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Afterword

This valuable and coherent collection of articles carries on the investigation of indigeneity in South Asia that was launched in 2005 by Karlsson, Subba, and their associates. It follows from the authorship of the present collection—an Indian, several Germans, an American, a Frenchman, and an Israeli—that in these articles we are looking at an interface between three world views: that of the modern social scientist; that of the modernizing, urban-centered Indian bureaucrat; and those of peoples who until now and for untold centuries have led a marginal existence in more or less remote parts of the subcontinent, operating in various kinds of subsistence economy that provided them with little in the way of a surplus.

Social anthropology can be traced back to a dim and amateurish ancestry in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment; its humanism was then tempered in the nineteenth century, first by the anti-slavery movement, and then by evolutionism, which in time merged somewhat with the long experience of colonial administration (mainly British, in the Indian case).

What authors confront in the field today is what those colonial administrators had been confronting for so long—phantom realities (Shweder 1991, 52–56). The mythology and world views of marginal people have rarely if ever seemed credible to rational social scientists (or to many officials, for that matter), yet the dilemma of such researchers has been that they have had to accept a certain reality for such beliefs if they were to continue with productive ethnographic study.

World views are expressed by a people in their songs, narratives, proverbs, mythical beliefs, and understandings of the self and its immediate situation. While an anthropologist can record such beliefs in great detail, there is a difficult intellectual leap to be made if one is to understand how a marginal,

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indigenous group *lives* in a world wherein those same beliefs are daily, taken-for-granted realities. And a large part of the anthropologist's task is to translate what is in the minds of such marginal people so that readers will understand something of it. It is a formidable task, since the world view of the writer is an ever-present materialist one, which grew out of Enlightenment thought and his or her training in social science; whereas the world view being addressed has no remotely similar background.

The world view of Indian officials dealing with such concerns as "tribal welfare" is equally alien to the world view of those at whom this official attention is directed. For them, "progress" in the post-Nehruvian society has all too often meant a gentle nudging towards Hindu orthodoxy—or even towards adoption of certain officials' cultural presuppositions—as when, for example, a social worker tried (with no success) to improve the South Indian Todas by prompting them to eat *chapātī*s instead of rice.

Indigenous people hold to their beliefs with a certainty that is rooted in their traditional hold on their environment as they conceive it. This hold, in the Nayaka case (Naveh and Bird-David 2014), centers on the treatment of the forest's animals and plants as *persons*, who must be spoken to, respected, and entreated with what amounts to a social relationship: an attitude that flies in the face of the ubiquitous modern conceptual divide between culture and nature, so central to academic thinking ever since the era of the Enlightenment. Nature, once magisterially analyzed by Darwin, Mendel, and so many others, was objectively knowable, whereas traditional knowledge about myths, demons, and so much else in indigenous belief systems is viewed as subjective, from this intellectualist viewpoint. In recent times we have seen that all assumed distinctions between subjective and objective have to be abandoned if the anthropologist is to make any headway in understanding alien world views.

The arrival of the colonial or postcolonial administration in the field is marked not just by the arrival of bearers of yet another, a third world view, but by a stark power differential too. Indian officials involved with marginal populations commonly come with vehicles, financial resources, agricultural or engineering know-how, and an attitude about their own importance on the scene that is not to be gainsaid. Material progress, they believe, is to be sought through a combination of threats and promises—a situation that in India can be much complicated by the introduction of a democratic electoral process. Urban outsiders, not always from the government but from competing political parties, make promises they may never keep in return for large blocks of votes on election day. All this is something novel, and often intimidating, to people in remote areas who may well have had little previous experience of similar urban authorities or indeed of any outsiders.

The power differential may also come in less official forms. Large mining or timber undertakings, for example, have their own agendas, material resources and

priorities, security guards, trucks and guns, and their ready need for cheap labor, all of which can have devastating effects on traditional subsistence economies for which the indigenous subaltern has no answer other than acquiescence. Resort to particular government officials rarely ameliorates the situation to bring any satisfaction.

