

*The Strategy of World Order. Volume 1: Toward a Theory of War Prevention, 394 pages; Volume 2: International Law, 382 pages; Volume 3: The United Nations, 848 pages; Volume 4: Disarmament and Economic Development, 672 pages; edited by Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz (New York: World Law Fund, 1966), set of four volumes \$14.00.*

*Morocco, Old Land, New Nation, by Mark I. Cohen and Lorna Hahn (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 309 pages, \$6.50.*

*African Books News Letter, Volume I, No. 1, a monthly record of the recent books published in English throughout Africa on different subjects (K. K. Roy Ltd., 55 Gariahat Road, P. O. Box 10210, Calcutta-19).*

*The Human Achievement, a secondary school text, by Michael B. Petrovich, Philip Curtin, et al. (Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Company, 1966), 803 pages, no price given.*

*Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790, by David Birmingham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 178 pages, \$5.60.*

*Dahomey and the Slave Trade, by Kurt Polanyi, in collaboration with Abraham Rotstein (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 204 pages, \$6.50.*

*Dimensions of East African Cultures, by Charles M. Good, Jr. (Michigan State University: African Studies Center), 126 pages, \$1.50, paperbound.*

*L'Année Politique Africaine 1966, by Pierre Biarnès, Philippe Decraene, and Philippe Herremans (Dakar: Société Africaine d'Édition, B.P. 1877), 136 pages, CFAF 2,500, paper.*

*Africa Is People, edited by Barbara Nolen (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1967), 270 pages, \$6.95.*

*Africa Since 1800, by Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 304 pages, \$4.95 cloth, \$1.95 paper.*

*British Rule in Kenya 1895-1912: The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 329 pages, \$8.80.*

*The Content and Form of Yoruba Ifalá, by S.A. Babalola (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 395 pages, \$11.20.*

*Malaria in Africa, by Michael Colbourne (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 115 pages, \$1.05, paper.*

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

**Russell Warren Howe** was the Africa correspondent for *The Washington Post* from 1958 to 1965 and is a frequent contributor to American and British journals. He is the author of *Black Africa*, a two-volume history published this month by Walker and Company (New York). He served in Togo as special counsel to Sylvanus Olympio in 1960, and has revisited Togo frequently since the beginning of military rule, most recently in April 1967.

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**Immanuel Wallerstein**, an associate professor of sociology at Columbia University, is the author of *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (New York: Random House, 1961), *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1961), and *Africa: The Politics of Unity* (New York: Random House, 1967).

**M. Crawford Young**, author of *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton University Press, 1965), is Chairman of the African Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin. In 1964-66 he was a visiting professor of African Studies at Makerere University College, Uganda.

**Ali A. Mazrui** is a professor of Political Science and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Makerere University College, University of East Africa. He was Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago in 1965 and Research Associate of the Harvard Center for International Affairs in 1965-66, and has also been Chairman of the Carnegie Endowment Institute in Diplomacy. Three books by Dr. Mazrui have been published in 1967: *Towards a Pan-Africanism* (University of Chicago and Weidenfeld & Nicolson), *The Anglo-African Commonwealth* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), and *On Heroes and Unhero-Worship* (Longmans).

**J. Gus Liebenow** is Visiting Professor of Political Science at University College, Dar es Salaam, for the 1967 academic year, after which he will return to his duties as Chairman of the African Studies Program at Indiana University. He spent 1960-61 in Liberia and Sierra Leone on a faculty research grant from the Social Science Research Council and is the author of the chapters on Liberia in *African One-Party States*, ed. Gwendolen Carter (Cornell University Press, 1962); *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, ed. James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg (University of California Press, 1964); and *Politics in Africa: 7 Cases*, ed. Gwendolen Carter and Alan P. Wathan (Harvard, Brace, and World, 1966).

**George Jenkins** is an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; he will be a visiting assistant professor at UCLA in 1967-1968. He is co-editor of *African Urban Notes* and co-author of a forthcoming biography of Alhaji Adesoke Adedibu.

The News-in-Brief reporting team for this issue included David Rhoads, Okon Iden, Omar Grine, and Frances Richardson.

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# POLITICAL PROTEST IN THE CONGO

## *The Parti Solidaire Africain During the Struggle for Independence*

By HERBERT WEISS

Drawing upon personal observations as well as official documents, Mr. Weiss describes the growth of political parties in the Congo, presents the first detailed history of the PSA, discusses the evolution of anti-colonial protest in the Kwango-Kwilu area of the Congo, and concludes with the relation of the PSA to anti-colonial protest in other parts of Africa. 325 pages. Maps. \$8.50

# CONGO 1965

## *Political Documents of a Developing Nation*

Compiled by J. GERARD-LIBOIS and B. VERHAEGEN

This seventh volume in the annual series of Congolese documents consists of official statements and memoranda, proceedings of conferences, personal and official letters, excerpts from speeches, and party programs and platforms. The documents are in the original French with an English introduction by Herbert Weiss.

530 pages. \$12.50

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

KARI POLANYI. *Dahomey and the Slave Trade. An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1967. Pp. xxiv + 204. 49s.)

It is unfair to the late Prof. Polanyi's reputation and memory that this book should have been published in its present form. As a posthumous work, though prepared for the press by Abraham Rotstein, its unfinished character is all too clear. Polanyi's intention was to study the commercial policy of Dahomey in the eighteenth century as a further example of the concepts and ideas about pre-market economies which he and his collaborators first set forth in *Trade and Markets in Early Empires* (1957). He is therefore principally concerned with Ouidah as a "port of trade", and with the way in which economic processes were embedded in the institutions and culture of Dahomey and its neighbours from the last quarter of the seventeenth century to the French Revolution.

The book is not, however, the product of new research. It is based instead on a rather narrow range of well known travellers' accounts and secondary authorities. This in itself is legitimate, and it could have been a useful summary for students; but its value as synthesis and its contribution to theory are both vitiated by the slipshod way in which these authorities are used. In this respect, there is a vast difference between the occasional minor error that finds its way into all scholarly work and the degree of confusion that appears in this one. Chronology is extremely imprecise throughout, and this fault is compounded by the references which give only the author's name and the date of publication. Thus Polanyi gives the impression that Hosman's data apply to the early nineteenth century, and that Barbot wrote about Guinea as it was in 1732.

More serious still, it appears that Polanyi did not have time to master the secondary literature. Neither the bibliography nor the content shows any evidence that he followed recent historical writing about West Africa. There is nothing, for example, from the *Journal of African History*, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, or the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*. He discusses the rise of the seventeenth-century slave trade in the "gap of Benin" without a single mention of Akwamu, even though Ivor Wilks's pioneering article appeared in 1957. Other statements are simply unaccountable—that André Sik's propaganda history of Africa could possibly give "the Africans' point of view" (p. ix), or that African Negroes were not found in Bahia until 1683 (p. 18), a date by which at least 400,000 slaves had been imported into Brazil.

One of the chief virtues of *Trade and Markets* was its contribution to comparative history, but in this work even a comparative view of the West African coast is missing. Occasional comparisons are made, but too often they merely recall the ignorant platitudes of early European writing about Africa. At one point, for example, a generalization about "the native mind" is constructed on the sole evidence of a mid-nineteenth-century example from the Ilma oasis in the Sahara and a fifteenth-century reference to the Mauritanian coast (pp. 147-8).

Readers in search of Polanyi's real contribution to economic history should return to his earlier work. Those who wish to understand Dahomey can look to the authorities on which this work was based. Even the discussion of the "ounce trade", a point on which Polanyi sought to say something new about West African currencies, has been corrected by Marion Johnson's recent article in the *Journal of African History* (1966).

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PHILIP D. CURTIN



Choice Sept 1967

**POLANYI, Karl and Abraham Rotstein.** *Dahomey and the Slave Trade: an Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* University of Washington, 1966. 204p map bibl 66-19569. 6.50

A case study of the economy of an African state by a noted economic historian. Dahomey was one of the most famous and most successful of the West African slave trading states in the 18th and 19th centuries. The authors include historical background on the army and slave raids, description and analysis of markets, land rights, kinship privileges and obligations, and other social and economic patterns. The final chapters, "Fictitious European Money in the Slave Trade" and "Archaic Economic Institutions," compare data from other parts of West Africa and are of more general historical and theoretical interest. Five maps; index. Recommended for libraries building general West African collections.

**SMUTS, Jan Christiaan.** *Selections from the Smuts Papers, ed. by W. K. Hancock and Jean van der Poel.* Cambridge, 1966. 4v bibl 64-21586. v.1, 2, 3, 12.50 ea; v.4, 10.00

Contents:— v.1: June 1886–May 1902; v.2: June 1902–May 1910; v.3: June 1910–November 1918; v.4: November 1918–August 1919. One thousand documents covering nearly 2,300 pages give at length material in the Smuts Papers on which Hancock based the first volume of his biography, *Smuts, the Sanguine Years 1870–1919* (1962). The editors, distinguished historians, have given sufficient information to make this collection intelligible and readable. The documents are placed in chronological order and divided into "Parts": I, The Student Years; II, Entry into Politics; III, The Anglo-Boer War; IV, Vereeniging; V, Memoirs of the Boer War, (in Volume I); VI, Defeat and Recovery; VII, Self-Government Achieved; VIII, Making the Union, (in Volume II); IX, The Union Under Strain; X, The African Campaigns; XI, The War in Europe, (in Volume III); XII, Peace Making, Biographical Notes, and Indices, (in Volume IV). There are documents on Smuts' personal and intellectual development as well as on policymaking; the collection makes clear his intellectual ascendancy over, and isolation from, his contemporaries in South African politics, and the bases of his opposition to the Versailles peace settlement. These volumes could be used for senior papers and theses on "Holism," the coming of the Anglo-Boer War, the making of Union, and Versailles. Documents originally in Dutch or Afrikaans are given as written and in translation. These volumes are unlikely to be superseded; more documents are due to be published after the second volume of biography is completed.

