



**Archaeology
and Primitive
Communism,
Karl Marx**

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Archaeology and Prehistoric Communism

Karl Marx's Second *Magnum Opus*

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Preface

Marx's general theory can be shown to propose surplus social product avoidance as the primary cause driving the biological and cultural evolution of *Homo* during the period of primitive communism. The great divide in human history occurs when society transformed from producing only what was needed day to day, despite its ability to produce far more, into its opposite – *i.e.*, a society producing surplus social product (now surplus value) to its maximum potential. The entire prehistoric-historic sociocultural evolutionary process is explicable in one general theory of causality and process.

A formula can be written depicting the loci of the engine (general crisis) driving sociocultural evolutionary stages. Thus, primary causality can be cross-culturally compared, through history and across the globe. Since each of these mathematical expressions is an exact structural duplicate of what Marx did for capitalism it appears as if Marx's second *magnum opus* has finally seen the light of day.

Surplus social product avoidance is also the reason for human migration into the northerly regions of the Old World and into the New World as well.

Background to Marx's Work on Primitive Communism

In 1966, it seemed to me what we saw in the history of the Soviet Union was not what we had had in mind in 1917. I thought perhaps clues to understanding the globally developing socialist stage might be found in the past. A complete sequence of sociocultural evolution from our ape like days to the present might shed new light on the transition from primitive communism into slavery. A general theory of primitive communism and the principles unveiled could not help but assist in providing the needed insight into the current transition from capitalism to modern communism. To tackle the problem one would have to look scientifically into the past. (1)

The proof I would need was in the ground – we would have to dig up the past. –And the first question: would hypotheses generated from ethnology stand up against the archaeological evidence? But, what were the specific questions to be asked of ethnology? The second question: would archaeological evidence shed new light on the current transition if properly interpreted? The answers to both questions have in fact come from anthropology in general, archaeology in particular, and the proper questions came from my own search for the foundation of sociocultural evolution (Smith, 2003).

Epilogue as Prologue

After forty years of studying the archaeological record, searching for insights into the questions surrounding primitive communism and its evolution, I now conclude: (1) the struggle of prehistoric humanity was not a struggle of primitive humans against the elements barely able to eke out a living. Rather, (2) the struggle throughout the epoch of primitive communism was just the opposite. Namely, ***primitive communists struggled not to produce socially dissolutional surplus social product*** .

It is this real struggle not to produce which is the at-bottom underlying contradiction of the primitive communist epoch . This epoch includes the entire Old

World Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic evolution of culture and society and the Lithic to Formative sequence in the New World . This avoidance pattern we may call **surplus social product avoidance** .

The pattern of avoidance was directly responsible for the altruism in ideology and the egalitarianism in social organization characterizing the primitive communism of the stages of hunting and gathering bands and tribes and the early agricultural bands and tribes. Furthermore this data can be arranged in a mathematical expression so as to make the “ **engine** ” (general crises loci) of sociocultural evolution clear and cross-culturally comparable through space and time.

Surplus product avoidance is also responsible for the migration of humanity out of Africa to the far corners of the most inhospitable ecozones in the world.

Where Marx left off

To follow Marx I had to master (1) the dialectical method, (2) his analysis of the capitalist system and then (3) try to pick up where he had left off in the study of the primitive world. I expand upon this background in the endnotes.

In 1968, when I began graduate school (Department of Archaeology University of Calgary) Karl Marx's earliest then known work on the subject of primitive society had been posthumously published eighty years earlier at his request by his lifelong associate Frederick Engels as the **Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State** (1888). Countless editions of that book had subsequently appeared, in virtually every language. As my graduate education got underway I discovered the work of Leslie A. White on Lewis Henry Morgan and Karl Marx. Finally, Lawrence Krader published the previously practically unknown, in the English-speaking world, **Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx** in 1972. (In Marxist scholarship this final period in Marx's productive life begins with the publication of Morgan's **Ancient Society** in 1877 and ends with Marx's passing in 1883).

The Ethnological Notebooks give us deep insight into what Marx had been doing in the final seven years of his life. Much of which had to do in one way or another with the subject of primitive communism. We see Marx conversant with the ethnological literature of his time. Subsequently I found he had probably delved into archaeology, inspired by the contemporary work of Flinders Petrie in Egypt . However, that may have been, Marx produced an as yet unpublished volume sized manuscript on **Fundamentals of Geology** , reflecting his recognition that the reconstruction of prehistory requires archaeology, especially on good seriated artifactual typology in well dated geological strata.

In the Ethnological Notebooks Marx hypothesized prehistoric society had begun to come apart into classes in the Chieftoms stage. I think he then hypothesized that a stratigraphic sequence in Europe or the Near East or Egypt of the right time and social evolutionary period should show the transition in the material remains of this cultural evolution. Marx died (1883) before he was able to see this sequence emerge and so there the matter stood.