As for the concept of indigeneity, central to this collection of articles, it has to be recognized that over the past half-century things have moved a long way from the dictionary definition of "indigenous": "born or produced naturally in a land or region; native to (the soil, region, and so on)" (LITTLE et al. 1973, 1057). The observation that Bengalis were indigenous to Bengal and Tamilians equally so to Tamil Nadu seemed trite and unproblematic at the time of that publication. The 336-page index to the seventeen-volume *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (SILLS 1968) did not even carry a reference to indigeneity (or aboriginality, for that matter). Yet a quarter-century later Kingsbury reported that the word has been politicized along these lines:

> Over a very short period, the few decades since the early 1970s, "indigenous people" has been transformed from a prosaic description without much significance in international law or politics, into a *concept with considerable power* as a basis for group mobilization, international standard setting, transnational networks and programmatic activity of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. (KINGSBURY 1998, 414; italics added)

We thus find, in both the collection of articles prepared under the editorship of KARLSSON and SUBBA (2006) and the present one, that the indigeneity of major social entities like the Tamilians, Bengalis, and so many others throughout South Asia is not a topic of discussion. Indeed, Karlsson and Subba, at the outset of their book, state that it is concerned with

> the politics surrounding the category of peoples known as "tribals" or "*adivasis*," and more recently as "indigenous peoples"... to how this category is being constituted and labeled and ... the rights and present predicaments of peoples designated as such. (KARLSSON and SUBBA 2006, 2)

So too in the present collection of articles: the term has been restricted to somewhat underprivileged minority groups, usually of small numbers. Karlsson and Subba make the same point when they say "that indigenous peoples are non-dominant people with a culture different from that of the majority" (KARLSSON and SUBBA 2006, 6). It would seem that in the contemporary cause of "indigenous rights" any concerns of the majority in the various Indian states are not to be addressed, and indeed are often seen (with considerable justice, I admit) as having been often exploitative and sometimes inhumane.

The older term, "tribal," still does good service in India; indeed, as Berger points out here, "Being recognized as "tribal" is more than a label, it is a material commodity." The Anthropological Survey of India, founded in 1901, still produces books with titles like *Tribal Society in India* (SINGH 1985), and many social scien-

tists still finds the terms "tribe" and "tribal" useful designations of a certain type of society. "In general, anthropologists agree on the criteria by which a tribe may be described: common territory, a tradition of common descent, common language, common culture, and a common name—all these forming the basis of the joining of smaller groups such as villages, bands, districts, or lineages" (Honigmann 1964, 729).

Nevertheless, "indigeneity" has in recent decades been replacing the term "tribal" in both social anthropology and social activism. But whereas "tribe" and "tribal" had long eluded precise and agreed-upon definition, "indigeneity" has if anything proved even more elusive a term. For a start, indigenous people, it should be agreed, are commonly not always "tribal." The Tamilians, over 70 million speakers of Tamil, are clearly indigenous to Tamil Nadu and were, on the evidence of inscriptions, speaking that language in that same territory more than 2000 years ago; an indigenous population, but hardly a tribe in any sense. The troublesome nature of "indigeneity" is simply reflected, too, when we look at the Saurashtrian community in Madurai and elsewhere in Tamil Nadu. They have probably been there for something like five centuries, and still speak Saurashtran (with Tamil as their second language). Given that this is a well-known Indo-European language from western India, it is difficult to argue that these particular Saurashtrians are indigenous to Tamil Nadu, despite their long residence there. But at the same time they are (so far as we know) indigenous to India. So indigeneity, we can see, is relative, a quality of residence in a definable territory.

In the Badaga case, which Frank Heidemann discusses, it has been noteworthy that in very recent decades a few well-educated Badagas have been claiming that their ancestors entered the Nilgiri Hills back in the time of Malik Kafur (who ruled in Delhi, 1296–1316). Badagas talking to Western observers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on the other hand, most commonly said that their ancestors had fled to these hills after the breakup of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565, and never mentioned Malik Kafur. And there is no real evidence for an earlier migration (Hockings 2013, 15), and even some evidence *against* the possibility. Yet the recent claim of a greater antiquity in the Badagas' settlement on the Nilgiri Hills is viewed by some of them as bolstering their claim to indigeneity and—crucially—to governmental benefits that are nowadays being extended to "indigenous people." Such benefits are indeed the meat of nearly all indigeneity claims over the past half-century or more.

