Part one

Theoretical perspectives

Chapter 1

Centre and periphery: a review of a concept

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Introduction

One of the great strengths of marxism as a critical doctrine has been its claim to expose purportedly complete explanations as in fact partial and ideologically biased. As Lukacs put it, 'it is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between marxism and bourgeois thought but the point of view of totality' (Lukacs 1968:27). In the mid twentieth century, the dominant theory of development in the core countries of the capitalist world economy had added little to nineteenth century theories of social change. Societies changed due to the logic of their internal historical development and either because of historical accident or indigenous advantages, some were simply more advanced than others. In other words, the framework was historicist and fixed firmly in categories of thought that anticipated all societies moving through objectively similar stages of growth and development. Moreover each society was moved along in this process by a constant examination of its own origins and an assessment of its rate of progress. This subjective evaluation of an objective past formed the ontological basis on which future growth was deemed to depend. It is more than a coincidence that physical excavation of past fragments and their being brought into order through interpretation and publication should also have developed as the dominant archaeological method by which this process of self identification would be achieved.

In *Emile*, Rousseau urges his heroine to preserve authen-

ticity against all the dissolving influences of modernity and recommends 'First of all, you must build a wall around your child's soul. Behind the protective enclosure of education the underground work of excavation could go on to recover the buried roots of the human spirit on which true liberation depended' (cit. Berman 1970:171). It is perhaps symptomatic of twentieth-century pessimism that this attitude to the benefits of digging deep had already soured by the time of Freud. 'The destruction of Pompeii was only beginning now that it had been dug up' he says in his description of the Rat Man (Freud 1909:153). This Nietzschean theme that the products of human life (spontaneity) become corroded when brought into the light of day (conscious reason) has generated a rich discourse much of which is probably irrelevant for most practising archaeologists. Yet in the decline from Enlightenment optimism to *fin-de-siècle* pessimism, excavation retained a privileged if transformed role. The royal road to archaeological knowledge betrays its own origins in an objectivity/subjectivity dualism that quite unquestioningly accorded privilege to the means of constituting a long and enduring narrative of its own past. Rousseau's advice betrays a related theme that is equally constant. Self-identity can only be constituted through the prior existence of a sense of boundedness. This thoroughly modern virtue assumes that awareness of historical development is a conscious process and is restricted to motivated actors living within the bounds of their mutually accepted limits of self-identity. In this respect there is little difference between historicist, evolutionist or diffusionist doctrines since for them, the autonomy of the cultural unit is never in doubt, only its capacity for creativity. Yet boundedness requires a definition of 'otherness', an excluded category of the incomprehensible or the undesirable against which the certainty and familiarity of habitual and traditional action can constantly be reaffirmed. Censorship functions as a strategy of exclusion to place such aberrations into the space of the alien, the primitive or the unconscious. Whatever their form, all share common properties in their unpredictability, irrationality or uncontrollable nature in contrast to stable self identity being the product of belonging to bounded social units embedded in traditional ways of life.

The categories of objectivity and subjectivity have been largely shaped by this peculiarly western experience to the extent that they have been constituted in constant antagonism to each other (Rowlands 1984b). In archaeology, 'digging deep' in order to reconstruct the particular history of a unique historical community has for long been opposed to a tradition of skeptical disbelief that values an outsider point of view. Whilst the former privileges the search for identity through authenticity, the latter exphasises truth usually by claiming that historical processes exist that operate outside of human conscious knowledge altogether. Moreover subjectivity was attacked as being not only Eurocentric and mystifying but intentionally concerned with denying its own real conditions of objective existence. The total assault on subjectivity in the post World War II era is understandable given that some of the most barbaric acts of twentieth-century history were perpetrated as a justification of the view that objective and subjective conditions of existence were only to be experienced within the same socially defined unit. Various nationalisms, fascisms and the 'gulag' have been pursued in the belief that a subjective definition of wholeness, as a product of historical or racial purity, should physically dominate and control all the objective material conditions which affect it. Given that this has been a constant recipe for militaristic expansion as well as the baleful consequences of a 'hunger for wholeness' which placed all those outside the bounds of pure identity as inferior and non-human, it is scarcely surprising that all attempts to rationalise or integrate subjective and objective approaches in the post-war era have resulted in failure. Even so, their antagonism is quite misguided and perpetuates a pathology of the western intellectual tradition. Those who adhere to a scientific, objectivist stance can never cope with the real emotional forces that shape people's perceptions of their own past and the role it plays in the present. And those that espouse a dogged subjectivism espouse a relatavism that can make nothing of the ironies and unintended consequences of the history that impinge upon sentient human action. Moreover, those that adopt the psychotic solution of jumbling the two stances together become confused or worse. By the early 60s in a range of different fields, a solution had been arrived at which recognised the distinctiveness of the two stances and yet which also recognised their complementarity. Both were seen as necessary aspects of the same cognitive process which may be carried on in different contexts without it necessarily arousing conflict between them (cf. Jay 1977). It is to this tradition that attempts by writers such as Braudel, Frank and Wallerstein to revise modern European theories of social change belong and against which their claims have to be judged.

Development and underdevelopment

In the late 40s and 50s, the dominant view of world history stressed the independent development of the West, which had now reached a peak of economic and political power, and a world role for the USA in the management of international politics and development. Comparative sociology had demonstrated conclusively that the precocious rise of the West was due to a unique combination of material and cultural factors that were not to be found elsewhere. Through the transmission of technological and managerial skills, economic aid and education, it was envisaged that the developed West could intervene to break the conditions of historical underdevelopment in the rest of the world. These ideals passed from political science into anthropology to generate a distinctive body of fieldwork and publication in this period (see Wolf 1982) and also into archaeology through the impact of neo-evolutionist doctrines in America and Britain (cf. Binford 1962; Renfrew 1972).