Marx's original manuscripts had been buried in the vaults of the Second International until the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. When German workers ended the war V. I. Lenin dispatched David Ryazanov to Berlin armed with plenty of cash. Ryazanov bribed everyone he needed to bribe in the German Social Democratic

Party and got this material to safety in Moscow where it remains today. It became the core of the Marx Engels Institute library.

Marxists in our profession such as V. Gordon Childe continued to tackle the subject of causality and process in primitive communism leading to the division of society into classes and the state. But their excellent work was mechanical rather than dialectical and was therefore insufficient. Why insufficient? Because in the dialectical materialist philosophy of science, in any given phenomenon primary causation has to be internal and not external (environmental change cannot be primarily causal only conditionally so.) (2)

Chapter One

Theory and Method

Making a theory useable: conversion to method (3)

We can reduce the general theory in this case to four essential elements. One might think of these four essential elements as analogous to the four fundamental nucleotides of DNA (not that there is in fact any such a thing as sociocultural DNA.) - And, in so doing, you will see that all of human culture and societal affairs can be reduced to these four elements, in the same way as all of life on Earth can be reduced to four simple nucleotides. This is what scientific method is all about – getting to the core of causality and process and laying bare the key driving elements, stripping away all the non-essential factors, adornments, and related manifestations.

These four elements can then be cross-culturally compared over the globe and through all of prehistoric as well as historic time. In this case the elements can be placed in a mathematical expression, in the form of a formula or equation, which shows their determinative function and the social organizational locus of causality in the form of surplus product and surplus value column and distribution subcolumns for surplus value. From Marx’s specific theory of capitalist development we can write the statement:

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 \text{Labor-power} & + & \text{machinofacture technology} & \text{Value (of two types)} & + & \text{Surplus Value} \\
 (1) & & (2) & (3) & & (4) \\
 \text{Technology} & & \text{Social Organization} & \} & \text{Mode of Production} &
 \end{array}$$

Above you see the four elements. Notice they also correspond to the relationship of “technology social organization” (which relationship, as an entity, we call the mode of production.) This mathematical expression allows us to see the locus of primary action. That locus is the category of Surplus Value, located specifically in its “engine” sub-columns. There are many possible subcolumns in this category because there are many choices the capitalist can make about how to expend his surplus value. However, in this mathematical system the locus of primary action always lies in two subcolumns under surplus value. One of these columns must always be “profit” since, in the Servitude Epoch, profit is the object of the slave, feudal or capitalist systems. The other subcolumn should always be the one which appears to be the main competitor with Profit for surplus value. One can have try outs. For example,

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 \mathbf{Lp + T} & & \mathbf{V1, V2 + \underline{SV}} & \\
 & & & \mathbf{Profit/X} \\
 \mathbf{(1)} & \mathbf{(2)} & \mathbf{(3)} & \mathbf{(4)}
 \end{array}$$

That is, different possible subcategories can be experimentally inserted here (at “X”) to see whether we have the most important factors as continuing drawdowns in competition with profit. This category of surplus value, and specifically the two subcolumns in primary competition for said surplus value, is the locus of the “general crisis” of each Servitude Epoch stage (comprised of the three distinct stages, slavery, feudalism, capitalism; in sociocultural evolution each has its own general crisis).

The formula exhibits this specific locus of primary causation in capitalism. How do we know this is the key “engine” relationship? Because, Marx (1867) proved it so in **Capital Volume One**, as far as capitalism (7) is concerned.

We will check the formula against our data for the slave stage and in so doing we see this data also conforms. By conformity I mean under surplus value (in the Servitude Epoch stages) when we show the subcolumns of “X” and Profit (“X” = the next generation of machinery (NGM), it stands most aggressively against profit in the capitalist stage; “X” = the state, or army, navy and police, versus profit in the slave stage). What happens in the category of surplus value is always the locus of primary causality because it is always the existence and growing importance of the main competitor with profit which drives the ruling oligarchs to distraction – it forces them to change course. This is why we call this “permanent” antagonism the general crisis of the capitalist system when profit versus NGM. If it were the slave stage system it would be profit versus “the state”. The general crisis is “general” because it is the primary driver and always there at one level of its own development or another. Meaning this permanent antagonism is always present either in its beginning phase or in its maturing phase or in its terminal transformational phase.

We hypothetically assert this formula to be applicable to every distinct sociocultural evolutionary stage in the first egalitarian epoch and the first transitional period. It remains to test the formula against the data for each of these primitive communist and transitional stages. We stipulate, by definition, all general crises are the engines of social change (primary causation) for their respective stages of sociocultural evolution.

Item number 4 above and below (surplus; surplus value), is fundamentally a social organizational component rather than a technological component in the mode of production. Why? Because many levels of technology can exist in the capitalist system beginning with the five essential elements of early modern capitalism (steam engines, blast furnaces, machine tools, machinery, and factories). This is the essential technological minimum for (and earliest level of) modern capitalism (Smith, 2010) but as you know there has been accelerating innovation since then. Now, technologically we are at the level of cybernetically run automated production factories. But this is still capitalism operating as it always has. Surplus value, its manufacture and distribution, is then primarily a social organizational matter. The capitalists still “own” everything worth having in industry and agriculture as well as culture, science and education. Big capitalists swallow small capitalists. Labor becomes more productive

and more workers are sent to the street. The social crisis deepens.

