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POLITICAL ECONOMY

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluating Marxist approaches in anthropology at the beginning of the 1970s, Firth (55) suggested a distinction between "gut Marxism" [he was later to call it "visceral" (56)] and "cerebral Marxism." The cerebral Marxists were those French anthropologists (66, 105, 176) who had "opened up problems of a highly theoretical order" (55, p. 29); the gut Marxists were those American anthropologists who "feel deeply about the world situation, hold that it conforms broadly to Marx's theories of class conflict, base and superstructure, etc, and espouse his interpretation of historical development with moral fervour." Among the issues that concerned the guts were "problems created by Western economic and political dominance of lesser developed societies, of the significance of migratory labour for a colonial regime, of the genesis of proletarian consciousness, of class identity and struggle, of the political role of a peasantry" (55, p. 25).

Recent authors have accepted his distinction and some of his evaluations, even as they have devised more academically acceptable and confining labels. In her review of anthropological theory since the sixties, Ortner (131) outlines two versions of Marxist anthropology, placing both in the 1970s—"structural Marxism," essentially the cerebral Marxism of Firth with the addition of some British and North American authors; and "political economy," Firth's gut Marxism with the difference that it is given a more specific inspiration and problematic. Its inspiration comes "primarily from world-systems and underdevelopment theories in political sociology," and its problematic concerns "the effects of capitalist penetration upon . . . communities" (131, p. 141). Among the salutary aspects of political economy for Ortner are its openness to symbolic analyses, its regional focus, and its historical attitude, each of which also points to specific weaknesses. Political economy is "too economic, too

strictly materialist," does not have enough to say about "real people doing real things," and has too "capitalism-centered" an approach to history (131, pp. 142-44). Ortner offers this assessment as part of a call for practice theory; others writing from different points of view (103, 175) offer slightly different critiques, but many agree on two points: Political economy is world systems theory, and it has little to offer anthropologists.

Between the two appraisals and critiques, between gut Marxism and political economy, lies a history, or more properly, a set of histories. Basic to recent critiques is a *representation* of anthropological political economy; and we have recently been reminded (32) that representations are sensitive to the political, social, scholarly and aesthetic concerns of the representers as well as the activities of the represented. By offering an alternative account of the history of anthropological political economy, this essay suggests a wider set of concerns and problems and offers a different appraisal of its current status and potential within the anthropological literature.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Labels, Movements, Histories

Many anthropologists identify what they do as political economy; but the label is also, at least in part, ascribed, and the ascription is offered as part of a critique. With the move toward "political economy," authors imposed uniformity or boundedness upon a heterogeneous set of scholarly and political concerns. Part of the problem here concerns the place of "political economy" within the history of economic thought, its identification with classical political economy from Ferguson and the physiocrats through Smith, Ricardo, Mill, and—by way of a critique that started with classical assumptions (e.g. the labor theory of value) and took them to radical conclusions—Marx. Political economy could in this sense be distinguished from neoclassical economics, which represented a shift in concerns from the "wealth of nations" to the price of beans, from value as determined by labor time to price as determined in markets. Most anthropologists who appropriated political economy, however, did not thereby appropriate all of classical political economy. They appropriated Marx. Few, with notable exceptions (71, 72), looked to the physiocrats, the Ricardians, or the neo-Ricardians.

Of more immediate importance for this essay is the range of ideas, projects, methods, and works that fit within an anthropological political economy. What has come to be called political economy is the developing product of a variety of intellectual and political movements, some Marxist and some not, some Wallersteinian and some not, that have come together as a set of arguments—with other anthropological "political economists," with other

historically minded social scientists, with other styles of anthropological work.

An essay of this length cannot fully explore each of these intellectual currents (see 86, 95, 99, 121, 165, 185 for other treatments; for more complete discussions of dependency and mode of production theories, see 25, 57, 68, 78, 87, 89, 128, 135, 184, 192). We can appreciate some of the depth and diversity of scholarship within anthropological political economy by looking at the work of the four scholars mentioned by Marcus & Fischer as practitioners from the 1960s (103, p. 84): Wolf, Mintz, Nash, and Leacock. Unfortunately, this ignores older work (82, 137, 194) as well as contemporaneous work done outside the United States (7, 19, 87, 206–208). It will, however, allow us to appreciate a wider range of perspectives and move beyond the simple identification of political economy with the 1960s and 1970s or with world systems theory.

Wolf, Mintz, Leacock, Nash

The proper place to begin with Wolf and Mintz is not in the 1960s but in the 1940s, in association with Steward's Puerto Rico project (113, 142, 170, 201). In the publication that resulted from that study, Wolf and Mintz explicitly distanced themselves from Steward's cultural ecology and called their approach "cultural history" (170, pp. 31–33). Superficially, their description of such an approach appears to be an early statement of an interest in "the effects of capitalist penetration upon communities," but their project offered a more radical challenge. The contributors to *The People of Puerto Rico* did not simply assume that their communities had their "own structure and history," (131, p. 143) on which a later history of capitalist penetration could be imposed (e.g. with the American occupation, or the investment of some new form of capital a few years before fieldwork). As was clear from their sketch of 400 years of Puerto Rican history, they were arguing that the *formation* of their communities was intimately connected with a larger history of colonialism, empire-building, international trade, and state formation.

