

could record Montagnais-Naskapi myths, parrot-like, not only to pore over with an interpreter and dictionary, but also to type up into the first renditions of their own literature in their own language that the people I worked with had ever read. Weltfish's class on Africa was the first in which I heard colonialism recognized as a basic historical reality in the lives of the people anthropologists study. Her comments on my doctoral thesis on the impact fur trading had on the Montagnais-Naskapi were the most cogent I received. Sensitive to patronization, she warned that I should not fall into the trap of presenting the Montagnais-Naskapi as mere passive victims but as people who were acting to cope with, or take advantage of, new situations. Recently I was invited to give a graduate seminar of my choice as a visiting professor. After discussion, I arrived at the topic, "anthropological theory and contemporary issues." The course was the contemporary successor, some thirty-five years later, to the course I took with Gene Weltfish, "anthropology and contemporary social problems."

Today the tables are turned and it is not only from my close associates but also from my students and their colleagues that I am learning. There is a new contingent in New York, and although some of today's senior women were important in establishing it, the New York Women's Anthropology Conference, Inc. is, in keeping with the spirit of the times, largely in the hands of young women. It is one of the many groups, formal and informal, that—again in the spirit of the times—are critically appraising social science, on both empirical and theoretical levels, as riddled with distortions by sex, race, and class. It was as a part of this critical review, and of the searching questions that are being raised, that most of the papers in this book were written.

1. Introduction: Engels and the History of Women's Oppression

by Eleanor Burke Leacock

In this paper I put forth the proposition that the continued separation of woman's position from the central core of social analysis, as an "and," "but," or "however," cannot but lead to continued distortions. This might be so because of the simple fact that women constitute half of humanity. The point I suggest instead, is that the notion of a somehow separate "woman's role" hides the reality of the family as an economic unit, an institution as crucial for the continued exploitation of working men as it is for the oppression of women. To understand this family form and its origins is fundamental to the interpretation of social structure, past and present, and to the understanding of how to fight for and win the right of the world's people to make decisions about their future. Relegation of family forms to secondary questions about "woman's role" has hindered us in our effort to comprehend the origins of class society, the dynamics of its perpetuation, and the shape of its full negation.

The same has been true of racial and national oppression, for they have also been relegated to the status of secondary issues in contemporary Marxist analysis, with serious consequences, both theoretical and political. Before developing my central point concerning family forms and their relevance to the interpretation of history, I shall review this parallel problem briefly.

As Marx pointed out, it was the expansion of the European market into the world market that transformed mercantile Europe

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From: Myths of Male Dominance
by Eleanor Burke Leacock
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into capitalist Europe. Historically, then, capitalism has been inseparable from racist brutality and national oppression throughout its history. Yet few Western scholars have chosen to explore all the ramifications of this connection. Marx unveiled the mystery of commodity production and the fetishism of money; he revealed the process whereby direct relations among people, as they labored to produce and to exchange the goods they then consumed, were transformed by the emergence of commodity production for profit, so that people's very labor became an alien force against them. In other words, Marx analyzed the nature of exploitation itself as a principle, and as a principle it was and is colorless, raceless, and sexless.

However, in the course of organizational failures and confusions in advanced capitalist countries, exploitation somehow became defined as centrally of whites and of men. Seduced by the divide-and-rule ploys that are constantly generated from the competitiveness inherent in capitalist structure and that are consciously reinforced by the servants of the powerful as well, scholars and self-styled revolutionaries, white and male, accepted the bribe of pitiful involvement in personal and petty oppression, and, bemused, analyzed society in their image, including the very nature of exploitation itself. The unifying power of the concept was destroyed by the hardening into dogma of a pernicious dichotomization, whereby the exploitation of the industrial worker, white and male, was pitted against the compounded exploitation and cruel oppression of the nonwhite as well as the nonmale.

The theoretical separation of class exploitation from other forms of oppression contributed to the tragic undermining of a revolutionary socialist movement in the United States following World War II. Black revolutionaries were forced to divide themselves in two, to dichotomize the oppression of their people through ritual statements that their exploitation as workers was more fundamental than their oppression as blacks. Thereby the special and powerful anger of black people was defined as inherently counterrevolutionary. I remember a black woman comrade, years ago now, saying, "I don't care what they say, *first* I am a Negro [the term "black" being then still a term of abuse], *then* I am a worker." Her third identity, powerfully adding to the totality of

her oppression, hence her potential as a revolutionary, that of a woman, she did not even express, so submerged then was such identification in the idiocies of a theoretically sterile organizational politicking. To pit national or racial oppression against class exploitation is a sophomoric sociological enterprise; it is not Marxist analysis. That people of color can fall across class lines—a few of them—has befuddled our thinking insofar as we are metaphysical and not dialectical. Class exploitation and racial and national oppression are all of a piece, for in their joining lay the victory of capitalist relations.

