

Exploring Cultural Domination in Empires: Based on Bourdieu and Gramsci

Xianni Zhang, University of Michigan

In his lecture on March 7, 1991, at the Collège de France, Bourdieu read a question from the audience, which asked his views on Marxism, particularly the less orthodox Marxism:

“You stressed that Marxism sees the state as oppression and that you see it as consensus... Don’t you realize that Marxism is far more complex? You need only look at Gramsci. Isn’t the fundamental thing in Marxism to see the society as the assumed foundation of the state? Do you view the state as the foundation of civil society?”
(Bourdieu 2014: 206)

In response to this question, Bourdieu (2014: 206-207) clarified that he did not intend to imply that the state represents oppression in Marxism. Rather, he sought to transcend the traditional frameworks of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber in order to develop a new understanding of the modern state. In other words, Bourdieu provided few substantial answers to the question and did not directly address the discrepancies between his views and those of specific Marxist theorists like Gramsci. This paper begins by exploring the unresolved question to compare Bourdieu and Gramsci.

Two key terms in the question—“oppression” and “consensus”—offer an initial insight for comparison. Both Bourdieu and Gramsci examine state power not only through the lens of physical force but also consider individuals’ perceptions of the state. Burawoy (2012) argues that both theorists develop theories of cultural domination, though they articulate their ideas using different concepts: “symbolic violence” and “hegemony.” However, their approaches to cultural domination follow fundamentally different logics, highlighting key distinctions in their views on

social change. Comparing Bourdieu's and Gramsci's theories on cultural domination allows us to reflect on current understandings of power and forces from a non-material perspective.

In the empirical realm, neither Bourdieu nor Gramsci explicitly applies their analyses of cultural domination to cases of empire. Bourdieu has faced criticism from later scholars (Steinmetz 2014) for neglecting colonial politics like empires and failing to incorporate these forms into his theoretical framework. Nonetheless, empirical research on imperial domination frequently draws on the concepts and theories of both Bourdieu and Gramsci, revisiting their ideas. As we explore these empire studies, the shared concerns and inquiries of the two theorists, along with their distinct responses, become more evident. The inherent boundaries and divergent emphases in Bourdieu's and Gramsci's theories are illuminated through empirical analysis, which this article aims to highlight.

In the following sections, I first review Bourdieu's theories on symbolic violence and Gramsci's theories on hegemony respectively. For Bourdieu, I focus primarily on his explanations of the modern state and its formation, highlighting the accumulation and maintenance of symbolic power as a central aspect. The existence of habitus and the practices of subjects based on habitus across various fields contribute to the persistence and reproduction of symbolic violence. In contrast, for Gramsci, I will discuss the concept of hegemony and the approaches he proposes for breaking through it, emphasizing the role of civil society as the arena where subaltern groups and organic intellectuals play crucial roles.

Subsequently, by comparing the theories of these two theorists, I argue that they differ in several key areas: their perspectives on individual agency confronted with cultural domination, the degree to which they emphasize class, and whether they view capitalism as a factor influencing cultural domination. These distinctions become particularly evident in empirical

studies of empires. Later scholars uncover various dimensions of imperial practices aimed at cultural domination, and their selection principles often align, even implicitly, with the frameworks established by Bourdieu and Gramsci. Among these empirical studies, agency has garnered significant attention, even though class is typically not considered the primary unit of agency. Nevertheless, when talking about the cultural domination of empires, the influence of capitalism and the relationship between imperialism and capitalism require more in-depth exploration.

A Comparative Review of Bourdieu's and Gramsci's Theories on Cultural Domination

Bourdieu: Symbolic Violence and Habitus

Bourdieu's analysis of cultural domination begins with the symbolic dimension in the formation of a state. Unlike some scholars, such as Norbert Elias and Charles Tilly, Bourdieu (2014: 123, 128, 133) emphasizes the accumulation of symbolic power as a driving force behind state formation, positioning it as the foundation and prerequisite for accumulating other resources, such as physical capital (Bourdieu 2014: 197) and economic extraction (Bourdieu 2014: 203-204). This emphasis arises from the understanding that gaining other forms of power necessitates first achieving recognition and legitimacy, which inherently involves a symbolic perspective.