A number of features characterized this early cultural historical approach as well as much of the later work of Wolf and Mintz:

1. It was historical, in the sense that it attempted to see local communities as products of centuries of social, political, economic, and cultural processes, and in the sense that it understood those processes in global terms.

2. Nonetheless, unlike later world-systems theories, the goal of historical investigation was not to subsume local histories within global processes but to understand the formation of anthropological subjects ("real people doing real things") at the *intersection* of local interactions and relationships and the larger processes of state and empire making. One object of their investigations in these early years was to understand social and cultural difference in terms

of a variety of such conjunctions, as in their essay on *compadrazgo* (116) or in their typological essays of the 1950s (107, 195–198, 204).

Even as their objects of inquiry changed [e.g. the life history of a Puerto Rican sugar worker (111), marketing in Jamaica, nation formation in the Caribbean (110) or in Mexico (199)], the interest in the formation of anthropological subjects at the intersection of deeply rooted local and global histories remained.

Like Wolf and Mintz, Leacock was educated at Columbia. She brought to her anthropology an explicit Marxism that affected her early themes and interests. Her early work on Montagnais-Naskapi was an attempt to show that the demarcation of hunting territories was a product of the fur trade and that the Montagnais-Naskapi case could not be used as an argument against primitive communism or for primitive conceptions of property (91). In this investigation were prefigured three themes that were to motivate her later work (53, 92–94, 96): evolution; the origins of inequality, especially gender inequality; and the effects of colonialism (and, later, of state formation). These interests, too, are the concern of political economy, but they involve a different focus from that of Wolf and Mintz. The central theme here is less the understanding of local histories in global terms than the understanding of evolutionary transformations and their effects upon particular classes and groups of people.

Unlike the other three, Nash was not educated at Columbia and did not receive her degree in the early 1950s. Coming out of the structural functionalist tradition of Chicago in the 1950s, she was part of the large group of scholars from Harvard and Chicago working in Chiapas and Guatemala. Her monograph on her early work in Amatenango in Chiapas is much more obviously “cultural” than any of the works by the others we have discussed, but it also reflected the structural functionalism of her earlier training, stressing the importance of responses to social and cultural stresses and strains (119). Her contributions to political economy in anthropology began later than those of the others. She has been engaged in two principal activities. First is her work among tin miners in Bolivia, which began in 1969 and resulted (in 1979) in a monograph that remains one of the most impressive ethnographies written within a political economic framework (120). Second is her organizational and ethnographic work in feminist anthropology, exploring questions such as the division of labor within and among families, the structure of multinational corporations, and the impact of recent international economic trends on the participation of women in the work force in advanced capitalist and underdeveloped countries. In addition to her own work on such topics, she has played an important organizational role in encouraging and collecting new anthropological work along these lines (121–123). Like Leacock, she has made feminist concerns central to political economy; unlike

her, she has been less interested in evolutionary questions than in the impact of recent developments in the capitalist world upon women and men. More than the others discussed here, she has always taken a fundamentally ethnographic approach to political economic problems.

Radical Critiques

The movements to which Firth directed his attention had their more immediate roots in the late 1960s and early 1970s and involved a rich combination of projects. As in other periods in the development of anthropology, intellectual and political thought developed within a material, or institutional, infrastructure. A full history of the institutional matrix would require an account of the different university settings; departmental and interdepartmental student cultures and reading groups; the teach-in movement, in which anthropologists were active (200); the participation of anthropologists in radical groups and parties; and the emergence in 1971 of Anthropologists for Radical Political Action (ARPA), which published a newsletter edited by “collectives” at various departments and began to organize groups of symposia for annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association. AAA meetings themselves became annual occasions for lively discussions of proposals condemning the Vietnam War or criticizing anthropologists for engaging in counterinsurgency research (95, 203).

It was this ferment and the intellectual movement associated with ARPA symposia that Firth dubbed gut Marxism. Although some of its intellectual products—critiques of reigning anthropological concepts and practices, reflections on the relationship between anthropology and colonialism, and reinterpretations of cultural and political materials (1, 2, 18, 69, 82, 148)—appeared in established journals, many papers were informally circulated or published in new, alternative journals that began to appear in the 1970s, some of which went on to become established journals as well. It was in this period that anthropologists began to use “political economy” to refer to their perspectives (100, 101, 125, 150), generally (though not always) as a gloss for Marxism. By the appearance of the 1978 special issue on political economy in *American Ethnologist*, the subfield can be said to have achieved official existence.

Dependency and World Systems Theories

One of the literatures first encountered by new groups of radical scholars was dependency theory, especially with the popularity of Frank’s work on Latin America (60, 61). Published in the later 1960s, his two most influential books drew on two traditions: (a) the “Monthly Review” tradition emerging from the 1950s, especially the work of Baran (8, 9); and (b) the development of

dependency theories in Latin America, which were rooted in the work of the Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA) (26). By the 1960s, intellectual centers in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and elsewhere had become the foci for left-wing critiques of the ECLA economists, pushing their theories toward more radical analyses of capitalism and the development process itself.

