

## Reflections on the Relevance of a Theory of the History of Exchange

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*This essay first appeared in Cahiers internationaux de sociologie, volume 46, 1968 and was translated into English in Economy and Society, volume 2, number 2, 1973. But it begins in a general sense, where Meillassoux's earliest contribution breaks off (see pp. 129-57 of this volume) — with a systematic critique of the approach characteristic of much liberal economic anthropology, as exemplified by Bohannan and Dalton's Markets in Africa (to which Meillassoux contributed) and an attempt, in line with this critique, to elaborate a problematic that would put exchange in certain forms of pre-capitalist society 'in its place'. They show how the place of exchange within what they term 'lineage society' can be explained only by the role of exchange in the reproduction of the conditions of production — that is, at a different level from that of exchange itself; and establish a framework for the analysis of the articulation between the 'lineage system' and the capitalist mode of production, arguing that the place of exchange in the articulation of these systems will be justified by its role in the process of one system's domination over another — this role being determined in the last instance by the dominant mode of production. The latter part of the discussion parallels, in some respects, the sketch presented by Meillassoux of the 'social organisation of the peasantry' (see pp. 159-69 of this volume), and here the discussion of the control over reproduction and production in lineage-based societies raises the question of whether domination by seniors of juniors constitutes exploitation. Dupré and Rey conclude that it does; which introduces the problem of whether the seniors could be said to constitute a social class, to which they respond with the suggestion that the exploitation of the juniors constitutes a class function but that the seniors do not constitute a class in the full sense of the term. This problem has been taken up recently by Rey in his book, Les alliances de classe.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of what is included in the following text was written in 1967 as part of an attempt to answer a specific need arising out of fieldwork in Congolese societies. At the time, when this research was in its infancy, the problem was to develop a theoretical tool capable of dealing with the information already collected and of making progress in future fieldwork.

Marx's thought had only recently been applied to anthropology; its application developed in the footsteps of Anglo-Saxon economic anthropology and began to take its place when the latter appeared to have exhausted its possibilities, inextricably caught between substantivism and formalism. For those who, in France, started fieldwork at that period, the only expression of Marxist theory on segmentary societies was to be found in the works of Godelier and Meillassoux. Let us say immediately that Meillassoux's work appeared most interesting in terms of what we were looking for. While Godelier's attempt at an attractive synthesis, derived from Marxist concepts and the ideas of Anglo-Saxon anthropology, turned out to be of greater academic than practical use, Meillassoux's research had the incomparable advantage of presenting a theory of traditional economies which was coherent and at the same time of applying this theory to the understanding of a concrete society, that of the Guro of the Ivory Coast. It is for this reason that Meillassoux's research was placed at the centre of a critique which aimed at producing a theoretical tool capable of dealing with the problems we needed to solve. The numerous criticisms we have made of Meillassoux here and elsewhere only show the extent of our interest in his work.

It was this connection between theory and practice which led us to concentrate on Meillassoux's work; in our view this connection needs to be discussed further here both with regard to our contribution and to the rest of this collection. In order to define the scope of our essay, it is necessary to locate it in the history of a specific piece of research in which it appeared as a preliminary to the process of knowledge in which the ideas put forward had to be confronted with concrete information and emerged inevitably transformed by this confrontation. It was more a critique of existing theoretical works than a construction based on concrete information. Indeed there was no lack of data on the concrete nature of the societies under study, but we were at a stage at which the societies were identified only at the global level and only their outline sketched. For this reason this essay must be considered only as a tool meant to answer specific needs. With time, a certain gap has appeared between the tool and

the knowledge which it enables us to produce. This is normal and simultaneously justifies both fieldwork and theoretical work. It would not have been possible in a few lines to state all the transformations which have taken place. In our view it is more interesting to provide the reader with a few ideas which will simplify the use of all the texts in the present collection because it is their use which is in question. In this respect, the reader may question the move from the first part of this collection to the second, from theory to fieldwork, and this all the more because the authors brought together appear to be either theoreticians or fieldworkers.

What is under discussion here is the transition from theory to enquiry, the relation to be established between theory and the concrete, i.e. the whole process of knowledge in anthropology. The starting point of the process of knowledge is not, as claimed by empiricism, a specific concrete reality, but the representations and the concepts which already exist within the discipline and which precede any particular study. The result of the process of knowledge is the most adequate reproduction of reality by means of thought, a reproduction which contributes either by confirming or by challenging the theoretical corpus which pre-dates it. This is enough to emphasise the importance of theory for the study of the concrete; but this importance, probably this dominance, must not allow us to forget that between departure and arrival, between the tool and the product, a whole process of production is inserted which is, at the moment, it must be realised, left to the discretion, the honesty (he who comes from afar may lie) and the temperament of the researcher. As a result most fieldwork studies can be judged only by the coherence of the theories that they propose and not by the capacities these theories may have to reproduce intellectually a particular reality. It is clear that the theories have the opportunity of assuming a scientific character as soon as the conditions in which they have been produced are defined other than anecdotally.

The theory of knowledge in anthropology which should, by taking its proper place between the two sections of this collection, establish the necessary link between theory and fact, is only at the preliminary stage. We must be satisfied with a few pointers. The process of knowledge in anthropology must be conceived as a complex production and as such is defined by its constituent elements and by the relations which structure them. These elements themselves are practices of production which may, as a first step, be reduced to three:

- 1) the social practice which produces social relations between the anthropologist and his field, thus making possible the use of techniques;
- 2) the technical practice which uses the social relations produced by

the previous practice as one of the conditions for the production of information;

- 3) the theoretical practice which produces knowledge for the use of the information as one of the conditions of its production.

The anthropologist's role is to reunite the elements of the different practices, to unite these practices themselves and finally to account for the way in which he has articulated them in his own research. Most of the time, however, the process of knowledge is reduced to one or the other of its constituent practices. This reduction of the structure to one of its elements, which is known as fetishism, can take the following forms: There is for example, participatory ethnology, familiar to a whole French school, in which the anthropologist assimilates himself as much as possible to the society which he studies in order to produce, after a number of years spent in the field, a monograph whose guiding line remains, in the final analysis, the ideology of the society studied. A lot could be said concerning the very vague field of socio-economics which appears to be the most barbarous and inadequate fetishism, used to account for social reality, the fetishism of techniques. But here it is particularly relevant to emphasise the particular fetish which is most tempting for Marxist researchers as well as for the reader of this volume who is quite rightly attracted by the totalising aspect of the theories represented, and this fetish is dogmatism. Dogmatism consists in disregarding the facts, or rather, in taking them into consideration only to the extent to which they agree with a theory which is never challenged, turning reality into a pool of examples drawn upon only to substantiate the theory.

The reader should bear in mind that the worship of ancestors, however prestigious they may be, whatever status may be dedicated to them, cannot coexist with a scientific process. Given this condition of fundamental and necessary disrespect he will be able to profit from the texts included here and experience for himself the full fertility of Marx's thought.

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#### REFLECTIONS ON THE RELEVANCE OF A THEORY OF THE HISTORY OF EXCHANGE

In recent years the crisis in American economic theory has manifested itself in a number of critical essays which European admirers of this theory have become aware of only after a considerable delay. Some of these essays even question the validity of applying economic theory to developed capitalist society: this is true of the works of Koopmans, Hicks, Shaeffler and more recently,

Dorfman, among the better known. Others emphasise the inadequacy of the marginalist, neo-liberal theoretical apparatus for all societies in which 'the market economy' is not or was not dominant; that is the intention behind the works of Polanyi and Arensberg, Bohannan and Dalton.

The comparison we are making between these two types of research has a precise historical origin: starting with a critique of the liberal economics applied to American society, Karl Polanyi elaborated his substantive view and became the initiator of a renovating trend in economic anthropology.

Koopmans is incapable of leaving the traditional model of Robinson Crusoe on his island (in spite of the fact that he treats him with greater humour than his predecessors) in which we see Robinson the consumer purchasing with the revenue from his labour the commodities offered by Robinson the producer, both seeking a Paretian optimum which would allow equilibrium to occur. In the same way Polanyi and Bohannan, following his lead, cannot conceive of typologies which allow them to classify economic systems in any way other than by the forms of exchange: 'market', 'prestation-redistribution', 'reciprocity'.

In France this internal critique of liberal economics is hardly tempting for those researchers immersed in their mathematical models or those practitioners embedded in technocratic models but, by contrast, it is made use of from 'outside' by Marxist scholars. The present work was the result of fieldwork: it was conceived in Brazzaville in 1967 with the intention of throwing light on certain problems presented by that inquiry. The necessity for this critical and theoretical phase in research imposed itself through two convergent paths. On the one hand, from the very beginning of fieldwork the problematic of economic anthropology was revealed to be incapable of dealing with the real problems because it was weighed down by its preoccupation with the past.

On the other hand, Marx's problematic for the analysis of capitalist society, which has been made more accessible in the last few years by the works of Althusser, made possible the presentation of the problems, and in particular, those which are of primary interest to us: the articulation of the capitalist and the 'traditional' modes of production, in order to clarify the present condition and the economic and political future of Africa.

Our essay reveals this double progression: on the one hand it is a critique of Bohannan's position and of Polanyi's on which his is based; it aims to show that these approaches are impossible, that is, that they cannot achieve their objective. It then suggests another progression whose logic does not necessarily arise from the

preceding criticism but which is an attempt to realise Polanyi's project of a substantive view: to place all the economic and social situations on a truly equal footing and to think their articulations.

