

The Whence of the Maori

Anthropology's contribution in the early decades of this century to the construction of New Zealand Maori culture stems from that great stream of now-discredited anthropological theory: diffusionism and long-distance migrations. This mode of thinking was largely responsible for the birth and nurturance of two major understandings about traditional Maori culture that, in some quarters, still lead a robust existence. One of these is a set of traditions about the settlement of New Zealand that may conveniently be grouped under the rubric of the "Great Fleet." The other is the idea that pre-European Maori culture featured an esoteric cult dedicated to a supreme being named Io.

The rudiments of the discovery and settlement theory are these. New Zealand was discovered in A.D. 925 by Kupe, a man from Ra'iatea in the Society Islands. The first settlers, Toi and his grandson Whatonga, arrived from Tahiti in about the middle of the 12th century. Finally, a fleet of seven canoes—Tainui, Te Arawa, Mataatua, Kurahaupo, Tokomaru, Aotea, and Takitumu—set out in about 1350 from a homeland named Hawaiki, which was probably Ra'iatea or Tahiti. After a stop in Rarotonga, the fleet arrived in New Zealand and the migrants dispersed to populate the various parts of the country. Most Maori tribes trace their origin to one or another of the canoes that formed the Great Fleet (Hiroa 1950:5–64; Simmons 1976:3–106; Sorrenson 1979:44–57).

As for the Io cult, it has been claimed that although the Maori pantheon contained many gods, over them all presided Io: an eternal being, itself uncreated, and the creator of the other gods, the universe, and all things (Smith 1913:110–112). The cult of Io was philosophically sophisticated and esoteric, knowledge and worship of the high god being restricted to a few ranking chiefs and high priests. "It is quite probable, indeed, that this superior creed may have been too exalted for ordinary minds" (Best 1973:24).

Before examining how anthropology contributed to their development and promulgation, it is important to know that scholarship in recent decades has thrown both the cult of Io and the Great Fleet story into serious question. The primary source for the Io cult is part 1 of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*. This is a compendium of religious and mythological lore of the Kahungunu tribe, arranged and translated by S. Percy Smith (1913). After a careful examination of the manuscript material on which the volume is based, David Simmons and Bruce Biggs concluded that chapter 2, which contains the material on the Io cult, is derived from manuscripts whose status as pre-European Maori tradition is questionable (Simmons 1976:382). Te Rangi Hiroa, a half-Maori anthropologist also known as Peter H. Buck, observed that Io's creative activities—bringing forth light from primordial darkness, dividing the waters, suspending the sky, and forming the earth—had rather too much in common with Genesis for their purely Maori provenance to sound convincing (Hiroa 1950:526–536; see also Johansen 1958:36–61).

As far as the Great Fleet is concerned, in 1840 Horatio Hale, a linguist with the United States Exploring Expedition, collected a legend at the Bay of Islands about a fleet of four canoes that were blown off course during a voyage between, he presumed, Samoa and Tonga, and which eventually arrived at New Zealand (Sorrenson 1979:35–36). The army historian A. S. Thomson, writing at mid-century, was also told that migrants to New Zealand set out in a fleet of canoes (Thomson 1859:1:57–68). As with the Io cult, however, Percy Smith was perhaps the key early proponent of migration stories of Kupe, Toi, and the Great Fleet. These are set out particularly in part 2 of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* (Smith 1915) and *History and Traditions of the Maoris of the West Coast* (Smith 1910).

Simmons and Biggs found the textual material in part 2 of *The Lore* to be a late compilation from a variety of sources (Simmons 1976:386). Simmons conducted an exhaustive study of European writings and Maori traditions from many tribal areas with the aim of ascertaining what Maori traditions actually say about the discovery of and migrations to New Zealand. He concluded that the stories about Kupe, Toi, and Whatonga as summarized above are not authentic Maori tradition (1976:59, 100). In this regard Simmons echoes William Colenso, who, a century before, had written that traditions such as Kupe's discovery of New Zealand and subsequent return to Hawaiki are "mythical rhapsody" that, while entirely believed by some Europeans, were not (at that time) taken as historical fact by the Maoris themselves (Sorrenson 1979:44–45).

