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Social-Economic Bases for Self-Management in the Developing World: the Cooperative Network

What basis is there for the introduction of self-management in the developing world? Is it an alien concept to be introduced from the outside, or is there an indigenous basis for it?

In this chapter, it will be shown that self-management has been an integral part of the social-economic life of a great many societies in the premodern era. The particular organizational form in which self-management is found is that of cooperative societies which are extremely widespread all over the world in both modern and premodern times. Indeed, it may be hard to find more than a dozen agricultural societies without some cooperative structure in premodern times. In Asia and Latin America, in Africa and Oceania, there are literally thousands of peoples that have cooperative societies of one kind or the other. Here we are not talking of the existence of cooperation in some broad sense but of formal cooperative societies in the narrow sense of the definition. Following the conventions in most modern cooperative laws, we define a cooperative as a voluntary, open and permanent association of equalitarian structure in which the members secure for themselves certain economic interests through communal self-help. We consider it open when it is not limited to kinship groups. It is permanent when it is not formed *ad hoc* but operates for some months or years. Equalitarian property structure implies that the members have the same rights to the results of cooperative efforts according to their inputs; while equalitarian social structure implies that all members are, on principle, equal and that everyone has the same chance of becoming a leader or any other office holder and holds the same voting rights with regard to the election to office and the enactment of rules and by-laws. Cooperatives generally have a formal structure. If one of the elements defined as constitutive for a cooperative is missing, namely voluntariness, openness, permanency, equalitarian property structure, economic purpose, or communal self-help, it will be subsequently referred to as a group rather than a cooperative. We found that there exists, among most peoples, usually a rather sharp distinction between cooperatives in the sense of the definition and other groups of economic cooperation, both linguistically and institutionally.

In fact, there may be no purer type of practiced self-management than that found in a traditional cooperative society. It should be quite dear that we are referring here not to modern cooperative societies. They do incorporate the idea of selfmanagement (at least as far as primary cooperatives are concerned); but as they usually have been introduced into the Third World during and through colonialism, we do not want to include them here, though they may have become an important part of the respective national economies. Instead, it is our intention to point to the existence of cooperative societies as an institutional base for self-management before the impact of colonialism was felt.

Such premodern cooperatives have usually been ignored in development policies, regardless of the political affiliation of their originators. At the same time, there are very few thorough studies. Descriptions of varying quality are usually found in ethnographies which are trying to give a picture of a whole society. For West Africa, we have examined the ethnographic literature for evidence of such cooperatives (Seibel and Koll, 1968). While we found many references to cooperative societies, including craft guilds, and even some excellent descriptions, the overall evidence turned out to be very unsystematic and of very uneven quality. Instead of trying to put together the scattered evidence from societies all over the world, we decided to present one country which we studied in depth, namely Liberia[*]. Liberia was chosen because the various societies have been left rather unaffected in their traditional culture until recently. Also, the size of Liberia makes it possible to include all tribes, sixteen In number, omitting none. The details would of course have been quite different had we chosen New Guinea or Nigeria; but the basic notion of the existence of vigorous cooperative societies would have been the same. The following description will now be limited to Liberia.

The basic principle of African cooperatives is that, at regular or irregular intervals, goods, money or labour services are pooled for the benefit of one member at a time in a rotating system.

According to what is pooled, goods or money on the one hand or labour on the other hand, there are two classes of cooperatives:
saving cooperatives and work cooperatives. According to the activities for which labour is pooled there are different types of work cooperatives, and according to what is saved and with what secondary purposes saving is combined, there are different types of saving cooperatives. The same applies to those groups where one or more of the elements specified in the definition to be constitutive for a cooperative are absent. The following typology will present the basic patterns of cooperatives and of other groups of economic cooperation.

WORK COOPERATIVES

A work cooperative comprises a group of farmers who work in turn on each member's farm. Distribution of labour services rendered and received is based on strict reciprocity. Work cooperatives were universally found in all tribes both in traditional and in modern culture. This makes them the most widespread, and with regard to traditional culture for many tribes even the only type of cooperative. With regard to economic relevance two zones may be distinguished: a western and an eastern one. Among the more centralized western tribes (Mano, Kpelle, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Mende, Gola and Vai) they are of highest relevance, the bulk of agricultural work on rice farms being done cooperatively. Among the segmentary eastern tribes (Kru, Sapo, Kran) they are of moderate relevance. Among the Bassa, who are located between both groups although belonging linguistically and culturally to the eastern tribes, their relevance lies in between. Among the De, who are located west of the Bassa and who also belong to the same ethno-linguistic group as the eastern tribes, the relevance of work cooperatives is dose to that

of the western tribes; this may be so because the De have been strongly influenced by the neighbouring tribes for centuries. Among the Belle, who also belong ethno-linguistically to the eastern tribes but are located in the west, work cooperatives are about as relevant as among western tribes. The Dan, who are the most eastern of the western tribes, take an intermediate position.

The two main reasons given overtly in all tribes for forming work cooperatives are that work is (1) done faster and (2) more enjoyable. Both may be summarized in one manifest economic function: increase in labour productivity.

‚Friendship among members' is occasionally stated as one of the reasons for joining a work cooperative. Socially, work cooperatives appear to have two integrative functions: a horizontal one and a vertical one. The following overall relationship was found to exist between social structure and cooperative structure:

The more segmentary the social structure of a society, the weaker work cooperatives, and the more centralized and hierarchical a society, the stronger work cooperatives. This may be taken as a corroboration of the hypothesis that work cooperatives fulfil primarily a vertical-integrative function and only secondarily a horizontal-integrative function.

In Liberia work cooperatives are predominantly found on rice farms, since rice farming is the most important type of agricultural production and at the same time very labour-intensive. Cooperatives may also be formed, however, for work on other farms, for example on cassava farms, and more recently on coffee, cocoa, or sugar-cane farms. The basic principle of work cooperatives, that is, pooling labour for the benefit of one member at a time in turn, is also applicable to other activities, as for example building, spinning, transportation, marketing, rum production, or palm-oil production. Work cooperatives formed for work on rice farms may also help their members in house-building, thus functioning as an informal work group whose membership happens to coincide with the work cooperative.

There are four activities which are invariably found to be part of the cooperative work programme in all tribes: cleaning the underbrush, felling trees, sowing and harvesting. In most, though not all tribes, the following activities may also be done cooperatively: burning the dried underbrush and trees, cleaning the farm of the unburned remainders and weeding. In a very few tribes hauling rice, building a fence around the rice farm and building a rice barn may also be done cooperatively.

Cooperatives exist mostly in pairs, one for men and one for women. The number of cooperatives, or such pairs, depends upon the size of the village and also upon the habitual size of cooperatives. Some tribes tend to form one or two large cooperatives in every village, others prefer several small ones.

The theoretical minimum size of a cooperative is two members, and there are in fact cases where a cooperative consists of two members. For practical reasons an upper limit is set by the number of work-days in a period during which a certain agricultural activity has to be done; if one day is spent on each farm the maximum number of members equals the number of work-days. Among the western tribes work cooperatives tend to be large in size, numbering between 10 and 30; for certain activities figures of up to 50 have been reported. In the east, cooperatives are small comprising only some 2 to 6 and up to 10 members.

Most work cooperatives are formed for one agricultural cycle, that is, in most cases for about half a year, since the activities performed by men fall in one half and those of women in another half of the year. Cooperatives may also be formed for one agricultural season, that is, for one type of activity, or for several years, or for an unlimited period. In the large majority of cases in traditional society and quite often

still today, cooperatives are legally limited by their members to a duration of one year. Sociologically, however, cooperatives may be considered to be established for an unlimited period, since the same cooperative with about the same members is re-established every year.

On principle, membership is open to everyone though women and men in eastern Liberia of different age grades may form their own groups. For technical reasons membership is closed once work has started because otherwise the principle of strict mutuality would be broken. New members may, however, be admitted between two round turns.

Work cooperatives are organized along the lines of the system of sexual labour division in each tribe. The heavy work, that is, cleaning underbrush, felling trees, burning, cleaning farms, building a rice barn and constructing a fence, is invariably done, at least traditionally, by men. Weeding is done in all cases but one by women. The pattern of which sex does the harvesting varies
greatly from tribe to tribe: it may be done by men, by women, by mixed groups or alternatively by any combination of these.

Anybody may found a work cooperative. The founder is often a respected person in the community whose appeal to form a cooperative has a good chance of being effective. He gathers the prospective members and organizes a first gathering.

At this first gathering the cooperative is formally established as such. Among the tribes of eastern Liberia the organizational meeting is of limited relevance since work cooperatives are not as highly formalized as among the western tribes. The three main tasks of the organizational meeting are to delineate membership, to determine the rules and bye-laws of the cooperative and to elect the officers. The rules and bye-laws pertain to the purpose of the cooperative; the activities which will be done cooperatively; the number of days to be spent on each farm; and the length of time for which the cooperative will be in existence. Special laws are enacted to regulate the behaviour of members. Fines are determined with regard to arriving late, absence from work and breaking other rules. It is also agreed upon whether or not the cooperative is to be hired out, and if so, what the compensation should be.

Only cooperatives in eastern Liberia (among the Kru, Sapo, Kran) may or may not have a leader. In all other tribes cooperatives are headed by at least one leader.

The structure of offices is presently becoming increasingly complex. Offices are in principle open to everyone. The allocation of an office is based on achieved criteria, not on ascription. In small villages there is a tendency for cooperative leadership to coincide with community leadership, but this is not made a rule. Criteria for leadership were stated to be general leadership abilities, ability to settle disputes, being well-known, sociability, honesty and trustworthiness, industriousness, strength, being a fast worker and agricultural skill. Main duties of the leader are to organize, control and supervise the work, and to judge matters in dispute. The leader joins work without enjoying any privileges. The only compensation he gets for his office is in terms of prestige. Traditionally there was only one leader, who was represented by an acting leader during his absence. Very large groups may have been divided into subgroups which were headed by sub-leaders. During recent years a mushroom growth of offices has started to take place as is found in most voluntary associations in Africa.

This development has gone farthest among the Mano where practically every member of the cooperative may be at the same time an office-holder. Many of these offices have no real function. Standard offices with real functions are those of the

treasurer, collector, secretary and/or clerk, messenger, law-enforcement officer and policeman. Offices are usually modelled along the lines of the political structure of the central government. Hence cooperatives may be said to fulfil a function of political socialization.

In some tribes large groups were divided into subgroups. In about half the tribes, namely among the Kpelle, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Grebo, Mende, Gola, and Bassa, work performance is organized on a competitive basis. A farm is divided up into portions which are assigned to groups or individuals of the cooperative. These compete with each other, the winning party or individual gaining prestige. Competition increases work speed considerably.

In work cooperatives drumming and singing accompanying the work plays an essential part. Not only does music contribute to the enjoyment of the members, but it also supplies a rhythm for the work movements which are performed much faster than those in individual or family work.

Since work performance is based on reciprocity no compensation is given. Food may be either provided by each farmer individually or by the farmer on whose farm work is being done; in the latter case all farmers provide reciprocally an equal amount of food an equal number of times.