To do this it is necessary to put exchange back in its true place and this implies the knowledge necessary to determine this place: this is the aim of the second part of this essay in discussing the 'lineage system' and its articulation with other systems, notably the capitalist system.

In this way the theory of the history of exchange which Bohannan and Dalton are indeed trying to develop as much as Polanyi and Arensberg must find its place within a theory of (simple or extended) reproduction of economic and social formations; that is, to use Balibar's terms, of their 'dynamic' and their 'diachrony' (cf. *Reading Capital*).

#### A. An Idealist Theory

##### (1) The Introduction to *Markets in Africa: An Impossible Typology\**

Bohannan and Dalton's text begins in the following way: 'To study markets in Africa, it is necessary that the distinction between the institution of the market place and the principle of market exchange be pointed up clearly.'

In relation to various previous theories, the function of this distinction is critical: in asserting the presence of truly economic facts in African societies, it asserts, in opposition to the defenders of a simple projection of liberal economics on to these societies, the existence of a concrete object, the market place, which alludes to the market principle although it cannot be explained by it.

But this distinction is irrelevant: one of its terms suggests shouts, colours, smells, the other refers to equations; the second presents itself as an equation but the first does not. If, however, this distinction has a meaning, it is because the notion of market place is used to indicate unresolved problems: by simultaneously suggesting a similarity and a difference with the market principle, it induces us to develop concepts at the same level as, but different from, the market principle — itself presented from the very beginning as a universally accepted concept of capitalist economics. Once these concepts have been developed, it would then be possible, in a typology, to compare as equals the African societies regulated by them and those regulated by the market principle. At this stage the reader thus expects the rest of the text to suggest a problematic

\* Bohannan, P. and Dalton, D. (eds.), *Markets in Africa*, Northwestern University Press, 1962.

which would make it possible to deal with the construction of these concepts, and the conclusion to make an assessment of the progress of this construction. But, as early as the bottom of the first page, a three-fold typology — 'a threefold arrangement has proved convenient' — is imposed: societies without markets, societies with so-called 'peripheral' markets and societies obeying the market principle. It is clear that if the difference between the third type of society and the other two is clearly defined, based as it is on a previously accepted concept (the market principle), then, by contrast, the difference between the first two types is far less obvious since this distinction depends on the presence or absence of the so-called 'peripheral' market whose role, as its name suggests, should not be essential in the society. Thus we get the impression that the presence of this market, despite the fact that it is peripheral, is the sign of something more fundamental which allows a distinction between societies in which it appears and those in which it does not. We shall attempt to discover the role of this typology.

The rest of the introduction attempts to place the three suggested 'types' of societies on the same level, but in fact its true object is to discuss the second type (society with a 'peripheral' market) and it is therefore on the excerpts devoted to this object that we shall concentrate our reading.

This reading gives rise to two observations: the first is that whenever societies with 'peripheral' markets are discussed the text always draws our attention to the market place itself; the second is that when our attention is concentrated on the market place the organisation of the article is absolutely incomprehensible.

The first observation is easily made, be it on page 2 (paragraphs 2 or 4) or page 7 where the description of societies with peripheral markets begins: 'societies with peripheral markets differ from societies without markets in that the market place is present, but not necessarily in the sense that the market is more widespread' or pages 15–19 where a long discussion is devoted to the non-economic aspects of market places (this discussion takes up the basic contributions of the twenty-eight pieces presented in the rest of the book insofar as they discuss market places).

The second is at first imprecise: it is unclear how the different paragraphs are connected, and the reader wonders what the authors' aim is. Why end the essay with the long section (pp. 19–24) devoted to western impact on African societies? Why insist in this section in particular on the transitional structures which appear during penetration into the market economy? Why if not because the whole essay, therefore the whole book, is conceived of as having to provide essential answers to these questions and even because the whole

essay and the whole book have been written only to ask these questions and begin to answer them? If this is the case, the underlying principle of the suggested typology becomes clearer: we are not dealing with three types of societies located at the same level but with two extreme types and one 'transitional' type.

We will see later how this transition is envisaged. At this stage of understanding, that is, as long as we have not taken our eyes off the market place to look at what is behind it, the progression of the analysis escapes us: why insist on this notion of market place and

*Characteristics of the Market in three types of Economy*

	Marketless Economies	Economies with Peripheral Markets	Economies in which the Market Principle is Dominant
Major Source of Subsistence Livelihood	Self-production and use; reciprocity; redistribution	Self-production and use; reciprocity; redistribution	Production for sale; factor resources for sale; marketing and trading as occupations
Price Formation for Goods and Services Changing Hands	Equivalency ratios gift exchange	Supply and demand forces qualified by idiosyncratic social influences and controls; absence of factor markets	Supply and demand forces; market principle transacts factor ingredients as well as outputs
Market Price as Integrating Mechanism for Allocation of Resources, Incomes, Outputs	Absent	Absent	Absent
Money and Money Uses	Standard (special Payment purpose moneys) moneyless transactions	Standard (special Payment purpose moneys) moneyless transactions	Exchange (one standard all-purpose Payment money)
External Trade	Gift Trade; Administered trade	<i>Market place exchange</i> ; Gift trade; Administered trade	Market trade

then state in conclusion (p. 26) that when the market principle develops the market place evaporates? Also to state that the development of the market principle does not usually take place starting from the market but elsewhere (p. 26) or by extra-economic means (p. 22)? Why devote long discussions to the political or religious role of the market place simply to discover that these aspects, in contrast with the political or religious levels, tend to disappear with the increase of economic autonomy, an autonomy which is characteristic of systems subject to the market principle?

Let us cease looking at what we are asked to see. The authors themselves will help us in this task: indeed, they return to their typology in a table (p. 16) which, as it is intended to do, presents all the characteristics at the same level and allows us to take a step in the direction in which we want to go.

A first observation needs to be made on the reading of this table: while, on the whole, the first and second columns have nothing in common with the third, on the other hand, they differ from each other in only two lines out of five:

— the last line, in which market place exchange is added in the second column; it is on this point that our attention has been directed up to now;

— the second line, in which the notion of supply and demand is introduced.

By comparing the fate of these two differences in the course of their transition to the third column, another observation can be made: while the market place has again disappeared in the third column the principle of supply and demand has expanded so much that it fills all five lines of the third column. The situation is thus clear: the market place which appeared in the second column and again disappeared in the third is there only as the sign of something else: the unobtrusive presence of the principle of supply and demand in the second column which is destined to become pervasive. On the other hand, if we read the text from the beginning we find other signs of this reversal. At the bottom of page 7 after the section devoted to the market place we are told: 'Two aspects of peripheral markets, of special interest to economists, concern the process of price formation and the role of market-made prices in the overall economy'; this is followed by a page of discussion of supply and demand in an economy of 'peripheral' markets and in an economy 'dominated by market principles' respectively. By going even farther back to page 2 we find, at the end of the paragraph devoted to societies 'dominated by the market principle': 'It is in such societies that the price mechanism functions as an integrative device to allocate resources, incomes and outputs', which leaves us to understand that the said price

mechanism, if it does not play this role in the preceding societies, has at least already appeared there; let us note that this discovery, which can be deduced from the form of expression used in paragraph 3 is not made explicit in paragraph 2 devoted to a society with 'peripheral' markets.

The organisation of this introduction is now clearer: it matters little that the market place has evaporated in the third type of society if it is because the principle which hid behind it, the presence of supply and demand, has penetrated the whole society. As for the political and religious aspects of the markets, they represent a necessary stage in the subordination of the political and religious aspects of the former exchanges to supply and demand. Let us note that it is sometimes said that the participants are unconscious of this subordination: 'some markets are not regarded as primarily "economic" institutions by the people' (p. 18) and that the forces of supply and demand already in action deep down do not yet appear in their entire purity: 'supply and demand forces qualified by idiosyncratic social influence and controls' (table p. 16). This subordination of religious and political phenomena to supply and demand logically precedes their later ejection from the economic sphere, characteristic of western or westernised societies, at least as it is interpreted by marginalist, liberal economists, etc.

Under these conditions the strategic role played by the market under analysis, as well as the fact that it is necessary to devote a book to it are understandable: it is the place where this principle of supply and demand which at a later stage will penetrate the entire society appears visibly for the first time.

One may wonder however about the nature of this supply and demand in the societies with 'peripheral' markets and about the nature of their development. One may also wonder why the authors have not themselves made the principle of their progression explicit.

But if, like the market, supply and demand are peripheral in relation to the functioning of society, they are also peripheral in relation to its transformation; the authors themselves tell us that we have seen that the market economy develops outside the market place and its development is based on direct — forcible — political intervention by the coloniser rather than the independent dynamism of the principle of supply and demand. From then on the relation between systems with 'peripheral' markets and the systems subject to the 'market principle' cannot be considered in terms of efficacy. The initial presence of the principle of supply and demand has nothing to do with its later development. In short, supply and demand are not presented as mechanism but as essence, and the article suggests to us the development of essence as in idealist philosophy.

However, while Polanyi discovers in Aristotle, under the guise of exchange determined by social controls and influences, the essence of the liberal economy which was to develop later, we have seen that Bohannon and Dalton are reluctant to follow this path openly. In short, their essay presents itself as a failure.

