AFRICANIST 'NOBLE SAVAGE' MODEL OF WEST AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

The radical position obviously calls for an agenda of social research from intellectuals anxious to make a contribution to development which differs, qualitatively, from the research agenda associated with the orthodox views of development, underdevelopment and the transition from underdevelopment to development...it emphasizes, as a means of advancing the development work and effectiveness of those already converted to that thesis, the need for close, and determined theoretical and empirical exploration of the subtle and not so subtle mechanisms by which the development of the world's developed parts and groups occurred and continued to occur at the cost of the underdevelopment of its underdeveloped parts and communities.

— A.V. Obeng, "Social Research and National Development in Nigeria: Notes of a Non-participant Observer," p. 5; Conference on Social Research and National Development In Nigeria, September 28 — October 4, 1975. University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Manning Nash's three major modes of social change and development[1] — index-gap approach, diffusion — acculturation approach and psychological — psychodynamic approach — do not by any means exhaust all the conceptual subtleties of the hydra-headed, liberal-bourgeois grand development paradigm which has been seriously criticized by Gunder Frank and others.[2] Current interest in the economic-anthropology of the so called non-money economies, has subtly introduced one other Africanist perspective of social change and development whose implications for West African social science development tradition needs to be critically evaluated.

This perspective which we shall call the "Noble Savage" subset of the grand, orthodox capitalist paradigm of development, to which Hill[3] and Berry[4] are chief subscribers, is shown to be ultra-functionalist, lacks historical and structural appreciation of the West African cocoa economy to which it purports to apply, is awesomely deficient as a development model and is, hence, a subtle promoter of imperialism and capitalism.

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1 Manning Nash, "Introduction, Approaches to the Study of Economic Growth", in *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 29/1. (January 1963), p. 5.

2 Andre G. Frank, 'Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology", *Catalyst*, No. 3, (Summer 1967), pp. 21-73; S.A. Shah, "What is Development". IDEP/REPRODUCTION/321, Dakar, July 1973, pp. 1—40.

3 Polly Hill, *Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa*, Cambridge University Press, London 1970.

4 Sara S. Berry, "The Concept of Innovation and the History of Cocoa Farming in Western Nigeria", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. XV/1, 1974, pp. 83—95.

Instead of castigating the peasant victim of capitalist exploitation, the 'Noble Savage', Africanist scholars usually extol the traditional farmer and his social institutions for their adaptability to new agricultural innovations which in turn are presumed to reinforce indigenous institutional order. Symbiotic relationship assumed to exist between economic innovations and the traditional social organization is further held to result from the farmer's positive response to economic incentives generated by new farm techniques, in particular and by the farmer's exposure to modern money economy in general. In effect, 'noble savage' 'development' studies endeavour to show that "although colonial governments played some part in providing a few inputs, neither colonial officials nor expatriate firms had much idea of what was happening in the agricultural system of the traditional hinterland;" after all, the traditional West African cocoa farmer succeeded where European cocoa plantations woefully failed!

Basic 'noble savage' studies were initially motivated by the Schumpeterian capitalist formulation which posited that innovators acted as catalysts in the process of "creative destruction" leading, among other things, to economic growth and structural change. In Berry's words, subsequent writers have, however, neglected Schumpeter's caveat to the effect that economic activity must be analyzed in the historical and structural contexts in which it occurred (a basically Marxian position). She further observed that, on the contrary, most Africanists have generally tended to transpose Western historical and structural conditions of economic growth to traditional African contexts and have, therefore, based their studies on wrong assumptions about traditional African economic behaviour.

Berry further took issues with most pro-urban Africanists who have hitherto assumed, in essence, that no important economic innovations have been initiated by African producers, especially African farmers; that the rural sector was one of the major impediments to economic developments; that most new plans and processes adopted in African economies have been introduced and often carried out by foreign entrepreneurs while Africans have been, at best, unthinking imitators of foreign innovations with little impact of such innovations on domestic incomes or on the structures of African economies; that economic activity in general was one of secondary importance being subordinate to political or cultural concerns in Africa; that indigenous social and political institutions were widely regarded as insurmountable impediments to innovative behaviour, and, therefore, to economic and cultural change in general, and that successful innovation in developing economies required a drastic transformation of the existing traditional social order.

Central to the 'noble savage' argument is the proposition that in some circumstances, traditional or even apparently non-economic institutions might have fostered, and did foster successful exploitation of new economic activities, and that in so far as these traditional institutions achieved these ends, economic change tended to strengthen rather than weaken such institutions and other related traditional interaction networks. These facts were essentially intended to challenge 'the conventional ignorance of economists' on matters regarding the internal dynamics of African rural economy, and to encourage the growth of 'indigenous economics' which should be aptly devoted to the analysis of the socio-economic organization of rural activities and to the study of 'the basic fabric' of existent economic life in rural Africa.

Dr. Polly Hill provided a concise discussion of (a) the phenomenon of rural capitalism among traditional producers including migrant Ghanaian cocoa farmers, the Ewe Seine fishermen, the cattle-rearers of Accra Plains and Hausa farmers of Batagarawa in the Katsina Emirate of Northern Nigeria; (b) the nature, scope and methods of traditional economies; (c) the insensitivity of development economists, as well as the irrelevance of their models to the problems of indigenous economies for which they planned, and (d) the belaboured and relatively uninspiring issue of economic rationality of West African rural economic producers.[5] More specifically, the study identified rural capitalists and their behavioural characteristics, the production problems that confronted them and methods for their resolution, attitudes of these capitalists to wealth accumulation, labour management and capital savings.

The study of the migrant Ghanaian cocoa producers, which was given relative prominence in the publication, basically provided an explanation for the fantastic expansion of cocoa shipment in Ghana between 1892 and 1911, and which virtually grew out of nothing to around 400,000 tons annually from about four million acres based on the labour of several million peasants. This astronomical growth rate was recorded despite the fact that cocoa was historically not indigenous to West Africa, and regardless of the fact that cocoa normally took several years to mature.

