INTRODUCTION

The following article was written in 1979 in Hawaii where we were researching the dynamics of pre-colonial regional systems in Oceania. We had more or less taken it for granted, on the basis of academic heresay that contemporary Hawaiian culture was non-existent having been virtually pulverized in the first hundred and fifty years following the first contact with Captain Cook. We soon discovered the existence of the Hawaiian movement, the forging of a cultural identity in conditions of extreme historical discontinuity, a political movement to regain the islands, or at least a land base. And all of this, from our vantage point in commercially saturated, tourist-filled Honolulu was something quite unexpected. The tiny Sand Island in the middle of Honolulu Harbour, half a city garbage dump and a haven for Hawaiians trying to escape the life of the concrete jungle became a political issue that ultimately reached national television when this small group of part time and some full time fishermen and women, many at pension age, going out with their nets to the roar of jumbo jets and military transports, was forcibly expelled from their homes by the state government for the express purpose of establishing a 'cultural park'. Their resistance in 1979, the movement to recapture the island of Kaho'olawe from the military and numerous other actions have emerged as a powerful politico-cultural movement whose aim is the reconstruction of an Hawaiian cultural identity and, ultimately a sovereign Hawaiian society practicing a Hawaiian culture on Hawaiian land. Today such movements have taken a prominent place in the accelerating decline of western hegemony. The ‘fourth world movements’, movements for ethnic
autonomy etc., have asserted themselves at the same time that the centers of ‘civilized’ identity have undergone the massive mutation from modernism, a belief in development, evolution, personal growth and individual freedom to a new traditionalism and culturalism, a post-modernist primitivism, a reassertion of the value of family and kin, of ‘primordial loyalties’ – in brief an anti-civilizational search for a more concrete identity.

The resurgence of culturalism and primitivism that has swept anthropology is the reflex of a wider and deeper phenomenon – the identity crisis of capitalist civilization. The collapse of ‘modernity’ as the viable definition space of our existence and the emergence of new more concrete forms of cultural identity is an absolutely crucial aspect of the economic crisis and fragmentation of the world system.

‘Towards a global anthropology’ was an attempt to analyse what appeared to be the major politico-economic processes that underlay the entire anthropological project – the conditions of existence of the asymmetrical we/they relation, the center/periphery/margin structure of civilized systems and the objectification of the periphery/margins concomitant to their transformative integration into the larger system. We stressed the need to develop an anthropology adequate to the system as a whole so as not to fall prey to the pre-given categories of civilized cosmology.

Much of our research since 1979 has revolved around questions emergent from the contemporary crisis; the nature of cultural revival, of the construction of social identity, the relation between cultural construction and the integrative-expansive phases of the system versus disintegrative-contractive phases. We have also dealt with the nature of the cosmological space of civilization and the cyclical oscillations between developmentalist/primitivist, materialist/culturalist and subject-centered/collectivist poles of that space (Friedman, 1983, 1984). We have argued specifically that the development of cultural based identities varies inversely with the expansion of the system. The current proliferation of ethnic and local autonomy movements is a systemic aspect of the decentralization of the system. While ethnic movements aim at the establishment of autonomous politics within the framework of the global system, stressing only their separate identity, fourth world movements are more radical in their anti-civilizational politics of exit from the larger system. For these movements, culture is not merely a source and/or symbol of identity, but a model of total existence including material reproduction (Ekholm & Friedman, 1984a).

Thus, while our earlier work focussed on problems of the relation between local social structures and global processes, on the transformational processes generating what might be referred to as ‘objective culture’ – i.e. culture as depicted by the anthropologist as representative of the center, our present interests concern the nature and
practice of cultural construction itself. The objective culture of the anthropologist, a structure in part generated by the construction of ‘civilized’ identity, is, of course, a phenomenon of a different order than the construction of a cultural identity by the people studied by the anthropologist. The relation and even interaction between the two over time is a significant aspect of the global system process (Friedman, 1983; Ekholm, 1983; Ekholm & Friedman, 1984b).

In this respect we think it opportune to take up the magnum opus by Eric Wolf (1982) to which we expectantly referred in 1979 (1980: 74 fn. 5). *Europe and the People Without History* does much to establish, in a concrete way, the argument for a global anthropology. It is primarily an empirical work informed by a theoretical framework close to the one we ourselves expressed in our earlier article, even going so far as to insist on existence of pre-capitalist global systems, as opposed to the usual world system view. While not wishing here to review what we think are the strengths and weaknesses of this work we do feel it necessary to state what appear to be the major differences between our approaches.

