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ON THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN SUBORDINATION IN CLASSLESS AFRICAN
 SOCIETIES.*

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In discussions on the subordination of women, the debate often turns to the question of how this subordination originated. A common argument is that the subordination of women originated from the development of private property and class society. This point of view is clearly influenced by the analysis presented by F. Engels in his book: "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State". The weakness of Engels' analysis is to a large extent a result of the very limited and wrongly interpreted data available at his time of writing.

This paper is an attempt to present an alternative historical materialist analysis which may contribute to a better understanding of the issues involved in the original subordination of women in Africa, by drawing on more recent contributions of social anthropological analysis on the subject.

To a large extent, the conceptual framework and the analysis presented below is based on A. Christensen and P. Aaby's "Postscript" to Engels' "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", Politisk Revy serien no. 5, Copenhagen 1977 (in Danish language). Christensen and Aaby's important contribution to the debate on the women question provides a thorough critique of Engels' theory, followed by an excellent analysis of the forms of pre-capitalist societies and the position of women. This paper summarises their analysis of the two earliest forms of society, the band and the tribal society, interwoven with an attempt to analyse the early history of women subordination in a dynamic perspective of production, control and accumulation.

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The Band Society.

Hunting and gathering societies are often referred to as band societies in anthropological literature. It is a useful term which expresses the small-scale, loosely knit and flexible social organization of these societies. It is the distinct mark of the social organization of band societies, that there is no necessity - in terms of the utilization of resources - of maintaining a continuous, permanent group based on kinship or other forms of recruitment. This has important implications for the position of women vis a vis men. Most literature, giving some consideration to the relationship between the sexes, indicate the existence of a complementary balance of power between men and women. This seems to be related to the way in which nature is utilized and to the fact that men had no means of controlling women apart from weapons, the use of which might well have been selfdefeating.

Hunting of wild animals, primitive fishing and gathering of insects, seeds, roots, berries and fruits are not forms of production in the strict sense. They are rather forms of appropriation of finished or ready made natural products. Appropriation of natural products does nevertheless involve labour, and hunting, gathering and fishing all condition forms of labour processes which may involve individual labour or cooperation. Whereas both sexes may fish, a sexual division of labour has developed between men as being mainly hunters and women as being mainly gatherers, but this sexual division is not always strict. Women participate in hunting as beaters and do hunt small animals themselves. Men, if hungry on a hunt, will collect berries, fruits etc.. Even so, the typical sexual division of labour seems to be a biological tendency influenced by the women's lesser mobility because of pregnancy and child care. At least child-bearing women are prevented from hunting larger animals which involves a lot of mobility. Ideologically, the social relations of this difference may develop the distinctions between hunting and gathering into a division of labour more strict than it had to be. This, coupled with the men's long training in the use of weapons, may give them a dominant position. So although we can not talk about equal positions of men

and women, this does not change the fact that the position of women in band societies is qualitatively better than in tribal agricultural or pastoral societies. In order to understand the existence of the complementary balance of power as a social phenomenon in band societies, we have to go beyond the problem of the sexual division of labour.

In the band societies found in Africa there seems to be no necessity of controlling the labour of any persons. Labour is not a critical factor. Contrary to common belief, band societies do not "scrape a living" at the bare level of minimum subsistence. Even in harsh areas like the Kalahari Desert or the Yaida Valley in Mbulu district the work performed by both sexes usually takes no more than 2-4 hours a day on average. It is common to work for 1 or 2 days and then rest for 2-4 days. When the men kill an animal or the women collect food, some of this food is consumed on the spot, some of it is brought back and consumed communally in the camp. When the food is consumed, hunting and gathering starts again. In contrast to agricultural societies, there is thus no accumulation and storage of a social product to be depended upon untill the next harvest. When there is food for a couple of days, work is discontinued for the moment and this goes on the whole year round. In contrast to agricultural or pastoral societies there is therefore neither any question of management and redistribution of the annual harvest nor of the hard build up over many years. There is no question of inheriting land, cattle, houses etc.. There is no estate to be managed and divided among future generations. Since the labour process is discontinuous and momentary both in time and space, there is no need to recruit and maintain or reproduce a continuous, permanent group of labourers and managers (elders) necessary for agricultural or pastoral production.

Every adult has the ability to produce his or her own tools. Cooperation in hunting only takes place during the hunt itself and is discontinued afterwards, and the labour process involved

in other forms of hunting is individual. Although women tend to go out and collect food in small groups so as to be able better to protect themselves and their children against dangerous animals, their labour process is also individual apart from the likelihood of cooperation in looking after children.