We were wondering why this proposed typology was not preceded by a problematic which would justify it and why the introduction has no counterpart in a conclusion setting out the progression made in the book. In fact this would have been possible only if the problematic envisaged at the beginning had been adequate, that is if it had presented the problem of the process of transition. But the idealist problematic could be decomposed only by an attempt to apply it: that is why instead of having both an introduction and a conclusion we only have two superposed introductions: the idealist, coherent introduction which we have read between the lines; and the real and apparently unprincipled introduction which emerges from a confrontation with the facts.

We consider Bohannon and Dalton's failure to be progress compared with the previous achievements of liberal theory applied to non-capitalist societies. This progress has been made possible only by two conditions: first, the information available on the period studied (the colonial period) was sufficient so that not only an initial and a final state of the structure could be known in detail (the pre-colonial and the present economy of Africa) but also the conditions under which there had been a transition from one of these stages to the other; also the authors' intellectual honesty was sufficient to stop them from abstracting the known process of this change and replacing it with an imaginary process which would have corresponded better with their idealist problematic.

This honesty is not as widespread as one might assume: for example, the whole technocratic literature devoted to Africa in the name of multilateral as well as bilateral aid is based on a dichotomy in the presentation of the history of colonisation: on the one hand, the regrettable excesses: the police system, forced labour, massacres; and on the other hand, the positive results: the development of exchange, the birth of a local bourgeoisie, the introduction of this part of the population to the 'American way of life'.

Such a historical view coexists very easily with an idealist problematic which accepts that the market system developed through its own forces, independently of any intervention in any structure other than that of exchange;<sup>1</sup> by contrast, it finds it more difficult to give a scrupulous account of the facts which does not hide the fact that the famous 'market principle' developed only through the violent intervention of the coloniser in the previous mode of pro-

duction, for then it appears that things could be no different and that, as a consequence, the 'positive' and the 'regrettable' aspects of colonisation were not linked by chance but by necessity. But this type of analysis continues to cause as much scandal as Marx's description of the primitive accumulation of capital, and for the same reasons; that is why American anthropology, like American economic theory (e.g. Koopmans) is ready to criticise its former problematic but not, at least not yet, ready to suggest a new one.

## II. THE ORIGIN OF THIS TYPOLOGY

The notion of the market place which is central to Bohannan's problematic appears in Polanyi as the product of theoretical research aimed at an autonomous understanding of economies other than the liberal economy. The market place which Bohannan has used as a key term in his classification of economies is in Polanyi's work the logical result of a project which is derailed from the start because it fails to avoid reference to the market economy. With him then we shall meet no attempt to camouflage internal contradictions: on the contrary in Polanyi the deviation appears in its full clarity.

To make this and all its consequences obvious let us examine Polanyi's two main essays in the symposium *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, beginning with the one in which he is supposed to give a theory of economies.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of this article Polanyi wishes to distinguish himself from his predecessors who projected the definitions and the concepts elaborated in the framework of the liberal economy on to their studies of the economies of archaic societies. He rejects a formal definition of the economy, the application of the logic of rational action to the market economy, as unfit to describe the functioning of other economies. At the same time he proposes the adoption of another point of view for the study of these economies: the substantive point of view. From this point of view, the economy is defined as an instituted process that is a totality of movements of goods and services within the framework of institutions specific to each society.

He reaches an extremely comprehensive understanding of archaic economies: 'The human economy, then, is embedded in institutions, economic and non-economic. The inclusion of the economic is vital. For religion or government may be as important for the structure and functioning of the economy as monetary institutions or the availability of tools and machines that lighten the toil of labour' (p. 250). This assertion concerns both the economies of the western

type and those which do not belong to this type. If it is to be truly operative it should help define a single theoretical field in which a problematic common to all economies could be elaborated. When the rest of the chapter is examined to discover whether the development of this concept answers this expectation, we are forced to recognise that it does not, that far from introducing the theoretical unity which we had the right to hope for, it does no more than once again bring up the contrast between market and non-market economies.

A preliminary remark is essential: the market economy can very well be studied without the substantive definition: 'As long as the economy was controlled by such a system [system of price-making markets], the formal and the substantive meaning would in practice coincide' (p. 244). From this moment onward the situation is clear: the substantive definition of the economy does not even begin to question the market system in order to set up a general problematic. It is merely a didactic definition whose ambiguity is immediately revealed: on the one hand it is the only one to be able to include all economies; on the other it is not necessary to the understanding of the market economy which is analysed far more conveniently in the formal way. Under the unifying appearance of the substantive view of economy, the duality remains untouched since the market economy continues to be opposed to the other economies. The rest of the article is constructed on the model of this opposition. The only link between market economies and non-market ones is to be found in their differences and their oppositions. Indeed, after devoting a paragraph to reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange as the three possible modes of integration of an economy, the article continues with the description of the elements which constitute an economy: the forms of trade, the elements of the market and the use of money. The description takes the role of a comparison between the role of these elements in the market system and in the systems based on reciprocity and redistribution, a comparison which takes the market system as its point of reference since there homogeneously and autonomously integrated elements are to be found which present themselves elsewhere as incongruous and unarticulated. The market, money and trade which in one case are integrated through the mechanism of supply and demand, are in the other isolated and independent. 'All-purpose' money is contrasted with various 'special use' monies, fluctuating and regulating prices are contrasted with fixed equivalents, etc. To summarise: at the end of the description of the elements of the economy, two totalities are implicitly set up: that of the market economy and that of the economies based on reciprocity and redistribution.

The failure of the substantive view is complete: the significance of the non-economic merely begs the question since the non-market economy is studied according to the criteria of the market economy.

We shall examine the implications of Polanyi's failure and in particular the historical relations which now appear necessary between market and non-market economies.

Polanyi takes care to specify that the three forms of integration, reciprocity, redistribution and the market do not constitute the stages of an evolutionist model: 'In any case, forms of integration do not represent stages of development' (p. 256). This is hardly surprising since an evolutionist model presupposes something which does not exist in Polanyi's work, namely a theory of the structures of each of the societies taken in isolation (the simplest object), as a preliminary to a theory of transition from one stage to the next (the most complex object). He thus places himself at a sub-evolutionist level.

How then is the transition from non-market economies to market economies to be made? In his description of the elements of the economy, Polanyi refers, in order to analyse economies based on redistribution and reciprocity, to a coherence which is external to them, whatever the postulate of the economy embedded in the non-economic may say about this: it is the coherence of the market system integrated by the interplay of supply and demand.

To make the form of this transition explicit, it is then necessary to try and find the first appearance of coherence in the non-market system which, as it affects an element of the economy, would be liable to permeate the whole system by its own impetus and, with time, to transform it into a market system.

On this point many assertions are significant; thus: 'Higgling-hagging has been rightly recognised as being the *essence* of bargaining behaviour' (p. 255); '. . . ancient Greek auction ranked among the *precursors* of markets proper' (p. 268); and later on the same page: 'changing or fluctuating prices of a competitive character are a comparatively recent development and their *emergence* forms one of the main interests of the economic history of antiquity.' The terms *essence*, *precursor*, *emergence* which we have emphasised imply a certain attitude on the part of the historian correlative with a certain form of emergence of the market economy from non-market systems. The economic historian's role is to study the non-market economies, to detect in them the germs of the market system — in a word, to grasp the essence of the market system when it emerges locally.

The study of the economy of Aristotle's ancient Greece, the subject of another of Polanyi's essays, will give us the opportunity of seeing how he answers two questions which he considers to be funda-

mental for the economic historian, 'When and how did trade become linked with markets? At what time and place do we meet the general result known as market trade?' (p. 263). The structure of Polanyi's analysis of the development of Greek society exemplifies market and non-market relations. Because the birth of the market system is understood as an irruption in the non-market, the analysis of historical facts is compelled to shift register at the point of transition and present it as a discontinuity.

The first part of the essay<sup>3</sup> is entirely devoted to setting out Aristotle's economic and political anthropology. The economy is actually described as embedded in the non-economic, in this case the political, and as finding in it its true coherence. From the moment when the germs of the market appear, the analysis which had prevailed up till then is replaced by an analysis following the principles of liberal economics.

For Aristotle 'natural' exchanges are those which within the communities, the city or the *oikos*, allow an equitable distribution of resources in such a way that each community's subsistence is adequately ensured and no more. The rate of exchange for two given products was fixed and dependent on the status of the exchangers.

Exchanges for profit were of little importance and those who practised them, the *kapelos*, were doubly excluded from society: by statute, as they did not have citizen's rights and did not participate in the play of reciprocity (the exclusive privilege of citizens and *oikos* chiefs), and physically, since their activity was exercised at the Agora built in a primitive fashion outside the city. Their small profits were pettily obtained by the sale of foodstuffs and cooked foods.

In the fourth century the introduction of mercenary troops for military expeditions as well as the increased length of those expeditions due to the subjection of the neighbouring cities presented the armies in the field with problems of provisioning. At that time food markets were created in the allied cities. The money which soldiers spent in these markets was given back to them on their return when they sold their booty. The case of General Timotheus in 364 (p. 86) reveals this transitory role of money since he was able to pay for food with copper instead of the usual silver coins by giving the assurance that these coins would be accepted, when they returned, for the purchase of the loot. These markets were temporary and disappeared at the end of the campaign.

The fact that food markets may have given certain citizens the opportunity of making profits appeared to Aristotle to be contrary to the political order. And according to him this new way of exchange should have been kept out of the city, just as the retail merchants of the Agora were.