Fines are set up as sanctions in case somebody breaks the rules on the cooperative. Such fines are in kind (rice, chicken, commodities) or, as a recent innovation, in money; people may also be assigned extra work, or they may be ordered to provide the food for x number of days. Attendance is strictly enforced by traditional and modern legal means. A person may get a leave of absence by: (1) asking for permission stating special reasons; (2) sending a substitute; (3) paying a compensation to the owner of the farm where he misses a session; (4) agreeing that the farmer on whose farm he is supposed to work will miss a work session reciprocally. Normal social pressure is usually strong enough to make a person choose one of these alternatives. If somebody misses a session without permission and excuse he is fined, the fines being in most cases between 50 cents and US $1; in some cooperatives, however, these are considerably higher. If the fine is not paid, the matter may be referred to the court.

Due to the strong position of secret societies, information about religious beliefs pertaining to cooperative work is difficult to get. Only among the Mano and some groups of the Dan was it found that an elaborate set of religious ceremonies was practised by the cooperative, including the use of masks. In the other tribes it appeared that the application of ceremonies and medicines was a private rather than a cooperative matter. In a few tribes it was observed that members behave as animals during work.

Though still functioning largely according to the traditional pattern work cooperatives have undergone some major adaptations to the new economy: (1) While they were fully integrated into subsistence agriculture in traditional society they may nowadays be instrumental in producing rice for sale. (2) The pattern of cooperative work has been applied to newly introduced cash crops like coffee, cocoa or sugarcane, and also to new activities like rum production. (3) In a gradually increasing number of instances the traditional system of sexual labour division is being changed or given up to increase agricultural production. (4) Only in the traditional culture of the Gola, not among the other tribes, was it possible to hire work groups. However it was generally found that cooperatives may be hired by non-members against the payment of money. It appears that in most cases the price for cooperative labour is higher than the price for individual wage labour. This may be

justified by the higher labour productivity of work cooperatives and/or by the higher prestige which accrues to somebody who hires a cooperative and displays his wealth by providing a rich meal and drinks.

The principle of cooperative work may be applied to a number of activities other than farm work, for example to building, palmnut harvesting, spinning, transportation, palm-oil or rum production. All these may be considered sub-types of the cooperative for farm work. They are all of minor importance found only in one or two tribes each, and even there only in a few instances. Their structure is usually much less elaborate than the one of work cooperatives proper.

Building cooperatives as found among the Kpelle and Belle may be formed for constructing or thatching the houses of all members in turn. In most cases, however, such work is done by informal work groups.

Among the Loma and Belle palm-nut harvesting cooperatives may be formed either attached to existing farm work cooperatives or independently. They consist of men among the Loma and of both men and women among the Belle.

Spinning cooperatives were only found in traditional Kpelle culture. They consist of about 6 to 10 women and are headed by a leader. Once a week one member brings a certain amount of cotton to be spun cooperatively; the yarn is returned to that person. This is done in turn until every member has once used the cooperative's services for one day.

In response to the money and market economy cooperatives have been formed among the Kpelle for the transportation of agricultural products to the market. Each member's product is transported in turn.

Palm-oil may be produced cooperatively in traditional Kpelle and Bassa culture. Such cooperatives are still in existence. The harvesting of palm-nuts may be done cooperatively or individually. The palm-oil produced is given to one person at a time in turn. Today the palm-oil may also be marketed cooperatively, the proceeds being turned over to one member at a time in turn. Among the Kpelle and the Gbandi it was found that the proceeds were kept by the group for community purposes. It appears that cooperative production of palm-oil is slightly increasing in spread and importance.

The local distilling of rum is of recent origin and is now being practised widely among Liberian tribes, since it is not inhibited by any laws. A few groups have been found among the Gola who purchased and run a rum distillery cooperatively.

Two or more of these cooperatives, or other cooperatives (for example, saving cooperatives), or groups may be combined into one.

Among the Kru, fishing groups are formed to man fishing boats. Since no reciprocity of services is involved they are not considered as cooperatives. The owner of the boat sells one part of the catch and distributes another as a compensation among his helpers.

Community work groups are universally formed by all tribes for the cleaning and maintenance of paths, for the building of bridges, formerly for the construction of fortifications, and for other community projects. Since membership is compulsory, comprising all men or all young men of a community, they are not considered cooperatives in the sense of the definition. Community and work group leadership usually coincide. Work performance is often organized on a competitive basis. Neighbouring villages mostly co-ordinate work in such a way that road-clearing groups meet half way between two villages.

In some areas among the Kru community work is done by small informal groups of young men who are gathered *ad hoc.* Membership is voluntary.

Among the Kru semi-cooperative farming is occasionally practised. A cooperative is formed for the surveying of a very large farm, the cleaning of the underbrush, the felling of trees, the burning and the cleaning of the farm. Then the land is divided among the members of the cooperative and each individual is responsible for the further cultivation of the land. Each member is free to join a work cooperative of his choice which is institutionally not identical with the one which first surveyed and cleared the land.

Community farming, locally referred to as government farming and sometimes as communion farm, was found among the Mano, Kpelle, Gbandi, Kissi, Mende and Gola, that is, among most of the western tribes. It is of recent origin. It has sprung up in response to requisitioning demands of government officials and agents. A whole village cultivates one farm communally and keeps the produce for government visitors. Since membership is compulsory it is not considered a cooperative; the terms used in the tribal languages differ from those used for cooperative. Community and work-group leadership coincide. In most cases the farm is a rice farm. In some cases palm-oil may be produced communally for the same purpose. More recently, there seems to be a tendency towards selling some surplus production and keeping the proceeds for the payment of community taxes and local levies, and most recently to use the money to build up a ban fund for community members and for financing community projects.

Only in a very few instances was it found among the Kpelle that chiefs requested community members to work on their farms without compensation, abusing the power vested in them by the central government. The subject of compulsory group work for persons higher in the political hierarchy than chiefs cannot be discussed here.

Non-reciprocal work groups represent the most important form of economic cooperation among the eastern tribes. This organizational pattern is not found among the western tribes, with the exception of the Dan who are located between Kran and Mano; they seem to have been strongly influenced by the cooperative culture of both tribes. Non-reciprocal work groups are absent among the Bassa although they belong to the eastern tribes. Among the De and Belle they appear to be somewhat less important than among the Kru, Kran and Sapo. The basic pattern is that a large group is called together to work on one farm for one or two days. Only the wealthy can afford to hire such a group since the group has to be compensated by a large meal for which goats and/or cows have to be slaughtered and by drinks. Today a payment which is between US $5 and US $40 has to be added. Besides its economic function of providing farm labour the institution of organizing large non-reciprocal work groups has also a socio-political function. While in centralized societies political power usually leads to economic power, segmentary societies (without chiefs or kings) tend to reverse this order:
wealth leads to political power via the social prestige gained by displaying (and distributing) the wealth. Thus hiring large-scale work groups enables the rich man to display his wealth, to win thereby social prestige and hence pave his way to political power. At the same time, it provides a mechanism for redistributing wealth, thus limiting the continuous accumulation of wealth. Without such a mechanism the unrestricted accumulation of wealth might eventually lead to the transformation of a segmentary system into a centralized one. Non-reciprocal work groups are organized in irregular intervals. They tend to be very large, comprising usually about 40 to 50 and occasionally more than 100 members. Traditionally membership was usually drawn from age grades. Such groups are not organized for minor agricultural

tasks. With regard to the frequency at which groups are formed, cleaning the underbrush ranks highest, followed by felling trees, harvesting and sowing, in that order; cleaning the farm appears to rank lowest in frequency. The pattern of sexual labour division follows largely the one found in work cooperatives among these tribes, the only exception being a stronger engagement of men in mixed groups for harvesting. The number of men's groups seems to exceed the number of women's groups considerably. A farmer who wants a group to work on his farm applies to somebody he considers able to organize and supervise a group. This person
receives a token payment or present. It is mostly him who will be the leader of the group. Considerable prestige accrues to a man who has proved to be an able leader of a non-reciprocal work group. Work is accompanied by drumming and singing. Quite often elaborate religious ceremonies are practised. Semi-professional groups of dancers and drummers may be hired by the leader of the work group to accompany the work and the concluding feast. Among the Kru, Kran and Sapo non-reciprocal work groups are institutionally of two kinds: small-scale and large-scale. They are perceived as two different types.

Small-scale non-reciprocal work groups may have between 2 and 15 members, mostly, however, between 5 and 10. They are less prestigious than large-scale groups and are hired by farmers who cannot afford the large ones. In some areas, especially among the Sapo, they have become more frequent in recent times since most farmers cannot afford the rising price of large-scale groups. Among the Kran large-scale groups are still prevalent. Such small groups may also be employed by a farmer who has previously hired a large group; it is not common for one farmer to hire two groups in one year. The basic pattern of small-scale and large-scale groups is about the same, the only exception being that drumming is not usual during work. In some Sapo sub-tribes small-scale groups have no leader.

Large-scale non-reciprocal work groups are supposed to have more than 10, preferably more than 20 members. Large-scale groups of 15 members are distinguished from small-scale groups of the same size by (a) different terms; (b) different amounts of compensation; and (c) different prestige accruing to the person who employs the group. Work is always concluded by a large, often village-wide, eating, drinking and dancing party.

Permanent non-reciprocal work groups are of very recent origin. They were found among the Kru and Kran and Sapo where they are of minor importance and among the Dan where they represent today the most important type of economic cooperation. Non-reciprocal work groups of the traditional type are only established *ad hoc,* even though in practice membership may quite often be largely identical in subsequent sessions; however, according to the organizational pattern they are considered non-permanent. With the coming of the cash economy and the increasing importance for wage labour more and more non-reciprocal groups are being formed on a permanent basis to be hired by wealthy farmers. They are a commercialized version of the old prestigious work group. Leadership is permanent, too. Among the Kran and Sapo such groups tend to keep the money they receive for their services and build up a ban fund (see below). Since membership is permanent and voluntary and such groups also have a formal structure they are to be considered as cooperatives. They deviate from the usual pattern of allocating all goods or services to one member at a time in turn; however, since the proceeds accrue to all members equally and since they are earned by communal efforts all criteria of the definition of a cooperative are met.

Informal work groups are universally found in all tribes. Their economic relevance varies from tribe to tribe. Groups of neighbours, relatives and friends may be called from the same or from different villages for any type of work. The groups are not permanent nor do they have a formal structure. No strict reciprocity of services is involved. An economic activity in which informal work groups are essential in most tribes is house-building. A short-term compensation for the work done lies in a meal provided. The mode of compensation differs from that in non-reciprocal small-scale or large-scale work groups in that now goats or cows are slaughtered; when meat is provided it is usually chicken.

There may be other voluntary or non-voluntary associations which fulfil cooperative functions, such as age grades, secret societies, burial societies, entertainment societies. Quite often it has been observed that the economic function of such groups has proved to be the strongest of all: many groups lost all functions but the economic one, thus retaining existence as a pure cooperative.