Thus, there is no permanent group established on the basis of territorial association or cooperation. Every individual is as good as any other, and there is no reason to continue to stick together if mutual dislike or hostility develops. Due to the high variability of game and vegetable food the band has to maintain high mobility. It may split up into smaller groups during seasons short of game and food, and if resources are insufficient in the whole area roamed by a particular band, members can leave and join other groups in areas where the resources are more plentiful. There is thus a constant flux of members between groups. The groups are highly flexible, free from being tied to a certain piece of land and free from depending on a fixed amount of labour. Since the labour is momentary and discontinuous, there is no strong mutual dependency.

These conditions, based on appropriation of natural products which show a high variability in time and space, seem to account for the fact that the common form of the family is one of loosely knit pair relationships showing a high degree of instability. The only relations of mutual dependency which could form the basis for a lasting connection are protection, complementary food provision or raising the children. But a woman is not dependent on one particular man for being protected, eating meat or becoming pregnant and neither is a man dependent on one particular woman for her services. It might not even be of any particular importance nor concern to know who the father of a child is. The children would naturally belong to their mothers. The same applies for the band which is not dependent on any particular members. For a band to exist it only needs a certain minimum size and an approximately equal sex composition. If it becomes too big for

the resources of the area it has to split, or rather some members will leave to join other groups.

When the children are old enough they could as well join other groups. They are not needed for herding, agricultural or domestic tasks. Children are neither a potential labour force nor an insurance against age. There is no strong social control of the offspring. Rather, too many children at the same time would be a burden in the same way as old people become a burden, because they are immobile and do not contribute to the provision of food. This would seem to account for the fact that aged or sick are left behind, and that child care exhibits very low standards to the effect that child mortality is reported to be very high. If a husband tries to subordinate, control or mistreat his wife there is nothing to prevent her from running away to live with another man who would protect her against her former husband.

If a woman absconds it is unlikely that two bands would line up behind their respective rival partners to fight out the matter. Due to membership inter-exchange, personal bonds might exist which would discourage some members. In any case it would be difficult for two bands to fight each other because of the large distances involved (very low population density), constant group mobility and the problem of keeping contact between always flight-ready enemies. A more wellknown and reported solution, both to inter-band enmity and to periodic or localised food shortages, is peacefully to allow the neighbouring band to utilize one's territory if there is enough food. There seems to be neither a struggle nor fights over women, land (nor cattle) in the way we know it from tribal agricultural and pastoral societies. You cannot offend the band as a group, only individuals. There is no institutionalized feud between lineages or clans as is the case in segmentary lineage societies, where you offend the whole lineage by offending just one of its members.

Where there is no general, continuous food shortage and no overall

population pressure the bands and sexes have no reason but to live in peaceful coexistence and good friendliness with each other.

So, if weapons are used only for hunting, not for fighting, why are the women sometimes precluded from armed training? It is well-known that hunting is considered a noble and enjoyable sport, much more so than food collection. By ideologically precluding women from armed training, the men could monopolise and control the activity of hunting and escape the boredom of food collection. Hunting becomes a specialization, a skill, more valued than women's work. But on its own, it cannot be used to exploit the labour of women. If nothing else, women can be looked down upon by the men collectively. But they cannot be subordinated in a political sense.

This is what we mean by a complementary ballance of power between the sexes. It arises not from the fact that men control certain objects like tools, cattle, land, etc., but from the fact that there is no need to control labour given the particular form of a momentary and discontinuous labour process based on appropriation - not production - of ready-made natural products which show a high degree of variability in time and space. If there is no need to control labour, then there is no need to control offspring and then there is no need to control the reproductive capacity of women.

In band societies gathering often provides some 70-80 per cent of the total food output. Does this mean that women are exploited? No. The women do not necessarily work longer hours than men do, but gathering is a more efficient activity than hunting, because the products collected are available in larger more reliable quantities whereas hunting requires a lot of time for spotting, approaching and tracking a wounded animal, and finally carrying it home. On average, there is considerably more labour time involved in a kilo of meat than there is in a kilo of seeds, roots, berries or flying ants. It is difficult to imagine how systematic exploitation of women could be carried out under such conditions. There is neither "social" accumulation of potential or actual labourers (children, youth, women) nor is there any mate-

rial accumulation of food or means of production which could provide the impetus for exploitation and subordination. In the first case the group might become too big and inflexible. In the second case the group would become immobile. But, the absence of material accumulation is not due to the lack of "productive" capacity for accumulation. As we have seen, there is more leisure time (i.e. potential labour time to be turned into surplus production) in band societies than in any other known societies. Furthermore, seeds and roots can be stored, and African hunters know how to preserve dried meat as biltong. But there is no point in doing so. If mobility is reduced a permanently utilized area would eventually become exhausted of its products and so movement would in any case follow.