Polanyi considers this comparison of Aristotle's to be judicious

despite the fact that, according to him, Aristotle had failed to see that the relationship between these two forms of exchange were established through the mechanism of supply and demand. Does this mean that the mechanism of supply and demand existed at the time of Aristotle? The answer given by Polanyi clearly shows how he sees its emergence:

1. The mechanism of supply and demand did not exist as such in Aristotle's time: 'The distribution of food in the market allowed as yet but scant room to the play of that mechanism; and long-distance trade was directed not by individual competition, but by institutional factors. Nor were either local markets or long-distance trade conspicuous for the fluctuation of prices.'
2. According to Polanyi, the mechanism of supply and demand was realised only later in the third century: 'Not before the third century BC was the working of supply-demand price mechanism in international trade noticeable. This happened in regard to grain, and later, to slaves, in the open port of Delos.'
3. But despite this, Athens is the precursor of the introduction of supply and demand: 'The Athenian agora preceded therefore by some two centuries the setting up of a market in the Aegean which could be said to embody a market mechanism.'

Thus the link which Aristotle did not make and which Polanyi establishes between the small traders of the Agora and long-distance trade is based only on the fact that the two forms latently contained the market mechanism. In Aristotle's time this mechanism appears only furtively, in the form of its essence sensed through the market place. This essence will only be realised, embodied in economic reality, two centuries later at Delos, without it being known how this historical transition between Athens and Delos took place, if it did.

Using emergence as the mode of transformation from non-market economies is the consequence of a lack of theory, replaced, as a palliative, by an idealist ideology.

The absence of theory also induces an extremely simplistic view of the relations between the two types of system, relations which can then be reduced to an elementary dichotomy: the market and the non-market, or, more precisely, the market *or* the non-market since the relation between the two terms can be seen only as mutually exclusive. Indeed from the very moment when a single element of the essence of the market is actualised in a non-market economy it then invades, at the same time destroying, the system in which it has manifested itself and replaces it by the market system.

Let us return to Polanyi's general essay<sup>4</sup> to look at the way in which he makes explicit this mutual exclusion of the two types of systems, an exclusion which in the final analysis, is the only logical consequence of seeing the origin of the market as an emergence.

On page 255 Polanyi opposes the exchanges at a set rate of the systems based on redistribution and reciprocity to exchanges at bargained rates in the market system. This opposition is developed, not in terms of structures but atomistically by the mediation of psycho-sociological attributes bestowed on each of its terms. The solidarity of the societies which practise exchange at a set rate is contrasted with the antagonism, the individualism and the desire for profit which necessarily accompany exchange at bargained rates. To complete this intrusion of the psycho-sociological, previously foreign to the analysis, Polanyi presents two postulates: 'No community intent on protecting the fount of solidarity between its members can allow latent hostility to develop around a matter as vital to animal existence and, therefore, capable of arousing as tense anxieties, as food' (p. 255).

This amounts to saying:

1. Societies based on redistribution and reciprocity could not tolerate antagonisms and tensions in their midst.
2. The essential thing for the economy of these societies is the satisfying of basic needs — the sphere of subsistence.

Owing to these fundamental postulates and the intervention of the psycho-sociological, Polanyi's explanatory system finds an apparent coherence; in a non-market economy, when a certain sphere presents possibilities of profit, and especially, the sphere of foodstuffs, as in the Athenian Agora, the antagonism which all the benefits necessarily entail, thus appears as the proof of the appearance of the essence of the market. Because of this the market system and the others are absolutely incompatible; the only possible coexistence is that of the market, a unique form of integration accompanied by secondary transactions of redistribution and reciprocity, which have no integrative role.

Aristotle's and Polanyi's analyses, in spite of their different points of view — the one in terms of economic anthropology and politics and the other in terms of liberal economics — produce superposing categories. What Aristotle rejects as non-political Polanyi takes up again in his category of market.

This conception of market and non-market relations has extremely important consequences for the subject which interests us, the penetration of the colonial economy to the heart of traditional societies. In the usual analyses of this contact, the themes of the idealist ideology are widely used. One element of the market system is sufficient to impose the whole system in traditional societies; for this reason it is an entire mode of comprehension and an entire mode of analysis which are in question because, at the moment when the market is introduced, the analysis which heretofore was anthropological gives way to the principles of liberal economics.

This type of analysis, brought about by conceiving of contact between economies as exclusive, results in the reinforcement of this conception, since it is incapable of grasping compromises or co-existence between the two systems.

### B. The Place of Exchange

In our critique of Bohannan and Dalton we have shown how the hypothesis of the development of the 'market principle' by a process of diffusion (a hypothesis according to which the previously 'peripheral' market progressively comes to dominate non-market societies) could not be seriously defended by its authors. Besides, this hypothesis is clearly equally unable to explain the development of the market and of monetary exchanges in Greece, and we believe that the few indications given by Marx on the dissolution of the 'ancient mode of production'<sup>5</sup> and 'the mere existence of monetary wealth, even its conquest of a sort of supremacy'<sup>6</sup> constitutes a far more solid scientific basis.

In a similar perspective we shall describe:

— Lineage society, by making explicit the fact that the place held by exchange — just like the place of exchange in capitalist society or the place of the political in ancient Greek society — is to be explained by the role of exchange in the reproduction of the conditions of production, i.e. at a level other than that of exchange itself.

— The articulation of this lineage society and that of the capitalist mode of production. To be complete this second element implies the need to state a theory of the capitalist system which is symmetrical with that of the lineage system: we have merely provided the framework for such an analysis and for the analysis of the last two forms of articulation which we identified; but the description of the first type of articulation does not require a detailed knowledge of the capitalist mode of production and we have therefore developed it at greater length. Just as we find within each particular system, the place of exchange in the articulation of these systems will be justified by its role in the process of domination of one system by another and this role will in the final instance be determined by the dominant mode of production.

#### I. THE PLACE OF EXCHANGE IN LINEAGE AND SEGMENTARY SOCIETIES

(1) *Control of Matrimonial Exchanges by the Seniors.* In his essay "The Economy" in *Agricultural Self-Sustaining Societies: A Preliminary Analysis*<sup>7</sup> Meillassoux has attempted to demonstrate

the importance of exchanges between seniors of different lineage groups and in particular the importance of matrimonial exchanges. Noticing that goods which are essentially produced by 'juniors' in the framework of the unit of production (the lineage being based on real or fictive kinship) are entirely controlled by the seniors, Meillassoux asks the following questions:

1. What is this dependence based on?
2. What is the role of economic fact in the development and maintenance of this dependence?

He then surveys different possible answers to this double question:

— Physical pressure which allows the maintenance of the social hierarchy in bureaucratic and feudal societies: but the 'seniors' do not control any police force capable of enforcing such pressure;

— Kinship relations: however 'kinship expresses the social relationships which form the basis of social cohesion, but it is not itself a cohesive force';

— Control of the means of production gives the non-producer control over the producer in the capitalist system, but the means of production in lineage societies are too elementary and too easily accessible for such control to take place;

— The control of technical knowledge: but technical knowledge is relatively rapidly accessible and senility makes this knowledge disappear.

Thus none of the mechanisms which, in other social systems, allow the maintenance of forms of dependence can be used by the seniors. By contrast, they retain for their sole access control of social knowledge (knowledge of genealogies, history, marriage rules) widened to 'artificial fields (magic, divination, religious rituals)' and particularly they retain control over the juniors as well as their own access to women, a control guaranteed by their possession of the 'elite goods' essential to marriage. This final weapon in the seniors' hands is original by comparison with the weapons previously considered: indeed, while all the others were each particular senior's *individual weapons* within his own group, this is a *collective weapon* under the control of all the *seniors from the different lineage groups*. That is what Meillassoux expresses when he wrote (pp. 140-1): 'Hence a more inclusive alliance is necessary between the seniors of these neighbouring groups in order mutually to preserve their respective authority within their communities'; of the goods produced by the community and handed over to the seniors as *prestation some will not be redistributed* but kept over at the level of the seniors themselves who will use them to sanction access to wives';

'But any senior who would accept such a transaction with an individual without the required rank would be weakening his counterpart's authority and consequently his own. It is in the joint interest of all seniors to respect established order.'

Thus the decisive argument which gives the seniors power to dominate the juniors is particularly manifested in marriage exchanges; it is their 'solidarity' which unites them in the face of discontinuous (and even antagonistic) groups of their juniors.

But what is the origin of the importance of this control of marriage exchanges? As Meillassoux clearly shows, the problem is not that of satisfying the juniors' sexual needs in societies in which male-female relationships are very relaxed before marriage. Control of matrimonial exchanges is one of the ways in which the group of seniors guarantees that they retain control over the demographic reproduction of the lineages; reproduction of the dependence relationship of juniors towards seniors is guaranteed as a corollary: indeed it can be said by taking up Marx's<sup>8</sup> formula that to reproduce himself as an 'objectively individual man' that is, as junior of a lineage, the junior must follow a continuous progression in the social hierarchy which allows him to reach, one day, the status of senior: among the Guro of the Ivory Coast, Meillassoux shows that the bachelor, even when he is old stays associated with younger juniors, i.e. placed lowest in the social hierarchy. By controlling matrimonial exchanges, the seniors can slow down or stop this progression for any given junior i.e. prevent this junior's reproduction as an 'objectively individual man'.