The symbolic dimension emphasizes the critical importance of cognitive structures and perceptions, which foster acts of submission and obedience. This concept stems from a neo-Kantian tradition, although Bourdieu (2014: 164-165) emphasizes Durkheim's contributions within this framework, stressing that cognitive structures are associated with historical contexts

and are socially constructed. Bourdieu (2014: 165-166) further develops Durkheim's idea by asserting that the state acts as a producer of cognition and perceptions, promoting a unified set of cognitive beliefs referred to as a *nomos* within a specific territory.

Among the various practices for producing cognitive structures, establishing principles of classification is particularly significant (Bourdieu 2014: 165). Individuals are divided into different categories defined by the state, and this categorization is inherently evaluative, often privileging certain categories over others. After creating the classification system, the state actively promotes it through institutions in the societies, such as the education system, and organizes rites within these institutions to reinforce the principles (Bourdieu 2014: 168). When subjects recognize and internalize this classification, perceiving the divisions as natural rather than arbitrary (Bourdieu 2018: 85-86), the symbolic order and the corresponding social order are secured.

Individuals belonging to different categories develop distinct forms of *habitus*, which can be transmitted to subsequent generations, thereby reproducing the existing classification system. *Habitus* embodies collective or transindividual traits, reflecting the common attributes shared by an entire group of agents (Bourdieu 2000: 156-157). Based on this, biological individuals turn to carry social markers, integrating past experiences and frameworks of perception and appreciation into their physical being (Bourdieu 2000: 138). In other words, individuals cannot fully control their practices, as these are shaped by the dispositions and beliefs that function as the basis of their participation in a particular field's game (Bourdieu 2000: 139-140).

Furthermore, individuals often lack awareness of the classification system in which they exist, misrecognizing the current exercise of symbolic power as inevitable. This results in symbolic violence, which in turn reinforces it. Symbolic violence derives its "mysterious

efficacy” from habitus, as habitus is often regarded as quasi-natural and innate, with insufficient analysis of the “conditions of production of the dispositions that predispose certain agents to experience it” (Bourdieu 2000: 169). When the dominated group shares the same perceptions and knowledge as the dominant, they find themselves unable to escape and can only consent to the dominators. The dominated individuals utilize cognitive structures and classification systems to interpret the world, while their social existence is also shaped by these very cognitions and classifications (Bourdieu 2000: 170).

Gramsci: Hegemony, Civil Society and State

Gramsci (1971[1992]: 245-246) develops the concept of “hegemony,” which encapsulates his exploration of cultural domination. Actually, Gramsci presents various interpretations of hegemony in the *Prison Notebooks*, offering several different definitions of the relationships between civil society and the state, as well as between coercion and consent (Anderson 2017: 39-53). The most influential and widely accepted definition posits that hegemony relies on both the coercion exerted by rulers and the spontaneous consent provided by the masses to establish and sustain itself. More specifically, the masses consent to the general conditions imposed by the ruling class. For Gramsci in this version, hegemony is closely linked to civil society, while direct domination occurs within political society. Together, civil society and political society form two levels of the superstructure (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 12).

However, the relationship between civil society and the state undergoes slippage and transformation in Gramsci’s theory. It is significant to highlight that one of Gramsci’s explanations on this question tends to view civil society as a component of the state, thereby

blurring the boundaries between the two (Anderson 2017: 48-49). Burawoy (2012) notes that Bourdieu does not allocate a distinct role for society in his theories on cultural domination and power. However, if we take Gramsci's evolving perspective on the relationship between civil society and the state seriously, we can also understand that civil society—along with its inherent hegemony—is enveloped by the state:

“For it should be remarked that the general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that State = political society +civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armor of coercion).” (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 262-263)

Of course, Gramsci does not fully eliminate the antagonism between civil society and the state, even though he is influenced by Croce's ideas to extend the boundary of the state (Anderson 2017: 52). As a result, the state, like civil society, can construct hegemony according to Gramsci.