As a perspective on modern development, these views were most trenchantly criticised by André Gunder Frank (1966, 1969) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979a); for the precapitalist eras by Ekholm (1977) and Ekholm and Friedman (1979, 1980) and more cautiously by Jane Schneider (1977); and for the ethnographic non-capitalist world by Eric Wolf (1982). Frank articulated the then heretical position that capitalism had been expansionist since the sixteenth century and wherever it penetrated had

turned other areas into underdeveloped dependent satellites (Wallerstein's peripheries) in order to extract surpluses to meet the requirements of at first mercantile and subsequently industrial metropoles (Wallerstein's centres). Both Frank's and Wallerstein's theses are strongly circulationist in arguing that the expansion of a world market has created an international division of labour as a precondition for exploitation to take place. The underdevelopment of peripheral areas was not a result of their archaic social structures but a product of their historical relations with the developed world, ever renewed and intensified by the transfer of surplus and their dependence on manufactured goods and technological innovation from industrialised core areas.

The general argument has not gone unscathed and the literature on the debate is now so enormous as to be impossible to summarise here (cf. Goodman and Redclift 1982: Chapter 2). Some of the most astringent criticisms have come from orthodox Marxists who have criticised the emphasis on unequal exchange and the failure to analyse internal class relations within core and peripheral social formations. They have objected also to the functionalism of the argument which denies peripheral formations their own histories of development and resistances to exploitation (Laclau 1971; Brenner, 1977). A theory which claims that conscious identity with local social units, whether nation states, ethnic groups, or religious movements, is shaped and formed by outside forces is unlikely to appeal to those advocating political action as a means of equalising the world order. Neither Frank nor Wallerstein (or their critics) have been particularly interested in the precapitalist era. To exaggerate slightly, it might be said that they chose to reproduce the modern/premodern division of world history and saw a 'world system', imperialism and a 'world economy' as uniquely modern phenomena. Prior to the sixteenth century, they argued, history had been the product of expanding polities (world empires) that related to each other through conquest, militarism and tribute (Wallerstein 1974: Intro.). In this respect, Wallerstein can be placed firmly in the substantivist camp. By contrast, Ekholm and Friedman have stressed the long-term continuity which exists between precapitalist and capitalist world economies and noted that the transition to the modern world economy was itself the product of the dissolution of a previously unified medieval European/Mediterranean world economy (Ekholm and Friedman 1979; 1980, also Schneider 1977). In many respects, and in particular the emphasis on the longevity of capital accumulation, their thesis is part of the long-standing primitivist/modernist debate on the characterisation of the ancient economy (cf. Will 1954; Finley 1973). It needs emphasising therefore that it is the scale of interaction, rather than the significance of 'trade' or the existence of primitive or archaic forms of capitalism, that has most appealed to some archaeologists and historians working in earlier time periods. World Systems/Dependency theory has had greater impact on rethinking the significance of large-scale spatial/temporal shifts in geopolitical centres; on the correlation of expanding peripheral formations with political decentralisation in far-away core areas and on the theorisation of irreversible social change (e.g. Kohl 1978; Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978; Gledhill 1979; Kristiansen 1982; Upham 1982). In addition, more interest has been shown in how it helps to understand cyclical development in early states and empires, on modes of incorporation and resistance to incorporation by peripheral social formations and the effects of both on their internal development (Kohl 1977; Hedeager 1978b; Haselgrove 1982). Questions which previously had floundered in the vaguer language of interaction and diffusion or had never been raised because the subject matters were deemed to belong to separate, specialist disciplines.

However, as some of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, a simple projection of such ideas into the past has not proceeded without difficulty (cf. Kohl, Larsen). Kohl summarises the position for the Ancient Near East in the following manner: 'the model of a world system, which Wallerstein defined for the modern era only imperfectly, describes structured interactions in antiquity... the development of underdevelopment in the Bronze Age was sharply constrained or itself underdeveloped' (this volume p. 22). The reasons for this, he summarises, were that technologies were neither as specialised nor as controlled in the same way; transport systems limited large-scale interregional economic integration and the capacity of cores to control and dominate their peripheries for long periods of time were more constrained (Kohl, this volume p. 23). In fact, similar criticisms have been levelled at Wallerstein's characterisation that the modern world has been 'capitalist' in the above sense, since the sixteenth century and it has been argued instead that most of these features are true only for the post World War II (see Wolf 1982). So, whether this constitutes a real capitalist/precapitalist empirical contrast is open to doubt. Nevertheless, as Kohl further remarks, 'models that fail also instruct and consideration of the economic and political linkages among disparate social formations is essential to advance beyond the theoretically simple minded and empirically innocent alternatives proveded by neo-evolutionism' (Kohl this volume, p. 24). It has to be the purpose of this introductory chapter to suggest ways in which such theories, used heuristically, can help us to do so.

Systems of social reproduction

Theorists of markedly different positions have chosen to agree that the analysis of social units is distinct from interpreting interactions between them. The reasons for this are complex and rooted in the conditions leading to the development of modern nation states and the promotion of international trade as their optimum means of interaction. The result is a received wisdom which polarises the categories of production and exchange and privileges the first as occurring within a bounded social unit and determines that the latter exists between them. Moreover, the internal circulation of goods within a social unit is assumed to take on a different form from foreign trade and to be influenced by social factors which might otherwise be considered as market imperfections.

