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Sahlins examines notions of production, distribution, and exchange in early communities and examines the link between economics and cultural and social factors. A detailed study of tribal economies, domestic production for livelihood, and of the submission of domestic production to the material and political demands of society at large, *Stone Age Economics* regards the economy as a category of culture rather than behavior, in a class with politics and religion rather than rationality or prudence. Sahlins concludes, controversially, that the lives of those living in subsistence economies may actually have been better, healthier, and more fulfilled than the millions enjoying the affluence and luxury afforded by the economics of modern industrialization and agriculture.

This Routledge Classics edition includes a new foreword by David Graeber, London School of Economics.

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Marshall
Sahlins

Stone Age Economics

With a new foreword by David Graeber



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THE DOMESTIC MODE OF PRODUCTION: THE STRUCTURE OF UNDERPRODUCTION

This chapter is constructed on an observation in apparent contradiction to the pristine “affluence” I have just taken so much trouble to defend: the primitive economies are underproductive. The main run of them, agricultural as well as preagricultural, seem not to realize their own economic capacities. Labor power is underused, technological means are not fully engaged, natural resources are left untapped.

This is not the simple point that the output of primitive societies is low: it is the complex problem that production is low relative to existing possibilities. So understood, “underproduction” is not necessarily inconsistent with a pristine “affluence.” All the people’s material wants might still be easily satisfied even though the economy is running below capacity. Indeed, the former is rather a condition of the latter: given the modest ideas of “satisfaction” locally prevailing, labor and resources need not be exploited to the full.

In any event, there are indications of underproduction from many parts of the primitive world, and the first task of the essay is to give some sense of the evidence. Beyond any initial attempt at explanation, the discovery of this tendency—more precisely of several related

tendencies of the primitive economic performance—seems of greater importance. I raise the possibility that underproduction is in the nature of the economies at issue; that is, economies organized by domestic groups and kinship relations.

DIMENSIONS OF UNDERPRODUCTION

Underuse of Resources

The major evidence for underexploitation of productive resources comes from agricultural societies, especially those practicing slash-and-burn cultivation. Probably this is a function of research procedures rather than a dubious special privilege of the subsistence type. Similar observations have been made of hunting and of herding economies, but anecdotally for the most part, and without benefit of a practicable measure. Slash-and-burn agriculture, on the other hand, uniquely lends itself to quantified assessments of economic capacity. And in almost all the cases so far investigated, still not numerous but from many different parts of the globe, especially where the people have not been confined to “native reserves,” the actual production is substantially less than the possible.

Slash-and-burn, an agriculture of neolithic origin, is widely practiced today in tropical forests. It is a technique for opening up and bringing under cultivation a patch of forest land. The standing growth is first cleared by axe or machete and, after a period of drying out, the accumulated debris is burned off—thus the inelegant name, slash-and-burn. A cleared plot is cultivated for one or two seasons, rarely more, then abandoned for years, usually with a view toward restoration of fertility through reversion to forest. The area may then be opened again for another cycle of cultivation and fallow. Typically the period of fallow is several times the period of use; hence, the community of cultivators, if it is to remain stable, must always hold in reserve several times the area it has under production at any given moment. Measures of productive capacity must take this requirement into consideration; also the period of garden use, the period of fallow, the amount of land required per capita for subsistence, the amount of arable land within range of the community, and the like. So long as these measures are careful to respect the normal and customary practices of the people

concerned, the final estimate of capacity will not be utopian—that is, what might be done with a free choice of techniques—but only what could be done by the agricultural regime as it stands.

Nevertheless, there are inescapable uncertainties. Any “productive capacity” so estimated is partial and derivative: partial, because the investigation is restricted in advance to the cultivation of food, other dimensions of production left aside; derivative, because “capacity” takes the form of a population maximum. What research yields is the optimum number of people that can be supported by the existing means of production. “Capacity” appears as a determinate population size or density, a critical mass that cannot be surpassed without some change in agricultural practice or conception of livelihood. Beyond that point is a dangerous ground of speculation which daring ecologists, identifying the optimum population as the “critical carrying capacity” or “critical population density,” all the same do not hesitate to enter. “Critical carrying capacity” is the theoretical limit to which the population could be taken without degrading the land and compromising the agricultural future. But it is characteristically difficult to project from the existing “optimum” to the persisting “critical”; such questions of long-term adaptation are not decided by the short-term data. We have to be content with a more limited, if possibly defective, understanding: what the agricultural system as constituted can do.

W. Allan (1949, 1965) was the first to devise and apply a general index of population capacity for slash-and-burn agriculture. Several versions and variants of Allan’s formula¹ have since appeared, notably those of Conklin (1959), Carneiro (1960), and a complicated refinement fashioned by Brown and Brookfield for the New Guinea Highlands (1963). These formulas have been applied to specific ethnographic sites and, with less precision, to broad cultural provinces dominated by slash-and-burn production. Outside of reservations, in traditional agricultural systems, the results, although highly variable, are highly consistent in one respect: the existing population is generally inferior to the calculable maximum, often remarkably so.²

Table 2.1 summarizes a certain number of ethnographic studies of population capacity from several world areas of shifting agriculture. Two of these studies, those of the Chimbu and Kuikuru, merit special comment.

Table 2.1 Relation of actual to potential population, swidden cultivators

Group	Location	Population (Size or Density)		Actual as Percentage of Potential	Source
		Actual	Potential Maximum		
Naregu Chimbu	New Guinea	288/m ²	453/m ²	64	Brown and Brookfield 1963
Tsembaga* (Maring)	New Guinea	204 (local pop.)	313-373	55-65	Rappaport 1967
Yagaw Hanao	Philippines	30/km ² (arable)	48/km ² (arable)	63	Conklin 1957
Lamet†	Laos	2.9/km ²	11.7-14.4/km ²	20-25	Izikowitz 1951
Iban	Borneo	23/m ² (Sut Valley), 14/m ² (Baleh)	35-46m ²	50-66 (s), 30-40	Freeman 1955
Kuikuru	Brazil	145 (village)	2041	7	Carneiro 1960
Ndembu (Kanongesha Chiefdom)	N. Rhodesia	3.17/m ²	17-38/m ²	8-19	Turner 1957

(Continued)

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Group	Location	Population (Size or Density)		Actual as Percentage of Potential	Source
		Actual	Potential Maximum		
W. Lala [‡]	N. Rhodesia	< 3/m ²	4/m ²	< 75	Allan 1965: 114
Swaka [‡]	N. Rhodesia	< 4/m ²	10+/m ²	< 40	Allan 1965: 122–123
Dogomba [‡]	Ghana	25–50/m ²	50–60/m ²	42–100	Allan 1965: 240

* Mean population capacity, between maximum and minimum pig-herd, here tabulated.

† The Lamet figures are calculated from Izikowitz's rough estimates, with the further assumption that only five percent of the countryside is arable. The results are probably far from accurate. However, we have the ethnographer's assurance that Lamet villages have considerably more land at their disposal than they need (use) (1951, p. 43).

‡ Allan presents data on several African populations, confined to reserves or otherwise subjected to disturbances of colonialism, that are over the capacity of the traditional system. These are excluded here. The Serenji Lala, however, may be an exception. (Most of Allan's estimates seem more approximate than the other studies tabulated above.)

The Chimbu example is indeed theoretically privileged, not only for the unusually sophisticated techniques developed by the investigators, but because these techniques were tested on a system of peak density in one of the most densely occupied areas of the primitive world. The Naregu section of Chimbu studied by Brown and Brookfield certainly upholds the New Guinea Highlands' reputation: a mean density of 288 people/square mile. Yet this density is only 64 percent of the prevailing agricultural capacity. (The result of 64 percent is an average for 12 clan and subclan territories of Naregu; the range was from 22 to 97 percent of capacity; Table 2.2 on p.44 gives the breakdown by territory.) Brown and Brookfield also made wider but less precise estimates for the 26 tribal and subtribal sections of Chimbu as a whole, yielding conclusions of the same order: mean population at 60 percent of capacity.³

The Kuikuru, on the other hand, illustrate another kind of extreme: the scale of the disparity that may exist between potential and reality. The Kuikuru village of 145 persons is only seven percent of the calculable maximum population (Carneiro, 1960). Given the Kuikuru's agricultural practices, their present population of 145 is supported from the cultivation of 947.25 acres. In fact, the community has a base of 13,350 acres (arable), sufficient for 2,041 persons.

Although studies such as these remain few, the results they present do not appear to be exceptional nor limited to the instances in question. On the contrary, reputable and sober authorities have been tempted to generalize to the same effect about wide geographical areas with which they are familiar. Carneiro, for example (projecting from Kuikuru but in a way that presumes them unusually well off), considers that traditional agriculture in the South American Tropical Forest Zone was capable of sustaining village populations on the order of 450 people; whereas the modal community throughout this extensive area was only 51–150 (1960). The Congo forest of Africa, according to Allan, was likewise underpopulated over wide stretches—"well below the apparent carrying capacity of the land for the traditional systems of land use" (1965, p. 223). Again in West Africa, particularly Ghana before the cocoa boom, Allan reports that "population densities in the central forest zone were far below the critical levels" (p. 228; cf. pp. 229, 230, 240). J. E. Spencer frames a similar opinion of shifting

Table 2.2 Actual and maximum population capacities of Naregu Chimbu Groups*
(from Brown and Brookfield, 1963, pp. 117, 119)

Group	Total Population		Population Density per Square Mile		Proportion of Actual to Maximum Density
	Actual	Maximum	Actual	Maximum	
Kingun-Sumbai	279	561	300	603	0.49
Bindegu	262	289	524	578	0.91
Togl-Konda	250	304	373	454	0.82
Kamaniambugo	205	211	427	439	0.97
Mondu-Ninga	148	191	361	466	0.77
Sunggwakani	211	320	271	410	0.66
Domkani	130	223	220	378	0.58
Buruk-Maima, Damagu	345	433	371	466	0.80
Komu-Konda	111	140	347	438	0.79
Bau-Aundugu	346	618	262	468	0.56
Yonggomakani	73	183	166	416	0.40
Wugukani	83	370	77	343	0.22
	Σ 2443	Σ 3843	$\bar{X} = 288$	$\bar{X} = 453$	$\bar{X} = 0.64$

* The capacities reported by Brown and Brookfield include a small allowance (0.03 acres/capita) for a cash crop, coffee, as well as an allowance for a tree crop, pandanus (0.02 acres/capita). The food-crop requirement of 0.25 acres/capita also includes an amount for pig food and some food sold. The allowance for pigs, however, is not adjusted to maximum herd size.

cultivation in Southeast Asia. Impressed by the unusually high densities of upland New Guinea, Spencer is inclined to believe "most shifting-cultivator societies are operating at less than maximum potential so far as their agricultural system is concerned" (1966, p. 16). His interpretation is of interest:

Light areal density patterns of population are naturally associated with many groups following shifting cultivation because of their intrinsic social system. . . . This cultural tradition cannot be interpreted in terms of the carrying capacity of the land, so that the social phenomenon, rather than the literal carrying capacity of

the land itself, has assumed the dynamic role of controlling population density.

(Spencer, 1966, pp. 15–16)

Let us underline the point, at the same time reserving it for fuller discussion later. Spencer says that the social-cultural organization is not designed after the technical limits of production, to maximize output, but rather impedes development of the productive means. If this position runs counter to a certain ecological thinking, it is nevertheless repeated by several ethnographers of underproduction. For the Ndembu, in Turner's view (1957), it is the contradictions of customary modes of residence and descent, coupled to an absence of political centralization, that set off village fission and population dispersal at a level inferior to the agricultural capacity. Izikowitz (1951), speaking of Lamet, and Cameiro of Amazonian Indians (1968) alike hold the weakness of the community polity responsible for an undue centrifugal segmentation. Quite generally among the tribal cultivators, the intensity of land use seems a specification of the social-political organization.

To return to the technical facts and their distribution: slash-and-burn agriculture is a major form of production among extant primitive societies, perhaps the dominant form.⁴ Inquiries in a number of communities, from several different world areas, confirm that (outside native reserves) the agricultural system is running below its technical capacity. More broadly, extensive areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and South American occupied by swidden cultivators are authoritatively judged underexploited. May we be permitted to conclude that the dominant form of primitive production is underproduction?⁵

Much less can be said about the performance of other common production types. There are suggestions that hunting-gathering may be no more intensive than slash-and-burn agriculture. But the interpretation of resource underuse among hunters presents special difficulties, even apart from the lack of a practicable measure. It is usually not possible to determine whether an apparent underproduction of the moment nonetheless represents a long-term adaptation to recurrent shortages, bad years when it would be possible to support only a fraction of the present population. All the more pertinent, then, is the following remark of Richard Lee on !Kung Bushman subsistence, as the period of

field observation included the third year of a prolonged drought such as rarely visits even the Kalahari Desert:

It is impossible to define “abundance” of resources absolutely. However, one index of *relative* abundance is whether or not a population exhausts all the food available from a given area. By this criterion, the habitat of the Dobe-area Bushmen is abundant in naturally occurring foods. By far the most important food is the Mongomongo (mangetti) nut. . . . Although tens of thousands of pounds of these nuts are harvested and eaten each year, thousands more rot on the ground each year for want of picking.

(Lee, 1968, p. 33; see also pp. 33–35)

Woodburn’s comments on Hadza hunting carry the same implication:

I have already mentioned the exceptional abundance of game animals in this area. Although Hadza, in common probably with all other human societies, do not eat all the types of animals available to them—they reject civet, monitor lizard, snake, terrapin among others—they do eat an unusually wide range of animals. . . . In spite of the large number of species which they are both able to hunt and regard as edible, the Hadza do not kill very many animals and it is probable that even in the radically reduced area they occupied in 1960 more animals could have been killed of every species without endangering the survival of any species in question.

(Woodburn, 1968, p. 52)

In a work primarily devoted to subsistence agriculture, Clark and Haswell (1964, p. 31) make a daring argument about preagricultural resource use that at least invites contemplation. Basing their calculations on certain data for East Africa summarized by Pirie (1962),⁶ and positing certain conservative assumptions about animal reproduction rates in the wild, Clark and Haswell estimate that the annual natural yield of meat is forty times greater than necessary to support a hunting population living at one person/20 square kilometers (1/7.7 square miles) and exclusively on animal foods—that is to say, the animal reproduction fully utilized would support five persons per square mile. This without diminishing the natural supply. Whether hunters need such a margin of safety is another, unanswered question, although Clark and Haswell rather think they do.

A further implication of Pirie's East African figures is that the wild animal yield per area of natural grazing land is higher than the output of pastoral nomadism in adjacent regions (cf. Worthington, 1961). Again, Clark and Haswell generalize to an interesting judgment of pastoralist land use:

We should remind ourselves that the primitive pastoral communities, found where the land is not forested . . . live at a density of about 2 persons/sq. km. Though not so wasteful of the land and its resources as are the primitive hunting peoples, they nevertheless fall far short of fully exploiting the potential mean output of land, which Price estimates at 50 kg. liveweight gain/ha./year (5 tons liveweight gain/sq. km.). Even if we half this figure, as some would do, it seems clear that primitive pastoral peoples . . . are unable to exploit the full growth of grass in favourable seasons of the year.

(1964)

Without technical means of accumulating fodder, as the authors recognize, pastoralists are of course restricted to the livestock they can support in poorer rather than favorable seasons. Still, Clark and Haswell's conclusion finds some support from Allan. As a rough conjecture, Allan supposes that East African pastoralists know a "critical population density" on the order of seven persons per square mile. But from a series of actual cases, "It would seem that population densities of surviving pastoral peoples are usually well below this figure, even in the more favourable of the regions they still occupy" (Allan, 1965, p. 309).⁷

We seem perilously close to that characteristic failing of interdisciplinary study—an enterprise which often seems to merit definition as the process by which the unknowns of one's own subject matter are multiplied by the uncertainties of some other science. But enough said at least to raise doubt about the efficiency of resource exploitation in the primitive economies.

Underuse of Labor-Power

That the labor forces of primitive communities are also underused is easier to document, thanks to a greater ethnographic attention. (Besides, this dimension of primitive underproduction conforms closely to European prejudices, so that many others besides anthropologists have

noticed it, although the more appropriate deduction from the cultural differences might have been that Europeans are overworked.) It is only necessary to keep in mind that the manner by which labor-power is withheld from production is not everywhere the same. The institutional modalities vary considerably: from marked cultural abbreviations of the individual working-life span to immoderate standards of relaxation—or, what is probably a better understanding of the latter, very moderate standards of “sufficient work.”

One of the main conclusions of Mary Douglas’s brilliant comparison of Lele and Bushong economies is that in some societies people work for a much greater part of their lifetime than in others. “Everything the Lele have or do,” Douglas wrote, “the Bushong have more and can do better. They produce more, live better as well as populating their region more densely than the Lele” (1962, p. 211). They produce more largely because they work more, as demonstrated along one dimension by the remarkable diagram Douglas presents of male working life span in the two societies (Figure 2.1). Beginning before age 20 and finishing after 60, a Bushong man is productively occupied almost twice as long as a Lele, the latter retiring comparatively early from a career that began well after physical maturity. Without intending to repeat Douglas’s detailed analysis, some of the reasons might be noted briefly for their pertinence to the present discussion. One is the Lele practice of polygyny, which as a privilege of the elders entails for younger men a considerable postponement of marriage, hence of adult responsibilities.⁸ Moving into the political domain, Douglas’s

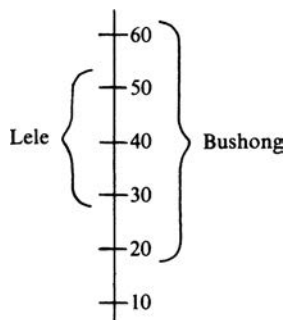


Figure 2.1 Male Working-Span: Lele and Bushong (after Douglas, 1962, p. 231)

more general explanations of the Lele-Bushong contrast strike a note already familiar. But Douglas carries the analysis to new dimensions. It is not only differences in political scale or morphology that make one or another system more effective economically, but the different relations they entail between the powers that be and the process of production.⁹

Scant use of young adult labor, however, is not characteristic of the Lele alone. It is not even the exclusive privilege of agricultural societies. Hunting and gathering do not demand of !Kung Bushmen that famous "maximum effort of a maximum number of people." They manage quite well without the full cooperation of younger men, who are fairly idle sometimes to the age of 25:

Another significant feature of the composition of the [!Kung Bushmen] work force is the late assumption of adult responsibility by the adolescents. Young people are not expected to provide food regularly until they are married. Girls typically marry between the ages of 15 and 20, and boys about five years later, so that it is not unusual to find healthy, active teenagers visiting from camp to camp while their older relatives provide food for them.

(Lee, 1968, p. 36)

This contrast between the indolence of youth and industry of elders may appear also in a developed political setting, as in centralized African chiefdoms such as Bemba. Now the Bemba are not markedly polygynous. Audrey Richards proposes yet another explanation, one that calls to anthropological mind still other examples:

In pre-European days there was a complete change of ambition between . . . youth and age. The young boy, under the system of matrilocal marriage [entailing bride-service in the wife's family], had no individual responsibility for gardening. He was expected to cut trees [for making gardens], but his main way of advance in life was to attach himself to a chief or to a man of rank and not to make large gardens or to collect material goods. He often went on border raids or foraging expeditions. He did not expect to work in earnest until middle age, when his children were "crying from hunger" and he had settled down. Nowadays we saw in concrete cases the immense difference between the regularity of work done by the old and young.¹⁰

This is partly due to the new insubordination of the boys, but partly also to a perpetuation of an old tradition. In our society youths and adolescents have, roughly speaking, the same economic ambitions throughout youth and early manhood. . . . Among the Bemba this was not so, any more than it was among such warrior peoples as the Masai of East Africa with their regular age-sets.¹¹ Each individual was expected to be first a fighter and later a cultivator and the father of a family.

(Richards, 1961, p. 402)

In sum, for a variety of cultural reasons, the lifetime working span may be seriously curtailed. Indeed, economic obligations can be totally unbalanced in relation to physical capacity, the younger and stronger adults largely disengaged from production, leaving the burden of society's work to the older and weaker.

An unbalance to the same effect may obtain in the division of labor by sex. Half the available labor power may be providing a disproportionately small fraction of the society's output. Differences of this kind are common enough, at least in the subsistence sector, to have long lent credence to crude materialist explanations of the customary descent rule, matrilineal or patrilineal, by the specific economic weight of female versus male labor.