While it is undeniable that Maori tribes tell of the arrival of their ancestors in migration canoes, the notion of an organized expedition by a Great Fleet in about 1350 seems to have been constructed by European scholars such as Smith in an effort to amalgamate disparate Maori traditions into a single historical account (Simmons 1976:316). Dating the fleet at 1350 was a particularly blatant work of fiction, since Smith simply took the mean of a large number of tribal genealogies that varied from 14 to 27 generations before 1900. "The date of 1350," Simmons concludes, "has validity only as an exercise in arithmetic" (1976:108; see also Smithyman 1979 for further evaluation of Smith's work).

If the Io cult and the Great Fleet are fabrications about indigenous Maori society, the question arises as to why European scholars so enthusiastically embraced them as fact. The answer pertains to the 19th-century fascination with tracing the various peoples of the world back to a few cradles of civilization. Well before the Great Fleet and Io entered European discourse this penchant of thought produced, as one of the earliest foreign inventions of Maori culture, the idea of the Maoris as Semites. Samuel Marsden, who in 1819 was the first missionary to visit New Zealand, opined that the Maoris had "sprung from some dispersed Jews." He advanced as evidence for this proposition their "great natural turn for traffic; they will buy and sell anything they have got" (Elder 1932:219).

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries scholars were using the Great Fleet and Io theories to suggest kinship between the Maoris and New Zealand's European settlers. The skin color, physical features, and often amorous hospitality of Polynesians had appealed to Europeans since the days of the 18th-century explorers. Now, diffusionist and migration-minded European scholars in New Zealand were pleased to discover in the Maori race the capacity for sophisticated philosophy, as demonstrated by the Io cult, and a history of heroic discoveries and migrations that included the Great Fleet, Kupe, and, in even more remote epochs, intrepid voyages through Indonesia, India, and beyond. This ennobled Maoris in European eyes to the point where it became possible to entertain the possibility of a link with themselves.

Doubtless that possibility became more palatable to British migrants when, as the 19th century drew to a close, the idea emerged that the Maoris were of Aryan stock. Edward Tregear, a high-level civil servant and amateur ethnologist and linguist who participated in the founding of the Polynesian Society, elaborated this thesis in his 1885 book *The Aryan Maori*. Rejoicing that "Comparative Philology and Comparative Mythology are the two youngest and fairest daughters of Knowledge" (1885:1), Tregear seduced from them a dazzling array of associations between Maori language and lore and that of, among other places, India, ancient Greece, Rome, and Britain. He even demonstrated that although Maori people had long since forgotten the cattle that their ancestors herded in the steppes of Asia and as they migrated through India, the memory remained embalmed in their language. So he found the Sanskrit *gau*, for cow, in several Maori terms containing *kau*. For example, a Maori weapon consisting of "sharp teeth of flint lashed firmly to a piece of wood" was called *mata-kautete* because its shape is reminiscent of a "cow-titty" (1885:30–31). Drunk with the power of comparative philology, Tregear uncovered similar memories in the Maori language of pigs, wolves, tigers, bows and arrows, and frogs (1885:30–37).

Such research was beginning to reveal the dim outlines of perhaps the most splendid chapter in human history the great Aryan migration. Enthused Tregear of the Maori forerunners,

> No free-booting Huns or Vandals, mad for plunder and the sack of towns were they but colonists seeking new homes beneath strange stars. We of Europe have set out on the same quest. Encircling Africa, the two vast horns of the Great Migration have touched again, and men whose fathers were brothers on the other side of those gulfs of distance and of time meet each other, when the Aryan of the West greets the Aryan of the Eastern Seas [1885:105]

Building on Renan's (1889:84) remark that Io is one of the many variants of the name Jehovah, Elsdon Best advanced the same theory (Best 1924:1:90).

The notion of Maoris as Aryans was pertinent to race relations and nation building in fledgling New Zealand. R. Studholme Thompson—who held that the Maoris belonged to the Alpine section of the Caucasian race and came originally from the Atlas mountains of North Africa—explained that his work on Maori origins

> "had a large object in view, viz., the demonstration that the highly-civilized Britain and the Maori, just emerging from barbarism, are one in origin; that in fraternising with the Maori the European undergoes no degradation; in intermarrying with the race he does no violence to the claims of consanguinity. It is thought that when this is thoroughly known there will arise a more cordial feeling between the peoples inhabiting the colony, both equally the subjects of one King." [quoted in Sorrenson 1979:29]

"What better myth could there be for a young country struggling for nationhood and for the amalgamation of its races," asks Sorrenson (1979:30), "than this reunification of the Aryans?"