In comparison with countries like Nigeria or Tanzania, very little effort has been made to build up a cooperative movement in Liberia although the Liberian Code of Laws provides for it. The few efforts made seem to show (a) that large cooperative enterprises may be successful if strictly supervised; however they are only nominally cooperatives; and (b) that small-scale projects may be successful with a minimum of supervision if based on traditional cooperatives.

SAVING COOPERATIVES

Rice-saving cooperatives are of traditional origin among the Mano, Kpelle and Dan. They are predominantly formed by women during or after rice harvesting. About 4 to 30 members may join and contribute every week a stipulated equal amount of rice. The total is given to one member at a time in turn. Members may also pay a multiple of the basic unit, thus being entitled to a multiple number of turns. The rice is used to acquire some large object. Rice-saving cooperatives have largely disappeared, being substituted by money-saving cooperatives and saving and ban cooperatives. During a transitional phase which may still be found to be in existence in some areas such saving groups acted as marketing cooperatives selling the rice and distributing the money to the members or keeping the money in a common fund, that is for bans.

Among the Loma, cooperative saving was traditionally done in primitive money, specifically in long twisted iron bars of 10-20 inches length. The habit has spread from there into Kpelle territory. In a few instances such cooperatives are still found today among the Loma.

Another object of saving in kind is palm-oil as found among the Kpelle and, when connected with the production of palm-oil, among the Bassa and Gbandi. While it is found traditionally as well as presently among the Kpelle and Bassa it is of recent origin among the Gbandi.

The principle of saving rice or palm-oil is also applicable to a number of other commodities, such as coffee.

Money-saving cooperatives are a modernized version of rice-saving cooperatives, the main difference being that money is being substituted for rice. They developed around 1930 when Firestone started its Operations and for the first time cash became available to the hinterland population. Those tribes without traditional saving-in-kind cooperatives said they learned the pattern from other tribes at the Firestone plantations. Contributions may be weekly or monthly. Groups may range

from very small ones to very large ones. The amounts contributed may vary between 5 cents and US $50 and more. Groups may be mixed or consist of either men or women. They may be found in the capital, in towns in the interior as well as in remote villages. The range of variability is very wide, except for the basic pattern that the total amount collected at each meeting is handed over to one member at a time. In the absence of banks saving cooperatives and related organizations derived from them provide the only saving institutions. They are found in most though not all tribes. Small groups have no leader; large groups are headed by a so-called president and sometimes by other officers. Saving cooperatives may also fulfill an insurance function: In case of necessity a member may receive the total in advance.

A modification of saving cooperatives was found among the Belle and Kru where regular contributions are made for a period of one year, after which they are redistributed. No further use is made of the money during the saving period.

In traditional Kru society cooperatives used to be established in which members contributed chicken, goats, cattle, rice or any other commodity. This was used to build up a fund from which members could take bans. No interest was paid. Among the Sapo, cooperatives were formed around 1930 on the basis of former age grades; they built up a fund of cattle and commodities which were later on exchanged for money. Members could borrow cash or kind to finance a burial, to pay taxes or court fines, etc. The money could also be used to finance a feast. Today these groups have been largely transformed into saving and ban cooperatives.

The most important indigenous development from saving cooperatives are saving and ban cooperatives. They were found in most tribes though of varying importance. Among the Mano the majority of the population belong to saving and ban cooperatives. Although less than 30 years old in their origins they are already very widespread and are continuing to gain in number and importance. The basic principle is that the money contributed weekly or monthly by the members is kept in a fund from which members and non-members may get bans. Sometimes bans are interest-free for members; more often members pay around 25 per cent and non-members between 30 and 50 per cent; interest rates are not calculated for certain time periods though bans are actually limited to periods between 1 week and 3 months, occasionally up to 6 months. In some areas saving and ban cooperatives are more popular among the literate population, in others more among illiterates. The degree of elaborateness of book-keeping and accountancy varies greatly depending upon the skill of the ‚secretary'. Saving and ban cooperatives are
usually highly formalized. There is nearly always a written constitution and a code of bye-laws. Groups are headed by committees consisting of several officers, the most important ones usually being a president, a vice-president, a treasurer, a collector and a secretary. Saving and ban cooperatives are usually established for one year, after which the money is distributed among the members. Among the Sapo saving and ban cooperatives are either identical with former saving and ban in kind cooperatives or have been established recently; the former cattle fund is partly or fully converted into a monetary fund, or monthly contributions between 10 cents and US $1. 50 are made. Contributions in kind may still be substituted for contributions in cash if otherwise members could not pay.

Among the Mano and Loma a few saving and ban cooperatives were found which had added an investment function. Instead of distributing the fund after one year among the members the total was given to one person (according to the pattern of saving cooperatives) to be invested in a bus or taxi. This procedure was repeated

each year until every member had had the total once. Such groups are usually small, and they are formed by wealthy traders or other relatively rich persons.

Among the Kissi, Mende, Sapo and Kran the principles of cooperative work, saving and loaning may be combined. Work groups are established, to be hired by farmers against payment of a fee. The money is used to build up a ban fund. Among the Kru it is a frequent practice for a person to hire his lineage or a lineage to which he does not belong. Once a lineage head has agreed to supply a work group, participation is compulsory for the lineage members. The money paid for the work may be used to build up a lineage fund for bans, run the same way as other saving and ban funds. Since membership is compulsory the term cooperative is not applicable to such groups.

Among the De and Bassa saving and consuming groups of traditional origin were found. Various kinds of foods are contributed by the community members and used for a big feast. Such groups are usually very large.

In traditional Belle society, groups used to be formed on a community basis for the collection of strips of ,country cloth'. These were used for garments to be given as presents to official visitors. Since such community-wide organizations usually compell all villages to join the group they are referred to as a group rather than a cooperative.

A total of three community saving and building groups were found among the Gola and De. Among the former, two villages save money to construct one new house for every four villagers every year. Among the latter, money is saved for the construction of a church and a school.

Community saving and ban groups with additional purposes were found among the Gola, Loma, Kpelle, Mende, Kru, Kran and Sapo. In a number of tribes they are of considerable economic importance. They are usually established for an indefinite period of time. Most of those found in existence originated between 1940 and 1960. They may be established on a lineage or community basis, or they may comprise several villages up to a sub-tribe. Small groups may have 10 to 60 members, large ones several hundred. It is common that in an area over which such a group extends every adult male and unmarried adult female is a member. Such community groups serve two broad purposes: they extend bans to individuals and they finance community projects. There are three principal ways of building up a fund: either by communal rice-farming, the rice being sold and the proceeds being put into the fund; by contributions in kind (rice, chicken, goats, cattle) which are either immediately sold or in case of animals bred for a number of months or years and sold then; or by monetary contributions. The latter are usually on a monthly basis. The amounts paid in by each member are mostly small: between US $10 and US $2. Individual bans are only granted for narrowly defined and socially recognized purposes, as for example burial, sickness, court fines, dowry, house-building, purchase of land and investments in a bus, taxi, or trade. Loan periods are in some tribes up to one month, in others up to three months. While non-members always pay interest there is some variation for members: they may pay no interest, or rates may be, according to tribe, 5-10 per cent, around 25 per cent or between 25 and 40 per cent. Community purposes for which the fund may be used are: construction and/or maintenance of motor roads, district taxes, community projects like a church or a school or a community feast. Such community groups are usually headed by an elaborate committee consisting of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, collector, judge, messenger and often many other officers. Local chiefs may serve as witnesses at all transactions. There is a rather tight control system to avoid fraud.

Wherever fraud occurs on a large scale or repeatedly, it may decrease considerably the propensity of the population to form
such groups. On the whole, however, there is a strong tendency for community groups, based on communal saving, loaning and financing community projects, to increase in number, size, amounts collected and projects undertaken.

Other groups like age grades, burial societies, entertainment societies, soccer clubs etc., may adopt the functions of cooperative saving and loaning. It is probably the majority of voluntary associations in West Africa which provides some material help when members are in need.

OTHER COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives of clearly traditional origin are also found among plantation and industrial workers and in the cities. Among plantation and mine workers, particularly, saving cooperatives seem to be widespread.

In a mining enterprise (Bong Mining Company, located on Kpelle territory) 36 per cent of a probability sample of 383 workers stated to be members of a saving cooperative. In two rubber plantations 43 per cent of a probability sample of 539 workers were stated to be members of a saving cooperative, the proportion in LAC (located on Bassa territory) being 49 per cent *(N = 338)* and in COCOPA (located on Mano territory) 33 per cent *(N = 199)*.

The mean contribution per month of 163 workers at LAC who indicated membership in a saving cooperative was US $11 .60. Education does not appear to be a factor influencing membership in a co-operative. In the two plantations an equal proportion of 43 per cent among both literates and illiterates stated membership in a saving cooperative. The higher pay literate workers receive enables them to make slightly larger contributions: literates contribute US $12.52 per month, illiterates US $1 1.09. Since work at the plantation ends usually between 12 noon and 2 p.m., enough time is left for the workers to engage in agricultural work on their own. The majority seem to have their own farms nearby. Thirty-two per cent stated that they were members in a work cooperative; at LAC the proportion was 37 per cent, at COCOPA 25 per cent. Of the illiterate workers 37 per cent stated membership in a work cooperative, of the literate workers 24 per cent.

Saving and ban cooperatives are not common among workers. Although no systematic study of cooperatives in Monrovia was
included, it appears that saving cooperatives are extremely widespread. The number of members is from two onwards. Small groups seem to be more common than large ones. There is hardly anybody who has not, at some time or another during his life in Monrovia, been a member of a saving cooperative. Even the fact that fraud may occur any time has hardly discouraged the formation of saving cooperatives.

Saving and ban cooperatives are also common. They are considerably larger than saving cooperatives, the average ranging from about 30 to 60 members. Contributions tend to be around US $5 per month. They are either organized for a period of one year after which the total amount is redistributed, or for an unlimited period. They are usually highly formalized, being governed by an elaborate constitution and by bye-laws, copies of which are often distributed among the members in mimeographed form. They all have elected officers. The money is usually deposited in a bank, and many precautions are taken to avoid the possibility of fraud.