I have myself had ethnographic occasion to observe a marked unbalance in the sexual division of labor. Excluded from agriculture, the women of the Fijian island of Moala show much slighter interest than do their men in main productive activities. True that the women, especially younger women, maintain the homes, cook, fish periodically, and are charged with certain crafts. Yet the ease they enjoy by comparison with their sisters elsewhere in Fiji, where women do cultivate, is enough to credit the local saying that "in this land, women rest." One Moalan friend confided that all they really did was sit around all day and break wind. (This was a slander; gossip was the more consuming occupation.) The reverse emphasis, on female labor, is probably more widespread in primitive communities (exception made for pastoralists, where the women often—but sometimes many of the men too—are not concerned with the daily husbandry).¹²

One example we have already noted is worth repeating, as it again concerns hunters, who less than anyone might be thought able to

afford the extravagance of one whole idle sex out of the two usually available. Yet such are the Hadza that the men pass six months a year (the dry season) in gambling—effectively inhibiting those who have lost their metal-tipped arrows from hunting big game the rest of the year (Woodbum, 1968, p. 54).

It is impossible from these few instances to infer an extent, let alone attribute a universality, to the differential economic engagement by sex and age. Again I would merely raise a problem, which is also to cast a doubt on a common presupposition. The problem concerns the composition of the labor force. This composition is clearly a cultural and not simply a natural (physical) specification. Clearly too, the cultural and natural specifications need not correspond. By custom the individual working career is variously abbreviated or alleviated, and whole classes of the able-bodied, perhaps the most able-bodied, are exempted from economic concern. In the event, the disposable working force is something less than the available labor-power, and the remainder of the latter is otherwise spent or dissipated. That this diversion of manpower is sometimes necessary is not contested. It may well be functional, even inevitable, to the society and economy as organized. But that is the problem: we have to do with the organized withdrawal of important social energies from the economic process. Nor is it the only problem. Another is how much the others, the effective producers, actually do work.

While no anthropologist today would concede the truth of the imperialist ideology that the natives are congenitally lazy, and many would testify rather that the people are capable of sustained labor, probably most would also observe that the motivation to do so is not constant, so that work is in fact irregular over the longer or shorter term. The work process is sensitive to interference of various kinds, vulnerable to suspension in favor of other activities as serious as ritual, as frivolous as repose. The customary working day is often short; if it is protracted, frequently it is interrupted; if it is both long and unremitting, usually this is only seasonal. Within the community, moreover, some people work much more than others. By the norms of the society, let alone of the *stakhonovite*, considerable labor-power remains underemployed. As Maurice Godelier writes, labor is not a scarce resource in most primitive societies (1969, p. 32).¹³

In the subsistence sector, a man's normal working day (in season) may be as short as four hours, as among the Bemba (Richards, 1961, pp. 398–399), the Hawaiians (Stewart, 1828, p. 111) or the Kuikuru (Carneiro, 1968, p. 134), or perhaps it is six hours, as for !Kung Bushmen (Lee, 1968, p. 37) or Kapauku (Pospisil, 1963, pp. 144–145). Then again, it may last from early to late:

But let us follow a (Tikopian) working party as they leave home on a fine morning, bound for the cultivations. They are going to dig turmeric, for it is August, the season for the preparation of this highly valued sacred dye. The group sets off from the village of Matautu, straggles along the beach to Rofaea and then turning inland begins to ascend the path running up to the crest of the hills. The turmeric plant . . . grows on the mountain-side and to reach the orchard . . . involves a steep climb of several hundred feet . . . The party consists of Pa Nukunefu and his wife, their young daughter, and three older girls, these latter having been coopted from the households of friends and neighbors . . . Soon after these people arrive they are joined by Vaitere, a youth whose family owns the neighbouring orchard . . . The work is of very simple nature . . . Pa Nukunefu and the women share the work fairly among them, he doing most of the clearing of vegetation and the digging, they some of the digging and replanting, and nearly all the cleaning and sorting . . . the tempo of the work is an easy one. From time to time members of the party drop out for a rest, and to chew betel. To this end, Vaitere, who takes no very active part in the work itself, climbs a nearby tree to collect some leaves of *pita*, the betel plant. . . . About mid-morning the customary refreshment is provided in the shape of green coconuts, for which Vaitere is again sent to climb. . . . The whole atmosphere is one of labour diversified by recreation at will. . . . Vaitere, as the morning draws on, busies himself with the construction of a cap out of banana leaf, his own invention, and of no practical use So between work and leisure the time passes, until as the sun declines perceptibly from the zenith the task of the party is done, and bearing their baskets of turmeric roots they go off down the mountain-side to their homes.

(Firth, 1936, pp. 92–93)

On the other hand, the daily labors of Kapauku seem more sustained. Their workday begins about 7:30 a.m. and proceeds fairly

steadily until a late morning break for lunch. The men return to the village in the early afternoon, but the women continue on until four or five o'clock. Yet the Kapauku "have a conception of balance in life": if they work strenuously one day, they rest the next.

Since the Kapauku have a conception of balance in life, only every other day is supposed to be a working day. Such a day is followed by a day of rest in order to "regain the lost power and health." This monotonous fluctuation of leisure and work is made more appealing to the Kapauku by inserting into their schedule periods of more prolonged holidays (spent in dancing, visiting, fishing, or hunting . . .). Consequently, we usually find only some of the people departing for their gardens in the morning, the others are taking their "day off." However, many individuals do not rigidly conform to this ideal. The more conscientious cultivators often work intensively for several days in order to complete clearing a plot, making a fence, or digging a ditch. After such a task is accomplished, they relax for a period of several days, thus compensating for their "missed" days of rest.

(Pospisil, 1963, p. 145)

Following this course of moderation in all things, Kapauku over the long run allow an unextraordinary amount of time to agriculture. From records that he kept through an eight-month period (Kapauku cultivation is not seasonal) and on the assumption of a potential eight-hour day, Pospisil estimates that Kapauku men spend approximately one-fourth their "working time" in gardening, the women about one-fifth. More precisely, men average 2h18m/day in agricultural tasks, the women 1h42m. Pospisil writes: "These relatively small portions of total working time seem to cast serious doubt on the claim, so often made, that native cultivation methods are wasteful, time consuming and economically inadequate" (1963, p. 164). For the rest, aside from relaxation and "prolonged holidays," Kapauku men are more concerned with politicking and exchange than with other areas of production (crafts, hunting, house building).¹⁴

In their studied habit of one day on, one day off, Kapauku are perhaps unusual for the regularity of their economic tempo,¹⁵ but not for its intermittency. A similar pattern was documented in Chapter 1 for hunters: Australians, Bushmen, and other peoples—their labors

chronically punctuated by days of slack, not to mention sleep. And notoriously among many agriculturalists of seasonal regime the same cadence recurs, although on a different time scale. Agricultural off-seasons are given over as much to relaxation and diversion, to rest, ceremony and visiting, as they are to other works. Taken over the extended term, therefore, all these modes of livelihood reveal themselves unintentional: they make only fractional demands on the available labor-power.

Fractional use of labor-power is detectable also in the individual work-diaries sometimes collected by ethnographers. Although these diaries typically account for only a very few people as well as a very brief time, they are usually extensive enough to show important domestic differences in economic effort. At least one of the six or seven people concerned turns out to be the village indolent (cf. Provinse, 1937; Titiev, 1944, p. 196). The diaries thus manage to convey a suggestion of unequal productive commitment, that is to say, a relative underemployment of some even within the unspectacular conscientiousness of all. A certain flavor of this pattern, if not an accurate measure, is provided in Table 2.3, a reproduction of F. Nadel's journal for three Nupe farm families (1942, pp. 222–224).¹⁶ The two weeks of observation fall into different periods of the annual cycle. The second week is a time of peak intensity.

Audrey Richard's diaries for two Bemba villages lend themselves to quantitative assessment. The first and longer, from Kasaka village, is presented in Table 2.4: it covers the activities of 38 adults over 23 days (September 13–October 5, 1934). This was a season of reduced agricultural labor, although not the Bemba hungry period. Men engaged in little or no work for approximately 45 percent of the time. Only half their days could be classed as productive or working days, of an average duration of 4.72 hours of labor (but see below, where the figure of 2.75 hours for a working day was apparently calculated on a base of all available days). Women's time was more equally divided between working days (30.3 percent), days of part-time work (35.1 percent) and days of little or no work (31.7 percent). For both men and women, this unstrenuous program would be modified during the busier agricultural season.¹⁷ Table 2.5, representing the work of 33 adults of Kampamba village over seven to

Table 2.3 Journal of three Nupe farm families (after Nadel 1942, pp. 222–224)

<i>N.</i> <i>Labor Group: Father and Three Sons</i>	<i>M.</i> <i>Labor Group: Father and One Son</i>	<i>K.</i> <i>Labor Group: One Man</i>
31.5.1936		
Goes out to farm about 8 A.M. Eats midday meal on the farm, and returns about 4 P.M.	Goes out to farm together with <i>N.</i> , whose farm is close to his own. Also returns with him.	Is away from Kutigi; went to a neighboring village for the funeral of his sister.
1.6.1936		
As previous day.	As previous day.	Returns in the evening.
2.6.1936		
Stays at home, together with sons.	Stays at home, and visits <i>N.</i> in the evening.	Goes out to farm about 10 A.M., and returns at 4 P.M.
3.6.1936		
Stays at home. Sons go out to farm in the morning, but are back at 2 P.M. in time to attend the market, which is held today.	Stays at home, works on garden plots round the house. Son goes out to farm.	Stays at home; says he is tired from the journey.
4.6.1936		
Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns for midday meal; sons stay longer.	Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after midday meal.	Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after midday meal.
5.6.1936 (Friday)		
Stays at home, together with sons. Attends mosque in the afternoon.	Stays at home. Visits <i>N.</i> in the evening.	Stays at home. His brother, who lives in a hamlet, comes on a visit.
6.6.1936		
Stays at home, says he is tired. Works on garden plots, but will go to farm tomorrow. Sons go out to farm.	Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns for midday meal.	Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns for midday meal.

(Continued)

Table 2.3 (Continued)

22.6.1936

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns at 4 P.M. One son goes to Sakpe to attend wedding of a friend.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

23.6.1936

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns for midday meal. He hurt his hand and cannot work properly. His sons stay on; one son still in Sakpe.

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns for midday meal.

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

24.6.1936

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., but returns early as his hand hurts. Son who went to Sakpe returns in the evening.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

Stays at home as he is tired and has stomach trouble.

25.6.1936

Stays at home, his hand not yet well. Sons go out to farm.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., returns after 5 P.M.

26.6.1936 (Friday)

Stays at home.

Stays at home.

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

27.6.1936

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns at 5 P.M.

Goes out to farm at 8 A.M., returns after 4 P.M.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., returns for midday meal.

28.6.1936

Stays at home because tax clerk of chief had summoned all elders. Sons go out to farm.

Stays at home for same reason as *N*. Son goes out to farm.

Goes out to farm at 7 A.M., but returns early to meet the tax clerk.

Table 2.4 Distribution of activities: Kasaka Village, Bemba (after Richards, 1962, Appendix E)*

	Men (<i>n</i> = 19)	Women (<i>n</i> = 19)
1. Days mainly working†	garden work, hunting, fishing, crafts, housebuilding, work for Europeans . . . 220 (50%)	gardening, fishing, work for chiefs, work for Europeans, etc . . . 132 (30.3%)
Mean duration of full working day	4.72 hrs/day	4.42 hrs/day
2. Days of part-time work‡	"in village," "away," "at home" . . . 22 (5%)	"in village," "no garden work," "away" . . . 153 (35.19%)
3. Days mainly not working	"leisure," visits to relatives,§ beer-drinks . . . 196 (44.5%)	"leisure," visits to relatives, beer-drinks . . . 138 (31.7%)
4. Illness	carrying sick . . . 2 (0.5%)	confinement . . . 13 (3%)

* *n* = 38; days tabulated = 23.

† The categories 1–4 and classification of data under these rubrics are my own.

‡ Richards specifies that even when remaining in the village, women do much domestic work; therefore, she rarely uses the category "leisure" to describe their days, preferring instead "no garden work." "Leisure" on the other hand means "a day spent in sitting, talking, drinking, or doing handicrafts." I have thus put "no garden work" (as well as "in village," "at home" and, for want of further information, "away") in a category of "part-time work," while "leisure" is classed in the category "days mainly not working." "Leisure" includes Christian Sundays.

§ Richards indicates that "walks" in her table mean "visits to relatives" unless otherwise specified; I include such "walks" here.

ten days of January 1934, attests to the periodic intensification of productive tempo.¹⁸

If these tables for the Bemba could be extended over a full year, they would probably yield results similar to those obtained by Guillard (1958) for the Toupouri of North Cameroon, shown in Table 2.6 on p.59.¹⁹

And if such systems as the Bemba and Toupouri were plotted graphically over the year, they would probably resemble the diagrams de Schlippe accumulated for the Azande—one of these is presented in Figure 2.2 on p.61.

Table 2.5 Distribution of activities: Kampana Village, Bemba (after Richards, 1962, Appendix E)*

	♂ (<i>n</i> = 16, 10 days)	♀ (<i>n</i> = 17, 7 days)
1. Days mainly working	114 (70.8%)	66 (62.9%)
2. Days of part-time work	9 (5.6%)	21 (20%)
3. Days mainly not working	29 (18%)	17 (16.2%)
4. Illness	9 (5.6%)	1 (1%)

* For explanation of the categories adopted, see Table 2.4.

But work schedules such as these, with their generous reservations of time to fete and repose, should not be interpreted from the anxious vantage of European compulsions.²⁰ The periodic deflection from “work” to “ritual” by peoples such as the Tikopians or Fijians must be made without prejudice, for their linguistic categories know no such distinction, but conceive both activities sufficiently serious as to merit a common term (so the “Work of the Gods”). And what are we to construe of those Australian Aborigines—the Yir Yiront—who do not discriminate between “work” and “play” (Sharp, 1958, p. 6)? Perhaps equally arbitrary are many cultural definitions of inclement weather, serving as pretext, it seems, for suspending production under conditions somewhere short of the human capacity for discomfort. Yet it would be insufficient simply to suppose that production is thus subject to arbitrary interference: to interruption by other obligations, themselves “noneconomic” but not by that character unworthy of people’s respect. These other claims—of ceremony, diversion, sociability and repose—are only the complement or, if you will, the super-structural counterpart of a dynamic proper to the economy. They are not simply imposed upon the economy from without, for there is within, in the way production is organized, an intrinsic discontinuity. The economy has its own cutoff principal: it is an economy of concrete and limited objectives.

Consider the Siuai of Bougainville. Douglas Oliver describes in terms by now familiar how garden work submits to diverse cultural obstructions, leaving the real output clearly below the possible:

Table 2.6 Distribution of activities over year, Toupouri (after Guillard 1958)*

	Men (n = 11)			Women (n = 18)		
	Average Man-Days per Year			Average Man-Days per Year		
	Number	Percent	Range	Number	Percent	Range
Agriculture	105.5	28.7	66.5-155.5	82.1	22.5	42-116.5
Other work	87.5	23.5	47-149	106.6	29.0	83-134.5
Rest and non-productive†	161.5	44.4	103.5-239	164.4	45.2	151-192
Illness	9.5	2.6	0-30	3.0		0-40

* n = 29 working persons.

† Category includes marketing and visits (often indistinguishable), feasts and rituals, and repose. It is not absolutely clear that for men the time in hunting and fishing was excluded here. Women's days in the village were calculated by Guillard as one-half "other work," one-half rest.

There is, of course no *physical* reason why this labor output could not be increased. There is no serious land-shortage, and a labor "stretch-out" could be and often is undertaken. Siuai women work hard at their gardens but not nearly so hard as some Papuan women; it is conceivable that they could work much longer and harder without doing themselves physical injury. That is to say, it is conceivable by *other* standards of work. Cultural rather than physical factors influence Siuai standards of "maximum working hours." Garden work is taboo for long periods following upon death of a kinsman or friend. Nursing mothers may spend but a few hours daily away from their babies, who, because of ritual restrictions, often may not be carried into the gardens. And aside from these ritual restrictions upon continuous garden work, there are less spectacular limitations. It is conventional to cease working during even light showers; it is customary to start for the garden only after the sun is well up, and to leave for home in mid-afternoon. Now and then a married couple will remain in their garden site all night sleeping in a lean-to, but only the most ambitious and enterprising care to discomfort themselves thus.

(Oliver, 1949 [3], p. 16)

But in another connection Oliver explains more fundamentally why Siuai working standards are so modest—because, except for politically ambitious people, they are sufficient:

As a matter of fact, natives took pride in their ability to estimate their immediate personal consumption needs, and to produce just enough taro to satisfy them. I write “personal consumption needs” advisedly, because there is very little commercial or ritual exchange of taro. Nevertheless, personal consumption needs vary considerably: there is a lot of difference between the amount of taro consumed by an ordinary man with his one or two pigs, and an ambitious social-climber with his ten or twenty. The latter has to cultivate more and more land in order to feed his increasing number of pigs and to provide vegetable food for distribution among guests at his feasts.

(Oliver, 1949 [4], p. 89)

Production has its own constraints. If these are sometimes manifest as the deployment of labor to other ends, it should not be thus obscured to the analysis. Sometimes it is not even disguised to observation: as of certain hunters, for example, who once again become the revelatory case because they seem to need no excuse to stop working once they have enough to eat.²¹ All this can be phrased another way: from the point of view of the existing mode of production, a considerable proportion of the available labor-power is *excess*. And the system, having thus defined sufficiency, does not realize the surplus of which it is perfectly capable:

There is no doubt at all that the Kuikuru could produce a surplus of food over the full productive cycle. At the present time a man spends only about 3½ hours a day on subsistence—2 hours on horticulture, and 1½ hours on fishing. Of the remaining 10 or 12 waking hours of the day the Kuikuru men spend a great deal of it dancing, wrestling, in some form of informal recreation, and in loafing. A good deal more of this time could easily be devoted to gardening. Even an extra half hour a day spent on agriculture would enable a man to produce a substantial surplus of manioc. However, as conditions stand now there is no reason for the Kuikuru to produce such a surplus, nor is there any indication that they will.

(Cameiro, 1968, p. 134)

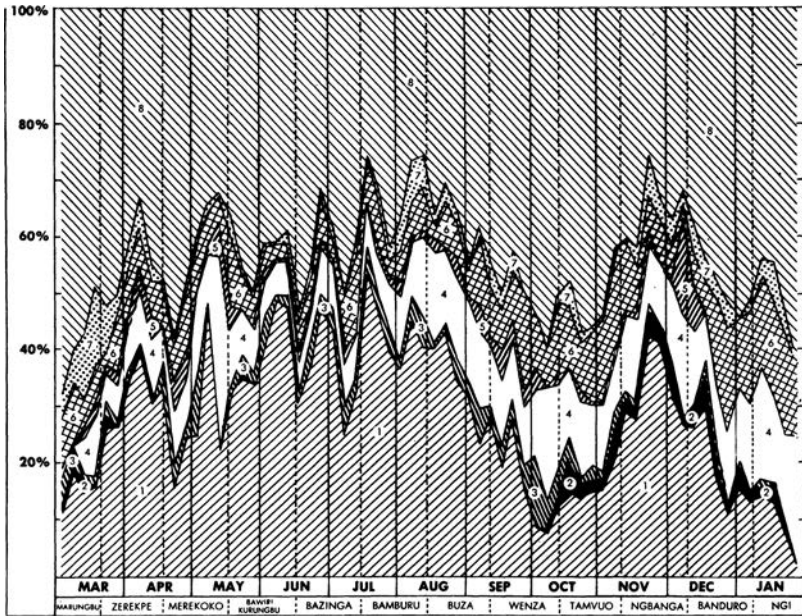
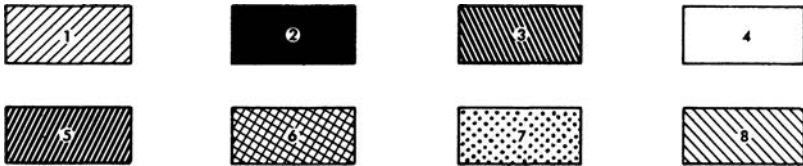


Figure 2.2 Annual Distribution of Activities, Azande [Green Belt] (after de Schlippe, 1956)



1. Agricultural work.
2. Gathering of wild produce, including honey, chillies, mushrooms, caterpillars, berries, roots, salt grass, and diverse others.
3. Hunting and fishing.
4. Processing at home of agricultural produce and of produce of gathering, including beer brewing, oil and salt making, and so on. These four items taken together could be called food production at or near home.
5. Marketing, including cotton markets, as well as weekly food markets, either selling or buying, and absences for the purpose of acquiring tools, clothes, and other goods in shops or elsewhere.
6. Other occupations at home, mainly housebuilding and craftsmanship, but also repairing, putting things in order, and such like.
7. Work outside home, including hunting and fishing expeditions, work for chief or district, salaried work for Government or E.P.B., and work for neighbors in beer parties.
8. No work for various reasons—including chiefs' courts, ceremonies and rituals, sickness at home, in hospital or at the witchdoctor's, childbirth, rest, and leisure.