Central to their work was the idea that the developed and underdeveloped worlds were structurally, systemically linked, such that the process of development in one region required a process of underdevelopment in another. Beyond that, dependency theories were characterized by argument. Among the various "schools" and points of view (29), two stand out. The first, associated with Frank, was the more extreme of the two. It saw the structures of development and underdevelopment forged by capitalism as rigid. Major events within the developed or underdeveloped world—economic crises, political independence, the development of new products, the emergence of new types of political regimes and economic policies, and so on—could not affect the basic structure of dependence and underdevelopment as long as the capitalist system remained intact. The second, associated with F. H. Cardoso (25–27), stressed movement and change within the structures of dependence. It also paid attention to the forms of dependence in particular countries and regions, and the different possibilities for "dependent development" or structural transformation the various forms might enable. Throughout, the emphasis was on the particularity of local situations, the "internalization of the external" (27).

Unfortunately, neither the entire range of dependency theories nor the argument among scholars reached the United States intact in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The version of dependency theory that was first consumed (25) in the United States was the more extreme version of Frank. While his works were widely available in the late 1960s, Cardoso & Faletto's more sophisticated survey, written at the same time as Frank's early works, was not translated into English and published in the United States until 1979 (27).

In many ways, Wallerstein's world-systems theory (186–188), especially in its earliest elaboration, was a North American version of Frank's dependency theory, not only in his explicit association with Frank but in his basic assumptions. The primary difference was that while dependency theorists were interested in the underdeveloped world or periphery, Wallerstein was most interested in the system as a system and in dynamics and processes occurring in the developed core. Furthermore, Wallerstein's most important innovation was a well-researched historical account of the origins of capitalism (187, 188). Dependency theories had implied and called for a history; Wallerstein wrote one.

Despite such differences and innovations, Wallerstein's world-systems

theory shared certain assumptions and defects with Frank's dependency theory. Both stressed structural stability. While both pointed to the deep (16th-century) historical origins of the world capitalist system and wrote historical analyses, the histories remained surprisingly static. All dynamism was to be found in the developed core or metropole; developments in the periphery or satellites were dependent upon initiatives taken in the core. Furthermore, a variety of events and structures within the system were explained in terms of the functions they served for the development of the core or the maintenance of the system as a whole. In this, Wallerstein, Frank, and their followers replicated the functionalist logic of a social science they were otherwise subjecting to radical critique.

After the initial consumption of Frank's work, more dynamic and historically sensitive versions of dependency theory emerged during the 1970s, partly owing to the impact of Marxist criticisms and partly owing to the growing awareness of the range of dependency arguments in Latin America. Likewise, with the institutionalization of world-systems theories, they developed a range of perspectives not easily subsumed within a neologism like "Wallersteinian." Specific issues such as class formation, slavery, South Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and the like engaged the work of anthropologists, sociologists, and historians who could not be accused of the functionalist logic associated with a caricatured version of world-systems theory. Within this broader group of dependency and world-systems work, many anthropological contributions to political economy can be located (34, 73, 149–151, 166, 167).

Modes of Production

Other anthropologists contributed to Marxist critiques of that literature, however. Within the Marxist literature, the dominant interpretation for most of the 1970s came from Althusser and his followers in France. Here Firth's cerebral and gut Marxisms, or Ortner's structural Marxism and political economy, are joined. Anthropologists interested in underdevelopment did not necessarily embrace all of Althusserian Marxism, nor did they necessarily read Althusser. Many came to the literature via Godelier (66, 67), Terray (176), Meillassoux (105, 106), or Rey (139, 140), not all of whom were Althusserian, despite their Marxism and their nationality (87).

Perhaps the most important contribution of Althusser to radical scholars interested in underdevelopment was his interpretation of two concepts: mode of production, and social formation. In their diffusion through journals and the practice of fieldwork, such concepts often became unhinged from the structuralist philosophy of Althusser himself and were applied to concrete problems of historical and current development. In these more practical applications, the mode of production concept offered the possibility of a more

differentiated understanding of capitalism than did the extreme versions of dependency and world-systems theory. This understanding was applied both to the history of capitalism and to the current situation of underdeveloped regions in the world economy. In historical surveys, rather than subsuming all parts of the world within a global capitalism from the 16th century onwards (as both Frank and Wallerstein had done), scholars working within a mode-of-production perspective saw a more prolonged and uneven transition to capitalism. The incorporation of regions within colonial or mercantile empires did not necessarily impose upon those regions the laws of capitalist development. Rather, scholars postulated a complex relationship, or "articulation," between the dynamics of noncapitalist and capitalist modes. Likewise, work with current populations would concentrate on groups who seemed to fall outside of a strictly conceived capitalism because they did not fit within a capital/wage-labor relationship. Here, too, a concept of the "articulation" between noncapitalist and capitalist dynamics was important. In particular studies, both approaches might be practiced, as authors tried to understand the history of capitalism in their regions and to place those regions within late-20th-century capitalist development.

