I

Introduction

I want, in this book, to explore the connection between ideas and power. We stand at the end of a century marked by colonial expansion, world wars, revolutions, and conflicts over religion that have occasioned great social suffering and cost millions of lives. These upheavals have entailed massive plays and displays of power, but ideas have had a central role in all of them. Ideas have been used to glorify or criticize social arrangements within states, and they have helped warriors and diplomats to justify conflicts or accommodations between states. Ideas have furnished explanations and warrants for imperialist domination and resistance to it, for communism and anticommunism, for fascism and antifascism, for holy wars and the immolation of infidels. They also reach into our everyday lives: they inform discussions about "family values," prompt some people to scare their neighbors by burning crosses in their yards, cause believers to undertake long pilgrimages to Mecca or Lourdes or to await the Second Coming in a Rocky Mountain retreat.

Nevertheless, an analytic understanding of how power and ideas intermesh has eluded us and remains a matter of debate. Some scholars accord ideas a Platonic existence in human "minds," or endow them with an independent capability to motivate and move people. Others regard them primarily as rationalizations for self-interested conduct or as accompaniments of behavior, lacking significance "in the long run." The long run may be seen as dominated by natural

selection, by the forces of the unconscious, or by the ultimately determinant role of the economy.

Arguments about how to think about ideas have marked out the intellectual pathways of American anthropology. Few anthropologists have followed those, such as Cornelius Osgood (1940, 25), who have attempted to reduce everything to ideas, but the field has accorded ideas a dominant role throughout its history. When Alfred Kroeber and Talcott Parsons, the leading doyens of anthropology and sociology respectively in the mid-twentieth century, staked out the boundaries between the two fields, anthropology was assigned the study of "patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artifacts produced through behavior" (1958, 583). This legacy to anthropology strongly reinforced the penchant for mentalistic interpretations.

To counter this "idealist expropriation of culture," the anthropologist Marvin Harris has insisted on granting priority in the study of culture not to ideas but to objectively verifiable behavioral facts recorded by observers employing an operationalized scientific epistemology (1979, 284). Harris did not exclude an interest in what the natives themselves think about their lives, but he treated with maximal suspicion any explanation for behavior derived from putative cognitive rules or guiding ideas. He asserted that "No amount of knowledge of 'competent natives' rules and codes can 'account for' phenomena such as poverty; underdevelopment; imperialism; the population explosion; minorities; ethnic and class conflict; exploitation, taxation, private property; pollution and degradation of the environment; the military-industrial complex; political repression; crime; urban blight; unemployment; or war. These phenomena . . . are the consequence of intersecting and contradictory vectors of beliefs, will, and power. They cannot be scientifically understood as manifestations of codes and rules" (Harris 1979, 285). Perhaps so. Yet "beliefs and will" surely involve ideas that code belief and inform will. How one might conceptualize the relation between ideas and power remains to be more fully specified.

In taking up this inquiry, my aim is not to develop a formal theory of the relationship between two mega-abstractions—something that is probably impossible because ideas come in many different kinds and variants, as does power. As an anthropologist, I believe

that theoretical discussions need to be grounded in cases, in observed streams of behavior, and in recorded texts. I want to find ways of interrogating such materials to define the relations of power that are played out in social arrangements and cultural configurations, and to trace out the possible ways in which these relations of power implicate ideas.

Ideas, Power, Communication

If I use the old-fashioned term "ideas," it is not to return to a now obsolete view of ideas as units held and stored in the mind, which replicate within the organism stimuli received from the world outside. Given what we now know about the workings of human neuro-cognitive systems, knowledge can no longer be visualized as a simple "reflection" in the mind of what goes on in the external world. Whether one believes that "minds" (or, rather, human neurological systems that include brains) merely edit what enters from outside or themselves construct cognitive and emotional schemata that can address the world but are not isomorphic with it, we must work with some variant of the neo-Kantian postulate that minds interpose a selective sieve or screen between the organism and the environment through which it moves. This, of course, is rendered even more evident by the work of anthropologists whose studies have taught them that panhuman "minding" is further inflected and conjugated from culture to culture.