The graph does not represent man-days given to various tasks but the number of days (or percentage of days) the type of activity occurred.

In brief, it is an economy of production for use, for the livelihood of the producers. Having come to this conclusion, our discussion links up with established theory in economic history. It also makes connection with understandings long established in anthropological economics. Firth had effectively made this point in 1929, when commenting on the discontinuity of Maori labor in comparison with European tempos and incentives (1959a, p. 192 f). In the 1940s Gluckman wrote as much about the Bantu in general and the Lozi in particular (1943, p. 36; cf. Leacock, 1954, p. 7).

There will be much more to say theoretically about domestic production for use. For now I rest on the descriptive comment that in primitive communities an important fraction of existing labor resources may be rendered excessive by the mode of production.

Household Failure

A third dimension of primitive underproduction, the final one here considered, is perhaps the most dramatic; at least it is the most serious for the people concerned. A fair percentage of domestic groups persistently fail to produce their own livelihood, although organized to do so. They occupy the lower end of a very large range of variation in household production, variation in appearance uncontrolled, but consistently observed in primitive societies of different circumstance, tradition and location. Once more the evidence is not definitive. But coupled to the logic of the case, it seems enough to encourage the following theoretical suggestion: that this variation, notably including a substantial degree of domestic economic failure, is a constituted condition of primitive economy.²²

I was myself first struck by the magnitude of household production differences while working in Fiji, collecting estimates of food cultivation from the household heads in a number of Moalan villages. These were mainly estimates, so I cite the results merely as an example of the anecdotal comment to be found often in the monographic literature:

Differences in production within any given village are even more critical than output differences between villages. At least no Moalan village seems to be starving, whereas it is apparent that some men

do not produce enough food for family needs. At the same time no village [with one possible exception] appears to have much surfeit, whereas some families are producing considerably more food than they can consume . . . familial differences in production of such . . . magnitude occur in every village and with respect to virtually every staple, secondary, and minor crop.

(Sahlins, 1962a, p. 59)

C. Daryll Forde's investigation of yam staple cultivation among 97 families in the Yako village of Umor, shown in Figure 2.3 on p.64, is more precise, and certainly more graphic. Forde remarks that, although a representative Yako family of husband, one or two wives and three or four children will have one and one-half acres of yams under cultivation each year, 10 of the 97 he sampled were cultivating less than half an acre and 40 percent between a half and one acre. The same kind of deficit occurs in the output curve: mean production per house was 2,400–2,500 yams (medium-sized units), but the mode was only 1,900; a large proportion of families fell toward the lower end of the scale. And some of those at the lower end were below the customary subsistence requirement:

It would be . . . incorrect to assume that there are no substantial variations from household to household in yam consumption. Although there is probably no gross insufficiency of supply of this staple food, there are at opposite ends of the scale households which, through inefficiency, sickness or other misfortune secure much less than they need by local standards, and others in which the *fufu* bowl is always heaped full.

(Forde, 1946, p. 59; cf. p. 64)

The situation depicted in Derek Freeman's classic study of rice production among the Iban is yet more serious (Freeman, 1955). But this example, covering the 25 families of Rumah Nyala village, carries two important reservations. First, the Iban maintain a considerable trade in their rice staple with mercantile centers of Sarawak—although in fact Iban families do not always produce enough for subsistence, let alone a surplus for export.²³ Secondly, the period of observation, 1949–50, was an exceptionally bad year. By Freeman's estimate—approximate, as he cautions—only eight of the 25 households were able to harvest a normal consumption quota

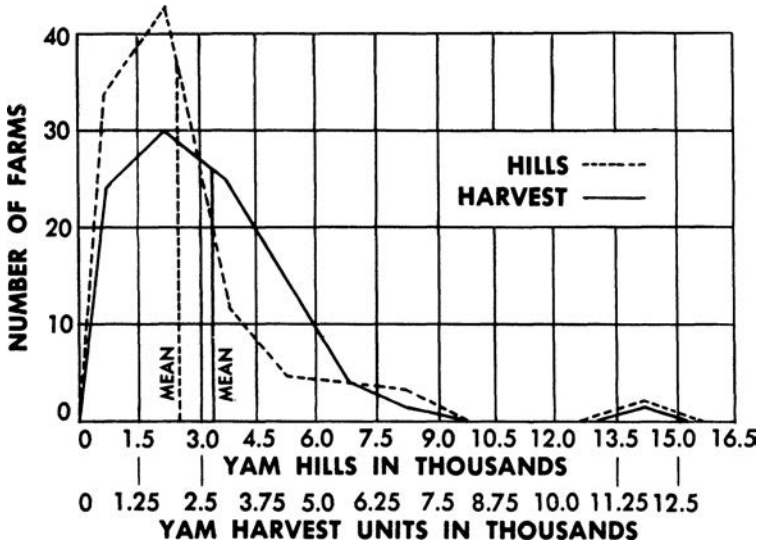


Figure 2.3 Yam Production, Umor Village, Yakö (after Forde, 1964)

(including rice for seed, animal feed, ritual expenses and beer). Table 2.7 summarizes yields in relation to consumption requirements for 1949–50. In ordinary years this distribution would probably be inverted, to show a normal rate of household failure on the order of 20 to 30 percent.

At first sight, the fact that only about one third of *bilek* families managed to secure their normal requirements seems surprising, but it must be remembered that the 1949–50 season was an exceptionally bad one. . . . Nonetheless, it seems probable that even in normal years it is not uncommon for a minor percentage of households to fall below the ordinary level of subsistence as we have defined it. In the absence of reliable data we can do no more than make an informed guess. From my discussions with Iban informants, I would expect that in normal years from 70% to 80% of *bilek* families would attain their ordinary requirements, and that in favourable seasons virtually all would be successful. . . . There are probably few, if any, Iban families which have not, at some time or another, found themselves in straitened circumstances with insufficient *padi* for their barest needs.

(Freeman, 1955, p. 104)

Table 2.7 Rice yields in relation to normal consumption requirements, 25 families of Rumah Nyala (1949–50) (after Freeman, 1955, p. 104)

<i>Rice Yield as a Percentage of Normal Requirements</i>	<i>Number of Households</i>	<i>Percentage of Households in Total Community</i>
over 100%	8	32
76–100%	6	24
51–75%	6	24
26–50%	4	16
under 25%	1	4

Another ethnographic example, to some degree making up by its precision for its modesty of scale, is Thayer Scudder's study (1962) of cereal cultivation among the 25 families of Mazulu village, Gwembe Tonga (Northern Rhodesia). The region is plagued by famine, but the yield of Mazulu farms is not of present moment; the first question is whether the several households had planted sufficient acreage to assure their subsistence. Scudder adduces a figure of one acre/capita as normally sufficient.²⁴ But as indicated in Table 2.8, presenting the results of Scudder's field study, four of the Mazulu households come seriously short of this level, and altogether 10 of the 20 fail to reach it. The domestic differences seem distributed as a normal curve around the point of per capita subsistence.

Enough said? Nothing is more tiresome than an anthropology "among-the" book: among the Arunta this, among the Kariëra that. Nor is anything scientifically proven by the endless multiplication of examples—except that anthropology can be boring. But the last proposition does not need an elaborate demonstration, and neither does the one under discussion. For certain forms of production, notably hunting and fishing, the likelihood of differential success is known to common sense and experience. Besides and more generally, insofar as production is organized by domestic groups, it is established on a fragile and vulnerable base. The familial labor force is normally small and often sorely beset. In any "large enough community" the several households will show a considerable range in size and composition, range that may well leave some susceptible to

Table 2.8 Household variations in output/capita, Mazulu village, Valley Tonga, 1956–57 (after Scudder, 1962, pp. 258–261)*

<i>House</i>	<i>Acreage Cultivated/ Capita</i>	<i>Relation to Estimated Subsistence Norm/ Capita</i>
A	1.52	+ .52
B	0.86	- .14
C	1.20	+ .20
D	1.13	+ .13
E	0.98	- .02
F	1.01	+ .01
G	1.01	+ .01
H	0.98	- .02
I	0.87	- .13
J	0.59	- .41
K	0.56	- .44
L	0.78	- .22
M	1.05	+ .05
N	0.91	- .09
O	1.71	+ .71
P	0.96	- .04
Q	1.21	+ .21
R	1.05	+ .05
S	2.06	+ 1.06
T	0.69	- .31

* For further discussion of Mazulu production in relation to subsistence, including attempt at a more detailed analysis, see Chapter 4.

disastrous mischance. For some must be unfavorably composed in the ratio of effective workers to dependent nonproducers (mostly children and the aged). Of course others are in this respect more fortunately balanced, even overbalanced, on the side of capable producers. Yet any given family is subject to this kind of variation over time and the domestic growth cycle, just as at any given time certain families must find themselves facing economic difficulties. Thus a

third apparent dimension of primitive underproduction: an interesting percentage of households chronically fail to provide their own customary livelihood.

ELEMENTS OF THE DOMESTIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

The foregoing constitutes a first empirical experience of widespread and profound tendencies of underproduction in the primitive economies. The succeeding is a first attempt to explain these tendencies theoretically by reference to a widespread and profound structure of the economies in question, the domestic mode of production. Necessarily the analysis will be as generalized as the phenomena are broadly distributed and variably expressed, a procedure which demands as an initial task certain methodological apologies.

Apologies For Generality

In a confrontation with a particular ethnographic case of underproduction, no abstract explanation can be as satisfactory as an accounting of the specific forces in play: the existing social and political relations, rights of property, ritual impediments to the deployment of labor, and the like.²⁵ But insofar as the several forms of underproduction noted earlier are generally discovered in the primitive economies, no particular analysis of them will satisfy either. For then they belong to the nature of the economies at issue, and in that capacity must be interpreted from equally general conditions of economic organization. Such is the analysis attempted here.

Yet the general only exists in particular forms. So the well-known methodological reservation of a well-known social anthropologist remains pertinent: what is the use, he asked, of putting into comparison a society you have not first thoroughly understood? To this a colleague of mine once replied, as we walked along a dim academic corridor: "How can you understand a society you have not first compared?" This unhappy conjuncture of truths seems to leave anthropology in the position of a railroad engineer in the state of Connecticut, where (I am told) there is a law on the books to the effect that two trains moving in opposite directions along parallel tracks must, when

they meet, come to a complete stop, and neither one may start up again until the other has passed out of sight. Undaunted anthropologists adopt cunning devices to break the impasse; for example, generalization by means of the "ideal type." The "ideal type" is a logical construct founded at once on pretended knowledge and pretended ignorance of the real diversity in the world—with the mysterious power of rendering intelligible any particular case. The solution has a dignity equal to the problem. Perhaps then it will excuse this chapter, which is written in the genre.

But how to justify certain other tactics even less respectable? From time to time the discussion will take clear leave of "reality," ignoring the apparent facts for what it is pleased to consider "the permanent fact." Penetrating beyond kinship, ritual, chieftainship—in sum, the main institutions of primitive society—it claims to see in the household system the first principles of economic performance. Yet the domestic economy cannot be "seen" in isolation, uncompromised by the greater institutions to which it is always subordinated. And even more reprehensible than this analytic arrogance, although in a way its inevitable result, the argument will be discovered on occasion in a scandalous flirtation with the state of nature—not exactly the latest anthropological approach. Philosophers who have examined the foundations of society, Rousseau said, have all felt the need to return to the state of nature, but none of them ever got there. The master thereupon proceeded to repeat the failure, but so magnificently this time as to leave the conviction that it really was useful to speak of things "that no longer exist, that perhaps never existed, that probably shall never exist, and yet of which it is necessary to have correct ideas in order to better judge our present condition."

But then, even to speak of "the economy" of a primitive society is an exercise in unreality. Structurally, "the economy" does not exist. Rather than a distinct and specialized organization, "economy" is something that generalized social groups and relations, notably kinship groups and relations, do. Economy is rather a function of the society than a structure, for the armature of the economic process is provided by groups classically conceived "noneconomic." In particular, production is instituted by domestic groups, these ordinarily ordered as families of one kind or another. The household is to the tribal economy as

the manor to the medieval economy or the corporation to modern capitalism: each is the dominant production-institution of its time. Each represents, moreover, a determinate mode of production, with an appropriate technology and division of labor, a characteristic economic objective or finality, specific forms of property, definite social and exchange relations between producing units— and contradictions all its own.²⁶ In brief, to explain the observed disposition toward underproduction in the primitive economies, I would reconstruct the “independent domestic economy” of Karl Bücher and earlier writers—but relocated now somewhat *chez Marx*, and redecorated in a more fashionable ethnography.

For the domestic groups of primitive society have not yet suffered demotion to a mere consumption status, their labor power detached from the familial circle and, employed in an external realm, made subject to an alien organization and purpose. The household is as such charged with production, with the deployment and use of labor-power, with the determination of the economic objective. Its own inner relations, as between husband and wife, parent and child, are the principal relations of production in society. The built-in etiquette of kinship statuses, the dominance and subordination of domestic life, the reciprocity and cooperation, here make the “economic” a modality of the intimate. How labor is to be expended, the terms and products of its activity, are in the main domestic decisions. And these decisions are taken primarily with a view toward domestic contentment. Production is geared to the family’s customary requirements. Production is for the benefit of the producers.

I hasten to add two reservations, which are also two final apologies for generality.

First, the convenient identification of “domestic group” with “family” that I allow myself is too loose and imprecise. The domestic group in the primitive societies is usually a family system, but this is not always so, and where it is, the term “family” must cover a variety of specific forms. Households of a community are sometimes morphologically heterogenous: apart from families, they include other kinds of domestic units composed, for example, of persons of a given age-class. Again, although it is also comparatively rare, families may be completely submerged in domestic groups the dimensions and structure of a lineage. Where the household is a family system, still the

forms vary from nuclear to extended, and within the latter category from polygynous through matrilineal, patrilineal, and a variety of other types. Finally, the domestic group is internally integrated in different manners and degrees, as may be judged by the patterns of daily cohabitation, commensality and cooperation. Although the essential qualities of production to be discussed—dominance of the sexual division of labor, segmentary production for use, autonomous access to productive means, centrifugal relations between producing units—appear to hold across these formal variations, the proposition of a domestic mode of production is surely a highly ideal type. And if one is nevertheless permitted to speak of a domestic mode of production, it is always and only in summary of many different modes of domestic production.

Secondly, I do not suggest that the household everywhere is an exclusive work group, and production merely a domestic activity. Local techniques demand more or less cooperation, so production may be organized in diverse social forms, and sometimes at levels higher than the household. Members of one family may regularly collaborate on an individual basis with kith and kin from other houses; certain projects are collectively undertaken by constituted groups such as lineages or village communities. But the issue is not the social composition of work. Larger working parties are in the main just so many ways the domestic mode of production realizes itself. Often the collective organization of work merely disguises by its massiveness its essential social simplicity. A series of persons or small groups act side by side on parallel and duplicate tasks, or they labor together for the benefit of each participant in turn. The collective effort thus momentarily compresses the segmentary structure of production without changing it permanently or fundamentally. Most decisive, cooperation does not institute a *sui generis* production-structure with its own finality, different from and greater than the livelihood of the several domestic groups and dominant in the production process of the society. Cooperation remains for the most part a technical fact, without independent social realization on the level of economic control. It does not compromise the autonomy of the household or its economic purpose, the domestic management of labor-power or the prevalence of domestic objectives across the social activities of work.

These apologies offered, I pass to the description of the principal aspects of the domestic mode of production (DMP), with a view fixed to the implications of this mode for the character of the economic performance.

Division of Labor

By its composition, the household makes up a kind of *petite* economy. In response to the technical scale and diversity of production, it is even expandable to a degree: the combination of nuclear elements in some form of extended family seems to make its debut as the social organization of an economic complexity. But more important than its size, familial control of production rests on another aspect of its composition. The family contains within itself the division of labor dominant in the society as a whole. A family—it is from the beginning and at the minimum a man and wife, an adult male and an adult female. Hence, from its inception a family combines the two essential social elements of production. Division of labor by sex is not the only economic specialization known to primitive societies. But it is the *dominant* form, transcending all other specialization in this sense: that the normal activities of any adult man, taken in conjunction with the normal activities of an adult woman, practically exhaust the customary works of society. Therefore marriage, among other things, establishes a generalized economic group constituted to produce the local conception of livelihood.

The Primitive Relation Between Man and Tool

Here is a second correlation, equally elementary: between the domestic mode, atomized and small scale, and a technology of similar dimensions. The basic apparatus can usually be handled by household groups; much of it can be wielded autonomously by individuals. Other technological limitations are likewise consistent with the supremacy of the domestic economy: implements are homespun, thus—as most skills—simple enough to be widely available; productive processes are unitary rather than decomposed by an elaborate division of labor, so

that the same interested party can carry through the whole procedure from the extraction of the raw material to the fabrication of the finished good.

But a technology is not comprehended by its physical properties alone. In use, tools are brought into specific relationships with their users. On the largest view, this relationship and not the tool itself is the determinate historic quality of a technology. No purely physical difference between the traps of certain spiders and those of certain (human) hunters, or between the bee's hive and the Bantu's, is historically as meaningful as the difference in the instrument-user relation. The tools themselves are not different in principle, or even in efficiency. Anthropologists are only satisfied by the extratechnological observation that in invention and use the human instrument expresses "conscious ingenuity" (symboling), the insect's tool, inherited physiology ("instinct")—"what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (Marx, 1967a, vol. 1, p. 178). Tools, even good tools, are prehuman. The great evolutionary divide is in the relationship: tool-organism.

The human capacities once achieved, ingenuity in turn loses its differentiating power. The world's most primitive peoples—judged as such on the plane of overall cultural complexity—create unparalleled technical masterpieces. Dismantled and shipped to New York or London, Bushman traps lie now gathering dust in the basements of a hundred museums, powerless even to instruct because no one can figure out how to put them back together again. On a very broad view of cultural evolution, technical developments have accumulated not so much in ingenuity as along a different axis of the man-tool relationship. It is a question of the distribution of energy, skill, and intelligence between the two. In the primitive relation of man to tool, the balance of these is in favor of man; with the inception of a "machine age" the balance swings definitively in favor of the tool.²⁷

The primitive relation between man and tool is a condition of the domestic mode of production. Typically, the instrument is an artificial extension of the person, not simply designed for individual use, but as an attachment that increases the body's mechanical advantage (for

example, a bow-drill or a spear thrower), or performs final operations (for example, cutting, digging) for which the body is not naturally well equipped. The tool thus delivers human energy and skill more than energy and skill of its own. But the latest technology would invert this relationship between man and tool. It becomes debatable which is the tool:

The share of the operative workman in the machine industry is (typically) that of an attendant, an assistant, whose duty it is to keep pace with the machine process and to help out with workmanlike manipulation at points where the machine process engaged is incomplete. His work supplements the machine process, rather than makes use of it. On the contrary the machine process makes use of the workman.

(Veblen, 1914, pp. 306–7)²⁸

The theoretical value placed by modern evolutionary anthropology on technology as such is historically contingent. Man is now dependent on machines, and the evolutionary future of culture seems to hinge on the progress of this hardware. At the same time, prehistory is by and large a record of instruments—as a well-known archaeologist is reputed to have said, “the people, they’re dead.” These banal truths I think help explain the analytical privilege often conceded to primitive technology, perhaps as mistaken however as it is entrenched for its exaggeration of the importance of tool over skill, and correlatively for its perception of the progress of man from ape to ancient empire as a series of petty industrial revolutions initiated by the development of new tools or new energy sources. For the greater part of human history, labor has been more significant than tools, the intelligent efforts of the producer more decisive than his simple equipment. The entire history of labor until very recently has been a history of skilled labor. Only an industrial system could survive on the proportion of unskilled workers as now exists; in a similar case, the paleolithic perishes. And the principal primitive “revolutions,” notably the neolithic domestication of food resources, were pure triumphs of human technique: new ways of relating to the existing energy sources (plants and animals) rather than new tools or new sources (see Chapter 1). The hardware of subsistence production may very well decline in the passage from the

paleolithic to the neolithic—even as the output goes up. What is the Melanesian's digging stick to the sealing gear of an Alaskan Eskimo? Up to the time of the true industrial revolution, the product of human labor probably increased much more in return to the worker's skill than to the perfection of his tools.

A discussion of the importance of human techniques is not as tangential as it might seem to this analysis of the DMP. It helps underwrite a major theoretical suggestion: that in the archaic societies, social-political pressure must often present itself the most feasible strategy of economic development. People are the most malleable as well as the most important side of the primitive man-tool relationship. Take into consideration, besides, the ethnographic testimony of underexploitation: that resources are often not fully turned to account, but between the actual production and the possibility there remains considerable room for maneuver. The great challenge lies in the intensification of labor: getting people to work more, or more people to work. That is to say, the society's economic destiny is played out in its relations of production, especially the political pressures that can be mounted on the household economy.