(2) *Control over the Exchange of Men.* Control over matrimonial exchanges is not the only way in which the group of seniors exercise control over the demographic reproduction of lineages: they also exercise it by control over the exchange of slaves. There exists in numerous lineage societies a mode of integrating slaves or descendants of slaves into the lineage after a few generations; thus fictive kinship is created, which is either actually presented as being fictive or presented as being true; anthropologists insist on this aspect of things which supports the theory according to which any chief in a lineage society is searching for the largest possible dependence group; but there is a symmetrical aspect to the reinsertion of the slave: the senior has the possibility of reducing the junior to slavery by exchanging him against elite goods provided by another senior.

These two symmetrical and complementary mechanisms are present in the societies of the western Congo in which we carried out our field-work. A senior could not reduce his junior to slavery as he pleased, but such a threat constantly determined the junior's

behaviour towards his senior. Indeed in cases of adultery, theft, witchcraft, etc. any man, senior or junior, had to pay a fine of 'elite goods' possessed by the seniors only; a junior then had to rely on his senior and the latter provided the necessary goods only if the junior was usually submissive to him; in general he did not provide them in case of relapse; one of the senior's 'exchange partners' could pay the fine for him and take the junior as slave. Similarly, despite the fact that during the whole period of the slave trade the general tendency had been to transfer slaves from one exchange partner to the next until the coast was reached a fair number of these slaves were nevertheless reintegrated as social juniors in the lineages and now many lineages and even whole clans are entirely composed of descendants of slaves since all the descendants of *mfumu* (owners) are dead. It seems that as a general rule the lineages in which slaves were reintegrated were demographically weak lineages: thus the combination of the two phenomena, putting juniors into slavery and reintegration of slaves as nominal juniors has, at the global level, had the effect of redistributing men from demographically strong to demographically weak lineages.

In this way, even more than by control over marriage exchanges, seniors controlled the careers of juniors in society.

(3) *The Reproduction of the Conditions of Production.* This demographic reproduction appears to be the essential precondition for the reproduction of conditions of production in lineage society. By comparison, other conditions appear secondary; this is so for collective ownership of tools, since these are in general very easy to reconstitute; this is also true for reproduction of land ownership as well as for the reproduction of the lineage unit (or of a wider unit grouping many lineages) as a free and independent unit, whereas in the 'ancient communities' such as those described by Marx<sup>9</sup> these conditions seem to be crucial. Let us explain what we mean by this:

Lineage land is the object neither of exchange nor conquest; in other respects confrontations are sorted out between lineage groups as well as between larger groups (including a number of lineages) in such a way that, after the conflict, each of the groups continues to survive independently. However, there are exceptions: when conflicts oppose groups which had previously had no relationship — as in the case, for example, of the great Fan or Bakota migrations in the Congo Gabon region — land may be conquered and one group either massacred or totally reduced to slavery. But such conflicts assume the absence of links and exclude the institution of reciprocal exchange between those groups for many years. Conflicts therefore end in this way only in exceptional cases; usually

conflicts are linked to the first type of reproduction which we looked at, the demographic reproduction of lineages, and in particular to matrimonial problems. The conflict, regulated and limited in its effects, takes place between groups whose seniors are, or may be, linked by reciprocal exchange. The results of this conflict are the same as those of reciprocal exchange between seniors, i.e. mainly the acquisition of men and women; what cannot be acquired by exchange between seniors e.g. land or the enslavement of a whole group, cannot be acquired by war either; the conflict takes place in a realm which is externally determined by exchange between seniors. The conflict appears as the necessary complement of exchange between seniors: in lineage societies only seniors can exchange men, women, elite goods, bridewealth goods. Permanent hostility between groups is a condition of this privilege: the seniors alone can transgress this hostility or rather return it since exchange between seniors retains strongly antagonistic forms.

As we understand them lineage societies can be contrasted both with Nambikwara hordes, wandering through an immense territory in which they hunt and gather and are highly unlikely to bump into a similar group, and with 'ancient communities' as Marx sees them, in which a land deeply transformed by agriculture, division of labour on a greater scale, and a high population density turn the land itself into an object of desire and men whose land has been conquered into 'mere organic appendices of this land'.

A comparison of the processes of reproduction in ancient society as Marx analysed it and lineage society allows us to specify what the dominant mode of reproduction is:

— in lineage society the reproduction of the conditions of production is primarily the demographic reproduction of the production group (the lineage) whereas in ancient society it is primarily the defence or acquisition of land, the preservation of the overall freedom of the community or the enslavement of the defeated community;

— in lineage society this reproduction is achieved primarily by a process of exchange whereas in ancient society primarily by war.

In this way the conditions of production explain why exchange between lineages controlled by seniors takes the first place in lineage societies: it is the dominant mode (one of the dominated modes being armed conflict) of the process of reproduction of the conditions of production.

The control of this process by all the seniors of the group allows them to control the reproduction of each junior as a junior of this group: for the junior the threat of being deprived of a wife or of acquiring one late corresponds to the demographic reproduction of

the group by the acquisition of women; for the junior the threat of being reduced to slavery corresponds to reproduction by acquisition of men. It can thus be said that control of the reproduction of the technical conditions of production (demographically adapted labour unit) ensures the reproduction of social relations (dependence of the juniors on the seniors).

Here we have a clear answer to the double question Meillassoux asked about the dependence of juniors:

- '1. What is this dependence based on?
2. What is the role of economic fact in the development and the maintenance of this dependence?'

Or at least this is a partial answer if we are right in thinking that the problem really concerns the *mode* of dependence and not the dependence of a particular individual: indeed this explains only the maintenance (or as we have said, reproduction) of dependence; its establishment would demand a very different discussion which would among other things, draw out the mode of transition to lineage society from another form of society. The confusion of these two problems is not without danger.

The 'role of economic fact' is determinant since it is the reproduction of the conditions of production which allows the reproduction of dependence; but this economic fact is not exchange: it is production and it first concerns men and not goods. On the contrary, exchange as we have shown by a parallel with war, appears to be a political fact: as it concerns the slave trade we will see the consequences of the fact that exchange belongs directly to the political level.

(4) *The Function of Elite Goods.* Exchange is primarily the exchange of men and women and only secondarily that of goods; secondarily, but nonetheless necessarily, because large-scale exchanges of men and women which simultaneously maintain the hostility of the groups and the continuity of their relationship at the level of the seniors are inconceivable without an inverse circulation of goods; certainly direct exchanges of men for men exist; for example the direct exchange of dependents (men and young children) among the Tiv of Nigeria as described by Bohannan: but this direct exchange is merely complementary to an exchange of 'elite goods' on a far larger scale; slaves are to be found in this last 'sphere' in which goods are exchanged for one another and eventually for dependents whose circulation is usually in the 'sphere' of direct exchange.

Those 'elite goods' which are not perishable and circulate without being consumed (copper, iron goods, bracelets, kula necklaces,

blankets on the north-western U.S. coast, raffia or cotton loin cloths, etc.) tend to be accumulated since they are continually produced and their total mass thus increases ceaselessly (the increase in bridewealth in Africa can be partly explained in this way since money has taken the place of elite goods as long as the sums accumulated and received are not used for other purposes). In many societies a readjustment is periodically made by institutionalised destruction; these destructions, inexplicable in terms of 'rationality' (that is, from the point of view of an economic or non-economic individual or collective subject), are the manifestations of the limits which the structure of reproduction imposes on the economy of such a society. These elite goods are not always directly produced by the juniors but often by caste groups (blacksmiths, weavers) or by the seniors themselves. But even in these cases, all or part of the extra labour socially necessary for the manufacture of these goods is provided by the juniors (or people assimilated to juniors, such as slaves reintegrated into the lineage), who must either produce the food given to the castes in return for these goods, or make prestations of labour or of consumption goods to the senior who is engaged in organising the production of elite goods. The manufacture of these goods often brings into play the most complex techniques known by the society (iron-working, weaving) and the only skills which it is possible to delay the learning of for a long time: juniors or women can then be employed by the senior who possesses these skills, as is done in Banzabi ironwork where the seniors organise the labour and intervene directly only in the final phase.

Iron, whether it is produced by the society itself or imported, is often an elite good; but iron is used to manufacture production goods (tools); among the Guro of the Ivory Coast — iron importers — iron tools are the direct property of the seniors whereas wooden tools circulate very freely in the lineage and even from one lineage to another. The political control which the seniors exercise through reciprocal exchange on the reproduction of the conditions of production is thus doubled at the level of each lineage by direct control of the means of production. Among the Banzabi of the Congo, who are iron producers this doubling is even clearer — the hierarchy of elite goods exactly parallels the hierarchy of production goods:

- at the top are found the smith's hammer and anvil, means of production of the production goods;
- in the middle was formerly the axe and now the imported machete, male production goods of agriculture;
- at the bottom, finally are found simple consumption goods such as raffia loin cloths.

In these two examples however, political control of reproduction is the basis for economic control of the means of production and not the reverse; but a general theory of lineage societies alone makes it possible to assert that this is really the case — consideration of an isolated case does not allow us to make any conclusions.

Even if the seniors do not differentiate themselves from their dependents by any particular consumption, under the guise of 'elite goods' they collectively have at their disposal a surplus directly or indirectly produced by the surplus labour of the juniors and the women and they use this surplus labour to control the reproduction of the lineage groups and correspondingly the reproduction of the dependence of these groups on themselves.

