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those of Western societies of either the modern or pre-modern period, since one of the most important things we must try to understand is how Western domination changed them.

Colonialism did not simply reduce indigenous forms of power to a theatrical shell of what had gone before. It also redefined 'society' in fundamental ways, forcing people to attach new meanings and practices to old identities, such as 'caste' and 'ethnicity'. If failure to identify these transformations impedes our reconstructions of the pre-colonial world, it becomes doubly problematic when we try to understand the contemporary, post-colonial world. Distinctive cultural structures inherited from the past leave traces in the present, but colonialism also produced strong discontinuities and a restructuring of established institutions, practices and beliefs, the subject of the next chapter.

4 THE POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF COLONIALISM: A STUDY OF DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE

An exclusive emphasis on the transforming power of Western colonial domination can be another way of denying Europe's 'others' a role in history. Indigenous resistance shaped the development of colonial societies, and this is important for understanding differences between post-colonial societies. However, as Roger Keesing pointed out, the topic of 'resistance' is a minefield of conceptual problems (Keesing 1992: 6–10). 'Resistance' at one level frequently seems ultimately to reproduce the 'categorical and institutional structures of domination', and it is often difficult to decide whether to label particular actions by individuals or groups as 'resistance' in the first place. Keesing does regard 'resistance' as a valuable notion, providing it is taken as a rich metaphor, not a precise concept. It illuminates facets of power relations which are easily overlooked because the actions in which relatively powerless people engage are different from the dramatic confrontations that attract the attention of historians and journalists. Such acts of resistance have often been ignored precisely because they are not obviously 'political' in the sense of the term understood by colonial and post-colonial states.

Keesing's work contributed to a larger reaction against both conservative social science and orthodox Marxist models which dismissed various forms of popular struggles as 'millenarian' and 'pre-political' or simply ignored them. Other important contributions come from political science (Scott 1985, 1990), the 'Subaltern Studies' school's writings on the Indian peasantry (Guha 1983), and from the work of diasporic literary critics working in leading universities in the United States, such as Edward Said (1978, 1993), Homi Bhabha (1994) and Gayatri Spivak (1988, 1996, 1999). This latter type of 'post-colonial criticism' or 'cultural studies' writing¹ is relatively unattractive to many anthropologists. Its ideas derive from a variety of fashionable Western theorists (Foucault in the case of Said, Lacan and Bakhtin in the case of Bhabha, and the deconstructionism of Derrida in the case of Spivak). Post-colonial criticism seems more concerned

1 For a sample of writing by important figures in the field, including Frantz Fanon and

with 'Western knowledge systems and identity' than 'with current local knowledge of the cultural politics of everyday life in post-colonial hinterlands' (Werbner 1996: 6). Although Spivak spends part of each year in India, not only lecturing, but training rural language teachers, her prose style remains a challenge to even the most self-confident reader of English, and her 'positioning' that of a Western feminist. Nevertheless, these diasporic intellectuals from the former colonial world have played an important, and in my view, positive, role in forcing anthropologists to be more self-critical about how we have represented that world.

Spivak, in particular, has offered important reflections on how any academic (irrespective of nationality) can present the viewpoint of 'subalterns' and make their experience known without distorting it and replicating the same kinds of power relations implicit in the colonial regime's claims to 'speak for' Indian women in prohibiting *sati* (the burning of Hindu widows) (Spivak 1988). One can object that Spivak's argument leaves her in the doubly difficult position of both repeating the gesture for which she berates others – speaking for the mute Indian subaltern, and even interpreting her actions (Ortner 1995: 189) – and principally addressing the Western intellectual, using a language and theory which is a product of Western intellectual culture. Yet her deconstructionist method leads to a very important point of principle. The colonial and post-colonial 'subaltern' can become an heroic and one-dimensional surrogate through which Western intellectuals fantasize about 'liberation' from capitalism, bureaucracy and imperialism. As Spivak (1996) notes, the 'subaltern studies' writers assumed that there was some kind of pure and authentic 'subaltern consciousness' that was unaffected by colonial discourses and practices. As anthropologists such as Keesing have shown, such completely 'autonomous' subjects do not exist, and the idea that there are spaces of subaltern social life that are completely uncolonized by power relations is also a fatal weakness of James Scott's theories.

Within anthropology itself, some writers, including Keesing and Jean and John Comaroff (1992), have appealed for theoretical inspiration to the heterodox Marxism of Antonio Gramsci (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971). The extent to which some anthropological references to 'hegemony' reflect Gramsci's own ideas as distinct from those of Raymond Williams, whose version sits more comfortably with the traditional anthropological concept of 'culture', has, however, been questioned by Kurtz (1996). Roseberry (1994) has also demonstrated the potential advantages of a closer reading of Gramsci in a discussion which rejects James Scott's interpretation of 'hegemony' as 'false-consciousness' or 'mystification'. There are, however, older works within anthropology itself which anticipate some aspects of the contemporary debates about colonial domination and resistance. One major contribution which I discuss later is Worsley's pioneering 1957 study of Melanesian cargo cults, republished as an extended second edition in 1968. This rich text hardly deserved the castigation as an orthodox Marxist tract

it received from Lucy Mair (1958) simply because it argued that the economic impact of colonialism had significant social consequences. It was also distinguished from many subsequent analyses because it viewed what the Melanesians were doing as a meaningful form of political action rather than a product of 'anomie' or cultural 'break-down'.

That studies of 'resistance' had a growing impact in anthropology through the 1980s reflected the discipline's progress towards reflecting on the colonial experience and exploring its history in depth. By the end of the 1990s, ideas had developed considerably as simple oppositions between the dominant and the dominated, and the notion of a unitary 'resisting subject', gave way to more sophisticated formulations. What anthropology might contribute to other perspectives was, Sherry Ortner suggested, the ethnographic 'thick description' often found wanting in cultural studies: this would not only improve our grasp of the meanings of action from the actor's point of view – something we might expect to change in the course of the experience of 'struggle' – but offer a better possibility of understanding the politics of action within its social context (Ortner 1995). It will be useful, however, to begin with a broader, historical-structural perspective. Western colonialism itself has a history, the impact of Western domination on particular regions of the world is related to its timing in terms of this larger history, and anthropological thinking itself needs to be contextualized in terms of specific historical moments of the 'colonial encounter'.

STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS A CHILD OF ITS TIME

As Talal Asad pointed out, even anthropologists from the 'left-leaning' Manchester wing of the British school, like Victor Turner, proved 'strangely reluctant' to take stock of the power structure within which their discipline had taken shape. If it was simplistic to dismiss anthropology as a 'handmaiden of colonialism', as some intellectuals in post-colonial countries were doing in the 1960s and early 1970s,² it was naive or disingenuous to assume that the 'professionalism' of the community of anthropological 'participant observers' guaranteed the objectivity of anthropological knowledge, as Turner had suggested (Asad 1973a: 15–16). However sympathetic they might be to the 'native', anthropologists were part of a larger colonial power structure, and that affected their analyses.

(Structural-functionalist anthropology) depicted the relationship between the rulers and the ruled in African political systems in terms of consensual government, reciprocal obligations between government and people, and

² See, for example, the analysis of the 'morbid perversion of much of African anthropology' offered by Onoge (1977).

