

THE OBJECT OF AFRICAN HISTORY:
A MATERIALIST PERSPECTIVE - II *

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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 purposes has as one of its conditions the continuous development of materialist theory and analysis. The following critique is grounded in the concepts and methodology of historical materialism and not in any subjectively rooted ideological 'choice.'³²

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 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 the course 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 (essential-

ism/nominalism, empiricism, positivism). Another level relates to substantive theoretical themes or schools -- for instance, evolutionism or structuralism -- while a third concerns the ways in which ideological currents (conservative, liberal, radical) are articulated in relation to specific issues.

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, to be 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 subordinate 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 critique implies several types of considerations. 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. Schematically, decolonization is located in a global context of changes in the concentration and specific modes of operation of monopoly capital, to which determinate shifts in political strategies and ideology are linked. The conjuncture 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.³³ 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, there was a development in Africa of anti-colonialist movements, which in their programs 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.³⁴ 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. Curtin has noted that "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."³⁵ 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 the British colonial administration. The years after the Second World War saw a mushrooming of agencies, particularly in the United States, which concentrated intellectual, technical, and ideological expertise in the field of Third World "area studies."³⁶ The professional historian of Africa 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 leveled 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."³⁷ 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. Like philosophers, historians 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 (for example, economists, political scientists, and 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 the like are labels typically applied to the civilizing mission conception of colonial imperialism. This may be accurate enough at a descriptive level, but it 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 precapitalist 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.³⁸ 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, and 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).³⁹ Later critics of colonialism were able to articulate their positions in relation to the demands of the nationalist movements (for example, Hodgkin and Davidson).⁴⁰ 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 on 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 concept 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 governments 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.⁴¹

The concept of a balance sheet of colonialism derives from a question that is posed ideologically and therefore is not, as we shall show, susceptible to scientific investigation. The criteria by which the accounting of the balance sheet is conducted and therefore the conclusions reached, vary among different writers, the essential point being that the determination of the "balance" is precisely an effect of different

ideological positions. The impulse 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," and on the debit side the "abuses" and "exploitation."⁴²

Such a procedure can be illustrated by the work of Duignan and Gann wherein it is argued that

there were atrocities but the [Congo] Free 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.⁴³

Why was policing necessary? The effectiveness of exploitation of colonial labor required as one of its conditions the establishment of a system of law and order, both to eliminate the competition for labor from slave raiders and other sources, and to recruit, regulate, and discipline this labor 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 else, and involved a scale of costs not only in the development 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 the Congo Free State, or indeed anyone else's flag.⁴⁴

All that 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 Belgian 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.⁴⁵

In this statement, "exploitation" is implicitly correlated with forced labor, a profoundly bourgeois misconceptualization. The development of capitalism is indeed bound up with the "freeing" of labor 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 Duignan and Gann only forced labor can be exploited, since they lack any concepts for distinguishing the modes of exploitation specific to the sale of labor-power, and the organization of petty-commodity production under conditions determined by capital.⁴⁶ Thus the introduction of the mining economy is seen as a commendable "reform" and not a new penetration of capitalist enterprise involving different techniques of mobilization and utilization of labor on a large scale. Their explicit polemical thrust against "anti-imperial folklore" is furthered, characteristically, by an appeal to the facts: "Leopold's rule was pilloried as so bloodthirsty that the African population in the Congo, it was claimed, had diminished by more than half. The facts, of course, are different."⁴⁷

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 Leopold's regime were not the essence of the system of colonial capitalism, but its expression in 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 contradiction between the civilizing face of imperialism (its paternal ideal) and the systematic brutality perpetrated in the Congo.⁴⁸ The response of Duignan and Gann is first to say that it was not as bad as all that, second to say that it did not last long anyway. 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' (that is, capitalist) in its organization.