We might begin with attempts to approach the articulation of noncapitalist and capitalist modes historically, analyzing the development of commodity markets, the imposition of colonial rule, the investment of different forms of capital, and so on. Here one of the most influential theorists was Rey (22, 57, 140), who envisioned three stages in a transition to capitalism. Despite the apparent uniformity of any stage scheme, he tried to fit his within a concern for the variety of possible transitions to capitalism, each conditioned by the local social relations at the time of contact and the forms and processes of the imposition of capitalism itself. Rey stressed the importance of writing a "double history," arguing that transitions should be viewed not solely in terms of the structure and logic of capitalism but also in terms of the structure and logic of the noncapitalist modes in which capitalism was taking root. His approach retained a teleological character, however, as the "double history" he called for had a single, capitalist, end.

Nonetheless, many scholars attempted to write a history of the regions or communities in which they were working in terms of the imposition or emergence of capitalism, conceiving that history as a changing articulation of noncapitalist and capitalist modes of production (4, 24, 134, 143, 158). Major structural breaks or markers might be placed on that process, but they were not necessarily conceived as stages in Rey's sense. Rather they might be tied to different moments in the history of global capitalism, connecting with the work of Amin, Mandel, or the later work of Frank and Wallerstein; or they might be tied to major political or economic developments in the region or country studied (political independence, the development of new commodity

markets, revolutions, and so on). This group had affinities with the more historically oriented dependency theorists, who also attempted to place regions or populations within the history of capitalism in particular countries.

Although some of the historical writers followed Rey's lead in attempting to write a variety of histories of transition, others turned to classic Marxist texts on the development of capitalism in Europe for inspiration, especially the section in Volume 1 of *Capital* (104) on primitive accumulation, and Lenin's studies of the Russian peasantry in the early 20th century (98), but also the transition debates among Marxist historians from the mid-20th century (48, 81). In its approach to peasants and simple commodity producers, the literature stressed social differentiation and explored the extent to which classes were forming among them, producing rural bourgeois and proletarian elements (10, 42, 45, 46, 68, 97, 141, 155). Others stressed the lack of differentiation, or the failure of differentiation to lead to the dissolution of peasant or artisan communities—either because of the special conditions of peripheral capitalism or as a result of conditions within the communities themselves (5, 157).

With this literature we begin to move from historical approaches toward those concerned with current populations. Here authors concentrated on groups and types of activity that did not fit within a strictly conceived capital/wage-labor relationship. Attempts to understand those groups and activities in terms of mode of production would label them noncapitalist and explore their internal coherence and logic as well as their relationship to the dominant capitalist mode. Scholars were particularly active in research on peasants and artisans (14, 15, 35, 40, 52, 68, 97, 105, 106, 141, 143, 155, 191, 205) and on women's work within households (12, 44, 51, 76, 90). The two literatures have separate histories, although recent attempts to integrate them offer some of the most promising developments in political economy (13, 36, 37, 43, 59, 74, 75, 146, 154). Linking the two throughout has been a common set of assumptions concerning the importance of "domestic" labor or of "reproduction," the sphere of labor that was removed from the wage-labor market and was not engaged in the production of value (e.g. peasant production of subsistence crops, women's housework, etc).

Alternatives

One of the most important strengths of world-systems and mode-of-production approaches was the placement of anthropological subjects within larger historical, political, and economic movements, the attempt to understand the impact of structures of power upon them—the slave trade, the imposition of colonial regimes, the development of postcolonial states, the cyclical boom and bust cycles of international markets, the development of particular capitalist enterprises such as plantations, and so on. They gave

greater theoretical and methodological weight to the criticism of community studies that had begun with Julian Steward and his students (102, 169), stimulating regional and more broadly comparative studies. And they contributed to the resurgence of historical investigation in ethnographic inquiry.

Unfortunately, both dependency theorists' and mode-of-production theorists' understanding of anthropological subjects in terms of capitalist processes too often slipped into a kind of functionalist reasoning, explaining the existence of traditional or noncapitalist features in terms of the functions they served for capital accumulation (source of cheap labor power, source of cheap goods, market for dumping excess goods, and so on). In a related way, the emphasis on structural determination was often too strongly determinative, leaving too little room for the consequent activity of anthropological subjects.

In addition, conceptions of history and of structural relationships were often related in a highly abstract fashion. Even the more practical applications of mode-of-production theory shared with Althusserian Marxism its more theoretical proclivities: Rather than serving as a means to the analysis of concrete social groups—communities, classes, ethnic groups, parties—mode-of-production analysis too often served as an end in itself. Although mode-of-production theorists offered an advance in their refusal to reduce economic, social, and political phenomena to capitalist requirements and dynamics, they often encapsulated their understanding of contradictory phenomena within the abstractly conceived laws of motion of noncapitalist systems. Thus social and cultural processes were conceived in terms of the lawful relationships among structures, seen as prior to and removed from human action.