1. While Wolf clearly states that societies are not be understood as closed systems and criticizes the notion of culture as a variation on the ideology of the nation state and national identity (1982:387-91) – albeit in a preliminary and rather simplified way – he fails to see that the concept of mode of production that he finds so necessary to his analysis (but which only appears marginally in the concrete discussion) is precisely the same kind of abstraction of society as closed system as is the culture concept. The reduction of reproduction to production obscures the fact that a single social operator or ‘dominant’ structure can unite many different productive systems which are in no sense the origin or cause of the former (Friedman, 1976). The dissolution of the causal, structural causal, or whatever explanatory model, internal to the mode of production itself (Friedman, 1974, 1976; Hindess and Hirst, 1977) necessarily means the dissolution of the mode of production concept itself. If the way people go about producing does not determine but is determined by a ‘higher level’ set of social relations, then production, the relation between Man and Nature is itself a product and not a determinant basis of social forms. We have, among others, argued that the mode of production concept is an abstraction-universalization of the relation between the social organization of production and consumption in capitalism. Now it is certainly the case that production for profit is a dominant activity of capitalist reproduction – although it is itself subsumed by the more general practice of conversion of money into more money. Societies that does not have a socially definable sphere of production, but only a ‘function’ or ‘locus’ corresponding to such a sphere, cannot be said to entertain the same kind of internal logic as in capitalism. In a ‘kin ordered’ (Wolf, 1982:88) system, the form of production is the outcome of a broader system of social
relations that logically implies what and how production, circulation and consumption are related to one another and where, since there is no autonomously defined sphere of production, there can be no question of its determinant role. This is not, of course, to deny the crucial constraining force of the material properties of social reproduction. But the latter relation is of an entirely different order than the notion of determination by social production of the structure and dynamics of the social formation. Thus while in capitalism it can be argued that economic crisis seriously affects the family, in the form of violence, divorce, etc. in the ‘primitive’ situation a crisis in kinship relations can lead to the breakdown of the production process. This is not to say that kinship dominates production in this latter case (i.e. as an external relation), but that it contains it, so that the ‘laws’ of production and exchange are the laws of the kinship order.

It is such fundamental differences in the internal logic of different social forms that leads us to prefer an initial framework based on reproductive process rather than on modes of production.

2. In similar fashion, we would tend to envisage world historical process not as a succession of multiple modes of production articulated to one another, but as a temporally continuous and spatially discontinuous series of global systems of varying extent, containing and significantly determining the nature and distribution of a number of productive modes. Industrial capitalism as an ideal-type reproductive form would thus be seen as a structural tendency of variable strength existing within all commercial civilizations. This tendency, towards the relative expansion of the wage labor sector of and the increasing dominance of productive capital, the dissolution of communal and family forms, the transformation of the state into a purely governmental-administrative apparatus – is present in earlier commercial based civilizations (Ekholm & Friedman, 1979). The accumulation of capital in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe in such terms is indissociable from the decline of the Middle East (Ashtor, 1976; Lombard, 1975). In a world already organized on the basis of global systems, it is inconsistent, in the absence of a special argument, to assume that European feudalism, a periphery in a larger economy transformed itself internally into capitalism and then became a world system center. If anything, the reverse is the case. The accumulation of capital in late feudalism represented a shift of capital accumulation within a larger Middle East dominated system, and the eventual emergence of industrial capitalism was largely dependent on external markets for textiles established by a previous imperial organization. Where, in all of this, is the determinant influence of the mode of production?

The above remarks are in no way meant to detract from the positive nature of Wolf’s important contribution to a global perspective in anthropology. We would stress that such an approach must necessarily come to grips with
the processes of cultural construction, with the nature of social identity and with the numerous processes that intervene between the individual, local organization and the larger system. If this does not occur, the global approach runs the risk of the kind of materialist reductionism that it is so often associated with the ‘political economy’ version of anthropology.

**TOWARDS A GLOBAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

The development of a global perspective in anthropology is a very different kind of phenomenon from that in economics or economic history. In the latter disciplines, the field of enquiry may easily be extended to the entire world, or at least to large enough portions of it that systemic supra-society relations are clearly discernable. The periodic appearance of an intellectual orientation to global relations – from the mercantilistists to the dependency theorists – is clear evidence of the availability of the larger perspective. The more common focus on the nation state or, by abstraction, the ‘society’, as the locus of analysis and explanation has been a reflex of the emergence of national cycles of economic reproduction in the nineteenth century. Ricardo, Marx, Keynes and much modern development theory restrict the field of enquiry to the single society where all the necessary conditions of reproduction and thus, explanation, are thought to be located (Friedman, 1976, 1978). Finally, with the emergence after World War Two of a center/periphery model of imperialism, a global perspective has again gained prominence.

Without discussing the scientific merits of any one approach, we merely suggest that the emergence and disappearance of a global perspective has been very much conditioned by social circumstances faced by the intellectual elite of the center and is not a result of some purely scientific development. In another article (Friedman, 1978) it has been suggested that the object of economic theory is very much an empirical abstraction of a given historical situation, producing theory appropriate to the description of a given ‘period’ without being able to transcend the temporal limits of the situation in which it was conceived. The recent industrial development in certain areas of the periphery as the result of massive capital export from the center (by multinational corporations - MNC) has confounded the dependency model that predicts only increasing polarization and vainly tries to interpret all signs of a declining West as a continuing expression of US imperialism. By taking a longer term perspective it has been suggested (Ekholm, 1977) that western capitalism, rather than leading to an increasingly hierarchical international system, tends, as in previous mercantile civilizations, to become decentralized and more competitive. The center, weakened and crisis ridden, is likely to decline and lose its power to new rising centers of imperialist accumulation – the Soviet block is the obvious candidate for a new
imperium. The current decline is reflected in the most recent analyses of the world market (Busch, 1974; Schoeller, 1976; Fröbel, Heinrichs, Kreye, 1977) which suggest the center/periphery structure is not inherent in the reproduction of capital and that a significant decentralisation of industrial production in the world market is presently underway. Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye (op. cit.) tentatively suggest that the present economic crisis is not simply another cyclical depression, but might be comparable to the great seventeenth century European crisis which was accompanied by the shift of power from southern to northwestern Europe. This is implied in the more general model of center/periphery cycles (Ekholm, op. cit.). It is, as we shall suggest, a feature of all civilizations and not an expression of a particular stage of industrial capitalist development.