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 \mathbf{Lp} + \mathbf{T} & & \mathbf{V1, V2} + \mathbf{SV} & \\
 \mathbf{(1)} & \mathbf{(2)} & \mathbf{(3)} & \mathbf{(4)} \\
 & & & \mathbf{Profit/NGM}
 \end{array}$$

(1) Lp = Labor-power (the average production of a group of workers per unit time)

(2) T = Technology (in capitalism this is always some form of machinery)

(3) Value

V1 (value type 1) = wages

V2 (value type 2) = cost of maintaining the machinery

(4) SV (surplus value) = total produced above V1 and V2

Subcolumn: NGM (Next generations of machinery)

Subcolumn: Profit = appropriated by the capitalist after cost of NGM

Comment on Process: The locus of primary causality in capitalism (7) lies in the cost of each succeeding next generation of equipment (NGM) and its drawdown on surplus value. The capitalist is trapped into having to buy this new equipment continuously, and without respite, because the competitive nature of the capitalist system expresses itself in attempting to reduce the cost per unit of any given commodity. This is done by keeping wages as low as reproduction of the labor-power requires (*e.g.*, starvation; \$.32c/hr in US controlled Haiti .) –And, as importantly, in increasing the productive potential of the machinery. Labor-power has finite adjustment limits whereas machinery can always be innovated, improved or otherwise made more efficient. This means the capitalist must continuously invest in the purchase and installation of new more productive machinery. This constant need to invest in new and improved NGM must diminish what remains for all other expenditures including and most especially, profit.

No matter how good the equipment coming in may be, to maintain the rate of profit, one must introduce labor-power at a one to one equivalent to machinery power. The inability of the capitalist to introduce labor-power, at the one to one ratio required, gives us the resulting absolute decline in the rate of profit, which is the general crisis of capitalism. (He cannot introduce labor-power at a one to one ratio, because the whole idea was to reduce the cost of labor in the productive process, not to hire more workers or work the same number of employees' longer hours.)

The Framework is established by historical materialism (3)

The practical side of historical materialism is the evolution of society and culture from one stage to the next, upwards and onwards, to wherever it may lead.

In Marx's time we knew only about the historic stages (slavery, feudalism, capitalism) and had only a vague notion as to what had gone before and an even vaguer notion of what was yet to come (See chapter 2 paragraph 22 of the **Communist Manifesto**). A contemporary chart of the stages of sociocultural evolution is at endnote 3.

In the decade following the publication of **Capital Volume One** (Marx, 1867) and preceding the publication of **Ancient Society** (Morgan 1877), Marx evolved in his thinking from looking at the monumental architecture of the early Slave Stage in nearby Egypt and Iraq (Marx, 1867: Volume 1 Ch 13) as examples of intensive labor specialization and cooperation. As his ethnological insight grew Marx began to see much more than this, namely, what anthropology sees so clearly today. Primitive society was far more complex, indeed mysterious, than had previously been thought. The process, if completely explicable, according to epistemology, nevertheless was not self-evident.

There were the frustrating problems of under production and the apparent lack of concern about it among primitive peoples. –And, why did it take so long for people to make the more sophisticated stone tools? Marx was penetrating deep into causality and process among primitive peoples but unhappy at what seemed to be constantly eluding him. Marx finds psychological changes in people and knows somehow this is the stumbling block to reaching full understanding of social evolution. This article summarizes the conclusions for which he searched.

Each stage in primitive sociocultural evolution can now be defined archaeologically. Each has its own distinct general crisis.

Testing the mathematical model

Before we move on to primitive communism let us test the formula against one further example. We used the capitalist stage to devise the formula because Marx left us with the completed analysis of that stage. Now let us test our formula against slavery, the first of the three stages of the Servitude epoch. What do we see when we apply the formula to our data for the slave stage?

The Ancient World state is the army (and navy) and police (in contemporary times the state is the military-intelligence establishment and the secret police). It must grow constantly to keep the slaves in submission. The larger the mass of slaves the greater the size and thus the cost of the army and police must be. The surplus generated by the slaves steadily falls behind in its rate compared to the growing costs of industrial or agricultural production, especially the growing cost of the state. The day will come when it is not worth it and the oligarchy will find another way to make money or another way will be made for them. This is the general crisis of slavery; *i.e.* the growing cost of the state apparatus *versus* profit.

The loci of general crises overall must be the locus of primary causality in this stage if the formula reflects an accurate theory. –And, what do we find?

$$\mathbf{Lp + Technology \ V1, V2 + \underline{Surplus Value}} \\ \mathbf{Profit/the State}$$

The locus of primary causality, as this formula for the slave stage shows, is in the social organizational realm where it is supposed to be, specifically in the articulation of the “engine” subcolumns of profit and the State. The test is passed.

