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Introduction

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The central unifying theme of this book is that social constructions of the past are crucial elements in the process of domination, subjugation, resistance and collusion. Representing the past and the way of life of populations is an expression and a source of power. These representations may frame relationships of social inequality, and can be intimately related to structures of power and wealth. They contain ideological and hegemonic properties that represent historical and sectional interests. In no way simple, they express a high degree of social and poetic complexity.

As chapters in this volume demonstrate, dominant histories may contain more than one social paradigm and set of principles. Dominant versions of the past are usually vague and general with a capacity to absorb diverging interests and interpretations. Under different social conditions one paradigm and cluster of principles may take sway over others. There are periods, however, during which the dominant renderings of the past cease to have either poetic or social efficacy. Instead, they may become the focus for intellectual debates, political struggles, and popular opposition. Other social constructions emerge as prime contenders for the past with their own interpretations and counter-hegemonic properties. The domains of knowledge, expressed in social constructions of the past, are brought into the arenas of political struggle. The politics of society becomes the politics of knowledge expressed in various fundamental forms of appropriation, interpretation and exclusion. As Lagemann (1987, 1988) makes clear in her history of the Carnegie Corporation, Vincent (1990) in her social history of political anthropology, and Harrison (1991) and Gilliam (1991) in their discussions of decolonizing anthropology, the politics of knowledge is a pivotal aspect of power relations. The meaning and scope of this politics have serious implications for the epistemological underpinnings of anthropology and its claims to an impartial and objective rendering of other cultures and societies. It should be recognized that many anthropologists today do not make this claim and yet, their published works often reveal otherwise.

The chapters in this volume, written by anthropologists and historians, raise

a series of fundamental issues related to epistemology, theory, methodology and praxis and to the constraints on historical and anthropological fabrications or constructions. They explore the interrelationship of cultural settings, the politics of knowledge and the ideological components of theory, with theory being simply understood as a body of propositions mapping out a problem area and preparing the ground for its investigation by appropriate methods (Nadel 1957, p. 1), that is, focused in a problematic and establishing criteria of selectivity, or the basis for including data.

These chapters speak to the limits of theories concerning the relation of labour, race and gender to power and class. They reveal that beneath the guise of objectivity and adherence to Weber's imperative of ethical neutrality there lurks a strong partisan rendering of the history and socio-cultural properties of subjugated and oppressed peoples. They make clear that the belief in historical and sociological objectivity has routinely obscured the circumstances of partisan interpretations. The authors demonstrate how power and economic domination establish one rendering of history and culture as objective and ethically neutral and another as subjective and partisan.

These chapters revisit unresolved debates centring on the ability of human thought to apprehend the complexities of social life. They do not assume histories and cultures to be concrete realities and thus, there can be no single correct rendering or version but a multiplicity of interpretations. Thus contemporary political conditions become an essential consideration for analysing scholarly production. Scholars are neither above nor outside societies but integral agents within them, ensuring their perpetuity and at times, attempting to change them. Knowledge is intimately related to power and its representation in its various forms has poetic dimensions that link it to academic canons and the aesthetic standards of public cultures.

Anthropology and history are disciplines that are particularly prominent in constructing the past and contemporary ways of life of 'western' and 'non-western' populations. They do so within the context of historical situations which are not of their own making but whose images they help to shape. The present period of history is one marked by political upheavals and the strong reassertion of the alternative discourses of the intellectuals of subjugated peoples.

Subaltern and 'postcolonial discourse'

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have served as global markers for the end of one era and the stirrings of a new one. They have signalled the gradual winding down of the first postcolonial phase with all its accomplishments and failures. The dramatic events in eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world during the past few years in areas such as governance, economic reform, civil conflicts such as 'ethnic cleansing' and wars have provided the context for re-examining and reinterpreting the past.

The magnitude of these events should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental accomplishments of 'postcolonial scholars' whose intellectual endeavours have revealed the partisan nature of scholarship itself, exposing the inadequacies of conventional accounts of the past by attempting to include what these accounts tended to leave out (Hall 1978, p. 9). They have disaggregated dominant traditions, reclaimed subjugated knowledge, and included subordinate peoples in the historical record. They have sought to develop theories of consciousness and culture (Spivak 1985, p. 331). In these writings the oppressed have ceased to be the recipients of historical conditions but have become principal actors within them. As a result of these efforts the very foundations of the structure of knowledge are undergoing careful scrutiny.

Colonialism provides the immediate touchstone and background against which many postcolonial scholars and leaders have pursued strategies to reclaim their past and assert their individual and national identities. Rowlands (Ch. 9) suggests that these scholars confronted the problem of breaking with deeply embedded colonial intellectual structures and narratives, and argues that the 'master narratives' of the European nation-states of the nineteenth century were used by the colonized against imperial domination and although they served well in nationalist struggles, they also served in shaping postcolonial narratives. But Shack (Ch. 7) observes that colonial narratives probably had much less of an impact on the colonized than Rowlands and others assert, reminding us that the contributors to *Presence Africain*, for example, rejected European and white American cultural domination, advocating types of black-centred ideologies such as Negritude as well as various forms of socialism. Many recognized their involvement in a struggle broader than nationalism. However, Rowlands and Shack agree that there are profound implications of the past for the present and the present for the past.

Though the postcolonial discourse is intimately linked to the colonial past, in many ways it transcends it in its concern with human conditions and the making of history. It is but one facet of a larger enterprise, the study of subjugated peoples (e.g. oppressed women, minorities, workers, and peasants), the subalterns, a part of that intellectual legacy that focuses on inequality and constructing the activities, consciousnesses, and ways of life of subaltern populations. Generally, the scholars involved in this enterprise align themselves with the subalterns. They employ strategies that reveal them as agents, instigators and actors in producing their own histories and cultures within the conditions of historical circumstances. Their social constructions and the strategies, mechanisms, and reasons for reclaiming, fabricating and inventing them are part of a much broader endeavour, an endeavour that includes studying the relation of knowledge to power, domination to subjugation, and resistance to collusion.

