

# Perspectives in U.S. Marxist Anthropology

*Edited by*  
David Hakken  
Hanna Lessinger



**Perspectives in U.S.  
Marxist Anthropology**

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## About the Book and Editors

An assessment of current trends in Marxist anthropology, this collection of essays reflects both the unifying force of Marxist thought and the diversity of contemporary anthropology. Linked by a common approach—a shared commitment to Marxist analysis—the contributors look at a variety of phenomena, including the problems of labor and work, in terms of a coherent theory of Marxism. Examining political, economic, and ethnic situations, the authors discuss social structures, ideology, and class formation. This unique volume warrants the attention of both Marxists and non-Marxists in anthropology and of scholars in other fields.

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In Loving Memory  
of  
Eleanor Leacock  
1922-1987

*For Happy*



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# INTRODUCTION

*Hanna Lessinger and David Hakken*

## **The Present Moment in Marxist Anthropology**

The volume which lies before you presents current work from within a trend of Marxist anthropology now maturing in the United States. In this introduction the editors present their assessment of this important work and what we see as its origins. While placing the selections in historical and organizational context, we point out impediments which still limit the contributions of Marxist anthropology. We conclude by identifying what we think are the distinctive characteristics of this trend and by pointing to its unfinished tasks.

Such an assessment is desirable at this time for a number of reasons. First, we feel that the quality of U.S. Marxist anthropology, manifest in the articles included here as well as evident in much other work, has reached such a level that it warrants the serious attention of both Marxists in other fields and of non-Marxists in anthropology. Secondly, we feel it is imperative right now to encourage development of a common language and a shared sense of problem among our Marxist anthropological colleagues. In order to understand why we feel this way, we need to consider the various contexts within which this volume has developed.

This current Marxist tendency in U.S. anthropology springs from a combination of intellectual, political and disciplinary developments, a confluence of events which has touched most academic fields over the past two decades. The present shift to the right in U.S. cultural and political life has coincided with organizational and intellectual crises within anthropology.

The root of these crises is the present marginalization of the field of anthropology during a period of global capitalist expansion. Anthropology, once deeply involved in the imperial enterprise, is now increasingly marginal or irrelevant to it--largely because of the discipline's liberal (and at times leftist) traditions. This apparent paradox exists because, alongside the field's sporadic involvement in both the ideology and practice of imperialism, working anthropologists have also had the bad habit of sympathizing with those they study. This identification with one's informants, who are often the powerless of the world, has made anthropology as a whole slightly more liberal than many other social sciences. Thus the general narrowing of both economic and ideological possibilities since the mid-1970s has meant that, alone of the social sciences, anthropology has failed to expand or to find non-academic jobs for its practitioners. People who seek to "reform" or "save" the discipline usually advocate the neutralization of anthropology's liberal thrust, and particularly the eradication of the leftist presence within the field. From this viewpoint (shared by the right and also by some liberals), Marxists are, and deserve to be, peripheral to anthropology. We, on the other hand, see Marxism as central to the rejuvenation of the discipline. We feel that dialectical materialism, an understanding of the labor theory of value and a vision of intellectuals' proper role in class struggle allow us to understand what is happening in the world around us. Marxism also gives us the hope that we can change that world.

One of the manifestations of crisis in anthropology has been the struggle over the proper object of anthropological study. For example, the writers in this volume, while often dealing with familiar ethnographic material, direct as much of their attention toward the state and the world capitalist system as they do to internal cultural dynamics. The question of broader analytical foci and wider economic and political contexts takes on particular urgency for U.S. anthropologists whose "own" state is bent on imposing an iniquitous system on the rest of the globe. Unlike many non-Marxist anthropologists, these writers find it impossible to ignore such relationships, and feel impelled to make them a major part of their analyses.

