

asserts it retrospectively, whereas careful analysis shows the powerful impact of new signs and values, even though they have not become firmly ingrained in structure.

The definition of a broad conception of ideology may now be further specified as the mediation between the multivalent signs which have been revalued but which continue to evoke connotations of the old order, and those which have been newly produced in the aspiration of signifying and/or generating a new order. This notion of ideology focusses attention both on the generation and regeneration of ideology as well as on the operation of ideology as generator of change. It enhances the understanding of ideology as "*synthesis* of stability and change, past and present, diachrony and synchrony" (Sahlins 1985: 144).<sup>19</sup>

Before I demonstrate the value of this approach for my ethnographic analysis, however, I would like to elaborate the two specific variations of old, revalued and new signs distinguished above, in terms of my definition of ideology. Firstly, I wish to focus attention on the disconnection of the signifier of a sign from its conventional signified. The hypothesis for this variation is that in the case of rapid social change traditional significations may disappear or acquire a different meaning in new circumstances, while their former signifiers continue to play a central role in social discourse. This appears to be a central characteristic of the main concepts featuring in the discourse of tradition. The traditional Maori tribal organisation, patterns of leadership, concepts of "love" and unity, as I will analyse in more detail below, have all acquired new meanings in contemporary circumstances, but their transformed values are defied in the discourse of tradition. Under the modified circumstances the indigenous structure has generated a new ideology which is formulated in terms of old signifiers whose "traditional" signifieds are lagging behind present practices.

A second major variation of ideological change involves the generation and integration of a signifier derived from a new order without it being connected to an available signified. The hypothesis for this variation is that when, in (neo-)colonial situations in particular, a new order is introduced, some appealing symbols might be interpreted as suitable for indigenous situations, but when elements of the foreign order are integrated into the already existing model for the future, the new images are

bound to remain empty. Nonetheless, they inevitably exert a destabilizing influence on the traditional order. They necessarily require a revaluation of the existing structure, and thus effect and affect the directions and paces of change. This operation of ideology characterizes the discourse of development. The features of the model of a new Maori tribal society, which is the ultimate goal of the comprehensive development programme, appear largely derivative of European models for community development. Despite the lack of resources to furnish the void models for self-determination, for example, Maori tribes have been restructured in anticipation of the new order with implications for many aspects of social practice. In this respect, a new ideology is running ahead of current practices, thus contributing to the generation of change. I shall now examine each of these variations of ideological change in more detail.

### 3. Ideology and the Discourse of Tradition

It has often been alleged that ideologies are a-historic and relatively persistent representations of their determinant realities.<sup>20</sup> The instigator of the recent discussion on ideology, Althusser (1976: 98–101), for example, argued that as ideologies appear unchangeable over time, they have no history. The notion that ideology is immutable is also deeply embedded in – Marxist – anthropology: "... one of the characteristic constitutive elements of ideology is its power to remain unchanged when other things are changing" (Bloch 1985: 45).<sup>21</sup> Bloch's conclusion is based on a rigorous distinction between ideological and nonideological cognition. Although he does much to reject a functional conception of ideology by recognizing that ideology and cognition are two sides of the same coin, it remains unclear how he himself attempts to escape from the dichotomy between ideological and nonideological cognition. To avoid an arbitrary distinction he proposes to shift the focus of attention to the common germination of ideology and

19 Sahlins attributes this synthesis to culture rather than ideology, but for reasons pointed out above I favour a broad notion of ideology.

20 The analysis presented below is based on detailed ethnographic research conducted during a period of 25 months of fieldwork among the Tainui Maori on the North Island of New Zealand. The details of the analysis are elaborated in my doctoral dissertation (van Meijl 1990). In this article I consider Tainui's discourses of tradition and development subject of analysis in my dissertation as representative for Maori aspirations at large since Tainui's development strategy for improving living standards without losing a distinct cultural identity has influenced the aims and objectives of most other Maori tribes in New Zealand.

21 See also Hamilton 1987: 79 and Maquet 1964: 28.