

Two Types of Mobility

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Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers

Pure Gift and Reciprocated Gift

Anthropologists have been studying so-called "archaic societies". These societies are extremely diverse, from wandering hunting gathering bands to clan societies that engage in fishing, small-scale precipitation farming, or slash-and burn agriculture. There are even clan societies whose chiefs possess power close to royal authority. In other words, in archaic societies there are many kinds of social formations that are qualitatively different; we cannot treat these diverse social formations under the same category of "primitive society." Nevertheless, all these share a common principle.

Marcel Mauss suggests the reciprocity of the gift (mutuality) as the common principle that forms different kinds of archaic societies. This principle can be divided by means of three obligations: to give, to receive, and to reciprocate¹. Anthropologists before Mauss distinguish between pure gift and a reciprocal gift. For instance, parents take care of children not because of an expectation of a return in the future—in other words, it takes the form of a pure gift. However, according to Mauss, there is no such thing as a pure gift, as he reckons that all gifts are reciprocal. If we apply this to the example here, parents feel rewarded through taking care of children. It is not a pure gift but a reciprocal exchange.

As opposed to this kind of view, Marshall Sahlins, who studies the society of hunter-gatherers, reintroduced the pure, non-reciprocal gift. Borrowing his words, it is practiced in the form of "pooling." This signifies an equal distribution of their produce. Communal deposit (pooling) and reciprocal exchange are different in the following sense: Communal deposit is an action within a family (household) or a community, while reciprocal exchange takes place between or among families or communities. Alternatively speaking, reciprocal exchange functions beyond small households and creates the tribal community or even bigger associations.

As for my own view, I see that the principle of reciprocity does not exist among wandering hunters-gatherers but is formed only after fixed settlement. Sahlins observed sedentary hunter-gatherer fishermen, but not wandering ones. The Ainu and the more ancient Jomon people from Japan are examples of the sedentary

hunter-gatherers. Mere studies of such people do not provide us with an understanding of human society prior to fixed settlement.

However, it is impossible for us to find a society of nomadic hunter-gatherers in today's world. Although nomadic bands still exist, they did not originate in ancient times. For example, it is presumed that the Bushmen, the hunter-gatherers of the Sahara Desert, were not there from the beginning but had taken refuge there to flee other tribes. Similarly, many existing nomadic hunter-gatherers had at some stage practiced small-scale farming or animal breeding but "regressed" to nomadic bands in order to flee civilization and the state.

A Thought Experiment concerning Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers

So how can we know of "pure" or "original" hunter-gatherers prior to fixed settlement? In Marx's *Capital*, it is written that since there is no evidence concerning the origin of currency, we need to think with our "power of abstraction." It is a matter of a thought experiment. Similarly, what is a society of hunter-gatherers before fixed settlement? It can never be observed empirically. It is a matter of the "power of abstraction," or a thought experiment.

Our point of departure is the observation of existing wandering band societies. Based on this observation, we may be able to speculate to a certain degree on the society of the original hunter-gatherers before fixed settlement. The wandering band under observation would be a community constituted by several monogamist families. They may include some families of polygamy. The cohesion of the band is maintained through pooling and eating together, but the unity of the band is not fixed. One may leave the band at any time. Bands are usually small groups of twenty-five to fifty people. This number will not increase to the extent that pooling becomes unmanageable. Nor does it decrease to the extent of that communal hunting becomes impossible. Just as the unity of the band is not fixed, the unity of the family is also not fixed. When a husband or wife leaves the family, the relationship of marriage is dissolved. There are, however, no cases of promiscuity or incest. The relationship between families is liquid in nature. Therefore, kinship organization remains undeveloped. Also, there is no group encompassing the band.