A further aspect of the crisis is the organizational struggle which has taken the form of debate within the discipline over the ethics of anthropological research. The debate flows, of course, from the crisis over what anthropology is, or should be. Many of the authors in this book have been part of a movement to defend

the code of anthropological ethics adopted during the Vietnam war. In that code we are defending the discipline's humanistic tradition against those who would domesticate its critical thrust, who would like to de-politicize (or in the words of one hostile observer, "de-Vietnam-ize") anthropology, making it more acceptable to government and business. All of these debates are simply manifestations of a general underlying tension within U.S. higher education--a tension about the purposes of education and the class alliances of intellectuals. Is the purpose of higher education to serve capitalist accumulation or to expand the potential of the human race? If social science cannot be neutral, where do anthropologists align themselves? One of our aims in presenting this collection is to bring these debates, which have raged in an often subterranean fashion, into the open. In doing so we hope to sharpen them, to stake out identifiable Marxist positions in the debate, and in doing so to evaluate and advance these positions.

Yet the articles in this volume, taken as a whole, reflect a dialectic internal to Marxist anthropology as well as the broader processes referred to above. On the one hand these papers reflect a strong, highly-informed interest in and identification with a wide tradition of Marxist discourse extending beyond the confines of anthropology. The papers by Schiller, Hakken and Nash are particularly good examples of this pattern. To the writers in this book, the problematics of Marxism provide more useful analytical frameworks than those of the anthropological mainstream in which we were trained. The processes and relations of production, the importance of class, the force of ideology, as well as questions of definition and conceptualization, provide the themes for many of these articles.

These authors do not by any means represent the whole spectrum of Marxist anthropological thought in this country. Nevertheless their pieces reveal considerable diversity; they do not all appropriate the Marxist tradition in the same way. Indeed, for many of these authors the initial points of departure for their investigations are the formulations of mainstream anthropology. For example, in the essays which follow, Ruyle and Hakken start their arguments from within ecological or economic anthropology, although both ultimately move beyond such categorizations. Babb, Schroder and Keren begin by examining topics currently under debate in their respective geographic areas. Interestingly, while many of the writers aim their critiques primarily at the mainstream, many are equally critical of Marxist colleagues. This,

along with the general diversity of outlook represented here, suggests that the current Marxist trend in anthropology is both broad and nonsectarian.

One can argue that this twofold orientation toward both mainstream and Marxist discourse is a symbol of maturity. Marxist anthropology, once banished to the non-professional periphery (or so deeply submerged as to be accessible only to a few), now contends with the mainstream and is becoming part of general scholarly discourse. Yet this diversity and this dual orientation also threaten further development. Without wishing to impose rigid political orthodoxy, the editors of this volume feel that appropriations of the Marxist framework which are too divergent can impede the identification of central questions and the recognition of common approaches. We need to clarify analytic and descriptive terminology, to identify more sharply crucial points of contention, if Marxist anthropology is to develop its full potential.

### **The Peculiar History of Marxism in U.S. Anthropology**

To make sense of the internal intellectual dialectics referred to above, one needs to examine the history of Marxism within anthropology, especially within U.S. anthropology. It is only fair to warn the reader that some of this history is presented very much from the viewpoint of those of us who came into anthropology in the 1960s and early 1970s. There are few systematic accounts of leftist thought and activity among anthropologists in the earlier parts of this century, although Leacock (1982) does provide one. Here we present what is surely a partial account--the way it looked to us.

To begin with, we should recognize that Marx and Engels were among those 19th century social theorists who recognized the importance of the anthropological materials becoming available to them and their contemporaries. For Marx and Engels, interest in these materials was shaped primarily by a desire to critique capitalist social formations, although the available data base was severely limited by the undeveloped state of anthropological research. Given the impressive scope of Marx's and Engels' analytic framework and their ongoing political influence, one might have expected their work to have provided anthropologists with continued stimulation as the field developed. However, in the United States the interplay between a narrowly liberal political and intellectual tradition and a deeply ingrained anticommunism largely

prevented this from happening. Instead, interest in the comparative ethnology of Marx and Engels remained concentrated in left political groups. With a few isolated exceptions, an explicitly Marxist approach to the study of other societies moved outside of academia. This was not unique to anthropology--the same process occurred in other social sciences as well. However the virtual absence of an overt, self-conscious Marxist position within anthropology has distinguished the U.S. intellectual scene from that of Europe or the third world.