In band societies, even if the position of women is not equal to that of men because of the biologically induced sexual division of labour, strengthened by the ideology of hunting, the social position of women, in terms of the complementary ballance of power, is qualitatively better than in virtually all societies which have followed. In Tanzania, band societies have existed for at least one million years whereas "producing" societies, characterized by women subordination have existed for no more than some three thousand years. Why was the transition to agricultural societies delayed? It was not that band societies and especially the women did not know about the relationship between seeds and plants. When collecting seeds, some are left on purpose for replanting. To increase productivity, these seeds could have been collected and artificially planted in the most suitable area, and other unutilized plants could have been uprooted to avoid plant competition. In fact both American and Australian band societies have been reported to do this on a minor scale. But again, such a concentration of edible plants would attract more animals and would require crop guarding to the extent of reducing mobility.

It is only when population pressure builds up to an extent where a reliable and more efficient food supply of plants becomes necessary that the transition from appropriation of natural products to production of food plants (Agriculture) would seem to

take place. Historically, the development of agriculture and animal husbandry is supposed to have started only in a few suitable agricultural areas discovered in Mexico (maize), Mesopotamia (wheat), China (rice) and Ethiopia (millet). In these centers, the neolithic revolution unfolded over thousands of years before it started expanding out into different environments. Agriculture seems to have been brought into Tanzania by migrating agriculturalists.

Before this immigration, population pressure in the country did not seem to have built up to the critical point. The lack of proper child care and the lack of a strong ideological and psychological syndrome of mother love and care for children seem to have had the double effect of maintaining high child mortality (low population density as a necessary condition for hunting & gathering) and maintaining a better position for women in society.

Most band societies have been studied by men and only after the colonial conquests. The first of these circumstances would tend to provide a male biased view of band societies, whereas the second would tend to strengthen the ideology of men. Band societies in contact with agricultural or pastoral societies would tend to effect the same thing. By trading meat in exchange for iron implements with agricultural or pastoral neighbours, it is likely that the political position of men was strengthened, while that of women was weakened.

Tribal Societies.

Agricultural and pastoral societies which have not reached the hierarchical stage of chiefdoms and state formations are often referred to as tribal societies. Politically, the tribe is a loosely knit organization mainly distinguished as a linguistic and cultural entity. Social boundaries between tribes tend to be fluid with a good deal of intermarriage, exchange and contacts between them.

The most common organizational feature of tribal society is the existence of clans and lineages. The clan is a group of people recruited through family relations, through social relations of descent and marriage. It is important to point out that recruitment into the group is a social mechanism rather than a biological one. Biologically non-related persons are often absorbed or adopted into the group and they will inevitably be conferred a social status within the system of kinship classification. Kinship relations are sometimes manipulated in such a way as to adjust membership to the economic and political realities. Nevertheless, this form of organization is radically different from the socially fluid band society. The clan constitutes a permanent and continuous group of people who trace real or imaginary origin back to a common ancestor. Its subgroups consist of lineages of more shallow "depth". Clans and lineages control those conditions which are important for continued production in society, e.g. land, cattle, the labour force and the women. We are now talking about so-called patrilineal societies ¹⁾. What has happened?

There has been a transition to agriculture and pastoralism. The transition from appropriation of ready-made natural products to increasing or controlling the production of natural produce implies an important transformation of the labour process. We can

¹⁾ There is one not very common exception to the control over women, namely the matrilineal, matrilocal society where daughters remain with their mothers.

now talk not only about the labour process as a continuum of labour activities within one sphere of production (in crop production: clearing, hoeing, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and storing or, in livestock production: breeding, herding, protecting, milking, slaughtering etc.). We talk about the production process as a continuous cyclical process which involves production, control of products, redistribution and consumption. In contrast to band societies there is no longer a direct connection between labour and consumption. There is production of a social product, the harvest or the family estate, which has to be preserved, stored or maintained until the next harvest or cycle. Continuity in production is dependent on the biological or natural cycle of plant and animal life, but production is no longer left to nature. Production is controlled. If the population increases, or if somebody wants to eat more, production can be increased. So, to some extent, nature is also controlled and it becomes necessary to control an area which is suitable and contains the necessary means of production. The place of work becomes permanent.