It might appear that we have strayed very far from anthropological concerns. Such is not the case, as implied above, since the parallels between capitalist and 'pre-capitalist' civilizations suggest that there is something more general going on than particular modes of production. If capitalist civilization is a subset of a larger family of global systems, then the anthropologist may indeed have a contribution to make to the understanding of the present. But this is only possible if anthropology expands its traditional concern with general social evolution to encompass the total systems of social reproduction within which social transformation occurs.

**THE OBJECT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AS A GLOBAL PRODUCT**

From the point of view of anthropological practice, the emergence of a global perspective is a result of a prise de conscience of the anthropological activity itself. It amounts to an awareness of the anthropologist-subject’s relation to his ethnographic object. This requires that the anthropologist understand his objective position in the larger system, and it is by no means an easy task. The very structure of ‘scientific’ discourse requires that the object must remain distinct, stable and exterior to the subject. If the subject is in fact part of the world that he analyses, such realisation is certainly not built into his immediate reality. But what is anthropology if not the activity whereby members of the center go out to examine the peoples of an already subdued periphery? Now, if the ethnographic object is itself a product of the transformative integration into the world system whose dominant peoples are the Subject, then a proper understanding of that Object depends on a theoretical knowledge of the larger system of which both Subject and Object are equally parts.

Now, it is, of course, true that a number of anthropologists have been conscious of the degree to which their objects, tribes and chiefdoms were products of the colonial system. Noteworthy examples such as Schapera...
and especially Gluckman pointed out, quite early the degree to which local societies, which looked as if they were aboriginal, were really structures of the colonial regime, where tribal entities were often created by administrative fiat and maintained by their administrative function. Such realizations, and they are numerous and widespread, did not lead to a reformulation of the anthropological object. They exist in the margins of a tradition whose object has been faithfully limited to the single society or even the local community. Only a very few anthropologists, clearly influenced by historians and economists of western expansion, have become aware of the general nature of the anthropological object. Lévi-Strauss, while totally immune to the implications of his awareness, has managed to state the case in an elegant way, when he wrote:

... (que) la colonisation est historiquement et logiquement antérieure au capitalisme, et ensuite, que le régime capitaliste consiste dans le traitement des peuples de l'Occident comme l'Occident l'avait fait précédemment des populations indigènes ... en premier lieu, les sociétés que nous appelons aujourd'hui 'sous-développées' ne sont pas telles de leur propre fait, et on aurait tort de les concevoir comme extérieures au développement occidental ou restées indifférentes devant lui. En vérité ce sont ces sociétés qui, par leur destruction directe ou indirecte entre le XVIe et le XIXe siècle, ont rendu possible le développement du monde occidental. Entre elles et lui un rapport de complémentarité.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1973:368)

Structuralism, as the study of cold societies, is truly an adaptation to this situation. Social systems emptied of their life blood do become cold and historyless, and any dynamic that remains can easily be frozen for analysis.

All the disparate societies studied by anthropologists have traditionally belonged to a larger category, the primitive, which has been the distinctive feature of the discipline. But that category is not the scientific creation of anthropology. On the contrary, it was already there as an ideological category of an expanding western-dominated world economy. Anthropology developed in Western Europe, very much as an outgrowth of a world view that for the first time placed peripheral areas of the western dominated world within the ideological frame of reference of western intellectuals. The European world economy began to emerge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was the age of ‘exploration’, of mercantilism, the formation of a European centered world market. Exotism and primitivism were two of its ideological offspring. The first expresses the encounter by the West of highly developed cultures in other parts of the world: Persia, India, China, etc. It is significant that areas of Africa that are later treated in terms of savagery are, in the periods of initial contact highly respected and thought of as equals. Exotism, related as it was to the continued existence of highly developed civilizations beyond Europe, soon became a domain of art-lovers and the cult of the ‘Magnificent Past’ as those areas were deindustrialized and reduced to
economic and cultural peripheries of Europe. Areas that were subject to total decline, to the point of losing their economic base, as in Africa, the Americas and, later, large parts of Asia, became, along with those areas which were peripheral in earlier world systems, the subject matter of primitivism and later anthropology. Primitivism, then, emerged somewhat later than exotism. It is specifically a response to the rapid commercialization and industrialization of Europe that makes use of the recently integrated ‘primitive’ peoples as comparative material. Two forms of primitivism – one expressed in the works of Montaigne, Dryden, Pope and to some extent Rousseau (Lovejoy 1948), the other by early British and later nineteenth century evolutionists – represent respectively negative and positive evaluations of civilized Man. But both are based on a single hierarchical vision of the world as we/they: civilized/natural (primitive), implying an imaginary developmental continuum. Evolutionism as a social ideology, simply ordered the different areas of the globe on a scale of progress leading to the industrial civilisation of the West. The others, Rousseauists (to simplify) or more recently cultural relativists and ecologists, have tended to emphasize the superiority of the primitive – this especially today when the crisis of the West makes the ‘return to nature’ a real issue, perhaps a reflex of decline itself.

What is crucial here is the fact that anthropology is born out of the ideological representation of the center/periphery/extra-periphery structure of our civilization as a pseudo-evolutionary relation between civilization and its less developed forerunners, a mistranslation of space into time. As only one side of the we/they opposition became the anthropological object, there could be no general awareness of the opposition as such and of the fact that it formed a larger totality whose parts can only be understood in terms of the whole.