It may be pointed out that Duignan and Gann present too easy a target; many liberal historians would like to relegate them to the ideological periphery of African Studies.⁴⁹ The main point, however, concerns modes of conceptualization and understanding of method that are shared by conservative and liberal historians alike, even if employed to different ideological ends. The very character of liberalism is such that it is vulnerable to both conservative and revolutionary criticism, and particularly so in the case of South Africa, where the liberal position distances itself from that of the conservatives only by means of a moralistic stance and not by any distinctive mode of analysis. While a typical expression of the liberal position is precisely as a 'middle way' between extremes, the fact that it shares the same analytical and methodological terrain with conservative social analysis gives it an affinity with the latter that it can never have with revolutionary theory, which partly explains the convergence of liberal and conservative politics at times of crisis. In any case, to the extent that liberalism endorses the pluralist idea that history should be written from as many 'viewpoints' as possible, thereby furnishing the means of assembling a complementary whole, the interest of Duignan and Gann in constructing large slices of colonial history from the viewpoint of the colonizers is quite legitimate.

The balance-sheeters in general are committed to assessing the "development" achieved under colonial rule, not least of which was the formation of educated 'elites' and the extension of commodity relations (bringing Africans under the rubric of *homo oeconomicus*, if not consistently so -- that is, peasant "irrationalism" and the notorious backward-sloping supply curve of labor). 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.⁵⁰ Instead of the development of Africa by colonialism, the issue is posed as '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 versus Europe the developer, the harbinger of civilization, but the subject is still 'Europe.'⁵¹ 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 appeals explicitly to the facts of colonial

exploitation to counter the facts assembled by the apologists. The purpose of this history is counter-ideological, its method counterfactual: "[the] scientific ascertainment of historical facts lays an objective foundation for unmasking the monstrous historic crimes (the horrible brutalities, outrageous frauds, and unparalleled provocations) committed by world capitalism over long centuries."⁵²

The empiricism is evident in Sík's equation, science = facts = objectivity. *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 no more constitutes 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 pretty bourgeois strata which with independence crystallized as the ruling classes. 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 that history. The rationale and program of such a history is perhaps most clearly articulated in the work of Terence Ranger and those associated with him, a manifesto being provided by Ranger's Inaugural Lecture at the University of Dar es Salaam which he entitled "The Recovery of African Initiative in Tanzanian History." In Dar es Salaam this has resulted in the nomenclature of a "Dar es Salaam School," though this is no doubt unduly parochial.

The establishment of the African subject as the central concern of African history has several purposes and effects. One purpose is to demonstrate that Africa had 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."⁵³ Therefore, it is asserted that Africa had a history before colonialism and that this past was 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 system 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 reconstruct its civilizations against the assumption of their non-existence.⁵⁴ In one particularly moralistic expression of the recovery of the African past, a dominant motif is that of social harmony contrasted with the disruption and misery attendant on colonialism. The Manichean quality of this vision is grist for 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), value 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*.⁵⁵

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 endeavors 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)." They are prevented from seeing that they are the agents of a particular ideological problematic 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" versus "value judgements."⁵⁶

The reinforcement of the view of the African past as essentially harmonious, with 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 benign 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 this theme in the history of the colonial period. A particular idea -- the recovery of African initiative -- is established as the program of a certain kind of history. The notion of African initiative, presenting Africans as decision makers, innovators, and activists, is counterposed to the view of a routinized behavior 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 other critical appraisals which contest 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.⁵⁷

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." For example, in his *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, Vansina seeks to demonstrate a case in which "acculturation" was effected under Kongolese hegemony, noting that "here was a fully sovereign state which, of its own volition, attempted to incorporate Christianity and many other elements of European culture into its own framework."⁵⁸ 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 proposition.

In the preface to his book on *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, Robert W. July 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*.⁵⁹

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 derive 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" who articulate the needs and aspirations of their countries and act to realize them. By one of the elementary confluences of bourgeois social thought the interests of Africa and those of its ruling classes are rendered synonymous.⁶⁰

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 culturally 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.⁶¹

In this statement, a further possible dimension of an alternative history is indicated -- not only is an Afrocentric orientation counterposed to a Eurocentric 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 -- meaningful to whom and for what reasons?