**Asia and Oceania**

**AKITA, George.** *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan, 1868–1900.* Harvard, 1967. 292p bibl (Harvard East Asian Series, 23) 65-13835. 8.50

A penetrating and detailed analysis of Meiji constitutional developments from the oligarchy's standpoint. A useful complement to Scalapino's *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan* (1953) seen from the viewpoint of the proponents of parliamentary government. Akita (Hawaii) rejects the contention that the Meiji oligarchs were "absolutists"; they were "enlightened elitists" committed to constitutional government because it would strengthen Japan and also induce acceptance by the West. The Meiji constitution was not forced upon the oligarchs by public opinion; they accepted power-sharing and were willing compromisers. Ito emerges as the most enlightened among them, but even Yamagata, a staunch opponent of parliamentary government, is seen as its benefactor. A very scholarly, thoroughly researched work. Perhaps a trifle too sympathetic to the oligarchs but the author carefully documents every statement, exercises sound and objective judgments, and reasons and writes clearly and logically. Essential for understanding modern Japanese political developments. Extensive notes, glossary, bibliography of Japanese and Western works, index.

**BASTIN, John, ed.** *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: 1511–1957.* Prentice-Hall, 1967. 179p 67-14838. 4.95

Bastin has given us the first book of readings (documents, articles, and excerpts from monographs) devoted to Southeast Asia. The frame of reference, however, is narrow: Southeast Asia under imperialism. The terminal date (1957) coincides with *Merdeka* (independence) in Malaya. He might have chosen another date: 1963, for instance, when Malaysia was joined by Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore. In any event,

the choice of theme, the lack of a bibliography to supplement the readings, and the omission of Thailand makes this book less than useful for scholars, graduate students, or libraries. No doubt there will be improvements over Bastin's pioneer efforts by other interested Southeast Asian scholars.

**BODARD, Lucien.** *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam, tr. with intro. by P. O'Brian.* Little, Brown, 1967. 372p map (Atlantic Monthly Press Book) 67-11226. 7.95

A condensed translation of two volumes originally published in Paris by a seasoned French foreign correspondent on the first phase of the French-Indochinese War. Bodard treats events, largely in eyewitness fashion, from the outbreak of the conflict in 1946 to the appearance of large numbers of Chinese Communist trained Vietminh troops in 1950, which he considers the turning point of the war. He portrays the vicissitudes of the French Expeditionary Force, the mistakes of French colonial and military policy, and the squalor and corruption of wartime Viet-Nam. It is not a pretty picture. As good reportage, this book adds some colorful details to but cannot take the place of the more analytical historical studies of the war by scholars like Devillers, Fall, Hammer, Lancaster, and O'Ballance.

**RUTTINGER, Joseph.** *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled.* Praeger, 1967. 2v map bibl 66-13682. 18.50 set

Contents: v. 1: *From Colonialism to the Vietminh*; v. 2: *Vietnam at War*. It may well be that the definitive history of Viet-Nam is still to be written, but this two-volume edition covering the period from approximately 1900 to the fall of the Diem government in 1963 deserves to be in every library. It is a scholar's delight. Each chapter is extensively annotated, with footnotes at the end of the individual volumes which do not interfere with the reader's enjoyment of the author's narrative style. Like Ruttinger's earlier volume *The Smaller Dragon* (1958) which covers the history of Viet-Nam up to the period of the French conquest, the emphasis in his present work is on political history broadly conceived. While the author's involvement with his subject is obvious and his prejudices against the French apparent, these should add to the enticement of the discerning reader. More than one-third of the length of these volumes is devoted to notes, appendices, an index, and a bibliography. The appendices containing biographies of outstanding French officials in Viet-Nam, a chronological list of political parties, a very extensive index, in addition to many extra references listed in the notes, make this work an indispensable reference tool. In view of the price, one could have wished for more illustrative materials, particularly maps, since those on the end papers do not suffice, but these volumes are easily worth the price of any half dozen journalistic accounts.

**CANNON, Michael.** *The Land Boomers.* Cambridge, 1967. 247p 11 tab bibl 67-10259. 13.50

A careful, sparsely written account of the developmental craze that overtook Australian speculators in Victoria in the 1880's and of the collapse that followed. Cannon tells the story in some detail, much of it colorful and most of it new, and he turns his account upon personalities rather than upon analysis. Unhappily, the book is succinct but poorly written, and Cannon makes little effort to show the reader why the relatively obscure financiers with whom he deals are important to any larger context. As a case study of a land boom or of several Victorian scandals, the book is excellent; as an analysis of late 19th-century Australian economics, it is deficient. Accordingly, although the book can be recommended to anyone interested in Australia, in financial history, or in Victorian politics, it is peripheral to all but the largest collections.

**CLIFFORD, Nicholas R.** *Retreat from China; British Policy in the Far East, 1937–1941.* University of Washington, 1967. 222p bibl 67-12395. 7.50

Diplomatic isolation and rapidly waning power characterized Great Britain's position in East Asia in the years immediately preceding World War II. The large British commercial stake in China, concentrated in the so-called treaty ports like Shanghai, was increasingly jeopardized by Japan's war against China which flared into major conflict in 1937. Despite all British efforts, the U.S. refused to join in a consistent policy of opposition to Japanese expansionism. And Britain in the 1930's did not have the military or naval resources in the Far East for independent action. Clifford has provided the first full-dress treatment of this British problem in his fine monographic study. His research in British and American sources is meticulous and unobtrusive; his style felicitous. College libraries will want this book.

in economic history, it is a contribution to social history as well. There emerges a well-rounded picture of life in sixteenth-century Seville, which was then the flourishingemporium of New World trade, and the political and social life of the Genoese is also graphically depicted.

JORN LEBDY PHELAN, *University of Wisconsin*

*Dahomey and the Slave Trade: An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* By Karl Polanyi in collaboration with Abraham Rotstein. Foreword by Paul Bohannan. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966. Pp. xxvi, 264. \$0.50.

Karl Polanyi enjoyed a singular place among economic historians, and his reputation is likely to remain secure whatever the final judgment on this posthumously published work. Paul Bohannan, with pardonable enthusiasm for an admirable old scholar and teacher, tells us that Polanyi executed this study with customary thoroughness, but this opinion is open to question. There are serious omissions from a rather thin bibliography, and the heavy reliance on Herkovits exacts a price. The extent to which Polanyi goes beyond the excellent chapters contributed by Rosemary Arnold to *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economics in History and Theory* is questionable. The notion of "state," which is so important for the thesis, is by no means clear. Notwithstanding important and useful features and some extraordinary insights, *Dahomey and the Slave Trade* is a long way from Polanyi's best work.

The most impressive part of the book deals with the functions of money in a nonmarket economy and the intricacies of trade between peoples with and without fully monetized economies. On these problems, which are of major importance to economic anthropology, Polanyi has much more to offer than a brief review could explore, and for this reason alone the book will long be a standard source. Polanyi's discussions of reciprocity and householding, if no longer so striking, will repay close reading. As in his earlier work, he chides economic historians for their apparent inability to see any economic relations other than those which can be reduced to exchange relations and for their unwillingness to realize that trade, money, and markets can arise and generally have arisen independent of one another. Polanyi, as usual, is crisp and enlightening on nonmarket economies, and in this book he has the opportunity to probe more deeply than he had in his synthetic essays.

For Polanyi state-building is a secular force within the economic organization and is not derivative from it. There would be nothing to quarrel about here, and indeed the proposition is far less original than the tone of the discussion suggests, did he not insist that his viewpoint refutes the Marxian theory of state formation. It may refute vulgar-Marxism and economic determinism, neither of which has enough left to require further criticism, but it presents no special difficulties for the Marxian theory of the state or of historical process. In general, the strongest parts of his analysis, in contradistinction to his



polemical thrusts and to Bohannon's demonstrably false assertion that he focused on exchange rather than production, rest squarely on his descriptions of and implicit assumptions concerning the productive process—precisely where, from a Marxian point of view, they ought to rest.

EUGENE D. GENOVESE, *Sir George Williams University*

*The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. I: The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, 2d edition. Edited by M. M. Postan. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966. Pp. xvi, 871, \$14.00.

A quarter of a century after its publication inaugurated the ambitious and still only half completed *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* series, the first volume has been reissued in a partly reprinted, partly revised, and partly rewritten form. This new edition of Volume I, dealing with agrarian life, along with Volume II (1952) on trade and industry, and Volume III (1963) on economic organization and policies, provides us with the most substantial, authoritative, and comprehensive coverage of medieval economic life in print. Although there are defects (cf. Professor Lane's review of Volume III, with comments on I and II, in the 1963 issue of this JOURNAL), this trilogy will not soon lose its fundamental value both for reference on point of detail and for general description and interpretation.

No doubt the question of chief interest is the extent to which this new edition has been revised and updated. In simple proportions, approximately two-fifths of the work is merely reprinted from the first edition, one-fifth has been slightly revised, and the remaining two-fifths is new or entirely rewritten material. In general, the chapters that present a description of rural life in the earlier Middle Ages are unchanged. These include the sweeping survey of settlement and colonization by Richard Koebner (Ch. I), the masterful description by Alfons Dopsch of agrarian institutions of the Germanic kingdoms (Ch. IV), and Marc Bloch's brilliant essay on the rise of seignorial institutions (Ch. VI). C. E. Stevens and Charles Parain have recast their chapters on agriculture in the Later Roman Empire (Ch. II) and the evolution of agricultural technique (Ch. III), but the essential picture remains unaltered. In addition, the fine account by George Ostrogorsky (Ch. V) of agrarian conditions in the Byzantine Empire has been virtually reprinted. This reviewer takes issue only with the editorial decision to reproduce the Koebner chapter without revision. However valuable, this essay is unwieldy both in length and in style and would have benefited from refashioning; it could also have been improved by utilization of abundant recent toponymic studies.