Hill's analysis of the socio-economic organization of the cocoa farmers revealed that: (a) the cocoa innovators were actually not settled but migrant peasants who started moving in the 1890s, and who were pulled into this adventure mainly by the desire to find a replacement for the declining staples by legitimate commerce in which they were hitherto involved as producers; these innovators also included innovative traders whose efforts to colonize new lands were apparently motivated by population pressure in their original home areas; (b) the migrant farmers did not merely add cocoa to their traditional activities; they migrated essentially to grow cocoa as a cash crop for export, while food production had to be fitted into this primary objective; (c) specialization in cocoa production by some peasants soon led others to concentrate on growing foodstuffs for sale; (d) concomitant with intensive production was also the emergence of a small class of peasant

5 Schumpeter, "The Theory of Economic Development," *Havard Economic Studies*, XLVI Massachusetts, Cambridge 1934, pp. 3—5.

capitalists who owned large, consolidated holdings, invested huge capital outlays and, thus, contributed a large proportion of exported cocoa beans; (e) the so called 'traditional' social structure proved to be an asset rather than a liability as determined by established forms of cooperative associations which were harnessed and adapted to finance migration itself, to purchase land in new areas, and to provide individually with group support in generating capital and other necessary resources.

In effect, the rural economy studied was clearly characterized by inequality in the ownership of, and control over, productive means which included capital goods. Indeed cocoa farms, one of the principal investment items among the migrant cocoa farmers, were concentrated in a few hands. Furthermore, the rural capitalists possessed specific behavioural characteristics which distinguished them from other operator-categories in the study population: they operated on a relatively large and cumulative scale. Many of them even had branches and performed significant managerial functions such as the intricate coordination of the performances of other individuals, notably non-kinsmen. Some of their investment activities reflected basic long-term economic orientation — they rationally viewed their agricultural activities as purely business and ploughed back a considerable proportion of their profits into it, while their entire way of life was significantly affected by the intensity of their involvement in their enterprise.

Testing the Schumpeterian thesis on a sample of cocoa producers from Ibadan, Ife and Ondo rural communities, Berry[6] came to similar conclusions, namely: (a) traditional cocoa producers relied heavily on a variety of traditional economic and non-economic institutions and methods in raising capital and other inputs, thus opening up cocoa production to both rich and poor alike; (b) Western cocoa industry flourished due to high premium placed on good use of available human resources which were fully exploited through traditional socio-cultural institutions of lineage, the extended family and other community informal networkds; (c) expanded cocoa production also gained immensely from intensive migration of stranger elements, as well as from increases in the number of newly established, relatively autonomous rural communities which served as communication channels between new and old establishments; (d) increased cocoa production further led to intense commercialization of hitherto inalienable lands, thereby drastically altering traditional patterns of social relationships based on land ownership; (e) the expansion of cocoa production equally led to increased dependence on wage labour which gradually replaced slave labour, family hands and community work bees as traditional agricultural labour resources; (f) in addition to reinforcing traditional institutions and social networks, the growth of cocoa industry in these communities resulted in the development of modern institutions, such as branches of the Western Nigeria Co-operative Produce Marketing Union and Co-operative Thrift and Credit Societies, and (g)

6 Sara S. Berry, op. cit.

finally, the expanding industry also provided greater incomes earned by several generations of cocoa farmers, rural landlords and others, thus altering the distribution of income and political power in many Yoruba communities, and helping to finance a substantial number of modern development projects in communication, education, health, transportation, etc.

In conclusion, Berry's basic position was that the history of Western Nigerian cocoa industry was an example of "a successful innovation in the Schumpeterian sense of the word — a new productive activity which, when adopted by a number of producers led to economic growth and structural change within a given institutional and social framework.

A Critique of The 'Noble Savage' Model

Hill's pioneer studies couched within the 'noble savage' framework, have been summarized by a Nigerian reviewer as "an important pioneering work in 'indigenous economics!", as well as "a significant contribution to economic anthropology of the more contemporary kind: rich descriptive details, a concern for showing how the elements of the socio-economic organization of the activities which she investigates hung together with hardly any friction."[7]

The 'noble savage' formulation, though apparently sympathetic to the peasant farmer and his traditional social system, is, nonetheless, pro-capitalist in its major implications. Only the unwary is taken in by the exponents' portrayal of the African as 'homo economicus Africanus', a basically irrelevant discovery. Theoretically, this perspective suffers from a truncated historical view and from an acute fixation on functionalism and, thus, conceived of West African cocoa production from a circumscribed level of abstraction. More importantly, exponents of this approach were so engrossed with an anthropological examination of the peasant economy to the total neglect of the more fundamental issues of rural decapitalization, exploitation and underdevelopment contingent upon pro-capitalist cocoa production and exchange processes.

1. Neglect of History of Cocoa Development

The 'noble savage' orientation is thoroughly ahistorical. It fails to indicate the political and economic antecedents of international dimension underlying the colonial exploiter's interest in the newly discovered innovative and productive capacity of West African traditional, non-economic institutions.

