

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION AND IMPERIALISM IN RELATION TO THE REPRODUCTION OF THIRD WORLD PEASANTRIES

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Studies on Third World peasantries display a variety of approaches to their subject matter. Most aim to describe the conditions of life of the peasantries anthropologically, socio-economically and/or physically. This paper by contrast seeks to theoretically define the nature of Third World peasantries vis-a-vis their social totality.

The first two sections are devoted to a consideration of primitive accumulation and imperialism as described by Marx and Lenin respectively. Both primitive accumulation and imperialism are important historical processes of capitalist development, relevant to the formation of today's Third World peasantries.

Section Three attempts to establish the relationship between imperialism and primitive accumulation through a review of recent historical materialist analyses dealing with the nature of Third World social formations and their articulation to capital. Criticism will be levelled at the failure to regard the significance of primitive accumulation and imperialism as historical processes. Amongst these analyses, two approaches are discernible:

1. The first being posited on the view of primitive accumulation and imperialism as primarily a historical, overlooking the specificity of the process of primitive accumulation spatially and temporally and the need to historically periodicize it vis-a-vis pre-capitalist modes of production. This arises because of particular misinterpretations of the historical materialist concepts of social production and reproduction.
2. The second being posited on the view of primitive accumulation and imperialism as historical epochs or alternatively historical interludes, thereby failing to correctly identify the actual operation of primitive accumulation and imperialism as social processes.

Section Four focusses on the object of analysis, Third World peasantries. It is argued that the peasantry is not a distinct form of economy and society. The widely varying natures of peasantries under different historical epochs points to the necessity to theorize the peasantry as a labour

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process to be understood within the context of specific modes of production or articulations of modes of production.

Section Five attempts to draw together the arguments of previous sections by a re-consideration of primitive accumulation and imperialism in relation to Third World peasant reproduction and its convergence with capitalist reproduction. The meaning and significance of social production and reproduction are stipulated at the outset of the section, serving to specify the conceptual context of the analysis.

I. Primitive Accumulation

Primitive accumulation was first described materialistically by Marx (Capital Vol. I) as the process through which the embryonic capitalist mode of production arose and extended itself while dissolving the feudal mode of production. In its original form, primitive accumulation was a class struggle of an intense and evolutionary nature. The culmination of this class struggle was on the one hand, the dispossession of the means of subsistence and means of production from the producers and on the other, their concentration in the hands of non-producers, i.e. capitalists. The ultimate result of primitive accumulation at this early stage was revolutionary in terms of giving rise to new production relations with the creation of two new classes.

Once concentration of the means of production had progressed to the extent that capitalist control of production was sufficiently consolidated, capitalism entered its competitive stage. Primitive accumulation as a process of dispossession of the producers continued to operate in the remaining areas of peasant production, giving rise to the development of a latent reserve population for wage labour. Primitive accumulation was no longer the center of the class struggle for domination and exploitation but rather it peripherally acted on the center where the capitalist class appropriated absolute and relative surplus value from the working class. The capitalist class was able to use the latent surplus population specifically as a weapon against working class demands. The presence of a latent surplus population facilitated the intensification of the exploitation of wage labour threatened with replacement and loss of their means of subsistence. In this manner, the process of primitive accumulation was indirectly instrumental for capitalist appropriation of absolute surplus value during the competitive stage of capitalist development.

The epoch of monopoly capitalism was marked by the centralization of the means of production, and the expansion of capital to unprecedented levels. Imperialist acquisition of cheap raw materials and labour power which continues up to the present day, serves to lower capitalist production costs.

The lowering of production costs facilitates the appropriation of relative surplus value from wage labour in the metropolises. Through imperialist expansion, the process of primitive accumulation gains significance in relation to lands encompassing the globe which hitherto had only marginal trading contact with capital. At this stage primitive accumulation takes the new form of colonialism and later neo-colonialism, with distinct differences when compared with its classical form. Primitive accumulation can no longer be characterized as a process by which a new embryonic mode of production asserts itself out of the feudal mode or for that matter any other pre-capitalist mode. Primitive accumulation becomes the confrontation between monopoly capital and pre-capitalist modes whose productive forces and relations of production in no way approximate the conditions of existence of capital. Furthermore, the coercive force of state power is an integral part of the colonial and neo-colonial forms of primitive accumulation. In contrast, in the classical form of primitive accumulation the dispossession of the means of production from the peasantry was the outcome of a spontaneous class struggle where in fact state sanctions were yet on the side of those being dispossessed from the beginning of the process in the late 15th century to the 18th century (Marx, Capital Vol. I; 718-724).

Marx stated that primitive accumulation is neither a unitary nor a universally uniform process.

"The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation in different countries, assumes different orders of succession, and at different periods. In England alone, which we take as our example, has it the classic form". (Capital Vol. I: 716)

The paradoxical fact that the colonial and neo-colonial forms of primitive accumulation generally have not resulted in the expropriation of peasant producers' means of production must be understood in light of the variability of the process of primitive accumulation. This becomes especially true when considering the implantation of capital in pre-capitalist modes other than feudalism. Under these circumstances entirely different manifestations of the primitive accumulation process arise which reflect the nature of the pre-capitalist modes in combination with the capitalist mode of production.

The difference between the articulated transition of feudalism to capitalism versus other pre-capitalist modes of productions' articulation to capital is difficult to generalize. Perhaps the difference is best understood by posing a question. To what degree did other modes of production

approximate the conditions which feudalism established for capitalist development? These conditions were surplus production, and a division of labour in combination with commodity production commonly referred to as handicraft. The economic base of handicraft was an underlying assumption of Marx's conception of classical primitive accumulation.

"A certain accumulation of capital, in the hands of individual producers of commodities, forms therefore the necessary preliminary of the specifically capitalistic mode of production. We had, therefore, to assume that this occurs during the transition from handicraft to capitalistic industry. It may be called primitive accumulation, because it is the historic basis, instead of the historic result of specifically capitalist production." (Capital Vol.I: 624)

The fundamental and defining identity between the classical form of primitive accumulation and its colonial and neo-colonial forms is that all can be understood as providing the historic basis of the capitalist mode of production, although in the latter forms the historic basis is founded at different levels of productive forces and production relations.

Marx's periodization of primitive accumulation as the historic basis of capitalism rather than its historic result requires further enquiry. While Marx specified there were different forms of primitive accumulation, nevertheless perhaps it is incorrect to view colonialism and neo-colonialism as more recent forms of primitive accumulation. Many people studying these phenomena consider the consolidation of competitive capitalism in Western Europe and North America as evidence of the foundation of a world-wide historic basis of capital. To them colonial territories and neo-colonial nation-states represent underdeveloped capitalist social formations. What they tend to overlook is the fact that the conditions of capitalist reproduction are far from indigenized in the colonial and neo-colonial social formations.

"The capitalist system pre-supposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour."
(Marx, Capital Vol.I: 714)

Clearly primitive accumulation continues to operate until these conditions are realized.

"The process therefore that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate

producers into wage-labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production." (Marx, Capital, Vol.1: 714)

How and why the process of primitive accumulation appears in pre-capitalist modes of production throughout the world, beyond the original birthplace of capital was to be illuminated by Lenin through his study of imperialism.

II. Imperialism

The hypothetical question as to whether all pre-capitalist modes of production would eventually transcend to capitalism is answerable only in terms of baseless conjecturing. The task of scientific analysis is to analyze abstractly and concretely real social phenomena. The pertinent question to ask is not about the possible evolution of pre-capitalist modes of production to capitalism but rather why the capitalist mode has the tendency to encompass and then dominate all other pre-capitalist modes of production. Marx did not address this issue in any detail because monopoly capitalism and its imperialist tendencies were only beginning to evidence themselves at the time of his writing. Colonialism existed, but it was still primarily facilitating the development of merchant capital which had yet to be affected by banking and industrial capital.