It is no wonder, then, given this situation, that anthropologists became preoccupied with the functional and/or evolutionary classification of primitive social types. Evolutionary and neo-evolutionary anthropology have done most to organize the ethnographica into a coherent scheme leading from bands to tribes to chiefdoms and states and culminating with ourselves. Historical materialist inspired anthropology has followed suit. Whether unilinear or multilinear, the categories are of the same type, an array of social forms determined by their individual adaptation to particular techno-environments. The ‘New Archeology’ which was very much an application of neo-evolutionary theory to archeological data, has found it increasingly difficult to maintain the original classifications and modes of explanation. For example, it is difficult to situate Jericho with its early intensive gathering subsistence base coupled to a complex urban society, just as the complex irrigation systems of the Philippines do not fit their egalitarian tribal organization. No ordering of subsistence technologies can account for the variation in social types. Some archeologists have begun to reconstruct systems instead of limiting
themselves to social institutions. They have discovered the importance of regional systems of production and exchange for the understanding of social transformation, but the resultant picture is quite unlike that presented by the neo-evolutionists.

The ‘band-tribe chiefdom-state’ schema was built up out of the ethnographic data of a colonized periphery. It is a classification of institutional forms. Evolutionary theory attempts to link those forms by means of external factors since the connections among them are not visible in the colonial situation where their functioning, if any, is entirely altered. And in the end, the theory runs up against the same obstacle as do the internal growth models of economic development theory. Why didn’t the primitives evolve? Evolutionary theory cannot explain the fact of non-evolution. Thus, it cannot account for the continual existence of the primitive societies upon which is build its evolutionary trajectories.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

A viable way out of the ethnographic impasse is to start with social reproduction rather than social institutions. That concept traces the cycles leading from production to consumption to new production, in whatever social form, and provides the framework within which we can ascertain the conditions of existence and functioning of the societies we confront. Cycles of reprocution are not necessarily bounded by individual societies, and since they can only be defined with respect to time, they provide the total framework for the analysis of economic accumulation and social transformation. Where a chiefdom reproduces itself as an administrative structure that extracts taxes from cash-cropping ‘commoners’ and is reinforced by a colonial military force, then, however pre-colonial the social category terms employed, the true connection between social categories is determined by the new process of reproduction. If the cash crop depends in turn on the world market, then the ongoing reproduction of the local structure is a supra-local matter.

Anthropologists, so often confronted with ‘traditional’ institutions purged of their internal dynamic, have not taken up the processes of social reproduction, but have instead confined themselves to the attempt to understand institutional elements as such, in their static existence. Functionalism, still the dominant mode of discourse among materialists and non-materialists alike, is most adequate to a situation in which the real social conditions of existence are of a non-traditional order. The need to recover that which is perceived as traditional can easily blind the anthropologist to the larger reproductive process.

After we had read about the Mekeo, one of the few reported chiefdoms in New Guinea and located on the south coast of Papua, one of us had the opportunity of making a visit there. From the reported ethnography, some
of it very recent, the Mekeo appeared to be a relatively autonomous traditional society. The photographs of their enormous traditional thatch roof houses, elaborately decorated, reinforced that impression. It was indeed a surprise to find tractor parts, motor cycles and even airplane motors under the native houses. The Mekeo resided at the end of the coastal road from Port Moresby along with a Catholic Mission. It seems that they had a virtual monopoly on the betel nut market in the capital, a product that they often transported to town in their own planes. They also experimented, after some initial Australian aid, with the mechanized cultivation of irrigated rice. It appears that their income was sufficient for them to maintain their machinery and their western imports as well as their traditional and costly architecture. The ‘bush’ Mekeo who lived further inland and had no access to the urban market did not maintain their traditional arrangements. Many of them were wage laborers in town or among their wealthier cousins. It might be suggested that paradoxically, the connection between local production and the larger market preserved the traditional trappings that disappeared in more remote areas.

Societies of even more remote areas, that seem to possess only their relation to the natural environment, have become so because of the collapse of larger inter-group exchange/warfare networks that provided the original conditions of their internal dynamic. However ethnographic the resultant traditional elements appear, the system that unites them can only be understood as a transformation of the ‘original’ produced by the incorporation of the area into a larger system.

By starting with reproduction as the significant totality we can discover to what extent a society is self-perpetuating or dependent upon a larger system. But this does not get us very far, for there are many areas of the globe where so-called primitive groups appear to carry on hunting/gathering or horticultural activity in almost total isolation. In order to grapple with the supposed ‘primitivity’ of such cases it is insufficient merely to observe present day social reproduction. It is necessary to consider the long term anthropological effect of the history of world wide western expansion. The massive dislocations and depopulation of large areas, the slave trade, the disintegration of older trade systems, are all factors that, even before direct colonization, so altered the conditions of existence of so many societies that the ethnographic present cannot be understood anywhere without such processes.

