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RE-THINKING AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY:

A contribution to the discussion of the roots of under-development*

by

Edward A. Alpers

[In writing this essay I owe a direct intellectual debt to a number of people who have helped me to clarify my own thinking on this subject. Giovanni Arrighi, Walter Rodney, and John Saul were instrumental in shaping my initial thoughts about development. I benefited greatly from the discussions of my students in my graduate seminar on 'Trade and Production in Pre-Colonial Africa' and in my undergraduate seminar on 'Western Expansion and the Making of the Third World.' Among these I am particularly grateful to Robert Cummings and David Lloyd for many stimulating sessions together, for their encouragement in writing this essay, and for their frank criticism. Finally I must thank Professor Temma Kaplan (U.C.L.A.) and Dr. Andrew Roberts (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) for their helpful readings of the first draft. None of them are entirely blameless for what follows.] Author's note

The development of African historiography has been marked by the search for African initiative and agency; it is this focus on what Africans have done that defines the field. Recognition of this fact is critically important and its propagation must continue in all situations where ignorance and racism still prevail. Africans were active agents in forming their own history and not merely passive creatures. But does this fundamental recognition represent the sum of African history? Can we not move beyond this base line of definition to a more meaningful appreciation of Africa's past? We can, of course, and there is a growing corpus of work which is demonstrating the many possibilities within the field. But the fact remains that African history is still inordinately dominated by political history and that most of this consists of reiterating the obvious point that Africans were instrumental in making their own history.

* Earlier versions of this essay were presented to an African History seminar at the University of California, Los Angeles, and to a joint History and Economics seminar at the University of Dar es Salaam.

Nowhere is this impoverishment more obvious than in the study of African economic history, which Basil Davidson has recently characterized as the Cinderella of the field.¹ To take a recent representative and influential example to illustrate this point: Does it really further our understanding of the pre-colonial trade of East and Central African to emphasize, as Richard Gray and David Birmingham do in their enthusiastically received volume on this topic, that the achievements of African traders, skilled entrepreneurs all, more perhaps than any other set of facts, should effectively destroy the stereotype of a pre-colonial Africa prostrate and passive before the forces of the outside world?² Even to a non-Africanist academic scholar the issue appears to be a thoroughly flogged horse.³ Why, then, are most Africanists unable to escape from this intellectual bind? Perhaps the onus of colonialism and colonial historiography still weighs too heavily on our minds. Perhaps we are captives of conventional Western bourgeois scholarship, rooted as it is in Western values and concepts. Whatever the explanation, the time has come to move on to consideration of more fundamental problems in African history, in this context to those concerning the economic and developmental history of Africa.

For me, and for others considering the same set of questions, the stimulus for this inquiry has its roots in the profoundly disturbing inability of most African states to fulfil the promise of the first decade of political independence. Almost everyone was swept up in the euphoria of independence, so that it was natural for historians to see African history entering a new era of fulfillment in the 1960's. Not so today. Only the blind or the foolhardy can ignore the basic problems of underdevelopment besetting modern Africa, although the struggle against these continues on a number of fronts on the continent. For the historian, this climate poses a basic challenge to earlier Africanist perceptions of Africa's past. The nature of this challenge has been neatly stated by T. O. Ranger:

*Can African help itself or is it powerless until the whole pattern of the world has been changed by revolution? And looking back into the past this revived pessimism casts doubt upon the ability of African peoples to shape or affect their fate over hundreds of years. The Africanist historian...who emphasizes African activity, African adaptation, African choice, African initiative, will increasingly find his main adversaries not in the discredited colonial school but in the radical pessimists.*⁴

Who are these shadowy figures, these apostles of doom? A beginning might be made with Basil Davidson. Best known as the foremost popularizer of the Africanist perspective, Davidson has also tended increasingly to sound the challenge which marks the thinking of the radical pessimists, particularly in his observations on twentieth century Africa.

As things stand today, with some exceptions, the recolonization of Africa is going ahead in spite of every signal of disaster. Whether by ideological penetration, the operation of the "terms of trade," the evolution of new forms of capital investment from outside, or the promotion of "middle-class elites," this recolonization takes place upon the general program, as it is called, of building capitalist economies in Africa. But to build capitalist economies in countries which do not have capitalist systems means to build capitalist classes. In the circumstances of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this in turn means building capitalist classes - putatively, ruling classes - which remain and must remain the immensely weaker partners of the capitalist classes of the rich countries.

. . . . It must be clear that the further fastening of the African continent into the general economic structure of the West can be achieved only by means of a growing Western penetration - a penetration which, in turn, can only mean an increasing Western interference or control, a process of recolonisation. ⁵

When Davidson moves back in time, however, he arrives at an analysis of the institutional framework of African development which perceives its problems as arising from a quite different set of historical factors. Those who have read *The African Genius* will know the argument, but it bears repeating here in its more recent form:

The argument, and one cannot say it too often, is about institutions Men do not act in a vacuum. They act according to the possibilities, and the possibilities are historically determined Historically, it can be seen that the institutions of Africa were already in crisis, incipient but nonetheless there, even before African societies felt, with colonialism, the full impact of the industrialized

outside world. Their structures were beginning to fail in efficacy even in the face of Africa's traditional needs: their possibilities, in short, were becoming too narrow to contain the needs and pressures of human growth. . . . No doubt, certain outside factors were involved in this . . .

. . . All I am saying here is that many of the current troubles of Africa can be traced to structural inadequacies which first began to appear in the early nineteenth century. They were basically pre-colonial; they are inherent to Africa's need for new forms and frameworks of economic growth; they are part of a historical problem. To think, accordingly, that all would have been well with Africa if only the Europeans had refrained from invading the continent is to indulge in romantic mythology. It is to suppose that the structures of the past - highly successful though they were in promoting the human conquest of Nature - could simply go on containing the very growth they had created. By 1850, on the contrary, many African societies were beginning to feel the need for structural change of a more or less radical depth - even without the perils they were soon to face from European penetration or invasion.⁶

This interpretation marks a pronounced departure from Davidson's earlier work on pre-colonial history. Here he provides us with an entirely internalized African crisis, as well as with a clear line of historical continuity from pre-colonial to colonial to post-colonial Africa. His argument deserves careful consideration and testing against the findings of future research into the pre-colonial economic history of Africa. But there still remains a gap in his own perception of the roots of African underdevelopment with respect to the impact of colonialism, which he sees as aggravating this indigenous crisis. For this colonialism he still sees as something new, a distinct break with the past. He does not confront, I think, the obvious set of external institutions which were affecting Africa's relations with the West before the imposition of formal colonial rule, even though he has elsewhere provided a concise sketch of the non-productive effects for Africa of the slave trade which dominated those relations for most of the pre-colonial era.⁷ In short, his discussion avoids the possibility that there were also institutional links shaping Africa's development - that is, leading to underdevelopment as a result of the long history of economic relations with the outside world.⁸

Precisely this sort of analysis of the historical roots of underdevelopment in Africa has recently been suggested by Walter Rodney. Rodney argues much more pessimistically than does Davidson that from the very beginning it was European initiative which determined the institutional framework of Afro-European relations - Europeans sailed to Africa, rather than the reverse - and that the dialectic operating between different stages of capitalism and Africa have led to Africa's present state of underdevelopment.⁹ In point of fact, almost everyone who has written about pre-colonial African trade has nodded in the direction of European initiative with a fully aware realization of constant European initiative and with a clear-sighted recognition that the pre-colonial relations led directly to the colonial subjugation of Africa by Europe. One of these is Rodney himself, whose pioneering volume on the Upper Guinea Coast has been sharply reviewed by major scholars who have not - however valid their specific criticisms of his book - apparently seen this most important point.¹⁰ Another is Jean Suret-Canale, whose earlier overview of the pre-colonial history of West Africa has met with a less enthusiastic response than his complementary study of the colonial period.¹¹ The willingness of Western scholarship to ignore the arguments presented by Rodney and Suret-Canale concerning pre-colonial West Africa apparently arises from the fact that they are both recognizably Marxist.

