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Chapter 7

Marxist theory and anthropological practice: the application of French Marxist anthropology in field-work

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Introduction[1]

Is there a case for a Marxist approach in anthropological field-work?

The present collection of papers explores the relevance of the theories of French Marxist anthropologists for empirical anthropological analysis. Our work-group's interest in these theories sprang mainly from the fact that here, we hoped, new perspectives were to be found for the analysis of our own field-work data. The preceding chapters may have indicated in what ways these Marxist theories can be used for interpreting specific sets of anthropological data. However, our project equally raises questions as to the relevance of these theories for the actual practice of anthropological field-work — for data collection itself. As has been emphasized in chapter 1 by Geschiere and Raatgever, our own field-work, in its design and execution, was still little influenced by Marxist theories. Moreover, in general it is as yet far from clear to what extent these theories have specific implications for the practice of anthropological field-work. Therefore in the present chapter we shall embark on a discussion of these practical implications, leaving the more theoretical evaluation of the French school to Reini Raatgever (ch. 8 below).

The main issue in this chapter is in what way these theories are to be used in the earlier phases of the anthropological empirical cycle: to what extent do they suggest new starting-points and new leading questions for the anthropologist in the field? Of course this question is related to the wider problem of whether a Marxist

anthropology can remain within the framework of the anthropological discipline or demands a completely new approach — a topic of lively discussion within our work-group. Clearly, in the practice of field-work a Marxist anthropologist cannot but apply the time-honoured techniques of anthropological research, developed under the inspiration of other theories. In this sense a Marxist-inspired practice of field-work will always be coloured by a certain eclecticism.[2] But it is equally clear that a Marxist field-worker will have to renew and complement the usual anthropological research-techniques by focusing on specific issues. In this sense there is a case for a Marxist approach to anthropological field-work. Moreover, it is our contention that more attention to this pratice of field-work is essential for stimulating further theoretical discussion in Marxist anthropology.

The French Marxist anthropologists themselves have written surprisingly little on their practice of field-work.[3] Clearly, in the course of their own field-work, they followed standard anthropological methods and interests: drawing up genealogies, studying kinship relations and territorial divisions, analysing the circulation of prestige goods. But apparently they also followed original conceptions while they were in the field. Meillassoux, for instance, during his research among the Guro, must have paid special attention to the interplay of the relations of production and the relations of (biological) reproduction (1964). And to Rey the contradictions within the 'lineage' societies and their modern transformations under capitalist dominance must have been topics of special interest right from the start of his research in Congo-Brazzaville (1971); the influence of Marxist viewpoints on his field-work may also be apparent from Rey's consistent refusal — as early as 1967 — to accept the 'tribe' as a meaningful unit of study (see chapter 6). However, so far a general evaluation of the specific possibilities and problems for a Marxist-inspired practice of anthropological field-work has been lacking.[4]

This relative neglect of the practice of field-work may be related to the French anthropological tradition in which the Malinowskian ideal of a complete and prolonged submersion in the culture to be studied was never really popular. To many French anthropologists field-work still seems to be a matter of shorter expeditions 'sur le terrain', after which the data collected may be analysed in more 'civilized' surroundings. None the less, for Marxist anthropology in particular, reflection on the implications of the theory for the

practice of field-work seems to be vital. The recent popularity of the theory may lead to problems in several respects. The models and concepts run the risk of being generalized and simplified into clichés, cut and dried formulas that are deceptively easy to apply to data — however collected, by whatever methods, and under the initial inspiration of whatever theoretical perspectives. Indeed, if Marxist models are simplified and dogmatized to a point where they begin to lose their meaning (and this is often the case in the bowdlerized versions of French Marxism now circulating in Anglo-Saxon literature — see Geschiere and Raatgever, chapter 1 above — one might be tempted to limit field-research to short surveys — already yielding enough data to allow for the classification of a particular group or field situation into the neat boxes of a textbook caricature posing as Marxism. Moreover, the flow of reactions and polemics can easily stagnate in formalistic discussions, which remain restricted to the theoretical level (see chapters 1 and 8). Meillassoux, who has considerable field-work experience, has lately shown some disappointment over the one-sided theoretical tenor of the reactions to his theoretical explorations.[5] Indeed, further theoretical progress in Marxist anthropology seems to depend particularly on new stimuli from such empirical research as is explicitly linked to the theory. But this requires a sharper insight into the specific consequences of Marxist theory for anthropological field-work. It was especially this issue, of the relation between field-work and theory, which our work-group discussed with Meillassoux and Terray when they visited the Netherlands. In this chapter our questions and suggestions, but also their reactions during these discussions, will be reflected.

The structure of our argument

After the preceding chapters of this book it may be clear that the theories of the French School have implications for anthropological field-work at least on one crucial point — namely, as to how anthropologists are to relate their research on a local level to developments of a much wider geographical and historical scope. Thus, the central theme in the work of Rey and Meillassoux in particular can be briefly summarized as the subjugation and the continuing attrition of 'domestic' communities by capitalism; and this does suggest valuable propositions for anthropological research: how is surplus labour extracted from the old production

communities? what is the varying role of 'footholds' for capitalist penetration in the old relations of production, notably in the pre-existing forms of surplus labour? how are old and new contradictions intertwined? and so on.

In this chapter we shall focus on a more general problem: how should the emphasis, in Marxist theory, on the level of production be reflected in the practice of field-work? Connected with this is the question of how the inter-relatedness of production and other societal spheres, such as politics and ideology, should be dealt with while doing field-work. Our first topic, the role of the level of production, will be discussed in relation to the application, in field-work, of the concept of mode of production; we shall concentrate on some practical problems attending the use of the model of a 'lineage mode of production' as first formulated by Rey and Terray. Our next issues concern the inter-relatedness of the sphere of production — or 'the economic' — with other aspects of social organization. Of course, on this topic there is no lack of theoretical fireworks in the literature. But rather than allowing ourselves to be blinded by those, our concern here will be with some practical questions related to the reality of the anthropological field-work situation. One such problem concerns the relation between the economic and politics. Our discussion on this point is prompted by the fact that, in the research of some Marxist anthropologists, surprising functionalist-teleological tendencies have appeared, betraying a somewhat naïve view of the analytical relation between on the one hand the level of the structural logic of modes of production, and the political level of decision-making, strategies and social actors on the other. In relation to this point we can return to another problem in the application of the mode of production concepts: namely the ethnographic identification of boundaries between a number of modes of production as articulated within one contemporary social formation where our field-work is located. Of course this problem is directly connected to the central issue in the preceding chapters of this book — the application of the concept of articulation of modes of production. Our discussion of this 'boundary problem' in studying articulated modes of production during field-work will focus on one particular political setting — that of a contemporary chief's court in Zambia.

Another vital issue, particularly apparent in anthropological analysis, is the relation between the economic and ideology. Whereas the economic instance may be dominant under capital-

ism, the French School (and Godelier in particular) have argued that in the societies where anthropologists habitually work, instances from what under capitalism would have been the superstructure tend to be dominant. Indeed a vital challenge to a Marxist anthropology seems to be the question of how to study the particular relations between production and ideology in these societies. Rather than embarking on a theoretical critique of this premise, we intend to assess again its implication for the practice of anthropological research by concentrating on the ethnographic context of religious plurality in a contemporary African social formation.

A Marxist discussion of the anthropological practice of field research would hardly be complete without reference to the current political contexts in which anthropologists have to carry out their work. The case for a committed, leftist research practice has already been stated with such vigour as to allow us, in the present paper, to concentrate on more narrowly methodological issues which have received far less attention (see note 40 below).

The level of production as a problem in anthropological field-work

Data on production

Of course, one of the most obvious implications of the Marxist theories for anthropological research is that primary importance is attributed to the level of production. French Marxist anthropologists have always criticized current anthropological approaches for the fact that whenever they happened to pay attention to the economic, this meant (in accordance with the liberalist inspiration of bourgeois anthropology) stressing not production, but circulation: i.e. relations of exchange and the role of the market (see Dupré and Rey 1973; Godelier 1973: 23f.). By contrast, Marxist analyses should depart from the premise that in the last instance production, and relations of production in particular, are of determining consequence.

Yet it is not automatically clear what this premise amounts to in the practice of anthropological field-work. One might easily suppose that from such a perspective every anthropological research undertaking should begin with the collection of detailed,

ideally quantitative, data on production. But in practice this will lead to all sorts of problems. The first difficulty is that anthropologists today almost always work in communities that have been touched by the capitalist system. Therefore, a reconstruction of the old modes of production has always to abstract from modern economic changes. This alone would drastically reduce the possibility of collecting valid and reliable quantitative data on relevant aspects of the old relations of production. Another difficulty is that too much emphasis on the collection of production data will almost inevitably lead to a certain one-sidedness in field-work. Especially in communities with a simple hunting or agricultural economy, research into the more practical aspects of production is extremely time-consuming. For instance, in slash-and-burn cultivation, enormous variations exist in the use of land and labour, in harvest yields, etc. In order to collect systematic data on the level of production — measuring labour investment, average yields, the amount of surplus labour appropriated from the direct producers, etc. — one often has to surmount so many practical difficulties that even a whole team of anthropologists in the field could barely cope. If in a Marxist practice of field-work each research was required to begin with a thorough analysis of production, we run the risk that hardly any time would remain for research into other aspects of society. And this would then run counter to the emphasis which French Marxist anthropologists have laid on the autonomous role — on the 'dominance' — of such super-structural aspects as kinship, politics or religion in the types of society habitually studied by anthropologists.

Significantly, the monographs of the French School limit themselves to fairly global analyses of the technical and quantitative aspects of the production process. Here one finds few attempts to analyse the reality of production by way of painstaking calculations — e.g. of the labour time expended, the relation between invested labour and product, the consumptive needs of the producers. Such calculations are more typical of American anthropologists of the 'ecological' or 'cultural-materialist' school.[6] However, precisely these anthropologists have often been accused by their French colleagues of 'vulgar materialism' because of their one-sided attention to the technical aspects of production.[7] Rey even stresses that the analysis of the immediate processes of production is by definition inadequate if one wishes to identify the characteristic relation of production within a mode of production.

In his view, each mode of production is characterized by a specific relation of exploitation, which forms the basis for a specific class contradiction. According to Rey, Marx demonstrated that, under capitalism, the reproduction of the relation of exploitation takes place primarily by means of the buying and selling of labour-power, i.e. *outside* the sphere of immediate production. The same holds true, Rey claims, for all other modes of production: the specific forms of exploitation, and their reproduction, cannot be reconstructed from the technical sides of the production process; rather, the reality of production can be analysed only on the basis of the class contradiction (Rey 1971: 40, 160; see also Rey 1979).

The concept of 'mode of production'

We shall come back to Rey's rather complex views in this matter. However, it will be clear at this stage that from the viewpoint of the French Marxist School extensive collections of data on production are in themselves of limited value. In anthropological field-work the determining role of production should be acknowledged in a less positivist way, notably by taking the concept of *mode of production* as one's point of departure. It is here in particular that French Marxist anthropology does offer practical pointers for field-work design. One of the merits of these anthropologists — especially Meillassoux, Terray and Rey — is that they have taken the concept of mode of production seriously. They do not content themselves with such cure-all concepts as 'peasant mode of production' (for a critique of this concept, see Ranger 1978); rather, they attempt to derive a number of specific modes of production from anthropological data, *each mode with its own logic and its own dynamics*, which are retained even after subordination to capitalist dominance. The practical significance of such attempts will be clear: if field-workers could just draw on an elaborate typology of modes of production, a brief survey of production would be sufficient to classify properly the social formation under study — to explain its specific peculiarities on the level of production by reference to a certain type of mode of production. Elsewhere in this book it is made abundantly clear that Marxist anthropology has not reached this advanced stage yet (see chapters 1 and 8): French Marxist anthropologists themselves are still in the midst of a debate on the operationalization of the concept of mode of production, and the implications of this debate

for the design of anthropological field-work are still far from clear. In view of this state of affairs, the collection of more elaborate and quantitative data on production itself might be opportune. However, more than anything else, a further elaboration and operational definition of the concept of mode of production is a prerequisite for progressive cross-fertilization between theory and practice in Marxist anthropology.