This first postcolonial phase has made apparent the necessity for investigating history from below as well as from above. It has marked the realignment of scholars around theoretical and practical issues and brought the common folk into the controversies of the historical record. The peoples of regions and

countries such as eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, India and the United States are making their own histories. Interpretations of the past are an important feature of their political struggles for individual and collective identities and their claims to power and economic resources. The struggle extends to the use and meanings of dominant icons, images, discourses and written texts (Comaroff 1985, Mitchell 1986, Morrison 1992, Sanjek 1992, Spurr 1993). It centres on the manner in which we understand and represent relations of inequality.

Relations of inequality

Spurr pinpoints an important but controversial feature of domination and subjugation by observing that 'The anxiety of colonial discourse comes from the fact that the colonizer's power depends on the presence, not to say consent, of the colonized. What is power without its object? Authority is in some sense conferred by those who obey it' (Spurr 1993, p. 11).¹ One obvious reaction would be to reject his position and to recite instances of rebellion and acts of resistance, and to refer to James Scott's (1985) work on the weapons of the weak. Unfortunately, the tendency is not to look for ambiguity or for subtle forms of collaboration and collusion that help to create and then maintain the *status quo*.

Charles (Ch. 3) on Haiti and Spiegel (Ch. 13) on South Africa suggest the complexities in distinguishing domination from subjugation and acts of resistance from those of collusion. In her chapter Charles argues that the sexual politics of Haitian women counters male domination and the sexual division of labour, contending that the present politics of sexuality had its genesis in Haitian slavery. During the colonial period, women used 'sexuality to mediate and undermine the race and class hierarchy' (p. 53). Female sexuality subverted the dual class and race systems by creating a free and wealthy mulatto group. Women recognized their sexuality as a resource – capital – a commodity which could be used to establish their autonomy, and which expressed their resistance to the *status quo* and proved an important element in transforming slave society. And yet, because sexuality is treated as a form of capital by many Haitian women today, it may transform them into a commodity, establishing their subjugation in the domain of commerce. The point is that acts of resistance in one domain may lead to one being dominated in another. One might also argue that the creation of a mulatto group positioned between black slaves and white masters might well have preserved the system of slavery rather than transforming it. Spiegel (Ch. 13) points out that supporting 'traditional' precolonial customs and practices may well appear as resistance but in fact they are acts of collusion and subjugation. Traditional and precolonial are measured against European notions of progress and development as represented in the 'Aryan Model' of the genesis of western civilization (see Bernal, Ch. 8). Thus, to support the traditional and the precolonial is to justify apartheid in the views of the white South African rulers.

Questions about the consent and obedience of the subjugated and whether an act is one of resistance or collusion are not only a philosophical matter, but may also shape the way in which scholars construct the past. Social constructions of both the past and the present are pliable, flexible and amenable to different interpretations and interests. Anthropologists and historians are master builders and, as a consequence, their roles in the complex fields of domination and subjugation need careful investigation. Their activities are integral parts of the context and substance of contemporary scholarship.

Alternative constructions

Social constructions may reflect the interrelation and interpenetration of structures of thought and human agency interacting within complex economic and political fields. On the one hand, they reflect the ways in which people are defined, apprehended and acted upon by others and, on the other, they define themselves.

A cadre of scholars and their works have become implicated in this process. They become agents and actors within history, actively engaged in fabricating the 'other' and defining their past. Spiegel (Ch. 13) refers to this situation and its consequences, by making the point that some South African anthropologists supported apartheid and actively participated in constructing parochial traditions to legitimize it. Just as important, however (and far more subtle and pervasive), are the seemingly objective works that represent Africans as having only recently emerged from 'traditionalism'. Images presenting Africans in this way, Spiegel argues, are 'the product of a thirty-year exercise of reinventing tradition for the country's Bantustans' (p. 188). Anthropologists are often the ones who define which customs, practices and beliefs are 'traditional'.

The debates by scholars and popular leaders over local history and culture often appear parochial, trivial, and idiosyncratic. In fact, they may be particular instances of more general patterns and processes. In this present period of history, arguments over the past and the validity of established scholarly canons appear to be endemic – witness the heated debates about governance, economic entitlements, and race relations in South Africa, and about multiculturalism and Afrocentricity in the United States (Asante 1987, Schlesinger 1991). Singh (Ch. 14) explores the complex role of intellectuals in conceptualizing the future of South Africa and the great diversity of theoretical opinions even among those who belong to the same social movements. The basic issues in these debates revolve round struggles over nationhood, national identity and national entitlements.

In South Africa the insurrection of subjugated populations has stimulated debates about the fundamental structure of South African society, with scientists and historians experiencing social change as a daily occurrence, and the debates are not only theoretical but also oriented towards practical policies. Singh's chapter (Ch. 14) on intellectuals and the 'reconstructive' agenda clearly

brings this home. Her contribution is highly theoretical and yet is constantly tempered by the mundane events of South African politics and the struggle among intellectuals over the reconstruction of South Africa. The context is highly textured and complex. On the one hand, through privatization the white South African government is transforming the white welfare state into a bastion of entrepreneurial activity and, on the other, black political leaders seek to preserve the welfare state and extend it to all segments of the population. Both state and folk histories are in the making, as are the new parameters of class and race. Singh's chapter makes the reader confront the problem of reconciling a class analysis with one that employs the dichotomy of state and civil society, especially during a period of political democratization. What then is the role of the ruling classes and intellectual elites? Singh makes it clear that our notions of class, state, civil society and democracy are of the same order as those of the indigenous intellectuals but with much less power. Their notions may well shape the course of South African history and development. And yet, these indigenous intellectuals are in fact none other than ourselves. The fundamental issue is thus the relation of human agency to the situations, circumstances and conditions of history and the representations of power.