RECEPTIVITY TO CHANGE

While traditional cooperatives have been reported to be on the decline in many parts of the world, the overall situation of traditional cooperatives is one of change and adaptation, but not of weakening. It is true that many actual cooperative organizations have vanished; but at the same time, the growth of new types of cooperatives has been astonishing, pointing to an enormous receptivity to change. The main points should be summarized briefly:

1. During a period of changing economic, social, and political conditions most traditional institutions of economic cooperation have continued to exist. They still play a very important economic role;

2. During the process of adaptation to changing economic conditions traditional institutions of economic cooperation underwent a number of structural and functional changes.
Functionally work cooperatives have changed in that (a) they produce rice now or other cash crops for a market while traditionally they operated in a subsistence economy; (b) they may be hired for money by outsiders an entirely new function; (c) they may process agricultural products, e.g. palm-oil and sugar-cane for the market. Structurally they have changed in that (a) the pattern of sexual labour division is not as strictly observed as before in order to increase agricultural production; (b) in many cases an elaborate committee has been elected which controls the cooperative business; (c) non-reciprocal work cooperative~ formed *ad hoc* among the eastern tribes have been converted in many instances into permanent work cooperatives to be hired by outsiders; (d) the social control mechanisms of cooperatives have taken advantage of the modern legal apparatus. Functionally saving cooperatives have changed in that (a) saving in kind where still in existence now often includes marketing; (b) money has been substituted for kind; (c) the ban business has been added as an entirely new function; (d) saving and ban cooperatives have spread from the original three tribes to all other tribes and have become extremely popular in all sections of the population. Structurally they have changed in that they have adopted (a) complex body of officers; (b) a constitution and bye-law regulating the conduct of the members and the business 0 the cooperative; (c) mechanisms and procedures to control the saving and ban business of the cooperative;

3. As a result of the application of traditional patterns of co operation to modern economic conditions new institution of economic cooperation have been generated. A combination of the basic patterns of work cooperatives an~ community work groups has led to the new institution of community farming. Many work groups have been trans formed into groups to be hired or have adopted hiring as new function. Saving in kind cooperatives have been most prolific in generating new types: short-term and long-term saving cooperatives; saving and loan in kind cooperatives; saving and loan cooperatives; saving, ban and investment cooperatives; saving and consuming cooperatives; community saving and building groups; and community multi purpose groups. Combining the patterns of cooperative work and saving, work, saving and ban cooperatives have come into existence;

4. Cooperatives proper (in the sense of the definition) of all forms of economic cooperation appear to be most receptive to change. On the whole, indigenous cooperatives have increased rather than decreased in number, variety and economic importance;

5. Two major trends have been observed: (a) With the transformation of the subsistence economy into a market economy work cooperatives proper become somewhat less frequent. At the same time hired work cooperatives which have come into existence in response to the introduction of the market economy become more frequent. (b) Saving cooperatives which started to develop around 1930 and saving and ban cooperatives which started to develop about 1950 are spreading very fast and are becoming increasingly important. In future, saving and ban cooperatives are to be expected to develop more rapidly than saving cooperatives and both more rapidly than work cooperatives. A most recent innovation are community multi-purpose cooperatives which are based on communal saving and loaning and which finance community projects. They may compromise one or several communities (comparable to cooperative unions and federations). They are rapidly growing with regard to number, size, funds raised and projects undertaken;

6. Most institutions of economic cooperation, and among these particularly cooperatives, could be considerably improved by technical aid (much less so by capital aid). Such aid could have two major aims: (a) to improve the Operation of already existing functions of cooperatives (e.g. to improve the functioning of saving and saving and ban cooperatives by training accountants, forming cooperative unions and federations etc.); (b) to add new functions to already existing ones (e.g. to add the function of cooperative marketing to already existing work cooperatives) hence using existing cooperatives as a channel for the introduction of a modern economy. Adding new functions to cooperatives may also counteract the process of weakening in case of work cooperatives (for a detailed case study cf. Seibel and Massing, 1974).

Whether or not traditional cooperatives can or should be saved and used as channels for modernization is not the issue here. What we have demonstrated is that cooperative societies represent the original form of self-management, or worker participation, and that they are exceedingly widespread in traditional cultures. Instead of eliminating the indigenous institutions of self-management by introducing so-called modern forms of alienated work, it is suggested that the existing self-managing potential be reinstated. What is possible in Yugoslavia should also be possible in the Third World.

Political Bases for Self-Management in the Developing World: Participation in Open Societies

Self-management is a system designed to utilize fully the potential of every individual participating in an organization. Its success is then of course contingent upon the extent to which the various individuals possess a potential that could be utilized. We do not intend to dig into that question as a philosophical issue. Suffice it to say that most people have many more useful talents and abilities than managers in industry and administration are aware of. The crucial question is then whether or not the respective cultures permit the members of society to activate their talents and to participate directly in all affairs or whether they relegate the individuals to some very limited function like cogs in a machine.

PARTICIPATION IN PREMODERN SOCIETIES

It is frequently assumed that the traditional cultures in developing countries are of the latter type. In fact, there are many societies to which this assumption applies. If for generations the message has been only to obey orders and never to move of one's own accord, then the introduction of self-management may indeed be problematic for a long learning period. However, even in those societies, there are usually spheres of activities in which some principles of self-management are practised, namely in cooperative societies. In our preceding study of cooperatives in Liberia, it
was shown that traditional cooperatives are particularly strong in the more centralized societies. If we add to that the evidence from the various kingdoms in traditional West Africa, then we can also point to the widespread existence of cooperative organizations in crafts, usually referred to as guilds. These present a vivid example of a combination of hierarchical structure with cooperative or self-management principles. Hence, even to hierarchically organized, centralized societies, the idea of self-management may not be totally alien.

There exist, however, a great many traditional societies in which the principles of self-management and participation are built right into the political and economic structure. We may refer to them as open societies. Politically, they are open in the sense that every adult (or at least every adult male, as there seem to exist only very few perfect open societies) participates in all political decisions. Economically and socially, they are open in the sense that all positions are on principle available to everyone, that there is free competition, that only individual achievement counts and that individual achievement and success must not lead to class privilege. Politically, such societies may be called grassroots democracies; economically, they may be called achieving societies. Not in all societies are the political and economic spheres matched in such a way that they can be truly called open. Some may be more open in the political and more closed in the economic order, or vice versa; but there is a general tendency, at least in premodern societies, for the two orders to correlate.

Before presenting some descriptions of premodern open societies, we have to deal briefly with the more theoretical question of why some societies are more open while others are more closed. As we will see at the end of this chapter, this is not of purely theoretical interest, for it will tie in with the political dimension of self-management.

OPEN AND CLOSED SOCIETIES

With reference to the system of social stratification, we may rephrase our question: What are the conditions under which political, economic and social roles are allocated by achieved criteria, and what are the conditions for role allocation by ascription?

For an example, let us first take an everyday setting as it widely occurs in every society. Decisions have to be made all the time in which the result of a choice between several alternatives or of a decision is irrelevant as long as the choice or decision is made.

For example, it does not matter whether lunch is served at twelve or one o'clock. All that matters is that those concerned know the time when lunch is served. The role of decision-maker (a particular type of work role) in this situation cannot be allocated on the basis of achieved criteria because everyone could make the decision and no one is particularly suited for the role. Or, in terms of a more precise definition of achieved roles, criteria of role allocation in that situation cannot be germane to the performance instructions of the role of decision-maker. The same applies to other types of roles. In many premodern societies, farming is unproblematic. Differences in performance are largely irrelevant; if all farmers attempted to maximize their output, they would produce a surplus they could not consume. As every extended family is a subsistence unit and surpluses cannot be sold, the farmer's goal is, in the terminology of decision theory, satisficing rather than optimizing.

In normal social life it has to be dear to everyone in most situations who takes up certain roles, lest there be strife or chaos. The system of role allocation most suitable to that situation is based on ascribed criteria like age, sex, or family or lineage affiliation. Its effectiveness lies in the elimination of uncertainty about role incumbents; it is predictable by every member of society who will then assume a certain role. Thus, individuals can be trained for these roles, from early childhood onwards. Anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936, p. 129) has even suggested that it is the normal state of a society in which the uncertainty arising out of the perennial search for the best man for a given role has been removed by placing the system of role allocation on a predictable ascriptive base:

> Social systems have to be built upon the potentialities of the average individual, the person who has no special gifts or disabilities. Such individuals can be trained to occupy almost any status and to perform the associated role adequately if not brilliantly. The social ascription of a particular status, with the intensive training that such ascription makes possible, is a guarantee that the role will be performed even if the performance is mediocre.

The underlying theorem can be summarized as follows: *In settings where the performance of work roles is unproblematic in the sense that differences in the quality of performance or in the degree of optimality of solutions to work problems are non-existent or irrelevant, work roles are allocated on the basis of ascribed, or non-achieved, criteria.*

Let us now consider a setting in which decisions and work activities are problematic, where conditions of uncertainty prevail. There are situations in which the fate of a group, sometimes even its survival, depends on the maximization of work-role performance or on the optimality of decisions; where it is of vital importance that certain roles are occupied by those who are most competent.

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Examples of such roles may be war leaders, heart surgeons or aircraft pilots. In such a setting, work roles are typically allocated on the basis of achieved criteria. Thus, our first proposition is complemented by a second: In settings where the performance of work roles in problematic in the sense that high quality of performance in work roles or optimality of solutions to work problems are both possible and important, work roles are allocated on the basis of achieved criteria.

The two propositions may now be applied to societies: *Societies characterized by a predominance of unproblematic settings tend to allocate work roles on the basis of ascribed criteria. Societies characterized by a predominance of problematic settings tend to allocate roles on the basis of achievement. The former may be called closed, the latter open societies.*

Once this theorem is accepted, one may infer from an emphasis on achieved roles that a society is characterized by a predominance of problematic settings; an emphasis on non-achieved roles leads us to conclude that a society is characterize~ by a predominance of non-problematic settings.

From the above static theorem, a dynamic theorem can be derived: *Any change in the predominance of unproblematic versus problematic settings in a society may lead to a subsequent shi}t in the emphasis on ascribed versus achieved roles, and accordingly to the emergence of a closed versus an open society.*

A major source of such change may be seen in technological innovations from within or without.

In a historical dimension, change may thus take place in two different phases that can be expressed in the form of two sub-theorems: *As a predominance of unproblematic settings in a society*
changes to a predominance of problematic settings, the emphasis on ascribed roles may shift to an emphasis on achieved roles, i.e. a closed society may turn into an open society.

Similar thoughts had been expressed by Linton (1936, pp. 129-30):

As soon as changes within the culture or in the external environment produce maladjustments, it has to recognize and utilize these gifts (i.e. special skills and talents germane to the performance of certain roles) . . . For this reason, societies living under new or changing conditions are usually characterized by a wealth of achievable statuses and by very broad delimitations of the competition for them.

As a predominance of problematic settings in a society changes to a predominance of unproblematic settings, the emphasis on achieved roles shifts to an emphasis on ascribed roles, i.e. an open society turns into a closed society.

Again, Linton (1936, p. 130) described that process in some detail:

As social systems achieve adjustment to their settings, the social value of individual thought and initiative decreases. Thorough training of the component individuals becomes more necessary to the survival and successful functioning of society than the free expression of their individual abilities. To ensure successful training, more and more statuses are transferred from the achieved to the ascribed group, and the competition for those which remain is more and more limited. To put the same thing in different terms, individual opportunities decrease. Well-

adjusted societies are, in general, characterized by a high preponderance of ascribed over achieved statuses, and increasing rigidity of the social system.[*]

AFRICAN SOCIETIES

We will now look at the evidence from premodern, and particularly from pre-literate societies. From its beginning, there has
been a long-standing tradition in sociology to speculate cursorily about ‚primitive peoples', rather than study them seriously. As the transition from medieval estate society was seen as a change from a closed to an open society, it was concluded by inference that all premodern societies must be closed systems. No advice came from anthropologists who concentrated mainly on kinship structures. When politically interested, they managed to detect absolute rulers in all societies. When the colonial policy of ‚indirect rule' was based on the assumption of universal absolutism, some tribes started to revolt (e.g. the Ibo of Eastern Nigeria in the Aba riots of 1929), for they had never before recognized any central authority. After some initial confusion among government anthropologists, it was eventually discovered that many if not most pre-industrial societies were ‚tribes without rulers' (Middleton and Tait, 1958), i.e. segmentary rather than centralized political systems.