The clearest formula for the operationalization of the concept of mode of production is to be found in Rey's and Terray's works. Both stress that the relation of exploitation should be the point of departure in the analysis of any mode of production (see Rey 1971, 1973; Terray 1975, 1979a). However, this formula turns out to raise difficulties also in application. This may become clear from a brief discussion of how anthropologists can utilize the model of the 'lineage mode of production', which occupies such a central place in Rey's and Terray's work. For both, the crucial relationship in that mode of production is the exploitation of the youth by their elders (taking these terms as social and not as biological categories). Often this exploitation finds expression in the elders' control over certain prestige goods, which may circulate in the form of bridewealth. The elders' authority over the young men is then confirmed by the former's monopoly on the prestige goods and their tight control of the exchange of women between groups.[8] Above, it became clear that this model has indeed considerable explanatory power in the analysis of African societies organized on a kinship basis, especially because it brings out the implications, for the elders' authority, of the circulation of bridewealth and prestige goods (see chapters 2, 3 and 4 above).

All the same, further elaboration is required if this model is to be really useful for field-work design: for how can one, within the confines of this model, do justice to all kinds of variations in the authority basis of the elders, and in the reproduction of the subordination of the youth? And how to capture the culture-specific, often extremely subtle, forms of interaction, transfer of goods and services, communication and sanctioning, that form the constituent elements in the authority and power relations between elders and the youth?

Variations in the 'lineage mode of production' in Black Africa

The preceding chapters of this book have indicated that even

between the 'lineage' societies of Black Africa, variation can be very considerable.[9] Our own field-work experiences may illustrate the problems which can rise when applying the concept of the 'lineage mode of production'. When one of us made a study of the Maka, a highly segmented group in the tropical rain-forest of southeast Cameroon, the link between bridewealth and the elders' authority proved to be extremely relevant (Geschiere 1981, 1982, in press, b). The coherence of Maka kin-groups under the authority of one elder is still primarily expressed through that kin-group's co-operation in the matter of bridewealth; by the same token, imminent fissions within the group first begin to manifest themselves in the way of conflicts concerning the elders' role in the payment and distribution of bridewealth. And it still is the payment of bridewealth which gives an elder *ijuga* (paternal authority) over a youth; this even leads quite regularly to a social redefinition of the relations of genealogical descent. However, among the Maka, control over marital payments is not linked with a clear authority of the elders over food production — which today means primarily the cultivation of bananas, cassava and ground-nuts, while in the old days hunting was also important.

The Maka ethnography is all the more remarkable since Terray (1969) and Meillassoux (1975) attach some significance to the elders' 'functional authority' in agriculture. Among the Maka there is hardly any trace of this. At best, the Maka elders have a formal control over the distribution of plots between the individual producers, but they are not directly involved in the organization of production or in the regulation of labour relations. Neither is there any pooling of produce to be administered by the elders. Maka women, who do the lion's share of the agricultural work, in all sorts of ways act as independent producers, and each woman administers her own harvest. Yet the Maka may still be considered to fit in more or less with the model of the 'lineage mode of production': in Rey's terms, they would then be an example of a situation where the relation of exploitation between youth and elders is confirmed by the circulation of prestige goods, but has not yet penetrated the sphere of direct production.[10]

However, when we compare the Maka with other 'lineage' societies in Black Africa as described in this book, more important irregularities catch the eye. Both among the Nyakyusa of southern Tanzania (see chapter 2) and among the Diola of southern Senegal (see chapter 3), certain types of plots have permanent value,

enabling elders to exercise direct control over production. Moreover, bridewealth is of only secondary importance among the Diola: there, the elders' control over prestige goods (notably cattle) is located rather in the organization of initiation rites, which, as some sort of functional equivalent of bridewealth, ensured the reproduction of the Diola youths' subordination. Even when we limit our analysis to the material aspects of the various prestige goods that feature in this context, it becomes manifest that there may be many more variations between the 'lineage' societies of Black Africa. Rey, Meillassoux and Terray write on societies where 'inanimate' prestige goods circulate (iron objects, jewellery, etc.). However, in numerous African societies cattle constitute the most important prestige good (for a Marxist approach, see Bonte 1977). This cannot remain without effect on intergenerational relations: by contrast with inanimate prestige goods, cattle play an important role in production and consumption. Their upkeep demands a continuous investment of labour. Moreover, cattle lend themselves to biological reproduction: they tend to multiply. On the other hand they are much more vulnerable to natural disasters than are most inanimate prestige goods. It is therefore very likely that under such circumstances different relations of production and different forms of exploitation will develop from those found in societies for which the model of the 'lineage mode of production' was formulated in the first place.[11]

Material conditions, however, are not the only factors resulting in significant variation between 'lineage' societies. The case of the Nkoya of Zambia, among whom one of us did research, brings out the significance of other means of production besides land as a source of control for the elders, but particularly highlights the importance of ideological means in this context. Our discussion of the Nkoya case, moreover, touches on their involvement in the urban capitalist sector — an aspect which, of course, is also implied in the other examples.

Among the Nkoya, the situation somewhat resembles that among the Maka, but the overall picture is different. Although there has in recent years been some slight but mounting pressure on a particular type of riverside gardens (*matapa*) that are extremely suitable for the main cash-crop (maize), land among the Nkoya is in fact still so plentiful that the elders' control, waning as it is, rests not on the allocation of land but on a combination of other factors.

Some of these lie in the sphere of production, notably hunting. The elders own the guns that procure the game-meat on which depend almost all locally-consumed animal protein and (since much of the meat is sold) a large proportion of the regional cash flow. The elders have acquired the guns through inheritance or on the basis of town-earned money; usually they let them be handled by young expert hunters, whose own share of the proceeds is limited.

Moreover, the elders exercise considerable (but by no means absolute) control over nubile women, and thus over the younger men's opportunities to have female labour-power at their disposal — as well as legitimate offspring which they can count upon for political and economic support in later years. The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact (not uncommon in southern Central Africa) that divorce is easy and frequent — in other words, control over women by elders and husbands is limited; and that a young man often ends up offering his residential and labour support to a (classificatory) mother's brother, rather than to a (classificatory) father — in other words, even if a man submits (by paying bridewealth) to the control some elder exercises over a nubile woman, he is by no means certain of subsequent control over his legitimate offspring. In this context of uncertainty, however, additional checks are found in the ideological sphere. The extensive ritual powers that are attributed to the elders enable them not only to control, to a considerable extent, the marital and residential choices of their younger followers (through curses, threats of sorcery, or alternatively by ritual protection and healing), but also to influence the flow of cash earned by the young men in the urban capitalist labour market: some of this cash is appropriated by the elders as a fee for their healing services. Likewise, through these powers (in particular their dominance of village shrines and the ancestral cult) the elders control young men's access to prestigious names and titles which are indispensable for establishing oneself as an elder, i.e. a village headman (van Binsbergen 1977b, 1981: chs 6, 7; n.d., a).

The 'lineage mode of production' in North Africa

The need for refinement and closer delimitation of the concept of a 'lineage mode of production' may be even more cogently demonstrated by an example from somewhat further afield.

Certain members of our work-group have also done field-work in the rural areas of northwestern Tunisia.[12] In the course of our work-group discussions, it was therefore a recurrent topic to assess to what extent the model as derived by Rey, Terray and Meillassoux from research in Black Africa would also be applicable to North Africa. On the surface, the North African peasant societies would appear to display many traits characteristic of Rey's and Terray's 'lineage mode of production', or Meillassoux's 'domestic community'. Also in North Africa many anthropologists would consider the 'lineage' to form the core of social organization; kinship has long formed the dominant organizational principle, and the family elders exercised a firm authority over the youth, manifested among other things in the elders' control over marital payments. Of course, on closer inspection all kinds of differences became apparent. For instance, on the level of production the peasant society of northwestern Tunisia is in many ways characteristic of the Mediterranean as a whole (see Davis 1977), but contrasts sharply with the types of slash-and-burn cultivation prevailing in Black Africa. In North Africa agriculture has traditionally used the plough. There has been a close connection between agriculture and animal husbandry; access to draught animals for ploughing was indispensable for the agricultural cycle. The main crop was wheat, and this could regularly be cultivated on the same piece of land, provided one observed short fallow periods. As a result, kin-organized communities had a close, more or less permanent, link with the land. Another result was fragmentation of land-holdings: the holdings of the various kin-groups were often interspersed. In many regions the increasing pressure on the land had turned the purchase or hire of land into common practice long before the colonial conquest.

It will be obvious that this form of production offered quite different footholds for the family elders' authority. By contrast with most slash-and-burn economies in Black Africa, in North Africa land had by definition a lasting value and it therefore constituted an essential part of the inheritance. Moreover the agricultural cycle required the use of complex means of production — plough, draught animals — which, contrary to the hoes and slashers of Black Africa, were by no means available to each producer. Therefore control over essential means of production did offer the North African elders a direct grip on the production process and on the young men's labour. On the other hand,

because of the limited access to the means of production, in the rural areas of North Africa various additional forms of surplus labour and exploitation could develop. Landless peasants could as share-croppers (*khammas*) get access to land, while the institution of the dependent herdsman (often marrying into his employer's family) was also well developed. In the process of articulation of these old relations of production with capitalism it was precisely such forms of surplus labour which came to play an important role: since there was already a considerable amount of labour which had been 'freed' from the means of production, in the first phases of capitalist penetration the 'labour problem' did not assume such acute forms as in large parts of Black Africa (see chapter 4).

Of course, these specific traits on the level of production go hand in hand with all sorts of differences in other spheres of life. The emerging overall picture raises serious doubt as to whether North African 'lineage' societies do fit into the 'lineage mode of production'.[13] For instance, for these societies also one might very well speak of the 'dominance' of kinship as an organizational principle. But this shows, at the same time, how easy it is to abuse kinship as some sort of mystifying concept (see Meillassoux 1975: 37; Rey 1971: 207). In fact the North African systems of kinship and marriage display a number of traits which deviate widely from the 'lineage' societies of Rey, Terray and Meillassoux. Thus it is remarkable that in North African societies women circulate on a much smaller scale: there is a strong tendency towards endogamy, both within the kin-group (there even is the explicit ideal of patrilineal endogamy, although few marriages are in fact so contracted), and within the local village community, which in many respects could be regarded as a localized bilateral kindred (van Binsbergen 1970, 1971, n.d., b). This is linked to the fact that the circulation of goods at the time of marriage clearly differs from the system of bridewealth in large parts of Black Africa. In the Tunisian rural areas the bride adds (at least in principle) her own inheritance (notably land) to the conjugal estate; and an important portion of the money paid by the bridegroom has to be put at the disposal of the bride herself. Also on the ideological level — e.g. in the organization and functioning of regional cults — relations have developed which are peculiar to North Africa in comparison with 'lineage' societies elsewhere on the African continent.[14]

Discussion

The important question is not so much whether the Tunisian peasant communities fit into the model of a 'lineage mode of production'. The point is rather to demonstrate that this model will need to be further refined before it can be used as a starting-point in anthropological field-work. In view of the great variation between kin-organized societies, even within Black Africa, one might well ask if in fact a number of different modes of production are involved. If we are to follow Rey's and Terray's emphasis on the relation of exploitation as the determining and distinctive feature of a mode of production, the question would be how, and on the basis of which criteria, such a relation of exploitation is to be considered as being sufficiently different to allow us to speak of a different mode of production when comparing African 'lineage societies'.

