Colin — best wishes, Henry.

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The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective

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THE OBJECT OF AFRICAN HISTORY: A MATERIALIST PERSPECTIVE

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T The establkishment of a journal specifically concerned with method in African history is to be welcomed. However, the early issues of the journal have demonstrated that the content of th e term method is itself at stake. The great majority of contributions to date have seized on a narrow and limiting conception of method as the development of techniques of collecting and evaluating data.[1] The necessity of such techniques is not in question, but but they are subordinate to, and indeed partially determined by, a broader and more fundamental conception of method as the principles of investigation and explanation in scientific practice.[2] There are historians who do not regard the productionof historical knowledge as a scientific enterprise, hence subject to certain theoretical demands, and they would not want to.[3] Accordingly, they need not read on, but we are confident that there are others who are interested in method in the second sense and who may also have noticed its virtual absence in the pages of this journal.

On the other hand, it would be disingenuous to imply that a common interest in method in the broader and more fundamental sense is sufficient ground for agreement. Our argument in what follows derives from an understanding of historical materialism that has nothing in common with the stereotyped views held by its bourgeois critics. Our central concern is with method as the principles of constructing scientific explanations. But what is to be explained? We attempt to show that method necessarily starts with the correct posing of questions, as well as bearing on their investigation. Moreover, we regard investigation and explanation as pre-eminently theoretical activities pursued within distinctive theoretical frameworks which determine the content and uses of empirical knowledge. The form of our presentation is extremely schematic which is regrettable but unavoidable within the limits of a single essay. The theme itself is, in principle, an all-embracing one and, in addition, we are unable to start from any assumption that our conception of the issues is shared by those who may read this essay.

Therefore the presentation is compressed and the illustrations limited but the sequence of our argument is logical. First, it is necessary to give an exposition of historical materialism and materialist history and the relations between them. In the course of this exposition we present the concept of a 'problematic' which is employed to establish the radical incompatibility of the social knowledge produced by materialist theory and bourgeois theory. This is further developed in the next section in which we trace aspects of the ideological career of African history. Finally, we indicate briefly some of the developments and issues regarding the constitution of African history as a field of investigation within the materialist problematic.[4]

Historical Materialism and Materialist History

In The German Ideology (1846), a work in which the general conception of historical materialism began to take shape, Marx and Engels wrote that 'The first historical act ... is the production of material life (which is the) fundamental condition of all history which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life'.[5] The material production and reproduction of social existence is therefore the first and essential premise. However, the statement cited concerns production in general, an abstraction which is necessarily a-historical : the fundamental condition of all history. The materialism expressed in th concept of production in general is not yet historical materialism. The latter begins with 'production at a definite stage of social development', and Marx continues

> It might seem, therefore, thatin order to talk about production at all we must either pursue the process through its different phases, or declare beforehand that we are dealing with a specific historical epoch such as, e.g., modern bourgeois production, which is indeed our theme. However, all epochs of production have certain common traits, common characteristics. Production in general is an abstraction, but a ractional abstraction in so far as it really brings out and fixes the common elements and thus saves us repetition. Still, this general category, this common element sifted out by comparison, is itself segmented many times over and splits into different determinations. Some determinations belong to all epochs, others only to a few. (Some) determinations will be shared by the most modern epoch and the most ancient. No production will be thinkable without them; however, even though the most developed languages have laws and characteristics in common with theleast developed, nevertheless,

> just those things which determine their development, i.e. the elements which are not general and common, must be separated out from the determinations valid for production as such, so that in their unity - which arises already from the identity of the subject, humanity, and of the object, nature -- their essential difference is not forgotten.[6]

In this important passage Marx indicates that the object of historical materialism cannot be production in general, but the specification of determinate modes of production. Three distinct types of abstraction can be derived from Marx's statement:

(i) categories pertaining to production in general and therefore common to all modes of production, for example, the appropriation of nature through the application of human labour;

(ii) categories common to several but not to all modes of production, appearing in several historical epochs, an example being commodity production;

(iii) categories which define the unique characteristics of a given mode of production; examples would be feudal rent in the feudal mode, surplus-value and the expanded reproduction of productive capital in the capitalist mode.

The concept of mode of production is by no means a simple one, and the theory of any particular mode of production posits a complex structure. Without entering into the recent debates concerning the status of the concept and the methodology of constructing the theories of particular modes of production, several essential observations can be made.[7] The first is that the concept of mode of production does not simply correspond to, nor can it be inductively derived from, the empirically observable and enormously diverse range of forms of production in history. On the contrary, modes of production can only be constituted by the application of a set of specific concepts: social relations of production, productive forces, political and ideological relations (which in class modes are relations of domination/subordination).

A tentative definition, sufficient for present purposes, may be suggested as follows :

(i) Any mode of production is a determinate ensemble of distinct relations of production and a particular set of productive forces, the social relations being the determinant element in this combination.

(ii) The categories of social relations (economic, political, ideological) and the relations between these categories cannot be theorised generally in the concept of mode of production itself, but vary according to each mode of production.

Moreover, each category, while occupying a different place in the structure of different modes, cannot be reduced to a simple 'cause' or 'effect' but as a distinct category is one of the conditions of existence of the mode as a totality.

(iii) The determinations linking the categories of social relations with each other and with the productive forces, hence giving them their unity in the mode of production as a structured whole, are expressed dynamically through the concept of the laws of motion of the mode. Analysis of the latter entails the mechanisms of material and social reproduction of the mode of production, including the contradictions given effect in this process.

It may be useful to briefly elaborate some of the elements of this compound definition. On the first part, the emphasis that social relations have the determinant role in the combination relations of production/productive forces militates against the reductionist materialism which views history as a sequence of technological advances giving rise to corresponding forms of social relations. In Capital there is an important demonstration by Marx that it was the emergence of capitalist relations of production which produced the Industrial Revolution in England, and not the Industrial Revolution which produced capitalism. Industrialization (above all the production of machines by means of machines) crystallized and propelled further the social relations of production, not as an effect of advances in 'technology' but in terms of the develoment of the productive forces which cannot be divorced from the social forms inin which they are embedded --in this case a specific division of labour producing the socialized labour process and what Marx termed 'the collective work'.[8]

Regarding the second part of our definition, the structural relations suggested incorporate the principles of 'determination in the last instance' by the material base, and the 'relative autonomy' of levels of a mode of production. The important theoretical work of L. Althusser in recent years has gone some ~~a long~~ way toward giving these methodological principles some precision, and rescuing them from the clutches of both vulgar and 'liberalizing' tendencies within Marxism.[9] The former interprets the base/superstructure metaphor in a manner that renders politics and ideology as more or less epiphenomenal 'reflections' of the so-called 'economic base'. The latter reacts against economic determinism by advocating a pluralist or factoralist history, that is, one in which 'factors' other than the economic are posed in an empiricist fashion thereby abandoning the

demands of a scientific (non-empiricist) methodology.[10] As an illustration of these issues, it can be suggested that the fetishism of commodities, the mystification of bourgeois social relations rooted in the very structure of those relations, and the bourgeois state in its functions of concentrating and containing class contradictions, are conditions of existence of the capitalist mode of production as necessary as the appropriation of surplus-value in the process of production.[11]

Finally, the laws of motion of given modes of production are an essential element in the conceptualization of historical specificity. Each mode of production has its own distinctive laws of functioning, which denies the metaphysical notion of 'general laws', the foundation of phil sophies of History. The production of historical knowledge cannot be accomplished within a philosophical framework which employs an a-prioristic, deductive method.

The concept of mode of production is therefore a specific kind of abstraction, produced by the application of its constitutive concepts. It is not an abstraction in the empicist sense of a generalization from observable data, but has a theoretical function and validity independent of any given set of concrete circumstances. The clearest example remains Marx's Capital which provides a theory of the capitalist mode of production per se, not capitalist society in England, France, Germany or the United States at a given time. Had Marx provided us with merely an abstraction selecting from and crystallizing the conditions of nineteenth century British capitalism (corresponding to the ideal-typical 'historical individual' of Weber as exemplified in The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism), then the categories of Capital could not provide the basis of analysis of other capitalist social formations, and of subsequent stages in the global development of capital.

Certainly, Capital contains much data, both historical and contemporary, but Marx makes it clear that these provide illustrations of the theoretical propositions of the work, rationally derived from what was at that time the most developed capitalist formation. In the celbrated last pat of Capital, volume I, on primitive accumulation, the essential theoretical point is how capital comes to organize production, a necessary condition of which is the separation of the direct producers from the means of production. Historically, this was illustrated by certain forms of the expropriation of thepeasantry and actions of the state in disciplining the emergent proletariat (examples again drawn mainly from Britain). Ther is no suggestion that

these particular forms of primitive accumulation constitute a universally valid or necessary the ry of the transition to capitalism, and Marx subsequently had to refute such an interpretation:

> The chapter on primitive accumulation does not claim to do more than trace the path by which, in Western Europe, the capitalist economic system emerged from the womb of the feudal economid system... (My critic) insists on transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the general path of development prescribed by fate to all nations, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves...[12]

The application of the preceding exposition to the concerns of historical methodology can now be elaborated. Production in general is a rational abstraction and the initial premise of materialism. However, it is a-historical in that it provides no concepts for producing historical knowledge, that is, establishing and explaining the characteristics of particular real objects, that is, certain historical periods, the development of particular social formations, or particular sequences and constellations of events. The first step in constituting history as a field of investigation is through the application of the concept of mode of production to produce the theories of particular modes of production, the scientific project pioneered by Marx in Capital.

In our view, the construction of the theories of particular modes of production is a necessary condition for the production of historical knowledge, but is not to be confused with it. Modes of production have specific structures and modes of functioning (laws of motion) which are constituted at a theoretical level that we can term Historical Specificity I. However, in a strict sense, a mode of production does not in itself have a history, nor does it produce a history through a simple process of deduction from its appropriate level of abstraction to a set of discrete data. On the first point, for example, the feudal mode of production is not reducible, say, to the history of European feudalism. The theory of the feudal mode of production may provide the basis for the investigation of social formations as separated in time and space as twelfth-century Englan, seventeenth-century Poland and Japan, and ninetennth-century Buganda and Rwanda. 'Feudalism' (that is, the feudal mode of production) thus hasno history as such but can be employed to construct the histories of different social formations in determinate periods ('epochs' in Marx's usage connoting the temporal dimension of the ascendance of a given mode of production).[13]

On the other hand, and this is our second point, we cannot produce historical knowledge of European (or any other) feudalism by simply combining the categories of the mode of production with the facts 'belonging' to a given time and place. By this deductive method it is possible to classify a number of social formations as feudal but this is essentially a typological procedure and not the same as producing their histories. Alternatively, the formations designated as 'feudal' could be distinguished according to various facts about them (ecological, demographic, techniques of production, forms of tribute, religious ideology, and so on), but this returns us to a procedure of empiricist description, however systematic it may be, of the various 'cases' within the category-type.