In the United States, the fundamental questions involve: What will be America? Who is an American? and Who is entitled to delineate the universe and establish the criteria of academic discourse? Arguments over these issues have brought into play the full range of political and social actors, revealing the partisan nature of scholarship with the academic as activist and instigator. However, these debates have yet to turn to the more theoretical matter of the individual as agent and instigator in relation to the forces of history and society.²

The chapters in this volume indicate not only the pervasiveness of these debates but also the active involvement in them of both activists and scholars. Both Ramos on Brazilian indigenism (Ch. 5) and Wade on Colombia's white/black relations (Ch. 4) point to indigenous ethnic movements whose representatives are actively contesting the established views of their histories and cultures. Having rejected the majority view, indigenous peoples are elaborating their own versions and interpretations. This form of critical appraisal has also emerged within the academy. Gero (Ch. 10) represents this type of alternative academic discourse, one which is both theoretical and self-reflexive. In a systematic manner, she reveals the type of concentration of women in particular activities within archaeology, and from a 'constructivist' perspective she demonstrates the gender component in the construction of archaeological knowledge. Women's contributions in archaeology are relegated to specific domains and their findings subordinated to those of men.

The critique of bodies of accepted knowledge both within the academy and outside it opens channels for reconsidering historical and social fabrications that invent the past and then constrain it. These debates represent the confrontation of alternative discourses. As they begin to reveal the hegemonic and

counter-hegemonic properties of historical fabrications and their intimate relation to modes of domination and subjugation and collaboration and resistance, academic guardians of 'high scholarship' may cease to treat them as minor irritants. As Gero (Ch. 10) notes, they often objectify subjective processes.

Said's (1990) observation about 'Third World' intellectuals such as C. L. R. James and Ranajit Guha applies to the contributors to this book. He observed that they 'share a common predilection for alternative versions of a greatly contested history' and that politics 'abuts very closely on the scholarship and research that they represent' (Said 1990, p. 46). Third World intellectuals are part of a submerged intellectual tradition which Said has identified as a 'culture of resistance'. It would be facile to argue that today's culture of resistance becomes tomorrow's culture of domination and that intellectuals move easily from being organic to traditional (Gramsci 1971, p. 5). The acceptance of such an assertion would return us to the mechanical and the parochial, trivializing the force of current social movements. The matter is much more complicated than that.

In characterizing Third World intellectuals, Said points to the issues fostering hegemonic intellectual domination and the persistence of resistance:

There is an explicit urgency, call it political or human, in the tone and the import of these works that contrasts quite noticeably with what in the modern West has come to represent the norm for scholarship. How that norm, with its supposed detachment, its protestations of objectivity and impartiality, with its code of politesse and ritual calmness, came about is a problem for the sociology of taste and of knowledge.

(Said 1990, p. 46)

As the range of contributors to this volume illustrates, Said's characterization is neither bounded by geography nor applicable solely to Third World intellectuals. The contributions that follow reveal the partisan nature of scholarship by representing conditions of social inequality. From the perspective of mainstream scholarship, they may not always seem detached, objective, or impartial. They may not conform to the code of politesse and ritual calmness. Buck, for example, introduces her contribution (Ch. 2) by situating herself in relation to history and her research materials. Expressing anger, fear and dismay over 'the hegemonic history that was part of [her] white, middle-class heritage' (p. 29) she deals with her theme analytically and self-reflexively. Almost simultaneously, she not only reveals her personal 'bias' but also exposes and rejects the biases of dominant historical versions of white/black relations in Kentucky. Her scholarly thrust goes to the core of mainstream history and anthropology, revealing them for what they are and placing their practitioners within the context of their own history and society. Scholars such as Buck seek not only to represent history in their work but also to transform it. In this sense scholarship is combined with political purpose.

The dominant intellectual elites have claimed authority and objectivity for their cultural productions for a long time. But political and economic tensions, lying very near the surface, have driven other scholars with other interpretations of the past, those who take the subjugated as the point of reference for research and writing. There are periods, however, when the histories and cultures of subjugated peoples are lost or subsumed within dominant or generalized histories. Frequently, the methodological problem is how to reclaim these rusticated bodies of knowledge.

Subjugated knowledge

By identifying two types of subjugated knowledges – the one, buried and disguised, and the other, disqualified and marginalized – Foucault (1980, pp. 78–109) has been central in revitalizing scholarly interests in reclaiming subjugated forms of knowledge and understanding the pervasive nature of domination. Buried knowledge consists of the clusters of knowledge buried and disguised within dominant regimes of formally systematized thought. The formal properties of this form obscure the struggle and conflict that led to the incorporation of other clusters and the domination of one, producing a particular configuration and imposition. What was required was a form of critical assessment that would disaggregate the established regime of thought, liberating the very historical basis of its fabrication.

The chapters by Bernal on European history's images of Greece (Ch. 8), Wade on notions of racial mixtures in Colombian history (Ch. 4), and Ramos on the construction of indigenism in Brazil (Ch. 5) disaggregate the main strands of dominant, totalitarian theories. They reveal the process by which one cluster of ideas gained sway over others and formed the basis for constructing the past differently. In their analyses of dominant bodies of knowledge they identify two contending paradigms: for Greece, Ancient and Aryan, for Colombia, white and black and for Brazil, edenic and indigenism. Each set of ideas and their representations of the past have their own practical consequences. They provide justifications and rationalizations for social and intellectual hierarchies, imperial conquest and the exclusion and subjugation of populations.