Needless to say, the observation of today's band societies is no proof that they are the same type of people as the original nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, it is clear that this way of living is impossible after fixed settlement. One can say that it is a result due not to the mode of production of the hunter-gatherer but to the condition of migratory

existence. The prey of hunting and gathering is equally distributed to all, even to those who did not participate in hunting and gathering, and to those who are merely guests. This is not because they are hunters and gatherers but because they are mobile. Since they are constantly moving from one place to another, they cannot stockpile the prey. Possession is meaningless; thus, they will equally distribute the prey among all the other members. This is precisely the act of a "pure gift" that is not reciprocal. As they do not stockpile the prey, they are not thinking about tomorrow and have no memory of yesterday. Therefore, the kind of reciprocity that consists of gift and return can only be possible after fixed settlement and storage become possible. If this is the case, we should speculate that there is no communal deposit (pooling) or reciprocal exchange in the society of pure hunter-gatherers before fixed settlement.

The Revolution of Fixed Settlement

A Principle for Reciprocity That Avoids Statehood

Gordon Child's notion of Neolithic Revolution (agricultural revolution) is still dominant nowadays.ⁱⁱ It is the view that civilization begins with cultivating plants and breeding animals when people settle down in a permanent place and improve productivity. Soon cities emerge, class divisions occur, and the state arises. Here, the first thing I call into doubt is the claim that agriculture results from fixed settlement. Fixed settlement took place before the practice of agriculture. Even some hunters and gatherers were settled. Most of them practiced small-scale farming and breeding of animals. These are not the reasons for their fixed settlement. Rather, they are the natural outcome of their fixed settlement. In addition to this, new technological development of goods storage and earthenware become possible after fixed settlement. In other words, Neolithic culture begins with fixed settlement. Thus, Neolithic culture exists without agriculture. Jomon culture is such an example of Neolithic culture without agriculture.

Of course, small-scale farming and animal breeding that began among settled hunter-gatherers could be developed into agriculture and stock farming. In addition to this, fixed settlement could lead to storage of produce, which then would lead to an inequality of wealth and power. Sooner or later, a state would be established. Yet this did not happen as settled hunter-gatherers rejected such a development. Even with fixed settlement, hunter-gatherers created a new system to maintain their way of the migratory lifestyle. This is the reciprocity of the gift. Therefore, if the rise of agriculture,

stock farming, and the state is to be called a "Neolithic Revolution," we should also call the hunter-gatherers' rejection of such developments a revolution. I call this the "revolution of the fixed settlement."

Generally speaking, clan society is regarded as the stage preceding the development of the state. However, we should see this clan society as the first attempt to avoid the path moving from fixed settlement to state formation. In this sense, clan society is not an "archaic society" but a society with an advanced social system. Indeed, it also opens up a path toward the overcoming of the state.

To repeat, members of a community become bound by the principle of reciprocity along with fixed settlement because they enforce gift-giving as a duty in order to prevent the rise of inequality. Needless to say, this kind of agreement was not reached by discussion among members. It fell upon them as "God's command," so to speak. How can we explain the matter without resorting to religious notions such as "God"? Related to this, one may recall Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913).ⁱⁱⁱ Freud investigates the formation and maintenance of "the clan of brothers and sisters" in archaic society. In other words, his focus is on how equality and the independence of members are acquired in clan society.

Reciprocity as the "Return of the Repressed"

According to Freud, the answer to the aforementioned question lies in the original act of murdering the violent "primal father" by the sons. Obviously, this is an application of the psychoanalytic notion of the "Oedipus complex" to the history of human beings. The idea of the "primal father" is, however, not a Freudian invention; rather, it is based on the views of certain scholars of the time, such as Darwin. They came up with the notion of the "primal father" based on their observation of the male leader of gorilla society. Of course, this theory is dismissed by contemporary anthropologists. Freud's notion of the "primal father" too is rejected.

It is true that the "primal father" did not exist in ancient times. The primal father should be thought of as a projection of the image of the king or patriarch, after the establishment of an absolute monarchy, back onto an era preceding clan societies. yet this does not imply the dissolution of the significance of the Freudian view of "patricide" or its repetition in the ceremony of the totem meal. Freud's question was about why and how the "brotherhood" system (the reciprocity) of the clan family successfully maintained such a strong bond. Critics of Freud have to answer this very question. They cannot answer that there simply is reciprocity in archaic society. They have to answer to

the question of how reciprocity came about, and why it has the power to control people.