Skipping the Feudal Stage

Note: we are not testing our model formula on the feudal stage because the feudal stage is simply the transitional stage between chattel slavery and wage slavery and to the degree it has a general crisis, that crisis consists of a balancing act between the ascending general crisis of capitalism and the descending general crisis of slavery. So, our formula does what we logically would expect it to do with regard to the Servitude Epoch. What about the first egalitarian epoch we call the primitive communist epoch?

Understanding the Primitive Communist Mentality (4)

Now we come to a most important part of this presentation which is, how should we view the primitive communist mentality? How should we understand the way in which primitive communist peoples of the hunting and gathering and/or early agricultural way of life looked at the ideas (mental categories) we call “needs” “desires” and “wants”? In answering this question we are indebted to Professor Marshall Sahlins who proved in 1974 in his book **Stone Age Economics** (most recently published in 2004 by Routledge) the key lies in the understanding that peoples of the Palaeolithic (Lithic in the New World) considered their society to be “affluent” when it satisfied all of a their material wants – and – when we do this we have to determine exactly what the wants of hunting/gathering and early agricultural peoples were.

The absolutely incorrect way to assess this category is to assume bourgeois priorities with regard to needs, wants and desires. For 99% of human history “affluence” was defined first and foremost in an entirely different way . Namely, by the desire to possess very few articles of production. So, if one has those things one considers essential then one is affluent. If we were to pick a slogan for primitive communism it might well be “if you desire little then little will make you affluent.” Ethnology proves primitive peoples presently desire little and therefore find it rather easy to be affluent. By implication this sums up the entire attitude of humanity for millions of years with regard to the possession of **articles of production**. (5)

Chapter Two

The Stages of Primitive Communism

Applying the Formula

Hunting and Gathering Bands

Primitive communism is the period comprising hunting and gathering bands and tribes and early agricultural bands and tribes. Let us look at the formula for hunting and gathering bands and tribes first. –And, let us do so by stages beginning with the earliest *Homo* :

The First Band Stage
The Australopithecines
Homo Australopithecus

l + t V1, V2
Produce enough

But no more

l = human labor (which millions of years later will become the category of labor-power)

t = technology (Oldowan stone tools)

V1 = cost of life (food, shelter, clothing, etc.)

V2 = cost of maintaining Oldowan technology.

— = General Crisis

Comment on Process: the Pattern of Avoiding Surplus Social Product is Set .

Among these earliest humans complex kinship reckoning and complex social organization became principal ways of using social time; simultaneously diverting some of that social time from becoming “food and shelter productive labor time.” (In this presentation, simply “labor-time” for short.) In effect the result was a true dialectical opposite: in other words, the first mechanism, by which human surplus social product accumulation was negated in favor of only producing what was needed day to day, is the mechanism of spending time thinking and in symbol use. The second mechanism was human sexuality itself which diverted considerable time.

The emergence of human sexuality (365 day a year male activity and female receptivity) required considerable alteration of the biology of the human-like apes. In addition to sexuality being glue holding the band together consider the positive selection effect on these primates of constant sexual activity in dumping social time before it can become labor time. These primates live together in groups of copulating irregular partners. Humanity itself may well owe its origin to the struggle of primates for security through social life, because (1) Sexual activity should have been glue holding these creatures together. Furthermore, and (2) as importantly, time spent in sexual engagement is time that might otherwise have been spent engaging in productive activity, where inequality in possessions, would have led to jealousy, coveting, envy and other anti-social (anti group life) tendencies. These are two powerful and permanent tendencies at work with distinct positive effects for our ancestors *versus* nature (*i.e.*, on natural selection.)

Thinking, symbol use, and constant sexual activity can be seen as avoidance. Avoidance of surplus product creation, which as we know, is the basis upon which primitive society avoids envy, jealousy, coveting and the like anti-social centrifugal tendencies. These are lethal and are the only tendencies that can tear Band society apart.

The most important cultural pattern in human history has evolved. The pattern set is one of doing non-productive things to evade surplus social product accumulation, and the concomitant invitation to violence within the group unequally divided surplus would insure (5).

Surplus avoidance will be with us, underlying everything, for millions of years. In fact, until the last six thousand years it was the only way people had to handle the danger of too much produce inequitably distributed among a Band (or Tribe).

The Second Band Stage

Homo erectus

$$I + t \frac{V1, V2}{\text{Produce enough}} \\ \text{But no more}$$

I = human concrete laboring activity; *i.e.*, human labor (*Homo erectus*)

t = hand ax technology

V1 = cost of life

V2 = cost of maintaining hand ax technology

__ = the locus of the General Crisis which continues in the exact same form

Comment on Process: It did not take millions of years and the doubling of our cubic centimeter cranial capacity to learn how to take a few more flakes off a stone core. So what were people doing all that time which expanded their cranial capacity? They were engaging in sexual activity, talking, living and learning. In other words, it did take that long for people to learn the intricacies of kinship organization and terminology; it did take that long to learn how to put together a complex supernatural world view and integrate it with the kinship system of social organization. In short, along the way whatever time people spent avoiding the production of surplus social product was time diverted to sexual and intellectual endeavors. This pattern inevitably led to an accumulating knowledge about a broad-spectrum of wild plant and animal resources. That is why there was a doubling in the grey matter part of human consciousness. Better brains, larger and increasingly organized in the special human way, made these intellectual tasks feasible, even easy as time went on.