Bernal's chapter (Ch. 8) is especially pertinent for unravelling dominant paradigmatic images and analysing the interests that created them. It demonstrates the use of talismanic – or magic – knowledge to distance the colonizer from the colonized, and to 'adjust' scholarship to a ruling class's interest during a particular era. The Aryan Model – developed in the nineteenth century – is just such an adjustment, causing scholars to overlook or dismiss earlier interpretations by Greeks of their own history. The Aryan Model obscured prior models of Greece, and justified the superiority of 'western civilization' and the claims of its ruling classes to conquer, colonize and thereby 'civilize'. It incorporated notions of progress and development against

which 'non-Aryans' would be measured, and became the standard for evaluating peoples, their cultures, and their ability to achieve 'modernity'. The Ancient Model was discarded and Greece became the cradle of western civilization and not a gateway for the exchange of ideas. The Aryan Model set the tone for European colonial domination and provided the ideological framework for incorporating and subjugating labour into a capitalist world order. Race, class and geography became merged into a single notion of domination. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Africa, the most recent source of slave labour and raw materials, became the lowest rung on the cultural ladder constructed by European scholars and rulers. The Aryan Model and its legacies were most appropriate for the sectional divisions of race, class and ethnicity so characteristic of societies in the Americas.

Wade (Ch. 4) reports the assertion of a Colombian anthropologist that 'the study of blacks was not "anthropology"' (p. 69). For this statement to make sense one must probe Colombia's dominant rendering of history and its national ideology. At its simplest, it reflected the dominance of whites over blacks and the preference given to whites in Colombian history. Historically, blacks were considered incapable of attaining the standard of progress necessary for development. Their subjugation was thus an expression not only of an historical construction that devalued them but also of the dominant national ideology that claimed Colombia was a nation of mestizos. Given this construction, the history of blacks was in Africa, and that of mestizos in Colombia. National history and ideology combined to justify both exclusion and subjugation of blacks. They were to be an invisible people graced with neither history nor culture.

Ramos (Ch. 5) dissects a more complicated historical rendering in which two dominant notions of Indians run concurrently through Brazilian history, if not the histories of the Americas. Indians are depicted on the one hand as 'noble savages' to be preserved and, on the other, as barbarians to be civilized. Though the two images seem antithetical, they represent the Indian as inferior. Consequently, the white ruling classes may appeal to either image as justification for subjugating Indian peoples and dispossessing them of rights and property. The one voice missing in this historical discourse is that of the Indian. Ramos points out that Brazil's indigenous peoples are organizing themselves and challenging the dominant views of their past. Indians, casting off their role as silent, invisible partners of either the government or anthropologists, are now claiming a voice in the construction of their own history. Their *de novo* constructions are beginning to expose the nature of past struggles and conflicts and the processes of cultural incorporation and subjugation of indigenous knowledges. At this point in time, the alternative discourses and social movements stand in a complementary relationship which does not mean, however, that in the ongoing struggle for political rights one body of knowledge may not become dominant and another be brushed aside and relegated to the margins.³

Foucault's second type of subjugated knowledge refers to a whole set of

knowledges that 'have been disqualified as inadequate for their task or insufficiently elaborated'. However, it is through 'the reappearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges . . . that criticism performs its work' (Foucault 1980, p. 82). Both types of knowledge, the erudite and centralized and the disqualified and localized, contain and exemplify histories of hostile encounters that either buried one form of knowledge or pushed it to the margins. While Foucault was primarily oriented toward reclamation through genealogical and archaeological pursuits, other scholars have been concerned with the immediate process of recasting, synthesizing and renewing discarded interpretations of the past. Their research has focused on reclaiming marginalized knowledge and the history and culture of subjugated and excluded peoples. This situation applies directly to those chapters in this book that focus on the history and cultures of formerly enslaved or conquered peoples of the Americas and Southern Africa.

Cummins & Rappaport (Ch. 6) provide another perspective on the relation of knowledge to power. They look for those elements which led to the fusion of Spanish and Andean traditions. Thus, their concern is not so much with salvaging or reclaiming history but with the consequences of incorporating literacy into a non-literate society. They view alphabetical literacy as an innovative and transformative technology that helped to shape Andean history and culture. With their focus on legal documents, they demonstrate the fundamental effect that this written material had on economic and power relations. The ability to use or command this technology conferred power and affected patterns of inheritance and succession and rights to property and authority. Here one is concerned with the creation of social inequality based on the incorporation of an alien technology. The consequences that Cummins & Rappaport describe for Latin America are also seen in many other parts of the world as well as in the academy. Literacy is a powerful tool for maintaining one's privileges and appropriating those of others. At times, the construction of history is closely linked to the level of control of literacy (Wolf 1982) and at those times the illiterate must look to subaltern scholars to represent them.

The reclamation of the past has its own complexities and social penalties, especially for scholars focusing on subjugated populations. These complexities become abundantly apparent when researchers begin to deal with the problem of how to retrieve the history and way of life of lower orders such as the illiterate, partially literate slaves, peasants, or workers, to say nothing of rebel consciousnesses and insurrections, from documents written by the dominant elements. Within the United States, these complexities have been particularly pronounced in issues surrounding slavery and the subjugation of blacks. The works of scholars such as Aptheker (1943) and Cox (1970 [1948]) are examples of attempts to analyse fields of subjugation, popular consciousness and resistance. Both paid dearly for challenging accepted wisdom and probing the roots of the academy's canons. But their work laid a firm foundation for the generation of scholars that followed. Lamentably, the scholarly legacy of

Aptheker and Cox is not always recognized by subaltern scholars, thereby producing distinctive disjunctions of intellectual continuity.