Such ideas are characteristic of many general analyses which have interpreted modern social development through posing dualistic evolutionary models of exchange relations. This includes the general influence of Marx, Weber and Polanyi, who,

although varying in specific content, tended to dichotomise between capitalist and precapitalist, rational and non-rational, embedded and disembedded economies and thus temporalise what was in origin experienced spatially. Marx's well-known assertion that the exchange of objects precedes historically the exchange of labour and that it took place initially on the boundaries of or between productive communities, whilst internal distribution took the form of an exchange of use values, guides the work of Meillassoux (1971), Sahlins (1974), Godelier (1977) and Gregory (1982). Much the same ethos underlies Mauss's distinction between gift exchange (or reciprocity) as the foundation of social relationships, and commerce as the seeking of profits through trade bringing about social dissolution (Mauss 1954). Polanyi's work was based on a strong political conviction that the function of the economy should be to strengthen social relationships and to eliminate conflict in the allocation of wealth which should conform to the values of each society (Humphreys 1969:203). The subordination of economic means to social ends had been for Polanyi a feature of all previous societies and in this sense he agreed with Weber that the unleashing of a pure economic rationality was the distinctive feature of modern capitalism and, for this reason, it was impossible to use its categories to understand the premodern. Weber's notion that status dominated in the ancient world and 'trading for gain' was of negligible importance and severely constrained is thus still central to debates on the characterisation of the ancient economy (Weber 1976; Finley 1973; Garnsey, Hopkins and Whittaker 1983; D'Arms 1981; Larsen, this volume).

In contrast to much of this orthodoxy, Wallerstein has always stressed that capitalism did not emerge in one particular bounded territorial unit but within what he terms a multi-state system (Wallerstein 1979a). His thesis therefore poses state-economy problems that are not singular but plural. The real value of this insight may have been obscured by his overestimating the international aspects of capitalism and his insistence that the 'world economy' has been capitalist since the sixteenth century AD. This tended to distract him and others from inquiring into the unevenness of the process and in particular that a 'capitalist core' in Europe was not formed 'all of a piece' but developed through the formation of increasingly antagonistic and self-contained nation states. Yet, in the sixteenth century, early modern Europe formed an emerging core which shared a certain unity within which relatively weak states held insecure control over their respective economic systems (Tilly 1977). Even the absolutist regimes of Spain and Portugal were unable to control the flow of bullion and treasure from the New World to the Netherlands and England to fund mercantile development there rather than within their own territories. What shaped this unity is unclear. It certainly was not Christianity, as in the Medieval world, nor was there a strongly idealised cultural–historical unity. Ties of diplomacy, court exchange, intermarriage of royals, foreign alliances and treaties of mutual support and defence were their overt manifestation.

The point to stress, therefore, is that the multi-state systems of early modern Europe, depending as they did on military strength and international treaties, were neither strongly articulated with the workings of the international economy nor with their own civil societies. A fully developed 'organic state' in which economy, social classes, culture and religion were 'nationalised' and limited to increasingly antagonistic nation states is a post eighteenth century phenomenon. Only then does it make sense to describe production as internal and trade as external or the state – paraphrasing Marx – as an executive committee managing the common affairs of the ruling classes. Moreover, only then can one say that a set of capitalist economic relations had been tamed and possessed by a nation state holding a monopoly of military force and able to regulate their self-contained economic interests within what were to become separate imperial domains.

It would be unrealistic to expect a similar set of contingencies to operate in earlier historical periods, although the incentives to regulate would certainly exist (cf. papers by Liverani and Zaccagnini, this volume). Hence, the stress on systems of social reproduction denies the necessary existence of bounded and self-contained geo-political units as a starting point to study interaction. This means more than simply taking 'trade' into account and might imply, for instance, the existence of extensive networks of political alliances imposed horizontally upon local and discrete populations (cf. Howard and Skinner 1984). In such cases, defining inside/outside divisions in social activity may be of less significance than recognising different scales and hierarchies of relations operating at different levels of geo-political resolution.

Centre – periphery

The pair of opposites, centre (or core) and periphery, has been extensively used to refer to the structure of integrated regional economic systems. In a modern context, these terms were first used in work concerned with understanding deterioration in the 'terms of trade' for agricultural and mineral products in relation to manufactured products in international trade. These two poles were taken as given and attention was focussed on what accounted for the deteriorating terms, given that it contradicted Ricardo's rule which states that partners in international trade should benefit equally by specialising in the production of commodities in which they held a comparative advantage in labour and other costs of production. Subsequently, attention turned to the formation of the division of labour through which respective patterns of export specialisation had formed. Centres came to be defined, therefore, as those areas which controlled more developed technological skills and production processes, forms of labour organisation (e.g. wage labour) and a strong state-ideological apparatus to defend its interests.

Peripheries were said to lack these attributes and to have been modified to meet external demands for raw materials. The functionalism which assumes that the periphery can simply be 'read off' by the role it plays to reproduce far-away centres has, understandably, been a most vigorous source of disagreement, particularly amongst third-world theorists (cf. Laclau 1971; Brenner 1977).

A number of difficulties exist in operationalising the content of this scheme – as it stands – to Old and New World areas of

'civilisation'. In fact to do so would present an array of empirical sequences. In the Ancient World, as has been pointed out, trade in bulk commodities over long distances may have been minimal (Adams 1974); land transport costs were high (Adams 1979; but see Hopkins 1983); technologies simple and easily dispersed (Kohl this volume); and resources more likely to be 'luxuries' (cf. Larsen this volume; Schneider 1977). Even Mesopotamia's chronic shortage of raw materials would not in itself imply dependency and a need to ensure regular supplies unless we knew why stone for temples or metals for internal circulation were critical to the reproduction of city states. But this may only be as much as saying that the Ancient World does not measure up to the complexity of the modern – which would not be surprising. What we should look for instead are the general axioms underpinning the scheme that may then be operationalised in several distinct empirical settings.