No one talks seriously anymore about ultimate Maori origins as Aryan or Semitic, but the two most prominent features of the tradition—the cult of Io and the discovery and migration stories concerning Kupe, Toi, and the Great Fleet—remain very much alive. Although they are largely of European construction they have been embraced by Maoris as their authentic heritage. Te Rangi Hiroa accepted the traditions concerning Kupe, Toi, and the Great Fleet (1950:4–64); in his mind the last of these was so significant that it "ranks in historical and social importance with the Norman Conquest" (1950:36). Sir Apirana Ngata, longtime Member of Parliament and probably the most influential and respected Maori of the 20th century, promoted the idea of a sexternial celebration in 1950 to commemorate the arrival of the Great Fleet (and, not coincidentally, to dwarf the mere centennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, which the New Zealanders of European descent had celebrated in 1940) (Sorrenson 1979:52). From their discourse, it is clear that Maori authors of today such as Maharaia Winiata (1967:25), Douglas Sinclair (1975:118–119), and Ereura Stirling (Stirling and Salmond 1980:83–84) also accept the tradition of the Great Fleet as historical fact.

Io too lives in Maori minds, as is evident from a recent essay on Maori religion and cosmology by Maori Marsden, chaplain in the Royal New Zealand Navy and Te Aupouri tribal member. Relying solely on sources he has encountered in Maori contexts, such as the transmission of tribal lore and orations at Maori gatherings, Marsden depicts Io as an authentically Maori concept of a creator-god who verbally called the universe into being from a primal void and differentiated light from darkness, the earth and waters from the sky (Marsden 1975:210–211).

Maori reasons for affirming Io and the Great Fleet have not, however, been the same as those of Pakeha (Maori for European or White) New Zealanders. If Maoris have always been willing to accept any qualities of racial greatness that Pakeha scholars might attribute to them, it was not so much to believe themselves worthy of assimilation into the White population and culture as it was to bolster a sense of their own ethnic distinctiveness and value. This sense has grown dramatically in strength and stridency of expression in recent years. That development, indeed, lies at the heart of the second chapter in the invention of Maori culture and tradition that we have to consider.

Maoritanga

The movement known as Maoritanga (Maoriness) or Mana Maori (Maori Power) is one of the most important developments in New Zealand society today. As with any large social movement, Maoritanga includes diversity, and not all of the tenets discussed below would be endorsed by all of its supporters. What unites them and, interestingly, what they share with turn-of-the-century scholars such as R. Studholme Thompson, is the goal to secure for Maoris a favorable place in the nation being built in New Zealand. Yet the current and earlier images of that place and of the national culture to emerge, are quite different. The earlier vision was to create one culture, European in form, into which Maoris would be successfully assimilated. To promote this goal it was necessary to identify *similarities* between Maori and European. As we have seen, the invention of Maori culture promulgated by Percy Smith and his contemporaries did just that by using the Io cult as evidence of the Maori capacity for sophisticated thought and the Great Fleet to demonstrate the mettle of Maori ancestors and even to identify them as fellow Aryans.

Maoritanga's vision is different. Its image of the future New Zealand is a bicultural society, in which Maoris are on a par with Pakehas politically and economically and Maori culture is respected as equally valid but distinct from Pakeha culture (see, for example, Sciascia 1984:162). To promote that image, it is necessary to stress the unique contribution that Maori culture has made to national life—different from but no less valuable than the Pakeha contribution. Thus, the Maori tradition that Maoritanga invents is one that *contrasts* with Pakeha culture, and particularly with those elements of Pakeha culture that are least attractive. In New Zealand as in the United States, human relations among Pakehas are often thought to lack passion and spontaneity; the Pakeha approach to things is detached and coldly rational; Pakehas have lost the appreciation for magic and the capacity for wonder or awe inspired by the unknown; Pakeha culture is out of step with nature—it pollutes the environment and lacks a close tie with the land.