Genovese (1972), Guha (1983) and Fields (1985) take up this legacy, and engage in an effort to analyse peasant movements, insurgencies and rebel consciousness from colonial documents. Comitas's (1994) study of Greek working-class drug users establishes three sets of discourses, representing distinct versions of history and their commanding voices. There is the rendering of history by historians; the recounting of personal histories and its historical context by the working-class drug users; and finally, the master orchestrating voice of the anthropologist. There is no closure, either empirically or theoretically. Ultimately, the reader becomes the final arbiter, measuring history against history and interpretation against interpretation. The key question raised by all four works is how to prioritize authority among competing voices. Within the arena of public culture, whose interpretations of events should be accorded authority? Most often, scholars attempt to remove themselves from the fray of public combat and should their interpretations or assessments prove false or inappropriate, they usually stand to lose very little indeed. The formulations of scholars are rarely tested within situations of actual social turmoil. Rarely do they have to pay for their misinterpretations. This is certainly not the case for political activists.

In this context, the emic/etic distinction delineated by Harris (1968) seems to obscure fundamental relations of power. This discussion of situation and authority leads to further questions regarding the relation of scholarship to power and praxis, especially in the politically charged racial atmosphere of countries such as South Africa and the United States. Rowlands (Ch. 9) frames the basic issue in relation to academic disciplines and nationhood and nationalism. He observes that 'Nations without pasts are a contradiction in terms and archaeology has been one of the principal suppliers of the raw material for constructing pasts in modern struggles for nationhood' (p. 133). Hall (Ch. 12) points out that in South Africa scholarship has often served the white ruling classes, with one source or type of material being promoted over another to serve the interests and policies of the state. This situation has placed responsibility for the manner in which research is undertaken squarely on the shoulders of the researcher. Thus, Hall attempts to avoid giving preference to written documents over the archaeological record, or artefact assemblage over travellers' accounts, probate records and paintings by viewing the past as a set of complex intertwined texts forming a discourse. Through his careful analysis of three sites, he successfully contests established archaeological wisdom.

Herzfeld (1987) and Bernal (Ch. 8) explore the theoretical and intellectual problems of promoting one stream of historical interpretation over another. Greece's position in western European civilization and western thought provides the terrain for investigation. Herzfeld (1987) discusses the weight that should be given to two types of histories: one produced by nations, states and dominant classes, and the other elaborated by the folk. In the former, timeless, general and pervasive and often incorporating elements of the folk histories,

the past appears to be or is presented as enduring and impenetrable. This generalized form of dominant history is 'like myth . . . a "machine suppressing time"' (Lévi-Strauss 1964, p. 24). Its atemporal nature brings it into line with the *status quo* and 'the distinction between myth and history is merely a way of banishing "others" from "history"' (Herzfeld 1987, p. 44).

On the other hand, folk histories tend to be disjunctive and fragmented with multiple contending versions (Bond 1976, Herzfeld 1987, pp. 42–5). They are often characterized as being incomplete and partisan, representing the interests of a particular parochial constituency (Bond 1976). Since they contest the dominant version of history, they are dismissed by mainstream senior scholars as discordant and political, the emanations of '*bricoleurs*' and not the refined efforts of specialists. But the question is which of these two types is to be privileged or how are they to be used in the construction of models of social history? Herzfeld grounds these problems in anthropological theory and Bernal in central paradigms of western thought. Both explore the centrality and marginality of Greece in notions of western civilization. Comitas (1994) does so from the perspective of the subaltern classes of contemporary Greek society.

Many of the chapters in this volume investigate the processes by which hierarchies of knowledge are established and the political implications of these hierarchies for social relations. Bernal (Ch. 8) on the two legacies of Ancient Greece, Hall (Ch. 12) on South African history and Cummins & Rappaport (Ch. 6) on the power of literacy in Latin America clearly lay out the relation of economic and political conditions to historical interpretations. They delve into both the immediate consequences and the long-term legacies of dominant histories that have subjugated other traditions. Procedurally, their task was one of careful extraction, the unmeshing of multiple pasts from a single encasement. A first step in this enterprise is the recognition of the power of language and those linguistic concepts that draw distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. The underlying methodological problem has become rooted in issues of essentialism, paternalism and distancing. It is a problem that entails invention and appropriation.

Liberating the past: invention and appropriation

The first order is to confront the language of paternalistic domination that resides in the tradition of western liberal thought and manifests itself in the common-sense terms of spatial, temporal and geographical subordinations. The terms are themselves part of the imagery of radical thought that separates a supposed 'western we' from a 'non-western them' or, in the anthropological language of authoritative appropriation, 'the other'. This distinction is given concreteness in terms such as centre and periphery, modern and traditional and north and south. As Fabian points out, this order of spatial and geographical distinction obscures an implicit assumption about temporal progression

(Fabian 1983). It reflects where 'we' have been and where 'they' have yet to reach. In these formulations, our present is their future.

The ideological component of these distinctions is so prevalent and pervasive, so subtle and entrenched, that it frames the thesis of radical thinkers. For example, in his discussion of the Subaltern Studies project, Chakrabarty (1992) situates his argument within the metonymic parameters of centre and periphery but has the wit to break their constraining hold. He explores the manner in which 'the center and the periphery come together in the postcolonial scene of writing history' (Chakrabarty 1992, p. 48). Some scholars may empty the centre, the metropole countries of the imperial past, of its subaltern content, the periphery of its international ruling element, industrialists, commercialists and brokers. These two monolithic categories, centre and periphery, confront each other in a sterile unproductive historical engagement, and history ceases to be about progressive interpenetrations and transformations of relations of power, domination, subjugation, resistance, subversion and collusion. Through an anecdote about attire, an Australian's view of the anachronistic cut of his Indian trousers, Chakrabarty collapses these categories and brings the notion of the periphery squarely into the centre. The postulated past and the present occupy the same temporal space, thereby restoring power to history.