The significant revisions in this volume are to be found in the parts dealing with the Later Middle Ages. Chapter VII, conceived as a series of national or regional descriptions of matured medieval agrarian society, reproduces the sections on the lands east of the Elbe (by Hermann Aubin), Poland, Lithuania and Hungary (by Jan Rutkowski), and Scandinavia (by Sture Bolin), very

*Economic Selections:*

*International Bibliography*

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787. POLANYI, Karl, in collaboration with Abraham ROTSTEIN. **Dahomey and the slave trade: An analysis of an archaic economy.** Foreword by Paul Bohannan. (Seattle; London: Univ. of Washington Press. 1966. Pp. xxvi, 204. \$6.50. L.C. No.: 66-19569.)

Karl Polanyi (1887-1964) was chiefly known for his contributions to economic history and economic anthropology. This work offers an economic history of the West African kingdom of Dahomey in the XVIII Century, with focus on trade and the monetary system. Paul Bohannan highlights Polanyi's contributions to the field of anthropology. (D)



## STONES, SACKS AND COWRIES

KARL POLANYI (in collaboration with ABRAHAM ROISHEIN): *Dahomey and the Slave Trade. An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* 204pp. University of Washington Press. (American University Publishers Group). £2 9s.  
 W. J. ARGYLE: *The Fon of Dahomey. A History and Ethnography of the Old Kingdom.* 210pp. Oxford University Press. 30s.

Dahomey was one of the most interesting West African states. The rain forest of the Guinea coast is here broken at one point, where, for a variety of climatic reasons, the savanna characteristic of the inland Sudan almost touches the coast. Whoever occupied this funnel-shaped area controlled trade-routes which assumed exceptional importance as soon as Europeans arrived by sea. On the coast itself, however, the fringe of trading ports (of which Whydah and Porto Novo were the most notable) was largely protected by swamps. The state of Dahomey inherited these conditions in the late seventeenth century. The kingdom had no natural inland boundaries. It could only try to keep the funnel clear of the encroachments of the Ashanti to the west (a relatively easy matter), and of the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo to the east—a much harder problem. In the end the kings took permanently to the offensive. They were forced to annex the buffer state of Ardra when this proved unable to keep open the route from the ports, and finally in 1727 they attacked Whydah directly to their state. The "port of trade" with its European factors was an entity alien to the archaic economy of Dahomey. Both in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries the kings tried to get the English to take it over. They wanted a stable subordinate administration in the port but could not themselves secure it. The English refused the task. The kings came to rely upon a Portuguese factor whose family became the Cecilis to their Tudors.

The Oyo kingdom exacted tribute until 1818. Then for more than fifty years the weakened Yoruba states were themselves constantly attacked by the Dahomeyans, who penetrated to Abeokuta for the last time in 1873. The incessant military activity of Dahomey over two centuries led to an extraordinary cen-

tralization of the state. The wars fed the slave-trade and its returns upheld the state. Despite the blood-stained events of the annual "Customs", Dahomey itself presented a calm and orderly scene according to the most idealized accounts: there was a royal road, and markets with fixed prices, organized bordellos, even an annual census.

Both these books are now analyses of the documentary evidence. The study by Karl Polanyi, published posthumously, is the tour de force we should expect from this pioneer of economic anthropology. Dr. Argyle's is a more modest work which nevertheless acts at times as a corrective to Dr. Polanyi's occasionally over-ready acceptance of the sources. The Dahomeyan census as described by Herskovits (whereby bags of stones were kept in sacks marked with emblems for boys, girls, men and women), the astonishing running system of vital registration, the annual census of pigs, and much else, are perhaps a twentieth-century dream in large part. As Dr. Argyle says:

[Herskovits] himself tells us that "the account of the census and the taxation system of the kingdom . . . were volunteered on the very last day of his field-work in Abomey . . . [and were] given privately, in the seclusion of the second-storey room of [a] house . . .". When the account of the so-called census was read by M. Maupail of the French colonial service to the ex-king Ago-ligbo and his suite "it took a little while for them to recover from the emotion which my reading to them of your article had caused".

Nevertheless the administrative inventiveness of Dahomey was genuine. The mobilization of the great force of palace women into an administrative structure mirroring that of the state was brilliant. Each official had his "mother" inside the palace who mastered his portfolio

and was his channel to the king. Every ambassador or trading negotiator was assigned a similar palace mother who would always be present during his business and would remember all previous phases of it. The creation by the kings of an elite female body-guard, which later became a regiment of the army (volunteers, virgins and pensionable), was a logical development.

Dr. Polanyi's economic analysis of the slave trade bears upon a more extensive region than Dahomey alone. The account of the development from barter to an exchange system based on cowries with a gold rate of 32,000 to the ounce is of great interest. A trade "ounce" valued in goods at only 16,000 cowries also existed. There were, then, two exchange rates: one in gold, and one in goods plus 100 per cent profit. Dr. Polanyi's skill lies in showing that these parallel rates made it possible to establish a firm accounting basis by which the factors could secure a consistent profit, while leaving undisturbed the fixed barter values established for goods on the coast by usage. The cowrie currency was a sophisticated device joining a world gold price to an "archaic" economic system.

Dr. Polanyi's book is then more than a study of Dahomey. It is a further step in the process of undermining ethnocentric assumptions in the approach to economics and for that reason merits a wider readership than Africanists alone. Neither of these books gives the full story of Dahomey itself. The key to that would lie in a complete modern analysis of the compulsive complementary dualism by which officials and structures were duplicated, and through which women were fully mobilized as the source of palace control. Perhaps Dr. Argyle whose own account is of interest will undertake this task for us.

rec. July 1971

REVIEWS

*Dahomey and the Slave Trade. An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* By Karl Polanyi, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1966, pp. 204.  
*The Fon of Dahomey. A History and Ethnology of the Old Kingdom.* By W. J. Argyle, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, pp. 210.

The openness of the landscape of the "gap of Benin" has been an important factor in the history of Dahomey. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century it allowed the fast growing empire of Dahomey to get—and to hold—control of a part of the "Slave Coast" and gave to Europeans, who were frequently required to visit the court at Abomey, easy access to the interior. This has made the relatively small area of the old kingdom of Dahomey one of the best documented areas, from the historical point of view, in West Africa. The existing literature on Dahomey is indeed so rich that it has recently proved possible for two valuable new contributions to be made by authors who did not visit the country, their work being based on printed source-material. These two books—the one by Polanyi, with a foreword by Dr. P. J. Bohannon; the other by Argyle, originally written as a thesis under the latter's supervision—are in many ways each other's complements, and sometimes even oppose each other.

As an economist, Polanyi is fascinated by the smooth working of ancient Dahomey's economy, an economy which he calls "archaic" in that it did not yet know a market-system in the modern, western sense of the word, but which could by no means be labelled "primitive". The economy of ancient Dahomey was centralized to the extreme around the king and his court through a system of taxation and redistribution. In his analysis Polanyi relies heavily on Herskovits's work, especially in his treatment of the sophisticated "census"-system which Herskovits supposed to have existed in Dahomey. This theory of Herskovits's is however attacked by Argyle as being based on superficial research and on conclusions too quickly drawn.

One of the most interesting points in Polanyi's account is his demonstration that, although Dahomey was for the maintenance of its power to a large extent dependent on the slaves-versus-arms trade with the Europeans, it was able to continue its own "archaic" internal economic system; and that it was rather the group of European traders in the "port of trade", Whydah, which adapted itself to the Dahomean circumstances. These traders developed the special Slave Coast "ounce of trade", expressed in the local cowrie currency and of a value different from the ordinary gold ounce of trade which was used on the Gold Coast and elsewhere.

From the historical point of view one may be a little irritated by Polanyi's lack of reference to any specific periods in his analysis of various aspects of the economy and his refusal to make use of footnotes for reference. This can



have a quite confusing effect. Polanyi happens for example to have used Pinkerton's 1814 edition of Willem Bosman's book, written in 1701. Quoting this author, he adds: (Bosman, 1844, p. . .). When Polanyi refers to "Bosman's time", therefore, the unprepared reader can receive the impression that Polanyi means the nineteenth century. There are also a few strange historical inaccuracies to be found in this book, such as mention of a Dutch trade-*fort* at Whydah which has never existed; or the statement that only by 1683 were African negroes to be found at Bahia, which ignores the fact that the Portuguese already had extensive slave-plantations in that area in the sixteenth century.

Argyle's book is historically more accurate. His main interest lies in the religious-traditional bases of the Dahomey kingdom. Parallel to Polanyi's theme of an authentic Dahomean, non-western economy is Argyle's theme: that the growth of the Dahomean empire was not the result of political thinking in the modern, western sense but rather of the strength of religious beliefs and traditions. He demonstrates that nearly every human action had to follow a pattern set by a "national" religion, which readily absorbed beliefs of conquered peoples if they could strengthen the monarchy. A generation younger than Polanyi, Argyle is no longer under the spell of Herskovits, whom he openly criticizes, though not always very convincingly. Take for instance the case of Herskovits's description of counting by means of pebbles. Since some early authors describe the sandy area of Dahomey as one where "no pebble could be found", Argyle takes this as sufficient reason for rejecting that part of Herskovits's theory.

Argyle treats the growth of the Fon-kingdom as a function of the growth of its traditional institutions. He shows that the kings of Dahomey were well aware of the difficulty of absorbing conquered peoples; but centralization and adaptation of existing traditions in conquered territories had right from the earliest years of the Abomey kingdom been shown to be the best policy. The monarchy did not pretend to derive from a mythical origin, but knew itself to be protected by the adopted gods (*vodoun*) of its conquered peoples. This makes Dahomey—meeting-place of Nago (Yoruba) and of Adja-Ewe cultures—a most attractive field for ethnological study. Three-quarters of the book is devoted to the ethnological study of such institutions as kingship, lineage groups, cooperative groups and the various religious cults. We get here a clear re-appraisal and summary of the work not only of Herskovits but also of various Dahomean and French authors, especially amongst the last, of the invaluable work of Le Hérissé, nowadays receiving renewed appreciation.