When analyzing the state, Gramsci (1971[1992]: 258) adopts the concept of the ethical state from Croce, asserting that for a state to be considered ethical or cultural, it must elevate the masses to a certain level of cultural and moral development. This is achieved through positive educational institutions like schools and negative educational institutions such as courts.

In this aspect, Gramsci (1971[1992]: 246) views law as a tool of the state for constructing and maintaining a specific category of civilization, which entails expelling certain existing customs while promoting others. The state acts as an educator, actively proposing and implementing a new set of civilizational norms and intervening at the superstructural level (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 247). This perspective aligns with Bourdieu's theory regarding the state's

influence on individuals' cognitive structures. However, they differ in that Gramsci explicitly incorporates a punitive and repressive aspect into the mental-intervention process. He argues that while law can reward positive behavior, it also embodies a repressive and negative dimension when punishing criminals (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 247). Gramsci's analysis of the role of law illustrates that coercion is a persistent element in his framework.

Hegemony involves both coercion and consent simultaneously, suggesting that the mechanisms used to gain consent may become ineffective or invalid. In such situations, the coercive aspect comes into play, forcing individuals to submit to authority. It is important to note that Gramsci's theory of hegemony has faced one kind of criticism that consent is not unique to capitalist rule but is common across various forms of governance (Poulantzas 1973: 217). However, what distinguishes ruling in a capitalist society, when we examine Gramsci closely, is that the consent of the masses indicates that the ruled no longer perceive the existence of any ruling class (Anderson 2017: 45). In this context, Gramsci's concept of consent closely resembles Bourdieu's notion of "misrecognition," which describes a situation in which individuals mistakenly view the current ruling order as natural and inevitable.

Nevertheless, unlike Bourdieu's elaboration of misrecognition, consent in Gramsci's theory can vanish, potentially giving rise to radical struggles and transformations. When the governed individuals express dissent toward the ruling authority, significant challenges remain in effectively overcoming it. The subaltern, specifically referring to the proletariat under capitalism in Gramsci's theory, must transform their political consciousness toward a philosophy of practice and build a new state on that foundation (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 52-55). This task should be carried out by organic intellectuals in connection with the class and corresponding party that authentically represent the standpoint of the oppressed. When a new group seeks to establish

dominance, it must “assimilate and conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals,” which will be “quicker and more effective the more successfully the group develops its own organic intellectuals” (Gramsci 1971 [1992]: 10). Based on this foundation, a party’s role should be “directive and organizational, that is, educative and intellectual” (Gramsci 1971 [1992]: 16). Therefore, a central aspect of the revolutionary work conducted by Marxist parties is to facilitate the ideological transformation of the proletariat, thereby uniting all oppressed groups and establishing a new popular power (Anderson 2017: 87-88).

Comparison: Agency, Class and Capitalism

There has been considerable debate regarding whether Bourdieu is primarily a theorist of social change or social reproduction (Riley 2017; Burawoy 2018; Heilbron and Steinmetz 2018). This question relates to Bourdieu’s views on individual agency and its role within his theoretical framework. In fact, Bourdieu allows for the possibility of agency amid symbolic violence through the concept of classification struggles, providing the masses from below with the opportunity to challenge the state’s pursuit of monopolizing symbolic capital, potentially leading to the reinvention or reinforcement of social divisions (Wyrzten 2015: 25).