Inspired by the Middleton-Tait discovery, a few political scientists shifted their interest from ‚states' to ‚political systems' which allowed them to include segmentary, or stateless, societies among their objects of study (Almond and Coleman, 1960). As segmentary societies are not characterized by hereditary positions in a hierarchical order, the question now arose: how do they allocate roles?

In our studies of premodern societies, we found that many, particularly the less-developed ones, place a major emphasis on achievement in their system of role allocation. Several examples will be presented for illustrative purposes, some from Africa and some from Oceania, although any other part of the Third World might have been chosen as well.

The Kran are a society in Eastern Liberia with a very simple technology. For their subsistence, they depend first on agriculture and second on hunting and gathering. Individual achievement is strongly emphasized, and important roles are filled by a person only as long as he is found to be the most competent. Thus, the Kran may be called an achieving society. As no society ever allocates all roles by achievement, however, the complexity of the Kran system of role allocation has to be examined in more detail.

In everyday Kran life, decisions have to be made all the time in which the outcome is irrelevant: any alternative will do equally well. For instance, it does not make any difference whether a family works today on one farm and tomorrow on another or *vice versa,* as long as the family members know when to work on which farm. According to our first theoretical proposition, the role of decision-maker in this situation cannot be allocated on the basis of achieved criteria because everyone could make the decision and no one is particularly suited for the role. The non-achieved criteria chosen by the Kran, and many similar societies, are kinship, age and sex. They define unmistakenly who is in charge of unproblematic decisions. The oldest person of the smallest social unit (such units are usually kinship units) that is directly concerned makes the decision. Decisions that concern both sexes are made

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[*] For a systematic presentation cf. Seibel (1974a; 1975).

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by men. Women make decisions according to seniority when the decisions pertain to women only.

The Kran arrive thus at a simple, formal authority system for unproblematic decisions. The largest unit subject to the authority of its eldest is the tribe *(bloa)*. However, as the tribe emerges as a social reality only in the form of war alliance between lineages, i.e. in a problematic situation, the role of the tribal eldest *(bloa dioi)* is purely ritual. The largest permanent social unit is the lineage *(tshe),* presided over by the lineage eldest *(bo klaa).* If a lineage is a residential unit inhabiting a village *(vulo)* its eldest is at the same time the village head *(vulo ba).* If a lineage is spread out, its segments *(unu)* are residential units under its eldest *(unu dioi);* they typically occupy a village section *(lü).* In village affairs, the segments are under the authority of the eldest of the oldest, or founder, lineage *(vulo ba).* This role is of only ritual importance as there are hardly any unproblematic decisions on that level; most unproblematic decisions in a village are made by lineage, or lineage segment heads and by heads of smaller social units. A segment consists of several extended families *(buli)* each of which lives in its own compound. Every extended family is headed by its oldest male *(nyo klaa de buli).*

Unlike in centralized, hierarchical societies, decision-making power in segmentary societies is strongest in the smaller, and weakest in the larger social units. This finds its logical conclusion in the fact that the Kran do not recognize the role of eldest within the very largest unit, the alliance of tribes *(bloa dru)* which is only formed in major wars. On that level, no unproblematic decisions exist; the authority of an eldest would thus be zero.

Our first proposition applies equally to other work roles among the Kran. In so far as hunting, gathering, farming, basket- or mat-weaving and other activities are unproblematic, they are assigned
without reference to differences in competence. As anyone can perform these roles, and as differences in the quality of performance are considered irrelevant, they are open to everyone. Criteria of role allocation are non-achieved, as everyone, or everyone of a certain sex, may assume these roles, permanently or intermittently.

A second sub-system of role allocation is structured along the dimension of problematic decisions and activities. There are settings, in which it is of crucial importance that certain roles are occupied by the most competent members. As traditional Kran society is under constant danger of attack, the most problematic setting is the military. Hence, the prevalence of achieved criteria in the allocation of roles is most pronounced in war and war-related activities, as suggested by our second proposition. The Kran consider the role of war leader *(bio)* as the one that is most important in their role system. This role is entirely problem-oriented. Its functionality is emphasized by the fact that in peace the *bio* may be a respected person but no special authority accrues to him. Rank and importance of the *bio* vary with the kind of social unit that is involved in warfare, e.g. a village or a tribe. In minor wars, the *bio* may participate in combat; in major wars, he is a strategist only. Accordingly, different weights may be assigned to his strategic abilities on the one hand and to his strength and fighting skills on the other. In any event, all criteria of selection are achieved, i.e. directly germane to the role. Age is irrelevant. What ultimately matters is a person's ability to win wars. More specific criteria are strategic skills, self-control, bravery, strength, endurance, reconciliatory talents and expertise in the production of medicines, charms and arrow poisons. Someone is *bio* only as long as he is considered the most capable. His role is only activated during war.

(With the pacification of the Kran by the Monrovia government early this century, the role of *bio* has ceased to be activated.)

In major wars, the *bio* is aided by head warriors *(taa nyo)* whose roles are also achieved. Main criteria are courage, bravery, strength and endurance.

In the economic sphere, the Kran consider as crucial two roles in which optimality or high quality of performance can be reached: the role of the ‚richest man' *(pa nyo)* and the role of the ‚gentleman' *(gaa nyo).* Both are allocated on the basis of achieved criteria. As land is plentiful and the amount of capital negligible,
wealth is largely proportionate to the amount of labour someone has at his disposal. Through hard work, the richest man has been able to afford the bride-wealth for several women. As he has many wives and children, he can afford to hire large work groups *(pã)* to extend his farm. As a compensation to the work group, he has to give a big party, the affluence of which indicates the amount of his wealth. Thus, the party is at the same time a major mechanism of redistribution: the prevention of excessive wealth is built right into the process of accumulating wealth. The richest man can only retain his role as long as he constantly proves his affluence through work parties. As in the case of the *bio,* past achievements are irrelevant; the role has to be earned anew all the time. For those farmers who decide to compete for the role of ‚richest man', farming becomes a problematic setting in which high quality of performance matters. Unlike the average farmer, they try to maximize their production. For them, farming becomes an achieved role as they strive for the higher status they may gain through hard work, skill in work organization and other criteria germane to the role of a ‚high status farmer'. Hence, a dual role of farmer emerges: the role of the average farmer within subsistence agriculture, based on non-achieved criteria; and the role of the rich farmer, for surplus production, based on achieved criteria. The incumbents of the latter role compete for the role of ‚richest man.

The term ‚gentleman' refers to the most generous man in the village. While the richest man uses redistribution in a calculated manner to increase his wealth, the gentleman considers redistribution, generosity and helpfulness as ends in themselves. He is ready to work with and for anyone who needs help; he readily offers visitors accommodation and food and he may help a young man pay his bride-wealth without asking for special privileges.

Further avenues to respected roles are found in a variety of associations (e.g. cooperatives), in which leaders are largely chosen on the basis of individual merit and ability.

Analytically, settings may be divided into problematic and unproblematic ones. Social reality, however, is frequently mixed. Accordingly, the actual system of role allocation among the Kran is very flexible. Depending on the extent to which settings are problematic or unproblematic, criteria of role allocation may include both achieved and ascribed roles. In such a mixed setting, a person may be chosen on the basis of both achieved and ascribed criteria, or persons chosen from different sub-systems of role allocation may contribute to the outcome. For instance, in a moderately problematic setting, the eldest may participate nominally while the *bio's* contribution may carry more weight; the converse may be true in moderately unproblematic situations.

Social, economic and political affairs among the Kran are characterized by two types of settings: problematic and unproblematic ones. Accordingly, the Kran allocate roles on the basis of achievement or ascription, respectively. As no society is ever completely achievement-oriented, it is justified to call the Kran an achieving, or open, society (for detailed ethnographic data cf. Schröder and Seibel, 1974).

The extent of problematic settings varies considerably between societies. A comparison of three pre-industrial societies in Nigeria shows that the importance of achievement in their systems of role allocation varies accordingly. It should be again noted that these descriptions pertain to the premodern, not to the present situation.

The Ibo are an agricultural society in Eastern Nigeria with a simple technology. While they are, economically speaking, slightly more advanced than the Kran of Liberia in that they do not rely on hunting and gathering, their economy is rather unsophisticated compared to the economy of many other Nigerian societies, particularly those which are kingdoms. There are no towns, and villages are split into hamlets which consist of dispersed homesteads. There are only small local markets, and very few specialized craftsmen. Craft technology is very crude. Before the advent of the British, the Ibo had no common name, nor a common tradition of origin. The socio-political structure is segmentary, the largest political unit being the village group. There is no central political authority, and authority is, in principle, never vested in one individual. In each community, political functions are served by a council of elders whose decisions have to be ratified by the community. With the exception of the cult slaves *(osu),* there are no hereditary positions or strata into which a person is born: everyone is born equal.

Living in very small communities, with a simple technology, and under constant danger of attack, survival is precarious for the Ibo. Their life is characterized by a preponderance of problematic settings. Hence, their system of role allocation is strongly based

on achieved criteria, as suggested by our theory. On principle, all economic and political roles labelled important are achieved, involving a person's competence, aptitude, capability etc. Personal efforts and the use of one's abilities lead to a rise in status. War leadership goes to the one who proves to be most efficient. Matters in dispute can be judged by a number of persons or councils; there is no office of judge. One chooses whom one considers best in judging and to whom both parties agree. Thus, there is considerable social mobility, every position being, in principle, open to everyone. A person has alternative choices between various ways of gaining prestige and between various occupations. The opportunity for upward or downward mobility is almost unlimited. Mobility is not confined to the political, economic, or occupational sphere; a person may also improve his position by high performance in athletics, arts and more recently in literature and science.

Thus, Ibo society may be characterized as an open society where roles may be attained on the basis of occupational skill, enterprise and initiative, individual achievement being one of the highest values.

However, as the Ibo are technologically slightly more advanced and survival is somewhat less precarious than among the Kran, the prevalence of problematic situations is not quite as pronounced as among the Kran. Both societies allocate important roles on the basis of achievement. But while the Kran are very rigorous in that such role incumbency is always transient, a role being awarded to the most competent at any given time, the Ibo have introduced an element of stability through their so-called title societies which allow the translation of achieved economic wealth into permanent political status. Every free-born male member of society may buy his way into the title society and then, through additional payments, up the ranks of titles within the association. But while the way into and up the association is earned, the status and prestige that accrue to a title do not have to be constantly renewed through permanent efforts.

