

world, which will be analysed in further detail in the next chapter on nationalism and minority issues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Marcus Banks: *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*. London: Routledge 1996.

Fredrik Barth: Introduction, in Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press 1969.

Anthony P. Cohen: *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge 1985.

Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, eds: *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis 1994.

18 THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY: NATIONALISM AND MINORITIES

People in different parts of the world still utter different sounds, but nowadays they say more or less the same things everywhere.

— Ernest Gellner

Scarcely anyone who has used the methods of ethnography to map out ideologies anywhere in the world since the 1960s can have avoided encountering expressions of nationalist ideology. The growth of nationalism and nation-building is an important, spectacular and highly consequential dimension of the worldwide processes of change connected with colonialism and de-colonisation. Nationalism is a kind of ideology which exists almost everywhere in the world, although it assumes very different forms. This does not mean that all the citizens of any state know about, or for that matter support, nationalist ideology – but it implies that nationalism is a cultural phenomenon of such importance that both anthropology and other social sciences have, since about 1980, seen it as a main priority to try to come to grips with it analytically.

NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

In anthropology, nationalism is usually defined as an ideology which holds that cultural boundaries should correspond to political boundaries; that is to say, that the state ought to contain only people 'of the same kind' (Gellner 1983). All nationalism champions, in one way or the other, the congruence between state and the culture of citizens. While many social theorists formerly regarded nationalism as an 'archaic survival' from a remote age, which would probably be superseded through modernisation and bureaucratisation (for instance, Weber 1978 [1919]), it has gradually become clear that it is actually a product of modernity. In fact, nationalism as we know it was developed in both France and Germany around the time of the French Revolution: it has a dual origin in the French Enlightenment and German Romanticism.

The parallel between the study of nationalism and that of ethnicity is obvious; most nationalisms – some would say all, but that is a matter of definition – are special cases of ethnic ideologies. Since most nationalist

ideologies argue the ancient nature of their nation, it has been widely held that this was also the case with the ideology itself. This is not the case, and at this point it may be useful to distinguish between tradition and traditionalism. While nationalism tends to appear as a traditionalist ideology, glorifying a presumed ancient cultural tradition, this does not necessarily mean that it is 'traditional' or 'ancient' itself.

The example of Norwegian nationalism since the 1850s demonstrates this point. At that time, Norway was in an enforced union with Sweden and a growing number of urban, educated Norwegians, inspired by similar movements elsewhere in Europe, felt that they ought to have their own state. They then travelled to remote valleys where they found popular traditions which seemed peculiarly Norwegian; they brought them back to the cities, exhibited them and made them appear as an expression of the Norwegian people and its 'spirit'. Thus a national symbolism was gradually developed, stressing dimensions of Norwegian rural life that were seen as unique (not found in neighbouring Sweden and Denmark, in contrast to which Norwegian nationhood was defined), and this was used to establish the idea of the ethnic Norwegian nation. A national historiography was founded during the same period, stressing the continuity with the Norse empire of the Viking age (around AD 1000), while a national literature, national art, national music and a new national language based on certain rural dialects – thereby markedly distinctive from Danish – were created. All of this effort was intended to give the impression that Norway was really an old country with a unique culture, and therefore deserved political independence.

The rural culture of Norway, in a reinterpreted form, provided an efficient political weapon, not because it was statistically 'typical' or because it was more 'authentic' than urban culture, but because it could be used to express ethnic distinctiveness vis-à-vis Danes and Swedes and because it embodied the rural-urban solidarity characteristic of nationalism. According to nationalist ideology, the important distinguishing lines between groups follow national boundaries, and internal differentiation is therefore undercommunicated. Nationalism postulates that all members of society have a shared culture, which was a radical point of view in societies which had formerly been based on ascribed rank and feudal hierarchies.

The traditionalism which is expressed through nationalism is thus deeply modern in character. The fact that the nationalists claim the Vikings were Norwegians does not mean that the nationalists are Vikings. We now need to examine more closely the relationship between nationalism and modernity, which has a strong bearing on earlier discussions of social scale, technology and forms of social integration.

NATIONALISM AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

In Ernest Gellner's important book about nationalism (1983), the author stresses that nationalism emerged as a response to industrialisation and

Ernest Gellner (1925–95) was initially educated as a philosopher, and an important part of his published work deals with the philosophy of science. He has contributed to anthropological debates on translation and rationality, as well as debates on the relationship between language and the world. His essays on the philosophy of social science include the collections *Thought and Change* (1964), *Spectacles and Predicaments* (1974) and *Relativism and the Social Sciences* (1985). Gellner has described himself both as a positivist and as a functionalist, and he emerges as a strong defender of anthropology as science, criticising hermeneutics as well as Wittgensteinian philosophy of language and, more recently, 'postmodernism'. He has carried out fieldwork in Mahgreb, and has in this context published *Muslim Society* (1981).