That one need not be a Marxist to embrace this seemingly disquieting thesis, however, is demonstrated by a reading of K.O. Dike's seminal study of *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-85* (Oxford, 1956), in which he clearly recognizes the process by which the trading activities of 500 years led in the nineteenth century to the political subjugation of West Africa to Europe.¹²

Indeed even the economic consequences of this process have been appreciated by a non-Marxist scholar in one of the standard introductions to West African history, where Christopher Fyfe writes: "Hence the slave trade was an unequal exchange, in which expendable consumer goods were bartered against a means of production. Even apart from its moral aspect, therefore, it was economic exploitation."¹³ Yet it is inevitably the moral aspect of the slave trade - however important in Europe's earlier economic relations with Africa - which obscures most discussions of the problems raised by Rodney and Suret-Canale. Indeed, most analyses of the trade lead inexorably away from its economic significance, despite determined attempts to confront the issue. Thus John Fage's recent essay on the impact of the slave trade in West Africa reveals itself as an essay about political, rather than economic, development which is thoroughly imbedded in Western notions of progress, as has so brilliantly been demonstrated by C.C. Wrigley.¹⁴ Let us return to Rodney, then, so that we may come to grips with what he is saying.

Beginning in the late fifteenth century with the fact that Europe had developed and was prepared to take advantage of a new world superiority in maritime and associated military technology,¹⁵ Rodney emphasizes the important point that 'Europe had a monopoly of economic intelligence of the international exchange system seen as a whole, for Western Europe, was the only sector capable of viewing the system as a whole.' The combination of these two factors, technological and conceptual, and the coterminus evolution of a highly developed mercantilist system within Europe, gave Europe its initial advantage over the rest of the world.

In effect, therefore, Europe took the first steps towards transforming Africa, Asia and America into economic satellites. It was at the very outset of international trade that there was established that radial pattern with Europe at the centre and very few independent connections between the non-European territories

Rodney concludes this introductory set of propositions by stating that 'This element of subordination and dependence is crucial to an understanding of African underdevelopment today, and its roots lie far back in the era of international trade.'¹⁶

When he turns his attention to the restructuring of African economies that was the result of African responses to this European initiative, Rodney refers to the 'pseudo-integration' in the Third World today which is compatible with economic dependence on the West in order to sharpen our awareness of his contention that in pre-colonial Africa this same phenomenon 'took the form of the interlocking of African economies over long distances from the coast, so as to allow the passage of human captives and ivory from a given point inland to a given point on the Atlantic or Indian Ocean.'¹⁷ Expanding his argument, he goes on to contend that 'Just as the slave trade and overseas trade in general had multiplier effects on European development, so it had multiplier effects on African underdevelopment.' Perhaps too sweepingly he contends that this trade drew not at all upon local production, so that any restructuring it engendered was 'dependent upon an overseas market.' In a critique of Andrew Roberts' sensitive reconstruction of Nyamwezi trade in the pre-colonial era,¹⁸ Rodney argues that

regional trade provided the 'capital' for the long distance ivory trade, but from then on any expansion of local manufacturing was incidental to rather than the goal of the local economies caught up in the international trading network, and the expansion was very limited. This kind

*of conceptualization is completely lacking
in reconstructions of African history.*

With the Gray and Birmingham volume as his prime example, but with the full understanding that it is representative of a whole series of studies of pre-colonial African trade, he observes that 'there is nowhere expressed any awareness that the professionalization of trade *per se* is no great thing, and that it meant not development but subordination of the local economies in the case of Africa's relations with Europe.'¹⁹

Rodney's final contribution in this provocative essay begins with the suggestion that 'the industry and skills which actually existed and were destroyed' as a result of the penetration of European manufactures 'were probably of less consequence than the loss of development opportunity.' He then returns to the studies in Gray and Birmingham where 'the basic weakness is failure to distinguish between an independent economy in evolution and one that is being transformed into a satellite. In the former, commercial activity is entirely the consequence of the level of development of the productive forces, whereas in the latter it is mainly a reflection of external needs.' To this he relates yet another point of great significance for the economic history of Africa, one which takes direct issue with intimations arising from both the colonial apologists and the mainstream modernizers. 'Any trade in Africa which was an extension of European production was largely irrelevant to technological advance within Africa.' African traders from the Upper Guinea coast right around the eastern seaboard of the continent, 'busied themselves selling goods that they had not produced. They were agents for distributing European imports and for organising the export of a few staples which were not in demand within the continent . . . Their contribution to technological development was nil, because they were on the fringes of production.'²⁰ In conclusion, both of his own presentation; and of this extended discussion of his ideas, Rodney suggests that 'The notion that the first four centuries of Afro-European trade represent the roots of African underdevelopment is doubly attractive because there was an actual carry-over of some of the mechanisms that connected the two spheres of metropole and dependency.' These included insurance companies, shipping companies, and certain African social formations, most notably the compradors, African and Asian, without whom the pre-colonial Afro-European trading system could not have operated and who 'at the start of the colonial period were already performing that function in the dependent trade economy.'²¹ Like Davidson, but with a considerably different thrust that is consistent with his own interpretation of pre-colonial African economic development, Rodney provides us with continuities between the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras in Africa.

Is Rodney's too strong a case? I think not, although I also think that it requires some modification and enlargement and that it does not satisfactorily raise, let alone answer, all of the major issues in African economic history. These issues divide themselves into two categories: those concerned with the impact of international trade on African economic development and those concerned with the independent development of indigenous African economies. Because they are more accessible to immediate analysis, the remainder of the paper will deal primarily with questions relating to trade. But as I hope to demonstrate thereafter, it is our almost total ignorance of the history of indigenous African economic systems which presents us with the most pressing challenges for future research.

First, Rodney's wider framework does not preclude the Africanists' concern with African agency, as both his own and Dike's monographs make plain. It does, however, importantly define the limitations placed upon those initiatives in the arena of Afro-European trade. Africanists will need to integrate their particular findings within the much larger and more clearly articulated setting of the radical pessimists. Otherwise, the assumptions of Western scholarship will lead them, often unwillingly, into the comforting belief that the pre-colonial economic specialization arising from this trade was in some vague sense leading to 'progress' or 'development.' And here, unless one subscribes entirely to Davidson's analysis, the only way to resolve this conviction with the realities of Africa's underdevelopment in the twentieth century is to lay the blame exclusively upon the impact of the brief period of formal colonial rule as Davidson and many others did not so many years ago. With colonial rule thus treated like the Atlantic slave trade as something of an aberration in the process of developing Africa along capitalist lines through mutually beneficial trade, it becomes possible again to see African entrepreneurs in the twelfth century as harbingers of 'progress' towards 'development.' Nowhere is this tendency more clearly exposed than in Cohen's essay and in Gray and Birmingham's introduction.²²

Perhaps it is unfair to single out these historians for criticism, but it is their commendable desire to take the field of African economic history beyond the 'trade and politics' stage, which is essentially just another form of political history, that has revealed the critical weaknesses in their assumptions. The most important of these are theoretical, the general unwillingness of most Africanist historians to recognize that modern economic theory can be as critically important a tool for reconstructing African economic history as are the descriptive and theoretical literatures of the other social sciences for other aspects of the African past. Not that the theories and assumptions of other disciplines do not contain their own solecisms and distortions.

