

STONE AGE ECONOMICS

by MARSHALL SAHLINS

© 1972b

Sociology of Primitive Exchange



ALDINE PUBLISHING COMPANY / New York

On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange

In a discussion that has anthropological pretensions, "provisional generalization" is no doubt a redundant phrase. Yet the present venture needs a doubly cautious introduction. Its generalizations have developed out of a dialogue with ethnographic materials—many of these are appended Tylorian fashion as "illustrative materials"—but no rigorous tests have been applied. Perhaps the conclusions may be offered as a plea to ethnography rather than a contribution to theory, if these are not again the same thing. At any rate, there follow some suggestions about the interplay in primitive communities between forms, material conditions, and social relations of exchange.

Material Flow and Social Relations

What are in the received wisdom "noneconomic" or "exogenous" conditions are in the primitive reality the very organization of economy.¹ A material transaction is usually a momentary episode in a

1. For the present purpose, "economy" is viewed as the process of provisioning society (or the "socio-cultural system"). No social relation, institution, or set of institutions is of itself "economic." Any institution, say a family or a lineage order, if it has material consequence for provisioning society can be placed in an economic context and considered part of the economic process. The same institution may be equally or more involved in the political process, thus profitably considered as well in a political context. This way of looking at economics or politics—or for that matter, religion, education, and any number of other cultural processes—is dictated by the nature of primitive culture. Here we find no socially distinct "economy" or "government," merely social

(continued on p. 186)

continuous social relation. The social relation exerts governance: the flow of goods is constrained by, is part of, a status etiquette. "One cannot treat Nuer economic relations by themselves, for they always form part of direct social relations of a general kind," Evans-Pritchard writes: "... there is always between them a general social relationship of one kind or another, and their economic relations, if such they may be called, must conform to this general pattern of behavior" (1940, pp. 90-91). The dictum is broadly applicable (cf. White, 1959, pp. 242-245).

Yet the connection between material flow and social relations is reciprocal. A specific social relation may constrain a given movement of goods, but a specific transaction—"by the same token"—suggests a particular social relation. If friends make gifts, gifts make friends. A great proportion of primitive exchange, much more than our own traffic, has as its decisive function this latter, instrumental one: the material flow underwrites or initiates social relations. Thus do primitive peoples transcend the Hobbesian chaos. For the indicative condition of primitive society is the absence of a public and sovereign power: persons and (especially) groups confront each other not merely as distinct interests but with the possible inclination and certain right to physically prosecute these interests. Force is decentralized,

groups and relations with multiple functions, which we distinguish as economic, political, and so forth.

That economy thus presents itself as an aspect of things is probably generally acceptable. That the emphasis be the provisioning of *society* may not prove so acceptable. For the concern is not how individuals go about their business: "economy" has not been defined as the application of scarce available means against alternative ends (material ends or otherwise). From means to end "economy" is conceived as a *component of culture* rather than a *kind of human action*, the material life process of society rather than a need-satisfying process of individual behavior. Our purpose is not to analyze entrepreneurs but to compare cultures. We reject the historically specific Business Outlook. In terms of controversial positions recently developed in the *American Anthropologist*, the stand adopted is much more with Dalton (1961; cf. Sahlin, 1962) than with Burling (1962) or LeClair (1962). Also, solidarity is here affirmed with housewives the world over and Professor Malinowski. Professor Firth upbraids Malinowski's imprecision on a point of economic anthropology with the observation that "This is not the terminology of economics, it is almost the language of the housewife" (Firth, 1957, p. 220). The terminology of the present effort similarly departs from economic orthodoxy. This may be justly considered a necessity born of ignorance, but something is to be said as well for the appropriateness, in a study of kinship economies, of the housewife's perspective.

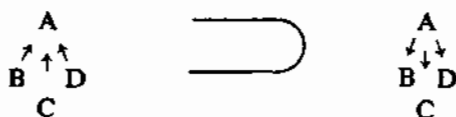
legitimately held in severalty, the social compact has yet to be drawn, the state nonexistent. So peacemaking is not a sporadic intersocietal event, it is a continuous process going on within society itself. Groups must "come to terms"—the phrase notably connotes a material exchange satisfactory on both sides.²

Even on its strictly practical side, exchange in primitive communities has not the same role as the economic flow in modern industrial communities. The place of transaction in the total economy is different: under primitive conditions it is more detached from production, less firmly hinged to production in an organic way. Typically, it is less involved than modern exchange in the acquisition of means of production, more involved with the redistribution of finished goods through the community. The bias is that of an economy in which food holds a commanding position, and in which day-to-day output does not depend on a massive technological complex nor a complex division of labor. It is the bias also of a domestic mode of production: of household producing units, division of labor by sex and age dominant, production that looks to familial requirements, and direct access by domestic groups to strategic resources. It is the bias of a social order in which rights to control returns go along with rights to use resources of production, and in which there is very limited traffic in titles or income privileges in resources. It is the bias, finally, of societies ordered in the main by kinship. Such characteristics of primitive economies as these, so broadly stated, are of course subject to qualification in specific instances. They are offered only as a guide to the detailed

2. Economy has been defined as the process of (materially) provisioning society and the definition opposed to the human act of satisfying wants. The great play of instrumental exchange in primitive societies underscores the usefulness of the former definition. Sometimes the peace-making aspect is so fundamental that precisely the same sorts and amounts of stuff change hands: the renunciation of opposed interest is in this way symbolized. On a strictly formal view the transaction is a waste of time and effort. One might say that people are maximizing value, social value, but such is to misplace the determinant of the transaction, to fail to specify the circumstances which produce different material outcomes in different historical instances, to hold fast to the economizing premise of the market by a false assignment of pecuniary-like qualities to social qualities, to take the high road to tautology. The interest of such transactions is precisely that they do not materially provision people and are not predicated on the satisfaction of human material needs. They do, however, decidedly provision society: they maintain social relations, the structure of society, even if they do not to the least advantage the stock of consumables. Without any further assumptions, they are "economic" in the suggested meaning of the term (cf. Sahlins, 1969).

analysis of distribution that follows. It is also advisable to repeat that "primitive" shall refer to cultures lacking a political state, and it applies only insofar as economy and social relations have not been modified by the historic penetration of states.

On a very general view, the array of economic transactions in the ethnographic record may be resolved into two types.³ First, those "vice-versa" movements between two parties known familiarly as 'reciprocity' ($A \rightleftarrows B$). The second, centralized movements: collection from members of a group, often under one hand, and redivision within this group:



This is "pooling" or "redistribution." On an even more general view, the two types merge. *For pooling is an organization of reciprocities, a system of reciprocities*—a fact of central bearing upon the genesis of large-scale redistribution under chiefly aegis. But this most general understanding merely suggests concentration in the first place on reciprocity; it remains the course of analytic wisdom to separate the two.

Their social organizations are very different. True, pooling and reciprocity may occur in the same social contexts—the same close kinsmen that pool their resources in household commensality, for instance, also as individuals share things with one another—but the precise social relations of pooling and reciprocity are not the same. Pooling is socially a *within* relation, the collective action of a group. Reciprocity is a *between* relation, the action and reaction of two parties. Thus pooling is the complement of social unity and, in Polanyi's term, "centricity"; whereas, reciprocity is social duality and

3. The reader familiar with recent discussions of primitive distribution will recognize my indebtedness to Polanyi (1944, 1957, 1959) on this score, and likewise the departures from Polanyi's terminology and threefold scheme of principles of integration. It is also a pleasure to affirm with Firth that "Every student of primitive economics, in fact, gratefully builds upon the foundations which Malinowski has laid" (Firth, 1959, p. 174).

"symmetry." Pooling stipulates a social center where goods meet and thence flow outwards, and a social boundary too, within which persons (or subgroups) are cooperatively related. But reciprocity stipulates two sides, two distinct social-economic interests. Reciprocity can establish solidary relations, insofar as the material flow suggests assistance or mutual benefit, yet the social fact of sides is inescapable.

Considering the established contributions of Malinowski and Firth, Gluckman, Richards, and Polanyi, it does not seem too sanguine to say that we know fairly well the material and social concomitants of pooling. Also, what is known fits the argument that pooling is the material side of "collectivity" and "centricity." Cooperative food production, rank and chieftainship, collective political and ceremonial action, these are some of the ordinary contexts of pooling in primitive communities. To review very briefly:

The everyday, workaday variety of redistribution is familial pooling of food. The principle suggested by it is that products of collective effort in provisioning are pooled, especially should the cooperation entail division of labor. Stated so, the rule applies not only to householding but to higher-level cooperation as well, to groups larger than households that develop about some task of procurement—say, buffalo impounding in the Northern Plains or netting fish in a Polynesian lagoon. With qualifications—such as the special shares locally accorded special contributions to the group endeavor—the principle remains at the higher, as at the lower, household level: "goods collectively procured are distributed through the collectivity."

Rights of call on the produce of the underlying population, as well as obligations of generosity, are everywhere associated with chieftainship. The organized exercise of these rights and obligations is redistribution:

I think that throughout the world we would find that the relations between economics and politics are of the same type. The chief, everywhere, acts as a tribal banker, collecting food, storing it, and protecting it, and then using it for the benefit of the whole community. His functions are the prototype of the public finance system and the organization of State treasuries of to-day. Deprive the chief of his privileges and financial benefits and who suffers most but the whole tribe? (Malinowski, 1937, pp. 232-233).

This use "for the benefit of the whole community" takes various

forms: subsidizing religious ceremony, social pageantry, or war; underwriting craft production, trade, the construction of technical apparatus and of public and religious edifices; redistributing diverse local products; hospitality and succor of the community (in severalty or in general) during shortage. Speaking more broadly, redistribution by powers-that-be serves two purposes, either of which may be dominant in a given instance. The practical, logistic function—redistribution—sustains the community, or community effort, in a material sense. At the same time, or alternatively, it has an instrumental function: as a ritual of communion and of subordination to central authority, redistribution sustains the corporate structure itself, that is in a social sense. The practical benefits may be critical, but, whatever the practical benefits, chiefly pooling generates the spirit of unity and centricity, codifies the structure, stipulates the centralized organization of social order and social action—

. . . every person who takes part in the *ana* [feast organized by a Tikopia chief] is impelled to participate in forms of cooperation which for the time being go far beyond his personal interests and those of his family and reach the bounds of the whole community. Such a feast gathers together chiefs and their clansfolk who at other times are rivals ready to criticize and slander each other, but who assemble here with an outward show of amity. . . . In addition, such purposive activity subserves certain wider social ends, which are common in the sense that every person or nearly every person knowingly or unknowingly promotes them. For instance, attendance at the *ana* and participation in the economic contributions does in fact help to support the Tikopia system of authority (Firth, 1950, pp. 230-231).