(5) *Is there Exploitation?* Under these conditions is it possible to talk of the exploitation of the juniors by the seniors? Meillassoux himself explicitly denies this in the following way: 'Despite the fact that they represent a relatively considerable amount of labour, the sumptuous character' of these treasures (elite goods) is still limited . . . the precise destination of these good restricts their use and does not really allow them to be diverted for personal gain' and he concludes that it is only contact with the market economy which has made it possible for the seniors to transform the community organisation into a system of exploitation.

What is the definition of the concept of exploitation which underlies this argument? It is precisely the one given by Godelier in many articles and which we quote as he formulated it in *Les Temps Modernes*<sup>11</sup>: 'Exploitation begins when the surplus is appropriated without any counterpart.' We believe that this definition is inoperative (according to its terms no society would be exploitative) and that it does not constitute a scientific statement.

Indeed let us attempt to apply this definition to the capitalist system: the development of the productive forces is undeniably a 'counterpart to the appropriation of the surplus'; therefore exploitation takes place only when the bourgeois class squanders the surplus without ensuring the extended reproduction of a the conditions of production. The argument is a return to the concept defended by the classical economists and which cleanses all known capitalist regimes of the sin of exploitation as soon as it is based on a period of time sufficient to eliminate the temporary effects of cyclical crises. It is not uninteresting to notice that this definition of exploitation brings about an understanding which is the reverse of Marx's: indeed it assumes that capitalists exploit less to the extent to which they provide a more important counterpart, that is, insofar as they devote a greater part of the surplus to the development of productive

forces and a smaller part to their personal consumption; but for Marx<sup>12</sup> the reverse is true. When the capitalists devote a greater part of the appropriated surplus value to reproduction, the exploitation of the labour force is increased, not diminished (any trade unionist knows this too); either because the capitalists thus have the capacity to exploit the labour force already at their disposal more intensely or (in the case when the capitalist mode of production has not yet eliminated the preceding mode of production), because they may exploit a new one.

Moreover this definition of exploitation is not a scientific statement; Godelier continues: 'And it is difficult to identify the precise moment when the community begins to be exploited by the very people who provide it with services.' This continuity shows that the author had not placed himself at the correct level to define his concept: the fact that the surplus product is appropriated without counterpart at a given moment is merely an external effect of a mutation in the relation of forces and tells us nothing of the process which permits the appropriation.

What Marx means by exploitation can be found in an ideological form in his earliest works: the product turns against its producer and increases his subjection.

We suggest the following definition of this concept: there is exploitation when the use of the surplus by a group (or an aggregate) which has not provided the corresponding labour reproduces the conditions for a new extortion of surplus labour from the producers. Thus, according to Marx, in the capitalist system, at the end of the labour process the proletariat finds himself obliged once again to sell his labour power which the capitalist will then exploit (more intensely) thanks to the surplus he has appropriated during this labour process.

In lineage society, as in all non-capitalist modes of production, the process which allows the simultaneous reproduction of the technical and the social conditions of production is distinct from the process of production itself; we have advanced our analysis of this process sufficiently to state that there is exploitation of the juniors by the seniors who control this process of reproduction.

In his discussion on societies 'in transition towards socialism' Preobrazhensky, in the first edition of *The New Economics* asserts that, in this phase, the working class must exploit the peasantry. This refers to an understanding of exploitation which we are questioning here, as is made clear by the rest of his work. This assertion has been eliminated in later editions, including the French CNRS one, for tactical and not theoretical reasons. However the theoretical

problem is more complex in this last case since exploiters and exploited belong to two different modes of production, articulated within the same social formation.

(6) *Do the Seniors Constitute a Social Class?* The seniors' control over production and in particular their control over the means of production (land, tools, etc.) is weak and, when it does exist as in the case of iron tools, it appears to be a consequence of the control these seniors exercise over the process of reproduction. This control over reproduction is a 'class function' but the support of this function has no effective existence outside the function itself, at least in real lineage societies. The societies of the western Congo where we carried out our field-work gave us the opportunity to observe the synchronic transformation which turned a group of seniors among the Banzabi, a hinterland people deprived of successors, into a truly dominant class among the Vili of the coast; but this was accompanied by an important shift from real 'seniority' towards social seniority (juniors, called 'grandsons' are the descendants of slaves) and also by a hierarchisation: the Vili kingdom of Loango was an elected monarchy; the king's electors were the chiefs of the main land-owning clans. We believe that this problem of a class function which is not supported by a constituted group can also be found in other socio-economic formations: thus, before the emergence of real feudalism as it is understood by Marc Bloch, the nobles and various magnates took on some of the class functions of the future feudal lords before becoming a real class.

(7) *Lineage Society and the Lineage Mode of Production.* The unit of production on which lineage society is articulated i.e. the lineage cell proper, is not the only possible unit of production in lineage societies, nor is the mode of production of this unit, which may be called the lineage mode of production, the only mode of production which is present in these societies but it is the dominant one. Here we will approach neither the problem of the identification of coexisting modes of production (without one of them tending to bring about the disappearance of the others) within a non-capitalist social formation, nor the analysis of the relations of domination between these modes of production. These problems may, however, be discussed — at least in a preliminary way — in the same way as that of the articulation of 'traditional' modes of production with the capitalist mode of production, during periods in which they coexist within the same society.

## II. ARTICULATION OF THE 'TRADITIONAL' AND THE CAPITALIST MODES OF PRODUCTION

We will examine the process through which European capitalism established its domination in the very midst of the African social formations which had previously been dominated by other modes of production. We propose to show that, if their usual interpretation is somewhat modified, the terms in which the history of this 'contact' is usually described, i.e. trade followed by colonial and neo-colonial periods, are able to recover the concepts of a periodisation of this history. We will restrict our analysis of this 'contact' to the lineage social formations on which we have concentrated up to now.

(1) *Homogeneity and Heterogeneity of Trade.* In the western Congo the networks used for the exchange of slaves during the (first official and later illicit) slave trade and commodities during the goods trade are identical: they are chains of 'exchange partners' moving from the hinterland to the coast, from one clan's territory to the next, from one ethnic group to the next.

In his contribution to *Markets in Africa* Meillassoux mentions<sup>13</sup> that the Guro differentiate 'man to man' exchanges or exchanges 'between partners' (they use the French expression 'entre camarades') which distinguish the exchange of slaves from other forms of exchange and particularly their relationship with the Diula. Since trade goods reached the Guro from the Ebrié (a coastal people) by way of the Agni and the Baule, it is very possible that such chains of exchange may also have existed in the Ivory Coast.

The period of the goods trade, which we assimilate to the slave trade, precedes the establishment of concessionary trading companies in the hinterland: when this begins we will speak of the colonial period.

During the whole period of the goods trade, the goods reach the coast through traditional chains of exchange; the trading posts are only set up on the coast and along the first few miles of the banks of the main rivers. Similarly, during the period of the slave trade, the slaving captains land only in the small coastal ports (Ngoïo, Kakongo, Loango, etc.) and the exchange chains bring the slaves to the coast. Each trading post is 'protected' by a local chief who provides it with labour, ensures its supplies and defends it against possible external attacks; besides it is only by using a local chief's network of 'exchange partners' that the trading posts can be supplied with trade goods. Similarly the slaving captains are under the protection of the 'kings' of the trading ports; for example, in Loango, they are assimilated to the royal clan and they depend on the *mafouc* for their supply of slaves.

However, there is an important difference between the two trading periods: while the slave trade (at least while it was legitimate) reached only a few ports, the goods trade took place in a multitude of trading posts spread along the coast. Correspondingly, at the end of the eighteenth century, the ports were capitals of kingdoms which appear to have been centralised; a century later no trace of centralised structure could be found; all the small coastal chiefs were independent of one another and the Loango kingdom, for example, existed only as a memory: thus the protection treaty signed by France with the king in no way committed the chiefs of Punta Negra (the future Pointe Noire) twenty kilometres away, and a new treaty had to be signed with them. Besides it is likely that the kingdom was declining before the installation of the trading posts whose traffic hardly developed before 1880.<sup>14</sup> Also, when the slave trade was outlawed it ceased to be practised in the main ports and the illicit trade developed at various points all along the coast; it was to carry on until the first years of the twentieth century. Our informants state that at that time they knew that a Portuguese whom they called 'Malalou' who bought slaves in Loango Bonde on the coast near the present border of the Congo and Gabon.

At other coastal points, by contrast, the trade seems to have induced a degree of centralisation: in Gabon, for example, the ephemeral Mpongwe 'kingdoms' of King Louis and Denis developed their influence thanks to the trade networks. However this centralisation took place at a much lower level than that of the earlier Loango Kakongo and Ngoïo kingdoms.

The two phenomena are interrelated and they reflect the very contradictions of the trade; on the one hand, as the trading posts multiply, the decomposition of the great traditional political units is speeded up; but on the other hand, for the trading posts to carry out their activities it is necessary that a degree of order be maintained. Thus Brunshwig<sup>15</sup> demonstrates that the problem presented to the European traders by the irruption of the unhierarchised Fan along the Gabon coast could be solved only by a colonial conquest; but at the same time Loango, whose institutions and organisation were praised by all observers at the end of the eighteenth century, now suffers from the looting resulting from the rivalry of small chiefs no longer controlled by any hierarchical authority.