The potential for population growth is increased by controlling nature and the continuous or recurrent use of the same area develops into greater territorial association. You grow your crops and graze your cattle on the land of your ancestors. Territorial association and the right of all members of the group to the ~~XXXXX~~ stored provisions of the last harvest and to the future product of labour conditions a greater stability in the composition of groups.

Whether it is the nuclear family, the extended family, or some minimal, minor or major section of the lineage which makes up the subgroup tends to depend on the necessary forms of cooperation in the labour process. And whether it is a subgroup or the clan which becomes dominant politically and economically might often be associated with the problem of defending the area. The extended family or the minimal or minor lineage tends to be the group which possesses the use-right of a given patch of land and of the cattle. The clan is often the only guarantee that such use-rights

can be exercised. The right and access to occupy a piece of land in the territory is acquired by being a member of the clan and the lineage, and as such, these groups collectively assume the responsibility for protection, defense and further access if the old territory becomes too small. The larger the clan, the stronger it is, the richer it is. Hence there is no private, individual ownership to land and cattle. There are only rights of possession and utilization conferred on groups. These communal rights of possession are hierarchically organized in line with the hierarchy (not stratification) of kinship groups.

If it is good for a clan or a lineage to increase membership, and agricultural and pastoral production allows for this, then there will eventually be a problem of territorial expansion vis a vis other groups. This problem can be solved "temporarily" by war, driving out the enemy if one is strong enough, or by intensifying production, i.e. increasing the yields on a given piece of land as a measure to contain the population within a given area. Although there may often be latent hostility between different clans, the problem of fighting one's own tribesmen can be solved by creating alliances between the clans. The whole tribe is thus bound together by alliances between the clans. Different tribes may also enter into mutual alliances or if not, the weakest tribe may lose out in a fight and be forced to move into another area. In some cases, alliances are established between subtribes or sections of a larger cultural and linguistic entity referred to as the tribe. So we can have both inter-tribal and intra-tribal alliances based on or designed to overcome latent inter-tribal or intra-tribal hostility.

The reason why we are stressing the problem of hostility in tribal societies is not that there is a constant state of "war", as one scholar suggested, but rather that it is a problem which, if possible, requires a peaceful solution. We can see how this problem develops out of a specific form of dynamic, pertinent to production and control. In terms of population migrations and expansion of agricultural and especially pastoral production,

the history of Africa is extremely dynamic. It would then seem that population growth is related both to production and to control of labour as the measure to control and promote natural production. But then it is not simply the technological development of production, the development of the productive forces, which by itself automatically causes the population to increase. It is control of labour as a necessary precondition for production which conditions population growth. At this early stage of social production, the dynamic of social development does not arise from the spontaneous development of the productive forces by controlling the means of production (land, tools and cattle), but by controlling labour directly. This relates directly to the subordination of women.

Labour is of critical importance to production and it becomes of critical importance to control labour. Women as producers of producers become of critical importance and are subordinated to direct control in classless society where nobody has direct and exclusive control over land or implements. During the early phase of tribal society, there is no doubt that land was easily available and that all adults could manufacture the necessary tools due to their simple technological properties. Producers could not be controlled by controlling and preventing access to the means of production. These were communally controlled.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the nature of the form of production which directly determines that kinship in the form of lineages or clans becomes the dominant relations of production in society. Nor can we say that the particular form of control found within the kinship system is directly determined by the form of production (Aaby, 1978). But we can observe that kinship relations function as the dominant relations of production and control in almost all tribal societies despite of the fact that they are based on a great variety of different forms of production or agricultural systems ¹⁾. All we can say is that there seems to be a good deal of

¹⁾ Different agricultural systems of production vary enormously in terms of land and labour use: Pure pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, plough agriculture, mixed farming, long-term forest fallow, short term bushfallow, annual cropping, irrigation, combinations of cultivation with fishing or hunting etc..

flexible compatibility between kinship relations as the dominant form of control on the one hand, and the different existing forms of production on the other. This measure of compatibility may arise from the fact, that in terms of continuity and group flexibility, kinship relations can operate or be manipulated in such a way as to be functional for most agricultural and pastoral systems of production. The basic problem is really to ensure that there is enough labour for the present, the next and future agricultural seasons. The problem of securing the future is thus a problem of securing children. Sometimes the future is also a problem both for children and for adults. It is this latter problem which "locates" the struggle.