Both books here reviewed make interesting reading for the historian, but they must certainly not be seen as introductions to the history of Dahomey.

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## *Karl Polanyi's Dahomey: To be or not to be a state?* A Review Article

Karl Polanyi (1885-1964), was a productive stimulus to contemporary economic anthropology. Paul Bohanan, George Dalton and Marshall Sahlins—to cite three outstanding examples—have all been directly influenced by Polanyi's thought. His collaborator, Abraham Rotstein, has therefore performed a valuable service by bringing out a posthumous edition of his final work, *Dahomey and the Slave Trade: an Analysis of an Archaic Society*. It represents an attempt to extend and develop the thesis of Rosemary Arnold<sup>1</sup> in two provocative articles which grew out of Polanyi's interdisciplinary seminar at Columbia. Like these articles the book poses some fascinating questions about the political economy of state formation in West Africa during the period of Euro-American slave-trade. At the same time, it compels us to critically examine our formulations about the economic culture of an archaic state society in a comparative, historical context.

To speak of 'the political economy of state formation' is not, strictly, to use Polanyi's own terms. He chose to focus on 'patterns of integration' or, to use Dalton's phrase<sup>2</sup> 'transactional modes', according to which 'political, religious and familial organizations arrange production and distribution in various ways'. He explicitly opposed such conceptions as 'modes of production' and 'stages' of political-economic growth as were developed by Marxists and evolutionists, so that, even in a work on pre-colonial Dahomey, Polanyi never found it necessary to define 'state' explicitly. His alternative was the creation of contrastive ideal-typical tendencies of modes of transaction by which he distinguished between 'market' and 'pre-market' systems. The 'pre-market' systems are divided between those primitive societies characterized by 'reciprocity' and those archaic societies characterized by 'redistribution'. These are the defining transactional modes of primitive and archaic societies respectively.

In *The Great Transformation*, published in 1944, Polanyi argued that market-exchange transactions only came to dominate and characterize society as the wonderchild of nineteenth century capitalism. Market-exchange transactions differed from redistribution and reciprocity in being purely economic, i.e., a market exchange system contains no expression of social—extra-econ-

1. "A Port of Trade: Whydah and the Guinea Coast"; and "Separation of Trade and Market: Great Market of Whydah", in Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson, *Trade and Market in the Early Empires* (Free Press, Glencoe, 1957), 154-187.
2. George Dalton, ed., *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies, Essays of Karl Polanyi*, (N.Y., 1968).



omic—obligations, being simply limited to the interplay of conditions of supply and demand. Reciprocity, the hallmark of primitive society, expressed such underlying social relationships as kinship, friendship, status and hierarchy, while redistribution tended to express the political or religious affiliations peculiar to archaic economy and society.

A certain semantic exercise becomes necessary if we are to understand Polanyi's objective. His use of terms like 'economy' and 'rationality', his typologies and empirical analyses are based on a kind of relativism which was neither historical-developmental as was Marx's nor yet meta-historical and subjective as was Weber's and the methods of orthodox economic theory. Yet Polanyi's work clearly contains elements from both, while not reducible to any simple marriage of the two. I feel that the results of his labours are best interpreted on different grounds than his own; that, in spite of himself, Polanyi's most provocative analyses make greatest sense in the very historical-developmental framework to which he was so opposed; and that nowhere is this more manifest than in *Dahomey and the Slave Trade*.

For Polanyi the key distinction remains that between market and pre-market systems. Hence, his notion of the archaic state is rendered consistently derivative from a redistributive mode of transaction denoting the state sector of the Dahomean economy. Redistribution is the key economic mechanism of archaic state power. That is, 'the movement of goods toward a center and out of it again'. Kingship is the redistributive agency of an archaic Dahomean state. This is summed up by Polanyi's account of the annual customs:

"The annual customs was the principal event of the economic cycle. In terms of gross national product and foreign import, as well as popular participation, it was an economic institution of unique proportions. The king himself was the central actor in an assembly of all the personages, administrators, and office holders of the land . . . the king received gifts, payments and tributes, subsequently distributing a part of this wealth as gifts to the crowd.

The economic aspect of this process may be analyzed as a move of goods and money towards the center and out of it again, that is redistribution."

Thus did 'redistribution' define the organization and direction of the channels of flow of the state sector of the Dahomean economy. It summarizes the networks of production, distribution and exchange which follow from the exercise of the political power of kingship—i.e., the economic consequences of state power. If, however, we were to focus not on the 'mode of transaction' itself, but rather on the political and economic context, and even the total

3. Polanyi, 33-34.

culture in which this redistributive pattern of integration operated in Dahomey, then Polanyi's reasoning begins to look autological. In his model, redistribution defines kingship which defines archaic state. State implies kingship, which in turn implies redistribution. Hereby he generated a definitional circle of very small diameter in which 'redistribution' alternates between serving as the major premise for isolating the economic dimension of state power and the political outcome of such an exercise of power now stated in 'economic' terms. As such his concept of redistribution begins to take on the word-magic of those orthodox, market-oriented interpretations Polanyi criticized so sharply. Simply substitute the term 'redistributive agent' for 'king' at each point and we have 'economic analysis'. Of course, such a play on words is unfair to Polanyi. The integration and differentiation of economic and political aspects of archaic state power is complex and subtle, as he perfectly understood. Moreover, his text is richer than my reduction to redundancy suggests. But, the fact remains that his notion of 'redistribution' is too general and vague to help us isolate and analyse the development of archaic Dahomean mechanisms of state power. It will not suffice to distinguish state from primitive pre-state economies.

This formal weakness in Polanyi's typology is recognized in a recent article by Marshall Sahlins,<sup>4</sup> himself profoundly indebted to Polanyi. Sahlins' departures from Polanyi's terminology and threefold scheme of principles of integration stem from the need to sharpen precisely this distinction. So, he makes explicit that by 'primitive' he refers to pre-state cultures whose "indicative condition . . . is the absence of a public and sovereign power."<sup>5</sup>

"It is also advisable to repeat that 'primitive' shall refer to culture lacking a political state, and it applies only insofar as economy and social relations have not been modified by the historic penetration of states."<sup>6</sup>

As a result Sahlins feels compelled to classify "redistribution" alongside "reciprocity" as the two main types of economic transaction characteristic of primitive culture. The economic tendency of pre-state culture is ". . . that of an economy in which food holds a commanding position . . . The place of transaction in the total economy is different [from state economy] . . . it is more detached from production . . . it is less involved than modern exchange in the acquisition of means of production, more involved in the redistribution of finished goods through the community . . . day to day output does not depend on a massive technological complex nor a complex division of labor . . .

4. Marshall D. Sahlins, "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange", *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology*, (N.Y., 1965), 139-236.

5. Sahlins, 140.

6. Sahlins, 141.



It is the bias also of a domestic mode of production . . . production that looks to familial requirements, and direct access by domestic groups to strategic resources. It is the bias of a social order in which rights to control returns go along with rights to use resources of production, and in which there is very little traffic in titles or income privileges in resources. It is the bias finally, of societies ordered in the main by kinship.<sup>7</sup> In contradistinction to state society, primitive society is one in which "social inequality is more the organization of economic equality" . . . "feudal terms therefore do not convey the economic equity of kinship ranking,"<sup>8</sup> and the varieties of chieftainship and social stratification—with the compulsory, redistributive generosity or higher status—that marks pre-state society. Sahlins' point is that primitive society mobilizes its social and political differentiation of rank and status to maintain and enforce an underlying economic equalitarianism.

The exact opposite holds in the case of state society. State society is class society. Fully aware of all the difficulties attached to the concept 'class', Robert Adams<sup>9</sup> in a recent comparative analysis of the processes of state formation in the Valley of Mexico and ancient Mesopotamia, nevertheless begins right there:

"If the term 'class' is used to describe objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of the means of production of the society without any necessary implications of reduced mobility, class consciousness, or overt interclass struggle, the early states characteristically were class societies."<sup>10</sup>

Adams' conclusions on two classic examples of archaic state formation, both completely uninfluenced by contact with already existing, still less, more powerful exogenous states, have a bearing on Polanyi's interpretation of Dahomey. On the relationship of kin groups and class structure he tells us that:

"From the viewpoint of stratification, it is not too much to describe early Mesopotamia and central Mexico as slightly variant patterns of a single, fundamental course of development in which corporate kin groups, originally preponderating in the control of land, were gradually supplemented by the growth of private estates in the hands of urban elites. And, while such corporate kin groups still remained active and viable in many respects at the termination points in our two sequences, it is only fair to conclude that they had by then become encapsulated in a stratified pattern of social organization that was rigidly divided along class lines."<sup>11</sup>

7. Sahlins, 140-141.

8. Sahlins, 159.

9. Robert McC. Adams, *The Evolution of Urban Society* (Chicago, 1966).

10. Adams, 79.

11. Adams, 119.

Generalizing from Sahlins and Adams we may arrive at a different overall interpretation of Dahomean economy and society from that offered in *Dahomey and the Slave Trade*. Polanyi opens with the assertion that the ". . . swift ascent from an inauspicious start to the *culmination of statehood*"<sup>12</sup> poses a key problem. True, the speed of a Dahomean state formation, rising out of obscure Yoruba (Ile-Ife)—beginning in the seventeenth century to its military ascendancy on the coast in 1727, seems remarkable, though hardly unique in West African precolonial history if we consider the speed of formation of the Ashanti confederacy after Osei Tyto. The short interval of rapid and thoroughgoing political and economic transformations in West Africa, and its coincidence with the acceleration of Euro-American slave trade hardly deserve repetition. What needs clarification is Polanyi's statement, which colors his entire outlook, about the 'culmination of statecraft' in Dahomey. Throughout, he leaves no doubt that he assesses the Dahomean archaic state as ". . . a structure of rare perfection . . .", as a completely developed archaic political economy.<sup>13</sup> Polanyi's characterization of Dahomean state structure is embedded in the dual character of its economy and society.