SOME EXAMPLES

In the twentieth century, the ethnography of the Lower Congo region describes hundreds of village societies, sparsely populated, and organized matrilineally with strong patrilocal tendencies. The large majority of these small societies practice varying forms of reciprocal exchange, some of them
rather complex. Yet several centuries earlier, this area was organized into the large Congo kingdom. The recent ethnography represents the ultimate transformation of the collapsed kingdom and several lesser kingdoms that were originally organized in vast hierarchies of matrilines linked by asymmetrical 'generalized exchange'. In such kingdoms, the central power monopolized external trade, the imports of which functioned as a kind of primitive money known as prestige goods whose control was the source of power in the kingdom, necessary for dowries and other socially necessary payments as well as being exchangeable for slaves. The articulation of the Congolese regional system to the expanding mercantile trade of Europe was the cause of its downfall. After an initial expansion due to the King's monopoly over the Portuguese trade (cloth and glass beads for such goods as ivory, copper and slaves obtained by exchange from other kingdoms), increasing number of European traders began establishing themselves along the coast and dealing directly with local chiefs. The Congo hierarchy was one in which local goods moved upwards to central points of distribution and where imported prestige goods moved down in return. The asymmetry of the structure consisted in the monopoly at nodal points of the inflow of socially essential goods. The establishment of coastal trade effectively bypassed the royal monopoly so that European-produced prestige goods became available directly, without royal intervention. The result was a disintegration of the older hierarchy and the emergence of the slave trade. Since slaves were exchangeable for prestige goods in the Congo system, the Europeans could simply pump in cheap cloth and beads and pump out people. The final result was one where increasingly petty chiefs and their gangs of vassals raided each other for captives to be traded to the coast in exchange for European goods, which now included increasing numbers of guns. The formerly internal circulation of slaves in the Congo area turned into a massive export of millions, so much so that the very subsistence base collapsed, and the vast homogeneous culture area fragmented into a great number of small political units in regions so depopulated that many historians and anthropologists treat the great Congo savanna zone as a natural phenomenon instead of a human product (Ekholm, 1972, 1977; Rey, 1972).

Exactly the same kind of structural articulation occurred in Eastern Indonesia (Friedberg, 1977). On Timor, once a unified kingdom with strong matrilineal tendencies, the sandalwood trade led to a fragmentation and transformation of local social structures, but without a massive exportation of population. The semi-statelike structures as well as some aspects of the local and regional reproductive cycles (including production of prestige goods) were maintained until recently, but on a much smaller scale. To understand the situation fully we must remember that Indonesia and Southeast Asia were organized in a large and well integrated trade system and that the center of power in Timor accumulated gold in exchange for sandalwood as early as the twelfth century. Early Dutch
visitors were convinced that a gold mine existed on the island. Timor probably functioned as a periphery in the commercial empires of Java and China before its integration into the European system. The structural complexity of some Timorese societies is very much a product of the breakdown and partial reorganization of former structure.

When the first Europeans came to the Mt. Hagen area of Highland New Guinea (Vicedom and Tischner, 1943-48) they found, according to their own reports, a rather 'stratified' society where people best categorized as chiefs apparently based their power on their monopoly of the shell trade from the coast and thus, on local inter-group exchanges. There were several ranks including a quasi-servile group. There is evidence that the free distribution of goods by Europeans broke the monopoly, resulting in a breakdown of hierarchy and the consequent emergence of a competitive 'big-man' system. Nor is it probable that such systems have existed before in history, but given the general disturbance of the coast-highland trade in the contact period it is possible that the 'big-man', which has become a cultural archetype in modern anthropology, is also a product of the modern world system, if not a previous world system.

If social fragmentation and decline are the ultimate processes, they are not the only ones. European arms trade and direct intervention were instrumental in the formation of states in such places as Madagascar and Hawaii even if they only lasted for a brief period.

In all these cases, direct or indirect disturbance of local regional systems resulted in rapid transformation. But since the field worker confronts only his village, his immediate reality does not include the larger whole required for its understanding.

Even the hunting/gathering band societies that have so often been used to represent the paleolithic are surely very different kinds of societies than those of the distant past. The Amazonian Indians, today dispersed into small, often endogamous, bands, were once organized into extensive chiefdoms practicing intensive riverine agriculture and connected by trade with the Inca Empire. The population of the Guarani tribe in 1500 is estimated at 1.5 million with a density as high as 10/km². The few thousand remaining members of this group live in small bands and temporary villages today. The Amazonian basin was classified by evolutionists as an area that could not maintain a large population and where a dispersed hunting/gathering strategy was the most natural (see Steward, ed. 1963). But it would appear that hunting/gathering is the final stage of a devolutionary process and not a stable adaptation. It is clear that European intervention was crucial in that process (Clastres, 1973, 1974; Lathrap 1968).

The Congo Pygmies, often cited as the best example of a really primitive society, have been described by modern anthropologists as if they were an economic isolate (Turnbull, 1966; Godelier, 1973). One structural Marxist has even tried to analyse them as if they had their own ecologically
determined mode of production (Godelier, 1973). Now the fact is that Pygmies were officially designated as hunters in the Congo kingdom, and that they appear to have been very much a part of the larger regional agriculturally based economies. That they appear in some very few cases to be more autonomous today is the result of the disintegration of surrounding Bantu social systems into which they were previously incorporated.

These societies as well as the numerous displaced and depopulated band societies that are so rapidly disappearing cannot be treated as mere fossils of the stone age. They are very much a part of our own system, even in their apparent isolation.

The point of all these examples is not to dismiss anthropology outright but to set the stage for a reconstruction that might enable us to better interpret the data. The concept of social reproduction forces us to consider the society-object in terms of its life processes. Social reproduction as a long term historical process enables us further to understand the emergence of the specific conditions of existence under which apparently autonomous tribes and bands seem to live. From the point of view of reproduction, the present-day ethnographic world can be understood in terms of two processes.

1. Those ‘primitive’ social forms that only reproduce themselves as elements of larger peripheral economies, by wage labor, cash cropping, administrative apparatuses, etc., are actively incorporated into the larger system and can only be understood as such.

2. Those social forms that are either isolated or in other ways autonomously reproductive may have had their conditions of existence drastically altered by the breakdown of older regional systems, physical displacement, demographic collapse, territorial blockage, etc. Structural transformation inevitably results from such alteration.

It is necessary to consider the combination of these two processes to understand the ethnographic present properly. And it is only on this basis that we can assess the general anthropological and evolutionary significance of the ethnographic facts.