So we have at least the outline of a functional theory of redistribution. The central issues are now likely to be developmental ones, the specification by comparison or phylogenetic study of selective circumstances. The economic anthropology of reciprocity, however, is not at the same stage. One reason, perhaps, is a popular tendency to view reciprocity as balance, as unconditional one-for-one exchange. Considered as a material transfer, reciprocity is often not that at all. Indeed, it is precisely through scrutiny of departures from balanced exchange that one glimpses the interplay between reciprocity, social relations and material circumstances.

Reciprocity is a whole class of exchanges, a continuum of forms. This is specially true in the narrow context of material transactions—as opposed to a broadly conceived social principle or moral norm of give-and-take. At one end of the spectrum stands the assistance freely given, the small currency of everyday kinship, friendship, and neighborly relations, the “pure gift” Malinowski called it, regarding which an open stipulation of return would be unthinkable and unsociable. At the other pole, self-interested seizure, appropriation by chicanery or force requited only by an equal and opposite effort on the principle of *lex talionis*, “negative reciprocity” as Gouldner phrases it. The extremes are notably positive and negative in a moral sense. The intervals between them are not merely so many gradations of material balance in exchange, they are intervals of sociability. The distance between poles of reciprocity is, among other things, social distance:

Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend usury (Deuteronomy xxiii, 21).

Native [Siuai] moralists assert that neighbors should be friendly and mutually trustful, whereas people from far-off are dangerous and unworthy of morally just consideration. For example, natives lay great stress on honesty involving neighbors while holding that trade with strangers may be guided by *caveat emptor* (Oliver, 1955, p. 82).

Gain at the cost of other communities, particularly communities at a distance, and more especially such as are felt to be aliens, is not obnoxious to the standards of homebred use and wont (Veblen, 1915, p. 46).

A trader always cheats people. For this reason intra-regional trade is rather frowned upon while inter-tribal trade gives to the (Kapauku) businessman prestige as well as profit (Pospisil, 1958, p. 127).

A Scheme of Reciprocities

A purely formal typology of reciprocities is possible, one based exclusively on immediacy of returns, equivalence of returns, and like material and mechanical dimensions of exchange. The classification thus in hand, one might proceed to correlate subtypes of reciprocity

with diverse "variables" such as kinship distance of parties to the transaction. The virtue of this manner of exposition is that it is "scientific," or so it would seem. Among the defects is that it is a conventional metaphor of exposition, not a true history of experiment. It ought to be recognized from the beginning that the distinction of one type of reciprocity from another is more than formal. A feature such as the expectation of returns says something about the spirit of exchange, about its disinterestedness or its interestedness, the impersonality, the compassion. Any seeming formal classification conveys these meanings: it is as much a moral as a mechanical scheme. (That the recognition of the moral quality prejudices the relation of exchange to social "variables," in the sense that the latter are then logically connected to variations in exchange, is not contested. This is a sign that the classification is good.)

The actual kinds of reciprocity are many in any primitive society, let alone in the primitive world taken as a whole. "Vice-versa movements" may include sharing and counter-sharing of unprocessed food, informal hospitality, ceremonious affinal exchanges, loaning and repaying, compensation of specialized or ceremonial services, the transfer that seals a peace agreement, impersonal haggle, and so on and on. We have several ethnographic attempts to cope typologically with the empirical diversity, notably Douglas Oliver's scheme of Siuai transactions (1955, pp. 229-231; cf. Price, 1962, p. 37 f; Spencer, 1959, p. 194 f; Marshall, 1961, and others). In *Crime and Custom*, Malinowski wrote rather broadly and unconditionally about reciprocity; in the *Argonauts*, however, he developed a classification of Trobriand exchanges out of manifold variations in balance and equivalence (Malinowski, 1922, pp. 176-194). It was from this vantage point, looking to the directness of returns, that the *continuum* which is reciprocity was revealed:

I have on purpose spoken of forms of exchange, of gifts and counter-gifts, rather than of barter or trade, because, although there exist forms of barter pure and simple, there are so many transitions and gradations between that and simple gift, that it is impossible to draw any fixed line between trade on the one hand, and the exchange of gifts on the other. . . . In order to deal with these facts correctly it is necessary to give a complete survey of all forms of payment or present. In this survey there will be at one end the

extreme cases of pure gift, that is an offering for which nothing is given in return [but see Firth 1957, pp. 221, 222]. Then, through many customary forms of gift or payment, partially or conditionally returned, which shade into each other, there come forms of exchange, where more or less strict equivalence is observed, arriving finally at real barter (Malinowski, 1922, p. 176).

Malinowski's perspective may be taken beyond the Trobriands and applied broadly to reciprocal exchange in primitive societies. It seems possible to lay out in abstract fashion a continuum of reciprocities, based on the "vice-versa" nature of exchanges, along which empirical instances encountered in the particular ethnographic case can be placed. The stipulation of material returns, less elegantly, the "sidedness" of exchange, would be the critical thing. For this there are obvious objective criteria, such as the toleration of material unbalance and the leeway of delay: the initial movement of goods from hand to hand is more or less requited materially and there are variations too in the time allowed for reciprocation (again see Firth, 1957, pp. 220-221). Put another way, the spirit of exchange swings from disinterested concern for the other party through mutuality to self-interest. So expressed, the assessment of "sidedness" can be supplemented by empirical criteria in addition to those of immediacy and material equivalence: the initial transfer may be voluntary, involuntary, prescribed, contracted; the return freely bestowed, exacted, or dunned; the exchange haggled or not, the subject of accounting or not; and so forth.

The spectrum of reciprocities proposed for general use is defined by its extremes and mid-point:

Generalized reciprocity, the solidary extreme ($A \rightleftarrows B$)⁴

"Generalized reciprocity" refers to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible

4. Since the original publication of this essay, Lévi-Strauss's "échange généralisé" has become much more current than our "generalized reciprocity." This is only unfortunate because the two do not refer to the same type (let alone the same universe) of reciprocity. Besides, friends and critics have suggested various alternatives to "generalized reciprocity," such as "indefinite reciprocity," etc. The time for beating a terminological retreat may be near; but for the moment, I am holding on.

and necessary, assistance returned. The ideal type is Malinowski's "pure gift." Other indicative ethnographic formulas are "sharing," "hospitality," "free gift," "help," and "generosity." Less sociable, but tending toward the same pole are "kinship dues," "chiefly dues," and "*noblesse oblige*." Price (1962) refers to the genre as "weak reciprocity" by reason of the vagueness of the obligation to reciprocate.

At the extreme, say voluntary food-sharing among near kinsmen—or for its logical value, one might think of the suckling of children in this context—the expectation of a direct material return is unseemly. At best it is implicit. The material side of the transaction is repressed by the social: reckoning of debts outstanding cannot be overt and is typically left out of account. This is not to say that handing over things in such form, even to "loved ones," generates no counter-obligation. But the counter is not stipulated by time, quantity, or quality: the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite. It usually works out that the time and worth of reciprocation are not alone conditional on what was given by the donor, but also upon what he will need and when, and likewise what the recipient can afford and when. Receiving goods lays on a diffuse obligation to reciprocate when necessary to the donor and/or possible for the recipient. The requital thus may be very soon, but then again it may be never. There are people who even in the fullness of time are incapable of helping themselves or others. A good pragmatic indication of generalized reciprocity is a sustained one-way flow. Failure to reciprocate does not cause the giver of stuff to stop giving: the goods move one way, in favor of the have-not, for a very long period.

Balanced reciprocity, the midpoint ($A \rightleftharpoons B$)

"Balanced reciprocity" refers to direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay. Perfectly balanced reciprocity, the simultaneous exchange of the same types of goods to the same amounts, is not only conceivable but ethnographically attested in certain marital transactions (e.g., Reay, 1959, pp. 95 f), friendship compacts (Seligman, 1910, p. 70), and peace agreements (Hogbin, 1939, p. 79; Loeb, 1926, p. 204; Williamson, 1912, p. 183). "Balanced reciprocity" may be more loosely applied to transactions which stip-

ulate returns of commensurate worth or utility within a finite and narrow period. Much "gift-exchange," many "payments," much that goes under the ethnographic head of "trade" and plenty that is called "buying-selling" and involves "primitive money" belong in the genre of balanced reciprocity.

Balanced reciprocity is less "personal" than generalized reciprocity. From our own vantage-point it is "more economic." The parties confront each other as distinct economic and social interests. The material side of the transaction is at least as critical as the social: there is more or less precise reckoning, as the things given must be covered within some short term. So the pragmatic test of balanced reciprocity becomes an inability to tolerate one-way flows; the relations between people are disrupted by a failure to reciprocate within limited time and equivalence leeways. It is notable of the main run of generalized reciprocities that the material flow is sustained by prevailing social relations; whereas, for the main run of balanced exchange, social relations hinge on the material flow.

Negative reciprocity, the unsociable extreme ($A \xrightarrow{\text{---}} B$)

"Negative reciprocity" is the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, the several forms of appropriation, transactions opened and conducted toward net utilitarian advantage. Indicative ethnographic terms include "haggling" or "barter," "gambling," "chicanery," "theft," and other varieties of seizure.

Negative reciprocity is the most impersonal sort of exchange. In guises such as "barter" it is from our own point of view the "most economic." The participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the other's expense. Approaching the transaction with an eye singular to the main chance, the aim of the opening party, or of both parties, is the unearned increment. One of the most sociable forms, leaning toward balance, is haggling conducted in the spirit of "what the traffic will bear." From this, negative reciprocity ranges through various degrees of cunning, guile, stealth, and violence to the finesse of a well-conducted horse raid. The "reciprocity" is, of course, conditional again, a matter of defense of self-interest. So the flow may be one-way once more, reciprocation contingent upon mustering countervailing pressure or guile.