In contrast to the band society, we can now understand why it becomes of critical importance to control women as producers of future producers (children). The real subordination of women, in the true sense of the word, arises out of this control. Before we ask how this control developed, we ask why it was the men, and not the women themselves, who took control of their function as producers of the producers? - After all, the reproductive capacity of women is private, irrespective of how production is organized. It would appear, naturally, that the children really belong to their mothers who have carried them in their womb, given life and birth to them, fed them and taken care of them ¹⁾. Women should have had the right to control men, because they produced them, they "laboured" for them.

Why did women not take control of men? If the problem is the continuity and reproduction of the group, it would not have made any sense. The contribution of an individual man to social reproduction is not of critical importance. As is wellknown, a single man can "impregnate" a great number of women. But if one woman had even a hundred men, it would not have made any significant difference to her reproductive capacity. For any group and any

¹⁾ There have been a number of societies where the connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy was not known.

man it is a problem to get women. It is no problem for women to get men. Originally, there appeared to be no reason for the women to take control of men. This was to prove counter-productive for women.

We can only imagine a situation where the original step of control over women was taken. At some time, the long transition from appropriation of natural products to production would indicate that it became more advantageous to artificially produce plants in order to achieve a higher output. Perhaps for specific environmental reasons, because of shortage of natural produce or because of population pressure in an island eco-system from which possibilities of expansion were limited, there was a necessity to start growing crops. There might also have been security reasons involved. Perhaps for some specific reason, hostility had developed between some bands. It became dangerous for women to roam around gathering food. Other men were out to rob them. Ambushes could be avoided if the women remained in one place where seeds, berries, roots and fruits grew in plenty and could be re-sown. Some men could remain at home protecting them. Others could continue hunting, perhaps under some constraints of mobility. Agriculture had become a necessity.

As crops grew in importance, it became necessary to secure a stable labour force of women. Demographic incidences, such as low fertility of women or high child mortality, would become a threat to the continuity and survival of the group. To counteract such circumstances, it would be necessary to acquire women from other groups, to fight them back with the same strategy of robbing women. It would appear to have been the crisis of the band society, the end of the complementary ballance of power between the sexes.

In such a situation the acquisition and control of women would have assumed a violent form. Because of the division of labour where women had to look after children and were less mobile, they did not have the possibility to take on the function of robbing other women. They were also more vulnerable, because other groups were out for them. Men became the controllers, part-

ly because they robbed women from other groups, partly because they defended the women of their group towards other groups. This might be the reason why mens' control over women tend to have assumed a violent nature in primitive agricultural societies, at the same time as the killing of women in warfare was avoided and forbidden ¹⁾. Women had become an object of control and a tool for child rearing. This marks the first step of what Engels correctly called the "historical defeat of the female sex".

At the original stage of permanent agriculture, why did the men not move around peacefully, living among other groups and waiting to find a woman? If there was also a general shortage of game in the whole area, it would be important for men to remain in the territory where they had grown up, which they knew well and where their chances in the hunt were the best.

The imagined origins of agriculture and control of women presented above are more of a myth than a proper theory. However, in contrast to the myth created by Engels in his "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", our myth is at least more in line with the vast amount of anthropological data which has appeared since Engels and which makes his book out of date with respect to his ideas on the biological role of kinship systems.

How did the violent forms of control over women develop over time? It is quite obvious that violent control and intergroup warfare present a lot of problems, which would tend to disturb production. Suppose that techniques of production had slowly improved and that demographic stability had improved as well. There would be less immediate inducement to fight for women. Rather, definite advantages would be gained from alliances where women were exchanged peacefully. If two groups had nubile (ready for marriage) women to ex-

1) In the areas of land shortage, where there has been a transition to intensive agricultural systems requiring a lot of female labour, warfare - although conducted according to certain regulations which tend to minimize casualties - is still a mechanism for robbing women, pushing back the other group and adjusting the land area to the size of the group's population (cf New Guinea, Rappaport, 1968).

change, they could swap directly. If a girl in one group was a bit too young, there would be delayed exchange. But the principle is that only a nubile woman can exchange for another nubile woman. If one woman does not bear children she would have to be replaced by another one. In order to establish and maintain the widest possible network of alliances, it would be useful to have as many women available for exchange as possible. This could only be done by preventing marriage within the group. At this point, the second step of the historical defeat of the female sex takes place.