" . . . the 'bush', i.e., the countryside, retained a social organization that was largely outside the state sphere. The villages where the lower classes lived and the hereditary compounds which enclosed the tilled land and the entailed palm oil trees of the lineages were removed from the action of the central administration. Society as a whole consisted of a state society and a nonstate society, since the village and even more so the compounds of the sibs represented singularly state-free collectivities of households."<sup>14</sup>

The stabilizing and durable poles of this dualism were, on top, the relatively recent monarchy with its redistributive sphere of state economy and, at bottom, the ancient village kin-community with its reciprocity sphere of householding economy. The latter fits neatly, all semantic modifications to the contrary notwithstanding, into Sahlins' description of primitive economy, while the former isolates—in the course of Polanyi's account—certain aspects of state structure. The rural village nonstate culture of Dahomey shared certain traits with feudal culture and its manorial economy in western Europe: ". . . solidly walled dwellings, hereditary ranking of families and traditional

12. Polanyi, 3 [emphasis mine].

13. In this report Polanyi's obvious and inevitable indebtedness to Hershkovits work which still remains the most complete account of Dahomean culture, shows through. Hershkovits' at times almost romantic picture of the achievements of the Dahomean state, and not Polanyi's economic analysis, has more than anything helped form our image of its 'perfection'.

14. Polanyi, 9.



religious ideologies . . ." so that "Peasant household and manorial economies differed mainly in size." However, "certain social criteria of Western feudalism are strikingly absent." Among these Polanyi notes that ". . . the African compound is not fortified and has no military character whatsoever; its walls ensure privacy, not security. Neither has the sib any affinity to cavalry, war chariots, or other knightly arms involving a specialized leisure class training of an elite connotation; *nor does the compound carry socioeconomic ruling class privileges that imply disposal over dependent labor...*" so that, finally, "...a sharp contrast obtains between the manorial feudal system of Europe and the African system of sib compounds."<sup>15</sup> The most significant and determining difference, from my point of view, between a manorial regime and the African system of sib compounds is the absence, in the latter, of a ruling landlord class. Kinship obligations are not rents. Local African chiefs are not feudal superiors. The Dahomean producer is not required to hand over to any overlord a fraction of his surplus product in any form from which the latter derives his income, and in which he bases his social status and political power. The class structure which Marc Bloch<sup>16</sup> considered the defining characteristic of a manorial regime is not present within the Dahomean village kin-community. Just as there are no feudal superiors, so there are no dependent peasants. As Polanyi's account makes clear, the nonstate sector of the Dahomean economy is essentially equalitarian.

The other alternative for generating 'objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of production' out of Dahomean society, from which dependent cultivation and artisan production might have arisen, is from the intersection of the state sphere with the sib compound and kin-community village structure. In this way it is possible to envisage the 'state as collector' or 'rentier'. Rents become taxes and analogies with the more centralized and bureaucratized archaic state developments of East Asia come to mind. Polanyi is painstaking when he details the forms of taxation and the elaborate, by non-Islamic and West African standards, Dahomean bureaucracy which evolved to administer this extraction of peasant surpluses. No doubt the central Dahomean monarchy itself, without the participation of a localized landlordism, pumped out its returns from peasant and artisan productivity. But this was not enough, as Polanyi's unambivalent conclusion itself testifies:

"The king of Dahomey . . . was notorious for his slave raids. His country produced no trade goods and had no other resources to acquire slaves but war."<sup>17</sup>

15. Polanyi, 72-73, emphasis added.

16. M. Bloch "The Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seigniorial Institutions", *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (Cambridge, 1941), 224-278.

17. Polanyi, 150.

Not only did the international slave market substitute for and add to state income which might otherwise have been expected from endogenous productivity, but warfare as slave-raiding became the necessary state policy for the collection of its prime export commodity, while at the same time deepening the state's technico-economic dependency on the Euro-American powers.

Meanwhile Dahomean state political and economic activity was insufficient to create the beginnings of a genuinely peasant, as distinguished from primitive cultivator, class structure in the villages. The 'redistributive state' reinforced rather than transformed the primitive, pre-state, social organization and economic equalitarianism of the sib compound. As Eric Wolf<sup>18</sup> has so succinctly put it, "*It is this production of a fund of rent which critically distinguishes the peasant from the primitive cultivator.*" Polanyi however speaks of Dahomean 'lower classes' and, in another context, describes Dahomean variations of West African forms of 'slavery' and 'pawngage'. As I have argued elsewhere for Ashanti,<sup>19</sup> and as is evident from Polanyi's text, neither 'slavery' nor 'pawngage' in the West African slave trade context can be viewed as any more than the barest, embryonic representations of an as yet incipient class structure. 'Slavery' was primarily an integrative mechanism, for those human beings who were not eliminated by their export or by a headsman's knife at state funerals, into the kin community organization. The general social equality of the position of 'slaves', their partial absorption into a society comprised of unilineal descent groups, through the mechanism of marriage out of which their children, or certainly children's children were full citizens and kin group members, seems to indicate an underlying political economy and ethic traditional to West African descent groups which measure their strength in terms of the size of their membership, rather than any productive nexus of slavery in which the master is in ownership of all the outputs as well as all the factors of production. From the state's point of view 'slaves' represented pure exchange value and pure ritual value. That is, they always had a market price and a ceremonial value in commemorating the ancestors. 'Pawngage' represented, as Polanyi indicates, a debt relation between corporate kin groups. An aliquot part of the pawn's outputs or returns from any trading activity, went back to the creditor group as interest until the creditor group had paid off the capital, thereby liberating the 'pawned' individual.<sup>20</sup> These native 'pawns' and not Daho-

18. Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), 11.

19. *Slave Trade and State Formation in West Africa with Special Emphasis on Ashanti*, paper presented at The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, October, 1967, (part of an unpublished MS.).

20. When Polanyi asserts that "no interest was charged" on a debt (p. 69), I cannot imagine how else he interprets these specified returns to the creditor from his lessee's outputs. Unless he is taking all too literally the Dahomeans' formulation of a their pawngage relationship; which is certainly surprising from so sophisticated and economic historian and student of economic ideology as Polanyi was.



mean 'slaves', who were foreign captives, represent the only instance cited in Polanyi whereby an individual or his kin group can legally force someone to part with any portion of the product of his own labor. Pawnage was the only Dahomean social relation involving any 'return from rent'. Here Polanyi may have missed an important point on the penetration of a market system and its values into the Dahomean village community. When telling us about slavery and its equalitarian social basis, he remarks:

"The honorable character of the relationship is suggested by the fact that a slave could not be offered as a pawn."<sup>21</sup>

I am suggesting that, just as in the Ashanti case,<sup>22</sup> it was not the 'honorable character', i.e., the general social equality, represented by the 'slave's' potential incorporation into the community by marriage, which prevented his being pawned so much as his high market value to the lessor-debtor group, which could not have been realized, not even by the lessee-creditor, so long as the individual remained in pawn. Last, there is clear evidence of a group of producer-slaves in the state sphere. Like the Niger Delta town states, e.g., Kalabri, which specialized in palm oil and slave trading, or Benin, the Dahomean kings had their own plantations. Here there existed the productive utilization of unfree labor, unlike the nonstate sphere where a slave's output were his own property. Unfortunately, Polanyi's sources are very meager on the extent, still less on the social and economic organization of these state enterprises. As for the Dahomean 'lower classes' referred to by Polanyi, I simply take this to mean the broad cross-section of its free citizenry for whom there is no evidence of any significant income differential on the part of the higher socio-political rankings in their community still less any internal income differential among themselves.

A general economic conformity and equality seems to run through all levels of Dahomean society. Even at court the monarch does not seem to have developed a significantly separate life style which would follow from and would be indicative of a higher aristocratic level of consumption than the rest of the population. True, there was more at court, and here one could find the concentration of various luxury trade goods acquired from Europeans. But the rifles and powder as well as much else that came in from the countryside and international trade was 'redistributed'. Over and over again Polanyi documents how the goods 'coming to the center' were funneled back out again. Yet it is the business of a state to accumulate, not to give away. Nevertheless, this Dahomean 'redistributive' state seems to have accomplished very little in the way of building up its own mechanisms of accumulation. Archaic state

21. Polanyi, 69.

22. A. N. Klein, *op. cit.*

accumulation is traditionally measured by the elaboration of the institutions of state power, by the intellectual and artistic productivity of its full-time leisured strata and the servants whom it supports and takes away from the village fields and markets, by the sometimes monumental accomplishments of the unfree labor force it commands to build public works and artistic symbols of state power. By comparison with prehistoric Mesopotamia, Egypt, Mesoamerica, Peru, India and China, Dahomey looks relatively impoverished. It was after all still formative. Its political machinery was largely underdeveloped and by contrast terribly limited in exacting demands from its villager populations. As a matter of fact, as I have been implying all along, in many crucial respects the 'redistributive state' of Dahomey was hardly a state at all. Yet Polanyi's characterization of the Dahomean political apparatus as 'redistributive' is probably, at root, true to events. This brings us back to Sahlins, Wolf and Adams. These are all concerned with the differences between pre-state, primitive producers on one side and peasant, and dependent producers in state societies, on the other. Hence, all three are forced back to some notion of 'class' defined as 'objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of production'. Polanyi's picture of a Dahomean 'state', on the other hand, looks more and more like an enlargement of an internally stratified unilineal descent group. Recall Adams' conclusions on the fate of such descent group organization after the emergence of states in Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica: "...while such corporate kin groups remained active and viable,... it is only fair to conclude that they had by then become encapsulated in a stratified pattern of social organization that was divided along class lines."<sup>23</sup> Polanyi's account, and his research seems beyond reproach, is of another kind of stratification in Dahomey. The defining 'redistribution' function of kingship calls to mind various accounts of socio-political ranking and stratification in the kinship social bases of primitive economies. Sahlins' analysis of rank differences and kinship distance in primitive society can almost be made to paraphrase entire sections of Polanyi's account of the 'redistributive' or 'state' sphere of Dahomey. In fact, Sahlins was driven to alternative if not contradictory conclusions about the economic operation of 'redistribution', in the social stratification of primitive as against state societies. He also begins with the implicit notion that the historic role of class structure in state society was to accumulate rather than to return, as is the case in primitive society:

"Rank difference as much as kinship distance supposes an economic relation . . . Rank is to some extent privilege, *droit du seigneur*, and it has its responsibilities, *noblesse oblige* . . . feudal terms do not convey the economic equity of kinship ranking. In its true historic setting *noblesse*

23. Adams, 119.



*oblige* hardly cancelled out the *droit du seigneur*. In primitive society social inequality is more the organization of economic equality. Often, in fact, high rank is only secured or sustained by overcowering generosity: *the material advantage is on the subordinates' side . . .*"<sup>24</sup>

The 'redistribution' function of the Dahomean state seems to reflect more of the kinship stratification of African patrilineal descent groups than it might resemble the accumulative function of *droit du seigneur* in other early state societies. As a matter of fact, Polanyi's 'redistributive state' calls to mind what Paul Kirchhoff<sup>25</sup> calls 'conical clans'. These were internally stratified, unilineal descent organizations whose system of inner rankings corresponded in some way to genealogical distance from a founding ancestor or ancestress. To define a state as 'redistributive' is to attach to its ruling class precisely those economic attributes of primitive society which prevent its chiefs from achieving any economic return from their socio-political statuses. Yet even the most cursory examination of ancient Mesopotamia or Mexico reveals the exact opposite. To define as primary the 'redistributive' economic function of a state, is to define that state out of existence, to reduce it to the level of an enlarged primitive society.

The argument is more than semantic and definitional. It is not enough to say: 'Polanyi has one set of criteria, while Sahlins and Adams have another.' The point is that nowhere are his assertions about the 'culmination' of Dahomean state power more flatly contradicted than in Polanyi's own testimony about its administration, its exercise of kingly power. For example, the traditional index of archaic state accumulation, that which set it apart from primitive society and separates its producers from its rulers and full-time non-food producing specialists, is the city. Max Weber put it very simply: "Economically defined the city is a settlement the inhabitants of which live primarily off trade and commerce rather than agriculture."<sup>26</sup> Polanyi, however, cites Duncan being told by the king of Dahomey that he [the king] "long ago issued orders that all the spare land in and around the town [of Whydah] should be cultivated. . . ."<sup>27</sup> Whatever the reasons the king himself may have had in mind, the fact is that such an edict, rather than reflect the power and economic forethought of a great monarch tells us more about the failure of the Dahomean state to develop and intensify the crucial cultural distinction between town and country, which in all the classic examples denotes the difference between state and primitive, tribal and peasant culture. The state is in its historical

24. Sahlins, 159.

25. Paul Kirchhoff. "The Principles of Clanship in Human Society", *Readings in Anthropology*, II, (New York, 1959), 259-270.

26. Max Weber, *The City* (Glencoe, 1958), 66.

27. Polanyi, 38.

essence an embodiment of urban culture. The earliest states made possible the earliest cities which mirror, in their relation to the peasant and countryside, the inter-class relations of ruler-extractor to subordinate-producer. Not only did Dahomean kingly policy reflect the relative backwardness of its class structure, its urban underdevelopment and its dependence on European powers, what perhaps is most important is the fact that the state sector was never able to in any way penetrate down into the basic productive relations between men and land which governed the ancient village economy. The tax burden on the producers seems to have been minimal. It was at any rate hardly oppressive. This is evident from the complete lack of any peasant protest in Dahomey. "But the main reason why the countrywide census involved so little bureaucratic harassment was the participation of the population which willingly obeyed the law and responded spontaneously to the rules."<sup>28</sup> We might conclude, rather mechanically, that an only partially developed class structure could not generate significant class conflict. This, however, is hardly the point. First, as Adams points out inter-class conflict is irrelevant to any definition of class in archaic, early state society. Next, and what is most important for Dahomey, the entire orientation of 'state' policy was directed toward deriving as much of its income as possible from other sources than its producers.

I submit that—from Polanyi's own data—precolonial Dahomey is more accurately characterized as a transitional and formative type of developing 'archaic' state with an initial technico-economic dependence on the superior Euro-American capitalist powers that gradually established themselves along the coast. This was a dependency which deepened, becoming more and more political, until it was finally formalized in colonial rule. In other words, much like its Guinea Forest neighbour, Ashanti, the evolution of the Dahomean state structure was from the outset largely conditioned and determined by indigenous West Africa's initial position as the weakest trading partner in an international circuit wherein it supplied the slave labor to the New World which played such an important part in the eighteenth and nineteenth century capital formations in Britain, France and the U.S.A. A state structure such as Dahomey's arose in direct response to the demands of a more powerful political economy whose national representatives were beginning, as early as the late seventeenth century, to assimilate West African cultures into its expanding international field of operations. Dahomey became one mediating moment in a four continent wide cycle of political and economic development, functioning as an agency of collection for a labour supply whose productivity was transferred abroad. Not only was this Guinea Forest state thereby deprived of the potential productivity of large numbers of its own and captive peoples, but its inter-

28. Polanyi, 41.



nal political and economic organization was compelled to generate counterparts to and absorb aspects of their Euro-American superiors. Polanyi might not deny any of these particular assertions, yet his overall outlook and specific formulations compel him to infer different criteria for and analyses of the mechanics of interpenetration between classical capitalist, i.e., the 'market-system' political economies and such West African state formations as Dahomey.

The international slave trade had created a situation in which the Dahomean rulers felt compelled to seek elsewhere than from heavier exactions from their producers the revenues necessary for the exercise of state power. Polanyi's opening remarks about the military efficiency for which Dahomey was feared, and the elaborately organized foreign trade and stable currency for which it was admired point immediately to its dependency on the Euro-American powers. In fact, Dahomey, from its beginnings, had relied "on the slave trade for the securing of firearms", which forced it "to seek direct contact with the coast". Once caught up in the vicious cycle of slave-raiding warfare the dependency could only deepen and intensify. The primary commodity which Dahomey could supply was captives from wars fought with European and American guns and powder which needed continuous replacements in order to capture more slaves. As warfare depleted the state's revenues through immediate outlay it exhausted its reserves by pulling able-bodied men off their land to fight instead of farm. As it mechanized the flow of wealth into the center of state power so, simultaneously, did it drain off not only the potential productivity of men at arms, but that of unfree captives sold or ritually dispatched at state funerals as well. One direct consequence of New World plantation economy and Euro-American capital accumulation was, for West Africa's peoples, almost unremitting war. This was explicitly recognized and formalized by the rulers of Dahomey:

"... the annual slave war was a national institution no king dared ignore, and, indeed in the absence of any productive trade its discontinuation would have left the country without export goods for the purchasing of weapons and, therefore, defenseless in the face of embittered enemies who would not stop at selling his people wholesale into slavery overseas."<sup>29</sup>

Warfare stimulates social and political stratification of a special sort. Leadership, planning and organization are critical to the outcome of any battle. While Dahomean social organization responded admirably to these military demands and produced a splendid African army and political apparatus to facilitate rapid and expedient decision making and coordination, and while there is no evidence that military-political stratification competed with or

29. Polanyi, 135.

curtailed the bureaucratic-administrative sectors of Dahomean state policy, which were after all, compelled to negotiate agreements with fully developed capitalist nation states, we cannot infer that such military stimulus operated, in the long run, to promote the articulation of a genuine class structure. The contrary seems to be the case. Trade in slaves probably intensified and widened the scope of pawnage, an institution with real possibilities for the evolution of class structure, and made possible the monarchical slave plantations. On the whole, however, the slave trade was an impediment to precisely the sort of economic development which a growing archaic state requires. By forcing the political organization to concentrate on sale to overseas markets of a raw material taken only in war, it directed energy away from the potential growth of internal productivity at home. By deepening the technico-economic dependence on foreign powers the trade in slaves took a burden of the shoulders of native producers and transplanted it abroad. It is precisely this burden, however, which was a long run requirement if the transitional strata of Dahomean society were to be transformed into genuine classes of a Dahomean state structure. Sustained and continuous peasant productivity, rather than the vagueries of war and slave markets, are at the foundation of a durable archaic state structure. At the risk of platitude, peaceful production is more conducive to political and economic development than warfare. Whatever social stratification and political rankings warfare produced, it certainly acted to inhibit the economic development necessary to a class structure. It blocked the final emergence of a true peasantry and a genuine ruling class from out of primitive cultivators on bottom and super-attenuated tribal chiefs on top.

The Dahomean polity was further advanced along the path to state structure than was its underlying political economy. This was made necessary by its having to come to terms 'as an equal' in treaty agreements with the representatives of more advanced powers on the coast. But that very same unevenness of development signalled the existence of further barriers to development from below. All the elegance of formal institutional ramifications of the Dahomean polity—what Polanyi calls the culmination of Dahomean statecraft—was based, in large measure, on the military and economic demands of the slave trade. That is to say the refinements of the Dahomean polity emerged as the technico-economic dependence intensified. Colonial rule was a difficult outcome to avoid once a more primitive society became enmeshed in the international cycle of more powerful capitalist states.