Historians must, however, inform themselves of this literature and use their own critical training as historians if they are to make any genuine progress in unraveling Africa's economic history. Indeed, the dangers of not confronting these and other relevant theoretical approaches to problems of economic analysis in historical perspective are very real, for the ideas of Western society - and therefore of Western scholarship - are shot through with the dominant economic assumptions of that society. To take one example of particular importance for Africa, Harry Magdoff has lately made the point that the Ricardian theory of comparative costs had become 'almost universal dogma in Western culture, to the point of becoming accepted as the common sense of our times.'²³ It is uninformed common sense such as this that is presently retarding African economic history.

Historians of Africa who flinch at this suggestion might well follow the advice of Joseph Schumpeter:

What distinguishes the "scientific" economist from all the other people who think, talk, and write about economic topics is a command of techniques that we class under three heads: history, statistics, and "theory." The three together make up what we shall call economic analysis.

Of these fundamental fields, economic history - which issues into and includes present-day facts - is by far the most important. I wish to state right now that if, starting my work in economics afresh, I were told that I could study only one of these three but could have my choice, it would be economic history I should choose. And this on three grounds. First, the subject matter of economics is essentially a unique process in historic time. Nobody can hope to understand the economic phenomena of any, including the present, epoch who has not an adequate command of historical facts and an adequate amount of historical sense or of what may be described as historical experience. Second, the historical report cannot be purely economic but must inevitably reflect also "institutional" facts that are not purely economic: therefore it affords the best method for understanding how economic and non-economic facts are related to one another and how the various social sciences should be related to one another. Third, it is, I believe, the fact that most of the fundamental errors currently committed in economic analysis are due to lack of historical experience more often

than to any shortcoming of the economist's equipment. History must of course be understood to include fields that have acquired different names as a consequence of specialisation, such as pre-historic reports and ethnology (anthropology).²⁴

Moreover, in a footnote to his second point, Schumpeter stated that 'Owing to the unreliability of "theories" on this subject (i.e. of non-economic facts), I personally believe the study of history to be not only the best but the only method for this purpose.' All of this is heady stuff for the historian, but it must be recognized that Schumpeter's exhortation to study history was not a denial of the relevance of theory, but a corrective to theoretical constructs which were not based in historical experience. As Joan Robinson has warned in sounding the same note, economic theory exerts a much more powerful influence over our lives than most people are prepared to admit.²⁵

Where, then, in a field which has had little substantive historical analysis and which therefore has not yet articulated its own body of theory, can the struggling economic historian of Africa turn for this sort of theoretical assistance? There are, I think, three principal, related areas of theoretical knowledge which bear upon the historical problems of economic development in Africa which have dominated this essay from the beginning: (1) theories of economic growth; (2) historical and theoretical studies of economic underdevelopment; and (3) studies of specific problems in the economies of modern African states.

The literature on economic growth is so vast that it is difficult to know where to begin, the alternatives being to wade through the classics from Adam Smith on or to latch on to what is most current in contemporary journals without bothering to gain some knowledge of what lies behind them. In the long run, both are important; but it is even more important not to solve the problem by turning to the standard texts dealing with African economic development, rooted as these are in the dogma of orthodox neo-classical economic thinking and the heritage of imperial domination.²⁶ Rostow should be read, if only to confirm for oneself the inapplicability of his thesis for Africa. Perhaps the best beginning can be made with Paul A. Baran's seminal study of *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York, 1957), which brings into sharp focus many of the historically observable economic facts of African history. To take one example, Rodney's brief comment about the loss of development opportunity which marked the history of Afro-European trade finds a much more complete and persuasive theoretical expression in Baran's volume, as does his argument that these relations were controlled by the interactions of two elites, European and African.²⁷

A much briefer essay on economic growth by Ignacy Sachs similarly conforms to and informs what the historian already knows about the facts of African economic history.²⁸ Sachs postulates that the growth potential of a country, which translates readily into any of a number of pre-colonial socio-political structures, depends upon four factors: 'the structure of the economy, the place in the international division of labor, the natural endowments and the strategy of development adopted,' by which he means 'the policies pursued, and in particular, the policies aiming at a higher rate of investment without impairing the popular consumption.' In order to realize a country's 'growth potential' and to encourage its expansion, it is therefore necessary to insure that growth is 'proportional' and that no one sector of the economy either surges ahead or lags behind, thereby creating productive bottlenecks, idle capacities, excessive stocks, and non-productive goods. 'The reader will sense that we have in mind the "luxuries" turned out or imported for the moneyed elites, taken in their broadest meaning, together with sumptuary dwellings,' (Italics in original.) Sachs then cites Piero Sraffa's *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* (Cambridge, 1960) - that 'engine of destruction', as Clairmonte has styled it²⁹ - to remind us that luxury goods are 'not used, either as instruments of production or as articles of subsistence, in the production of others.'³⁰ When, however, the luxuries sector grows at the expense of the other sectors of the economy, the result is not 'proportional growth' but 'perverse growth.' In the short run high rates of expansion of gross national product and of employment are obtained. But such a process does not add to the "growth potential" of the country and 'the long-run prospects of development are endangered by it.'

Sachs concludes by contending that this is what has happened in post-war Brazil, an interpretation which is subscribed to by an increasingly wide circle of Latin Americanist scholars.³¹ But it should not take much effort on the part of Africanist historians to recognize how applicable these ideas are for the pre-colonial trading economies of Africa, not to mention those of independent Africa. And if the point of Sachs' argument is grasped, it becomes no longer possible to sustain quite so confidently, if at all, the belief that pre-colonial African societies inextricably bound up in trade with Europe were marching resolutely on the path to proportional economic growth.

A third example from another seminal economic thinker that raises fundamental questions about the structures of pre-colonial African societies comes from Michał Kalecki.³² Kalecki begins his dense and demanding essay: 'the paper purports to develop the idea that the institutional framework of a social system is a basic element of its economic dynamics and thus of the theory

of growth relevant to that system.' His criticism of the idea that there is 'something like a general theory of growth' is rooted in the conviction that 'theories are being created which may raise problems of great interest but are not very conducive to understanding what actually happened, is happening, or should happen.' With respect to underdeveloped countries he suggests 'that the central problem here is at whose expense the country is to be developed,' while cautioning that the critical problem 'of sacrificing present for future consumption is involved here.' This is obviously a matter of policy, as Sachs also recognizes. But given a desire to develop an economy to its full potential, the fact remains, he contends, 'that to each social system there corresponds an appropriate theory of growth.' His demonstration of this proposition is achieved 'by showing that the same formula for the rate of growth of national income should be interpreted in a different fashion depending on the social system we deal with.' Kalecki's examples are a socialist, a laissez faire capitalist, and a 'mixed' underdeveloped economy, but the same sort of exercise - if not the same formula - could be attempted for any specific pre-colonial or modern African socio-economic system if only we can develop adequate conceptual tools for getting at these systems. 'We see here again,' Kalecki concludes, 'that the theory of growth of a social system of a certain type should reflect its crucial problems,' past, present and future. Surely this is what any relevant African economic historiography seeks to accomplish.