Maori culture is represented as the ideal counterbalance to these Pakeha failings. Maoris cherish the dead, speaking to them and weeping freely over open caskets, while Pakehas mute the mourning process and hide the body from sight (Dansey 1975:177). The Maori has a "close, spiritual relationship with the land"; he "loved his land and identified with it perhaps more closely than any other race" (Sinclair 1975:115). Maori thought appreciates the mystical dimension and transcends reason:

> Abstract rational thought and empirical methods cannot grasp the concrete act of existing which is fragmentary, paradoxical and incomplete. The only way lies through a passionate, inward subjective approach. Only a few foreigners alien to a culture, men like James K. Baxter with the soul of a poet, can enter into the existential dimension of Maori life. This grasp of a culture proceeds not from superficial intellectualism but from an approach best articulated in poetry. Poetic imagery reveals to the Maori a depth of understanding in men which is absent from the empirical approach of the social anthropologist. [Marsden 1975:218–219]

The times have changed a great deal since 1922, when no less respected and proud a Maori than Sir Apirana Ngata could say of a Pakeha scholar, "There is not a member of the Maori race who is fit to wipe the boots of Mr. Elsdon Best in the matter of the knowledge of the lore of the race to which we belong" (quoted in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 1932:31). Today Maoris are no longer willing to tolerate being told by Pakehas what is good for them, and even how to be Maori (Rangihau 1975). The notion that the rational Pakeha mind is unsuited to grasp Maori life, together with Maoritanga's major objective of drawing power into Maori hands, have encouraged many Maoris to insist that they, not Pakehas, be the proper custodians and managers of knowledge about the Maori heritage.

This sentiment is strong enough that some advocates of Maoritanga have invited Pakeha scholars out of Maori studies. Michael King, a Pakeha who has written extensively on Maori topics, observed that in 1971 Maori radicals insisted that Pakeha historians write more about Maori subjects, but by 1983 the demand was that they should not write about

them at all (1985:161). King's own 1983 book, *Maori—A Photographic and Social History*, has been negatively received by Maori reviewers, who stated the preference that such topics be addressed by Maori writers (King 1985:163). In the university, a Maori student complained that it is ethically wrong to be taught his own heritage by a Pakeha (Mead 1983:343–344).

Pakehas have not been routed from Maori studies. Indeed, because virtually all scholars who deal in Maori topics actively support the goal of Maoris to secure a better position in society and share the objective of creating a bicultural New Zealand, they have been active participants in the invention of the tradition that Maoritanga presents to the world. Michael King himself, for example, served as editor of the important collection of works by Maori authors that articulated many of the cardinal principles of Maoritanga (King 1975).

A number of writers have fostered the present invention of Maori culture by lending the weight of Pakeha scholarship to the movement. This often takes the form of according special authority to Maoris in matters pertaining to Maori culture. The Pakeha historian Judith Binney acknowledged the premise that Maoris are best equipped to understand and write about Maori topics when, in the preface to her excellent study of the Maori prophet Rua Kenana, she expressed misgivings about her grasp of the material and recorded the hope that one day a Maori scholar would produce a more authoritative account (Binney, Chaplin, and Wallace 1979:11). Anthropologist Anne Salmond has made it one of her professional objectives to promulgate and interpret Maori concepts of knowledge with the aim of incorporating them more fully into a bicultural New Zealand society (Salmond 1982; Stirling and Salmond 1980).

Steps have been taken to avoid offending Maori sensibilities. Preserved and tattooed Maori heads from the early 19th century, only 15 years ago a staple of museum exhibits, are no longer to be found on display in New Zealand institutions. Pakeha scholars have softened critiques of the Io cult and the Great Fleet, primarily, it seems, because many Maoris accept these traditions as authentic. The first edition of anthropologist Joan Metge's *The Maoris of New Zealand*, published in 1967, contains the following passages about Io: "The existence of a supreme god, Io, was allegedly revealed to those who reached the upper grades of the school of learning" (1967:30), and, from the glossary, "Io: Supreme Being whose existence and cult are claimed to have been revealed to initiates of the pre-European 'school of learning' " (1967:223). The corresponding passages in the second edition of the work, published in 1976, are: "The existence of a supreme god, Io-matua-kore, was revealed to those who reached the upper grades of the school of learning" (1976:23), and "Io: Supreme Being whose existence and worship were revealed to initiates of the pre-European 'school of learning'; identified by many Maoris with the Supreme Being of Christianity and used instead of or in alternation with the name Jehovah" (1976:337). A reference to Io as "the Supreme Being of Classic Maori cosmology" also appears on page 55, in a new chapter written for the second edition. Beyond the generally more positive attitude toward the Io cult, an increased concern about highlighting the views of contemporary Maoris is visible in a change of citation in the glossary entry on Io from Hiroa's skeptical account of the cult in *The Coming of the Maori* (1950) to the 1975 essay by Maori Marsden, discussed above, which accepts Io as authentic tradition.