Even at the time of their greatest prosperity the kingdoms of the Congolese coast were not based on bureaucratic organisation. Their basis was an agreement between the chiefs of the principal land-owning clans who elected the king. All these kingdoms split off early from the Kongo kingdom which they survived by over two centuries. Trade certainly contributed to their survival, and for each trading

port (as they are enumerated by Desgrandpré) there was a kingdom; all the exchange chains necessarily ended in one of these ports and the role of intermediary which the slaving captains recognised in the kings and their 'ministers' could only strengthen royal power. The termination of the slave trade, at least in its centralised and regulated form, reveals the character of the coastal societies: they are lineage societies headed by a royal power whose main function was to guarantee the cohesion of the class of seniors.

(2) *The Slave Trade: Exploitation of the Internal Contradictions of Lineage Society.* We have made explicit the function exercised by the exchange of men in lineage societies. In western Congo-Brazzaville this function must have been disturbed even before the trading period by an asymmetry between the hinterland and the coast: indeed the coastal groups produced sea salt by craft techniques before the arrival of the Portuguese and the process remained relatively unchanged until the 1930s. Throughout the whole trading period and the beginnings of the colonial period, and until this late date, the salt thus produced remained an essential element of exchange 'between partners' between the coast and the hinterland.

This asymmetry, which was increased by the arrival of European goods during the trading period, re-directed the slave traffic from the hinterland to the coast. Of course, the bottomless pit created by the demands of the trade accelerated this polarisation to a previously unknown extent. Those demographically strong lineages who had no traditional need to reintegrate slaves as nominal juniors developed among themselves exchange chains from the hinterland to the coast, excluding weak lineages for whom slavery could therefore play the role of demographic corrective only to a smaller extent.

Thus, during the whole period of the slave trade, the European commodity economy got its supplies essentially by manipulating the internal contradictions of the lineage social formations (indeed all the descriptions by missionaries of captains show that the direct 'grabbing' of slaves played only a minor supplementary role compared with the mechanism we have described) and in particular by using the contradiction within the social function of the circulation of men controlled by the seniors alone; this contradiction was exacerbated when a hierarchy began to develop in this lineage society.

The fact that the goods trade never developed in a way comparable to that of the slave trade reflects, as Brazza himself indicated, the direct competition existing between these two forms of trade; beyond this it also demonstrates that in the system we have des-

cribed the transfer of men was easier to carry out than the extortion of a significant amount of surplus value from these same men.

The stability of this first type of articulation is remarkable: in the course of four whole centuries, according to Reverend Rinchon, 13,250,000 slaves were exported from the Congolese coasts (i.e. the two contemporary Congos and Angola). This stability is to be explained by the apparently perfect complementary interests of the chiefs of strong lineages on the one hand, and European ship-owners on the other. This complementarity itself reflects a deeper reality: namely, that in the two modes of production present, the dominant instance acts through the use of exchange. But this complementarity is only apparent because if, in the capitalist mode of production, it is the economic level which acts through exchange, we believe that, in the lineage mode of production, it is the political level which is thus expressed. For the European trader trading is distinct from the political level, while for the lineage society, whether hierarchised or not, such exchange is the main argument of the political level. For the coastal kings in particular, control of trade is the means to control access to elite goods by the chiefs of dependent lineages, i.e. it is control over the control that these lineage chiefs have over the reproduction of their dependence group, and therefore of the dependence of this group.

The durability of the slave trade is thus to a small extent due to a coincidence: that the European traders, by making the type of demands which were at the time necessary for the (extended) reproduction of the capitalist system, thereby gave a boost to the form of political power (monarchy) which most favourable to the pursuit of their activities. But when, as a consequence of the dispersion of the illicit slave trade and later the goods trade, commodity exchanges ceased to take place at the level of hierarchised power, this transformation which is purely economic for capitalism has, on the other hand, directly political implications for the lineage societies: the small local states where the exchange chains now terminate no longer have any use for royal authority and it disintegrates. As a consequence, the political protection necessary to trade disappears and in order to carry on with trade it is necessary to recreate a political order by force. The period of the goods trade, as opposed to that of the slave trade, is an unstable period which makes colonisation necessary. This will take place, however, only under the joint pressure of the need for order combined with the exacerbation of inter-imperialist contradictions.

(3) *The Colonial Period: A Period of Transition.* During the trading period the domination exercised by the capitalist system over the

lineage mode of production is exercised through the intermediary of the dominant level of the *lineage social formation* itself; the latter, however, will remain equally dominated by the lineage mode of production. The object of the colonial period on the other hand — regardless of briefly held illusions about the considerable intensification of production without modification of the mode of production — is to introduce the domination of the capitalist mode of production at the very heart of the colonised society. At the end of this process a new type of social formation is to be constituted in which the capitalist mode of production is dominant; moreover, the capitalism this set up must be dominated by the capitalism of the metropolis, i.e. it must be dependent on it for its reproduction: neo-colonialism.

In short, the two extreme stages have more in common than either of them has with the transitional stage; indeed in stages 1 and 3 metropolitan capitalism merely acts through the control it exercises over the reproduction of the dominant mode of production in the dominated society and it acts by its 'normal' means of domination, i.e. exchange. The difference between stages 1 and 3 resides in the fact that in stage 1 the society's dominant mode of production is not capitalist whereas in stage 3 it is.

Stage 2, that of colonisation, is characterised by ambiguity: its problem is to set up the conditions of the transition to capitalism through the use of the economic base characteristic of the lineage society. The most characteristic examples of this contradictory situation are the building of roads for motorised traffic and the building of railways taking place where there is neither the possibility of a labour market nor a pre-existing infra-structure. The organisation thus established is far more similar to 'oriental despotism' than to capitalist organisation. It implies the forced hierarchisation of segmentary societies (introduction of 'chefs de terre' and 'chefs de tribu') subject to the white 'leader'. Where, as in Madagascar, a centralised government existed prior to colonisation, the comparison between the two 'despotisms' does not, from the point of view of the effectiveness, favour colonial despotism. Overall, this period is not profitable for the capitalist system: it often is not profitable for particular capitalist groups.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, both the trade period and the neo-colonial period are highly profitable.

(4) *The Neo-Colonial System.* As capitalism tends to adhere to its own laws and to manage without the colonial apparatus of political constraints, the administrative and police systems lose their front-line role. They remain in place but the representatives of the colonial

society who directly control production no longer need to control this police organisation personally. The capitalist system continues to prosper even where it is absolutely ineffectual.

During this period the colonised country's social formations appear in the shape of a complex articulation:

- of the lineage system which still operates;
- of the politico-administrative system inherited from colonisation which, on the one hand, is based on the lineage system (tribalism) and, on the other, supports the emergence of local capitalism (bureaucratic capitalism);
- finally of the capitalist system itself under its different forms as they are articulated among themselves (for example, the large trading companies provide capitalist forest exploiters with means of production) and as they are articulated with the capitalisms of the developed countries and in particular that of the former metropolis.

(5) *Overall Interpretation of the Transition.* If we consider the lineage system on one side and the capitalist system on the other we notice that in each of these systems exchange plays a dominant role for the reproduction of the domination of one of these systems over another with which it is articulated. Let us examine a few examples of this as they concern the capitalist system:

During the last two centuries in France the capitalist mode of production has fought against small-scale peasant production; as is clearly shown in some recent works<sup>17</sup> it is by the use of political intervention that small and middle peasant forms of production maintained themselves between 1870 and 1958, but had the 'law of competition' been applied as it has been in other countries (where a bourgeois class under less of a threat from the working class, or less intimidated, could survive without allying politically with the peasantry) their disappearance would have taken place at a far faster rate.

In *The New Economics* Preobrazhensky shows how, during the transitional period before it has established its domination, the socialist mode of production must defend itself against the joint attacks at the level of exchange of small and medium commodity production within the USSR and of international capitalism abroad. This second problem, at least, is still valid today.

The neo-colonial period, particularly in Africa, appears when capitalism, having created a labour market (during the preceding colonial period) and developed an infra-structure adequate to its needs can finally draw the full profit from the (mainly military and administrative) expenditure it made during the colonial period to

establish itself; its domination of the previous modes of production and their (very gradual) elimination are ensured through the medium of exchange.

The struggle between the different national capitalisms is *normally* carried out by preference at the level of economic competition.

This is just as true for the *regular* reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production as for the regular reproduction of its domination over other modes of production. Indeed, even in normal times, other levels such as the political or ideological level, play a part in these two reproductions; but it is a supplementary role, the primary place being held by exchange itself.

By contrast, in periods of *crisis* the domination is reversed for both the reproduction of the conditions of production and that of the conditions of domination:

Concerning the reproduction of the conditions of production, this is so, for example, in the case of German capitalism during the 1914-18 war (war economy) or under Nazism; political intervention becomes primary and exchange plays a subordinate role; this is also true for all contemporary capitalist production which some characterise as 'State-monopoly capitalism'.

Concerning domination, this is the case during crises between national capitalisms in the form of hot or cold wars; this is so during the implementation of the direct domination of capitalism over other modes of production either by importation from outside, for example, during the colonial period, or by self-development within a social formation in which it had not existed: it is this latter case which Marx analyses in the chapter of Capital<sup>18</sup> devoted to 'primitive accumulation'.

We may notice analogous phenomena concerning lineage societies: we have shown that exchange played the dominant role in the reproduction of the conditions of production, but other processes, such as armed conflict, play a supplementary role under normal conditions; similarly the ideological level intervenes in this reproduction.