What does the second step of the historical defeat of the female sex consist of? It means that mens' control over the exchange of women becomes institutionalized. It means the development of kinship relations into institutionalized kinship systems through the control of marriage. In a general sense, it means the institutionalization of the subordination of women. Women are turned into objects of exchange and tools for child rearing. Women are turned into things to be used for certain purposes. The objectification or "reification" of women means that the person or some of her activities (delivery, labour power, sexuality, consciousness) are made into an owned object. Her most obvious belonging, her children, no longer belong to her, but to her husband. In Kiswahili the woman is married (kuolewa) the passive verb form, she does not marry (kuoa) the active verb form. An old Danish expression says: "she bore him a child". Men exchange women to control their offspring. The rule of exogamy - not being allowed to marry within ones own group (lineage or clan) - secures the maximum number of alliances as a precondition for women exchange to operate to the best effect. Exogamous exchange of women and mens' control of their offspring are the only conditions necessary for the development of the patrilineal kinship system constituted as patri-lineages and patri-clans.

As to the origin of the rule of exogamy, there can be no doubt that exogamy also prevents in-breeding. But it is a doubtful question whether the effects of human inbreeding - still hotly disputed for lack of good evidence - were instrumental in creating the rules of exogamy. If it is a fact that a number of

peoples with exogamous kinship systems have not known the connection between sexual intercourse and children - a gap now bridged by missionary activity - how could they be bothered about inbreeding? In band societies, the flux of members between groups produced an anarchical type of exogamous effect which would also have made any knowledge about inbreeding unnecessary. -It is outside the scope of this paper to consider the question as to what the world would have looked like to-day if there had been no rules of exogamy.

We have said above that the form of control operating through the kinship system is not directly determined by the form of production. We have shown that the violent form of control based on robbing women is not a good solution to the problem of continuous stabilized production. But we have said that the kinship system operating through exchange of women and regulated marriage is a compatible solution. Why is that so? In general, the reason is that kinship relations, i.e. relations of descent and marriage, are the "natural" form of social control. Control presupposes dependency. Children are naturally dependent on their parents. Since men control women, children are socially dependent on their fathers and this applies equally well to sons and daughters. Daughters can be given away by their fathers.

Up to this point in time, controlled women exchange has proved a great revolution to the elders. It has meant a farewell to arms as a means to obtain women and a welcome to the diplomacy of the gift: If I give you a woman, you owe me a woman. By regulating the exchange of women through peaceful negotiations, the elders have managed to free themselves from the dangers and struggles involved in armed robbery. This is because in armed struggle the elders are likely to lose out against their young men. Young men are numerically and physically stronger. So, even if an elder weak man would like to go and take a second young wife, a young strong man might get her first.

As this problem is already solved through an alliance between elders, we can proceed to the next problem. Since the exchange

of women takes place directly between two elders or two groups A and B, and since it can easily happen that the girl of A is not yet old enough, the marriage of B would have to be delayed while A could go ahead and marry. What now, if that young girl suffers an untimely death. Or alternatively, what if she eventually gets married but fails to bear any children? In both cases another woman must be found. But suppose there is none to be found and women cannot be borrowed from other groups because they also want a woman in return. This is clearly the bottleneck of the system. A now stands in debt to B. It may well be that some form of compensation was worked out. How it started we don't know. But it is clear, that bridewealth, what the first Europeans in Africa called the brideprice, solved the problem. The origin of bridewealth, the transition from direct to indirect exchange, marks the second revolution for the elders.

For the wife givers, bridewealth really constitutes a form of compensation which can be used in exchange for another wife. For the wife takers the payment of bridewealth legalizes the right to the bride's off-spring and labour power¹⁾. The transition to bridewealth is a revolution in two respects. You can take a wife from any other group without waiting for your daughter to get old enough or even without having one, provided you compensate with bridewealth. Secondly, bridewealth can be accumulated, and you can get several wives by means of whose labour power you accumulate.

Bridewealth gives the society a new dynamic. The accumulation of bridewealth serves this purpose: the accumulation of wives and off-spring. The more wives and children you have, the greater your chances of accumulating more bridewealth. In contrast to the band society and the early stages of tribal society based on robbing women or direct exchange, the exchange of women for bridewealth represents an inbuilt mechanism for surplus production²⁾.

1) Some people, brought up on commodity capitalism, believe that you pay a price for the woman as a person or a human being. This is a wrong belief which projects the nature of the capitalist mode of exchange onto qualitatively different phenomena.

2) Since wealth represents an accumulation of valuable objects, bridewealth is the proper term.

