

TRADE AND THE PATRIMONIAL STATE: WEBER AND VAN LEUR

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IN HIS REVIEW of Japanese opinions on Weber, Takeshi Ishida opens his article with the statement that "one cannot find in Weber what might be called a theory of Asian society."¹

This proposition, however, must be taken as only partly correct. It is correct in that it implies Weber did not operate with a specific concept of "Asiatic society," applicable only to human groups "East of Suez"; it is incorrect in that it ignores Weber's generalizations on the kind of state he thought to be most typical for Asia (which does not imply that it only occurred there nor that it was the only one occurring there), viz., the patrimonial state.

Weber's *generalizing* statements on the economic structure of the patrimonial state are mainly found in "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum," *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, and also in his *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*. Fairly detailed pictures of economic life in China and India are, of course, given in his well-known studies on the religions of these countries.

A. *Patrimonial Authority*

Though Weber's theories on the bureaucratic structure of the patrimonial state are not under discussion here, some remarks should be made on the concept of patrimonial authority.

Patrimonial authority was for Weber a special case of patriarchal authority which came about through the decentralization of *Hausgewalt* via the gift of land and, in cases, inventory to sons and others dependent on the house [16, p. 592]. A *patrimonial-staatliches Gebilde* originated where the prince extended his political power (often through physical force) to extrapatrimonial regions and people, and organized these latter "political subjects" in the same way as those falling under the exercise of his *Hausgewalt* [16, p. 593]. According to Weber, most of the great continental empires have had, until the beginning of modern times and even in modern times, a rather strong patrimonial character [16, p. 593]. Weber emphasized the enormous and wide-ranging extent of patrimonial relations as bases for political structures. He mentioned ancient Egypt, the Inca state, and the state of the Jesuits in Paraguay as typical examples.

¹ Weber has been more assiduously studied in Japan, to judge from the number of articles and monographs written about him (according to Takeshi Ishida nearly one thousand) than any other Western sociologist (see Takeshi Ishida [7, pp. 349-50]).

B. *Economic Aspects of Patrimonial Structure*

According to Weber, nothing much could be said about the economic conditions for the origination of patrimonial structures. "Patrimonialism is compatible with household and market economy (*Verkehrswirtschaft*), petty-bourgeois and manorial agriculture, absence and presence of capitalist economy" [16, p. 648].²

Yet, in spite of this disclaiming of any special linkup between patrimonial and specific economic structures, Weber's various statements on the matter do imply that certain economic forms were more compatible with patrimonialism than others. For instance, the "liturgic" coverage of the ruler's economic and political needs was most highly developed in, though not completely typical for, the patrimonial principalities.³ The most important case of such liturgic organization was constituted by the pre-taxation of people owning certain possessions or being in certain professions, who were forcibly organized into hereditary-exclusive associations which were granted the privileges of status groups. According to Weber, China, India, Egypt, as well as the countries with the oldest forms of hydraulic (*Wasserbau*) bureaucracy knew a liturgic organization with deliverances in kind which was always associated with organization in professional groups ("Stets bedeutet sie *berufsständische* Gliederung"). In Hellenism and in the late Roman Empire, such liturgic organization was to be found in a money economy [16, pp. 116-17].

Most forms of a liturgic organization of the economy existed somewhere on a continuum with an administration by local *Honoratioren*⁴ who were to a great extent independent of the ruler at one end, and a condition of universal personal patrimonial bondage of the ruler's subjects at the other. Whether an actual situation approached the latter condition was mainly dependent on the measure of development (technically) of the power position of the ruler, especially of his military power.⁵

² All translations of German quotes in this article are mine.

³ [16, p. 600]. A liturgic organization of the state's income implies for Weber a fixed taxation of certain groupings (classes, status groups, castes, associations) levied, as it were, "in advance." He distinguishes (1) positively privileging liturgic arrangements, i.e., exemption from certain performances, (2) negatively privileging liturgic arrangements, i.e., "pre-taxation" (*Vorbelastung*) of certain groupings, (3) correlative liturgic arrangements, i.e., the linking of specific monopoly grants with the performance of certain obligations or the delivery of certain goods [16, p. 116].

⁴ From the different ways in which Weber uses the term *Honoratioren*, Bendix distilled the following definition: "all persons who *can afford* to perform official functions without remuneration, whether they do so or not, and who on some basis possess a common style of life that has prestige in the society, and this occasionally includes the prestige of knowledge, as in the case of lawyers. Through various applications, the term becomes in fact a synonym of 'status group with wealth and prestige...'" [1, p. 348, note 21].

⁵ [16, pp. 601-2]. In his *General Economic History*, Weber states in more general terms that either "there arose a centralized personal enterprise of the prince with separation of the administrative officials from the resources with which they worked, so that political power belonged to no one except to the prince, or else there was a class organization of the administration with the enterprises of vassals, tax farmers and officials, functioning in a subsidiary role alongside that of the prince. In the latter case, the prince granted

C. Importance of Trade

Weber stated that one economic factor essential for the development of strongly centralized patrimonial bureaucracies had continuously been overlooked, and this was trade. The power position of the rulers was partly based on the "hoard" of rare metals needed for the upkeep of their retinue, body guards, army, and, especially, their officials [16, p. 649]. The most common ways of maintaining and increasing the ruler's hoard were through: (a) gift trade—this exchange of presents between princes often had the character of actual barter trade;⁶ (b) the ruler's own trade, which often led to a complete export monopoly;⁷ (c) other forms of a princely exploitation of trade, consisting of (1) direct taxation in the form of duties, etc., (2) indirect taxation through market concessions and the foundation of cities, which created high land rents and very taxable subjects [16, p. 649].