Centres

The definition requires that groups of polities and in particular their ruling elites become net consumers of resources (however culturally defined) from other polities by a variety of relations of exploitation. What is consumed is less important than how it is consumed, i.e. the circuits of consumption–production have to be traced to assess their importance for reproducing the whole. Such systems are rarely single polities although competition and the achievement of core hegemony may produce this situation. Usually we find groups of polities of roughly similar size, enmeshed in dynastic ties and treaties to regulate relations with each other in order to minimise conflicts of interest. (Examples may be Sumer, Larsen 1979; Valley of Mexico, Brumfiel n.d.; Maya, Marcus 1984.) It may be the network of alliances and its density and topological form that best define a centre, or those sub-centres that are in conflict for core hegemony. Struggles between rival core polities and tendencies toward core expansion are the likely result of competition for diminishing resources or loss of control over resources.

Peripheries

This requires the identification of polities and elites that are constrained to meet demands for surplus product. The actual transaction may involve transfers between different rulings elites to the perceived advantage of both. Hence peripheral incorporation may not involve devolution but quite the reverse. Yet, it has to be assumed that the costs of meeting these demands in terms of rates of exploitation in the periphery are greater than those at the centre. It also has to be assumed that peripheral elites have less choice in exchange partners and become increasingly dependent on such alliances in order to sustain local domination and stave off attacks on their status orders. Peripheries locked into political cul-de-sacs endure greater exploitation than those enjoying choice as a means of resistance. Hence, it is to the advantage of core polities to agree amongst themselves to limit competition over access to their respective peripheries in order to increase rates of exploitation. By reducing the capacity of their peripheries to resist, core elites potentially risk the survival of their peripheral partners: a calculation that is likely to depend on awareness as well as the availability of alternative options.

To define a social formation as peripheral requires therefore that it be possible to show that (a) however defined, the conditions which reproduce and extend social inequality are dependent on the network of alliances to which local elites belong; (b) that the costs of maintaining such a position are unequally distributed, both in terms of the relative rate of exploitation of local populations and the costs to local elites to participate in external alliance. Moreover, accepting the stress on specific forms of capitalist exploitation in the Frank/Wallerstein model, the most likely difference when compared with precapitalist cases is likely to be that the form of exchange is more politically motivated and directed towards control over persons rather than the direct intervention in the technological conditions of production and commodity exchange. Hence, quantitative measures of the degree of dependence and exploitation are likely to be misleading without a prior assessment of what kind of influence is being exercised over what kinds of social activity.

Structures of exploitation

World Systems theory promise a unified explanation of the development of 'complex societies' and 'tribal groups', the absence of which has long been problematic in unilinear evolutionary models. If the two categories are linked as parts of a single spatio-temporal process, rather than forming an evolutionary sequence, the central question raised is what constitutes the relationship between them? Moreover, it could be argued that the relationship is primary and constitutes the overt categories of centre and periphery.

Unequal exchange

The relation of unequal exchange is given priority in Frank and Wallerstein's theory of capitalist expansion (Emmanuel 1972). This states that the location of different production processes, labour forms and wage levels determines the transfer of surplus from peripheral primary producers to core producers of manufactured goods. The process of accumulation operates throughout the system to relocate production and capital investment wherever profitability is highest. That this may require the use of violence at times or involve other forms of direct intervention would – in their view – still be selected for by this basic economic calculus.

However, this is specific to the development of industrial capitalism and presumably cannot be generalised to earlier periods. A modified argument has been made which relates to mercantile activity either in the contemporary third world (Kay 1975) or for earlier periods (Wolf 1982: 183). This argues that different forms of production, existing as historical givens, are brought into exchange with each other through the entrepreneurial role of specialist traders. Profits accruing through the exploitation of price differences distributed in space are gained by those agents capable of organising trading expeditions and by the power holders of the societies they belong to. It is further argued that for merchants to maintain, if not expand, differentials in

rates of exchange, it is necessary that they exclude rivals from their sphere of influence since competition would lower exchange rates to the benefit of the producers. Excluding others from competition may be achieved in a number of different ways, e.g., benefits accrue to strong states that could intervene to preserve monopoly mercantile interests by force if necessary; or by the development of transport technologies over that of rivals (a feature particularly important in European mercantile expansion but also in Phoenician and Greek trade as well (Frankenstein 1979).

In order to exclude competitors, merchants have to depend on alliances with indigenous power holders to develop their interests. Yet it has also to be in the interest of the latter to harness mercantile activity to meet their needs. As has often been observed the relationship between state and merchant has therefore rarely been a harmonious one. The relationship of mercantile accumulation to state power has understandably gained a considerable literature which cannot possibly be summarised here (see Curtin 1984). Yet a central theme is the form of domination linking merchant capital to state power. This may involve power holders acting as discrete providers of trading capital, or wielding a monopoly in the supply of specialist products as well as controlling the means of violence and exerting forms of symbolic domination.

Until recently, far less attention had been paid to how 'complex societies' were able to penetrate and dominate internal circuits of exchange in peripheral societies. In such situations the term 'exchange' has consistently been used to refer to those situations where neither profit nor satisfaction of needs was supposedly a dominant motive for the circulation of goods. What had been discovered instead were various forms of exchange where evaluation of objects takes place within some morally defined hierarchy of value (Firth 1939:44). The study of exchange became the study of idealised relations based on the assumption that giving in the absence of alienation (or in the certain knowledge of a return) engenders social relationships. Once this basic assumption was accepted, the argument narrowed to specifying that different forms of exchange would exist in the same society, one of which would dominate and articulate all the others. Where for Marx, persons and objects became commodities in a system of relationships he called capital, so for Lévi-Strauss, Godelier and others, persons and valuables become gifts in a system of relationships called kinship (cf. Damon 1980). The transition from gift exchange to commodity sale is therefore, in essence, a theory of transition whereby dominance over the circulation of persons is replaced by control over the distribution of things. Normally this in envisaged as an historical transition in evolutionary terms (Mauss 1954:35, 68). Yet if we accept the argument for the coexistence of both forms in some societies over long periods of time, then the question is rather, how did kinship function to dominate and distort incipient forms of capital accumulation? Moreover, on what basis can it be said that kinship functions as a dominant social relationship in non-capitalist societies and how does it determine a particular mode of (gift) exchange? (Godelier 1972).