Given that modes of production do not have a history, the concrete conditions in which a given mode of production emerges, develops, undergoes crises and possibly dissolves in the course of its transition to another mode, can only be investigated through the social formations in which the mode of production is manifested. It is at this level, which we term Historical Specificity II, that historical knowledge is produced. The most important point here is that the production of knowledge at the level of Historical Specificity II, just as in the case of Historical Specificity I, involves the application of its own constitutive concepts. In other words, specific forms of theorization are appropriate to the investigation of concrete historical phenomena, in contrast to viewing such analysis as the effect of theory on data.

The constitutive concepts are of two kinds. Clearly, the categories pertaining to particular modes of production are employed, that is, specific relations of production, productive forces, political and ideological relations, which are now investigated through the concrete (and variant) forms in which they appear. This is expressed in the definition of the concept of social formation as it operates in the work of Althusser:

> ...the concrete complex whole comprising economic practice, political practice and ideological practice at a certain place and stage of development. Historical materialism is the science of social formations.[14]

The second category of concepts is operative only at the level of Historical Specificity II, examples of which are transition and conjuncture. The transition from one mode of production to another cannot be theorized at the same level of

abstraction as the concept of mode of production itself. Transitions occur in determinate concrete conditions, and therefore take significant variant forms. We emphasize again that the variation of forms of transition cannot be established scientifically by appeal to the facts, but requires appropriate theoretical concepts. For example, variant forms of the transition to capitalism are the effect, in broad terms, of the character of existing pre-capitalist formations, the specific class struggles and alliances through which the transition is charted, the forms of the bourgeois state arising from these struggles, the particular forms and rythm of the emergence of capitalist relations of production, and so on. Only on this basis is it possible to construct a scientific history of the variant forms of the transition to capitalism in Britain, France, Germany, the U.S.A., Japan and Russia, to cite only the 'classic' examples.

The concept of conjuncture refers to sequences or constellations of events subject to a specific theoretical focus on the balance of class forces in a social formation at a given historical moment. At any one moment contradictions are manifested in a more or less concentrated form expressed in the uneven development of the political forms of class struggle.[15] The concept is located properly within the Marxist theory of politics, and some notable conjunctural analyses have concerned instances of political crisis in which stabilityof bourgeois régimes has been severely shaken, with the purpose of drawing out the lessons for the revolutionary movement, for example, Marx's The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850 and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, and Trotsky's 1905 (which is introduced by a brilliant historical sketch of the character of the Russian social formation). The works of lenin and Mao Tse-Tung also provide many rich examples of the method of conjunctural analysis.

We have outlined, in a compressed and schematic fashion, some of the issues involved in theproduction of historical knowledge as these issues [illegible] are posed in historical materialism. Our principal argument is that the production of knowledge (in the sense of the means and results of explanation) is always and necessarily a theoretical task, in which concepts at different lebels of abstraction --to which particular functions correspond-- are established and applied in the investigation of different objects of knowledge, at the level of Historical Specificity I the theories of particular modes [illegible]

of production, at the level of Historical Specificity II the analysis of particular historical epochs, social formations and conjunctures. The investigation of history cannot be accomplished by the deductive application of concepts established at the level of Historical Specificity I, which has the effect of viewing concrete historical phenomena as more or less 'pure'/'impure' expressions of the theoretical categories (i.e., reducing the concept of mode of production to a Weberian ideal-type construction, that is, a 'model' to which reality 'approximates' in varying degrees). Rather, as Alain Badiou has written:

> (It) is impossible to set a theretical conception of history against real history defined by its very complexity --its historical impurity... in Marxist theory the complexity is constructed according to the concepts of theory... It is the proper task of a theory of history to give an account of the nature of real history.[16]

The ultimate objective of materialist analysis is always 'the concrete analysis of a concrete situation' (Lenin), and the method by which this is achieved is a movement from the abstract to the concrete, as Marx put it.[17] This movement comprises a series of steps in which 'concepts richer in theoretical determinations' in Poulantzas' instructive phrase, are successively introduced.[18]

In order to concentrate the arguments that have been advanced in a manner that further highlights issues of method, it is useful to consider the concept of 'problematic' (problématique). In its preliminary and most immediate meaning, problematic is synonymous with theoretical framework. All knowledge is produced within a problematic, whether this is explicitly acknowledged or not, and this applies equally to the crudest inductivism which claims to derive explanations from 'the facts' without the intervention of any conceptual apparatus. This statement is not particularly controversial and would find acceptance by many who are not Marxists. To leave the issue at this point, therefore, does not resolve very much and the concept of problematic must be pursued further.

What does a problematic consist of? Its components include both a set of concepts and a set of rules or procedures (methodolofy) which govern both the construction of concepts, hence their content and their employment in analysis. A problematic thus comprises the means of investigation necessary to producing knowledge. But it is more important to understand not merely a problematic is, but how it functions in the active of producing knowledge. This involves a number of systematic

steps beginning with the posing of a question for analysis which indicates the object of the knowledge that is produced. This is of the greatest importance because the questions which are posed are not given outside a problematic --either by facts themselves or by the personnal inclinations of the researcher. Nor can a question which is posed within one problematic be taken over for investigation by another. The questions which indicate the object of knowledge are constituted within a problematic by its distinctive concepts and method. This is the sense in which Marx said 'frequently theonly possible answer is a critique of the question and the only solution is to negate the question'.[19] What distinguishes a scientific problematic, inter alia, is its procedures for 'problematizing' an issue, that is, posing it in a manner that is compatible with the productionof its knowledge.

Several consequences follow from this formulation of a problematic. The first, and in a way the most strategic, is that different problematics do not produce different knowledges of the same object, in conventional terms different 'interpretations' of the same issue. For example, Marx and Weber do not provide different interpretations of the same process, the rise of capitalism (common as this mistake is in'comparing' them). Their differences cannot be understood at the level of their conclusions, the results of their investigations, but must be pursued in how the questions they sought to answer were posed. In this case they were posed within different problematics, those of historical materialism and a subjectivist sosiology which differ in their epistemology, their constitutive concept , and their methods of investigation.[20]

It can be inferred from what has been said that a scientific problematic entails a radically anti-empiricist methodology. The problematic of historical materialism does not reproduce the theory/facts distinction characteristic of bourgeois social science which suggests theory as responsible, hence subject to error, and facts as innocent in their passive and preexisting 'givenness'. Materialist epistemology is premised on the objective nature of the material and real world, prior to and independent of its appropriation in thought. The real cannot be appropriated in thought without the mediation of categories. The cognitive appropriation of the real world in scientific knowledge necessarily employs a methodology distinct from that which operates to produce the practical knowledge derived from the daily experience of social life (knowledge that is practical in a social and ideological as well as a technical sense).

In contrast to the perceptions of everyday life, the empirical data are no more innocent or 'given' to science than the concepts and methods of a problematic. 'Knowing' a fact is to name it, to classify it, to evaluate its significance within a particular conceptual framework. In a profound methodological sense, therefore, every problematic produces its own facts in the activity of appropriating the data of the real world through its concepts.[21]

Historians are prone to a particular mystification in that the generic object and the name of their discipline are the same, i.e. History is the study of history. Herbert Lüthy has pointed out that this is analogous to Biology being termed 'Life' or Jurisprudence 'Justice'![22] This makes the pursuit of historical knowledge even more vulnerable to the empiricist effects of lacking an explicitly constituted object of knowledge. 'History is the study of the past'. The notion of the past, contrasted with the present, clearly does not yield an object of knowledge in any scientific sense. 'The study of African history is the study of the African past'. All that happens here is that the vacuous, because residual, chronological dimension is combined with a geographical one which merely compartmentalizes what is, in principle, a limitless field of 'facts' of the African past. 'The study of Dahomey in the eighteenth century is part of the study of African history'. This narrows the focus by further demarcating the chronological and spatial referents but in no way introduces any theoretical means of constituting an object of knowledge to be investigated.

In this sense, historians face a lamentable problem: their discipline has no object! As Althusser has remarked --'This apparently full word (history) is a theoretically empty word in the immediacy of its obviousness![23] Now, contrast history with the social sciences which have problematics that define their concepts and objects, for example, ineconomics the neo-classical and neo-Ricardian, in sociology the functionalist and phenomenological, in political science the institutionalist and behavioral problematics. The resolution of this paradox is, of course, that historians do use concepts and methods which both define their specific objects of knowledge and govern the ways in which they investigate them. However, these concepts are not produced within the discipline of history, or more precisely do not emanate from the enterprise of historical research (as the study of the 'past'). The concepts, in the case of non-

Marxist history, are constituted within bourgeois social theory (and its various branches and theoretical schools, some of which have been mentioned), and are thereby available to retrospective investigation ('history') as well as to contemporary investigation.

The effect of our argument is to displace questions of 'what is history?' variety which exercise the self-conscious reflection by historians on the rationale and practice of their discipline. We have endeavoured to shift the focus of inquiry to irs proper location, namely the production of social knowledge, whether concerning the past or the present. The production of knowledge involves both epistemology and methodology united in the concept of problematic. Since the time of Marx the field of social knowledge has been the site of a struggle between the problematics of historical materialism and those of bourgeois social theory and ideology (by no means a homogeneous category). This struggle has been waged within historical research and debate as well as in other areas, but its content is the confrontation between historical materialism and the range of bourgeois social theory, not Marxist 'economics' vs. bourgeois economics, Marxist 'sociology' vs. bourgeois sociology, Marxist 'history' vs. bourgeois history; and so on.