One approach that gives some leverage on the meaning of indigeneity is to consider the question of who is *not* indigenous in a given region. Looking at Tamil Nadu once more, we could be sure, without chance of rebuttal, that the Saurashtrians and the British, both groups that have been resident in the region for something like four centuries, would not be considered indigenous by other residents there. Another community to consider might be the Parsis of Gujarat (though they are now found worldwide), who were first of all living in an area to the south of Saurashtra. But although they speak Gujarati as the mother tongue, their culture and monotheistic religion are easily traceable to Persia, whence they fled around

the tenth century (perhaps 936 CE or a bit earlier). This means that Parsis have been in India for nearly as long as the Anglo-Saxons have been in Britain or the Normans in France; and yet, despite this long lapse of time, Parsis, although Indians, are never viewed as indigenous to India. So it is clear that indigeneity is conditioned by language use and perceived "homeland"—and a knowledge of ethnic history. In the Saurashtrian case, those people speak Saurashtran and can be associated culturally with a "homeland" in Gujarat. In the case of the Tamilians, on the other hand, the people all speak the majority language of Tamil Nadu and cannot be associated with any other "homeland." In short, we need to question whether indigeneity has any specific relationship with known migration history.

On the borders of Tamil Nadu the situation for Tamilians has been different. The Nilgiri Hills, for instance, are a geographical isolate of uplifted Devonian rock that had no known Tamilian population until 1820, when newly arrived British settlers there brought in some Tamil-speaking laborers, household servants, and shopkeepers. The other ethnic groups in the Nilgiris now recognize themselves as indigenes, but not the Tamilian, Kanarese, Telugu, or Malayali people who only came during the British era. But the Badaga farmers would seem to be a borderline case: their settlement began around 1565–1617, for the most part, and thus antedated by two centuries the arrival of other Kanarese workers (HOCKINGS 2013, 12–29). On the other hand, they speak a language that is quite close to Kannada and moreover they can be traced back to a homeland to the north, in Mysore District, as they themselves recognize, for some can even cite the names of ancestral villages there.

Coelho reminds us (above) that the applicability of the term "indigenous" to ethnic groups in India that were previously called *ādivāsī* or "tribal" has indeed been under discussion recently. It is clear that all three terms are problematic because there is no clear-cut and consistent set of criteria distinguishing those groups who claim to be indigenous from those not so designated. However, several of our authors also argue that these terms are out there, in use, and are not about to go away. Moreover, the terms are in use not because they are the most appropriate descriptors of these groups, but because they serve the purpose of marking off certain sections of Indian society that for various social and historical reasons were previously to be distinguished from the "cultural mainstream," however spurious the criteria used to make the distinction. Of the three terms, "indigenous" in particular is nowadays embraced by activists because it has international resonance and because "the importance of self-determination is that it represents control of land, resources, and livelihood ... an opportunity to redress systemic injustice in state judicial systems ... [and] new opportunities to express culture and language without the expectation that these will be systematically maligned, suppressed, and extinguished by state-sponsored programs" (NIEZEN 2003, 188). Coelho concludes that the term "indigenous" is therefore used by groups to identify themselves as people who once had control over land, resources, and livelihood in a particular region and who possessed a sufficiently distinct culture and language, but who in

recent times have been deprived of control and aspects of cultural expression by more powerful groups that are designated as non-indigenous.