Lenin's writings are contemporary with the rise of monopoly capital. Lenin's (1969 (1917) Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism described monopoly capital as the concentration of production and capital at a very advanced stage of development. Monopoly capital signified the end of the dominance of competitive capital and the growth dynamic engendered by the competition of small private capitalist enterprises. The development of productive forces could no longer be contained by competitive capitalism. The extended reproduction of monopoly capital resulted in the proliferation of investments, markets and new sources of raw materials to facilitate the development of national capitals which however, defied national boundaries. The capitalist states territorially divided the world through colonial annexation in an attempt to guarantee their national monopoly capitals' investment opportunities and sources of raw materials.

Imperialism was depicted as the phenomenon of self-expanding extended reproduction of capital dynamized by monopoly competition. Lenin described monopoly competition, as the process of centralization of capital in the organizational form of syndicates, cartels and trusts situated within

particular national capitals. Furthermore, Lenin noted that some national capitals advanced far beyond others to gain a monopolist position (Lenin 1969: 62). In conjunction with the force of capitalist state power these national capitals expanded their reproduction to encompass raw materials, markets and investment in areas hitherto untouched by capitalism.

The question here arises as to how Marx's conception of primitive accumulation and Lenin's conception of imperialism relate. Lenin approaches imperialism from the side of monopoly capital itself and says little about its effects on pre-capitalist modes of production, besides the following:

"As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will never be utilised for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists; it will be used for the purpose of increasing those profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap. The possibility of exporting capital is created by the fact that numerous backward countries have been drawn into international capitalist intercourse; main railways have either been built or are being built there; the elementary conditions for industrial development have been created, etc." (Lenin 1969(1917): 63).

With the benefit of more information on pre-capitalist social formations, the relationship between primitive accumulation and imperialism becomes more apparent although as the next section will show there is much debate. Lenin's work is very crucial to the present debate, especially with regard to two aspects.

Firstly, Lenin established imperialism as a particular historical phase of capitalist development.

"Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres". (Lenin 1969(1917): 88)

Secondly, monopoly capital expansion was motivated by big profits (Lenin 1969(1917): 63), however the costs of colonialism were considerable, to the extent of hindering development in the imperialist country (Lenin 1969(1917): 65). This seeming contradiction was resolved by Lenin who

recognized the primary importance of colonies as sources of raw materials in the face of monopoly competition.

"Finance capital is not only interested in the already known sources of raw materials; it is also interested in the potential sources of raw materials, because present-day technical development is extremely rapid, and because land which is useless today may be made fertile tomorrow if new methods are applied..."(Lenin 1969 (1917): 83)

"Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of the struggle with competitors, including the risk that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more the need for raw materials is felt, the more bitter competition becomes, and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds throughout the whole world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies". (Lenin 1969 (1917): 82).

III. The Relationship between Primitive Accumulation and Imperialism

Primitive accumulation and imperialism appear in the works of Marx and Lenin respectively as descriptions of historical stages of capitalist development. If one were oblivious to the method of abstraction of historical materialism one could readily conclude that primitive accumulation and imperialism were originally intended as concepts explaining in a one-to-one correspondence the historical reality of a particular time and place. This would be incorrect. Primitive accumulation and imperialism denote general, abstract historical processes applicable to the analysis of any concrete situations evidencing the characteristics described by Marx and Lenin. Confusion however has arisen in their analytical usage. This section is divided into two main parts: the first part composed of a review of two analyses which ignore the status of primitive accumulation and imperialism as historical processes, generalizing them to the operation of the capitalist mode of production as a whole. The second part reviews three analyses of underdevelopment which define primitive accumulation and imperialism as historical epochs or interludes, thereby ignoring their dynamics as historical processes in the development of the capitalist mode of production.

A. Ahistorical Conceptions of Primitive Accumulation and Imperialism :

1. Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg was one of the first to theorize a relationship between primitive accumulation and imperialism. Essentially her position

was that both imperialism and primitive accumulation are inextricably a part of capitalist development but disregarded their original status as historical processes.

"At the time of primitive accumulation, i.e. at the end of the Middle Ages, when the history of capitalism in Europe began, and right into the nineteenth century, dispossessing the peasants in England and on the Continent was the most striking weapon in the large-scale transformation of means of production and labour power into capital. Yet capital in power performs the same task even to-day, and on even more important scale - by modern colonial policy". (Luxemburg 1951 (1913): 369-370)

Luxemburg attempted to go beyond describing imperialism and instead, analytically dissect it, in relation to capitalist reproduction. She argued that capitalist simple reproduction was self-contained whereas extended reproduction was not realizable without an exogenous market. This conclusion followed from the contradiction she posited between the expansion of capitalist production and the full realization of surplus value. Luxemburg believed that under conditions of capitalist expansion the necessary diversion of capital to new investments would cause the realization of surplus value on old investments to fall short. The cause of this was the failure of the consuming power of capitalist society to absorb the capitalist production arising from both new and old investments.

Luxemburg's main thesis was that capital's extended reproduction was imperialist by nature, in its requirement for exogenous markets. The search and establishment of exogenous markets led to the process of primitive accumulation as a necessary condition of capitalist development.

"Historically, the accumulation of capital is a kind of metabolism between capitalist economy and those pre-capitalist methods of production without which it cannot go on and which, in this light, it corrodes and assimilates". (Luxemburg 1951 (1913): 416)

Primitive accumulation thus becomes the process of destruction of natural economies throughout the world. Imperialism gives rise to primitive accumulation, but the relationship is inherently contradictory.

"... capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organizations, nor, on the other hand, can it tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continuous and progressive disintegration of non-capitalist organizations makes accumulation of capital possible". (Luxemburg 1951 (1913): 416)

Luxemburg distinguished three phases of primitive accumulation all of which are brought about by the application of force.

"we must distinguish three phases: the struggle of capital against natural economy, the struggle against commodity economy, and the competitive struggle of capital on the international stage for the remaining conditions of accumulation." (Luxemburg 1951 (1913): 368)

Subsidiary to her main market thesis, Luxemburg argued that capitalist extended reproduction required free access to ever fresh sources of raw materials arising from both new or increased needs, as well as to replace depleted sources.

Luxemburg's contribution to the theoretical understanding of primitive accumulation was the recognition that the process of primitive accumulation in relation to pre-capitalist modes of production other than feudalism can be traced back to a stage preceding handicraft commodity production. While this is a significant contribution, nevertheless, there are very fundamental problems with her work as a whole.

Luxemburg's market thesis is based on a serious oversight in her reading of Capital. As Bradby (1975) correctly pointed out, capital's extended reproduction does not inherently jeopardize surplus value realization. The capitalist accumulation process is accompanied by increasing productivity in the economy which constantly lowers exchange value while creating greater and greater masses of use values. Lowered exchange value pre-empts the problem of the capitalist society's consumptive ability to absorb capitalist production.

Bradby incisively recognized that Luxemburg's market thesis contradicts her secondary thesis on capital's imperialist expansion for raw materials. The market thesis generalized imperialism to the capitalist mode of production regardless of its level of development. The secondary raw material thesis, on the other hand, followed Lenin's conception of imperialism, viewing imperialism as essentially an historical phenomenon arising from the needs of capitalist production at a particular historical conjuncture.

Bradby also criticized Luxemburg for generalizing capital's application of force to the entire process of primitive accumulation. Bradby adhering to the classical conception of primitive accumulation, argued that primitive accumulation can eventually result in capital's forcible expropriation of the producers' means of production and land and the exploitation of their labour, but producers cannot be directly coerced to come to the market and buy commodities, which is central to Luxemburg's market thesis. Again a reflection of Luxemburg's ahistorical bias.

