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ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN THE
NEGRO KINGDOM OF DAHOMEY

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ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN THE NEGRO KINGDOM OF DAHOMEY

Chapter 1.

While this book is essentially an account of the economy of an archaic society in its heyday - eighteenth century Dahomey - it was written in an almost painful awareness of the issues of our own time. Thus it was conceived as an economic historian's modest contribution to meeting the problems of the age, informed as it was by the conviction that realistic insight may advance the search for their resolutions.

Such a contribution from a historian of the economy needs a special dispensation, for in all probability it is no longer the economy which will be the overwhelming concern.

Fear, that architect of power is swinging the axis of men's lives away from the economic order and towards the political and moral order. Freedom, bare physical survival, and a morally meaningful existence are the imperatives of the future. The very place of the economy in society is ^{slipping.} slipping. Contrary to all appearances, not livelihood but peace and human integrity are the emergent issue.

The economy, then, is moving into an unwonted position. Though reduced to a secondary status, it will, of necessity, in an industrial society, continue to create a problem, which, if unsolved might viciate the chance of survival. The position thus created is quite outside our experience. The economy as we have known it, enveloping within it all of society, raises problems altogether different from an economy subordinated in its organization and motivation to the aims of its environment. Are we equipped to deal with so unexpected a state of affairs?

No lengthy regression in time is needed to record the historical origin of our present entanglements. 24

The nineteenth century gave birth to two sets of events of a very different order of magnitude: the Machine Age, a technological development of millennial range; a market system, an initial adjustment to that development.

In the Machine Age, we have the beginnings of one of those mutations that mark the lifetime of the human race: The Old Stone Age; the Neolithic with its plough agriculture in which almost all history happened; and now, the brand new Machine Age. If plough agriculture is credited with having given rise to civilization, the machine has given rise to industrial civilization. It is our fate. We must learn to humanize it, or it will destroy us.

Changes in economic organization were required to give scope to the technological miracles of the nineteenth century. The market system may well have been the only means of using elaborate expensive machinery for the purposes of production. Neither the readiness nor the capacity for risk bearing, neither the knowledge of products nor of the consumers, was available in that merchant class which for generations had been practising 'putting-out'. In the circumstances, markets had to be organized for everything as the one way of assuring a steady flow of raw materials for the machines and an assured disposition of the finished products. Failing a system of interconnected markets at all stages, the economic risk in investing capital in machinery would have been too

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great. Not only were markets needed for the purchase of consumers goods and raw materials, but land and labour had also to be organized as pseudo-commodities so as to assure ~~the~~ mobility and continuity of supply. Man and his environment inevitably came to be governed by the laws applicable to ~~the~~ genuine commodities produced for sale. The outcome was one approaching a self-regulating system of markets, which revolutionized Western society in the first part of the nineteenth century.

The consequences for man's ideas of himself and his society were fateful. Once livelihood has been organized through a separate instituting of everyday activities that are carried on in markets of a varied kind, based on profit motives and determined by competitive attitudes ~~governed by a utilitarian value scale~~, man's society becomes an organism that is, in all essential regards, subservient to gainful purposes.

Under a market system the influence of the economy on the economic process is of course, overwhelming. The working of the economy, - the interplay of supply and demand - does here shape the rest of society or rather, 'determines' it, almost as in a triangle the sides 'determine' the angles.

17 Take the stratification of classes. Supply and demand in the labour market are, by definition, identical with workers and employers, respectively. The classes of capitalists, landowners, tenants, brokers, merchants and professional were defined and actually created by the respective markets for land, money, capital, and various services. The income of these social classes was fixed by those markets, their rank and position by their income.

(4)

led to the establishment of

Once technology ~~led to~~ a market system, such an institutional setting would center man's thoughts and values on the economy. Terms such as freedom, justice, equality, rationality and rule of law seemed to culminate in a market system. Freedom came to mean free enterprise, justice centered around the protection of private property, the upholding of contracts and the "natural" verdict of prices in the market. A man's property, his revenue and income, the prices of his wares, were now just, if they were formed in a competitive market. Equality ~~came to mean~~ ^{pointed to} the unlimited right of all to enter into contract as partners, ^{and} rationality was epitomized by efficiency and maximization on market behaviour. The market was now the economic institution, its rules identical with the Rule of Law, ~~a modern achievement~~ which reduced all social relations to the one norm of property and contract.

Thus the The modern exchange economy is a market system which includes within its scope all aspects of society dependent on material means, no matter how indirectly. Since very little of our social existence can be carried on without material means of one kind or another, the principles governing the economy, (or the process of material supply) have come to be considered as absolute. Our new perspective invokes a different set of priorities where the economy must be relativized in regard to society, a task for which we are ill suited. However, this inadequacy need not be incurable. Hence our strongly held opinion, that it may not be beyond the scope of intellectual effort to eliminate at least the most intractable slant under which the problem of the place of the economy in society presents itself to men of this century.

This faith, amounting with the author almost to a personal engagement springs from a compelling insight of many years' standing, the largely unconscious weakness under which western civilization labors lies in the peculiar conditions under which it has to shape its economic fate.*

from p. 3 ~~bottom~~ middle
(new p. 6)

Footnote:

* Great Transformation - New York - 1944.

of man loses the capacity of relativizing it again. The very word 'economy' evokes not the picture of man's material livelihood and the substantive technology that helps to secure it, but recalls a set of particular motives peculiar attitudes and specific purposes which collectively we used to call 'economists' though they are as such foreign to the actual substantive economy and came to be regarded as its accessories only by virtue of an ephemeral interplay of modern Western culture traits. Not the permanent features of the economy but the transitory ones appear to us as the essentials. This obsolete market mentality is an impediment to a realistic approach to the problems of the era in which forgotten continents are suddenly industrializing and the industrial ones are steered by electronic automation and nuclear power towards unknown shores. **

No civilization in our knowledge has made the production of material goods the standard of its total achievement, nor the success in the making of profit, the measure of an individual's personality. Such life values must estrange us from the past, as well as from the non-industrial present. It is a paralyzing handicap in dealing with the practical issue of organizing material production itself under the on coming social circumstances. Thus the obsessions of the nineteenth century may block the road to life, ideologically and institutionally. The economic historian should try to transmit

Footnote:-

**

"Our obsolete market mentality", Commentary, 1947.

to our understanding the true nature and proportions of the powers that shaped us. X

The perspective is then the succession of problems for life and society raised by a Machine Age of an enduring character. The nineteenth century market system with its economic view of human livelihood and its enveloping position in society have been spelt out. This ideological distortion threatens to inhibit our adjustment, and it is the historian's task to make the data of the past available in an objective light so that the place occupied by economies in societies be demonstrable and the lessons of the past ^{may} be focused on the future.

What appears to our twentieth century minds when scanning the present horizon as the

to 16,000 cowries as weighing 40 lbs and 41 lbs, respectively. Considering the time span and the lack of uniformity in cowrie as a medium of payment by weight, the slight disparity cannot affect the internal evidence supporting the authenticity of the text. Indeed, the Treaty of the 6th September, 1704 was the occasion for the natives to adjust slave prices to the monetary changes occurring in the West African slave trade in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Our sources bear this out. The 1704 slave price of 80,000 cowries, equal 5 "onces" at 16,000 cowries, amounts to 10 pounds sterling, which amounts to a doubling of the slave price of 5 pounds sterling, quoted by K.G. Davies for 1702. In whatever units prices were ~~expressed~~ expressed in the Treaty, the Africans' adjustment certainly tended to overcompensate changes in the currency.

and Ch 4: The market of the port of trade

imported into this country, bought of the Whites at Arebo, by the Veadors and brokers.."
Arebo and Gotton are two of the "above-mentioned trading places which are properly for dealing with Europeans". At Gotton, a port of trade, there is also a "publick market", a situation analagous to Whydah. But these markets are only for "the subjects to trade together", and European imports reach these markets only through the hands of the brokers appointed to deal with the ~~XXXXXX~~ European traders.

the native

Trade with/peoples further inland~~is~~ is not permitted to the Europeans but is reserved to the subjects of Benin. "They have also at certain times of the year", Barbot explains, "publick markets or fairs appointed, and kept in large open plains .. near the high-way; to which a great number of people resort from all the neighbouring places, to buy and sell goods". These fairs are not for the ~~XXXXXX~~ Benin people only, as were the markets mentioned above, but for ~~XXXXXX~~ the peoples of "all the neighbouring places", and these fairs are ~~XXXXXX~~ held only at certain times of the year instead of every three days in the week. These fairs have other special features. "It is a custom there", Barbot continues, "for the king to send his proper officers to the said markets to keep the peace and good order amongst the people that come to it, appointing every merchant a proper place, according to the nature of the goods he deals in, etc., for the reason, during the market-time, the ordinary justices of the place have no manner of authority; but it is vested for that time only in the court-officers."

These inland fairs resemble the port of trade. As in the port of trade, ~~XXXXXX~~ safeguards are set up in dealing with strangers and guarantees of neutrality are provided by the political authority. The intent is clearly to regulate transactions with foreigners, whether these be Europeans from overseas, or native peoples from inland countries.

established the all but complete absence of all-purpose money. Also Gardan and Derelli in their recent study of the Cappadocian tablets ~~assume~~ assume the tankar's function to have been to assist the traders' business deriving his own revenue not from the transactions in hand, but from a commission fee on turnover (1961). The trend of evidence would have definitely appeared to run in favour of the more recent views sceptical on the traditional marketing interpretation of the Babylonian economy. (K. Polanyi and Leo Oppenheim, 1957) However, with a notable exception. F.W. Leemans/ very considerably re-interpreted his weighty declaration about the absence of a word for ~~Market~~ "Market" in Akkadian with the significant reservation that this did not in his view amount to the absence of markets, since the widespread institution of the kar actually functioned as a market in Babylonia.

In practice, then, the king's law was a curb upon the men of wealth and power. While the customary usages of clan, gild, and village were not interfered with, the king kept a tight rein on his own officials. The higher offices in the kingdom and their associated benefices were usually hereditary, but they were retained at the pleasure of the king. Numerous cases are on record of the king's ousting an incumbent for malfeasance in office and investing another with his post and the property attaching to it. To be 'broken' in this manner at the king's order symbolized ruin, and the ever present threat of such disgrace was a stern reminder to the office-holder.

Indeed, the rationale of the royal power is most clearly revealed in the relationship of the king to the bureaucracy.

The king's officials constituted the elite of Dahomey: They were the ministers of the kingdom, the war captains, the officials in charge of trade, the provincial governors. While some of these elite families were of aristocratic lineage and themselves the leading families of their clans, new 'houses' were created by the king's endowment of commoners with land, slaves, and trade prerogatives. Manorial families owning large plantations worked by slave labor thus came to be superimposed upon the basic clan structure. It was primarily the distribution of booty in slaves which gave rise to this elite, since land was abundant, the cultivators moving on to take up new fields when the old ones were exhausted or left fallow for a period, but additional land was useless without the labor to clear the fields and keep the growing crops from the invading bush. These new forms of wealth arising outside the clan and free of the restrictions placed on property by the traditional usages of the clan were a threat to the clan organization and the basis for a new power in society.

Against this new power, the crown acted as a counterweight. The monarchy had to develop the administrative personnel necessary to handle the expanding affairs of the kingdom and at the same time to set limits to its aggrandizement. Surely no mean achievement!

The instituting of 'Rules of Law' played a major part in this achievement. The planning of war and trade required an extension of economic transactions beyond the customary jurisdictions of clan, village, and gild. To keep such transactions within bounds, a parallel extension of administrative rules and techniques had to go hand in hand. Such an extension is evidenced in the 'Rules of Law' which laid down the general framework of economic regulation under which individuals might operate with considerable freedom of action. In trade, for example, the trade officials and other dignitaries of the kingdom might trade freely on their own account, as well as for the account of the state, so long as they observed the established equivalencies and operated within the limits set by the law.