The Yoruba comprise a number of closely related kingdoms which, under the Oyo empire, dominated a large part of the West African coast. They are technologically very advanced, their economy being based on agriculture, highly developed crafts organized in guilds and extensive trading. The Yoruba have the highest rate of traditional urbanization in Africa, cities and hinterland being connected through considerable economic exchange and through a net of administrative channels. Politically and economically, the Yoruba have reached a high degree of political and economic control over their environment, i.e. their existence is characterized by a predominance of unproblematic settings. This implies that economic and political processes and their outcomes are largely predictable. This predictability is rooted in their system of status allocation which is primarily based on ascription. People are born into positions and can thus be trained for them from birth onwards. The achievement principle according to which the most competent is assigned to any given role would introduce an amount of uncertainty that would be incompatible with the stability of the economic and political system. Conforming to our theory, Yoruba society is thus highly stratified, with a layer of royal families at the top of the hierarchy, a stratum of hereditary chiefs and representatives of major territorial and associational groups beneath, commoners without hereditary claims to titles below them, subdivided into two main layers of craftsmen and farmers, and slaves at the bottom. During the last 250 years, however, there has been a sharp increase of problematic settings among the Yoruba. After a series of wars against the kingdom of Dahomey in the eighteenth century, civil war led to internal disintegration during the nineteenth century. This enabled the Hausa-Fulani in the north to penetrate into Yoruba territory and to islamize its northern part. The Yoruba emerged from this divided into largely independent kingdoms. The introduction of problematic settings added a strong element of achievement to an otherwise ascriptive system of role allocation. As a consequence, there is some inter-stratum mobility. A wealthy man, for example, may be appointed to council membership and even receive a chieftaincy title which involves the crossing of strata boundaries. Moreover, there is considerable intra-stratum mobility, each stratum being a differentiated system of substrata. Mobility within strata is largely dependent on individual achievement, with the Ogboni society, similar to the Ibo title society, allowing the transformation of achieved roles into permanent positions. Especially during the wars of the nineteenth century, a number of other avenues were open to men of ambition: in the army, in crafts which produced weapons and other supplies for the armies, and in agriculture which had a permanent market among full-time craftsmen as well as in the armies. In each of these fields, a man could strive for roles on the basis of his competence and improve his status through personal efforts. Even in the selection of a king from among several royal families, personal competence and merits matter. Thus, the life of every Yoruba is characterized by the presence of both problematic and unproblematic settings and accordingly affected by achieved as well as ascribed criteria of role allocation.

Technologically and organizationally, the Hausa are one of the most advanced societies of pre-industrial Africa. Since the thirteenth century, when the islamic faith was adopted, the Hausa have had a highly developed system of government with a centralized bureaucracy, a well-organized tax system and a highly qualified judiciary. Each of the eight Hausa states is administered from its capital, which is the seat of the emir, an absolute ruler. The degree of differentiation of occupational roles is most remarkable; there is an elaborate marketing structure that connects not only every village with the capital but also the empires across the Sahara with the North African

coast. Crafts are very advanced, both technologically and organizationally. The nomadic Fulani who had been immigrating peacefully into Hausaland from around the year 1500 onwards, led a holy war *(jihad)* against the Hausa aristocracy in 1802, overthrew them and set up a feudal government under Fulani emirs.

As the Hausa have exercised, for centuries, perfect control over their environment, social, political and economic life has been rather unproblematic for them. Interaction processes have become a routine, with all inputs and outputs predetermined and thus predictable: a near-perfect state of equilibrium. Complying with our theory, achievement as a criterion of role allocation is non-existent:

> The Hausa system of occupational status is almost. . . wholly ascriptive in its orientation, since its units are closed descent groups between which all movements is disapproved. . . . The occupational status model . . . incorporates such ascriptive factors as descent and ethnicity. (M.G. Smith, 1959, p. 251)

The system of ascribed roles that are organized into a multitude of layers is so complex that any exact statement about the number of strata must be artificial. There are separate stratification systems for men and women. The main determinants of the male order are political rank and occupational class. The two main strata groups are chiefs and office-holders on the one hand and subjects and commoners on the other, i.e. rulers and ruled. Below them is the layer of slaves. All occupational groups are ranked, with officials, islamic teachers and wealthy merchants at the top, and butchers, mat-weavers, drummers, praise-singers and buglers at the bottom of the hierarchy.

In offices and crafts, an important distinction is between inherited *(karda)* and freely selected *(shigege). Karda* roles are more frequent and rank higher than *shigege.* Despite a strong emphasis on *karda,* mobility is not absent in Hausa society. As polygamy and concubinage proliferate the number of those eligible for any role, there is a form of institutionalized competition: *neman sarautu,* or clientage system. A person may become the client of an office-holder, hoping to be rewarded for his loyalty and obedience with an office. Yet there is no room in *neman sarautu* for achievement, as mobility is allowed on the basis of servitude and respect for authority but denied on the basis of competence.

Our concern in describing the three societies was with the social system, or more specifically with the system of role allocation. It was mentioned earlier that, ideally, a social orientation towards achievement is complemented by a corresponding value and motivational orientation. In fact, it was found that such a congruence exists in the three societies. In an empirical study of achievement values and achievement motivation, LeVine (1966, p. 78) concluded:

> The frequency of obedience and social compliance value themes in essays on success written by the students was greatest for the Hausa, followed by the Southern Yoruba and Ibo, in that order.
> The frequency of achievement imagery in dream reports was greatest for the Ibo, followed by the Southern Yoruba, Northern Yoruba and Hausa, in that order.

As the change from a premodern to a modern society implies a revolutionary change in most spheres, which all become highly problematic, we may postulate that there is only one appropriate system of role allocation: that of an open society in which roles are allocated by achievement.

We may now hypothesize that societies with a premodern emphasis on achievement have a great advantage over those societies which have to make the transition to a new system of role allocation in addition to the shift to a new system of work roles. Tentatively, one may thus formulate the following proposition:

Pre-industrial societies characterized by an achievement-based system of role allocation tend to be receptive to modernization; pre-industrial societies characterized by an ascriptive system of role allocation tend to be more resistant.

As the three largest societies of Nigeria differ widely in terms of their premodern system of role allocation, they should be highly amenable to a test of this proposition. Common sense would lead us to predict that the technologically and organizationally highly advanced Hausa and Yoruba should be very fast modernizers while the Ibo, with their relatively simple traditional economy, should be very slow. However, using the above proposition, the prediction would be very different: the Ibo with their traditional emphasis on achievement may continue to strive for higher ranking or more rewarding work roles, simply substituting new opportunities for old ones. The Yoruba, with their mixed system of role allocation, may be expected to be somewhat less receptive to change; while the Hausa, with their social contempt {or individual competence and talent, are likely to be resistant to change.

Using interregional mobility, inter-generational and intra-generational occupational mobility in modern employment settings and several measures of adaptation to wage labour as modernization indicators, it was concluded, on the basis of a sample study of 509 factory workers, of a study of Wells and Warmington (1963), and of official statistics, that the Ibo modernize fastest, that the Yoruba are somewhat slower and that the Hausa have been largely resistant to change (Seibel, 1974a). Indeed, within half a century, the Ibo have reached higher levels of modernization than the Yoruba have over a full century, while the Hausa very successfully resisted any attempt at modernization until the civil war of 1967-70.

This study was also carried out in Liberia, under more controlled conditions, comparing the Kran, Kru, Bassa and Grebo (they all belong linguistically and culturally to the Kru group), who traditionally emphasize achievement, with the Kpelle, who are organized into a polycephalous associational state and place more emphasis on ascription. While the differences, in terms of criteria of role allocation, between these two groups are by far not as drastic as between Ibo and Hausa, they are pronounced enough to allow the prediction that the Kru group of societies should be more receptive to modernization than the Kpelle. Confirmation of this prediction would in fact lend considerable support to the underlying hypothesis as the Kpelle happen to be located much closer to centres of modernization than the Kru group. Measuring receptivity to modernization by a composite index of adaptation to wage labour in a random sample of 115 Kpelle and 105 Kru-group mine workers, the latter were found to adapt much faster to wage labour than the Kpelle. A replication of the study among plantation workers in Liberia confirmed these results. The proposition that pre-industrial societies that emphasize achievement are more receptive to modernization than those who are more ascriptive in their traditional system of status allocation has thus been repeatedly confirmed.

OCEANIAN SOCIETIES

Another Third World area which we would like to present as an example for the existence of very vigorous systems of self-determination, competition and achievement is Oceania, in particular Melanesia, which today largely coincides with Papua-New Guinea. This area comprises an enormous number of societies – speaking about 730 different languages – which are all more or less open societies. At the same time, we want to show that the openness of the stratification system, which we consider fundamental to the idea of self-management, is related to the environment, in particular to the problems posed by the environment. We therefore will compare the Melanesian societies, which are exposed to hostile environments, to the neighbouring Polynesian societies, who live, by comparison, under very favourable circumstances.

This difference in environmental situation between Melanesia and Polynesia was already noted by anthropologist Ralph Linton (1955, p. 179). About Samoa, one of the Polynesian islands, La Perouse, the first European to have landed there in 1798, wrote that: ‚they were so rich, and in want of so little . . .‚, an impression which has been confirmed later. Even the loss of the entire taro or yam crop would not produce much hardship, for planting could be continued throughout the year so that losses would be quickly recovered. In the meantime, the bounteous natural environment provided fish from the sea, wild yams and roots from the forest, and coconuts along the seashore (Lockwood, 1971, p. 11). ‚So liberal was the Samoan natural environment', wrote Watters (1958, pp. 350-1), that a subsistence system was supported more easily than in most other groups of the Pacific, and little effort was required to maintain comfortable living standards. The challenge of the natural environment was on the whole only slight, and the response of the Samoan culture was accordingly small. Even diseases like malaria, filariasis and tropical phagedaenic ulcers, which are rampant in Melanesia, have spared Polynesia.

In different areas, Melanesians are plagued by a wide variety of hardships: rugged mountains and swamps, poor soils and precipitous slopes, volcanic eruptions and typhoons, leading to unpredictable droughts, crop failures, food shortages, hunger and starvation, to which epidemics, wiping out whole villages, have to be added. One of the most dramatic accounts of what a problematic situation means to Melanesian societies is the *loka* description of the Massim on Goodenough Island, presented in a stylized verbal form which betrays frequent repetition:

Omens are heard: ancestral spirits disguised as birds sing in the village. Portents are seen: the sky darkens and ash falls to smother the land. Coastal villages are swamped by tidal waves. The ‚big wind' comes, toppling houses and stripping trees of their fruit. Next the ‚big sun' scorches the grass and bakes the ground ‚like stone'. Feasting stops and fasting begins. Taro is moved to the creeks, but these soon dry up and the plants wither. Already the old people's eyes are ‚turning in their heads with hunger'. Families repair to the bush every day to search for food: roots, nuts, berries, wild yam and the despised famine foods *laiwai* and *baima,* which resemble bitter crab apples. Soon only those with lokana yams and strong *sisikwana* (anti-hunger magic) remain in the village; others live in the bush sleeping in caves or between the roots of trees. Armed sorties
are made to the coast to steal fish and sago, and even the precious betel nut is cut down for its succulent heart. Seed yams have been eaten, the bush has been scoured and the gardens are still empty. The old people then die in the village

while the young are dying from sickness in the bush. The strong of one village have been killing and eating the weak of another for some time; now they turn to their fellow villagers. Parents begin to exchange their children to eat . . . . (Young, 1971, pp. 173 – 94)

According to our theory, we would expect to find open societies in Melanesia, allowing the individual a maximum amount of participation in all affairs, emphasizing the importance of the individual through competition and achievement. In Polynesia, we would expect to find closed societies, providing a place for everyone from and through birth and discouraging any individual striving. Let us now look at the evidence.