Sachs and Kalecki both raise fundamental problems which for the Africanist require a much more realistic understanding of African socio-economic systems than has prevailed to date. That Africa presents its own particular problems of analysis goes without saying. But there is much to be learned by the historian who looks beyond Africa to work which has been done in other parts of the Third World.³³ The most suggestive single historical study is Andre Gunder Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, 1967, revised edition, 1969), while the first two essays on 'The Development of Underdevelopment' and 'Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology' in his *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution* (New York, 1969) provide an important theoretical statement together with a basic bibliography for extending one's perspective to still other parts of the Third World.³⁴ Impressive, too, is the way in which the thrust of Frank's thesis has permeated other interpretations of Latin American economic history.³⁵ Powerful though Frank's theoretical formulations are, however, they have not gone unchallenged on the Left, as recent discussions by Leclau and Arrighi demonstrate.³⁶ Indeed, recalling Schumpeter, it is important to recognize that this interpretation of Latin American economic history has emerged because scholars have looked carefully at the economic history of

Latin America, and not because they have imposed a specific set of theoretical constructs upon that history.

More generally, there is a considerable literature reflecting a spectrum of ideological positions which emphasizes that in the modern period the terms of trade between the developed and underdeveloped nations have produced and continue to produce a dynamic relationship whereby the rich nations get richer and the poor nations get poorer. Singer, Myrdal, and Jalee, to name only a few, have all made this point in one manner or another.³⁷ But the most significant theoretical analysis of this problem is Arghiri Emmanuel's *L'echange inegal: essai sur les antagonismes dans les rapports économiques internationaux* (Paris, 1969; English translation as *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*, New York, 1972), which takes Ricardo's theory of comparative costs to task by confronting it with an integrated and thereby reformulated combination of the theory of international value and the general theory of value. That such a theoretical departure is accessible to the historian of Africa is more than adequately demonstrated by the way in which Magdoff utilizes recent historical studies of England's trade with Portugal in the early modern period to demolish Ricardo's thesis on the basis of the very historical example upon which it was initially constructed.³⁸

When at last we return to Africa, we find very much the same ideas beginning to come to the foreground after years of lurking in the shadows. The most impressive corpus of analytical and historical studies for the colonial and post-colonial periods have been the product of a single scholar, Samir Amin. Dealing with the Maghreb, Francophonic West Africa, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Amin has necessarily faced a number of historical variations within the framework of a common colonial and neo-colonial experience.³⁹ All the more reason, then, to deal seriously with his theoretical study, which both follows in the path of other Marxist analysts and is rooted in scrupulous examination of the historical record in Africa.⁴⁰ Another African economist who is squarely confronting problems of economic analysis from an historical perspective is Justinian Rweyemamu, a Tanzanian. Rweyemamu's debate with Leslie Stein on the role of international trade in underdeveloped countries crystallizes the differences between neo-classical and Marxist analysis and methodology, and demonstrates, I think, the distinct superiority of the latter for the student of African economic history.⁴¹ From Baran to Rweyemamu there is much to be learned, not by simply swallowing whole what is being said, but by confronting their ideas and interpretations with the discernible facts of African pre-colonial economic history.

Not surprisingly, and as must be evident by now, these studies bear mainly upon historical developments in the colonial and post-colonial periods of African history, which is why I have attempted - like Rodney - to indicate that these notions are equally valid for dealing with the problems of African development in the pre-colonial era. But when we step back from the immediate problems facing African economies, and therefore from the domination which the developed countries of the world today exercise over those that are not, we can see that Rodney's argument does not help us to understand problems of African economic development before the era of European contact. Accordingly, a satisfactory approach to African economic history must also deal with the phenomena of pre-colonial Afro-Arab and Afro-Asian trade, especially if Africanists are not to slip back into a romanticized idealization of the potential for international trade to lead to proportional development were it not for the imposition of formal colonial rule by European powers. As prominent an advocate of the beneficence of colonial rule as D. K. Fieldhouse admits that the economic domination of capitalism would have prevailed in the Third World, as it does today, even without the establishment of political control by the West.⁴² What I wish to suggest now is that similar economic domination was already being exercised by Arab and Asian capital before Europeans came on the African scene with their own mercantilist system.

Africanists have always assumed that the tran-Saharan trade with the Islamic world in the pre-Portuguese period was beneficial to the Western Sudan because it led to a process of state formation. Bovill, Fage, Awe, Ifemesia, and Fyfe all operate on this premise in some of the most widely used introductions to the history of the period.⁴³ In his main works on West Africa, Davidson embodies a sensitivity to problems of growing social stratification, but never squarely faces the economic issue. He, too, essentially regards this only as a period of creative development, although he now appears to be in the process of reconsidering this position.⁴⁴ Even Suret-Canale falls into this trap:

*Until the sixteenth century, black Africa, following its own path of development, had already produced developed civilizations; in the eleventh century, at the time of Ghana, the comparison with contemporary western Europe had been in many spheres to its advantage. Contacts with the outside, essentially with the Arab world, had had beneficial effects on this development.*⁴⁵

Wrigley's essay has exposed the fundamental weaknesses of this sort of historicism in a closely related context. To date, however, the only serious attempt to deal with the economic history of the trans-Saharan trade has been made by the Indian scholar, K. Madhu Panikkar. His conclusion, which he states at the very beginning of a lengthy chapter on the subject, is that 'Colonialism in Africa did not originate in 19th century Europe. The Sudan from the earliest times had a colonial economy. The characteristic of a colonial economy is that trade rather than production dominates it.'⁴⁶

The rest of Panikkar's chapter explores this idea thoroughly, but it clearly represents only a beginning, the details of which may well be challenged upon further examination. Furthermore, if his colonial analysis is to gain acceptance, it is important to explore with equal care the economic structures of the Arab world to which the Western Sudan was so closely linked. Briefly, these can be characterized as urban and commercial, their prosperity being 'bound up with that of long-distance trade,' which provided the links between the great Arab cities and the nomadic peoples of the desert, as well as with the African peoples of the Western Sudan.⁴⁷ The remarkable fourteenth century Arab historian-philosopher, Ibn Khaldun, observed this to be the case in the Maghreb in his day, while the landmark studies of Goitein reveal the development of the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie in the four previous centuries.⁴⁸ That the medieval Arab commercial economy did not develop into a fully capitalist system reflects both structural problems within the Arab world and the confrontation with the rising mercantilism of Europe. Nevertheless, the decline which seized most of the Arab world after 1500 should not obscure the fact that throughout the period during which Afro-Arab trade dominated the international relations of West Africa, the economic advantages were weighted largely in favor of Arab capital and Arab merchants, and that there are no indications that this relationship was turning in Africa's favor towards the end of this period.

The same thesis holds true for East Africa in the pre-Portuguese era. Here, in fact, the comparison with Europe's domination of trade with Africa is even more striking because of the technological similarities. For all that the camel gained fame as the 'ship of the desert,' its importance in enabling Arab merchants to carry the initiative in trade to the Western Sudan can in no way be construed as a product of a superior technology of transportation. In the Indian Ocean, however, the development of the lateen sail and the early knowledge of the operation of the monsoon winds clearly were the result of man's technical mastery over his environment. Thus in both

East and West it was outsiders who sailed to Africa rather than Africans who sailed to their shores. As the distinguished maritime historian, Michel Mollat, has recently argued, 'in its total relations to the heart of the Indian Ocean community, Africa played a passive role of a colonial type, which was securely established in the course of centuries previous to the arrival of the Europeans.' In exchange for rare and precious primary goods, the East African coast was provided with some foodstuffs, cotton goods, and 'an important proportion of manufactured objects and luxury items destined for the rich merchants of the coastal settlements.' Trade was in the hands of foreigners, some of whom settled on the coast to form one of the elements of a later Swahili civilization, while the interior was little affected except in certain areas like the gold producing regions of Zimbabwe. 'During these centuries, Africa submitted to exchanges often unequal.'⁴⁹