In periods of crisis the dominant element can be shifted: thus during the colonial period exchange of men becomes *more and more* difficult (though the slave trade for internal use survived the emergence of colonialism by many years) and the exchange of women is disrupted by the monetisation of the economy. At this point the ideological level ceases to play a merely supplementary role and takes the first place in the reproduction of the system; it is at that level that the 'retaking of initiative' which is the prelude to the disappearance of the colonial system is manifested.

The fact that under normal conditions in each of the two modes of production (capitalist and lineage) which come into conflict, the dominant level is expressed through the medium of exchange facilitates the interpretation of transition as a continuity such as the one which underlies the introduction to *Markets in Africa*. But this interpretation ceases to be possible as soon as one goes beyond the form of exchange and poses the problem of its role in each of the modes of production with respect to each other and in their articulation.

For four centuries goods produced by different forms of European capitalism were absorbed by the lineage system: they were exchanged from senior to senior as elite goods in the lineage societies and there they partly or totally replaced locally produced items which had previously played the same role: thus these goods of European origin have played an important part in the reproduction of the lineage mode of production (despite the fact that the corresponding losses in men disrupted the demographic reproduction of the weak lineages); but these goods in no way contributed to bringing about the emergence of the capitalist mode of production within the said social formation. Of course, the injection of money into such a system was even less able to transform this mode of production than the injection of goods had been (some of which, e.g., guns and gunpowder, were production goods).

It was necessary to introduce a break to give the capitalist mode of production the possibility of developing besides and in opposition to the lineage mode of production. This break manifested itself as an independent mode of production which was neither capitalism nor the lineage mode of production; this mode of production remained dominant as long as the normal conditions of development of capitalism were not fulfilled. In this transitional system exchange does not play the dominant role: as in other bureaucratic systems it is administrative and police constraints which play this role.

Bohannon and Dalton's problematic does not allow the identification of this transition. But it cannot seriously suggest that it be replaced by the only form of transition it seems capable of imagining — that of the 'peripheral' market — since all historical references show that there is no relation between, on the one hand, the existence of a market at the periphery of non-market society, even if this market is as important and as lasting as the slave trade, which lasted for four centuries on the periphery of Congolese lineage societies and, on the other hand, the transformation of the mode of production which alone allows the market economy to establish itself as dominant within the society.

## CONCLUSION

What conclusions can we draw from these analyses of the problems which concern us: that of contemporary relations of forces between the 'traditional' systems and the capitalist system, and that of the future development of the relation of these forces?

It is obvious that the answers to these questions are not univocal: when capitalist domination is studied from the angle of the capitalist system itself there is no doubt about this domination; indeed the problem is presented globally by taking the example of the African country as a homogeneous entity. Dalton was one of the first people to show how this attitude brought about the confusion between 'birth' and 'development', i.e. in the terms used here, between the domination of the capitalist system constantly reinforced at certain points in the territory (ports, main roads, mines, etc.) and the domination of the capitalist system over the whole territory.

It is therefore suitable to present this problem from the point of view of the dominated societies — then the answer is more subtle. Indeed, if one can still talk of the domination of the capitalist system, it is with many different meanings, of which the following can be distinguished:

(a) A mode of domination corresponding to that of trade. The capitalist mode of production plays no part within the social formation under consideration but it controls the reproduction of this mode of production by providing the items (goods or money) specific to this reproductive circuit; the sale of juniors by seniors (characteristic of trade) may be replaced by the temporary sale of the junior's labour power, whose price is to be paid to the seniors.

(b) Typically neo-colonial modes of domination:

— Either the domination of commercial capital which is accompanied by the replacement of the traditional mode of production in agriculture by small commodity or capitalist production (plantation economy);

— or the domination of industrial capital within the social formation under consideration with its contemporary characteristics: urbanisation, large units of production and a labour market. All this is equally true of large industrialised capitalist agriculture. The traditional mode of production is then left with nothing other than a more or less significant supplementary role in certain sectors of consumption and it is subjected to commodity exchange imposed by capitalism.

(c) An intermediary situation between *a* and *b* in which capitalism and the traditional mode of production live side by side as in *b* but in which the domination of the capitalist system is guaranteed only in

the same way as in *a*. This is possible when, for example, certain male agesets play only a minimal role in lineage agriculture and can become wage-earners without affecting agricultural production; then this production is not subject to commodity exchange or only insofar as the producers desire it. Symmetrically, the wages can be almost entirely used in the circuit of reproduction of the traditional system (bridewealth, funeral celebrations, and so on). But if the reproduction of the traditional system is then dependent on the money thus earned for its supply of 'elite goods', it is obvious that the capitalist system is equally dependent for its supply of labour power on the only coercion which the traditional system itself can exert; it is therefore a fairly small and unstable source.

(d) Finally the establishment of capitalist domination can be ensured by political intervention which, in the neo-colonial phase, takes the form of 'incentive' and 'supervision' rather than that of brute force. The great trading companies can then provide direct or indirect technical assistance to the State which thus intervenes to develop production.

But it is only the *b* form of domination which creates a situation which is always favourable to the capitalist system: the traditional mode of production has indeed an increasingly narrow field of operation and no opportunity of recovering its autonomy. As for modes of domination *a* and *c* they are conceivable only as complements of the *b* mode of domination established nearby. Indeed, here, far from weakening the traditional structure, the presence of the capitalist mode of production tends to maintain it as in the case of the goods trade with an unstable capitalist domination whose access to surplus labour is limited by the traditional system. Except by having recourse to a form of coercion which would bring us back to the real colonial system this type of domination cannot maintain itself in isolation. Finally, in the neo-colonial phase, type of domination *d* always appears to be transitory and of dubious efficacy.

It is thus established that what is ordinarily understood as capitalist domination during the neo-colonial phase is a system of modes of domination articulated around a dominance described in *b*. Types *a* and *c* on the one hand, and *d* on the other, appear as the sequel during the neo-colonial period of the modes of domination which have successively dominated during the trade and colonial periods. The promotion of the typically neo-colonial mode of domination has not yet eliminated the preceding modes of domination but has relegated them to a secondary function. Thus the history of the types of articulation and the history of exchange, which is part of it, take place in the present as well as the past.

## NOTES

1. Besides it is still possible that in a second phase the memory of even the 'regrettable' facts cannot be more or less eliminated, on the one hand by the camouflage or destruction of compromising archives and, on the other, by discrediting those who may formerly have consulted what are happily described as blind, anti-colonialist fanatics. It is also necessary to take into consideration the self-censorship of the scholars themselves who attempt to avoid these problems first to avoid public disgrace and then because they are caught in a Bohannan-type problematic and thus do not know how to fit these facts into their models. If this were so it would be possible to let people believe that the market system developed in Africa through its own internal dynamic just as Marx's predecessors implied that the first capitalists got rich by their own labour. There already exists a whole body of literature gleefully doing just this.
2. K. Polanyi, M. Arensberg and W. H. Pearson, *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1967, p. 382. The essay to which we refer is 'The Economy as Instituted Process', pp. 243-70.
3. K. Polanyi, 'Aristotle Discovers the Economy' in Polanyi *et al.*, *op. cit.*, chapter 5, pp. 64-94.
4. 'The Economy as Instituted Process', *op. cit.*
5. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 123-5
6. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
7. See pp. 129-57
8. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 94.
9. *Ibid.*
10. See *The Guro*, p. 334 my translation — *HL*.
11. May 1965, P. 2008 my translation — *HL*.
12. See *Capital*, volume I part 4.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 290n.
14. See C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'L'échec d'une tentative économique: L'impôt de capitation au service des compagnies concessionnaires du Congo français (1900-1909)', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, volume VIII number 29, 1968, pp. 96-109.
15. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, number 6.
16. See Coquery-Vidrovitch, *op. cit.* on the concessionary trading societies of the Congo.
17. See, for example, Gervais, Servolin and Weil, *Une France sans paysans*.
18. *Capital*, volume I part 8.

## The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and Marxist Models of Social Evolution

Maurice Godelier

*Dupré and Rey end their discussion with the construction of a framework for the analysis of the articulation of 'traditional' modes of production and the capitalist mode of production, and suggest that 'if their usual interpretation is somewhat modified, the terms in which the history of the "contact" is usually described . . . are able to recover the concepts of a periodisation of this history' (see p.198 of this volume). Godelier's survey of Marxist models of social evolution and his specific analysis of the 'Asiatic' mode of production provides an immensely valuable introduction to Marxist approaches to the principles of social development and to the fundamental concepts essential to the analysis of any determinate mode of production. It broadens the framework of social historical evolution from the rigid and dogmatic schema adopted under Stalin by re-introducing the 'stage' of the 'Asiatic' mode of production and, having located this particular model within the general scheme of historical development, proceeds to reconsider the very notion of historical necessity. Finally, it suggests the need to go even further and to consider the various forms possible within the model of the 'Asiatic' mode of production and the various forms of development from these particular modes of production. The essay was published in the C.E.R.M. volume, Sur le mode de production asiatique in 1968.*

### INTRODUCTION

Since its first publication in 1964, this text has been discussed, at times polemically, in the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia,<sup>1</sup> Mexico and Peru. Its re-publication in 1968 calls for a number of corrections.

There has been nothing to invalidate the main theses which were developed then and will be recalled in a moment. However our

Seddon, D. (ed.)

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