'checks and balances' inhibiting the arbitrary exercise of power (Asad 1973b: 104–5). Such accounts generally described local African political structures without reference to the political fact that the African chief was subordinated to European coercive and administrative power. At best they produced an 'ideologically loaded constitutional history of African states prior to colonial rule' (Asad 1973b: 109). Even when anthropologists did begin to refer to the colonial regime as part of the local structure:

they generally did so in such a way as to obscure the systematic character of colonial domination and to mask the fundamental contradictions of interest inherent in the system of indirect rule. The role of new political-economic forces brought about by European colonialism (labelled 'Social Change') were usually not thought to be directly relevant to understanding the dynamic of African political structures. (Asad 1973b: 109, emphasis added)

This vice was not peculiar to Africanists, since precisely the same problem arises in the study of politics and caste in India. What is most illuminating about Asad's critique, however, is his explanation for why the structural-functionalists depicted African polities in the way that they did. European 'Orientalist' accounts of the Islamic world projected a quite different image of the other, focusing on the repressive nature of the relations between rulers and ruled. Asad argues that structural-functionalist political anthropology in Africa was the objectification of an era of 'routine colonialism'. The now professionalized anthropologists set about their work within an already long-established, and apparently stable, colonial regime, which most found it relatively easy to view as essentially benign. The foundations of modern Orientalist images of Islamic civilization, in contrast, were laid towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Western powers were still engaged in a protracted colonial penetration of the Islamic world, and needed to delegitimize the Muslim rulers they were displacing.

Since most British anthropologists were conservative, the majority's acceptance of the positive nature of the 'Pax Britannica' is not surprising. The issue is not, however, simply whether British colonialism was really more vicious than most anthropologists at one time painted it, but about why it is not adequately present in their analyses and the implications of this absence for the models they produced.

This becomes clear if we take the example of Max Gluckman, whose work deals in a self-evidently critical way with the apartheid regime in his native South Africa, recognizes the way 'traditional' authorities were coopted to serve colonial interests, and suggests the need to see changing African urban identities as a consequence of capitalist transformation. In *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand* (1958) Gluckman uses the apparatus of structural-functionalist political anthropology – in particular the notion of 'cross-cutting ties' – to show how routine practices in daily life allowed the reproduction of a regime premised on racism, by mediating the 'dominant cleavage' between Black and White. His analysis undeniably made a useful contribution to understanding the mechanisms of domination in South Africa,

since it is not immediately obvious how such a patently unjust and exploitative system could maintain itself over time. Yet it remained trapped within the same boundaries as work of the era which is less critical, because it takes the colonial status quo as a structure which is stable. The difference is that Gluckman felt that this stability was paradoxical enough to require explanation. His perspective still deflected attention from forms of action among Black South Africans which could be described as 'counter-hegemonic' resistance to domination and remained a partial vision of social reality.

Although anthropology now claims to have decolonized itself, many of the issues raised by the contributors to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Asad 1973c) at the start of the 1970s remain live ones. Anthropology continues to be professionalized and anthropologists continue to be involved in power relationships with the people they study, whether they are from the West or products of the higher educational systems of non-Western countries. I review these issues in more depth in Chapter 9.

THE COLONIAL PROCESS AS AN OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

A focus on colonialism as a system of economic exploitation has been central to anthropological approaches influenced by Marxism, dependency theory and world-systems theory. It is immediately apparent from this perspective that we cannot treat Western colonial expansion as a single process in either time or space. There are differences in terms of political economy between the kind of colonialism represented by the Spanish conquest of the Americas, which establishes a tributary empire and is associated, like early Portuguese and Dutch expansion, with a 'world economy' integrated by merchant capitalism, and the nineteenth-century 'scramble for Africa', which occurs after metropolitan capitalist industrialization. As the 'articulation of modes of production' approach of the French Marxist anthropologists suggests (Foster-Carter 1978), Europeans began to transform African societies through the slave trade even before they implanted direct colonial rule. The same point has been made by Wolf (1982) in his comprehensive analysis of indigenous reactions to the expansion of global commodity trading networks. Wolf emphasized that the 'peripheral' populations incorporated into the European world economy played an active role in shaping the new systems and could not be regarded merely as passive victims, as I noted in the previous chapter.

Even within a single region a variety of different kinds of colonial economic system emerged. On a moral scale of barbarities, it might be possible to draw distinctions between the operation of Belgian colonialism in the Congo of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*³ and the British in East Africa. Yet such

3 Tausig (1987) offers a modern anthropological analysis of a South American equivalent of the horrors recounted in *Heart of Darkness*, the case of the Colombian Putamayo.

comparisons simply lend themselves to apologetics and are best avoided in favour of drier categories. In Africa, we can distinguish areas where colonial states left exploitation in the hands of private concessionary companies from those where they regulated the process of exploitation more directly (Wallerstein 1976). The latter were subdivided into zones where European settler agriculture became important, those where indigenous agriculture remained predominant and those where European enterprise focused on extractive industries drawing on indigenous migrant labour. Some areas, however, not only mixed economic regimes, but combined them in a systematic way.

The transformation of South Africa's political economy into the form associated with apartheid involved, first, state interventions to limit African farmers from competing commercially with Whites, and second, the forced removal of Blacks to the so-called 'homelands' where poor agricultural conditions forced them into wage-labour migration (Wolpe 1972, Legassick 1977). This political economy perspective is an obvious advance on the anthropological models of the 1940s and 1950s. It reveals both the systematic nature of colonial economic exploitation and the less benign side of colonial politics. The South African example shows how the politics of the dominant White stratum of colonial society contributed to the deteriorating economic position of Blacks since this was in part the result of pressure from poor Whites on the White elite within a political system from which Blacks were excluded. Starting analysis of the colonial world with the local structure of economic exploitation does however, obscure the way economic exploitation of the colonies was shaped by international political factors.

Political struggles in Holland, for example, played an important part in determining how Indonesia was to be exploited. A system of forced cultivation and forced deliveries of cash crops by the indigenous population continued for decades in the face of opposition from liberals advocating an extension of Dutch-owned plantations (Kahn 1981). World-systems theory explains such differences in terms of the dominance of different factions of capital within the metropolitan and/or colonial state, but it seems difficult to explain why different class factions are hegemonic in different national states without a broader analysis of their politics. This would include analysis of the role of non-elite classes and the balance of power between regional and national elites, but political oppositions not reducible to conflicts of economic class interests might also be relevant to shaping state policy.

Differences in the administrative regimes implanted in the colonies themselves may also not be explicable simply in terms of the needs of a particular type of colonial economy, and there were broad differences between different European countries' colonial policies. France, for example, delegated little control over policy to colonial administrators on the ground in comparison with the British. The French ensured that their colonies did not develop economic sectors which would harm metropolitan enterprises and that they covered the full costs of their administration from local

taxation, even if those costs were increased by the need to put rebellions against colonial head taxes (Scott 1976, Murray 1984).¹ Theless, all colonial states, irrespective of nationality, were military-administrative units, reliant not simply on Western-style bureaucracies and professional military forces maintaining internal pacification, but on the strong security services of which anthropologists occasionally fell foul. Since colonial regimes were by nature authoritarian, interested in coopting local elites but not in consulting them about policy, their 'penetration' of civil society remained limited. In certain aspects of daily life, the colonial state interfered greatly, even in indirect rule systems, through modern apparatuses of surveillance, yet it excluded the bulk of the population from direct participation in the political system and defined them as a special type of 'colonial citizen', generally on explicitly racist lines.