Something similar is happening with the Great Fleet myth. New Zealand archeology has made great strides in recent years, and most discussions of the time and material conditions of early settlement (now established to have occurred by at least the 11th century) rely on archeological evidence. However, in a scholarly presentation of that evidence, Agnes Sullivan carefully states that, while the notion of an organized fleet seems discredited, archeology has produced nothing that disallows the possibility of migrant canoes arriving in New Zealand from East Polynesia up to about the 14th century. This has the effect of muting any archeological challenge to the magic date of 1350 for the arrival of ancestral canoes although, it will be recalled, Smith's settling upon that date is

one of the most contrived components of the Great Fleet story. "In traditional terms," Sullivan concludes, "there appear to be no good grounds at present for suggesting that the central themes of most Hawaiki canoe traditions are to be interpreted other than straightforwardly" (1984:62).

One of the most effective projects to publicize Maoritanga's invention of Maori culture was the exhibition "Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections" (see Mead 1984b). Anthropology's role in the project is mainly to be found in the person of Sidney Mead, a Maori anthropologist who was one of the central organizers of the exhibition. "Te Maori" was shown in New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Chicago in 1984–86, and subsequently toured New Zealand in a triumphant homecoming. Through a stroke of genius in the presentation of the exhibition, Mead and the other Maoris involved in it managed to clothe the objects with more than simply artistic value. In each city the exhibition opened with a dramatic dawn ceremony in which Maori elders (brought from New Zealand specifically for the purpose) ritually lifted the *tapu* ("taboo") from the objects and entrusted them to the care of the host museum. The ceremony received extensive media coverage in each city, and it conveyed the Maori idea that the objects were infused with a spiritual power that derived from the ancestors and linked them in a mystical union with the Maoris of today. As a result the objects were viewed as more than examples of fine and exotic workmanship, and the notion was inserted into the minds of many Americans who saw or were involved with the exhibition that the Maori people have access to primal sources of power long since lost by more rational cultures (see O'Biso 1987).

The special meanings that became associated with "Te Maori" in the United States also had an impact in New Zealand. Vincent Crapanzano has cogently pointed out (1980:49, 81–87) that it is much easier to believe something about oneself if one succeeds in convincing someone else of it. As the standing of Maori art skyrocketed in international recognition as a result of the exhibition, Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders alike took greater interest and pride in it and became more receptive to the idea of a nonrational, spiritual quality in Maori culture. While the point should not be overemphasized, the exhibition did have some effect in both strengthening Maori identity and increasing Pakeha respect for the Maori people and Maori culture. In this way "Te Maori" advanced the agenda of Maoritanga and the notion of a bicultural New Zealand. Indeed, this was one of the prime purposes and major benefits of the entire project (Mead 1981a:29; 1986:27, 74, 78, 104).

Maoris insisted that art objects produced by their ancestors are tribal treasures *(taonga)*, with the result that tribal proprietary rights became an important issue in the mounting of "Te Maori." In the planning stages of the exhibition a distinction was made between the legal ownership of the objects, vested in the museums that hold them, and the cultural ownership, which remained with the tribes. It was decided that no object could leave New Zealand unless the cultural owners agreed. Intense debate raged among elders of the various tribes over this issue, and ultimately the art of the Whanganui region was not included in the exhibition because of tribal disapproval. The concept of cultural ownership of art objects, which had not been enunciated prior to "Te Maori," has enriched the significance of tribal membership for Maori people and represents an important step toward Maoritanga's goal of bringing the Maori heritage under Maori control (Mead 1986:99).