Among Gellner's later books, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) stands out: it has been a decisive source of inspiration in the interdisciplinary field of nationalist studies. Here, he emphasises the modern character of nationalism, linking it to the Industrial Revolution. *The Psychoanalytical Movement* (1985) is a strong criticism of psychoanalysis, which Gellner dismisses on epistemological and logical grounds, as well as providing a sociological explanation of its great importance. *Reason and Culture* (1991) develop perspectives on modern society further, but from a more philosophical point of view, as the focus is on the tension between Enlightenment and Romanticism in European thought – between 'reason' and 'culture', or – as an extrapolation – between civil rights and nationalism. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (1992) attacks epistemological relativism in anthropology, evaluates the merits and shortcomings of religious fundamentalism, and ends in a very outspoken defence of science as a source of understanding.

people's disengagement from 'primordial ties' to kin, religion and local communities. Industrialisation entailed a greater geographical mobility, and made people participate in social systems that are on a much larger scale than those they had known earlier. Kin ideology, feudalism and religion were no longer capable of organising people efficiently. There was, in other words, a need for a cohesive ideology in the large-scale societies evolving in Europe in the nineteenth century, which both created social systems of enormous scale and inspired demands for individual equality and civil rights. Nationalism was able to meet such demands, and Gellner largely sees it as a functional replacement of older ideologies and principles of social organisation.

A fundamental difference between kinship ideology and nationalism is the fact that the latter postulates the existence of an abstract community; that is, as a nationalist or patriot, one is loyal to a legislative system and a state which ostensibly represents one's 'people', not to individuals one knows

personally. The nation thus only exists if one is capable of imagining its existence – it cannot be observed directly – and it is in this sense that Benedict Anderson (1991) has spoken of the nation as an imagined community. In his account of nationalism, he stresses the development of mass media, particularly the printed book. With print-capitalism, he argues, an immense number of people are able to appropriate the same knowledge, and this may take place without direct contact with the author. A standardisation of language and world-view on a huge scale thus becomes possible. The role of the state educational system in nation-states is immensely important here. All English schoolchildren have heard of Guy Fawkes, but few know why Pieter Stuyvesant is an important person in Dutch history. In the Netherlands, naturally, the situation is reversed.

At a cultural level, print media and standardised education imply a certain homogenisation of representations. At the level of social organisation, it facilitates geographical mobility over a large area, since it gives people in different areas roughly the same qualifications and thus makes them replaceable in the labour market. Large-scale communication and cultural standardisation or homogenisation are thus important features of nation-building, which contribute to explaining how it can be that people identify with such an abstract entity as a nation.

Both Gellner and Anderson emphasise the modern and abstract character of the nation. The nation and nationalism here appear as tools of state power in societies which would otherwise be threatened by dissolution and anomie. Nationalism is a functional ideology for the state in that it creates loyalty and facilitates large-scale operations, and it is functional for the individual in that it replaces obsolete foci for identification and socialisation, notably the family. It is thus no mere cliché that the nation-state has taken over many of the former functions of the family in modern societies, as an institution representing, among other things, social control, socialisation and group belongingness. The nation may further be seen as a metaphoric kin group. Kinship is fundamental to human organisation, and nationalism tends to emerge in situations where kinship organisation has been weakened. From having been members of lineages or villages, people also, and perhaps more importantly, become citizens through processes of modernisation. The nation-state offers both a feeling of security and a cultural identity, as well as socialisation (through schooling) and career opportunities. It demands our loyalty in roughly the same way as the family: people are willing to kill and die for their relatives and their nation (if nationalism is a successful ideology), but for few other groups. The nation-state is, in other words, able to mobilise very strong passions among its members, and Anderson (1991) has remarked that nationalism has more in common with phenomena such as religion and kinship than with ideologies like socialism and liberalism.

Some authors have argued that although nationalism is a modern phenomenon, it is rooted in earlier ethnic communities or 'ethnies' (A. Smith 1986, 1991), but it would surely be misleading to claim that there is an

unbroken continuity from pre-modern communities to national ones. As the Norwegian example shows, national dress and other symbols take on a very different meaning in the modern context from that which they had originally.

THE NATION-STATE

For a nation-state to exist, its leaders must simultaneously be able to legitimate a particular power structure and create a popular belief in the ability of the nation to satisfy certain profound needs in the population. A successful nationalism implies, in most cases, an intrinsic connection between an ethnic ideology stressing shared descent, and a state apparatus. Let us briefly consider some of the characteristics of the nation-state, seen as a mode of social organisation. It may be relevant to compare it with other forms of social organisation described earlier in this book: there are both similarities and differences between, say, the nation of France and the Dogon village.

Above all, the nation-state is based on nationalist ideology; that is the doctrine stating that state boundaries should correspond with cultural boundaries. Further, the nation-state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, the enforcement of law and order, and the collection of taxes. It has a bureaucratic administration and written legislation which covers all citizens, and it has – at least ideally – a uniform educational system and a shared labour market for its people. Most nation-states have an official national language; some have even banned the use of other languages in public.