If anthropology in this country remained largely ignorant of Marxism, Marxist intellectuals were relatively uninterested in the developing science of anthropology. Left political groups did sometimes still refer to 19th century work on society and social evolution. For instance, Socialist Labor Party activists organizing in Chicago in the 1960s stressed the importance of cultural evolution in their educational work. During the same period the Communist Party U.S.A. continued to cite a unilinear form of Morganism, with a heavy stress on the determining role of forces of production. By the 1960s the new left, stimulated by the emerging feminist and third world liberation movements, had also developed an interest in other cultures and in social evolution. However most of this attention was channeled toward study of Marxist classics such as Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. We who were studying anthropology during that brief flowering of the new left often found it necessary to convince members of left groups that additional data and new theoretical insights accumulated since the composition of *Origin* might require some re-evaluation of Engels' contentions.

At the time, those of us struggling to create intellectual "fit" between our anthropology, our increasing grasp of Marxism and our involvement in political action were forced to contend with an anti-Marxist legacy within the discipline. Some of this simply reflected this society's general fetishization of "neutral" or "non-political" intellectual endeavor, as it is mythically conceived. Some of the hostility was overtly political. Anthropologists, who have long had to confront the implications of observer bias in their central research method, nevertheless blandly accepted an analytic prejudice against Marxism. They remained convinced that it was--intellectually--much worse to be a Marxist than to be a symbolic anthropologist or a cultural ecologist, since Marxism, it was thought, made one unfit to do "unbiased" scholarship.

The deep antipathy to Marxism goes back to the beginnings of the discipline. Marvin Harris, whose *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968) was one of the first works in mainstream anthropology to locate Marx within the intellectual landscape, argues that identification of Morgan's evolutionary schema with Marxism contributed to the strong anti-evolutionism of the Boasians. Some have viewed Leslie White's materialism as a significant exception to this hostility. However Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, while arguing the importance of the White legacy to Marxist anthropologists, has cautioned against minimizing the differences between White and Marx (1986).

Although the generation of the 1960s did not understand it at the time, a number of anthropologists had tried to connect Marxism and anthropology, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s when leftist currents were more widespread in U.S. intellectual circles. In the 1940s anthropology graduate students at Columbia organized the Mundial Upheaval Society. Elman Service, Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, Stanley Diamond, Morton Fried, Daniel McCall, Rufus Mathewson, Robert Manners and John Murra at various times belonged to this informal group. Participants discussed their own work and formulated their research problems against a background of implicit and tacitly understood Marxism. As Sydel Silverman has noted, the intellectual orientation of the Mundial group reflected the lingering post-World War II impetus of the progressive ideology of the 1930s, and the dislocations experienced by those who had lived through the war (1981:xii). Both Murra and Service had fought in Spain with the International Brigades. The general progressive orientation of such informal groups of graduate students, (which may have existed outside of New York as well) also reflected the impact of British archeologist V. Gordon Childe's work. In New York the presence of such figures as Paul Kirchhoff, Karl Wittfogel, and linguist Morris Swadesh was important. Clearly, at the period the Mundial group and probably many other graduate students elsewhere were grappling intellectually with field experiences in the third world in which they were obliged to confront the phenomenon of colonialism and anticolonial resistance.

Elsewhere in this period Melville Jacobs and Bernhard Stern produced a 1947 textbook, *Outlines of Anthropology*, with strong Marxist overtones. Stern, a sociologist with affinities for anthropology, was also editor of *Science and Society*. Eleanor Leacock organized an important symposium on social stratification

and evolutionary theory at the 1957 American Anthropological Association meetings, which presented papers by herself, John Murra, Preston Holder, Robert Armstrong and Joyce Wike (Leacock, 1958).

The intellectual current such informal groups represented was profoundly dampened by the rise of McCarthyism in the U.S. Among the many academics who suffered at the time was Gene Weltfish, fired by Columbia. Jacobs, a student of Boas who had worked in the Northwest Coast, ran afoul of investigating committees at the University of Washington. Swadesh, dismissed from City College, went on to a second career in Mexico. The repressive atmosphere was apparently instrumental in leading many, including the Mundial group, to develop a coded method of referring to essentially Marxist concepts (Lauria 1987). In their work there emerged a use of language more acceptable to non-Marxist colleagues but quite different from standard Marxist rhetoric.