**THE STRUCTURE AND EVOLUTION OF TOTAL SYSTEMS**

Thus far there is, perhaps, little disagreement between the point of view expressed here and that of historians who have stressed the unity of the capitalistic world economy since its emergence in the sixteenth century. Proponents of this view have criticized anthropology for years. But for most of these people, the world system, imperialism and a world market
are phenomena peculiar to western capitalism. Before the sixteenth century there are only traditional pre-capitalist modes of production. Occasional 'redistributive' empires, feudal and tribal societies populate the pre-capitalist landscape, but no global systems. Evolutionary processes are confined to single societies before the advent of the capitalist mode of production. It is for this reason that capitalism must first evolve from feudal society before the world system can be established. It is as if anthropologists studying the world before the sixteenth century would at last find their societies in their natural states, unchanged since the start of social evolution.

We have, perhaps, exaggerated here, but it is necessary to stress the point. The rise of European capitalism cannot be separated from the decline of the previous Arab dominated world economy within which Europe functioned as a periphery. Maurice Lombard suggested some years ago that the rise of Western Europe might be understood as a shift in the accumulation of wealth (mercantile) from east to west, just as the decline of the Roman Empire and the re-emergence of Middle Eastern imperialism was expressive of a shift in the opposite direction. We shall suggest that such processes are common to all global systems, and that such systems date back to the earliest civilizations.

In previous articles (Ekholm, 1976; Ekholm and Friedman, 1979) we attempted to reconstruct the center/periphery structure and dynamics of the earliest Old World civilizations. The basic argument can be summarized as follows:

1. The rise of civilization out of previous tribally organized regional systems consists in the formation of a technologically integrated center/periphery organization. The development of 'high culture' depends on the accumulation of resources from an area wider than the center of development itself.

Mesopotamia is a prime example of such a development since nearly all of its raw materials including wood and stone for building were imports. Irrigation, often cited as the basis of Mesopotamian evolution, is clearly insufficient since there is no internal alchemy which can convert surplus grain into stone temples, palaces and a bronze industry. The formation of city states in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia consists in a differentiation within a formerly more homogeneous area where evolving urban societies are surrounded by a periphery of societies identified as chiefdoms or small states whose elites control the import of manufactured goods and grain and the export of raw materials and slaves (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1975).

2. The implosion formative of civilized society is simultaneously the transformation of tribally organized hierarchy into a more differentiated structure in which kinship loses its function at political and economic levels. The pre-urban structure is a theocratic state organized along the lines of a 'conical clan', where the upper class is identical to the state,
supporting itself on taxation and a monopoly of external relations and internal production of elite goods. This theocratic or ‘Asiatic’ structure becomes differentiated into a number of class factions. Alongside of the priestly and secular bureaucracy is a private landed aristocracy and a merchant class all of whose interests are far from identical. This rapid differentiation in the upper class frees primitive monetary forms from their social relations, and a category of abstract wealth emerges, expressed at first in such forms as precious metals. This pre-industrial ‘capital’ can be accumulated independently of the state and is instrumental in the decentralization of wealth within the upper class. The emergence of a commercial economy is, of course, implicated in this transformation. Even the forms of labor become more differentiated. In the theocratic state there are temple and/or royal slaves and a great mass of tax paying peasants. In the new urban based economy we have the continued existence of a state and smaller temple sector employing slaves and a category best characterized as helots (Diakonoff, 1977). But there is also wage labor, a variety of relatively free peasants, and private slaves.

3. There is a functional relation between the density of the regional trade network and the degree of urban implosion, which is itself a direct outcome of competition for the wealth of the total system. In Egypt with its very sparse network, urbanization does not really occur, and there is an over-elaboration of the theocratic bureaucracy with its vast system of state financing. At the other extreme is Mesopotamia, situated in the extensive trade area between the Mediterranean and India. Here the theocratic hierarchies fragment into warring city states, and the competition leads to cyclical empire formation. The same type of phenomenon occurs in China where, after the initial fragmentation of the Eastern Chou era periods of so-called ‘feudalization’ alternate with empires. The degree of implosion is less extreme in China where the early Chou ‘warring states’ are territorially more extensive than those of Mesopotamia and India, to say nothing of the Levant and the Mediterranean, but the process is of the same type.

4. The degree of fragmentation depends on the spatial distribution of accumulative possibilities which are a function of the control over external conditions of local reproduction. In dense trade areas, regional hierarchy breaks down due to the loss of regional monopoly. This is accompanied by a loss of internal monopoly by the old state-class and the rise of competing factions.

5. Empire is a phenomenon proper to urban multi-state systems, resulting from competition in the center for the control of the larger system. Empire functions to maintain or organize imperialistic (center/periphery) processes within an already existing larger network. It is a political attempt to control the supralocal conditions of local reproduction.
6. The developmental cycle of global systems seems to follow the following kind of pattern.
   a. initial and usually violent expansion of centers – trade, warfare, piracy and the like play crucial roles in primary accumulation of wealth.
   b. formation of peripheries and center/periphery relations. Under the umbrella of massive importation of wealth there is a development of local commercial and industrial economies.
   c. competition among central states leads to empire formation and the emergence of hegemonic power which is unstable in the long run.
   d. with the establishment of empire there is an increase in economic activity. As the accumulation of wealth in the center far outstrips real production, there is rapid inflation and increasing costs. This combined with increasing opportunities in the empire lead to an outflow of merchants and producers, a relatively rapid decentralization of accumulation in the larger system. As total accumulation is greater than that part drawn into the center there is a gradual decline of the hegemonic center and an increase in competition again. Such a process may later spread to the relation between the center and periphery as a whole.
   e. reflected in this cycle is that of the hegemonic center itself or the center generally – from initial high local production and export of manufactured goods to final low production and the export of 'capital', high levels of consumption maintained by increasing state deficits. The result is a general crisis of the state.