In addition to certain categories of craft workers who furnished the ruler's personal requirements and were attached to his household [13, p. 103], the princes (in China and India) probably also had at their disposal craft workers engaged in a tied shop industry producing for the market [13, p. 128].

The trade of patrimonial empires was often only moderately or even weakly developed—yet, the origination of such empires, says Weber, rarely came about without trade playing an important role. Exceptions to this were constituted by cases in which tribes bordering on regions with a highly developed money economy made conquests in these regions [16, p. 649].

The role of the ruler as a landed proprietor was, according to Weber, very often only of secondary importance (as compared with trade) in the origination of patrimonial empires. Though the point of departure for a princely power position was often landed proprietorship, the further development to a situation in which land rents were monopolized was also conditioned, and this to an extraordinary degree, by trade [16, p. 649].

the lands to the subordinates who paid all the costs of the administration out of their own pockets" [13, p. 57]. It is clear that in these last sentences Weber is referring to what in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* he calls a *lokale Honoratiorenverwaltung*. So far there are no differences between this and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. However, a difference does seem to arise when Weber states that it is economic considerations "which largely determine which form would win out" [13, p. 57]. Yet this difference is not based on any real inconsistency in Weber's thought. In the passage of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* to which we referred, Weber merely implicitly assumes that the military power of the prince was partly based on economic circumstances. This comes out more clearly in his remarks on Oriental irrigation (see text of this article).

⁶ Weber gives here as an example the gift trade between Pharaohs and Levantine rulers, who exchanged gold and war chariots against horses and slaves. "Here originally the free gift was the custom. Numerous breaches of faith and trust which occurred in this connection gradually led to the imposition of mutual considerations so that a genuine trade on an accurate quantitative basis grew out of the gift trade" [13, p. 152].

⁷ [16, p. 649]. Weber mentions here as examples the ship-owning Egyptian Pharaohs, the doges of Venice in the earliest period of their city, and finally "the princes of numerous patrimonial states of Asia and Europe, including the Hapsburgs to well along in the 18th Century" [13, p. 155].

The causal importance of trade in this respect, writes Weber, was however not such that we can posit all forms of patrimonial *Herrengewalt* as finding their origin in trade—neither, of course, did trade always lead to the development of patrimonial political structures. Trade could also result in a domination by *honoratiore*s [16, p. 650] (see note 4).

The importance of trade in a “liturgically” organized economy found expression, apart from the existence of certain state monopolies (amounting to *erwerb*swirtschaftliche öffentliche Bedarfsdeckung), in what Weber called correlative liturgic arrangements (see note 3). Certain monopolies could be granted to private persons in exchange for fixed dues or a share in the profits.⁸

Yet not even the “correlative” liturgic arrangements of the mercantilistic period could, says Weber, have brought about modern industrial capitalism. This depended on certainty of calculation and such certainty was lacking in states where the administration of law, in particular, was arbitrary [16, p. 651]. This was especially the case where the patrimonial regime was “stereotyped” to only a limited extent.⁹ Such arbitrariness and uncertainty had however a far less inhibiting influence on wholesale trading. According to Weber, the accumulation of trade capital was possible under almost any form of domination, but in particular under patrimonialism. However, under arbitrary political rule confiscations and new privileges continuously led to the destruction and creation of new fortunes [16, p. 654]. Such arbitrariness could also lead to the “artificial immobility” of capital, e.g., when it was tied-up in monastic foundations, which were in reality the entailed property of a family (*Familienfideikommiss*)—the “sacred character” of such foundation provided protection against the arbitrariness of secular power [16, pp. 651–52].

D. *Naturalwirtschaft and Geldwirtschaft*

To what extent did Weber judge “natural economy” rather than “money economy” to be typical for patrimonial political structures? Alfons Dopsch reproaches him for too heavily emphasizing the link between a system of (forced) deliveries in kind and the patrimonial army and administration.¹⁰ There is how-

⁸ [16, pp. 653–54]. According to Weber, this latter kind of monopoly was most important in the time of “mercantilism,” when the capitalistic organization of trade (and industry) came into existence and the financial household of European states was revolutionized by the bureaucratic rationalization of patrimonial domination and the increasing money needs of the administration [16, p. 653].

⁹ [16, p. 651]. Weber makes a distinction between more stereotyped and more arbitrary *Patrimonialverband*. In the latter form of patrimonial rule, the power of the ruler is not hampered by officials’ appropriation of administrative tasks and power positions, which are thus left free to be given to favorites. Stereotyped patrimonial rule was more prevalent in the West; arbitrary rule more in the Orient “wo die theokratischen und patrimonialmilitärischen Grundlagen der durch stets neue Eroberer usurpierten Gewalt den sonst naturgemäßen Dezentralisations- und Appropriationsprozess weitgehend kreuzten” [16, p. 612].