These are important questions to answer in the context of current interest in prestige good systems and their role as peripheries to more complex centres of state/mercantile development (Ekholm 1977, Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978, Gledhill 1979, Kristiansen 1978, 1982, Weigend *et al.* 1977). Yet, a simple kin-based periphery versus non kin/class-based centre model is unhelpful. Claims to common genealogies and to ancestry, expressed in the exchange of appropriate gifts, are a dominant political practice in most early states and empires (cf. Liverani and Zaccagnini this volume). Commerce was subordinated in such societies precisely because local and international power relations were recognised and legitimised through gift exchange. We shall return to the question of their articulation later but more immediately the question to answer is what do we mean by prestige goods and how does the circulation of such gifts relate to the distribution of inalienable rank in kin-ordered societies of such varying complexity?

Hierarchy and exchange

Mauss claimed that for exchange to take place, culturally defined objects had to be produced as things (Mauss 1954). Yet, that it was a gross assumption to assume that in being given, such objects were alienated, i.e. lost, to the original owner. Inalienable wealth takes on important priorities since the act of 'keeping while giving' (to use Weiner's term 1985) implies not only that it or an equivalent must be returned but that being able to enforce this is, in itself, a means of domination. To lose a valuable is thus to expose oneself and one's group to social diminishment. Now there appears to be nothing in the act of exchange itself to prevent this occurring but when the object in the act of exchange is given prominence, attention is drawn instead to the quality of ownership of a shared property. Mauss's well-known discussion of the nature of the gift focused precisely on how prestige items were embodied with a 'spiritual matter. . . part of one's nature and substance' that created the obligation to give, to receive and to repay (Mauss 1954:10). He provided a wide range of examples of valuables which circulated but whose possession he described as 'immeuble' or inalienable (Mauss 1954:7, 167–7). For instance Maori nephrite adzes and cloaks were distributed at rituals marking births, marriages and deaths because:

> Each treasure (ta'onga) was a fixed point in the tribal network of names, histories and relationships. They belonged to particular ancestors, were passed down particular descent lines, held their own stories and were exchanged on various memorable occasions. Ta'onga captured history and showed it to the living and they echoed patterns of the past from the first creation to the present. (Cited in Weiner 1985:220)

The emphasis in this and other comparable cases is on the circulation of objects that are endowed with a common spiritual substance and which people possess temporarily as members of a 'community of shared memory'. An equation is postulated between persons and things which denies the possibility of their loss or separation without doing violence to personal or group identity. For Mauss, this contrasted explicitly with the logic of capitalist commodity exchange where goods engender a symbolic

detachability of persons from things in order that their value be kept distinct from the objective conditions of their production. Such a statement cannot apply to all capitalist social relations, no more than Mauss's notion of the gift can apply to all non-capitalist relations but the contrast does evoke the notion of dominance of exchange relations alluded to earlier.

Yet, for wealth to be inalienable implies both the power to keep while giving and the power to exclude others from the right of temporary possession. In other words, the term suggests property relations, certainly different from capitalist notions of ownership, but none the less a definition of persons and social relations in terms of possession of things. Marilyn Strathern has recently defined a broad category of societies as 'bridewealth systems' where things come to stand for persons or parts of persons and their circulation to stand for their possession (Strathern 1985:196). The circulation of bridewealth objects can substitute for persons or parts of persons (e.g. their labour) in such a way that their possession will bind people into relations of clientship and obligation.

It should be possible therefore to establish connections between the circulation of inalienable prestige objects, the control over persons or their attributes and the distribution of inalienable rank. One possibility, as in the case of the Maori, would be for things to come to stand for qualities possessed by some and not others. Friedman's analysis of the Kachin demonstrates how control over persons and the appropriation of their surplus is linked to control over communal deities which ensure general prosperity (Friedman 1975). Political ritual offices are defined by the right to perform these functions for the community as a whole. The distribution of inalienable wealth is in this case analogous to that of the Maori. It does not in itself define rank but functions to demarcate relative access to the source of power which underlies it. Hierarchy is defined therefore by not having to give and achieves this by closing off access to circulation through rules of endogamy (marriage prescriptions), rules of succession (creating exclusive roles and offices) and by rules of exclusion (creating categories of non-persons). Many West African societies contrast with this general situation in their concern with the jural definition of status (Goody 1962). Here, persons are invested with offices which may be endowed with rights to wealth, knowledge and property. Kinship roles are defined as a certain kind of inheritable estate separate from the persons who hold them. This yields a hierarchy of positions rather than persons, based on the inheritence of offices (and regalia) as well as excluded categories of non-office holders (junior males and women are defined as jural minors). The detachability of persons from things in this context is more complete in the sense that eligibility to office is a matter of defining a position rather than directly exercising control over persons. This in turn can be contrasted with recent generalisations about the nature of exchange in Melanesia where a more direct relation between control of persons and the circulation of prestige objects has been observed (Strathern 1982). Here, it is the person who is the prime form of moveable property and is circulated rather than any material property which s/he owns and others inherit.

The argument so far has demonstrated variability within a category of exchange which shares a common concern with how inalienability engenders certain types of social relations and defines different categories of persons. To paraphrase Marilyn Strathern:

> things can indeed behave as gifts. They may stand for whole persons or for part persons and their disposable attributes. Persons are thus constructed as bundles of assets to be distributed among others (thus making relationships).
> (Strathern 1985:202)

Not only does this constitute a system of control over the disposal of persons and their attributes through control over the circulation of things, but it also allows the relationship to be mystified. In capitalist commodity relations, this takes the extreme form of denying that any relation between them exists at all. By contrast, in bridewealth systems there is a general tendency for both persons and things to be explained as supernaturally caused and to figure prominently in the kinds of cosmologies which Bloch and Parry have recently described as 'the systematic attempt to transform death into rebirth or a regeneration of either the group or the cosmos' (Bloch and Parry 1982:42). Any direct connection between the control of persons through the control of things is thus denied in favour of stressing their common derivation from a supernatural origin. To analyse these systems, a distinction is needed between 'power from' which has an ideologically constructed source in sacred origin and tradition and 'power over' which describes control over persons and attributes through manipulating the production and circulation of things (see Merquior 1979: Chapter 1 for this distinction). A dynamic for social change lies in the conditions that promote discordance in the relation between these structures over time.