In other societies too, the political authorities have monopolies on violence and taxation. What is peculiar to the nation-state in this regard is the enormous concentration of power it represents. If we compare a modern war with a feud among the Yanomamö, we see the difference clearly. In the same way as the abstract community of nationalism encompasses an incredible number of people (usually many millions) compared to societies integrated on the basis of kinship (among the Yanomamö, there is an upper limit of a few hundred people), the modern state may in many cases be seen as an enormous enlargement of other forms of social organisation. This does not mean that the nation-state is 'just like other kinds of society', only bigger, but we ought to be aware of the similarities between state and non-state forms of organisation, not merely the differences. A distinction between contemporary states and earlier ones may also be relevant, not least in the context of this chapter. In *Pluralism and the Politics of Difference* (Grillo 1998), Ralph Grillo shows that ethnic plurality was generally seen as less problematic in earlier state formations – from the Alur (Uganda) to the Aztecs and the Ottomans – than it is today. 'Minority issues' are therefore the true-born child of the modern state, where the ambitions to standardise and unify, and the demands of participation, are greater than in other large-scale political entities.

Multiculturalism and Anthropology

The growing importance of self-conscious constructions of cultural identities, which is a global phenomenon, is evident in consumption patterns, politics and the arts. In many countries, perhaps particularly the rich ones with substantial immigrant populations, debates about 'multiculturalism' have highlighted several of these dimensions. Is it, for example, meaningful to talk of 'ethnic art', and should it be evaluated according to culturally specific criteria? Many feel that this approach can lead to the justification of mediocre work in the name of cultural pluralism, but ultimately not to the benefit of the artists and their 'communities', because of the patronising attitude. On the other hand, as Charles Taylor (1992, p. 67) remarks, to 'approach, say, a raga with the presumptions of value implicit in the well-tempered clavier would be forever to miss the point'. An important debate in recent social philosophy, which is relevant for this issue, opposes communitarianism to liberalism. Communitarians like Taylor and Alasdair Macintyre (1981) hold that the community is prior to the individual and favour a certain degree of relativism in value judgements, while liberals like Richard Rorty (1991) warn against the pitfalls of communitarianism (including fundamentalism) and defends the undiluted rights of the individual. A 'middle ground' has been defined by Will Kymlicka, who argues for cultural rights on individualist grounds (Kymlicka 1995; see Grillo 1998, Werbner and Modood 1997 and R. Wilson 1997 for ethnographically grounded discussions).

In the political field, related issues have focused on the relationship between human rights and minority rights. Multiculturalism could be defined as a doctrine which holds that discrete ethnic groups are entitled to the right to be culturally different from the majority, just as the majority is entitled to its culture. However, as many critics have pointed out, this kind of doctrine may serve to justify systematic differential treatment of ethnic groups (as in apartheid), and may indeed, even in its more benevolent forms, be at odds with individual rights. On the one hand, then, every citizen is in theory entitled to equal treatment from the state and greater society; on the other hand, persons with different cultural backgrounds also may claim the right to retain their cultural identity. When this cultural identity entails, for example, corporeal punishment in child rearing and this is unlawful (which it is in Scandinavia, but not in Britain), the conflict between the right to equality and the right to difference becomes clear. Should groups have rights and not just individuals, and if so, how can one prevent oppression and abuse due to internal power discrepancies in the group? Although anthropologists would be expected play an important part in these discourses, they have in general been surprisingly reluctant to

do so. Perhaps multiculturalism is too close for comfort; after all, the very notion of multiculturalism draws on a concept of culture developed in anthropology, but which has today been abandoned by most anthropologists for being too rigid and bounded (T. Turner 1993; Kuper 1999).

The 1999 GDAT debate, an annual debate in anthropological theory (see box in Chapter 6 for details), concerned the motion 'The Right to Difference is a Fundamental Human Right' (Wade 1999). The motion was defeated by 43 votes to 30 (15 abstentions).

NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY

The difference between nationalism and ethnicity is simple if we stick to the level of definitions. A nationalist ideology may be defined as an ethnic ideology which demands the right to its own state on behalf of the ethnic group. In practice, the distinction can be much more complicated.

First, groups or categories of persons may be located analytically in a grey zone between nationhood and ethnic identity. It is simply not true that ethnic groups 'have a shared will'. If some of their members wish for independence, while others are content to have linguistic and other rights within an existing state, the category in question may appear both as a nation and as an ethnic group, depending on who is speaking. A person may also switch situationally between being a member of an ethnic minority and a member of a nation. An Argentinian migrant to France belongs to an ethnic minority while in France, but belongs to a nation the moment she returns to her country of birth.

Second, nationalism may sometimes express an ideology which represents, and is supported by, a majority of ethnic groups. This is clearly the case in Mauritius, where no ethnic group openly wishes to make nation-building an ethnic project on its own behalf. Nationalist ideology in such countries may be seen as polyethnic or supra-ethnic in that it tries to reconcile ethnic differences, but not abolish them, within a shared framework of a nation.

Third, we should keep in mind that everyday language and mass media continuously mix up the concepts of nation and ethnic group; when, for example, people speak of the '104 nations' of the former Soviet Union, they clearly refer to ethnic groups, a few of which are nations in the sense that their leaders want to have states where they are dominant.