This perspective, however, grew out of the nineteenth century colonial debate between capitalist protagonists of peasant versus plantation agriculture as to which was the better method of ensuring maximum cash crop production, as well as a greater control of West African agricultural export trade. Interest in West African agricultural economy also grew out of the larger controversy over the place of the African 'savage' in the evolutionary development of world capitalism. The debate itself was indeed intensified by the increasing unproductivity of the slave trade and the slave-based economy, as well as the precariousness of the so-called 'legitimate' trade during the early nineteenth century.[8] Having experienced several tragic failures in attempting to establish modern West African cocoa plantations following the American, Latin American and Caribbean successes,[9] early colonial exploiters were prompted to evolve an alternative production system based on maximum exploitation of sedentary African labour and other natural resources, essentially what the tragic slave trade sought to accomplish in the first place.[10]

At this historical juncture, Malinowskian functionalist anthropology came to the colonial exploiter's rescue, for it provided an apparently convincing intellectual rationale for the newly evolved productive system which aimed at uninterrupted exploitation of African natural resources including labour. Thenceforth, colonial economic interests which hitherto embraced evolutionism now came to accept the newly spun functionalist assumptions which stipulated that: (1) every social system, traditional pre-literate or otherwise, operated in terms of its peculiar internal dynamics rather than by transcendental evolutionary imperatives; (2) as a social system grew in complexity through processes of differentiation and specialization, its internal homeostasis was generally attained by a self-regulating mechanism, as well as by the functional interdependence of its subparts; (3) its increasing differentiation and integration provided it with greater capacity to adapt to internal as well as external environmental stresses and strains; and (4) the subparts of a social system functioned primaryly to maintain the stability and/or survival of the system as a whole.[11]

Armed with this new knowledge, the capitalist exploiter thus found it increasingly unprofitable to stretch his vilification of the African as an anthropological atavism, or to continue to denigrate the African's traditional social system as economically unproductive. The bitter truth had to be appreciated that in such areas as cocoa production where the colonial exploiter's scientific plantation system had proved to be disastrous, African traditional institutions and the prevailing indigenous productive system could be comfortably relied upon, and even successfully harnessed and

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7 E.O. Akeredolu-Ale, "Rural Capitalism and Development Policy in West Africa — A Review Article," Mimeographed, n.d.

8 A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 138.

9 A. Hopkins; ibid pp. 137—8.

10 Eric Williams,*Capitalism and Slavery*, Capricorn Books New York: 1966.

11 Ralf Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopian: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis", *American Journal of Sociology*, 64 (Sept. 1958), pp. 115-127; (b) Kinsley Davis, "The myth of Functional Analysis as a Special Method in Sociology and Anthropology", *American Sociological Review*, 24 (December 1959), pp. 757-772; and (c) Ralf Dahrendorf, "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict," in Etzioni and Etzioni, *Social Change*, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers New York: 1964 pp. 98—111.

exploited, to serve the coloniser's economic interests at virtually no cost to the latter. Functionalism worked! 'Eulogize the African "noble savage" for his economic innovativeness and exploit him all the same' apparently became the guiding principle underlying foreign interest in West African cocoa production.

Practical and measurable evidence of the profitability of indigenous productive capacity was easily available. It had been observed that the Ghanaian cocoa industry, for example, had easily become the largest in the world by 1910, while European-run cocoa plantations which interfered with food production and with traditional land rights and labour recruitment were total failures. According to Hopkins, it was on the basis of similar experiences that the French endorsed the role of indigenous West African peasants primarily to avoid the complications which expatriate economic interests had generated in Indo-China and Algeria.[12] The British, under the leadership of Clifford who served in both the Gold Coast (1912-1919) and Nigeria (1919-1925), were similarly sympathetic to the new plan. In effect, the 19th century colonial exploiters saw the rise of a new generation of export producers and sought, therefore, to partition West Africa among themselves in order to create an economic environment that would allow this new crop of producers to thrive. In restricting the West African plantation frontier against erstwhile foreign commercial interests and in supporting African producers, colonial powers were, thus, not acting to safeguard African peasants from foreign predators; they were basically carrying their nineteenth century economic policy to a fructifying conclusion.

But recessions, depressions and imperalist global wars — demons the colonial exploiters consistently invoked but were apparently incapable of exorcizing — were soon to impose incalculable strains on the capitalist economy, as well as on the newly-developed cocoa production system. The great need to save the West African cocoa economy, and the desire to control the entire cocoa export trade in particular, for purposes of resuscitating Europe's war-torn economy, led colonial governments and their supportive multinational corporations to introduce several measures to be adopted by African peasants, but primarily aimed at promoting and guaranteeing expanded production generally even at reduced producer's income.

These new measures which included several agronomic and extension practices, usually portrayed as contributing to the development of West African economy, were basically functionalist-oriented; they were essentially intended to restore the production capacity of the traditional cocoa economy which was then operating neither in consonance with the discredited evolutionary principle, nor with Adam Smith's laissez-fairism. Increased demand for cocoa beans and the profits which increased production yielded, therefore, necessitated and informed the introduction of several modern techniques which were adopted at varying rates by West African primary

12 A.G. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 214.

producers to enable them increase the volume of exportable cocoa beans. It is in this context that liberal Euro-American sponsored economic anthropology, rural sociology and agronomic research thus came to focus almost exclusively on diffusion and acculturation of new cocoa production technology as a matter of economic necessity.

The foregoing brief historical survey points to the fact that, from the slave-based Latin American and Caribbean plantation successes and the disappointing West African experiment, to the diffusion-oriented agronomic support of the West African indigenous planter, the colonial exploiter's goal has been essentially the same: increased cocoa production for profit maximization through exploitation of resident African labour and other natural resources, and through exclusive control of cocoa export trade. But it was necessary to flaunt the 'homo economicus Africanus' profits in order to camouflage the capitalist's real intentions. Basically, therefore, the 'noble savage' exponents acted as the intellectual handmaidens of the capitalist exploiter.

2. *Neglect of Rural Class Structure*

The 'noble savage' perspective is also atomistic and, therefore, failed to satisfy the intellectual requirements of holism and structuralism. The exponents easily fragmented reality by focusing ultimately on the peasant's productive system as though it was the most crucial centre. Yet the fundamental sociological locus of West African cocoa industry is neither the producing rural communities nor even the Western Nigerian or West African economy per se. On the contrary, the most crucial macro socio-economic system within which the West African cocoa industry could be meaningfully located, has been vertically linked as an exploited satellite over the decades.