Needless to say, in nomadic band societies, there was no "primal father." The unity of a band or a family was weak. In this sense, Freud's presupposition is wrong. However, we can think in the following manner, Fixed settlement, as we have discussed, leads to the rise of classes and the state, that is the possibility of the "primal father" being formed. The original father in this case is a metaphor of state formation and accompanying results such as inequality. The totem meal can be interpreted as an attempt to prevent such a possibility before its happening by "murdering the father" in the form of ritual and repeating this ritual. In this sense, the killing of the father is the "cause" supporting the structure of reciprocity, even though the killing never takes place in reality.

Freud explains the system of archaic society as a "return of the repressed." According to him, when the repressed and forgotten returns, it is not a mere recollection but a compulsion. In Freud's theory of clan society, what returns is the murdered "primal father." In our theory, however, the "return of the repressed" brings about the mobility lost in fixed settlement, or the freedom and equality guaranteed by this mobility. This retuning of the repressed explains why people are compelled to reciprocate. (I call reciprocity the mode of exchange A. Refer to the end of this article for the four modes of exchange from A to D.)

Two Types of Nomads

The Rise of Agriculture and Stock Farming in the Earliest Cities

To recapitulate, Childe's notion of the Neolithic Revolution (agricultural revolution) suggests that once agriculture and stock farming begins, then productivity increases, the city is established, classes are divided, and the state is born. This is the dominant theory that agricultural progress forms the state. This idea is, however, challenged by Jane Jacobs, the author of *The Economy of Cities*.^{iv} In contrast to such an idea, Jacobs suggests that agriculture originated in the "earliest cities." These "earliest cities" began as places for exchange between communities. As a result of the exchange and accumulation of information in the city, agriculture is established. I support her argument.

Agriculture did not produce the city. Rather, it was invented in the earliest cities and expanded beyond the cities. Following this line of thinking, we can account for the origin of stock farming, which also can be presumed to have begun in the earliest cities.

Tadao Umesao critiques the view that stock farming is a developed form of animal breeding (*The World of Hunting and Nomadism*).^v The objects of stock farming, such as sheep, flock together. Stock farming then, according to Umesao, develops in the grasslands as a technology to control such flocks as a whole. But we should think of this in the following way: As in the case of agriculture, stock farming begins in the earliest cities where there is an exchange and accumulation of information.

Once agriculture and stock farming began in the earliest cities, there arose a distinction between farmers and nomads. Nomads began to migrate out of the earliest cities. By doing so, in a certain sense, they restored the mobility that existed among the travelling hunter gatherers. However, these pastoral nomads are essentially different from the original or pure travelling hunter-gatherers. Pastoralism, just as farming, is a technology developed out of sedentary life. Besides, pastoralism and agriculture supplement each other as in a "division of labor." Nomads are also merchants; not only do they trade with farmers, they facilitate trades among different communities.

Nomads Establish the State

In the term "nomad" is applied to migratory people in general, we need to include some farmers in the category. These farmers practice slash-and-burn agriculture. In most cases, they also practice hunting and gathering. Among the nomads, moreover, we may include traveling merchants as well as craftsman. For farmers with fixed settlements, nomads are uncanny. Farmers look down on the nomads, but they have to rely on them. For if they fail to trade with the nomads, they will lose their self-sufficient economy. As for the nomads, they look down on the way of living of farmers, but they have to depend on the farmers in many ways. In this sense, nomads of all types contribute to the development of the mode of exchange C (commodity exchange).

Pastoral nomads are different from slash-and-burn farmers, traveling merchants, or craftsman, for they are often united and come to dominate over farmers. The state is born as a result. In this case, the state is not merely established by violent force. It owes to a form of "exchange" where the ruler protects the ruled. I call this the mode of exchange B. We now see that nomads play a role in the development of mode B (domination and protection), as well as of mode C (commodity exchange).

The emergence of the state is ordinarily explained in terms of internal class divisions within an agricultural community or city, but it cannot be established by internal factors alone. In these communities, the principle of reciprocity (mode A) is strong, thus precluding the appearance of an absolute ruler. Such a community at best can develop

into a developed chiefdom or large scale chiefdom. The chief in this case is no more than a mere leader. In order to understand the establishment of a state or kingdom, therefore, it is necessary to take into account an external invasion. This external force is the nomad. Having said this, not all states are established by external invasion, and not all invaders are nomads. But, nonetheless, the motivation of defense against nomads or other states shifts a chiefdom into a centralized state (even if an actual invasion does not take place).