¹⁰ “Max Weber hat in seiner Vorliebe für die ‘Oikowirtschaft’ Karl Büchers und als getreuer Anhänger der historischen Evolutionstheorie zu sehr den Zusammenhang des patrimonialen Heeres und Beamtentum mit dem Naturalabgabensystem betont” [3, pp. 216–17].

ever no reason, I feel, to presume that Weber was thinking in terms of the dichotomy patrimonial bureaucracy—natural economy and modern bureaucracy—money economy. One of the relevant passages of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* reads as follows:

The *Gemeinwirtschaft* based on levies and services in kind is the primary form in which patrimonial, political structures cover their needs. . . . With the development of trade and a money economy, this *oikos*-like household of the patrimonial ruler can grow into a monopolistic profit-economy, as happened to the highest degree in Egypt where, with a natural economy, the Pharaoh of early periods was already engaged in trade, and where during the time of the Ptolemies and even more so under the Romans a system of the most diverse monopolies beside innumerable money taxes was introduced, replacing the old liturgic coverage of the needs of those periods which had a predominant natural economy. With the rationalization of its finance patrimonialism slides unnoticed into the tracks of a rational bureaucratic administration with regular taxes in money. [16, p. 594]

This passage implies neither that patrimonialism is dependent on deliveries in kind nor that patrimonialism and *Naturalwirtschaft* invariably go together. *It states on the contrary rather clearly that patrimonialism can also depend on taxation in money and trade monopolies.* Taxation in money is, indeed, also to be found together with *einer rationalen bürokratischen Verwaltung* but only when it has completely “rationalized” its finances. This also fits in with a statement of Weber’s concerning China, quoted by Dopsch himself, in which Weber asserts that “in some places also the money economy of the state. . . , at least under the Han dynasty around the beginning of the Christian era, was already far progressed” [3, pp. 216–17].

In his book-length article “Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum,” Weber gives many more examples of *Geldwirtschaft* elements in the patrimonial empires of antiquity. Here he quotes figures from Wilcken from which it appears that during the reign of the Ptolemies in Egypt (323–330 B. C.) only one-fourth of their income, reckoned in money value, consisted of goods in kind, “. . . the money economy progressed so strongly” comments Weber here [12, p. 126]. In Hellenic times there were also, as Weber points out, numerous institutions pertaining to a money economy as, for instance, the credit letter and payments via banks. Admittedly Weber does add here: “But any glance, for instance in the records of Genoa from the eleventh and twelfth century onwards, and especially so in the books of the Florentinian merchants of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, not only reveals the greater superiority of the techniques of money exchange then, but also the greater absorption of capital by the economy, as compared to antiquity” [12, pp. 134–35].

Yet, Weber says clearly that a study of the economy of Hellenic times shows that “capitalism” and “money economy” should not be identified [12, p. 139]. Dopsch could hardly have desired a stronger statement on this point.

In the light of Weber’s statements in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, it is also not immediately obvious why Dopsch suggests, with regard to the patrimonial army,

that Weber placed too great an emphasis on the necessity of deliveries in kind for the upkeep of this army. In at least one place Weber says almost the opposite of what Dopsch accuses him:

In the early period of antiquity there were mercenaries who were paid predominantly in kind. But the part of their pay which consisted of precious metals, was always the most attractive. So the prince had to possess means in the form of a money income, equally so whether his army consisted of slaves, who had to be bought, or of mercenaries. The prince could obtain this money income either by his own trade or his own production for the market or, by taxing his subjects in money, in this action supported by his soldiers. [16, p. 596]

That Weber was indeed speaking of patrimonial structures here is also proven by the fact that a few lines further down he calls the *Fürste* from the passage quoted above *Patrimonialfürste*.

Weber's emphasis on the importance of trade for the patrimonial princes is seen throughout these passages referring to the patrimonial state.¹¹

E. *The Economy of India*

An analysis will now be given of Weber's remarks on the economy of India (as found in his famous study of the religion of that country) in which attention is centered mainly on the trading activities of the patrimonial princes.

In view of Weber's insistence on the importance of this trade, it is to be expected that he would draw attention to royal trading activities in the first dynasty of the great kings, that of the Maurya in the third and fourth centuries B. C. Traces of these royal trading monopolies were still to be found in Weber's time—the Raja had monopolies "for saffron in Kashmir, precious stones in South India, horses in the West, weapons and fine textiles in the East, elephants throughout India" [15, p. 68].

Rich princes, especially those of the trading cities of South India and Ceylon, employed artisans recruited from far away. These artisans could contribute to the royal income or rather the royal possessions in three different ways: (1) through the construction of palaces and temples [15, p. 96]; (2) through employment in a royal *ergasterion*, a "workshop" belonging to the prince—in principle the prince could in this latter case profit from his artisans in two different ways, viz., by selling their products himself or by letting them sell their products in return for a specified payment; (3) artisans could be submitted to regular money taxes, in return for trade monopolies—hence to a form of liturgical taxation.¹²

¹¹ Yet, it is in this context interesting to note that Weber emphasized the *Naturalwirtschaft* aspect of ambulatory kingship in patrimonial states without mentioning the administrative necessity which Brühl and others considered as being of greater importance.