Recent critics of political economy have made similar points. What requires stressing here is that these criticisms were offered from *within* political economy in the 1970s and early 1980s, stimulating the development of new approaches, reaching out to neglected Marxist traditions, and connecting with earlier and concurrent anthropological work that could not easily be placed within either dependency or mode-of-production frameworks. Disquiet about the functionalist nature of much of this work was forcefully expressed in early reviews of Meillassoux's study of capitalism and the domestic community (129, 138). Individual scholars began to express reservations about our understandings of ethnicity, peasantries, or history (25, 30, 31, 78, 83, 85, 87, 117, 143, 153). And publication collectives that had served as conduits for the translation and publication of French Marxism began to express serious reservations, most visibly in *Critique of Anthropology's* "French Issue" in 1979.

This critical current was stimulated in part by the appearance of work by other French scholars such as Bourdieu; but one of the more important influences came from scholars outside the French tradition, the most visible of which was Thompson (181). His criticism of Althusser addressed most firmly

the problem of abstraction and of structural determination, calling for a more concrete and open-ended approach to the activity of working people in the history of capitalism. Thompson's was one of several critical appraisals that placed a concern for "structure and agency" on the agenda; as he did so, he also opened up for Marxist anthropologists a Marxist tradition that had been dismissed by the Althusserians—the tradition of British Marxist historiography as developed by Hobsbawm, Hill, Hilton, and Thompson. Some of their work, especially that associated with the transition debates (81), had been incorporated within the literature on modes of production. Other work—especially Thompson's study of the early English working class, his studies of 18th-century political culture (177–180), or Hill's work on 17th-century culture and politics (79, 80)—had been underrepresented in the bibliographies of anthropological political economists.

Given the growing dissatisfaction with mode-of-production arguments in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this work and that of other British Marxists such as Williams (193) became increasingly popular, opening up Marxist studies of culture that drew upon Gramsci and Williams, showing more explicit concern for class, culture, and politics. The new work was increasingly prominent in anthropological political economy. In it, we find case studies of working-class or peasant experience and politics, community formation, the creation of cultural traditions, hegemony, and resistance (11, 23, 38, 47, 50, 58, 118, 130, 145, 152, 156, 161, 168, 172, 173).

This work has its own strengths and weaknesses, which in many ways complement those of the world-systems and mode-of-production literature. Where the mode-of-production literature often paid too little attention to the activity of human subjects, such activity is now placed at the center of analysis. Where the mode-of-production literature was too abstract, new work places concrete groups—and individual actors within them—at the center of analysis. Where world-systems theory had too little to say about local situations, many scholars now begin and end with the local.

In each of these ways it might be argued that some of the new work has gone too far—too little contextualization of the activity of local groups and individuals, too little theoretical reflection on the structures and systems within which people act, too little attention to the structures of power that shape and constrain resistance: too much agency, too little structure. In this, some scholars have consumed British historical materialism one-sidedly. They have read carefully Thompson's emphasis on the activity of the British working class but have paid too little attention to his treatment of the industrial revolution and of the changing British state in which that activity took place. It is insufficient to assert that transformations are not structurally determined but result from human agency. At this level, such statements are true but trivial and quickly become a kind of theoretical slogan. What requires

stressing is the unity of structure and agency, the activity of human subjects in structured contexts that are themselves the products of past activity but, as structured products, exert determinative pressures and set limits upon future activity.

We can point to two related bodies of work that help us move beyond these apparent difficulties. One is the lineal descendent of mode-of-production theory as it has emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s. The internal criticisms of the period pushed scholars beyond articulation. Many maintained their interest in theoretical issues, but they stated that interest in terms of *forms* rather than *modes* of production, invoking fewer assumptions concerning abstract laws of motion. The most interesting work of this sort concerns simple commodity production (6, 16, 17, 28, 39–42, 62–65, 84, 157–160, 162, 163).

A related group has moved toward more ethnographic and historical studies of particular regions or populations, concentrating on concrete problems and issues such as ethnic formation and relations, labor migration and remittances, household formation, food production and supply, and various structures and processes of colonialism (21, 35, 36, 43, 70, 85, 126, 127, 132, 158). As they did so, they began to connect with the cultural history that preceded world-systems and mode-of-production approaches, developed alongside them in the 1970s, and offered new advances in the 1980s (34, 108, 109, 112–115, 124, 136, 149, 150, 202). In our earlier discussion of this work, we stressed its concern for the formation of anthropological subjects at the intersection of local and world history. In this it offered a much more radical understanding of history than had either the mode-of-production theorists or their more recent critics.

Although authors within the mode-of-production literature often constructed their analyses in historical terms, the history of the noncapitalist modes themselves was too often taken for granted. Basic concepts were borrowed from European history and applied to apparently noncapitalist groups along with assumptions about their basic social relationships and dynamics. This was most true of those who used Chayanov uncritically, imputing essentialist notions about use value and reproduction orientations to populations for whom such notions were scarcely applicable. But the basic conceptual problem plagued those who were more careful about the application of “First World categories” to “Third World realities” (147). The problem was too often stated as one of assessing the “impact” of capitalism on noncapitalist modes, as if those noncapitalist modes had their own history, structure, and logic that preceded the intervention of “capitalism” and could be understood apart from its history, structure, and logic.