By shifting emphasis away from a holistic, open-system concept of world capitalism, the 'noble savage' scholars were, therefore, particularly inclined to view elements of structural changes related to cocoa production as simply immanent within the producing system. Many changes observed were thus erroneously regarded as functionally integrative and, hence, beneficial to the peasant and his institutional order. Since diffusionism basically shared with functionalism the generic equilibrium postulate, traditional institutions in the communities studied by Berry, for example, were accordingly presumed to guarantee equal participation to both rich and poor with virtually no existing peasant class distinctions. Since institutional adaptability to cocoa production was also presumed to enhance social stability in the communities studied, Hill's study which focused less on institutional adaptability to an innovative economic enterprise than on the socio-economic organisation of a typical rural capitalism, equally ended up with a description of a conflict-free indigenous economic system. When all relevant elements within the peasant cocoa economy were fully considered, a symbiotic relationship was thus presumed to exist between exploited producers and the exploiting foreign interests alike as members of one, large happy family!

Significantly the 'noble savage' writers avoided the rural class question within the contexts of the observed peasantization processes and rural underdevelopment in West Africa. Berry observed evidence of peasant class formation in the communities she studied but over-looked its implications for community class conflict and unequal resource distribution. Hill focused on the socio-economic organization of rural capitalists studied but only to the extent that the African cocoa peasant was presented as a rational man capable of being motivated by profit incentives, rather than as an operator within a procapitalist exploitative system. Yet, issues of capitalist production and exchange processes in relation to under-development in Africa are increasingly unavoidable. They constitute the basis for appreciating the contemporary African predicament.[13]

Much as Hill and Berry would deny it, both studied a pro-capitalist cocoa economy which was (and is) essentially a class-oriented and exploitative system. Commenting particularly on some major structural changes contingent on increased cocoa production in some Yoruba rural communities studied, Galletti and his associates (whose monumental work was acknowledged by Berry, especially regarding the proper role of migrant cocoa producers) noted generally that the production process was positively related to unequal distributions of farm land, capital, available labour, volume of cocoa sales, lending and borrowing capacities, farm income from cocoa sales, family expenditure and such related social class indices.[14] In other words, observed skewed distributions of these socio-economic indicators generally tended to favour a small class of peasant capitalist producers who contributed a large proportion of exported cocoa beans.

From his recent review of several works on the Yoruba peasant economy, Nzimiro has similarly shown that the intensification of cocoa production in Western Nigeria led to increased rate of land commercialization, the emergency of a peasant class system consisting of landlords, middle and lower farmers, money lenders and speculators, as well as increased litigation rate, and increased incidence of indebtedness and loss of land and other mortgaged property on the part of poor farmers who were incapable of redeeming such property.[15] Other examples of peasant structured inequalities in the

13 Ikenna Nzimiro, *Class and Class Struggles in Nigeria* (forth-coming), Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972; P. Jalee, *The Pillage of the Third World* (N.York: Monthly Review Press) 1969; Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us* (N. York: Vintage Books) 1975; Comrade Ola Oni and Bade Onimode, *Economic Development of Nigeria: The Socialist Alternative*, The Nigerian Academy of Arts Sciences and Technology, March, *1955;* Gunder Frank, op. cit.; Omafume F. Onoge, "The Counterrevolutionary Tradition in African Studies: The Case of Applied Anthropology", *The Nigerian Journal of Economics and Social Studies*, Vol. 15/3. (November 1973), pp. 325—346; to name a few.

15 Ikenna Nzimiro, "Capitalism and Rural Societies In Nigeria", paper presented at the Conference on An Appraisal of the Relationship between Agricultural Development and Industrialization in Africa and Asia, Tananarive, under the auspices of UN-IDEP, Dakar, Senegal, 4-14 July 1975, pp. 21—35.

cocoa growing areas of West Africa have been documented by Hopkins who, however, associated this trend with increasing specialization among peasant producers generally, rather than as evidence of the evolution of a distinct class of landlords[16]. Furthermore, a few studies of West African cocoa peasant riots have strongly indicated that these intermittent peasant movements were generally spearheaded by middle level operators who successfully enlisted the sympathy of their low income counterparts.[17] Finally, an emerging profile of 'high-adopter-progressive-cocoa-farmers' based on the author's study of 209 farmers drawn from four rural communities within the Western Nigeria Cocoa Circle, also showed that these high-income producers were older, controlled large households, owned large farm holdings, were moderately educated, held many affiliations in several relatively strong organizations including cooperatives, were vertically linked with extra-community resource networks, were more capable of receiving loans, subsidies, extension services and other government aids and were generally more cosmopolitan in outlook[18].

In the existing centre-periphery clientelistic system, this class of rural capitalists normally produced the local patrons linking the exploited rural economy with urban and metropolitan centres. The mode of production and related capital formation and property relations in the West African cocoa economy cannot be properly understood except in relation to the function of this class of peasants.

In the process of decapitalization and exploitation of the peasant cocoa economy, this class shares some responsibility. The emergence of this class involves concomitantly increased individualized ownership and concentration of means of production — land, labour, capital, technology and managerial skills. It equally involves intensive monetization of existing traditional interaction patterns and values and the domination of production processes and distributive channels by a minority class of large producers, buyers, distributors, transport owners, land speculators, usurers. It further involves capital formation by this minority class by such means as: exploitation of migrant and local labour; investing in, and expansion of, cocoa holdings with inherited, borrowed or profit-generated capital; lending money at extortionist rates; land speculation, conversion of communal to individual land rights through the manipulation of legal instruments, etc. Finally, the emergency of this class of rural capitalists involves the development of rural

16 A.G. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 239—40.

17 A.G. Hopkins, op. cit., 240-42; Oshoma Imoagene, "Status Crystalization and Peasant Revolt in Western Nigerian" Paper presented at the 2nd Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association of Sociology and Anthropology, Nsukka, 5-7th December, 1973.