A social class exists only in the system of its relations with other classes and this is fundamental to any adequate history of the formation and development of any given class. While Afrocentric 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 Africa 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 example of historical research dealing with the formation of a proletariat, and demonstrating the construction of specificity by means of a materialist method, is Charles van Onselen's recent study, *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 Vansina'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 versus Europe the benefactor, Africa versus Europe, local innovators versus foreign innovators, "masses" versus "elites", etc. 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 provide simultaneously the source of historical change and its explanation.⁶²

On Some 'New Directions' in African History

In recent years there has emerged at least a partial awareness among some historians of the proposition advanced above, namely that history has no intrinsically theoretical object, but provides a field of 'facts' (those of the past) to which the concepts and methods of social analysis are applied. Typically, this awareness is expressed in terms of disciplinary "cross-fertilization," thus history and sociology/anthropology/psychology/biology/economics/demography and so on, or more diffusely in terms of "multidisciplinarity" or "comparative history." Interest in econometrics, in particular, has produced a new fascination on the part of historians with the application of quantitative techniques made possible by the use of computers. This is reflected in the "New Economic History," and in the field of social history in the study of slavery by Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman.⁶³

In African history the 'new direction' of quantification has made a much heralded appearance in Philip Curtin's *Economic Change in Pre-colonial Africa*, which assembles an impressive volume of data on the pre-colonial economic history of Senegambia. Curtin's conclusion is that up to a certain point in the nineteenth century (the 1830s) the Senegambian economy benefited from its trade relations with Europe and North America, a finding deemed to contradict the position of Walter Rodney and other radical or Marxist historians. But, as some critics have pointed out, the question of exploitation is not one which can be resolved by the accumulation and deployment of statistics.⁶⁴

The statistics are only as good as the theory which determines their use, a theory which in the first place has to establish the content of "exploitation" in terms of historically specific relations of production and exchange (in this case, additionally, exchange relations linking classes in very different social formations). Given the theoretical character of Curtin's conception of economic relations and of "exploitation," his conclusion is neither here nor there. Had he 'proved' a "balance of exploitation" against Senegambia, this would have been *no more* a contribution to scientific history, *given his problematic*, than the results he does adduce.

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 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 ethnographic present . . . The bulk of this book consists of a series of specific studies which demonstrate what can be achieved if historical questions are asked about religious ideas and institutions in African societies.⁶⁵

This inspiration apparently stems from the discovery that "traditional" religion has been a kind of *chassée gardée* 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.⁶⁶ 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.

The example of Kimambo's and Ranger's project resonates the new interest in ethnohistory which is certainly not confined to African studies but in recent years has had an impact in the field of European social history. The appeal of ethnohistory lies in the apparent benefits to be gained from marrying history

(conceived as enjoying an expertise in dealing with the facts of the past) and ethnography (which has as its object the pre-literate community as social microcosm). Thus the lack of theoretical muscle in the first discipline, and the lack of sense of historical time in the second, can be overcome by arranging their synthesis:

Ethno-history being necessary, who must be its practitioner? An *a priori* answer seems to impose itself: one must take advantage of the skills and abilities of the historian to study, albeit in an indirect way, facts belonging to a distant past, and of the expertise of the anthropologist in dealing with 'traditional' societies, that is, groups belonging to an oral culture.⁶⁷

That anthropology of a highly traditional character should take on a new lease of life in studies by social historians of Europe might be regarded with some irony in Africa, where the identity of anthropology with the colonial mission is now widely recognized, and its ideological role displaced by the various currents of Afrocentric history.

The conception of an anthropologically-informed history is only one example of "multidisciplinarity," the effects of which are assumed to be beneficial with little demonstration of why this should be the case. The same judgment applies to current notions of "comparative history." In the first issue of *History in Africa*, Henige suggested that "there can be no doubt that in any extensive interchange of ideas and information it is the African historian who stands to gain most."⁶⁸ This is a more curious statement than may be apparent at first glance. The exchange of ideas, in principle, can be of benefit to all who are party to it, but the exchange of information returns us to the position (albeit implicit) that there is an intrinsic quality in the 'facts' themselves, so that by knowing more of them, including facts about other places (comparative facts?) knowledge is advanced *ipso facto*. The African historian stands to gain most presumably because of the underprivileged status of African history relative to the wealth of facts available to historians of other areas.