Nationalism and ethnicity are related phenomena, but there are many ethnic groups which are not nations, and there may also be nations which are not ethnic groups – that is, polyethnic nations or countries which are not founded on an ethnic principle. Naturally, most of the world's countries are as a matter of fact polyethnic, but many of them are dominated by one

ethnic group; the French in France, the English in Great Britain, and so on (see Grillo 1980). The model of nationalism presented above, as well as models endorsed by nationalists, rarely fits the territory. Notably, there is rarely, if ever, a perfect correspondence between the state and the 'cultural group'. This simple fact is the cause of what, in the contemporary world, is spoken of as minority issues.

MINORITY AND MAJORITY

Two kinds of ethnicity studies which have placed a great emphasis on power and power discrepancies are studies of labour migrants from poor to rich countries, and studies of indigenous peoples. Both types are concerned with the relationship between minorities and majorities, where the majority – usually a nation represented in a nation-state – is in several ways more powerful than the minority.

An ethnic minority may be defined as a group which is politically non-dominant, and which exists as an ethnic category. Although the term 'minority' usually refers to inferior numbers, in the professional literature it denotes political submission. A great number of peoples in the world may therefore be seen as minorities. Their relationship to the nation-state nevertheless varies, as do the strategies of the nation-state towards these minorities.

The term 'minority' is relative to both the scale and the form of organisation in the total social system. As has been shown earlier, any delineation of a social system is relative. This means that (1) minorities are created when the compass of the social system increases, as when formerly tribal peoples become integrated into nation-states (the Yanomamö were no minority before they entered into a relationship with the state), (2) minorities may often become majorities if they are able to delimit the system in new ways (for example, by setting up a new state), and (3) ethnic groups which are minorities in one place may become majorities in another.

The Sikhs make up less than 2 per cent of the total population of India; in Indian Punjab, however, they comprise 65 per cent of the population. In accordance with (2) above, some of their leaders are struggling to set up an independent Sikh state, thereby transforming the group collectively from minority to majority status. On the other hand, Hungarians in Transylvania (Romania) and Pakistanis in Britain exemplify (3): they are a minority, but their group is a majority elsewhere.

POWER ASYMMETRIES

So far in the discussion of ethnicity and nationalism, we have not emphasised the very important and very widespread fact of uneven or asymmetrical power relations between ethnic groups. Many studies of ethnicity concentrate on the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and negotiations over

identity, without looking more closely at the ways in which power disparities may be decisive for inter-ethnic relationships. The famous studies of ethnicity (or 'tribalism') in the Copperbelt, for example, rarely mentioned the wider context of colonial mining society, which defined Africans as second-class citizens in relation to Europeans.

Stanley Tambiah (1989) has proposed a typology of contemporary societies that differentiates them according to their ethnic composition (see Eriksen 1992 and Horowitz 1985 for alternative typologies of minority-majority relationships):

1. Countries which are almost ethnically homogeneous (where the dominant group has more than 90 per cent of the total population), such as Japan, Iceland and Bangladesh.
2. Countries with a large ethnic majority (75–89 per cent of the population), including Bhutan, Vietnam and Turkey.
3. Countries where the largest ethnic group makes up 50–75 per cent of the population and where there are several minorities, for instance Sri Lanka, Iran, Pakistan and Singapore.
4. Countries with two groups of roughly the same size, such as Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago and Malaysia.
5. Truly plural countries composed of many ethnic groups where no one of them is dominant; for example India, Mauritius, Nigeria and the Philippines.

A problem with this kind of typology is that it lumps together countries which are politically extremely different. Within each category there are stable and unstable countries, parliamentary democracies and military dictatorships, countries with good as well as bad records regarding human rights and so on. Ethnically homogeneous Somalia experienced civil war in the 1990s, while there is no threat to the territorial integrity of neighbouring multi-ethnic Kenya. Eritrea's secession from Ethiopia in the early 1990s, moreover, was not an ethnic issue, as Eritrea's population is composed of about twelve ethnic groups, including both Christian and Muslim groups. The recent war between Eritrea and Ethiopia largely involves Tigrinya speakers on both sides of the border, many of them kin (Tronvoll 1999). Mauritius, a truly ethnically plural society, is one of the most stable parliamentary democracies in the Third World. Ethnic plurality, in other words, cannot account for violence and political instability (see Turton 1997).

However, if we add a distinction between ranked and unranked polyethnic systems (Horowitz 1985; Tambiah 1989), it may be easier to understand why some such societies are unstable and others are not. Typically, ethnic groups which are systematically deprived of civil rights and career opportunities will tend to perceive the political order as unjust. This applies only in societies where rights are in practice unevenly distributed on the basis of ethnic membership, but this kind of situation is not uncommon. For now,

Non-ethnic Nations?