¹² [15, p. 98]; also [13, p. 101]. Weber refers here to Robert Knox's *A Historical Relation of the Island Ceilon*, dating from 1662, which refers to such *ergasteria* and also to royal "boards of trade." This same book plays an important role in Leach's article on what he chooses to call, "feudalism" in Ceylon (see E. R. Leach, "Hydraulic Society in Ceylon," *Past and Present*, Vol. 15 [1959]).

The patrimonial administration was also interested in license fees and excise taxes, based on the existence of small-scale urban industry—this urban industry stimulated the emergence of guilds, with a membership of merchants and artisans, and even of guild confederations [15, p. 127]. During certain stages the princes were financially quite dependent on the guilds. However, the internal weaknesses of these organizations (see note 12), the aid of the Brahmans, and the change-over from royal taxation in the form of tax liturgies to “capitalistic tax farming” enabled the princes to regain their autonomy vis-à-vis the guilds [15, pp. 129–30]. Even during their heyday guilds were never politically dominant in Indian cities. Weber says: “As far as is known, a republican city administration in the occidental manner has nowhere been developed in a lasting and typical form. . .” and also “. . . guild power remained pure money power, not backed by an independent military organization” [15, p. 90].

Weber paid great attention to the social status of merchants in Indian cities and especially to the coincidence of this with caste ranking.

F. *Royal Revenues, Trade, and Harbor Principalities*

Concern here is not with the organization of the taxation system. The problem is rather one of determining what were the sources of revenue of the Indian patrimonial princes. This question has already been broached above, but it must be added here that Weber was not very clear in his statements on the relative weight of these sources of revenue. He says in one place that the “land tax was and remains the absolutely decisive source of finance. . .” [15, p. 77] and somewhere else again that “the patrimonial princes, in accord with the continental nature of India, relied upon the rural organizations as sources for armies and taxes” [15, p. 128]. This hardly rhymes with Weber’s insistence on the importance of trade as a source of finance for the prince in the patrimonial state. Also, if the land tax was the absolutely decisive source of finance then it is not quite clear why, during certain stages, Indian patrimonial princes became financially so dependent on the urban guild organizations. The way in which Weber relates these things suggests that the princes “relied upon the rural organizations as sources for. . . taxes” only after the guilds had been overthrown, but he does not give us many clues to the why and how of this “evolution.” Could “land tax” be an urban phenomenon then? It is true that in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber speaks of *hohe Grundrenten* as the, for princes, advantageous results of the foundation of cities (hence an urban phenomenon),¹³ but in the *Religion of India* he speaks about land tax exclusively in relation to villages and “rural organizations.”¹⁴

¹³ [16, p. 649]. “With the overthrow of the guilds by the princes, incipient urban developments of occidental stamp were destroyed. Allying themselves with the Brahmans, the patrimonial princes, in accord with the continental nature of India, relied upon the rural organizations as sources for armies and taxes” [15, p. 128].

¹⁴ Moreover, the word used in the German original of the *Religion of India* is not *Grundrenten* but *Grundsteuer* and these things are not necessarily the same [14, Vol. 2, p. 77].

The question, however, what was the most important source of income for the Indian patrimonial princes, trade or land tax, is wrongly put, and herein lies probably the explanation of Weber's apparent inconsistency on this point. Some princes were more dependent on the former, others on the latter. Most were dependent on both, and the land tax could even provide them with the very products for trade. Weber's lack of clarity here is caused by his neglect of the difference between "harbor principalities" and "inland states," a conceptual distinction which constituted the very basis of Van Leur's theory concerning early Indonesian economy. Yet Van Leur exaggerated the *exclusive* dependence on trade of the "harbor princes." As Mme. Meilink-Roelofs has pointed out, the coastal states relied also on their agrarian hinterlands.

G. *The Views of Van Leur*

Van Leur's achievements as far as the sociological analysis of early Indonesian states is concerned are by now, thanks to Wertheim, well known. Before going on to discuss them, the rather "schematic" character of his views and, accordingly, of his opinions on economic life in antiquity, should be briefly outlined.

In the application of historical categories to this rather "outlandish" province of sociological studies, Van Leur drew heavily on Weber's treatment of patrimonial authority, his concept of the *Oikos*, and his studies of China and India. Yet, as will be seen, his idea concerning the *Oikos* economy is not entirely similar to that of Weber.

The main points brought out by Van Leur in his analysis of the economic structure of these early Indonesian states, are the following:

(1) The early Indonesian states could be divided into trading harbor principalities and inland states, the latter being based on *cōrvée*, *soccage*, and (often) a liturgical organization of the economy.

(2) The trading harbor principalities were different from European trade cities as regards (a) the role of the aristocracy in trade, (b) the domination of economic life by political aims.

(3) The role of the aristocracy in trade was an organizing and capital-providing one (monopolies, preemption, *commenda*, *bottomry*). The actual trading was done by travelling peddlers.

(4) The trading goods consisted mainly of luxury wares—which were small in bulk and high in value.

H. *The Harbor Principalities*

The coastal principalities were independent monarchical or aristocratic regimes. According to Van Leur, the following main groups participated in the trade of these principalities: (a) the ruling class—people in this class were the chief owners of land "which was usually leased out to small farmers for rent in money or kind. . . ." They also had political control of the city, accumulated its chief movable wealth from trade, owned ships, possessed money, carried on occasional trade, and sometimes exploited craftsmen working in "putting out industries"; (b) the urban patriciate—beside the ruling class there could also exist an urban patriciate, with equivalent material possessions, cooperating with (a) economically

but separated from it in "class" traditions; and (c) the mass of merchants, the peddlers, who actually went out to trade their wares in overseas ports [11, p. 66].