The beneficent effects of the royal policies are attested by more than one observer. Duncan, who had the opportunity to observe conditions at first hand throughout the interior, frequently remarks upon the contentedness of the population. A century earlier, Norris had found submission to Dahomey "so devoted" that none of the people conquered by Trudo had even attempted to regain their independence. Some of the peoples bordering Dahomey even submitted themselves voluntarily to Dahomey's rule. In his conversation with Duncan, the king reports with satisfaction that "the good effects of his new laws were manifest even in the Mahee country, for within the last two years several petty kingdoms in that and the Annagoo country had voluntarily been ceded to his government."

native denominations of these gold weights are the units in which prices are quoted. We may summarize Barbot's account of these gold weights:

"The proper weights used there for gold, in trading with the Blacks, or among Europeans, are either pounds, marks, ounces, or angels, sixteen of these to an ounce; but the Blacks do not weigh their gold by pounds, or marks, but commonly by the Benda, which is two ounces, and thus they weigh one, two, or more Bendas successively, four Bendas being a mark; each of them, as has been said, two ounces troy weight. ... The ounce troy weight is divided into sixteen Angels, or Akyes ..." (234). In brief then, we have the following relationships:

16 Angels or Akyes equal 1 oz.

2 oz. equal 1 Benda

4 Bendas equal 1 Mark

Slaves are priced in oz. or Bendas. Barbot, speaking of Accra on the Gold Coast, reports that "a good slave sells there, as at all other trading places on the Gold-Coast westward, at the rate of one Benda of gold, which is two ounces."

Prices of European goods, whether quoted in l.s.d., risdallers, francs, etc., can be readily converted into angels, ounces, and Bendas, by establishing the ratings of European currencies in terms of these gold weight units.

In the English currency, for example, gold dust is rated at $\frac{1}{4}$ per oz. (80s.). At this rate, the Angel or ackie of gold is worth 5s., and goods priced l.s.d., are readily converted into ackies. Atkins provides us with an example. The goods on his invoice are priced in l.s.d., whereas the sortings composed for the various places of trade along the Coast are rated in the local standards, that for Appollonia (Gold Coast) being rated in ackies as ff;

(Atkins, p. 167). ...

is not necessarily a means of exchange. It may simply be a means of payment, or used as a standard and different objects material units may serve the different uses. In Babylonia, barley was used for payment, e.g., of wages and rents, while silver was generally used as a standard. In the absence of markets there is but little evidence of exchange other than that of specific objects, such as a definite plot of land or a house, a few individual slaves, heads of cattle or a boat, and that but rarely if at all shows an actual employment of silver. Rather oil, wine, wool or other staples served indiscriminately as a means of exchange at fixed equivalents.

In regard to trade the situation was similar. Trade in Babylonia which, in contrast to Egypt, was ample, was thought to be market-trade. Thus administered trade and gift-trade were overlooked. Yet, between the empires of antiquity gift trade was the chief form of trade (it is in evidence also for Pharaonic Egypt.) The other form of administered trade carried on from the Babylonian period onward is that great institution of pre-modern times, the "port of trade."

Nor did price fare differently. Prices were taken to be market prices. Actually in antiquity prices were largely fixed by custom statute, or proclamation, and should not perhaps generally be called prices at all. To describe them as "fixed prices" would be even more misleading, since in no way had they ever been fluctuating. Possibly a new term is needed such as equivalents. This is the name here employed for such permanent rates at which one kind of good was either substituted or exchanged for an other. The difference was basic between these two variants of equivalents: "Substituted," as in the one-way movement of payment 'in kind' of taxes, or as in choosing between ration goods under a point system

(substitutive equivalents); "exchanged", as in the two-way movement of goods, for instance in the purchase of one sort of fungible for another at a fixed rate (exchange equivalents.)

The fountainhead of these errors was to rank exchange as the universal economic relation. Hence the claim to the general validity of such marketing terms as "supply" wherever things were available, and "demand" wherever things might be employed as a means to a purpose. On such flimsy speculations was the human world established by economics into a potential market system. Actually, patterns of economic organization other than exchange obtained in the pre-modern world. In primitive communities reciprocity frequently occurs as a vital feature of the economy, in archaic societies redistribution from a center was widespread. On a smaller scale, the universal pattern of the livelihood of the peasant family is householding. But reciprocity and householding, however general, remained invisible to the modern observer trained to notice economic phenomena only if they were reducible to exchange.

Dahomey's was an ordered economy, based on the principles of a redistributive state and achieving an almost perfect balance of central administration and local freedom through a subtle tissue of reciprocating and householding institutions supplimented by local markets. The paradoxes of a planned agricultural production and village freedom, as well as a governmental foreign trade breathing through local markets while avoiding a market system, were here a fact. How that amazing stability of the exchanges was achieved in the absence of the equilibrating mechanism of the market, also invites an answer. Archaic society possessed a solid

structure which internalized the rule of law, and status was further reinforced by money functions foreign to the market system.

The economic historian should make the data of the past available in an objective light. It seems doubtful, for instance, whether the accepted criterion of civilization marked by the accomplishment of literacy should not be dropped by reference to stratified archaic societies which banned the art of writing for religious, political, or economic reasons, preferring isolation to undesirable culture contact. Apart from the Incas the Ashanti and the Dahomeans come to mind.

How were their accomplishments in war, and even in trade and currency compatible with illiteracy? The answer lies in a forgotten phase of civilization which we might call 'operational' due to the type of gadgets by virtue of which mechanical and organizational feats were performed without any conceptualization of the intermediate steps that led to the results. The practice of writing superseded a world of operational devices, even the memory of which was eventually lost. The abacus is one of the very few which survived the triumph of the alphabet. Some early states - prototypes of archaic society - may have emerged from the primitive level precisely as the outcome of the greatest innovation previous to writing, the operational devices, of which elaborate pebble statistics or differentiated numeration systems like the two ways of counting - the one applying to cowrie, the other to 'men and mice' - were a sample. Such devices were an advance in communication comparable to I.B.M. which also results in a deconceptualization of mental activities through a replacing and surpassing of thought by mechanism.

Another source of administrative achievements in archaic countries was a high level of traditional statecraft. It was partly due to the absence of a market system, which would render superfluous much of the art of government. Incidentally, the recession in political crafts from which the Modern Age suffers may well have happened by stages with the gradual expansion of markets.

Perhaps the most valuable reflection that the study of eighteenth century Dahomey offers, is that the gift of statesmanship is not a white man's privilege. Surprising attainments were in evidence in the 'international' field between non-literate countries. On the Upper Guinea Coast neighbouring Dahomey and Ashanti maintained an independent existence over several centuries, deliberately and skillfully using separate currencies. Rates of exchange were kept stable in spite of an intensive commercial intercourse with a number of European states, which used by no means always stable silver currencies. Ashanti employed gold dust, Dahomey used cowrie, a particularly elusive monetary medium, as modern West African colonial powers have found. The English and French moreover employed a stable fictitious currency in dealing with either.

While operational civilizations in native Africa may have given way to literacy for good, traditions of high statecraft may suddenly reappear in the awakening countries of that continent.

Even the anxious complexes of freedom and bureaucracy, or of planning and market are not altogether novel. The threat to freedom from an intricate administration and the contradiction of free exchange and central planning was foreshadowed in the economies of the ancients. Actually, two different dilemmas seem to interact in Dahomey. The social structure of the archaic world abounds in institutional

devices that act as safeguards both to freedom and efficiency.

The Dahomean countryside was teeming with big and small market places in village and bush, yet the choice of crops was directed from the capital, according to the overall requirements of planning. A very considerable overseas trade was channelled through an administrative network quite separate from markets, acting through the intermediary of the "port of trade".

The formal separation of central administration from activities originating in familial and local life, that cradle both of tradition and freedom barred arbitrary rule. Such jurisdictional limitations were reinforced by administrative divisions into spheres of war, trade, taxation and currency domiciled within the palace, while local autonomy was rooted in ancient custom which the king himself did not dare offend.

We must guard against being anachronistic. Rather, we should leave room to scholarly interests that derive from the absence of markets for labour and land, and refrain from projecting our problems into the native environment, yet be ready to make use of what elements of answers to our own questions we may happen to find in this chapter of the history of mankind.

Let us return to the ^{question of the} origins of the port of trade and the security factor which was so conspicuous in silent trade. According to the archaeological evidence the search for security may have played a signal role in ~~a later variant~~ ^{the eventual emergence} of the port of trade, which we will here call the emporium or ~~wik~~ ^{wik}.

Lahmann-Hartleben, who discovered the remains of a number of emporia on the Mediterranean Coast, should be credited with the plausible explanation that the ~~walled~~ ^{walled} emporia ~~are~~ ^{were} no else than the elaboration of sites originally dedicated to silent trade. What were these emporia like? On uninhabited coasts curious semi-circular stone walls of medium height are found usually with a protective altar within the circuit which is open towards the sea. The low walls are only meant to seclude the meeting place of ^{foreign} traders, but hardly to protect them against an attack from the land. Such sites of trade ~~and meetings~~ are

found not infrequently and must be dated to pre-historic times. In Northern Europe ^{where} they are called wik and are justly ^{they are much fewer, &} described ⁱⁿ ^a to scandinavian origin.

Another use of the term emporium should, however, be mentioned here. The ancient Greeks ^{generally} designated as an emporium that part of a coastal town which happened to be dedicated to ^{overseas} trade. The town itself thus harboured the emporium, which, in the classical age may have been fitted with a mole or pier, also a quay with warehouses, indeed, it ought to possess a market place or agora of its own, as well as hostels for the accommodation of transient seafarers. The Piraeus, for instance, ^{comprised} contained a famous emporium, ^{with a separate local market.} Undoubtedly, this emporium development may in case of its administrative elaboration have ^{also} become another ~~start~~ starting point of the port of trade.

~~A history of Ardra + Calabar trade~~

Ardra, on the western end of the Slave Coast, ^{and the} as well as Calabar^s deep in the eastern stretch of the Bight of Benin, were ~~at first~~ the chief sources of the new trade rush. ^{of the Europeans,} The Portuguese were ^{the earliest} first on the scene. ^{But by} the last quarter of the seventeenth century, when the slave trade suddenly ^{swept in,} surged, they were superseded by the Dutch and the English. Ardra shall here comprise its tributaries, the Popos, Offra, Porto Novo and approximately up to ~~1700~~ 1700, also Whydah. Ardra was an inland power, cutting off the coast in a broad belt from the Dahomean hinterland. However, both Ardra and Dahomey were nevertheless dependent on the military Great Power that over-
 shadowed the region ^{on} from the north east, namely, Oyo. ~~In a~~ ~~bird's eye view~~ between Ardra and the Calabars lay the Niger & Delta, a stretch ^{of almost 150 miles} where no slaves were to be had. Ardra proper was ^{in Barbot's phrase,} "open to trade" from the north, and ^{also} at its eastern end, where slave caravans and large boats reached it by way of the lagoons with ample ^{human cargo} shipments from distant stretches of the Calabar ~~Rivers~~ / supplied ~~with slaves~~ ^{in turn} from the rainy tropics of Central Africa. Hence the overflow of slaves, which without any administrative machinery to ~~immediately~~ funnel it, ~~flowed down~~ reached across Ardran territory ~~for a stretch~~ ^{a coastal strip of} ~~of the coast~~ ^{dependent peoples states,} several times longer than the very narrow beach of Ardra proper. ~~Indeed,~~ the chief obstacle to satisfactory conditions of trade ~~was~~ ^{unslakable} for the Europeans was the refusal of the King of Ardra to shift his habitation to the coast.

Strategic, ~~as well as~~ ^{as well as ritual} political considerations stood in the way. ^{This being so,} Unless the coastal chieftainships with their vicious pirogues could be solidly incorporated in Ardra, actual trading had to be left to ^{be scooped by} the Popos and other unreliable confederates who had ^{then} to be tined and again blackmailed by ^(to deliver) their suzerain ~~out~~ of their profits. Even the foreign ambassadors who visited the King in Great Ardra, had to make the journey by night, to ~~avoid~~ ^{avoid} incidents, so great was the ruler's fear of military espionage. Yet the capital was some thirty miles from the coast, putting a burden on ^{the} traffic ^{of goods} too great for the ^{trader} Europeans to bear.