Bradby explained:

"The role of force is not in introducing commodity exchange, but rather in forcing people to give up natural resources by any means other than a fair exchange. It is therefore linked with Luxemburg's 'weak thesis' (raw material thesis). not with the 'strong thesis' (market thesis), so that we can say that the use of force arises out of concrete needs in different branches of capitalism at different times, and not out of any permanent necessity". (Bradby 1975: 141)

Finally, it is necessary to note that while Luxemburg drew attention to the operation of primitive accumulation in precapitalist modes of production other than feudalism, nevertheless her consideration of the significance of the pre-capitalist mode in its confrontation with capital does not extend far enough. Luxemburg never adequately considered the nature of internal conditions in the pre-capitalist modes of production. In her theoretical formulation, pre-capitalist modes are merely external markets for capital or sources of raw materials. This is why Luxemburg so easily reduces imperialist penetration to force. If she had considered the pre-capitalist mode of production she would have been in a position to recognize the possibility for the introduction of commodity exchange peacefully in pre-capitalist modes of production characterized by a certain level of productive forces and production relations.

2. Claude Meillassoux

Meillassoux's work (1972, 1974 and 1975) exemplifies an attempt to consider the nature of pre-capitalist modes in the process of primitive accumulation under imperialism. His attempt however is undermined by his failure to understand the historical character of imperialism and primitive accumulation. The following critique of his work relies heavily on O'Laughlin's (1977) review of Meillassoux's latest book Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux which is as yet unobtainable in English.

Meillassoux, in his book Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux defined imperialism as the mode of reproduction of cheap labour power. In so doing he posited a contradiction between capitalist production and capitalist reproduction. Unlike Marx, Meillassoux did not view capitalist production and capitalist reproduction as a necessarily unitary social process. Identifying capitalist reproduction as synonymous with biological reproduction of labour power, Meillassoux proceeded to theorize that capitalist production does not guarantee its own reproduction (i.e. biological reproduction).

Hence, capital's imperialist expansion arises as the means of cheap secure-
ment of labour power originating from pre-capitalist modes of production.
Primitive accumulation becomes the process whereby capital penetrates
pre-capitalist modes of production and harnesses labour power.

Meillassoux theoretically generalized pre-capitalist modes of
production to a classless domestic mode of production where the relations of
reproduction and not the relations of production are seen as dominant. The
dynamic of the domestic mode of production is projected towards population
growth instead of accumulation of surplus production as in modes of production
where classes are present. In this way the domestic mode of production has a
tendency to develop a surplus population. Surplus population as available
labour power, attracts capital to the domestic mode of production because it
provides the resolution of the contradiction between capitalist production and
capitalist reproduction.

Meillassoux referred to imperialist intervention and the harnessing of
the surplus labour power of the domestic mode of production as 'super-
exploitation', implying that this labour power is not fully remunerated accord-
ing to its value. The inevitable question as to why workers submit to super-
exploitation while still maintaining access to their means of production (i. e.
the land) was explained by Meillassoux in terms of an imperialist initiative.
Imperialism in the form of colonial state power introduces and propagates
taxation, monetization and forced labour. In this way, the domestic mode of
production is articulated to the capitalist mode of production in a position of
sub-ordination.

Meillassoux's attempt to understand the nature of a pre-capitalist
mode of production both before and during the process of primitive accumulation
under imperialism is a contribution to the theoretical study of primitive
accumulation and imperialism. Meillassoux, however, made many methodol-
ogical errors which Bridgette O'Laughlin (1977) uncovered in her critique of
Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux.

Firstly, Meillassoux ignored the distinction Marx made between
'labour' and 'labour power'. Labour power is particular to the capitalist
mode of production and signifies a specific class relation of capitalism.
Labour power defined as the capacity for labour connotes human labour
alienated from the means of production. Workers have no other choice than
to sell their labour power in exchange for a wage, which provides the basis
for subsistence. Meillassoux generalized the concept labour power to the
domestic mode of production by arguing that capital cannot guarantee its own
conditions of reproduction and must seek labour power from an exogenous

source. But clearly labour power does not exist in the domestic mode of production until capital itself creates it through expropriation.

Secondly, Meillassoux mystified the concept of mode of production by separating production and reproduction within the same mode of production, implying that reproduction is synonymous with biological reproduction and generalizable to all modes of production. Meillassoux can thus distinguish two separate, articulated modes of production solely on the basis of the form of production they manifest. For example, Meillassoux can choose to ignore the dominance of wage labour in a social formation focussing his attention instead on the vestige pre-capitalist form of production. In this way, the nature of the articulation of capital to the pre-capitalist mode of production is mystified.

The reproduction of capital and the reproduction of the pre-capitalist mode of production must be distinguished theoretically as well as empirically. The initial point of contact between the two modes of production affects their respective modes of reproduction and not production. The reproduction of the pre-capitalist mode of production gradually merges with capital's reproduction. When can we say that the pre-capitalist mode of production ceases to exist? The deficiencies of Meillassoux's theoretical constructs are revealed in his answer to this question. By separating production within particular modes of production from their congruent modes of reproduction Meillassoux can view even minor vestiges and mere remnants of the pre-capitalist labour process as signs of the existence of a pre-capitalist mode of production. In this way, just as Meillassoux saw imperialism as a necessary general condition of capitalist production, so too he viewed primitive accumulation as forever manifesting itself in the articulation of the domestic mode to the capitalist mode of production even at very advanced stages of capitalist development e.g. representing the domestic labour of women in the capitalist family as the domestic mode of production.

O'Laughlin correctly identified Meillassoux's methodological error.

"The sphere of capitalist production is identified with the capitalist mode of production; inversely all forms of non-wage labour are presumed to define non-capitalist modes of production. Meillassoux thus constructs a mode of capitalist/non-capitalist articulation which replicates in its analytical categories the dualistic appearance of the world economy. In such an empiricist framework, relations between modes of production are inevitably conceptualized as things; a social formation consists of people and commodities moving between capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production which are also linked by the apparatus of the state". (O'Laughlin 1977: 24)

B. Historical Conceptions Devoid of Clarity regarding Primitive Accumulation and Imperialism as Social Processes

1. Bridget O'Laughlin

O'Laughlin in her critique 'Production and Reproduction: Meillassoux's Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux' poses a methodological question of what a theory of imperialism should be.

"Although any general theory of imperialism is a theory of capitalist development, one must theorize non-capitalist modes of production and their relation to capital as well". (O'Laughlin 1977:11)

O'Laughlin insisted on "a theory of imperialism grounded in production" (O'Laughlin 1977: 25), rejecting Meillassoux's dualist conception of imperialism based on a separation between production and reproduction.

The two premises that buttress her position are: firstly, that production and reproduction of a mode of production constitute a unitary process. Secondly, the distinction between theoretical and empirical space, is such that historical materialist abstractions are not intended to offer a one-to-one correspondence with reality.

Both premises are valid and in fact necessary, but O'Laughlin contorts them. She disregarded the existence of two distinct modes of production (i.e. the capitalist mode and a pre-capitalist mode) with their two different and distinct unitary processes of production and reproduction gradually merging into one mode of production after the productive base of the subordinate mode of production is destroyed by capital.

Secondly, O'Laughlin failed to apply the full implications of her methodological criticisms to her own analysis. The theoretical concepts used for the analysis of imperialism exist in the matrix of other concepts which cannot be ignored. While it is true that we must always distinguish analytical and empirical space, the question remains as to why pre-capitalist modes of production are considered non-entities as soon as imperialism penetrates, ruling out the possibility of the articulation of modes of production entirely. In other words primitive accumulation is completely dismissed. To Marx 'primitive accumulation' was both empirical and theoretical. Empirically it was the process he documented taking place in England, but beyond that and of far greater significance it was an abstraction of capital's confrontation with pre-capitalist modes of production. O'Laughlin ignored the process of primitive accumulation and thereby tacitly rejected its theoretical validity.