This way of looking at the colonial order has radically different implications from the view implicit in the work of anthropologists during the colonial era itself. In many cases, the political legacy of colonialism was a formal state apparatus weakly linked to civil society and enjoying little popular legitimacy because it was designed by bureaucrats, authoritarian in style and orientated to domination rather than government by consent. Yet the experience of European colonialism was not identical for all subjects of European empires. In the first place, some had been subjects of other empires previously, whereas others had not, and, in the second place, some strata of the colonized societies were more integrated into the colonial system than others. European colonialism created new classes, new bourgeoisies, new types of commercialized peasantry, and urban working classes. Later European colonialism's growing need for a bureaucratic infrastructure produced not simply a Western-educated native elite but hordes of school-teachers, clerks and other minor functionaries. These developments shaped the political legacy of the colonial era, but they also reinforce the point that the colonial systems of nineteenth-century industrial capitalist metropolises had distinct transformative effects linked to the 'modernity' of their power infrastructures.

Although the transformation of indigenous class structures and property relations is one of the most important dimensions of nineteenth-century colonial transformations, Western colonial bureaucratic and educational systems also had a crucial impact on subsequent political developments. The policies of the colonial state transformed indigenous elite culture in ways which subtly linked such things as religious affiliation to the colonial class and bureaucratic order, and as Anderson (1991) has shown, Western domination changed the nature of discourses on 'culture' by bringing with it the print-capitalism that was the vehicle for the propagation of popular nationalism in the European context. Each of these dimensions of the colonial impact deserves further comment.

The 'new empires' forged by industrial capitalist powers generally sought to develop commercial agriculture on the basis of private property relations.

Even in societies that had long historical experience of landlordism, the implantation of a colonial capitalist model had traumatic social consequences, as Scott (1976) demonstrates for the case of Indochina. Peasant tenants had been used to an agrarian system in which landlords were flexible about the rents due to them in years when harvests were bad and families faced a subsistence crisis. Indigenous landlords now faced pressures from the world market, as colonial regimes opened up local regional markets to rice imports. Those who displayed traditional 'flexibility' towards tenants faced ruin, and ceased to do so. Peasant communities around the world found that their rights to use landlord resources like pasture and forests were curtailed as these resources now had a commercial value. Such changes greatly reduced the ability of the peasant household to maintain itself without recourse to participation in wage labour off the farm. The transformation of landlord agriculture was therefore intimately related to processes which turned peasants into 'semi-proletarians', even if there was no reduction in peasant access to land through the conversion of village 'common land' into private property. Furthermore, there was less the peasantry could do to resist landlord power than in the pre-colonial past. Landlords now enjoyed the backing of a more powerful colonial state actively sponsoring socio-economic transformation.

Nevertheless, colonial capitalism did not, by and large, produce 'modern' capitalist class structures dividing society into bourgeoisie and proletariat. In many cases, even the coercive power of the colonial regimes could not carry through a process of mass proletarianization on the scale required and the implantation of a generalized system of wage-labour-based capitalism was seldom even deemed necessary or desirable in the short term, since the prime economic objective of colonialism was to supply the mother country with cheap food and industrial raw materials rather than to develop an integrated modern economy on metropolitan lines. The later nineteenth century saw an increasing emphasis on improving the efficiency of sectors such as mining and sugar production, but both continued to rely on migrant labour drawn from rural hinterlands based on peasant subsistence agriculture.

Such systems could be based on 'internal colonial' relationships within independent national states. The dictatorial liberal government of Guatemala in the 1870s, for example, reintroduced colonial labour draft laws to force migrant labour out of Indian villages down to the coastal coffee plantations, and backed up labour contractors with a modern system of surveillance and military policing designed to ensure that peasants did not escape their debts and work obligations (Dunkerley 1988). Such systems, which mixed 'contractual' forms with coercive enforcement and surveillance, might be organized by local planter oligarchies (as in El Salvador) or by the state itself, but all rested on coercive transformations of agrarian structures and property relations which forced wage labour out of what remained overwhelmingly agrarian populations. In the periphery the

processes of class formation were everywhere affected by the fact that industrialization was limited in scale and mainly restricted to basic utilities, transport and light industries. More urban people worked in services than industry, and large numbers of people were caught in an ambiguous status between peasant and proletarian as migrant workers in mines and plantations. These class dimensions of colonial transformation had an impact on political development when colonialism ended.

The bureaucratization created by the colonial state laid the basis for the later emergence of new class factions and political leaderships among the indigenous population. This theme is central to Benedict Anderson's analysis of the origin and spread of modern nationalism. His primary thesis is that it is premised on the 'imagined community' of people who can define their common identity with other people with whom they do not have a face-to-face relationship. The medium of its spread is print-capitalism, but even in the period when national identities were proliferating in Europe, the mid-nineteenth century, almost half the population of even Britain and France remained illiterate. What Anderson terms 'the rising middle strata of plebeian lower officials, professionals and commercial and industrial bourgeoisie' were therefore the key actors in the process. The expansion of the civil and military bureaucracy of European states drew in persons of far more varied social origins than previously (Anderson 1991: 76). Since, however, print-capitalism made it possible for people to form common identities and solidarities on an imaginary basis, this development transformed political life everywhere.

The French Revolution was a complex historical event, but it now became a 'thing' capable of serving as a key symbol in polemical political debates across national boundaries. Different political cultures produced different interpretations of the symbols, but Anderson argues that the logic of the paradigm acquired a certain force of its own which constrained interpretation. The liberator of South America, Simón Bolívar, was a plantation owner who was embarrassed by his own dark complexion and feared that the end of slavery would prompt a Negro revolt. Yet once creole leaders accepted a general 'model' of independent national 'modern' republican society diffused through print, institutions like legal slavery had to go because they were too incompatible with that model (ibid.: 80-1).

English imperialism sought to use English educational systems to create an indigenous colonial elite which would be culturally English. Yet the official nationalism propagated by the English state did not lend itself to the integration of the empire. Neither Anglicized Indians nor Anglicized Australians were allowed to occupy the commanding heights of imperial administration outside their homelands (ibid.: 93). Though they became culturally alienated from their own society, they remained excluded from real admission to the society of the metropolis. Nevertheless, however artificial the colonial demarcation of territorial units may have been in relation to pre-colonial conditions, the administrative organizations of the

colonial states created the basis for articulating new national units based on imaginary communities formed by these indigenous functionaries, communities which corresponded to the administrative domain of the highest administrative centre to which they could be assigned. This effect was reinforced with the vast expansion of the bureaucracy in the colonial world after the mid-nineteenth century. Anderson shows how this hypothesis helps us to understand Indonesia's continuing unification after independence in contrast to cases such as French Indochina.

Colonial educational facilities in Indochina were concentrated in Hanoi and Saigon up to 1917. After 1915 the regime ceased to accept Confucian education as a qualification for entry into the bureaucracy, fearing influence from Sun Yat-Sen's nationalist movement in China. This prompted the Vietnamese elite to place their children in French *lycées*, provoking protests from French colonists which led to the creation of a separate Franco-Vietnamese educational structure, based on instruction in Vietnamese in the lower grades. This excluded Indochinese from Cambodia and Laos and led to the development of a separate educational structure in Phnom Penh. Since Vietnamese were also given preference by the French in appointments to administrative posts in western Indochina, these developments fuelled Khmer nationalism (and antagonism to Vietnamese). Colonialism therefore created nationalist political leaderships by creating an indigenous bureaucracy educated in the values of Western nationalism but subject to discrimination. Its need for school texts provided European or vernacular print-languages through which such nationalisms could be invented and diffused (ibid.: 133-4).