East and west of Fidji, there are culture areas that are markedly different in religion, art, kinship structure, economic and political organization. These differences become even more pronounced when seen before the background of their similarities: both Polynesian and Melanesian societies practice agriculture with stone-age tools. With very similar technology, the same crops are planted, such as yams, taro, breadfruit, banana and coconuts, frequently supplemented by fishing.

Polynesia is known in anthropology for its differentiated forms of social strata and hierarchical structure with hereditary chieftainships and kingships. Such structures are absent in Melanesia. Thurnwald already pointed to the wide discrepancies between the small, democratic Melanesian communities and the aristocratic Polynesian societies. In life-style and consumption patterns, Melanesia appears to be egalitarian, while Polynesia is highly stratified.

In Melanesia, politically independent communities typically comprise about 70 to 300 inhabitants, in some rare cases up to 1000. In Polynesia, communities with 2000 or 3000 members are average. In areas like Tonga or Hawaii, they may even reach 10,000 or more.

Corresponding to these differences in size, there are also differences in political structure, which are very marked despite a wide range of local deviations. In Melanesia, an ethnic group,
usually without a proper name, comprises a multitude of autonomous kinship groups, though kinship is used very generously as a membership criterion. Each of these groups occupies a certain territory. The political structure is segmentary. A small village or a group of hamlets form the basic unit. Each of these units is economically independent, of equal political status and structurally similar.

In Polynesia, the political geometry is pyramidal, as Sahlins (1963, p. 287) put it:

Communities are subdivisions of larger political entities. Within a structure of differential ranks, smaller units are integrated into larger ones, with a hierarchy of chiefs as political co-ordinators. At the top of the pyramid, there is the king or paramount chief with his lineage, which is above all other lineages, which are in turn differentiated by rank among themselves. All lineages are part of an inter-generationally stable structure.

In Polynesia, leadership functions are precisely defined, and leadership roles are firmly appropriated by chiefs. In Melanesia, there exist only very close concepts of leadership, and leadership roles are allocated only intermittently to so-called big men. At any given point in time, a large number of Melanesian men is competing to be a big man, though usually at quite different stages of the competitive game. Only a few men never in their lifetime enter that competition. In Melanesia, achievement

and success are the result of hard work and intelligent investment; there is no permanent accumulation of wealth or power, and no inheritance of privileges.

In Melanesia, charisma as a magical, personal force *(mana)* is open to anyone, and everyone can build up and utilize his *mana* to enter the big-man competition. In Polynesia, a chief inherits his *mana,* which provides the basis of his power and protects him against commoners. A Melanesian big man has to possess personal abilities, such as rhetorical talents. The Polynesian chief, however, has a speaker who is especially trained in rhetoric and the chief has control over the voice of his speaker.

The same difference is found in the sphere of production. The Melanesian big man literally has to prove his productive powers all the time, while the Polynesian chief possesses them ,by nature' and without any personal effort in the form of religious control over the fertility of the land. The Polynesian chief has a right to dispose of the work and production of the households on his territory, and mobilization of economic resources is a regularly exercised practice that can be enforced. For the Melanesian big man, however, work and production have to be continuously mobilized through personal loyalties and economic obligations. In Melanesia, surplus production is the result of charismatic efforts; in Polynesia, it is routinized and enforced as a duty in regular cycles. The exchange of work services and goods tends in Melanesia towards reciprocity, in Polynesia to inequality. In Polynesia, there is an administrative staff which is dependent on the chief; in Melanesia, a big man is dependent on his followers. A Polynesian chief makes decisions because he is a chief; a Melanesian may become a big man because he frequently contributes to decisions. In his community, a Melanesian big man may have prestige, but he never has power, while the area outside his own village will always remain external territory. To the Polynesian chief, however, the area outside his community is internal territory in which he can exercise not only influence but power, and if resisted in his power, he will be legally justified in using force. In both areas, the limits to political expansion will be reached through strains on the relationship between staff and people: in Melanesia by exploiting the followers for the benefit of the wider population, in Polynesia by exploiting the people for the benefit of the staff.

At this point, a more detailed description of a Melanesian big man's rise to renown may be in order, and an example will be presented from the Solomon Islands (Hogbin, 1938).

A man is usually in his early thirties when he starts thinking of becoming a big man, a *mwanekama.* He will begin with hard work, i.e. by cultivating larger gardens. His relatives are always ready to help, but then he has to provide them with a good meal at the end of the day. At first, he therefore makes definite demands only on some of his closest relatives and neighbours. As the area under cultivation increases, more and more workers are required, but the food produced will soon exceed that given away. Most crucial for his further success is the raising of a large herd of pigs. Every time the sows belonging to the relatives have litters he begs for one or two piglets, from which he breeds. After a few years, when he has several acres in extent under cultivation, and when he has a herd of perhaps eight or ten pigs, he announces that he

intends to build a large house. This amounts to publicly announcing that he aims at becoming a big man. This is actually the first hurdle, and many end up finding the drain on their energies and resources so great that they abandon their ambitions once the house is built.

If the house-building feast is successfully completed, the man of ambition has further to consolidate his position by acquiring more wealth. He will have to cultivate even larger gardens and breed still more pigs. At this point he is likely to wed some additional wives. He will prefer young widows who are apt to be better gardeners than young girls. Just like their husband, the wives of a would-be big man have to work much harder than other women, for they have to cultivate very extensive gardens and provide food for a constant stream of visitors. In exchange, they derive reflected prestige from their husband and usually have considerable influence in the community.

The process is concluded by a great public dance series with a public feast sponsored by the *mwanekama.* From the time of the feast ,to bring the performers to the dance area' until a final feast known as ,balm for the aching bones', a dance takes place every two or three weeks. At the final feast, 50 pigs may be slaughtered, and, say, 350 strings of shell discs may be given away. Once a man has held his dance he is recognized even outside his own village as a real *mwanekama.* But if he wants to maintain his prestige, he still has to be generous and provide feasts. If his wealth diminishes, as it usually does when he becomes advanced in years and less active in work, he sinks back into insignificance.

There is one further step to go, though this is not done by the average big man. The very highest renown is reached when the *mwanekama* has made himself responsible for the festival known as *siwa.* This implies entertaining a group of people from another village who have carried out vengeance on his behalf when he has lost a relative through sorcery. The sorcerer is identified, and as the mourners are prevented by mourning regulations from carrying out the killing and only another big man can carry out vengeance, a *mwanekama* from another village is requested to do the killing. Upon completion, the killing party will be lavishly celebrated, with large numbers of pigs slaughtered and as many as 5000 strings given away, a huge amount of wealth. Once a *mwanekama* has celebrated a *siwa,* he is renowned along the coast and remembered for years after his death.

While the particular forms of competitive feasting vary widely among the different Melanesian societies, the fact that such feasts are given and large numbers of pigs, sometimes several hundreds, are slaughtered, is the same everywhere, providing a social mechanism of accumulation and distribution of food upon which the survival of a whole society may depend when one of the frequent droughts and famines or other emergencies break out.

In Melanesia, roles are created by individuals, assuming a tentative shape intermittently in the process. In Polynesia, roles are structurally determined, and they are filled by designated incumbents who cannot alter their content. Polynesia is characterized by role-taking, Melanesia by role-making. The role of priest may serve as an example. In Melanesia, everyone is his own priest, and it is up to him how he shapes that role. In Polynesia, there are temples with paid priests.

In Polynesia, a happy life in the other world is guaranteed by divine descent; in Melanesia, a place in heaven is earned by economic and social success in this world, while the poor and unsuccessful are condemned to a state of unhappiness after death.

Melanesian children learn aggressiveness and individualism in their behaviour; at the same time, they also learn how to share. They are taught to develop their individual capabilities to the fullest and to utilize them. In competitive games, everyone gives his best in order to win. Polynesian children are trained to be submissive and obedient. They are punished for spontaneous, independent

behaviour. The pace of Polynesian group games is determined by the slowest, and parents feel ashamed when their children are ahead of others of their group or age. The model of Melanesian education is the achievement-oriented, competitive individual; the model of Polynesian education is the reliable, dutiful servant of his master.

Melanesian societies are usually described in the literature as ‚dynamic' and ‚open', while Polynesian societies are referred to as ‚static'. Further details have been presented elsewhere (Seibel, 1978). In particular it has been shown that the development of ascriptive, hierarchical structures in Polynesia only occurred during the last few centuries after these societies had successfully mastered the problems of settlement, which was eased by a favourable environment.

A brief note on Melanesian receptivity to modernization, which has emerged very recently, may be in order:

A new generation of leaders, who achieve status in the market economy and seek elective political office, has developed in the Highlands. Today a large coffee plantation, a trade store and a truck are the marks of economic accomplishment of ambitious Highlanders, and election to a Local Government Council or to the House of Assembly of Papua-New Guinea is the avenue they follow to modern political power. (Finney, 1968, p. 394)

THE INDIGENOUS POTENTIAL FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT

At the beginning of this chapter we have suggested that open societies are highly conducive to self-management by giving all their members opportunities for full participation in all affairs. We have then given a variety of examples demonstrating that many premodern societies are of that type. In fact, the large majority of societies that have ever existed are of that type. The reason why this has been hitherto ignored is that virtually all of them are small-scale societies which have attracted less attention than large-scale societies or empires.

We must therefore conclude that, in a great many societies in the developing world, there is an enormous indigenous potential for self-management. It is simply not true that all or most peasants in the developing countries are passive, superstitious and lazy. Maybe it is rather the laziness or ignorance and prejudice of many scholars and so-called development experts that prevent them from exploring the true nature of these societies.

Our message is that the participatory potential of the people in these societies must be utilized in all spheres of the economy and of politics. Particularly in production organizations, the participatory talents and abilities of all individuals should be mobilized by providing organizational structures for self-management.

A second, though more theoretical, finding of this chapter has been the association between environmental situation and social-political and economic structure. Traditional societies faced with severe problems tend to develop open, participatory structures. This confirms precisely the findings from Yugoslavia, where self-management originated in a situation of emergency. The system
of self-management usually evolves at times of crisis. Algeria presents a very prominent example of that and many additional examples have been presented in Chapter 2.