Nor was this situation changed after the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean caused the collapse of the existing Arab commercial system. Not that the Portuguese entirely replaced it themselves, for after their initial successes in exploiting the gold trade of Southeast Africa at the beginning of the sixteenth century, they were an ineffective economic force in East Africa except insofar as they were able to control the predominant system of Asian international commerce which arose to replace that of the Arabs. Only from the middle of the eighteenth century did European mercantilism begin to make a serious dent in the trading economy of East Central Africa, while along the Swahili coast Asian merchants held their own with increasing numbers of Europeans during the nineteenth century right up until the era of formal colonial rule.⁵⁰ Indeed, the Asian commercial economy was not seriously threatened by European mercantilism until late in the eighteenth century, and then not at all evenly. Eventually, however, its own structural weaknesses and steady penetration by European capital undermined its vitality, as had taken place earlier on to the medieval Arab commercial economy. The problems inherent to Asian economic development are brilliantly analysed for Mughal India by Irfan Habib, whose work could well serve as a model for all economic historians of the Third World.⁵¹ As for the more familiar problem of European penetration, Holden Furber writes: 'It is now, I think, fully realized by economic historians that the steadily increasing participation in the maritime trade of Asia by Europeans in partnership - voluntary and involuntary - with local traders and seamen was the foundation upon which the imperialism of more recent times was built.'⁵²

Echoes of Rodney. But if Africanists can re-examine their assumptions about the impact of European trade along the lines which I have suggested in the libraries and archives of Europe,

they do not enjoy quite the same luxury of rich literary and archival sources bearing upon indigenous African economic systems as do scholars like Goitein and Habib. And to reiterate what I said earlier, it is here that our ignorance is most glaring. Now the problem is to confront the issue in the field, in oral traditions, as has been done so effectively by Africanists working on political and, to a lesser extent, social and religious history. The challenge first involves asking the right questions in the field, however less susceptible economic data are to oral transmission than political information. The researcher in the field will need, then to work very hard at digging into the past and will no doubt need to extend his or her inquiry to include matters of general cultural values, of which purely economic values will be but a single aspect. Unless this is done, African economic history will forever be the history of trade - indigenous as well as international, to be sure, but trade nevertheless. What needs to be emphasized is that there is an entire dimension of African economic history which is in danger of being overlooked if we devote all of our energies to studying its international aspects. Indeed, there can be no true understanding of the tragedy of Africa's present economic dilemma without some knowledge of the way in which indigenous African economic structures and values have been skewed. Moreover, greater knowledge and appreciation of the way in which African societies managed their own economies in the past and dealt with earlier, less pervasive manifestations of foreign economic penetration could provide some suggestions for those who would lead Africa out of her present predicament. To recall Sachs and Kalecki, proportional growth cannot be achieved without full knowledge of the socio-economic structure of a given society, and for each society there is an appropriate theory of growth. Reconstructing the history of indigenous African economic systems is an integral part of achieving these ends.

Having decided to tackle this problem in the field, then, what are the possibilities for historians to inform themselves so that they can acquire the necessary conceptual tools? A good beginning can be made by studying the literature on African agricultural systems. There is more of this than is generally recognized, although much work remains to be done. Perhaps the best single available study is William Allan's *The African Husbandman* (London, 1965). Allan's field experiences are Zambian, but his scope is continental. Furthermore, Allan's great value derives from the fact that his approach is not merely descriptive, but that it begins to grapple with the economics of African agriculture, particularly in his discussions of 'normal surplus' production.⁵³ Most of these studies do not share Allan's methodology although they bring together in a most valuable way a massive amount of raw material on African agricultural systems.⁵⁴

To take but one example which shares this shortcoming, Marvin Miracle's compendium on Congolese agriculture has caused at least two reviewers - C. C. Wrigley and Andre Lux - to stress the need for economic studies of the problems, in as many different societies as is possible. Wrigley also voices doubts that economic growth in Africa must be based upon increased agricultural production for export and poses some vital questions about the general relationship between agricultural improvement and economic growth. Lux, for his part, addresses his most pointed comments to the need for some discussion of optimization in order to arrive at an understanding of past economic behavior in Africa.

*This point, indeed, is of great importance, if we want to give economics its right place within traditional culture and organization, and understand the real nature of economic acculturation in modern times. One aspect of the "optimization" process is to inventory the full range of returns, both social and economic, and their interrelations, in order to break through the dichotomy of "substantivist" and "formalist" approaches which oppose anthropologists dealing with traditional economies.*⁵⁵

One could hardly state the problem more effectively. The rhetoric which dominates much of the debate between the two major schools of thought in economic anthropology allows their various proponents to avoid locking horns directly, so that one seems to be drawn progressively into two closed systems. To an outsider, the 'substantivists' are more obviously anthropologists and believe that the economies of pre-capitalist societies are embedded in the total social structure of the society, which requires the scholar to seek unfamiliar, non-Western concepts for explaining their economic behavior.⁵⁶ The 'formalists' cling to the thesis that peoples in pre-capitalist societies act entirely rationally in matters economic and that their behavior is therefore as susceptible to formal economic analysis as is that of modern Americans.⁵⁷ A selective approach to the economic anthropologists can still be most interesting, as Lux intimates, sharpening the historian's perspective on a particular set of data by raising the possibility that these may be representative of a much wider process of the sort being discussed in theoretical terms by the social scientist. Schneider's study of the agro-pastoral Nyaturu of Tanzania, to take the most persuasive example from the 'formalists', is a thoroughly stimulating discussion of 'pure' economic behaviour, raising important ideas about maximization and economic conceptualization in at least one African society. And in dealing with the problem of what would appear to be economic stasis in Nyaturu

society, he suggests this fruitful formula for the historian to contemplate: 'Stasis in Turu society is partly a function of the lack of new goals and partly a function of the lack of understanding how economically to pursue new goals.'⁵⁸

While these two perspectives on economic anthropology dominate the literature, they do not represent the only ways of looking at pre-capitalist economic behavior in Africa. A collection of essays edited by Raymond Firth and apparently representing a more balanced effort by British scholars to tackle this problem makes much good sense after one has explored the 'substantivists' and the 'formalists.'⁵⁹ Marshall Sahlins' major re-thinking of Karl Polanyi's formulations about 'archaic' economies, while admittedly 'substantivist,' also provides food for thought.⁶⁰ Another suggestive approach is taken by Abner Cohen in his analysis of Hausa traders in Yorubaland.⁶¹ But the most original and most widely known scholar to historians is Polly Hill, an anthropologized economist, whose 'Plea for Indigenous Economics' points the way for both developmental economists and economic historians.⁶² Finally, there is the important departure of Claude Meillassoux, whose analysis of the Guro of the Ivory Coast demonstrates the potential for extending sophisticated Marxist analysis to indigenous African economies.⁶³ Taken together, sifted through and sorted out, economic historians of Africa will find their horizons and conceptualizations greatly expanded by the work of the economic anthropologists.