A surplus can be accumulated over and above the necessary material reproduction requirements of a society at any given point in time. A surplus can be invested in expanded production and expanded reproduction. In materialist terms, expanded reproduction in a subsistence economy means a rate of surplus accumulation over and above the rate of demographic growth. Since expanded material reproduction is in this case tied in with expanded social reproduction (the accumulation of wives and children), there is at the same time an inbuilt mechanism of population growth. To the extent that the rate of population growth follows suit with the rate of expanded surplus production, and thus absorbs this surplus to the effect that there is no surplus accumulation, is simply to indicate the dynamics of production and population growth in subsistence economies. Over the long run, a low rate of surplus production might simply be transformed into higher standards of living. Or a section of the population, those who control accumulation might enjoy a higher standard of living than the rest of the lot. But this depends on their degree and form of control and on their ability to enforce and appropriate the surplus.

However, before the question of accumulation is taken too far; we have to consider which type of objects are exchangeable for women and how they can be accumulated as bridewealth. In some parts of Africa and other continents, bridewealth consists of shells, beads, beautiful feathers, metal items etc., all of which prove to be very difficult to get hold of. Prestige goods tend to be what the classical economists called naturally scarce (like gold or shells). They cannot be produced, only appropriated as ready-made natural products, and their exchange value bears no relationship to the amount of labour time used to appropriate them from nature. The sphere of exchange of prestige items exhibits "barriers" vis a vis the sphere of exchange of subsistence goods, probably for no other reason than to avoid competition from youth and women who as immediate producers of subsistence goods could otherwise liberate themselves through compensation. If the barrier were to be transcended, it would probably involve the exchange of a lot of food requiring a lot of labour power of youth and women.

And usually, trading relations in the typical form of trading partnerships, is the prerogative of elders. They are in a position to appropriate the surplus labour of women and youth in the form of a surplus product which only elders can exchange for prestige goods.

In other areas, pigs, horses or camels are used. In Tanzania it is, and has been for a long time, small stock and especially cattle. Of particular importance are cows and especially heifers which in terms of their reproductive capacity are similar to nubile women. In terms of bridewealth it is not important really whether you compensate with 20 head of cattle or with one heifer of a particular uniform white colour. Both forms are difficult to get.

As objects of bridewealth cattle are useful in several respects. Cattle embody a natural propensity for being controlled by their original owners. As a herd boy grows to maturity, old enough to marry, he has contributed some 15-20 years of labour to the production of his father's herd. He ought to be able to claim some of them free of restrictions. But the growth of the cattle herd does not appear to be the product of his labour. The offspring appear "naturally" to be the product of the cows. The calves belong to the cow which belongs to the father who got them from his father or from his daughter's father-in-law¹⁾. Second, under average to good conditions of grazing, the rate of growth of the cattle population may easily amount to several times the rate of growth of the human population. The elders may be able to take several wives before their first-borne son will get his wife. There is almost a "natural" propensity for polygyny under such conditions with the effect that the marriage of sons will "naturally" be delayed. Thirdly, even if only one heifer is received in exchange for a daughter, that heifer would statistically produce another heifer calf at least within

1) As items of prestige and bridewealth, livestock differ from naturally scarce prestige goods in so far as they can be produced, and as such are not to be considered naturally scarce.

A three year period. After another 2 or 3 years it can be exchanged for a nubile woman.

There seems to be^a particular dynamic involved in using cattle as bridewealth and this dynamic applies equally well to the role of cattle as means of production and subsistence. The fantastic historical expansions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists over large parts of Africa is not simply due to the fact that cattle are mobile or movable property, or that pastoralists are by nature martial predators as has been suggested, but due to the fact that cattle herds may increase rapidly, supply an extremely healthy diet especially for children and breast-feeding mothers, are drought resistant and constitute an easy means of control. This may account for the fact that cattle keeping has been so popular even with agricultural peoples who originally entered Tanzania without having cattle.

In the Mesopotamian cradle area of the neolithic revolution, crop production and animal husbandry was developed simultaneously. The first agricultural people to have entered northern Tanzania are supposed to have been the Kushitic ancestors of the Iraqw who kept cattle as well, and whose place of origin can be traced to Ethiopia where the production of millet was developed. In Tanzania, the importance of the development of iron tools for agricultural expansion might have been a later parallel to agro-pastoral expansions catalyzed by the combination of agriculture with pastoralism in areas previously utilized by pure cultivators or cultivators cum hunters¹⁾. In this respect it could be of interest to know what effects the great pastoral expansions of the Barbaig and the Maasai had on the neighbouring agriculturalists who eventually started to build up their own herds with nuclear stock acquired through exchange of women and through trade in grain with these pastoralists. (cf. e.g. Kikuyu, Kamba, Kuria, Arusha, Chagga, Gogo, Hehe, Nyaturu, Sukuma).

1) The Sandawe in Kondoa district provide a fairly recent example of a transition from hunting/gathering to agro-pastoralism.