18 William I.A. Eteng, *"Factors Related to Farm Practice Adoption Among Cocoa Farmers of Western Nigeria,"* M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Rural Sociology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1968.

clientelism with the rural capitalists as patrons and a majority of low-income peasants as clients.

This is the system through which capitalism requires the cooperation of this class for maximum exploitation of local resources. In effect, therefore, Hill's rural capitalists are part of the ongoing capitalist system. And in so far as capitalism by its very logic is exploitative, Hill's rural capitalists are an exploiting class, not just members of the 'homo economicus Africanus'.

Part of the problem of the 'noble savage' writers derives from a conceptual confusion and failure to distinguish between the modern cocoa peasants they actually studied and the mythical 'traditional farmers' hardly existing in today's West Africa. Perhaps the point needs belabouring: the cocoa producers originally described by both Hill and Berry had become relatively important — politically and economically — especially in terms of their vertical linkages with urban and metropolitan interests through politico-bureaucratic and market networks rather than through lineage and local community interaction channels. Thus, the capitalist peasants detected by Hill were no more part of the Durkheimian mechanical society or Toennies gemeinschaft-like social system. They produced cocoa chiefly for metropolitan industries; they did not just dominate a traditional, inward-looking economy. They also were not merely holding a commanding position within the rural sector of a mythical dual economy. They and the economy they 'dominated' were part and parcel of the world's capitalist hegemony. The central locus of politico-economic power had shifted drastically from the lineage and the community to urban and metropolitan centres, and the rural capitalists constitute the local link-pins in this pervasive system.

Avoidance of Cocoa Export Control

The West African cocoa industry is characterised by two conflicting peculiarities. Cocoa production is primarily in the hands of indigenous African peasants, while cocoa export trade is externally controlled by the exploiting capitalists whose partners include the legitimizing 'noble savage' proponents who failed to include in their original analysis the dynamics of cocoa export control. This arrangement is deliberate and is part of the capitalist production and distribution mechanism which alienates primary producers from the products of their labour. A brief analysis of cocoa export trade control is one means of testing the extent to which the adoption of the innovative cocoa economy was an asset or a liability to the African institutional order.

In his analysis of differential capacities in controlling the West African cocoa trade and exchange channels, Hopkins provided the following summary:[19] (1) economic development by way of staple exports was a precarious

19 A. G. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 258—9.

and lengthy process for West African producers, and that world market demand and supply fluctuations frequently set back the progress of particular staples such as cocoa and retarded the West African economy generally; (2) West Africa's external trade consistently experienced series of crises particularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries when export producers were caught in a staple trap, and during which the barter terms of trade turned against them so that attempts to increase export volume either failed, or when successful, again contributed to further decline in the terms of trade, with the result that growth became self-defeating; (3) due to the unfavourable factors governing the demand for tropical agricultural products in the industrial countries, West African countries had to accept world prices as given, even though they supplied a considerable proportion of cocoa and other primary goods; this was because cocoa prices were especially susceptible to changes in the size of harvest, thus, when there was a slump in the world market, production adjustment on the part of the cocoa producer was rather problematic; (4) West Africa had to export cocoa in exchange for a variety of manufactures, chiefly consumer goods whose prices as in the case of exported cocoa, were mainly determined by industrial powers who also dominated the entire import trade; (5) in every attempt of the colonial government and foreign firms to contain the political and economic crises of the First World War (1914-18), the 1920-21 post-war slump, the 1930-33 world depression and the 1939-45 Second World War and after, the ideal of socio-economic development of West Africa was clearly tangential (if ever mooted at all) to their ultimate objective of 'self preservation' and profit maximization.

Methods adopted by West African producers on the one hand, and by colonial governments and expatriate economic interests, on the other, are also highly instructive in evaluating the differential amount of power exerted by both groups in dealing adequately with the cocoa export crises. Generally, expatriate and colonial government interests bent on survival adopted a number of defensive and offensive strategies all of which were essentially detrimental to West African cocoa producers. These tactics included:[20] imposition of export and import restrictions — quotas, tarrifs — on goods leaving or entering West Africa under the system of imperial preference and protectionism; reduction or elimination of high production cost and unnecessary competition through retrenchment and market sharing schemes; and direct British government control of cocoa purchase under the auspices of the British Ministry of Food (1939), the West African Cocoa Control Board (WACCB) (1940), and West African Produce Control Board (WAPCB) (1942). By thus eliminating competition among themselves and by imposing export and import restrictions on West African export trade generally, colonial governments and their supportive expatriate firms were able to virtually dominate and manipulate at will the existing cocoa export channels, and hence the profit earnings from this trade.

20 A.G. Hopkins, ibid. pp. 259—260

Conversely, West African producers were less successful in the survival campaign. Caught in a 'staple trap' and unable to contend with the prevailing capitalist forces, the peasant producers often adopted 'symbolic' strategies — withholding actions, short-lived farm protests and ill-organized farm riots such as were reported in Ghana in 1920 and 1930-31, in Ghana and Nigeria in 1937 and in Nigeria in the famous Agbekoya riots of 1968.[21] At other times, the indigenous producers reacted to the downtrends in cocoa prices in terms of what Hopkins calls a 'perverse response': they expanded rather than reduced their volume of production since they were earnings, and since no alternative ~~meant~~ ~~of~~ buying imports was readily available.