But an intensification of labor will have to take a dialectical course, because many properties of the DMP make it refractory at once to the exercise of political power and the enlargement of production. Of first importance is the contentment of the household economy with its own self-appointed objective: livelihood. The DMP is intrinsically an anti-surplus system.

Production For Livelihood

The classic distinction between "production for use" (that is, for the producers) and "production for exchange" was, from the beginning of an economic anthropology, at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries, interred in the graveyard of prehistoric concepts. True that Thurnwald had adopted these concepts to set off the primitive from modern monetary economies (1932). And nothing could prevent their reincarnation in various ethnographic contexts (see "Underuse of Labor Power" above). But when Malinowski (1921) defined the "Tribal Economy" in opposition (partly) to Bucher's

“Independent Domestic Economy” (1911), the notion of production for use was effectively put aside before its theoretical usefulness had been exhausted.

Perhaps the problem was that “production for use” or “independent domestic economy” could be interpreted two different ways, one of which proved indefensible—so the other was generally ignored. These phrases suggest a condition of domestic autarky, untrue for the producing units of any real society. The households of primitive communities are not usually self-sufficient, producing all they need and needing all they produce. Certainly there is exchange. Even aside from the presents given and received under inescapable social obligations, the people may work for a frankly utilitarian trade, thus indirectly getting what they need.

Still, it is “what they need”: the exchange, and the production for it, are oriented to livelihood, not to profits. This is a second rendering of the classic distinction, and the more fundamental; more fundamental than a certain exchange is the *producer’s relation to the productive process*. It is not merely “production for use” but production for use *value*, even through the acts of exchange, and as opposed to the quest for exchange value. On this reading, the DMP does find a place in the received categories of economic history. Even with exchange, the domestic mode is cousin to Marx’s “simple circulation of commodities,” thus to the celebrated formula $C \rightarrow M \rightarrow C'$: the manufacture of commodities (C) for sale in the market in order to obtain wherewithal (M, money) for the purchase of other, specific commodities (C'). “Simple circulation” is of course more pertinent to peasant than to primitive economies. But like peasants, primitive peoples remain constant in their pursuit of use values, related always to exchange with an interest in consumption, so to production with an interest in provisioning. And in this respect the historical opposite of *both* is the bourgeois entrepreneur with an interest in exchange value.

The capitalist process has a different starting point and another calculus. The “general formula for capital” is the transformation of a given money sum into more of the same by way of the commodity: $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$, the engagement of labor-power and physical means for the fabrication of a good whose sale realizes the highest possible return on an original capital. Livelihood and gain, “production for

use” and “production for exchange” pose thus contrasting finalities of production—and, accordingly, contrasting intensities of production.

For one is an economic system of determinate and finite objectives while the other holds out the indefinite goal of “as much as possible.” It is a difference of quality as well as quantity: in the first place of quality. Production for livelihood envisions not only a moderate quota of good things, but these of a *specific useful character* responding to the producers’ customary requirements. Yet where the domestic economy seeks merely to reproduce itself, production for exchange (value) would constantly exceed itself: in the accumulation of a generalized “wealth.” It is not the production of goods in particular but of an abstract “wealth.” And “the sky’s the limit.” By definition, $M' \leq M$ is a failure of the practice $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M'$; by competition, $M \rightarrow \infty$ is the formula of success. How sublime, Marx wrote, seems the ancient conception that made man the objective of production, in comparison with a modern world where production is the objective of man—and wealth the objective of production (1967b, vol. 1, p. 450).

To consider but one implication—of which we have already had ethnographic testimony: work in a system of production for use has unique possibilities of defining a term. Production is under no compulsion to proceed to the physical or gainful capacity, but inclined rather to break off for the time being when livelihood is assured for the time being. Production for use is discontinuous and irregular, and on the whole sparing of labor-power. Whereas, in production organized by and for exchange value:

Le but de travail n’est plus, dès lors, tel produit spécifique ayant des rapports particuliers avec tel ou tel besoin de l’individu, c’est l’argent, richesse ayant une forme universelle, si bien que le zèle au travail de l’individu ne connaît plus de limites: indifférent à ses propres particularités, le travail revêt toutes les formes qui servent ce but. Le zèle se fait inventif et crée des objets nouveaux pour le besoin sociale. . . .

(Marx, 1967b, vol. 1, p. 165)

It is regrettable that Economic Anthropology chose largely to ignore this distinction between production for use and production

for exchange. Recognition of the difference in productivity between them had served the study of economic history honorably and well. In a famous case Henri Pirenne thus explained the decline of agriculture in early medieval Europe, when the economy was left without outlets by the Arab seizure of the Mediterranean and lapsed at once from commercial exchange to local self-sufficiency and from higher to lower productivity:

. . . the regression of agricultural methods is obvious. It was useless to make the soil yield more than was required to satisfy the needs of the cultivator, for since the surplus could not be exported it would neither improve the condition of the tiller of the soil nor increase the rental value of the land. The farmer was therefore satisfied with a minimum of care and effort, and agronomic science was allowed to fall into oblivion, until the possibility of selling the crops should once more encourage the owners of the soil to adopt improved and more lucrative methods. But then the land would begin to be regarded as a value, and not as a means of subsistence.

(Pirenne, 1955, p. 99)

And now the classic opposition reappears as the “dual economy” of “underdeveloped” countries. Boeke, author of the principle, describes the contrast in performance this way:

Another respect in which an Eastern differs from a Western society is the fact that *needs are very limited*. This is connected with the limited development of exchange, with the fact that most people have to provide for themselves, that families have to be content with what they are able to produce themselves, so that needs necessarily have to remain modest in quantity and quality. Another consequence of this is that the economic motive does not work continuously. Therefore . . . economic activity is also intermittent. Western economy tends in a diametrically opposite direction. . . .

(Boeke, 1953, p. 39)

But as witnesses to the colonial confrontation of the two economies, anthropologists have had the opportunity to experience the historic difference as an ethnographic event. In obdurate patterns of indigenous labor and “irrational” responses to prices, they have seen production

for use—in crises, therefore in essence. For the traditional economy of finite objectives insists on asserting itself even as it is broken and harnessed to the market. Perhaps that helps explain how the rational West could live for a very long time with two contradictory prejudices about the “natives” capacity for work. On the one hand, a vulgar anthropology was contending the people had to labor constantly just to survive, given their technical incapacities; on the other hand, it was only too evident that “the natives are congenitally lazy.” If the first was a colonialist rationale, the second testifies to a certain deficiency of the ideology: for some reason it proved necessary to beat the people into shouldering the white man’s burden. Recruited as plantation hands, they frequently showed themselves unwilling to work steadily. Induced to raise a cash crop, they would not react “appropriately” to market changes: as they were interested mainly in acquiring specific items of consumption, they produced that much less when crop prices rose, and that much more when prices fell off. And the introduction of new tools or plants that increased the productivity of indigenous labor might only then shorten the period of necessary work, the gains absorbed rather by an expansion of rest than of output (cf. Sharp, 1952; Sahlins, 1962a). All these and similar responses express an enduring quality of traditional domestic production, that it is production of use values, definite in its aim, so discontinuous in its activity.

In brief, by this characteristic of DMP—that it is a production of use values—we return to underproduction, the empirical observation of which was the beginning of inquiry. The domestic system entertains limited economic goals, qualitatively defined in the terms of a way of living rather than quantitatively as an abstract wealth. Work is accordingly un-intensive: intermittent and susceptible to all manner of interruption by cultural alternatives and impediments ranging from heavy ritual to light rainfall. Economics is only a part-time activity of the primitive societies, or else it is an activity of only part of the society.

Otherwise said, the DMP harbors an antisurplus principle. Geared to the production of livelihood, it is endowed with the tendency to come to a halt at that point. Hence if “surplus” is defined as output above the producers’ requirements, the household system is not organized for it. Nothing within the structure of production for use pushes it to transcend itself. The entire society is constructed on an obstinate economic base, therefore on a contradiction, because unless the domestic

economy is forced beyond itself the entire society does not survive. Economically, primitive society is founded on an anti-society.

Chayanov's Rule

There is a more exact way of appreciating this un-intensive use of productive forces. I offer a mixed series of theoretical and statistical reflections mounting to the conclusion that the domestic system sets norms of livelihood limited not only absolutely but in relation to the society's potential; that indeed, in the community of domestic producing groups, the greater the relative working capacity of the household the less its members work. The last is a capital discovery of A. V. Chayanov, here acknowledged by calling it "Chayanov's rule."

A preliminary understanding is that the three elements of the DMP so far identified—small labor force differentiated essentially by sex, simple technology, and finite production objectives—are systematically interrelated. Not only is each in reciprocal bond with the others, but each by its own modesty of scale is adapted to the nature of the others. Let any one of these elements show an unusual inclination to develop, it meets from the others the increasing resistance of an incompatibility. The normal systematic resolution of this tension is restoration of the status quo ("negative feedback"). Only in the event of an historic conjuncture of additional and external contradictions ("overdetermination") would the crisis pass over into destruction and transformation. Specifically, the norm of domestic livelihood tends to be inert. It cannot move above a certain level without testing the capacities of the domestic labor force, either directly or through the technological change required for a higher output. The standard of livelihood does not substantially increase without putting into question the existing family organization. And it has an ultimate ceiling set by the possibility of any household order to provide adequate forces and relations of production. So long, therefore, as the domestic mode prevails, the customary idea of livelihood will be suitably restrained.

Moreover, if the internal contradictions set off by rising standards thus define an absolute limit, the external contradictions will determine an equilibrium which is low relative to the society's economic capacities.

Because, whatever the nature of social relations between households, from the anarchy of nature to the amity of kinship, the customary

norm of welfare has to be fixed at a level attainable by the larger number of them, leaving underexploited the powers of the most efficient minority. Potentially, the several households of a community differ greatly in per capita output, if only because they are at different stages of the familial development cycle, so must vary in their ratio of effective producers to dependent children and elders. But suppose the conventions of domestic well-being were adapted to the households of greatest working capacity. Society is then faced with one of two intolerable conditions, depending on the proximity of existing inter-household relations to the poles of anarchy and solidarity. No relations prevailing (or hostile relations), the success of only a few and the inevitable failure of the many is an economic invitation to violence. Or, given an extensive kinship, distribution by the happy few in favor of the many poor merely creates a general and permanent discrepancy between the convention of domestic welfare and the reality.

Taking together then these abstract and preliminary reasonings: on pain of engaging internal and external contradictions, revolution and war, or at least continuous sedition, the customary economic targets of the DMP have to be held within certain limits, these inferior to the overall capacity of the society, and wasteful particularly of the labor-power of more effective households.

“In the family farm,” writes A. V. Chayanov, “rates of labor intensity are considerably lower than if labor were fully utilized. In all areas investigated, farm families possess considerable stocks of unused time” (1966, pp. 75–76). This observation, summing up extensive research on Russian agriculture of the immediate prerevolutionary period, allows us to continue the argument in an entirely different register without missing an essential beat. True that Chayanov and his coworkers developed their theory of precapitalist domestic economy in the special context of simple commodity circulation.²⁹ Yet, paradoxically, a fragmented peasant economy may more clearly than any primitive community present on the empirical level certain profound tendencies of the DMP. In the primitive case these tendencies are concealed and transfigured by general social relations of solidarity and authority. But the peasant domestic economy, articulated rather to the market by exchange than to other households by corporate kinship, without pretence manifests to inspection the deep structure of the

DMP. It manifests in particular an underuse of labor-power, as many of Chayanov's tables testify. Table 2.9 (p.82) is typical.

Chayanov moved beyond the mere observation of a general underuse of manpower. He investigated in detail the variation in intensity by household. Bringing to bear a study of his own among 25 Volokolamsk farm families, he was able to show, first, that these differences are quite remarkable: a threefold range of variation from 78.8 working days/worker/year in the least industrious household to 216.0 working days per worker in the most industrious.³⁰ Then, most revealing, Chayanov plotted the differences in intensity/household against variations in domestic composition figured in terms of number of consumers. A ratio of household size to effective manpower (dependency ratio), the last is essentially an index of household economic strength in relation to its appointed tasks of livelihood. The relative working capacity of the domestic group can be understood to increase as the index descends towards unity. Chayanov demonstrates (Table 2.10, p. 83) that the intensity of labor in the domestic group *decreases* accordingly.

Chayanov's demonstration might seem a superfluous refinement of the obvious, particularly if the domestic economy of finite objectives is taken for granted. All it says statistically is what one would then expect logically; namely, the smaller the relative proportion of workers the more they must work to assure a given state of domestic well-being, and the greater the proportion the less they work. Phrased more generally, however, and in a way that says nothing about the finality of the DMP except by the invitation to comparison with other economies, Chayanov's rule suddenly seems magnified several theoretical powers: *Intensity of labor in a system of domestic production for use varies inversely with the relative working capacity of the producing unit.*

Productive intensity is inversely related to productive capacity. The rule of Chayanov felicitously summarizes and supports several propositions we had made along the way. It confirms the deduction that the norm of livelihood does not adapt to maximum household efficiency but settles rather at a level within reach of the majority, so wasting a certain potential among the most effective. At the same time, this means that no compulsion to surplus output is

Table 2.9 Distribution of peasant labor by sector in three areas of czarist Russia* (after Chayanov, 1966, p. 74)†

District	Percentage of Working Time in:					Festivals‡
	Agriculture	Crafts and Trades	Total "Productive Labor"	Housework	Unused Time	
Vologda Uezd (Vologda Guberniya)	24.7	18.1	42.8	4.4	33.8	19.8
Vokolamsk Uezd (Moscow Guberniya)	28.6	8.2	36.8	43.2		20.0
Starobel'sk Uezd (Khar'kov Guberniya)	23.6	4.4	28.0	3.0	42.0	27.0

* n not given.

† It is regrettable that many of Chayanov's statistical tables, fashioned in the main from reports of Czarist agricultural inspectors, lack the kinds of precision that modern study must consider indispensable, notably with regard to the character of the sample, operational definitions of categories employed, and the like.

‡ The figures of this column evoke Lafargue's critique of the bourgeois revolution: "Under the Old Regime, the laws of the Church guaranteed the laborer ninety rest days, fifty-two Sundays and thirty-eight holidays, during which he was strictly forbidden to work. This was the great crime of Catholicism, the principal cause of the irreligion of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie: under the revolution, when once it was in the saddle, it abolished all holidays and replaced the week of seven days by that of ten, in order that the people might no longer have more than one rest day out of ten. It emancipated the laborers from the yoke of the Church in order better to subjugate them under the yoke of work" (1909, p. 32 n).

Table 2.10 Intensity of work in relation to household composition: 25
Volokolamsk families (after Chayanov, 1966, p. 78)*

Index of consumers/worker	1.01–1.20	1.21–1.40	1.41–1.60	1.61+
Working-days/worker/year (household average)	98.8	102.3	157.2	161.3

* The same relation between intensity of production and effectiveness of the domestic group is shown in another table, covering several peasant regions and using output/worker measured in rubles rather than intensity measured in workdays (p. 78). I excerpt part of that table:

Consumer/ Worker Ratio	Output (Rubles) per Worker		
	Starobel'sk Uezd	Vologda Uezd	Vel'sk Uezd
1.00–1.15	68.1	63.9	59.2
1.16–1.30	99.0	106.95	61.2
1.31–1.45	118.3	122.64	76.1
1.46–1.60	128.9	91.7	79.5
1.61+	156.4	117.9	95.5

built into the DMP. But then, the plight of the least effective domestic groups, especially the substantial percentage that do not meet their own requirements, seems all the more serious. For the households of greater working capacity are not automatically extending themselves on behalf of the poorer. Nothing in the organization of production itself provides systematic compensation for its own systematic defects.

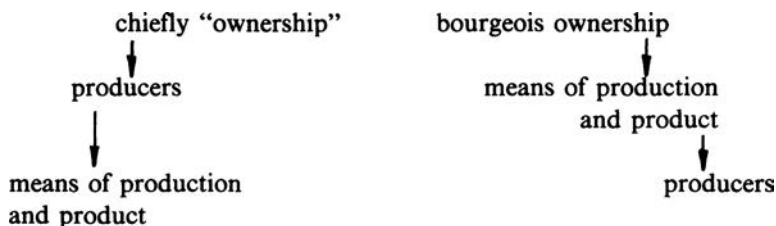
Property

On the contrary, rather than producing for others, a certain autonomy in the realm of property strengthens each household's devotion to its own interests.

We need not be so fascinated with "title" to property as with entitlement, nor with abstract claims of "ownership" so much as real privileges of use and disposition. A stockholder in A.T. & T. believed himself

endowed by his five shares to chop down a telephone pole placed noxiously in front of his picture window. Anthropologists have likewise learned by experience to separate various rights of property— income, use, control—inasmuch as these may be divided among different holders in the same thing. Also we have proved tolerant enough to recognize separate rights that are not exclusive by nature but differ mainly in the power of one holder to override decisions of the other: ranked overrights, as between a chief and his followers; or segmentary overrights, as between a corporate lineage and its constituent households. The path of anthropological progress is now strewn with terminological corpses, the ghosts of most of which are better avoided. The issue of present concern is the privileged position of domestic groups, whatever the coexisting tenures.

For these coexisting tenures are typically superposed to the family rather than interposed between the family and its means of production. In the event, the higher “owners” in the primitive societies— chiefs, lineages, clans—stand in a relation of the second degree to production, as mediated by the entrenched domestic groups. Chiefly ownership—“of the land, the sea and the people,” as the Fijians say—is a particularly revealing case. It is an “ownership” more inclusive than exclusive, and more political than economic: a derived claim on the product and productive means in virtue of an inscribed superiority over the producers. In this it differs from a bourgeois ownership that confers control over the producers by a claim upon productive means. Whatever the resemblances in ideology of “ownership,” the two systems of property work differently, the one (chieftainship) a right to things realized through a hold on persons, the other (bourgeois) a hold on persons realized through a right to things.³¹



The household in the tribal societies is usually not the exclusive owner of its resources: farmlands, pastures, hunting or fishing territories. But across the ownership of greater groups or higher authorities, even by means of such ownership, the household retains the primary relation to productive resources. Where these resources are undivided, the domestic group has unimpeded access; where the land is allotted, it has claim to an appropriate share. The family enjoys the usufruct, it is said, the use-right, but all the privileges entailed are not obvious from the term. The producers determine on a day-to-day basis how the land shall be used. And to them falls the priority of appropriation and disposition of the product; no claim of any supervening group or authority legitimately goes so far as to deprive the household of its livelihood. All this is undeniable and irreducible: the right of the family as a member of the proprietary group or community to directly and independently exploit for its own support a due share of the social resources.

As an *economic* rule, there is no class of landless paupers in primitive society. If expropriation occurs it is accidental to the mode of production itself, a cruel fortune of war for instance, and not a systematic condition of the economic organization. Primitive peoples have invented many ways to elevate a man above his fellows. But the producers' hold on their own economic means rules out the most compelling history has known: exclusive control of such means by some few, rendering dependent the many others. The political game has to be played on levels above production, with tokens such as food and other finished goods; then, usually the best move, as well as the most coveted right of property, is to give the stuff away.

Pooling

The domestic segregation constructed into production and property is completed by an inner-directed circulation of the household product. An inevitable consequence of production at once specialized by sex and oriented to collective use, this centripetal movement of goods differentiates the household economy from the world even as it reiterates the group's internal solidarity. The effect is magnified where

distribution takes the form of eating together, in a daily ritual of commensality that consecrates the group as a group. Usually the household is a consumption unit in this way. But at the least, householding demands some *pooling* of goods and services, placing at the disposition of its members what is indispensable to them. On one hand, then, the distribution transcends the reciprocity of functions, as between man and woman, upon which the household is established. Pooling abolishes the differentiation of the parts in favor of the coherence of the whole; it is the constituting activity of a group. On the other hand, the household is thereby distinguished forever from others of its kind. With these other houses, a given group might eventually entertain reciprocal relations. But reciprocity is always a “between” relation: however solidary, it can only perpetuate the separate economic identities of those who so exchange.

Lewis Henry Morgan called the program of the domestic economy “communism in living.” The name seems apposite, for householding is the highest form of economic sociability: “from each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs”—from the adults that with which they are charged by the division of labor; to them, but also to the elders, the children, the incapacitated, regardless of their contributions, that which they require. The sociological precipitate is a group with an interest and destiny apart from those outside and a prior claim on the sentiments and resources of those within. Pooling closes the domestic circle; the circumference becomes a line of social and economic demarcation. Sociologists call it a “primary group”; people call it “home.”

Anarchy and Dispersion

Considered in its own terms, as a structure of production, the DMP is a species of anarchy.