Indeed, the most ambitious extant attempt to write an internalized African economic history is the product of the searching mind of Karl Polanyi, the recognized fountainhead of the 'substantivist' school of thought.⁶⁴ *Dahomey and the Slave Trade* is by no means an unflawed work, but its pioneering significance in bringing together issues of African economic analysis in an historical perspective and in raising major questions of interpretation and conceptualization has gone largely without comment in most reviews by Africanist historians. Only Basil Davidson and A. Norman Klein treat it as a serious piece of historical economic analysis and their comments are well worth pursuing.⁶⁵ Basically, Polanyi is concerned to demonstrate that, given the involvement of the kingdom of Dahomey in international trade, its rulers recognized that there were two discrete economic sectors of society. One of these was indigenous and dominated by factors of rural agriculture, the other international and dominated by factors of trade and market. He then proceeds to analyse the institutions of each and to suggest the ways in which each was integrated into the structure of the society at large. That Polanyi's conclusions are often open to question and his analytical framework is too rigidly

'substantivist' is not the point; what matters is that Polanyi is essaying something wholly novel, which, as Davidson comments, 'marks an important enlargement of our historiography.'

Another provocative endeavor to do this sort of history appears as a brief essay on what is today Ghana by Stephen Hymer, an economist who has absorbed the ideas of Polanyi, while not being completely dominated by them, and who carries his overview on into the modern period.⁶⁶ Neither Polanyi nor Hymer ought to be slavishly emulated. Nor for that matter should historians simply adopt the methodology implied by Georges Balandier in his analysis of the pre-colonial economy of the kingdom of Kongo, as Jan Vansina has cautioned.⁶⁷ But it should be a sobering reminder to the historian that these attempts to reconstruct the indigenous economic history of African societies are the work of an economic anthropologist, an economist, and a sociologist.

Historians have not been entirely lacking, however, although their numbers are thin and their output still limited. For West Africa there are already a number of specialized essays dealing with aspects of trading which do much more than merely describe and do not fall back upon the old 'trade and politics' typology.⁶⁸ Balandier's depiction of the Kongo has been corrected to a large extent by W. G. L. Randles, while the Gray and Birmingham collection deserves special recognition for some of the solid achievements which it attains in this respect.⁶⁹ Finally, two most valuable general essays on the economic history of Buganda have been written by Wrigley, a scholar of great perception who merits wider recognition for his contributions to this developing field.⁷⁰ There can thus be little doubt, I think, that this sort of economic history can be written, whatever the obstacles. But to do so requires a shifting of emphasis from trade to production and the acquisition of a new battery of allied skills.

The compression which marks the preceding section of this paper is a sharp contrast to the extended discussion of the external economic factors bearing upon African economic development which dominates its initial sections. The justification for this imbalance derives from the fact that while some Africanists are already alive to the possible fusion of economic anthropological theory and historical methodology, and have actually begun to try their hands at this sort of indigenous economic history, they are by no means ready to confront the reality which is raised by the radical pessimists. This does not vitiate the other major contention of this essay that most of these studies appear to be focusing on the trading economies

of African societies, rather than on their whole economies. The distinct possibility remains, then, that without this sort of corrective re-focusing of the field, we could end up with a massive literature of increasingly sophisticated studies which tacitly or explicitly assume that their further demonstrations of African initiative were taking African societies along the path to proportional economic development. It is my belief that unless these new historical studies of African indigenous economic systems are set within the widest context of the problems confronting African economic development, they will only obscure today's reality and add further to the mystification of the African past. Once individual African economies are drawn into the arena of international trade, the critical problem of Africa's economic disadvantage when confronted with the presence of Arab, Asian, and European capital on its doorstep cannot be avoided by the historian.

As for the ultimate roots of these problems, they ought now to be familiar to all Africanists. First, there are ecological factors, such as poor soils and irregular rainfall, which have worked to limit Africa's agricultural productive capacity. Second, and more critical, is Africa's technological gap, a problem of considerable complexity which has recently been analyzed with great sensitivity by Jack Goody.⁷¹ But it is well to bear in mind Meillassoux's perceptive criticism of Goody's thesis linking technology to the means of destruction in West African societies.⁷² Goody neglects the important fact that the societies which he has chosen to illustrate his point had already been in commercial contact with the outside world for many years, so that the military techniques adopted by each society were, as Meillassoux argues, historically determined by 'the nature of these exchanges, the trade goods and the means of their production - thus in the modes of production.'⁷³ If we are to arrive at a better appreciation of Africa's technological gap, and of the dynamic of technological change in Africa, this sort of approach is surely preferable to the frequently encountered geographical determinism which seeks an explanation in the isolation of sub-Saharan Africa from other world civilizations. Finally, there can be little doubting the severe disadvantage which political fragmentation of African society on a continent-wide base created for pre-colonial economic development. And this, of course, is itself inexorably linked to the underlying ecological and technological problems.

Let us now turn to a single historical example, one which arises from my own work on the pre-colonial trade of East Central Africa, one which provided a critical link between history and theory for me and allowed me to escape from a simple narrative

analysis of the topic which I was studying. The international trade of East Central Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was dominated by a combination of Asian and European capital, operating primarily upon the peoples of the interior through the coastal *entrepôts* of Kilwa - successively under Portuguese, independent, and Omani Arab rule - and Mozambique Island - the center of the Portuguese administration of East Africa, but with its commerce controlled by Asian and French capital. Within this setting, however, there is overwhelming Portuguese documentary evidence of African initiative, trading acumen, and market sensitivity. People like Yao and those Makua in the Cape Delgado area had two independent international markets at their disposal and regularly adjusted their pattern of trade to their own advantage within this framework. The flow of trade to the coast shifted markedly more than once during the eighteenth century, while African traders increasingly were able to weigh the relative advantages of ivory and slaves as items of export after the middle of the century. At Mozambique, where goods were traded at a mainland fair, Yao and Makua were able to secure the most favorable rate of exchange as a result of fierce competition between Asian, Portuguese, and at times also French and Swahili traders. Portuguese control over this trade was remarkably ineffective. Yet it cannot be denied that these responses were all being made to external economic stimuli. With the growth of the slave trade in the nineteenth century at Mozambique, where the Brazilian traffic now became a dominating factor, the hazards of this process of response became clear all around with the transformation of the once powerful Makua chiefdoms of the coastal hinterland from aggressors to victims of the trade.

Leaving aside the complications of the slave trade for a moment, the issue of economic domination and the problem of unequal exchange in international trade comes vividly into focus in the chance observation of Henry Salt, British ambassador to Abyssinia, who spent several idle weeks at Mozambique on his passage to the Horn in August 1809. This was the height of the trading season on the mainland, and Salt inveigled an invitation to observe its operation as a means of diverting himself from the oppressive boredom of the island-capital:

In the cool of the evening, the planter took us to a kind of fair held in the neighbourhood for the purpose of bartering with the traders lately arrived. The articles displayed to tempt these simple savages were very trifling, such as salt, shells, beads, tobacco, coloured handkerchiefs and coarse cloths from Surat; a

circumstance that proves how artfully the Portuguese have carried on this species of traffic, otherwise they could not have kept the natives in an ignorance thus suitable to their purposes. 74

Salt's ignorance of the system of trade at Mozambique prevented him from realizing that in this closed system it was the Yao and Makua - the unnamed traders from the interior - who dominated the Portuguese. Indeed, the Portuguese themselves were too much a part of it to see what Salt could see, namely, that the institutions of trading - however poorly they operated locally for the Portuguese - ultimately reduced the Africans to the role of weaker partners in an unequally balanced trade. In the context of world economic history the Africans were being had, and Salt knew it.