Humans inhabit a world, a life space, characterized by imperative constraints and potential opportunities, but the ways in which they adapt to these life spaces is only partially programmed by their biology. They must rely on their nervous systems to construct models of the world and its workings, but these models are not identical with that world, and the connections mapped out between an experienced reality and how it is represented are complex and variable. Thus, any attempt to account for ideas and systems of ideas must juxtapose both dimensions with the aid of theoretically informed guesses.

I speak of ideas in this context because I hope to underline that such mental constructions have content: they are *about something*.

They also have functions; they do something for people. Striving to lay out the features of the world, they seek to render it amenable to some human use. In doing so, they play a part in bringing people together, or—alternatively—in dividing them. Both cooperation and conflict invoke and involve plays of power in human relationships, and ideas are emblems and instruments in these ever shifting and contested interdependencies.

I want to draw a distinction between "ideas" and "ideology." The term "ideas" is intended to cover the entire range of mental constructs rendered manifest in public representations, populating all human domains. I believe that "ideology" needs to be used more restrictively, in that "ideologies" suggest unified schemes or configurations developed to underwrite or manifest power. Equating all ideation with ideology masks the ways in which ideas come to be linked to power. The questions of when and how ideas are thus concentrated into ideologies, and how ideologies become programs for the deployment of power, cannot be answered by merging ideology with ideation as a whole. They demand a separate kind of inquiry.

Conceptualizing power presents difficulties of its own. Power is often spoken of as if it were a unitary and independent force, sometimes incarnated in the image of a giant monster such as Leviathan or Behemoth, or else as a machine that grows in capacity and ferocity by accumulating and generating more powers, more entities like itself. Yet it is best understood neither as an anthropomorphic force nor as a giant machine but as an aspect of all relations among people.

I first encountered this formulation when I heard Norbert Elias lecture in the summer of 1940 at the Alien Detention Center at Huyton near Liverpool in England, where all male Austrian, German, and Italian citizens living within a certain range of London were interned by the British government, as the German armies overran France and an invasion of England seemed imminent. There I not only had my first lesson of sociology but also learned from Elias that "more or less fluctuating balances of power constitute an integral element of all human relations" (1971, 76–77; my translation). Elias likened the shift of power balances to a game: balances may change and produce gains for one set of partners (individuals, groups, or whole societies) and losses for another; a cumulative run of gains may eventually build up

monopolies of power yet simultaneously generate efforts to test and disestablish these favored positions. Particular moves in these games can bring on violence and war; but violence and war, too, were to be thought of in relational terms as interdependent phenomena, and not as forms of anomic disorder.

Thinking of power in relational terms, rather than as a concentrated "power-pack," has the further advantage that it allows one to see power as an aspect of many kinds of relations. Power works differently in interpersonal relations, in institutional arenas, and on the level of whole societies. I have found it useful to distinguish among four modalities in how power is thus woven into social relations. One is the power of potency or capability that is seen to inhere in an individual. Power in this Nietzschean sense draws attention to how persons enter into a play of power, but it does not address what that play is about. A second kind of power is manifested in interactions and transactions among people and refers to the ability of an *ego* to impose its will in social action upon an *alter* (the Weberian view). Left unspecified is the nature of the arena in which these interactions go forward. A third modality is power that controls the contexts in which people exhibit their capabilities and interact with others. This sense calls attention to the instrumentalities through which individuals or groups direct or circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings. I refer to this mode as tactical or organizational power.