Her position implicitly reflects the view that the historical basis for capitalism was established on a world-wide level in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe. Pre-capitalist modes of production appear to persist in other parts of the world until imperialist penetration when they at once become non-entities vestige appearance as pre-capitalist forms of production. She cited Marx to support her.

"Marx (cf. Capital III) considered it historically appropriate to apply the concept of mode of production to discrete capitalist and non-capitalist productive systems linked through the market only for the period of domination of merchant capital. With the rise of industrial capital, however, he thought it necessary to drop the assumption of spatially separated modes of production, in the context of an expanding capitalist system, all non-capitalist forms lose their analytical autonomy, for all are shaped by the dynamics of the capital/labour relation. Thus instead of seeing African villagers, for instance, as settled down with their hoes in a pre-capitalist mode of production, one would assume that the movement of present village life is shaped within production by capitalist as well as pre-capitalist modes of production." (O'Laughlin 1977, 24-25)

The quote ends on an extremely ambiguous note, besides the questionable assertion made in the name of Marx. One can easily quote Marx to support the view that primitive accumulation was in operation with the presence of distinct modes of production long after industrial capital was fully established.

"In Western Europe, the home of Political Economy, the process of primitive accumulation is more or less accomplished. Here the capitalist regime has either directly conquered the whole domain of national production, or, where economic conditions are less developed, it, at least, indirectly controls those strata of society which, though belonging to the antiquated mode of production, continue to exist side by side with it in gradual decay". (Marx Capital Vol.I: 765)

O'Laughlin's argument is highly contradictory. It appears that O'Laughlin mistook the dominance of capital over pre-capitalist modes of production to be exclusive and hence argued that empirically only 'forms' of pre-capitalist production remain which nevertheless can be analyzed at the theoretical level of modes of production.

2. Geoffrey Kay

Geoffrey Kay (1975) appears to reject Lenin's classical formulation of imperialism and finance capital. Finance capital is conceptualized as merely a 'form of circulation capital' (Kay 1975: 90). Thus there can be no sense of

an epoch of capitalist development characterized by the expansion of capital's extended reproduction on a new scale with the merger of banking and industrial capital to create finance capital.

The notion of primitive accumulation appears but is never named as such.

"The vast commercial empires set up by the Spanish and Portuguese and later by the British, French and Dutch, established the basis of the modern economy. They concentrated vast accumulations of wealth in the form of capital, while overthrowing and pillaging whole civilizations". (Kay 1975: 96)

From this passage it becomes clear that Kay like O'Laughlin conceptualized primitive accumulation as one and only one process which established the world-wide basis of capital by the beginning of the 18th century.

As we have seen in O'Laughlin's work, this formulation besides its methodological shortcomings, leaves a rather inexplicable gap in the historical development of Third World social formations between the period of primitive accumulation during the 15th to 18th century and the late 19th century colonial expansion of capital. Kay's work however seems intent on closing that gap and developing a theoretical conception of an historical continuum arising from the earliest penetration of foreign merchant capital in the Third World. Briefly he periodized the historical development of Third World social formations as:

- 1) The period of primitive accumulation whereby vast amounts of wealth were accumulated in conjunction with the transformation of feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe.
- 2) The period of the creation of the world market. Merchant capital continued to operate as the dominant form of capital in the Third World, functioning under the hegemony of industrial capital. Merchant capital served the interests of industrial capital through its procurement of cheap raw materials and the creation of markets for the commodity produced by industrial capital.
- 3) The period of the ascendancy of industrial capital over merchant capital. The 1930s depression triggered the long impending crisis of merchant capital. Merchant capital unable to control the labour process and in contradiction with industrial capital over proportional division of surplus value gives way to industrial capital. Industrial capital's

penetration marks the beginning of the development of Third World proletariats and the attendant creation of a relative surplus population. Underdevelopment of the Third World is explained in terms of the operation of capital's expanded reproduction in an historical context moulded by merchant capital.

Merchant capital is central to Kay's thesis. His depiction of the nature and operation of merchant capital is accurate.

"The general features of merchant capital are the same in every type of society in which it operates - capitalist or non-capitalist. It has no direct control over the labour process and is always dependent upon the class which does, even where it dominates this class. Secondly, it must always engage in unequal exchange to appropriate part of the surplus product of society. Thirdly, as capital it is always driven to accumulate and in this way acts as a medium through which the law of value is brought to bear on all parts of the economy, particularly the sphere of production. The repercussions of these features, however, do differ with the nature of society." (Kay 1977: 94)

However, Kay had difficulty drawing the relationship between merchant capital and industrial capital. On this point Bernstein (1976: 56-57) criticized Kay especially in two respects.

- 1) Kay formulated merchant capital as 'agent' and 'representative of industrial capital' and in other instances viewed it as the 'form of existence' of industrial capital, the latter having quite different connotations than the former two,
- 2) Kay slipped into defining the boundaries of merchant capital very loosely when he traced its development to include investment in actual production. This mistake is traceable to Kay's incorrect assumption that relative surplus value appropriation is identifiable with industrial capital while absolute surplus value is related with merchant capital.

Kay's consideration of merchant capital is disproportional to its importance. By ignoring the significance of the imperialist epoch, Kay mistakenly attributes features such as violence to merchant capital. Violence is much more pertinent to the role of the colonial state as the coercive instrument for the development of the interests of the capitalist class. Kay theorized merchant capital as the motive force of development in the Third World.

"The underdeveloped countries were drawn into the world market in a way quite different from that of the developed countries. They were the colonised not the colonisers, and of all the many consequences of this fact one stands out. Where the destructive deprivations of merchant capital were controlled in their homelands by the state and the powerful social classes represented within it, there was not force to withstand it overseas. Wherever, it went sooner or later it broke down all opposition and pursued its interests in a completely unrestrained fashion". (Kay 1975: 98)

To identify the cause or necessity for violence is even more important than identifying the agent perpetrating violence. Marx recognized that the operation of merchant capital in pre-capitalist modes of production with limited surplus products generally concentrated in the hands of the ruling classes lends itself to manifestations of violence (Capital Vol.III, 331). The violence in this case does not arise from forcing producers to produce or buy from the market, but rather it is a conflict between merchant capital and ruling classes (e.g. slave-owners, feudal lords etc.) over distribution of the surplus product between them. Whereas violence exerted to catalyse surplus production from the producers arises from the colonial state. It is this latter form which was most directly instrumental in creating the conditions of underdevelopment that we witness today.

By confusing the role of the colonial state with that of merchant capital Kay detracted from the strong argument that can be made for the disintegrating effects of merchant capital on pre-capitalist modes solely through the law of value, as Marx emphasized.

"Of course, commerce will have more or less of a counter-effect on the communities between which it is carried on. It will subordinate production more and more to exchange-value by making luxuries and subsistence more dependent on sale than on the immediate use of the products. Thereby it dissolves the old relationships. It multiplies money circulation. It encompasses no longer merely the surplus of production, but bites deeper and deeper into the latter, and makes entire branches of production dependent upon it. Nevertheless this disintegrating effect depends very much on the nature of the producing community". (Marx Capital Vol.III: 330)

The criticism that above all strikes at the problem of Kay's work is the fact that his level of analysis stops just short of what is required. His focus on merchant capital provided an analysis of the nature of the articulation between capital and the pre-capitalist modes of production without adequately explaining the production relations and development of the productive

relations on the side of capital or on the side of the pre-capitalist modes of production. As an analysis of the articulation it is inadequate because it ignores the significance of the colonial state.

Purporting to analyze underdevelopment in relation to the law of value, Kay started but did not logically develop the analysis. Consideration of the law of value must be carried out in the context of stipulated modes of production. Where merchant capital mediates between two modes of production, then the effect on each must be specified.