The dynamic of African history cannot be understood without explaining the dynamics of production, control and accumulation. In the band society, the dynamics involved would seem to be determined mainly by nature. Sole dependency on appropriation of natural products apparently imposed limits to the possibility of social accumulation, despite the existence of a potential surplus in the form of unmobilized labour time. The dominant mode of appropriation, based on individual labour, seemed to have made it difficult to control any individual. This proved to stabilize the mode of appropriation and the complementary balance of power between the sexes for many thousands of years ¹⁾. There was no exploitation of woman by man.

The dynamic history of tribal patrilineal kinship systems based on agricultural and pastoral production is the history of perpetual subordination of women and temporary subordination of youth.

The accumulation of bridewealth in the form of prestige goods and livestock was based on controlled exchange of women and on exploitation and appropriation of a surplus produced by women and youth. Accumulation imposes a dynamic of its own upon nature and society. Nature was no longer dominant. Social control becomes dominant. Ideology centers on the accumulation of bridewealth. In Africa, the so-called cattle complex was born. In New Guinea and Melanesia they are said to have a pig complex.

1) According to Richard Leakey the first primitive hunter/gatherers in East Africa can be dated back to about 2 mill. years ago. At that stage tools were only at their most rudimentary stage and hunting consisted mainly of scavenging or waiting for the animal to drop dead. A complex of tools manufactured for killing and cutting was a much later development. The rise of a developed language can be related to early ideological productions of art, such as sculpture and rock-paintings of game and hunting scenes dating back some 40,000 years. The development of language and ideology would seem to be an important precondition for the development of social control as distinct from instinctive biological control.

Final Comment.

This paper was intended to deal also with the question of matrilineal societies. Due to shortage of time, an analysis of matrilineal societies could not be included in this first draft. The same applies to the important problem of the disproportionate or progressive intensification and exploitation of women's labour as a result of the process of intensification of agricultural systems brought about by population growth and the development of commodity production. Finally, the socio-political and ideological developments associated with social control of women and youth, such as the age-grade system, initiation rites, bridewealth negotiations and ancestor cult would need to be incorporated in any proper historical analysis of the women question.

Is the historical analysis presented above of any relevance to the problem of exploitation and subordination of women in Tanzania to-day. I would say yes, to the extent that the historical control of women has caused a cementation of the sexual division of labour at the expense of women, and in so far as the existence of bridewealth as a mechanism for controlling and subordinating women is still a matter of fact. Even if the control of women no longer provides the general and dominant mechanism for exploitation and subordination, it still operates to intensify the exploitation and subordination of women much more than that of men. At this specific level, the struggle should thus be waged towards abolishing the institution of bridewealth. As long as women are forced to perform all the necessary domestic tasks and all the work involved in child rearing in addition to all the other tasks, the children born and raised should belong to the women.

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INDFØDTE FOLK OG INTERNATIONAL LOV

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Hanne Weber

Der er mange som har undret sig over sammenstillingen af de to felter "Indfødte Folk" og "International Lov" og spurgt, hvad de to ting har med hinanden at gøre. Svaret er enkelt: Når mennesker, det være sig som enkeltpersoner eller som grupper, bestandig finder sig sat udenfor enhver lov og ret i det land, de bor i, må de søge udveje for støtte på et plan, som er overordnet enkeltstaterne, d.v.s. de kan appellere til internationale organer og til verdensoffentligheden for på denne måde at skaffe sig moralsk og politisk støtte.

Det er et velkendt faktum, at indfødte folk alle steder i verden har været ofre for de europæiske nationers expansion og kolonialisme, som har ført til massiv udryddelse af hele befolkninger, voldsom reduktion af andre; indfødte folks land og ressourcer er ødelagt eller taget fra dem, og deres rettigheder som mennesker i det hele taget trådt under fode på enhver tænkelig måde. Efterhånden som den europæiske civilisation tromlede frem over hovederne på andre verdensdeles folkeslag, udvikledes en idé om, at disse folk var mindreværdige som mennesker; de blev kaldt for laverestående racer, og det blev profeteret, at de langsomt ville uddø af sig selv ligesom fortidens kæmpeøgler, dinosaurer og mastodonter - i hvert fald ville det gå dem sådan, om de ikke havde forstand til at køre med på udviklingens strømlinede vogn. hvortil adgangsbilletten bestod i at de indfødte befolkninger måtte opgive deres land og deres særlige kultur og etniske identitet, m.a.o. hvis de indfødte ville have plads i fremskrittets samfund måtte de enten lade sig integrere og assimilere eller også slet og ret - uddø.