To pursue this line of criticism in a more academic context, consider the extent to which United States history has been written as the history of white men. The contribution from the left has mainly been to stress that the black experience must be added. Recently, some American Indians, and now women, are being tacked on as well—as if it were a matter of merely adding these extras to make the whole, rather than a matter of fundamental rethinking. Consider also how the history of capitalist development has been written as if wholly white, deriving almost totally from internal European processes. Relations with Africa, Asia, and the New World are seen as extras, as gravy, unimportant until quite late when they set off Europe's final imperialist exploitation. It is agreed that the English capital which made industrialization possible was derived in major part from the triangular trade in slaves, rum, and sugar (produced in what were models for European factories, the sugar mills of the Caribbean plantations), and then the significance of that fact is forgotten. W. E. B. DuBois and Eric Williams are respectfully saluted and their work is ignored or said to be overstated (DuBois 1946; Williams 1944). It is as if the victory of bourgeois market relations over feudalism, and the "freeing" of workers to sell their labor, were largely internal European developments that involved only white men. In fact it was the uniting of class, race, and national exploitation and oppression on a world scale that made the triumph of the European bourgeoisie possible. The reality was all too painfully evident to Toussaint L'Ouverture when he unsuccessfully tried to win support for a free Haiti from the revolutionary French bourgeoisie, as C. L. R. James so masterfully relates (1963).

Sometimes it is argued that racial and national oppressions were in theory not essential to a victory of capitalist relations. The argument is fruitless, for historically they *were* joined. True, it was an accident of human physical differentiation that peninsular Europe was inhabited by a people who had lost much of the melanin in their skin, as it was an accident of geography that it was an area with many harbors and waterways, and relatively available coal and iron that made possible primary industrialization once the area had caught up with the ancient urban world. On another planet it might have been different. On ours, however, when it behooved energetic merchants to wring great profits from workers other than those in their own nations, color offered a convenient excuse. The first rationale for slavery was religious, since economic conflicts in Europe had been fought for so long in religious terms. "Heathens" were natural slaves. The rationale did not last long, since heathens could easily convert, at least nominally, when it was in their interest to do so. Color, an elaboration of the "white man's burden," then became the excuse for conquest, plunder, and enslavement of non-Europeans. Racism did, and still does, serve powerfully to divide the world's workers. It befuddles the scholar as well. Were humanity either wholly "white" or wholly "black," would the early history of exploitation and oppression in the Third World be considered as somehow apart from, or as merely supplementary to, exploitation of Western workers?

I trust I have labored my point sufficiently. At present, Marxist social scientists and revolutionaries in Latin America and Africa are beginning to clarify these issues. Today there are many who recognize that it is critical to sort out true and false oppositions in joining the struggle of the world's people to bury class society before it buries us all. The point I want to make here is that the same is true when it comes to the oppression of women. And sex oppression goes further back, not just to the rise of capitalist class relations, but to the origins of class itself.

According to the happenstances of disciplinary boundaries, as they became defined in the nineteenth century, the task of analyzing the nature and origin of women's oppression has fallen to us as anthropologists. I cannot say that we have risen to the task. The

dominant view today is that women have always been to some degree oppressed—the usual term is "dominated"—by men, because men are stronger, they are responsible for fighting, and it is in their nature to be more aggressive. In the United States, the position has been stated most fully by Tiger and Fox. Fox, in fact, uses the term "man" literally to mean male, rather than generically human. As "man evolved, he evolved exogamously," writes Fox. "At some point in the evolution of his behavior he began to define social units and to apply rules about the recruitment of people to these units and the allocation of women amongst them" (Fox 1972). Referring to Lévi-Strauss, he elaborates this theory of human evolution with "we" as male, and women as passive objects of exchange:

For in behavior as in anatomy, the strength of our lineage lay in a relatively generalized structure. It was precisely because we did *not* specialize like our baboon cousins that we had to *contribute* solutions involving the control and exchange of females. (Fox 1972: 296–297)