It is a long way from a suckling child to a Plains Indians' horse-raid. Too long, it could be argued, the classification too widely set. Yet "vice-versa movements" in the ethnographic record do grade into each other along the whole span. It is well to recall, nevertheless, that empirical exchanges often fall somewhere along the line, not directly on the extreme and middle points here outlined. The question is, can one specify social or economic circumstances that impel reciprocity toward one or another of the stipulated positions, toward generalized, balanced, or negative reciprocity? I think so.

Reciprocity and Kinship Distance

The span of social distance between those who exchange conditions the mode of exchange. Kinship distance, as has already been suggested, is especially relevant to the form of reciprocity. Reciprocity is inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance.

The reasoning is nearly syllogistic. The several reciprocities from freely bestowed gift to chicanery amount to a spectrum of sociability, from sacrifice in favor of another to self-interested gain at the expense of another. Take as the minor premise Tylor's dictum that kindred goes with kindness, "two words whose common derivation expresses in the happiest way one of the main principles of social life." It follows that close kin tend to share, to enter into generalized exchanges, and distant and nonkin to deal in equivalents or in guile. Equivalence becomes compulsory in proportion to kinship distance lest relations break off entirely, for with distance there can be little tolerance of gain and loss even as there is little inclination to extend oneself. To nonkin—"other people", perhaps not even "people"—no quarter must needs be given: the manifest inclination may well be "devil take the hindmost."

All this seems perfectly applicable to our own society, but it is more significant in primitive society. Because kinship is more significant in primitive society. It is, for one thing, the organizing principle or idiom of most groups and most social relations. Even the category "nonkin" is ordinarily defined by it, that is, as the negative aspect of it, the logical extreme of the class—nonbeing as a state of being. There is something real to this view; it is not logical sophistry. Among ourselves, "nonkin" denotes specialized status relations of positive quali-

ty: doctor-patient, policeman-citizen, employer-employee, classmates, neighbors, professional colleagues. But for them, "nonkin" connotes the negation of community (or tribalism); often it is the synonym for "enemy" or "stranger." Likewise the economic relation tends to be a simple negation of kinship reciprocities: other institutional norms need not come into play.

Kinship distance, however, has different aspects. It may be organized in several ways, and what is "close" in one of these ways need not be so in another. Exchange may be contingent on genealogical distance (as locally imputed), that is, on interpersonal kinship status. Or it may hinge on segmentary distance, on descent group status. (One suspects that where these two do not correspond the closer relation governs the reciprocity appropriate in dealings between individual parties, but this ought to be worked out empirically.) For the purpose of creating a general model, attention should also be given to the power of community in stipulating distance. It is not only that kinship organizes communities, but communities kinship, so that a spatial, coresidential term affects the measure of kinship distance and thus the mode of exchange.

Brothers living together, or a paternal uncle and his nephews living in the same house were, as far as my observation goes, on much closer terms with each other than relatives of similar degrees living apart. This was evident whenever there was a question of borrowing things, of getting help, of accepting an obligation, or of assuming responsibilities for each other (Malinowski, 1915, p. 532; the reference is to the Mailu).

Mankind [to Siuai] consists of relatives and strangers. Relatives are usually interlinked by both blood and marital ties; most of them live nearby, and persons who live nearby are all relatives . . . Transactions among them should be carried out in a spirit devoid of commerciality—preferably consisting of sharing [i.e., "pooling" in terms of the present discussion], nonreciprocable giving, and bequeathing, among closest relatives, or of lending among more distantly related ones. . . . Except for a few very distantly related sib-mates, persons who live far away are not relatives and can only be enemies. Most of their customs are unsuitable for the Siuai, but a few of their goods and techniques are desirable. One interacts with them only to buy and sell—utilizing hard bargaining and deceit to make as much profit from such transactions as possible (Oliver, 1955, pp. 454-455).

Here is one possible model for analyzing reciprocity: the tribal plan can be viewed as a series of more and more inclusive kinship-residential sectors, and reciprocity seen then to vary in character by sectoral position. The close kinsmen who render assistance are particularly near kinsmen in a spatial sense: it is in regard to people of the household, the camp, hamlet, or village that compassion is required, inasmuch as interaction is intense and peaceable solidarity essential. But the quality of mercy is strained in peripheral sectors, strained by kinship distance, so is less likely in exchanges with fellow tribesmen of another village than among covillagers, still less likely in the inter-tribal sector.

Kinship-residential groupings from this perspective comprise ever-widening comembership spheres: the household, the local lineage, perhaps the village, the subtribe, tribe, other tribes—the particular plan of course varies. The structure is a hierarchy of levels of integration, but from the inside and on the ground it is a series of concentric circles. Social relations of each circle have a specific quality—household relations, lineage relations, and so on—and except as the sectoral divisions be cut through by other organizations of kinship solidarity—say, nonlocalized clans or personal kindreds—relations within each sphere are more solidary than relations of the next, more inclusive sector. Reciprocity accordingly inclines toward balance and chicane in proportion to sectoral distance. In each sector, certain modes of reciprocity are characteristic or dominant: generalized modes are dominant in the narrowest spheres and play out in wider spheres, balanced reciprocity is characteristic of intermediate sectors, chicane of the most peripheral spheres. In brief, a general model of the play of reciprocity may be developed by superimposing the society's sectoral plan upon the reciprocity continuum. Such a model is shown in Figure 5.1.

The plan does not rest alone upon the two terms of sectoral division and reciprocity variation. Something is to be said for the embedded third term, morality. "Far more than we ordinarily suppose," Firth has written, "economic relations rest on moral foundations" (1951, p. 144). Certainly that must be the way the people see it—"Although the Siuai have separate terms for 'generosity,' 'cooperativeness,' 'morality' (that is, rule abiding), and 'geniality,' I believe that they consider

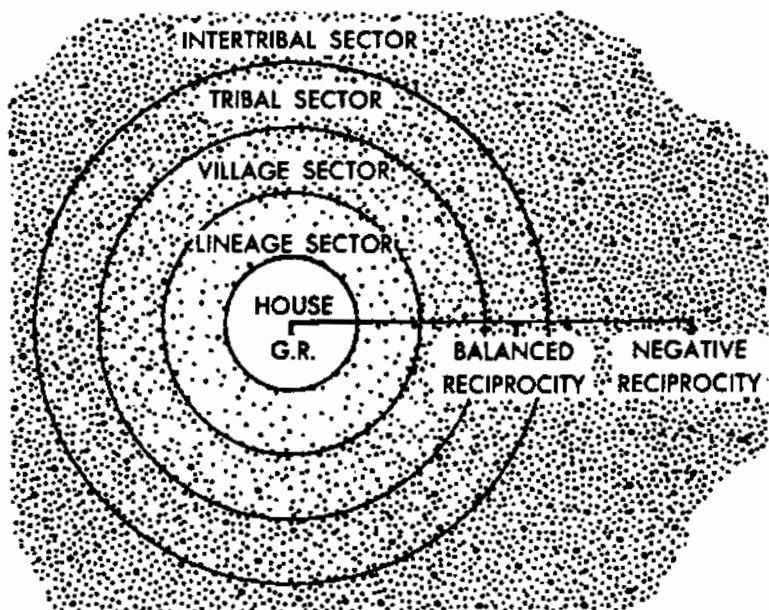


Figure 5.1. *Reciprocity and Kinship Residential Sectors*

all these to be closely interrelated aspects of the same attribute of goodness . . ." (Oliver, 1955, p. 78). Another contrast with ourselves is suggested, a tendency for morality, like reciprocity, to be sectorally organized in primitive societies. The norms are characteristically relative and situational rather than absolute and universal. A given act, that is to say, is not so much in itself good or bad, it depends on who the "Alter" is. The appropriation of another man's goods or his woman, which is a sin ("theft," "adultery") in the bosom of one's community, may be not merely condoned but positively rewarded with the admiration of one's fellows—if it is perpetrated on an outsider. The contrast with the absolute standards of the Judeo-Christian tradition is probably overdrawn: no moral system is exclusively absolute (especially in wartime) and none perhaps is entirely relative and contextual. But situational standards, defined often in sectoral terms, do seem to prevail in primitive communities and this contrasts suffi-

ciently with our own to have drawn repeated comment from ethnologists. For instance:

Navaho morality is . . . contextual rather than absolute. . . . Lying is not always and everywhere wrong. The rules vary with the situation. To deceive when trading with foreign tribes is a morally accepted practice. Acts are not in themselves bad or good. Incest [by its nature, a contextual sin] is perhaps the only conduct that is condemned without qualification. It is quite correct to use witchcraft techniques in trading with members of foreign tribes. . . . There is an almost complete absence of abstract ideals. Under the circumstances of aboriginal life Navahos did not need to orient themselves in terms of abstract morality. . . . In a large, complex society like modern America, where people come and go and business and other dealings must be carried on by people who never see each other, it is functionally necessary to have abstract standards that transcend an immediate concrete situation in which two or more persons are interacting (Kluckhohn, 1959, p. 434).

The scheme with which we deal is at least tripartite: social, moral, and economic. Reciprocity and morality are sectorally structured—the structure is that of kinship-tribal groupings.

But the scheme is entirely a hypothetical state of affairs. One can conceive circumstances that would alter the social-moral-reciprocal relations postulated by it. Propositions about the external sectors are particularly vulnerable. (For “external sector” one can generally read “intertribal sector,” the ethnic peripherae of primitive communities; in practice it can be set where positive morality fades out or where intergroup hostility is the normal in-group expectation.) Transactions in this sphere may be consummated by force and guile, it is true, by *wabuwabu*, to use the near-onomatopoeic Dobuan term for sharp practice. Yet it seems that violent appropriation is a resort born of urgent requirements that can only, or most easily, be supplied by militant tactics. Peaceful symbiosis is at least a common alternative.