The history of historical materialism is itself the history of its confrontation with the concepts and methods of bourgeois social theory, a history Marxists cannot afford to ignore as it is inseparable from the struggles for revolutionary socialism which have occurred in the past and continue today. This history of struggle which can be traced through the various political and ideological tendencies and movements and the conjunctures in which they are submitted to the test of practice, is therefore also the history of the varying fortunes of historical materialism. Contrary to the views of bourgeois critics, Marxist in no sense feel that they are in possession of a science which is unshakeable, complete and provides the key to open immediately all the doors of social knowledge. Rather, historical materialism by its very nature as a science concerned with social reality, which is subject to the fluctuations of the class struggle, is self-critical, provisional and open.[24]

Its history begins with its foundation by Marx as the result of a long and arduous struggle with some of the dominant theories of his time, with which he himself had to break --those of classical political economy, idealist dialectical philosophy, and petty-bourgeois socialism, represented in their most developed forms by Ricardo, Hegel and Proudhon repsectively. The con-

tinuing close study by Marxists of Marx's work and the character of its development does not replicate the exegetical concerns of the 'history of ideas', but expresses the necessity of penetrating the construction of Marx's problematic in order to reproduce it in the theoretical, ideological and political circumstances of struggle of each generation.[25]

Historical materialism at any given time is subject to the penetration of various elements of bourgeois social theory --elements of idealism, positivism, empiricism, reductionism-- more or less disguised in the conceptual vocabulary of the materialist problematic but undermining its distinctive principles of determination and investigation. Several examples were mentioned earlier : the réduction of the movement of history to the development of the productive forces, the reduction of a mode of production or a social formation to an exclusive determination by its 'economic base'. Of particular relevance to our present concerns is a mahor tendency which has had the effect of stifling the development of materialist history. This is the conception of historical materialism as positing 'general laws' of history, which was evident in much of the theory of the Second International (Plekhanov, Kautsky, Hilferding), were it was associated with an 'inevitabilist' view of the collapse of capitalism producing particular effects in political practice. The conception of the 'general laws' of history was subsequently to govern much of the 'official' Marxism of the U.S.S.R. in the period of Stalin and after.[26]

What are the effects of such a conception ? The notion of 'general laws' militates against the production of historical knowledge in the sense we have tried to elucidate: the investigation of the specificity of particular epochs, social formations and conjnctures. Investigation is pre-empted by established knowledge of the 'general laws' (the 'historico-philosophic theory', in Marx's words), which can only yield a verificationist account of the concrete particularities of time andplace as exemplifying the operation of these 'laws'. This is quite explicit in the standard Eastern European work on African history by Endre Sik, who states taht one of the purposes of studying Afridan history is that 'it brilliantly substantiates and most vividly illustrates a whole series of theses maintained by Marx, Lenin and Stalin in the field of historical science'. (our emphasis)[27]

On the contrary, the purpose of method inhistorical materialism is to establish and apply the principles through which a 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation' is made possible,

through which the specificity of the concrete is determined and not for ever pre-determined by general laws of 'History'.[28] The development of materialist history has been hindered by such conceptions, which is recognized in themodesty of Marxist historians regarding their achievement. Pierre Vilar has observed that 'the programme of a fully Marxist history remains not merely to be realized but even to be drafted'.[29]

The Ideological Career of African History

It is now possible to apply the concept of problematic to a critique of African history, in the first place to illustrate how the constitution of its object has been the site of certain ideological confrontations. Our analysis derives from the materialist problematic and therefore lays no claim to any spurious neutrality. On the other hand, neither is it 'ideological' in the sense of expressing personal or subjective preferences. The ability of historical materialism to produce objective knowledge does not derive from, nor is it guaranteed by its political purposes: the overthrow of capitalism and the eventual construction of communism --but the achievement of these purposess has as one of its conditions of the continuous development of materialist theory and analysis. The following critique is grounded in the concepts and methodology of historica materialism and not in any subjectively rooted ideological 'choice'.[30]

A preliminary question concerns the extent to which African history provides an object of a critique. There is no assumption that African history is a corpus of knowledge homogeneous in its aims, its concepts or its methods. The illusory assumption of a unitary object ('the African past') has been shown to lack any scientific content. The boundaries of African history are indicated in the first place by thecourse of its emergence as a particular field of academic specialization. In terms of its content, it is hardly surprising that the works of African history produced to date reflect various positions within the terrain of bourgeois social thought. The latter as we suggested earlier, is not homogeneous and operates at various levels. One level, of long duration, is established by different ontological positions (idealism, subjectivism, bourgeois materialism), or methodological positions (essentialism/nominalism, empiricism, positivism). Another level relates to substantive theoretical themes or schools, e.g. evolutionism, structuralism, while a third concerns the ways in which ideologocial currents (conservative, liberal, radical) are articulated in relation to the specific objects they pose.

In general terms, any given production of a knowledge within bourgeois social thought can combine elements of positions at different levels with a greater or lesser degree of internal coherence. The texts which contain these knowledges are not seen, from the materialist perspective, as the products of individual subjects (the researcher, the historian) but as the effect of the specific combination of conceptual, methodological and ideological elements forming the problematic of the text. Accordingly, the writer or historian is first and primarily an agent of production of a knowledge within a particular problematic. The characterization of a text as the product of his/her individual consciousness, 'values', intelligence, skill, and so on, is of a strictly subrdinate interest, and such a biographical or subjective approach is irrelevant to our present purpose (offensive as this may be to the amour propre so deeply embedded in the social conditions of bourgeois intellectual production).

Our ciritique implies several types of consideration. The first has already been situated, namely that of the concepts and methods available within the various currents of bourgeois social analysis. The second type of consideration is more precisely historical and relates to the timing and character of decolonization. Schematicaly, decolonization is located in a global context of changes the concentration and specific modes of operation of monopoly capital, to which determinate shifts in political strategies and ideology are linked. The conjucture at the end of the Second World War was characterized by a 'recomposition of social capital' in Kay's formulation: a combination of conditions at the level of both the reproductive cycle of capital and the social character of the state which produced a new phase of expansion.[31] An intensified internationalization of productive capital, under U.S. hegemony, confronted the increasingly anachronistic structures of the colonial empires. Converging with the interest in decolonization of the most dynamic sectors of monopoly capital, in Africa there was a development of the anti-colonialist movements, which in their programmes and organization expressed the ambiguities in class terms of their specific forms of nationalism. The new nationalisms were invariably articulated by a petty-bourgeois intelligentsia that was itself a product of colonialism. Moreover, this social category had an intimate

if contradictory relationship with the colonial state and in particular its ideological apparatuses.[32] It was able to draw on some of the dominant themes of the Western bourgeois tradition, such as liberal democracy and social justice, which directly challenged the oppression exercised by the colonial state in its mission of organizing the initial penetration of pre-capitalist formations by capital. A significant element in the nationalist ideologies was the assertion of the African past in the face of its effective denial by the racist mythology of colonialism (an issue to which we shall return).

The third consideration, related to the above, concerns the institutional context in which African history is established and develops as a professional field of academic production. As Curtin has noted

> The first Conference on African History and Archaeology was sponsored in London by the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1953, and it was followed by later conferences in 1957 and 1961. 33

Both the timing and the sponsorship of this symptomatic step in the academic institutionalization of African history are significant. On the first, this initiative occurs in the twilight of the colonial period; on the second, it emanates from an institution the founding purpose and functions of which were the **servicing in a number of ways of British colonial administration** The years after the Second World War saw a mushrooming of agencies, particularly in the United States, which concentrate intellectual, technical and ideological expertise in the field of Third World 'area studies'.[34] The professional historian of African may react to the implications of this observation with the protest that the knowledge he/she produces is not practical or applicable. This would seem to protect historians from the charges levelled against the interventionist social sciences, whether the old-style, individual and paternalistic 'applied anthropology' of British colonialism, or the current growth industry of 'development studies' with its vast resources in funds and personnel and its active involvement in policy and the politics of 'leverage'.[35] However, few historians of any sophistication would deny the profound ideological salience of the production of historical knowledge, a characteristic it shares with another eminently 'non-practical' discipline, namely philosophy. Ideological practice is as necessary to the reproduction of social relations as economic and political practice. Historians, like philosophers, have an active role as agents of ideological production even if they tend to be less directly involved in servicing the machinery of capitalist society than other kinds of academic specialists (e.g. economists, political scientists, sociologists).

In charting some aspects of the ideological career of African history, we concentrate on several types of response to the legacy of colonial ideology which the emerging African history had to confront in the course of establishing its own legitimacy. It is not necessary to embark on an extensive discussion of colonial ideology. Its essential theme was the 'civilizing mission' of the West in the face of African 'barbarism'. In the climate of today no historian of Africa would fail to recognize this as ideological, although many would be unable to analyze with any precision its content and functions. Racial arrogance, ethnocentrism, and so on, are labels typically applied to the civilizing mission conception of colonial imperialism. This may be accurate enough at a descriptive level, but fails to relate the particular character of the ideology to the historical process of which it was a component, namely the initial penetration by capital of a variety of pre-capitalist formations. Colonial history then, such as it was, effectively negated the African past (barbarism = lack of history) except for antiquarian forays and some fascination with exotica.[36] The history of Africa ('proper') began with the colonial presence and the colonial mission; it was the record of the trials, efforts and achievements of the agents of penetration - the settlers, administrators, investors, managers, engineers, missionaries.

The manner in which capital entrenched itself all over the continent had, of course, its liberal critics (Hobson, Morel Nevinson, Mark Twain, Leys, Woolf),[37] and later critics of colonialism were able to articulate their positions in relation to the demands of the nationalist movements (e.g. Hodgkin, Davidson).[38] The emerging professional field of African history had to establish its own positions vis-a-vis the colonial legacy. One kind of position represents in effect a tactical retreat. While imperialist ideology was certainly arrogant and literacy of the offensive, in the changing political and ideological conditions of decolonization a more defensive strategy was adopted, which was effected in two ways.

First, a new vocabulary of development and modernization came into vogue which retained much of the content of the civilizing mission conception while shedding its overtly racist mode of expression. With 'development' and 'modernization' placed centrally on the agenda (by the United Nations, by the multifarious aid agencies, by the independence governts themselves), concepts and indicators were made available for a more 'objectivist' history of colonialism. By admitting that colonialism entailed 'costs' as well as 'benefits' for those on whom it was inflicted, the

achievements of colonial rule could be evaluated according to a 'balance-sheet' of its effects.[39]

The conception of a balance-sheet of colonialism derives from a question that is posed ideologically and therefore is not susceptible to a scientific investigation, as we shall show. The criteria by which the accounting of the balance-sheet is conducted and therefore the conclusions reached, vary between different writers, the essential point being that the determination of the 'balance' is precisely an effect of different ideological positions. The impluse behind the balance-sheet approach is the attempt to 'objectify' the record of colonialism in order to rescue its 'positive' aspects from the comprehensive accusations of the nationalist offensive; thus on the credit side the railways schools, hospitals and 'economic development', on thedebit side the 'abuses' and 'exploitation'.[40]

Such a procedure can be illustrated by the work of Duignan and Gann on The Burden of Empire.