The retreat into an essentially coded form of discourse left those of us in following generations with odd, if not distorted, perceptions of our "elders." Perhaps mistakenly we saw the work of the Mundial group, for instance, not as Marxist but as a kind of left-wing materialism and evolutionism. We were not always able to differentiate the work of the Mundial group from that of the Michigan group around Julian Steward, particularly the work of Service and Sahlins. Many a graduate student has pondered Steward's "levels of sociocultural integration," for instance, or Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism" (Vincent 1985:141) and has wondered just how closely these constructs were supposed to parallel Marxist models. The difficulties succeeding generations of anthropology students experienced in decoding this work was exacerbated by our generation's typical pattern of intellectual development, which started from political activism and the study of anthropology and only later moved into the discovery of Marxist theory. It is not surprising that we were initially unable to grasp the Marxism which was present, in partial disguise, in some of the mainstream anthropology we read. Nevertheless, the re-emergence of an *explicitly* Marxist strain in U.S. anthropology was an eventual product of the social ferment of the 1960s and 1970s. This new strain in anthropology combined a commitment to political activism, the study of Marxist classics and a mandate to integrate these into our scholarship.

As in other disciplines, the initial manifestations of this emerging Marxist current were often negative. To be a Marxist

was to oppose the established social sciences. There is a great deal of similarity in tone between Martin Nicolaus' debunking of sociology as "a branch of the tree of political power" (1969:387) and Kathleen Gough's discussion of "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism" (1968). For some of the generation of the 1960s, such critiques led them to abandon anthropology intellectually if not formally. Others of us, believing in the revolutionary potential of a transformed anthropology, still found it difficult to make a connection between our academic enterprises and the social upheaval in which we were participants.

In the 1970s Dell Hymes called for *Reinventing Anthropology* along Marxist lines (1972) and Stanley Diamond founded the journal *Dialectical Anthropology*. These and similar efforts marked for many of us the beginning of an attempt to use Marxism systematically and explicitly as a basis for rethinking the discipline. Among the Mundial group, Wolf and Mintz were active in this endeavor, as was Leacock in a slightly different sphere. It is important to note, however, that these efforts were largely individual, somewhat diluting their effect on an already-disparate field. For most younger scholars just coming to think of themselves as Marxist anthropologists, self-identity grew out of political experiences in the anti-war, working-class, civil rights, Black, Chicano, women's, gay or ecology movements, rather than out of the influence of particular teachers. The essentially coded nature of the debate was heightened by an absence of continuity which might have been produced by institutionalized theoretical "schools," around particular graduate departments or research institutes devoted to leftist anthropology.

Thus in an important sense younger anthropologists felt they had to invent themselves, and to create a Marxist anthropology on their own, often in great isolation. However there was external stimulus for such efforts, from events like the publication of Emmanuel Terray's (1972) *Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies* and the translations of French Marxist anthropological work appearing in the British journal *Critique of Anthropology*. Important homegrown points of identification were Leacock's introductions to Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1963) and to Engels' *Origin of the Family* (1972). Rayna Reiter [Rapp] established an important Marxist position within the newly emerging feminist anthropology with her *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1974).

In the 1970s, as the crisis in anthropology began to emerge, the language of Marxism became more acceptable in the discourse

of the discipline. Some of this was a response to the work of European and Latin American scholars; some was a response to the pressure of radical political movements of the 1960s. As this growing acceptance of Marxist language continues today, its limitations become clearer. We find ourselves having to distinguish between the sometimes eclectic or haphazard use of analytical tools like "political economy" and the use of a developed Marxist analytical framework. As a consequence, scholars genuinely committed to fostering a Marxist trend within the discipline frequently found it necessary to sort out those with a substantive commitment to Marxist anthropology from those who simply desired to appropriate its symbolism. Vincent (1985), Bloch (1983) and Wessman (1981) all confront this problem to one degree or another.

The question of who is or is not a "real" Marxist anthropologist is further complicated by the coexisting debate over various kinds of materialism and evolutionism, which skirt but do not coincide with some of the concerns of Marxism. For instance, in the long absence of an overtly Marxist position within the discipline, the materialists and cultural ecologists have often been the most visible opposition to the Geertzians and other schools of idealist symbolic analysis, and sometimes the materialists have defined their positions using quasi-Marxist language. The symbolists' real opponent in some of these debates--Marxism--has been absent or operating from deep cover.

