

Com mittee
Outline of a Study Project on 'Economic Institutions,'
Columbia University (1956-58).
Interdisciplinary

(A) We regard ourselves as a work team in the broad field of the social sciences and interested in economic institutions, their development, structure, functioning, history and general setting in society as a whole.

The purpose is to elaborate and test an emergent theory of economic institutions which permits an analysis of the empirical data of history and comparative ethnography; supports similar emergences of theory in the treatment of economic data within cultural anthropology and sociology, as well as in related parts of the behavioral sciences.

(B) The Project has a staff (directors and executive secretary), an office, a budget, an accountancy. Members of work teams and other contributors can be of all academic grades, from senior professor to graduate student. As a rule, the Project refunds fares, long distance calls and other expenses incurred; exceptionally, salaried work is possible, over a limited period, and is paid at the usual academic rates. Multigraphs are prepared and circulated by the office.

The nucleus of the organization consists of the directors, Professors Polanyi and Arensberg; Executive Secretary Assistant Professor Harry W. Pearson; Consultant Professor A. Leo Oppenheim; as well as of Thomas Hazard, Terence Hopkins and Walter C. Neale.

We are thus primarily relying on our own people, from

the Interdisciplinary Project 1953-55. Mature scholars are invited to join, insofar as their own interests and work-plans appear to them to require what we can offer. Such a positive scholarly interest is the best assurance of effective participation. As a rule, participants undertake to contribute a paper within the term of a year. One meeting a month for members of all work teams (general seminar); separate meetings (ad lib) of work groups are envisaged.

(C) The nuclei of our work teams should draw upon outside participants to the extent and in the direction they may decide upon. Each team will formulate its way of operating, in consultation with the Staff.

(D) Tentative work program:

I. Primarily anthropological

"Prestige economy" versus subsistence economy.

Materials initially can be drawn from:

- (1) Integrative function of wealth concepts (Cora du Bois)
- (2) Notes on types of potlatch (Hazard)
- (3) Role of prestige in collecting of Pomo exports (Vayda)
- (4) Parallel of Pomo trade and Samian grain import in ancient Greece (Polanyi)
- (5) "Surpluses" as instituted through prestige methods (Pearson)
- (6) Sociological analysis of the substantive view of the economy (Hopkins)
- (7) Élite circulation of goods at equivalency rates (Tive of Nigeria)
- (8) Melanesia, Solomons (Oliver)

(9) Guatemalan and Yaqui leiturgies

(10) Report on Fiji (Sahl^{INS}~~ms~~)

(11) Skinner (if back) on Yoruba and Tiv.

II. Primerily historical

(A) Ancient Greece

This "team" consists initially of Martin Ostwald, Columbia University, Polanyi and Pearson, who prior to the 'Oikos controversy' wrote his "Master's" on trade, money and markets in Ancient Greece.

Main theme: Early development of economic institutions in ancient Greece.

Special subject: Origins of sale-purchase transactions; auction; kapēlikē.

(B) Mesopotamia

Trade, money and market in ancient Mesopotamia. To be organized with Oppenheim as consultant, Mr. Sweet to be introduced to institutional methods of analysis.