The 'comparative method' in its untheorized state conceals criteria and standards of comparison, a notable example of which is found in social science theories of development and modernization. Even in the pioneering work of Basil Davidson, which was both progressive and valuable, the underlying purpose is to establish achievements of African history *comparable* to those of Europe. If European history has produced organized polities, monarchs, and cities, then Davidson was concerned to show that Africa has produced them too -- and that Africa does not suffer in the comparison. More recently the work of Ivor

Wilks on Asante has sought to establish the concept of bureaucracy (in its sociological, specifically Weberian, associations) as applicable to the history of an African social formation.⁶⁹

In making these comments it is not our intention to dismiss the utility of techniques as such, but to stress once again that techniques can only be as useful as the theory which deploys them. The problem for historians -- that their discipline has no distinctive object, whether in the sphere of theory or that of techniques -- remains. Perhaps this is why Vansina, in his most recent methodological statement suggests a recourse to "the special sensitivities developed by historians."⁷⁰ In other words, in the context of a discussion about introducing new elements of theory and technique into the practice of history, and how the discipline can be made more rigorous, the special sphere occupied by the historian is preserved by an invocation of subjectivity. Exposed to the questions and criteria of the scientific production of social knowledge, the historian adopts the cloak of a particular consciousness, a guise of intuition and artistry that ultimately resists quantification and invidious comparison.⁷¹

Problematization, Theory, and Facts

Returning to scientific history, 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 Africa 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 or 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 classes and fractions of classes in the course of their general development and in specific conjunctures. Bourgeois social thought in itself has a contradictory character, on the one hand incorporating many of the advances registered by the revolutionary and "world historical" nature of capitalism, and 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

everything that has been produced in African historiography. 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' of materialist and bourgeois theoretical positions, but only to indicate the ability of historical materialism to differentiate bourgeois thought, to recognize its achievements, and to appropriate them for its own purposes.⁷² Banaji has made the interesting observation 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 the materialist problematic was being produced by the *Annales* school in France.⁷³ To cite a more specific instance, Meillassoux has commended the value 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.⁷⁴

A single example may serve to illustrate the point more fully. 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 in which questions have been directed by these conceptual frameworks has tended to dominate the terms of investigation, even if specific results may lead to the rejection of aspects of the evolutionist or diffusionist arguments.

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

. . . in reconstructing the history of West Africa we need to invoke no mysterious Hamitic *Führerprinzip* in order to understand 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 literate 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 Sudan. 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.⁷⁵

He comes to terms with the Hamitic thesis precisely on "the balance of the evidence;" to the degree that this is negative 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 quasi-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."

Joseph Miller confronts diffusionism in a more refined empiricist manner, suggesting that an idea or an 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 very 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.⁷⁶

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 convincing 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 triumph of institutions based on the loyalties of kinship and those articulating the demands of kings.⁷⁷

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 rests 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. As 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.⁷⁸

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?⁷⁹

Godelier's resolution of these questions as he posed them is circular. Kinship relations function as production relations, political relations, ideological schemata. Noting this circularity, a critic emphasized that certain critical questions have been concealed. Why do kinship relations *function* in this instance as relations of production? And what does 'function as' mean? Are they actual relations of production? And why is the economy realized in kinship?⁸⁰ Questions such as these express the cardinal principle of problematization: *no social category can be taken as given*, even (or particularly) those as apparently embedded in 'nature' as the sexual division of labor 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 exemplified (in relation to kinship) in the first part of Meillassoux's recent work *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*.

As noted above, state formation 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 essay published a few years earlier, Miller treats the theme of contradictory allegiance to kinsmen and kings in terms which approach those of the reproduction of social relations.⁸¹ Here his analysis of the transition from kinship to kingship bears strong similarities to the work of two Marxists, Pierre Bonnafé and Pierre-Philippe Rey on slavery in Congo-Brazzaville.⁸²

Kinship 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 reciprocity are displaced by relations of domination/subordination. However, this transition is effected partly through the preservation of *kinship ideology* even though the material 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 relevant here. In these formations which were patrilocal and matrilineal (Rey's *sociétés disharmoniques*) 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 could lead to fining: sorcery, witchcraft accusations, and the like. One is tempted to speculate that this kind of analysis of the international dynamics of slavery may provide the beginning of a historical answer to Mary Douglas' question concerning the reasons for the disappearance of the matrilineal belt in central Africa.⁸³

By way of conclusion

In the current stage of materialist work on African history, our review of the issues has a certain preliminary and pro-

visional character. However, to begin with a critique of existing conceptions is necessary and serves, metaphorically, as a kind of initial mapping of a terrain that is subsequently to be established in more depth and detail. In his prodigious reading and painstaking critique of classical political economy, Marx noted the following in the context of a discussion on money:

The question here arises whether the problem does not already pronounce its own nonsensicality, and whether the impossibility of the solution is not already contained in the premises of the question. Frequently the only possible answer is a critique of the question and the only solution is to negate the question.⁸⁴

We have stressed in our argument, notably through the use of the concept of problematic, that the materialist history of Africa must pose its own questions and cannot progress by taking over questions as they are posed in bourgeois historiography, even that of an ideologically radical character. Scientific advance cannot be charted through the confrontation of ideologies, nor by marshalling legions of data against each other as in polemics conducted through counterfactualization. The profound differences for science exist at the level of theory and method which determines the object of investigation and how it is pursued. By this emphasis on theory, and how it is understood in the problematic of historical materialism, we may have helped to dispel some of the mystique of method, conceived as the application of ever more refined techniques to ever larger quantities of facts, which is one of the means by which the social sciences -- including history -- cover up their theoretical impoverishment and contradictions.

NOTES

* Part I of this paper appeared in *History in Africa*, 5(1978), pp. 1-19.

32. We find considerable correspondence between our purpose here and the project of Abdallah Laroui in his *L'histoire du Maghreb* (Paris, 1970) in which he points out that an ideologically decolonized history such as Mohamed Sahli's *Décoloniser l'histoire* (Paris, 1965) is not the same thing as, nor a sufficient basis for, the production of scientific history. The reason for this is spelled out below.
33. Gordon Kay, *Development and Underdevelopment. A Marxist Analysis* (London, 1975), especially Chapters 7 and 8; see also E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London, 1975). For a critical discussion of Kay's important work, see H. Bernstein "Underdevelopment and the law of value," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 6(1976).

34. On the concept of ideological and repressive state apparatuses see Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation" in his *Lenin and Philosophy* (London, 1971).
35. Philip D. Curtin, *African History* (Washington, 1964), p. 8.
36. However it is worth pointing out that the large foundations have a long history of funding studies of the Third World, for example, Carnegie's interest in Lord Hailey's *African Survey*, first published in 1938.
37. On colonial anthropology see A.O. Pala, "A Critique of Colonial Anthropology," *Joliso: East African Journal of Literature and Society*, 2(1974), pp. 107-24; 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. Talal Asad (London, 1973). On the post-war boom in "area studies" and "development studies" see *America's Asia*, ed. E. Friedman and M. Selden (New York, 1971) and *The Trojan Horse*, ed. S. Weissman (San Francisco, 1974).
38. Michèle Duchet's *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (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.
39. 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); idem, *Red Rubber* (London, 1919); idem, *The Black Man's Burden* (New York, 1969 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); Norman Leys, *Kenya* (London, 1926); also P. Mille, *Au Congo Belge* (Paris, 1899), André Gide, *Voyage au Congo* (Paris, 1927) and the article by Jean Stengers, "L'anticolonialisme libéral du 19ème siècle et son influence en Belgique," *Bulletin des Séances, ARSOM* (1965).
40. Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York, 1957); Basil Davidson, *African Awakening* (London, 1955).
41. Notably Stengers, *Combien le Congo a-t-il coute à la Belgique?* (Brussels, 1957); and in the same vein, *Livre Blanc: Rapport scientifique de la Belgique au développement de l'Afrique centrale* (3 vols.: Brussels, 1962-63).
42. One of the favorite topics in the field of the positive contributions of colonial rule is that of health and "modern medicine." The work of Michaël 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: an 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 John Ford, *The Role of the Trypanosomiasis in African Economy. A Study of the Tsetse Fly Problem* (London, 1971). Van Onselen's excellent study *Chibaro* demonstrates that improvements in health care are a function of the conditions in which it becomes necessary for capital to invest in the quality of labor, and not an expression of any humanitarian or benevolent impulse. On similar lines, see also Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique noire: l'ère coloniale* (Paris, 1964), pp. 490-516; E. Ferguson, "Political Economy of Health and Medicine in Colonial Tanganyika" in *Tanganyika under Colonial Rule*, ed. M. Kaniki (forthcoming); J. Depelchin, "Dr. Schweitzer and the Legend of Colonial Samaritans," a paper presented to the Western Social Sciences Association Annual Conference, Denver, 1975; C. van Onselen, "Landlords and Rotgut, 1886-1903: An Essay on the Role of Alcohol in the Development of European Imperialism and Southern African Capitalism," *History Workshop* 2(1976), pp. 38-89. See also note 48 below.
43. Peter Duignan and Lewis H. Gann, *Burden of Empire* (New York, 1967), p. 7.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. The *locus classicus* of the analysis of exploitation effected through the commodity sale of labor power is, of course, *Capital* and in particular Volume I. 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* (Moscow, 1962, vol. 2), especially sections 7 to 14. On the domination of petty commodity production by capital, see O. Le Brun and C. Gerry, "Petty Producers and Capitalism," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 3 (1975) and H. Bernstein, "Capital and Peasantry in the Epoch of Imperialism," Occasional Paper 77.2, 1977, Economic Research Bureau, University of Dar es Salaam, and contribution to *Peasant Production in Tanzania*, ed. by M. Mbilinyi and C.K. Omari (in preparation).
47. Duignan and Gann, *Burden of Empire*, p. 7.
48. Morel articulated in humanitarian terms what is in effect a protest against practices that were 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 honourable 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 discontents developing into sporadic outbreaks; the notorious inefficiency of African labour under such circumstances; the decrease in vitality consequent upon the introduction of an unnatural existence; the lowered birth rate; the increase in prostitution and venereal disease.* Here is no constructive policy, but a destructive one. Nothing is being built up, except the ephemeral fortunes 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 folly of the conception is palpable. If it be true in an economic sense, as true it is, that *the 'asset' of a tropical African dependency is primarily the native, a system which enfeebles and impoverishes the native is suicidal, always from the same utilitarian point of view.* That is one side of the case. *The other side is that in enfeebling and impoverishing 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 tolerates a system of that kind in its dependencies, is allowing the major national interest to be sacrificed for the temporary enrichment of a restricted 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. 238-39, with emphasis added.