The domestic mode anticipates no social or material relations between households except that they are alike. It offers society only a constituted disorganization, a mechanical solidarity set across the grain of a segmentary decomposition. The social economy is fragmented into a thousand petty existences, each organized to proceed

independently of the others and each dedicated to the homebred principle of looking out for itself. The division of labor? Beyond the household it ceases to have organic force. Instead of unifying society by sacrificing the autonomy of its producing groups, the division of labor here, as it is principally a division of labor by sex, sacrifices the unity of society to the autonomy of its producing groups. Nor is any higher cause entertained by the household's access to productive resources, or again by the economic priorities codified in domestic pooling. Viewed politically, the DMP is a kind of natural state. Nothing within this infrastructure of production obliges the several household groups to enter into compact and cede each one some part of its autonomy. As the domestic economy is in effect the tribal economy in miniature, so politically it underwrites the condition of primitive society—society without a Sovereign. In principle each house retains, as well as its own interests, all the powers that are wanted to satisfy them. Divided thus into so many units of self-concern, functionally uncoordinated, production by the domestic mode has all the organization of the so many potatoes in a certain famous sack of potatoes.

That is in essence the primitive structure of production. But of course not in appearance. In appearance, primitive society is a poor likeness of primordial incoherence. Everywhere the petty anarchy of domestic production is counterposed by larger forces and greater organization, institutions of social-economic order that join one house to another and submit all to a general interest. Still, these grand forces of integration are not given in the dominant and immediate relations of production. On the contrary, precisely as they are negations of domestic anarchy, they owe part of their meaning and existence to the disorder they would suppress. And if in the end anarchy is banished from the surface of things, it is not definitively exiled. It continues, a persistent disarray lurking in the background, so long as the household remains in charge of production.

Here, then, I appeal the apparent facts to the permanent fact. "In the background" is a discontinuity of power and interest, lending itself moreover to a dispersion of people. In the background is a state of nature.

Interesting that almost all the philosophers who have felt the need to go back there—granted not one of them ever made it—saw in that condition a specific distribution of population. Almost all

sensed some centrifugal tendency. Hobbes sent back ethnographic report that the life of man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Underline (for once) the “solitary.” It was a life apart. And the same notion of original isolation appears ever and again, from Herodotus to K. Bucher, in the schemes of those who dared speculate on man in nature. Rousseau took several positions, the most pertinent to our purpose in the *Essai sur l’origine des langues*.³² In the earliest times the only society was the family, the only laws, of nature, and the only mediator between men, force—in other words, something like the domestic mode of production. And this “barbaric” epoch was, for Rousseau, the golden age,

not because men were united, but because they were separated. Each one, it is said, considered himself master of everything; that could be: but no one knew of nor coveted more than he had in hand; his needs, far from bringing him nearer his fellows, drove him away. Men, if you will, attacked each other upon meeting, but they rarely met. Everywhere reigned the state of war, and all the earth was at peace.

(translation mine)

Maximum dispersion is the settlement pattern of the state of nature. To understand what conceivable significance this can promise the present analysis—that is, supposing the reader has not already abandoned the effort to its apparent folly—it is necessary to ask why the political philosophers thus rendered natural man far-flung and for the most part alone. The obvious answer is that the sages posited nature by a simple opposition to culture, stripped then of everything artificial, which is nothing less than society. The residue could only be man in isolation—or perhaps man in the family, that concord of natural lust, as Hobbes called it—even if the man in question was really the rugged individual become now so common in society that he claimed to be only natural. (“L’état de nature, c’est le bourgeois sans société.”) But beyond the obvious, this conception of a scattered distribution was also a logical and functionalist deduction, a reflection upon the necessary deployment of men supposing the natural rather than the political state were in effect. Where the right to proceed by force is held generally rather than monopolized politically, there discretion is the better part of valor and space the surest principle of security. Minimizing

conflict over resources, goods, and women, dispersal is the best protector of persons and possessions. In other words, this division of force that the philosophers imagined forced them also to imagine a humanity divided, putting the greatest distance between one another just as a kind of functional precaution.

I am at the most abstract, the most hypothetical, in brief, the wild-point of speculation: that the deeper structure of the economy, the domestic mode of production, is like the state of nature, and the characteristic movement of the latter is also its own. Left to its own devices, the DMP is inclined toward a maximum dispersion of homesteads, because maximum dispersion is the absence of interdependence and a common authority, and these are by and large the way production is organized. If within the domestic circle the decisive motions are centripetal, between households they are centrifugal, spinning off into the thinnest probable distribution—an effect proceeding in reality to the extent it is not checked by greater institutions of order and equilibrium.

This is so extreme that I must cite some possibility of its ethnographic relevance, even at the cost of recapitulating known facts and anticipating later arguments. Carneiro, as we had seen earlier, took some care to show that villages of the Amazon Tropical Forest are typically inferior to the 1,000 or even 2,000 inhabitants they might sustain on existing agricultural practices. He rejects, therefore, the usual explanation of small village size, to wit, that it is due to shifting cultivation:

I would like to argue that a factor of greater importance has been the ease and frequency of village fissioning for reasons not related to subsistence [that is, to techniques of subsistence]. . . . The facility with which this phenomenon occurs suggests that villages may seldom get a chance to increase in population to the point at which they begin to press hard on the carrying capacity of the land. The centrifugal forces that cause villages to break apart seem to reach a critical point well before this happens. What the forces are that lead to village fission falls outside the present discussion. Suffice it to say that many things may give rise to factional disputes within a society, and that the larger the community the more frequent these disputes are likely to be. By the time a village in the Tropical Forest attains a population of 500 or 600 the stresses and strains within it are probably such that an open schism, leading to the hiving off of a

dissident faction, may easily occur. If internal political controls were strong, a large community might succeed in remaining intact despite factionalism. But chieftainship was notoriously weak among most Amazonian villages, so that the political mechanisms for holding a growing community together in the face of increasingly strong divisive forces were all but lacking.

(Carneiro, 1968, p. 136)

My point is that primitive society is founded on an economic disconformity, a segmentary fragility that lends itself to and reverberates particular local causes of dispute, and in the absence of "mechanisms for holding a growing community together" realizes and resolves the crisis by fission. We have noticed that the domestic mode of production is discontinuous in time; here we see it is also discontinuous in space. And as the former discontinuity accounts for a certain underuse of labor, the latter implies a persistent underexploitation of resources. Our very roundabout and theoretical tour of the domestic mode of production thus comes back to its empirical point of departure. Constituted on an uncertain household base, which is in any case restrained in material objectives, stunted in its use of labor power and cloistered in relation to other groups, the domestic mode of production is not organized to give a brilliant performance.

3

THE DOMESTIC MODE OF PRODUCTION: INTENSIFICATION OF PRODUCTION

Clearly the domestic mode of production can only be “a disarray lurking in the background,” always present and never happening. It never really happens that the household by itself manages the economy, for by itself the domestic stranglehold on production could only arrange for the expiration of society. Almost every family living solely by its own means sooner or later discovers it has not the means to live. And while the household is thus periodically failing to provision itself, it makes no provision (surplus) either for a public economy: for the support of social institutions beyond the family or of collective activities such as warfare, ceremony, or the construction of large technical apparatus—perhaps just as urgent for survival as the daily food supply. Besides, the inherent underproduction and underpopulation posed by the DMP can easily condemn the community to the role of victim in the political arena. The economic defects of the domestic system are overcome, or else the society is overcome.

The total empirical process of production is organized then as a hierarchy of contradictions. At base, and internal to the domestic

system, is a primitive opposition between “the relations” and “the forces”: domestic control becomes an impediment to development of the productive means. But this contradiction is reduced by imposing upon it another: between the household economy and the society at large, the domestic system and the greater institutions in which it is inscribed. Kinship, chieftainship, even the ritual order, whatever else they may be, appear in the primitive societies as economic forces. The grand strategy of economic intensification enlists social structures beyond the family and cultural superstructures beyond the productive practice. In the event, the final material product of this hierarchy of contradictions, if still below the technological capacity, is above the domestic propensity.¹

The foregoing announces the overall theoretical line of our inquiry, the perspectives opened up by analysis of the DMP. At the same time, it suggests the course of further discussion: the play of kinship and politics on production. But to avoid a sustained discourse on generalities, to give some promise of applicability and verification, it is necessary first to attempt some measure of the impact of concrete social systems upon domestic production.

ON A METHOD FOR INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL INFLECTION OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

Given a system of household production for use, theory says that the intensity of labor per worker will increase in direct relation to the domestic ratio of consumers to workers (Chayanov’s rule).² The greater the relative number of consumers, the more each producer (on average) will have to work to provide an acceptable per capita output for the household as a whole. Fact, however, has already suggested certain violations of the rule, if only because domestic groups with relatively few workers are especially liable to falter. In these households, labor intensity falls below the theoretical expectation. Yet more important—because it accounts for some of the domestic default, or at least for its acceptability—the real and overall social structure of the community does not for its own part envision a Chayanov slope of intensity, if only because kin and political relations between households, and the interest in others’ welfare these relations entail, must

impel production above the norm in certain houses in a position to do so. That is to say, a social system has a specific structure and inflection of household labor intensity, deviating in a characteristic way and extent from the Chayanov line of normal intensity.

I offer two extended illustrations, from two quite different societies, to suggest that the Chayanov deviation can be depicted graphically and calculated numerically. In principle, with a few statistical data not difficult to collect in the field, it should be possible to construct an intensity profile for the community of households, a profile that indicates notably the amount and distribution of surplus labor. In other words, by the variation in domestic production, it should be possible to determine the economic coefficient of a given social system.

The first example returns to Thayer Scudder's study of cereal production in the Valley Tonga village of Mazulu. This study was considered earlier in connection with domestic differences in subsistence production (Chapter 2). Table 3.1 presents the Mazulu materials in fuller form and in a different arrangement now including the number of consumers and gardeners by household and the domestic indices of labor composition (consumers/gardeners) and labor intensity (acres/gardener). The Mazulu data offer no direct measure of labor intensity, such as the actual hours people work; intensity has to be understood indirectly by the surface cultivated per worker. Immediately an error of some unknown degree is introduced, since the effort expended/acre is probably not the same for all gardeners. Moreover, in the attempt to account for the fractional dietary requirements and labor contributions of different sex and age classes, some estimates had to be made, as a detailed census is not available and the population breakdown in Scudder's production tables (1962, Appendix B) is not entirely specific. Insofar as possible, I apply the following rough and apparently reasonable formula for assessing consumption requirements: taking the adult male as standard (1.00), preadolescent children are computed as 0.50 consumers and adult women as 0.80 consumers.³ (This is why the consumer column yields a figure less than the total household size, and usually not a whole number.) Finally, adjustments had to be made for calculation of the domestic labor force. A few very small plots appearing in Scudder's table were evidently the work of

Table 3.1 Household variations in intensity of labor: Mazulu Village, Valley Tonga, 1956-57 (after Scudder, 1962, pp. 258-261)

<i>Household</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Number of Consumers</i>	<i>Number of Gardeners</i>	<i>Total Acreage Cultivated</i>	<i>Ratio of Consumers/ Gardener</i>	<i>Acres Cultivated/ Gardener</i>
O	1	1.0	1.0	1.71	1.00	1.71
Q	5	4.3	4.0	6.06	1.08	1.52
B	3	2.3	2.0	2.58	1.15	1.29
S	3	2.3	2.0	6.18	1.15	3.09
A	8	6.6	5.5	12.17	1.20	2.21
D*	2	1.3	1.0	2.26	1.30	2.26
C	6	4.1	3.0	7.21	1.37	2.40
M	6	4.1	3.0	6.30	1.37	2.10
H	6	4.3	3.0	5.87	1.43	1.96
R	7	5.1	3.5	7.33	1.46	2.09
G	10	7.6	5.0	10.11	1.52	2.02
K†	14	9.4	6.0	7.88	1.57	1.31
I	5	3.3	2.0	4.33	1.65	2.17

N	5	3.3	2.0	4.55	1.65	2.28
P	5	3.3	2.0	4.81	1.65	2.41
E	8	5.8	3.5	7.80	1.66	2.23
F	9	5.6	3.0	9.11	1.87	3.04
T	9	6.1	3.0	6.19	2.03	2.06
L*	7	4.1	2.0	5.46	2.05	2.73
J	4	2.3	1.0	2.36	2.30	2.36

* In families D and L, the head of the house was absent in European employ during the entire period. He is not calculated in the household's figures, although the money he brings back to the village will presumably contribute to the family's subsistence.

† The head of the house, K, worked part time in European employ. He also cultivated and figures in the computations for his household.

quite young persons; probably these were training plots in the charge of younger adolescents. Gardeners listed by Scudder as cultivating less than 0.50 acres and belonging to the youngest generation of the family are thus counted as 0.50 workers.

Manifestly, I must insist on the illustrative character of the Mazulu example. In addition to the several errors potentially introduced by one's own manipulations, the very small numbers involved—there are only 20 households in the community—cannot inspire a grand statistical confidence. But as the aim is merely to suggest a feasibility and not to prove a point, these several deficiencies, while surely regrettable, do not seem fatal.⁴

What then do the Mazulu materials illustrate? For one, that Chayanov's rule holds—in a general way. That the rule holds in general, although not in detail, is evident by inspection of the final columns of Table 3.1. The acreage cultivated/gardener mounts in rough relation to the domestic index of consumers/gardener. A procedure like Chayanov's own would show the same, with a little more exactness. Following Chayanov's methods, Table 3.2 groups the variation in acreage/worker by regular intervals of the consumer/worker index:

The results are fairly comparable to those Chayanov and his coworkers found for peasant Russia. Yet the Mazulu table also betrays the rule. Clearly the relation between labor intensity and the household ratio

Table 3.2 Household variations in acreage/gardener: Mazulu*

<i>Consumers/Worker</i>	1.00–1.24	1.25–1.49	1.50–1.74	1.75–1.99	2.00+
Average household acreage/gardener	1.96	2.16	2.07	3.04	3.28
(Number of cases)	(5)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(3)

* One further complication of the Mazulu data: in richer households able to provide beer for outside workers, some of the labor expended does not come immediately from the domestic group in question. On one hand, then, the figures for acreage cultivated/worker do not do justice to the actual force of the Chayanov principle—richer houses are working less than indicated, poorer more. On the other hand, some portion of the beer so provided may represent the congealed labor of the supplying household, so that over the longer run the slope of intensity/worker is closer again to the data reported. Clearly subtle corrections are necessary, or else direct estimates of hours worked per gardener—both beyond the prerogatives given by the present data.

of workers is neither consistent nor proportionate over the entire range. Individual houses deviate more or less radically, but not altogether randomly, from the general trend. And the trend itself does not develop evenly: it takes on an irregular curvature, a specific pattern of rise and fall.

All this trend and variation can be plotted on a single graph. The scatter of points in Figure 3.1 represents the distribution of household differences in labor intensity. Each house is fixed relative to the horizontal (X) axis by its ratio of consumers/gardener, and along the vertical (Y) axis by the acreage cultivated/gardener (cf. Table 3.1). A midpoint to this variation, a kind of average household, can be determined at $X = 1.52$ (c/w), $Y = 2.16$ (a/w). The overall average tendency of household differences in intensity is then calculable by deviations from this mean, that is, as a linear regression computed according to standard formula.⁵ The result for Mazulu, the real intensity slope of the community, amounts to an increase of 0.52 acres/worker (Y) for each additional 1.00 in the ratio of consumers to workers (X), but artificially so. The broken line (D) of Figure 3.1 seeks out the truer course of variation, the important propensity to depart from a linear relation between intensity and composition.

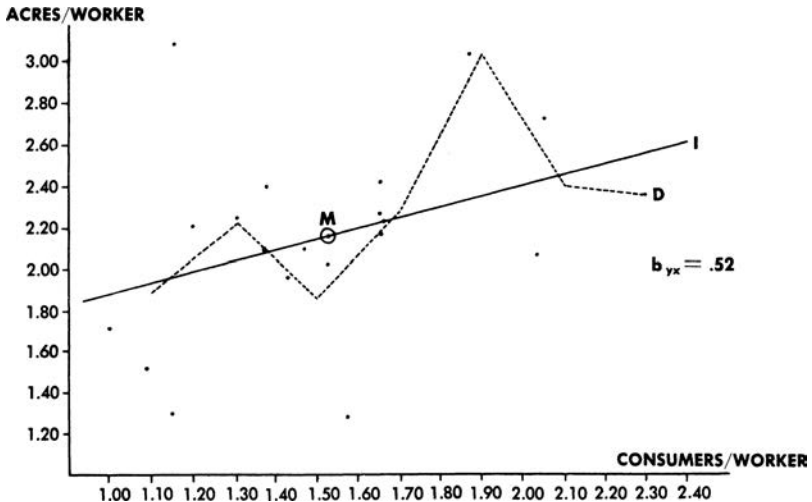



Figure 3.1 Mazulu: Trend and Variation in Household Labor Intensity

This line, the *real intensity curve*, is constructed after the mean intensities (columnar means) of 0.20 intervals in the consumers/worker ratio. Note that the curve would have taken a somewhat different path if plotted from the values of Table 3.2. But with so few cases at hand, 20 households, it is difficult to say which version is more valid. Statistical intuition might hold that with more instances the Mazulu curve would be sigmoidal (an  curve), or perhaps concave upward to the right in exponential fashion. Both of these patterns, and others besides, occur in Chayanov's own tables. What seems more important, however, and consistent with accomplished understandings, is that the variation in labor intensity increases toward both extremes of the *c/w* range, disturbing or even reversing the more regular incline of the medial section. For at the extremes of household composition, Chayanov's rule becomes vulnerable to contradiction. On one side are households weak in manpower and subject to one or another crippling malchance. (Household J in the Mazulu series, represented by the point furthest right, is an instance in question: a woman widowed at the beginning of the cultivation period and left to support three preadolescent children.) On the other side, the decline of the intensity curve to the left is arrested at some moment because certain domestic groups well endowed in workers are functioning beyond their own necessity. From that point of view (that is, of their own customary requirements), they are working at surplus intensities.

But the surplus output is not exactly indicated by the foregoing procedure. For this it is necessary to construct a *slope of normal intensity*, drawn as much from theory as from reality: a slope describing the variation in labor that would be required to supply each household the customary livelihood, supposing each were left to provision itself. It is necessary, in other words, to project the domestic mode of production as if unimpeded by the larger structures of society. The performance to which the DMP as such is disposed, this line of normal intensity might also then be deemed the true Chayanov slope, for it represents the most rigorous statement of the Chayanov rule. Insofar as it is predicated on production to a definite and customary goal, Chayanov's rule does not admit just any proportionate relation between intensity and relative working capacity. In principle it stipulates strictly the slope of this relation: the

domestic intensity of labor must increase by a factor of the customary consumption requirement for every increase of 1.00 in the domestic ratio of consumers to workers. Only in that event will the same (normal) output per capita be achieved by each household, regardless of its particular composition. This, then, is the intensity function that conforms to the theory of domestic production—as the deviation from it in actual practice conforms to the character of the larger society.

How do we determine the true Chayanov slope for Mazulu? According to Scudder, 1.00 acres under cultivation per capita should yield an acceptable subsistence. But “per capita” here applies indiscriminately to men, women and children. As by our earlier computation the village population of 123 reduces to 86.20 full consumers (adult male standard), each consumer of account will demand 1.43 acres for a normal subsistence. The true Chayanov slope is therefore a straight line departing from the origin of both dimensions and rising 1.43 acres/gardener for every increase of 1.00 in the domestic ratio of consumers to workers.

Before proceeding to measure real deviations from this slope, some decision has to be taken between alternative formulations of the Chayanov rule, as this has a practical bearing on the representation of normal intensity. Most of the preceding discussion has been content to refer to intensity rising with the relative number of consumers. Yet the law of Chayanov is just as well expressed as an inverse relation between domestic intensity and the relative number of producers; that is, the fewer the producers to consumers, the more each will have to work. Logically, the two propositions are symmetrical. But sociologically, perhaps not. The first seems to better express the operative constraints, the burdens imposed upon able-bodied producers by the dependents they must feed. Probably that is why Chayanov in effect preferred the direct formulation, and I shall continue to do so.⁶

In Figure 3.2, then, the Chayanov line (C) rises upward to the right, intensity increasing with the relative number of consumers by the calculated factor of 1.43 a/w per 1.00 c/w . The line threads its way through a scatter of points. Once more these stand for the *de facto* household differences in labor intensity. But in juxtaposition to the true Chayanov slope, their meaning is transformed: They tell now of the modification imparted to domestic production by the greater organization of society. This modification is summarized also by the

deviation of the real intensity slope (I) from the Chayanov, insofar as the former— 0.52 a/w for each 1.00 c/w from the means of intensity and composition—represents a reduction of household production differences to their main drift. The positioning of these lines, their manner of intersection within the range of known domestic variations, makes a profile specific to that community of the societal transformation of domestic production (Figure 3.2).