Anthropologists and other scholars throughout New Zealand are also attempting to further the cause of Maoritanga by encouraging the growth of Maori Studies programs in the schools and universities, the involvement of program staff in assisting the Maori people with land claims and other projects, and greater Maori university enrollment. The aim is more ambitious than just increasing knowledge of and respect for Maori culture among Pakehas and making the benefits of Pakeha-style education more available to Maoris. As Anne Salmond articulates it, the imperative is to expand social institutions and modes of thinking in New Zealand to the point where they become truly bicultural,

so that Maori concerns and Maori epistemology may be included in the national discourse on an equal footing with Pakeha concerns and epistemology. She has registered satisfaction that signs of this are emerging in the university, in the form of a series of master's theses written in Maori by Maori students about the traditional histories of their own tribes, and often presented from the perspective of Maori epistemology. Her main disappointment is that the response from the Pakeha side has been inadequate, for academic anthropology has offered little of relevance to this much-needed injection of Maori ways of thinking and knowing into university-based Maori studies.

> It could be that the anthropology we have inherited from Europe and America is simply not used to epistemological experiments of this sort, because it does not confront the experience of bicultural living, day by day, in the university as well as in the field. The questions of who are "we" and who are the "others" is anything but clear-cut when those who sit in lecture theatres and seminars and those who teach in them, those who write books, theses and articles and those who read them are inextricably both Maori and European; and in such a situation anthropology must change or be discarded. [Salmond 1983:323]

Moving still further along the same road, Sidney Mead has suggested that Maori Studies be elevated from its current program or department status in New Zealand universities to the level of a school; indeed, that a whole University of Aotearoa (the name for New Zealand favored by Maoritanga) be founded. The point is quite radical. It apparently aims to transform Maori Studies from a field of inquiry within the Pakeha-defined university to a general and distinctively Maori epistemological perspective from which not only Maori language and culture but also subjects such as anthropology, sociology, history, education, geography, linguistics, art history, and economics would be investigated (Mead 1983:343–346). Such a school would have a *marae* (in Maori villages, the place where visitors are received and community matters are discussed) as its central feature, instruction would be in the Maori language, and most of the staff would be Maori. Although Mead does not specify it, he is certainly not oblivious to the prospect that a University of Aotearoa would command more prestige—and much more substantial government funding—than the various *whare wananga* (traditional Maori schools) sponsored by different tribes. Echoing Maoritanga's cardinal demand for more power in Maori hands, Mead contends that the establishment of a Maori university would make it "possible to repossess our heritage, hold on to it, and to exercise a measure of control over it" (1983:346).

The Logic of Cultural Invention

The image of Maori culture that developed around the turn of the 20th century was constructed in the main by scholars who were predisposed to analyze institutions in terms of long-distance migrations, and who cherished the political desire to assimilate Maoris to Pakeha culture. The present image has been invented for the purpose of enhancing the power of Maoris in New Zealand society, and is largely composed of those Maori qualities that can be attractively contrasted with the least desirable aspects of Pakeha culture.

Taken together, these case studies might incline one to the pessimistic view that the reality of traditional culture and history is so irredeemably shrouded behind multiple veils of distortion, some woven from imported fabric and others homespun, that no effort at objectivity could be sufficient to strip them away. But that would miss the distinctive feature of both examples: that the "distortions" have been accepted by Maoris as authentic to their heritage. Io and the Great Fleet have been incorporated into Maori lore and are passed from elders to juniors in storytelling, oratory, and other Maori contexts. Today Maoris, and also those Pakehas who desire to incorporate both sides of bicultural New Zealand into their own experience, make it a conscious point to practice the tenets of Maoritanga. They learn the Maori language and Maori history. They are careful to show respect for elders. They open themselves to the emotional and mystical impact of charisma and the nonrational, and they heighten their appreciation for Maori lore and

Maori art. As a result, these and other elements of the current invention of Maori culture become objectively incorporated into that culture by the very fact of people talking about them and practicing them.

Therefore, the fact that culture is an invention, and anthropology one of the inventing agents, should not engender suspicion or despair that anthropological accounts do not qualify as knowledge about cultural reality. Inventions are precisely the stuff that cultural reality is made of; as Linnekin (1983) and Handler (1984) have convincingly demonstrated by means of Hawaiian and Quebecois examples, "there is no essential, bounded tradition . . . the ongoing reconstruction of tradition is a facet of all social life" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:276).