49. For example, the exchange between Kenneth Wylie and Duignan/Gann in *African Studies Review* 14(1971), pp. 129-36, 345.
50. We cannot afford a digression into the so-called neo-Marxist "underdevelopment" theories represented in the work of André Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, *et al.* These have considerably influenced the work of Walter Rodney. See

- also E.A. Alpers, "Re-thinking African Economic History," *Kenya Historical Review* 1(1973), pp. 163-88. The comments of Kay in his introduction to *velopment and Underdevelopment* are apposite, and for a fuller discussion see C. Leys, "Underdevelopment and Dependency: Critical Notes," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 7(1977), pp. 92ff; A. Phillips, "The Concept of Development, *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 8(1977); H. Bernstein, "Sociology of Underdevelopment vs. Sociology of Development," in H. Bernstein, D. Cruise O'Brien and W. Nafziger, *Development Theory. Three Critical Essays*, (forthcoming).
51. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, 1972).
 52. Sík, *History of Black Africa*, p. 19.
 53. Necessary also in the 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, *History*, pp. 10-11.
 54. And the terms of reference or criteria of cultural achievement are derived from European history. This is manifest in Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa* (Boston, 1955), and traces of this tendency appear in Rodney's work, as pointed out by G.T. Mishambi, "The Mystification of African History: A Critique of Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*," forthcoming in *Utafiti*.
 55. Duignan and Gann, *Burden of Empire*, p. 132.
 56. 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 Conceptions of the Conditions of Scientific Knowledges," *Economy and Society* 2(1973).
 57. 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," mimeographed paper, Department of Afro-American Studies, State University of New York, Buffalo, and Depelchin, "Towards a Problematic History"; 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 Tanzania. We are indebted to Swai for the use of the term "counter-factualization."
 58. (Madison, 1968), p. 37.