For Salt, this truth merely reinforced his typical prejudices about Africans as 'simple savages'. This they were manifestly not. But they clearly did not see the inequities in their trade which the interloping Salt did. The reason for this, and the key to a beginning of the understanding which I am seeking, is that Africans and their international trading partners - European, Arab, and Asian - were each operating within discretely perceived economic systems. In particular, until too late in the day Africans were not able, for the most part, to see the way in which they were linked and subordinated to the international institutions of trade. In short, Africans did not share in that essential breadth of economic vision which marked European expansion from its beginning, and which no doubt informed Arab and Asian international trade in their heyday. Most Africans - in this case Yao and Makua - could not see that they were compradors in a colonial relationship with European, Arab, or Asian economic systems, although it seems that a number of West African coastal traders were more aware of their position as compradors. These, however, were usually too concerned to maintain their own privileged status in the local society to abandon this rule. To judge people like the Yao and Makua leadership for falling unknowingly into this relationship and category is overly harsh and unhistorical. In general, what happened in the era of earlier international trade in Africa was, instead, the convergence of different economic systems with different sets of economic perceptions. On the one hand there were a multitude of pre-capitalist African economic systems; on the other hand there were the developing capitalist or capitalistic systems of Western Europe (including the United States of America after independence), the Arab world, and the Indian sub-continent. Dike perceived this point nearly two decades ago, but neither he nor later writers ever followed it up.⁷⁵

Throughout this essay I have been arguing for a wider recognition by Africanist historians of two central points. On the one hand, I have emphasized that the only economic history of Africa which makes any sense at all is developmental history. Within this framework I have also suggested that the principal causes of Africa's historical and present underdevelopment lie in the nature of the trading relations which developed between Africa and the rest of the world over the past two millenia. On the other hand, I have tried to reconcile this argument with what is known about indigenous African economies and have suggested some ways in which historians might begin to get at the history of African systems of production, rather than limiting themselves to analyses of trade in Africa. For it is clear that in addition to the primary problems which Africa's role in world trade has imposed upon economic development on the continent, there are very real obstacles of transformation which must be confronted in the nature of indigenous African systems of production and attitudes towards the economy.

Even here, however, there is one last point to be made. In the past decade there have been several important attempts made by French Marxists to define an African mode of production.⁷⁶ The most recent and comprehensive of these, by Coquery-Vidrovitch, is notable for her attempt to integrate the two elements of African economic life which have been raised in this essay. Yet her argument seems peculiarly reminiscent of Polanyi's analysis of Dahomey, a state which she also utilizes to illustrate her thesis that the African mode of production was characterized by two distinct sectors, one agricultural and the other commercial, with the latter dominated by a class which, however, exploited the surrounding peoples rather than the peasants within their own society to produce the products which were then used in the international trade that generated the largest part of the surplus within any one society. Once again, we seem to be thinking in terms of a dual economy. What has not been given serious thought by most Africanists is the possibility that international trade might have penetrated the agricultural economy in any number of subtle yet important ways, particularly in terms of how people thought about the economy, how they allocated their labor, and how relations of production were affected in the local community. This is a problem which can only be resolved by intensive field work on pre-colonial economic history. And the result of such research will very likely reveal a dynamic process at work with many perplexing variations rather than a single African mode of production.

So long as African perceptions of their role in the world economy coincided with that of non-Africans, that is, so long as their relationship was based upon the nexus of trade - trade from

which each side believed itself to be profiting - there was little chance for Africans to see their way out of the subordinate economic role which Arab, Asian, and finally Western commercial expansion had imposed on them. The change to direct colonial rule by Europe and America of not just Africa, but of all the Third World, radically altered this situation politically, while at the same time it grew organically out of it. Moreover, while direct rule has become inessential to the domination of Western capital in the Third World today - save only in the special context of Southern Africa - this situation remains virtually unchanged. But if colonialism and 'modernization' have not helped Africans to develop Africa for themselves, then it has provided them with the historical moment and the conceptual tools to perceive the roots of their present underdevelopment and to create that African revolution which alone can free them from its shackles. So must Africanist scholarship now move forward on that front and begin to deal with this problem in both its contemporary and its historical dimensions.

Footnotes

1. Basil Davidson, review of Karl Polanyi, *Dahomey and the Slave Trade*, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, XVII, 2 (1970), 280.
2. R. Gray and D. Birmingham, (eds.) *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London, 1970), 13. cf. David William Cohen, 'Agenda for African Economic History,' *J. of Economic History*, XXXI, 1 (1971), 217, and Raymond Dummet, 'The rubber trade of the Gold Coast and Asante in the nineteenth century: African innovation and market responsiveness,' *J. of African History*, XII, 1 (1971), 101.
3. Henry Rosovsky, 'The Economic History of the Third World: A Few Comments,' *J. of Economic History*, XXXI, 1 (1971), 257.
4. T. O. Ranger, (ed.), *Emerging Themes of African History* (Nairobi, 1968), xxi.
5. Basil Davidson, 'Africa Recolonized?' in John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (eds.), *Amistad 2* (New York, 1971), 251-253.

6. *Ibid.*, 235-237: cf. Davidson, *The African Genius* (Boston, 1969), ch. 24.
7. Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade* (Boston, 1961), ch. 7
8. The same criticism can be made of two recent interesting essays by Ralph Austen, 'Patterns of Development in Nineteenth-Century East Africa,' *African Historical Studies*, IV, 3 (1971), 645-657, and 'Economic History,' *African Studies Review*, XIV, 3 (1971), 425-438
9. Walter Rodney, 'The Historical Roots of African Underdevelopment,' paper delivered at the 1970 Universities of East Africa Social Science Conference, Dares Salaam, December 1970, for the application of this argument to Angola by Rodney, see 'European activity and African reaction in Angola,' in T. O. Ranger (ed.) *Aspects of Central African History* (London, 1968), 49-70. See also his recent study, (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, and Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House 1972) for a fuller exposition of his ideas.
10. Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford, 1970); reviews by Philip D. Curtin in the *J. of African History*, XI, 3 (1970), 453-455, and by Yves Person in *African Historical Studies*, IV 3 (1971), 669-689: 'Ethnic Movements and Acculturation in Upper Guinea since the Fifteenth Century'
11. Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique Noire, Occidentale et Centrale: I: Geographie - Civilisations - Histoire* (Paris 1958), and *Afrique Noire Occidentale et Centrale: II: L'Ere Coloniale (1900-1945)* (Paris 1964)
12. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-85* (Oxford 1956), 18
13. Christopher Fyfe, 'West African Trade, A.D. 1000-1800,' in J. F. Ade Ajaya and Ian Espie (eds.), *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan 1965), 244
14. John D. Fage, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History,' *J. African History*, X, 3 (1969), 393-404; C. C. Wrigley, 'Historicism in Africa: Slavery and State Formation,' *African Affairs*, LXX, 281 (1971), 113-124. Fage's essay was written largely in response to Rodney's arresting article on 'African slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea coast in the context of the Atlantic slave-trade,' *J. African History*, VII, 3 (1966), 431-443

15. See Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400-1700* (London 1965)
16. Rodney, 'Historical Roots,' 3, 15, and 18.
17. *Ibid*, 18
18. Andrew D. Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade,' in Gray and Birmingham, *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, 39-74
19. Rodney, 'Historical Roots,' p. 24
20. *Ibid*, 28-29, italics in original
21. *Ibid*, 35, italics in original; Austen has apparently begun to examine the problem of compradorism in Africa, having taken part in a panel on comparative compradorism at the 1971 meetings of the American Historical Association.
22. See especially Cohen, 'Agenda,' 215-216, and Gray and Birmingham, *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, 21-23. A similar point has been made by Roberts in a splendid review of L. H. Gann and F. Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa, 1890-1960, I* (New York 1969) which appeared in *Transafrican Journal of History*, I, 2 (1971), 88-89.
23. Harry Magdoff, 'Economic Myths and Imperialism,' *Monthly Review*, XXIII, 7 (December 1971), 8
24. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, (London 1954) 12-13
25. Joan Robinson, 'The Relevance of Economic Theory,' *Monthly Review*, XXII, 8 (January 1971), 29-34
26. - See, e.g. Andrew M. Karmack, *The Economics of African Development*, Revised edition (New York 1971), a text designed for instruction primarily in the United States. For an African university variation on the same theme, see I. Livingstone and H. W. Ord, *An Introduction to Economics for East Africa* (London 1968)
27. This last point is amply demonstrated by the many 'trade and politics' studies which are characteristics of West African coastal historiography. In addition to Rodney and Dike, see Kwame V. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1800-1720* (Oxford 1970), and I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbours, 1708-1818* (Cambridge 1967), as well as the perceptive essay by Dov Ronen, 'On the African role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Dahomey, *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XI, 41 (1971), 5-13. For a