Likewise, those critics of mode-of-production theory who sought to recover the agency of human subjects outside the bounds of structural determination too often removed those subjects from the very historical processes in which

they had acted. Ironically, the theorists who were least likely to search for authentic human pasts removed from history were the dependency and world-systems theorists, but they too missed the radical possibilities of a cultural historical vision. Where Wolf, Mintz, and others concentrated on the *formation* of anthropological subjects at the *intersections* of global and local histories, writers like Frank and Wallerstein saw a variety of institutions and practices—peasant communities, ethnic divisions, household structures, and gender relations (60, 77, 164)—as the unambiguous *products* of capitalism.

In this sense, Wolf's most recent book (202) serves both as a culmination of the cultural historical vision outlined in the early 1950s and as an enabling text for a variety of political economic studies. It would be appropriate to read the book either as an example of world-systems theory (103, 131) or as another text in the mode-of-production literature, for it undermines both. In the first case, aside from the fact that it offers explicit criticisms of Wallerstein and Frank, it examines global processes without enclosing them within a system. In the second, there is no attempt to conceptualize articulating modes of production. Rather, mode of production becomes a tool for thinking about the history of capitalism outside of Europe without imposing evolutionist labels upon that history.

One may question whether evolutionism is entirely avoided (144) and whether the concepts are adequate for getting at the intersecting histories Wolf takes as his subject (3). Nonetheless, in practice, Wolf avoids both the unilateral imposition of capitalism upon anthropological subjects and the illusory search for cultural authenticity (33). In his discussion of the reactions of various North American groups to the fur trade, or the reformation of African societies into slave-capturing and slave-providing centers, he provides excellent case studies of the unity of structure and agency. He traces the imprint of a series of intersections of world and local histories in the very constitution of anthropological subjects, calling for a radical reformulation of the way we think and talk about history. Critics who identify the book with world-systems theory, or who counter that, "A society, even a village, has its own structure and history, and this must be as much part of the analysis as its relations with the larger context within which it operates," (131, p. 143) miss this fundamental point. Admirable as attempts to keep the local and particular in view may be, this particular statement of the attempt depends upon a logical and historical separation of the "local" and the "larger context" that is no longer tenable.

PROJECTS

The statement that anthropological subjects should be situated at the intersections of local and global histories is a statement of a problem rather than a conclusion. The problem imposes upon scholars who attempt to understand

particular conjunctions a constant theoretical and methodological tension to which oppositions like global/local, determination/freedom, structure/agency give inadequate expression. They must avoid making capitalism too deterministic, and they must avoid romanticizing the cultural freedom of anthropological subjects. The tension defines anthropological political economy, its preoccupations, projects, and promise.

I conclude by discussing six recent works that deal with this tension in different ways. I do not imply that they are the best books published in recent years; others could easily have been selected (20, 38, 47, 49, 54, 58, 156, 182, 190). My aim here is to indicate the kinds of approaches that political economic anthropologists take to the relationship between global and local analyses (Stoler and Behar), to history (Vincent and Warman), and to culture (Ong and Mintz).

Stoler and Behar

This pairing is the one most likely to surprise. Although Stoler's regional study (171) seems to be a quintessential political economic monograph, Behar's study (11) of a single village would seem to be beyond the bounds of most anthropologists' definitions of political economy. Yet Behar's book draws much of its inspiration from Thompson, especially his richly suggestive article on the web of use rights among European villagers in open fields regions (179), and therefore holds an important place within a broadly conceived anthropological political economy.

In her study, Stoler takes an entire region (the plantation zone of East Sumatra) as her focus, although she also presents material from an ethnic Javanese village in the region. Viewing that region as a concentration of many determinations—global, colonial, inter-island, Indonesian, regional, and local—she adopts a multistranded research strategy that includes work in Dutch archives, interviews with retired Dutch administrators and foremen, research in Indonesian archives, extensive travel through the estate region interviewing actors at various levels, and a local village study. In this, and especially in her use of materials and persons at the colonial center to illuminate her study of a particular region, she has provided a methodological guide for others who would attempt regional studies in terms of global processes. Yet she also makes an important theoretical contribution to the problem of the relationship between structure and agency. By concentrating on changing forms of labor control over a 100-year period, she shows how estate managers' plans for labor control were at least partly determined by their perception (at times accurate and at times inaccurate) of danger from the laborers. Attempts to resolve that problem (e.g. through the establishment of rural households) would in turn create new problems for labor organization. On the other hand, she also shows how the activities of laborers (e.g. in a

squatter movement) could have unforeseen consequences for the organizational capacities and incapacities of the laborers themselves. Thus the structure of estate agriculture at various periods is shown to be the result of actions and reactions by Dutch colonialists, Malay notables, Indonesian nationalists, Javanese laborers, and Javanese squatters. But the structures seldom represented the intended outcomes of action for any one of the groups, and they carried with them consequences that none of the actors could foresee.