7. In the center, there is a tendency to economic decentralization and political 'democratization' in periods of expansion. In periods of crisis and/or decline the conflict between state and private sectors increases with a growing tendency for centralization. Centrally controlled economies are invariably dominant in the periphery where, in periods of crisis, they may have an advantage due to their control over local conditions.

8. In periods of crisis of the system as a whole, the tendency to centralism is also system wide. The development of the Hellenistic states following the classical city state period might profitably be compared to the development of state interventionism in the West today. The increase in class struggle and in tyrannies from the fourth to second centuries B.C. are highlighted by inflation, declining real wages and increasing state intervention. The proliferation of utopian philosophies often stress the model of a centralized society, and practical writings such as those of Demosthenes look to the Macedonian state as an ideal type (Fuks, 1974). The relation between Macedonia and the city states is not unlike that between the Soviet Union and the West, and while the situations are, of course, quite different, a frightening parallel might be suggested. What might seem, in terms of our own developmental ideology to be a transition to a 'higher' stage may be no more than a pernicious cyclical phenomenon.
We might suggest here that the evolution of civilizations up to our own is more of a single continuum than a succession of distinct modes of production or stages. While in Europe there may be an apparent succession of different stages, slavery, feudalism, wage labor capitalism, they do not form a closed evolutionary process. Furthermore, in any one system we are likely to find the different types simultaneously. Just as the capitalistic world contained different forms of exploitation such as slavery, serfdom, métayage as well as wage labor in the center, so the Medieval Arab system had mostly wage labor in centers such as Baghdad, but feudal exploitation, slave plantations and free peasant elsewhere. It is of course true that generalized industrial capitalism is a specific phenomenon, characterized as it is by competition of capitals at the level of production leading to an explosion of technology or at least of commodities. The tendency to total disintegration of communal and domestic social forms is clearly a specificity even if it is of a somewhat quantitative nature. In any case, the emergence of industrial capitalism occurs within an already constituted imperialist process of capital accumulation on which it is entirely dependent, and it is the latter process that represents the historical continuity of global systems.

We have tried here to indicate the continuity of world systems from early civilizations up to the present or at least to suggest this as an avenue of research. The perspective has special significance for anthropology since the access to human social origins can no longer be conceived in the same way. Before the European slave trade there was an Arab slave trade organized on similar grounds. The existence of world systems for the past five thousand years implies that tribes, chiefdoms, feudalism and the like have repeatedly appeared and disappeared with those systems. We are not even the first civilization to conceive of our peripheral populations as our evolutionary predecessors. The evolutionary mirage is the distorting mirror of past civilizations as well as our own (Lovejoy and Boas, 1935).

As we believe that there are properties common to all global systems consisting mainly in a given distribution of functional positions, we think it best to provide a tentative sketch of a hypothetical system within which one might locate the different social formations we have discussed.

**THE REGIONAL STRUCTURE OF A GLOBAL SYSTEM**

**A. Center/Periphery structures**

1. Centers of accumulation and relatively advanced production where is a high demand for foreign raw material and labor power (especially before industrial capitalism). There is a high degree of social differentiation and specialization

2. Supply zone peripheries – small hierarchically organized chiefdoms or states that exchange local resources for imported manufactured
items, where monopoly over external relations is instrumental in defining the position of the elite.

Between such center/periphery structures there are a number of functional positions, some of which are dependent upon the existence of centers for their reproduction and some which are not.

**B. Dependent structures**

1. Such structures are those that depend on the larger system for their reproduction but are neither centers dominating their own peripheries nor peripheries dependent on a center.

   a. semi-peripheral economies might be so classified in modern capitalism.

   b. specialist producers - groups entirely specialised in specific kinds of manufacture, raw material and specialized agricultural products for a wide region containing several centers. They are linked not to a specific center but to inter-center trade routes.

   c. trade states - groups whose existence depend on their position as middle-men. Trade states are often also specialized producers. The two categories are not mutually exclusive.

Dependent structures are neither socially nor economically selfsufficient although they may often be politically autonomous. They often depend upon the import of subsistence requirements and their social structures are often entirely supported by a necessary minimum share of the total wealth flow in the larger system. Such structures have the possibility of rapid growth and can become centers where the conditions of profit taking are suitable.

**C. Independent structures**

1. These are structures whose operation is characterized by internal cycles of reproduction that are not connected to global cycles. However, such structures are clearly not independent with respect to their conditions of reproduction which depend on their location in the larger system.

   a. expansionist tribal structures - predatory structures. These are structures containing internal cycles of accumulation and that expand against both A and B, exploiting the flow of wealth in the larger system by extortion when possible. They often expand into states and so-called ‘barbarian’ empires – especially in periods of decline of the central economies. These latter developments become increasingly dependent...
on their ability to exploit the rest of the system.

b. 'primitive' structures are those that are blocked by their position within the larger system. They are often the prey of centers, peripheries and predatory tribal societies. They tend to lose control over their resource base and their labor by violent methods. As a result they may only exist as refugee groups, escaped into the remote areas, or as politically acephalous structures that, where not the prey of the systems, are nonetheless so blocked in their own expansion that they experience breakdown, internal warfare and declining resources.