The Third Band Stage

Homo sapiens

The new formula looks like this:

$$I + t \frac{V1, V2}{\text{Non-productive time}} + \text{Surplus Social Product} \\ \text{creates} \\ \text{Productive potential}$$

I = human concrete laboring activity

t = Middle and Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic tools

V1 = cost of life

V2 = cost of maintaining technology

Surplus Social Product = proto-surplus value about to be irreversibly released productive potential.

__ = this is the locus of the general crisis of hunting and gathering, as it has been, but it is now acute.

Comment on Process: At the core of this transition is the reality that social time

was being consumed in sexual activity and in experimentation, perfection and beautification of tools and in learning about their environment rather than engaging social time in direct production (*e.g.*, hunting and gathering.) By 100,000 years ago this time-use pattern had back-lashed into making people even more capable of creating social surpluses than they already were. We see this in the explosion of tool types and traditions beginning in the Old World by 110,000 BP.

The General Crisis continues (produce enough, but no more) in a more sophisticated form of extraordinarily complex social time usage. Nevertheless this increased concentration on thinking abstractly in order to engage in such extraordinary social time dumping is simply exacerbating the rate of development of this tendency to potentially being able to really significantly increase production by making it certain people know more and more about plants and animals and every other aspect of their objective daily lives. In other words, the more they know about nature, because of this extraordinary amount of thought and time devoted to *de facto* learning, the more they could if they wished increase their production. The proof lies in the fairly rapid emergence of broad-spectrum exploitation in the latter part of the Lower Palaeolithic and then in the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic and its in turn transformation into the agricultural revolution!

Finally, we consider this third band stage to be a distinct sociocultural evolutionary change because of the extremely acute nature of the General Crisis and the biological evolution of the carriers featuring 1/3 more cubic cranial capacity (and presumably smarter too.)

Chapter Three The Stage of Band and Tribal Agriculture (5)

Our production formula now looks like this:

$$(I + I_p) + t \quad V_1, V_2 + \text{ Surplus in the Family Farms } \\ \text{ Surplus Needed vs.} \\ \text{ Dangerous Surplus }$$

I = concrete individual laboring activity

I_p = human labor-power

t = Neolithic/Formative Agricultural Revolution technology

V₁ = cost of life

V₂ = cost of maintaining technology

SV = irreversibly released surplus social product (proto- surplus value) in large quantities.

___ = Surplus in the Family Farms: both needed and dialectically dangerous (inequality between the farms.) This is the locus of the general crisis of Tribal Agriculture.

Comment on Process: One reason for the irreversible release of surplus was and is that farming people need surplus for the rainy day. A myriad of events can bring catastrophe to crops in the field, then as well as today. Floods, droughts, insect

pestilence, fire, disease, hurricanes and tornados. In these predicaments the farming families have to have reserves to see them through until a new crop can be planted and harvested.

For another reason it simply isn't possible to tell either the plants or the animals not to reproduce to capacity. You can thin herds and let fields lie fallow but you wouldn't have to do this if ever-present extra social product would not otherwise be on hand.

The fact is surplus social product has been irreversibly released with the coming of the agricultural revolution. But, this kind of agricultural surplus has a tendency to be irregular due to outside forces such as those above.

As has proto-commoditized labor-time also become a new if irregular feature of Tribal life. For these primitive farmers must pool their collective labor-power at least occasionally for clearing fields, planting and harvesting, and the construction of irrigation works and perhaps the village chapel.

Within this new setting the larger families will produce more than the smaller families, if for no other reason than they have more "hands;" population will expand simultaneously, because more hands make self-sufficiency of the domestic unit far more certain and also simultaneously, because the more mouths there are to feed the less surplus will be accumulating in individual farms at any given moment. (5)

More hands and more mouths constitute a vicious circle, running inside and in the same direction as another circle of need for surplus for hard times. -And in both cases these two circles are encouraging increased production (meaning more labor hours and/or labor-time hours devoted to productive activity). We can think of these two circles of causation, as encompassing another counter-rotating inner circle consisting of societal mechanisms for controlling the magnitude of surplus. This is the key nexus for as we have also seen it is the existence of surplus, and the real or potential inequality between the farming families it creates merely by existing, that is now the at-bottom source of envy, jealousy and coveting – the ultimate danger confronting primitive communism.

We can say it again this way: in primitive farming villages of whatever size it is the "more hands and mouths and inevitable hard times means we need surplus" idea, which functions as the central ideological feature driving production. That is, driving production beyond the old hunting-gathering Band level of minimal subsistence requirements.