European global expansion also produced new nationalisms in other ways, illustrated by the Japanese formulation of their own 'official nationalism' under the Meiji (ibid.: 94-9). Anderson argues that the aggressively imperialist character of Japanese nationalism reflected Japan's long isolation and unbroken dynastic tradition. The Japanese elite produced an interpretation of what had made the Europeans superior and what Japan needed to do to make herself a great nation. Yet both official and popular nationalisms outside Europe were forged under conditions created by European expansion and propagated themselves through similar mechanisms, even if they embodied distinct social and political ideologies. The culture of nationalism was the most universal legacy of the West to the colonial world.

The colonial state and its bureaucratic apparatus transformed indigenous social organization in fundamental ways not considered by Anderson. It turned previously flexible 'ethnic' categories into fixed criteria for the bureaucratic identification of groups. It incorporated caste into the workings of the colonial state in India and Sri Lanka by treating caste communities as autonomous groups. Yet this bureaucratic redefinition of the caste system ironically also provided subaltern groups with means for engaging in political resistance (Guha 1983). It is now time to look at such resistance in more depth.

CRACKS IN THE STRUCTURES: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RESISTANCE

A focus on 'resistance' to domination may, as I remarked earlier, draw our attention to practices which are often overlooked. James Scott's (1985) analysis of 'everyday peasant resistance' argues that conventional forms of 'class struggle' or mass mobilization behind the banners of political oppositions are generally not perceived as viable options simply because they are too dangerous, given the repressive power of modern agrarian dominant classes and the states which back them. Dramatic forms of conflict which mobilize large numbers of rural people in violent attacks on the 'system' typically occur only when the structures of repressive power are perceived as weakened or disorganized. Nevertheless, the poor in Malay villages did not take growing social differentiation and insecurity linked to commercialization and technological changes lying down. Beneath the tranquil surface of rural life, machines were broken but the culprits proved hard to identify. Labourers engaged in a whole series of even less overt forms of 'foot-dragging' resistance in a continuous effort to mitigate the impact of change on their welfare.

Such practices have also been documented in contemporary transnational capitalist industry. One example is the women workers in the offshore assembly plants (*maquiladoras*) established on the Mexican side of the US-Mexico border in the second half of the 1960s, who resisted management attempts to speed up the assembly line by coordinating their own work rhythms (Peña 1987). These tactics have some impact on the way capitalism works but they seem to pose little threat to the capitalist system as such. Against the criteria of revolutionary class struggle, 'foot-dragging' in the production process seems a feeble form of resistance, premised perhaps on yearnings for the lifestyles of a doomed agrarian society. Lenin (1967) decried even trade unions as a spontaneous first step in working-class organization which would merely habituate the workers to capitalist relations without the intervention of professional revolutionaries who could lead them beyond 'economism' and 'trade union consciousness'.

Scott is not impressed by Lenin's argument. He argues that far from being an obstacle to revolution, 'trade union consciousness' is 'the only plausible basis for it' (Scott 1985: 318). Part of his case rests on rejection of 'false consciousness' theories of lower-class abstention from collective acts of rebellion and an interpretation of Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'⁴ as the thesis that

⁴ In my view, and that of Roseberry (1994), this is a bad reading of Gramsci, who defined 'hegemony' as a dynamic process of 'establishment of unstable equilibria' which is shaped in significant ways by the actions and reactions of the subaltern classes (Forgacs 1988: 205-6; see also Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971: 158-68, 175-85, 210-18 and 279-318). Gramsci argued that both ruling and subaltern classes are 'historical blocs', *fragile* coalitions of diverse social forces. Their unity needs to be built by hegemonic practices, which include real politics and its dirty deals as well as cultural and ideological dimensions. The political revolution which created the modern Italian nation state was what he termed a 'passive

the lower classes internalize a 'dominant ideology' imposed from above. Scott argues that lower-class people are not 'mystified' in this way and form perfectly sound understandings of the way exploitation works without the intervention of political leaderships from outside their class. The understandings embodied in everyday resistance are what make rebellions possible. His position also rests, however, on the argument that the power commanded by the dominant in modern societies is so substantial that more overt forms of popular resistance tend to constitute a fatal misreading of the real prospects for emancipation, whilst radical political leaderships recruited from the urban intelligentsia, like the Bolsheviks, tend to betray the lower-class groups they mobilize (Scott 1990: 79).

The kind of 'realism' about power structures which Scott commends here has an affinity with the ideological pessimism of our times. It could lead us to downgrade the study of organized popular movements, and to denigrate all attempts to unite different segments of the lower classes into broader 'political' coalitions (the major focus of Gramsci's politics). Scott's theoretical approach is in danger of postulating mechanical relationships between social class position and forms of consciousness by arguing that lower-class politics is basically concerned with 'bread-and-butter issues' (Scott 1985: 296). Learning from experience of struggle and the repressive reactions of the dominant seems to me to be an important part of the dynamic of many forms of 'resistance', even if it is dangerous to assume that people are passive simply because they are 'mystified'. Finally, economic class identities may be less important in particular contexts of action than other kinds of non-class identities. Nevertheless, although Scott's brand of realism is open to various challenges (Roseberry 1989, Gutmann 1993), it is useful to start discussing 'resistance' in a sceptical frame of mind.

Returning to the example of the Mexican *maquiladoras*, we find that in the 1980s the workers organized themselves into unions independent of the

revolution': a change in political regime which involved no fundamental reordering of society. Garibaldi, the most radical political leader, failed to mobilize the peasant masses to carry through a more radical social reform and destroy the power of the Catholic Church, professional army and the landlord elite. So the state created by the Piedmont bourgeoisie was ultimately incoherent. Discontented peasants and workers could not mount a direct challenge to the regime: a *war of movement*. The only realistic strategy was a *war of position*, in which communist cadres and progressive intellectuals would conduct a slow and protracted campaign to win the hearts and minds of the masses. Yet since passive revolution did not establish an effective bourgeois government, whilst the communists had not succeeded in establishing their hegemony over other disgruntled social classes, the latter turned to Fascism. Gramsci's approach emphasizes the way subaltern groups are divided in many ways – by economic interests and their conditions of life, and by regional or ethnic differences – which are, in turn, *constructions* of identity which can be manipulated politically by elites. Many different sorts of alliances are therefore possible between different segments of the social elites and different segments of the subaltern classes. Hegemony, for Gramsci, is a *dynamic process*, and as Roseberry suggests, may be more usefully used as a tool to understand 'struggle' rather than 'consent' (Roseberry 1994: 360–1).

official trade union organizations which the post-revolutionary state created to control the working class. The state's response was, however, the characteristic one of arresting independent union leaders and supporting a further reduction in worker rights in a bid to encourage the flow of foreign capital south, so the immediate fruits of a more collective form of struggle were not positive. Furthermore, traditional Marxist notions of what a more adequate form of resistance to capitalism would be, centred on the notion of 'proletarian class consciousness', seem less plausible today than they might have done earlier in the history of capitalism. The peasant-proletarian migrant workers created by colonial capitalism have not turned out to be a historical anomaly or a phenomenon of transition, but precursors of a more general pattern in which the uprooting of the peasantry from the land has not led to 'classical' forms of proletarian existence. A certain renewal of the capacity of some rural people to 'resist' capitalism today owes much to the global environmental movement and a new global politics of indigenous rights, but most rural people live by a combination of farming and other activities which may include urban or rural small-scale commercial activities as well as migrant wage labour (Kearney 1996, Gledhill 1997).