But there is still a fourth modality of power, which I want to focus on in the present inquiry: structural power. By this I mean the power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows. In Marxian terms, this refers to the power to deploy and allocate social labor. It is also the modality of power addressed by Michel Foucault when he spoke of "governance," to mean the exercise of "action upon action" (1984, 427–28). These relations of power constitute structural power. Marx addressed the structural relations of power between the class of capitalists and the class of workers, while Foucault was concerned rather with the structural relations that govern "consciousness." I want to trace out the ways in which relations that command the economy and polity and those

that shape ideation interact to render the world understandable and manageable.

Ideas or systems of ideas do not, of course, float about in incorporeal space; they acquire substance through communication in discourse and performance. We therefore need to attend also to how ideas are communicated, from whom to whom and among whom. The term "communication"—generating, sending, and receiving messages—was in common usage in the 1950s (for example, Ruesch and Bateson 1951), but it yielded pride of place, after a brief reign, to "meaning." It nevertheless remains a useful term, because it covers both messages expressed through human language and those transmitted nonverbally. Nonverbal communication embraces many modes through which messages can be conveyed. They can be transmitted through human gestures and bodily comportment, and also communicated iconically through displays of objects and representations.

Both modes of communication provide vehicles to convey ideas, but messages have first to be cast into appropriate cultural and linguistic codes. To speak and understand a language, one needs access to its linguistic codes, so as to identify its phonemes and morphemes as well as the syntax through which these elements are formally combined. Similarly, to take part in a ritual, one needs to have a formal script of required acts, set out in the memory codes of participants or in the written instructions handed out to an expectant audience. Codes arrange the constituent elements of the message in particular ways, in order to convey which notion or notions are to be broadcast to an audience and how it should decode the messages heard. There would be no communication without codes, and to the extent that all social relations involve communication, they must also utilize codes and engage in coding and decoding. Thus, this concept of code and codes is applicable not only to language and formalized behavior such as ritual but to other facets of cultural life as well. One can speak, for example, of dress codes, culinary codes, codes of appropriate comportment, or codes that govern gifts of flowers.

Yet these codes should not be understood as fixed templates for how social life is to be lived. They vary with the social contexts in which they are deployed, whether these be on the level of household, family, community, region, or on the level of society at large.

They also vary according to the domain they address—such as economics, politics, or religion—and according to the social characteristics of the parties to the communication process, including their social origins, gender, age, educational milieu, occupation, and class position. Since these social categorizations involve variabilities in access to power, power equalities or differentials are at work in defining who can address whom, and from what symmetrical or asymmetrical positions. The grid formed by these rankings and positions, in turn, sets up the contexts for how things are said or performed and codifies how they are to be understood.

Communicative processes must thus strike a balance between adhering to codes and to the formal properties of codes, on the one hand, and fostering variability in application, on the other. Adherence to rules supports intelligibility and coherence; variability permits communication to be fitted to changing circumstances. Yet these operations of replication or variation do not take place in the minds of isolated individuals. The signs and codes employed possess a tangible, public quality, a reality that anyone attempting to communicate must take into account; no one can simply invent a language or a culture individually. The processes of reproducing or modifying communicative traditions are social, carried on by socialized participants with communicative means and skills deployed publicly in social contexts.

Just as all social arrangements, including those of communication, involve relations of power, so also is that true of ideas. Contrary to the old German revolutionary song that proclaimed that thoughts are "free," ("die Gedanken sind frei"), ideas and idea-systems are often monopolized by power groups and rendered self-enclosed and self-referential. While ideas are subject to contextual variation, moreover, this variation itself encounters structural limits, since contexts too involve social relationships and thus acquire their structure through plays of power. A key question that emerges is how power operates in these contexts to control potential disruption. More concretely, we need to inquire into how conflicts between tradition and variability in communication are fought out.