However, for Bourdieu, individual agency has clear boundaries because the dominated group cannot achieve collective self-awareness in the face of symbolic domination (Burawoy 2018). This is reflected in Bourdieu’s concept of misrecognition. To maintain existing domination, those in power seek to naturalize the arbitrariness of their ruling through various mechanisms that ensure alignment between objective structures and the mental frameworks of the dominated (Bourdieu 2013: 164). As a result, the dominated group develops a collective

misrecognition of power relations and comes to accept them as granted. Furthermore, although Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition shares similarities with Gramsci's notion of consent in the phenomena they describe, the two concepts fundamentally differ in the involvement of agency. Misrecognition illustrates the vulnerability of agency, as the dominated can experience it unintentionally. In contrast, consent for Gramsci signifies a spontaneous response to domination, which retains the potential for the dominated to transcend existing cultural domination.

Different from Bourdieu, agency is a foundational element in Gramsci's theory, as he, being a Marxist and revolutionary, firmly aligns himself with the driving forces of social change. His analyses of civil society and the cultural dimensions of power offer a nuanced perspective on proletarian struggle that extends beyond traditional Marxism. An interesting point is that both Gramsci and Bourdieu emphasize the role of intellectuals. Although Bourdieu's concept of collective intellectuals was not fully developed during his later years (Heilbron and Steinmetz 2018), distinctions can already be seen when compared to Gramsci's vision for intellectuals. For Gramsci, intellectuals are associated with specific social groups, and as each new class emerges, it develops and cultivates its own organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 6, 12). Unlike traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals bear the responsibility of actively engaging in practical life and shaping a "humanistic conception of history" (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 10). They play a crucial role in assimilating and organizing, helping to establish a universal character for a particular dominated social group (Gramsci 1971[1992]: 21).

Besides agency, they also differ in their elaborations about class and how class matters in cultural domination. When discussing class, Bourdieu distinctly departs from Marxist perspectives by defining class not solely in terms of the distribution of economic resources and positions within the production process, but by incorporating additional dimensions such as

culture. This aligns with Bourdieu's fundamental idea that the basis for action lies in people's dispositions rather than material interests and rational calculations (Heilbron and Steinmetz 2018). It is evident that Bourdieu downplays the role of economic conditions in his theoretical framework, and this is not a coincidence. In his discussions of cultural domination, or more precisely, symbolic violence, Bourdieu emphasizes classification rather than class. The principles of classification are not necessarily tied to the division of different classes. However, for Gramsci, class remains a cornerstone of his thought, closely linked to his analyses of capitalism. His theory is essentially a class theory, aiming to identify a path for the proletariat to challenge bourgeois rule and seize power.

Additionally, Gramsci clearly integrates the evolution of capitalism into his theories, particularly highlighting the disparity in capitalist development between Italy's northern and southern regions, with the latter lagging and primarily reliant on agriculture in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, Gramsci is careful about the historical context of the type of ruling he discusses, as evidenced by his clear identification of bourgeois democracy as the primary focus of his analysis. In other words, Gramsci not only contemplates consent but also examines the distinctions among the forms of consent that arise in different historical moments (Anderson 2017: 45). In contrast, Bourdieu does not incorporate capitalism into his framework. Instead, he uses the modern state as the primary context for his analyses.

Empirical Analyses of Cultural Domination in Empires

Based on Bourdieu's Concepts and Framework: Habitus, Field and Symbolic Violence

Several scholars have integrated Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and terminology to reveal the cultural domination exercised by empires. They often use "habitus" as a foundational and concrete starting point, representing the dispositions shaped by individuals' prior social backgrounds and trajectories within the empire. Through the lens of habitus, individuals form their perceptions of imperial society. Both the ruling and subordinate groups utilize habitus to develop their cultural and cognitive understandings. When the rulers of the empire become colonizers, their dispositions influence their comprehension of unfamiliar societies. The ruled subjects, including marginalized groups, also rely on their habitus to interpret and respond to the ruling practices.