In these nonviolent confrontations the propensity to *wabuwabu* no doubt persists; it is built in to the sectoral plan. So if it can be socially tolerated—if, that is, countervailing peace-enforcing conditions are sufficiently strong—hard bargaining is the institutionalized external relation. We find then *gimwali*, the mentality of the market place, the impersonal (no-partnership) exchange of Trobriand commoners of

different villages or of Trobrianders and other peoples. But still *gimwali* does suppose special conditions, some sort of social insulation that prevents the economic friction from kindling a dangerous conflagration. In the ordinary case, haggling is actually repressed, particularly, it appears, if the exchange of the border is critical to both sides, as where different strategic specialties move against each other. Despite the sectoral distance, the exchange is equitable, *utu*, balanced: the free play of *wabuwabu* and *gimwali* is checked in the interest of the symbiosis.

The check is delivered by special and delicate institutional means of border exchange. The means sometimes look so preposterous as to be considered by ethnologists some sort of "game" the natives play, but their design manifestly immunizes an important economic interdependence against a fundamental social cleavage. (Compare the discussion of the *kula* in White, 1959, and Fortune, 1932.) Silent trade is a famous case in point—good relations are maintained by preventing any relations. Most common are "trade-partnerships" and "trade-friendships." The important thing in all varieties is a social suppression of negative reciprocity. Peace is built in, haggling outlawed, and, conducted as a transfer of equivalent utilities, the exchange in turn underwrites the peace. (Trade-partnerships, often developed along lines of classificatory or affinal kinship, particularly incapsulate external economic transactions in solidary social relations. Status relations essentially internal are projected across community and tribal boundaries. The reciprocity then may lean over backward, in the direction not of *wabuwabu* but something to the generalized side. Phrased as gift-giving, the presentation admits of delay in reciprocation: a direct return may indeed be unseemly. Hospitality, on another occasion returned in kind, accompanies the formal exchange of trade goods. For a host to give stuff over and above the worth of things brought by his partner is not unusual: it both befits the relation so to treat one's partner while he is traveling and stores up credits. On a wider view, this measure of unbalance sustains the trade partnership, compelling as it does another meeting.)

Intertribal symbiosis, in short, alters the terms of the hypothetical model. The peripheral sector is breached by more sociable relations than are normal in this zone. The context of exchange is now a

narrower co-membership sphere, the exchange is peaceful and equitable. Reciprocity falls near the balance point.

Now the assertions of this essay, as I have said, developed out of a dialogue with ethnographic materials. It seems worthwhile to append some of these data to appropriate sections of the argument. Accordingly, Appendix A sets out materials relevant to the present section, "Reciprocity and Kinship Distance." This is not by way of proof, of course—there are indeed certain exceptions, or seeming exceptions, in the materials—but by way of exposition or illustration. Moreover, since the ideas only gradually came over me and the monographs and articles had been in many instances consulted for other purposes, it is certain that data pertinent to reciprocity in the works cited have escaped me. (I hope this is sufficiently apologetic and that the ethnographic notes of Appendix A are of interest to someone besides myself.)

Whatever the value of these notes as exposition of the asserted relation between reciprocity and kinship distance, they must also suggest to the reader certain limitations of the present perspective. Simply to demonstrate that the character of reciprocity is contingent upon social distance—even if it could be demonstrated in an incontestable way—is not to traffic in ultimate explanation, nor yet to specify when exchanges will in fact take place. A systematic relation between reciprocity and sociability in itself does not say when, or even to what extent, the relation will come into play. The supposition here is that the forces of constraint lie outside the relation itself. The terms of final analysis are the larger cultural structure and its adaptive response to its milieu. From this wider view one may be able to stipulate the significant sectoral lines and kinship categories of the given case, and to stipulate too the incidence of reciprocity in different sectors. Supposing it true that close kinsmen would share food, for example, it need not follow that the transactions occur. The total (cultural-adaptive) context may render intensive sharing dysfunctional and predicate in subtle ways the demise of a society that allows itself the luxury. Permit me to quote *in extenso* a passage from Fredrik Barth's brilliant ecological study of South Persian nomads. It shows so well the larger considerations that must be brought to the bar of explanation; in detail it exemplifies a situation that discounts intensive sharing:

The stability of a pastoral population depends on the maintenance of a balance between pastures, animal population, and human population. The pastures available by their techniques of herding set a maximal limit to the total animal population that an area will support; while the patterns of nomadic production and consumption define a minimal limit to the size of the herd that will support a human household. In this double set of balances is summarized the special difficulty in establishing a population balance in a pastoral economy: the human population must be sensitive to imbalances between flocks and pastures. Among agricultural, or hunting and collecting people, a crude Malthusian type of population control is sufficient. With a growing population, starvation and death-rate rise, until a balance is reached around which the population stabilizes. Where pastoral nomadism is the predominant or exclusive pattern, the nomad population, if subjected to such a form of population control, would *not* establish a population balance, but would find its whole basis for subsistence removed. Quite simply, this is because the productive capital on which their subsistence is based is not simply land, it is animals—in other words *food*. A pastoral economy can only be maintained so long as there are no pressures on its practitioners to invade this large store of food. A pastoral population can therefore only reach a stable level if other effective population controls intervene *before* those of starvation and death-rate. A first requirement in such an adaptation is the presence of the patterns of private ownership of herds, and individual economic responsibility for each household. By these patterns, the population becomes fragmented with respect to economic activities, and economic factors can strike differentially, eliminating some members of the population [i.e., through sedentarization] without affecting other members of the same population. This would be impossible if the corporate organization with respect to political life, and pasture rights, were also made relevant to economic responsibility and survival (Barth, 1961, p. 124).

Now, about the incidence of reciprocity in the specific case, here is something else to consider—the people may be stingy. Nothing has been said about sanctions of exchange relations nor, more importantly, about forces that countervail. There are contradictions in primitive economies: inclinations of self-interest are unleashed that are incompatible with the high levels of sociability customarily demanded. Malinowski long ago noticed this and Firth (1926) in an early paper on Maori proverbs skillfully brought to light the clash, the subtle interplay, between the moral dictates of sharing and narrow economic interests. The widespread mode of family production for use, it might

be remarked, acts to brake outputs at comparatively low levels even as it orients economic concern inward, within the household. The mode of production thus does not readily lend itself to general economic solidarity. Suppose sharing is morally called for, say by the destitution of a near kinsman, all the things that make sharing good and proper may not evoke in an affluent man the inclination to do it. And even as there may be little to gain by assisting others, there are no iron-clad guarantees of such social compacts as kinship. The received social-moral obligations prescribe an economic course, and the publicity of primitive life, increasing the risk of evoking jealousy, hostility, and future economic penalty, tends to keep people on course. But, as is well known, to observe that a society has a system of morality and constraints is not to say that everyone acquiesces in it. There may be *biša-baša* times, "particularly in the late winter, when the household would hide its food, even from relatives" (Price, 1962, p. 47).

That *biša-baša* is the pervasive condition of some peoples is not embarrassing to the present thesis. The Siriono, everyone knows, parley hostility and crypto-stinginess into a way of life. Interestingly enough, the Siriono articulate ordinary norms of primitive economic intercourse. By the norm, for instance, the hunter should not eat the animal he has killed. But the *de facto* sector of sharing is not merely very narrow, "sharing rarely occurs without a certain amount of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding; a person always feels that it is he who is being taken advantage of," so that "The bigger the catch the more sullen the hunter" (Holmberg, 1950, pp. 60, 62; cf. pp. 36, 38-39). The Siriono are not thereby different in kind from the run of primitive communities. They simply realize to an extreme the potentiality elsewhere less often consummated, the possibility that structural compulsions of generosity are unequal to a test of hardship. But then, the Siriono are a band of displaced and deculturated persons. The whole cultural shell, from rules of sharing through institutions of chieftainship and Crow kinship terminology, is a mockery of their present miserable state.

Reciprocity and Kinship Rank

It is by now apparent—it is made apparent by the illustrative materials of Appendix A—that in any actual exchange several cir-

cumstances may simultaneously bear upon the material flow. Kinship distance, while perhaps significant, is not necessarily decisive. Something may be said for rank, relative wealth and need, the type of goods whether food or durables, and still other "factors." As a tactic of presentation and interpretation, it is useful to isolate and separately consider these factors. Accordingly, we move on to the relation between reciprocity and kinship rank. But with this proviso: propositions about the covariation of kinship distance or of kinship rank and reciprocity can be argued separately, even validated separately to the extent to which it is possible to select instances in which only the factor at issue is in play—holding "other things constant"—but the propositions do not present themselves separately in fact. The obvious course of further research is to work out the power of the several "variables" during combined plays. At best only the beginnings of this course are suggested here.

Rank difference as much as kinship distance supposes an economic relation. The vertical, rank axis of exchange—or the implication of rank—may affect the form of the transaction, just as the horizontal kinship-distance axis affects it. Rank is to some extent privilege, *droit du seigneur*, and it has its responsibilities, *noblesse oblige*. The dues and duties fall to both sides, both high and low have their claims, and feudal terms indeed do not convey the economic equity of kinship ranking. In its true historic setting *noblesse oblige* hardly cancelled out the *droits du seigneur*. In primitive society social inequality is more the organization of economic equality. Often, in fact, high rank is only secured or sustained by overcrowing generosity: the material advantage is on the subordinate's side. Perhaps it is too much to see the relation of parent and child as the elemental form of kinship ranking and its economic ethic. It is true, nevertheless, that paternalism is a common metaphor of primitive chieftainship. Chieftainship is ordinarily a relation of higher descent. So it is singularly appropriate that the chief is their "father," they his "children," and economic dealings between them cannot help but be affected.

The economic claims of rank and subordination are interdependent. The exercise of chiefly demand opens the way to solicitation from below, and vice versa—not uncommonly a moderate exposure to the "larger world" is enough to evoke native reference to customary chiefly dues as local banking procedure (cf. Ivens, 1927, p. 32). The

word then for the economic relation between kinship ranks is "reciprocity." The reciprocity, moreover, is fairly classed as "generalized." While not as sociable as the run of assistance among close kinsmen, it does lean toward that side of the reciprocity continuum. Goods are in truth *yielded* to powers-that-be, perhaps on call and demand, and likewise goods may have to be *humbly solicited* from them. Still the rationale is often assistance and need, and the supposition of returns correspondingly indefinite. Reciprocation may be left until a need precipitates it, it bears no necessary equivalence to the initial gift, and the material flow can be unbalanced in favor of one side or the other for a long time.