- more complex, but equally useful version of this theme with respect to the Congo basin, see Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison 1966), esp. the concluding chapter.
28. Ignacy Sachs, 'On Growth Potential, Proportional Growth and Perverse Growth,' *Czechoslovak Economic Papers* 7 (Prague 1966), 65-71. Sachs is Director of the Center of Research on Underdeveloped Economies, Warsaw, and has done his main work in India.
 29. Frederick F. Clairmonte, review of Samir Amin, *L'Accumulation a l'echelle mondiale*, in *J. of Modern African Studies*, 481
 30. Piero Sraffa, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* (Cambridge 1960), 7.
 31. See, e.g. Celso Furtado, *The Economic Growth of Brazil* (Berkeley 1963)
 32. Michal Kalecki, 'Theories of Growth in Different Social Systems,' *Monthly Review*, XXIII, (October 1971), 72-79.
 33. The comfortable isolation of area specialists was a major criticism of all of the papers commented upon by Rosovsky at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Economic History to which Cohen presented his 'Agenda.' Rosovsky, whose work is on the economic history of Japan, noted that Third World economic historians 'seem to have rather systematically ignored each other's research and conclusions.' Rosovsky, 'The Economic History of the Third World,' 257.
 34. Among these, I have found Eric Wolf's *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago 1959) and Clifford Geertz's *Agricultural Involution, the Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963) to be especially useful. See also George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York 1972)
 35. See Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America: Essays on Economic Dependence in Perspective* (New York 1970)
 36. E. Leclauh, 'Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America: *New Left Review*, 67 (1971), especially 24-33; G. Arrighi, 'The Relationship between the colonial and the class structures: A critique of A. G. Frank's theory of the development of underdevelopment,' African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Paper 267

37. Hans Singer, 'The Distribution of Gains Between Investing and Borrowing Countries (1950), reprinted in George Dalton (ed.), *Economic Development and Social Change* (Garden City 1971), 336-350; Gunnar Myrdal, *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* (New York 1957); Pierre Jalee, *The Pillage of the Third World* (New York 1968) and *The Third World Economy* (New York 1969)
38. Magdoff, 'Economic Myths and Imperialism,' 9-12
39. Samir Amin, *Trois experiences africaines de developpement: Le Mali, la Guinee et Le Ghana* (Paris 1965); *L'economie du Maghreb* (Paris 1966); *Le developpement du capitalisme en Cote d'Ivoire* (Paris 1967); *Le monde des affaires senegalais* (Paris 1969); *L'Afrique de l'ouest bloquee: L'economie politique de la colonisation, 1880-1970* (Paris 1971); and with Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire economique du Congo, 1880-1968* (Paris 1969)
40. Amin, *L'Accumulation a l'echelle mondiale: Critique de la theorie du sous-developpement* (Paris 1970). This study was presented as a dissertation a decade ago, but Amin delayed publication until he could test his ideas against the historical record and modify them accordingly.
41. See J. F. Rweyemamu, 'International Trade and the Developing Countries,' *J. of Modern African Studies*, VII, 2 (1969), 203-219; Leslie Stein, 'Developing Countries and International Trade - an Alternative View,' *J.M.A.S.*, VIII, 4 (1970), 605-616; Rweyemamu, 'The Causes of Poverty in the Periphery,' *J.M.A.S.* IX, 3 (1971), 453-455
42. D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A comparative survey of the Eighteenth Century* (London 1966)
43. E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, second edition with Robin Hallett (London 1968); Fage, *A History of West Africa* (Cambridge 1969), chs. 2 and 3; Ajayi and Espie, *A Thousand Years of West African History*, 55-112, 236-241
44. B. Davidson, *A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century* (Garden City 1966), chs. 3-6, 10 and 12, 145, cf. *African Genius*, 212ff.
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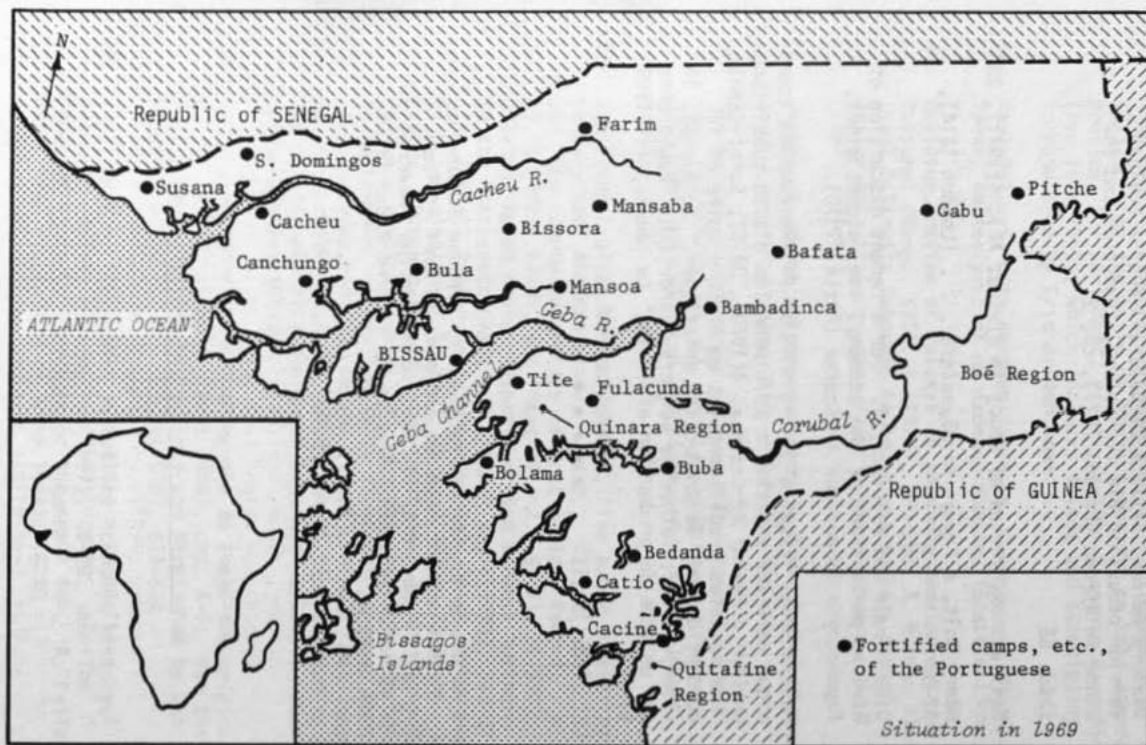
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GUINEA BISSAU AND THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS



"In the urban centres and the other areas still occupied (a few coastal zones, the islands off Guine and the Cape Verde Archipelago) the enemy's position is less and less secure". [See Vol.II, No. 3, page 5 and quotes on page 5 of this issue.]