The Mazulu profile can be sharpened and certain of its configurations measured. The empirical production slope (I) passes upward to the left of the Chayanov intensity (C), to an important extent because certain households, among them many with favorable manpower resources, are cultivating above their own requirements. They are working at surplus intensities, not simply for their own use, because they are included in a social system of production, not simply a domestic system. They contribute to the larger system surplus domestic labor.

Eight of the 20 Mazulu producing groups are so engaged in extraordinary efforts, as shown in Table 3.3. Their own average manpower structure is 1.36 consumers/worker, and their mean intensity 2.40 acres/gardener. Let us mark this point of mean surplus labor, point S , on the Mazulu profile (Figure 3.2). Its coordinates express the Mazulu

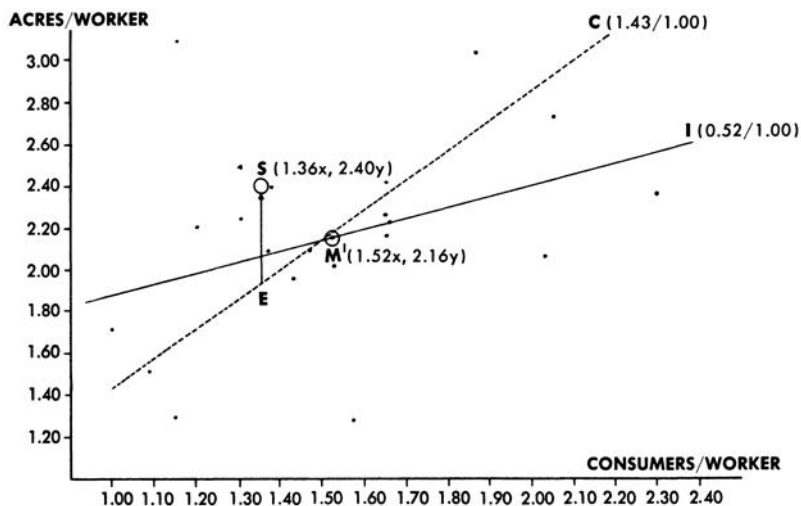


Figure 3.2 Mazulu: Empirical and Chayanov Slopes of Labor Intensity

strategy of economic intensification. The vertical distance of S over the slope of normal intensity (segment ES) constitutes the mean impulse to surplus labor among productive houses: 0.46 acres/worker or 23.60 percent (as normal intensity at 1.36 c/w is 1.94 a/w). There are 20.50 effective producers in these houses, or 35.60 of the village labor force. Thus 40 percent of the domestic producing groups, comprising 35.60 percent of the working force, are functioning at a mean of 23.60 percent above the normal intensity of labor. So for the Y -value of S .

The X coordinate of the surplus impulse (S) will by its relation to mean household composition (M) provide an indication of how the intensification tendency is distributed in the community (Figure 3.2). The further S falls to the left of the mean composition ($X = 1.52$ c/w), the more surplus labor is a function of higher proportions of workers in the domestic group. A position of S nearer the mean, however, indicates a more general participation in surplus labor: further still to the right, S would imply an unusual economic activity in households of lesser labor capacity. For Mazulu, the mean surplus impulse (S) is clearly left of the village mean. Six of the eight houses functioning at surplus intensities are below average in their ratios of consumers/worker. For all eight, the mean composition is lower than the community average by 0.16 c/w or 10.50 percent.

Finally it is possible from the materials on hand (Tables 3.1 and 3.3) to compute the contribution of surplus (domestic) labor to the total village product. This is done by first calculating the sum of surplus acreage in the several houses producing above normal intensity (number of workers multiplied by the rate of surplus labor for the eight relevant cases). The output thus attributable to surplus labor is 9.21 acres. The total cultivations of Mazulu amount to 120.24 acres. Hence, 7.67 percent of the total village output is the product of surplus labor.

It has to be emphasized that "surplus labor" applies strictly to the domestic groups, and that it is "surplus" in relation to their normal consumption quota. Mazulu village as a whole does not show a surplus expenditure of labor. It is testimony rather to the character and relative ineffectiveness of the existing social strategy that the total acreage cultivated falls slightly below village requirements. (Thus at the point of mean household composition [1.52 c/w], the empirical inflection

Table 3.3 Normal and empirical variations in domestic labor intensity: Mazulu

<i>House</i>	<i>Consumers/ Gardener (X)</i>	<i>Acres/ Gardener (Y)</i>	<i>Chayanov Intensity Acres/ Gardener (Cy)</i>	<i>Deviation from True Chayanov Slope (Y-Cy)</i>
O	1.00	1.71	1.43	+ .28
Q	1.08	1.52	1.54	-.02
B	1.15	1.29	1.65	-.36
S	1.15	3.09	1.65	+1.44
A	1.20	2.21	1.72	+ .49
D	1.30	2.26	1.86	+ .40
C	1.37	2.40	1.96	+ .44
M	1.37	2.10	1.96	+ .14
H	1.43	1.96	2.04	-.08
R	1.46	2.09	2.09	0
G	1.52	2.02	2.17	-.15
K	1.57	1.31	2.25	-.94
I	1.65	2.17	2.36	-.19
N	1.65	2.28	2.35	-.08
P	1.65	2.41	2.36	+ .05
E	1.66	2.23	2.37	-.14
F	1.87	3.04	2.67	+ .37
T	2.03	2.06	2.90	-.84
L	2.05	2.73	2.93	-.20
J	2.30	2.36	3.29	-.93

of production [I] passes under the true Chayanov slope [C].) A non-productive class could not live on the output of the Mazulu villagers—at least not without substantial contradiction and potential conflict.

The mathematical reason for village underproduction is obvious. If some domestic groups are functioning above normal intensity, others are working below, to the extent that village output is on balance slightly negative. But this distribution is not accidental. On the contrary, the entire production profile should be understood as an integrated social system in its projection of normal domestic intensity as well as its empirical labor slope, in its dimension of domestic underproduction

as well as domestic surplus. The subintensive output of some houses is not independent of the surplus labor of others. True that (as far as our information goes) household economic failures seem attributable to circumstances external to the organization of production: illness, death, European influence. Yet it would be misleading to contemplate these failures in isolation from the successes, as if certain families simply proved unable to make it for reasons entirely their own. Some may not have made it precisely because it was clear in advance they could depend on others. And even the underproduction due to unforeseen circumstances is acceptable to society, these vulnerable households tolerable, by virtue of a surplus intensity elsewhere, which in a sense had anticipated in its own dynamic a certain social incidence of domestic tragedy. In an intensity profile such as Figure 3.3, we have to deal with an interrelated distribution of household economic variations—that is, with a social system of domestic production.

The Kapauku of western New Guinea have another system, very different in its pattern, much more pronounced in its strategy of intensification. But then, Kapauku is another political system, capable of harnessing domestic economic efforts to the accumulation of exchangeable products, pigs and sweet potatoes primarily, whose sale and distribution are main tactics of an open competition for status (Pospisil, 1963).

Sweet potato cultivation is the key sector of production. The Kapauku to a very large extent, and their pigs to a lesser extent, live by sweet potato. It accounts for over 90 percent of the agricultural land use and seven-eighths of the agricultural labor. Yet the domestic differences in sweet potato production are extraordinary: a tenfold range of variation in output/household as recorded by Pospisil for the 16 houses of Botukebo village over an eight-month period (Table 3.4).

Again for Kapauku we know the intensity of labor only by its product. The intensity column of Table 3.4 is presented as kilograms of sweet potato produced per worker—probably introducing an error analogous to the corresponding Mazulu figures, insofar as different workers expend unequal efforts per unit weight of output. I have taken the liberty, moreover, of revising the ethnographer's household consumer counts, bringing them closer in line with other Melanesian societies by assessing adult women at 0.80 of the adult male requirement,

Table 3.4 Household variation in sweet potato cultivation: Botukebo village, Kapauku (New Guinea), 1955 (after Pospisil, 1963)

Household (Ethnographer's Code)	Number of Members	Adjusted No. of Consumers*		Number of Workers	Kilograms/ Household	Ratio of Consumers/Worker (Revised)	Intensity (Kilograms/ Worker)
		Pospisil	Revised				
IV	13	8.5	9.5	8.0	16,000	1.19	2,000
VII	16	10.2	11.6	9.5	20,462	1.22	2,154
XIV	9	7.3	7.9	6.5	7,654	1.22	1,177
XV	7	4.8	5.6	4.5	2,124	1.25	472
VI	16	10.1	11.3	9.0	6,920	1.26	769
XIII	12	8.9	9.5	7.5	2,069	1.27	276
VIII	6	5.1	5.1	4.0	2,607	1.28	652
I	17	12.2	13.8	10.5	9,976	1.31	950
XVI	5	3.2	4.0	3.0	1,557	1.33	519
III	7	4.8	5.4	4.0	8,000	1.35	2,000
V	9	6.4	7.4	5.5	9,482	1.35	1,724
II	18	12.4	14.6	10.5	20,049	1.39	1,909
XII	15	9.5	10.7	7.5	7,267	1.44	969
IX	12	8.9	9.5	6.5	5,878	1.46	904
X	5	3.6	3.8	2.5	4,224	1.52	1,690
XI	14	8.7	9.1	4.5	8,898	2.02	1,978

* See text for discussion of "revised" consumer estimates.

† Calculated at adults (\bar{Q} and $\bar{\sigma}$) = 1.0 worker; adolescents and elders of both sexes at 0.50 worker.

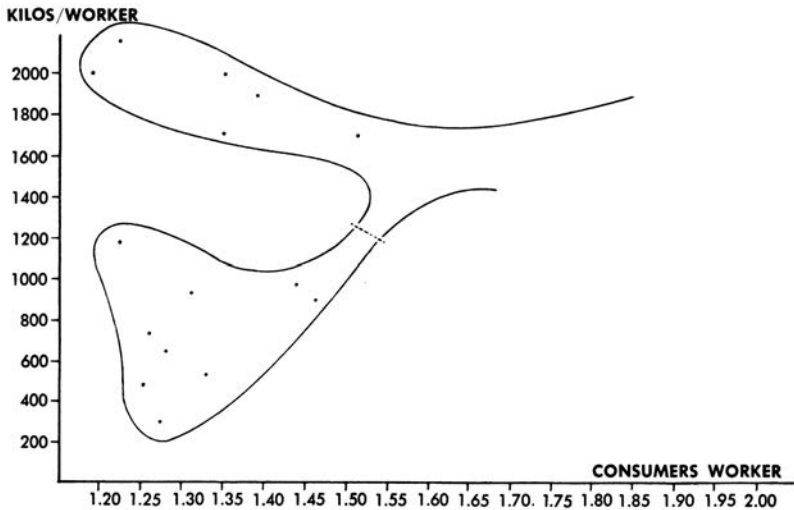


Figure 3.3 Botukebo Village, Kapauku: Domestic Variations in Labor Intensity (1955)

rather than the 0.60 Pospisil had computed from a brief dietary study. (For the other members of the household, children were figured at 0.50 consumers, adolescents at 1.00 and elders of both sexes at 0.80.) Adolescents were calculated at 0.50 workers, following the ethnographer's usage.

Domestic differences in labor intensity compose a very distinctive pattern. No clear Chayanov trend is evident on inspection of Table 3.4. But the apparent irregularity polarizes, or, rather, resolves itself into two regularities once the household variations are plotted in graph (Figure 3.3). Everything appears as if the Kapauku village were divided into two populations, each adhering singularly to its own economic inclination in one case, something of a Chayanov trend, intensity increasing with the relative number of consumers, yet in the other "population" just the reverse. And not only are houses of the latter series industrious in proportion to their working capacity, the group as a whole stands at a distinctly higher level than the households of the first series. But then the Kapauku have a big-man system of the Classic Melanesian type (see below, "The Economic Intensity of the Social Order"), a political organization that typically polarizes

people's relations to the productive process: grouping on one side the big-men or would-be big-men and their followers, whose production they are able to galvanize, and on the other side those content to praise and live off the ambition of others.⁷ The idea seems worth a prediction: that this bifurcate, "fish-tail" distribution of domestic labor intensity will be found generally in the Melanesian big-man systems.

Although not evident to inspection, a light Chayanov trend does actually inhere in the scatter of household intensity variations. It has to be picked up mathematically (again as a linear regression of deviations from the means). On balance, the slope of domestic labor intensity moves upward to the right at the rate of 1,007 kilograms of sweet potato/gardener for each increase (from the mean) of 1.00 in the consumers/gardener ratio. Considered by their respective standard deviations, however, this Kapauku inflection is flatter than the Mazulu empirical slope. (In z -units, $b_{y'x'} = 0.62$ for Mazulu, 0.28 for Botukebo.) Yet more interesting, the Kapauku real inflection stands in an entirely different relation to its slope of normal intensity (Figure 3.4).

I have plotted the slope of normal intensity (the true Chayanov cline) from Pospisil's brief dietary study covering 20 people over six days. The average adult male ration was 2.89 kilograms of sweet potatoes/day—693.60 kilograms, then, for an eight-month period matching the duration of the production study. An inflection of 694 kilograms/worker for each 1.00 in c/w passes substantially underneath the empirical intensity slope; indeed, it does not intersect the latter through the range of real variations in domestic production. The profile is altogether different from Mazulu, and as different in its indicative measures.⁸

Nine of the 16 Botukebo households are operating at surplus intensities (Table 3.5, p.108). These nine houses include 61.50 gardeners, or 59 percent of the total working force. Their average composition is 1.40 consumers/gardener, their mean labor intensity 1,731 kilograms/gardener. Hence the point of mean surplus labor, S , falls slightly to the right of the average household composition—by two percent of the c/w ratio. In fact, six of the nine houses are below average composition, but not dramatically so. The impulse to surplus labor thus appears more generally distributed in Kapauku than in Mazulu. At the same time, the strength of this impulse is definitely

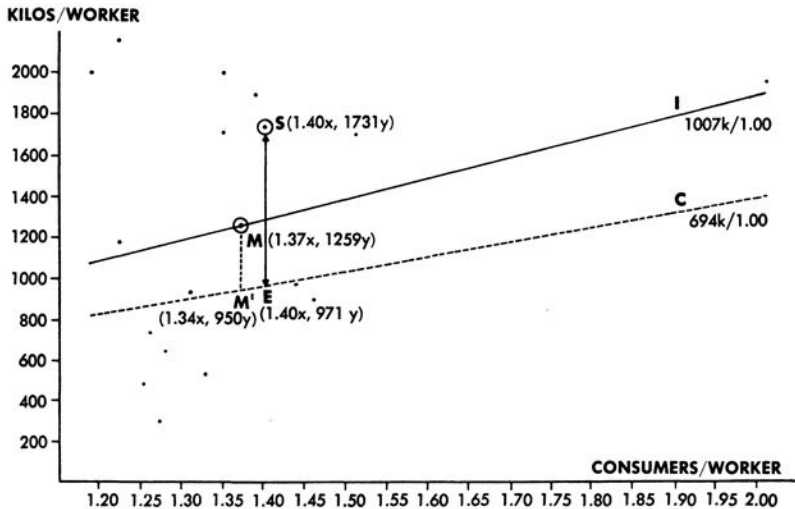


Figure 3.4 Botukebo, Kapauku: Social Deviation of Labor Intensity from the Chayanov Slope

superior. As expressed by the Y coordinate of S, the mean tendency of surplus intensity, at 1,731 kilograms/worker, is 971 kilograms above the normal tendency (segment SE). In other words, 69 percent of the Kapauku domestic units, comprising 59 percent of the labor force, are working at an average of 82 percent above normal intensity.

The collective surplus labor of these Kapauku units accounts for 47,109 kilograms of sweet potato. Botukebo total village output is 133,172 kilograms. Thus, 35.37 percent of the social product is the contribution of surplus domestic labor. Taken in comparison with Mazulu (7.67 percent), this figure makes us aware of something heretofore left out of account: the customary household structure is also part of the society's intensification strategy. Botukebo's advantage over Mazulu does not consist solely in a higher rate or more general distribution of surplus labor. Botukebo houses have on average more than twice as many workers, so multiply by that difference their superiority in rate of intensity.

Finally, as the Kapauku intensity profile shows, the effect of surplus labor is to displace real domestic output upward by a sizable amount over the normal. At mean household composition, the empirical inflection of intensity is 309 kilograms/worker (29 percent) higher

Table 3.5 Botukebo, Kapauku: Domestic variation in relation to normal intensity of labor

<i>House</i>	<i>C/W</i>	<i>Kilos s.p./ Worker</i>	<i>Normal Y</i>	<i>Deviation from Normal Intensity</i>
IV	1.19	2000	825	+1175
VII	1.22	2154	846	+1308
XIV	1.22	1177	846	+331
XV	1.25	472	867	-395
VI	1.26	769	874	-105
XIII	1.27	276	881	-605
VIII	1.28	652	888	-236
I	1.31	950	909	+41
XVI	1.33	519	922	-403
III	1.35	2000	936	+1064
V	1.35	1724	936	+788
II	1.39	1909	964	+945
XII	1.44	969	999	-30
IX	1.46	904	1013	-109
X	1.52	1690	1054	+636
XI	2.02	1978	1401	+577

than the Chayanov slope (segment M-M' of Figure 3.4). In terms of the people's own consumption requirements (pigs excluded), Botukebo village as a whole has a surplus output.⁹

Table 3.6 summarizes the differences in production intensity between Mazulu and Botukebo. These differences are the measure of two different social organizations of domestic production.

But clearly the task of research is not finished by the drawing of an intensity profile; it is only thus posed. Before us stretches a work of difficulty and complexity matched only by its promise of an anthropological economics, and consisting not merely in the accumulation of production profiles, but of their interpretation in social terms. For Mazulu and Botukebo this interpretation would dwell on political differences—on the contrast between the big-man system of the Kapauku and traditional political institutions described by the ethnographer of Tonga as “embryonic,” “largely egalitarian” and generally

Table 3.6 Indices of domestic production: Mazulu and Botukebo

	<i>Domestic Surplus Impulse*</i> (Intensification Strategy)				<i>Average Domestic Deviation from Chayanov Norm</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Output Due to Surplus Domestic Labor</i>
	<i>Percentage of Households at Surplus Intensity</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Labor Force at Surplus Intensity</i>	<i>Average Production of Surplus in Relation to Normal Intensity</i>			
Mazulu	40	35.6	123.6	+2.2%	7.67	
Botukebo	69	59.4	182.0	+32.9%	35.37	

* Concerns households working at surplus intensity.

disengaged from the domestic economy (Colson, 1960, pp. 161 f). It remains to specify such relations between political form and economic intensification; and also, the less dramatic economic impact of the kinship system, almost imperceptible for its prosaic, everyday character but perhaps not less powerful in the determination of everyday production.

KINSHIP AND ECONOMIC INTENSITY

The kinship relations prevailing between households must affect their economic behavior. Descent groups and marital alliances of different structure, even interpersonal kin networks of different pattern, should differentially encourage surplus domestic labor. And with varying success, too, kinship relations counter the centrifugal movement of the DMP, to determine a more or less intensive exploitation of local resources. Here then is an idea in some ways banal, in others outrageous, but nevertheless indicative of the kind of problem worth further research: all else being equal, Hawaiian kinship is a more intensive economic system than Eskimo kinship. Because, simply, the Hawaiian system has a greater degree of classification in the Morganian sense: a more extensive identification of collateral with lineal relatives.

Where Eskimo kinship categorically isolates the immediate family, placing others in a social space definitely outside, Hawaiian extends familial relations indefinitely along collateral lines. The Hawaiian household economy risks an analogous integration in the community of households. Everything depends on the strength and spread of solidarity in the kinship system. Hawaiian kinship is in these respects superior to Eskimo. Specifying in this way a wider cooperation, the Hawaiian system should develop more social pressure on households of greater labor resources, especially those of the highest c/w ratios. All other things equal, then, Hawaiian kinship will generate a greater surplus tendency than Eskimo. It will be able also to sustain a higher norm of domestic welfare for the community as a whole. Finally, the same argument implies a greater variation in domestic per capita output for Hawaiian, and a smaller overall variation in intensity per worker.

Besides, the Hawaiian system probably exploits a given territory at a higher level, closer to the technical capacity. For kinship is opposed to the underproduction of the DMP in another way, not just to the

centripetal domestic concern for livelihood but to the centrifugal tendency of household dispersion, hence not only to the domestic underuse of labor but to the collective underuse of territory. Against the constituted dispersion of the DMP the system of kinship erects a peace of greater or less effect; so, a corresponding concentration of households and exploitation of resources. The Fijians, who as we have seen conceive a nonrelative as a stranger, hence as a potential enemy and victim, understand by their term “to be acquainted” (*veikilai*) also the meaning “to be related” (*veiveikani*); and they have no more common word for “peace” than “to live as kinsmen” (*tiko vakaveiveikani*). Here is one of several primitive versions of that contract lacking in the DMP, a *modus vivendi* where the means of force and production remain segmentary and unalienated. But again different kinship systems, varying in their powers of attraction, must permit varying degrees of spatial concentration. They overcome the fragmentation of domestic production in different measure, and to that extent determine capacities of territorial occupation and exploitation.