Fox's basically biological view is gaining in popularity, containing as it does fashionable allusions to Lévi-Strauss. However, more common among those who discuss sex roles are blunt judgments, empirically phrased, that casually relegate to the wastebasket of history the profound questions about women's status that were raised by nineteenth-century writers. "It is common sociological truth that in all societies authority is held by men, not women," writes Beidelman (1971: 43); "At both primitive and advanced levels, men tend regularly to dominate women," states Goldschmidt (1959: 164); "men have always been politically and economically dominant over women," reports Harris (1971: 328). Some women join in. Women's work is always "private," while "roles within the public sphere are the province of men," write Hammond and Jablow (1973: 11). Therefore "women can exert influence outside the family only indirectly through their influence on their kinsmen."

The first problem with such statements is their lack of historical perspective. To generalize from cross-cultural data gathered almost wholly in the twentieth century is to ignore changes that

have been taking place for anywhere up to five hundred years as a result of involvement, first with European mercantilism, then with full-scale colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, there is almost a kind of racism involved, an assumption that the cultures of Third World peoples have virtually stood still until destroyed by the recent mushrooming of urban industrialism. Certainly, one of the most consistent and widely documented changes brought about during the colonial period was a decline in the status of women relative to men. The causes were partly indirect, as the introduction of wage labor for men, and the trade of basic commodities, speeded up processes whereby tribal collectives were breaking up into individual family units, in which women and children were becoming economically dependent on single men. The process was aided by the formal allocation to men of whatever public authority and legal right of ownership was allowed in colonial situations, by missionary teachings, and by the persistence of Europeans in dealing with men as the holders of all formal authority (Boserup 1971).

The second problem with statements like the above is largely a theoretical one. The common use of some polar dimension to assess woman's position, and to find that everywhere men are "dominant" and hold authority over women, not only ignores the world's history, but transmutes the totality of tribal decision-making structures (as we try to reconstruct them) into the power terms of our own society. Lewis Henry Morgan had a marvelous phrase for such practice. He used it when talking of the term "instinct," but it is generally apt. Such a term, he wrote, is "a system of philosophy in a definition, and instillation of the super-natural which silences at once all inquiry into the facts" (1963: viii). In this instance, women are conveniently allocated to their place, and the whole inquiry into the structure of the primitive collective is stunted. The primitive collective emerges with no structure—no contradictions—of its own; it is merely our society minus, so to speak.

Two examples help clarify these points. On history, take the Balonda, one of the Lunda Bantu peoples of the Congo. In his handbook of African peoples, Murdock writes of political authority among them as "vested in a headman and council of lineage or

family heads within the local community," and over these, "district or subtribal chiefs with important ritual functions" (1959: 286). All are taken for granted as men. Murdock goes on to say that, although the Balonda are patrilineal and patrilocal, their Crow kinship terminology, plus a number of related practices, suggests that they were originally matrilineal and avunculocal like neighboring Bantu peoples (297–288). Murdock is a careful and conscientious scholar, and he or his assistants did, I am sure, scan the some dozen references, English and French, that he lists. Nonetheless, there is no mention of David Livingstone's encounter with the Balonda, when he was travelling through the area in 1857. At that time, women, as well as men, were chiefs. Livingstone's account of a young woman chief in her twenties and her self-assurance both in relation to him and to the district chief, her maternal uncle, is so revealing that I am going to give it at some length.

Livingstone entered a Balonda village on the sixth of January and was brought before the chief. He wrote that a man and woman "were sitting on skins, placed in the middle of a circle, thirty paces in diameter, a little raised above the ordinary level of the ground." His men put their arms down, Livingstone continued,

... and I walked up to the center of the circular bench, and saluted him in the usual way, by clapping the hands together in their fashion. He pointed to his wife, as much to say, the honour belongs to her. I saluted her in the same way, and, a mat having been brought, I squatted down in front of them.