Terray appears to be of the opinion that with the current state of anthropological and historical research we should lay great emphasis on the differences in exploitation and in the modes of production they entail. Only if we start from these differences may further research enable us to develop an elaborate typology of modes of production.[15] In the Introduction to this book (see chapter 1), reference has already been made to Godelier's criticism of this point (1979: 17): he takes it to imply that each field-worker may return from his or her research with a private freshly-discovered mode of production; this would be the surest way of depriving the concept of mode of production of all analytical power. On the other hand, the dangers of working with all too general models of modes of production will be equally clear: such models can easily function as 'blanket' concepts underneath which the multiple variations in exploitative and authority relations are obscured, and the contemporary dynamics of these relations under conditions of capital dominance smothered. Therefore, if we are to retain concepts such as, for instance, 'lineage mode of production', it would be necessary to try and demarcate, within such a type, important variations, each with its own underlying logic. It is especially on this point that further empirical and comparative research could stimulate the theoretical discussion.[16]

A useful point of departure for such comparative research would be Rey's emphasis — which has somehow gone unnoticed,

so far — upon 'the regrouping of the producers in relation to the production' (1971: 158); for Rey, this seems to constitute the main criterion to distinguish between modes of production. As sketched above, in Rey's view the 'determining relation of production' in each mode of production is the relation of exploitation and the class contradictions it entails. Rey adds (1971: 154):[17]

> the essential moment in the reproduction [of this determining relation — WvB & PG] is the process by which the members of the dominated class, i.e. the direct producers, are regrouped in order to produce. In the capitalist case this moment is the buying and selling of labour power. In the feudal case it is the contract of man to man, between the serf and his landlord [. . .] In the lineage mode of production, it is the double process of the circulation of men and women [. . .] to the profit of the dominating class [. . .] This process by which the producers are re-grouped can take place only outside immediate production.

In his monograph on the Mossendjo region, Rey (1971) uses this criterion in order to analyse the shift in dominance which attends the articulation between the 'lineage mode of production' and capitalism.[18] However, it stands to reason that this criterion of the 're-grouping of the producers' can also be utilized for an analysis of the differences between various pre-capitalist modes of production, or in order to identify the essential variations within the 'lineage mode of production'. At any rate, for comparative research, this criterion has the advantage that it focuses our research not just on the sphere of production but also on variations in the functioning of various political and ideological institutions.

It would be worthwhile to try to translate Rey's general insights into more concrete proposals for further research. As we said above, it is notably in their explorations involving the concept of mode of production that the French Marxist anthropologists offer the opportunity for meaningful cross-fertilization between the theory and the practice of field-work. But this would require further creative exploration of how the concept of mode of production can be operationalized towards concrete ethnographic and historiographic settings.[19]

Production and politics

The danger of functionalist teleology

Further refinement in the operationalization of the mode-of-production concept seems to be equally required, in the course of our field research, to deal with the thorny problem of the inter-relatedness between the level of production and other spheres of life. By using shortened, stereotyped formulas to indicate the structural coherence of a mode of production, or the internal logic of the articulation of various modes, anthropological enquiry may get bogged down in shallow, functionalist arguments. This danger is apparent, for instance, when we deal with the relation between production and politics. In anthropological field-work as much as in any other practice, we are facing the well-known Marxist dilemma of how to connect the determining role of production with the inherent dynamics of political processes and, by implication, with the autonomy of political actors. If in our explanation of a particular process we immediately invoke the logic of the mode of production or the logic of the articulation of various modes involved, there is just the risk that we overlook the political level of consciously acting actors and the groups to which they belong. Our research may then stagnate in the demonstration of the functional requirements of modes of production or of their articulation, without paying due attention to the power processes from which the extant relationships derive in a more direct sense — often resulting in a rather unstable and precarious outcome.

Meillassoux and the politics of kin-group composition among the Guro (Ivory Coast)

Numerous examples from the monographs produced by the French School could show that this danger is far from imaginary. Thus Meillassoux, in one of the most interesting and best documented chapters of his Guro monograph (1964: ch. 5), expounds how biological reproduction adapts to the requirements of the relations of production. Chance fluctuations in procreation are levelled out by the circulation of producers between the units of production. To put it more concretely: on the one hand, natural and inevitable differences in demographic reproduction exist

between the small kinship units, each under the authority of one elder; but on the other hand these familial production units turn out, in practice, to be constituted in such a way as to result to a large extent in the same overall internal balance between '*actifs*' and '*inactifs*' (i.e. between productive and non-productive group members). Various mechanisms — among them fission and adoption — correct the demographic inequalities and result in viable production units.[20]

Meillassoux touches here on a theme that is of particular importance in anthropology: the relation between production and kinship. But the more important the topic, the more essential it is to stress that Meillassoux's analysis contains major gaps. Thus it remains fairly unclear how in actual social practice the Guro achieve such a well-balanced distribution of productive and non-productive persons within the various familial production units. Yet in itself the fact of such a balanced distribution is rather surprising. Every Africanist is familiar with the adage that, in Black Africa, wealth and power are primarily based on control over people. Therefore, one would expect that among the Guro, too, the various family heads would do everything in their power to expand their own group to the utmost. The ethnographic literature on Black Africa teems with examples of family elders involved in heated rivalry over a following of junior kinsmen.[21] Are the Guro an exception? Among this people there are obviously powerful levelling mechanisms at work which limit the extent of inequality in group composition. The problem is, however, that Meillassoux nowhere indicates how in this society the allocation of producers — i.e. young men — over the various production units is achieved in practice. He gives only one case of an adult man and his elder involved in a conflict that threatened to escalate into group fission. However, that case is treated so cursorily — in a footnote (Meillassoux 1964: 171) — that we scarcely get an impression of how the elders bind the young men to their own group, and of how the young men can try to disassociate themselves from this group. It is hardly sufficient to claim that the reproduction of viable production units is brought about because 'the link of consanguinity is transformed into social filiation' (1964: 168).[22] In order to gain a true understanding of this process, more attention ought to be paid to political relationships: the means the elders have at their disposal so as to exercise control; the young men's process of decision-making; and in general the participants'

strategies which determine the actual composition of the production units in the most direct sense.[23]

Rey and determinism

As we have seen, the problem of the relation between determination as stemming from the level of production, and the autonomy of political actors, is as old as Marxism itself; it lies, e.g., at the root of Marx's treatment of class consciousness. Little wonder that this problem looms large in the work of Rey, who is most insistent on the crucial importance of the notion of class in the analysis of any mode of production. Right at the beginning of his monograph (1971), Rey quotes a saying of Engels: 'Men make their own history but within a given milieu which conditions them' (1971: 18; cf. Engels 1967: 4f.). In a polemic with Sartre, Rey comes back to this point and lays full stress on the second half of Engels's dictum:[24]

> Individual strategies, however autonomous they may seem, are nearly completely determined by the position of the individuals in the process of reproduction [viz. the reproduction of the mode of exploitation which, according to Rey, determines the 'given milieu' in Engels's dictum — WvB & PG]
>
> There is no political subject nor an economic subject. The classes 'who make history' are themselves determined by the process of reproduction (Rey 1971: 22).[25]

In itself it is difficult enough to bring such deterministic formulas into line with Rey's stance at the end of his monograph, where he invokes the class struggle as the factor which will ultimately determine the future of the societies he studied in the Mossendjo area, Congo-Brazzaville (see Rey 1971: 520). The relative neglect of the political level, of social actors and class actions, in Rey's study may give the reader the impression that, towards the end, class struggle is produced only as some sort of *deus ex machina*.[26] However this may be, our point here is of a more general nature. The views expressed in the above quotations from Rey can lead to considerable problems in anthropological field-work. One possible criticism of Rey's monograph would be that the book, while containing extremely interesting analyses of the structural mechanisms behind the articulation of the 'lineage mode of production'

with capitalism, does not offer the reader a convincing insight into how these mechanisms find expression and realization in the conscious actions of the people and groups involved. This is particularly manifest in Rey's handling of the notion of class alliance (1971: 121, 434, 518; see also Rey (1973) and (1976): 62–3).

In his analysis of capitalist expansion in the Mossendjo region, Rey is directly inspired by the well-known Marxian analysis of a class alliance between feudal landlords and capitalists which facilitated the birth of capitalism in Western Europe. In Rey's opinion, capitalist expansion in his research area came about as a result of a somewhat similar class alliance between capitalists, on the one hand, and elders, the dominant class in the 'lineage mode of production', on the other. In Europe the monetarization of land rent benefited not only the feudal landlords but also the capitalists, by solving their labour problem: large numbers of peasants were driven from the land and became available as 'free' wage-labourers. By the same token, in the Mossendjo area the monetarization of bridewealth, which formed the crucial relation of exploitation in the old 'lineage mode of production', benefited not only the elders but also the capitalists: when bridewealth was first expressed in money, and then underwent inflation, youths were driven to the labour market in order to earn more and more cash.

In itself Rey's interpretation is of considerable value. He succeeds in bringing to the fore a more or less hidden mechanism which in all likelihood played an important role in many parts of Africa (see Geschiere 1978). However, in the context of our present argument, it is relevant to stress that Rey's conclusions are primarily his own deductions as extrapolated from archival materials. Rey confines himself to a rather global analysis of the transformations of bridewealth in terms of monetarization and inflation (1971: 116f., 317). He does not seem to have felt the need to check the stages in this process with his informants in the field, or to trace in enough detail the ways in which colonial civil servants perceived this process (1971: 368, 416, 435). Generally speaking, the reader hears little about the parties involved, their views of the changes, their strategies. Thus one cannot help wondering whether the 'class alliance' between 'lineage' elders and capitalist interest groups (here the civil servants, in particular) did spring at all from the conscious strategies of either party.

Class alliance between elders and capitalists: The Maka case (S.E. Cameroon)

Observations on the basis of the field-work of one of us among the Maka of southeast Cameroon, already referred to, may indicate that an analysis in the manner of Rey does give rise to complex problems in the field. The Maka inhabit a region in the tropical rain-forest of Equatorial Africa not too far from Rey's research area. Capitalist penetration in the Maka area was attended by difficulties similar to those described by Rey. Also among the Maka, the task of involving the old village communities in the capitalist economy proved to be an arduous one (see chapter 4). Until as late as the 1930s the colonial economy remained based on the most stringent forms of state coercion: through the 'customary chiefs' (who, in this strongly segmented society, were in fact entirely new creations of the colonial state itself), the colonial civil servants organized regular labour raids in the villages. Moreover, the administration tried to force the villagers, in all possible ways, to produce surpluses for the market. At first the Maka responded by attempts to withdraw from administrative control and from the authority of the new 'customary chiefs'. The civil servants would complain that time and again the Maka disappeared into the forest, and that the newly-formed villages constantly split into smaller units which could barely be controlled. However, by 1935 a radical change occurred. Less and less direct state coercion became necessary, since obviously the villagers were increasingly keen to earn money: the Maka began to enter into wage-labour or to establish cash-cropping farms on their own initiative. It is clear that, also in this part of Africa, the villagers' increasing involvement in the money economy was connected with transformations in the pre-existing forms of 'exploitation'. Extensive data on the composition of marital payments, derived from informants and from archival materials demonstrate that, about 1930, money first entered the bridewealth circuit, and that the money component of bridewealth began to rise gradually, especially after 1935 (Geschiere in press, a, b).