Still, the kinship solidarities of primitive societies cannot be undifferentiated, given the inherent cleavages of the domestic mode of production. Even Hawaiian kinship is only formally a universal familiarity; in practice it continually knows invidious distinctions of social distance. The household is never entirely submerged in the larger community, nor are domestic ties ever free from conflict with wider kin relationships. This is a permanent contradiction of primitive society and economy. But it is not an apparent contradiction. Normally it is obscured, repressed by sentiments of sociability that extend to the far reaches of kinship, mystified by an uncritical ideology of reciprocity, above all dissimulated by a continuity of social principles from the family to the larger community, a harmony of organization that makes the lineage seem the household writ large and the chief father to his people. The discovery of the contradiction in the normal course of primitive society therefore takes an act of ethnographic will. Only occasionally comes a crisis, a *crise révélatrice*, to lay bare the structural opposition beyond any possibility of mistaking it. In the absence of that rare chance—or of close observation of the nuances of “reciprocity” (see Chapter 5)—one has recourse at first to certain ethnographic curiosities, proverbs for

example, whose elliptical sagesse may put a construction of paradoxes on what seems otherwise a broad sociability.

Thus the same Bemba who define a relative as someone to whom you give food also define a witch as someone “who comes and sits in your house and says, ‘I expect you are going to cook soon. What a fine lot of meat you have today,’ or ‘I expect the beer will be ready this afternoon,’ or some such remark” (Richards, 1939, p. 202). Richards reports the artful dodges often employed by Bemba housewives to avoid obligations to share: the concealment of beer upon the appearance of an elderly visiting relative, then met with an, “Alas, Sir, we poor wretches. We have nothing to eat” (*ibid.*).¹⁰

For the Maori, the conflict between the household and larger interests was current byword: a “squarely-faced opposition,” Firth wrote in an early article on the Maori proverbs, a “direct contradiction between sayings which inculcate hospitality and the reverse, liberality and its opposite” (1926, p. 252). On one hand, hospitality “was one of the highest virtues of the native . . . inculcated into all and gained the greatest approval. On the practice of it depended to a large extent reputation and prestige” (p. 247). But Firth was also quick to note a whole set of popular dicta to the contrary. Here were proverbs that privileged an enlightened self-interest over concern for others, the retention of food over its distribution. “Raw food is still possessed,” went the adage, “cooked it goes to another”—advising that food be eaten underdone on pain of being obliged to share it out. Or again, “Broil your rat [a favorite Maori dish] with its fur on, lest you be disturbed by someone.” One proverb recognizes in the noble act of sharing a large residue of discontent:

<i>Haere ana a Manawa yeka</i>	Glad heart went away,
<i>Noho ana a Manawa kuwa</i>	Bitter mind remained.

Another says this of the irksome cadging of relatives:

<i>He huanga ki Matiti</i>	A relative in winter,
<i>He tama ki Tokerau</i>	A son in autumn.

—the man who during the winter planting season is only a distant relative suddenly becomes a son at the autumn harvest.

These contradictions of the Maori proverbial wisdom translate a real conflict of society—“two diametrically opposed principals of conduct working side by side. . . .” Firth, however, did not pause to analyze them as such in their capacity as social facts. He adopted instead that kind of “naive anthropology”¹¹ conventional to Economic Science: it was at base an opposition between human nature and culture, between the “impulse of the individual to seek his own advantage” and “the expressed morality of the social group.” Perhaps Lèvi-Strauss would say the model is after all the Maori’s own, for proverb does hold that raw is to cooked as possession is to sharing—that is, nature is to culture as the refusal to share is to reciprocity. In any event, Firth’s later detailed analysis of Maori economy (1959a) makes it clear why the opposition of principle was drawn specifically along the line distant relative/son. It was a conflict between extended kinship and the homebred self-interest of the *whanau*, the household, “the basic unit of the Maori economy”:

The *whanau* held group-ownership of certain types of property, and also as a body exercised rights to land and its products. Tasks requiring a small body of workers and co-operation of a not very complex order were performed by the *whanau*, and the apportionment of food was largely managed on this basis. Each family group was a cohesive, self-contained unit, managing its own affairs, both social and economic, except as these affected village or tribal policy. Members of a *whanau*, on the whole, ate, and dwelt together in a distinct group.

(Firth, 1959a, p. 139)¹²

The position of the household in these primitive societies is one of constant dilemma and continuous maneuver, temporizing always between domestic welfare and broader obligations toward kinsmen in the hope of satisfying the latter without menacing the former. Apart from the paradoxes of the proverbial wisdom, this tug of war does receive one general expression: in the nuances of traditional “reciprocity.” For despite the connotation of equivalence, ordinary reciprocal exchanges are often unbalanced; that is, on the strictly material plane. Repayments are only more or less equal to the initial gifts, and they are only more or less direct in time. The variation is correlated

notably with kinship distance. Balance is the material relation of distant kinship; closer to home, exchange becomes more disinterested; there is tolerance of delays or even of complete failure to reciprocate. To observe that kinship plays out in social force as it moves out in social distance is not a sufficient explanation or even a very logical one considering the wide extension of familial categories. More pertinent is the segmentary separation of economic interests. What gives this dissipation of kinship solidarity function and definition, makes meaningful such distinctions as “distant relative”/“son,” is the economic determination of home as the place where charity begins. The first premise of “kinship distance” is the DMP. Thus, all the discussion of Chapter 5 on the tactical play of reciprocity can be taken as a case in present point.

Despite the constituted contradiction between the household and the larger kindred, instances of structural breakdown that reveal the conflict are few in the primitive societies. All the more valuable, then, Firth’s succeeding work on Tikopia, especially the restudy (with Spillius) of 1953–54, when he chanced upon this people celebrated for their hospitality during a trial of famine (Firth, 1959b). Nature had dealt Tikopia a double blow: hurricanes struck in January 1952 and March 1953, doing great damage to houses, trees and standing crops. Food shortages followed, in severity varying from district to district and time to time; generally, the worst occurred between September and November 1953, a period the ethnographers describe as “famine.” Still, the people on the whole survived, as did the social system. Yet the first was not entirely due to the second. Kinship beyond the household held on in the formal code, but the code was being systematically honored in the breach, so that even as Tikopian society managed a kind of moral continuity it showed itself founded on a basic discontinuity. It was a revelatory crisis. Firth and Spillius speak of “atomization,” of the fragmentation of larger kin groups and “closer integration” of the household. “What the famine did,” Firth wrote, “was to reveal the solidarity of the elementary family” (1959b, p. 84; emphasis mine).

Economic decomposition set in on several fronts, in property and distribution most notably. Even in planning for recovery after the first hurricane, it was (apart from the chiefs) every household for itself: “the

use of resources was nearly in every case intended to safeguard family interests. . . . The range of calculation rarely went beyond this" (p. 64). Attempts were made to abrogate traditional kinship privileges of access to family garden areas (p. 70). Land held in common by close kinsmen became a cause of proprietary contention, sometimes pitting brother against brother, sometimes resulting in a definitive division and precise bounding of fraternal claims (Firth, 1959b; Spillius, 1957, p. 13).

The movement in the sphere of food distribution was more complicated. Exchange showed a predictable pulsation between an expansion of sociability and generosity under trial, and a reversion to domestic isolation as the trial turned into disaster.¹³ At those times and in the places food shortage was less severe, the household economy would even efface itself: closely related families suspended their separate existences to pool supplies in a collective oven. But as the crisis deepened, an opposed tendency set in, made up of two complementary trends: decrease in sharing and increase of theft.¹⁴ Firth estimated that theft reached a level fivefold higher than its incidence during his first visit twenty-five years earlier, and where formerly it was restricted mainly to "semi-luxuries" now it was largely theft of staples—nor were ritual crops immune, or members of chiefly houses guiltless. "Nearly everyone was stealing and nearly everyone was robbed" (Spillius, 1957, p. 12). Meanwhile, after the initial wave of sociability, the frequency and social range of sharing progressively declined. Instead of food, visitors got only apologies, perhaps disingenuous. Supplies were hidden from kinsmen, even locked up in boxes and someone left in the house to guard them. Firth describes such un-Tikopian behavior as this:

In some cases the kinsman would suspect there was food in his host's house; he would sit and chat and wait, hoping that the host would give way and use it. But nearly always the host would hold out until the guest had gone before unlocking the box and taking out the food.

(Firth, 1959b, p. 83)

Not that there was a war of every family against every family. The Tikopians remained polite. As Firth wrote, manners continued if morals degenerated. But the crisis did test certain structural tolerances. It exposed the weakness of that celebrated "We, the Tikopia" by the

strength of the private household. The household proved a fortress of self-interest which in the crisis cut itself apart, raised its social drawbridges—when it was not engaged in sallies against the gardens of kith and kin.

The DMP has to be counteracted and transcended. This not simply for technical reasons of cooperation, but because the domestic economy is as unreliable as it is apparently functional, a private nuisance and a public menace. The greater kinship system is one important way it is counteracted. But the continuing hold of the domestic economy then leaves its mark on the whole society: a contradiction between the infrastructure and the superstructure of kinship that is never entirely suppressed but continues in subtle ways to influence the everyday disposition of goods, and under stress may surface to put the whole economy in a state of segmentary collapse.

THE ECONOMIC INTENSITY OF THE POLITICAL ORDER

Two words are used for feasts [among the Sa'a], *ngäuhe* and *houlaa*: the meaning of the first is "eating," of the second "fame."

(Ivens, 1927, p. 60)

"Without feasts" [a Wogeo man] said, "we would not collect all our chestnuts nor plant so many trees. We would perhaps have enough to eat, but we would never have any really big meals."

(Hogbin, 1938–39, p. 324)

In the course of primitive social evolution, main control over the domestic economy seems to pass from the formal solidarity of the kinship structure to its political aspect. As the structure is politicized, especially as it is centralized in ruling chiefs, the household economy is mobilized in a larger social cause. This impulse transmitted by polity to production is often attested ethnographically. For although the primitive headman or chief may be himself driven by personal ambition, he incarnates the collective finalities; he personifies a public economic principle in opposition to the private ends and petty self-concerns of the household economy. Tribal powers that be and would-be powers encroach upon the domestic system to undermine its autonomy, curb its anarchy, and unleash its productivity. "The pace

of life in a given Manus village” Margaret Mead observed, “the amount of goods in circulation, and therefore the actual amount of goods in existence depend on the number of leaders in that village. It varies with their enterprise, intelligence, and aggressiveness, and the number of their kin whose cooperation they can enlist” (1937a, pp. 216–217).

Conversely, but to the same rule, Mary Douglas introduces her major monograph on the Lele of Kasai as a study in the failure of authority. And she notes immediately the economic consequence: “Those who have had anything to do with the Lele must have noticed the absence of anyone who could give orders with a reasonable hope of being obeyed. . . . The lack of authority goes a long way to explain their poverty” (1963, p. 1). This negative effect we have seen before, especially in relation to underuse of subsistence resources. As Camero perceived it for the Kuikuru, and Izikowitz advances a similar appreciation of Lamet, the issue is between a chronic tendency to divide and disperse the community, and, on the other side, the development of political controls which would check this fission and effect an economic dynamic more appropriate to the society’s technical capacity.

I discuss this aspect of the primitive political economy only briefly and schematically.

Everything depends on the political negation of the centrifugal tendency to which the DMP is naturally inclined. Otherwise said (and other factors being equal), the approximation to productive capacity accomplished by any given society is a vector of two contending political principles: on one hand, the centrifugal dispersion inscribed in the DMP—already a kind of reflexive mechanism of peace; on the other hand, the accord that can be installed by prevailing institutions of hierarchy and alliance, whose success is measurable rather by the concentration of population. Of course, more than just the tribal authorities are at issue, and more than their intervention against the primitive reflex of fission. The regional intensity of occupation depends too on relations between communities, relations possibly carried on as much by marriages and lineages as by constituted authorities. My concern here is merely to indicate the *problématique*: each political organization harbors a coefficient of population density, thus in conjunction with the ecological givens, a determinate intensity of land use.

The second aspect of the general problem, the effect of polity upon household labor, I discuss in greater detail. This in part because more ethnographic detail is available. It is even possible to isolate certain formal qualities of leadership structure that imply different degrees of domestic productivity, so hold out the hope of analysis in terms of a social intensity profile. Before these flights of typology, however, we should first consider the structural and ideological means by which power in the primitive societies is realized in production.

The impact of the political system upon domestic production is not unlike the impact of the kinship system. But then, the organization of authority is not differentiated from the kinship order, and its economic effect is best understood as a radicalization of the kinship function. Even many of the greatest African chiefs, and all those of Polynesia, were not disengaged from the kinship nexus, and it is this which renders comprehensible the economics of their political acts— as well as the politics of their economics. Thus I specifically exclude from this discussion true kings and states, to speak only of societies where kinship is king and the “king” only a superior kinsman. At the most we have to deal with “chiefs” properly so-called, and chieftainship is a political differentiation of a kinship order—as kingship is usually a kinship differentiation of a political order (State). Moreover, what is true of the most advanced form, chieftainship, is *à plus forte raison* true of all other kinds of tribal leaders: they hold positions in and of a network of kinship. And as it is structurally, so ideologically and in practice the economic role of the headman is only a differentiation of kinship morality. Leadership is here a higher form of kinship, hence a higher form of reciprocity and liberality. This repeats itself in ethnographic descriptions from all over the primitive world, even to the dilemmas posed by chiefly obligations of generosity:

The [Nambikwara] chief must not merely do well: he must try, and his group will expect him to try, to do better than the others. How does the chief fulfill these obligations? The first and main instrument of his power is his generosity. Generosity is among most primitive peoples, and above all in America, an essential attribute of power. It has a role to play even in those rudimentary cultures where the notion of property consists merely in a handful of rudely fashioned objects. Although

the chief does not seem to be in a privileged position, from the material point of view, he must have under his control surplus quantities of food, tools, weapons, and ornaments which, however trifling in themselves, are nonetheless considerable in relation to the prevailing poverty. When an individual, a family, or the band as a whole, wishes or needs something, it is to the chief that an appeal must be made. Generosity is, therefore, the first attribute to be expected of a new chief. It is a note which will be struck almost continuously; and from the nature, discordant or otherwise, of the sound which results the chief can judge of his standing with the band. His "subjects" make the most of all this. . . . The chiefs were my best informers; and as I knew the difficulties of their position I liked to reward them liberally. Rarely, however, did any of my presents remain in their hands for more than a day or two. And when I moved on, after sharing for several weeks the life of any particular band, its members rejoiced in the acquisition of axes, knives, pearls, and so forth from my stores. The chief, by contrast, was generally as poor, in material terms, as he had been when I arrived. His share, which was very much larger than the average allowance, had all been extorted from him.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1961, p. 304)

The same refrain appears in the complaint of the Tahitian priest-chief, Ha'amanimani, to the Duff missionaries:

"You give me," says he, "much parow [talk] and much prayers to the Eatora [God], but very few axes, knives, scissars, or cloth." The case is, that whatever he receives he immediately distributes among his friends and dependents; so that for all the numerous presents he had received, he had nothing now to shew, except a glazed hat, a pair of breeches, and an old black coat, which he had fringed with red feathers. And this prodigal behaviour he excuses by saying that, were he not to do so, he should never be a king (*sic*), nor even remain a chief of any consequence.

(Duff Missionaries, 1799, pp. 224–225)

This benevolent interest of the headman in the process of distribution, and the political energy he accumulates therefrom, are generated by the field of kinship in which he moves. In one respect it is a matter of prestige. Insofar as the society is socially committed to kin

relationships, morally it is committed to generosity; whoever, therefore, is liberal automatically merits the general esteem. Generous, the chief is a paragon among kinsmen. But more profoundly, his generosity is a kind of constraint. "Gifts make slaves," the Eskimo say, "as whips make dogs." Common in any society, this constraint gains in force where the norms of kinship are dominant. Because kinship is a social relation of reciprocity, of mutual aid; hence, generosity is a manifest imposition of debt, putting the recipient in a circumspect and responsive relation to the donor during all that period the gift is unrequited. The economic relation of giver-receiver is the political relation of leader-follower.¹⁵ This is the working principle. More exactly, it is the operative ideology.

"Ideology" that is revealed as such from the beginning by its contradiction with the larger ideal in which it is fixed, that is, with reciprocity. Always the rank relation, faithful to the qualities of a society it would not abolish, is compensatory. It is conceived in terms of balance, a "mutual helpfulness," a "continual reciprocity."¹⁶ But in strictly material terms the relation cannot be both "reciprocal" and "generous," the exchange at once equivalent and more so. "Ideology," then, because "chiefly liberality" must ignore the contrary flow of goods from people to chief—perhaps by categorizing this as the chief's due—on pain of canceling out the generosity; or else, or in addition, the relation conceals a material unbalance—perhaps rationalized by other kinds of compensation—on pain of negating the reciprocity. We shall find that material unbalances in fact exist; depending on the system, they are borne by one or the other side, headman or people. Yet the conjunction of a norm of reciprocity with a reality of exploitation would not distinguish the primitive political economy from any other: everywhere in the world the indigenous category for exploitation is "reciprocity."¹⁷

Considered at a more abstract level, the ideological ambiguity of the chiefly office, at once generous and reciprocal, expresses perfectly the contradiction of a primitive nobility: between power and kinship, inequality in a society of amicability. The only reconciliation, of course, is an inequality that is generally beneficial, the only justification of power its disinterestedness; which is to say, economically, a distribution of goods from the chiefs to the people that deepens at the same time

it offsets the latter's dependence—and leaves no interpretation of the distribution from people to chiefs but as a moment in a cycle of reciprocity. The ideological ambiguity is functional. On the one hand, the ethic of chiefly generosity blesses the inequality; on the other, the ideal of reciprocity denies that it makes any difference.¹⁸

However it is realized, one thing the ideology of headmanship does not admit: the economic introversion of the DMP. The “liberality” of the chief must stimulate production beyond the usual aims of domestic livelihood, if only in the chief's own household; reciprocity between the ranks will do the same on a more or less general scale. The political economy cannot survive on that restrained use of resources which for the domestic economy is a satisfactory existence.

We return thus to the original point: the political life is a stimulus to production. But it is so to varying degrees. The following paragraphs trace some of the variations in political form that seem to connote differing domestic productivities, beginning with the Melanesian big-man orders.

Open systems of status competition, such as prevail in Melanesia, develop economic impact in the first place from the ambition of aspiring big-men. Intensification appears in their own work and the labors of their own household. The New Guinea Busama clubhouse leader, as Hogbin reports,

has to work harder than anyone else to keep up his stocks of food. The aspirant for honours cannot rest on his laurels but must go on holding large feasts and piling up credits. It is acknowledged that he has to toil early and late—“His hands are never free from earth, and his forehead continually drips with sweat.”

(Hogbin, 1951, p. 131)¹⁹

To this end of accumulation and generosity, the Melanesian leader typically attempts to enlarge his domestic working force, perhaps by polygyny: “Another woman go garden, another woman go take firewood, another woman go catch fish, another woman cook him—husband he sing out plenty people come *kaikai* [eat]” (Landtman, 1927, p. 168). Clearly the Chayanov slope begins to suffer a political deviation; against the rule, certain of the most effective groups are working the most. But

the big-man would quickly surpass the narrow base of autoexploitation. Deploying his resources carefully, the emerging leader uses wealth to place others in his debt. Moving beyond his household, he constructs a following whose production may be harnessed to his ambition. The process of intensification in production is thus coupled to reciprocity in exchange. So the Lakalai big-man, with a view toward sponsoring memorial festivals and participating successfully in external trade,

must not only show personal industry but also be able to call on the industry of others. He must have a following. If he is blessed with many junior kinsmen whose labor he actually commands, he is under less pressure to build up a following. If he is not so blessed, he must acquire his following by assuming responsibility for the welfare of remoter kinsmen. By displaying all of the necessary attributes of a responsible leader, by dutifully sponsoring festivals on behalf of his children, by being ready with wealth to meet his obligations to his in-laws, by buying magic and dances for his children, by assuming whatever burdens he can feasibly carry, he makes himself attractive to older and younger kinsmen alike. . . . His younger kinsmen court his support by volunteering to help him in his undertakings, by cheerfully obeying his calls to work, and by catering to his wishes. They tend increasingly to entrust their wealth to him as trustee in preference to some senior relative.