As some West African writers have rightly observed, the seeming impressive expansion of cocoa exports particularly during the 1930-40 and 1950-60 decades, was not a reflection of prosperity as the 'noble savage' scholars would imply. For example, Ekundare,[22] his obvious eulogies of capitalism notwithstanding, conceded that the volume of cocoa export tonnage and export income values, particularly during the 1930s, generally tended to vary negatively. He specifically noted that the value of total cocoa exports fell from ₦34m in 1928 to approximately ₦18m in 1934, the large decrease in export values being primarily due to poor prices received by local producers. Thus, about 49,000 tons of cocoa valued at approximately ₦4.8m were exported in 1938, whereas in 1954, with an increased export tonnage of 68,000 tons (an increase of 27.9 per cent), the export value fell to about N2.58m (a loss of 45.8 per cent in revenue). Similar trends also prevailed with respect to palm produce and tin.

Nkrumah[23] also observed that the instability of, and the down-trend in, world prices of cocoa products were generally disadvantageous to West African producers due to the latter's unbroken dependence on the world market. He also indicated that this generally created a situation where more of the primary producers' investments in land, labour and other resources invariably yielded negative earnings during the 1954-64 decade. He particularly noted that Ghana's 1954 earnings from cocoa were ₦170.5m when her 1954/5 production stood at 210,000 tons, while her 1964 earnings were estimated at around ₦154m from an estimated 1964/5 crop of 590,000 tons. In 1964 Ghana thus increased her 1954 production by 64.4 per cent but lost 9.9 per cent of her 1954 cocoa revenue. Similarly, Nigeria received ₦78.25m from 89,000 tons in 1954/5 while her estimated receipts for 1964/5 was aroung ₦80m from an estimated production of 310,000 tons. Thus, for an increase of 249.4 per cent on 1954/5 tonnage, Nigeria lost 9 per cent of her 1954/5 cocoa earnings. In other words, Nigeria and Ghana apparently trebled their joint cocoa production while their combined gross earnings fell by 46.4

21 A.G. Hopkins, Ibid., pp. 255—6; O. Imoagene, op. cit.

22 Ekundare, A Socio-Economic History of Nigeria: 1860—1960, pp. 204-5.

23 Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, International Publishers, New York: 1969, p. 10.

per cent from ₦250m to ₦134 during the decade under review. This is a graphic case of growth without development!

Another illuminating study by Kofi[24] provided a period by period analysis of world market performances of West African cocoa producers relative to the performances of multinationals and foreign manufacturers. Periodizing the cocoa export trade specifically into four major market periods, Kofi showed that producer prices, as well as producer gross market margins — both measured as proportions of foreign-determined cocoa spot prices — varied from one period to another according to the nature and amount of power exerted, and the crucial market information controlled by foreign firms and manufacturers.

Kofi's findings specifically indicated that (1) as foreign dealers and manufacturers increased their monopolistic and oligopolitic control of the cocoa export channels, the proportion of the profit margins accruing to them also increased over the years, while profits accruing to the primary producers concomitantly decreased to the point where (as occured during the Second World War) the margins even failed to cover the variable cost of transporting the cocoa; (2) trade was one in which ill-organized and ignorant peasant producers constantly faced a group of foreign, monopolistic buyers and importers — multinationals, manufacturers, colonial agencies — which controlled the export channels, fixed prices and, therefore, retained a large percentage of the profits, and (3) foreign price determination and control generally resulted in disorderly marketing and skewed profit distributions which in turn affected rather negatively the rate of capital accumulation and socio-economic development in the cocoa producing economies of West Africa.

An impression of the extent of cocoa profits controlled by foreign manufacturers other than importers has been provided by Deedee Morre's "The Town That Cocoa Built"[25] — a down-to earth profile of Hershy, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. — the world's largest and most ultra-modern chocolate factory built at the beginning of the century by late Milton Snavely Hershey, an importer-manufacturer. This factory town with the most modern amenities and total assets worth over $500m was built and sustained out of profits made from cocoa exports mainly from Ghana, Nigeria and Ivory Coast. In keeping with the 'noble savage' doctrinaire, Deedee Moore ended Hershey's profile with a derisive capitalist footnote: "Africa has a stake in the famous Hershey chocolate bar." Indeed, Africa has a stake in the cocoa wealth it does not control!

This brief analysis has shown that West African primary producers have consistently lost out to foreign controllers in the cocoa export trade. In the present context in which the real producers are alienated from capital

24 Tetteh A. Kofi, "The Role of Multinational Corporations In Cocoa Marketing and Pricing and Economic Development In Producer (African) Countries", UN-IDEP, CS/2562—16, Dakar, September, 1974.

25 Deedee Moore, "The Town That Cocoa Built", *Topic*, No. 87, pp. 36—38.

generated by their labour, and in which the metropoles are developed at the expense of the producing enclave, the Schumpeterian thesis that "innovators act as catalysis in the process of 'creative destruction,'" is scarcely validated.

Negation of African Development

The 'noble savage' capitalist doctrine negates contemporary African development objectives. Steeped in functionalism, the 'noble savage' strategy seeks to perpetuate traditional structures which foster the entrenchment of capitalism in the West African cocoa economy. It props up indigenous institutions, reinforces peasant production and property relations, refurbishes existing natural resources, strengthens distributive channels and relationships, and makes all these available in the service of exploitative and predatory capitalism and neo-colonialism. In fact, the primary reason why the African savage is noble is because he serves the needs of the capitalist exploiter.

But, as Gunder Frank has rightly opined, a more authentic alternative to the orthodox, capitalist development theory must, among other things (1) come to terms with the historical and contemporary realities of the Third World nations; (2) reflect the structure and development of the capitalist system which initiated and now maintains and perpetuates both the structural development of the metropoles and the underdevelopment of the Third World countries as simultaneous and mutually produced manifestations of the same historical processes; (3) further explain the nature of the national and international exchange process and relations within the context of the prevailing capitalist modes of production and property relations in both the metropoles and the satellite nations, and (4) be ever more politically revolutionary in helping the peoples of underdeveloped countries to destroy this exploitative and brutalizing system, and substitute in its place a relatively self-reliant, indigenously controlled political economy geared toward the continuous improvement of the quality of life of the citizens.[26]

According to Obeng.