This kind of inquiry shifts attention away from an internal analysis of how codes are arranged, transmitted, or altered to questions about the society in which these messages are sent and received. Lin-

guistics and semiotics investigate the mechanics of communication that lay the groundwork of signification, but they do not yet address what the communicatory act is *about,* what it asserts or denies about the world beyond the vehicle of discourse or performance itself. Communicative acts impute attributes to the world and convey them as propositions to their audiences. It is part of the ethnographer's task to bring together the different pronouncements thus made, to note their congruence or disjunction, to test them against other things said and done, and to guess at what they might be about. It should also be his or her task to relate these formulations to the social and political projects that underwrite discourse and performance and to assess the relevance of these projects to the contests over power in social relations. These contests involve ideational repertoires; stress on one repertoire over another can affect the outcome of power struggles, opening up opportunities to one set of claimants, foreclosing them to another.

Seeking answers to such questions, however, also requires us to go beyond the ethnographic present—the moment in which the ethnographer collects and records his observations—to locate the object of our study in time. It is not the events of history we are after, but the processes that underlie and shape such events. By doing so, we can visualize them in the stream of their development, unfolding from a time when they were absent or incipient, to when they become encompassing and general. We may then raise questions about proximate causation and contributory circumstances, as well as about the forces impelling the processes toward culmination or decline.

Earlier Explorations

This undertaking on my part may come as a surprise to readers who have understood my work as falling primarily within peasant studies and world-systems research, and who may think that I am now leaving the hard terrain of reality for the shores of fantasy land. I, however, see this endeavor as a continuation of concerns that have engaged me ever since I first heard of anthropology. The very discipline of anthropology had its beginnings in confrontations with

then unfamiliar modes of thought and belief, and it set itself the task of recording and explaining their forms and significance. The German ethnologist Adolf Bastian distinguished between *Elementargedanken* and *Völkergedanken*, "universal elementary ideas" and the ideas of particular peoples. Edward Tylor, the doyen of British anthropology, sought to show how the mind evolved through a developing ability to differentiate between subject and object. Numerous scholars hoped to identify the origins and rationales governing "animism," "totemism," initiation, magic, or sacrifice. In these attempts, what people thought and imagined was dealt with as manifestations of their particular mental capacities, as exemplifications of the "mind," without much interest in their links to economy or society.

In contrast to this anthropological absorption in what were then taken as the "absurd beliefs of savages," the protagonists of the developing disciplines of political economy and sociology in the nineteenth century were less interested in the comparative workings of the mind. They downplayed the possible significance of culturally specific ideas as revelatory of peoples' essential cultures and visualized ideas primarily as manifestations of social interests in the operations of civil society. Thus, one set of thinkers fastened on ideas as dimensions of distinctive "cultures" but did not address questions of power, while others in the emerging human sciences stressed the role of power in society but defined ideas entirely as mental precipitates of power games, as "ideology," without much interest in their cultural role as elements of orientation and integration. My present effort hopes to draw these seemingly opposed analytic stances into convergence, by bringing them to bear conjointly upon historically and ethnographically described cases. In many ways, it represents the outcome of several previous explorations in my work and engages their unsolved problems.

I came into the discipline of anthropology at a time when studies of "culture and personality" had won out in the United States over more formalized inquiries into culture-trait distributions in time and space. The guiding idea was that each culture gave rise to a common personality, which was then transmitted transgenerationally through the cultural repertoire of child training. Common socialization and enculturation not only channeled the basic drives but also generated both culturally induced tensions and ways of abreacting these in be-

havior and fantasy. This model of commonality, it was then thought, would not only apply to small, homogeneous tribal groups but could be extended as well to large and differentiated societies, such as nations.

Speaking as one who for many years earned his keep by teaching courses on culture-and-personality, I would now say that this development within anthropology raised some important questions in asking how people in different social and cultural milieus acquired the knowledge and motivation to be actors and cultural carriers in the societies to which they belonged. In the language of structuralist Marxism, these were questions about how "the subject" is socially and culturally constructed. Yet culture-and-personality studies limited their capacity to find answers by adhering too narrowly to their guiding premises that societies and cultures were mostly homogeneous and that the causes of this homogeneity lay in the prevalent techniques of child training, especially as understood by psychoanalysis.