Rey's analysis of the mechanisms that play a role in the articulation of the 'lineage mode of production' and capitalism, thus turns out to be extremely relevant to understand developments in the Maka area. However, in the Maka case it certainly seems far-fetched to speak of a class alliance, e.g. one between

Maka elders and the colonial civil servants. It is almost certain that the mechanisms as postulated by Rey were rarely reflected at the political level of conscious strategies and decision-making. Administrative reports indicate that, from the very beginning, the colonial authorities viewed the monetarization and the inflation of bridewealth as a big problem. They made every possible effort to contain a further rise of bridewealth: to them this meant that more and more money was withdrawn from circulation for what, in their eyes, appeared as unproductive goals. State intervention, intended to deflect a further increase of bridewealth, turned out to be in vain, and it still is. It is, however, very clear that the civil servants did not look at the transformation of bridewealth as a possible solution for the pressing demand for labour.[27]

On their part, the Maka elders were, to all appearances, equally unaware of their 'alliance' with the colonial state. Instead, one gets the impression that they felt constantly threatened by the measures the colonial masters took. Geschiere's informants emphasized, for instance, how the fixed preference, among colonial civil servants, for installing young 'dynamic' chiefs (who then would be proclaimed 'customary chiefs') meant a drastic erosion of the old authority relations. Among the Maka there is by no means the sort of fusion between old and new dominant classes after decolonization that Rey postulates for his own research area (Rey 1971: 518). The new Maka élite of politicians and civil servants was recruited mainly from among the children of parents who had sought refuge at mission stations — these children had little choice but go to school. And this new élite maintains an extremely ambivalent relationship with the family elders, who have managed to maintain some measure of authority only within the confines of the village society.

In such circumstances we can speak of a class alliance only in the most figurative or abstract sense: as some sort of unconscious convergence of interests. In retrospect it appears that the Maka elders and the colonial civil servants did benefit, each in their own way, from the transformation of bridewealth. But the government policy lacked any awareness of such a class alliance, or even of a less distinct convergence of interests between civil servants and elders, in connection with bridewealth. And quite clearly such an alliance did not feature in the Makas' perception of the situation.

The Zambian Nkoya as a contrasting case

This issue of how the intertwining of old and new relations of exploitation became expressed in class alliances and conscious strategies is certainly still of interest. Differences in this respect may explain variations in the course of the articulation of capitalism with old modes of production leading to differing political relationships at present. For, of course, there have been considerable differences in this respect, even within Black Africa. The Nkoya, already mentioned, may serve here again as a contrasting example to the case of the Maka. In their region, part of Barotseland in western Zambia, early colonial history clearly illustrated the importance of a *conscious* class alliance (formalized in treaties and colonial legislation) between a local aristocracy and the colonial powers (e.g. Stokes 1966; Prins 1980). The two main Nkoya Chiefs, Mwenemutondo and Mwenekahare, were among the very few chiefs who, despite some vicissitudes, by and large shared in the very extensive privileges, material and otherwise, which the Barotse (Lozi) Paramount Chief enjoyed on the basis of this class alliance. Specifically, these Nkoya Chiefs are known to have issued, in their areas of jurisdiction, legislation fixing and altering the level of bridewealth ever since Nkoya bridewealth came to be monetarized (in the first decade of this century). Alternatively, these chiefs maintained relatively friendly and trustful relations with the local colonial civil servants, sharing the latter's interest in keeping the 'cheeky young natives' in their place and, with this purpose in mind, occasionally visiting the latter's places of work in the urban capitalist sector (van Binsbergen n.d., a). The explicit, conscious class alliance postulated by Rey for the Mossendjo area, and looked for in vain by Geschiere among the Maka, appears to have been present among the Nkoya during the colonial period. As a result, the contemporary political relationships are clearly different from the Maka case: the Nkoya youths' emerging consciousness after Zambia became independent took the form of persistent and violent attacks on chiefly power — the latter, however, still proved to be protected by the party and local government officials representing the post-colonial state at the district level (van Binsbergen 1975; cf. Geschiere 1982).[28]

Such essential differences in political relations and in the participants' perceptions — factors which have directly shaped the course of the articulation of modes of production — run the risk of

being ignored if we focus our research too one-sidedly upon the functional requirements of the articulation process. Therefore it remains an important question, for a Marxist practice of anthropological field-work, how to link our attention to the structural logic of modes of production and their articulation, on the one hand, with political analysis in terms of acting individuals and groups, strategies and power processes, on the other.

Analysis in terms of class?

To tackle questions like these, an obvious tool for a Marxist researcher seems to be the notion of class, since it poses the relevant questions about the crystallization of class contradictions and class consciousness. For an analysis of modern conditions in Africa the concept of class has proved its utility in so far as the *analysis* of research data is concerned (see Buijtenhuijs and Geschiere 1978). But as a point of departure for the collection of data the concept often still appears to be of only indirect utility.[29]

In Africa, anthropological research still tends to take place in settings where classes and class consciousness have far from found an explicit and coherent form. In such a setting the notion of class foremost introduces the question of which factors impede the development of class consciousness and of effective class solidarity in practical politics; van Binsbergen's analysis (see chapter 6) of Nkoya consciousness is a case in point. Only if we are prepared to abstract from the actual processes of decision-making, conflict and control, is it possible to discern classes in Africa today. The way in which the French School has handled the concept of class so far would at least suggest that to employ the term 'class' does not automatically amount to detailed political analysis. Thus the youth, as an exploited class, do play an essential role in Rey's monograph (1971), but at the same time this is an extremely abstract role. The development of class relations and the transformations in the exploitation of the youth are analysed in general terms referring to the logic of the old 'lineage mode of production' and its articulation to capitalism; the young men's personal, conscious outlook, and their political reactions to their class position hardly feature in Rey's story.[30]

The extended-case method

One may well wonder whether a way out of this dilemma, also in

the context of a Marxist practice of field-work, could not be found in the 'extended-case method', which has become so dear to many British and Dutch anthropologists influenced by the Manchester School (as we are ourselves). Would not the study of 'extended cases' *à la* Gluckman (1958) or van Velsen (1967), or of 'social dramas' in Victor Turner's sense (1957), provide the possibilities to link in anthropological field-work, the structural implications of modes of production with the political reality of power processes and their rapidly shifting outcomes? One obvious danger is that, with this method, theoretical premises could be smuggled in which are absolutely alien to a Marxist anthropology. Prominent trends in both British and Dutch anthropology have primarily utilized extended-case analysis in the context of an approach which could best be characterized as 'methodological individualism'.[31] But such a one-sided attention for 'Man the Entrepreneur', or even 'Man the Maximizing Animal', does not seem to be inherent to extended-case analysis, and might be avoided in the context of a different theoretical orientation. For, surely, the analysis of cases should ultimately illuminate not just individual decision-making and strategies but also the structural constraints under which the actors act.

However simple and modest the 'extended-case method' would appear to be as a point of departure for anthropological field-work, it could healthily counter-balance the tendencies towards abstraction which spring from the introduction, into our field-work, of any such Grand Theory as Marxism is. For instance, Rey's class analysis in his monograph (1971) might have been much less global, and much more convincing, perhaps, if he had offered some detailed cases in which the contradictions between elders and youth are acted out in ways that lend flesh and bones to the abstract analytical treatment. If we look at developments one-sidedly from the point of view of the structural logic of modes of production, political vicissitudes can appear only as external and superficial forms in our research. Then the perceptions of those participants with whom the anthropologist has closely associated in the course of her or his research would be treated as of only secondary importance. In an almost Lévi-Straussian fashion, the anthropologist's task would be reduced to, arrogantly, discovering the 'objective' contradictions behind these allegedly external forms. In a Marxist practice of field-work, the extended-case method may serve as some sort of antidote to such abstracting

tendencies. It may be a useful aid to connect, in our data collection, the determining role of the level of production and the distinct dynamics of the political level — in ways that save us from relegating to one-dimensionality the rich reality which the anthropologist was privileged enough to share in the course of field-work. Only thus can we hope to impart, in the course of our research, real meaning to such concepts as class and class struggle.

The ethnography of articulation

The problem

So far, our discussion has concentrated on the description and analysis of the inner logic of one specific mode of production, the one loosely termed 'lineage mode'. In the modern world, however, it is unlikely that a field-worker will encounter such a mode of production in a pure and independent state. Usually it will be part of a more complex social formation where it is articulated with other modes of production — with capitalism, in the first place, and often also with other non-capitalist modes, such as the tributary one. Some of the chapters of this book (see chapters 3, 4 and 6) have suggested how such articulation could be handled historiographically — capturing the significant pre-existing relations of production, and their shifts in the direction of a class alliance (between local dominant classes and capitalists) which made for such articulation. Coming to terms, as a researcher, with several articulated modes of production in a contemporary ethnographic setting is a different matter. Modes of production are models. A Marxist theory of knowledge would claim that these models are *more* real than the bric-à-brac of directly observable social surface phenomena. A more positivist methodological tradition (in which we were educated) would claim, rather, that these models are theoretical constructs, merely superimposed upon the confusing social reality, and waiting to be superseded by rival models once the latter's greater analytical power is argued convincingly. Whichever philosophical position we take, it is clear that modes of production do not present themselves in an immediately recognizable form in the social reality. Therefore, also the boundaries between articulated modes of production cannot be established by direct observation but can only be argued

on the basis of a theoretical analysis of the raw ethnographic data.

Let us recall the process of articulation between the 'lineage mode of production' and capitalism, through the monetarization of bridewealth. Here we saw the *same* categories of people (the youth and the elders) being involved in two irreducibly different types of relations of production. Articulation becomes possible because a young man is subjected (simultaneously; or alternately, but within a limited period of a few years or less) both to capitalist relations of production — where he is a worker selling his labour-power — and to 'domestic' relations of production — where he is a youth trying to secure rights over a nubile woman by paying bridewealth to the elder who is her guardian. What is confusing here, from the point of view of field-work, is that articulation (which theoretically suggests some sort of distinctness, even boundaries, between the various modes of production involved) in fact is realized in the social life of an individual, who remains one and the same person, and who constantly and apparently without great effort, in his actions and conceptionalization, crosses the boundaries between the various modes.

In structural-functionalism the same problematic was often described under the heading of labour migration and urban/rural relations. In that approach,[32] the notion of boundaries between the various 'spheres' in which the actors would operate would be replaced by a sense of continuity. Both the village and the places of migrant work would be considered part of one comprehensive social field, whose constituent components would all be connected by functional and/or normative integration, by the converging interests of the various categories of people involved, the conflicts that bind them, etc. A Marxist approach in terms of the articulation of modes of production, however, would on *theoretical grounds* postulate the existence, within a social formation, of a number of more or less bounded units (modes of production), each unit with its own specific logic which revolves around the central relation of exploitation characteristic of that particular mode — while the articulation between modes would be effected whenever the spoils of exploitation in one mode were used in order to serve the reproduction of relations of exploitation in the other mode or modes involved. The structural-functionalist approach might have greater appeal, a more obvious common-sense rendering of the surface phenomena researchers would encounter in their field-work setting; and particularly that approach would do

justice to the smooth movement to and fro between the two distinct spheres of life. Yet it is the lesson of a whole body of Marxist anthropological literature, including the present book, that the modes-of-production approach has greater analytical power. But how to identify, ethnographically, the various irreducible logics, and hence the various modes of production, while in fact they are closely entangled in the actions of the same set of people? A description of one ethnographic setting may suggest that, in the actual practice of field-work, concrete solutions may be found without falling into the trap of simply and blindly superimposing theoretical distinctions upon the living raw data.

Production at a Zambian chief's court

We have already referred to the chiefly courts which still exist among the Nkoya people of western Zambia. A description of these foci of the political process in the countryside may be fitting following a section on 'production and politics', even though our emphasis will now be slightly different. There our point was that the allegedly 'inescapable' logic of a mode of production is realized and actualized through the concrete and variable micro-political decisions of conscious actors. Here we want to explore how the various modes of production articulated within one social formation, the internal logic of each mode, and the mechanisms of their articulation, can be identified by describing and analysing the concrete interactions between the various actors involved.

The royal court of Mwenekahare[33] is located in Kaoma district, in a large village cluster on the Litoya stream, about 25 km south of the tar road connecting the national capital of Zambia (Lusaka) with Kaoma, capital of the district of the same name, and further west, with Mongu, the provincial capital of Western Province. In addition to the royal village itself (called by the generic name of *Lukena*, royal court), the cluster consists of some fifteen hamlets. The centre of the royal village is formed by a fenced yard, inside which are found the royal palace, a hut without walls where the royal musical instruments are kept, and finally the chiefly shrine. The chief's nuclear family lives inside the fence. Outside the fence, the royal village provides accommodation for the chief's consanguineal kin, visitors and court officials: prime minister, retainers, chief's messengers and musicians.