"Commerce, has a more or less dissolving influence everywhere on the producing organization, which it finds at hand and whose different forms are mainly carried on with a view to use-value. To what extent it brings about a dissolution of the old mode of production depends on its solidity and internal structure. And whether this process of dissolution will lead, in other words, what new mode of production will replace the old, does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself." (Marx Capital Vol.III: 331-332).

Merchant capital cannot in and of itself explain the transition from a pre-capitalist to the capitalist mode of production - imperialism and primitive accumulation become essential in this regard.

3. Barbara Bradby

Bradby (1975) viewed imperialism as arising from capital's historically defined need for raw materials. Primitive accumulation was conceptualized as the articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production to capital to facilitate the provisioning of raw material requirements. The different forms and tempos of the process of primitive accumulation in specific cases are regulated by the nature of the raw material requirement.

"In looking at capital's need for raw materials, we have to analyse whether its need is for the actual products of the pre-capitalist mode, or it is rather for control over the means of production at present possessed by the pre-capitalist producers, so that it can go about producing itself what it does need." (Bradby 1975: 155)

Bradby recognized that certain pre-capitalist modes of production will be more pre-disposed than others for the penetration of capital based on the level of their productive forces and production relations, especially with regard to the division of labour. level of commodity production and international class formation.

"... the internal structure of the Campas' mode of production has meant that it is much more resistant to breakdown on contract (sic) with capitalist commodities than are the highland Communities.... There is very little division of labour, each kinship unit being virtually, possibly completely self-sufficient; and the units are internally redistributive. This means that the time-saving benefits of the import of commodities from a technologically advanced society can be distributed evenly among the population, without causing any redundancies or expulsion of surplus population". (Bradby 1975: 159-160)

Thus the pre-capitalist division of labour, its level of commodity production and internal class formation condition whether capital serves to destroy or maintain pre-capitalist relations of production to facilitate expropriation, which must however be viewed in relation to the nature of raw material extraction.

If and when capital requires labour power, Bradby argued it is not necessarily force or force alone that dissolves production in the pre-capitalist mode. The existence of labour power denotes that in some form or other expropriation of the means of production from the producers has taken place. But this can happen through physical coercion or the development of the operation of the law of value, i. e. exchange of equivalents. Bradby explained the operation of the law of value as:

"... the forcing out of the market of all producers using techniques from a former mode of production where development of the productive forces is on a lower level, and therefore, the 'divorce of the direct producers from the means of production' by purely economic mechanisms." (Bradby 1975: 150)

In criticizing Bradby's analysis, it is initially useful to compare it with the analyses of Luxemburg and Meillassoux. Bradby like Luxemburg and Meillassoux conceived imperialism engendering primitive accumulation in pre-capitalist modes of production. She identified the process of primitive accumulation with the articulation of modes of production as Meillassoux did. However her understanding of primitive accumulation and imperialism and their relationship to one another differed markedly with their historical conceptions.

Bradby viewed imperialism as a historical phenomenon arising from capital's expansion of production requiring an expanding resource base. Primitive accumulation was seen as not only historical but qualified as historically specific, occurring sporadically and in numerous places as

interludes in response to the needs of certain branches of capitalist production for raw materials or labour. One is struck with the arbitrary nature Bradby gave to imperialism and especially primitive accumulation. Bradby implied that imperialism can disappear as soon as a historical stage of capitalist development is reached whereby capital itself can produce the raw materials required or the stage when all potential sources of raw materials are taken over. Whereas primitive accumulation apparently can be turned on and off like a faucet at the will of different branches of capital. In other words, the process of primitive accumulation can be implanted in a certain mode of production and then disappear when capital has no immediate interest in it. This conception is acceptable only if we assume that the process of primitive accumulation has been very superficially imposed by external force, and not internalized by the pre-capitalist mode of production. This formulation is a disservice to the insight Bradby provided concerning the law of value as an objective force whose operation in the pre-capitalist mode tends to trigger transition to capitalist production relations.

Bradby's analysis suffers from economistic and functionalist assumptions. Bradby analyzed at the level of structural economic change disregarding changes of a political nature which are in fact indicative of fundamental changes in the production relations. Bradby ignored much of Lenin's thesis on imperialism. Lenin observed that imperialism marked the rise not only of an unprecedented scale of capital's extended reproduction requiring an expanded resource base, but also the colonial state as guaranter of bourgeois interests seized land both with and without immediate economic potential. This must be understood in terms of inter-imperialist rivalry; secondary contradictions which nevertheless become determining with regard to particular pre-capitalist social formations.

Bradby's work veers towards functionalism, with its implicit assumption that the articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production are instituted or dissolved as dictated by the capitalist profit motive. While Bradby succeeded in going beyond Luxemburg's position by her recognition that some pre-capitalist modes of production are more easily penetrable by capital than others, Bradby failed to develop her ideas sufficiently with regard to the role of the sub-ordinate pre-capitalist modes of production. Instead Bradby resorted to a functionalist argument which assumes that capital's dictates will be determinate in all instances, de-emphasizing the contradictions that can and do arise.

Historical materialist analyses degenerates into
"functionalist logic when the existence of a social

form is explained in terms of the contribution it makes to the reproduction of a given system of production. In non-class societies, it is simply presumed that a practice is reproduced because it is logically compatible with the requirement of the mode of production.... In class societies, however, it is logically compatible with the domination of the ruling class; causes, if they are considered at all, are assumed to lie in the directing power of the ruling-class state and ruling-class ideology.... The basic difficulty with this assumption is that it fails to recognize that all emergent social forms are the product of material contradictions which are quite different from the consequences that they have either for a particular class or for the system as a whole". (O'Laughlin 1977: 27)

IV. The Peasant Labour Process

The aim of this section is to provide the background for a more narrowly focussed analysis of primitive accumulation and imperialism in relation to the peasantry in Section V.

The peasantry is defined and the notion that the peasantry constitutes a specific economy and society is rejected, through a critique of the writings of Chayonov. By way of illustration elements of present day peasant production and reproduction are identified with the mediation of capital.

Peasant production is a mode of organization of the labour process characterized by family labour engaged in land husbandry. Peasant production does not constitute a mode of production in the sense of being an economy structured by the articulated combination of relations and forces of production. Peasant production is rather subsumed within various modes of production, its specific nature as a labour process depends on the mode of production in which it exists as well as other modes that might be articulated to that mode.

Chayonov (1966) wrongly tried to portray independent peasant production as existing in a specific economy and society regardless of any mode of production. Chayonov characterized peasant production in terms of a family labour farm with a single labour income and a labour-consumer balance, the latter being determined by the biological life cycle of the family. Littlejohn (1977) showed how the notion of an independent peasantry is entirely misleading.

"The independent peasantry can only exist with commodity production and generalised commodity production entails the eclipse of the independent peasantry by capitalist farming. Nor can the 'independent peasantry' exist in the

same form under different modes of production such as feudalism or the ancient mode of production. As we have seen the peasantry paying feudal money-rent is not economically independent". (Littlejohn 1977: 29)

The rejection of Chayonov's theoretical categorization of the peasantry necessitates a theoretical alternative. The peasantry can best be generally theorized as a labour process. At the abstract level Marx formulated the concept of the 'labour process' in isolation from any social relations of production defining it as:

"Human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements". (Marx, Capital Vol. 1: 183)

More specifically in dealing with an actual social labour process, for example Marx's analysis of the capitalist labour process, a recognition of the social relations of production is imperative.

Clearly, Chayonov failed to distinguish the general and specific levels of analysis, limiting himself to a partial and general understanding of peasant production which he then simply imposed at the specific level. As a consequence, Chayonov equated the labour process with the relations of production. While the two concepts cannot be separated in specific analysis, clarity at the abstract and general levels of analysis distinguishes the form of production, i.e. the labour process from the far more significant nature of production as manifested in the production relations. The peasant labour process as a form of production exists in several modes of production and can be abstracted and generalized. However, in specific analysis the nature of the peasant labour process, despite its seemingly ahistorical form, profoundly reflects the production relations and development of the productive forces of the prevailing mode or articulation of modes of production.