Reciprocity is harnessed to various principles of kinship rank. Generation-ranking, with the elders the privileged parties, may be of significance among hunters and gatherers not merely in the life of the family but in the life of the camp as a whole, and generalized reciprocity between juniors and seniors a correspondingly broad rule of social exchange (cf. Radcliffe-Brown, 1948, pp. 42-43). The Trobrianders have a name for the economic ethic appropriate between parties of different rank within common descent groups—*pokala*. It is the rule that "Junior members of a sub-clan are expected to render gifts and services to their seniors, who in return are expected to confer assistance and material benefits on the juniors" (Powell, 1960, p. 126). Even where rank is tied to genealogical seniority and consummated in officepower—chieftainship properly so called—the ethic is the same. Take Polynesian chiefs, officeholders in large, segmented polities: supported on the one hand by various chiefly dues, they are freighted, as many have observed, with perhaps even greater obligations to the underlying population. Probably always the "economic basis" of primitive politics is chiefly generosity—at one stroke an act of positive morality and a laying of indebtedness upon the commonalty. Or, to take a larger view, the entire political order is sustained by a pivotal flow of goods, up and down the social hierarchy, with each gift not merely connoting a status relation but, as a generalized gift not directly required, compelling a loyalty.

In communities with established rank orders, generalized reciprocity is enforced by the received structure, and once in operation the

exchange has redundant effects on the rank system. There is a large range of societies, however, in which rank and leadership are in the main achieved; here reciprocity is more or less engaged in the *formation* of rank itself, as a "starting mechanism." The connection between reciprocity and rank is brought to bear in the first case in the form, "to be noble is to be generous," in the second case, "to be generous is to be noble." The prevailing rank structure influences economic relations in the former instance; the reciprocity influences hierarchical relations in the latter. (An analogous feedback occurs in the context of kinship distance. Hospitality is frequently employed to suggest sociability—this is discussed later. John Tanner, one of those "feral Whites" who grew to manhood among the Indians, relates an anecdote even more to the point: recalling that his Ojibway family was once saved from starvation by a Muskogean family, he noted that if any of his own people ever afterwards met any of the latter, "he would call him 'brother,' and treat him as such" (Tanner, 1956, p. 24).)

The term "starting mechanism" is Gouldner's. He explains in this way how reciprocity may be considered a starting mechanism:

... it helps to initiate social interaction and is functional in the early phases of certain groups before they have developed a differentiated and customary set of status duties. . . . Granted that the question of origins can readily bog down in a metaphysical morass, the fact is that many concrete social systems [perhaps "relations and groups" is more apt] do have determinate beginnings. Marriages are not made in heaven. . . . Similarly, corporations, political parties, and all manner of groups have their beginnings. . . . People are continually brought together in new juxtapositions and combinations, bringing with them the possibilities of new social systems. How are these possibilities realized? . . . Although this perspective may at first seem somewhat alien to the functionalist, once it is put to him, he may suspect that certain kinds of mechanisms, conducive to the crystallization of social systems out of ephemeral contacts, will in some measure be institutionalized or otherwise patterned in any society. At this point he would be considering "starting mechanisms." In this way, I suggest, the norm of reciprocity provides one among many starting mechanisms (Gouldner, 1960, pp. 176-177).

Economic imbalance is the key to deployment of generosity, of

generalized reciprocity, as a starting mechanism of rank and leadership. A gift that is not yet requited in the first place "creates a something between people": it engenders continuity in the relation, solidarity—at least until the obligation to reciprocate is discharged. Secondly, falling under "the shadow of indebtedness," the recipient is constrained in his relations to the giver of things. The one who has benefited is held in a peaceful, circumspect, and responsive position in relation to his benefactor. The "norm of reciprocity," Gouldner remarks, "makes two interrelated minimal demands: (1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them" (1960, p. 171). These demands are as compelling in the highlands of New Guinea as in the prairies of Peoria—"Gifts [among Gahuka-Gama] have to be repaid. They constitute a debt, and until discharged the relationship of the individuals involved is in a state of imbalance. The debtor has to act circumspectly towards those who have this advantage over him or otherwise risk ridicule" (Read, 1959, p. 429). The esteem that accrues to the generous man all to one side, generosity is usefully enlisted as a starting mechanism of leadership *because it creates followership*. "Wealth in this finds him friends," Denig writes of the aspiring Assiniboin, "as it does on other occasions everywhere" (Denig, 1928-29, p. 525).

Apart from highly organized chiefdoms and simple hunters and gatherers, there are many intermediate tribal peoples among whom pivotal local leaders come to prominence without yet becoming holders of office and title, of ascribed privilege and of sway over corporate political groups. They are men who "build a name" as it is said, "big-men" they may be reckoned, or "men of importance," "bulls," who rise above the common herd, who gather followers and thus achieve authority. The Melanesian "big-man" is a case in point. So too the Plains Indian "chief." The process of gathering a personal following and that of ascent to the summits of renown is marked by calculated generosity—if not true compassion. Generalized reciprocity is more or less enlisted as a starting mechanism.

In diverse ways, then, generalized reciprocity is engaged with the rank order of the community. Yet we have already characterized the economics of chieftainship in other transactional terms, as redistribution (or large-scale pooling). At this juncture the evolutionist question

is posed: "When does one give way then to the other, reciprocity to redistribution?" This question, however, may mislead. Chiefly redistribution is not different in principle from kinship-rank reciprocity. It is, rather, based upon the reciprocity principle, a highly organized form of that principle. Chiefly redistribution is a centralized, formal organization of kinship-rank reciprocities, an extensive social integration of the dues and obligations of leadership. The real ethnographic world does not present us with the abrupt "appearance" of redistribution. It presents approximations and kinds of centrality. The apparent course of wisdom is to hinge our characterizations—of rank-reciprocities versus a system of redistribution—on formal differences in the centralization process, and in this way to resolve the evolutionist issue.

A big-man system of reciprocities may be quite centralized and a chiefly system quite decentralized. A thin line separates them, but it is perhaps significant. Between centrality in a Melanesian big-man economy such as Siuai (Oliver, 1955) and centrality in a Northwest Coast chiefdom such as the Nootka (Drucker, 1951), there is little to choose. A leader in each case integrates the economic activity of a (more or less) localized following: he acts as a shunting station for goods flowing reciprocally between his own and other like groups of society. The economic relation to followers is also the same: the leader is the central recipient and bestower of favors. The thin line of difference is this: the Nootka leader is an officeholder in a lineage (house group), his following is this corporate group, and his central economic position is ascribed by right of chiefly due and chiefly obligation. So centrality is built into the structure. In Siuai, it is a personal achievement. The following is an achievement—a result of generosity bestowed—the leadership an achievement, and the whole structure will as such dissolve with the demise of the pivotal big-man. Now I think that most of us concerned with "redistributive economies" have come to include Northwest Coast peoples under this head; whereas assigning Siuai that status would at least provoke disagreement. This suggests that the political organization of reciprocities is implicitly recognized as a decisive step. Where kinship-rank reciprocity is laid down by office and political grouping, and becomes *sui generis* by virtue of customary duty, it takes on a distinctive character. The distinctive character may be usefully named—chiefly redistribution.

A further difference in economies of chiefly redistribution is worth remarking. It is another difference in centricity. The flow of goods both into and out of the hands of powers-that-be is for the most part unintegrated in certain ethnographic instances. Subordinates in severalty and on various occasions render stuff to the chief, and often in severalty receive benefits from him. While there is always some massive accumulation and large-scale handout—say during rites of chieftainship—the prevailing flow between chief and people is fragmented into independent and small transactions: a gift to the chief from here, some help given out there. So aside from the special occasion, the chief is continuously turning over petty stocks. This is the ordinary situation in the smaller Pacific island chiefdoms—e.g. Moala (Sahlins, 1962), apparently Tikopia—and it may be generally true of pastoralist chiefdoms. On the other hand, chiefs may glory in massive accumulations and more or less massive dispensations, and at times too in large stores on hand congealed by pressure on the commonalty. Here the independent act of homage or *noblesse oblige* is of less significance. And if, in addition, the social scale of chiefly redistribution is extensive—the polity large, dispersed, and segmented—one confronts a measure of centricity approximating the classical magazine economies of antiquity.

Appendix B presents illustrative ethnographic materials on the relation between rank and reciprocity. (See the citation from Malo under B.4.2 and from Bartram under B.5.2 on magazine economies of various scale.)

Reciprocity and Wealth

According to their [the Yukaghir] way of thinking, "a man who possesses provisions must share them with those who do not possess them" (Jochelson, 1926, p. 43).

This habit of share and share alike is easily understandable in a community where everyone is likely to find himself in difficulties from time to time, for it is scarcity and not sufficiency that makes people generous, since everybody is thereby ensured against hunger. He who is in need to-day receives help from him who may be in like need tomorrow (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 85).

One of the senses of previous remarks on rank and reciprocity is

that rank distinctions, or attempts to promote them, tend to extend generalized exchange beyond the customary range of sharing. The same upshot may come of wealth differences between parties, often anyhow associated with rank differences.

If one is poor and one's comrade is rich, well, there are certain constraints on acquisitiveness in our dealings—at least if we are to remain comrades, or even acquaintances, for very long. There are particularly restraints on the wealthier, if not a certain *richesse oblige*.

That is to say, given some social bond between those who exchange, differences in fortune between them compel a more altruistic (generalized) transaction than is otherwise appropriate. A difference in affluence—or in capacity to replenish wealth—would lower the sociability content of balanced dealing. As far as the exchange balances, the side that cannot afford it has sacrificed in favor of the side that did not need it. The greater the wealth gap, therefore, the greater the demonstrable assistance from rich to poor that is necessary just to maintain a given degree of sociability. Reasoning further on the same line, the inclination toward generalized exchange deepens where the economic gap amounts to oversupply and undersupply of customary requirements and, especially, of urgent stuff. The thing to look for is food-sharing between haves and have-nots. It is one thing to demand returns on woodpecker scalps, yet one spares a dime—brother!—for even a hungry stranger.