Today we would pay much greater attention to the differentiation and heterogeneity of social formations and to the multiplicity of social domains beyond the level of family and household. The interest in how "subjects" are formed could also have been more fruitful had it drawn more broadly on other disciplines, ranging from sociology to folkore, in order to grasp the relevant phenomena both processually and in history—to ask how guiding ideas, attitudes, and modes of action were shaped by class rule and hegemony, state policy, law, and public institutions, as well as by child training. One recent effort that moves in this direction is Pierre Bourdieu's adaptation of Marcel Mauss's concept of *habitus,* to show how people acquire "durable and transposable dispositions" through conditioning to the institutional landscape of social settings (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 115–39). These dispositions include the cognitive schemata that order society, which are incorporated into the body until they have "all appearances of objective necessity." This then allows for inquiry into how people deploy their dispositions in daily life and into how symbolic systems can become instruments of domination.

For myself, having grown up in Central Europe, where many national identities, nationalisms, and nation-states were of but recent origin and where antagonisms among ethnic groups, regions, and classes threatened to tear apart even those nations that had been

painfully constructed over the course of a century, the culture-and-personality mode of conceptualizing a national totality seemed utterly mistaken. It assumed that a common repertoire of child training would produce a single national character, and it abstracted personality formation from the historical processes that often required the use of force and persuasion to bring differentiated populations under the aegis of unified nation-states.

My own interests turned me toward learning more about these processes. Nations grew over time through intensified flows of capital and labor; through the unification of currencies and measures; through urbanization and migration from the countryside into the cities; through growing participation in politics; through the expansion of formal education, the hegemonic spread of standard languages, and the widening of channels of communication; through universal military training and the establishment of universal codes of law; through the diffusion of new norms of comportment and etiquette relevant to the expanding "civil society"; as well as through elaboration and proliferation of key ideas that celebrated the new collectivities or proved to be critical of them. These activity systems and institutions seemed to me to merit study in their own right. That was also true of the various nationalisms manifested as systems of ideas, and of the programs and visions of nationhood put forth in each particular case.

Yet clearly, the expansion of national life was uneven. Nations were constructed segmentally and unequally, marked by what the German philosopher Ernst Bloch called "the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous" (1962). Some people and groups were drawn or propelled into the central orbits of national existence; others were ignored, marginalized, or obliterated altogether. There were winners and also losers, unequally distributed over the national terrain and unequally represented in the symbolizations of the nation. More recently, as nation-states have become partners in wider alliances and participants in transnational networks of exchange and commerce, many of these subgroups and regions have reemerged with claims on their own behalf, testing the limits of integration into nations. None of these simultaneously encompassing and differentiating processes was mirrored in concepts of "national character."

I codified some of these observations early on in an article, "The

Formation of the Nation," published in Spanish as "La formación de la nación" (1953) but never in English. There I argued that the formation of such differentiated and yet stratified societies

involves the growth of new cultural relationships which permit the accommodation of the new groups to each other. The socio-cultural segments of the society must learn them and make them their own. This is true when the ruling segment of one society establishes its dominance over another society. It is also true when culture change within a society causes the emergence of wholly new socio-cultural segments which must establish relations with each other and with the groups which provided the matrix from which they sprang.

Differences in location and timing, as well as in the nature of the sociocultural segments and their activity systems, would render this process uneven and cause it to be shot through with conflicts. It was more likely that the outcome would favor the rise of heterogeneous social arrays than the development of homogeneous national or subnational totalities.

How groups and social segments are drawn into a nation—economically, socially, politically, and in the realm of ideas—was then, and remains for me now, a problem to be explored. My first book, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (1959a), attempted to depict the historical trajectory of Mexico as a succession of the different ways in which quite varied groups and units were brought into relationship with one another at different phases over time. Each phase, and the integrative processes that characterized it, had ramifying effects on what was to follow. I see much of my work as efforts to amplify this perspective—to think about how different aggregates and organizations of people, operating on diverse territorial and institutional levels, are drawn into more extensive units, only to be then reshuffled and repositioned into alternative arrangements at some later moment in history.