Her article is one of the five in this collection that deal with ethnic groups on the Nilgiri Hills of South India. Such an emphasis on a tiny region of just under a thousand square miles (the size of Rhode Island or Luxemburg) might seem unbalanced in the total collection published here, but it has to be recognized that this area, small as it is, is the most heavily studied region in South Asia: the bibliography of books, articles, and maps dealing directly with the Nilgiri Hills now runs to well over eight thousand items (Hockings 1996). It is therefore appropriate that this very solid academic grounding, much of it the work of nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists, should form the basis for new developments in social theorizing.

Berger introduces the idea of three types of indigeneity in his analysis of the Gadaba: indigenous indigeneity, ascribed indigeneity, and claimed indigeneity. The first type is local, symmetric, relational, and is created by the Gadaba themselves. Different forms of ascribed indigeneity, by contrast, assign indigeneity to the Gadaba unilaterally; the relationship between those who do the ascribing and the Gadaba is both asymmetrical and monolithic. The third type of indigeneity, in Berger's view, the one that is claimed, is still in a nascent state: few Gadaba voice an indigenous identity in the larger field of state politics. Neither cultural performances nor political organizations exist to support such a claim. Berger here would seem to be revisiting reference group theory (Merton 1957), and it would be entirely possible to rephrase his summary here in Mertonian terms. This is not intended as a criticism. Indigeneity is not to be equated with cultural tradition. This was made clear, in connection with the Santals, by Mohan Gautam a long time ago:

> Whenever a modern means helps them express solidarity, they take that means and integrate it into their culture. Among the modern forces are technology, the formation of the All-India political party, elections, government development blocks, welfare departments, education, government services, public interest, and transport and communication. They help bring together the scattered Santals into a single geographical unit, able to function as a unit without delay or misunderstanding.... In their way modernity does not break down the Santal traditions and ideals but becomes an asset in the achievement of unity and progress in respect to local ecological and economic needs. (Gautam 1977, 374–75)

Schleiter looks at the differing ways Santal people now engage with "their" movies, which are to be seen in Kolkata and in two villages in Assam and Odisha. People articulate their identity through mediatized identity building, which relates to the identity practice of a wider society and the political situation for Santal people. He recommends focusing on the diversity of individuals' understanding of their belonging as in itself an assertive device.

The Saurashtrians and the resident British in Tamil Nadu, discussed above, are undoubtedly examples of *non-indigenous* residents who never asserted their right to live in that area in any overt political way. In each case they (a) use as their

mother tongue a language that is spoken elsewhere; (b) have an identifiable homeland elsewhere; and (c) bear a distinctive, "alien" culture. This is the opposite situation to that of indigenous Tamilians, who do not speak an alien language, have no homeland elsewhere, and indeed can be shown from linguistic evidence to have been resident in Tamil Nadu for over two millennia.

The Vadag situation raises the central question as to whether there are more or less degrees of indigeneity in a region. In the Nilgiri case, the Todas have been there "from time immemorial," everyone agrees, and have no known homeland elsewhere (although Rivers [1906] pointed to some cultural parallels with northern Kerala nearby, which suggested a distant origin in that area, perhaps several thousand years back). Todas have reported to outsiders that they brought the Kotas up to the hills centuries ago to provide a variety of craft services that the Todas did not themselves command. The Kotas reported to M. B. Emeneau that they were part of an intertribal Nilgiri council that had initially granted some land for the Badaga immigrants to settle on, centuries ago. And the Badagas were noted to be present in small numbers by Fr. Jacome Fenicio during his pioneering visit to the Todas in 1603 (Walker 2012). All three "tribes" speak languages that are unknown beyond the Nilgiri hills.

The Badagas thus appear to be a group with a sort of "intermediate indigeneity"—less than that of Todas or Kotas in terms of length of local residence, but much more than that of immigrant workers of several other ethnic groups who appeared in the Nilgiri Hills only in the nineteenth century. This situation seems to be paralleled by what we know of the early Santal settlement in the Rajamahal hills, a settlement encouraged by British officials early in the nineteenth century and involving lands that up to that point had been occupied by Paharia tribespeople who were shifting cultivators but who also exploited "minor forest products" (Sivaramakrishnan 1999, 83–90).