> There were atrocities but theFee State did good work in suppressing Arab slave traders and indigenous raiders. Policing, however, was expensive, and the State always lacked money. Its trouble was not that it built up a vast, oppressive state machinery, but that it remained weak and could not control the area.

Why was policing necessary? The effectiveness of exploitation of colonial labour required as one of its conditions the establishment of a system of law and order, both to eliminate the competition for labour from slave raiders and other sources, and to recruit regulate and discipline the labour force. The penetration of capitalist relations of production and modes of appropriation of surplus-value could not be effected by purely 'economic' means in the Congo any more than anywhere elese, and involved a scale of costs not only in thedevelopment of infrastructure and investment of capital, but also in the administration of the repressive apparatuses of the state.

> The Congo, a country as big as Western Europe, could not be effectively administered with the slender means at Leopold's disposal; far from being exploited, many tribal communities probably never even realized that they lived under the flag of theCongo Free State, or indeed anyone else's flag.

All this demonstrates is that the process of capitalist penetration was incomplete at a certain time for specific reasons due to the costs and risks of financing it throughout a territory the size of the Congo. It stands as an argument by default which does not touch on the logic of the process at all. But we need to pursue further what Duignan and Gann mean by 'exploitation'.

> In 1904 the Belgians appointed an impartial commission of inquiry. This confirmed the existence of many abuses but put the matter into a clearer perspective. In 1908 the Belgian state reluctantly assumed control of the Congo and initiated a series of important reforms; copper mining rather than the collection of ivory and rubber became the economic foundation of the colony. Once more, however, the original impression of widespread exploitation and excessive profits tended to stick, and the story of 'red rubber' became part of anti-imperial folklore.

In this statement, 'exploitation' is implicitly correlated with forced labour, a profoundly bourgeois misconceptualization. The development of capitalism is indeed bound up with the 'freeing' of labour from the forms of exploitation characteristic of pre-capitalist class formations, although initially for the purposes of primitive accumulation pre-capitalist forms of exploitation may be intensified, as Marx noted in relation to American slave plantations. For Buignan and Gann only forced labour can be exploited as they lack any concepts for distinguishing the modes of exploitation specific to the sale of labour-power, and the organization of petty-commodity production under conditions determined by capital.[42] Thus the introduction of the mining economy is a commendable 'reform' and not a new penetration of capitalist enterprise involving different techniques of the mobilization and utilization of labour on a large scale. Their explicit polemical thrust against 'anti0imperial folklore' is furthered, characteristically, by an appeal to the facts.

> Leopold's rule was pilloried as so bloodthirty that the African population in the Congo, it was claimed, had diminished by more than half. The facts, of course are different. 43

Their smugness draws on the numbers game in its most obscene expression. The typical device of counter-factualization is something which we will note again. Its effectiveness in polemic is guaranteed by certain shared assumptions between protagonists about the conduct of the argument, and in this case also by the conceptual apparatus of the liberal opponents. The atrocities of the Leopoldian regime were not the essence of the system of colonial capitalism but its expression is specific circumstances. The propaganda of E.D. Morel was employed in a period of intense intra-imperialist rivalry over the hoped for fruits of the last colonial frontier. Morel's denunciation of a particularly vicious form of colonialism was articulated in humanitarian terms. He was not an anti-imperialist as Duignan and Gann would have us believe, but drew out the contradition between the civilizing face of

imperialism (its paternal ideal) and the systematic brutality perpetrated in the Congo.[44] The response of Buignan and Gann is first to say that it was not as bad as all that, second to say that it did not last long. The phase of 'exploitation' was terminated by the change from the activities of gathering exchangeable products (extremely primitive from the standpoint of capital) to a branch of production, mining, more recognizably 'modern((i.e. capitalist) in its organization.

Duignan and Gann in a sense present an easy target. The nature of their position has provoked criticism by other historians,[45] although their strong institutional base in the production of African history is not to be underestimated, as evinced in their everseeing of a multivolume project on colonialism in Africa. The very transparency of the work by Duignan and Gann, however, makes the point clear. The balance-sheeters in general are committed to assessing the 'development' achieved under colonial rule, not least of which are the formation of educated 'elites' and the extension of commodity relations (bringing Africans under the rubric of homo oeconomicus, if not consistently so, viz peasant 'irrationalism' and the notorious backward-sloping supply curve of labour).

Opposed to the apologetics of the positive balance-sheet is a response from the Left: the negative effects of colonialism. Bourgeois concepts of development are stood on their head in the framework of radical underdevelopment theory.[46] Instead of the development of Africa by colonialism, the question is posed of 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa'. The conflict is clear enough but the point is precisely that it is ideological. A Left ideological position is pitted against a Right ideological position but in a basically similar methodological problematic. The title of Rodney's combative work shares the terms of reference of the enemy while opposing them: the subject of this history is now Europe the exploiter vs. Europe the developer, the harbinger of civilization, but the subject is still 'Europe'.[47] The driving force of capital is obscured by the geographical (and implicitly racial) terms of reference of both Right and Left.

Disputing the balance-sheet from an anti-colonialist position also draws typically on counter-factualization. The Hungarian historian Endre Sik explicitly appeals to the facts of colonial exploitation to counter the facts assembled by the apologists. The purpose of this history is counter-ideological, its method counter-factual:

> (The) scientific ascertainment of historical facts lays an objective foundation for unmasking the

> monstrous historic crimes (the horrible brutalities, outrageous frauds, and unparallelled provocations) committed by world capitalism over long centuries. 48

The empiricism is evident: science = facts = objectivity in Sik's equation. Within the closed circle of ideological discourse the 'facts' are indeed made to 'speak for themselves', for the one side the mileage of railways, the hospitals and schools, the liberating extension of commerce and enterprise, for the other side the 'crimes, brutalities, frauds and provocations'. The marshalling of facts of the latter kind is no more constitutive of a scientific object and method of African history than the same operation conducted by the ideological enemy.

Much African history, however, has been characterized by another development which is more pervasive and resonates more closely the ideological themes of the petty-bourgeois strata which crystallized as the ruling classes with independence. This is the constitution of an African subject as the proper concern of African history. The object of African history is now to study the activities of Africans as the genuine subjects or 'actors' of the history. The rationale and programme of such a history is perhaps most clearly articulated in the work of Ranger and those associated with him a manifesto being provided by Ranger's Inaugural Lecture at the University of Dar es Salaam (then the University College) which was titled The Recorvery of African Initiative in Tanzania History. In Dar es Salaam this has resulted in the nomenclature of a 'Dar es Salaam School', though this is no doubt undulty parochial.

The establishment of the African subject as the central concern of African history has several purposes and effects. One purpose is the demonstration that African has a past before colonialism that is, a field which is just as susceptible to, and worthy of authentic historical investigation as European history. This was indeed a necessary task in the face of both the denial of a historical past by colonial ideology, and to a lesser degree the quasi-monopolization of the study of African societies by anthropologists employing the convention of a 'timeless ethnographic present' (Ranger).[49] Therefore, it is asserted that Africa has a history before colonialism and that it is the creation of Africans. A second purpose is to show that the course of colonial history itself was determined as much by the 'responses' of Africans as by the actions of the agents of colonial penetration. That is, within the sytem of domination Africans continued to be active subjects (actors) rather than passive subjects (victims).

Several points can be made about the 'recovery' and 'reconstruction' of pre-colonial history, metaphors which indicate the

danger of posing such a project in counter-ideological terms. Once again it can be seen that a counter-ideological problematic takes its terms of reference from the enemy: in opposition to the denial or denigration of the African past there is a tendency to romanticize it, to pose achievement as its content or theme against the charge of lack of achievement, to recover and reconsruct its civilizations against the assumption of their non-existence.[50] In one particularly moralistic expression of the recovery of the African pst a dominant motif is that of social harmony contrasted with the disruption and misery attendant on colonialism. The Manichaean quality of this vision is grist to the mill of the defenders of colonialism.

> The main problems are that the new history is guided by a priori notions (every African nation must have a glorious past, and African historians have the duty to demonstrate this), values judgements are emphasized (the guilt of Europeans in dealing with Africans), and Africans must be shown to be morally superior to Europeans. The notion of European guilt is heavily stressed by such writers as Basil Davidson in Black Mother. 51

It does not require any great perspicacity on the part of Duignan and Gann to recognize the ideological stance of their opponents. Their own work endeavours to rescue African history from 'the danger of becoming the tool of politicians and special pleaders', Lacking any concept of the nature of an ideological problematic their retort is formulated in the subjective terms of 'special pleading'. 'You are a special pleader (an ideologist), we are objective' (we stick to the facts)'. That they are the agents of a particular ideological problematic they are prevented from seeing by the very character of that problematic which, inter alia, counterposes objectivity and subjectivity in a manner characteristic of much bourgeois thought, that is, 'facts' vs. 'value-judgements'.

The reinforcement of the view of the African past as essentially harmonic, of social harmony being the essence of African culture, does provide an ostensibly scholarly foundation for that strategic current of ruling-class ideology which emphasizes the classless nature of African society. This is not a mystification for its own sake, if such a thing is possible, but is a component of the very process of class formation and class rule, whereby the unity and harmony of the current social order (under the benig leadership of the state) continues a tradition that is authentically African. The glaring contradictions manifested in the social order are accordingly externalized as the effects of 'imperialism' in its contemporary form of 'neo-colonialism'.