59. (New York, 1967), p. 17, with emphasis added.
60. In a similar vein of "intellectual history," see Claude Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* (New York, 1967); *Africa Remembered*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (Madison, 1968); Lilyan Kesteloot, *Intellectual Origins of the African Revolution* (New York, 1973).
61. Allen F. Isaacman, *Mozambique* (Madison, 1972), p. xiv. The same message appears in his recent study *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique* (London, 1976), p. xxiv.
62. 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*. Althusser is criticized on this issue by Geras "Marx," pp. 290-91.
63. For an excellent review of Engerman's and Fogel's *Time on the Cross* and their critics, see Thomas L. Haskell's "The True and Tragical History of *Time on the Cross*," *The New York Review of Books* (October 2, 1975).
64. See Claude Meillassoux's review of Curtin in the *JAH* 18(1977), pp. 449-52; also J. Depelchin's review article for *African Review* (forthcoming).
65. *The Historical Study of African Religion*, eds. Isaria Kimambo and Terence Rnager (London, 1972), pp. 2-3. Emphasis in original. It can become monotonous hearing about the ahistorical character of anthropology when some excellent historical studies are being produced by Marxist anthropologists, for example, *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, ed. C. Meillassoux (Paris, 1975).
66. For a theoretical discussion and an example drawn from late Imperial China see S. Feuchtwang, "Investigating Religion" in Bloch, *Marxist Analyses*.
67. M. Agulhon, "Un problème d'ethnologie historique: les chambrées en Basse-Provence au 19ème siècle" in *Ethnologie et Histoire* (Paris, 1975). Note also the way in which anthropology is being rediscovered by historians of the European Middle Ages, e.g. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village Occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975).
68. David Henige, "On Method: An Apologia and a Plea," *History in Africa*, 1(1974), p. 4.
69. In fact, bureaucracy is one of the most explicitly comparative concepts in the sociology of Weber, who himself applied it to a number of cases in antiquity as well as employing it (as the organizational embodiment of "rationality") in his theory of "modern" (i.e. capitalist) society. For a critical review of Wilks *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* see J. Depelchin "The Rule of Bureaucracy in Ghanaian history from Osei Tutu to Nkrumah," *Africa Development*, forthcoming.
70. J. Vansina, "The Power of Systematic Doubt in Historical Enquiry," *History in Africa*, 1(1974), p. 121. A similar

- point of view was expressed in his *Oral Tradition*, Chapter VII.
71. Ibid, p. 184. "In addition, the historian adds something of his own to these facts, namely, his own particular flair, which is something more akin to art than to science." Sociologists are also prone to this form of mystification of self and others in a line that runs from the "sociological imagination" of C. Wright Mills to the "reflexive consciousness" of Alvin Gouldner and the radical phenomenology of John O'Neill.
 72. On the dangers of "adaptations" from bourgeois thought see, however, M. Castells and E. de Ipola, "Epistemological Practice and the Social Sciences," *Economy and Society* 5(1976), esp. pp. 140-41.
 73. "Modes of production." It is perhaps not surprising that the "histoire totalisante" of the *Annales* school should attract Marxists. See also G. Stedman Jones, "History: the Poverty of Empiricism" in Blackburn *Ideology in Social Science*. However, the looseness of certain categories and principles of explanation of the *Annales* historians (e.g. Lucien Febvre's "interrelations" and "interdependence," and also the Conclusion in Fernand Braudel *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800* (London, 1973) present difficulties to the enterprise of Marxist history.
 74. Meillassoux, "From Reproduction to Production," *Economy and Society* 1(1972), pp. 94-96. There are a number of works of bourgeois materialism which command respect (albeit critical) from Marxists; for example, Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (London, 1971), and Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London, 1971). For Marxist discussions of these works see E. Terray in *Critique of Anthropology*, no. 3(1975), and P.Q. Hirst, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 2(1974).
 75. 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), p. 119.
 76. Joseph C. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen* (London, 1976), p. 281.
 77. 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(1972), pp. 11-54.
 78. Alain Maire, "Rapports de parenté et rapports de production dan les sociétés lignagères" in *L'anthropologie économique*, ed. François Pouillon, (Paris, 1976).
 79. Cited in *ibid*, p. 89.
 80. Ibid, p. 91.
 81. Miller, "Slaves, Slavers and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Kasanje," in *Social Change in Angola*, ed. F.W. Heimer, (Munich, 1973). 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 Steven Feierman's *The Shambaa Kingdom* (Madison, 1974) which is of a similar caliber.

82. Rey, "L'esclavage lignager chez les tsangui, les punu et les kuni du Congo-Brazzaville; sa place dans le système d'ensemble des rapports de production"; and P. Bonnafé, "Les formes d'asservissement chez les Kukuya d'Afrique centrale," both in Meillassoux, *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*.
83. Mary Douglas, "Matriliny and Pawnship in Central Africa," *Africa* 34(1964), pp. 301-13.
84. Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 126-27.