Indeed, ~~matters~~ ^{greatly} were far removed from the expeditiousness ~~cherished~~ by ~~skippers~~ ^{skippers}, pressed for time in view of a perilously short sailing season. The ~~governor~~ ^{detailed} of Little Ardra, the official in charge of the port town, was to conduct the factor or supercargo to the King's seat ^{at} in Great Ardra. Several ~~hundreds~~ ^{hundreds} pounds weight of fine corals were the gift of the occasion. For each ship 'customs' were the King's due ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the value of fifty slaves, in goods, to be delivered at the trader's ~~charge~~ ^{charge}. As Barbot says,

"all such goods of their cargo as the King has pitched upon for himself out of their invoices." This ^{arranged for the} ~~governor~~, the officers and others ^{who had} ~~accompanying him~~, ^{ried the trader} ~~return~~ in the same order back to the coast, where ~~he~~ ^{was} settled in a ~~small~~ "house for trade," ^{Now the time had come to} ~~and can at last~~ ^{decide to} have all his cargo brought ashore, and ^{have it} ~~carried~~ ^{put at his disposal.} to the said house by ~~porters~~. Thus ~~the~~ the stage ^{was} ~~reached~~ ^{when} the trader sends ^t up by the said ~~porters~~

And so

means of

porters to Great Ardra all the goods the King ~~has~~ selected
 as the ones in which he wished the customs to be paid to him.
 Matters may ~~be~~ ^{have been} ~~humanly~~ complicated by the circumstance as Bar-
 bot remarks, ^{of} it being very rare that the factors or supercargoes
 will give a true invoice of all their best goods, either to
 the King or to the Poella (^{his} ~~who is~~ commercial headman). ~~These are~~ ^{Such}

~~was~~ ~~the~~ the accompaniment of the "adjusting of prices of slaves and
 goods" which ~~is~~ ^{was} the main subject of the proceedings. For then
 only ~~can~~ ^{could} the public cryer proclaim the prices as well as per-
 mission to the population "freely to trade with the supercargo
 of such ship." As a token of satisfaction conventional ~~presents~~
^{as well as} ~~are~~ offered to the King ~~plus~~ goods to the value of nine slaves.

^{gifts were} ~~are~~ offered to the King ~~plus~~ goods to the value of nine slaves.
 The objects of the ^{transaction}, the slaves, were
 still to appear.

Chapter VII. The Port of Trade

Besides the Amazon Army, Dahomey's pride was the Port of Trade of Whydah. ~~It was in its time~~ ^{the most} famous slaving station, ~~supplying~~ ^{an average} ~~more than 10,000~~ ^{about 20,000} slaves annually with the help of an exemplary administration ~~which carried on~~ ^{neutral in the period of great wars} dealings with a number of nations, ~~whose~~ ^{supplies} ~~their national currencies in perfect order, with legal safeguards provided through long-term treaties, and all this~~ ^{of set up and managed} ~~under the auspices of an~~ ^{entirely} non-literate people.

Historically, the Dahomean period of the port of trade, ^{naturally} dates from the conquest of Whydah, ~~in 1727~~, and stretches over some 160 years. In the preceding Whydensian period, ~~of almost a quarter century, from~~ about 1704 to 1727, the essentials of that institution were established

~~Yet~~ ^{yet} Whydah was not the earliest slaving state on the Guinea Coast. It was preceded by Ardra, ^{a kingdom} ~~a larger country~~, ranking in size ~~between~~ ^{territorially} between Whydah and Dahomey, and ^{them territorially} separating the two from one another. The evolution of the ^{full fledged} ~~Dahomean~~ Port of Trade should, then, be traceable ^{back} over Whydah to Ardra, a neighbour and close competitor of Whydah, ^{the latter's independence from Ardra} ever since ~~the establishment~~ of the latter. Yet Ardra, though a slaving state, did not possess a port of trade. ^{In fact, it} ~~It~~ was ^{off the coast} neither situated on the coast, nor did it set up any organization designed to serve external trade.

Geographically, too, we are dealing here with a sequence: the North Guinea Coast of the Gambia and Sebehal was commercially active almost 2000 years before the Corn and Tooth Coasts, which again, were followed by the Gold Coast and, eventually, ~~the~~ the Slave Coast. These

practiced different areas ~~had their~~ typical forms of trading, and ^{set up} corresponding coastal regimes, under which Europeans and Africans met with each other.

~~Members of the~~ emergence This ^{brief historical} succinct rehearsal of ^{and taking geographical} periods, commercial spheres ~~and~~ areas shall serve us as a background to the ^{emergence of the institution of the} first port of trade on the Guinea Coast, ^{first} in Whydah, / its spectacular development, ^{there} under the Dahomean monarchs. ^{independent}

^{later} We shall follow its ^{then} ~~emergence~~ ^{rise out of} from the situation about the 1670ies when the explosive demand for African Slave labour ^{exerted} ~~initiated~~ by ~~the~~ ^{of the} ~~new~~ sugar cane plantations ^{in the West Indies} on ~~Barbados~~ ^{Lower Guinea} reached the eastern ~~end of the Gold Coast~~ ^{and} a steady stream of human cargo began to filter through ~~to the coast~~ ^{from inland} by way of Ardra.

^{Commercially,} the change was ^{when} two-fold: ~~as~~ (slaves replaced gold as the ^{chief} ~~main~~ object of trade, the Gold Coast proper lost trade to its eastern neighbours. The tribal peoples of the ~~the~~ eastern beaches such as the Popo and the Houéda ~~now~~ ^{rebellious} started ~~to rebel~~ against their ^{SUPERIOR} ~~common~~ sovereign the inland kingdom of Ardra. This sums up a situation ^{of} ~~which~~ ^{which} was for a ~~long time to produce~~ ^{resolved} tensions of varying intensity ~~and~~ ^{soon after} was only fifty years later through the conquest ~~first~~ of Ardra and ~~subsequently~~ of Whydah by the Dahomean empire. The replacement of the quest for gold

by the slave ^{ing} ~~trade~~ rush was accompanied ^{both} by an eastward shift of the ^{the} site of trade and ~~announcement~~ ^{the} emergence of a novel institution, ^{had} of the port of trade. ^a The quest for gold brought with it a ~~fairly~~ dense settlement of the coast, through permanent ~~European~~ ^{defensible} establishment from one or two intimidating fortifications to some dozen of/warehouses ~~benefiting from~~

of the fortified castles.

benefiting from their protection. The natives tended to congregate around these European settlements, ^(the white settlers) which provided them with occasions of livelihood and ~~also~~ served as their customers, The Europeans sold off their wares for gold, which readily flowed in over the counters.

Besides offering for protection against the inland powers,
The natives liked to select their purchases at the warehouses, ~~where~~ ^{bartered} the Europeans ~~sold~~ for gold. The weak and poor coastal tribes were ^{fairly} ~~therefore~~ acculturated and no treaties with the organized inland units were required. ^{by the Europeans} If the coastal peoples increased in wealth, they were

regularly fleeced by the inland states who forced them to tithe to them. Then the gold trade declined, maybe partly owing to the exhaustion

of river gold, ^{more frequently} slaves would be sold to the whites. But ~~the~~ human beings could not be handed over the counter for a few ells of cloth.

Slave trade
~~Not merely as a matter of etiquette, but~~ For valid technical reasons the Europeans would insist on large consignments and on dispatch

in delivery otherwise the hazards of the weather in an era of sailing ships would cause ^{desastrous} ~~serious~~ delays. Yet inland rulers would ~~be adamant~~ in their refusal to ^{by} ~~meet~~ the Europeans in person ^{move their domicile to} on the coast. The Oyo, for instance, were forbidden ^{by their religion to have as much as a} ~~as much as to look~~ at the sea.

Their priests were supposed to punish infringements by death. ~~Whether~~ Whether the taboo was a mere ritualization of reasons of state which forbade inland peoples to move from the bush to the strategically ^{unfavourable} ~~indifferent~~ locations of the marshes and lagoons, it would be difficult to say. There can not be any doubt about the efficacy of the taboo. The technical nature of the slave trade with its intricate details and the politically motivated objections of the hinterland rulers to transactions on the coast led to the emergence of

Gold Trade by the Europeans

the port of trade. That institution sui generis was designed to advance the transacting of foreign trade by administrative methods under definite circumstances from the earliest times. In Ardra the king refused to set up a port of trade and held on to the poor substitute of having his coastal dependants sell the slaves for him and eventually ^{compell} ~~persuade~~ them to relinquish their profits to him. The method was politically awkward, and contributed much to the decay of Ardra as a slaving state.

~~Whydah, its former tributary, was a small state, yet its king managed to separate the political capital, Savi, from the commercial capital, the town of Whydah proper. This latter, only three miles from the beach, the former another ten miles farther away. As already mentioned, the King of Dahomey, with his capital, Abomey, another sixty miles inland, first seized Great Ardra (Allada), then Savi, finally, Whydah, situated almost on the beach. As an outcome of this absentee rulership the administration of the slave trade at Whydah reached a degree of sophistication, that surpassed by far that of the port of trade as it was under Whydah.~~

It might lengthen our perspective, to
 start from the earliest beginnings of the Guinea trade. French merchants from the Normandie had been trading for gold on the North Guinea Coast for centuries. They sailed up several hundred miles up the Gambia in ~~shallow-draft~~ shallow-draft sloops, or yachts, and sold their wares for gold. The coast ^{itself} was altogether under native control and the French settlements were ^{safely} located on off-shore islands, such as ^{(The English, on St. James Island).} Ganeán Gorée. Later on farther south, trade for ivory and pepper was carried on ^(still) as "ship trade" ^{coasting alongside} ~~alongside~~ of the beaches. Watering and wooding was ~~there~~ possible and the natives

boarded the merchantmen, since in these regions no organized kingdoms swayed sovereignty over the coast itself. ^{only} Stray natives from weak local chieftainships inhabited the Corn and Tooth Coasts. Neither fortifications, nor permanent European settlements were called for, ~~nor~~ nor would they have repaid the heavy cost of construction and upkeep. The next stage took the white man ^{further east} to the Gold Coast. Large scale exports and intense competition between the Europeans ^{themselves} called for veritable fortresses ^{ing} to protect a host of minor settlements. Each of these would sell a few ounces worth of ^{gold} ~~ivory~~ daily, adding up to several marks ~~of gold~~ annually. There was no need for the trader to transport ^{his} ~~these~~ wares far inland, nor for the native ruler to appear personally on the coast. As long as Ardra, the easternmost of the Gold Coast states was mainly an outlet for gold, no European power ^{if only} pressed the king to transfer his seat to the coast, ~~at least~~ for the trading season. ^{But 2 3 1 4} ~~that~~ demand precisely was made by the Chevalier d'Amant in 1687, ^{thereby wrecking} ~~and wrecked~~ France's long standing contacts with **Ardra**.

D'Amant's three points were 1. the king to move to the coast, 2. the exclusive monopoly of commerce in regard to all of Ardra, 3. an embargo on the transference of slaves by the king's subjects to any other parts. The King accepted 2 and 3 on condition that annually six ships capable of carrying at least three thousand slaves each were sent by the company. However as to 1. he "deemed that more ample consideration was required and that decision should be postponed to another time." The text of the proposition he rejected deserves to be quoted in full: "Permission to place the ^{French} settlement **on** the coast, where both the **K**ing and the inhabitants of the capital would settle in the future so as to ^{save} ~~avoid~~ ^{French the} the ruinous cost of having to transport the foreign goods ^{inland} to the ~~king's~~ King's seat seven leagues (21 miles) from the sea." (**Report of the Chevalier d'Amant, 1698**)

The Port of Trade I.

Whydah, 1704-1727

The Amazon army and the Annual Customs celebrations were the features on which the ^{early} fame of the Kingdom of Dahomey rested. Ever since the conquest of Whydah, ^{in 1727 Dahomey} it ranked among the nations. Whydah ~~was~~ ^{trading} ~~was~~ ^{The history of this consists of (a) the sl. tr. trade and (b) the p. of trade.} was renowned as the outstanding port of ^{Bonny at Adams 20,000}

technical difficulties;
climatic limitations;

- (1) Afro-American slave trade. For administration, policing, justice, currency,
- (2) expeditiousness, ^(speed) and the range of supply which it commanded
- (3) in far inland regions were all equally admirable. ~~in~~
- (4) Moreover, a non-literate people managed this complex task under a ruler who from his distant capital by
- (5) remote control performed this ~~indicate~~
- (6) delicate feat of business management. ^{(a) the Cha-cha}
^{(b) Ve yogan}
- (7) The taboo which barred the Alladoxonu monarchs from appearing on the coast may have been only a symbolic demonstration of the tradition which restricted the realms of the Upper
- (7a) Guinea Coast to their inland sites.
- (8) Cf. Porto Novo rulers (purification)
Oyo priests
Army regulation
tactical handicap in ^{Pope wars}

Hence the polarity in Dahomean ^{betw. inland + coast} history, which had its peripety in the role played by the Gap of Benin in the history of that country.