Wilson (2011) argues that British colonizers' perceptions of Indian society, which refracted societal structures, influenced their choices regarding tax administration in India. Different from the reflection model, which posits that social structures and orders exist independently of actors' perceptions and interpretations, constraining them, the refraction model emphasizes administrators' autonomy in selecting and abstracting certain aspects from a complex social environment based on their understanding of society. Although the refraction model is not exclusively derived from Bourdieu's theories, its focus on actors' interpretations and its view of structures as shared patterns of meaningful actions reflect Bourdieu's influence. Comparing it to the reflection model, we can see that Bourdieu incorporates agency into his framework, as he emphasizes perceptions and beliefs, even though this agency may not lead to a breakthrough in symbolic violence and can, in fact, become an integral part of it.

Additionally, Wilson (2011) points out that colonizers can have competing perceptions, shaped by their social backgrounds and positions within the official system. Following 1784, colonizers in India faced the challenge of governing a largely misunderstood agrarian economy,

with taxation being a key issue. In response, the administrators proposed two distinct systems: the ryotwari system and the zemindari system. The differences between these systems stem from the designers' views on whether Indian society and its people were comparable to British society, reflecting their varying levels of understanding of the colonized population. British administrators formed their opinions about colonized India through their educational backgrounds and personal development experiences.

Wyrzten (2015) highlights that European colonizers' cultural practices in Morocco were more interactive, intertwining with existing identities and social groups to create a new Moroccan identity. A diverse group of Moroccan actors, including rulers, elites, and marginalized ethnic or religious communities, played a role in shaping a new Moroccan identity (Wyrzten 2015: 4). In contrast to Wilson's (2011) research, Wyrzten (2015: 5) does not emphasize top-down processes driven by administrators. Instead, he incorporates perspectives from both rulers and the ruled. Notably, Wyrzten uses a Bourdieusian framework to analyze the interactions between the state and society, even though Bourdieu himself does not specifically address the concept of civil society (Burawoy 2012). Wyrzten (2015: 5, 11) reveals various rules of engagement and different styles of interaction within the colonial political field where the new Moroccan identity emerged, highlighting how a wide range of European and local actors engage in practices shaped by their habitus. Put another way, the habitus of the masses in the colonized society also played a significant role, although the thoughts and perspectives of marginalized groups were often suppressed. Incorporating the actions of diverse characters into the analytical framework adds complexity to the dynamics and clarifies why Wyrzten introduces the concept of "field" to represent them. Other scholars also employ the term "field" to unfold their analyses.

When various groups of officials and elites exist, they are likely to compete over the validity and accuracy of their societal perceptions. Success in this competition leads to greater recognition from the masses, which is essential for accumulating symbolic capital. To explain this process of contestation and capital accumulation among different actors based on their habitus, scholars engage with and expand upon Bourdieu's field theory.

Steinmetz (2008) describes the competition among colonial officials for recognition of their ethnographic expertise, conceptualizing the colonial state as a field. The colonial state field is both connected to and distinct from the metropolitan field. They are linked because the configurations of elite class conflict originating in the metropolitan field can be transferred to the colonial state. However, these configurations undergo transformations upon entering the colonized society, allowing for a degree of independence between the two (Steinmetz 2008: 5, 52). In the colonial state field, the primary focus on native policy, which requires ethnographic sensitivity, can enhance the power of the educated middle class (Steinmetz 2008: 53). Furthermore, Steinmetz notes that the interactions between administrators' ethnographic approaches and the responses of the colonized—whether through resistance or collaboration—can alter the colonizers' perceptions and influence native policies (Steinmetz 2008: 2, 54). The issue of agency arises again here, although it may not manifest as a classification struggle as Bourdieu envisions. This underscores the shared concerns among scholars utilizing Bourdieu's concepts and theories regarding actors' agency under imperial domination.