Theories of nationalism have often been Eurocentric (Handler and Segal 1993; Gladney 1998), and unsurprisingly, non-European countries have often failed to fit the model. If by nationalism we mean the doctrine of congruence between state and ethnic group, even the USA does not seem to be a nation. In Central and South America, few see their own country as essentially ethnically homogeneous; in Mexico, for example, the notion of *mestizaje* (cultural and racial mixing) has become a symbol of the Mexican nation. Africa presents a no less complex picture, with hardly a single ethnically homogeneous country, and large parts of Asia are also ethnically very complex – not only in fact, but also at the level of ideology (unlike in Europe, where the facts are often multi-ethnic but the ideology of nationalism mono-ethnic). If the nation of Kenya is to be imagined by its citizens, therefore, it cannot be imagined as a Luo, Kikuyu or Maasai nation, but as a symbolic community which exists at a higher segmentary level than the ethnic groups that make it up. In many of these countries, national ideology is therefore associated with equal rights and civil society rather than with any particular ethnic group. It may still have the ability to stir patriotic emotions and create loyalty to the state.

Would these polyethnic imagined communities still be nations in an analytical sense? That is a matter of definition. It is certain, however, that if the concept of nationalism is going to be cross-culturally valid, it cannot be restricted to mono-ethnic nations only: it will have to be refined to fit the global territory better.

we will restrict ourselves to considering asymmetrical relationships between dominant ethnic groups which control the state, and minorities.

SEGREGATION, ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION

Short of physical extermination (which has actually been quite common), states may use one or several of three principal strategies in their dealings with minorities. First, the state or the majority may opt for segregation. This means that the minority group becomes physically separated from the majority, often accompanied by the notion that the members of the minority are inferior. The former South African ideology of apartheid promoted segregation, and many North American cities are de facto segregated along ethnic lines.

Assimilation is also a possible outcome of contact between majority and minority. If it happens on a large scale, it eventually leads to the disappearance of the minority, which melts into the majority. In England, this

happened to the Norman upper class which ruled the country after the invasion in 1066. The descendants of this group, after a few generations, became English.

Assimilation may be enforced or chosen. In some cases, it is practically impossible, if ethnicity is based on physical appearance. In the USA, most immigrant groups have historically become assimilated; usually they lost their mother-tongue after two generations and retained only a vague memory of their country of origin. But this did not happen with the descendants of the black slaves, since skin colour is an important criterion for social classification. A black American cannot become a 'typical', that is white, American in the same way as the grandchild of a German immigrant may do. In these situations, where assimilation becomes impossible for cultural reasons, it may be useful to speak of entropy-resistant traits (Gellner 1983): the distinguishing marks of the minority cannot be removed, whether or not its members wish.

Integration is the third 'type' of relationship between majority and minority. It usually refers to participation in the shared institutions of society, combined with the maintenance of group identity and some degree of cultural distinctiveness. It represents a compromise between the two other main options.

An ethnically based division of labour is compatible with segregation as well as integration, but only assimilation and certain forms of integration are compatible with full political participation in greater society. Chosen segregation may form the rationale for a nationalist movement, or it may be an elite option chosen to keep valuable resources within the ethnic group, but most segregated minorities are 'second-class citizens', whether they are indigenous peoples or recent arrivals.

Most empirical cases of majority-minority relationships display a combination of segregation, assimilation and integration. Assimilation may well take place at an individual level, even if the chief tendency might be segregation or ethnic incorporation. Despite the fact that the Sami of northern Scandinavia have in recent decades moved towards a stronger ethnic incorporation and chosen segregation, there are still individuals who are assimilated to a majority ethnic identity (Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish, as the case may be).

In studies of majority-minority relationships, it is difficult to escape from an analysis of power and power discrepancies. Not only does the majority possess the political power; it usually controls important parts of the economy and, perhaps most importantly, defines the terms of discourse in society. Language, codes of conduct and relevant skills are defined, and mastered, by the majority. The majority defines the cultural framework relevant for life careers, and thus has a surplus of symbolic capital over the minorities. For this reason, many minority members may be disqualified in the labour market and other contexts where their skills are not valued. A Somalian refugee in Germany is highly skilled if he speaks four languages,

but he has no chance in the German labour market if those languages happen to be Somali, Swahili, Amharic and Arabic.

MIGRATION

Migrants are a special kind of minority. They often lack citizenship in the host country, and they often have their origin in a country where they belong to a majority. In many cases, migrants are only temporarily settled in the host country. Sociological and anthropological research on migration from poor to rich countries has mainly concentrated on three topics: aspects of discrimination and disqualification on the part of the host population; strategies for the maintenance of group identity; and the relationship between immigrant culture and majority culture. Some researchers have also studied the relationship between the community of origin and the socio-cultural environment in the host country, since most migrants maintain important ties to their place of origin (Georges 1990; Olwig 1993).

In a comparative study of two polyethnic neighbourhoods in London, Sandra Wallman (1986) discovered important differences in the relationships between majority and minorities. Bow in East London was characterised by a strong polarisation and dichotomisation between people born in Britain and immigrants, whereas ethnic relationships in Battersea, South London, were much more relaxed and less socially important. Both areas were largely populated by manual and lower white-collar workers, and they included roughly the same proportions of immigrants from roughly the same places of origin (Africa, Pakistan, India, the West Indies).

Wallman shows that the social networks of the two areas were constituted in significantly different ways. In Bow, the same people interacted in many different types of situation, and the different groups of which each individual was a member overlapped a good deal. In Battersea, on the contrary, each individual was a member of many different groups with different criteria for membership. In Bow people worked and lived in the same area; in Battersea, people tended to work in other parts of London. The British-born population in Bow was extremely stable, while Battersea was characterised by a greater flux.