We have already referred to the center/periphery structures of Old World civilization. Recent analyses of the European hinterland of Mediterranean civilizations reveal the same kind of center/periphery structure (Franken-stein and Rowlands, 1978; Hedeager, 1979; Nash n.d.) and an indication of the same kind of prestige-good based economy as we discussed earlier. History is full of examples of trade and specialized production states. Greece of the classical period represents an excellent example of how an advantageous position in the larger system led to a transition from periphery to center position by way of trade and specialized production. The independent structures referred to above have been the traditional domain of anthropologists. The more expansionist forms have been commonly found in between the developed civilizations. In central Asia and northern Southeast Asia they were in existence until very recently.

The use of a model of regional structure is an attempt to situate the various kinds of social formation in terms of their total conditions of reproduction. Doubtless, in earlier civilizations, tribally organized societies played more active roles in global functioning, roles that may have been assumed by feudal structures or by colonial states in later periods. The general model tells us little about specific social forms. Only a more complex model of global system evolution might do that. In today's world, anthropologists find their most dynamic examples in remote areas occupied by independent structures. In those areas where historical investigation can show that the functional position, for geographical or other reasons, has remained more or less stable, one might be tempted to speculate on the possible age of the local social forms and on their evolutionary status. More generally, by a thorough analysis of ethnographic material in terms of reproductive processes and a comparison of the results of that analysis with the archeological data it might be possible to reconstruct the real processes of the evolution of civilization. The ethnographic present is thus useful for evolutionary theory, but not by the simple reification of extant societies (Ekholm, 1979).
**CONCLUSION**

Anthropology is the most general social science. It is concerned with the human condition from its origins until today. We endeavour to explore our potentials as a species at the same time that we try to find out what has gone so disastrously wrong in social evolution. A global anthropology is not a denial of the value of ethnography but a plea for its reinterpretation. Ethnography is not the study of a fossilized past but of the world of today. This does not mean that small societies organized entirely on an interpersonal basis have nothing to tell us simply because they don't belong to this or that developmental stage. On the contrary, they have very much to teach us about our social possibilities and they can contribute to a theoretical reconstruction of our original conditions. But they cannot simply be treated as remnant objects for our alienated discourse. The misguided scramble after the *really* isolated society and the authentic primitive is a rather pernicious pastime that is more a reflex of our own ideology than a scientific pursuit. The recently discovered Tasaday tribe of the Philippines is a glaring example. We were informed upon their discovery that the most primitive group in the world had been found, cave dwellers that did not even know the art of fire making. It now appears that this primitive society is made up of relatively recent refugees from surrounding agricultural groups.

Anthropology must begin by making a distinction between our social origins and those of our primitive contemporaries. It must study both for what they are. There is a crying need for an anthropology that properly situates its object. Also needed is an anthropology of civilization that undertakes an analysis of the dynamics of accumulation, growth and decline, and the shift of centers in history – one that attempts to delineate the connection between the cyclical emergence and disappearance of different social formations and the larger systems and which tries to characterize the long term trends in the history of civilizations. By placing our own capitalism in the larger context of global systems, one can delineate the similarities as well as the differences in the concrete evolution of our world. This may be important merely by decentering, so to speak, the question of evolution. Instead of making assumptions about the future that depend on our linear view of the past, we may be led to recharacterize both the essential nature of our own and other societies. If the analysis of the emergence of centralized stateclass structures in previous systems tells us more about the Soviet type systems than the attempt to account for them in terms of deviation from the model of socialist evolution, then our entire developmentalist framework could be dangerously incorrect.

Finally, we need to stress the importance of the understanding of primitive society, both in global systems and in the paleolithic and neolithic past. It is necessary to grapple with the basic structures of power and alienation, the forms of control, the nature of primitive accumulation
and the dynamic transformations that led to global systems of civilization. From the evolutionary standpoint, it is a question of finding out where things went wrong, how man lost control over his social conditions of existence, a control which he possessed in the primitive situation. It is a long way from a situation where survival depends on direct personal relations to one where our conditions of existence depend on a quantity of paper representing abstract wealth paid from an anonymous bank account that is no more than a computerized sector of a state budget, where society as a whole has become one enormous job structure in which the only necessary relation is the monetary transfer.

The history of world systems has been one of violent expansion, exploitation, collapse, dark ages and so on. It is not unlikely that we shall face the same end as other great centers of development. Decadence has become a prime issue of discussion in recent years, and the coming dark age has been proclaimed by some with an air of optimism (Stavrianos, 1975). Many talk of a return to a more humane society, to local community forms that are more in harmony with nature. A similar body of literature appeared in the crisis-ridden end of classical Greek civilization. It marked the beginning of a long decline. If the West too is in its period of decline, then anthropology may indeed have something very practical to communicate. The study of the primitive, after all, may be the science of the future as well as the past.

NOTES

1. Lévi-Strauss (1967) describes the nature of delayed reciprocal marriage exchange common to the area. People given in one generation are returned in the next.

2. Generalized exchange (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) is the asymmetrical movement of men or women from one group to another: A → B → C...

3. The Arab centers were not, of course, alone. The centers of China and Southeast Asia and the urban commercial economy of coastal India reveal a large scale international system in which there were several interconnected center/periphery structures.

4. See Ekholm and Friedman (1979) and Friedman and Rowlands (1977) for an analysis of the pre-civilization state-class structures and their evolution.

5. See Schneider and Schneider (1976) for the best published work in this direction. Eric Wolf is currently at work on a reinterpretation of the ethnographic world in terms of a larger system perspective.

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