Power within history lies in several domains: one is the relation of text to subject and another is the construction of individual and collective identities (for example, racial, ethnic and national). These social constructions are part of the process of inventing traditions. In the act of creating a written text subjects are transformed into transposable objects. 'We' create 'them' and in so doing, we pretend that we are creating ourselves, if only through contrasts and opposition. But in the process 'we' appropriate 'them', 'we' fix and frame the 'other' through a zealous essentialism, thereby falling prey to the dilemma of dual fabrication.

Most of the chapters in this book explore power relations between peoples framed and phrased in the idiom of race. Inevitably, this thrust leads directly to the fragile, unstable core of 'western social sciences'. It does so with particular pungency in disciplines such as anthropology. Anthropologists are in the unique position of advancing themselves and their discipline through the fabrication of their subjects of study. They make them the 'other' and then situate the 'other' in the timeless void of the ethnographic present (Sanjek 1991). The anthropological 'we' and the native 'other' are intimately tied together, one as active agent, fabricator, or inventor, the 'other' as supposedly passive, the fabricated, or invented. The construction of historical and social configurations gains significance only through a stirring of social and historical imaginations, imaginations usually conditioned by social circumstances and dominant theories. The bind is that anthropologists usually develop paradigms to explain or interpret that which they have themselves created, a scholarly extension of omphaloscepsis. The crisis lies in the limitations of anthropological paradigms to explain historical and ethnographic constructions. As anthropologists, we engage in exploring the internal logic of our paradigms as well as

the appropriateness of our data to contemporary theory and political issues. Our scholarly analysis and authority is based upon our own social inventions and fabrications. In our texts we orchestrate the presence of the 'others' as well as their absence. Ironically, in poststructuralist and postmodernist texts the 'others' become no more than an echo. As Mullings (Ch. 1) notes, much of their literature has overlooked the work of Third World scholars who tend to link representation to relations of domination. Instead they focus on texts and textual analysis and not on actual physical circumstances and consequences of subjugation.

In the past our anthropological paradigms have remained aloof from active political realities and the critical analytic assessment of 'subaltern' scholars (Young 1990, p. 160) and indigenous intellectuals and theorists. That day is rapidly passing. Fortunately, the 'others' have the capacity of inventing and interpreting their own pasts and as Singh (Ch. 14) points out, of conceptualizing and constructing their own futures.

Hobsbawm (1992, p. 4) sets out the conditions under which one might expect to find the invention of new traditions. The situation would be one marked by social dislocations – when society is undergoing rapid social 'transformations that weaken or destroy the social patterns for which "old" traditions had been designed, producing new ones to whom they were not applicable, or which such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated'. This formulation joins social strain theory (Geertz 1973, p. 205) with a notion of the role of traditional and organic intellectuals in the shaping of history and culture (Gramsci 1971). The invention of tradition is intimately linked to the structure of society and reflects, in one way or another, the potential or real cleavages within it. It is an expression of the history of patterns of differential incorporation of populations (Smith 1991, p. 8) and their sectional interests.

Hobsbawm (1992, p. 9) identifies three overlapping types of invented traditions: 1) those establishing and symbolizing social cohesion and membership of groups; 2) those legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority; and 3) those whose main purpose was that of socialization. He is concerned with what these traditions do and their connection with social units and processes. Not solely part of the process by which subjects are transformed into objects, these traditions become linked to these objects and secure their continuity. Integral elements of emerging socio-historical configurations, they furnish individuals and collectives with distinct identities and new opportunities. They help fabricate heritage from assorted objects.

Rao (Ch. 11) and Spiegel (Ch. 13) provide examples of the complex factors involved in the invention of tradition. Rao argues that for Indians to assert a postcolonial identity they found it necessary to emphasize tradition. Her analysis of Hindu/Muslim relations in Ayodhya, a city in northern India, points to the continual reinvention of the past to serve contemporary sectional interests. In this context, she explores a dispute between Hindus and Muslims

as to whether Babar, the first Mughal emperor, razed a Hindu temple and built a mosque on the site. Although there is no archaeological or written evidence one way or the other, both sides use their own and their antagonists' contemporary religious norms to claim actions in the past. Both Hindus and Muslims validated and affirmed their own identities through the supposed past practices of the other. These invented heritages were brought into the arena of everyday Indian politics, and became points of debate for political elites and religious intellectuals.

Spiegel (Ch. 13) describes how the South African government's policy of inventing African tradition from above has gained support from some Africans. Following the logic of apartheid, the South African government created ethnic enclaves or 'tribal homelands' and established indirect rule by restoring 'traditional' chiefs to oversee renovated 'traditional' administrative and land-tenure systems. Both the white government and black chiefs claimed 'traditional' authority and powers for chiefs. Great store was placed on restoring the precolonial 'communal' land system which was supposedly highly productive with no deleterious environmental or societal effects. By renewing the past, it was argued, consequences of overcrowding and low productivity could be resolved. Appeals to reinstate a 'traditional' land-tenure system also came from Africanist opponents of apartheid. However, since there was no evidence that this precolonial system actually provided equitable allocations of land and agricultural abundance, the government literally invented new administrative and land-tenure systems. Cadres of intellectuals came forward to support this 'restoration' of 'tradition'.

Gramsci's (1971) understanding of the relation of intellectuals to political and economic formations is relevant to the chapters by Rao (Ch. 11) and Spiegel (Ch. 13) as well as to those by other contributors to this volume. The role of intellectuals in inventing and shaping culture and the past is always complicated. Although they claim dispassion and objectivity it is never quite clear for whom they speak and whose interests they represent, points clearly made in Singh's analysis of South African intellectuals (Ch. 14). The latitude of their autonomy is a matter of constant concern.

The distinction made by Gramsci between organic and traditional intellectuals alerts us to the intimate connection between economic production, basic social groupings and intellectual activity. He observes that

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.