We can now turn to the pursuit of the theme in the history of the colonial period. A particular idea - the recovery of Afican initiative - is established as the programme of a certain kind of history. The notion of African initiative, presenting Africans as decision-makers, as innovators and activits, is counterposed to the view of a routinized behaviour governed by custom and superstition (the effect of a debilitating traditional culture), and to that of Africans as submissive victims of colonial oppression. Initiative is sought in instances of economic, political and ideological self-assertion traced in the history of entrepreneurship of the early resistance and subsequent nationalist movements of the development of educational and religious ideas and institutions by Africans. This problematic operative in the work of Ranger has been subjected to critical appraisal from positions similar to ours, which contests the view that by posing 'African initiative' as an object of investigation in a number of substantive areas Ranger has established a new theoretical framework or method for the study of African history. 53

Several quotations from the work of other historians exemplify, with specific variations, the underlying theme of initiative or more broadly, history 'from an African point of view'. Vansina for example, in his Kingdoms of the Savanna seeks to demonstrate a case in which 'acculturation' was effected under 'Kongolese begemony

> Here was a fully sovereign state which, of its own volition, atempted to incorporate Christianity and many other elements of European culture into its own framework. 54

In other words, a formation which embraced the culture of the foreigner rather than having it imposed. The subject in this instance is 'a fully sovereign state', whose 'volition' acts as a category of explanation. Even within this problematic, it can be noted that Vansina's evidence fails to demonstrate his propostion.

Robert W. July in the preface to his book on The Origins of Modern African Thought puts his purpose very clearly:

> I have undertaken this study with the needs and aspirations of present-day West African nations continually in mind. It seems clear that the new nations of Africa are more than ever concerned with the tasks of modernization, and are caught up in the problem of how to manage the ideal as well as the material aspects of building a modern nation-state. (our emphases). 55

This would appear a commendably liberal statement, if perhaps easier to make at the time it was written than would be the case today. The identification of the nation, the tasks of modernization, and the building of the state derives precisely from the definitions

promoted by the state, by the social categories that staff it. July's study of key figures and themes in the formation of a West African intelligentsia provides a historical tradition (of achievement), a legitimating ancestry, for the so-called 'modernizing elites' which articulate the needs and aspirations of their countries, and act to realize them. By one of the elementary conflations of bourgeois social thought the interests of 'Africa and those of its ruling classes are rendered synonymous.[56]

Finally, an example from one of the younger generation of African historians. Allen Isaacman's first study of Mozambique was inspired by

> ... a belief that the historiography of Mozambique needed to be redirected. An overemphasis on the Portuguese presence at the expense of the activities of the indigenous population has helped generate a series of racially and cultually arrogant myths. Inextricably combined with this Euro-centric bias was an elitist approach which focused on governors, judges, generals, and, in passing, on African leaders. Obviously, this is not the stuff from which meaningful social histories are written. 57

In this statement, a further possible dimension of an alternative history is indicated - not only is an Afro-centric orientation counterposed to a Euro-centric approach, but the latter is further characterized as 'elitist' implying a populist history to redress the balance. An implicit notion of balance is present here as Isaacman suggests that a distorted history of colonial Mozambique is an effect of 'overemphasis' on the Portuguese presence, which cannot produce a 'meaningful' social history 'Meaningful' remains as question-begging as ever - menaingful to whom and for what reasons?

A social class exists only in the sytem of its relations with other classes and this is fundamental to any adequate history of the formation and development of any given class. While Afro-centric history has a tendency to homogenize 'Africa', so populist history has a tendency to homogenize the 'masses', a term which proclaims its own diffuseness. The formation of a proletariat in African takes place in particular and variant conditions of the operation of capital, and the same is true for the formation of different categories of peasantry. Again it is specificity that is at issue, and it cannot be established on an empiricist basis. A concrete historical research, dealing with the formation of a proletariat, and demonstrating the construction of specificity by means of a materialist method, is van Onselen's recent study of Chibaro. African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933.

Scientific knowledge of social reality cannot be produced as the record of activity of historical subjects, whether they are individual actors or groups of actors, or more aggregated subjects like ansina's 'sovereign state' of the Kongo, or more metaphysically still 'Africa'. The common thread running through the ideological career of African history is the posing of a historical subject on which that history is predicated. The choice of a subject is the effect of different ideological positions as we have shown: Europe the exploiter vs. Europe the benefactor, Africa vs. Europea, local innovators vs. foreign innovators, 'masses' vs 'elites'. The object of a scientific history cannot be the activities of a designated subject or subjects, but has to be specified in terms of objective social relations and systems of social relations (modes of production, social formations), the contradictions they contain and the transformations arising from these contradictions. Men and women figure as the agents of these objective social relations and their dynamics, not as individual or aggregated subjects whose motivations, aspirations, volition talents and other qualities provided simultaneously the source of historical change and its explanation.[58]

Some further considerations

It can be assumed, non-controversially, that Vilar's observation that the programme of a fully Marxist history remains to be drafted applies *a fortiori* to Africa. On the other hand, some of the elements of such a programme have emerged in the past ten or twelve years through the work of a number of writers. Certain questions have been posed, sometimes in an initially crude manner but increasingly sharpened in the course of debate within the materialist problematic. These questions and investigations have begun to articulate as objects of knowledge the pre-capitalist modes of production and social formations of Africa, the specific forms and effects of their penetration by capital, and the emergence of particular class formations and forms of the state through the colonial period and that of independence. One can mention, *inter alia*, the work of Meillassoux, Rey, Cquery-Vidrovitch, Terray, Arrighi, van Onselen, Mamdani, Shivji, M. Hussein, and the rapidly developing corpus of Marxist analysis of South Africa by Trapido, Wolpe, Degassick, Morris and others.[59]

Some of the concerns of this emerging body of theoretical/historical work can be indicated. First there are a number of issues debated concerning the constitution of the pre-capitalist modes of production, initiated by Meillassoux's pionnering work on Anthropologies economique des Gouro de Cote d'Ivoire (Paris, 1964). The content of the debate reflects different positions regarding the concept of mode of prduction, as well as the theorization of the modes of production specific to the investigation of African history. One major issue concerns the class nature of pre-capitalist formations, specifically the relations of production, appropriation and utilization of the social product which entails both the theoretical and historical investigation of such categories as exchange of different kinds, slavery, kinship and ideology, and state formation.

The concept of 'articulation of modes of production' has similarly posed a number of questions for research with respect to the specific processes of penetration of pre-capitalist formations by capital. The relations between capital and labour develop through a number of variant forms according to concrete conditions, the concept of articulation has posed questions of transition which focus on the degree of determination excercised by pre-capitalist modes and forms of production, for example, the functions of social units such as peasant households, the 'domestic community' (Meillassoux), and lineages in subsidizing the reproduction of labour-power whether for direct exchange with capital through the wage-form (the case of labour migration) or mediated through petty commodity production. The work of Pierre-Philippe Rey on articulation has emphasized in particular the class alliances necessary to the tasks of the colonial (and subsequently independence) state in establishing and extending the conditions of operation of capital.[60]

Within the limits of the present paper, the discussion of the emerging materialist problematic in African history must remain brief but several of its remifications can be spelled out. First, it is the case that our use of the concept of problematic does violate the integrity of African history as a field of academic specialization. The unity and coherence of a body of knowledge is the effect of its production within a problematic, not the record of its institutional growth and prestige. Most of the writers we have cited are not historians according to their professional labels, but in terms of their theoretical and methodological practice (the curcial determinant, as we have argued), Coquery-Vidrovitch and

van Onselen, say, who are historians have more in common with Arrighi (an economist) Meillassoux (and anthropologist), Mamdani (a political Scientists) and Wolpe (a sociologist) than they do with their non-Marxist counterparts in history.

Moreover, a number of these writers have shown that the production of detailed historical studies is by no means the exclusive province of professional historians. This results in a definite problem for the latter who, given their lack of a generic object or method of knowledge, are driven into the defensive posture of finding increasingly sophisticated and esoteric techniques of collectiving data - the pursuit and glorification of the 'sources'. The need for efficient and accurate techniques is evident but they cannot replace the theoretical issues in the production of knowledge.

Neither can a substitute for the tasks of problematization in scientific investigation be found by merely 'historicizing' certain themes. The attempt to do this and its justification is exemplified in a recent collection of studies on religion edited by Professors Kimambo and Ranger.

> The need to demonstrate the possibility of African religious history emerges even more clearly from Dr. Parrinder's recent survey, Religion in Africa... (which) gives us an almost exclusively narrative history of Islam and Christianity, hardly pausing to analyze them in their various African forms, but his treatment of African 'traditional' religion is purely descriptive and in the idiom of a timeless ethnolographic present.
>
> The bulk of this book consists of a series of specific studies which demonstrate what can be achieved if historical questions are askedabout religious ideas and institutions in Africa societies. 61

This inspiration apparently stems from the discovery that 'traditional' religion has been a kind of chasse gardee of anthropologists. What is the content of its 'historicization beyond the assertion that traditional religions have a past, that they cannot be adequately treated in a synchronic framework but would benefit from a diachronic approach, promoting them to the same level of seriousness as the study of Islam and Christianity? 'Religion' as an object of investigation, whether retrospective or contemporary, has to be problematized both as a category of ideology and in relation to the nature of the social formation in which particular religious ideologies are manifested.[62] Extending the range of African history by finding a chronological dimension for phenomena previously neglected in the discipline may be good for business but fails to meet the demands of a scientific history.

Returning to the latter, a very important and tricky issue remains; as we have shown, Marxist historical work on Africa faces the challenge of appropriating and constructing in knowledge the social reality to which it addresses itself, but it also confronts a substantial body of literature on African produced through the concepts and methods of bourgeois social thought and its component specializations, including history. The fact that all along we have pointed out the heterogeneity of bourgeois intellectual production, substantiates the point that we now have to stress. While there is a radical break between the materialism problematic and those of bourgeois social thought, and while this break must be constantly reproduced from a materialist viewpoint the relation to bourgeois thought cannot be one of comprehensive of uniform dismissal.

All social production has an objective reality, including ideological production which articulates, albeit sometimes in a highly mediated form, the positions of particular social classess and fractions of classes in the course of their general development and in specific conjuctures. Bourgeois social thought in itself has a contradictory character, on one hand incorporating many of the advances registered by the revolutionary and 'world historical' nature of capitalism, on the other hand contributing in diverse ways to the ideological reproduction of the hegemony of capital.

While we have traced aspects of the ideological career of African history as a convenient means of illustrating the operation of the concept of problematic, we do not dismiss every thing that has been produced in African history. The ideological elements in the problematics we have discussed constitute only one level of determination of the knowledges that are produced. In the first place, and most obviously, historical work on Africa had accumulated a great deal of information on various social formations which can be utilized in the investigation of questions posed by materialist analysis.