The ~~sharpening of the~~ inner contradiction was pointed up ever since the second half of the 17th century, i.e., through

N. Keyf
1107-2370

- (9) the slave trade rush in the former Gold Coast, then on the way of turning into the Slave Coast.
- (10) Ardra was the ^{locus} ~~hero~~ of ^{the transition.} ~~this period of ambiguity~~. The white man had suddenly developed a brand new interest: The quest was ^{not any more} ~~not~~ for gold, but for slaves. Ardra was the hinterland of those hundreds of miles ^{stretching} from Cape to
- (11) Porto Novo. Hence~~x~~ the uncertainty about the precise location which separated Dahomey proper all the way from the sea. ~~Nevertheless~~ All the more revealing was the process by which the
- (12) small chieftainships of Whydah step by step evolved a port of trade (though there was no example on which to shape it. It might well be that the rise of Porto Novo gave the first impulse to what was destined to grow into a notable feature of pre-nineteen century trade the world over. Pre seventeen hundred slave trade, its inadequate fittedness and the unawareness. The West African trade had
- (13) always included some beginnings of trading in slaves (cf. Barbot on Gambia). Also the seventeenth century French
- (14) attempts (Ducasse, Issigny and the long list of French failures in Ardra. Consistent refusals of the King of
- (15) Ardra to move to the coast.
- The number of coastal chiefdoms - Popo~~s~~, etc. and the con-
- (16) tinuous antagonism between hinterland and coastal strip
- (17) Insufficient treaties to protect trade from incessant unaval wars, sea battles between the traders of the great powers

- Elaborate tenuous trading arrangements with distant
- (18) inland kingdoms. Large number of slaves shipped over very long distances from Angola, partly from inland markets, partly captured in war.

Description of early slave trade at Whydah¹

- (19) dates
- (20) personnel
- (21) rulers role
- (22) twin capitals (Savi)
- (23) capitals moved
- (24) Whydah, tributary to Ardra yet ever in revolt.
- (25) blackmailing of coast by hinterland, a traditional feature of the Upper Guinea Coast.
- (26) Rulers came from allada , ~~population from~~ ~~Demb~~
- (27) population from Benin (Houéda)
- (28) trade of hinterland was mulcted , taxed , blackmailed.
- (29) Competition invited (?) but peacefulness imposed.
- (30) free trade favoured on account of otherwise involved in wars, thus disrupting trade.
- (31) Discipline was not secured on the spot, even less were foreign intrigues prevented.
- (32) Policy: "enforcement of free trade."

7

Chapter VII. The Port of Trade

In an earlier chapter, ~~the~~ "Birth of a state", the conquest of the port of Whydah in the small kingdom of that name by the inland power of Dahomey was shown to be the key to the history of ~~that~~ ^{this} ~~Magnanimous~~ African kingdom. The Gap of Benin, a climatic oddity almost compelled the Fong of Dahomey, founders of the new empire to abandon the ~~isolation of the~~ hinterland status of their country and take on the responsibilities of a center of international commerce in the coastal lagoons of the tropical ocean. Great wealth and renown came to the Alladoxonu dynasty which this came to administer one of the most sophisticated commercial institutions of its time. Whydah functioned as a neutral port, offering safety of commerce on a large scale, amidst great wars over more than a century and a half, itself no more than a powerless home of a non-literate people.

The port of trade was the paradigm of a type of arrangement ^(for foreign trade) comparable in economic efficiency to the international market places of latter days while embodying administrative principles and operational methods foreign to the supply-demand-price mechanism with which we are familiar. Its origins lay ^{back} in primitive society whence they ^{grew} expanded in the pre-historic age to a universal model ^{on the coasts of} the Old Orient, or in ~~pre~~ pre-Conquest Mexico, eventually producing an archaic variant ^{for purposes of the} ^{Upper} on the Guinea Coast. Operational gadgets capable of coping with ^{development on} ^{currency} ~~the monetary~~ and pricing problems were here developed that met the requirements of modern commerce.

An institution of antiquity and of archaic society ~~was here~~

was thus here renewed under changed conditions. Safety of life and limb, expedition, the benefits of treaty and law were extended by the natives to the foreign trader. Rates of exchange, ^{or "proportions"} between the local staple and the "riches of the sea" ~~offered by the marine~~ ~~of many tongues~~ were negotiated with the exclusion of competition and ~~altogether~~ by "diplomatic" and administrative methods, whether primitive or elaborate. Arithmetic was sometimes replaced by ~~devi~~ devices of which the abacus is a surviving instance. Such institutions and procedures account for the level of achievement in societies to which we have denied the designation of civilized because they do not employ writing. Yet the economic process and its embeddedness in society with some advanced civilization of the ancient world and indeed up to modern times cannot be understood if we ~~neglect~~ ^{ignore} the forms ~~which~~ that life ~~took~~ took in those civilizations.

1) See Trade and Market in the Early Empires, ed. K. Polanyi, C.M. Arensberg, H.W. Pearson, Glencoe, Ill. 1957

- I. Origins of the Port of Trade
- II. The Slave Coast Trade
- III. The setting of equivalencies

I. Origins of the Port of Trade

Trade is the relatively peaceful acquiring of goods ~~from~~ from a distance, involving carrying, and as a rule, exchange for other goods. The meeting of strangers on foreign coasts thus is an

accompaniment of trade, as are the dangers inseparable therefrom. Hence, security is a prime consideration in transacting trade and trade meetings. Herodotus described graphically the Carthaginians bartering for gold on the Upper Guinea Coast beyond the Pillars of Hercules: The smoke signals of the natives who then retire and remain invisible and the repeated return of the strangers to and from their ships until the precise amounts of gold and goods reciprocally deposited in a no-man's-land appear as mutually acceptable. The natives are afraid to be panyarred, hence the precautions.

Trade meetings where the natives belong to a militarily "weak" group such as a tribal community or a small inland kingdom of the neighbourhood approximate the conditions of silent trade. The ~~shangan~~ disembarking stranger may feel ^{fairly} safe from being robbed, dragged into slavery or killed outright. Only at the extreme counterpole of the "weak hand" do we meet again with conditions of relative safety, namely, in the presence of a strong and ordered government which is both capable and willing to enforce law and order even on behalf of the stranger. (To return to the landing site) in a region that belongs to a militarily weak group, the visiting trader may reasonably rely on himself to guard against ^{acts of} untoward violence, while in the ~~presence~~ presence of a military power on the spot the stranger may feel inclined to avoid the site, unless, the authority of law is known to be ^{undeniably} ~~reliably~~ established. One instance placed in the middle of the sixteenth century is that of Cortez' occupa-

tion of the area of Acalán between the Mexican and the Mayan empires proper, famous for its trade, previous to the Spanish Conquest when it was no more than a chieftain's area. Cortez visiting Acalán saw with surprise that it had lost its importance as a center of trade, clearly as a result of its incorporation by the conquerors. Another case is really that of Whydah itself, the conquest of which by Dahomey caused a drying up of the slave trade over more than a decade. A third instance antedates both Dahomey and Mexico by much. The resplendent caravan city of Palmyra in the desert of Roman Syria was justly characterized by Rostovtzeff as having been in the nature of a port of trade where Parthian and Roman ^{goods carried} traders ~~trekking to~~ ^{far across} the ~~desert~~ ^{were exchanged} desert from east and west ~~met~~. This explains in his view the refusal of the Romans to garrison Palmyra, ^{which endowed the city with an artificial nobility.} Instead, they fell back, ~~on~~ restricting themselves to a sort of remote control, keeping the military at a several hundred miles distance from the city as a reassurance to the Arab caravan traders that no danger attached to ~~their entering~~ the neighbourhood of the city. ^P

It is difficult to find straight evidence of intent underlying the manifest fact that the early Empires of the Near East focussed ^{upon their} ~~on the~~ inland centers and refrained from extending their power permanently to the coast, be it Mediterranean, Black Sea or Persian Gulf. Yet the fact, so surprising to the modern mind, remains, that the famous and flourishing trading places through which a broad flow of imports reached the cities, the Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Hurrite empires remained almost

through the whole course of history free of foreign domination. It is reasonable to assume that the patent threat of a stoppage of imports in case of foreign countries nurtured a traditional policy of continentalism which found support in the obvious strategic arguments discriminating against coastal sites. Hence maybe, that no-man's-land character of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Coast during the periods of Hellenic colonization that hardly ever met with serious local resistance when settling in the backyards of powerful military empires. Long-distance trade plying the sea and caravan routes with standardized staples to be ~~man~~ expeditiously exchanged at set rates in the ~~ports~~ port town under the administration of the local ruler presupposed a neutral handling of the complex machinery of such exchanges in the archaic circumstances, even in a literate environment.

The economic historian ^{naturally} ~~justly~~ turns to the question: What were the ^{social} ~~visible~~ forces, the concrete situations and obvious interests which ~~here~~ made the inevitable actually happen: ~~How~~ did about the turn of the eighteenth century the obscure coastal strip inhabited by the Houéda branch of the marginal lagoon dwelling peoples ~~of the coast~~ free ^{itself} ~~themselves~~ of the suzerainty of the Kingdom of Ardra, set up a capital of ^{itself} ~~its~~ their own, establish ~~themselves~~ ^{itself} ~~themselves~~ as a small kingdom, and make ^{itself} ~~themselves~~ felt as a rising center of the slave trade, soon dividing ^{its} ~~their~~ capital into a political palace, ^{well} ~~off~~ the coast, and a commercial city retaining the name of Whydah proper,

in close proximity to the beach, and within a very short time declare itself a strictly neutral force during a global war between the Great Powers of the age?

The answer must be sought in the requirements of the *new* slave trade which, as we saw above, (Chapter II) struck the Upper Guinea Coast like a tornado at that critical spot.

This offers a cue to the presentation of the ^{fate of this} intensified Guinea trade ^{in the beginning} of slaves which ~~on its economic side~~ suffered from ^{extreme} uncertainties both of supply and demand, involving ~~also~~ the *problem* ~~question~~ of pricing, ^{if the trade} had been left to what is commonly called the interplay of ~~the~~ market forces. *The port of trade emerged ~~as an answer~~ as a solution.*

II. Slave trade on the Guinea Coast

For a historical explanation of the process we turn to The needs of this peculiar trade at that juncture ~~and~~ in the given region ~~are to be considered.~~

Historically, the Dahomean period of the port of trade naturally dates from the conquest of Whydah and stretches over some 160 years. In the preceding Whydasian period, about 1704 to 1727, the essentials of ^{the} ~~that~~ institution ^{of the port of trade} were established. Yet Whydah was not the earliest slaving state ^{of the period} on the Guinea Coast. It was ~~immediately~~ preceded by Ardra, a kingdom ranking in size between Whydah and Dahomey, and separating them territorially from one another. The evolution of the full-fledged Dahomean port of trade ^{de} should, then, be traceable over Whydah to Ardra, a close competitor of Whydah, ever since the latter's ^{political} emancipation from Ardra.

^{Andra}
 Yet ~~the latter~~, though a slaver state, did not possess a port of trade. ³ ² ¹ It was ¹ Neither situated on the coast, nor did it set up any arrangement off the coast designed to serve external trade.

Geographically, too, we are dealing here with a sequence: The North Guinea Coast of the Gambia and Senegal was, according to Herodotus, active in trade almost 2000 years before the Corn and the Tooth Coasts, which, again, were followed by the Gold Coast, and, eventually, the Slave Coast. These regions practiced different forms of trading, and had ^{various} corresponding coastal regimes under which Europeans and Africans met with each other.

This brief rehearsal of historical periods, geographical areas and trading spheres shall serve as a background to the emergence of the ~~institution of the~~ port of trade ~~on the Guinea Coast~~, first in independent Whydah, and then ^{to} its spectacular rise under the Dahomean monarchs.

For the Europeans the slave trade on the Guinea Coast was as much of ^{an} ~~a~~ sui generis activity, that could bear no comparison with any line of legitimate trade, as it was morally ^{anomalous} ~~indefensible~~ from the angle of the native communities themselves. This inhumanity of the slave trade ~~or, in other terms~~, its many negative sociological ^{affects} ~~aspects~~ have been assessed in an earlier chapter. Here its economic features ^{shall} ~~will~~ be reviewed, ^{since these} ~~which were~~ reflected in the development that led up to the neutralization of Whydah, and the administrative forms of trading, introduced there.