The talker was then called, and I was asked who was my spokesman. . . . (1857: 274)

This was Nyamoana, sister of Shinte, and mother of Manenko, a young woman chief. The discussion proceeded, Livingstone to his interpreter, the interpreter to Nyamoana's talker, the talker to her husband, her husband to her, the response moving back through the same chain. Livingstone wanted to travel on alone to Nyamoana's brother, Shinte, while Nyamoana wanted her people to accompany the missionary. The arrival of Manenko, the young chief, and her husband, ended the argument and much to Livingstone's annoyance, Manenko was to take him to Shinte. "As neither my men nor myself had much inclination to encounter a scolding

... we made ready the packages," he wrote. However, there was some delay on Manenko's part, so Livingstone seized the opportunity to leave. She intervened,

... seized the luggage, and declared that she would carry it in spite of me. My men succumbed sooner to this petticoat government than I felt inclined to do, and left me no power; and, being unwilling to encounter her tongue, I was moving off to the canoes, when she gave me a kind explanation, and, with her hand on my shoulder, put on a motherly look, saying, "Now, my little man, just do as the rest have done." My feelings of annoyance of course vanished, and I went out to try and get some meat. (1857: 279)

They walked, too fast for the comfort of Livingstone's men, Manenko without any protection from the cold rain. Livingstone was told that chiefs "must always wear the appearance of robust youth, and bear vicissitudes without wincing." When they arrived at the district chief's, Livingstone gave him an ox, whereupon Manenko angrily asserted it to be hers. Livingstone was "her white man," she declared and she had her men slaughter the ox and give her uncle one leg. Livingstone noted, "Shinte did not seem at all annoyed at the occurrence," thereby corroborating the correctness of Manenko's position (1857: 295).

Everywhere in Africa that one scrapes the surface one finds ethnohistorical data on the authority once shared by women but later lost. However, to leave the matter at this, and argue a position of "matriarchy" as a "stage" of social evolution is but the other face of the male dominance argument. Pleasant for a change, to be sure, but not the true story. For what such data reveal is the *dispersed nature of decision-making in pre-class societies*—the key to understanding how such societies functioned as "collectives." The second example, from the Montagnais-Naskapi of eastern Canada, makes this point clear. Here we have more than just hints of early Naskapi scattered through various documents. Instead we have rich ethnohistorical data in the *Jesuit Relations*, particularly in the letters Father Paul Le Jeune wrote back to his superiors in France in the 1630s (Thwaites 1906).

Elsewhere I have written of the Naskapi at length, of the fur trade and its impact on the band collective, of the emergence of the individual trap line, improperly called the privately-owned

hunting territory, and of the changing position of women (Leacock 1954). The early accounts indicate a matrilineal emphasis in Naskapi society and refer to the considerable "power" held by women. The twentieth-century ethnographies, on the other hand, indicate a loose structure with an emphasis on patrilineality, and infer male "authority" (Leacock 1955). Both early and late, however, considerable flexibility is reported, with no hardened formal structure. Therefore, social practices shifted without the same kind of overt recognition and resistance as, say, that among the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest who have long struggled to maintain their mores. To the ethnographers of the early twentieth century, the Indians, camping temporarily here and there in the woods in the winter, speaking their own language almost exclusively, wearing moccasins of traditional style, sharing game animals within the group, and still remembering much of their pre-metal-tool technology, appeared little changed from pre-Columbian times. In fact, however, the economic basis for the multifamily groups that lived collectively as winter units and that had links with parallel groups which could be activated in times of need, had been fundamentally undercut by the fur trade. The beaver and other furbearers had been transformed from animals that were immediately consumed, the meat eaten and the fur used, to commodities, goods to be kept, individually "owned" until exchanged for goods upon which the Indians had come increasingly to depend. The process whereby "goods" were transformed into "commodities," although completed early in the old centers of trade, was still incomplete in outlying areas well into the twentieth century, so that the outlines of the change could be reconstructed from my field work, with the seventeenth-century Jesuit records serving as the base line.

In the 1630s individuals within Naskapi society were autonomous; people made decisions about activities for which they were responsible. Group decisions were arrived at through feeling for consensus. The essential and direct interdependence of the group as a whole both necessitated this autonomy and made it possible as a viable system—*total interdependence was inseparable from real autonomy*. The *Relations* document the ethic of group solidarity as bound up with individual autonomy that together characterize

the Naskapi. The emphasis was on generosity, on cooperation, on patience and good humor, but also on never forcing one's will on others. This ethic was enforced through ridicule and teasing, often bawdy, behind which lay the threat of great anger at injustice, and the deep fear of starvation, that might ultimately force individual hunters to abandon the group in order that someone might survive. The psychological expression of this fear was a cannibal monster—the *witigo*—and a cannibalistic psychosis. . . .