(Gramsci 1971, p. 5)

An important characteristic of this emergent social group and its intellectual component is their struggle 'to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971, p. 10) who represent the interests of a

prior epoch. The organic intellectuals act to synthesize and organize a new culture, one which is compatible with the sectional interests of the emerging dominant social group. They are, in fact, engaged in inventing traditions. However, Singh (Ch. 14) and Spiegel (Ch. 13) demonstrate the complex role of intellectuals and the difficulty in assigning them to a simple set of categories.

Gramsci was well aware of the complex relationship between intellectuals and the thick textures of cultural screens that mediate their link to productive modes. But it is not clear whether he fully appreciated the autonomy of contemporary intellectuals and that they were bound by neither situation nor geography. Free to move, the terrain of discourse becomes broad indeed. Obviously, Gramsci did have some appreciation of this situation, as evidenced in his brief discussion of the possible influence of United States 'negro intellectuals' on the 'backward' African masses (Gramsci 1971, p. 21). And yet, he could not have anticipated African intellectual discourse in black American thought and action.

A fierce struggle over the 'history' or 'histories' of Africa is now in full swing. The combat is taking place in the United States and not Africa. While United States black intellectuals of rural and proletarian backgrounds claim an Africa that never was, African intellectuals analyse the historical and philosophical necessities for its invention. Both are engaged in fabrication. They invent a present and, at the same time, elaborate profound intellectual and social critiques of contemporary African and western civilizations and their modes of thought. Mudimbe (1988) provides a francophone perspective on these issues while Appiah (1992) brings to bear the full weight of his elite academic training and social background in Africa and England on the philosophical and practical problems of inventing Africa.

These American and African scholars, while engaging in both the social construction and critique of imagined communities, also provide the basis for interpreting public cultures, as well as ascribing authority to themselves and to their works. Generally, the domain of their discourse is not restricted by economy or locality. Ironically, less reflexive scholars of this mode often succumb to the elegance of their own critique and inventions. By sometimes appropriating the 'other' as an object of thought, they merge unconsciously and unintentionally with the colonial past and its discourse, entwining themselves in their own poetics of meaning.

Essentialism and the poetics of meaning

A world of meaning is constructed through images, or icons, that are the products of particular historical circumstances. Orientalism, Occidentalism and Africanism are examples of such constructions. Manifestations of a particular type of essentialism, they reduce complex and intricate historical and social diversities to a few prominent cultural images. The images become the basis for collusion, cultural screens through which the world is ordered,

interpreted and understood. They have the power to evoke the past, apprehending the present, and establishing the basis of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1992). These imagined communities, built on clusters of key symbols that evoke a past that might have been, have a transient and ephemeral present, and a future whose distinctive signature is epiphany. In its own way, the past is the epitome of the imagined community, since it cannot exist coterminously with the present. Collingwood notes the complexities of constructing the past when he observes that

historical knowledge is that special case of memory where the object of present thought is past thought, the gap between the present and the past being bridged not only by the power of present thought to think of the past, but also by the power of past thought to reawaken itself in the present.

(Collingwood 1961, p. 294)

Neither the past nor the present enters full blown into our heads.

Whether incorporated into the apparatus of the state or formulated by folk notions of the past, public history takes on the rhetoric of poetics and the attributes of property, with claims and counter-claims as to its veracity and its ownership. Moreover, battles are fought over whose aesthetic principle is most appropriate for constructing the past in the most convincing fashion, that is, with the most hegemonic power. No single interpretation of public history exists, but rather a series of contending fabrications, which pit interest to power, meaning to experience, and understanding to social consciousness. Aesthetic and stylistic conventions become points of domination and also of resistance, and both state and folk histories conform to canons of appropriateness that establish their credibility. As Rao (Ch. 11) and Hall (Ch. 12) clearly point out, these canons are built upon images, understandings and a shared constellation of meaningful objects. Though Hindu politicians contest each other's notions of the past, they rally their followers by employing the same popular stylistic and poetic forms.

In multiracial societies such as South Africa and the United States, the use and meaning of key images contained in state and folk histories introduce further complexity. Hall (Ch. 12) points out that for the South African Cape of the 1830s and 1840s the image of the lower classes as being homogeneous and black would be incorrect. There was no clear correlation between race and class. As he notes 'The Attorney General's full contempt was reserved for the "lower Irish" ' (p. 170).

Buck (Ch. 2) demonstrates the extent to which social control and power are embedded in symbols of race, gender and class. The history of the American south has been rooted on the reality and imagery of the power of whites, with economic and political power reserved for upper-class white males. 'Whiteness' became the key symbol that elevated and subordinated and channelled social and class consciousness. For the white population it represented a range of valued attributes such as justice, goodness and progress, in addition to

power itself. In the traditional historiography of the state of Kentucky whiteness has been part of the apparatus of domination, obscuring long-held social alliances across the lines of colour. Buck's chapter illuminates this use of the ideology of whiteness to subvert shared class interests.

Shack's discussion (Ch. 7) of his mother's use of the Bogey Man is a further illustration of the use of a key image for understanding race relations within the United States. The essential features of whiteness and its concrete manifestation in white males become even more powerful in its reversal and symbolic transmutation as a mechanism of social control and discipline. Instead of white males personifying goodness, purity and justice, Shack's mother (and probably black mothers throughout the South) represented them as evil, veritable Bogey Men. Her rendering, on the one hand, effectively controlled the behaviour of her small son and on the other, exemplified the poetics of resistance in everyday life. Historically, black mothers have been vulnerable socially and yet active politically, highly visible in shaping the counter-hegemonic discourse of black resistance against the social apparatus of cultural domination.