The commercial domination by groups (a) and (b) took a number of forms: "levies and tolls, enforced stapling, monopolization, exploitation of some kinds of production for sale in trade, occasional trade, shipowning, and *commenda* investments, and the practising of salvage rights and piracy as well" [11, p. 92].

The capital needed for trade was often provided by groups (a) and/or (b) for group (c) in the form of *commenda* and *bottomry*.¹⁵ The peddling traders could, however, also be completely independent "travelling with packs on their backs, journeying individually or in company as pedlar caravans." They would board ships on which the skipper and crew carried on trade of their own, as a side line, in the transport of people and goods [11, p. 67].

According to Van Leur, as regards "this principal form of trade, the picture in Indonesia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is quite the same as that in the ancient world, the Byzantine and Islamic cultural sphere, and the western European middle ages" (emphasis added) [11, p. 329]. Van Leur insisted that this pattern also provided the key to the economic life of the Greek polis which was, however, not dominated by "bourgeois' economic life" but by "war, booty, and political tribute..." [11, p. 60].

As a typical example of an Indonesian harbor principality, Van Leur mentioned the early Sumatran state of Çriwijaya. Here,

The royal authority based its power on the compulsory stapling it enforced upon the international trade of southeast Asia. Military and maritime force was used without hesitation to maintain that power. There were tributary overseas possessions, and overseas predatory expeditions. Ships were owned by the ruler, perhaps by him alone. Military power was supplied by the nobility, perhaps in conjunction with the ruler's own troops. The trading sections of the town revealed forms characteristic for an international peddling trade carried on by a multitude of people from countries everywhere. [11, p. 105]

Van Leur emphasized that Çriwijaya exerted its power mainly over the river and the seas. The Sumatran hinterlands fell under its authority but they did not constitute the heart of the state [11, p. 106].

However, the dominant economic position of the ruling princes and aristocratic groups was, according to Van Leur, definitely not limited to Çriwijaya. It "is a certainty for the whole early period of Indonesian history; it would

¹⁵ Van Leur quotes the following contemporary description of the situation in Bantam in 1596: "The merchants who are wealthy in general stay at home, then when some ships are ready to leave they give those going with them a sum of money to be repaid doubly, (the amount) more or less according to the length of the voyages, of which they make an obligation, and if the voyage is prosperously completed then the giver is paid according to the contract, and if the drawer cannot pay the money because of some misfortune then he must give his wife and children in pledge for the whole time until the debt is paid, unless the ship be wrecked—then the former loses the money he lent" [11, p. 328].

appear to be the case just as well for later times, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" [11, p. 92].

The "market" of the trade carried on in these early harbor principalities was subjected to the stapling enforced by a political authority, limited in scope and unstable, and based on political aims [11, p. 75].

The overseas trade of the Indonesian states dates from very early times. One of its initial functions was to provide the princes and lords "with foreign wares for ambassadorial gifts" [11, p. 95]. Later the trade wares consisted of "valuable high quality products," generally with little bulk but a high value.¹⁶

Except for that of the master's workshop, industrial production for the market was nonexistent.

I. *The Inland States of Java*

Beside the harbor principalities of Sumatra, we find, in the Indonesian archipelago, the inland states of Java, situated in the fertile volcanic plains of the interior and reached only with difficulty from the coast. Agriculture rather than trade was the mainstay of the economy. Van Leur pictures this type of state as an *Oikos* state "based on levies and soccage, with an administrative machinery expanding in patrimonial, bureaucratic forms, a state with a hierarchy of officials." In the patrimonial structure of its bureaucracy the Javanese inland states differed from Sumatran coastal states, the harbor principalities, which were, according to Van Leur, characterized by "a closed aristocratic community as the backbone of royal authority" [11, pp. 104-5].

The occurrence of great ancient edifices in Java, rather than in Sumatra, is connected with this difference in structure. Labor could be mobilized in Java, in states "with soccage and an officialdom" but not in Sumatra [11, p. 107]. This is strikingly demonstrated by the fact that even in the Javanese Çailendra period, when Sumatran Çriwijaya held sway over the Javanese interior, the great edifices (i.e., the Barabudur, Chandi Mendut, the Chandi Sewu complex) were constructed in the latter region and not in the (externally more powerful) Sumatran state.

Hence, the harbor principalities and the patrimonial bureaucracies of inland Java constituted "two powerful indigenous Indonesian types of authority the process of formation of which must have stretched over centuries."¹⁷

¹⁶ Van Leur quotes on this point the early Dutch traveller Jan Huyghen van Linschoten who wrote from Goa in 1584: "I should be much inclined to travel into China and Japan, which are the same distance from here as Portugal, that is, he who goes thither is three years on the road. If I only possessed two or three hundred ducats they could easily be converted into six or seven hundred...but to enter on such a thing with empty hands I thought folly: one must start tolerably provided to make profit" [11, p. 67].