> it is, indeed, the conception of development in the now underdeveloped countries (and in underdeveloped communities within those countries) as essentially a matter of struggle *against* unequal exchange and exploitation, and *for* freedom, independence and self-reliance in the economic, social, technological, agricultural and cultural fields, and not essentially as technical processes and challenges on a linear path toward the production and consumption profile of Europe and North America (or the Soviet Union) that distinguishes the revolutionary section of the development community from the community's established and orthodox faction.[27]

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26 A. Gunder Frank.

27 A.V. Obeng. "Social Research and National Developments In Nigeria: Notes of a Non-Participant Observer". Paper presented at the NISER conference on Social Research and National Development In Nigeria, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2 September — 28 October 1975. p. 4—5.

This is the only meaningful conception of development against the historical backdrop of capitalist-instigated genocides and economic exploitation in Africa.

Hill and Berry and their 'noble savage' school add nothing to the foregoing African development objectives. The trouble, as Akeredolu-Ale's interesting but superficial review has shown, is that Hill (and one might add Berry) focused primarily on *how* rural economies operated to keep the economy going, thus, providing no more than a relatively exhaustive description (not analysis) of the socio-economic organization of rural capitalism in West Africa, while completely neglecting the more basic policy issue concerning *why* rural economies operated the way they did[28]. The later question would have formed a more critical analysis of the basis of underdevelopment and 'rural inertia' in contemporary West African peasant economies.

As to the 'causes' of 'rural sector, Akeredolu-Ale provided two groups of supposedly related variables: (1) one relating to the personal characteristics of the rural capitalists studied by Hill — their social psychological traits, notably their presumed conservatism and low innovativeness, as well as their relative small size and high socio-economic status; (2) the other relating to the structural nature of the peasant economy they operated: its presumed traditionalism reinforced by a dual economy which (i) fostered a 'circular flow' of capital and resources, (ii) strengthened the rural capitalists' political and economic dominance, (iii) concomitantly diminished the rural capitalists' visibility and capacity as agents of rural transformation, and (iv) finally forced government into adopting a futile modernization strategy of encouraging the use of new extension-promoted farm techniques "among the wide farming population (the amorphous peasantry) rather than assisting a very small number of large-scale established farmers to take over the rural sector". Akeredolu-Ale, thus, concluded that as a result of these associated factors, West African rural transformation "in the sense intended by governmental development policies, plans and programmes" and defined in terms of qualitative "transformation of production techniques and the productivity of the rural producer, as well as his orientation to the urban sector in such a way as to integrate rural economic processess into the mainstream of the national economy", basically failed to materialize.

Ostensibly, Akeredolu-Ale's provision of 'the missing link' between rural capitalism and development at least raises one of the most critical issues in modern literature on Third World development. But in attempting to delineate factual, manipulable independent factors implicated with the elimination of underdevelopment in the West African cocoa producing peripheries, Akeredolu-Ale unfortunately got trapped in the 'noble savage' diffusionist snare, thus subscribing to several current fallacies of the grand, orthodox development paradigm, namely; (1) the fallacy of the prevalence of a dualistic economy in the Third World; (2) the fallacy regarding moder-

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28 E.O. Akeredolu-Ale op. cit., p. 4.

nization as contingent on the goodwill of the dominant Schumpeterian and McClelland's entrepreneurial elites; (3) the fallacy of the conservatism and mental inflexibility of the Third World's peasantry; and (4) the fallacy concerning the implicit interest of the national elites in the elimination of rural poverty through mass mobilization of the peasantry.

If one, therefore, pressed for Akeredolu-Ale's prescriptions for eliminating 'rural inertia' and for ushering in rural modernization and socio-economic development, his response would apparently approximate the following: Carefully isolate rural capitalists who are, by definition, most qualified but unable to exploit their potentialities as natural agents of rural modernization. Teach them to live up to expectations by "innovating on a continuous basis in the application of their surpluses, and in picking up and translating into action new insights of scientific inquiries into crop quality, technology and organizational methods." In a word, transform these rustic rural capitalists into modern entrepreneurs, the African equivalents of American commercial farmers. Finally, devote all government efforts and resources to launching and consolidating this special class of farmers to "take over the rural economy" rather than wasting its efforts on "the amorphous peasant mass".

This is a pro-capitalist prescription par excellence, but hardly a panacea for the prevailing rural underdevelopment. We seem to have journeyed full circle! From Berry who carefully avoided the peasant class question altogether, to Hill who described rural capitalists within the context of homoeostatic, self-maintaining dualistic economy, we now confront Akeredolu-Ale who initially chided the Africanists for failing to live up to their promise to analyze traditional African economies within their historical and structural contexts — but who subsequently ended refurbishing the exploitative capitalist system we are seeking to dislodge. Thus (1) instead of emancipating the entire West African peasantry, in Hofotee's terms,[29] as a basic pre-requisite to authentic development, Akeredolu-Ale endorsed the entrenchment of current peasant class system through the government's deliberate sponsorship of rural capitalism, thereby politically and legally legitimising West African economic dependency on world capitalism; (2) rather than dismantling the prevailing rural-urban-metropolitan dependency structure by eliminating existing urban/patron — rural/client networks in which rural capitalists play intermediary exploitative roles, he alternatively opted for the strengthening of the politico-economic power of an exploiting rural capitalist minority; (3) rather than attacking the structural impediments of rural development by destroying the basic mode of capitalistic production, its attendant property relations and its entire neocolonialist paraphanelia, Akeredolu-Ale proposed a social-psychological remedy-the injection of a good dose of Schumpeterian entrepreneurship into his select cadre of rural capitalists; (4) instead of proposing a national development policy of relative self-reliance, he ultimately endorsed diffusionism and acculturation approach to authentic development, thus perpetuating African technological dependency on Europe, and (5) rather than providing an adequate and empirically grounded theoretical framework reflecting African realities, Akeredolu-Ale momentarily escaped the clutches of the 'noble savage' ideologies only to fraternize with blaming-the-rural-victim exponents, thereby enslaving in the long run the very peasants he set out to emancipate in the first instance.