It is the acceptance of the new reality of constant surplus on hand that sets this new farming village way of life fundamentally apart from the subsistence pattern hitherto lasting millions of years. In other words, this drive for surplus, regardless of magnitude, runs diametrically counter to the millions of year's old tradition of handling potential and real surplus with (a) minimal labor input and (b) sharing.

This is the General Crisis of Tribal Agriculture. The engine at the core of Tribal (or Band) Agriculture, as a distinct sociocultural evolutionary stage, as the principal mode of production is the Tribe's need for permanent surplus for as-needed redistribution in the event of environmental stresses and for regular redistribution to support community efforts and perhaps one or two professional specialists. Surplus potential increases with the steady growth of population which provides the domestic farming unit with more hands and is sustainable in the new economy. Note that a

growing population level, in and of itself, reduces the amount of surplus on hand, at any given moment and simultaneously, makes it necessary that new levels of production be regularly achieved to support the rising population numbers. These central features constitute the driving force to increase production and become antagonistic to the counter-running tradition of discouraging surplus social product from ever coming into existence.

In satisfying the need for more production by assigning more persons to agriculture and sedentary life (as one example), leading to bigger families living in each individual farm, society had created a self-triggering mechanism leading to an inevitable increase in the amount of surplus social product being created in the farms and thus in society as a whole. On the other hand, this irreversible release of surplus social product, was certain to generate social dissolutional effects of envy, coveting, jealousy and so forth unless it was immediately and promptly ameliorated, shared, in some effective way (which initially will be Tribal Council collection of surpluses and then the storage of said surpluses until the time comes for redistribution, or some kind of socially approved consumption.)

The General Contradiction on the other hand continues as it has for the previous many millions of years. The drive not to produce surplus social product, but only product needed, in the face of the ever-present reality that people in such societies could produce much more than they do.

Both the General Crisis and the General Contradiction find resolution when the Tribal Council collects surplus above and beyond what is agreed upon to be necessary for the annual upkeep of one given person. In this way the larger families are assured of having what they need as are the smaller families; yet the inequality that otherwise would exist between different-sized farms is leveled out by the collection of everything above this level of subsistence as surplus, and its transport and storage at some central point (the Tribe's "warehouse.") Its administration being part of the job of the democratically elected Tribal Council. {The ethnographic record tells us immediate recall is an accepted feature of such representative processes. (The primitive communist mode of "term limits" for elected representatives, in other words.)} By the way we should note the first professional administrators emerge at this time. Why? Because someone has to keep track of all of these contributions – family credit, clan credit, sodality credit, moiety credit, and phraternity credit – these are examples of how credit for contributions would have been made – and we haven't yet considered the role of these Central Consigliore of the coming Chiefdom in astronomy and religion. These administrators are the embryonic form of what will become a New Class (once classes exist.)

We know from the ethnographic record that another common way of avoiding the production of too much surplus in Tribal agriculture is for these peoples to rely on the old fashioned dumping of labor-time in non-productive chores. Although, in one new form of "moving-on", slash-and-burn agriculture, the dumping of social time comes in the form of the non-essential repetitive dumping of labor-time.

But "inequality" is a real and ever present specter now. Infants and children are exposed to the fact that for some reason (it doesn't matter what) there is a difference between being well off and not so well off. In other words all I have mentioned above, inherent in the economy and social organization of tribal agriculture, makes the fact of

inequality inescapable. Even when ameliorated or leveled it was still there; otherwise it wouldn't have to be handled in these ways. Yet what could these societies do except what they had always done? –And, one feature of what they had always done was to implement the rule: the more hands there are in the family farm the less each of them works (Chayanov's Rule.)

There are a variety of other ways to divert potential labor-time into non-productive or tangentially productive social time. For example, it was not necessary in many cases that people pick up and move every few years for strictly technical (soil depletion) reasons. This could have been handled with fertilizer, crop rotation and irrigation. The reason they move is because they found the tremendous effort involved in "starting over" all over again, to be good for the spirit of collectivity, cooperation and egalitarianism. In strictly economic terms "starting over" dumped a great deal of labor-time itself. That is, labor time could have been used in other ways far more productive in the short run.

Why didn't this go on forever?

Because, something just as critical as the mode of production was changing. That was the way some people began to view the egalitarian ideas of times past. The superstructure of ideology was changing from being altruistic to something less so. Much less so. The ideology of selfishness and indeed sadism is on the horizon (the ideology of the stages of the Servitude Epoch in other words.)

Chapter Four **The Stage of Simple Chiefdoms (6)**

The new General Crisis emerging features constant surplus on-hand as a fundamental reality and necessity. Yet, its division will be a source of great social friction when there is too much or too little social product.

$$(l + lp) + t \quad V1, V2 + \frac{\text{Surplus}}{\text{Storage/Support}}$$

Neither too much or too little

l = concrete individual laboring activity

lp = labor-power as a proto-type is emergent

t = Protoarchic/Archaic, Neolithic/Chalcolithic technology

V1 = cost of individual labor and collective labor-power

V2 = cost of maintaining technology

SV = Surplus Value

Storage = that surplus value in storage (for redistribution as needed or as planned)

Support = that surplus value used to pay the professional specialists, and the center (the chief and her consigliore, retainers, families)

__ = This is the locus of the general crisis of the Simple Chiefdom Stage. One must have enough surpluses to supply demand (necessity) but not too much. That extra (above agreed minimum personal maintenance needs) is collected by the Chief and

stored in the central (society's) warehouse (not in the family farms.) Potential inequality is eliminated and needed surplus obtained simultaneously.