By way of further explanation, the peasant labour process can be traced from the natural economy where production is restricted to use values at very low levels of the development of the productive forces, through various modes of production which subject peasant production to a variety of land tenure systems with their attendant modes of appropriation and appropriating classes. Generally, peasant production of exchange value, i.e. commodity production is not very significant until the encroachment of the capitalist mode of production. In the face of the capitalist mode of production, peasant production appears conservative and technically backward. There are objective reasons for this. The utilization of family labour with the object of production being the reproduction of this family

labour does not create a distinction between necessary and surplus labour. The significance of this is that while a capitalist farmer must respond to increases in the wages of labour power with mechanization of the labour process, the peasant with his seemingly free family labour maintains his techniques of production organizing his production on the basis of equalizing labour intensity throughout the year (Cutler 1975: 80:81).

However, the peasant labour process is by no means intractable when subsumed to the capitalist mode of production, contrary to the impression conveyed by Chayanov. Once the peasant family is afforded the opportunity of purchasing necessary consumer products on the market the family can rationalize their production by specializing production and substituting purchased goods for those products with greater labour demands (Littlejohn 1977: 7 and Cutler 1975: 81). In other words, the peasants' maintenance of pre-capitalist calculation depends on whether the reproduction of subsistence can take place in isolation from the capitalist sector.

"The increasing entrance into the capitalist market has the effect that the peasants become dependent not on peasant calculation and the conditions of production on the peasant unit but rather on the relative prices of subsistence to cash crops. If it is impossible for the peasant to meet their own subsistence crops then cultivation of cash crops is the necessary alternative, the higher the relative price of the subsistence crop the greater proportion of peasant labour has to be expanded on the cash crop". (Cutler 1975: 81).

In conclusion, to understand the peasantries of Third World social formations of the present day it is necessary to recognize that the peasant labour process and its changing content reflect the production relations of the prevailing modes of production.

V. Peasant Production and Reproduction

This section seeks to tie the threads together of the preceding sections. Firstly my analytical framework is stipulated in order to avoid some of the methodological errors of the analyses so far reviewed. A schematic presentation of the very complex development of the articulation between Third World social formations and capital follows. This is not an attempt to reduce historical materialism to model-building, nor is it meant as a simplified representation of any specific example of the articulation of modes of production. Rather the diagrams are merely intended as visual abstractions depicting the dialectical development of movement between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production.

A. Analytical Framework:

A 'mode of production' is an abstraction denoting the articulated combination of relations and forces of production structured by the relations of production. The relations of production refer to the mode of exploitation and its attendant class structure. The 'forces of production' signify the specific form of the articulation of the instruments and objects of production with the labour process. The 'social formation' at a more concrete level of analysis denotes the structure of social relations in the economic, ideological and political spheres.

Friedman (1976) criticized the analytical power of the concept 'mode of production' arguing that the mode of production as relations of exploitation and appropriation and relations of production does not denote a total social system. It does not include the relations of realisation and circulation which are necessary for distinguishing a reproductive totality (See Friedman 1976: 15); Friedman's conclusion was as follows:

"We should, therefore, like to maintain relations of exploitation-appropriation and relations of realisation, circulation plus forces of production as the significant theoretical totality. For this reason it seems warranted to reject the notion of mode of production along with that of 'society' as ideological reifications that hamper rather than help our scientific work". (Friedman 1976: 16)

Friedman's criticism is indeed correct insofar as any one theoretically specified mode of production may not provide a full understanding of a given social totality, but he cannot justifiably go further to reject the 'mode of production' concept. Modes of production provide the constituent parts of a social reproductive totality which can be analyzed in terms of the 'articulation of modes of production'. The various modes of production with their respective modes of exploitation and appropriation are studied in view of their inter-connectedness to one another. Their cycles of reproduction become mutually conditioning through the sphere of circulation, warfare etc. Yet they must be distinguished as distinct modes of production until their production relations and forces of production become one through the increasing dominance of the more advanced mode of production.

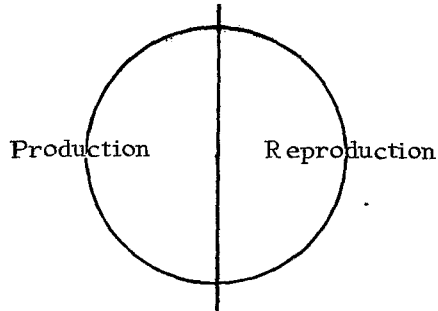
B. † Reproduction and Production in the Articulation of Modes of Production.

Social reproduction denotes a continuous process of production and consumption in society. Production leads to consumption which leads to production. The conditions of production are also those of reproduction.

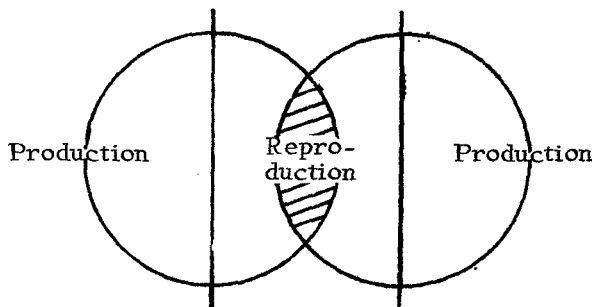
The conditions of material reproduction in any particular society arise from the mode of production or articulation of modes of production. In the works of Marx:

"A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction". (Marx Capital Vol. I: 566)

Diagrammatically this can be illustrated as:

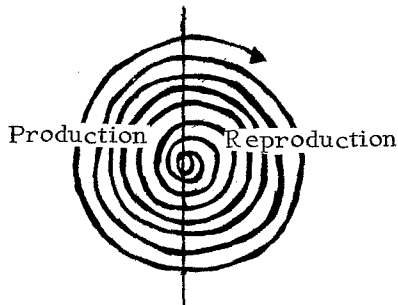


Marx was explicit that "If production be capitalistic in form, so, too will be reproduction". (Vol. I: 516). How do we reconcile this with Friedman's observation that conditions of reproduction may not be entirely endogenous to a particular mode of production especially with regard to relations of realization, and circulation? It can be explained by the puzzling statement that the conditions of existence of production and reproduction for any particular mode may be exogenous. Diagrammatically, it is perhaps more clear.

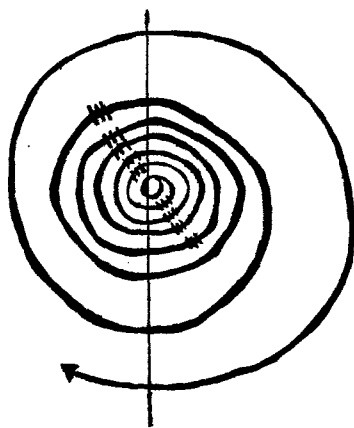


As soon as we consider two modes of production in relation to one another, we are in other words studying the articulation of modes of production. What forms can the articulation of modes of production take? In the classical case of primitive accumulation described by Marx, capitalism grew out of the conditions of feudalism and in the process dissolved