Second, and more fundamentally, historical materialism can appropriate not only information but also ideas from bourgeois works according to a method by which they are reformulated and given a content and function in the system of concepts of the Marxist problematic. This is not to subscribe to the specious notion of a 'dialogue' between, or 'synthesis' or, materialist and bourgeois theoretical positions, but indicates the ability of historical materialism to differentiate bourgeois thought,

to recognize its achievements and to apporpriate them for its own purposes.[63] J. Banaji has made the interesting obvservation that contemporary with the vacuum in Marxist historiography caused by the verificationist method of the 'historico-philosophic conception, a body of work much closer to the concerns of materialist problematic was being produced by the Annales school in France.[64] To cite a more specific instance, Claude Meillasoux has commended thevalue of Firth's concept of 'spheres of circulation' in the analysis of pre-capitalist exchange relations, while at the same time subjecting to criticism the categories of Firth's formalist problematic.[65]

A single detailed example may serve to illustrate the point more fully, in concluding this essay. We have chosen the theme of state formation which raises questions about the differentiation of 'primitive communal' formations, and the forms of transition in the development of formations constituted by class relations. State formation is habitually treated by non-Marxist anthropologists and historians in the light of two substantive areas of discussion. The first is that of kinship, the definitive object of bourgeois anthropology which poses it as the fundamental structural principle of 'primitive' society, often within an evolutionist problematic. The second is that of the Hamitic thesis, or more generally the diffusionist problematic from which it derives. The way questions have been directed by these conceptual frameworks have tended to dominate the terms of investigation, even if specific results may lead to the rejection of aspects of the evolutionist or diffusionist arguments.

R. Horton comes to terms with the Hamitic thesis in the following manner:

> ... in reconstructing the history of the West Africa we need to invoke no mysterious Hamitic Führerprinzip in order to undertand the transition from statelessness to state organization. In repudiating the Hamitic Hypothesis, of course, we must avoid the opposite extreme of denying any trans-Saharan influence on pre-colonial West African political development. We know that the scale and efficiency of several of the great states owed much to the presence of liberate Muslim chamberlains who hailed from over the desert. We also know that the ideology of Islam contributed immensely to the power of the great kings of the Western Suda. Nevertheless the balance of the evidence makes it seem likely that a good deal of the basic business of state formation took place through the development of indigenous principles of social organization. 66

He comes to terms with the Hamitic thesis precisely on 'the balance of the evidence'; to the degree that this is negative then the question of state formation can be pursued in 'the indigenous

principles of social organization'. The empiricism of this procedure is evident; Horton is unable to find a method of posing state formation as an object of investigation which incorporates a theoretical critique of the question assumed in the Hamitic thesis. The notion of 'balance' of evidence leads to a queasi-quantitative posture: diffusion is allowed an empirically contingent efficacy, while the 'indigenous' exploitation applies to 'a good deal of the basic business of state formation'.

J.C. Miller confronts diffusionism in a more refined empiricist manner, suggesting that the idea or the institution can travel without any particular historical subjects (such as the literate Muslim chamberlains) as its carriers. He continues

> Diffusion hypotheses, while closer to historical fact in some ways, must be applied bery carefully, since the experience of the Mbundu shows that the simple availability of an idea diffused from the outside did not guarantee its implementation or long-term success... Thus diffusion did not explain state formation but merely provided the opportunity for local innovators to change an outside idea into a form which they could use to create new states. 67

Miller's empiricism is more refined because he recognizes, albeit in an intuitive fashion, a possible contradiction between 'proof' by appeal to the facts and explanation. The degree to which the facts are convinding is not an intrinsic property they possess but is a function of the conceptual framework that locates those facts, or, better, produces their signification. Otherwise, Miller's statement resonates the elements of the same problematic, namely idealism - the state carried in the idea of the state, and subjectivism - the substitution of one group of historical subjects (indigenous innovators) for another (the carriers of the state idea). Unfortunately, Miller's inability to extricate his analysis from the terms of this problematic, interferes with his central thesis which indicates the contradictions between two principles of social organization without any appeal to historical subjects:

> Mbundu political history moved in no single direction but consisted of irregular alternation between the trimph of institutions based on the loyalties of kingship and those articulating the demands of kings. 68

Both Horton and Miller concur that the process of state formation is to be regarded as a transition from a kin-based social group to a form of social organization whose cohesion restes on relations transcending those of the basic kin-group. This may have an adequacy at a descriptive level but the central term 'kinship' cannot be taken as given. Kinship itself has to be problematized, otherwise it retains a residual conceptual potency by default. At

a given, as the 'natural' basis and overwhelming fact of 'primitive' social life, it becomes the source from which all else follows. Kinship does not have to be explained because it explains everything.69

This problem with respect to kinship is also found in the work of some Marxists, as the effect of an incomplete break with the problematic of anthropology. For example, Godelier asks

> Is it possible to maintain this thesis (determination in the last instance by the economic base) when one sees kinship playing the dominant role in primitive societies? How can one understand and reconcile the dominant role of kinship in primitive societies and the determining role, in the last instance, of the economy, and, generally, how is one to understand the dominant role of a structure in a determined type of society? 70

Godelier's resolution of these questions as he has posed them, is circular. Kinship relations function as production relations, political relations, ideological schema. A critic, noting this circularity, stressed that 'certain critical questions have been concealed:

> Why do kinship relations <u>function</u> as relations of production? And what does 'function as' mean? And why is the economy realized in kinship? 71

Questions such as these express the cardinal principle of problematization: <u>no social category can be taken as given, even</u> (or particulary) those as apparently embedded in 'nature' as the sexual division of labour and kinship, but has to be posed as an object of investigation and explanation according to the method of a scientific problematic, that is, one capable of so posing it. In our opinion, this procedure is exemplofied (in relation to kinship) in the first part of Meillassoux's recent work <u>Femmes, greniers et capitaux</u>.

State formation, as noted above, is generally seen as a process of transition from formations whose social relations are expressed through kinship. Any analysis of transition must focus on the contradictions which give the content of transition: between different modes of production, between the principles of organization characteristic of different modes of production. We saw that the posing of the question in these terms appears in Miller's monograph on the Mbundu, where it was distorted by elements of idealism and subjectivism. However, in an essary published several years earlier, Miller treates the theme of contradictory allegiance: to kinsmen and kings in terms which approach those of the reproduction of social relations. Here his analysis of the transition from kinship to kingship bears strong similarities to the work of two Marxists, P. Bonnafe and P.-P. Rey on slavery in Congo-

Brazzaville.

Kingship appears clearly as a precursor of the state, as it comes to be known in class societies. Kinship changes with the formation of a coalition of dominant lineages, whose survival as dominant lineages depends on extending the material and social bases of their reproduction. In this process relations of reciprocality are displaced by relations of domination/subordination. However, this transition is effected partly through the preservation of kinship ideology even though thematerial conditions have changed. One of the functions of kinship ideology was to designate those who could be sold as slaves to the slave-traders. Both Rey and Miller point out that the ideology according to which a person outside a lineage was not a social being, held the possibility of the emergence of a population outside recognized kin relations which became a potential source for the Atlantic slave trade.

Again, both Rey and Miller indicate the juridical mechanisms which were employed to outlaw, as it were, kin members from their clans and lineages. The practice of pawning members of a lineage (especially females) in order to pay fines is relevent here. In these formations which were patrilocal and matrilineal such practices provided a basis for the emergence of patrilocal and patrilineal groups. A possible sequence from fines to pawnship to slavery to a process of pre-capitalist primitive accumulation is suggested, and both authors draw attention to the proliferation of incidents which lead to fining: sorcery, witchraft accusations. One is tempted tos speculate that this kind of analysis of the international dynamics of slavery may provide the beginning of a historical answer to Mary Douglas's question of concerning the reasons for the disapperance of the matrilineal belt in Central Africa.

Notes

1. We are saying this on the basis of the first two issues of History in Africa that were available to us, as well as on the basis of the general trend in the discipline.

2. In the second issues of History in Africa, several of the contributors pay tribute to J. Vansina's pioneering work Oral Tradition (London, 1965), and rightly so. This work still awaits a fully critical treatment, but we may point out that in a number of instances 'historical methodology' is treated as a compendium of techniques, a tendency even more manifest in e.g. Reconstructing African Culture History ed. C. Gabel and N.R. Bennett (Boston, 1967). In his opening article in the first issue of the journal, D. Henige makes a strong plea for 'comparative history' which presumably reflects an awareness of the need for some theoretical stiffening in the discipline. However, advocates 'comparative history', 'interdisciplinary history' and other fashionable phrases of the day should be beware of thinking that the problems of a scientific history are solved thereby.

3. For example, J. Ki-Zerbo, Histoire de l'Afrique Noire (Paris, 1972) p. 27.

4. This essay derives from and substantially develops several previous papers by the authors - H. Bernstein, 'Marxism and African History: Endre Sik and his Critics', Kenya Historical Review (in press), J. Depelchin, 'Toward a Problematic History of Africa(, Tanzania Zamani 18 (1976), also to appear in the Journal of Southern African Affairs, and 'African History and the ideological Reproduction of Exploitative Relations of Production', Africa Development (in press).

5. K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology ed. C. Arthur (London, 1970) p. 48.

6. K. Marx, Grundrisse ed. M. Nicolaus (Harmondsworth, 1973) p. 85.

7. It is impossible to give anything like a complete bibligoraphy of the course of this debate over the past decade, but cf., inter alia, the publications of the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes - Sur les societes precapitalistes. Textes choisis de Marx, Engels, Lenine (Paris, 1973, for the long introductory essay by M. Godelier), Sur le 'mode de production asiatique' (Paris, 1974, second edition), Sur le feodalisme (Paris, 1974); E. Balibar, 'The Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism' in L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital (London, 1970); B. Hindess and P.Q. Hirst, Pre-capitalist Modes of Production (London, 1975), and the discussions by J. Taylor in Critique of Anthropology 4/5 (1975) and 6 (1976), by T. Asad and H. Wolpe in Economy and Society 5(4) (1976), and by J. Banaji, unpublished ms. (1976); M. Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics (London, 1972); E. Terray, Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies (New York, 1972); P. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism and Lineages of the Absolutist State (London, 1975), and the discussion by P.Q. Hirst in Economy and Society 4(4) (1975); P.-P. Rey, Les alliances de classes (Paris, 1973); W. Kula, An Economic Theory of the Feudal System (London, 1976); J. Banaji, 'Modes of production in a materialist conception of history', mimeo (Dar es Salaam, 1975); A.M. Bailey and J.B. Llobera, 'The Asiatic mode of production: an annotated bibliography' in Critique of Anthropology 2 (1974) and 4/5 (1975).