I thought then, and still do, that if we were going to come to grips with such complex and tension-laden processes we would also have to develop a better grasp of how they were rendered and expressed in ideation. My first effort specifically focused on how ideas relate to power was cast in a functionalist mode. An early publication on "The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam" (1951) argued that expanding commerce subverted lineage separatism in the city, setting up pressures toward a new form of

organization that could transcend the narrowness and limitations of lineage organization. The new form of organization was the community of the faithful (*umma*), built up around the worship of one overarching god. That god, previously only the deity of the non-kin clients of kinship units, was installed as the dominant figure of the entire collectivity, now recodified as a unitary body of believers rather than as members of separate bodies of kin. My article was based on less acquaintance with Arabic and other Near Eastern sources than was required, and I have properly been taken to task for its shortcomings by a number of better-informed specialists (Eickelman 1967; Aswad 1970; Dostal 1991). It was also strongly influenced by British structural-functionalism, and in its own terms was relatively unsophisticated in relating religious phenomena functionally and causally to social structure. Yet it did connect changes in social organization, understood as a structure of distributed rights and duties, with changes in collective representations—in this case the representation of a transcendent "god"—and it did so by paying attention to the particular "form of thought" that inspired that conception.

A few years later I tried to explain the Mexican image of "The Virgin of Guadalupe" (1959b) as a collective representation of Mexican national identity. The icon of the Virgin had played an important role at several junctures of Mexican history. The rebel-priest Father Miguel Hidalgo initiated his movement for independence from Spain in 1810 with an emblem of the Virgin in his battle flag. A hundred years later, during the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata's agrarian rebels decorated their wide-brimmed straw hats with images of the Virgin. The Catholic Church elevated the Virgin to the status of patroness over all the Americas, and the cathedral housing the image of "the dark-hued Virgin" in Mexico City became a major pilgrimage center for people from all over the country. When I first went to Mexico in 1951, many houses in rural villages bore signs that read: "We are neither Protestants nor Communists—we believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe." In this case the questions were how the icon brought together the sentiments and longings of quite various strata of the population, Indians as well as non-Indians, and how this convergence upon a common symbolism might have taken place. I realized later that the questions, as well as the work based on them, were unusual for their time. They raised issues of differential power at a time when anthropology in general tended to think of native ways

in terms of acting out a static "culture." They introduced history as a dimension, calling for us to look at the making of a key symbol as the outcome of processes unfolding over time. They put forth the idea that a common collective representation might be fashioned from very diverse discourses and imaginings of people stationed in different social and cultural positions.

A subsequent, more ambitious experiment (1969) proved unsatisfactory. It tried to construct and then contrast structural "homologies" in society and symbolism on the northern, Christian littoral of the Mediterranean and its southern, Muslim side. This drew some inspiration from the various structuralisms in vogue in the 1960s, such as that of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and of the sociologist of literature Lucien Goldmann. My own effort to think in these terms, however, projected an overly abstract and ahistorical scheme of structural oppositions upon very heterogeneous elements and levels of society and culture. The result reinforced the lesson that structural analysis required close attention to the specificity of elements in one structural set at a time. It was not a shortcut to knowledge.

I tried to heed that lesson when I later wrote *Europe and the People Without History* (1982). The title was ironic, the point being that all the people who were drawn into the widening orbit of Europe-centered capitalist expansion *had* histories, indeed that their histories were part of ours and ours part of theirs. To make that point I did pay rather close attention to reports of peoples' concrete lives and fates, especially to emphasize that incorporation into the circuits of capital and labor under capitalist conditions was not a uniform process but was likely to vary according to the circumstances that obtained in different corners of the world.