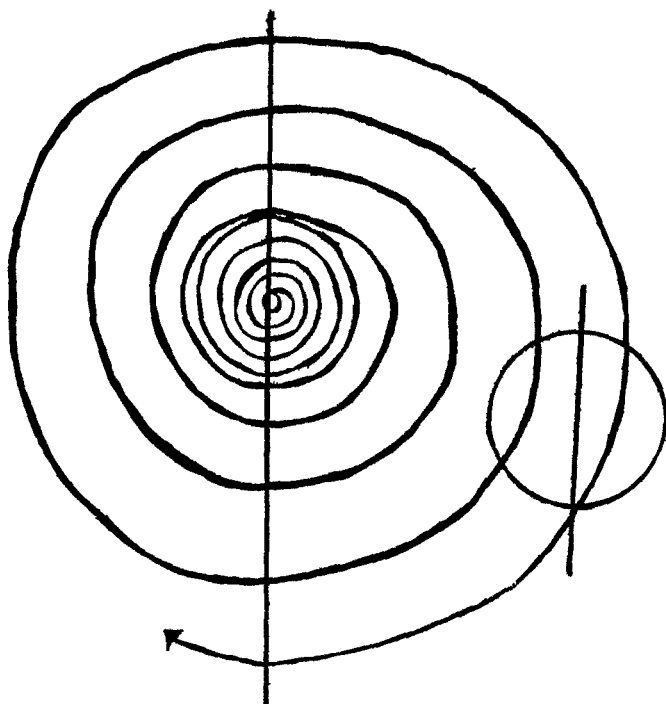
feudalism. The darker circle imposed on the spiral represents a qualitative boundary demarcating the destruction of the feudal peasantry to the critical point where labour power appears, and we can speak of the existence of the capitalist mode of production based on capitalist relations of production.



Capitalist production and reproduction continually expands to the point where the productive forces and the rise of finance capital results in the extended reproduction of the capitalist mode of production on a new scale. The dark circle in this case represents the boundary of the reproduction of competitive capital, outside of this boundary lies monopoly capital.

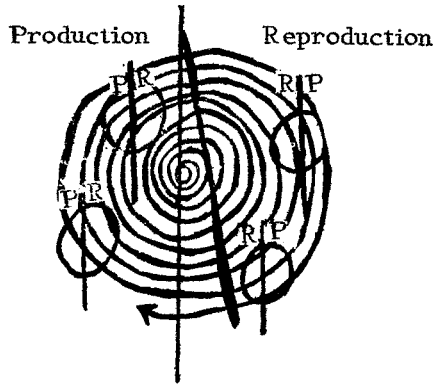


At this stage, the process of primitive accumulation merges with imperialism giving rise to the greater likelihood of the confrontation between capital and pre-capitalist modes of production. The articulation of modes of production in the reproductive totality of the world becomes far more complex.

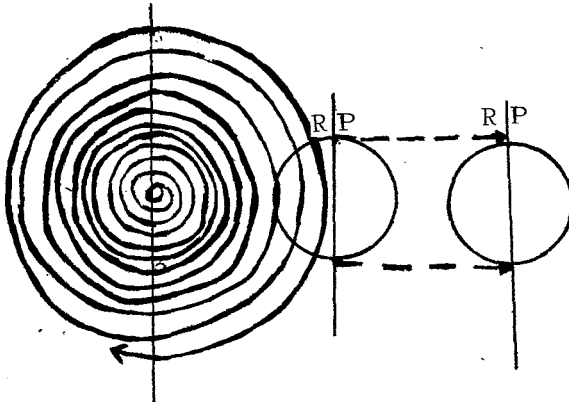


The important question to be answered is when does capital become dominant in the pre-capitalist mode. As we have seen in Section Three this has been answered in a number of ways.

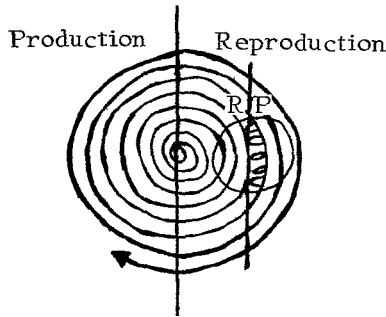
Luxemburg viewed capitalist extended reproduction as synonymous with the contemporary operation of imperialism and primitive accumulation. The confrontation and absorption of exogenous pre-capitalist societies would begin as soon as capital had consolidated itself. Capital would be dominant upon penetration of the pre-capitalist society whose extinction would be inevitable eventually.



Meillassoux and O'Laughlin would seem to concur that capital is dominant at the time of capital's penetration into the pre-capitalist mode. Bradby however suggested the resilience of certain pre-capitalist modes after capital's penetration. This would indicate that dominance is a gradual process and not altogether without setbacks.



According to Kay, capital's dominance becomes hazily distinguished from the operation of merchant capital.

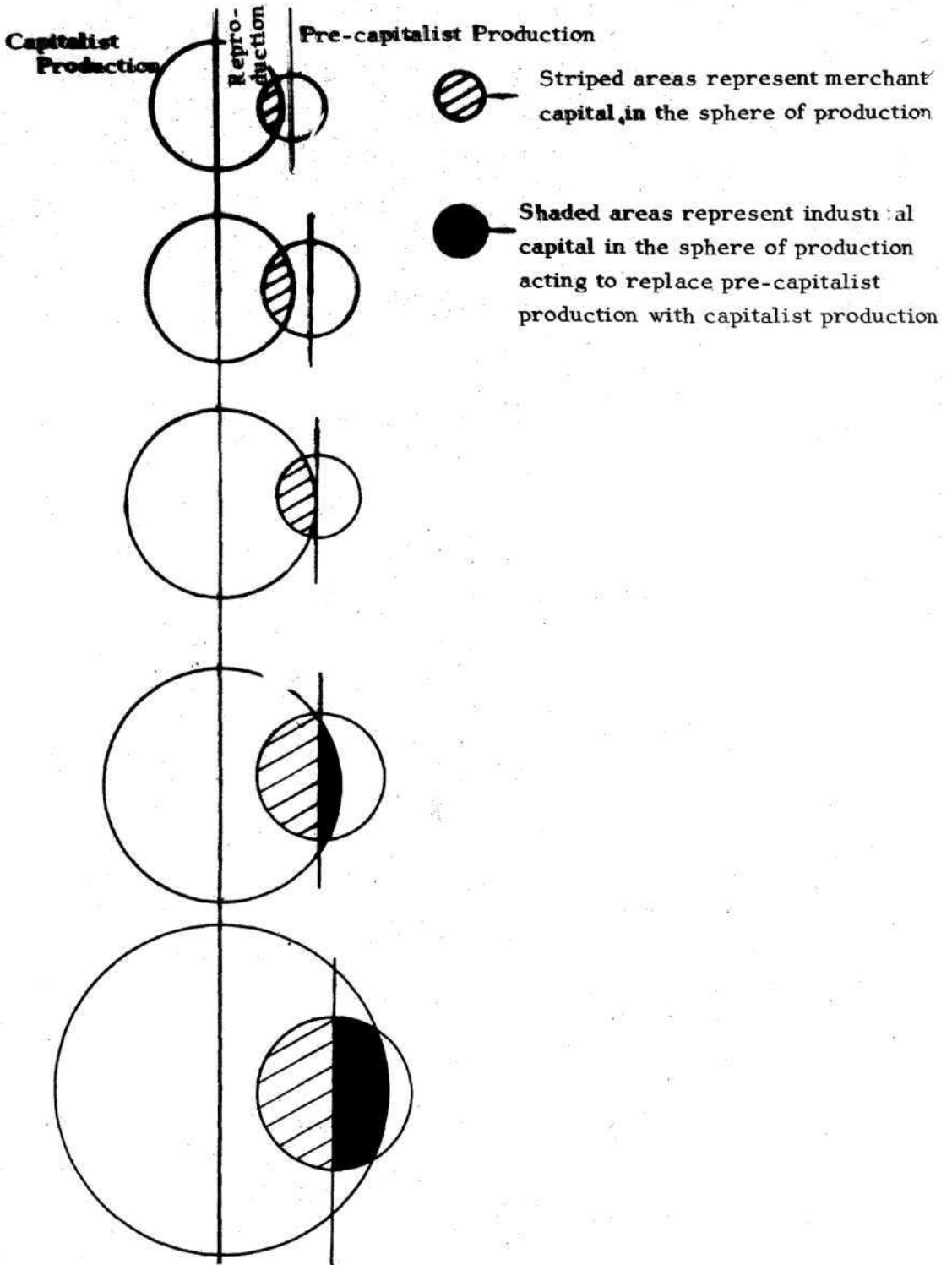


All of these analyses fail to notice the significance of capitalist penetration beyond the sphere of the reproduction of the pre-capitalist mode into the sphere of pre-capitalist production. In other words, there is a qualitative difference between capitalist penetration in the sphere of reproduction through circulation and/or violent incursions which thereby operate as the 'conditions of existence' of pre-capitalist production versus the actual transformation of pre-capitalist production, both in terms of the pre-capitalist relations of production and productive forces into that of the capitalist mode of production. Until capital penetrates pre-capitalist production