~~From the economic viewpoint we had sharply to distinguish~~
 between the early phases of haphazard slaving ~~which may have~~
~~to be regarded as a legacy~~ ^{of antiquity} and that modern form of slavery
 which began with the commercialized plantations in the West
 Indies, and culminated in the re-emergence ^{of} ~~a new~~ large scale
 exploitation of slave labour in the American South states
 reminiscent of ^{both as to} its dimensions ^{and} ^{(calculated)ness} ~~as well as its callous ruthless-~~
~~ness~~ ^{new} ~~under~~ the late Roman Republic. The slave trade that supp-
 lied the ^{se} plantations ~~of the West Indies and eventually of the~~
~~American South~~ with African ~~slave~~ labour was a traffic of utmost
 intensity and, broadly, a very risky branch of commerce, which
 would have hardly survived as a business but for the ^{European} steady
 governments support which it enjoyed as ^{a result} ~~the outgrowth~~ of the
~~influence of the~~ ~~unwilling~~ ~~phantom~~ overseas planters' ^{pressure} inter-
~~est~~ that reached a near emergency degree, whenever the supply
^{African} of slaves threatened to fail ~~altogether~~. ~~namely~~ The political
 and financial interests of the African slaving states, tacitly ^{themselves}
 worked in the same direction as those of the Chartered Companies
 whose fortifications off the Whydah beach played an essential
 part in the creation of the port of trade.

April 4

Concepts of the economy designed to explain the functioning of a market system are bound to give biased results when applied to another institutional framework. Take, for instance, the definitions of two basic terms such as trade and money. Trade would be defined as a two-way movement of goods through the market directed by prices; money as a means of facilitating this movement. Thus wherever trade and money were present markets would be assumed.

Yet such an approach may be entire misleading. In actual fact, in Babylonia, trade and money uses are abundantly in evidence, yet as we now know, markets were absent in the cities of Babylonia. This basic fact escaped observation altogether.

Moreover, the above concept of money was inadequate. Money is not necessarily a means of exchange. It may simply be a means of payment or used as a standard and different objects may serve these different uses. In Babylonia, barley was used for payment, e.g. of wages and rents, while silver was generally used as a standard. In the absence of markets there is but little evidence of exchange other than that of specific objects, such as a plot of land or a house, an individual slave, heads of cattle or a boat, and that but rarely if at all shows an actual employment of silver. Instead, oil, wine, wool or similar staples serve as means of exchange. These recent findings had been covered up by concepts which seemed logically to exclude their very possibility.

In regard to trade the situation was similar. Trade in Babylonia, which, in contrast to Egypt, was ample, was regarded as market trade. Thus administered trade and gift trade were overlooked

Between the empires of antiquity, gift trade was the chief form of trade (the latter is in evidence also for Pharaonic Egypt). The other form was administered trade carried on from Babylonian times onward in that characteristic institutions of pre-modern times, the "port of trade".

Nor did price fare differently. Prices were taken to be market prices. Actually in antiquity, prices were largely fixed by statute or custom, and should not perhaps be called prices at all. To describe them as "fixed prices" would also be misleading, since in no way had they ever been fluctuating. A new term is needed for the concept of equivalents, the name for such permanent rates at which one kind of goods would be substituted for another. As in the payment of taxes, or choosing between different ration goods as under a point system. Though meant to be permanent, equivalents may change over long periods of time but only by way of the same process through which they were established in the first place. This is true of Egypt and Babylonia, where however these long period changes when they occurred, took on the form of a change of the unit of measurement, while leaving the equivalent nominally unaltered. Compulsory mutual aid in emergencies lunge on the availability of equivalents. The fountainhead of all errors was to rank exchange as the general form of social relations in the human economy. Hence the postulate of the universal validity of such marketing terms as 'supply' wherever things were available, and 'demand' wherever things might be employed as a means to a purpose. On such flimsy generalizations was the human world transformed into a potential market system.

Forms of economic organization, other than exchange were characteristic of the pre-modern world. In primitive society we commonly find reciprocity between symmetrical parts of society while in archaic empires, including those of antiquity, redistribution was fairly general. (The Greek polis with its agora practiced of course exchange in price-controlled markets). Reciprocity and redistribution however widely spread, remained in the nature of things invisible to those trained to follow only economic phenomena reducible to exchange.

The historians perspective of the future comprises then in general terms a succession of problems of life and society raised by a Machine Age of an enduring character: The further the distortions that went with the nineteenth century market system with its enveloping position in society and its economistic view of human livelihood have to be spelt out. He has to make the date of the past available in a more objective light, so that the place occupied by economies in societies be demonstrable and topical reflections gain solid ground. What may seem to the economic historian, stimulated by the questions of this day to be resolutions of similar problems in contemporary archaic societies or their forerunners in antiquity, are in all probability nothing of the sort. There is certainly, if any, of an awareness of these questions in modern terms. But this would not justify the ignoring of a successful and sometimes strikingly original solutions of situations that were in archaic societies objectively set though not always subjectively recognized as such. We may meet almost miraculous achievements in avoiding drawbacks of bureaucracy and

and yet fail to link this fact with some features of the earliest civilizations which were subsequently obliterated by the use of written signs. Writing superseded a host of operational devices, even the memory of was eventually lost. Other administrative achievements in undeveloped countries were due to a level of statecraft largely explained by the absence of a market system which rendered such statecraft superfluous. Indeed, the strictly regression in political crafts from which we suffer, may have happened by stages in earlier times with the gradual expansion of markets. Precivilized states - prototypes - of archaic society, may have been the result of the greatest innovation previous to writing: those operational devices of which pebble statistics and differential muneration systems are a sample. This was an advance in semantics closely analogous to I.B.M. which also produces results by an advance in deconceptualization in replacing and surpassing thought mechanism. While operational civilizations have disappeared for good, the trading of statecraft may suddenly reappear in the awakening continents. Even more topical to our days is the anxious complex of freedom and harmony, planning and market. The novel threat from an expanding bureaucracy or the dilemma of a free exchange co-existing with planning from a center mirrored in the past. Actually, two sets of problems seem here subtly to interact: similarities and differences between the problem of buoyancy and freedom and those of economic planning and market. In Dahomey, as we will see, all four poles of the double dilemma were institutions highly developed. Its countryside was teeming with big and small market places yet the choice of crops was from

directed from the capital. Overseas trade was channeled through an administrative network which however avoided markets acting through the intermediary of the sinuous institution of the "port of trade".

Dahomey's was an ordered community based on simple principles of state craft achieving an almost perfect balance through an infinity institutional selling tissue. Yet the paradox of centralized Government and utter local freedom of a planned agricultural production and foreign trade, breathing through innumerable local markets while avoiding a market system, was here a fact.

In the person of the historian modern man is for the second time penetrating Black Africa. The Dahomey of Eighteenth century British travelers was the country of the Amazon army, an authentic fighting force not paralleled since Herodotus' semi-mythical scythia, and of pyramids of skulls hideous evidences of human sacrifice and religious cannibalism, the Dahomey whence Bristol and Liverpool channeled a stream of war captive slaves to the West Indies under conditions of unspeakable inhumanity. The questions raised in this book by-pass the cultural melodrama of our ancestors' moral degradation as much as the natives recent acceptance of Western ideals of freedom and progress. We must equally guard from being anachronistic rather we must critically define our modern intellectual interests that derive from a changing world and refrain from projecting our problems into the native environment, yet be ready to make use of what elements of answers to our own questions we may happen to find in this chapter of the history of mankind.

Cowries are the common currency of Dahomey, circulating as media of exchange in market transactions and in discharging certain customary payments.

Goods serving as money, in one or several of its uses, are slaves, cloth, rum, tobacco, iron, coral, gold and silver -- the treasure and staples of the monarchy.

While cowries are the stuff of everyday exchanges in the market, staples and treasure are not a currency of the market place. Their use as money is confined to the redistributive sphere. The reasons for such a distinction become apparent if we examine their role in the economy.

The staples serving as money are the major trade goods, and as we have seen above in the section on Trade, there are restrictions on the acquisition, ownership, and use of these goods which limit their movement and keep them out of everyday circulation. Moreover, these staples are the storage goods, and storage is limited for the most part to the redistributive centers: the household of the king and the chiefs, and to a lesser degree perhaps, to the temples. In the king's palace at Abomey there were stores of iron, cloth, rum, tobacco, as well as cowries. Ministers and officials keep stores of rum, tobacco, and cowries, some for their own account, and some collected as revenues from trade to be turned over to the king from time to time.

These staples serve primarily as means of payment in the transactions of the royal household and the chiefs of state. Fine cloth for outer garments and for counterpanes is the traditional payment by the king to his officials, and no commoner may wear such a garment or sleep under a counterpane. Rum and tobacco figure in the disbursements made by the monarch to his people at the Customs, and on other redistributive occasions -- feasts, religious observances, entertainment of visitors, etc. Rum, cloth, and tobacco also appear in the market, but under the restrictions we have mentioned elsewhere, and as consumption items, not in their monetary role. Iron, together with powder and firearms, service the army and cannot be dealt in except by the public hand. Lastly, slaves, as we have seen above, never figure in market transactions. Captives taken in war are purchased from their captors by the king and thereafter assigned to the royal plantations, given as gifts to

avored officials or guests, or disposed of to the European merchants for the king's account.

Treasure goods are similarly restricted in circulation. Coral passes in tribute and gift-giving between the Dahoman monarch and other sovereigns. Gold and silver coins are not used as currency but are beaten down by the king's silversmiths into ornaments or other decorative pieces for the use of royalty or persons of rank.

Cowries enter the redistributive sphere as means of payment. Certain taxes, fines, etc. are collected in cowries. Staples and cowries are jointly used as means of payment in certain customary transactions -- at marriage feasts, funerals, and other ceremonial occasions; as offerings to the temple; and, most lavishly, in the disbursements of the monarch at the Customs, or in the discharge of other obligations incumbent upon the royal house. Visitors leaving the capital, for example, will receive a parting gift from the king of rum, cloth, perhaps a fat sheep or two, perhaps a slave, and always some heads of cowries, to defray their expenses on the road. Every gift or payment from the hand of the monarch must be "watered", as it were, with a sprinkling of cowries. In customary payments, such as those made to grave-diggers at a funeral, cloth, rum, and cowries are given in fixed proportions.

This dual use of cowries and staples appears in another connection. Both cowries and slaves seem to function as standards of value, each in its own sphere.

Wealth is reckoned in terms of slaves. Daisel, for example, speaks of traders who had accumulated property "to the value of sixty or seventy slaves". The royal revenues are likewise reckoned, Bosman reporting of Whydah kingdom that "...the King's toll...is worth one hundred slaves". Again, in the passage quoted in the section above on Trade, he speaks of "trusting the Inhabitants with Goods to the value of one or two hundred slaves." The Dahoman customs dues on incoming vessels, according to M'Leod, are reckoned at so many slaves per mast -- "...on a ship of three masts, twenty-one slaves, that is to say, the amount in goods of twenty-one slaves, according to the existing prices at that time: - for a brig, or schooner, fourteen; and seven for a cutter or sloop..." The king of Dahomey, when pressed by Bullfinch Lamb to name the terms for his release, set his ransom, with somewhat playfully it seems, at a value of 700 slaves -- a staggering sum, which drove the

wretched captive to despair of seeing England again.

Cowries are the standard of value on which the currency system is based. They serve as a unit of account, not only for exchange or payment transactions, but in other arithmetical computations. As reported in Dalziel's History, "when they express an army of 10,000 soldiers, they say, two cabees and a half; or two cabees and ten galinas." We may recall also that the extremely complicated census enumerations are facilitated by using cowries in counting. The earliest eyewitness testimony on this point comes to us from Bullfinch Lamb, who describes the counting of captives taken in war: "...the general called me to come and sit with him and the petty captains of war, while they counted the captive slaves, which they did, by giving a booge (cowrie) to every one; the whole amounted to upwards of two grand cabees, or above 8000 in number".

thus

It would appear that two standards of value co-exist, cowries and slaves, the latter perhaps relating to political and trade transactions -- the redistributive sphere.

The question arises, How are these two standards of value related? And how are quantitative relationships established among the various goods circulating as money in different spheres?

Our information on these points has to be pieced together from scattered sources, and our conclusions can be only tentative. However, it appears that certain standard ratios obtain between cowrie-units and the major staples. Forbes mentions such a connection, saying that "Iron bars four to the head, rum half-a-head a gallon, and cloth form a currency dependent on the market". The reference is to a late period, however, and suggests that the restrictions governing the movement of staples have been somewhat relaxed.