The "sagamores," or "headmen," were spokesmen or intermediaries for the group; they held no formal power. "They have reproached me a hundred times because we fear our Captains, while they laugh at and make sport of theirs," bemoaned Le Jeune (Thwaites 1906: 11: 243). They "cannot endure in the least those who seem desirous of assuming superiority over the others; they place all virtue in a certain gentleness or apathy" (16: 165). Shamans were often people of considerable personal influence. Women as well as men became shamans at that time; this has ceased to be the case. In one incident recounted in the *Relations*, a woman shaman took over from a man who had not succeeded in reaching the gods. She began to shake the houses and "to sing and cry so loudly, that she caused the devil to come," whereupon she called upon the people to rally in war against the Iroquois. When a Jesuit Father took her to task, "she drew a knife, and threatened to kill him" (9: 113-117).

Personally, I have been tempted to think of women as "natural" peacemakers; it is a role they play in many societies. Among the Naskapi, however, women joined in the protracted torture of Iroquois prisoners with even more fury than the men, in bitter anger at the loss of kinsmen dear to them. As for the notion of women "obeying" their husbands, the *Relations* are full of arguments over this issue, with women running away from zealous male converts who were threatening to punish them for disobedience.

Reconstructed bits and pieces from the last five hundred years of North American Indian history suggest that parallel development took place quite widely among previously egalitarian peoples. As trade, and in some cases wage labor, undercut the collective economy, chiefs and other men of influence began to

play roles beyond that of spokesmen, often as entrepreneurial go-betweens in commercial matters, or as leaders of resistance, and the masculine "authority" of ethnographic accounts took shape (although doubtless often exaggerated, as they depended largely on male informants). Under colonial conditions, the "public" and "private" sphere became divided, as had not been the case when the "household" was the "community," and the "public" sphere became invested with a semblance of the male power it represents in state-organized society. However, to consider latter-day chiefs as having held ultimate authority in earlier tribal terms, is to distort the structure of societies in which relations with outside groups were not yet combined with an internal economic basis for the exercise of individual power.

At first blush, the fact that in some instances chiefly authority was undercut by the colonial usurpation of power would seem to contradict the above. However, while the great reaches of the North and Northeast, down into the western plains and plateaus, constituted a huge area in which collective life was as yet unchallenged, in the southern and coastal areas of what became the United States and Canada, native American societies were developing internal cleavages prior to Columbus. I have been using the term "tribal" in an inappropriately undifferentiated manner in order to make my general point; in fact, however, the lumping of non-Western and non-Oriental peoples into a single category of "primitive," "preliterate," "tribal," etc., that is then contrasted with "civilization" has been a source of confusions which are not yet entirely cleared up. Classes, with their contradictory properties of freeing human ability and creativity through specialization of labor, while at the same time alienating the producers from control over the products of their labor, were of course developed or developing in many parts of the so-called primitive world prior to European colonialism. What is of moment in the present argument, however, is that in both egalitarian societies where chiefly authority was a matter of purely personal influence, and in stratified societies where it was based on some form of economic control over a significant part of the society's production—or whatever variation on the two principles or the combination of them in fact existed in the historic moment of any given society at

the time of Columbus—at the heart of subsequent changes in group structure was the delineation or strengthening of the family as an economic unit and its separation from essential dependence on band or kin ties.

The authority structure of egalitarian societies where all individuals were equally dependent on a collective larger than the nuclear family, was one of wide dispersal of decision-making among mature and elder women and men, who essentially made decisions—either singly, in small groups, or collectively—about those activities which it was their socially defined responsibility to carry out. Taken together, these constituted the “public” life of the group. These were the decisions about the production and distribution of goods; about the maintenance, building, and moving of the camp or village; about learning and practicing various specialties and crafts, and becoming curers, artists, priests, dancers, story tellers, etc.; about the settlement of internal disputes and enforcement of group norms; about feasts connected with birth, adolescence, death, and other rites of passage; about marriage; about ceremonial life and the extra-legal or anti-social manipulation of supernatural power; about the declaration of war and the making of peace. Even a casual consideration of any nonstratified society one knows reveals that in the precolonial context, in so far as the culture can be reconstructed, to speak simply of men as “dominant” over women distorts the varied processes by which decisions in all the above areas were made.*