These and related factors, Wallman argues, have contributed to creating fundamentally different types of ethnic relationships in the two areas. She describes Bow as a closed homogeneous system and Battersea as an open heterogeneous system (see Figure 18.1). In Battersea, unlike in Bow, there were a great number of 'gates' and 'gatekeepers': there are, in other words, many ways in which one may cross group boundaries as an immigrant. One becomes a member of the local community the moment one moves in. But in the closed environment of Bow, people have to live their entire lives there in order to be accepted. In Bow, the ethnic boundaries are sharper than in Battersea because the different social networks are so strongly overlapping

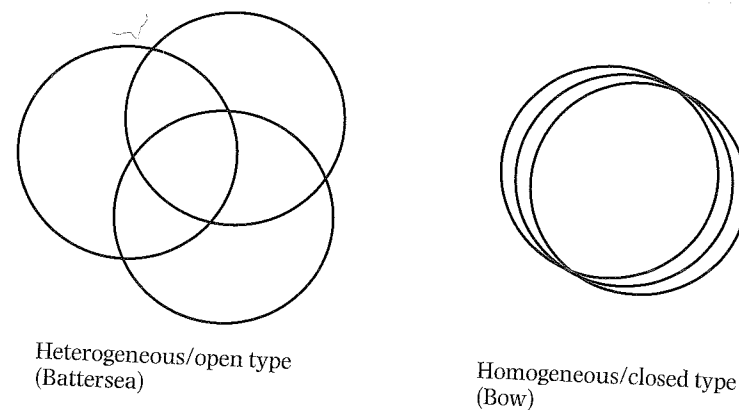


Figure 18.1 Degrees of overlap between social sub-systems in Battersea and Bow (Source: Wallman 1986, p. 241)

that an immigrant will have to cross several 'gates' or fences simultaneously in order to become an accepted member of the locality. In practice, this is impossible.

Wallman's study strengthens the idea, discussed elsewhere in this book, that cross-cutting ties have a mitigating effect on conflict. Other researchers, rather than choosing a sociological approach, have focused on the personal identity of migrants. Here, a common perspective amounts to the view that migrants often 'live in two worlds', that they switch between different cultural codes when they move between contexts. Whereas ethnic identity may be undercommunicated in relationships with the host population, it may be overcommunicated internally.

A different, more dynamic perspective would rather focus on social and cultural change, indicating that a Pakistani identity in England necessarily means something different from a Pakistani identity in Pakistan. In some respects, such migrants are 'Anglified'; in other respects, they may self-consciously work to strengthen their cultural identity; in yet other respects, there may be strong cultural values in the midst of the community which are difficult to change even if some members of the group may want to – regarding, for example, the tradition of arranged marriages. The field of migration may in this way prove to be an interesting area for the study of cultural dynamics and change (see also Chapter 19). It also highlights issues to do with the negotiation of identity, discussed in the context of gender in Chapter 9.

'THE FOURTH WORLD'

The term 'indigenous peoples' refers, in everyday language, to a non-dominant population associated with a non-industrial mode of production.

This does not mean that members of indigenous peoples never take part in national politics or work in factories, but merely that they are seen to represent a way of life that renders them particularly vulnerable when faced with the trappings of modernity and the nation-state. It can therefore be instructive to distinguish them from migrants, who are fully integrated into the capitalist system of production and consumption, but who make no territorial claims.

One cannot speak of 'indigenous peoples' in a value-free way. Technically speaking, all inhabitants of the world are indigenous peoples of the planet. The term is always used in a political context in order to make specific political claims.

Indigenous peoples all over the world are placed in a potentially conflictual relationship to the nation-state – not just to one particular nation-state, but to the state as an institution. Their political project frequently consists of securing their survival as a culture-bearing group, but they rarely if ever wish to found their own state. Many indigenous peoples have too few members, and are insufficiently differentiated, for such an option to seem realistic.

The most common conflict between indigenous peoples and nation-states concerns land rights. For this reason, issues regarding these groups and their rights have become increasingly relevant – both in politics and in anthropological research – as nation-states have progressively expanded their territories and spheres of influence. As a reaction against this development, the indigenous peoples of Greenland, Australia, New Zealand, Amazonas, northern Scandinavia, North America and elsewhere have organised through global networks to protect their rights to their ancestral land and cultural traditions. In other parts of the world, including Borneo, New Guinea and large parts of Africa, such forms of organisation are still embryonic, not least perhaps because the coming of the modern nation-state has taken place at a later stage.