Weiner argues that the circulation of Maori valuables at certain ritual occasions served to re-establish or extend exchange (hence social) relations between the members of dispersed descent groups claiming a common ancestry. The fact that no single line of descent could claim to control the conditions of their social reproduction required that each should be represented and be seen to share in the circulation of the spiritual substance that each held as common to all. Hence the highest-ranked valuables formed a set which no descent line possessed completely but all elements of which had been possessed once and would be again. Such networks formed totalities and the circulation of valuables exactly replicated the limits of a sense of wholeness justified by a belief in a common ancestry. Simply excluding members from circulation could not be the basis for domination since it served only to create a category of non-persons with whom social relations could not be established. However, by making claims to superior ancestry, existing claims could be devalued in the overall hierarchy of social value. Hegemony was established through the continuous expansion of alliances with other more prestigious centres and legitimised through claims to common origin to which those of inferior origin within a totality were unable to lay claim. By this logic, Weiner is able to explain the bewilderment of Maori notables confronted with Europeans whose main concern was to establish alienable rights to property (mainly land) and remove

themselves from further exchange obligations. The sorry story of European contact and the dissolution of local hierarchy is a familiar theme and need not detain us here (cf. Ekholm 1977; Sahlins 1981; Wolf 1982). A more relevant and equally widely recognised theme is the identification of centres in kinship-ordered societies as 'ceremonial' in the sense that they hold a monopoly of sacred origin. The cosmological ordering of the Mayan realm is a particularly clear example of how the spatial organisation of ceremonial centres is concerned with symbolic closure such that nothing is left outside (Marcus 1984). The theme is widely replicated and it suggests that a pervasive feature of such forms of closure is the capacity to maintain strict hierarchical equivalence in the relation between persons and things.

What may originally have been a dispersed pattern of circulation becomes 'centralised' in the sense that a single claim to represent the totality of those of common descent has been successfully achieved. This claim constitutes a denial of exchange due to the fact that gifts which represent the essence of wholeness are never given out but become the monopoly of particular lines of descent. When Polynesian chiefs, for example, were described as imbued with the sanctity of mana and the sacred powers of divine ancestry, this served to separate them physically from non ritual exchange within their communities. Even indirect contact was dangerous. Tahitian chiefs were carried around so that their feet should not touch the ground and endanger its fertility. Kwakiutl chiefs were constituted as privileged bestowers and commoners as obligatory receivers (and givers) according to Goldman. Here, in his phrase, 'the donor is simultaneously benefactor and destroyer and the receivers are reciprocally the benefited and the destroyed, presumably on the model of the hunter and his animal game' (Goldman 1984:128). In both cases, giving is a privilege derived from superior access to ancestral and supernatural powers. Moreover, the relation between the first beginning (sacred origin) and the present is also expressed through men, more specifically chiefs, acting as universal donors of timeless substance to those of low rank acting as universal receivers, who could respond only with alienable gifts of surplus product.

The social and ideological realities of such systems are thus rooted in the ontology of self. Exploitation stems from the impossibility of envisaging oneself to be outside the claim to wholeness and yet no longer participating directly in the conditions of its reproduction. Such servile status is reinforced further by the fact that what may be received as the inalienable possession of those of high status requires a return in alienable surplus product from those of low rank. Hence, bridewealth or labour given as local surplus is lost from possession as a return for the maintenance of the inalienable conditions of social reproduction. It could be argued that some notion of self-exploitation is more appropriate in this situation yet objectively we are dealing with a notion of 'sacrifice' in which absolute surplus is alienated in return for maintaining the ontological conditions of reproducing the self.

It follows that in all cases where prestige objects circulate as rights, we should find other subordinated systems of production and exchange where goods are categorised as alienable products. A number of authors have argued recently for the co-presence of a number of different forms of production and circulation that may be entwined in different patterns in distinct social settings (Adams 1974; Hopkins 1983; Wheatley 1975; Yoffee 1981). This replicates Polanyi's more subtle point that whilst different forms of exchange may be present, one would form the dominant mode of allocation which all the others would ultimately serve (Polanyi 1957). In addition, this raised the issue argued most cogently by Jane Schneider in her review of Wallerstein (Schneider 1977), that distinguishing different 'economic forms' rests on the misplaced acceptance of a utility luxury dichotomy in the analysis of the circulation of goods. As Larsen (this volume) points out, few of the goods circulating in the elaborate Mesopotamian commercial networks he describes were intended to satisfy biological or utilitarian needs. If attention is turned to the 'commodities' themselves, we find a more confused pattern in which items that clearly embody various kinds of ontological statement about the definition of the person, power and its origins are imbued, in certain contexts, with commercial (trading for gain) connotations. Nor is this only a feature of so called 'complex systems'. Strathern, in his comparison of Melanesian exchange systems, has emphasised that the circulation of valuables is used quite unproblematically for personal gain through the attachment of side increments (Strathern 1971). The supposed universal antagonism between commerce and reciprocity may thus be overgeneralised due to the importance of this theme in the Graeco-Roman world and its European heritage (cf. Parry 1986).