Adams (2005) also employs the idea of field in her research on early modern Europe, although she does not establish a central concept of it. Specifically, Adams explores how familial structures impact power dynamics within the political and economic spheres of early modern Europe. She focuses on elite men—who viewed themselves as kings, princes, and historical

subjects—as the primary actors in these fields (Adams 2005: 10). However, these elite men and their families occasionally faced competition and challenges from other actors within the field. For example, regent families such as the Bickers and de Graeffs struggled to achieve Medici-style centralization during the Golden Age due to the need to contend with various governments and institutions within the same organizational field, complicating efforts to establish a hegemonic front (Adams 2005: 101). Additionally, Adams (2005: 179) discusses the influence of patrimonial elites on merchant capitalism, particularly in limiting independent capitalists' ability to access the colonial field. By adopting a cultural perspective to analyze the dynamics of imperial domination, Adams directly addresses the existence and development of capitalism, a focus that is relatively uncommon in similar research.

Gaining recognition from the masses offers a cultural lens on the empire's governance, which also impacts the governed subjects at a cognitive level, shaping their understanding of governance itself. When they misrecognize the ruling as legitimate and natural, it results in symbolic violence, as defined by Bourdieu. After examining the studies influenced by habitus and field, we can further investigate empirical analyses of the symbolic violence perpetrated by empires.

King (2018) argues that US colonizers exploited ambiguities in policies and the legal system to deny full rights to colonized Filipinos, creating new classifications that marginalized their rights. This intervention in classification altered the governed masses' self-perceptions. As Bourdieu (2014) pointed out, altering the classification system is a common strategy employed by state actors to engage with the cognitive structures of the ruled and to acquire symbolic power. By grappling with the issue of whether Filipinos were considered citizens, aliens, or both, the American official system maintained a fluidity and ambiguity in categorizing the Philippines

and its people between 1934 and 1946 (King 2018: 58, 60). The prevailing tendency was to establish a dual classification system that recognized the territory of the Philippines as American while simultaneously denying Filipinos the status of American citizens (King 2018: 82). This classification, marked by ambiguities, interacted with the bottom-up struggles, permeating the collective consciousness of the masses.

Norton (2022) focuses on how the English colonial state defined and classified piracy between 1670 and 1730, reflecting the power and violence exerted by English elites over pirates. The newly established punitive powers of the English were rooted in a process that transformed piracy from an ambiguous and poorly defined category into a clearly delineated one, making it easier to label and control pirates (Norton 2022: 4). This redefining process relied on an interpretive framework that sought recognition both from the masses within the state and the international community. In other words, a coordinated collective and symbolic capacity was necessary to establish the new definition and gain legitimacy (Norton 2022: 4, 7). Through this process and a series of practices, the agents of the English empire addressed threats to the empire's maritime foundations while simultaneously consolidating its monopoly on violence (Norton 2022: 5). The significant role of symbolic violence in constraining subjects is evident in this case. After the rulers established the new definition, seamen and pirates adapted their behavior to meet the new expectations, even when the coercive control of the empire's agents was distant from them (Norton 2022: 10).

Similarly, Wilson (2023) illustrates how perceptions of corruption shifted and were reconstructed with the expansion of British imperialism, with a new moral narrative that served to legitimize colonization and impose new cultural values. By examining the experiences and transformations of the English East India Company from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-

nineteenth century, the dynamics and contradictions within the British Empire gradually come to light. During this transformative period, the language and concept of corruption played a crucial role in establishing the rule of colonial difference, with the source of corrupting influences attributed to indigenous populations (Wilson 2023: 217-218). Given that corruption can serve as an empty signifier, it transcends so-called objective criteria and allows for social construction (Wilson 2023: 223). British administrators infused their own meanings and beliefs into the concept of corruption, maintaining the legitimacy of their authority through symbolic power.

From the studies discussed above, we can identify common characteristics in the works inspired by Bourdieu's theories to explore the cultural and symbolic aspects of imperial governance. One key feature is their shared focus on agency. Unlike structural-determinist arguments, these studies assert that actors' perceptions and cultural beliefs can independently influence outcomes, forming the foundation of agency. The researchers adopt various perspectives to reveal individual agency, including the habitus of both elites and administrators as well as that of the masses, and they examine the competition for cultural and symbolic capital among different actors within the same field. A prominent way to manifest agency is through classification struggles, which encompass the protests of colonized or marginalized groups. However, while agency is a prevalent theme in these studies, it does have its limitations.