To entertain the notion of a historically fixed tradition is to affirm what Jacques Derrida calls the "metaphysics of presence" (1978:281) or "logocentrism" (1974:12). He argues that since Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, among others, it has been necessary to replace the metaphysics of presence with a more fluid, decentered view.

> Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when . . . in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse . . . that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present. . . . The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. [Derrida 1978:280]

Applied to our examples, a logocentric view would hold that traditional Maori culture existed in determinate form, say, at the moment of effective Western contact by Captain Cook in 1769. That cultural essence was then distorted in one way or another by turn-of-the-century anthropologists as well as by contemporary proponents of Maoritanga—although all of them claim to be holding fast to it. Derrida would maintain, on the contrary, that Maori culture has always been "a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play." From this perspective, discourse about the philosophically sophisticated cult of Io and the arrival in 1350 of a Great Fleet of migrant canoes represents not really a distortion of traditional Maori culture but one set of sign-substitutions in the play of signification that is itself the essence (if we may be allowed to use that word) of Maori culture. Other sign-substitutions include the warmth, passion, and mysticism stressed by Maoritanga. Indeed, they also include whatever lore, conventions, and institutions were in play among Maoris in New Zealand in 1769 on the eve of Cook's visit, for there is no reason to privilege them with some sort of fixed (logocentric) authenticity absent from the other inventions or sign-substitutions that we have considered. Certainly Maoris of the 1760s, no less than contemporary Maori activists, were moved by their own political agendas to appeal selectively and creatively to the tradition of their ancestors; and the same can be said for those ancestors, and so on indefinitely.

It follows from this that the analytic task is not to strip away the invented portions of culture as inauthentic, but to understand the process by which they acquire authenticity. Social reproduction—the process whereby people learn, embody, and transmit the conventional behaviors of their society—is basically a matter of interpersonal communication. Any conventional act, such as greeting someone on the street, is learned by observing how other people do it, modeling one's own behavior on that, and being assured that it is done properly (or alerted that it is not) by the reactions of other people to the behavior. Moreover, each person is teacher as well as learner in the process, because his or her behavior also serves as a model upon which still other people construct their behavior (see Bourdieu 1977; Hanson and Hanson 1981). No one bit of behavior can be said to have ultimate authenticity, to be the absolute and eternal "right way" of which all the others are representations. All of the bits of behavior are models: models of previous bits and models for subsequent ones.

Described like this, the process of ordinary social reproduction is a case of sign-substitution in a play of signification. But, as we have already seen, the invention of culture is also that. This demystifies the process whereby cultural inventions acquire authenticity in the eyes of members of society because the invention of culture is no extraordinary occurrence but an activity of the same sort as the normal, everyday process of social life.

While it is essential to recognize this point, there must nevertheless be something distinctive about culture invention. It is, after all, much too strong a phrase to use for everyday social reproduction. As a first approximation, it might be said that inventions are sign-substitutions that depart some considerable distance from those upon which they are modeled, that are selective, and that systematically manifest the intention to further some political or other agenda. This criterion would authorize us to classify as inventions those sign-substitutions that rework Maori migration canoe legends into a chapter of the great Aryan migration, or that stress Maori respect for the elders and the dead without mentioning that such respect operated within tribes only and was matched by a tendency to revile and cannibalize the elders and dead of other tribes.

Very often, however, the inventive quality of sign-substitutions is recognizable only from outside and when they form clusters. Percy Smith, Edward Tregear, and Elsdon Best worked ingenuously within the tradition of diffusionist anthropology. When compared with the other two, the theories (or sign-substitutions) advanced by any one of them are not radical departures, and certainly they did not consider those theories to be inventions. The same may be said of contemporary advocates of Maoritanga. But when detached observers consider these two movements as wholes, and compare the images of Maori culture they advance and the political agendas they espouse, their status as inventions becomes obvious. Indeed, this highlights one of the main values of the Maori case for the study of culture invention: the fact that there have been two quite distinct inventions of Maori culture makes it much easier to get a clear view of each of them.