29 E.W. Hofotee, 'Development and Rural Structure", *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vo. III./3—4, 1968, pp. 240—255.

Conclusion

It is our original contention that African scholars who are dedicated to the cause of fundamental African development can make worthwhile contributions in this respect by, among other things, exposing those subtle and not too subtle variations of the orthodox capitalist development paradigm. The grand orthodox paradigm is dangerously hydro-headed; some appear 'bearing cross'. One of such strands which has recently been smuggled into current development literature by Africanist enthusiasts following growing interest in the economic-anthropology of Third World economies is the 'noble Savage' perspective.

Hill and Berry, chief contributors to this orientation, provided insights as to how traditional institutions and non-economic socio-cultural values were instrumental in successfully grafting an economic innovation — cocoa production — into the traditional economy. Upon critical review, however, both authors only succeeded in providing an unrewarding profile of the 'homo economicus Africanus,' a thoroughly belaboured and unprovoking theme. Their studies were more impressive for what they failed to consider. They initially set out to study African cocoa economies within their respective historical and structural foundation contexts rather than imposing Euro-American frame works. Both ended up completely avoiding the historical and structural foundations of underdevelopment in the cocoa producing regions of West Africa. They flouted the intellectual rules of holism and structuralism by failing to locate the West African cocoa economy appropriately within the larger context of the world capitalist economy. Similarly, they avoided the critical problem of the capitalist production processes with implications for the related processes of peasantization and peasant class evaluation in the cocoa industry. They equally failed to analyze the cocoa export control dynamics for purposes of determining the specific roles of both the indigenous producers and foreign interests in the prevailing cocoa trade. Finally, developmentally, they were disguised sympathizers, and indeed agents, of neocolonialism and capitalism; they discovered the African 'noble savage' and dumped him at the mercy of the capitalist exploiter.

Our review also indicated that the history of West African cocoa industry is part of the historical development of capitalism in West Africa. A major consequence of this development includes the transformation of the traditional economy into a capitalist prototype with its manifest concentration of property in a few hands through ownership and control of production and distribution processes. The ensuing decapitalization of the cocoa producing areas arising from the prevailing clientelistic system directly militates against capital formation and development in this region.

Rural capitalism presumably discovered by Hill is a misnomer. Capitalism in the modern sense is capitalism, whether white, black, rural, urban or metropolitan. Because capitalism is essentially exploitative and predatory, rural capitalists are merely local compradores operating as intermediaries in the exploitative chain. Basic African development must, therefore, take the African historical and structural realities into serious consideration. Within these contexts, development policy must seek to sever existing links between Africa and the exploitative capitalist hegemony.

In the 1970-80 decade and beyond, African social science must decide to chart a course and to play an intellectual vanguard role in this freedom movement or lose its relevance. The critical question is, therefore, whether African social science must continue refurbishing the Capitalist Leviathan with new robes, in the manner of the Africanists, or whether it has conscience enough to reminisce on the enormity of African lives within the continent and in the Diaspora - that have been destroyed in the name of this Leviathan, and be courageous enough to abandon it. This is the question! If the first alternative is preferred, this author strongly believes that the role of the African intellectual is rather superflours; white liberal social science tradition is doing that job better. If the second alternative is preferred, and it ought to be preferred, African social scientists have an awesome task of (1) 'searching and destroying' those ensnaring 'development' theories and models either from the West or East that have trapped the African for too long; (2) disabusing themselves of their 'colonial mentality,' and (3) rigorously conceptualizing and reconceptualizing true meanings of African development, and clearly specifying its underlying philosophies, assumptions, values, models, approaches and strategies. African social scientists may not begin with a finished progarmme, but let them start somehow. The essence of history making is learning from participating in history making. This is the praxis!

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPERIALISM

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It will be argued in this paper that Public Administration, as it is presently conceived, taught and practised both in the 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' parts of the world is both theoretically and empirically an impossible tool for bringing about development in the 'third' world. Public Administration has never been a tool for development anywhere. In the third world, it can only serve — indeed it has only served — the interest of imperialism. Little wonder, therefore, that the search for development-oriented bureaucracy has yet to yield any positive results.

For clarity, let us define some of the terms used here. Imperialism is that process by which capital, owned by persons or agencies in country A, is deployed in a foreign country B, where it yields profit; this profit is then either reinvested in B for the continued advantage of its owners in A, or is repatriated back to A. The other side of the coin of imperialism is economic exploitation. Imperialism can lead to colonialism, but both phenomena are distinct. In Africa, for example, imperialism preceded colonialism and set the stage for the latter. And although colonialism has come to a formal end in many parts of that continent, imperialism continues unabated in these same parts.[1] By development, we have in mind

> a change process characterized by increased productivity, equalization in the distribution of the social product, and the emergence of indigenous institutions whose relations with the outside world, and particularly with the developed centres of international economy, are characterized by equality rather than dependence or subordination.[2]

We shall understand by underdevelopment, a situation in which the institutions of a country in the periphery of international capital maintains a dependence relationship with one or several countries at the centre of international economy. It is not the absence of growth. But it is characterized by unequal distribution, slow growth, and the subordination of internal economic and political institutions to influences from the centre and, therefore, loss of real autonomy.

Public Administration as it is being used here does not lend itself to easy definition. Being subsumed under it are such other concepts as 'bureaucracy',

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1 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Publishing House, 1972, pp. 148—160; Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, New York, International Publishers, 1966.

2 E.A. Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919 — 1939*, New York, NOK Publishers, Ltd., 1973, p. 18.