First, the struggles often center around classifications and definitions, involving contests between differing cultural interpretations, while other forms of resistance are seldom explored. Secondly, related to cultural protest, symbolic violence rarely dissipates, particularly because the actions of dominated groups do not easily dismantle it. Instead, the existing beliefs and cognitions of the dominated can be utilized by ruling groups to reinforce localized forms of symbolic violence. In other words, symbolic violence appears to be a stable and entrenched trap,

and the struggles of actors do not necessarily provide a means of escape. Thus, returning to Bourdieu, it is not entirely accurate to claim that he disregards agency. Rather, human agency serves as the foundation of his theories on cultural domination. Nonetheless, the agency of dominated subjects appears to be fragile, and the path to escaping symbolic violence remains unclear.

Another noteworthy feature is how these studies integrate the development of capitalism into their analyses. Few studies provide direct examinations of capitalism, which is understandable given that specific economic contexts and the interplay between economic foundations and politics are often downplayed. Scholars in this camp focus more on culture and the interplay between culture and politics. While a limited amount of research addresses capitalism, it examines how the cultural and symbolic capacities of elites and rulers impact the benefits and rights of individual capitalists.

Based on Gramsci's Concepts and Framework: Subaltern Agency, Hegemony and Its Failure

Scholars influenced by Gramsci's theories focus on subaltern agency when analyzing the cultural domination of empires. In this context, subaltern groups maintain a space for their own cultural beliefs and identities, evolving alongside the dominant ideology imposed by the rulers.

Guha (1999) argues that peasant insurgency is essential for understanding the history of colonial India, as it highlights the agency of rural groups and transcends mere reactions to colonization. During these resistances, the consciousness of peasants developed independently from the dominant ideology of the colonizers. According to Guha (1999: 4), the acknowledgment of peasants as the architects of their own rebellion and their ability to cultivate a consciousness

for spontaneous resistance can only occur when historiographical knowledge production moves beyond elitist biases. Bourgeois-nationalist scholars often err in equating consciousness with organization (Guha 1999: 5), which limits their ability to recognize the presence of consciousness itself. It is true that the consciousness manifested in peasant insurgencies during the first three-quarters of British rule was relatively naive (Guha 1999: 11). Faced with a significant rise in indebtedness due to the interplay of landlordism and British rule, along with a dominant ruling culture, peasants needed to develop a conscious readiness for uprising, even if this process underwent various transformations influenced by local organizations (Guha 1999: 9). Furthermore, the leadership in these movements differed significantly from the style of modern political parties, embodying multiple elements of conscious leadership rather than a singular, dominant form (Guha 1999: 10).

While these scholars draw on Gramsci's insights into cultural practices within governance and share concerns similar to those influenced by Bourdieu, their emphasis on the cultural agency of the governed groups allows them to identify more fissures and fractures within cultural domination. Consequently, scholars in this tradition place greater significance on physical forces and utilize Gramsci's concept of "hegemony," which encompasses both coercion and spontaneous consent.

Guha (1997) notes that colonization in India was characterized by coercive dominance rather than achieving consent and constructing hegemony. This failure to obtain consent reflects the colonizers' inability to assimilate and transform the indigenous culture. The liberal culture introduced by British colonizers did not permeate Indian society beyond the upper level (Guha 1997: 80). Under these circumstances, the activities occurring in civil society cannot be fully absorbed into the framework of the state, resulting in a coexistence of diverse cultures alongside

the culture of the ruling group, even though the latter remains the dominant force (Guha 1997: 72). Guha (1997: 72) also notes that the state's inability to gain consent and establish hegemony was not uncommon during the pre-capitalist era, echoing Gramsci's contextualization of his theory within the capitalist world. Here, we see that capitalism has been incorporated into the discussion, although the situation of hegemony in the pre-capitalist world is more often treated as an assumption rather than being analyzed in detail in Gramscian works.

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