Much of this story is told at the regional level, and action is recorded as the action of organized groups (e.g. unions) or through the commentary of sympathetic and unsympathetic observers. This results from one of her methodological decisions—to use the silences and preoccupations in elite commentaries to indicate areas of disquiet, to signal disorder within apparent colonial order. Had she been able to supplement these sources with more of the voices of those from below, either through a fuller integration of the village of Simpang Lima into the historical account or through life histories, her impressive study would have been even richer.

Behar's elegant portrait of the Leonese village of Santa Maria del Monte is especially interesting because the village was able to maintain its open fields until the early 1980s, after her main period of fieldwork. Rather than presenting an account of the impact of the Franco regime on the village, or of the integration of the village into a wider economy through labor migration, or of the transformation of village life with the enclosing of the open fields and the recent suburbanization of the town, she attempts to recapture the economy and culture of an open field village in a region that has practiced strictly partible inheritance. In the process she provides a detailed account of noncapitalist peasant life and livelihood. Her account centers around the concept of use, beginning with the "archaeology" of a village house, which leads directly into a description of inheritance practices and strategies and the ideology of equality, and, most importantly, the web of use rights in village agriculture and herding. The result is an ethnography of the commons, one that enriches our understanding of historical instances of open field agriculture elsewhere in Europe. She also shows that the concern for use *rights* does not necessarily imply an exclusive concern for use *value*. The economy of use rights in Santa Maria does not preclude commodity production and exchange, and the villagers show themselves to be quite acute and calculating in matters of inheritance, in which everything is expressed in monetary values.

In her emphasis on economic and cultural continuity, she draws upon events that have occurred over the past 300 years. Partly because they are not drawn into a chronological narrative, crucial movements such as the 19th-century liberal reforms and the impact of the Franco regime are often mentioned but are not fully explored. Continuity is stressed, but the differentiating effects of, for example, the move toward hiring herders in the late 19th

century are not emphasized. Had some of the processes of change within a continuous system of open field agriculture been more fully integrated into her account, the extraordinarily rapid changes that came with enclosure might have seemed less abrupt.

Vincent and Warman

With Vincent and Warman, we explore two historical strategies. Vincent (183) concentrates on a relatively short period (37 years) during which capitalism was introduced and took root in the Teso district of Uganda. Warman (189) concentrates on the experience of peasants in eastern Morelos since the Mexican Revolution, but he also recounts changes that had occurred during the previous 300 years.

Vincent's book provides an account of the conquest and colonization of the area that was to become the Teso District; the creation of an administrative hierarchy, first through Baganda agents and later through Iteso chiefs; the competition between Catholic and Protestant missions and their role in the creation of colonized subjects; the introduction of poll taxes and compulsory labor drafts; and the introduction of compulsory cotton cultivation. Her concentration on a few decades, marked at the beginning by the advent of conquest and at the end by the British removal of a number of Teso chiefs, is strategic. To make sense of her period, she must look backward to forms of trade and settlement, dimensions of social and political organization, and forward to the social and political consequences of the changes introduced in the first three decades of the 20th century. But the period remains crucial because it represented a fundamental break with preexisting forms and because it established certain basic social and political relationships that were to have lasting consequences.

Of these social and political relationships, one of the most important was the establishment of a nascent peasantry and proletariat. Vincent's description of these processes is especially good: When a colonial regime creates a peasantry through the imposition of a poll tax, the transformation of property relations, and the introduction of cotton cultivation, or when it creates a supply of laborers who are escaping tax obligations and labor drafts by working on estates, it seems bizarre to accuse the person who studies such processes of imposing European class labels on non-European folk (165). Nonetheless, given the period with which Vincent is working, the question with which she concludes—why did Teso workers not acquire class consciousness?—is surprising. Situations of genuinely cohesive working-class consciousness are rare enough and would not be likely in Teso of the early 20th century, characterized as it was by growing regional disparities, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, cotton booms and busts, and administrative transformations. The fundamental characteristic of this period, and of the social groups that resulted from it, can be surmised from Vincent's reference

to “nascent” class: A differentiated peasantry and a segmented proletariat were being created in the context of uneven development and regional differentiation.

Among the books that have placed Latin American peasantries within regional, national, and international structures of power, Warman’s study of eastern Morelos (first published in Spanish in 1976) remains one of the most impressive. Like Vincent’s study of Teso, it is historical, but Warman’s use of history differs in two important respects. First, Warman is most interested in delineating the characteristics of the present. The work is based on a large-scale cooperative project of ethnography and oral history in several villages in the region, and most of his data concern the villagers’ present situations and their memories of the revolution and its aftermath. Nonetheless, his interpretation of the present depends upon an historical sketch. Unlike Vincent’s Ugandan example, the introduction of capitalism in Morelos cannot be concentrated in a relatively brief period. Warman therefore presents several moments in the formation of eastern Morelos: the colonial period, in which he discusses the formation of sugar estates, the remaking of indigenous communities and the settlement of workers on the estates; the late 19th century, in which the entire region was controlled by a single estate; the revolution; and the post-revolutionary years, in which the estate was dismantled, *ejidos* instituted, and new social groups and state institutions entered into the lives of rural cultivators. In each period, Warman pays careful attention to the social relations of a differentiated peasantry, outlining the different kinds of rural cultivators (those on estates, those off; those with land, those without, etc), and sketching the different kinds of domestic group that emerged in particular periods and situations.