Cosmology and exploitation

The terms centre and periphery are highly specific to a sense of identity developed in the West. Wallerstein, for instance, has been accused of reproducing a typically Eurocentric evolutionist view of recent world history in which an active and progressive centre subordinates and transforms a passive and backward (i.e. primitive) periphery (Goodman and Redclift 1983:47). Nineteenth-century evolutionism was part of an ideological mode of thought which justified a radical break between civilised centre and savage periphery to legitimise exploitation without responsibility. This contrasts strangely with many premodern definitions of the alien which strove to assimilate a savage, wild 'other' as a necessary part of sustaining a cosmic order. Even Renaissance and Enlightenment views of the naked and threatening savage required debate as to whether the latter could be or already was human and could be incorporated into a Judaeo-Christian world view. Such contrasts in the way centres and peripheries are culturally constructed also have to be viewed as the product of long transformational processes that are rooted in a common ontological problem of constituting identity through either the eradication or the creation of difference.

Lévi-Strauss has argued that primitive classifications strive to collapse time into space through a form of cosmic closure which establishes a continuum between culture and nature (Lévi-Strauss 1966). The world as a closed and bounded cosmological order is threatened by the eruption of chaotic material outside of its control. This suggests a timeless, concentric model in which culture as a gift of nature (i.e. the supernatural) spreads out to

assimilate and order a chaotic world (cf. Friedman 1982:42). The constitution of modern society as an analytic unit is, by contrast, a product of separation and alienation and required the development of science to replace cosmological ordering as its source of existential security. Presenting this as a rupture between a modern, scientific and techno-rational centre opposed to a primitive, prelogical and mystical periphery which should be either civilised or preserved is thus a contemporary myth.

In a premodern sense, a rupture between centre and periphery is denied or at least never considered irreparable. Liverani's discussion of the ideology of the neo-Assyrian empire shows how they viewed their own periphery as a failed cosmos; one not yet realised but one that could be eventually. This 'difficult path' could only be overcome by a king's virtue whose duty it was to extend a cosmic order as an embodiment of himself to an unruly periphery which was sterile and blocked until his presence would cause towns and palaces to be built, arid land to be irrigated and a great cycle of creation and rebirth to be extended as a defence against cultural decay (Liverani 1979d). Once incorporated (and it is significant that war for an Assyrian king should be like a hunting expedition), the function of a periphery is to serve its cosmological centre to ensure its proper functioning. Periphery to centre is constituted as a relationship in much the same way as that of the identity of the individual to the whole. In other words, the relation between centre and periphery is organic in contrast to the mechanistic view of modern ideologies. The Assyrian view is of course a common theme and forms a debateable area in Eliade's work (Eliade 1959). Yet Geertz on Negara, Marcus on the Maya or Wheatley on Shang China all stress the arrangement of centres to enclose an ordered whole and the aestheticisation of an expanding cosmological realm (Geertz 1982, Marcus 1976, Wheatley 1971). Hopkins's discussion of Roman emperor worship is much nearer our modern perception (Hopkins 1978). The difficulties presented to a man who becomes divine in order to create a unified political order has a distinctive twentieth-century ring to it.

Evolutionary and devolutionary cycles

It has often not been sufficiently appreciated that dependency and world systems theories were intended as dynamic models of modern world history. Wallerstein, for instance, accepted the established view that capitalism operates in cyclical rhythms. Short-term or business cycles were already well-known consequences of equalising supply and demand vectors, but the existence of longer term cycles covering fifty years or more was less certain (first proposed by Kondratieff, cf. Wallerstein 1979c). Work by historians on price formation from the end of the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century had suggested that even longer cycles of growth and decay govern periods of 150 years or more (cf. Braudel and Spooner 1967). François Simiand had already independently suggested that world economic history was characterised by long periods of growth and expansion (A phases) followed by periods of crisis (B phases) which could only be resolved by further expansion (Simiand 1932). For Marx, such crises were specific to the capitalist mode of production possessing a tendency towards overproduction, whilst Luxemburg would argue later that such crises could be resolved only by the global expansion of commodity markets as a means of continued production and capital accumulation (Luxemburg 1951). Others would now stress a greater variety of causes (e.g. Mandel 1978) but would still accept that historically capitalism has tended to expand in search of markets and raw materials and that such systems have experienced significant crises resolved by renewed expansion.

More complex models have been developed to relate shorter and longer term cycles into a single expansionist dynamic. Perhaps the most well known is Braudel's model of the *longue durée* (Braudel 1978) which combines short-term cycles of discontinuous change within longer cycles of continuous process. Attempts at a more rigorous synthesis of short- and long-term cycles (given that for many the existence of the latter is still highly debateable, see special issue of *Review* Wallerstein 1979c) can be found in Kula (1976) and Wallerstein (1980).

It is hardly surprising that a notion of short-term and long-term cycles nesting in a single dynamic should appeal heuristically to those working in earlier time periods. The specification of long-term cycles was sufficiently vague to encourage thinking that this was not a phenomenon limited to the rise of industrial capitalism. Braudel's early work on the history of the Mediterranean world as the product of short-term cycles of expansion and decay of states and empires underlain by a long-term stability of constraining factors was particularly influential (Braudel 1949). Friedman modified this argument in an ethnographic context by asserting that a long cycle would predict evolutionary or devolutionary stages depending on the material conditions of social reproduction (Friedman 1975). Short cycles are due to 'the variation that occurs owing to political and economic constraints operating within the technological limits defined by the long cycle' (Friedman 1975:187). The fact that short-term cycles should ultimately be determined by the techno-ecological limits on production has been widely criticised (e.g. O'Laughlan 1975; see Friedman 1979:15–16 for a defence of his argument). Nevertheless he adheres to the primacy of the long term in a later article where he states that short cycles of political growth and collapse are embedded in longer evolutionary cycles determined by the conditions of agricultural production (Friedman 1982). In effect, the question is more whether long-term cycles exist at all as autonomous determinants (and if so whether they are the products of biological imperatives rather than a social dynamic) rather than being formed from a coalescence of shorter cycles of political expansion and decay. In answer to this, a number of different views have been produced as to what constitutes long-term cycles. An early precocious attempt is Steward's discussion of cyclical conquests (Steward 1949). The argument is set in the short term, with each era marked by different conditions of expansion and decline, although population pressure and competition for resources is a constant theme. Friedman uses the limits on intensification of agricultural production and an increasing trade density model to explain short-term cycles of chiefdom formation and devolution in Oceania (Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Friedman