In such situations Marxists attempting to define their own positions often find themselves attacking some of the colleagues most sympathetic and most open to Marxist thinking. The sorting process is fraught with additional danger because those spotting "fake" Marxists can easily be accused of trying to stuff rivals into ideological straightjackets. (In popular demonology straightjackets, along with jackboots and horns, are standard-issue Marxist garb.) Yet we feel some such distinction is necessary since Marxist anthropology is something more than another useful paradigm to be grafted onto the body of anthropology-as-usual.

Perhaps we should, following Mao Tse-tung, distinguish dialectical materialists working within the Marxist tradition from two other groups: metaphysical materialists like Harris and dialectical idealists like Marshall Sahlins and Edmund Leach. We feel the metaphysical materialists tend to undervalue the importance of human cultural agency in accounting for the dynamics of social transformation, while the dialectical idealists tend to ignore the

ways in which human culture is constrained by material forces. The approaches of Harris and Sahlins are simply examples of a more general trend: the piecemeal appropriation of parts of the Marxist conceptual apparatus into anthropology. This often has negative analytic and political consequences and, as noted above, has sometimes driven those in the Marxist mainstream to apply preemptive political tests in an effort to separate the sheep from the goats among those who have at one time or another called themselves Marxist. It is important for Marxist anthropology to strike a balance, maintaining tolerance for those who are politically sympathetic, while insisting on clarity in the actual debate. Given this history, it is no wonder that current Marxist anthropology in this country is diverse and somewhat fragmented.

### **The Organizational Context of the Current Volume**

As we suggested earlier, organizations and institutions shape the nature of intellectual development. It is not accidental that the current volume originates within an organization, the U.S.-based Council for Marxist Anthropology (CMA). In Britain much of the recent development in Marxist anthropology took place around a journal, *Critique of Anthropology*. In France the center was a research *problematique* spelling out the relationship between the dynamics of precapitalist societies and economic anthropology. In Latin America it was the close association between intellectuals and political liberation movements. CMA, not the first such left caucus within U.S. anthropology, is the descendant of a "radical caucus" which emerged within the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in the 1960s and 1970s. That was succeeded by Anthropologists for Radical Political Action (ARPA) in the mid-1970s. The CMA was founded in 1978.

These organizations are an outgrowth of "the movement" of the 1960s, in which Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was the major mass organization for whites. Contemporary Marxist anthropology in this country reflects some of the characteristics of these SDS-style organizational forms. The early radical caucus, for instance, served as an outpost of "the movement" within the discipline. It devoted itself to exposing the meretricious character of certain anthropologies and to emphasizing the importance of various liberation struggles against imperialism. ARPA was typical of groups which emerged in other U.S. academic disciplines in the early 1970s, the most vigorous of which was Science for the People

(SftP), still alive and well in Boston. A similar development occurred somewhat later in Britain. Organizationally these groups were radically decentralized and preoccupied with "political," rather than "theoretical," development. Reflected in these groups was that dominant belief of the 1960s--that the only true struggle was a direct one.

The CMA emerged as ARPA faded. The new organization saw its role as the stimulation of theoretical development. At its founding meeting CMA members decided to include "Marxist," rather than "socialist" or "progressive," within the title of their organization. This decision underlined the group's commitment to the development of Marxist theory, a task as important as the political tasks of CMA's predecessors. We understand, as we did not 20 years ago, that theoretical struggle is also a form of class struggle, though it can never stand alone as the only form of resistance.

In practice much CMA theoretical work in the early 1980s has been oriented toward the legitimation of Marxism within the discipline, rather than the cumulative clarification of Marxist anthropology. To do this, we have organized scholarly sessions at meetings of the AAA and of regional anthropology groups. In our efforts to give the Marxist position greater visibility within the discipline, we have had some success. CMA deserves some of the credit for the widening number of sessions at AAA meetings in which Marxist perspectives are evident. The format of these sessions, however, has not always led to sustained or substantive intellectual exchange.