8. K. Marx Capital Vol. I (New York, 1967) Chs. 14 and 15

9. In particular L. Althusser and E.Balibar, op. cit.,L.Althusser For Marx (London, 1969) and Essays in Self-Criticism (London 1976)

10. E.g., I. Herbek, 'Towards a periodisation of African history' in Emerging Themes of African History ed. T. Ranger (Nairobi, 1968) and the further comments in Bernstein op. cit.

11. On the fetishism of commodities, see Capital Vol. I, Ch. I, Section 4, also I.I. Rubin, Essays on Marx's Theory of Value (Detroit, 1972, first published in the Soviet Union in the 1920's), and N. Geras, 'Marx and the Critique of Political Economy' in Ideology in Social Science, ed. R. Blackburn (London, 1972). On the theory of the bourgeois state see N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes (London, 1973), which contains a very precise discussion of the relative autonomy of the political in the capitalist mode of production. For further discussion of this fundamental point and its application to pre-capitalist modes of production see a number of the references cited in note 7, also several of the contributors to Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology ed. M. Bloch (London, 1975).

12. K. Marx, Letter to the Editorial Board of the Otechestvenniye Zapiski (November, 1877) in Marx/Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow, 1975), p. 293.

13. The capitalist mode of production is an exception to this statement, as to most general statements. This is because of its 'world-historical' nature (Marx), that is, its relentless driver to accumulate which leads to its expanded reproduction on a world scale thereby characterizing an entire epoch of world history. However, while it is possible to construct the framework of a history of capitalism in this sense, such a framework must include concepts which can produce a periodization of the global development of capital, and the specificity of particular capitalist formations (both advanced and backward) within each period.

14. Glossary in Althusser, For Marx op. cit.

15. Althusser elaborates a principle of analysis specific to the concept of conjuncture, namely that of 'overdetermination'; cf. his essay 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' in For Marx.

16. Quoted in Terray op. cit. p. 39.

17. See 'The Method of Political Economy' in the Grundrisse, op. cit. pp. 100-108.

18. Poulantzas op. cit., p. 16

19. Grundrisse, p. 127

20. For an excellent recent analysis of the Weberian problematic, cf. P.Q. Hirst, Social Evolution and Sociological Categories (London, 1976) Chs. 3-6. Hist characterizes Weber's problematic as a specific combination of the conception of the object of historical and social knowledge derived from the neo-Kantian Geisteswissenschaften, and a positivist conception of the nature and methods of empirical knowledge.

21. Cf. B. Hindess, The Use of Official Statistics in Sociology (London, 1973). This is a short and extremely incisive work of far wider epistemological and methodological singificance than its title suggests.

22. H.Lüthy
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23. Reading Capital p. 143.

24. Althusser, Essays... op. cit., and in particular 'Is it simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy?' which contains some remarkable passages on what might be termed the functions of a 'minimal' epistemology, for example - 'Marx protects himself... by the use of the thesis of the primary of the real object over the object of knowledge, and by primacy of this first thesis over the second: the distinction between the real object and the object of knowledge. Here you have that minimum of generality, that is, in the case in question, of materialist theses, which, by drawing a line between themselves and idealism, open up a free spare for the investigation of the concrete processes of the production of knowledge... Our thesis is precise enough not to fall into idealism, precise enough to draw a line between itself and idealism, that is, correct enough in its generality to prevent the living freedom of science from being buried under its own results' (p. 193).

25. Important discussions in recent years of the formation of Marx's problematic with specific reference to the writing of Capital include L. Althusser, E. Balibar, J. Ranciere, R. Establet and P. Marchery, Lire le Capital (Paris, 1968, second edition); R. Rosdolsky, Zur Entstehungesgeschichte des Marxschen 'Kapital' (Frankfurt, 1968, English translation in preparation by Pluto Press, London); E. Mandel, The formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx (London, 1971); M. Nicolaus in his introduction to the Grundrisse op. cit. The foremost examples of this process of reconstructing Marx's problematic in order to apply it in theoretical and political practice are to be found in the work of Lenin who devoted a number of years to the exhaustive study of Capital and other major works - see L. Trotsky, The Young Lenin (Harmondsworth, 1974) which is a highly illuminating and beautifully written account. At the level of economic theory, for example, Lenin fought to re-establish Marx's concepts and method against the Narodniks (e.g. The Development of Capitalism in Russia, Ch. 1). and later against Kautsky in the Second International debate on imperialism; in terms of political theory, see Lenin's The State and Revolution, the first part of which is devoted to drawing out the elements of a theory of the state from various works by Marx and Engels.

26. On the Marxism of the Second International cf. L. Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin (London, 1972), and on the USSR the comments in Banaji, 'Modes of production...' op. cit. This is not to say that all Soviet historigraphy is subject to these deformations; see, for example, the work of A.D. Lublinskaya, French Absolutism: the Crucial Phase 1620-1629 (London, 1968), 'Popular masses and the social relations of the epoch of absolutism: methodology of research' Economy and Society 2(3) (1973), and 'The contemporary bourgeois conception of absolute monarchy', Economy and Society (1) (1972). The latter article is introduced by an appreciation of Lublinskaya's work by G. Littlejohn.

27. The History of Balck Africa (Budapest, 1966), Vol. I, p. 19, You 'theses' read 'laws' - the content of any term or workd is given by the way it functions conceptually in a particular problematic. On the nature of Sik's 'Marxist' history of Africa see further Bernstein op. cit.

28. 'Althusser's chief achievement is to produce a version of the dialectic according to which history is determined, not predetermined'. A. Callinicos, Althusser's Marxism (London, 1976) p. 71.

29. P. Vilar, 'Marxist history - a history in the making' New Left Review 80 (1973) p. 67.

30. We find a considerable correspondence between our purpose here and the project of Abdallah Laroui in his L'histoire due Maghreb (Paris, 1970) in which he points out that an ideologically decolonized history such as MohamedSahli's Decoloniser-L'historire (Paris, 1965) is not the same thing as, nor a sufficient basis of, the production of seientific history. The reason for this are spelt out below.

31. G. Kay Development and Underdevelopment. A Marxist Analysis (London, 1975) especially Chs. 7 and 8. For a Critical discussion of Kay's important work, see H. Bernstein 'Underdevelopment and the law of Value' Review of African Political Economy 6 (1976).

32. On the concept of ideological and repressive state apparatuses cf. L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation' in his Lenin and Philosophy (London, 1971).

33. P.D. Curtin African History (American Historical Association, 1964) p. 8.

34. However, it is worth pointing out that the large foundations have a long hstory of funding studies of the Third World, for example, Carnegie's interest in Lord Hailey's African Survey (London, 1938, revised 1956).

35. On colonial anthropology cf. A.O. Pala 'A Critique of Colonial Anthropology', Joliso. East African Journal of Literature and Society,2(1) (1974); S. Feuchtwang 'The Colonial Formation of British Social Anthropology', and R. Brown 'Anthropology and Colonial Rule: the case of Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia, both in Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter ed. T. Asad (London, 1973). On the post-war boom in 'area studies' and 'development studies' cf. America's Asia, ed. E. Friedman and M. Selden (New York, 1971) and The Trojan Horse, ed. S. Weissman (San Francisco, 1974).

36. M. Duchet's Anthropologie et histoire au siecle des lumieres (Paris, 1971) is a very interesting study which shows the dialectical connection between the progressive aspects of the writings of Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius and Diderot, and the emergence of colonial racist ideology.

37. J.A. Hobson, Imperialism. A Study (London, 1902); E.D. Morel, The British Case in French Congo: The Story of a Great Injustice, its Causes and its Lesson (London, 1903), Red Rubber (London, 1919). The Black Man's Burden (New York, 1969 reprint); H.W. Nevinson, A Modern Slavery (New York, 1968 reprint); Mark Twain, King Leopold's Soliloquy (New York, 1971 reprint); L.S. Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa. A Study in Economic Imperialism (London, 1919); N. Leys, Kenya (London, 1926); also P. Mille, Au Congo Belge (Paris, 1899), A. Gide, Voyage au Congo (Paris, 1927) and the article by J. Stengers, 'L'anticolonialisme liberal du 19eme siecle et son influence en Belgique', Bulletin des Seances, ARSOM (1965).

38. T. Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa (New York 1957) B. Davidson African Awakening (London, 1955).

39. Notably J. Stengers, Combien le Congo a-t-il coute a la Belgique? (Brussels 1957); and in the same vein, Livre Bianc: Apport scientifique de la Belgique au development de l'Afrique Centrale (Brussels, 1962-3), 3 vols.

40. One of the favourite topics in the field of the positive son tributions of colonial rule is that of health and 'modern medicine'. The work of M. Gelfand is representative - Proud Record: an Account of the Health Services Provided for Africans in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Salisbury, 1960), and Tropical Victory: and Account of the Influence of Medicine on the History of Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1923 (Cape Town, 1953). For a more sobering account of colonial 'achievements' in the health field, see J. Ford. The Role of the Trypanosomiases in African Economy. A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem (London, 1971). C. van Onselen's excellent study Chibaro (London, 1976) demonstrates that improvements in health care are a function of the conditions in which it becomes necessary for capital to invest in the queality of labour, and not an expression of any humanitarian or benevolent impulse. On similar lines, see also J. Suret-Canale, Afrique noire: l'ere coloniale (Paris, 1964 pp. 490-516; E. Ferguson, 'Political Economy of Health and Medicin in Colonial Tanganyika in Tanganyika under colonial Rule, ed. M. Kaniki (forthcoming); J. Depelchin, 'Dr. Schweitzer and the Legend of Colonial Samaritans', paper presented to the Western Social Sciences Association Annual Conference, Denver, 1975; C. van Onselen, 'Randlords and Rotgut, 1886-1903. An Essay on the Role of Alchohol in the Development of European imperialism and Southern African Capitalism', History Workshop 2 (1976). See also note 44 below.