The "brother" is important. That scarcity and not sufficiency makes people generous is understandable, functional, "where everyone is likely to find himself in difficulties from time to time." It is most understandable, however, and most likely, where kinship community and kinship morality prevail. That whole economies are organized by the combined play of scarcity and differential accumulation is no secret to Economic Science. But then the societies involved do not wrest a livelihood as limited and uncertain as the Nuer's, nor do they meet hardship as kinship communities. It is such circumstances precisely that make invidious accumulation of fortune intolerable and dysfunctional. And if the affluent do not play the game, they ordinarily can be forced to disgorge, in one way or another:

A Bushman will go to any lengths to avoid making other Bushmen jealous of him, and for this reason the few possessions the Bushmen have are constantly circling among members of their groups. No one cares to keep

a particularly good knife too long, even though he may want it desperately, because he will become the object of envy; as he sits by himself polishing a fine edge on the blade he will hear the soft voices of the other men in his band saying: "Look at him there, admiring his knife while we have nothing." Soon somebody will ask him for his knife, for everybody would like to have it, and he will give it away. Their culture insists that they share with each other, and it has never happened that a Bushman failed to share objects, food, or water with other members of his band, for without very rigid co-operation Bushmen could not survive the famines and droughts that the Kalahari offers them (Thomas, 1959, p. 22).

Should the potential for poverty be extreme, as for food collectors such as these Bushmen, best that the inclination to share out one's abundance be made lawful. Here it is a technical condition that some households day in and day out will fail to meet their requirements. The vulnerability to food shortage can be met by instituting continuous sharing within the local community. I think this the best way to interpret tabus that prohibit hunters from eating game they bring down, or the less drastic and more common injunction that certain large animals be shared through the camp—"the hunter kills, other people have, say the Yukaghir" (Jochelson, 1926, p. 124). Another way to make food-sharing the rule, if not a rule, is to freight it heavily with moral value. If this is the case, incidentally, sharing will break out not merely in bad times but especially in good. The level of generalized reciprocity "peaks" on the occasion of a windfall: now everyone can cash in on the virtues of generosity:

They gathered almost three hundred pounds [of tsi nuts]. . . . When the people had picked all they could find, when every possible bag was full, they said they were ready to go to Nama, but when we brought the jeep and began to load it they were already busy with their endless preoccupation, that of giving and receiving, and had already begun to give each other presents of tsi. Bushmen feel a great need to give and receive food, perhaps to cement relationships with each other, perhaps to prove and strengthen their dependence upon each other; because the opportunity to do this does not occur unless huge quantities of food are at hand. Bushmen always exchange presents of foods that come in huge quantities, these being the meat of game antelope, tsi nuts, and the nuts of the mangetti trees, which at certain seasons are scattered abundantly all through the mangetti forests. As we waited by the jeep Dikai gave a huge sack of tsi to her mother.

Her mother gave another sack to Gao Feet's first wife, and Gao Feet gave a sack to Dikai. Later, during the days that followed, the tsi was distributed again, this time in smaller quantities, small piles or small bagfuls, after that in handfuls, and, last, in very small quantities of cooked tsi which people would share as they were eating . . . (Thomas, 1959, pp. 214-215).

The bearing of wealth differences upon reciprocity, of course, is not independent of the play of rank and kinship distance. Real situations are complicated. For instance, wealth distinctions probably constrain assistance in some inverse proportion to the kinship distance of the sides to exchange. It is poverty in the in-group particularly that engenders compassion. (Conversely, helping people in distress creates very intense solidarity—on the principle of “a friend in need. . . .”) On the other hand, material distinctions between distant relatives or aliens may not commensurately, or even at all, incline the affluent party to be charitable. If the interests had been opposed to begin with, well now the desperate traffic will bear more.

The observation is frequently made that any accumulation of wealth—among such and such people—is followed hard upon by its disbursement. The *objective* of gathering wealth, indeed, is often that of giving it away. So, for example, Barnett writes of Northwest Coast Indians that “Accumulation in any quantity by borrowing or otherwise is, in fact, unthinkable unless it be for the purpose of immediate redistribution” (1938, p. 353). The general proposition may be allowed that the material drift in primitive societies tends on the whole away from accumulation towards insufficiency. Thus: “In general it may be said that no one in a Nuer village starves unless all are starving” (Evans-Pritchard, 1951, p. 132). But in view of foregoing remarks there must be qualification. The incline toward have-nots is steeper for more urgently than for less urgently required goods, and it is steeper within local communities than between them.

Supposing some tendency to share in favor of need, even if qualified by community, it is possible to draw further inferences about economic behavior in general scarcity. During lean food seasons the incidence of generalized exchange should rise above average, particularly in the narrower social sectors. Survival depends now on a double-barreled quickening of social solidarity and economic cooperation (see Appendix C, e.g. C.1.3). This social and economic consolidation conceivably could progress to the maximum: normal

reciprocal relations between households are suspended in favor of pooling of resources for the duration of emergency. The rank structure is perhaps mobilized and engaged, either in governance of pooling or in the sense that chiefly food reserves are now put into circulation.

Yet the reaction to depression "all depends": it depends on the social structure put to test and on the duration and intensity of the shortage. For the forces that countervail are strengthened in these *biša-baša* times, the tendency to look to household interests especially, and also the tendency for compassion to be more-than-proportionately expended on close kin in need than on distant kin in the same straits. Probably every primitive organization has its breaking-point, or at least its turning-point. Every one might see the time when cooperation is overwhelmed by the scale of disaster and chicanery becomes the order of the day. The range of assistance contracts progressively to the family level; perhaps even these bonds dissolve and, washed away, reveal an inhuman, yet most human, self-interest. Moreover, by the same measure that the circle of charity is compressed that of "negative reciprocity" is potentially expanded. People who helped each other in normal times and through the first stages of disaster display now indifference to each others' plight, if they do not exacerbate a mutual downfall by guile, haggle, and theft. Put another way, the whole sectoral scheme of reciprocities is altered, compressed: sharing is confined to the innermost sphere of solidarity and all else is devil take the hindmost.

Implicit in these remarks is a plan of analysis of the normal sectoral system of reciprocities in the given case. The prevailing reciprocity scheme is some vector of the quality of kin-community relations and the ordinary stresses developing out of imbalances in production. But it is the emergency condition that concerns us now. Here and there in the illustrative materials to this section we see the two predicted reactions to depressed food supplies, both more sharing and less. Presumably the governing conditions are the community structure on one side and the seriousness of shortage on the other.

A final remark under the head of reciprocity and wealth. A community will, if suitably organized, tighten not only under economic threat but in the face of other present danger, of external political-military

pressure, for example. In this connection, two notes on the economics of native war parties are included in the illustrative materials appended to the present section (Appendix C: C.1.10 and C.2.5). They illustrate an extraordinary intensity of sharing (generalized reciprocity) between haves and have-nots during preparations for attack. (Likewise, the experience of recent wars would show that transactions move a long way from yesterday's dice game in the barracks to today's sharing of rations or cigarettes on the front line.) The sudden outbreak of compassion is consistent with what has been said of sociability, sharing, and wealth differences. Generalized reciprocity is not merely the sole exchange congruent with the now serious interdependence, it strengthens interdependence and so the chances of each and all to survive the noneconomic danger.

Ethnographic data relevant to the propositions of this section may be found in Appendix C).

Reciprocity and Food

The character of the goods exchanged seems to have an independent effect on the character of exchange. Staple foodstuffs cannot always be handled just like anything else. Socially they are not quite like anything else. Food is life-giving, urgent, ordinarily symbolic of hearth and home, if not of mother. By comparison with other stuff, food is more readily, or more necessarily, shared; barkcloth and beads more readily lend themselves to balanced gift-giving. Direct and equivalent returns for food are unseemly in most social settings: they impugn the motives both of the giver and of the recipient. From this several characteristic qualities of food transfers appear to follow.

Food dealings are a delicate barometer, a ritual statement as it were, of social relations, and food is thus employed instrumentally as a starting, a sustaining, or a destroying mechanism of sociability:

Food is something over which relatives have rights, and conversely relatives are people who provide or take toll on one's food (Richards, 1939, p. 200).

The sharing of food [among the Kuma] symbolizes an identity of interests. . . . Food is never shared with an enemy. . . . Food is not shared with strangers, for they are potential enemies. A man may eat with his cognate

tic and affinal relatives and also, people say, with the members of his own clan. Normally, however, only members of the same subclan have an unequivocal right to share each other's food. . . . If two men or the members of two sub-subclans have a serious and lasting quarrel, neither they nor their descendants may use one another's fires. . . . When affinal relatives come together at marriage, the formal presentation of the bride and the pork and the valuables emphasizes the separate identity of the two clans, but the people actually participating in the ceremony share vegetable food informally, unobtrusively, as they might share it with intimate companions within the subclan. This is a way of expressing their common interest in linking the two groups. Symbolically, they belong now to a single group and so are "brothers," as affinal relatives should be (Reay, 1959, pp. 90-92).

Food offered in a generalized way, notably as hospitality, is good relations. As Jochelson says, putting it for the Yukaghir with near-Confucian pith: "hospitality often turns enemies into friends, and strengthens the amicable relations between groups foreign to one another" (1926, p. 125). But then, a complementary negative principle is implied, that food not offered on the suitable occasion or not taken is bad relations. Thus the Dobuan syndrome of suspicion of everyone save the nearest kinfolk finds its clearest expression in the social range of food-sharing and commensality—"Food or tobacco is not accepted except within a small circle" (Fortune, 1932, p. 170; on rules proscribing commensality, cf. pp. 74-75; Malinowski, 1915, 545). Finally there is the principle that one does not exchange things for food, not directly that is, among friends and relatives. Traffic in food is traffic between foreign interests. (Look how a novelist quite simply suggests that one of his characters is a real bastard: "He brought his blankets to the bare house, took silent supper with the Boss family, insisted on paying them—he could not understand why they pretended reluctance when he offered to pay them; food cost money; they were not in the restaurant business, but food cost money, you could not deny that"—MacKinlay Kantor.)