Simultaneously, the CMA has been forced to respond to various AAA organizational maneuvers aimed at eliminating political content from a more "professionalized" anthropology. The profound employment crisis which has already damaged the discipline has given those to the right of the political spectrum new ammunition, since the drive to make anthropologists "marketable" may sometimes disguise a drive to eradicate liberal and leftist thinking within the discipline. At the same time the label "Marxist anthropologist" has rarely improved anyone's chances of employment. Thus CMA's existence has not, in itself, created the conditions or structures necessary for clarifying the meaning of Marxist anthropology or wholly legitimating its presence within the discipline.

Nevertheless, the cautiously positive reception Marxism is beginning to receive in anthropology grows from a recognition that

the discipline is in theoretical crisis and that Marxism may offer some vision of why. To many the technicist, metaphysical materialist or semioticist options once so fashionable no longer seem viable as the world itself changes. Conversely, Marxism offers much of the humanistic, holistic appeal of traditional U.S. anthropology.

The larger context of CMA work is, of course, the growth of the political right wing in the United States. Conservatives have chosen to mount ideological battles around evolution and around the study of alternate lifestyles and non-Western cultures. There have been strenuous right-wing efforts to replace the teaching of evolution with "scientific creationism" and to limit cultural studies to the study of the Western tradition (or a middle-class white, male version thereof). John Cole and Gerald Reed have demonstrated how these ideological battles have come together in an assault on the very notion of independent institutions of higher learning, as well as in a particular assault on anthropology (1985, 1986). Institutionally we must recognize the danger of such conservative crusades and must prevent our associations or work places from accommodating or capitulating.

In a larger sense anthropology has a great deal to contribute in combating such rightist world views. For instance anthropology can contribute to the analysis of various world conflicts in which the rightward rush of U.S. policy has embroiled us. Marxist anthropology has an important role to play in ensuring that such analyses are: 1) connected directly to the broader global situation, acknowledging forces of capitalism and imperialism; 2) built upon a progressive vision of future social formations, and 3) grow out of an accurate understanding of the particular peoples involved. One of the most positive elements of the Mundial heritage has been its focus on "applied" problems like that of the anticolonial struggles which we now call struggles for national liberation. We thus see such activities as a continuation of a progressive tradition in anthropology, to be defended through both political action and the development of a vibrant, nonsectarian Marxist intellectual tradition.

### **The Papers and Perspectives of This Volume**

The papers in this book represent, as we noted earlier, a distinct trend in U.S. Marxist anthropology. Eugene Ruyle makes a strong case for an "anthropological Marxism." His "Rethinking

Marxist Anthropology" develops a general anthropology based on Marx's labor theory of value (Ruyle labels this "social thermodynamics"). He contrasts his own approach with that of European structuralist Marxism. Ruyle illustrates the value of his approach in reference to three topics: the emergence of human society; the rise of class society and the analysis of contemporary societies--divided into overdeveloping capitalist, underdeveloping capitalist, and socialist nations. Ruyle's approach is informed by the concerns, if not the total approach, of cultural materialist and ecological trends in U.S. anthropology. This is a reminder of the close, if uneasy, relationship between Marxism and other materialist viewpoints. Ruyle uses the model of human extraction of energy from the physical environment to discuss the exploitation of one class by another. He sees his method as central to the criticism and evaluation of contemporary society, and he places emphasis on the re-allocation of social energy away from elites to other classes. He argues that Marxist anthropologists have an important duty to apply anthropology to the theoretical debates of current political movements.

David Hakken's "Studying Work: Anthropological and Marxist Perspectives" makes a general argument about anthropological theory and the need to integrate dialectics and materialism. He illustrates his perspective with a critical discussion of work, a concept central to much non-Marxist anthropology as well as to Marxism. Not surprisingly, aspects of work are also investigated in many of the other papers included in this volume. Drawing widely upon Marx, Marxist philosophy, the relatively new subfield called the anthropology of work, primate studies and feminist theory, Hakken develops an approach to work which aims to avoid a number of philosophical problems inherent in much previous scholarship. His major emphasis is on the embeddedness of work in collective social relations of reciprocity. Like Ruyle, Hakken identifies with an activist tradition which insists that anthropologists have a responsibility to develop analytic categories which at once satisfy theoretically and illuminate contemporary political problems. Hakken sees his own concern with the definition of work as directly relevant to the plight of unemployed workers in situations of deindustrialization.