Polanyi, however, employs different criteria than these for political and economic development. From a reading of the book one is tempted to conclude that the development of a formal monetary system and a stable currency were the hallmarks and final achievements of an archaic Dahomean state. In fact, money comes in the end to be a major criterion for Polanyi's concep-



tion of "... state society, where it ranks among the building stones of the early state and its solid social structure."<sup>30</sup> It may very well be that money functions primarily, in primitive and early state society, in other ways than as a means of exchange. So far as the mechanics of state formation are concerned, however, I cannot help feeling that to make state structure a consequence of the development of money, which the above passage, as well as many others, clearly asserts, is to turn things upside down. Whatever other functions money may have fulfilled in Dahomey it was certainly a consequence of the need to develop stable exchange relations with foreign powers. Polanyi begins by blasting the errors of previous interpretations of economists, economic historians and anthropologists: "The fountainhead of all these errors was to rank exchange as the economic relation."<sup>31</sup> To then conclude with money at the root of archaic state development strikes me as ironic.

The value of *Dahomey and the Slave Trade* is that Polanyi has opened the important questions, many of which are not touched in this review. Following Arnold he leaves us some provocative and imaginative insights into the role of treaty ports and by implication compels his reader to ask himself about contrastive modes of African state formation during the slave trade period. Dahomey is different from Islamic Hausaland, both of which are different from the remarkable city-states of the Niger Delta. Also, despite our differences, problems about the role of money in the cultural contexts of primitive and early state societies are, in themselves, certainly worthwhile and meaningful to the economic anthropologist. Polanyi's irony, however, is that his most imaginative and fruitful analyses make most sense within the framework of an approach to which he was himself so antagonistic.

A. Norman Klein,  
Sir George Williams University

*Short East African Plays in English*, ten plays in English collected and introduced by David Cook and Miles Lee. Nairobi and London: Heinemann, 1968. 7s.

A fair amount of the literature that comes out of Africa at the present moment is better judged by social criteria than by literary standards. The continent has to create in its various countries and regions, more or less from scratch, the written materials for future generations to read and act, for them to build a future literature on through the written as well as the spoken word. In such a situation the writing of a good school reader may be just as important as the production of a good novel. As long as we are dealing with a general need for literature at all levels we must be chary about applying critical standards of the 'world's great books' type. What is more, we must avoid the presump-

30. Polanyi, 193.

31. Polanyi, xiv.

New

**An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, Second Edition**

By A. J. WILIS

This study, concerned with the area of present-day Malawi, Rhodesia, and Zambia, provides within a general survey a balanced consideration of the long history of the African peoples. Early migrations, Portuguese settlement, and the Arab slave trade are described, and concise and objective analysis is made of Livingston's work and the part played by Rhodes and Johnston. The last three chapters cover the period from 1918 to 1965, bringing the study up to the Rhodesian U.D.I. crisis in the second edition. Wherever possible quotations from contemporary sources are used, and the book points the relevance of past events to present problems.

1967 406 pp. cloth \$7.00 paper \$3.75

**The Politics of the Third World**

By J. D. B. MILLER, Australian National University

The study examines those countries of the Afro-Asian bloc united by the common attributes of being non-European, non-Communist, and poor. Professor Miller is primarily concerned with international behavior of the Third World states and devotes particular attention to those aspects of their domestic affairs that contribute towards foreign policy. The general conclusion of the study is that Third World unity as a distinctive political force has not been achieved and that harmony of view within the Third World exists only on issues of symbolic importance such as colonialism and economic development.

1967 144 pp. cloth \$3.75 paper \$1.50

Recent

**The Oxford Regional Economic Atlas of Africa**

Prepared by P. H. ADY, Oxford University, and the Cartographic Department of the Clarendon Press, with A. H. HAZLEWOOD, Oxford University

1965 164 pp. cloth \$15.00 paper \$7.00

**Three Worlds of Development: The Theory and Practice of International Stratification**

By IRVING LORIS HOROWITZ, Washington University

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**The Springtime of Freedom: Evolution of Developing Societies**

By WILLIAM MCCOBB, Rice University

1965 312 pp. cloth \$6.00 paper \$2.25

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of its history. The change came in 1947-48—at the same time that California repealed its law forbidding such unions.

This is a provocative book that sees white South Africans as rounded human beings. It will infuriate most critics of South Africa, yet it has already been banned by the South African Government.

—Edwin S. Munger

**DAHOMY AND THE SLAVE TRADE: AN ANALYSIS OF AN ARCHAIC ECONOMY**, by KARL POLANYI in collaboration with ABRAHAM ROTSTEIN; foreword by Paul Bohannon (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966), 204 pages, \$5.50.

**THE FON OF DAHOMY: A HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE OLD KINGDOM**, by W. J. ARGYLE (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 210 pages, \$4.80.

In contrast to most books concerning Africa, the posthumous work by Karl Polanyi, in collaboration with Abraham Rotstein, concerns itself in depth with a specific historical event in a relatively small place in Africa during a relatively short period of time. The title succinctly summarizes the subject matter of the book; but it is only by reading the whole, chapter by chapter, that one appreciates the wealth of factors Polanyi took into account in examining the effects of the first large-scale intrusion of the modern slave trade into an inland African kingdom.

According to Polanyi, the modern slave trade began in 1672, though slaving on a smaller scale was carried on along the Gold Coast prior to that. By 1704, Whydah—a coastal territory of the vaguely described kingdom of Ardra—had risen to prominence because of slaves. Due to a multiplicity of factors, both African and European, Whydah organized an efficient "port of trade," became free of inland Ardra, and then attracted the attention of Dahomey. The bulk of the business of the port was not affected by the change of sovereigns in 1772, however.

In defining and describing his notions of primitive, archaic, and modern economies, Polanyi helps put Ardra, Whydah, Dahomey, and trading Europe in perspective. His analysis of the functioning of the Dahomean economy, characterized by "redistribution" in the state sphere and "reciprocity" and "householding" in the local, non-state sphere, is important in itself; it also aids in comparing and contrasting the traditional economy with the international part of trade at Whydah. The high point of the book is the discussion of sortings, ounce trade, gold ounces,

and cowries in West Africa. Polanyi demonstrates that it was the Europeans who had to make the greater adjustment in this international trade.

The book suffers from one major fault—poor organization. The historical narratives, for instance, are spread unpredictably throughout. Dates, even centuries, are sometimes unclear. While formal footnotes would have cluttered the pages, one wishes for more of them, as well as maps. (Citations within the text do, however, enable the reader to know most sources.)

*The Fon of Dahomey*, by W. J. Argyle, is complementary to Polanyi's study, providing historical and ethnographic information about the "Old Kingdom." Unlike Polanyi's book, Argyle's work is superbly organized, progressing with historical information from the establishment of the kingdom through the nineteenth century, followed by studies of various aspects of Dahomean kingship, local government, social organization including cooperative institutions, and religion. Information from publications by others is sorted, analyzed and incisively criticized, and presented with little ambiguity. There is a clear and much needed diagram of succession within the lineage; this is information which Polanyi also gives, but in a form much more difficult to comprehend. And unlike Polanyi, Argyle expands on materials deriving from Herskovits concerning cooperative institutions, in particular the work group known as *dokpwe*. For strictly Dahomean matters, Argyle's work is the better presented and much more carefully analyzed. He is not concerned with the non-African foreign relations of Dahomey to any great extent, however, and Whydah is only lightly touched upon.

Argyle uses an historical presentation even when discussing anthropological data. In addition to a straight account of who came from where and who ruled when and did what, the author endeavors throughout to demonstrate how the evolution of political, religious, social, and economic institutions was intertwined. He thus avoids errors Polanyi sometimes commits by relying too heavily upon the anthropological present. Argyle eschews anthropological jargon, thereby protecting readers in other disciplines from stumbling over terms.

Neither of the authors reports having done original field work. While the work of each would have been improved by on-the-spot investigation, the two books make readily available to readers important information deriving from French and English language sources, and new insights. Both deserve a place on a well-stocked African bookshelf, not only because

(Continued on page 54)



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cause of their intrinsic importance, but also because too little of the serious research on French-speaking Africa appears in English.

—Victoria Bomba Coifman

**FRENCH AID**, by TERESA HAYTER (London: Overseas Development Institute, Ltd., 1966), 280 pages, 20/-, paperback.

The Overseas Development Institute was established in 1960 as a non-governmental body "aiming to ensure wise action in the field of overseas development" using grants from the Ford Foundation, British institutions, and British industry to finance studies for that purpose. *French Aid* is part of a series that includes Thomas White's *German Aid*, an appraisal of US aid programming in Tunisia, and studies of British aid. To judge from the present volume, the series warrants attention as a key to understanding the aid policies and administrative machinery of several countries involved in Africa and the rest of the emerging world.

Miss Hayter begins with a historical survey that leads up to the French Government-commissioned Jeanneney report of 1963, which was intended to find a rationale for aid following the "completion of decolonization." The report criticized French procedures and recommended improvements, but its most significant sections were, in Miss Hayter's view, those which set forth the reasons for continuing French aid: humanitarianism, the *rayonnement* of French culture, and long-term political and economic advantages, in that order. These themes reappear in counterpoint to the day-to-day administration of aid by what the author calls a "bewildering diversity of institutions and organizations."

Functional analysis, supported by numerous statistical tables, creates order amid the diversity by sorting out the relationships among the political and economic organs of the French Government that are engaged in assistance programs. There is a two-page diagram of the leading participants—the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economics and Finance, the Ministry of State for Overseas Departments and Territories, and the Africa-oriented Secretariat of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Cooperation. Another useful adjunct is a long, though admittedly incomplete glossary of the French "alphabet agencies"—CAD, CREDIE, FIDES, FIDOM, SATEC, et al.—which have a hand in overseas development.