Comment on Process: Changing are the General Contradiction and the Prime Directive. (6) Instead of avoiding the enemy within (envy, jealousy, coveting) by avoiding surplus production, one is now saying maximize surplus production, because with honest central collection and efficient one-woman administration we will all still be equal! However, on this course, and in a few more steps (and centuries), the maximizing of surplus production will occur far beyond “necessary” amounts.

Why?

Because (A) society has been (1) dividing into special interest groups (*via* professional specialization) which constitute *de facto* “ranks” of differing access to both the articles of production and the means of production! These ranks are the necessary result of the simple fact that with the professional specialization of individual concrete labor, some professions are economically and “politically” “better off” than others. – And, (2) simultaneously non-egalitarian ideology has firmly taken root!

(B) The effect has been for the higher “ranks” of society, now selfishly motivated, to maximize production in order to take more as “profit” for themselves . The General Contradiction of the Servitude Epoch is also on the horizon .

This new and coming General Contradiction would have been camouflaged by all the talk about how, what we call the General Crisis can be more efficiently handled. Efficiency in a tribal agricultural setting is further enhanced, some would have said, by getting rid of the Tribal Council and all that “democratic rot”, in favor of military discipline and organization of the various productive tasks that come with the professional specialization of labor. So one Chief is elected - and, although she may have consigned from the clans - it is a revolution in social organization tending toward centralization and concentration of social authority as well as surplus.

The archaeological record is universally in line with this interpretation. Everywhere, without exception, where we have a continuous sequence of sociocultural evolution in the ground, we see the transition from Tribal Agriculture to Simple Chiefdoms happened exactly this way. Which is to say in Egypt , Mesopotamia , China Mesoamerica and Peru .

The small group at the center will have within it that “one” who advocated (or will advocate) this change for the ulterior motives of greed and self-advancement regardless of the effect on the community as a whole. Not that the immediate effect will have been bad. It probably will have been excellent. But to the person with the hidden agenda this is altogether a matter of fortune, he or she can turn to their advantage in selling the “new way.” Her concern is with herself - not “them.”-And being in the center of the reciprocal movement of goods and services means you can pull some of it out of the “cash flow” as you will, to do as you wish!

The farther one goes down the road of efficiency, *via* professional specialization of labor, the further one has traveled along the road of social revolution. The Chief collects the surpluses and assigns different persons to new tasks such as full time irrigation and dam building; full time pottery and textile production for the new rank of irrigation and dam builders. *Etc* . The more labor-time that is actually specialized -

truly commoditized now as numbers of people are assigned to specific tasks where their labor-time is socially necessary and abstracted - the better the results in the production of both value and surplus social product (including proto-surplus value.) The Chief and her family, helpers and cohorts from the clans, the religious specialist who convinces all the rubes that all this is divinely inspired, now constitute special “ranks” themselves. As do the farming families; the professional specialist families.

These ranks have special interests . It is inevitable they will become antagonistic if for no other reason than the vagaries of primitive agriculture and animal husbandry. The exigencies of Tribal Agricultural Stone Age economics may create a severe shortage of surplus leaving the central granaries depleted. {Hail, rain, flooding, drought, locusts, disease, war or raiding, *etc., etc* .} Who will lose out when the Chief’s warehouse is approaching bankruptcy? Good luck may bring excellent and very large harvests. When the granaries are full which groups, if any, stand to benefit?

The General Crisis of the Simple Chiefdom Stage is the growing need for professional specialization of labor on the one hand and on the other the concomitant need to offset the tendency toward social dissolution. A society split between different special interest groups with inherently different interests, implies potential antagonism between them, and thus impending social crises. One must either stop fragmenting society and return to the simpler Tribal Agricultural way of life or find some way to offset the dissolutional effects arising from the eventual fractioning of society into groups of relatively discontented people.

The First “First Stage Chiefdoms” in the Near East and Egypt

When these primitive Chiefdoms migrated where did they go?

In the Near East and North Africa , some of them went to what appear to be the worst rather than the best locations. Going deeper and deeper into the deserts of Arabia is one example. That is, leaving the lush environs of the Mediterranean, or the hilly flanks of Southwest Asia, for the blazing hot desert sands along the Tigris and Euphrates as far as Sumeria. Or going up the Nile into the incredible ovens of Egypt and the Sudan .

So, why did they do it?

Because, it was an “excuse .”

Whose excuse?