In order to grasp the nature of the social collective from which class divisions arose, it is essential to grasp the implications of decision-making as widely dispersed, with no one holding power over another by social fiat (only by personal influence). All of this

* Although one must check for distortions in the ethnography of a group. For example, take men “exchanging” women in Australia. Older men may spend a great deal of time talking about such exchange (as to Hart and Pilling), but older women are also involved; sons are married off by elders as well; and the young people do have ways of refusing if they are dead set against the marriage. Furthermore, marriage is not that big a deal anyway, since divorce is easy, and sexual exclusiveness a foreign concept. To talk of “power” by men over women in such instances, as if it were the power of a Victorian father to consign his daughter for a life of personal servitude to a man she dislikes, is ethnocentric distortion.

is nothing new, of course, since Engels outlined the entire proposition in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972). It is the more surprising, therefore, that so little additional study has been made of the processes whereby the emergence of commodity production and a merchant class were interrelated with the breakdown of the tribal collective into individual units that were economically responsible, privately, for rearing a new generation.

The male bias to which I have already alluded is part of the reason why *Origin* has not been taken more seriously. However, a good part also lies in the brevity and design of the book itself. *Origin* sets up a paradigm, a model of tribal society as contrasted with class society. Virtually all of the non-European and non-Oriental world are placed in the first category, and Greece, Rome, and early Germany are used as examples of the transition from collective kin-based to class-organized society. Therefore the book leaves in a very unsatisfactory state the colonial peoples who were in various stages of transition to class and state organization when their autonomous development was interrupted. Morgan's over-correction of the Aztecs, so to speak, in his concern to clarify distinctions between Aztec rule and more entrenched state organization, was accepted by Engels, so *Origin* had little applicability directly to New World urban societies. And the fact that Morgan, Marx, and Engels all shared an ethnocentric ignorance of Africa has limited the applicability of *Origin* to the analysis of African kingdoms. Furthermore, Engels' lack of any reference to the “Oriental” society that so interested Marx, and that subsumed, in a general way, the patriarchal societies of the East and of the classical Mediterranean that existed for thousands of years, is a further shortcoming. Finally, perhaps, Engels' work has suffered precisely because it has been so accepted, for despite its shortcomings, it is still a masterful and profound theoretical synthesis. At a time when Marx is being taken off his pedestal as a god who ordained the future and is being seen increasingly as a man of great brilliance who armed people's hope for a better life with theoretical tools for organizing their fight for such a life, the fact that Engels' work has to such an extent been reduced to dogma has probably worked to its disadvantage. And, again, first and last, it has been relegated to the status of a “woman's book,”

peripheral to the scholarly domain. I cannot help but digress with an anecdote. Having sent a copy of the new edition of *Origin* with my introduction to a colleague, whom I knew was interested in many of the questions I discussed, I asked for his reaction. He thanked me for sending the book and assured me that he had given it to his wife who was very much engrossed in it.

At present, then, we have something of a paradox. We are becoming acquainted with some of Marx's thinking about early social forms that he did not bring to publication in *Capital* or elsewhere—parts of the *Grundrisse* that predated it, and now the beautifully edited *Ethnological Notebooks* that followed it. Yet these are being considered strangely apart from *Origin*, as if they somehow superseded it, as if *Origin* did not represent in the main the product of both Marx's and Engels' thinking. After all, the questions the notebooks raise—the full significance of commodity production and its early development in relation to money and then coinage, the relation between slave and free labor, between internal and external markets, between town and countryside in ancient society—were all discussed in *Origin*, along with their relation to the family as the fundamental economic unit in class society.

A recent exception is Mariarosa Dalla Costa's "Women and the Subversion of the Community" (n.d.), which elaborates on the economic significance of women's labor within the private confines of the family for the production of a new generation of workers. Dalla Costa also discusses distinctions between the patriarchal family and the capitalist family, as the center of production shifted from the patriarchal home to the factory. Again, however, in the contemporary academic setting in which Marxist anthropologists largely function, this is considered a "women's article."

In closing, I want to suggest the kinds of research questions that would begin to redress the imbalance I have been discussing:

1. Is the strongly institutionalized sex antagonism that is found among Melanesian and Latin American tropical forest horticulturalists tied in with an early phase in the development of specialization and trade and the breaking up of the primitive collective? What are common features in both geographical areas? Are there parallels elsewhere, somewhat obscured by the happenstances of

who writes about what and where? Is the formalized hostility related to incipient competitiveness over a surplus of food, at times allowed to rot in keeping with egalitarian pressures, yet beginning to operate as an independent force through trade? Is there a concomitant shift from matrilineal to patrilineal kinship? How widely was social structure affected by slaving (in Latin America the Yanoama apparently came out on top of neighboring peoples in this respect) or by recruitment of plantation labor (so common in Melanesia)?