The earliest cities, in a certain sense, were the earliest states. The state was established by the farmers and nomads, and through the development of agriculture and stock farming. Therefore, the mobility of nomads, despite the apparent similarity, is different from that of migratory hunter-gatherers. Nomads reside between communities. Through trading or war, they associate with the community, invade the community, and finally take over the community. In terms of modes of exchange, the mobility of nomads is not guided by A, but by B and C.

Mountain tribe people are similar to nomads. James Scott, who studied the mountain tribes called Zomia in Southeast Asia and South China, claims that these people took refuge in the mountains because they refused to be governed by the state (*Zomia*).^{vi} They have been regarded as primitive, but this is wrong according to Scott. They are those who once lived on the plains, and some even migrate back to the plains from the mountains. A state with a plains environment is always in relationship with the world of the mountain tribe people. In this sense, it appears that mountain tribes are similar to nomads. However, it is necessary to point out that mountain tribes, who may have returned to the mobility of the hunter-gatherers as in the case of nomads, are essentially different from the pure hunter-gatherers.^{vii}

Nomadology Cannot Overcome State or Capital

The nomad is discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) by Deleuze and Guattari. They make a pun on Leibniz's monadology with their term "nomadology." They formulate the term "nomadic war machine" in opposition to the state. Clearly, this concept is based on the image of nomads outside the state. The principle of such nomadology may be able to overcome fixed settlements and the resulting territorialization or order, but it cannot overcome the state or capital. On the contrary, it dramatically accelerates the expansion of state and capital. For example, nomads as the war machine may ruin a state, but they will establish a bigger state (an empire). It is the same for capital. For example, financial capital is about deterritorialization and

works to destroy regional state economies.

Since the 1970's, the Cold War between the USA and the USSR began to predominate. In this situation, nomadology was regarded as the principle that deterritorializes and deconstructs the Cold War structure. But after the demolition of the USSR and the rise of capitalist globalization in the 1990s, nomadology has become an ideology that justifies the "empire of capital" or neoliberalism. For example, in Japan, nomadology was popular in contemporary thought during the bubble economy of the 1980s. It was regarded as a radical thought because it transcends borders, nations, and corporate communities. But at the same time, corporations themselves welcomed this thought. Hence nomadology had at one point become a social phenomenon.

After the 1990s, nomadology became indistinguishable from the ideology of neoliberalism. For nomadology supports capitalism that transcends borders and nations, and it penetrates and invades everywhere. As a result, there are new types of nomads, for example, the group of business people referred to as "jet-setters" and homeless people. Needless to say, these nomads are not the sort of nomads Deleuze and Guattari were referring to. In any case, the mobility of such nomads never contributes to overcoming the "capital-nation-state."

However, the key to overcoming the capital-nation-state remains in mobility. This is not the mobility of pastoral nomads but the mobility of the original hunter-gatherers. The mobility formed after fixed settlement, that is, the mobility of pastoral nomads, mountain tribe people, and wanderers, does not contribute a genuine return to the mobility preceding fixed settlement. On the contrary, such mobility only contributes to expand the domination of state and capital.

What I call the mode of exchange D is a recuperation of pre-settlement mobility in a higher dimension, or moving beyond state and capital, It is not a mere idealism. As it is in the case of mode of exchange A (reciprocity), mode of exchange D is the compulsive arrival of the "return of the repressed." In other words, it is "God's command" so to speak. Mode D appeared originally in the form of universal religion. However, mode D as such is not religious in nature. It is first and foremost a form of economic exchange.

What really returns in the mode of exchange D? It is the mobility of the original hunter-gatherers. Their mobility was lost in fixed settlement and no longer exists. However, we can think of it in a theoretical manner.