Urban working-class families in the Third World also typically combine different ways of getting an income. A growing number of people not only find themselves excluded from the social role of a full-time, stably employed, wage labourer able to feed a family from the weekly pay-pocket, but may never enjoy any form of official 'employment' at all, though they too are bombarded with images of a model modern lifestyle centred on the nuclear family unit and the 'culture of consumerism'. The contemporary growth of such 'social exclusion' adds salience to Jean Comaroff's historical-anthropological study of the Tshidi branch of the Tswana peoples of the South Africa-Botswana borderland.

The Tshidi were first brought into the orbit of capitalist 'civilization' by Methodist missionaries in the 1830s, were subjected to British overrule in the Bechuanaland protectorate in 1885, transferred to Cape Colony under the pressures of mining interests in 1895, incorporated into the Union of South Africa in 1910 and de-incorporated into the 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana by the apartheid regime in 1977 (Comaroff 1985: 23–39). They were consigned by the apartheid state to participate in a labour migration system in which lone males from diverse ethnic backgrounds congregated in urban centres in which they had no permanent place, whilst their families remained in the homeland⁵ in poverty. Since the wages of migrant workers were purposely set below the level needed to meet minimal family subsistence costs, the Tshidi Tswana remained in the position of being an extreme type of 'peasant-proletarian'. Their marginalization was

⁵ Unless women themselves entered the world of the Whites as migrants independently of their husbands, as some did.

enhanced by the racist basis of their exclusion from 'South Africa' and ultimate 'inclusion' in what a majority saw as the illegitimate 'homeland' society of Bophuthatswana. Their response to growing alienation was a shift away from orthodox Methodism and the dissenting forms of Protestantism which were the precursors of African political nationalism,⁶ towards the 'fundamentalist' Zionist Church.

Zionism originated among the urban poor of Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the meaning of Zionism and its practices to the Tshidi congregations must be understood in terms of the specific sociocultural forms which constitute it as a religion, it is of great significance that the image of Zion is a product of a *transnational* historical process, a diffusion 'from English nonconformity, through American fundamentalism, to the shantytowns and villages of the Third World' (ibid.: 254). Comaroff suggests that South African Zionism can be seen as part of a second, counter-hegemonic global culture, part of a larger movement of symbolic orders which share an opposition to bourgeois liberal secularism and promise to subvert the divisive structures of colonial society. Each individual case is different, the product of contingent historical conjunctures between 'external agencies and specific local systems under particular circumstances' (ibid.). Nevertheless, broadly similar contexts produce a repetition of broadly similar developments, though they are not *precisely* identical, even within South Africa (ibid.: 256-7). This leads us, however, to the question of where, if anywhere, these supposedly counter-hegemonic movements lead. In the opinion of many Black intellectuals, the Zionist churches are 'utopian' sects which substitute for 'real' forms of struggle against class exploitation and racism and actually reproduce the material and symbolic forms of a neo-colonial system. They also sought accommodations with the apartheid regime.

Like Scott, Comaroff argues that the 'coded' nature of such forms of popular resistance reflects the 'realpolitik' of oppression,⁷ and she denies that

6 The development of an African Independent Church movement is explicable in Benedict Anderson's terms. Methodist missions created a literate Black laity and a print culture in African languages through their Bible translations. This group could also advance socio-economically as a class, within the severe constraints imposed by racist exclusion. The Independent Church movement developed in the early years of the twentieth century. Its offshoot in the Ethiopian Church combined 'the symbolism of a biblically-indexed millennium with an evolving African nationalism, itself cross-fertilized with the neatly overlapping ideology of Marcus Garvey - that blacks were the dispossessed of Ethiopia' (Comaroff 1985: 175). Although the discourses of the Independent Churches had some appeal to the proletariat, they did not 'contest the structure of the colonial order' but 'debated the place within it of the aspiring Black protestant elite' (ibid.: 176). With the development of the struggle around segregation and the Natives' Land Act, this elite focused on developing a 'secular' nationalist movement, but remained strongly influenced by liberal Christian ideology, stressing multiracial integration and free enterprise.

7 The mine compound, with its strong surveillance apparatus of police, spies and physical discipline, was not conducive to 'uncoded' forms of resistance. The apartheid system, with its tight control over Black movement in White areas, routinized diffuse forms of everyday repression to which diffuse responses were most appropriate (Comaroff 1985: 196).

they represent an 'apolitical escapism' for two basic reasons. Firstly, utopian movements frequently clash violently with secular political authorities, and this can have significant long-term implications for the stability of existing power structures. Comaroff notes that dismissal of such movements as 'utopian' and 'symbolic' reflects conventional Western divisions between politics and religion and thought and action, divisions which obscure the way that ritual practices, particularly those orientated towards healing the body, *can* promote a thoroughgoing rejection of dominant values and ideologies. This leads her to a second contention, that Tshidi Zionism constitutes a counter-culture which is the basis for a kind of 'working-class' oppositional consciousness. This is the consciousness not of a 'classical' working class, but of a large sector of marginalized people. It is therefore a *modern* form of consciousness which should not be seen as 'primitive' or 'pre-political' relative to another, more 'effective', politically and socially transformative, type of consciousness.

Sociological approaches to popular religion tend to be uninterested in their religious and ritual content since the existence of 'sects' is explained in terms of broad sociological processes like the 'dislocations' caused to 'traditional' social organization by urbanization. They are therefore often reduced to forms of group organization and identity-re-establishment concerned with 'adaptation' to a changing world. Similar views were also advanced by structural-functionalist anthropologists such as Mayer (1961) who shared sociologists' ideas about 'social order' and 'social change'. As Comaroff points out, other anthropological approaches have followed the idealist and intellectualist paths set by Weber, but such approaches fail to set the movements in any kind of meaningful politico-economic and cultural context (1985: 169).

It is important to analyse the content of such popular 'practices of resistance' in order to see what *kind* of impact they have on power relations, accepting that they do not pose an immediate threat to the stability of existing forms of social and political domination. Indeed, it is crucial not to think about these issues in terms of stability versus totalizing 'revolution', even where we are dealing with a counter-hegemonic culture whose tone is apocalyptic. After all, even 'real' social revolutionaries like Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not succeed in creating the societies of their imagination.

Zionism represents a phase in a longer history of relationships between religion and capitalism and politics in the region, which began with the entry of Methodist missionaries before the period of British overrule. The Methodists could to some extent be incorporated into the indigenous political system, but the missionaries blundered their way into inducing major political and social transformations by introducing the plough and digging wells for agricultural as well as domestic use (Comaroff 1985: 139). Since rain-making was central to indigenous chiefly authority, the missionaries' campaigns against the rituals engendered conflict between the mission and the indigenous political authorities which persisted until the office of chief

was denuded of its remaining temporal as well as spiritual power by the colonial state.