Perhaps paradoxically, the cultural survival of indigenous peoples necessitates important changes in their culture and social organisation. The Sami of northern Norway provide a good example of this. Only after having acquired literacy and a certain mastery of modern mass media and the national political system was it possible for them to present their political case in effective – and ultimately successful – ways. Generally, the global 'Fourth World' movement is 'Western' and modern in every respect insofar as it is based on human rights ideology, draws on modern mass media and is oriented towards political bodies such as the United Nations. Peoples who retain their traditions unaltered to a greater extent than, for instance, the pragmatic and resourceful Sami, stand a much smaller chance of survival in the long run, since they have no effective strategy for handling their encounter with the hegemonic, modern state. This odd paradox of indigenous politics relates to a more general paradox of ethnicity and nationalism, namely that there is no one-to-one relationship between

culture and cultural identity, although the two are connected. The distinction between tradition and traditionalism may help us to understand the difference.

ETHNIC REVITALISATION

That 'reawakening' of traditional culture in a modern context, which seems necessary for indigenous peoples to survive, is often spoken of in more general terms as ethnic revitalisation. The discovery, or invention, of the Norwegian past described earlier is a classic example. The concept of revitalisation literally means that cultural symbols and practices which have lain dormant for a while regain their lost relevance. However, we have to be aware that a revitalised culture is always very different from the original. Revitalisation movements are traditionalist in that they seek to make tradition relevant in a context which is not itself traditional, but modern. An instance of this kind of process is the ongoing Hindu revitalisation in Trinidad (Klass 1991; Vertovec 1992).

Several hundred thousand Indians arrived in Trinidad and other plantation colonies following the abolition of slavery in 1839. Most of them never returned to India, and in Trinidad people of Indian origin make up about 40 per cent of the total population of 1.2 million. For generations, the Indians (or 'East Indians', as they are locally called) were the poorest and in many ways most marginal part of the population: they were illiterate, rural and strongly culturally stigmatised by the dominant European and Afro-Trinidadian groups. Since the Second World War, they have increasingly taken part in the institutions of the Trinidadian state: they now have adequate schooling, trade unions and political representations; they have become occupationally differentiated and have experienced a general rise in their standard of living. Since the 1970s, Hindu symbolism and the Indian cultural heritage have played an increasingly important part in the community. In the 1980s a Hindu weekly paper was founded, and during the same period it became common for Indo-Trinidadians to go to India on vacation. Religious attendance is increasing, and political organisations aiming at strengthening the Indian identity have been formed.

This revitalisation may seem paradoxical. In many ways, the Indians have been assimilated into Trinidadian society. Virtually all Indo-Trinidadians now speak Trinidad English as their vernacular; the caste system has lost most of its functions and categories, and research indicates that the 'East Indians' have the same dreams and aspirations as the rest of the population. Nevertheless, many of them are determined to retain and strengthen their ethnic identity and Indian heritage.

This process is actually very common in ethnopolitical movements. Before 1960 the Indo-Trinidadians were socially and politically fragmented, many were illiterate, and they lacked a strong group identity. Only when they were

integrated into the modern institutions were they able to mobilise political resources enabling them to function as a corporate group (or an 'imagined community'). Moreover, the concerted presentation of ethnic symbols – itself dependent on a modern infrastructure – gives a meaningful focus to the movement, in creating cohesion at the same time as responding to the individual quest for dignity.

Cultural homogenisation within the modern nation-state may contribute to explaining ethnic revitalisation in other ways as well. Since the Second World War, Indo-Trinidadians have entered into more intensive relationships with the rest of the Trinidadian population, which has led to the erasure or challenging of ethnic boundaries in a number of fields. Many Indians have therefore felt that their identity is threatened, and speak of 'creolisation' as a danger to the integrity of the Indian 'way of life'. A response to perceived creolisation has been conscious dichotomisation and overcommunication of distinctiveness. In general, we might say that an ethnic identity becomes important the moment its carriers feel that it is threatened. Evidently, this is connected to the fact that ethnicity is created by contact, not by isolation. It also adds substance to the claim that nationalism, and identity politics more generally, are enhanced if not created by modernity, since contacts between groups are intensified in modern settings with their huge labour markets and rapid communication technologies. Indeed, Miller and Slater (2000) argue, the Hindu identity in Trinidad was strengthened in important ways during the 1990s, as many Indo-Trinidadians used the Internet to communicate with the greater Hindu world.

It would not be correct to state that ethnicity occurs exclusively within the framework of a modern state, but the ethnic dimension can be expressed in unusually powerful ways there. Although ethnicity does not necessarily relate to processes of modernisation, most ethnic studies deal with social and cultural change. In Norway, there were scarcely fewer Sami in 1940 than in 1990, but they were much less visible, less culturally self-conscious and lacked both a corporate organisation and an 'imagined' collective identity. They did not deal directly with the state and had no minority status; Sami–Norwegian ethnicity was still at the interpersonal level.

As for labour migrants and refugees, their very migration is a tangible expression of modernisation, of links mediated by the state and capitalist modes of production and consumption. Villages in Jamaica and Ghana are becoming economically tied to cities in Britain, and in the 1970s the labour market in Oslo was better known to villagers in parts of Pakistani Punjab than the labour market in Lahore.

Indigenous populations find themselves in a precarious position. In a certain sense, they are wedged between the reservation and cultural genocide. On the one hand, they may try to opt for isolation and build solid boundaries about their customs and traditions. Such strategies have nearly always been unsuccessful. On the other hand, they may try to promote their political interests through established channels, and for this to be possible

they – or some of them – must go through a process of modernisation in order to learn the rules of the relevant political game. This strategy may nevertheless be successful, and in the next chapter it will be clear in what way.