The price of slaves is a question of special importance. One would expect to find this price related to the cowrie-standard, perhaps to other values throughout the system; otherwise, reckoning in slaves would seem to have no fixed point of reference. There are two questions involved here, which we shall examine in turn. First, is there an established ratio between the two standards of value which we have assumed to exist -- a fixed price for slaves in terms of cowries? And second, in what units are slaves actually paid for?

The evidence on this point is by no means clear. Our earlier sources indicate beyond

question that a price was established by the king for the slaves sold on his account, but the currency unit in which price is expressed differs with the various writers -- Rix-Dollars, Pounds, Dollars, and Francs, being variously used according to the nationality of the writer. We know, however, that the price proclaimed by Adahoenso II was 32 Cebess; and prices quoted by Le Herisse as current "sous les premiers rois" are given in cowries. Thus there seems to be little doubt that the price was established in terms of the native currency, and converted into other monies at current rates of exchange. However, the possibility of fluctuations in these conversion ratios makes it difficult to establish whether or not the price of slaves changed, or what relationship existed between the "royal price" and "free prices" that might have obtained in other transactions -- for example, in the purchase of slaves from inland merchants, or in slave markets outside Dahomey.

Burton says that the price of a good slave at Whydah in 1694 is reported to have been "equal to £3 15s. in goods", and that "the price is now, including the Custom House fee, £16 16s. and the chattel is not so sound". About the same time, in an interview with Wilmot, the king mentions that his price for slaves is "30 dollars, with 4 dollars custom on each". From Le Herisse, quoted in Herskovits, we have the following: "Sous les premiers rois un homme se vendait 1,400 cauris, ce qui correspondrait maintenant a 7 sous; sous Ghezo 160,000 cauris soit 40 francs; sous Behanzin un esclave se payait de 160 francs a 320 francs ~~suivant~~ suivant son age, son sexe, et sa constitution." While these prices apparently refer to the prices paid to slave merchants from the north, it is striking that a single price is quoted for each regime, and that over the whole period -- certainly a century and a half, at least, although the time span is not specified -- the price moves only three times, and then by clear-cut steps.

There is evidence that the price of slaves at Whydah around the turn of the century (1700) had moved upward. Snelgrave, negotiating with the Dahoman king immediately after the conquest of Whydah (1727), reports as follows: after agreeing upon the customs fee to be paid the king, Snelgrave asks that the king "please to fix the Price... Accordingly Zunglar was called again, to inform his Majesty what were the last Prices the Europeans had paid for Negroes at Whidaw, before the Conquest: But on my representing, That the Price had

been raised there, much above what had been customary, on account of the War; the King moderated it himself, and I writ down with my Pencil, in his presence, everything agreed on..." A year or so before ERIBK this, Bullfinch Lamb valued the ransom placed on his head by the king -- 700 slaves -- at £10,000, or £14 per head. And we know further that a maximum price of 32 Cabess was established by Adahoonsou about 1780.

If we put this evidence together, using the conversion ratios appropriate to each period, wherever these are available from contemporary sources, a striking result emerges. The evidence is collated in the following table.

DATE	SOURCE	PRICE (in units as given in source)	PRICE IN £	CUSTOMS FEE
1. 1694	Burton	£3 15s. (value in goods)	£3 15 s.
2. 1734	Lamb	£14	£14	(probably not included)
3. 1774 -1789 (Adahoonsou)	Dalsel	32 Cabess	£16	"
4. 1818 -1843 (Ghezo)	Le Herisse	160,000 cowries	£16 plus	"
5. 1848 - ? (Gelole)	Burton	£16 16s.	£16	16s.
6. "	Wilmet	\$80 plus \$4	£16	16s.

The first two items refer to the period before the capture of Whydah by Dahomey. Thereafter, we have no evidence of a change in price for a span of a century and a half, if our computations are correct. Even recognising the possibility of a large margin of error, the results do not appear to be accidental.

The conversion ratios which we have used are given separately, at the end of this section.

If our hypothesis of an established price for slaves is correct, it throws new light on the measures introduced by Adahoonsou to effect a "direct monopoly of commerce", in Burton's

phrase. We might infer that the maximum price of 32 Cabess set by the king was not a new price, but the established price, which the king was determined to enforce in the face of a threatening breakdown in the customary price relationships. A buying price of 32 Cabess would still permit the king to realize a margin in re-selling to the European traders, the margin being his customs fee.

The presumption is that this price of 32 Cabess was the price established by Trudo the Conqueror, the first Dahoman monarch to negotiate with the Europeans for slaves, on the occasion of his first meeting with a European slave dealer -- the occasion reported by Snelgrave, as quoted above. Support for this view hinges on another point, the matter of the customs fee. Snelgrave reports, in a passage not quoted above, that the first matter taken up with the king was his customs fee, which the king set at half the charge previously made by the King of Whydah. About 1773, Norris mentions that Trudo the Conqueror had "remitted forever" one half the customs formerly charged to the European traders. "Forever" is a strong word, and it would seem that the customs fixed by the king had the character of a basic law governing all subsequent regimes. Since the customs and the price were fixed by the king on the same occasion, there is good reason to believe that the price also was to govern his successors "forever".

It is quite possible that different prices were established for different grades of slaves. This hint comes to us from Burton who attaches the name "Kammo" parenthetically to a "good slave". And Bosman mentions the name "Mackron" as the term current at his time for slaves rejected as sickly or unsound. "Kammo" commodities are likely to have a fixed price.

As to what was given in exchange for slaves, there is much evidence to indicate that slaves were paid for in goods for the most part, or in cowries and goods together in the early period. Bosman reports sending men into the interior with goods "in order to buy with them Slaves". Again, in reporting his dealings with the King of Whydah, he says of the king: "...he will have the choicest and vendible part of our Merchandises in exchange for his Slaves, which falls very heavy on the Merchant; for besides that he is obliged to give him one third, fourth or fifth at least extraordinary for every Slave; the best Goods being

disposed of, the remainder are not to be put off but to disadvantage:" Another passage suggests how the European traders might manipulate the situation to their advantage, even under the restrictions of a fixed price: "We are seldom long detained in the buying of these Slaves, because their price is established, the Women being one fourth or fifth part cheaper than the Men. The Disputes which we generally have with the Owners of these Slaves, are, that we will not give/^{them} such Goods as they ask for them, especially the Beesies (as I have told you, the Money of this Country:) of which they are very fond, though we generally make a division on this Head in order to make one sort of Goods help off another, because those Slaves which are paid for in Beesies cost the Company one half more than those bought with other Goods. The Price of a Slave is commonly _____." It is our misfortune that the honest Bosman, intending to protect the interests of his company, did not fill out the last space. However, there is a clear indication here that the trader's profit might be secured by manipulating the character or quality of his goods, possibly their price. That goods were price-tagged is indicated by Lamb, who writes from his captivity in Abomey to his company as follows: "If you think well of my agreeing for any slaves with the king, you must talk with his servants thereon... but then I must have a specie of all sorts of goods, marked and numbered with the rates, to prevent mistakes."

The character of these transactions may have been unaltered even into the later period of the monarchy. Burton, in 1853, says that the Spanish and Portuguese slave dealers have lately been forced to pay for their slaves in gold, since they cannot compete in goods with the British products. And Forbes mentions that "the slave trade is carried on in Dahomey and the neighboring kingdoms with British merchandize... the taste for British goods runs high, and if these could not be purchased with slaves, palm-oil would be manufactured to obtain them." It may well be that the goods-for-slaves transaction held only in the case of British goods. There are indications that gold was given for slaves in the trade with Portuguese merchants, even in the early period of the monarchy. Snelgrave reports on one occasion that "... the King of Dahome being desirous of the Portuguese Gold, which they bring to purchase Negroes with, his Majesty sent a great many Slaves down to Whidaw..." We may recall, however, that gold was treasure-goods, not a means of exchange, and the gold

obtained from trade went to swell the palace stores.

There are further questions to be asked about the role of pricing in the fiscal system of the monarchy. It would seem, for example, that the ~~quantitative~~ quantitative ratios in terms of which collections and disbursements are made, should be sufficiently stable to keep the system in balance; further, that some elements of flexibility would be required to permit adjustment to changing circumstances, such as variations in the harvest yield, etc.

We cannot ~~make~~ attempt an answer to these questions. However, we can point to the existence of certain devices which might have served to introduce a measure of flexibility into the structure of price relationships.

In the tax system, it will be recalled that certain taxes were fixed, others variable. The salt tax, for example, was set at ten bags per year from each salt-worker; the tax on pigs, at one animal from each owner per year. On the other hand, the taxes-in-kind on agricultural produce varied with the annual yield. Customs and export duties were apparently fixed over the period of each regime. Burton says that the port dues change with every regime. Forbes noted a fixed duty on exports of palm oil under Ghezo, one gallon in a measure of eighteen.

In general, there was a notable lack of rigidity in the collections and disbursements of the royal household. While certain incomes were budgetted to specific uses, most revenues were not so assigned, and notwithstanding the careful accounting procedures, there was apparently no attempt made to pair off revenues against disbursements in every instance. If the budget was "balanced", we are not in a position to say how it was done. One instance may be cited, however, to indicate a type of device that might have had wider application. In arranging the supply of meat for the royal household, hunters were divided into groups, four for each month, each set of four taking turns in provisioning the palace. This device of rotation appears also in the organization of selling by the guilds, a matter which will come up again in our section on Markets.

Of great interest in this connection is the distinction between the "royal head" of cowries and the head used in ordinary reckoning. This distinction is reported by Forbes and Burton, and goes back to the earlier period as well. In Dalsiel's History, it is stated that

cowries circulate loose throughout the country, "...but all disbursements from the King's house are made in branches of strung cowries, containing two thousand each, deducting one fortieth part, as a perquisite to the King's women for piercing and stringing them." It is explained that "Forty cowries make one string, if loose; 39, when strung; the 40th being allowed for the piercing and stringing"; and in addition, that the women of the palace deducted 3 to 6 cowries per string. This fits with Forbes' description of the "royal head" as being one-seventh less than the current head -- a deduction of one-seventh coming out approximately to 6 cowries per string.

While the full significance of this difference is not clear, two interesting features may be noted. First, that the cowrie-pieces are accounting units, not circulating units, at least in the 18th century when Dalzel reported that cowries circulated loose. The royal head is a palace unit, circulating only in transactions issuing from the palace. Second, the royal head is the unit used in payment for slaves when the king "turns trader", as Dalzel says, "...he paying the price which himself had fixed, in strung cowries, at the gate of the palace."

This dual character of the "head" appears again in comparing the monetary system as given by early writers with that reported by later observers. Dalzel, in 1793, gives "A complete table of the Dahoman monies, numbers, and weights, collected from the several authors", which we reproduce below:

	No.	Value		Weight		
		s.	d.	lb.	oz.	tenths
40 cowries = 1 tocky, or string	40	0,	1 1/5	0	1	7
5 tockys = 1 galhina	200	0,	6	0	8	4
5 galhinas = 1 ackey	1,000	2,	6	2	10	0
4 ackeys = 1 cabess	4,000	10,	0	10	8	0
4 cabess = 1 ounce <u>trade</u>	16,000	40,	0	42	0	0

The following note is appended to the table: "Now from this ounce, weighing on experiment about 45 lb. troy, or 42 lb. avoirdupoise, the weights in the last column are determined."

In this table, the cabess - called by other writers the "grand cabess" - equals 4,000 cowries, whereas Forbes and others of his period give 3,000 cowries to the head; likewise,

the "branches of strung cowries" mentioned above in the passage from the History, have a nominal content of 2,000 cowries. The presumption is that "cabess" and "head" refer to the same unit; Burton translates "cabess" as "cabeca" or head. We seem to have then either two quite different units, or a unit having two different cowrie-values, one double the other.

We can merely suggest that these adjustable units might have served to adapt the currency to changing "values", while keeping the metrological system intact.

A depreciation in the value of the currency in terms of foreign money is noted by Forbes and Burton. Forbes says: "...2,000 (cowries) are calculated to form one 'head', to which a nominal value of one dollar is attached. Such, however, is the scarcity of a metallic currency that, in exchange, the silver dollar is eagerly taken at 2,400 to 2,600 cowries; and other metals, as well the lower as the higher, are freely taken in barter." And Burton: "Cowries...are merchandise, and the price varies accordingly; at present they are abundant, and therefore cheap."