The prime minister, the chief's senior councillor, is a stranger from the area of the other major Nkoya Chief, Mwenemutondo, which is about 100 km away. Retainers, messengers, musicians and clients are largely recruited from among the chief's bilateral kin. Many are reputed to be of slave origin.[34] Only a minority of the court officials, however, are natives of the royal village; the majority hail from neighbouring hamlets within the larger village cluster, and reside there. Those recruited from more distant villages (like the prime minister) have established a temporary home at Lukena, while retaining a proper household in their villages of origin. The staff of the royal court number about fifteen male adults. They form only a small minority of the male householders in the central village cluster. These court officials are appointed and paid by the District Secretary in Kaoma, upon nomination by the royal council. Their salaries range from about K15 to K60 (c. £8 to £30) per month, while Mwenekahare himself receives a state subsidy of about K100 (£50). Modest though these sums may appear, they are above the level of the cash requirements of most rural households, and partly explain the keen competition that exists for posts at the court.

In addition to the fifteen hamlets in the central cluster, the Litoya valley contains some twenty villages. Kahare's area comprises over a dozen other major valleys and the extensive forest areas in between. These valleys each have their own valley chief, who presides over the valley court of headmen and other elders. In addition, the valley chief administers the valley's main rain-shrine. Valley chiefs have titles whose prestige is often equal to that of Kahare's. As hereditary members of Kahare's royal council they pay infrequent individual visits to the Lukena. These visits are prompted by the process of intrigues and changes in office that constitute (neo)-traditional politics among the Nkoya today. During those visits the valley chiefs offer tribute to Kahare, nowadays usually in the form of money. Without formal judicial powers, and with very limited ritual functions, the court activities that focus on the person of Kahare today mainly lie in the spheres of politics and of production.

Mwenekahare stands at the top of a local hierarchy of traditional political offices. Moreover, Kahare occupies a position within the traditional royal hierarchy of western Zambia, the former Barotseland, whose most exalted office is that of the Paramount Chief (Litunga) of the Lozi people, usually residing at

Limulunga near Mongu. Along with one other Nkoya Chief, Mwenemutondo, Kahare belongs to the handful of royal chiefs in western Zambia whose recognition, prestige and state subsidy directly derive from the special treaties the British South Africa Company, the British Crown, and later the Zambian state at the moment of independence (1964), made with the Litunga.[35] Contacts between Kahare's court and the Litunga's are infrequent: there is a trickle of correspondence, and official delegations from Kahare visit Limulunga (bringing tribute in cash) on the occasion of major events, such as the accession of a new Litunga. In the mid-1930s a branch of the Litunga's court was created in Kaoma district at Naliele 200 km east of Mongu, and headed by a junior member of the Litunga dynasty. Contacts are maintained similar to those with Limulunga court, but more frequently. So much for traditional politics.

On the district and national level, Kahare is also active in modern state institutions. The Kaoma District Council is a local government body which, besides elected councillors, comprises a limited number of nominated councillors who, among other local foci of power, represent the major chief's courts in the district. Mwenekahare is one of the nominated councillors. As such, he receives a further state remuneration; and he infrequently travels to Kaoma in government vehicles, in order to attend the council meetings and related functions. At the national level, Kahare is one of about twenty-five Zambian chiefs who were co-opted into the House of Chiefs, a body whose infrequent meetings in Lusaka bring these traditional rulers in close contact with the top leaders of the Zambian state. On the district and national level, as within his own chief's area, Kahare's function is largely ceremonial, and involves the maintaining of the institution of chieftainship and not the allocation of scarce financial resources and power.

Against this background we may now consider production at Kahare's court and attempt to analyse it in terms of an articulation of modes of production. Mwenekahare is involved in production in a number of ways: legally, as one controlling considerable resources of land, game and fishing sites;[36] and practically, as one supervising hunting and agricultural production at the court, and appropriating the proceeds from these activities.

Apart from that part of Kahare's realm that has been appropriated by the state for public usage (roads, a large game reserve, an agricultural development project), the chief is supposed to hold

the available land area in trust for his people. The Nkoya cultivate different types of land. Wet riverside gardens (*matapa*) are permanent, scarce, and keenly controlled by villages and kin-groups; it is largely on these plots that the very limited local production of hybrid maize as a cash crop takes place. Alternatively, there is an abundance of land available for dry forest gardens, and unlimited access to such land is taken for granted once one is accepted as a member of a local village. It is here that subsistence cultivation of cassava, traditional maize, millet, sweet potatoes, and groundnuts takes place.

Village sites are frequently moved, as a result of both ecological and micro-political processes; few villages remain intact and located at the same spot for much longer than ten years. Selection of a new village site is subject to Kahare's approval. In addition, immigrants from other chiefs' areas, and from ethnic groups other than Kahare's Nkoya, often aspire to establish new villages in Kahare's area. Their settlement, however, is also subject to Kahare's approval, and he is known to have sent his own messengers, or to have demanded assistance from the police at the district capital, to oust newcomers who had failed to obtain his permission. This chiefly control over land does not affect the distribution of land among recognized inhabitants of the same valley, e.g. Litoya. Such distribution sometimes becomes problematic when kinsmen residing in different villages contest the use of *matapa*, or when an enterprising villager (e.g. the local shopkeeper) in exchange for cash mobilizes outside labour and mechanical assistance which enables him to cultivate a disproportionally large forest garden. The ensuing conflicts have no formal judicial solution; they fall outside Kahare's competence, whereas local courts among the Nkoya consider land cases obscene and not actionable. The limitations of Mwenekahare's control over land as the main production factor are also manifest when it comes to appropriation of land for the public interest. Requests are made not to the royal chief but to the Kaoma District Council. Even though Kahare is a nominated member of this body, his voice is hardly ever recorded in the Council minutes, and the Council has reallocated portions of Mwenekahare's area without formally requesting his approval.

Likewise in the sphere of control over production factors lie Mwenekahare's claims over fishing sites and proceeds from hunting. Rights over fishing in specific streams and ponds attach to

hereditary princely titles, including that of Kahare; Kahare's are particularly extensive. While some headmen manage to have their claims respected by non-kin, this is no longer the case with Kahare. Fishing freely takes place in his ponds, without his permission being asked, and without the traditional tribute in kind being paid. The only vestige of his claims is that Kahare still sets the time for a day of massive, collective fishing in his ponds, when, towards the end of the dry season, catches are particularly plentiful. Part of the catch is consumed locally, but much finds its way to the district markets, normally via middlemen who belong to other ethnic groups than the Nkoya.

Western Zambia is still relatively abundant in big game, and royal chiefs used to have exclusive rights over certain animals or portions thereof. Under present-day national game legislation, most of the massive hunting that still goes on in the area would be poaching. The Department of Game and Fisheries battles ineffectively against existing practices, and particularly turns a blind eye to the conspicuous hunting activities of local chiefs. More or less as chiefly paraphernalia, Mwenekahare possesses a number of excellent licensed rifles and guns; in this again his position is similar to that of other headmen and elders. Besides being an excellent hunter himself, he sends his lesser court officials hunting, mainly in order to keep up the meat supplies at the Lukena. Besides, Kahare privately employs an elephant-hunter, who kills several elephants per year. Their meat is freely distributed among the inhabitants of Litoya and the surrounding valleys, the ivory is sold by Kahare on the black market.

On several occasions Kahare has used the proceeds from ivory sales (augmented with savings from his subsidy) in order to buy motor-cars. One landed up in the royal courtyard, immobilized for lack of spare parts; while another was appropriated by one of his urban relatives. However, during their characteristically short episode at the court, these vehicles were used not only for ceremonial visits dictated by Kahare's various offices, but also for transport runs to urban areas, where game meat and agricultural produce were marketed, and in the course of which paying passengers would be taken. While the vehicles were in running order, Kahare would employ drivers who would frequently resign on the ground of being underpaid.

Mwenekahare's main productive activity, however, lies in agriculture. He does not belong to the category, much favoured by

the Zambian central government, of exemplary chiefs who combine traditional politics, representative functions within the modern state, and impressive agricultural production. Kahare's area is of old a famine danger area, and famine relief (in the form of bags of maize being freely distributed by the district authorities) was occasionally necessary in the 1970s; the recent growth of cash-crop production of hybrid maize (inevitable with the decline of cash-earning opportunities offered by labour migration) appears to have aggravated this situation. On a very limited scale (which yet exceeds that of almost all other agricultural producers in the Litoya valley) Mwenekahare cultivates both subsistence crops and marketable maize. There is no evidence of tributary labour: Kahare's subjects, even those living in the Litoya valley or in the central village cluster, do not work in his fields on some collective and unpaid basis. All labour-power used comes from people living at the Lukena: Kahare's nuclear and extended family (who are entirely dependent upon his crops), and the court officials and their wives and children (who, in addition to working in Kahare's fields, also have their own independent agricultural production in their villages of origin). All workers share, to a limited extent, in the subsistence crops produced, but the proceeds from the marketing of hybrid maize are retained by Kahare. Interestingly, Kahare's *matapa* lie outside the Litoya valley, at the Kazo stream, about 5 km from the Lukena. Therefore most of the royal establishment moves to temporary shelters at Kazo in the month of July (with picturesque effects, such as the royal musical instruments hanging in trees, and the royal guns and spears sticking out above the walls of the roofless royal shelter), only to return there shortly before the first rains, in October/November.

Just as there is no communal tributary labour in the royal fields, there is no distribution of foodstuffs by the chief among his subjects. Exchanges of foodstuffs belong, however, to the standard pattern of interaction between households, and members of the royal household are engaged in such exchanges just like anyone else. Purchases of foodstuffs (and particularly of beer) are increasingly normal phenomena, and also the royal household makes such purchases in the central village cluster and further afield. Some people stick to the custom of making tributary offerings of beer and grain to the chief, but these are exceptions which constitute only a small proportion of consumption at the Lukena, and of production in the surrounding hamlets and villages.

Capturing articulation in ethnographic data

Overlooking this body of descriptive data, an analysis of the patterns of labour and the appropriation of surpluses would reveal three mutually connected yet irreducible sets of relations, which sets, we argue, are modes of production.

First there is the domestic level, the 'lineage mode of production', on which Kahare, relying on the labour-force of the younger men and the women in his extended family, gains part of his agricultural production, keeps up reciprocal exchanges with other households, and in many respects is comparable to all other elders in the region. Here the basic productive unit is the extended family, co-residing in the same village. The circulation of direct producers (mainly women and youth) would be dictated by virilocal marriage in the case of married women, and by temporary attachment to elderly male consanguineal kinsmen (patrilateral or matrilateral) in the case of the youth, and of adolescent, divorced and widowed women. The youth and unmarried women normally have a choice between a number of elderly relatives with whom they can live, and to whom they can offer their labour-power in exchange for food, clothing, shelter and supernatural protection. The relation of exploitation is between elders and youth/women, and is mitigated by the fact that the latter have the option of moving to a different village if their exploitation becomes too extreme. All this applies equally to the extended kin at Kahare's court, all of whom have potential options of membership in a number of villages besides the Lukena, and many of whom have for several years lived elsewhere, or have moved away from the Lukena since the mid-1970s.