THE GRAMMAR OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Whether nationalist, ethnic, religious or regional in nature, identity politics is a *glocal* phenomenon: it is confined to a territory and a particular in-group, yet it depends on a global discourse about culture and rights in order to succeed. It can indeed be argued that identity politics in very different settings, in spite of important differences, share a number of formal traits (Eriksen in press) making comparison viable. The recent phenomenon of Hindu nationalism (van der Veer 1994) can be invoked to illustrate this.

Although Hinduism is an old religion, politicised Hinduism is recent. The idea of *hindutva*, or Hindu-ness, first appeared in the 1930s, but became a mass phenomenon only in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or the 'Party of the Indian People') emerged as the most influential party in India, amidst heated controversy over the nature of the Indian state. Its many critics (among them Indian sociologists and anthropologists) stressed that India had from its inception been a secular state, and that the idea of a Hindu state (which the BJP promoted) was extremely disruptive and harmful in a country with large Muslim, Christian and other minorities.

Also, the idea of a shared collective identity encompassing all Hindus is far from obvious to most Indians; both caste and important linguistic distinctions have divided Hindus as much as uniting them. Unlike egalitarian European societies, Indian society has thrived on hierarchy and difference. *Hindutva* nevertheless emphasises similarity.

Ideologically, *hindutva* is reminiscent of both European nationalisms and identity politics elsewhere. Some of its features, which can be identified in many other settings as well – from Fiji to Yugoslavia – are as follows. The examples in brackets are largely illustrations.

- The external boundary is overcommunicated; internal differences are undercommunicated. (In the case of *hindutva*, the significant others are Muslims – both Indian and Pakistani.)
- History is interpreted in such a way as to make the in-group appear as innocent victims. (The Mughal period, when India was ruled by Muslims, is described as oppressive and humiliating for Hindus.)
- Cultural continuity and purity are overcommunicated. (Sanskrit epics have been commercialised and popularised.)
- Mixing, change and foreign influence are undercommunicated. (This is evident in the clothing, food and language – generally Hindi rather than English – preferred by BJP leaders.)

- Non-members of the in-group are demonised when it is deemed necessary in order to strengthen internal cohesion. (The Ayodhya affair and subsequent riots in 1992–93, when thousands of Muslims were killed, showed this.)
- Conflicting loyalties and cross-cutting ties are strongly discouraged. (At the interpersonal level, relationships between Muslims and Hindus have become more strained.)
- Cultural heroes of the past (from poets to warriors) are reconceptualised as modern nationalists. (The great poet Rabindranath Tagore, to mention one example, is invoked virtually as a hindutva ideologist.)

These and related dimensions indicate that identity politics serves to magnify certain social differences perceived as major, thereby minimising other distinctions – in a sense, it could be said that it tries to transform a world consisting of many small differences into a world consisting of a few large ones, namely those pertaining to nationhood, ethnic identity, religion or territorial belonging.

IDENTITY THROUGH CONTRASTS

In this chapter, nationalism and minority issues have been discussed as modern phenomena. I have nevertheless pointed out that there are certain parallels with other ideologies and forms of organisation, which are more typical of the societies traditionally studied by anthropologists. One parallel with non-modern societies which deserves to be mentioned concerns the production of identification through contrast. The Iatmul of coastal New Guinea, studied by Bateson (1958 [1936]), recounted a myth of origin which expresses a line of reasoning reminiscent of the white North American stigmatisation of black and Amerindian citizens, and which suggests that ethnicity is not a mere tool of dominance but expresses a need for order, classification and boundaries. In the earliest of times, according to the myth, there was on the shore an enormous crocodile, Kavwokmali, which flapped its huge tail, front legs and hind legs so that soil and water were continuously muddled together in an unpalatable mixture. Everything was mud: there existed neither land nor water. The great culture hero Kevembuangga then came along, killing the crocodile with his spear. The mud sank, and the distinction between land and water was a reality. Boundaries, outlines, clear distinctions appeared for the first time.

This myth, not dissimilar to the myth of origin told in the Bible (Genesis), exemplifies the social production of distinctions and classification – differences that make a difference. The production of ethnic distinctions may be regarded as a special case of this general phenomenon, which has been discussed in Chapter 15. Perhaps the fact of ethnic conflict and ethnic discrimination is better analysed not as a result of ethnicity, but rather of unjust

social arrangements. Perhaps when we speak of the tragedy of nationalist war, the problem is war and not nationalism.

Finally, we should keep in mind that neither ethnic groups nor nations are eternal. They appear, flourish and vanish. Since history is always written by the victors, it is easy to forget that for every successful nationalism there are perhaps ten or more unsuccessful ones. The members of such potential nations, or their descendants, were either exterminated or assimilated in the long run.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities: An Inquiry into the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn. London: Verso 1991.
- Thomas H. Eriksen: *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press 1993.
- Ernest Gellner: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell 1983.
- Anthony D. Smith: *National Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1991.