Yanagita Kunio

Yanagita's Lifetime Engagement with Mobility prior to Fixed Settlement

Yanagita Kunio is a thinker in Japan who drew attention to nomads.^{viii} He has examined various types of nomads since his earlier years. Importantly, he distinguished two types of mobility. First, he suggested the existence of *yamabito* or mountain nomads. According to Yanagita, mountain nomads were the native hunter-gatherers of the Japanese islands but, threatened by farmers, they hid themselves in the mountains. However, mountain nomads are different from mountain tribes (*sanchimin*), for the existence of the former has never been confirmed. In many cases, they were represented as *tengu*, long-nosed goblins. On the other hand, Yanagita focuses on migrating farmers, hunting mountain tribe people, and wandering entertainers, including craftsman and practitioners of martial arts. He distinguishes these kinds of nomads from mountain nomads. In other words, he distinguishes two kinds of mobility.

In his later thought, Yanagita's interest shifts from mountain nomads to farmers with fixed settlement. He also stops speaking of wandering entertainers. He is thus criticized for losing the perspective that aims to overcome the fixed settlements of farmers and the state. Yanagita's critics are interested in nomads such as merchants, artisans, and entertainers, and are searching for moments of overcoming the power of the state (the emperor system) constituted by farmers with fixed settlements. These kinds of nomads, however, are different from mountain nomads. Just like the pastoral nomads, who live in the gap between societies of sedentary farmers and sustain themselves by mediating different sedentary societies through trade and other activities or at times even establish a state that dominates the sedentary people, wandering entertainers live in the gap between different societies and sustain themselves through mediating them while connecting with the state (royal authority), directly or indirectly, that rules these sedentary farmers. In other words, while being outcasts, these nomadic entertainers and craftsman came to hold power to rule over the farmers.

Those who criticize Yanagita for building his theories centering on farmers with fixed settlements, or the common people (*jomin*), naturally stresses the importance of mobility. But they do not distinguish the two types of mobility. One of the representatives of these critics is the historian Yoshihiko Amino^{ix}, who studies certain types of entertainer-wonderers as opening the possibility of freedom from the homogeneous Japanese society with the emperor at the apex of the system. His study, however, ironically concludes that these wandering people are in fact lined directly to the emperor. There is nothing mysterious about this irony. It can be explained easily by the fact that he failed to distinguish the two types of mobility. The entertainer-wonderers rejected obeisance that comes with fixed settlement, but they were lined to the power that rules

permanent residents. Therefore, with this kind of mobility, one shall not search for a ground to resist the state.

There is one type of mobility that can radically "resist the state." It is the mobility of mountain nomads. However, mountain nomads were never an empirically observable reality even when Yanagita first began paying attention to them. Yanagita is ridiculed for insisting on the existence of mountain nomads, and later he drew back his claim. Nonetheless, he has never given up on the reality of mountain nomads. Even though he later focuses on farmers with fixed settlements, or the common people, he still continues his search for the possibility of the existence of mountain nomads. Eventually, he came out to look for the traces of mountain nomads in indigenous beliefs. According to Yanagita, the indigenous beliefs of the Japanese were formed prior to rice cultivation at a time Japan or the Japanese had not yet come into existence. That is to say, the indigenous beliefs were not limited to the Japanese. Its form is most ancient but is at the same time futuristic. In other words, Yanagita was attempting to look for the mode of exchange D.^x

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Note

This piece is an extract from *Yudoron* (Tokyo, 2014). It appeared on *Journal of Japanese Philosophy Vol. 4*, New York, SUNY Press, 2016

Translator's Notes

i Mauss, *The Gift*

ii Childe, *Man Makes Himself*

iii Freud, *Totem and Taboo*.

iv Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities*.

v Umesao Tadao, *Shuryo to Yuboku no Sekai*.

vi Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*.

viii For Karatani's interpretation of Yanagita Kunio, refer to the main text of *Yudoron*, as well as *Yanagita Kunio Ron*.

ix Amino, *Nihon Chusei no Hi-nogyomin to Tenno*.

x The final page of this article is a table showing the four types of modes of exchange:

B Redistribution (plunder and redistribution) (submission-protection)	A reciprocity (gift and return)
C commodity exchange (Currency and goods)	D X