¹⁷ [11, p. 107]. In contrast to the Javanese inland states, Van Leur describes the Chinese states, formed in the valleys of the middle regions of the Hwang-ho and the lower regions of the Wei-ho and Fen-ho, as half patrimonial bureaucratic and half feudal. They owed their patrimonial bureaucratic character to "the river channelization and irrigation work" and their feudal character to "the continuous defensive struggle against the 'barbaric' peoples of the mountains and the steppes to which ancient China...was forced to adjust itself" [11, pp. 25-26].

J. *Comments on Van Leur*

Van Leur's contribution to the understanding of the economic structure of Southeast Asian patrimonial states is considerable. Here, however, we are concerned with an aspect of that economic structure which he definitely misunderstood.

Van Leur believed, as indicated above, that the "true nature of 'Oriental' trade" was to be found in trade in valuable high-quality products, there being virtually no trade in bulk cargo. Mme. Meilink-Roelofs, in her book on early Asian trade, has objected against Van Leur's picture of the Asian "peddling trade." Van Leur used this term to include both the hawkers of cheap goods and traders in luxurious items, merchants who, according to Meilink-Roelofs, "were very well provided with capital. . . ." Van Leur also ignored the trade in bulk cargo, which, according to Meilink-Roelofs, "was just as important a branch of trade in Asia and one in which both travelling and established merchants were engaged" [8, p. 5]. It is true, says Meilink-Roelofs, that bulk transport in Asia was not as spectacular as in Western Europe, which was "much more intensively navigated and heavily populated. . . ." Yet, according to Meilink-Roelofs, the same "rule" can be used in both areas: "the greater the distances, the more the luxurious character of the merchandise predominates" [8, p. 6].

What Mme. Meilink-Roelofs has not pointed out, however, is that Van Leur's views on the character of Asian trade were influenced wrongly by his reading on trade in antiquity. He confidently asserted, as seen above, that the trading pattern he described for the Indonesia of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was "quite the same as that in the ancient world, the Byzantine and Islamic cultural sphere, and the western European middle ages." This was not only a sweeping generalization, but, in view of his picture of Indonesian trade, an unwarranted one. It is perhaps understandable enough that Van Leur came to this misconception; however, it could have been avoided if he had read some of the sources mentioned in his bibliography (inter alia Rostovtzeff) with greater care.

The first observation which can be made here is that Van Leur seems to have misconstrued a remark by Gibbon (as quoted by Moreland). "Gibbon's mordant aphorism," says Van Leur, "that 'the objects of oriental trade [*sic*] were splendid and trifling' is in substance as applicable to the sixteenth as to the second century of our era." Here again we see an implicit example of Van Leur's disbelief in trade in bulk (primarily foodstuffs) in the Orient.

However, what Van Leur has not sufficiently realized is that when Gibbon was talking about "objects of oriental traffic" being "splendid and trifling" [4, Vol. 1, p. 72], he was actually talking about the trade objects brought back by the fleet, which every year "about the time of the summer solstice" set out from Myoshormos, an Egyptian port on the Red Sea, with the coast of Malabar or Ceylon as their "usual term of navigation." According to Gibbon, this fleet only returned to the Red Sea in December or January. There the cargo had to be loaded onto the backs of camels which brought it to the Nile, where it was transferred to ships descending the Nile to Alexandria. At that place, finally,

it "was poured without delay into the capital of the empire." It is almost self-evident that no cheap bulk was transported in this laborious way and that such goods as were brought out acquired an almost incredible value, as for instance, silk, a pound of which, according to Gibbon, "was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold" [4, pp. 72-73].

Van Leur's misunderstanding is that he thought it possible to apply Gibbon's remark to trade *within* Southeast Asia, overlooking the fact that there transport costs could not have been as prohibitive for trade in bulk as they were for the traffic between Rome and Asia. Similarly, at the same time that the Rome-Asia trade was "splendid and trifling," the semi-independent kingdom *within* the Mediterranean most certainly traded bulk foodstuffs with Rome and each other (see note 19).

There seems to be, however, another and more fundamental reason for Van Leur's disregard of trade in bulk within Asia. At the period when Van Leur was writing (round about 1930), Bücher's concept of "geschlossene Hauswirtschaft," to which Weber's (or rather Rodbertus's) concept of *Oikowirtschaft* is related, still had great influence in economic history.

K. *The Oikos*

The debate on the *Oikos* concept, to be sure, had begun some decades earlier when Rodbertus's and Bücher's views on this point were challenged by Eduard Meyer. Rodbertus insisted that the *Oikowirtschaft* was characteristic for antiquity. According to him, economic production in this era took place within a household economy using slave labor. The division of labor in antiquity was, he said, to be found in these large slave households. Economic exchange took place only incidentally, when the household wanted to sell superfluous products. Generally, however, the *Autarkie des Oikos* prevailed [12, p. 55].

In general, Bücher agreed with this picture. Weber in his comments on these views of Rodbertus and Bücher (to be found in "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum"), took Bücher at his word when the latter declared that the concept was for him merely a *Konstruktion* of the sort which Weber called an "ideal-type."