On the other hand, Duncan reports that cowries appreciated in value as he traveled further into the interior of the country; at one town, he says, a head of cowries "...is forty-seven strings, each string containing thirty-three cowries, or one dollar, in this part of the country of more value than five sovereigns would be in England."

This depreciation is probably linked with the rise in prices of provisions remarked by Burton. However, the currency-goods ratios prevailing at his time need not be taken as typical of conditions in the earlier period, nor even of current conditions in those parts of the country remote from European influences. Burton himself gives an indication that customary and stable ratios between cowries and goods might have obtained at one time; in reproducing the cowrie measures used by Lamb and his contemporaries -- the same table in the main as we have given above -- he notes that the gallinha-unit was so called because it was the price of a fowl.

Some few remarks on credit operations may be added at this point.

The credit transactions of the sovereign apparently involved staples. Dalzel reports that Adahoenzo II, embarking on a great campaign in 1789, took "on trust" all the guns and powder to be found on the ships then in the road. In the early period of the monarchy, as

recorded in the History, the provisioning of the Dahoman army in the field was secured in part by alliances with neighboring kings who advanced supplies from their stores. Gelele, in mid-19th century, complains to Commander Wilmot that the seizure of slavers off the Dahoman coast by English vessels touches him sorely -- "On most occasions he is paid before the slaves are taken away, but sometimes he risks them on trust, and then he feels the capture of the slave-ship". In the negotiations with Mr. Duncan respecting the cession of Whydah, the king assures him that the English "could with much more propriety exert our authority to prevent slave traffic than he himself, particularly as he was under great obligations to a certain large slave-merchant in that settlement."

It is not clear whether these debts are owing in goods or currency, unless we assume that goods and slaves are traded directly, and goods taken on credit repaid in slaves. That the king was accustomed to pay off his debts in slaves seems to be implied in the following passage from Dalzel, which we have referred to previously: "...this wretch (Adahoonsou) more than once has been known to put to death many hundreds of his captive enemies, without reserving a single slave for sale, or even for the payment of his debts."

Apparently, slaves were the major credit resource of the king's caboccers as well. We may recall the somewhat puzzling account given by Dalzel of the effect produced by Adahoonsou's measures touching on the slave traffic; these measures, referred to above, are said to have reduced many wealthy traders to "bankruptcy". The simplest explanation seems to be that the "bankrupts" had obtained goods on credit and were thereafter unable to pay their debts with slaves because the flow of slaves was cut off by the king.

We have no evidence that cowries figured in these operations. The distinction we have made throughout between staples and cowries rests partly on the character of this shell-currency. Cowries are as ill adapted to haute finance as they are suited to the "2-cowrie lot" transactions in the market place, which Burton describes at Whydah market. Every visitor to Dahomey complains that the cost of carrying cowries is prohibitive; Forbes for example has to hire five women to carry \$50 worth; 10 heads of cowries, equal to \$10 or £12, being the load per carrier, male or female.

In the everyday life of the people, credit advances were made through the medium of mutual

aid societies, or by recourse to pawning of persons. Forbes reports that goods were obtained from European merchants on the surety of pawns given by the natives. There is no mention in our sources of money-lending or credit operations of a regular character in any other form.

Strikingly enough, we have not come across any mention of interest. The absence of interest, or at least of any mention of interest, might conceivably be connected with the use of slaves in credit operations.

Money-changing does not appear to be an established practice, except in the port towns. According to Forbes, a French merchant house in Whydah is the only place where cowries can be purchased. While at Abomey during the Customs, Forbes runs out of cowries and has to send carriers back and forth each week to Whydah to replenish his stock. Duncan, stranded temporarily in an inland town and without cowries to purchase food, is unable to get a sovereign changed by the local chief and has to make out by borrowing a few strings of cowries from the chief. Somewhat later than Forbes, Burton reports that cowries can be bought and sold like merchandise at Whydah and Abomey. There is nothing to indicate, however, that these transactions were handled by any agencies other than the foreign houses mentioned by Forbes. While it is probable that some means existed, even in the early period, for changing foreign money into native currency to meet the needs of European traders or visitors, there is no evidence to suggest any native agencies in this field.

CONVERSION TABLES
(to accompany Table given on page 40)

3. Adahoonzon's price: 32 Cabess

Table used: Dalzel - see page 44, Part III. Money and Pricing.

4,000 cowries = 1 cabess = 10s.

32 cabess = £16

4. Le Herisse: 160,000 cowries.

Table used: Forbes.

(a) 40 cowries = 1 string
50 strings = 1 head = \$1 (nominal value)

(b) or,
1 string = 1d.
10 cowries = 1 farthing

Using (a): 160,000 cowries = \$80 = £16 (at \$5 = £1)

Using (b): 160,000 cowries = 4,000 strings = 4,000d. = £16 plus

5. Wilmot: \$80 plus \$4.

Table used: \$5 = £1.

(This seems to be appropriate, since Burton's figure, given in £, and Wilmot's in \$, both appear in Burton's book, and Burton must have been familiar with Wilmot's Report, to which he refers. Since Burton wrote only a year or so after Wilmot, the king's price refers to pretty much the same period. We assume that Burton probably converted the figure given by Wilmot into £ -- and if so, he must have used \$5 = £1.)

NOTES ON TRADE, MONEY AND MARKETS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DAHOMEY

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(Introduction, being the study...)

The economic history of antiquity offers many an institutional problem for the resolution of which the study of advanced forms of primitive society may be put to good use. In the nature of things the anthropologist is ~~confronted~~ faced here with a grave difficulty. In the last century the European powers have conquered the globe. Field work in any fairly large sized primitive society is notoriously complicated by the impact of industrial civilization on the archaic institutions of the country while the reconstruction of original conditions can be but rarely attempted for lack of contemporary historic sources. By a freak of geography and history such a chance offers in the case of the Western Sudanese Kingdom^a where a complete archaic state unexpectedly emerged from its seclusion and was subjected to the scrutiny of travellers some 200 years ago. The sudden appearance of the negro empire of Dahomey on the Coast of Guinea in 1727 made, indeed, world news. A perusal of contemporary writings may contribute in more than one way to our understanding of the economic organization of the ancient world.

These Notes center on three points - slave trade, gold dust and cowrie currency, inner and outer markets - each of which has a direct bearing on trade, money and markets, respectively. The 'Remarks' preceding each Section are meant to indicate in general terms the ~~(setting of ancient)~~ institutions^{at setting} into which Dahoman experience may be usefully fitted.

SECTION I: SLAVE TRADE

A. General remarks on slavery and the slave trade.

1. Sources of slave supply.

a. 'Prisoners of war'. This traditional term tends to be somewhat ambiguous. It comprises two very different matters, namely the fate of prisoners of war in the true sense of the term and the removal of whole settled populations from their domicile by the conqueror (andrapodizing). The disposal of prisoners of war in 4th century Greece was typically represented by booty sale which, in Sparta was the duty of civil commissioners called

laphyropolai. In Rome the procedure was performed sub hasta. Both here and there the auctioning device ensured publicity, expedition, and a valid title of property for the buyer. Though the economic historian may well stress the ^{greatly} stimulating influence of booty sale on the development of the slave trade, it is nevertheless apparent that unless an organized slave trade was already in being, no auctioning of slaves on the battlefield was practicable. In ^{the} absence of such an ~~organized~~ trade the disposal of prisoners of war proper ^{could} ~~can~~

be = only a minor source of supply of slaves.
 often comprised under the "Sale of"

b. Andrapodizing. ~~This wider meaning~~ ^{often comprised in the term} ~~'prisoners of war'~~ ^{is much more relevant to the origin of slavery.}

For slavery is not so much the fate of the fighting man who happens to fall into the hands of the enemy - this, in savage society is usually death - but rather the condition to which the people of conquered cities ^{are} ~~are~~ reduced. They are removed from their homes and transported to foreign parts, as distant from their places of origin as from that of their vanquishers'. Such a forcible removal of a population by settling it in a remote part of the Empire or by dispersing it through sale abroad was meant by ~~andrapodidzein~~ ^{the} ~~term~~ ^{commercial} ~~had no~~ ^{connotation.} To render it as 'sold into slavery' changes a technical term of brutal political sociology into an apparent business transaction. The procedure of andrapodidzein applied also to the victims of civil war. Again, not the captured combatant, the adult male fighter, but the whole of the defeated faction together with their families ^{here} ~~were~~ ^{andrapodized} ~~'sold into slavery'~~. The practice of extermination did not spring, as with the Israelites, from a religious objection to an intermingling of blood with the infidel, but from the necessity of physically eliminating the opposing party as the only means of achieving ^{its} political annihilation. As long as he remained on the spot, if in an ever so helpless and reduced status, he would eventually make himself felt and even might, in an emergency, turn the tables on the victors.

All this shows the close connection between slavery and ~~the~~ ~~history~~. 'Historical' times are periods of violent group interaction, whether expressed in migration, revolution, or war. Such concussions involve ~~the~~, at least, partial disintegration of organized communities as a recurrent event. Pari passu there is accretion

he

state building.

of ethnical splinters, the raw material of ~~state building~~.
Apart from ^{such} splinters, there is the submission of whole integrated

groups. ~~This is often the deliberate result of the 'frightfulness'~~
is partly calculated exhibited by the conquerors towards their unhappy victims, since it may

to induce others to throw themselves upon the mercy of the stronger. The
degradation of the submitting party may run the gamut from a mere second
citizenship of the Lakedaemonian period type ^{over} = a disfranchised popu-

lation, subject to the poll tax, such as the Jews in Babylonia, ^{inclusion}
of larger groups ^{is} another requisite of state building. Thus ~~the~~

regular slavery.

~~the~~ conquest, regarded as a primary source of slavery, transcends by
far the question of how to deal with ^{prisoners of} captives taken in war.

c. Panyarring.

The procedure is not unfamiliar to the present

to the end of the Middle Ages the goods and even the persons of indi-
vidual merchants were liable to seizure in a foreign city, in ^{ies} ~~retaliation~~

retaliation of acts committed by their compatriots. In ancient Greece such
a carrying away of seized goods (wherein), or driving away of cattle or slaves (again),

was practiced by citizens not only in their ^{own} home town, but also in other
towns ^{if} they chanced to meet ⁱⁿ with an opportunity to distrain on the
goods of any compatriot of ^{at} ~~the~~ defaulting debtor or to retaliate for
injury done to them in their victims' towns. ~~Herodotus~~ (Drei lokrische

Gesetze' in 'Forschungen zur alten Geschichte', 1892a I, p. 312).

According to Herodotus, VI, 42, Artaphernes compelled Ionian cities to
sign reciprocity treaties protecting them from being ^{quarantined} forcibly made host-

ages in one another's cities. cf. also E. Meyer: ⁴

On the Guinea coast, the extensive market habit gave ample scope
to 'panyarring' which early writers on the slave trade described as the
chief source of the supply of slaves. ~~The injured party kidnapped~~
~~any member of the offending community.~~ "Panyarring", John Atkins

from p. 5. Similar (2)

against citizens of a third town (C)

(3)

(4)

(1)

in 1722

wrote of Sierra Leone (p. 53) "is a term for man-stealing along the whole coast; here it's used also for stealing anything else; and by custom (their law) every man has a right to seize of another at any convenience so much as he can prove afterwards, at the Falaver-Court to have been defrauded of, by anybody in the same place he was cheated." (cont. p 4)

d. Kidnapping proper

This is ~~both~~ ^{an illegal} ~~source~~ ^{that and is} source of slaves, ~~is~~ ^{is} deemed everywhere a crime if committed against a member of the community (Cf. the punishments of the Bible, the Assyrian, the Hittite code, or ancient Greek law.) Not also, of course, when practiced against ~~foreign peoples, & strangers.~~ ^{the enemy or subdued peoples,} However, like booty ~~on a considerable scale~~ ^{on a considerable (or small) scale} ~~when~~ ^{when} sale by auction, it is met with only, where an organized slave trade is already in existence. If, as ~~in the case of the~~ ^{as e.g. practiced by the Phoenicians with the offshoot of the} ~~Phoenicians~~ ^{trade} ~~with the~~ ^{is} ~~Phoenicians~~ ^{kidnapping} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~not~~ ^{is} a regular practice, this is certain proof that we are faced ~~with~~ ^{with} independent communities, even if they are of the same tongue.