In characterizing the capitalist mode of production and how it affected the social formations that it drew into its ever widening orbit, I made use of certain Marxian concepts. These concepts seemed to me especially productive in tracing out the lineaments of structural power over how social labor is mobilized and deployed. They continue to be valuable, I believe, for their call to attend to how material production, organization, and ideation intersect, and to how this intersection is not frozen at some moment of history but unfolds in tension-producing changes over time and space. They furthermore raise the question of how the division of labor in society—especially in class-divided society—impinges on the production and distribu-

tion of ideas. I became convinced that structural power in any society entails an ideology that assigns distinctions among people in terms of the positions they occupy in the mobilization of social labor.

Some critics argued that by taking this approach I was peddling "cosmologies of capitalism" and that I was underplaying the fact that many groups around the globe cling to their cultural forms and employ them to defend their own ways of life against capitalist encroachment. This may indeed be the case, but it also may not be: the nature of the variable relation between capitalism and the settings it penetrates persists as an open question. There clearly are groups in which one set of cultural understandings remains dominant to the exclusion of others and that refuse any truck with alternatives to their own way of life. Yet there are assuredly others in which people can and do combine diverse lifestyles and modes of thought and learn to negotiate the contradictions. That range of variation demands attention and explanation; it poses problems to be investigated, not certainties to be assumed.

If Marx and Engels retain relevance for us in this endeavor, it does not mean that their work contains the answers to all our questions. Their writings are full of pertinent ideas, along with notions invalidated since (*"caduques,"* according to Maurice Godelier [1970, 110]). While they predicted many crucial aspects of capitalist development, the realization of a socialist future has not corresponded to the ways they imagined it. We also need to confront the fact that the development of linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and neuropsychology in the twentieth century has called into question the modes in which Marx and Engels, like many of their contemporaries, thought about "consciousness." There is a lack of fit between Marxian postulates, however liberally applied, and the ways in which anthropologists have gone about their work of depicting and analyzing other cultures and societies.

Three Cultures

It has been a hallmark of the anthropological approach to submit its presuppositions to the test of direct and intensive encounters with culturally specified populations. This kind of experi-

ence has been especially important when the behavior observed in a field location and the utterances recorded there proved to be at odds with the expectations of the investigator. Repeated encounters with cultural differences gave to the anthropological enterprise both caution about rushing to judgment and a measure of willingness to "let the observations speak for themselves"—this despite the understanding that facts cannot find their voice without some assist from a theoretical scheme.

To pursue the problem of how ideas and power are connected, therefore, I will look to three case studies, following the anthropological tradition of trying to relate observed behavior and recorded texts to their contextual matrix. In each of the cases, I will try to trace out the linkage between power and ideation, placing it in relation to the people's history and the material, organizational, and signifying forms and practices of their culture.

The three populations on which I will focus are the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, the Aztecs of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Central Mexico, and the Germans who willingly or unwillingly became members of a Third Reich that was supposed to last for a thousand years but collapsed in fire and ashes in 1945. The Kwakiutl have been categorized as a "chiefdom," the Aztecs as an "archaic" or "early" state, and National Socialist Germany as a distinctive "reactionary-modern" state, combining the apparent modernity of capitalism and technology with a reactionary fascism. This seriation is compatible with an evolutionary sequence, but my aim is not to apply an evolutionary scheme to the study of three sociopolitical systems. Nor am I primarily interested in systematic comparison among the three cases, although I will sometimes juxtapose them in order to highlight contrasts or similarities among them.

My main interest is analytical: I want to find out what we can bring to light by exploring the relation between power and ideas in the cases. I have fastened on these three because each of them is characterized by unusually evocative and elaborate repertoires of ideas and practices based upon these repertoires. Forty years ago, Kroeber suggested that we might come to understand the dimensions and limits of human nature by taking stock, comparatively, of "the most extreme expressions yet found in particular cultures, of the various activities and qualities of culture" (1955, 199). He offered as one such