In these principles of instrumental food exchange there seems little variation between peoples. Of course, the extent to which they are employed, and which of them are employed, vary with the case. Dobuans proscribe intervillage visiting and hospitality, no doubt for

good and sufficient reasons. Elsewhere, circumstances ranging from economic interdependence through political strategy enjoin both visiting and the hospitable entertainment of visitors. A detailed look at the circumstances would be beyond the present purview: the point is that where some coming to sociable terms with visitors is desirable, hospitality is an ordinary way of doing it. And the Dobuan syndrome is by no means typical. Ordinarily, "Savages pride themselves in being hospitable to strangers" (Harmon, 1957, p. 43).

Consequently the sphere of generalized exchange in food is sometimes wider than the sphere of generalized exchange in other things. This tendency to transcend the sectoral plan is most dramatized in the hospitality afforded trade partners, or any kinsmen from afar, who make visits the occasion for exchanging presents (see examples in Appendix A). Here are people whose dealings in durables are consciously balanced out—or even potentially run on *caveat emptor*—by some miracle charitably supplying one another with food and shelter. But then hospitality counters the *wabuwabu* lurking in the background, and provides an atmosphere in which direct exchange of presents and trade goods can be equitably consummated.

There is logic in an undue tendency to move food by generalized reciprocity. Like exchange between rich and poor, or between high and low, where food is concerned a greater inclination to sacrifice seems required just to sustain the given degree of sociability. Sharing needs to be extended to more distant relatives, generalized reciprocity broadened beyond ordinary sectoral limits. (It might be recalled from the Appendixes to previous sections that generosity is distinctively associated with food dealing.)

About the only sociable thing to do with food is to give it away, and the commensurably sociable return, after an interval of suitable decency, is the return of hospitality or assistance. The implication is not only a rather loose or imperfect balance in food dealing, but specifically a restraint on exchanges of food for other goods. One notes with interest normative injunctions against the sale of food among peoples possessed of primitive currencies, among certain Melanesian and California tribes for instance. Here balanced exchange is run of the mill. Money tokens serve as more or less general equivalents and are exchanged against a variety of stuff. But not *foodstuff*. Within a broad

social sector where money talks for other things, staples are insulated against pecuniary transactions and food shared perhaps but rarely sold. Food has too much social value—ultimately because it has too much use value—to have exchange value.

Food was not sold. It might be given away, but being "wild stuff" should not be sold, according to Pomo etiquette. Manufactured articles only were bought and sold, such as baskets, bows and arrows (Gifford, 1926, p. 329; cf. Kroeber, 1925, p. 40, on the Yurok—same sort of thing).

[To the Tolowa-Tututni] food was only edible, not saleable (Drucker 1937, p. 241; cf. DuBois, 1936, pp. 50-51).

The staple articles of food, taro, bananas, coconuts, are never sold [by Lesu], and are given to kindred, friends, and strangers passing through the village as an act of courtesy (Powdermaker, 1933, p. 195).

In a similar way, staple foodstuffs were excluded from balanced trading among Alaskan Eskimo—"The feeling was present that to trade for food was reprehensible—and even luxury foods that were exchanged between trade partners were transferred as presents and apart from the main trading" (Spencer, 1959, pp. 204-205).

It would seem that common foodstuffs are likely to have an insulated "circuit of exchange," separate from durables, particular wealth." (See Firth, 1950; Bohannan, 1955; Bohannan and Dalton, 1962, on "spheres of exchange"). Morally and socially this should be so. For a wide range of social relations, balanced and direct food-for-goods transactions (conversions) would rend the solidary bonds. Distinctive categorizations of food versus other goods, i.e. "wealth," express the sociological disparity and protect food from dysfunctional comparisons of its worth—as among the Salish:

Food was not classed as "wealth" [i.e. blankets, shell ornaments, canoes, etc.]. Nor was it treated as wealth . . . "holy food," a Semiahmoo informant called it. It should be given freely, he felt, and could not be refused. Food was evidently not freely exchanged with wealth. A person in need of food might ask to buy some from another household in his community, offering wealth for it, but food was not generally offered for sale (Suttles, 1960, p. 301; Vayda, 1961).

But an important qualification must in haste be entered. These food and nonfood spheres are sociologically based and bounded. The immorality of food-wealth conversions has a sectoral dimension: at a certain socially peripheral point the circuits merge and thus dissolve. (At this point, food-for-goods exchange is a "conveyance" in Bohannan and Dalton's usage.) Food does not move against money or other stuff within the community or tribe, yet it may be so exchanged outside these social contexts, and not merely under duress but as use and wont. The Salish *did* customarily take food, "holy food," to affinal relatives in other Salish villages and received wealth in return (Suttles, 1960). Likewise, Pomo *did* "buy"—at any rate gave beads for—acorns, fish, and like necessities from other communities (Kroeber, 1925, p. 260; Loeb, 1926, pp. 192–193). The separation of food and wealth cycles is contextual. Within communities these are insulated circuits, insulated by community relations; they are kept apart where a demand of return on necessities would contradict prevailing kinship relations. Beyond this, in the intercommunity or intertribal sector, the insulation of the food circuit may be worn through by frictions of social distance.

(Foodstuffs, incidentally, are not ordinarily divorced from the circuit of labor assistance. On the contrary, a meal is in the host of primitive societies the customary return for labor solicited for gardening, housebuilding, and other domestic tasks. "Wages" in the usual sense is not at issue. The feeding amounts to an extraordinary extension to other relatives and to friends of the household economy. Rather than a tentative move toward capitalism, it is perhaps better understood by a principle something to the opposite: that those who participate in a productive effort have some claim on its outcome.)

On Balanced Reciprocity

We have seen generalized reciprocity in play in instrumental ways, notably as a starting mechanism of rank distinction and also, in the form of hospitality, as mediator of relations between persons of different communities. Balanced reciprocity likewise finds instrumental employments, but especially as formal social compact. Balanced reci-

procacity is the classic vehicle of peace and alliance contracts, substance-as-symbol of the transformation from separate to harmonious interests. Group prestations are the dramatic and perhaps the typical form, but there are instances too of interpersonal compact sealed by exchange.

Here it is useful to recall Mauss's dictum: "In these primitive and archaic societies there is no middle path. . . . When two groups of men meet they may move away or in case of mistrust or defiance they may resort to arms; or else they can come to terms." And the terms ought to balance, insofar as the groups are "different men." The relations are too tenuous to long sustain a failure to reciprocate—"Indians notice such things" (Goldschmidt, 1951, p. 338). They notice a lot of things. Goldschmidt's Nomlaki Indians in fact articulate a whole set of glosses and paraphrases of Maussian principle, among them:

When enemies meet they call to one another. If the settlement is friendly they approach closer and spread out their goods. One man would throw something in the middle, one man from the other side would throw in something for it and take the traded material back. They trade till one side has traded everything. The ones that have some left make fun of those who have run out, bragging about themselves. . . . This trade takes place on the border line (Goldschmidt, 1951, p. 338).

Balanced reciprocity is willingness to give for that which is received. Therein seems to be its efficacy as social compact. The striking of equivalence, or at least some approach to balance, is a demonstrable foregoing of self-interest on each side, some renunciation of hostile intent or of indifference in favor of mutuality. Against the preexisting context of separateness, the material balance signifies a new state of affairs. This is not to deny that the transaction is consequential in a utilitarian sense, as it may well be—and the social effect perhaps compounded by an equitable exchange of different necessities. But whatever the utilitarian value, and there need be none, there is always a "moral" purpose, as Radcliffe-Brown remarked of certain Andaman transactions: "to provide a friendly feeling . . . and unless it did this it failed of its purpose."

Among the many kinds of contract struck as it were by balanced exchange, the following seem most common:

FORMAL FRIENDSHIP OR KINSHIP

These are interpersonal compacts of solidarity, pledges of brotherhood in some cases, friendship in others. The alliance may be sealed by exchange of identical goods, the material counterpart of some exchange of identities, but at any rate the transaction is likely to balance and the exchange is of distant for close relationship (e.g., Pospisil, 1958, pp. 86-87; Seligman, 1910, pp. 69-70). An association once so formed may well become more sociable over time, and future transactions both parallel and compound this trend by becoming more generalized.

AFFIRMATION OF CORPORATE ALLIANCES

One may place in this category the various feasts and entertainments reciprocally tendered between friendly local groups and communities, such as certain of the interclan vegetable-heap presentations in the New Guinea Highlands or inter-village social feasts in Samoa or New Zealand.

PEACE-MAKING

These are the exchanges of settlement, of cessation of dispute, feud, and warfare. Both interpersonal and collective hostilities may be thus quieted by exchange. " 'When an equivalence is struck', parties to an Abelam argument are satisfied: 'talk is thrown away' " (Kaberry, 1941-42, p. 341). That is the general principle.

One may wish to include wergeld payments, compensations for adultery, and other forms of compounding injury in this category, as well as the exchanges that terminate warfare. They all work on the same general principle of fair trade. (Spencer provides an interesting Eskimo example: when a man received compensation from the abductor of his wife, the two men "inevitably" became friendly, he writes, "because they had conceptually effected a trade" [1959, p. 81]. See also Denig, 1928-29, p. 404; Powdermaker, 1933, p. 197; Williamson, 1912, p. 183; Deacon, 1934, p. 226; Kroeber, 1925, p. 252; Loeb, 1926, pp. 204-205; Hogbin, 1939, pp. 79, 91-92; etc.).

MARITAL ALLIANCE

Marriage prestations are of course the classic form of exchange as social compact. I have little to add to the received anthropological discussion, except a slight qualification about the character of reciprocity in these transactions, and even this may be superfluous.