The missionary project went deeper than simply converting the 'natives' to Christianity. Following E.P. Thompson (1967), Comaroff argues that the cultural logic of Protestantism 'mediated a protracted transformation of European social and productive systems' towards capitalism, and that Methodism was orientated towards inculcating a set of values and disciplines specifically associated with industrial capitalism (Comaroff 1985: 131). The missionaries dedicated themselves to instilling the regimentation of industrial capitalist civilization in the layout of the mission settlements and the fields, and in the timetabling and scheduling of both religious and secular activities. Yet they believed an agrarian route to civilization was more appropriate to the Tswana and promoted a commercialized peasant model of economic development which was ultimately to be undermined by colonial mining interests, the rinderpest pandemic of 1896, changes in transport systems and market networks and the Natives' Land Act of 1913. From the start, however, the new agricultural model changed Tshidi society. Men took on the role of drivers of plough teams, displacing women to a secondary place in agricultural production which reduced their influence over distribution of the product. 'Feminization' became an image of male social debasement as class differentiation increased (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 143). Production of commercial surpluses for the diamond fields by some farmers was accompanied by growth of clientage relations, proletarianization and land concentration, processes in which aristocratic families predominated (Comaroff 1985: 35–6, 148).

The impact of the missions was contradictory. The attempt to impose the cultural system of capitalism conflicted with indigenous principles, producing an opposition in Tshidi consciousness between *sekgoa* (the way of the white man) and *setswana* (Tswana tradition). The literate lay Tshidi elite associated with the mission identified itself with *sekgoa*, but it too objected the elements of its new world-view in terms of concepts which resonated with pre-colonial ideas (ibid.: 144–5). Yet it was the confrontation between world-views that led the Tshidi to become *conscious* of the distinctive features of their own cultural order and *objectify* them in the category *setswana*. The indigenous political leadership found a way to resist mission control and encompass the evangelists within its own political order, yet this strategy created a minority which identified with the mission in opposition to the chief. The mission's impact on the local political economy both undermined politico-ritual mechanisms which reproduced allegiance to the centre and strengthened existing centrifugal tendencies in indigenous society (ibid.: 146).

The ability of the Tshidi to resist 'missionary imperialism' was undermined by the fact that the chiefs were forced to ally politically with the missionaries to secure British protection against annexation by the Boer Republic or the Cape Colony. The missions came to favour formal colonization to deepen

the conversion process, whilst the Tswana chiefs sought it as a defence mechanism against still more profound changes. Both parties were rapidly overwhelmed by the superior power of other factions within the colonial regime. Commercial agriculture did not collapse entirely, but the combination of subsistence agriculture on eroded land coupled with labour migration replaced the missionary dream of a prosperous yeomanry. With the transition to 'the development of underdevelopment', personal experience came into sharper contradiction with the content of the Methodist ideological model, partly because of its sanctification of inequality and bourgeois interests, but also because of its spiritually unsatisfying ritual practice (ibid.: 166).

In particular, the new Churches centred on healing and the ritual reconstruction of the body, and parodied the insignia of Western Protestant orthodoxy. In his analysis of the extended resistance of the pagan Kwaio of the Solomon Islands, Roger Keesing argues that parody enabled the Kwaio to use the semiology of European domination to frame a counter-hegemonic discourse based on 'emulation without deference':

We find a sort of parody at two levels. First, running through the Kwaio texts, we find parody in a strict sense, a more or less intentional imitation of the semiology of the rulers, deployed as a sardonic mode of resistance ... Second, we find what is not really parody in a strict sense, but appears as such only in the eyes of the (Western) beholder: as where Malaitians, often Christian scribes acting on behalf of pagans, write documents they intend to be taken with legal seriousness in what they take to be legalistic language ... When I advised Fofolo'u that the claim was not valid in terms of European or international law, his response was 'It's valid in terms of our law!'; but Kwaio *loa*, so conceptualized, is constructed in opposition and correspondence to the law that has historically been invoked to end Malaitian autonomy. (Keesing 1992: 234)

The Kwaio were first incorporated into the British colonial world as plantation labourers taken to Queensland, Samoa and Fiji. The pivotal event of their colonial experience was the massacre of around a thousand Kwaio men, women and children by the 'punitive expedition' sent to avenge the killing of District Officer William Bell in 1927. Remaining obstinate pagans in a world where everyone else had converted to Christianity, the Kwaio nevertheless came to conceptualize their pagan-ness in terms of *Christian* discourse. A Kwaio priest, for example, adopted the sobriquet of 'Peter Satan'. The Christian Churches defined the people's ancestors as manifestations of the Devil, the old pagan world as one of darkness, and conversion as a process of rebirth, so the Kwaio fought that cosmology of Christian power by accepting its categories but inverting their meaning.

Jean Comaroff argues that the same 'irreverence' characterizes the Tshidi Zionist transformation of orthodox symbolic schemes in South Africa. The opposition between Zionism and orthodox Protestantism corresponded roughly to an illiterate peasant-proletarian/literate bourgeois-petty

bourgeois class divide. Tshidi conceptions of social differentiation are not, however, couched in Marxist class terms – differential control of means of production – nor in purely economic terms. This is hardly surprising since education, literacy and race, as well as wealth, influenced life-chances (Comaroff 1985: 190). Nevertheless, the practices of one of her case studies, the Full Witness Church, do include attempts to reverse commoditization through the ritual processing of outside products and, through dance and divine healing, to realize a collective integration which defies the enforced personal and social differentiation imposed by the hegemonic structures of the outside world (ibid.: 218–19, 233).

The Church has a 'collection' of money, used to support the leader's domestic expenses, but the bulk of such support is provided in labour and foodstuffs. The ritualized deposition of coins in the jar suggests a negation of the commodity role of money (ibid.: 236). None of this removes the contradictions imposed on the congregation by the larger political-economic forces which compel them to live in a world in which social relations are negatively influenced by commoditization, but the ritual process does seem to express a desire to subvert the actual. Other Zionist Churches actually own and operate means of production collectively, but even the Full Witness Church goes some way towards countering individuation and privatization by encouraging pooling of assets. This assertion of collectivism is not, however, a return to the pre-colonial order. The organization of the Churches and their ritual practices constitute a *bricolage* of elements. What is most 'non-Western' about Zionism is the way the healing of the body is the healing of society and reconstitution of its relations. Comaroff argues that this process is counter-hegemonic in the sense that pre-colonial metaphors and images of bodily affliction were reworked to address the effects on the person of the social changes wrought by capitalism and the apartheid state (ibid.: 202). Yet core symbols of redemption and apocalypse derived from Christian traditions and both pre-colonial and colonial symbols were 'recycled' to create something new.

Similar principles apply to indigenous Catholicism in Latin America, which incorporated elements of European popular culture (Ingham 1986, Brading 1990). The *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods) were introduced by the Church as an instrument of spiritual conquest, but multiplied in an extra-official manner through indigenous initiative. The Indians used the images of the saints as oppositional symbols, denying the clergy control of them and asserting that they had belonged to the community from 'time immemorial'. The public ritual procession of saint images by Indians had more in common with popular European than indigenous pre-colonial practices. The ritual was used, however, to establish and defend frontiers between Indian and Spanish society (Gruzinski 1990), in just the same way as the Kwaio use colonial symbols and categories to build an 'invisible wall ... to defend and preserve a space within which the ways of the ancestors can be followed'

(Keesing 1992: 226). Dominated groups do not simply appropriate the symbols of the dominant order but subject them to powerful inversions.

Inversion, as Keesing points out, is not the same as 'strategic obliteration' of the semiology of colonialism, as when the Algerian revolutionaries suppressed the colonial 'ethnic' distinction between 'Arabs' and 'Berbers' or when Gandhi donned homespun to symbolize his counter-hierarchical style of leadership (ibid.: 238). Keesing's chosen examples in fact seem to demonstrate that even radical rejection of colonial semiology in oppositional discourse does not necessarily secure a transformation of social practices, since the old divisions and old styles of leadership were subsequently reactivated. Yet difference in subversive potential is clear and inversion without 'strategic obliteration' is certainly more subversive than Keesing's third possibility, 'reproduction in opposition' of the categorical structures of domination, as I can again show with a Latin American example.