Schulte-Droesch shows us here how the Santal people validate their ethnic identity in their region of occupation through a Flower Festival. As local practice, rituals cannot be understood in isolation from their historical context. Her article focuses on this festival and explores how national and global influences have come to shape it in the last few decades. Previously only celebrated in the village context, since the 1980s an elaborated version of the festival has been hosted by local politicians and activists on a regional level. One objective of the article is to compare the village and regional version of the festival and analyze the key value structuring each of these contexts. As the village flower festival in its symbols and activities highlights the relationship between agnatic and affinal relatives, its structuring value seems to be one of kinship. During the large celebrations of regional flower festivals the performance of Santal culture and identity vis-à-vis other communities stands out as a dynamic shaped by the value of ethnicity. Her article also addresses the question of cultural change and explores three historical factors contributing to the emergence of regional flower festivals, namely industrialization, the Indian state's politics of recognizing (or not) minorities, and the Jharkhand movement (Orans 1965).

The article by Bird-David can usefully be read in combination with a new article she wrote in collaboration with Danny Naveh (Naveh and Bird-David 2014). These authors, who both worked in the same Nayaka community, note the epistemological and ontological changes that have come about with a shift from a solely hunting/gathering economy to one that now includes wage labor, rice cultivation, and domestic animals. Their traditional attitude to the Nilgiri forests had encompassed an idea that trees, animals, and even inanimate features were persons that could and should be talked to and dealt with, as were the forest spirits. With the recent economic changes animals raised for sale have become *objects* whereas those that were raised as "part of the family" have retained their personhood.

In her article here Bird-David concludes: "This case calls for examining the ironies, paradoxes, and subversions that take place on the way, and the intersection of colonial, scholarly, and postcolonial arenas in the reproduction and transformation not only of the ethnonyms but the lived-realities behind them." While her article is primarily concerned with the use of the ethnonym Nayaka, she recognizes that the shifting use of the ethnonym is paralleled by shifts in the economy and daily lives of the Nayaka, and it is this latter aspect that has been further developed in the 2014 article.

Like Coelho, Bird-David is concerned with the definition of a social category, in this case the social life of the people called "Nayaka or Kattunayaka" in modern times. These forest-dwellers in the Nilgiri Wainad regard themselves primarily as *sonta* ("own, relatives who live together," usually prefixed by *nama*, "our"). However, their neighbors and many colonial, academic, or other observers and administrators, have used various ethnonyms. The author examines various intersecting arenas: local, colonial, and postcolonial; and then looks at the ethnonyms used for these people by their neighbors. She ends with the entry of the textual name into the national arena, where it plays its part in legal claims for rights of Scheduled Tribes at the center of Tamil Nadu far from the quite marginal area where this community resides.

Indigenous *ādivāsī* communities in the same area and global flows of imagination are seen by Demmer as a dynamic field of often tense yet creative relationships. He focuses on the politics of identity among Jenu Kurumbas, close neighbors of the Nayakas, viewing identity as the explicit ethical self-understanding of a people, which develops through dialogue and debate. I have in the past made a similar point about how the Badagas of the Nilgiris discuss and negotiate what aspects of modernity they wish to adopt into their culture (Hockings 2013, 283). It means, according to Demmer, taking a position in the ethical space of value orientations, especially with respect to ideas about a good life and virtuous behavior. Thus identity is a product of practical reason, articulated through a poetical and figurative language that is both verbal and nonverbal.

Richard Wolf also explores the question of what it means for the members of a community to call themselves "tribal," *ādivāsī*, "mountain people," or something similar, to suggest an indigenous status. Looking specifically at the Kotas, another Nilgiri group, he notes how they stress "tribal" aspects of their identity as Kōv,

the term by which they identify themselves. How does the drive to be "modern" or "civilized" challenge the interpretation of so-called traditional practices? Being an ethnomusicologist, Wolf is also concerned with how Kota ideas about cultural preservation and interactions with the broader, multi-ethnic Nilgiri society implicate music and sound.