An excuse of the “privileged” rank to further professionalize labor, which is the source of their power and their riches. Wealth is being accumulated by the Chiefly rank, as a function of their “New Rank” position in society. This is also the origin of the New Class (when ranks become classes.) Therefore this migration in and of itself is proof of the emergence of selfish ideology among at least some of the chiefdom’s leadership.

Not every Simple Chiefdom went this route. Where mass democratic impulses were stronger than the selfishness of the few, who wanted to further intensify social ranking and the concomitant privilege of the central administrators and bullshit artists (shamans are becoming priests and priestesses,) the chiefdoms moved into environmentally friendly areas. Which is to say, those Tribes and Simple Chiefdoms, where democratic inclinations were more powerful, moved into areas where they could “stay with the old ways.” Where the rubes could slash-and-burn to their hearts

content, and live happily ever after. Such as the vast steppe lands of the Soviet West and Central Asia and Eastern Europe and so on and on...

The Stage of Advanced Theocratic Chiefdoms

Let us look at how our formula says that the SURPLUS VALUE column is subdividing:

$$L_p + t \quad V_1, V_2 + \underline{SV}$$

Storage/Support

Profit /Theocrats

Lp = labor-power

t = Chalcolithic and Bronze Age technology in the Old World; Classic and some post-Classic technology in the New World .

V1 = cost of labor-power

V2 = cost of maintaining technology

SV = surplus value: its distribution is the *locus* of the **general crisis** in this Stage.

Support = cost of supporting the professional specialists

Storage = that surplus value held in storage

Profit = that appropriated by the high ranks for themselves for the first time

Theocrats = that appropriated by the theocracy for itself; a substantial continuing appropriation, derived from what the Chiefs and Consigliere took during Simple Chiefdom times (a form of profit.) To the degree that the theocrats are also part of the high ranks, this is a “double dipping” for them.

__ = Religion temporarily solves the problem of labor discipline in the production of surplus (now a definite necessity) but sets itself up as a factor exacerbating the increasingly complex division of social production.

Comment on Process: Eventually, all the explanation and persuasion of the theocrats in justifying the social order, the division and distribution of surplus social product, (the nonsense in other words) from the priests and priestesses will be insufficient to assuage the anger and insight of the mass of farmers and other lower ranked laborer specialists.

This is the *locus* of the general crisis of the **Stage of Advanced Theocratic Chiefdoms** – which dialectically is to say on the one hand society must have the theocrats to stay together. On the other hand, the priests are also simultaneously exacerbating the inherent unjust nature of society (in the process of dividing against

itself, between the haves and have nots) and are contributing to the splitting of society by helping themselves to the maximum as well.

When a crisis arises that puts too many people between a rock and a hard place, and the resolution attempted by the theocratic center is blatantly unfair, Ma and Pa Kettle will gather round with their fellow rubes and revolt. Then they will either tear society apart in a rank war or (some will) flee to begin life again in a simpler way, in lands far from the home region.

Could a new solution appear to the civil conflict? What would that be?

Origin of the State

The archaeological record is replete with proof of this eventual end to Advanced Theocratic Society in Mesoamerica, the Central Andes, along the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates, Huang ho and Yangtze rivers, and many many other places including East Africa, the Indus, the USA Southwest, the USA Eastern Woodlands, *etc* Everywhere it is always the same.

Is there no way forward?

Yes there is, but it involves the emergence of armed force in the very private pay of a few financially powerful families and/or ranks of the old Theocratic Chiefdoms. Where that happens, which is to say, where “the state” emerges, then true class society has also emerged . Ranks have been transmuted into classes. The ruling classes will domesticate the rest of society.

The way forward is to create **the state** ! The state is the army and police in the pay of the richest families. It exists to compel obedience from the poor families. That is what the “state” means in scientific terms and should not be confused with “government” which existed before the state and which will exist after the state withers away. (Nor should the state be confused with “violence” which also existed before class and state society and which will exist after class and state society is abolished.)

Mel Gibson’s movie **Apocalypto** is as perfect a recreation of an Advanced Theocratic Chiefdom (ATC) as I could imagine, and I have no hesitation in recommending this movie to you as an excellent historical example of the stage. It was precisely this kind of society Hernan Cortes and associated investors and adventurers first encountered at the mouth of the Grijalva River in the contemporary state of Tabasco Mexico , along the Gulf of Mexico coast, as the movie brilliantly illustrates. (The Spanish Monarchy was unaware of Cortes’ existence let alone his adventure against Mexico . In 1518 Cortes put together an investor group of wealthy men and women in Cuba and Hispaniola and a bunch of buccaneers and went after a rumored City of Gold on the newly discovered Mexican Yucatan peninsula.)

As an aside, it is a matter of continuing interest to me that a religious person such as Gibson should again and again recreate a perfect Marxist example of historical events as in **Braveheart** , **the Patriot** , and **Apocalypto** (the struggle within English feudalism, the North American Revolutionary War and finally the Advanced Theocratic Chiefdoms of the Yucatan peninsula, respectively.)

Stonehenge

Not All Chiefdoms on the direct Road to Statehood