Second, there is the 'tributary mode of production', which provides the pattern and the idiom for most of the productive activities at the Lukena in so far as these involve court officials other than Kahare's nuclear and extended kin. Moreover, through the slavery connotations of many paid court officials, through rights over land, fishing sites and game, through infrequent and minor tribute (received by Kahare from lesser chiefs and subjects and given by Kahare to the Lozi courts at Naliele and Lumulunga), the tributary pattern is further worked out, in a form which suggests both the historical background of the 'tributary' mode of production, and its contemporary erosion. For the court officials, the pattern of circulation is on the surface dictated by traditional

court politics: the vicissitudes of nomination to office and demotion from office; here competition can be very open, since there are no fixed rules of succession, and heredity does not play an important part. Having a slave background (i.e. descent from a royal princess and a male slave) seems slightly to increase one's chances of being nominated for the more menial court offices of musician and retainer. Formally nomination and discharge are the competence of Kahare's royal council. A perusal of relevant files at the Kaoma district capital[37] reveals, however, that these matters are ultimately decided upon by the District Secretary, on grounds of stability, political reliability and efficiency, which operate in a field of discourse totally different from that of Nkoya court politics. This is one instance where an articulation of the tributary mode of production to a third mode (capitalism as mediated through the state) can be seen. We shall come back to this. At any rate, the circulation of male court officials follows a logic radically different from the competitive kinship idiom patterning the circulation of producers in the 'lineage mode of production' among the Nkoya.

This also holds for the relations of production within the present-day tributary mode: Kahare controls the production of his court officials not because he is their elder/patron, but because he is the chief, and by virtue of his own exalted status enjoys a state subsidy on which the salaries of the court officials depend. Being paid by the state, that part of their work which yields material products is appropriated by the chief (much of their work at the courts amounts only to ceremonial or ideological production: court music, oratory, ritual). Here we encounter two moments of articulation. In the first place, all male court officials are heads of households, which are productive units in the 'lineage mode of production'. By working in the chief's fields, the wives and youths in these households generate a surplus under conditions stipulated by the 'lineage' mode (for it is under that logic that their labour power is controlled by their head of household), but appropriated by the tributary mode (under whose logic their head of household is a court official, who allows the chief to dispose of part of the labour power of his household). Second, there is a moment of articulation between the tributary and the capitalist mode, since some of the surpluses thus appropriated by chief Kahare are marketed by him for cash on distant urban produce market, or to

the National Agricultural Marketing Board whose lorry comes to the Lukena a few times a year.

Other examples of an articulation between the tributary mode and the 'lineage' mode can be seen in the tribute (produced under the logic of the 'lineage' mode) offered by householders and village chiefs to Kahare. The cash tribute offered by Kahare to the Limulunga and Naliele courts is circulated under a tributary logic, but when we examine its sources (state subsidy, cash tribute from valley chiefs, and cash proceeds from the production of agricultural workers, hunters, and the operation of motor vehicles) there is reason to characterize the production of this tribute as the outcome of an articulation between the 'lineage', the tributary and the capitalist modes of production.

Kahare's personal employment of hunters and drivers largely follows the logic of a capitalist mode of production: wage-labour, separation between the workers and their means of production (gun, vehicle) owned by his employer. Tributary overtones, however, can be detected in the fact that the hunter is traditionally entitled to part of the bag (ideally the upper tusk — the one that does not touch the ground when the elephant has been felled), while the driver is expected to accept subnormal wages because of the honour of being employed at court.

But while the capitalist mode of production appears in a straightforward form in Kahare's cash sales and his employment of hunters and drivers, the present data suggest that capitalism's articulation to the tributary and 'lineage' modes is much more complex and subtle than that. Kahare's state subsidy goes back to treaties (in other words, a class alliance) signed in 1900 between the British South Africa Company on the one hand, and on the other the Lozi king Lewanika, heading a tributary state which included several Nkoya chiefs. Today this subsidy is financed by the Zambian state largely from the proceeds of mineral sales, realized through the labour of Zambian mine-workers many of whom are migrants from rural areas similar to Kahare's (although few Nkoya work at the Zambian mines). The Zambian state partly finances and distantly controls traditional politics which form the motor of the tributary mode of production in present times, and while infringing on the autonomy of tributary relations of production (as is clear when we consider the chief's diminished control of land, game and fishing sites), makes ample use of the

encapsulated tributary mode in order to further its own legitimation — in other words its ideological reproduction.

Thus, an analysis of the actual relations at Kahare's court may clarify especially the role of the tributary mode in the articulation of capitalism and rural modes of production in western Zambia — notably its role in legitimizing and reproducing capitalist dominance. Of course, this specific role of the tributary mode has to be analysed against the wider background of the involvement of the Nkoya, in the villages and as urban migrants, in the money-economy and capitalist relations — or, in an even wider sense, in relation to Zambia's place within capitalist economy on a world scale. Even though Kahare does receive some income from urban kinsmen, such an analysis would surpass the scope of our ethnographic example of Kahare's court. None the less, the present analysis may have given some indication of how articulation of modes of production can be detected in the practice of anthropological field-work by studying the empirical interactions of the actors within a particular setting.

Field-work on ideology, belief and ritual

Some theoretical problems

The application of the ideas of French Marxist anthropology to field-work in the sphere of ideology (which we shall here limit down to belief and ritual) poses a number of problems, which Marxist writers are only beginning to explore. But, even in general, considering the spate of descriptive anthropological publications on ideological and religious subjects, values, world-views, etc., it is amazing that the anthropological literature contains so very little on the methodology of field-work on these topics. Penetrating ideological complexes of thought and symbolic action through participant observation remains a craft that is learned not from books but by contact with experienced researchers, and by personal trial and error. This is not the place to make up for this general omission. We would rather explore how the marxist perspective on modes of production and their articulation, as presented in this chapter and throughout the present book, suggests specific questions as regards the ideological dimensions of social life — and how these questions might be approached in anthropological field-work.

Setting out on this course, we encounter a second difficulty. In France modern Marxist anthropology has primarily developed as an attempt to come to terms with the economic organization of local communities, especially in Africa, trying to identify the material aspects of production and reproduction, and the relations of exploitation around which these revolve; a major issue in this context has been the forms and effects of capitalist encroachment. In the works of Meillassoux, Terray and Rey, religion is either ignored or (see Terray 1979b) is treated in a way which scarcely illuminates the place of ideological elements within modes of production and their articulation. Godelier is in a different position: his short articles on religion (1975, 1977) pretend to offer a Marxist perspective, but his approach is disappointingly idealist, and, besides, a Godelierian idiom seems to contribute little that is not already contained in mainstream anthropology of religion since Robertson Smith, Tylor and Durkheim.

However, others working on the basis of a Marxist inspiration, and utilizing the concept of mode of production, have meanwhile produced a limited number of analyses of the ideological dimension within one non-capitalist mode of production; in this respect reference could be made to the works of Bonte (1975), Houtart, (1980), Houtart and Lemercinier (1977, 1979), Augé (1975), and Baré (1977). Religious analyses cast in terms of the articulation of modes of production within a social formation were offered by Schoffeleers (1978) in his historical analysis of a Malawian martyr cult, and by van Binsbergen in *Religious Change in Zambia* (1981a). That book offers an elaborate theoretical framework that enables us to interpret the complex historical succession of major religious forms in Central Africa since about 1500, and the contemporary manifestations of these forms, as the ideological counterpart of the emergence, articulation and partial decline of various modes of production. The contemporary co-existence of all these religious forms (transformed, no doubt, since they first appeared on the local scene) is explained by the fact that today's complex social formation still contains (again, in a transformed shape) the various modes of production and the structures of articulation to which these various religious forms belonged in the first place.

These studies are specific applications of a more general Marxist approach to ideology, whose classic statement is to be found, of course, in Marx's analysis of the ideological dimension of the

capitalist mode of production (Marx 1973; Marx & Engels 1975). A number of leading ideas combine in this tradition. Religion is seen as the ideological projection, into the celestial and the unreal, of processes of appropriation and exploitation that constitute Man's social life. Thus religion appears as a structure of *ideological reproduction*: by reflecting existing relations of production and by endowing the phantasms thus produced with a unique, exalted sense of reality and power, these relations are underpinned and carried over to new generations (e.g. in rites of passage) and to other parts of the world (cf. the spread of Islam and Christianity). Religion, however, may take on an impetus of its own, and (in the hands of elders, kings, priests, cult leaders) may stipulate a circulation of producers and an appropriation of their surpluses which, rather than reflecting relations of production that exist outside the religious sphere, constitute relations of exploitation in their own right. In this respect (the point is also stressed in recent non-Marxist theories concerning so-called 'regional cults' or 'territorial cults'; see Werbner 1977; Schoffeleers 1979; van Binsbergen 1981: 252–5), religion may become a structure of material production and exploitation *sui generis*. Only a sophisticated materialist theory of symbolism (whose development is one of the most urgent tasks for contemporary Marxist social science) will be able to explain how the unreal is capable of imposing itself (either as a reflection, or *sui generis*) with such vehemence upon the reality of material production and exploitation. From this point of view we look at religion, primarily, as a structure of *ideological production*, and we try to classify the forms of such ideological production, and to identify the rules and laws that govern it.

Throughout, the problem of religion from a Marxist point of view might be summarized, in Bourdieu's words, as the problem of identifying

> *the transformation laws which govern the transmutation of the different forms of capital into symbolic capital.* The crucial process to be studied is the work of dissimulation and transfiguration (in a word, euphemization) which makes it possible to transfigure relations of force by getting the violence they objectively contain misrecognized/recognized, so transforming them into a symbolic power, capable of producing effects without visible expenditure of energy (Bourdieu 1979: 83, emphasis added; cf. Bourdieu 1977).

However, we must not overlook the fact that such transmutation is in principle a two-way process. For symbolic capital can also be transmuted into material capital, as is demonstrated by so many politically and economically successful ideological and religious movements, from the Roman Catholic Church to the Bolshevik Party, from the nationalist movement in colonial Africa after World War II to the Muridiyya brotherhood which is less than a century developed into a major economic force in Senegal.[38]

The dimensions of ideological reproduction, material production and exploitation, and symbolic production suggest specific sets of data which a Marxist field-worker doing religious research would primarily focus upon. The dimension of symbolic production would appear to be the most difficult to tackle from a Marxist point of view. Not only is it further removed than the other two dimensions from the processes of material production habitually studied by Marxist anthropology. Also, ideological production is by its nature innovative, and often escapes from the repetitiveness of social phenomena field-workers look for in the first place. Anthropologists engaged in religious research are now beginning to realize that the power and the appeal that are being generated in religious contexts derive not only from more or less permanent structures (which the tradition of religious anthropology has always stressed), but also from creative and unpredictable, symbolic manipulation by means of which religious actors captivate their audiences, presenting to them a new and illuminating view of their personal condition and of the world (see van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers (in press, b), and references cited there). This so-called praxeological element (which would equally be discernible in artistic production, or in political oratory in a context of mobilization for class, ethnic and racial conflict) is realized in momentaneous transactions between participants. Linking up with the language- and culture-specific processes of communication between those involved, it is eminently amenable for research by means of participant observation in the field; but it is less easily analysed in the terms that dominate structural Marxism.

Clearly, the underlying problematic here is that of the relative autonomy of the symbolic order vis-à-vis material production and exploitation. Symbolic production presupposes considerable room for experiment, free variation, unsystematic and distorted reflection of material reality, and hence a creative departure from the objective structure of social reality as anchored in relations of

material production. For the field-worker, this means that he or she should detachedly and attentively study symbolic phenomena in the field, before jumping to conclusions as to their repetitive, systematic nature, let alone their reflecting, in whatever dialectical way, the material structures of production and exploitation. Ultimately, of course, Marxist research into ideology should aim to reveal systematic connections between symbolic and material structures;[39] and for this purpose, the study of relations of material production should occupy a very considerable part in any such research. From an analytical and theoretical point of view, however, it would appear as if the study of ideology, belief and ritual is in a somewhat different phase from the study of exploitation, reproduction, bridewealth and related topics well covered by Marxist anthropological theorizing. Both within and outside Marxism the theoretical reflection on the ideological dimension of social life is relatively underdeveloped. One explanation for this state of affairs is that such theoretical reflection is in itself a form of ideological production, and thus when brought to bear upon other people's ideological production, raises immense philosophical problems whose solution cannot be expected to come from anthropologists alone (see chapter 6). This is no reason to sit back and refrain from Marxist field-work on religion and ideology until the theorists have finished their homework. But less than in other spheres of Marxist anthropological analysis, a break-through in the study of ideology can be expected from field-work alone.