(Chowning and Goodenough, 1965–66, p. 457)

Drawing then from a local group of followers economically engaged to his cause, the big-man opens the final and socially most expansive phase of his ambition. He sponsors or contributes heavily to great public feasts and distributions that reach outside his own circle to establish his dignity, “build his name” Melanesians say, in society at large. For

the purpose in owning pigs and pig-wealth is not to store them nor to put them on recurrent display: it is to use them. The aggregate effect is a vast circulating flow of pigs, plumes and shells. The motive force of the flow is the reputation men can gain from ostentatious participation in it. . . . The Kuma “big men” or “men of strength” . . . who command much wealth, are entrepreneurs in the sense they control the flow of valuables between clans by making fresh presentations

on their own account and choosing whether or not to contribute to others. Their profit in these transactions is incremental reputation. . . . The aim is not simply to be wealthy, nor even to act as only the wealthy can act: it is to be *known* to be wealthy.

(Reay, 1959, p. 96)

The big-man's personal career has a general political significance. The big-man and his consuming ambition are means whereby a segmentary society, "acephalous" and fragmented into small autonomous communities, overcomes these cleavages, at least provisionally, to fashion larger fields of relation and higher levels of cooperation. Through concern for his own reputation, the Melanesian big-man becomes a point of articulation in a tribal structure.

It should not be supposed that the big-man of Melanesian type is a necessary condition of the segmentary societies. Chiefs of the Northwest Coast Indian villages achieve the same sort of articulation, and if in their potlaches it is by external feasting similar to the prestige quest of many Melanesian leaders, the chief has an entirely different relation to the internal economy. A Northwest Coast chieftain is a lineage head, and in this capacity is necessarily accorded a certain right to group resources. He is not obliged to establish a personal claim by the dynamic of an autoexploitation put at the others' disposal. Of even greater contrast, a segmentary society may dispense with all but minimal ties between its constituent parts; or else, as in the celebrated case of the Nuer segmentary lineage system, the relations between local groups are fixed mainly and automatically by descent, without recourse to a differentiation among men.

The Nuer pose an alternative to the segmentary politics of personal power and renown: the anonymous and silent government of structure. In classic segmentary lineage systems, headmen have to be content with a local importance at best, and perhaps proven by attributes other than their generosity. The interesting deduction is that the segmentary lineage system has a lower coefficient of intensity than the Melanesian polity.

The Melanesian system can be put to another speculative purpose. Beyond the contrast it suggests between tribes with and without rulers, in its successive phases of generous autoexploitation and an

accumulation funded by reciprocity, the career of the Melanesian big-man makes a transition between two forms of economic authority that elsewhere appear separately and appear to have an unequal economic potential. Autoexploitation is a kind of original and underdeveloped economics of respect. It is often encountered in the autonomous local groups of tribal societies—the Nambikwara “chief” is an example of the genre—and most commonly in the camps of hunters and gatherers:

No Bushman wants prominence, but Toma went further than most in avoiding prominence; he had almost no possessions and gave away everything that came into his hands. He was diplomatic, for in exchange for his self-imposed impoverishment he won the respect and following of all the people there.

(Thomas, 1959, p. 183)

Authority of this kind has obvious limitations, both economic and political—and the modesty of each sets limits to the other. Only the domestic labor immediately under the control of the headman is politically engaged. While his own household labor pool is expandable to a degree, as by polygyny, neither through structure nor gratitude does the headman gain significant command over the output of other domestic groups. The surplus of one house put to the benefit of others, this *politique* is closest to the ideal of noble liberality—and the weakest economics of leadership. Its principal force is attraction rather than compulsion, and the field of this force is principally restricted to people in direct personal contact with the leader. For under the simple and often capricious technical circumstances, with the labor of so few provisioning it, the headman’s “fund of power” (as Malinowski called it) is meagre and rapidly exhausted. Furthermore, it is necessarily diluted in political efficacy, the influence to be had by its distribution, as this distribution is stretched out in social space. The greatest dividends of influence, then, are accrued in the local cohort, and in the form of the respect due a self-effacing generosity. But no one is thereby rendered dependent, and this respect will have to compete with all the other kinds of deference that can be accorded in face-to-face relations. Hence the economic is not necessarily the dominant basis of authority in the simpler societies: by comparison with generational status, or with

personal attributes and capacities from the mystical to the oratorical, it may be politically negligible.

At the other extreme is chieftainship properly so-called, as it developed, for example, in high islands of Polynesia, among nomads of interior Asia, and many central and southern African peoples. The contrast of economic and political form seems complete: from autoexploitation—by the sweat of the leader's brow—to tribute, accompanied sometimes by the idea that even to shoulder a burden is beneath the chiefly dignity: for that matter, dignity may require that he be carried; from a respect personally accorded to a command structurally bestowed; and from a liberality something less than reciprocal to a reciprocity less than liberal. The difference is institutional. It lies in the formation of hierarchical relations within and between local groups, a regional political frame maintained by a system of chiefs, major and minor, holding sway over segments of greater and lesser order and subordinate all to the one paramount. The integration of parochial groups tenuously broached by Melanesian big-men, if unimaginable to prestigious hunters, is achieved in these pyramidal societies. They are still primitive. The political armature is provided by kinship groups. But these groups make positions of official authority a condition of their organization. Now men do not personally construct their power over others; they come to power. Power resides in the office, in an organized acquiescence to chiefly privileges and organized means of upholding them. Included is a specific control over the goods and the services of the underlying population. The people owe in advance their labor and their products. And with these funds of power, the chief indulges in grandiose gestures of generosity ranging from personal aid to massive support of collective ceremonial or economic enterprise. The flow of goods between chiefs and people then becomes cyclical and continual:

The prestige of a [Maori] chief was bound up with his free use of wealth, particularly food. This in turn tended to secure for him a larger revenue from which to display his hospitality, since his followers and relatives brought him choice gifts. . . . Apart from lavish entertainment of strangers and visitors, the chief also disbursed wealth freely as presents among his followers. By this means their allegiance was secured and he repaid them for the gifts and personal

services rendered to him. . . . There was thus a continual reciprocity between chief and people. . . . It was by his accumulation and possession of wealth, and his subsequent lavish distribution of it, that such a man was able to give the spur to . . . important tribal enterprises. He was a kind of channel through which wealth flowed, concentrating it only to pour it out freely again.

(Firth, 1959a, p. 133)

In advanced forms of chieftainship, of which the Maori is not particularly an illustration, this redistribution is not without material benefit to the chief. If an historical metaphor be permitted: what begins with the would-be headman putting his production to others' benefit, ends, to some degree, with others putting their production to the chief's benefit.

Eventually the ideals of reciprocity and chiefly liberality serve as mystification of the people's dependence. Liberal, the chief only returns to the community what he has received from the community. Reciprocal then? Perhaps he did not return all of that. The cycle has all the reciprocity of the Christmas present the small child gives his father, bought with the money his father had given him. Still this familial exchange is effective socially, and so is chiefly redistribution. Besides, when the timing and diversity of the goods redistributed are taken into consideration, the people may appreciate concrete benefits otherwise unobtainable. In any case, the material residue that sometimes falls to the chief is not the main sense of the institution. The sense is the power residing with the chief from the wealth he has let fall to the people. And in a larger vantage, by thus supporting communal welfare and organizing communal activities, the chief creates a collective good beyond the conception and capacity of the society's domestic groups taken separately. He institutes a public economy greater than the sum of its household parts.

This collective good is also won at the expense of the household parts. Too frequently and mechanically anthropologists attribute the appearance of chieftainship to the production of surplus (for example, Sahlins, 1958). In the historic process, however, the relation has been at least mutual, and in the functioning of primitive society it is rather the other way around. Leadership continually generates domestic

surplus. The development of rank and chieftainship becomes, *pari passu*, development of the productive forces.

In brief testimony, the remarkable ability of certain political orders distinguished by advanced ideas of chieftainship to augment and diversify production. Again I use Polynesian examples, partly for the reason that in earlier work I had argued the exceptional productivity of this polity by comparison with the Melanesian (Sahlins, 1963); partly also because a few of the Polynesian societies, Hawaii particularly, take the primitive contradiction between the domestic and public economies to an ultimate crisis—revelatory it seems not only of this disconformity but of the economic and political limits of kinship society.

Comparison with Melanesia would not only compliment the Polynesian achievement in overall production, but for the occupation and improvement of once-marginal areas effected under the aegis of ruling chiefs. To this process the chronic struggles between neighboring chiefdoms often supplied decisive force. Competition probably accounts for a remarkable tendency to invert by culture the ecology of nature: many of the poorer regions of Polynesian high islands were the more intensively exploited. The contrast in this respect between the southeast peninsula of Tahiti and the fertile northwest moved one of Captain Cook's officers, Anderson, to reflect positively Toynbee: "It shows," he said, "that even the defects of nature . . . have their use in promoting man to industry and art" (cited in Lewthwaite, 1964, p. 33). The Tahitian group is even better known for the integration of offshore atolls in mainland chiefdoms. Here was a political combination of economies so different as to constitute in Melanesia, and even other parts of Polynesia, the basis of entirely different cultural systems. Tetiaroa is the most celebrated example: "the Palm Beach of the South Seas," a complex of thirteen "spit-of-land" coral islets 26 miles north of Tahiti, occupied for marine and coconut production by men of the Pau district chief and as a watering place of the Tahitian nobility. By forbidding all cultivation except coconut and taro on Tetiaroa, the Pau chief forced a continuous exchange with Tahiti. In a punitive action against the chief, Cook once seized 25 canoes en route from Tetiaroa with a cargo of cured fish. "Even in stormy weather, the missionaries

[of the Duff] counted 100 canoes on the beach [of Tetiaroa], for there the aristocracy went to feast and fatten, and their flotillas returned 'rich as a fleet of galleons'" (Lewthwaite, 1966, p. 49).

Then again, one might consider the impressive development of taro cultivation in the Hawaiian Islands, notable for its extent, diversity and intensity: the 250–350 different varieties, often recognized for suitability in different microenvironments; the large irrigation networks (as in the Waipio Valley, island of Hawaii, site of a single complex three miles by three-fourths to one mile); irrigation remarkable for the complexity of ditching and protective works (a canal in Waimea, Kauai runs 400 feet around a cliff and up to 20 feet above level, while in the Kalalau Valley a sloping sea wall built of great boulders shelters a broad stretch of shoreward flats); irrigation remarkable again for the utilization of tiny pockets of soil interspersed through rocky lava, and for the terracing of narrow gorges deep into the mountains, "where the least available space has been won." Nor is this to catalogue the manifold ecological specialization of agricultural techniques, the several types of forest as well as wet taro cultivation, and in the swamps a form of chinampa, the "muddyback method."²⁰

The relationship between Polynesian chieftainship and the intensification of production can be given historic depth. In Hawaii, at least, the political transformation of marginal areas knows legendary depth: a chief who used his authority to squeeze water out of rocks. On the western side of the Keanae valley, Maui, is a peninsula that stands a mile out to sea and a much longer distance beyond ecological reason: fundamentally barren and rocky, without natural soil, but covered nevertheless with famous acres of taro. Tradition lays the miracle to an old chief, his name now forgotten,

. . . who was constantly at war with the people of Wailua and determined that he must have more good land under cultivation, more food, and more people. So he set all his people to work (they were then living within the valley and going down to the peninsula only for fishing), carrying soil in baskets from the valley down to the lava point. The soil and the banks enclosing the patches were thus, in the

course of many years, all transplanted and packed into place. Thus did the watered flats of Keanae originate.

(Handy, 1940, p. 110)

Perhaps the Hawaiian tradition is not truly historical. Still it is the true history of Polynesia: a kind of paradigm of which the entire archaeological sequence of the Marquesas as presented by Suggs, for example, is only another version. All Marquesan prehistory recounts the same dialogue between intervalley competition, the exercise of chiefly power, and the occupation and development of marginal areas of the islands (Suggs, 1961).

Is there evidence in Hawaii or Tahiti of political crises comparable to the episode Firth and Spillius described for Tikopia? Do we discover, that is to say, analogous crises *révélatrices*, here exposing the vertical contradiction between the household economy and the chieftainship, as the Tikopian exposed the horizontal contradiction between household and kindred? But then, the Tikopian famine is not irrelevant either to the first question, for the same hurricanes of 1953 and 1954 that shook the kinship structure also almost brought down the chiefs. As the supply of food diminished, economic relations between chiefs and people deteriorated. Customary dues to the clan leaders were neglected; while, to the contrary, stealing from chiefly gardens “became almost barefaced.” Said Pa Ngarumea: “When the land is firm people pay respect to the things of the chief, but when there is a famine people go and make sport of them” (Firth, 1959b, p. 92). Moreover, reciprocity in goods is only the concrete mode of the Tikopian political dialogue; its breakdown meant the whole system of political communication was in question. The Tikopian polity had begun to unhinge. An uncommon rift appeared between chiefs and the underlying population. Somber traditions were resurrected—“myths,” Spillius considers them—telling how certain chiefs of old, when pressure on the local food supply became unsupportable, drove the commoners en masse off the island. To the present chiefs the idea seemed fantastic, but one private meeting of notables unwittingly provoked a mass mobilization of the people of the Faea district, forewarned by a spirit medium and forearmed to resist a chiefly conspiracy to expel them (Firth, 1959b, p. 93; Spillius, 1957, pp. 16–17). Still the antagonism

remained incomplete, the commoners in an undeveloped stage of political consciousness and the chiefs in command throughout. Battle was not given. Indeed, it was never even conceived by Tikopians in the classic form of a popular uprising against the powers that be. On the contrary, it was the chiefs who constituted the danger to the commoners. And to the last, everyone continued to concede the chiefs' traditional privilege of survival, whoever else might have to die—and however much food was being stolen from them. The Tikopian political crisis was thus aborted.²¹

Let us then consider Hawaii, where one can follow conflicts of the same general type to the conclusion of a successful rebellion. Conflicts “of the same general type” in the sense they brought forth the opposition between the chieftainship and domestic interests, but the differences are also important. In Tikopia the political stress was externally induced. It did not unfold from the normal working of Tikopian society, which normally does work, but in the wake of a natural catastrophe. And it could have happened any structural time, at any phase in the development of the system. The political upset in Tikopia was exogenic, abnormal and historically indeterminate. But the rebellions with which Hawaiian traditional history fascinated itself, Hawaiian history had made. They were produced in the normal course of Hawaiian society, and more than endogenic, they were recurrent. These troubles, besides, seem incapable of realization at just any historic stage. They mark rather the maturity of the Polynesian system, the working through of its contradictions to the point of denouement. They reveal the structural limits.

The paramount chiefs of old Hawaii reigned each and independently over a single island, a section of one of the larger islands, sometimes over districts of neighboring islands. The variation is already part of the problem: the tendency, on which traditions discourse at length, for chiefly domains to enlarge and contract, extended once by conquest only to be partitioned again by rebellion. And this cycle was geared to a second, such that the rotation of one would set off the other. Ruling chiefs showed a propensity to “eat the power of the government too much”; that is, to oppress the people economically, which the chiefs found themselves forced to do when the political domain was enlarged, despite their obligations

as kinsmen and chiefs to consider the people's welfare, which they nevertheless found difficult to do even when the polity was reduced.

For the administration of merely an ordinary domain would bite deeply into the labor and goods of the common people. The population was dispersed over a wide area; the means of transportation and communication were rudimentary. The chieftainship besides enjoyed no monopoly of force. It had to meet its diverse problems of rule organizationally then, by a certain administrative formation: a bloated political establishment that sought to cope with a proliferation of tasks by a multiplication of personnel, at the same time economizing its scarce real force by an awesome display of conspicuous consumption as intimidating to the people as it was glorifying to the chiefs. But the material weight of this chiefly retinue and the sumptuary airs it affected fell, of course, on the ordinary people. It fell especially on those nearest the paramount, within a range that made transport worthwhile and the threat of sanctions effective. Conscious, it seems, of the logistic burdens they were obliged to impose, the Hawaiian chiefs conceived several means to relieve the pressure, notably including a career of conquest with a view toward enlarging the tributary base. In the successful event, however, with the realm now stretched over distant and lately subdued hinterlands, the bureaucratic costs of rule apparently rose higher than the increases in revenue, so that the victorious chief merely succeeded in adding enemies abroad to a worse unrest at home. The cycles of centralization and exaction are now at their zenith.

At this point, Hawaiian traditions will hint of intrigue and conspiracy mounted against the ruling chief by local followers, perhaps in collusion with distant subjects.²² The rebellion is launched always by important chiefs, who of course had their own reasons for challenging the paramount, but had their power to do so as personifications of a more general discontent. The revolt takes form as a court assassination, an armed struggle, or both. And then, as one ethnological bard said, the Hawaiians sat cross-legged upon the ground and told sad stories of the death of kings:

Many kings have been put to death by the people because of their oppression of the *makaainana* [the commoners]. The following kings

lost their lives on account of their cruel exactions on the commoners: Koihala was put to death in Kau, for which reason the district of Kau was called the Wier. Koka-i-ka-lani was an *alii* [chief] who was violently put to death in Kau . . . Enu-nui-kai-malino was an *alii* who was secretly put out of the way by the fishermen in Keahuolu in Kona . . . King Hakau was put to death by the hand of Umi at Waipio valley in Hamakua, Hawaii.²³ Lono-i-ka-makahiki was a king who was banished by the people of Kona. . . . It was for this reason that some of the ancient kings had a wholesome fear of the people.

(Malo, 1951, p. 195)

It is important that the death of tyrants was taken in charge by men of authority and chiefs themselves. The rebellion was not then a revolution; the chieftainship if overthrown was replaced by a chieftainship. Delivering itself of oppressive rulers, the system did not consequently rid itself of basic contradictions, transcend and transform itself, but continued instead to cycle within the confines of existing institutions. In the object of replacing a bad (exacting) chief by a good (generous) one, the rebellion would have a fair chance of success. In its aftermath, the enlarged political domain would probably fragment, as recalcitrant outdistricts regained their independence. The chieftainship thus decentralized, its economic weight was reduced. Power and oppression returned to the nadir—for the time being.

The epic quality of Hawaiian traditions conceals a more mundane causality. Manifestly, the political cycle had an economic base. The great struggles between powerful chiefs and their respective districts were transposed forms of the more essential struggle over domestic labor: whether it was to be more modestly employed in household livelihood or more intensively deployed to political organization. That the chiefs had the right to levy the domestic economy was not contested. The problem was, on one hand, the customary limit to this right, as established by the existing structure, and on the other hand, the regular abuse of it set off by a structural exigency. Hawaiian chieftainship had distanced itself from the people, yet it had never definitively severed the kinship relation. This primitive bond between ruler and ruled remained in force, and with it the usual ethics of reciprocity and chiefly generosity.²⁴ Malo says of the great storehouses maintained by ruling

chiefs that they were “means of keeping the people contented, so they would not desert the king”—this in a passage otherwise remarkable for its political cynicism: “as the rat will not desert the pantry . . . where he thinks food is, so the people will not desert the king while they think there is food in his storehouse” (Malo, 1951, p. 195).

In other words, the chiefly toll on the household economy had a moral limit consistent with the kinship configuration of the society. Up to a point it was the chief’s due, but beyond that, highhandedness. The organization set an acceptable proportion between the allocation of labor to the chiefly and domestic sectors. It set a fitting proportion also between retention of the people’s goods by the chief and redistribution to the people. It could tolerate only a certain unbalance in these matters. Besides, some propriety ought to be observed. Exaction by force is no customary gift, nor is pillage the chief’s due. The chiefs had their own lands, set aside for their support, and received many gifts regularly from the people. When a ruling chief’s men seized the people’s pigs and plundered their farms, the “*makaainana* were not pleased with this conduct on the part of the king”—it was “tyranny,” “abuse of authority” (Malo, 1951, p. 196). Chiefs were too much inclined to work the *makaainana*: “It was a life of weariness . . . they were compelled at frequent intervals to go here and there to do this and that work for the lord of the land” (p. 64). But then let the leader beware: “The people made war on bad kings in old times.” Thus did the system define and maintain a ceiling on the intensification of domestic production by political means and for public purposes.

Malo, Kamakau and the other custodians of Hawaiian tradition refer habitually to the paramount chiefs as “kings.” But the trouble was precisely that they were not kings. They had not broken structurally with the people at large, so they might dishonor the kinship morality only on pain of a mass disaffection. And without a monopoly of force, the probability was that the general discontent would come down on their particular heads. In a comparative perspective, the great disadvantage of the Hawaiian organization was its primitiveness: it was not a state. Its further advance could only have been secured by an evolution in that direction. If Hawaiian society discovered limits to its ability to augment production and polity, this threshold which it had reached but could not cross was the boundary of primitive society itself.