Franciscan missions implanted European apocalyptic and millenarian visions into indigenous societies in Latin America. Yet the redemption which Andean peoples sought in eighteenth-century rebellions was one in which the Spanish and their allies amongst the indigenous elite were transformed (through symbolic inversion) into the Anti-Christ, to be swept away in a cosmic renewal which combined indigenous notions of cyclical time and world renewal with Christian traditions (Szemiński 1987). The Indian underclass would inherit the earth as the truly Christian community of suffering. Such examples may seem archetypal 'millenarian', 'pre-political', reactions to colonialism. Keesing argues, however, that although Melanesian cargo cults were millenarian in content and doctrine, they embodied a political analysis of European wealth and power (1992: 223), a point echoed by the Comaroffs (1992: 259–60). By these criteria, Andean rebellions were consciously 'political'. They aimed to destroy the colonial state and restore an indigenous socio-political order. They failed to achieve their goal, but left a legacy in historical memory and fed a counter-hegemonic indigenous historical consciousness which changed over the centuries and could manifest itself in the form of participation in more conventional political and class-based organizations in recent times.

This brings us back to Worsley's classic analysis of Melanesian cargo cults. Like Comaroff, Worsley argued that these millenarian movements were 'objectively' politico-religious movements (whatever the actors' conscious will and purpose) because they brought the participants into a clash with institutionalized authority (Worsley 1970: 312–13). In his reflections on theoretical criticisms of his original analysis, Worsley was careful to emphasize the variability of the cults, whilst standing firm against models that based themselves on concepts of 'cultural breakdown' without any reference to exploitation, oppression and indigenous senses of 'relative deprivation' (ibid.: 336–41). He suggested, however, that millenarian movements tended to give way over time to secularized nationalist movements in colonial countries and to class-based political organizations

elsewhere, since he saw them as essentially movements of the poor and marginalized (ibid.: 233). As the evolution of secular politics proceeds, millenarian cults become both secondary in importance and change their content. They become 'religions of the afflicted', orientated to the problems of the individual (ibid.: 319). Comaroff, however, argued that Zionism had counter-hegemonic significance precisely because it was a kind of class movement, of the marginalized.

Even Melanesianists sympathetic to Worsley's approach have argued that his evolutionary argument is invalid because a simple progression from cults to a more inclusive nationalist movement was deflected by new forms of differentiation within the emerging national political community. Gerritsen, for example, argues that poorer peasants develop communal groups practising a politics of protest on the basis of an ideology of egalitarianism, and suggests that these are closely connected to earlier cargo cults (Gerritsen 1982, cited in Rimoldi and Rimoldi 1992: 9). As Rimoldi and Rimoldi have pointed out, however, this argument depicts 'the political rationality of community as a development corresponding to a phase of political change initiated by the state' (ibid.: 9). It cannot account for the specific cultural practices through which people, as historical agents, respond to the contradictions they experience. In their view, the historical development of social movements on Buka reveals neither a different set of rationalities characterizing early and later movements nor a simple continuity of a general 'culture of resistance' because the actors have meaningful disagreements amongst themselves about what to do in response to particular situations. What Bougainvillians do have in common at any particular moment of time is a shared historical experience and 'political commitments linking them to past practices and to each other' (ibid.: 12).

The secessionist movement on Bougainville is a serious conflict, which has cost thousands of lives. Nevertheless, the concept of 'resistance' in general remains problematic. As Keesing reminds us, it is easy for the observer to romanticize 'acts and stances which may have an oppositional element' but which have other motives of personal gain and political ambition (Keesing 1992: 216–17). Such motives are present among leaders of even great 'millenarian' acts of defiance, and the leaders of 'revolutionary' movements do not necessarily (or even usually?) share their followers' world-views.

Keesing argues that it is important that the political force of the kind of resistance discussed by Comaroff for the Zionists is 'at least partly hidden from the consciousness of the adherents', like the 'Devil' worship Taussig (1980) describes as resistance to capitalism in the Bolivian tin mines. He suggests that Kwaio resistance has passed through three dominant modes, armed struggle and violent confrontation in the period before 1927, a phase of ancestral revelation and religious cultism through the 1930s, and political confrontation from the mid-1940s onwards. The third phase follows Kwaio contact with US troops during the war, some of whom were people of colour

who were shocked by the racist brutality displayed by the British towards the Kwaio as a colonial people and plantation workers.

Although the 'religious' dimension focused on the ancestors remained an inseparable component of Kwaio 'political' action throughout, Keesing sees the 'religious' cultic phase as a *displacement* of the struggle, resulting from the impossibility of overt resistance (1992: 212). He views the Zionist cults as another example of deflection of resistance into religious forms, and argues that a broadly defined 'political' mode of resistance must be based on the existence of a 'subculture of subalternity, a collective code in which strategies for opposing domination and exploitation are communicated, shared, themselves represented ideologically' (ibid.: 214). Other modes of resistance have an impact on power relations, even if they are not based on a conscious analysis of systems of domination, but Keesing argues that only forms of resistance sustained by subaltern subcultures have the potential to 'radically transform' the structures, categories and logics of colonial discourse even as they seem to be internalizing them.

It does seem problematic to argue that forms of action which become 'political' because the state chooses to classify them as 'subversive' and represses those who participate in them have the same implications as movements which articulate a more direct and sustained counter-hegemonic politics. Yet as Keesing concedes, much oppositional thought is *reactive* (ibid.: 237). As Roseberry notes, parodic or not, 'the forms and languages of protest must adopt the forms and languages of domination in order to be registered or heard' (Roseberry 1994: 363–4). Structures of domination constrain the ways in which the dominated and oppressed *can* resist their condition. In the case of the Kwaio, the institutions of the colonial state had a powerful influence on the way subaltern groups could define their identities. Kwaio now try to control resources, patronage and political power as *Malaitians*, a social unit and ethnicity that did not exist in pre-colonial times, and they do so in opposition to a series of other pseudo-ethnicities. They also internalized Christian ideas about good and evil, light and dark, in relation to ideas about 'race' that introduce significant ambiguities into their 'subaltern culture of resistance'. 'Blackness' can be opposed positively to 'Whiteness' in a discourse of emancipation but it also figures as derogatory racist imagery applied by the Kwaio to non-White rivals and enemies.

Such processes often seem to be concerned with defending spaces of relative autonomy and dignity *within* oppressive social orders. Scott argues that even everyday and individualized forms of resistance have significant consequences for the way systems of domination are structured. It is true, for example, that the flight of Indians from indigenous communities towards towns and Spanish estates to escape the colonial labour draft had a significant impact on class structures and colonial state policy in the Andes (Larson 1988). This form of 'resistance', however, did not change the fundamental balance of class and ethnic power in the long term in a direction which was favourable to Indians and peasants. Chazan *et al.* (1992) argue

...at the political fabric in Africa is slowly being undermined by a plethora of forms of 'popular confrontation', many of which fall into Scott's 'everyday resistance' category. Again, however, this 'undermining' may ultimately merely provide the scenario for the replacement of one elite by another, more effective, dominant group. It is important to recognize the existence of 'hidden' processes of resistance, but it seems impossible to say anything useful about their consequences in isolation from a broader analysis of power relations.