1982) and the idea has been used to interpret the European Bronze Age by Rowlands (1984a). Kristiansen uses the intensification of agricultural production model in his analyses of local production cycles in the Scandinavian Bronze Age and argues that they are in turn linked to changes in the regional exchange system (Kristiansen 1979; 1982). Parker Pearson's interpretation of the Danish Iron Age distinguishes only short cycles of differential wealth accumulation leading to an inflationary spiral which, he argues, results in a crisis of major proportions in the long term of a millennium of development (Parker Pearson 1984). Miller, in an analysis of the ideological structures of the Harappan civilisation, suggests that this represented the beginning of an irreversible oscillation between the principles of Harappan/Buddhism versus Vedic Hinduism/modern Hinduism that characterises much of later South Asian history (Miller 1985:62–3).

It should be emphasised that most of these cases deal with cyclical change in peripheral formations and so far few attempts have been made to theorise similar kinds of trajectories for more 'complex' states and empires (cf. Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Gledhill and Larsen 1982). Moreover, in contrast to those theorising modern capitalism, archaeologists have had no reason to dismiss previous periods of expansion and contraction as irrelevant, and taking these into account has often meant setting highly contingent and arbitrary conditions on the periods that authors have chosen to study. Outside of the Braudelean theme of understanding what maintains the constancy of culture despite change, the discovery of a single dynamic operating over long periods of time, appears hard to find. Hence, whether long-term cycles exist and if so what their relation is to the empirically surer short-term cycles remains problematic.

It has not been sufficiently appreciated that a theory of cyclical change also includes a theory of shifts of centres in space. In other words, expansion and contraction processes have rarely been geographically stable. In the case of shorter cycles, this may involve intra-regional shifts in influence between competing centres within a single core area, as for example in a competitive city state phase or, in more modern terms, nation state competition in nineteenth-century Europe. However, it has been frequently claimed that these oscillations in intra-core hegemony are interspersed by much larger scale shifts in the arrangements of centres and their peripheries (called either logistics or secular trends: Cameron 1973; Wallerstein 1979c). In modern history, it is argued that the rise of capitalism in the West cannot be separated from a decline of the earlier Arab domination of the Mediterranean, and the expansion of industrial capitalism in northwest Europe cannot be separated from the decline of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Wallerstein 1974). More recently, the 'kapitallogik school' has argued that the current world economic recession is more than another cyclical downturn but represents a significant loss of competitive advantage by the older western industrialised core and the rise of new centres of imperialist accumulation (Frobel 1980; not all would agree cf. Klapinsky 1984). Centre–periphery as a relationship does not therefore predict a fixed and immutable position but implies that constituent groups will move through different statuses as a necessary feature of maintaining the relationship.

It is perhaps the historical experience of capitalism that a decline of an old centre should be necessary for the expansion of the whole system (the post World War II shift from Europe to the USA for instance) which has prompted the frequent observation that similar events occurred in the Ancient World. The shift of centres of imperium from southern to northern Mesopotamia in the third to first millennia BC; the east to west relocation of political centres in the development of the Mediterranean world; the re-emergence of Middle Eastern imperialism in late Roman times has been the stuff of grand narrative world history for many years. With a decline of the West scenario literally in mind, such narratives were clearly serving as contemporary warnings. Max Weber had the fate of Wilhemine Germany in mind when he claimed that a corrupt bureaucracy conspiring with large landowners to avoid taxes promoted the expansion of a feudalised 'natural exonomy' in the late Roman Empire in the west (Weber 1976). This thinly veiled attack on the evils of socialism and state bureaucracy has spawned some sophisticated variants on the general theme that excessive state control can transform cores into parasitic consumers which eventually undermine their own revenue base. This is broadly the A. H. M. Jones and Brunt position on the decline of the western Roman Empire which has recently been given a more sophisticated revision by Hopkins (1980) and Whittaker (1983). Hopkins argues that there was an inner circle of tax-exporting provinces in the early Roman Empire which also exported surplus product to gain the money to pay taxes. These 'exports' were consumed in the Italian heartland and in an outer ring of militarised frontier provinces. This stimulated long-distance trade and a vast expansion of goods in circulation through an integrated monetary economy but also decentralised manufacturing to the outer provinces and created a consumption centre that relied increasingly on tax and tribute to be maintained. The crises of the third century AD, necessitating a shift to tax in kind to ensure supplies to the army and the state bureaucracy, made it possible for local army commanders to control taxation directly and establish themselves as rival governments to an increasingly dispensable imperial centre in Rome. The feudalising tendency of the late Empire is explained in this revised Weberian model by the linkage between different forms of tax and their effects on production and trade. Polanyi also believed that strong states stifle mercantile activity because otherwise they would set up competing centres of wealth accumulation. It was Polanyi's contention that ports of trade not market places were growth points in the ancient economy (Polanyi 1978:246). The model of 'stagnant' bureaucratic states surrounded by expanding mercantile 'city states' in which the latter would eventually overcome the former has for long been held as a justification of modern European expansion and its historical destiny. Yet, it has received some empirical support. Oppenheim once argued that southern Mesopotamia produced a corona of merchant city states to serve as intermediaries or buffers in long-distance trade but which soon outgrew the parent centres and absorbed them into empires (cited by Larsen 1979:99).