In the debates of the 70s among Mexican social scientists concerning the positions, roles, and fates of peasants, Warman was often characterized as a populist or peasantist. To the extent that he draws inspiration from Chayanov, or to the extent that he pays special attention to peasants as historical actors, such a characterization is accurate enough. Warman does not draw his inspiration solely from Chayanov, however, and his treatment of peasants is far from romantic. In rejecting those Leninist understandings of peasants that would make them disappear into other class categories, he may underestimate the extent of class formation within peasant villages. But his treatment of the historical formation of a local peasantry and the character of its connections with other classes and the state is one of the most satisfying available—both for the detail with which it analyzes the peasantry itself and the sophistication with which it treats structures of power.

Ong and Mintz

I conclude with two recent political economic attempts to understand cultural phenomena. Ong’s (130) is an ethnographic analysis of spirit possession

among young Malay women working in electronic assembly plants; Mintz's (114) is an historical examination of the changing place and meaning of sugar in the diet of the English working class.

Ong's title and the question with which she begins her Preface ("Why are Malay women workers periodically seized by spirit possession on the shop floor of modern factories?") (130, p. xiii) connect her work with other attempts to view cultural phenomena such as spirit possession and devil contracts as responses to the introduction of capitalist relations. Unlike Tausig's earlier work (174), however, Ong does not reduce her understanding to a simple opposition between precapitalist use value relations and capitalist exchange value relations. Rather, she begins with an examination of the colonial creation of a "Malay" peasantry, its early experience of commodity production, and explores the changing character of village life within the modern Malaysian state. By studying differentiation and class formation in villages as well as changing domestic relations, she outlines the emergence of a group of young women who, because of their class positions in the villages and their alienated positions within households, are pushed toward wage work outside the home. That work simultaneously offers the possibility of increased independence and the experience of stigmatization within the household and village.

When Ong follows these women to the shop floor, then, she has located them as historical subjects in terms of particular experiences of class, gender, village, and household life. When she writes, "I wish to discover, in the vocabulary of spirit possession, the unconscious beginnings of an idiom of protest against labor discipline and male control in the modern industrial situation" (130, p. 207), her analysis remains largely suggestive. She recognizes that the phenomena of spirit possession are too complex to be viewed simply as a response to or commentary on capitalism. Words like "unconscious" and "beginnings" call for a multistranded analysis that is not fully attempted here. Ong's careful placement of the young women within a complex set of contradictory experiences makes such an analysis possible and should carry discussion of such phenomena to a new level.

Mintz's book could be seen as a commentary on each of the dimensions of political economic work considered in this section. It takes a novel approach to the relationship between the local and global by turning insights gained from decades of study in the Caribbean toward a study of transformations in England. Its approach to history is one that attempts to encompass some 250 years from the 17th to 19th centuries, a period that covers the establishment of capitalism and the creation of a proletariat in England. We concentrate here, however, on his analysis of cultural change, specifically the transformation of diet and the growing predominance of sugar in English life. His approach to this change is intimately connected with his choice of unit of analysis and of historical periodization and method. He begins with an outline of the place of

sugar in the creation of a world economy, the creation of plantation economies in the Caribbean, and the increasingly powerful position of England in the sugar trade and in the colonization of the islands. Though his study is explicitly placed in this context, the focus is on the changing structure of consumption. Here he traces changing uses of sugar from late medieval to industrial contexts, from differentiated uses as medicine, spice, decorative substance, sweetener, and preserver to more widespread and less differentiated use as a sweetener. He also examines the transition from exclusively upper-class use to more general, population-wide use.

The change in diet, and of the place of sugar in diet, are explicitly connected with the change in class structure—the proletarianization of working people and consequent changes in domestic groups, work and eating habits, and forms of sociality within and between households. Although the data on diet are not presented in terms of regional and social differentiation, Mintz makes a powerful case for understanding cultural change in terms of changing circumstances of class, work, and power. He therefore offers an important criticism of those who would divorce their understanding of culture from relations of class and power, and he shows that we can approach such complex connections through historical reflection upon apparently simple objects like a bowl of sugar.

CONCLUSION

Although most of these studies place their subjects within the formation of a world economy and the development of capitalism, none of them is simply asserting that there is a wider world, and none is overly concerned with the articulation of modes of production. Each places the social and cultural phenomena it investigates within an examination of circumstances associated with getting a living and the structures of power that shape and constrain activity. Taken as a group, they give evidence of the range, vitality, and promise of studies pursued within anthropological political economy, and they offer an effective response to those who would proclaim too quickly and eagerly its demise. More importantly, they demonstrate that anthropologists can creatively deal with the theoretical and methodological tensions imposed by the attempt to place anthropological subjects at the intersections of local and global histories. In the process, they offer a fundamental challenge to those who discuss culture, history, and practice without sufficient consideration of class, capitalism, and power.

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