Many of the chapters in this book indicate the power that is attributed to colour in multiracial societies. Mullings (Ch. 1), Shack (Ch. 7) and Wade (Ch. 4) point to the equation of white with progress and development, the Aryan notion of human history. 'Blackness' is framed by a concept of the primitive and non-developed. Progress toward civilization, toward modernity, demands becoming increasingly white. Thus colour itself, an inert substance, is transformed into a political marker that determines the extent of domination. To foster blackness, therefore, may be taken as an act of resistance. And yet, as Buck (Ch. 2) argues, colour is no more than part of the ideological and hegemonic apparatus that enables the subjugation of both black and white workers. As Shack's mother so aptly realized, ideology is itself a powerful factor in daily human behaviour.

Scholarship is not immune to the social environment in which it thrives and the ideology of colour has long been an intricate part of the social context of scholarly activity. That this is rarely acknowledged is in part due to the fact that to mention this relation is to endow it with undue racial sensitivity. To validate scholarship is to give it an 'unraced' identity, and by doing so, the assumption of the universality of implicit 'whiteness' of scholarship is enhanced. Morrison intimates that to omit mention of race in a racialized society is to enhance the power of that society:

What does positing one's writerly self, in the wholly racialized society that is the United States, as unraced and all others as raced entail? What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level always conscious of representing one's own race to . . . a race of readers that understands itself to be 'universal' or race-free?

(Morrison 1992, p. xii)

In this sense, one new strategy of American conservatives is to label racist the person who notes the ethnic composition or lack of ethnic diversity within a given structure, while simultaneously calling for a colour-blind society. Such stratagems have always informed scholarship, and link racism to the twin pillars of 'social reality and scientific truth'. For some scholars 'Racism is thus fundamentally a theory of history' (Saxton 1990, p. 14).

Insurrections, re-evaluations and the 'western' focus

Much of this book is concerned with that which has been banished from the mainstream to the outer reaches. Most of the authors recognize that periodic insurrections of subjugated populations release bodies of knowledge and have led to a proliferation of empirical data and theoretical formulations. These insurrections have been a constant source of new analytic perspectives and aesthetic and stylistic renderings of the past and cultures of populations. One example is the perspective that collapses the distance between the social analyst and the social actor, with the analyst no longer attempting to give the impression of being a detached and dispassionate observer. In fact there are times when the analyst's history, culture and interests appear to merge with those of the actors themselves (Rosaldo 1989), and the scholar's analytic subjective engagement becomes an essential element of the published text (see, for example, Drake & Cayton 1962, Jules-Rosette 1975, Alvarez 1987). It brings into the text Geertz's (1968) two fundamental orientations toward the realities of fieldwork, the 'engaged' and the 'analytic'. The text, in part, retains its context, anchored in reality, yet transcending it. While retaining the personal, it links individuals into the universal attributes of human existence. It derives power and authority from its ability to personalize sociological theory and relate it to particular social situations and human conditions.

However, insurrection has at times led to its own form of negative essentialism in which scholarship and scholars are accorded geographical and 'cultural' designations and preferences. Phrased in terms of the 'non-western vs the western world', this global dichotomy is usually presented as if it captured all the diversity in the world and had intrinsic explanatory power. It is a characterization so deeply rooted in our language of description and analysis that we find it difficult not to use. We may question the essentialists' construction of Orientalism and Occidentalism and yet without second thought preserve the West as the essential point of reference to be used in comparative and dialectical analysis. Even in his perceptive critique of ethnographic essentialism and analysis of Occidentalism, Carrier (1992) uses this dichotomy in much the same way that many scholars bestow centrality to the West. He observes, for example, that 'the way I have cast this privileges the West as the standard against which all Others are defined, which is appropriate in view of both the historical political and economic power of the West and the fact that anthropology is overwhelmingly a western discipline' (Carrier 1992, p. 197). In this

Introduction we too have not avoided making distinctions, but we trust that we have redrawn the contours of the dichotomy without giving explicit or implicit preference to the West. Subjugation is never merely a function of either geography or culture and appearances are often deceiving, obscuring underlying political and economic processes.

The acceptance of the dichotomy and the West as the centre has often led to the belief that the self-proclaimed 'Third World intellectual' has some special hold on knowledge or an intuitive insight into the non-western world. Both the dichotomy and the belief are no more than romantic radicalisms. In this regard, Shack (Ch. 7) notes the absence of the critical voice of the indigenous common folk in academic discourse. The academic spokesman for the common folk may frame the scholarly poetics of subordination and resistance, but fail to represent its substance and the voices of the subjugated. The western and non-western dichotomies often obscure the common ground shared by a body of scholars who explore social inequality, domination and subjugation from a partisan perspective. Certainly scholars may and often do share the same past and conditions as the social actors they study, but it must be stressed that this is by no means essential. The engagement in and critical assessment of explicitly partisan scholarship is the most direct path to an open society and one that oft-times reveals its enemies.

Social constructions are rarely objective and neutral. What is analytically significant is what they do and do not represent or fail to include, and the preference that they give to one body of knowledge over another, and to one set of scholars over others. The politics of knowledge is no more than an element of the politics of society, that is, of domination and subjugation.

Notes

- 1 Spurr notes that he uses colonial and colonial discourse to designate a series of historical instances and rhetorical functions. Thus, colonial discourse describes aspects of language that survive beyond the classic colonial era and which continue to colour perceptions of the non-western world (Spurr 1993, p. 8). Colonial relations and relations of subjugation may be said to contain the same rhetorical function.
- 2 Young (1990, pp. 134-40) provides an interesting discussion of Foucault and Said's relation to this issue. The relation of human agency to social and historical determination is a long-standing feature of anthropological theory. Anthropologists have not, however, tended to look at themselves as agents and instigators. They do not usually explore the extent to which their works are the products of cultural and historical circumstances.
- 3 In less sophisticated hands this type of knowledge excavation could lead to a crude syncretic approach to the social construction of the past. The main concern of these chapters is with relations of power, and not with the genesis of cultural elements.

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