(Nigeria)

(e)

Punishment for crime. Unless compensation is accepted, the gravest forms of crime, such as ~~murder, sacrilege and~~ ^{may be} ~~cases of adultery~~ are punished by elimination of the offender from the community, either by death, or by enslavement. This latter term invariably means sale "trans Tiberim," i.e., banishment ~~to foreign lands.~~ ^{the victim is also} ~~to foreign lands.~~ ^{led from his} Hence the corresponding prohibition of selling to foreign parts the non-slave, i.e., the merely indentured or debt bonded or pawned person in case of default. (Cf. Bible, Hammurabi's Code, Hittite, Assyrian Codes, Solonic crisis, nexum. ^{Again,} ~~only~~ ^{only} where there is an organized slave trade in being, ~~the~~ ^{does} the motive of gain ~~is~~ ^{lead to} undermine these safeguards and broaden punishment of crime into a regular channel of the supply of slaves.

f. Adjudicated slaves are condemned to loss of freedom for defaulting

on debt. However, the debtor is not, as a rule, adjudicated to ~~his~~ ^{his}

The creditor's

creditor, but is rather sold abroad for ~~the~~ benefit. Default on taxes, fines or other public obligations - probably the most frequent source of adjudication - does not result in the debtor's becoming a public slave, *usually* but in his sale for the benefit of the treasury. ~~Again, the 'peculiar~~

~~ness of the institution asserts itself~~
g. the offspring of a slave mother was, as a rule, a slave, and ~~could~~ might be sold as such.

2. Forms of slavery.

It is a common fallacy to equate domestic 'slavery' and the various forms of bonded or otherwise dependent labour, so widespread in antiquity, antiquity and in the Oriental world in general, with the institution of ~~commercialized~~ *western times* plantation slavery, an outburst of which ~~in North America~~ *less than a century ago.* has been ~~relatively~~ *recently* quashed. Investment of capital in slaves employed either on plantations or in ergasteria on the manufacture of articles for sale, was at no time common practice except for the comparatively ~~brief~~ *brief* periods of classical Athens, the late Roman republic and pre-Civil War North America. Debt bondage, domestic slavery and forced labour as well as the numerous varieties of dependent labour should not, therefore, be confused with the more modern phenomenon of commercialised slave labour. This error was mainly induced by the writings of the classical Greek authors who ~~consciously~~ *enlarged* their ~~national~~ *national* institutions and unconsciously misrepresented those of the much less commercially minded Oriental empires.

a. Forced labour on public works, mines, etc.

Assyria rationalized this method of building city walls, roads and canals on the largest scale, with the help of ~~conquered~~ *enslaved* populations. Occasionally and on a small scale similar practices were not *in antiquity* infrequent. However, labour enforced by direct military compulsion *was* bound to be costly and ~~is~~ inherently unreliable.

b. Complete political subjugation involving dependent labour of an agricultural character.

The population of conquered territories may be allowed to remain in their place of settlement and be put to work on the land of their new lords. In extreme cases, as in Sparta, such subjection may take the form of helotage on public small holdings. As a rule however only 'andrapodized' populations, i.e., persons collectively disposed of abroad, or re-settled in distant parts, are so employed.

(c.) Domestic slavery, is by far the most widespread and economically the most important form of slavery on the Asiatic and African Continent. It is also the mildest, since such slaves form part of the family. Domestic slaves as contrasted to bonded men, servant maids, or apprentices are recruited from 'outside' the community, usually through purchase on markets. In effect the Greeks only rarely, and the Athenians practically never, used their captives as ~~the~~ domestic slaves, but sold them abroad and purchased slaves for cash. In spite of the enormous booty of prisoners made in successful campaigns, private, and even public, slaves were bought on the regular slave markets, ~~not taken from among the prisoners of war~~. As a general rule it holds good that domestic slaves, whatever their origin or former status, are everywhere safe from being sold abroad, except in ^a ~~thoroughly~~ *deeply affected by a commercialized* ~~commercialized~~ environment. *Slave trade*

d. Slaves as public servants, including King's merchants, soldiers, high ranking officials. Such an employment of slaves, ~~also~~ *very common* ~~found~~ in highly organized archaic society, is certain proof of the wider than economic connotation of the institution of slavery.

e.

e. 'Hiring out'.

Domestic slaves were regularly hired out in Babylonia on precisely the same terms as cattle. The hire was fixed by law (Hammurabi's Code, Laws of Eshuanna). ^{the} Commercial exploitation of slaves ~~possession~~ thus does not necessarily start with the ^{it} acquisition ^{as a} of means of production, but rather with ^{their being with} renting out. However, the hirer of slaves (as of cattle) would ^{often} ~~usually~~ act in this way for business motives (Cf. 'Bankhouse' Egibi, etc.)

motives

The transaction is typical of Babylonian economy, which probably both hired out and rented land, cattle and slaves. The documents incorporating ^{such hire} ~~it~~ are similar to those of sale-purchase ^{in effect, i.e. legally construed as} renting was, ~~in this way~~ a subdivision of selling. A similar construction ^{was} ~~is~~ put, in Greece and

~~Rome, in the case of the sale of revenue, as~~ Rome on the sale of revenue, as

^{the case of} in tax-farming.

f. 'Rake-off' from slaves' earnings.

Both in Greece and Rome slaves were frequently allowed ^{in their own name} to go into business, as craftsmen, artisans and traders or ^{or} bankers for their own benefit as well as that of their ^{masters.} ~~owners.~~ The slave would pay an aphora to the owner which need not absorb ^{the slave's} his profits. Clearly, the arrangement assumes a widespread marketing habit. In other parts of the world, where private trading was not practiced, the slave who was trading for his master, would be recompensed for his labours by his master, sometimes bountifully.

g. Female slaves were often used as concubines but even then their employment in domestic labor ^{including gardening,} determined their price & status.

3. Slave markets.

As a rule, slave markets of substantial size do not cater for the community in which they are held. (Delos, Tripoly, Whydah) or, if they do, they provide it with slaves of foreign provenience, (Havannah, Trinidad, etc.) In modern times, this

would be justly put down to the distance separating the countries of supply from those of demand, ^{the two being racially different} ^{between countries of} such a distinction explanation, ^{however} ~~in regard to antiquity~~ ^{for} ~~them~~ would be of but little relevance, (Greek slaves were as

frequent in Asia as non-Greek slaves were in Greece proper. ^{The} ~~Innumerable instances could be adduced to show that~~ ^{chattel} slaves, un-

^{True reason is} ~~less born in the household, were brought from afar, and were al-~~ ^{rarely} ~~most~~ never of native stock. Only comparatively late did Greeks

enslave Greeks ^{even later did they} and sell them in the home market. Similarly the

Romans: Neither ^{the} Latin, nor ~~the~~ even the ^{SAMNITE}

or Etruscan captives were ^{as a rule} ~~sold as slaves~~ to Romans. Britannic, ^{glia} Teutonic or Gaul slaves were offered on the markets of Massilia,

but not for local sale. Conditions of the modern slave markets

(16th to 19th century) therefore rather tend to obscure the sociological 'peculiarity' of such markets, ^{which consisted in,} ~~namely, to isolate~~ ^{up}

the slave from the country of his origin. All large scale sale of

slaves ^{was} ~~must~~, therefore, ~~be~~ either preceded or followed by their removal from one land to an other. This again involved (a) the

intervention of regular slave dealers (whether as private or ~~as~~ public agents), (b) provision for transportation of ^{the slaves,}

^{i.e. of a commodity of a peculiar} ~~of a specific~~ character, Unless such transport was by (a) river or sea, or, (b) across ~~the~~ desert territory, a number of political obstacles had to be overcome. (Cf. below). ^{Hence the specific}

^{nature of the slave trade, including the persons of} the traders.

a. Local slave markets are essentially markets in which a slave might 'change hands' as between citizens of one and the same community. In case of domestic slaves ~~which should be regarded as the rule in the~~ ^{the} ~~East~~ ^{West} this involved ~~what practically amounted to~~ ^{almost} a change in the ~~status~~ composition of the family and was surrounded by safeguards no less stringent than those accompanying the sale of land. (Publicity, proclamation, etc.) This accounts for the invariable practice of committing the purchase of slaves to writing, and embodying it in forms accepted for the sale of specific objects (such as a plot of land, a house, cattle, ^{or} a boat, ~~or~~ a temple post). Similar legal safeguards existed in early Rome (mancipatio). ^{to this} No greater contrast could be imagined than

Slaves for commercial exploitation or plantations were sold, exposed for sale ~~as~~ including 2/ diamonds per unit

the forms in which the modern slave market of ~~Hydah~~ ^{Hydah} ~~was organized~~ ^{was} ~~as~~ ^{reckoned} slaves were reckoned as bundles of fungible goods, i.e., ~~measured~~ ^{measured} by weight and number, with a definite percentage provided for the ratio in which the sexes were represented in the bundle.

b. Booty-sale in ancient Greece (4th century) and Rome (3rd cty) amounted to the auctioning in the field of cattle and slaves to the highest bidder, usually to slave dealers who had provided themselves with chains for this purpose. Again, the slave would have to be sold 'out of the country' otherwise he might easily decide to run away.

c. Escape of slaves. One of the signs of the growth of local marketing of slaves ~~is~~ ^{was} the frequency of flight. In the 4th cty B.C. an attempt was made in Persia to institute governmental insurance for slave owners against loss from the escape of slaves. Approximately at the same time purchasers of slaves began to insist on contractual safeguards on the part of the seller against such losses, at least for a period of time.

④ Traders. One of the main economic characteristics of the large organized communities of antiquity is that trade is carried on professionally by public agents (dankar), i.e., persons who are traders by status. They belong to

the notables. The same applies to brokers who are often organized in guilds. The successful trader is ~~often~~ recompensed by great wealth, dispensed in the form of fiefs, customs revenue, ^s similarly to other high officials and potentates. It seems that the wealth ^{which} that individuals can acquire by 'private trade' (where there are no rigid rules to prevent ~~it~~ ^{enrichment}) is much inferior to the purely economic advantages conferred on the dankar by the sovereign (~~not to speak of the moral ones~~). In more primitive communities we do not find the dankar, so that insofar as we here meet with trade, it is ~~private trading~~ 'private trading'.

An important deviation from these rules is caused by the proximity of powerful and elaborate trading communities.

⊕ Inset: small block pages

Mascot

however

set
P72

For the ~~purposes~~ of historical research, it might be preferable to keep to definite regions and periods, primarily ancient China and West Africa. As to the centuries when a cowrie currency ~~was~~ emerged, on the Upper and Middle reaches of the Niger, ~~we may still find ourselves~~ ^{fall} in the latter part of antiquity. ^(with its vast empires) ~~Now, in this period of history both~~ ^{By that time} currencies and long-distance trade routes ^{my} were ~~all around the Mediterranean heartland~~ ^{Call around the Mediterranean heartland} established through millennia. ~~It is the background against which~~ ^{is the background} for the Western Mediterranean the emergence of an ^{additional or even a} new currency, spread by commercial trade or over ^{the} trade routes in general, ~~will have to be reconsidered.~~ ^{must should}

align
or pull

Metal currencies, primarily using money ~~as a standard~~ ^{mainly for inventories} in staple finance, ~~for~~ ^(in kind were no novelty) storage and taxation, existed. These currencies centered in the palace economies of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, and the Aegean. As to trade, its features are fairly clear. By ~~riverine~~ ^{on the level of} riverine, caravan and coasting routes it moved as gift-trade ~~from~~ ^{and King} chieftains ~~to palace levels~~ ^{and} yet familiarity with ^{such} low level ~~monetary~~ ^{monetary} currency must have been almost general, since even in the absence of established equivalencies which exclude ^{of commercial} monetary profit, ~~neither inventories nor taxation could be handled without~~ such "pre-monetary" uses. This allows the carrying on of ^{only} an effective tamkar-type of trade, ^{could be carried on} and the beginnings of a limited merchants' trade tagged on to it. ~~Now~~

set

However, ^{we} are still moving on the fringes of the metal currencies. Ibn Batutah, circulating between the Maldives and ^{was} Melli ~~is~~ ^{range} definitely within the gold currency ^{reach} of the mitkal. That is why Mrs. Quiggin can quote ^{differential} gold rates for cowrie as between

Indian Ocean coral reefs and trade ports on the Middle and Upper Niger.

~~[But what about the spread of cowrie "by trade"? Was it restricted to highly elaborate gold areas, such as Mali and Songhai with which nothing in contemporary Europe could compare?] The~~