Philip Kohl's "Sumer and the Indus Valley Compared: Towards an Historical Understanding of the Evolution of Early States" aims both to revise our understanding of the Indus Valley civilizations and to inject more appropriate theories of cultural

evolution into the archeology of early states. Through a comparison of data on urban sites in the two geographic areas, Kohl criticizes neo-evolutionary theory as both inaccurate and as ideologically laden with anti-evolutionism. Kohl believes such perspectives, which he labels "evolutionistic," tend to deny important differences between social formations and to eliminate the concept of class struggle in history. Instead, Kohl uses the Sumerian and Indus Valley cases to develop a perspective integrating specific local history with general evolution. He goes on to make a strong case for the relevance of archeological data to both the analysis of class society and the political issue of self-determination.

Hans Baer argues for the continued relevance of categories such as "Asiatic mode of production" in analyzing the dynamics of recent social formations. His "Nineteenth Century Mormonism as a Partial Asiatic Mode of Production" focuses on changing relations among various modes of production--quasi-communal, Asiatic and capitalist--in 19th and 20th century Utah. Baer places particular analytic importance on the rise and fall of the Asiatic mode, while arguing that analysis of the changing relations among modes is important in understanding contemporary Mormonism, whose present operation he likens to that of a multinational corporation. In addition to upholding the validity of such categories, Baer is also proposing that several diametrically different modes of production can coexist to give distinctive shape to a particular society at any one time. Baer's work raises the question of whether a "partial Asiatic mode of production" is a social reality or simply a useful abstraction.

Barbara Schroder's "Ethnic Identity and Economic Change: Non-Wage Labor Relations in Highland Ecuadorian Haciendas" takes up both the question of local history and the question of how economic development should be analyzed. She is critical of dependency, world systems and "multiple modes of production" theories, as well as of mainstream anthropology. All, she feels, are overly deterministic. Schroder shows, for example, that in Ecuador the same economic forces produce hacienda labor systems and hacienda work forces ranging from the "modern" to the "traditional," with many mixed forms. Like other leftist Latin Americanists, Schroder emphasizes the role of local history--regional ethnic relations, historical patterns of land use and remuneration, and indigenous resistance to Spanish and mestizo dominance--in shaping the area's mixed development. The implication of her

argument is that causality and outcome of economic change are more diverse than either Marxist or non-Marxist theory has generally shown.

Donna Keren, in "The Waiting Proletariat: Creating a New Industrial Labor Force in Rural Maquilas," addresses the experiences of women employed by the new wave of small "cooperative" factories in Querétaro, Mexico. Whatever the formal organization of these garment factories, Keren argues that their female employees are being proletarianized. Rather than simply obtaining cheap labor, however, this maquila system is, with the support of the Mexican government, also designed to control labor. In the process what Keren calls a "waiting proletariat" is created. Supporting Marx's emphasis on the importance of labor process control in capitalism, the author shows how a progressive ideology, in this case that of Mexico's cooperative movement, has been harnessed to the process of labor control and capital accumulation.

Florence Babb returns to Marx's definition of petty commodity production in her "Marketers as Producers: The Labor Process and Proletarianization of Peruvian Marketwomen." The paper asks how petty traders, and the work they do, are to be conceptualized. Traders are, she argues, petty commodity producers adding value to what they sell by virtue of the labor they expend on processing goods for resale. Babb suggests that much "informal sector" labor needs to be analyzed in this fashion to make clear both its structural position in the economy and its workers' range of possible class alliances. She points out that Peruvian traders are becoming progressively proletarianized by a variety of events, among them Peru's debt crisis. Babb conceptualizes this transition theoretically as a movement from multiple modes of production to a more unitary social formation. She goes on to discuss the relationship between marketers' economic exploitation, their gender and their impetus toward political action.