2. What about the comparative study of cloth as a major form of goods that could be easily transformed into a commodity? In fact, cloth suggests itself as a perfect commodity, not only in Europe (and not only because of the first hundred pages of *Capital*), but because it is useful everywhere, and in many places essential, for everyone, while at the same time it is capable of generating a widespread demand as a luxury item that must constantly be replaced. It is readily storable, and not overly heavy for transportation, and it is very time-consuming to produce by hand. Cloth is indicated as important in the emergence of commodity production and in the delineating of the extended family household as an economic unit. Note such items as Marx's references to wives and daughters producing cloth in the (patriarchal) Oriental household; references to traded cloth like those of de Lacerda, the eighteenth-century Portuguese emissary to Angola and Zambia (Burton 1969: 79); the fact that England destroyed the Indian cloth industry when it took over that country; the discussion by John Murra on the role of cloth in strengthening the economic base of the Inca state (1962); the probable importance of cloth manufacture in the development of classes in Mesopotamia (informally, Robert Adams indicated to me that material on women as weaver-workers, and on their declining status, are available for attempting to reconstruct the early relations of class and family in this area); the importance of cloth as a trade item among the Maya (June Nash informed me that the more independent women in late Maya society were those who were weavers as well as other specialists—potters, healers, midwives, and tradeswomen).

3. What about commodity production seen from a different vantage point, the market? The study of internal markets and

external trade as they relate to the emergence of classes and the state has clearly suffered from the failure to tie in the emergence of the family as an economic unit. In West Africa, for example, data on women as internal marketers and men as external traders have too often been the focus for argument over women's status relative to men, rather than the focus for reconstruction of class and state formation. A wealth of questions awaits research in this region, where for more than five hundred years taxes from trade laid the basis for royal centers that maintained themselves along with standing armies and elaborate entourages. The historical rise and fall of these centers, the extent of urban development involved, and the nature of economic ties between these and surrounding agricultural village areas, are questions clearly related to the delineation of at least upper-class families as entrepreneurial economic units, and in many parts of West Africa kin groups ceased functioning as collectives long before colonial times. West Africa offers data on a further topic, the resistance of women to the process of their exclusion from newly-developing forms of public authority.*

4. A problem of increasing interest today is the structure of those precapitalist class societies that have been loosely dubbed "Oriental." In the congeries of questions to do with relations between city and countryside, nature of classes, and extent of trade, the patriarchal extended family cannot be ignored as a central institution, with its upper-class and lower-class variations.

5. I could continue indefinitely, but let me end with ideology. The series of fascinating questions about concepts of omniscience and omnipotence, and absolute good and evil, that accompany the rise of classical theocracies, cannot ignore that what becomes a primary evil, sex, is represented by female temptation, not male. Are we going to leave this where Freud left it? When does the shift take place from "female" as symbolic of positive fertility to "female" as temptation to evil? Aztec theology was moving toward absolutes; are there hints of the latter aspect? When does it appear in Mesopotamia? It was very early that the law codified that women could *no longer* take "two husbands" or they would be

*For example, among the Igbo of Nigeria.

stoned. An interesting early version of the Protestant ethic was represented by women who lived together as ascetics—as nuns, but were independent business women who produced cloth.

To sum up, to relegate the analysis of changing family forms to a secondary status leaves social interpretation not only incomplete, but distorted. Furthermore, to leave out women as women, leaves out people, hence much of the dialectic that is involved in individual decision-making is the stuff of social process. Such omission is conducive to mechanical determinism in the analysis of both pre-class and class society. And finally, the passing over as subsidiary of subjects concerning women not only distorts understanding, but becomes another stone in the wall of masculine resistance that moves women to reject Marxism as not relevant to their problems. As a result, the positive contribution Marxists should be making toward the women's movement is hampered. Marx indicated that the oppression of women in a society was the measure of its general oppression. One can add, the strength of women's involvement in a movement dedicated to opposing a social order is a measure of the movement's strength—or weakness.