Yet, some of Bücher's statements in his then widely read book *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft* are quite specific. According to him, the economic autonomy of the slave-owning household was the key to the whole social, and *ein guter Teil* of the political, history of old Rome. "There were no productive professional status groups, no agriculturists, no tradesmen. There were only small and large owners, the rich and the poor" [2, p. 99]. The *geschlossene Hauswirtschaft* was characterized by Bücher as follows:

...the closed home-economy is characterized...by the fact that the whole economic cycle, from production to consumption, takes place within the closed circle of the house (of the family or lineage). The kind and extent of the production of each house is dictated by the needs of the people belonging to it. Each product is fully developed, from the raw materials to the stage in which it can be consumed, within the same economy and enters, without any intermediate link, into consumption in which it finally disappears again. [2, p. 92]

and somewhere else he comments:

Income and capital constitute an indistinguishable whole from which one part goes up continuously to the stage in which it can be consumed and another part descends to consumption, whilst a third part is to be found in boxes and trunks, in cellars and warehouses as a sort of insurance fund. [2, p. 115]

Hence, for Bücher, trade played hardly any role at all in this kind of economy. That the Greeks, Carthagians, and Romans, whose economic activities allegedly confirmed to this pattern, could nevertheless obtain a great variety of products, was explained by him from their employment of household slaves specialized in the production of these articles [2, p. 98].

Eduard Meyer challenged these views of Bücher but rejected *any* application of special categories to the economy of antiquity. For the period in which Athens flourished, he even used such modern concepts as "factory" (*Fabrik*) and "factory hands" (*Fabrikarbeiter*). He insisted that we could not possibly underestimate the modernness of economic life of that period. Weber, in his turn, attacked in "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum" the opinions of Meyer. According to him, there was no evidence whatsoever pointing to the existence of "factories" in that period. He emphatically warned that nothing would be more dangerous than to picture the situation in antiquity as "modern." ("Es wäre nichts gefährlicher, als sich die Verhältnisse der Antike 'modern' vorzustellen...")¹⁸

Weber himself gave qualified approval to the application of Rodbertus's *Oikos* concept to certain periods of antiquity. However, an important difference in emphasis between Rodbertus and Bücher on the one hand, and Weber on the other, is that Weber brought out the role of trade far more clearly, also in those economies characterized by an *Oikewirtschaft*. The possible importance of trade is even implicitly mentioned in the very definition of *Oikos* as given in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*:

An *Oikos* in the technical sense is not simply each "great" house-community or each such community producing various products, e.g., industrial and agricultural goods, but it is the great household, led in an authoritarian manner, of a prince, landlord, patrician, whose final aim is not capitalistic *money making* but the organized natural *coverage of his needs*. To achieve this aim he can utilize all means, *also that of outside exchange* [italics added], to the highest degree. The decisive fact remains: that for him the formative principle is use of property and not profit-making via capital. The word *Oikos* signifies in essence: organized need-coverage, even though individual workshops, based on profit, can have been linked up to it for this purpose. [16, pp. 230–31]

¹⁸ See for this *Oikos* debate especially [12, pp. 55–57]. An interesting comment on the debate is to be found in H. W. Pearson [9]. Professor Heichelheim has, however, bitterly criticized this latter book and especially Pearson's article. "...Professor Pearson has made the preposterous assumptions that the formulations of Professors Rodbertus, Buecher, and Eduard Meyer are in agreement with the Graeco-Roman source evidence, and that Professors Eduard Meyer, Oertel, and Rostovtzeff had aspirations to analyze and propound economic theory" [6, p. 108].

For Weber then trade is certainly possible in the *Oikenwirtschaft*, only its motivation is not a "capitalistic" accumulation of money but the satisfaction of demands created by the lord's household consumption. There is another difference between Weber and Bücher which should be pointed out. Bücher, caught within the limits of a conceptual framework basically derived from nineteenth century Western economies, tried to trace *produktiven Berufsstände*. He did not find them. Weber, however, focussed his attention on what he knew was important in the patrimonial state, i.e., on the trading activities of the princes and associated aristocracy.

Weber also knew that the "pure" type of *Oikenwirtschaft*, could only exist, at any case *dem Streben nach*, in the exchangeless household economy. He pointed out, however, that such tradeless *Eigenwirtschaft* did not occur even when an economic structure approached the pure type of *Oikenwirtschaft*, e.g., as in Egypt, among princes and aristocrats of the Homeric type and also the courts of the Persian and Franconian kings. Weber stated that even the Pharaohs, and the great majority of Mediterranean princes and aristocrats traded.

Rostovtzeff, in his discussion of why the Roman Empire failed to develop capitalistic forms of industry similar to those of our period, comments: "The answer given to this question by leading modern economists like K. Bücher, G. Salvioi and M. Weber is that industry could not develop because the ancient world never emerged from the forms of primitive house-economy (*Oikenwirtschaft*) . . ." [10, p. 302]. On the contrary, however, he then goes on to argue, "recourse was had to the market," in the Ancient World and particularly in the Roman Empire, for almost everything beyond spinning and weaving. He emphasizes that "pure house-economy did not exist even in the earlier times of the Oriental monarchies . . ." etc.

In view of the fact that Rostovtzeff bases his remarks on the same pages of Weber as I have quoted above, it seems odd that he should construct this contradiction between Weber and himself, and even more remarkable that he mentions Weber and Bücher in the same breath. That recourse was had to the market was never denied by Weber—the latter also pointed out that the lord of an *Oikos* could in certain circumstances (viz., a certain exploitation, using slave or wage labor, of workshops) "come very near to being a capitalistic entrepreneur or altogether become one . . ." Admittedly, the example he gives here does not refer to the Ancient Orient [16, p. 232].