41. P. [illegible] L.H. Gann, Burden of Empire (New York, 1967) p.7.

42. The Locus classicus of the analysis of exploitation effected through the commodity sale of labour power is, of course, Capital and in particular Volume 1. Marx, however, provided an excellent summary in his address to the General Council of the International Working Men's Association in 1865 - see 'Wages, Price and Profit in Marx/Engels, Selected Works Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1962), especially sections 7 to 14. On the domination of petty commodity production by capital, cf. O. LeBrun and C. Gerry, 'Petty Producers and Capitalism', Review of African Political Economy 3 (1975) and H. Bernste 'Capital and Peasantry in the Epoch of Imperialism', Economics Research Bureau, University of Dar es Salaam, 1976.

43. As note 41.

44. Morel articulates in humanitarian terms what is in effect a protest against practices that are no longer rational from the viewpoint of capital, that is practices characteristic of an earlier period of plunder. It is worth quoting him at length - 'Now consider the picture of a tropical African dependency - take British East Africa as typical - where policy is directed to ensuring that a dozen or so European concessionaires shall earn large dividends. The first call upon the labour of the country is for work on the plantations and estates of these concessionaires. As a result native villages decay. The population is unable to feed itself. The administration has to import foodstuffs at great expense. The people sink immeasurably in the scale of their self-respect. They are reduced to a proletariat with no rights. There is no horizon before them; no hnourable ambition to fulfil. Their capacities are arrested. Their condition becomes one of stagnancy. Add to all this all the abuses incidental to labour thus

economically forced, with their attendant discountents developing into sporadic outbreaks; the notorious inefficiency of African labour under such circumstances; the decrease vitality consequent upon the introduction of an unnatural existence; the lowered birth rate; the increase in prostitution and veneral disease. Were is no constructive policy, but a destructive one. Nothing is being bult up, except the ephemeral fortunates of a few white men. The future, viewed from the broad standpoint of both European and African interests, is being undermined all the time.

The f olly of the conception is palpable. If it be true in an economic sense, as true it is, the the 'asset' of a tropical African dependency is primarily the native, a system which enfeebles and impverishes thenative is suicidal, always from the same utilitarian point of view. That is one side of the case. The other side is that in effebling and improverishing the African, you are destroying the major economic interest of Europe in the African. Every penny taken from the national wealth of a European State for the purpose of bolstering up a system of that kind in tropical Africa, is flung into the sea. Every European nation which is a governing State in tropical Africa and which toletates a system of that kind in its dependencies, is allowing the major national interest to be sacrificed for the temporary enrichment of a resticted number of individuals. And from the point of view of economics, the national interest is also the international interest.' The Black Man's Burden (1969 reprint) pp. 238-9, emphases added.

45. For example, the exchange between K. Wylie and Duignan/Gann in African Studies Review.

46. We cannot afford a digression into the so-called neo-Marxist 'underdevelopment' theories represented in the world of Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin et al. These have considerably influence the work of Walter Rodney; see also E.A. Alpers, 'Re-thinking African Economic History', Kenyan Historical Review 1(2) (1973) The comments of Kay op. cit. in his introduction are apposite, and for a fuller discussion see H. Bernstein in H. Bernstein, D. Cruise O'Brien and W. Nafziger, Development Theory Three Critical Essays (London, forthcoming 1978).

47. W. Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Dar es Salaam and London, 1972).

48. E. Sik op. cit., p. 19.

49. Necessary also in face of the denial by other historians that such a thing as African history exists, e.g. H. Trevor Roper, The Rise of Christian Europe (London, 1965), and other references given in Ki-Zerbo op. cit. pp. 10-11.

50. And the terms of reference or criteria of cultural achievement are derived from European history. This is manifest in B. Davidson, The Lost Cities of Africa
and traces of this tendency appear in Rodnye's work, as pointed out by G.T. Mishambi, 'The Mystification of African History: A Critique of Rodnye's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa', forthcoming in Utafiti, Dar Es Salaam, 1977.

51. Duignan and Gann op. cit., p. 132

52. That is, yet another variation on empiricism which sees the production of knowledge as the relation between a subject and an object (the field of facts). Science then denotes a loyalty to the facts, 'ideology' a bad faith in dealing with facts. For a useful discussion of the subject/object conception, see B. Hindess, 'Models and masks: empiricist conseptions of the conditions of scientific knowledges', Economy and Society 2(2) (1973).

53. On early resistance and the nationalist movements, see M. Tsomondo, 'Shona reaction and resistance to the European colonization of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), 1890-1898: a case against colonial and revisionist historiography', Dept. of Afro-American Studies, State University of New York, Buffalo (mimeo,), and Depelchin, 'Towards a Problematic History...' op. cit., more generally the excellent paper by B. Swai, 'Local initiative in African history, a critique', History Department Seminar, University of Dar es Salaam (1977), to appear as a pamphlet published by the Historical Association of Tanzaia. We are indebted to Swai for the use of the term 'counter-factualization'.

54. Madison, 1968 (second printing) p. 37.

55. New York, 1967, p. 17.

56. In a similar vein of 'intellectual history', cf. C. Wauthier, The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa (New York 1967) Africa Remembered ed. P.D. Curtia (Madison, 1968); L. Kesteloot, Intellectual Origins of the African Revolution (New York, 1973).

57. A.F. Issacman, Mozambique (Madison, 1972) p. xiv; the same message appears in his recent study The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique (London, 1976) p. xxiv.

58. This remains a contentious question in Marxist debate. The 'strong' case is put by Althusser in his essay 'Marxism is not a Humanism' in For Marx op. cit. Althusser is criticized on this issue by Geras op. cit. pp. 290-1.

59. For the French literature see the annotated bibligraphy in C. Meillassoux, Femmes, greniers et capitaux (Paris, 1975). Works by the other writers cited include the essays on Rhodesia by Agrighi in G. Arrighi and J.S. Saul, Essays on the Political Economy of Africa (New York, 1973); van Onselen, Chibaro op. cit.; Mamdani, Politics and Class Formation in Uganda (London, 1976) I.G. Shivji, Class Struggles in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam and London, 1975), M. Hussein, Class Conflict in Egypt, 1945-1970 (New York, 1973) S. Trapido, 'South Africa in a Comparative Study of industrialization', Journal of Development Studies, 7(3) (1971); H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid', Economy and Society 1(4) (1972); M. Legassick, 'South Africa: capital accumulation and violence Economy and Society 3(3) (1974), and Liberal Thought, Racial Discrimination and the Industrialisation of South Africa (forthcoming); M. Morris, 'The development of capitalism in South African agriculture: class struggle in the countryside' Economy and Society 5(3) (1975).

We would also like to acknowledge the work of J. Suret-Canale whose Afrique Noire Volume I (Paris, 1968, third edition) was for a long time the only serious by a Marxist of the pre-capitalist formations.

While there has sometimes been a somewhat mechanical quality about the work of the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes, for example Suret-Canale's pursuit of the so-called Asiatic mode of production in African history, a number of original and creative studies have been produced; cf. J. Suret-Canale, 'Essai sur la signification, sociale et historique des hegemonies Peules (XII eme-XIXeme s.) 'Les Cahiers due Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes (special issue, Paris, 1964); also P. Boiteau, 'Les droits sur la terre dans la societe Malgache pre-coloniale', La Pensee 117 (1964) which anticipated a number of questions concerning the articulation of modes of production which are usually associated with the work of Perre-Philippe Rey (see following note).

60. Colonialisme, neo-colonialisme et transition au capitalisme (Paris, 1971), Les alliances de classes (1973), Capitalisme negrier (Paris, 1976, edited by Rey).

61. The Historical Study of African Religion ed. I. Kimambo and T.N. Ranger (London, 1972). It can become monotonous hearing about the ahistorical character of anthropology when some excellent historical studeis are being produced by Marxist anthropologists - see, for example, L'esclavage en Afrique precoloniale ed. C. Meillassoux, (Paris, 1975).

62. For a theoretical discussion and an example drawn from late Imperial China, see S. Feuchtwang, 'Investigating Religion' in Bloch ed. op. cit.

63. On the dangers of 'adaptations' from burgeois thought, see, however, M. Castells and E. de Ipola, 'Epistemological Practice and the social Sciences' Economy and Society 5(2) (1976), esp. pp. 140-1.

64. 'Modes of production...' op. cit. It is perhaps not surprising that the 'histoire totalisante' of the Annales school should attract Marxist - see also G. Stedman Jones, 'History: the Povert of Empiricism' in Blackburn op. cit., However, the looseness of certain categories and principles of explanation of the Annales historians (e.g. L. Febvre's 'interrelations' and 'interdependence', and also the Conclusion in F. Braudel Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800, London, 1973) present difficulties to the enterprise of Marxist history.

65. C. Meillassoux, 'From reproduction to production', Economy and Society 1(1) (1972) pp. 94-6. There are a number of works of bourgeois materialism which command respect (albeit critical) from Marxists, for example, M. Sahlins, Stone Age Economic (London, 1974), and J. Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa (London, 1971) which is discussed by E. Terray in Critique of Anthropology 3 (1975).

66. R. Horton, 'Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa'. in History of West Africa ed. J.F.A. Ayaji and M. Crowder (New York, 1972), Vol. I. p. 119.

67. J.C. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen (London, 1976) p. 281.

68. Ibid p. 282. It is regrettable that in his review of studies of state formation, Miller omits one of the best recent analyses, J.K. Rennie, 'The precolonial kingdom of Rwanda: a reinterpretation Transafrican Journal of History 2(2) (1972).

69. Alain Marie, 'Rapports de parente et rapports de production dan les societes lignageres' in L'anthropologie economique ed. F. Pouillon (Paris, 1976).

70. Cited ibid p. 89.

71. Ibid p. 91

72. J.C. Miller, 'Slaves, slavers and social change in nineteenth-century Kasonge', in Social Change in Angola ed. F. W. Heimer (Munich, 1973); P. Bonnafe, 'Les formes d'asservissement chez les Kukuya d'Afrique Centrale', and P.-P. Rey, 'L'esclavage lignager chez les Tsangui, Les Punu et les Kuni du Congo-Brazzaville : sa place dans le systeme d'ensemble des rapports de production', both in Meillassoux ed. op. cit., It is appropriate to reiterate at this point that we are not claiming to have provided a critical discussion adequate to their seriousness of recent works like Miller's Kings and Kinsmen, and S. Feierman's The Shambaa Kingdom (Madison, 1974) which is of a similar calibre.

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