We conclude, then, that inventions are common components in the ongoing development of authentic culture, and that producers of inventions are often outsiders (including anthropologists) as well as insiders. This conclusion has a reflexive dimension that pertains to anthropology itself. No less than any other cultural enterprise, anthropology is a discourse consisting of sign-substitutions, of which the present essay is one. To claim otherwise—that anthropology occupies some fixed perspective outside the play of signification of other discourse—would be to sponsor a grotesque mating of logocentrism with professional ethnocentrism.

Granted that this essay is a sign-substitution, but does it qualify as an invention? The comments above distinguishing between the inventive status of individual contributions as opposed to larger aggregates pertain here. Within the rest of the "invention of tradition" literature, which constitutes a kind of paradigm in Kuhn's (1962) sense, this essay is not an invention. But that literature or paradigm, taken as a whole, does make a radical departure from earlier anthropological thinking about tradition, and thus is an invention. Moreover, this anthropological invention belongs to a larger set of inventive sign-substitutions in contemporary Western social thought, represented by thinkers such as Derrida and described by Clifford (1988:9) as "a pervasive condition of off-centeredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning."

To acknowledge the presence of inventions in anthropology may appear to jeopardize its capacity to locate truth and contribute to knowledge. But that would be to miss the point of the entire argument. It would assume the existence of some other form of discourse that trades in fixed rules and eternal verities—in short, that logocentrism reigns. To the contrary, the thesis of this essay is that invention is an ordinary event in the development of all discourse, which therefore never rests on a permanent foundation.[1] From this point of view truth and knowledge stem—and always have stemmed—from inventions in the decentered play of sign-substitutions.

Notes

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[1]Obviously this thesis is closely tied to anthropology's long-standing if ambivalent affair with cultural relativism. The issue of relativism is treated more explicitly in another essay which arrives at a similar conclusion by a different path (Hanson 1979).

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Primitive Warfare and the Ratomorphic Image of Mankind

The most influential current explanations of preindustrial violence and warfare see it as determined by factors and forces entirely external to human beings and their motives and purposes. This article critically examines the most prominent of these approaches—behavioristic, sociobiological, and ecological-functional—and some of the assumptions underlying them. Then, drawing on ethnographic data from a society known for its peacefulness—the Semai Senoi—the article offers an alternative conception of action, one that views human behavior, including warfare and nonviolence, as purposive, and that sees human beings as active decision makers picking their ways through fields of options and constraints in pursuit of individually and culturally defined goals in a culturally constituted reality which they themselves are actively constructing.

IN *THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE*, Arthur Koestler's lively attack on stimulus-response psychology, he characterized behaviorism as an approach that began by cutting the heads off human beings, denying any relevance—indeed any reality—to human consciousness. When behaviorism dealt with human beings, they were biological machines, larger than, but not fundamentally different from, laboratory rats and, like them, were seen to be wholly animated by responses to externally derived stimuli, a conception Koestler labeled "the ratomorphic view of man" (Koestler 1967:17). While that particular battle has been won and behaviorism now lies moribund, ratomorphism is alive and well, flourishing in a variety of approaches that continue lopping off human heads by denying relevance, if not reality, to human consciousness, values, purposes, and intentions, and seeing human actions as determined by forces entirely external to human beings and human goals. This view is nowhere more apparent than in current theories of human violence and warfare. This article critically examines some of the most prominent of these theories and some of their underlying assumptions, and offers an alternative conception, one which insists that we take people seriously, not only as biological beings in ecological contexts, but also as *human* beings in sociocultural contexts, deriving their humanity from the systems of meanings, of values and beliefs, of symbols and significations, that many anthropologists call "culture."

Much of the current controversy surrounding attempts to explain and understand the phenomena of human violence and war has its roots in these two differing conceptions of the nature of human beings and, thereby, of the nature of explanations of human behavior. On the one hand is a deterministic conception of human beings as primarily reactive, responding to forces emanating from the environment, either directly and mechanically (e.g., the frustration-aggression hypothesis), or with the response mediated by cultural evolution (e.g., the ecological-functional "techno-environmental determinism" of Harris and others), or mediated by biological evolution (e.g., ethological, sociobiological, and some psychoanalytic approaches).[1]

On the other hand is a perspective that takes human activity for granted, viewing people not as passive machines pushed this way and that by ecological, biological, sociolog-

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