A contemporary economic historian, Heichelheim, has declared himself to be in favor of Weber's concept of *Oikenwirtschaft*:

Professor Max Weber has described the Ancient Oriental state economy as that of a royal oikos, that is, the whole kingdom was regulated from one centre, as if it were the property of one large estate owner. I think this definition hits the nail on the head although the principle behind it was obscured in Akkadian Mesopotamia and in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms when a certain amount of freedom was given to independent economic bodies. [5, Vol. 1, p. 170]

Van Leur who explicitly used the *Oikos* concept to characterize the Javanese inland states *has apparently been misled by its more Bücherian version into*

underestimating the trade in foodstuffs which took place in Asia (and in antiquity). It should, however, be made clear here that there are passages in Weber which led Van Leur to believe that if there was trade in foodstuffs in antiquity it was firstly inspired by political reasons and secondly of neglectible proportions. Weber, in fact, more or less prefaced his discussion of the *Oikos* concept in "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum" with a note concerning the relation between *öffentliche Gewalt* and *Getreidezufuhr* in antiquity:

Dependence on the import of grains from abroad constitutes where it exists as a lasting phenomenon in antiquity, always a fact which stirs public authority into action and which has institutional and political consequences of the most wide ranging kind. . . . [12, p. 54]

The studies of Rostovtzeff and, in particular, of Heichelheim, however, led to different conclusions. Firstly they found that trade in the basic necessities of life, not in luxuries, was of prime importance; and secondly that this was not exclusively a "bureaucratically arranged" affair of only political importance.¹⁹

As one of the faults inherent in Van Leur's work, Wertheim (in his introduction to Van Leur's *Indonesian Trade and Society*) mentions "the tendency sometimes to state his new propositions and theories all too absolutely. . . ." One can indeed say that if Van Leur had clearly used the distinction between inland

¹⁹ Van Leur makes the following comment on trade in the ancient world: "...trade was international, and the goods traded make up a long list including precious metals, jewelry, fabrics, earthenware, but also base metals and many raw materials for handicrafts and *ergasterion* industry, thus not only trade exclusively in valuable high-quality products. There was no question of a trade in mass quantities of goods; whenever shipments of large quantities occurred the immediate cause was usually a political one. This can be seen in the case of the imports of grain in Athens and Rome, the examples best known in history, though, as has been said, one may not draw any conclusions for trade in general from them" and Van Leur adds to this a remark by Weber: "Such trade is completely incomparable to modern exchange. It was about the same as if now only champagne, silk, and such things were traded in" [11, p. 63].

Although Rostovtzeff's book on the social and economic history of the Roman Empire is listed in Van Leur's bibliography, the latter does not seem to have paid much attention to Rostovtzeff's remarks on the importance of agriculture and agricultural trade in the African and Asiatic provinces of Rome. Rostovtzeff provides ample information about this trade [10, pp. 241-45, 277]. Rostovtzeff writes furthermore concerning the Roman state of the first century B.C.: "Goods were freely exchanged inside the Roman state and with its neighbours. The most important branch of trade was, not that which dealt in luxuries, but the exchange of articles of prime necessity—corn, fish, oil, wine, flax, hemp, wool, lumber, metals, and manufactured products" [10, p. 36] which is just about the exact opposite of what Van Leur has asserted on this point. It could be argued that Van Leur was referring exclusively to earlier periods of antiquity, i.e., earlier than those to which Rostovtzeff's remarks apply, but actually Van Leur makes no such distinction between earlier and later periods, as his mentioning of the import of grain in Rome [11, p. 63] shows. Heichelheim too makes some interesting remarks on "cheap mass exports" during antiquity [5, Vol. 2, pp. 41, 47, 49]. He comes to roughly the same conclusion as Rostovtzeff forty years earlier regarding the trade of a slightly later period: "So that goods of use for the daily needs of the man in the street, for cooking, house-keeping, and common articles of clothings were more characteristic for the economic structure in the foreign trade of our period than fancy goods and costly articles" [5, p. 52].

states based on soccage and harbor principalities based on trade as an ideal-typical distinction only, he might have paid more attention to what was in the Mediterranean as well as the Archipelago, an important phenomenon, viz., bulk (mainly foodstuffs) trading. It is only by being aware of this aspect of Asian trade that one can understand, for example, the foreign relations of traditional Siam, a state which in many ways answered to Van Leur's description of an "inland state" based on soccage. It was Siam's "bureaucratically" controlled rice trade which had paramount influence in her relations with, inter alia, China, Malacca, and the Dutch East India Company.

When one compares Weber's account of India with Van Leur's account of Indonesia, one has the impression that Weber was far more cautious in applying concepts which had been developed in the study of antiquity. Weber's insistence on the *Oikos* being an ideal-type—concept only could in Van Leur's case have corrected some other fairly misleading information he obtained from Weber. Yet, we should be grateful that Van Leur's sociological imagination made him daring enough "to rush in where angels fear to tread." There is often more scientific merit to be found in one risky but fruitful hypothesis than in dozens of confirmed facts.

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