Religious plurality and articulation of modes of production: the Nkoya case

The following example, again from the field-work of one of us in Zambia, may indicate how the French Marxist perspective of an articulation of modes of production can bring order to otherwise extremely confusing ethnographic data collected in a contemporary setting. It suggests some of the types of data a field-worker working on religous data in this approach would be advised to look for. In this case, the empirical steps can be summarized as follows.

(1) One should try to identify (through a study of symbols, participants' actions and statements, processes of recruitment and control) the underlying symbolic logic that is consciously applied by the participants in their rituals, cults and religious conceptions.

(2) Rather than assuming that in any historical social formation

one and only one symbolic logic is at work, one should make an effort to identify, in the field data, any number of such logics: mutually irreducible and contradictory, and each separately applied in a distinct cult or ritual.

(3) Analysis of non-religious data on production and reproduction within the social formation under study should lead to the identification of the various modes of production articulated (following a historical process — to be studied by additional historiographic research) within that social formation.

(4) The logics of production and reproduction identified under (3) should then be compared with the symbolic logics identified under (1) and (2), in an attempt to relegate the various symbolic sub-sets encountered in the field, to various modes of production and their articulation.

(5) It should be borne in mind that ideological reproduction (ideally resulting in a one-to-one correspondence between symbolic and material logics) is only one of the possible connections between the symbolic order and the material order — in addition, ideological production that has no clearly detectable material counterpart is to be encountered, whereas the field-worker may also come across ideological structures *sui generis*: structures which introduce an element of production and exploitation in the religious field (e.g. appropriation, by cult leaders, of surpluses produced by members of a cult in productive contexts defined by that cult), again without a detectable counterpart in structures of non-religious production and reproduction.

The contemporary religious situation among the Nkoya turned out to be extremely confusing, as a considerable number of major cult complexes existed side by side, and the same people would participate in many or all of them apparently indiscriminately. Thus the Litoya valley turned out to be the scene of (among minor other types) the following ritual forms:

— ancestral ritual, in which all members of a village would collectively take part under the direction of the headman and other elders, in cases of hunting trips, name-inheritance, and serious illness supposed to have moral implications;

— rain ritual, conducted by the valley chief and a few other headmen belonging to the Kahare dynasty, at the previous chief's burial place;

— cults of affliction, venerating not ancestors but alien spirits; these cults, treating individual diseases devoid of any moral

implications, would be represented by independent cult leaders who had been initiated into the cult in the course of some earlier treatment. The cultic congregations of adepts would be recruited from neighbouring and even more distant villages and valleys, according to a pattern cutting across existing units of production and reproduction;

— prophetic cults of affliction, which differed from the non-prophetic ones in that they venerated the High God, and that their cult leaders, deriving their powers from a charismatic cult founder, would belong to an interlocal cultic organization which rigidly controlled the cultic idiom and the flow of cash within the cult;

— Christian churches and sects, primarily Watchtower and the Evangelical Church of Zambia, which in many ways are comparable to prophetic cults of affliction, except for the latters' near-exclusive emphasis on healing.

This outline does not cover the whole range of symbolic expression, and particularly does not touch on divination and sorcery control as engaged in by diviners and diviner-priests (*nganga*); these activities, however, were largely of a technical and individual nature, if they were not part of the cults mentioned above.

Once the relevant ethnographic data had been collected, the five major cult complexes clearly stood out. They defined different sets of activities, organized differently. Each had its own patterns of control over people and material resources, and pursued a distinct idiom featuring different supernatural entities, interpretations of human misfortune and ways of redress. Some cults would stress morality whereas others would not. Some had a strongly communalist view of the human individual in that the misfortune of one of the members was supposed to reveal a moral crisis affecting the entire group (ancestral cult). Others would look at misfortune as a purely individual, accidental and a-moral circumstance, to be redressed by appeasing the vagrant spirit that had allegedly taken possession of the patient (non-prophetic cult of affliction). The various complexes seemed to represent, *on the symbolic level*, a number of mutually irreducible logics, whose co-occurrence within one and the same 'culture' could not be explained in structural-functionalist terms. For here the same set of people were operating, in cultic complexes which were rigidly compartmentalized rather than normatively or functionally integrated.

The pattern began to make sense once the various irreducible logics underlying this contemporary religious plurality were

interpreted in terms of distinct logics of modes of production. Ancestral ritual and chiefly rain ritual could easily be identified as the ideological components of the 'lineage' mode and the tributary mode respectively. They, in other words, constituted clear-cut cases of ideological reproduction.The individual-centredness of the remaining three cultic forms, their lack of references to the processes of production (hunting, agriculture) that went on in the local community, their recruitment patterns which denied the units in which such production was organized, their veneration of invisible entities without local referents (such as chiefs and ancestors have), the more or less bureaucratic organization characterizing the prophetic and the Christian forms, and the extensive circulation of cash in all three varieties suggested a dynamic beyond the local horizon: processes of articulation, capitalist encroachment.

Only after extensive historical research and further theorizing (which led to the idea that cultic forms might reflect not just modes of production, but also the process of their articulation), was it possible to relegate the contemporary cultic varieties to specific modes of production in the articulation process of the social formation of Kaoma district, and to establish a rough periodization for the emergence and decline of the various modes of production involved. The original data, however, derived from the contradictions encountered, in the course of field-work, in the ethnographic data themselves.

Interestingly, cultic forms, which originally reflect modes of production and their articulation, turn out to replace in part the very relations of material exploitation to which they originally referred. Thus they come close to being *sui generis* exploitative structures in their own right. Non-prophetic cults of affliction, for instance, could be argued to have formed, at the time of their emergence (in Kaoma district: late nineteenth century), the ideological component of an articulation between, on the one hand, mercantile capitalism (as locally represented by alien traders), and on the other, a social formation comprising a dominant tributary mode articulated to a 'lineage' mode. The social formation today has a very different composition, and the impact of capitalism has taken new forms. Yet these cults of affliction continue to play an important part in the relations of exploitation between elders and the youth: they provide a structure through which the cash the youth earn in the capitalist sector is syphoned

back to the villages, as payment for the activities of elders who are among the important cult leaders; most cult leaders are elderly women and their cultic administrations over female patients, for which the youth act as sponsors, provide a grotesquely deformed mirror-image of the relations of exploitation characteristic of the 'lineage' mode of production (van Binsbergen 1981).

Concluding remarks

It will be evident that our explorations do not yet permit any conclusive prescription of what a Marxist practice of anthropological field-work should be. Concerning the various aspects discussed above we could only offer some preliminary suggestions. And there remain many more aspects to discuss — such as, just to mention a crucial one, the practical political problems encountered by a Marxist field-worker.[40]

None the less, our argument may have shown that there is a case for a Marxist practice of field-work. The theories developed by such Marxist anthropologists as Meillassoux, Terray, Rey and Godelier do suggest original starting-points for field-work. However, the practical consequence of their ideas remain to be clarified on important points. Thus, our discussion on the concept of mode of production may have shown that further operationalization of this concept could stimulate interesting field-research. But it became equally clear that further nuancing of the concept of mode of production would be necessary in order to make that concept a useful tool for dealing with the rich variation anthropologists encounter in the field. Likewise, only further research can hope to demonstrate the value of our suggestion that the 'extended-case method' might be a proper technique in a Marxist practice of field-work in order to deal with the problematic relations between 'production' and 'politics' — in order to do justice to the autonomy of the political sphere in relation to the logic of modes of production and their articulation. The same applies to our attempts to translate this concept of articulation of modes of production and the equally problematic inter-relation of 'production' and ideology' into propositions for research and observation within a specific ethnographic setting.

Reflection on the implications of Marxist theories for anthropological field-work should have priority in present-day discussions

of Marxist anthropology. Direct and systematic application of Marxist theory in field-work will enhance the value of data and their interpretation — as we hope our own future field-work in Africa will prove. But with the data, the theory also will improve on the basis of such reflection. As Reini Raatgever argues in chapter 8, stagnation of the theoretical discussions among French Marxist anthropologists has now reached a stage where a new empirical input from field-work can be expected to result in a new break-through.

Notes

1 Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at a seminar with Meillassoux, Amsterdam, 28 February 1980, organized by the Amsterdam Work-group for Marxist Anthropology, in association with the African Studies Centre, Leiden and the Free University, Amsterdam, and at a similar seminar with Terray, Leiden, 27 November 1981, similarly organized; the Anthropology seminar, University of Manchester, March 1980; and the Amsterdam Work-group for Marxist Anthropology, April 1980. We are indebted to all participants in these sessions, and particularly to Claude Meillassoux, Emmanuel Terray, and the members of our work-group, for their constructive criticism. We also gratefully acknowledge comments by the editors of the journal *Development and Change*.

2 Here lies a fundamental problem with whose implications we shall be confronted throughout this chapter. Marxist social science is often claimed to offer a total approach to all aspects of social life in its historical development — a dialectical method that is both all-encompassing, and essentially different from the methods (often with neo-positive overtones) prevalent in so-called 'bourgeois' social science. In practice we allow ourselves to be sensitized to such specific aspects of the field data as are particularly relevant in the light of our Marxist theory; yet we apply field-work techniques which belong to the anthropological discipline in general, and which imply general anthropological theories (e.g. as to the structure of kinship, symbolism, face-to-face interaction, etc.) accumulated over the past hundred years largely irrespective of Marxist debate.

3 In Rey's monograph (1971) any explicit account of his field-work is lacking. The reader is even left in the dark as to when the field-work was conducted. Only towards the end of the book may the attentive reader surmise that Rey's research topic was reformulated in the course of his field-work (Rey 1971: 23, 496, 500). Godelier in his monograph (1982) confines himself to the most general indication of the circumstances under which he conducted his research (Godelier 1982: 15–17). In his Guro monograph, Meillassoux offers somewhat

more factual details, but neither gives a real insight in the design and the development of his research (Meillassoux 1964: 7–8). Nor are the design and the conditions of Meillassoux's various field-work projects extensively dealt with in his later collection of articles (Meillassoux 1977).

4 Together with Cresswell, Godelier has edited a handbook on anthropological field-work (Cresswell & Godelier 1976). Unfortunately, the book offers hardly more, and in many ways less, than the classic anthropological methods and techniques. Godelier's own contribution to the book is extremely limited, and does not go beyond a perfunctory introduction (pp. 7–11), and a surprisingly technical piece on agricultural plots (pp. 140–51). Likewise, reactions upon French Marxist anthropology from outside France have hardly touched on the matter of field-work (see chapter 1 on the predominantly theoretical orientation of the Anglo-Saxon reactions).

5 E.g., Meillassoux's oral presentation at the Meillassoux seminar mentioned in note 1.

6 Cf., e.g., Sahlins (1972); Harris (1980).

7 See Godelier (1973): 46–52. Cf. also Meillassoux's scepticism as to the utility of detailed and quantitative data collection on production, as expressed in the oral presentation at the Meillassoux seminar mentioned in note 1.

8 Rey (1971) likewise stresses, for the Mossendjo area in Congo-Brazzaville, the importance of the circulation of young men as 'slaves'. He shows how such circulation is closely related to the elder's control over prestige goods. Rey's and Terray's views in this respect come close to Meillassoux's; the latter was the first to stress the relationship between bridewealth, prestige goods and the elders' authority (cf. Meillassoux 1960, 1975). The principal difference is that Meillassoux refuses to speak of exploitation and class contradictions in this connection (Meillassoux 1975: 121).