through frontal dispossession by frontal moves to eradicate the antiquated low levels of productivity of pre-capitalist production through effectively dispossessing the peasantry of their means of production, the pre-capitalist mode of production retains an intact productive base, with relations of production that can and do defy capital's drive for extended reproduction. This does not deny the fact that in many cases the conditions of existence of the pre-capitalist mode as defined by capital are vitally necessary to the continuing reproduction of the pre-capitalist mode of production. To the extent this happens it is perhaps more significant for capital than the pre-capitalist mode of production since capital's surplus appropriation is posited on continuity in the productive base whether it be a capitalist or pre-capitalist productive base (Marx Capital, Vol. I: 567)

All of the preceding diagrams have failed to show the development of the pre-capitalist mode itself in relation to capital. When we say capital disintegrates and destroys the pre-capitalist mode we cannot however deduce that development of the pre-capitalist mode is necessarily impossible. As the articulation between capital and the pre-capitalist mode develops production and surplus generation in the pre-capitalist mode generally increases but it is realizable to capital and not the internal surplus appropriating classes. A class struggle is implicit which gives rise to the expansion or contraction of the pre-capitalist mode based on its own internal dynamic dialectically confronting the dynamic of capital.

Having discussed the reproduction of modes of production in terms of the reproductive totality of the articulation of modes of production, the question remains where Third World peasantries fit in. Section IV established that the nature of peasantries were different under different modes of production and went on to suggest a peasantry's characteristics under the increasing dominance of capital. The peasantry reflects the transitional nature of the society. The peasant labour process geared to the production of use values for family consumption is a manifestation of the pre-capitalist mode of production which is backward and archaic in the face of capital. The important question to ask is why the peasant labour process is destroyed gradually and not more rapidly extinguished and replaced by a capitalist labour process. How long and why does peasant production persist after the law of value is set in motion by merchant capital and the coercive force of the colonial state begins to exert itself? In other words how do peasants maintain ownership and control of their means of production and resist proletarianization despite the presence of capital?



The answers to these specific questions must be sought by studying the nature of the pre-capitalist mode/s of production and the nature of capital's extended reproduction, specifically in relation to them.

However, at the general level, we may ask what distinguishes classical primitive accumulation from the process of primitive accumulation engendered by imperialism. The key feature is that direct expropriation of peasants from the land and their means of production is not as prevalent in the latter. Why?

Firstly, during the imperialist era specific raw materials are the immediate objective of imperialist expansion as well as the guarantee of raw material sources in general vis-a-vis the inter-imperialist rivalry of capitalist nation-states. For any one pre-capitalist society, the penetration of capital may wax and wane depending on the immediate need for a specific raw material. Under such circumstances the expropriation of the peasantry becomes crucial to capital only if indigenous wage labour is used for the production or extraction of this raw material.

Secondly, primitive accumulation in its classical sense was the process whereby capital asserted itself from within the feudal mode of production. Capital during the imperialist era has already consolidated itself and rests on a firm economic base. Primitive accumulation becomes the confrontation between monopoly capital and pre-capitalist modes whose productive forces and relations of production in no way approximate the conditions of existence of capital. When capitalist extended reproduction encompasses pre-capitalist reproduction, capitalist reproduction conditions pre-capitalist reproduction and vice-versa. In this state of transition, the reproduction of both modes merging into one another takes on warped forms which are not strictly characteristic of either. The dispossession of the peasantry as a general feature of capital does not necessarily appear under such circumstances, or is delayed until the conditions of existence of capital, i.e. commodity production are sufficiently dominant.

The implications for Third World peasantries are numerous.

Firstly, the peasant labour process is not directly penetrated by capital and instead is only indirectly affected through alteration of the conditions of peasant reproduction aimed at stimulating tradable surpluses through:

- 1) the introduction of new crops (often higher yielding or serving to proliferate choice of foodstuffs) by travelling traders;

- 2) encouraging the purchase of necessary consumption items as well as creating new needs by offering new commodities for sale; and
- 3) the intervention of the colonial state and taxation of the peasantry. This move introduced a generalized cash economy. It is important pre-condition of capitalist production relations, but it is not synonymous with them.

Secondly, the peasant labour process is gradually transformed through increasing commodity production. Under the stress of commodity production traditional political and social units are eroded. Although contradictions generally do not manifest themselves in the extreme form of direct divorcement of producers from their means of production, a point does arise when wage labour appears in response to capital investment.

Thirdly, the question of the peasantry vis-a-vis wage labour must be posed. Meillassoux argued that the presence of a peasantry affords capital the exploitation of cheap labour. This argument treats what is symptomatic as causal. It is not the mere presence of the peasantry which affords capital cheap labour but rather it is the outcome of the class struggle between metropolitan capital and the peasantry which determines whether or not this is true. In connection with this point, the cheap labour of the Third World cannot be identified with unequal exchange. By definition wage labour is financed by productive capital and not circulation capital, i.e. merchant capital. While Third World wages may appear low in comparison to wages offered in the developed capitalist countries, nevertheless productive capital is paying the price of labour power as it has been determined by the class struggle taking place in the Third World.

Fourthly and lastly, the peasant production and reproduction that persists in the face of growing forces towards proletarianization is yet an identifiable entity albeit highly weakened and vulnerable. Under such circumstances, the state may choose to guarantee peasant reproduction if peasant production is still a viable form of production of required raw materials or if uncontrolled proletarianization is perceived as politically destabilizing. In these cases famine relief and other safeguard measures are undertaken by the state to ensure peasant reproduction.

In conclusion, the process of primitive accumulation which operated to destroy the feudal peasantries during the 15th to 18th century in Europe must be distinguished from the process of primitive accumulation operating in conjunction with imperialism on Third World peasantries. To be sure

the tendency is towards dissolution of the pre-capitalist modes of production but the process is off-center, affecting peasant reproduction and not production initially and only very gradually making inroads into pre-capitalist production. The articulation of modes of production theory allows for the conceptualization of the confrontation of several different modes of production at that period when their reproduction is mutually conditioning yet autonomous in the sense that their respective productive bases remain relatively intact. Third World peasantries can only be understood in relation to the theory of the articulation of modes of production.

VII. Conclusion

It remains to be emphasized that this paper is written at the most general and abstract level of analysis, that of modes of production. As regards the processes of primitive accumulation and imperialism discussed, neither of these processes nor the combination of the two together can be interpreted as the ultimate cause of specific developmental problems or social contradictions in a one-to-one correspondence. In other words, primitive accumulation cannot be used as the explanation or cause of any and every social phenomenon. Just as imperialism should not, although it often has been used to explain almost 'everything under the tropical sun'. An understanding of primitive accumulation and imperialism as historical processes begs for concrete and specific historical analysis in the form of rigorous scrutiny which attempts to present history and present day events as accurately as possible rather than to fit a formula. It is in this respect that an understanding of primitive accumulation and imperialism as combined historical processes offers the historical materialist theoretical framework in which our concrete analyses can be situated.

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