

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57800-4 - The Sociology of Post-Colonial Societies: Economic Disparity,
Cultural Diversity, and Development

J. E. Goldthorpe

Frontmatter

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This is the completely revised and updated version of the immensely successful *Sociology of the Third World*. It is about the division of the world into rich and poor countries, and the disparities between rich and poor people, especially in poor countries. Chapters on world population trends and on the colonial episode set the historical scene for a detailed analysis of economic conditions and living standards in poor countries. Droughts, famines and environmental concerns are fully discussed, along with questions about limits to growth and sustainable development. Theoretical perspectives on development and underdevelopment are reviewed. Later chapters summarize the findings of the different social sciences on the growth of towns, language, culture and communications; the psychology of modernization; religious movements, sects, cults and fundamentalism; post-colonial politics, including ethnicity, military rule and recent democratization; and the issues involved in aid.

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**Economic disparity, cultural diversity,
and development**

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Preface

It was during my war service as a naval radar officer in 1942–5 in such places as Mombasa, Durban, Colombo, and Trincomalee, and through seeing at first hand the economic disparities and cultural diversities of peoples with widely different preoccupations and ways of life, that I finally decided to try to carry over the scientific attitude with which I had been imbued as a student of the natural sciences, especially at Cambridge, into the study of human society. After the war, then, I did not go back to Cambridge but went instead to the London School of Economics and Political Science to graduate afresh in economics and sociology, including social anthropology. As it had been what I saw in East Africa that had first and most strongly awakened my interest, in 1951 I eagerly accepted a post at Makerere College in Uganda (later Makerere University). There I pioneered the teaching of sociology as a degree subject, and in the process learned much and wrote something about East African society in general and the educated African elite in particular.

So it was with a somewhat narrowly East African focus that I came to Leeds in 1962, yet with a growing awareness that despite their profound diversities traditional societies throughout the world were subject to common forces making for change. Leeds proved to be a good place to seek a wider vision, with a consistently lively interest in development studies at all levels and in many departments throughout the University.

The idea of writing this book originated about the end of 1967, and the first edition was written during a 'semi-sabbatical' session in 1971–2. It was completely revised and largely rewritten just ten years later, my first task on taking early retirement from University teaching in 1981.

Revising it again in 1993–5 under a new and more appropriate title has sometimes felt like bringing out the third edition of a decennial newspaper. Some stories run and run, such as the continuing tension between Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks institutions; some new stories demand inclusion, such as the Brundtland report and 'sustainable

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development'; yet others, such as famines, elbow earlier ecological concerns off the page. The UN Development Programme's adoption of a human development index as a counterpart to the World Bank's GNP per head has signalled an important shift in policy and thinking involving the dethronement of industrialization, once thought of as the main difference between rich and poor countries, and the main means for improving the human condition in the latter. Moreover, to an increasing extent the issues that demand attention are world issues, not only 'Third World' issues. Minimum wage laws afford one example; another is religious fundamentalism.

Successive revisions during two decades of rapid change have, I hope, given increased historical depth to the analysis, and taught me to write more in the past tense. Especially to one with a scientific background, propositions and statements about continuing tendencies are naturally expressed in the present. But strictly speaking we have knowledge only of past events; and if that is true in astronomy about receding galaxies, it has immediate practical importance for a social scientist writing in 1993–5 for whom the latest available demographic and economic statistics are for 1991 or 1992 while many recent research reports are of studies carried out in the 1980s. I hope, though, that a sense of immediacy has not been lost as the processes and problems of yesterday's world continue to affect today's.

I am grateful to those who taught me, including my tutors: at Cambridge, C. P. Snow; at LSE, Jean Floud. At Leeds the late Harry Hanson, professor of politics, encouraged me to start this whole project, while the late Lord Boyle, our vice-chancellor, was actively interested in development studies and honoured me with a foreword to the first edition. I am grateful to family and friends for tolerating my preoccupation with 'the book', and giving me their affectionate support. And I acknowledge with thanks the kindly help and guidance of the staff of Cambridge University Press at all stages.

J.E.G.
October 1995

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