Faye Harrison's "Gangs, Grassroots Politics and the Crisis of Dependent Capitalism in Jamaica" grows from field work among the urban poor in Kingston. She shows how neighborhood gangs--partially created by state and international policies--become a crucial part of Jamaica's political structure. Thus gang rivalries and warfare become directly linked to national political party conflict, economic crisis and imperialist intervention. Harrison shows, however, that Kingston slum dwellers are not content to remain the mere victims of such processes but attempt to reassert control over their neighborhoods. She goes on to question how far such

grassroots activity can create, or lay the groundwork for, larger progressive social changes. Harrison's work, like Schroder's, lays emphasis on local history as it shapes the working-out of global processes.

Nina Schiller draws not only on anthropology but on management studies and on Marxist theories of the labor process to assess a system of "workers' control" in a U.S. firm. Her "Management By Participation: The Division of Labor, Ideology and Contradiction in a U.S. Firm" uses field work among telephone market researchers in a multinational company to trace the way in which "management by participation" affected and ultimately failed one group of workers. The company-sponsored ideologies of worker control and self-improvement led these employees to try to redefine their jobs and to make the work process less alienating. The attempt, which seems initially to fulfill leftist expectations about the revolutionary potential of such systems, ultimately crumples when management, worried about profit rates, reasserts its power over the work process. Schiller concludes that the workers do not actually develop a revolutionary understanding from the experience. In her paper Schiller is using social science methodology to answer questions which are simultaneously political and scholarly.

June Nash's richly detailed study of culture, consciousness and economic decline appears in "Corporate Hegemony and Industrial Restructuring in a New England Industrial City." Using a long-term study of a single-industry western Massachusetts industrial center to analyze cultural practice in the formation of consciousness, Nash criticizes both economic determinism and approaches which invoke simple "false consciousness." Her analysis starts from the Gramscian concept of hegemony. In fact, as she shows, Pittsfield workers as well as the General Electric Company actively participated in the process of creating hegemony during the 40-year period covered in the study. Now, however, under the impact of a worldwide capitalist crisis, the "social contract" which characterized the area since the 1930s has broken down in Pittsfield's current period of de-industrialization. Nash's methodology, involving a use of participant observation and local history (including oral history), is designed to show how cultural hegemony works within the context of global economic and political forces.

We suggested above that the papers in this volume are diverse, yet share common characteristics, indicating the emer-

gence of a distinct U.S. style of Marxist anthropology. Reading these papers together, one can see certain major elements of that style.

First, these papers manifest a strong reaction against what are perceived as the overly structural analyses of European Marxist anthropology. While Ruyle makes this case most explicitly, it is also stated strongly elsewhere. If one considers "world systems" theory as a structuralist transplant which skims over both class struggle and dialectics, the critique of structuralism seems to underlie virtually all the pieces in the volume. Put positively, there is a strong desire among these writers to let theory flow from the field work experience. This is perhaps a consequence of the historical particularism and the empiricism instilled in U.S. anthropology by scholars like Boas and Mead. Other anti-structural influences include the perspectives of social historians (both British and North American) and of ethnohistory. Our writers share the growing tendency within U.S. anthropology to accept historical materials, including oral history, as legitimate sources of anthropological data. Wolf's 1982 book *Europe and the People Without History* gave enormous impetus to the use of history among U.S. leftist anthropologists. The tendency is most visible in the work of Schroder, Harrison, Nash and Kohl, whose papers in particular emphasize history as an important shaper of social formation dynamics.

At the same time, the writers here make it their overriding concern to locate particular ethnographic situations, however small, within broader political economic contexts. Despite the salutary corrective which world systems approaches initially offered anthropology, these writers criticize such approaches for being too reductionist to account for important ethnographic data and important local differences. Nevertheless, the dynamics of international capital accumulation in shaping local events engage Babb, Keren, Harrison and Schroder, for instance, as they examine societies under U.S. neocolonial influence. Schiller and Nash pinpoint the process in the U.S.--itself an interesting choice of field site given the predilection of U.S. anthropology for the study of other cultures. This emphasis on the interaction between global and local (and the careful choice of field sites to emphasize that dynamic) is, of course, very different from that of traditional U.S. particularism, with its presumption of the "primitive isolate." It is interesting that Kohl identifies and attacks an archeological version of the primitive isolate: the "pristine state."