COLONIAL RULE

Problems with Colonial Hegemony

→ “the transforming power of Western colonial domination”?

→ Unimpeded Western colonization?

→ Marshall Sahlins, June Nash, John and Jean Comaroff, and James Scott

→ Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies school: doubting the efficacy and legacy of empire

→ “hegemony” can assume consent as a starting point of discussion, not a question

Colonial Monolith?

→ John Comaroff: “The image of colonialism as a coherent, monolithic process can no longer be sustained: indeed, the very nature of colonial rule was, and is, often the subject of struggle among colonizers as well as between ruler and ruled….settlers, administrators, and evangelists contested the terms of European domination.”
→ problems with speaking in unitary and universal terms of the European colonial project

→ fragmentary interests, shifting projects, and internal contestation among colonial elites

→ tensions and contradictions among and between: State officials, Settlers, and Missionaries

→ intra-European competition and wars for geopolitical dominance

→ Different types of colonies:

**Colonies of settlement**—Canada, Australia, the US, New Zealand

**Colonies of conquest**—Peru, Mexico

**Colonies of exploitation**—the Caribbean

→ Direct Rule
→ Indirect Rule

→ Slave labour, Peasant labour, or Wage labour
Domination—Resistance

→ The colonial world as “a Manichean world”?

→ Frantz Fanon (1963: 84): “colonialism…is in fact the organization of a Manichean world, a world divided up into compartments. And when in laying down precise methods the settler asks each member of the oppressing minority to shoot down 30 or 100 or 200 natives, he sees that nobody shows any indignation and that the whole problem is to decide whether it can be done all at once or by stages”

→ Ideology

→ Resistance

→ Hegemony vs. ideology:

“Since it is possible, indeed inevitable, for some symbols and meanings not to be hegemonic—and impossible that any hegemony can claim all the signs in the world for its own—culture cannot be subsumed within hegemony, however the terms may be conceived. Meaning may never be innocent, but it is also not merely reducible to the postures of power” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 20).
→ James Scott: resistance, hidden transcripts

→ Ranajit Guha: dominance without hegemony

→ Power: dominance (coercion and persuasion) and subordination (collaboration and resistance)
On Anthropology and Colonialism:

“As Talal Asad pointed out, even anthropologists from the ‘left-leaning’ Manchester wing of the British school, like Victor Turner, proved ‘strangely reluctant’ to take stock of the power structure within which their discipline had taken shape. If it was simplistic to dismiss anthropology as a ‘handmaiden of colonialism’, as some intellectuals in post-colonial countries were doing in the 1960s and early 1970s,2 it was naive or disingenuous to assume that the ‘professionalism’ of the community of anthropological ‘participant observers’ guaranteed the objectivity of anthropological knowledge, as Turner had suggested (Asad 1973a: 15–16). However sympathetic they might be to the ‘native’, anthropologists were part of a larger colonial power structure, and that affected their analyses” (Gledhill, p. 69)

“Although anthropology now claims to have decolonized itself, many of the issues raised by the contributors to Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter (Asad 1973c) at the start of the 1970s remain live ones. Anthropology continues to be professionalized and anthropologists continue to be involved in power relationships with the people they study, whether they are from the West or products of the higher educational systems of non-Western countries” (Gledhill, p. 71)

“The role of anthropologists in maintaining structures of imperial domination has, despite slogans to the contrary, usually been trivial; the knowledge they produced was often
too esoteric for government use, and even where it was usable it was marginal in comparison to the vast body of information routinely accumulated by merchants, missionaries, and administrators. Of course, there were professional anthropologists who were nominated (or who offered their services) as experts on the social life of subjugated peoples. But their expertise was never indispensable to the grand process of imperial power. As for the motives of most anthropologists, these, like the motives of individuals engaged in any collective, institutional enterprise, were too complex, variable, and indeterminate to be identified as simple political instrumentalities” (Asad, p. 134)

“But if the role of anthropology for colonialism was relatively unimportant, the reverse proposition does not hold. The process of European colonial power has been central to the anthropological task of recording and analyzing the ways of life of subject populations, even when a serious consideration of that power was theoretically excluded. It is not merely that anthropological field work was facilitated by European colonial power (although this well-known point deserves to be thought about in other than moralistic terms); it is that the fact of European power, as discourse and practice, was always part of the reality anthropologists sought to understand, and of the way they sought to understand it” (Asad, p. 134)
For further discussion:

_Gledhill, Ch. 4, “The political anthropology of colonialism: a study of domination and resistance,” 67-91._

What are some of the analytical problems surrounding the concept of “resistance”? Why do some anthropologists (and “post-colonial critics”) appear to be resisting “resistance,” and do their objections invalidate the concept for you?

How does Gledhill link colonialism and nationalism? To be more specific, how did nationalism arise from colonial situations?

How would you summarize the contribution of James Scott to the study of resistance, and do you agree with the criticisms directed at his approach?

Gledhill summarizes some of the work of the Comaroffs on religion and politics in South Africa, and states that the impact of Christian missions was contradictory. How was it contradictory? What does this make you think about the role of powerful institutions in your own society, in your time?

Be able to explain the meaning of “inversion,” “strategic obliteration,” and “reproduction in opposition,” as presented in the chapter.

In the lecture, the question of disputing “the colonial monolith” was explored. How does this chapter reflect and support the same concerns raised in the lecture?

What was the basis for divisions between the colonial government and the planters?

Why is it that, in a colony whose ideological leitmotiv was “peace and order,” that acts of violence by labourers were downplayed?

Simply put, how does an outnumbered and encircled colonial minority exercise power and assure its dominance?

What accounts for the change in discourse, by the 1920s, of the colonial planters with reference to the government?

Ch. 12 [Vincent reader] – Talal Asad, “From the History of Colonial Anthropology to the Anthropology of Western Hegemony,” 133-142
How have anthropologists handled “change” and “modernity” with respect to their ethnographic objects of study?

Why does Asad say that it is not enough for anthropologists to note that resistance to modernization took place, or that hegemony is not monolithic? What more needs to be said, and why?

*Ch 3 [Vincent reader] -- Max Gluckman, “‘The Bridge’: Analysis of a Social Situation in Zululand,” 53-58.*

What do you think is the basic purpose of this chapter?

Why do you think that this piece of work attracted the attention that it has, enough to warrant placing it in this reader?