9 Rey (1971: 253–68) complicates this problem of how to deal with variations within the 'lineage mode of production', by arguing that even African state societies like the Ashanti did fit in with the 'lineage mode of production': the main function of the statal superstructure would have been to guarantee the reproduction of the 'lineage' system and the authority of the elders. The consequence is that Rey has to refer to 'truly segmentary' societies as a kind of subtype of the 'lineage' mode. If the concept of the 'lineage mode of production' is stretched that far, it becomes all the more necessary to refine the concept in order to deal with the considerable variation between societies like the Ashanti and the 'truly' segmentary ones. Apparently Terray would prefer to analyse the Ashanti as a formation determined by an articulation of a 'lineage' and a 'slave' mode of production (see 1974 and 1975). Meanwhile we note that the term 'lineage' in this context should be regarded as a blanket concept meant to loosely indicate societies mainly organized on a kinship basis. In Africanist anthropology since the late 1950s there is little to suggest that the concept of the segmented, unilineal descent group (cf. Fortes 1953) is all that suitable

to describe the complex and shifting patterns of social organization found in the continent, often characterized by bilateral tendencies, inchoate and optional structures and considerable local variation within a region.

10 Or, in terms later adopted by Rey (1979): among the Maka the formal subordination of the producers to the relations of exploitation was not yet fully developed into a real subordination (the immediate production was not yet reorganized in direct connection with the exploitation of the juniors by their elders). See also Geschiere (1981).

11 Cf., e.g., Bonte (1981), Kuper (1982a); the crucial role of cattle in the Diola mode of production is shown clearly by van der Klei, in chapter 3. It seems likely that in practice the monopoly of the elders over cattle is often less strict than their monopoly over inanimate prestige goods, which can be simply stored without any further investment of labour being necessary. Such variations must have different consequences for the authority position of the elders, and moreover, they appear to be of direct significance for the dynamics of 'domestic' patterns of organization under capitalist dominance. In general, inanimate bridal goods are nearly everywhere rapidly transformed into money under the modern relationships. By contrast, cattle seems to be much more resistant, as bridal goods, to modern changes; even in communities which have been involved in the money economy for a longer period, bridewealth still consists primarily of cattle. Therefore, the continuing importance of cattle as a prestige good can have a specific impact on the articulation of capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production. Cf., e.g., the numerous compaints of modern development-specialists on the 'irrational' expansion of livestock and the 'over-grazing' in East African cattle-societies.

12 See van Binsbergen (1970, 1980, n.d., b), Geschiere (1969) and van der Klei (1971).

13 Of course, it becomes apparent here that the term 'lineage mode of production' has serious drawbacks. The general validity of the 'lineage' concept is strongly contested among anthropologists nowadays (see Kuper 1982b). The comparison of peasant communities in North Africa and in Black Africa shows in any case that patterns of organization somewhat resembling the 'lineages' of classic anthropology can function as cores of the social organization in very different economic settings. Therefore, it may be somewhat confusing to use the term 'lineage' in order to denote a specific mode of production. However, in a chapter like the present one, where we refer directly to Rey's and Terray's interpretations, it would be even more confusing to introduce a new term for this mode of production.

14 See van Binsbergen (1971, 1980, n.d., b, n.d., c). Another variation concerns the way in which the North African peasant communities were related to wider politico-economic formations. See, for an interesting Marxist analysis of the unstable relationship of the 'tribal' systems and the political centres of the states in North Africa, Seddon (1978); cf. also Seddon (1981).

15 Oral intervention by Terray at the seminar mentioned in note 1.

16 See the research project, formulated by Meillassoux in 1964, which aimed at 'identifying and characterizing the old modes of production in West Africa' (see Meillassoux 1977: 107f). Such comparative research concerning the application of the notion of mode of production on different pre-capitalist forms of organization within one area still seems very important. It is to be hoped that the results of this project may still be published.

17 Our translation. Cf. also Rey's elaboration upon Marx's statement that, for any society, it is as impossible to stop producing as it is to stop consuming. Rey continues: 'This truism is the base of the power of all dominant classes because the process of reproduction which enables societies "not to stop producing", demands social combinations which these dominant classes can control. It is by using this technical necessity of the reproduction that dominant classes maintain the social forms in which production takes place — social forms which appear as technical necessities to the dominated classes [. . .] We have shown that [. . .] the determining social relation of production never appears as a moment in the immediate process of production: it appears always as a moment of what Marx called either the "social process of production" or "the process of reproduction" [. . .]; therefore, the process of reproduction appears in the form P → X → P, in which [P is the immediate production — WvB and PG] X is the "instance" charged to accomplish the determining moment of the social production: the re-grouping of the direct producers' (Rey 1971: 160–1; our translation).

18 See Rey (1971): 450f.; as long as new economic developments (the impact of the European trade and the production of new commodities by the African communities) reinforced the old circulation patterns of the producers between the local communities, the lineage mode of production was still to be considered as dominant; in the area Rey studied, this phase continued until the second decade of this century. But about 1930, after the violent interventions by the colonial state, the impact of the money economy created new patterns in the circulation of the producers which satisfied the capitalist demand for wage-labourers. Only then the capitalist mode of production had become dominant.

19 Another problem, related to the operationalization of the notion of mode of production in anthropological fieldwork, is the issue of the unit of study which has haunted so many generations of anthropologists. Does the application of a concept such as mode of production imply a specific delimitation of the unit of study? An interesting attempt to deduce the proper unit of study from the specific characteristics of the 'domestic' (= 'lineage') mode of production is to be found in Meillassoux's use of the notion of 'matrimonial area' (1975: 73). In his view one of the characteristics of the 'domestic' community is that the relations of (biological) reproduction always have to link several communities and thus, create a wider social network than the relations of production (which demand relatively simple forms of co-operation, mostly restricted to one community).Therefore, a meaningful unit of study in such a setting would be the 'matrimonial area' — i.e. the conglomerate of communities linked by the necessities of (biological) reproduction which form the basis to the widest forms of co-operation. An almost insurmountable problem seems to be, however, that, honeycomb-fashion, the matrimonial areas around individual households, or villages, seem partly to overlap and to shift from one household or village to the next, so that ultimately they do not appear as bounded socio-geographical units clearly demarcated in the landscape, but constitute statistical aggregates, in other words analytical constructs without immediate roots in observable reality. See chapter 6 for further discussion of the issue of the unit of study in a somewhat different context.

20 See Meillassoux (1964): ch. 5, notably p. 160 f.: 'The biological family[. . .] is replaced by *functional* families whose members are associated by economic obligations rather than by ties of consanguinity' [our italics — WvB and PG]. Cf. also Meillassoux (1975): 93, for a more general discussion of the topic of the necessity in the domestic patterns of organization to have the producers circulate between the units of production. As noted above (p. 249), Rey considers the 're-grouping' of the direct producers as a crucial moment in the reproduction of all modes of production.

21 Cf. Geschiere (1981); Vansina (1980); van Binsbergen (1977b), 1982 and n.d., a); and in fact virtually the whole of Zambian rural ethnography as discussed by van Binsbergen, ch. 6 above.

22 In French: 'le lien de consanguinité se transforme [. . .] en une filiation sociale' (Meillassoux 1964: 168). Further analysis is required on this point, not only in view of specific authority relations in the ethnography of the Guro, but also in the light of the very extensive discussion, in general kinship anthropology since about 1960, on 'descent and filiation', and the social functioning, and social manipulation, of genealogical and/or biological links between people.

23 Cf. Terray's warning that the somewhat trendy use of the notion of reproduction may lead to forms of analysis in which the necessities of the reproduction of the system are constantly invoked as the ultimate explanation to any relation or process, in a way which strongly reminds one of functionalist teleology (1979a): 35–6. See also Rey (1971): 242–3; there, Rey does refer, albeit very briefly, to a tension between the demographic function of the circulation of men and women in the 'lineage mode of production' and the power-politics of the elders controlling this circulation.

24 Cf. Sartre (1960): 60.

25 See Rey (1971): 48; cf. also Rey's tendency to refer to modes of production as if these were historical actors. Cf., for example Rey (1971): 459–60, where capitalism is supposed to 'create a transitional mode of production'; or Rey (1976): 55, where 'capitalism' substitutes itself to feudalism and a peasant mode of production 'offers resistance'. Such formulations make it relevant indeed, to raise the question of the relationship between the conscious strategies of the actors and

interest-groups involved on the one hand and the ultimate impact of a mode of production on the other.

26 See Rey's own criticisms of his earlier works in the epilogue to his *Les Alliances de classes* (1973: 217f.), where he stresses that closer attention should be paid to the realities of class-struggle.

27 Rey seems to suggest that in his research area at least some of the colonial administrators more or less understood the real consequences of the transformations of the old relations (for example the monetarization of the bride-'price') for the labour question (see 1971: 368, 416, 513). However, Rey's analysis remains rather vague on this point. One could suspect that here, Rey's interpretation of the motivations behind the interventions of the administrators is heavily influenced by his own views in retrospect on the real mechanisms behind the developments.

28 Of course there are many more examples in Africa of how a conscious class alliance between a local aristocracy and colonial powers directly influenced modern political developments; cf. for instance Mamdani (1976) on the development of class relations in Buganda.

29 There are of course exceptions. See for instance Konings (n.d.), who used the concept of class while doing research in a specific context of manifest, bureaucratically-organized, and more or less violently imposed capitalist relations of production in the countryside of modern Ghana.

30 Cf., e.g., Rey's extremely global analysis of the development of national politics and its effects on the local relationships and the power-balance between elders and juniors in his research area (1971: 481, 509, 513).

31 Cf. Bailey's dictum that he distrusts any explanation of social processes which is not formulated in terms of individual actions (1969). On the influence of this 'transactionalist' approach in Dutch anthropology, see chapter 1 above. For a critique of methodological individualism as applied to capitalist encroachment in Zambia, see van Binsbergen (1977a).

32 See van Binsbergen 1977a; van Binsbergen & Meilink 1978; Gerold-Scheepers & van Binsbergen 1978; and references cited there.

33 See van Binsbergen 1975, 1981, and n.d., a. The ethnographic present refers to the years 1973–4, when van Binsbergen lived at the Kahare *lukena*.

34 Domestic slavery effectively disappeared in this area only about 1930, and before that time it was customary for women of the royal family to marry slaves so that their offspring would swell the ranks of the royal village without rival residential claims being made upon them from their paternal side. This however is a point not of ethnography but of history; see van Binsbergen n.d., a.

35 Dealing here with the ethnographic present, we cannot discuss the dynamics of state formation in Zambia which, as a more or less autonomous datum, led to the special status of chiefs in western Zambia (cf. Mulford 1967; Caplan 1970; Hall 1968; Ranger 1968; chapter 6 above, and Binsbergen n.d., a; Prins 1980; Mainga 1973).

36 A useful account of these chiefly rights in western Zambia, although largely concerned with the case of the Lozi of the Zambezi flood-plain, is Gluckman (1968).

37 Consulted by van Binsbergen in 1978 on a field-trip financed by the African Studies Centre, Leiden; for a detailed account, see van Binsbergen (n.d., a).

38 We continue, in this section, to concentrate on religion, although the problem of ideology is much wider than that, and includes, e.g., varieties of class consciousness, often appearing in a religious form. In this book, a non-religious aspect of ideological analysis, ethnicity, is treated in chapter 6.

39 We have Marx's word for it that this is even a relatively simple exercise: 'It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestial forms of those relations' (1973: 372–3, as quoted approvingly by Godelier 1977: 4). Unfortunately, our task is made rather more difficult by the fact that religion is not a self-evident category in social analysis. Nor can religion (and this point is made repeatedly by Godelier: see 1978a, 1978b) always be neatly dissected from the processes of material production and reproduction in a social formation: it often forms a part of them (as stressed by Godelier — an aspect we would term 'ideological reproduction'), and sometimes generates them (under conditions we would describe as '*sui generis*').

40 Our only excuse for not going into these practical political problems is the fact that others have already discussed them at length; see Copans 1975; Amselle 1979; Editorial 1979.

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