Keesing's concept of 'subaltern subcultures' of resistance is attractive, and he emphasizes the way 'old forms acquire new meanings' in the practice of resistance. Yet the Rimoldis' analysis suggests that the historical reproduction of communities of resistance through practice involves moments of tension where a change of course is conceivable. Shifts generally occur in the world-views and consciousness of those doing the resisting as they pursue their struggles. In seeking terrain on which domination can be contested, as Keesing concedes, the evolving strategies of subaltern strata are shaped by the structures created by the dominant to implement their hegemony. This has several important implications.

Firstly, the production of a 'counter-identity' on the part of subaltern groups in the face of oppression may express *antagonism* but elites may be able to manipulate such reactive oppositional discourses to their own advantage. I discovered that the resident workers on a landed estate in Mexico represented themselves as the real base of the enterprise, and expressed a thinly veiled contempt for the administrators and foremen (Gledhill 1991: 84-5). This dignified their productive efforts in conditions of physical abuse and social humiliation, but involved a profound form of self-alienation, in which the hacienda appropriated the peons as much as the peons appropriated the hacienda. The majority of these estate workers opposed the revolutionary land reform.

Secondly, as Matthew Gutmann suggests, self-conscious acts of outright rebellion may have unintentional system-conserving qualities (Gutmann 1993: 85). Among the examples he cites is Eckstein's analysis of how everyday defiance of the law by citizens 'rationally rejecting authority' may enhance the stability of undemocratic regimes which thrive on corruption (Eckstein 1977).

Thirdly, it seems impossible to reduce power relations to a simple opposition between the dominators and dominated, as James Scott tends to do. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) Scott argues that all subordinated groups create a 'hidden transcript' that is a critique of the dominant, but spoken behind their backs in places which are beyond the reach of their surveillance - in slave quarters or places where only poor people come to eat and drink, for example. In public interaction, the subordinate are constrained to talk to the dominant in a way that appears respectful of their power. By and large, observers therefore get a false perspective on subalterns that makes them seem to be passively accepting

their place. Scott argues, however, that even in the public transcript we can find a kind of muted, disguised resistance in what subalterns say, which is about dignity and justice. Yet Scott's efforts to build a general theory of domination and resistance raise fundamental difficulties.

The first is that he erases all differences between different kinds of subaltern groups and situations: the same theory is supposed to apply to members of Indian scheduled castes, eighteenth-century plantation slaves in America, Maya Indians in Chiapas, and workers in US factories (Gal 1995: 415). There are enormous differences in the way such diverse groups were dominated, their experiences and their identities. There seems to be little space in this formulation for culture, history or, indeed, the 'internal politics' of subalterns (Ortner 1995: 177). As the Kwaio case illustrates, members of one subaltern group may invest considerable energy in differentiating themselves from other subaltern groups. In the case of the Caribbean, not only did Blacks differentiate themselves from Asians and vice versa, but island-born Blacks taunted new slaves arriving on the docks as 'savages' in a process of micro-differentiation in which all members of oppressed groups strove to carve out what spaces of dignity they might within the framework of White domination, giving rise to a pigmentocratic hierarchy of status in which distance from Blackness was the organizing principle (James 1993). This casts doubt on Scott's assumption that the 'hidden transcripts' emerge in an autonomous space where power does not enter, simply as a product of face-to-face interaction within subaltern communities. In this sense, Scott is more of a romantic than a conservative, wilfully ignoring the substantial body of evidence that shows that real subalterns resist some things whilst accepting others, and that resistance at one level can be accompanied by repressing other people.

As Susan Gal (1995: 420-1) points out, Scott uses a simple representational theory of language, in which the world and its realities are already there, unmediated by the structure of language itself. Yet various 'truths' about our world are already naturalized in the specific languages we need to use to talk about it. In English, for example, we have to make a real effort to say 'he or she' to avoid gender bias in talking about 'people' in general. As I have stressed, even direct protest is impossible without subalterns adopting certain categories originally imposed by dominant groups as a basis for struggle. No human situation or relationship exists independently of the meanings we ascribe to it and we need a more complex theory of meaning production than Scott offers.

This last point is underscored by Sherry Ortner's critique of the simple opposition between 'domination' and 'resistance'. Since the meaning of acts to actors changes in the course of their experience of struggle, Ortner argues that it is not important if actors are ambivalent about what they are doing and why they are doing it (Ortner 1995: 187). As the Comaroffs stress, much of what goes on within power relationships has this 'murky' quality (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 259). Quite clearly we need to avoid two

resistance accepted by dominant structures - of 'realistic'

discarding between oppressed & oppressors

kinds of conceptualizations about 'the resisting subject' which would be empirically and theoretically naive. Firstly, we have to recognize that subalterns are not a homogeneous group of people, but have their own politics and internal power relations. Not only do some subalterns dominate or brutalize other subalterns, but even small-scale local social movements often display internal conflicts and the very important category of people who do not participate in resistance movements are not necessarily collaborating with the dominant (Ortner 1995: 179). Secondly, it follows from this that individual subalterns do not display unitary senses of their own identity and uniform types of consciousness. Yet it is also clearly true that individual identities are shaped by various kinds of social and cultural processes, including categories that dominant groups seek to impose on people and which they *may* accept.

Spivak and some of the other writers that Ortner discusses have concluded from this that what we should be studying is how individuals accept or reject 'subject positions' assigned to them, and how they shift from one possible 'subject position' to another. The problem is that this shifting subject appears to have no agency, does not learn, develop or create anything. Ortner argues convincingly that what we lose sight of here is how people construct projects that *transform* who they are through social action and thus do gain a voice and in some ways change history.

As Brackette Williams (1991) demonstrates in a study of post-colonial Guyana, people cannot change history entirely in a manner of their own choosing. The Guyanese have built a post-colonial national identity in a way that reflects the efforts of different ethnic groups to retain their own specific identities. The post-colonial politics of cultural struggle in Guyana reflect a legacy of Anglo-European hegemony, and the struggles of individuals and groups to build new identities re-create ethnic and racial stereotyping, along with religious and class divisions. A colonial culture of domination remains a 'ghostly constraint' on contemporary Guyanese identity formation (Williams 1991: 257-8). Systems of shared meanings that divide Guyanese are reproduced in everyday social practice and even by political leaderships that claim to be struggling to get rid of the colonial legacy. Yet at the same time, Guyana and the Guyanese do, in other senses, 'move on' and no one group has succeeded in imposing a single framework of shared meanings on the post-colony.

Thus, although there is a clear logical difference between 'resistance' which is merely concerned with improving the terms of oppression and that which strives to implant a new socio-political order, only further analysis of an ethnographic kind can determine how far conscious projects of radical rejection actually transform structures and practices of domination. This is also true of less consciously radical forms of resistance which have unintended consequences because the state reacts to them in a repressive way. It is therefore ultimately undesirable to try to privilege the analysis of one kind of counter-hegemonic activity over another a priori. The argument

cuts both ways, since privileging 'everyday resistance' may lead us to ignore the way actors can gain new confidence and horizons of struggle from the experience of defying the dominant by overt collective rebellion on a limited issue. The real issue is not one of deciding what is or is not 'real' resistance. We must analyse both the possibilities and limitations of individual acts and collective movements within particular historical contexts and larger fields of power relations.