As a guide through the labyrinth, the book is probably unique in English. Less certain though more provocative are the author's thoughts on the nature and phi-

## STONES, SACKS AND COWRIES

KARL POLANYI (in collaboration with ABRAHAM ROJSTEIN): *Dahomey and the Slave Trade. An Analysis of an Archaic Economy.* 204pp. University of Washington Press. (American University Publishers Group). £2 9s.  
 W. J. ARGYLE: *The Fon of Dahomey. A History and Ethnography of the Old Kingdom.* 210pp. Oxford University Press. 30s.

Dahomey was one of the most interesting West African states. The rain forest of the Guinea coast is here broken at one point, where, for a variety of climatic reasons, the savanna characteristic of the inland Sudan almost touches the coast. Whoever occupied this funnel-shaped area controlled trade-routes which assumed exceptional importance as soon as Europeans arrived by sea. On the coast itself, however, the fringe of trading ports (of which Whydah and Porto Novo were the most notable) was largely protected by swamps. The state of Dahomey inherited these conditions in the late seventeenth century. The kingdom had no natural inland boundaries. It could only try to keep the funnel clear of the encroachments of the Ashanti to the west (a relatively easy matter), and of the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo to the east—a much harder problem. In the end the kings took permanently to the offensive. They were forced to annex the buffer state of Andra when this proved unable to keep open the route from the ports, and finally in 1727 they attacked Whydah directly to their state. The "port of trade" with its European factors was an entity alien to the archaic economy of Dahomey. Both in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries the kings tried to get the English to take it over. They wanted a stable subordinate administration in the port but could not themselves secure it. The English refused the task. The kings came to rely upon a Portuguese factor whose family became the Cecils to their Tudors.

The Oyo kingdom exacted tribute until 1818. Then for more than fifty years the weakened Yoruba states were themselves constantly attacked by the Dahomeyans, who penetrated to Abeokuta for the last time in 1873. The incessant military activity of Dahomey over two centuries led to an extraordinary cen-

tralization of the state. The wars fed the slave-trade and its returns upheld the state. Despite the blood-stained events of the annual "Customs", Dahomey itself presented a calm and orderly scene according to the most idealized accounts: there was a royal road, and markets with fixed prices, organized bordellos, even an annual census.

Both these books are new analyses of the documentary evidence. The study by Karl Polanyi, published posthumously, is the tour de force we should expect from this pioneer of economic anthropology. Dr. Argyle's is a more modest work which nevertheless acts at times as a corrective to Dr. Polanyi's occasionally over-ready acceptance of the sources. The Dahomeyan census as described by Herskovits (whereby bags of stones were kept in sacks marked with emblems for boys, girls, men and women), the astonishing running system of vital registration, the annual census of pigs, and much else, are perhaps a twentieth-century dream in large part. As Dr. Argyle says:

[Herskovits] himself tells us that "the account of the census and the taxation system of the kingdom . . . were volunteered on the very last day of his field-work in Abomey . . . [and were] given privately, in the seclusion of the second-storey room of [a] house . . .". When the account of the so-called census was read by M. Maupoil of the French colonial service to the ex-king Agadigbo and his suite "it took a little while for them to recover from the emotion which my reading to them of your article had caused".

Nevertheless the administrative inventiveness of Dahomey was genuine. The mobilization of the great force of palace women into an administrative structure mirroring that of the state was brilliant. Each official had his "mother" inside the palace who mastered his portfolio

and was his channel to the king. Every ambassador or trading negotiator was assigned a similar palace mother who would always be present during his business and would remember all previous phases of it. The creation by the kings of an elite female body-guard, which later became a regiment of the army (volunteers, virgins and pensionable), was a logical development.

Dr. Polanyi's economic analysis of the slave trade bears upon a more extensive region than Dahomey alone. The account of the development from barter to an exchange system based on cowries with a gold rate of 32,000 to the ounce is of great interest. A trade "ounce" valued in goods at only 16,000 cowries also existed. There were, then, two exchange rates: one in gold, and one in goods plus 100 per cent profit. Dr. Polanyi's skill lies in showing that these parallel rates made it possible to establish a firm accounting basis by which the factors could secure a consistent profit, while leaving undisturbed the fixed barter values established for goods on the coast by usage. The cowrie currency was a sophisticated device joining a world gold price to an "archaic" economic system.

Dr. Polanyi's book is then more than a study of Dahomey. It is a further step in the process of undermining ethnocentric assumptions in the approach to economics and for that reason merits a wider readership than Africanists alone. Neither of these books gives the full story of Dahomey itself. The key to that would lie in a complete modern analysis of the compulsive complementary dualism by which officials and structures were duplicated, and through which women were fully mobilized as the source of palace control. Perhaps Dr. Argyle whose own account is of interest will undertake this task for us.





## Egy anarchikus gazdaság elemzése

Polányi Károly: Dahomey és a rabszolgakereskedelem

Volt a tizenhetedik században egy állam, a kétszáz ezer lelkes Dahomey, amelyet a Guineai partvidék és a Niger folyó kanyarulata határolt. Szélessége mindössze 50 mérföld, lakosainak száma, akár Miskolcra, körülbelül 200 ezer. Kís területén, a történelemszok egybehangzó véleménye szerint a fekete világ legfejlettebb politikai szervezetét alakította ki a dahomey monarchia. Polányi Károly a New York-i Columbia egyetem 8 éve elhunyt világhírű gazdaságtörténésze arról az államról írta azt a munkáját, amely most jelent meg.

Az államigazgatás két tényezőn alapult. Egyrészt a központosított hivatalnakszervezet, másrészt ősi szokásokon. A fiatalabb monarchia és a régi családi településforma: a nagycsaládi udvar párhuzamosan létezett egymás mellett. A monarchia igazi megalapítója Agadzsza király volt, 1708 és 1740 között modern, nemzetközi kereskedő államrendszert hozott létre. A felvirágzó állam gazdasági alapját a rabszolgakereskedelem szolgáltatta. A 16-17. századi cukornádültetvényeket látják el olcsó munkanévvel 8 az jó üzletnek bizonyult. Az ember-kereskedelmi ürtől az ákörtől kezdve nyilvántartották. A pillanatszerű kereslet és kínálat azonban erősen befolyásolta az árut. Egy 1721-ből származó, Sierra Leone-i őrgyűjteményben például ez olvasható:

1 db egyszínű flanelszövet cse-reértéke 10 aranyrúd;

3 db festett vászon 12 aranyrúd;

1 db zsebkendőanyag 2 aranyrúd;

1 rabszolganő ára pedig 50 aranyrúd volt.

A korabeli törvényhozás is erőteljes intézkedésekkel támogatta az ültetvényesek és (közvetve) a rabszolgakereskedő államok érdekeit, mert az ültetvények a királyok és a legmagasabb rangú tisztviselők birtokába kerültek. XIV. Lajos idején Franciaországban minden kereskedőnek állami prémiumot fizettek az Amerikába exportált rabszolgák után. Néhány évtized alatt meglepőmódú a modern rabszolgakereskedelem. Ennek nagy vámszádja, Dahomey a rabszolgautánpótlást a szomszédos országokból, elsősorban az Oyoval viselt háborúból biztosította. A sok európai országgal, és a számos belföldi ügyféllel folytatott emberkereskedelem technikailag és pénzügyileg fejlett adminisztrációt igényelt.

Az évenkénti válósággal bültetett háborúk általános hadsereget kívánták. A legjobb katonák a király magánhadseregéhez tartozó női elefántvadászok voltak. A százezer hadserege bukoidóban az udvar körül lakott. Verandáji nyugdíj jogosultságot élveztek. A patriarchális társadalmi létesítmény egyik ellenmondó furcsasága, hogy a nők milyen jelentős szerepet tölthettek be a dahomey társadalom életében. A király körül 2000 feleségből állította ki a tilkosrendőrséget is, amelyet a hivatalnokai kart ellenőrizte, tökéletesen. Egyes dahomeyi asszonyok a minisztereknek magasabb államtanácsosi rangot kaphattak.

Mindent kettőszel sőt többszörös párhuzamossággal hajtottak vég-

re a királyi közigazgatási rendszerben. A hivatalokban minden hivatalnoknak megvolt a női megtelelője, az „anyja”, aki a királyi udvarban lakott. Mindenkinek szeszélyes kötelessége volt bizalmasan ismerni férfi megfelelőinek valamennyi közigazgatási ügyét és állandó ellenőrzés alatt tartani működését. Az irásbeliséget nem ismerő társadalomban különböző megszervezett évenként ismétlődő népszámlálások és állatösszeírások tartottak. Mindezt egyszerű, de praktikus módon, dobozokba rakott kavicsokkal oldották meg.

A kereskedelmi rendszer pénzügyalkodáson alapult. A pénzem az 1290-ben Marco Polo által Kína Jünnan tartományában is látott kauri-écska volt, amit helyi kofálmunkásokról exportáltak. Polányi az anarchikus társadalmi gazdasági viszonyain belül a cse-reviszonyok kialakulását is elemzi. Új gazdasági kategóriát alkot, amelyet kereskedelmi kapunak nevez el. Ezt funkcióiban és buékonyságában a jelenlegi nemzetközi piacokhoz hasonlítja. Dahomey 8 évszázadon át tartó virágzását a kereskedelmi kapu megőrzése és fenntartása biztosította. Hegemoniája Polányi Károly összegzése szerint jó példát arra, hogy „Áfrika mindégylet területén és mindégylet földszakban a kereskedelem lebonyolításának sikerét kizárólag a tengerparti terület és a hátszág politikai szervezeteinek szilárdsága határozta meg.” (Közgazdasági)

Iszlai Zoltán