Frank Heidemann, like Prévôt, considers how indigenous claims are expressed in the public sphere, in small towns or district headquarters. He tells us that it is a rather common scene for large groups of tribal people to walk to a government office to hand over some petition or memorandum. Local leaders then address the gathering and sometimes the press reports on the event. It is on such occasions as these that cultural forms can be expressed to a larger audience. Rather than rioting or damaging property, as is quite common in other parts of the world, activists select ritual forms, play music, perform what are deemed traditional dances, or simply worship their own gods. Thus cultural practices are displayed and performances are transformed for new social contexts, thereby identifying groups, highlighting cultural markers, and underlining political claims. It is an externalization of culture.

This externalization is reflected too in the tribal stereotypes used in Bastar by certain local institutions in their different representations of the *ādivāsī*s, as Nicolas Prévôt explains. Local NGOs run workshops and sell "tribal handicrafts" or the government-planned tourism policy starts to offer well-arranged "tribal tours." Prévôt looks at a yearly "folk dance competition" that has been organized for at least fifteen years in a small town in central India. The competition involves dance groups representing different village dormitories (or *ghoṭul*), an old and traditional feature of the Muria villages (ELWIN 1947).

Caste society of the most conservative sort is the dominating sociological feature in what is loosely known as coastal Odisha (otherwise Orissa), Georg Pfeffer tells us, but the inhabitants of the hills inland do not follow the caste model. The state, which is firmly and anciently rooted in the lowlands, has been involving the highlanders in rather different ways. Much the same situation pertains in the Nilgiri Hills, where the several ethnic groups on the Nilgiri Plateau have not one but two possible criteria for ranking: an economic one, which gives the Badagas the dominant position, backed as it is with their huge majority of 135,000 over the other small tribes and their successful, mixed economy; and a ritual one that uses Brahminical Hindu criteria to give the Todas primacy, in light of their totally vegetarian diet and social emphasis on complex rituals performed by a priestly hierarchy. This latter criterion is widely propagated by foreign scholars and happily perpetuated by the Todas themselves, but is completely rejected by the Kotas (if not also by some other groups) on a number of grounds (WOLF 2005). Indeed, what we do not find in Nilgiri society is any scriptural validation of the ranking arrangement. The ranked phratries of the Badagas even intermarry to some extent, either hypergamously or hypogamously (HOCKINGS 2013).

In this area too, like the Orissan highlands, there never was any indigenous state, nothing more extensive than a small local chiefdom (the Badagas) and only

the most tenuous control of the plateau area by the pre-British Mysore State to the north. Anthropologists concerned with premodern societies have long distinguished between tribes and states, in other words, between segmentary lineage societies and centralized, hierarchically organized political systems, as Burkhard Schnepel points out. By the mid-twentieth century it was already clear that extensive political systems could exist without kings or other forms of central government. Yet where exactly does an acephalous society end and a state begin? It is no longer useful to view boundaries between states and stateless societies in social evolutionary terms: particular ethnic groups cannot realistically be fitted into evolutionary stages from "no state" to a "fully developed state," as some early anthropology supposed.

What we have seen in this well-organized and illuminating collection of articles is that those who are promoting claims of indigenous status in India have for some time been creating—or otherwise manipulating—their myths and rituals, forms of art and language, to offer an enhanced view of the importance of their ethnic units in their modernizing world, and of the validity of their claims to space and status. Although the articles have been confined to field studies of the Nilgiri Hills and Middle India, I am confident that the conclusions of the various authors would apply equally to many indigenous groups in the Himalayan foothills and Northeastern India too. Clearly indigenous status has acquired in recent decades a political and economic dimension that had not previously been appreciated. India is a fluid social entity, and that fluidity is as visible on the "margins of society" as it is in the mobility of the urban masses. In many parts of the country remote from the great urban centers, ethnic groups are renegotiating their position in a larger society where considerations of traditional caste rankings jostle with concerns about accessibility to modern benefits conferred by governmental institutions, by the labor market, and by newly emerging possibilities in the realms of education, agriculture, and administration.

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