This association between crisis situations and the emergence of self-management is of course due to the fact that only a self-management system is able to mobilize the creative potential of all members of a society to the fullest. This finding is of greatest importance to developing countries. For all of them find themselves in a state of constant crisis, permanently confronted with severe problems, particularly in the economic sphere. And for many more decades to come, they will continue to be confronted with the problem of development. We argue that a solution to the problem of development can only be found from within, by mobilizing all human resources in each developing country through self-management. And fortunately, in a great many of these societies, the potential for full participation has been already present in the traditional culture and need only to be reactivated in new ways. A variety of influences from within and without, which of course cannot all be attributed to imperialism, seem to have prevented the continued practice of participation of all, and new classes have emerged that benefit from the resulting inequality. But if development is to be speeded up, the return to, or introduction of; equality of participation has to come quickly. We hope that the Yugoslav example will convince those who are presently responsible for development that participation and self-management is not just a relic of premodern societies, but possibly the only avenue to rapid modernization.

Is there a Chance for Self-Management in the Developing World?

Self-management as a social, economic and political model of participation is designed to mobilize the potential of every individual to the fullest. In one country, this model has been tried out as a large-scale historical experiment, namely in Yugoslavia. For a period of over thirty years, self-management has grown to remarkable strength and vigour and, starting in industry, it has gradually spread to all other types of organizations. There, the mobilization of individual potential and participation has proved to be highly successful: it was under self-management that Yugoslavia moved from an underdeveloped to a developed country.

What does this mean for the Developing World? It is quite dear that the Developing World badly needs the full participation and mobilization of individual potential to tackle the task of development. It is equally dear that human potential in the Developing World is presently grossly underutilized. In this situation, the success of the self-management system in Yugoslavia should be inducement enough to examine it very carefully as a model for development. There are of course alternative models: capitalist countries have developed, and so have socialist countries. At this point, we do not want to enter the debate as to the relative efficiency of the three models. We have tried to show that self-management is efficient; but for a rigid comparison, the available data, and particularly the available historical experience, may not be sufficient. Political values will certainly play a major role in determining what development path a society will follow. But for those countries in the Developing World which are disenchanted with either capitalism or socialism, self-management does present a viable third way.

Despite an urgent need for more participation in the Developing World, however, self-management has not got very far. The most prominent and most promising example was Algeria, where self-management emerged spontaneously in agriculture and industry upon the conclusion of the French-Algerian war. Not only was there a mass movement towards self-management originating from the base, but subsequently this was even legally backed by the enactment of laws which made self-management the legal system of work organization. In the ensuing conflict between base and centre, between workers and administrative bureaucracy, the old story repeated it self as we learned it from various other countries: the centre won and the base lost. Many feel, therefore, that Algeria is also one of the saddest examples of experiences with self-management. While there are still a very few well-functioning self-managed enterprises, self-management in the rest of the economy either exists only on paper or not at all. The revolutionary zeal from which self-management grew in Algeria has been quenched and new endeavours would have to be made in order to make self-management again a reality. At the same time, the Algerian case has not lost all its promise. For the decline of self-management has not been primarily due to lack of interest, support, qualification, ability etc., from the base, the claims of the administration notwithstanding. And this is very important for an evaluation of the potential of self-management as it must always rest on the participation of the base. At the same time, the Algerian experience shows that without support from the top self-management is doomed to failure. This may be sad, but it is a reality. And this reality places a heavy burden on the political leadership of

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the countries in the Developing World: the burden of responsibility for the success or failure of self-management.

It is frequently said that what militates against the potential success of self-management in the Developing World is the inexperience and lack of education of the workers. Since the workers and even many of their representatives are often not well educated, they find it difficult to follow the complex task of management let alone carry out the actual task of managing or participating in decision-making. This may be, however, very much an excuse, for Algerian peasants were hardly any better educated in the early 1 960s than people in the other developing countries. Learning comes first of all by doing: given the opportunity for self-management, practice and experience will follow. Education does play a crucial role in this process: but only after the opportunity for self-management has been granted. Once self-management has been, or is about to be, initiated, training for self-management must begin. For guidelines, one may look to the Yugoslav workers' and people's universities. As the potential for self-management is there, as has been amply demonstrated by our examples, all that it takes is the opportunity for practice, and specialized training for self-management tasks has to be added to that.

What militates most against the introduction of self-management is the management style practiced in developing countries. In his book on *Theories of Management and the Executive in the Developing World,* Damachi (1978, p. 113) has characterized this style as ‚authoritarian paternalism'. It is questionable whether this style is rooted, in any significant way, in the traditional culture. As far as foreign entrepreneurs or managers are concerned, it is certainly easier to detect authoritarian than paternalistic patterns in their style of management; and *vis-à-vis* workers, this is equally true of most indigenous businessmen or managers. Only when it comes to filling positions in management may the latter show some signs of benevolent paternalism. Damachi (1978, pp. 113-14) writes:

> Any form of delegation of authority is usually to relatives or dose friends. The delegation of authority is therefore limited because of managers' mistrust of those not related by ties of kinship or ethnicity. . . . The African manager relies heavily on ascriptive practices in personnel selection. He gives first preference to his relatives and then those of friends. Despite his ascriptive practices, he insists on competence. If the new recruits are not initially competent, he believes that they can be trained to be.

It may be more important to point out that the authoritarian patterns of authority practiced in industry as well as in other complex organizations in developing countries are the direct and immediate result of the importation of such patterns from the industrialized countries. In fact, this management style is the only one known to political and business leaders in the Developing World. It is not surprising that they do not know any better; for the structuring of organizations in the form of authoritarian hierarchies (sometimes euphemized as ‚functional hierarchies') is one of the few points on which bureaucratic state socialism and capitalism agree.

In the light of such management practices, is there a chance for self-management in the developing countries? First of all, it should be pointed out that self-management started in Yugoslavia when the prevailing management pattern was autocratic; but at the same time Yugoslavia found itself in an exceedingly difficult situation. While the ties with the East had been cut and ties with the West were not yet established, it could only rely on itself – and invented self-management. In most of the developing

countries, the economic situation should be dire enough, at least at some time or other, to warrant the introduction of self-management. It is in such situations that the political leaders in the Developing World should be aware of the existence and feasibility of self-management as a third model.

Yet, before starting to develop any optimism, one has to be aware that there are usually very powerful vested interests against the introduction of self-management. It is probably no accident that self-management was first introduced in Yugoslavia at a time when such vested interests happened to be largely absent, at the end of a world war. It is interesting to note that self-management was not introduced by one of the big, rich, powerful nations. In wealthy and well-established societies, there are powerful forces, social classes or interest groups at work to preserve the status quo. As any major change may threaten their privileges, they are likely to use their power to prevent a major change. New structures are thus more likely to be tried out in societies that have not yet developed a firmly established power and interest structure. This also explains what writers from Marx to Mandel have observed as the law of uneven development: in no single society has development taken place unilineally from the beginning to the end of the universal continuum. For example, capitalism was first introduced in England; but it was in the United States where it reached the height of its development. Yet, the United States did not make the transition to socialism. The country which did it first, the Soviet Union, does not appear to be one which will carry socialism to the height of its development. Similarly, democracy was first introduced in the United States on a large scale, but it was in Yugoslavia where it was first extended to business and

other organizations. Societies lose their innovativeness to an extent as the rich and powerful gain control over the system of role and reward allocation, the social basis of a society's or organization's problem-solving capacity, innovativeness and creativity.

Are the vested interests in developing countries so strong that there is no chance for self-management? For some, this may certainly be the case, but less so in others. If a real economic or political disaster occurs, which, unfortunately, is not too rare an occurrence in the Developing World, such vested interests may simply be wiped away. In the highly industrialized countries this is much less likely to happen and, accordingly, there is much less of a chance for self-management in these countries. Maybe, in the long run, we will see once again the law of uneven development in action, when self-management will spread in the still underdeveloped world.

As we have shown in Chapters 12 and 13, there is also an indigenous potential for self-management in many of the developing countries, rooted in traditional culture: in the former small-scale societies in the form of grassroots' democracy and active participation by all in the political and economic sphere, and in other societies in the form of premodern cooperatives for which self-management has always been constitutive. If those countries go back to their own cultural traditions, which many of them prefer to ignore in favour of imported alien concepts, the chance for self-management may be greatly enhanced.

To the extent that the indigenous cultural potential for self-management is there and that the population could readily learn to utilize their potential to participate, it all hinges upon the leadership in the Developing World. One of the main pillars on which the continued success of the Yugoslav system has rested has been the dedication of the Yugoslav political leadership to the idea of self-management. These leadership qualities have become a model for the average Yugoslavs to emulate; for they were soon convinced of the sincerity and determination of their

leaders to involve them in self-managed national development. Consequently, they too became determined to give their best to developing their country. It is because of this determination by both the leaders and the citizens and especially the sincerity of the leadership that self-management became a success.

In most developing countries, however, the situation seems to be very different. Leaders tend to have two codes of ethics, one for the citizens and the other one for themselves. Quite frequently, leaders in developing countries conjure concepts and programmes in which they themselves do not actually believe: they are meant to ingratiate them with the public. At times they do not even give the concept or programme a chance to be implemented. Unfortunately, this seems to be true in many of the cases where works councils or other forms of worker participation or self-management are introduced. Such actions are of course apt to confuse and disillusion workers and management alike. As a result they can never be sure whether the leadership is serious in its endeavour to establish workers' participation in management or not. The eventual result of such attempts is, at best, limited success, at worst, utter failure. Moreover, the style of management in most countries makes it difficult to adopt any form of self-management. Since most of the private employers are eager and anxious to protect their entrepreneurial or managerial prerogatives, and since even the political leadership is reluctant to share power and authority (their professed ideology notwithstanding), the prospects for self-management seem limited.

But one thing is apparent. In any production process, it is not only technology and management but also the workers' skills and attitudes that determine the rate of work and the quality of production. In short, the workers are responsible for the actual mechanics of production. This does not mean that the professional managers' contribution will become superfluous. The Yugoslav experience shows quite clearly that it is the combination of professional management and workers' participation in management which really optimizes productivity. If managers in developing countries could be convinced of this fact, if they could be assured that the introduction of worker participation in their respective plant or industry would increase productivity, they may be persuaded to try it at that level.

Self-management at the national or political level in developing countries is likely to remain a dream for some time to come. Even in countries that purport to be socialist, the political leaders are reluctant to share power and decision-making with the people. Even where workers' committees or tripartite bodies exist, the government holds sway over the decision-making process.

There may be a certain, though perhaps limited, chance for developing countries to introduce workers' participation in management at plant or industry level. How and when this will come about cannot be said yet. We only know that self-management is a highly flexible system. Hence, the respective structure of self-management may be just as unique in every country as the circumstances of its emergence. The responsibility for the introduction of self-management and the shape it takes will rest with the leadership of each country. As they are the ones who can prevent self-management from developing, they must also be the ones to implement it. As far as the masses are concerned, they will surely participate.