It does sometimes miss the point, however, to view marital exchange as perfectly balanced prestation. The transactions of marriage, and perhaps contingent future affinal exchange as well, are often not exactly equal. For one thing, an asymmetry of quality is commonplace: women move against hoes or cattle, *toga* against *oloa*, fish against pigs. In the absence of some secular convertability, or of a mutual standard of value, the transfer seems to an extent one of incomparables; neither equivalent nor total, the transaction may be of incommensurables. In any event, and even where the same sorts of things are exchanged, one side or the other may be conceived to benefit unduly, at least for the time being. This lack of precise balance is socially of the essence.

For unequal benefit sustains the alliance as perfect balance could not. Truly, the people concerned—and/or the ethnographer—might muse that in the fullness of time accounts between affines even out. Or losses and gains may be cancelled by circular or statistical patterns of alliance. Or some balance in goods, at least, may obtain in the total political economy, where the flow of payments upwards (against a flow of women downwards) through a series of ranked lineages is reversed by redistribution from the top (cf. Leach, 1951). Yet it is socially critical that over a certain term, and perhaps forever, the exchange between two groups united by a marriage has not been balanced. Insofar as the things transferred are of different quality, it may be difficult ever to calculate that the sides are "even-steven." This is a social good. The exchange that is symmetrical or unequivocally equal carries some disadvantage from the point of view of alliance: it cancels debts and thus opens the possibility of contracting out. If neither side is "owing" then the bond between them is comparatively fragile. But if accounts are not squared, then the relationship is maintained by virtue of "the shadow of indebtedness," and there will have to be further occasions of association, perhaps as occasions of further payment.

Moreover, and quite obviously, an asymmetrical exchange of different things lends itself to alliance that is complementary. The marital bond between groups is not always, maybe not even usually, some sort of fifty-fifty partnership between homologous parties. One group surrenders a woman, another gets her; in a patrilineal context the wife-receivers have secured continuity, something at the expense of the wife-givers, at least on this occasion. There has been a differential transfer: the groups are socially related in a complementary and asymmetrical way. Likewise, in a ranked lineage system the giving of women may be a specification of the set of subordinate-superordinate relations. Now in these cases, the several rights and duties of alliance are symbolized by the differential character of transfers, are attached to complementary symbols. Asymmetrical prestations secure the complementary alliance once again as perfectly balanced, symmetrical, or all-out total prestations would not.

The casual received view of reciprocity supposes some fairly direct one-for-one exchange, balanced reciprocity, or a near approximation of balance. It may not be inappropriate, then, to footnote this discussion with a respectful demur: that in the main run of primitive societies, taking into account directly utilitarian as well as instrumental transactions, balanced reciprocity is not the prevalent form of exchange. A question might even be raised about the stability of balanced reciprocity. Balanced exchange may tend toward self-liquidation. On one hand, a series of honorably balanced dealings between comparatively distant parties builds trust and confidence, in effect reduces social distance, and so increases the chances for more generalized future dealings—as the initial blood-brotherhood transaction creates a “credit rating,” as it were. On the other hand, a renege acts to sever relations—as failure to make returns breaks a trade-partnership—if it does not actually invite chicanery in return. May we conclude that balanced reciprocity is inherently unstable? Or perhaps that it requires special conditions for continuity?

The societal profile of reciprocity, at any rate, most often inclines toward generalized modes. In the simpler hunting groups the generalized assistance of close kinship seems usually dominant; in neolithic chiefdoms this is supplemented by kinship-rank obligations. There are nonetheless societies of certain type in which balanced exchange, if not exactly dominant, acquires unusual prominence. Interest attaches

to these societies, not alone for the emphasis on balanced reciprocity, but for what goes with it.

The well known "labor exchange" in Southeast Asian hinterland communities brings these immediately to mind. Here is a set of peoples who, placed against the main run of primitive societies, offer departures in economy, and social structure as well, that cannot fail to kindle a comparative interest. The well-described Iban (Freeman 1955, 1960), Land Dayak (Geddes, 1954, 1957; cf. Provinse, 1937) and Lamet (Izikowitz, 1951) belong in the class—some Philippine peoples may as well, but I am uncertain how far the analysis about to be suggested will work for the Philippines.

Now these societies are distinctive not only for uncommon internal characteristics of economy but for unusual external relations—unusual, that is, in a strictly primitive milieu. They are hinterlands engaged by petty market trade—and perhaps also by political dominance (e.g. Lamet)—to more sophisticated cultural centers. From the perspective of the advanced centers, they are backwaters serving as secondary sources of rice and other goods (cf. Van Leur, 1955, especially pp. 101f, for some hints about the economic significance of hinterland provisioning in Southeast Asia). From the hinterlands view, the critical aspect of the intercultural relation is that the subsistence staple, rice, is exported for cash, iron tools, and prestige goods, many of the last quite expensive. It is suggested—with all the deference that must be supplied by one who has no research experience in the area—that the peculiar social-economic character of Southeast Asian hinterland tribes is congruent with this unusual deployment of household subsistence surpluses. The implication of an external trade in rice is not merely an internal ban on sharing it, or a corresponding requirement of quid-pro-quo in intracommunity dealings, but departure from ordinary characteristics of primitive distribution in virtually all respects.

The engagement with the market makes a key minimal demand: that internal community relations permit household accumulation of rice, else the amounts required for external exchange will never be forthcoming. This stipulation must prevail in the face of limited and uncertain modes of rice production. The fortunate households cannot be responsible for the unfortunate; if internal leveling is encouraged then the external trade relations are simply not sustained.

The set of consequences for the economy and polity of the hinter-

land tribal communities appear to include: (1) Different households, by virtue of variations in ratio and number of effective producers, amass different amounts of the subsistence-export staple. The productive differences range between surfeit above and deficit below family consumption requirements. These differences, however, are not liquidated by sharing in favor of need. Instead (2) the intensity of sharing within the village or tribe is low, and (3) the principal reciprocal relation between households is a closely calculated balanced exchange of labor service. As Geddes remarks of the Land Dayak: "... co-operation beyond the household, except on business lines where every service must have an equal return, is at a low level" (1954, p. 34). Balanced labor-exchange, of course, maintains the productive advantage (accumulation capacity) of the family with more adult workers. The only goods that customarily move in generalized reciprocity are game and perhaps large domestic animals sacrificed in family ceremonies. Such items are widely distributed through the community (cf. Izikowitz, 1951), much as hunters would share them, but the sharing of meat is not as decisive in structuring interfamilial relations as the lack of sharing decreed by export of staples. (4) Even household commensality may be rather rigidly supervised, subjected to accounting of each person's rice dole in the interest of developing an exchange reserve, hence less sociable than ordinary primitive commensality (compare, for example, Izikowitz, 1951, pp. 301-302 with Firth, 1936, pp. 112-116). (5) Restricted sharing of staples, demanded by articulation with the siphoning market, finds its social complement in an atomization and fragmentation of community structure. Lineages, or like systems of extensive and corporate solidary relations, are incompatible with the external drain on household staples and the corresponding posture of self-interest required *vis-à-vis* other households. Large local descent groups are absent or inconsequential. Instead, the solidary relations are of the small family itself, with various and changing interpersonal kin ties the only such nexus of connection between households. Economically, these extended kin ties are weak ones:

A household is not only a distinct unit, but one which minds its own business. Perforce, it has to do so, because it has with other households no formal relations, sanctioned by custom, on which it can rely for certain support. Indeed, the absence of such structured relationships is a condition

of the society as at present organized. In the main economic affairs, cooperation with others is based upon contract and not primarily upon kinship. . . . As a result of this situation, ties which persons have with others in the community tend to be widespread, but limited to sentiment and sociability, often sadly so (Geddes, 1954, p. 42).

(6) Prestige apparently hinges upon obtaining exotic items—Chinese pottery, brass gongs, etc.—from the outside in exchange for rice or work. Prestige does not, obviously cannot, rest on generous assistance to one's fellows in the manner of a tribal big-man. The exotic goods figure internally as ceremonial display items and in marriage prestations—thus insofar as status is linked to them it is principally as possession and ability to make payments, again not through giving them away. ("Wealth does not help a man to become chief because it gives him power to distribute largesse. Riches rarely incline a Dayak to charity, although they may to usury" [Geddes, 1954, p. 50] No one then obligates others very much. No one creates followers. As a result there are no strong leaders, a fact which probably contributes to the atomization of the community and may have repercussions on the intensity of land use (cf. Izikowitz, 1951).

In these Southeast Asian communities, the prevalence of balanced reciprocity does seem connected with special circumstances. But then the circumstances suggest that it is not legitimate to involve these peoples in the present context of tribal economics. By the same token, their use in debating issues of primitive economics, as Geddes uses the Land Dayak to argue against "primitive communism," seems not very pertinent. Perhaps they are best classed with peasants—so long as one does not thereupon suggest, as is unfortunately often done under the label "economic anthropology," that "peasant" and "primitive" belong together in some undifferentiated type of economy distinguished negatively as whatever-it-is that is outside the province of orthodox economic analysis.

There are, however, incontestable examples of societal emphasis on balanced reciprocity in primitive settings. Primitive monies serving as media of exchange at more or less fixed rates argue this. The monies amount to the suggested special mechanisms for maintaining balance. It is worthwhile to inquire into their incidence and their economic and social concomitants.

Yet this is not to be hazarded without some formal definition of

"primitive money," a problem approaching the status of a classic dilemma in comparative economics. On one side, any thing that has a "money use"—as we know money uses: payments, exchange, standard, etc.—may be taken for "money." If so, probably every society enjoys the dubious benefits, inasmuch as some category of goods is usually earmarked for certain payments. The alternative is less relativistic and therefore seems more useful for comparative generalizations: to agree on some minimal use and quality of the stuff. The strategy, as Firth suggests, is not to question "What is primitive money?" but "What is it useful to include in the category of primitive money?" (1959, p. 39). His specific suggestion, which as I understand it centrally involves the medium-of-exchange function, does indeed appear useful. ("My own view is that to entitle an object to be classified as money, it should be of a generally acceptable type, serving to facilitate the conversion of one object or service into terms of another and used as a standard of value thereby" [Firth, 1959, pp. 38-39].)

Let "money" refer to those objects in primitive societies that have token value rather than use value and that serve as means of exchange. The exchange use is limited to certain categories of things—land and labor are ordinarily excluded—and is brought to bear only between parties of certain social relation. In the main it serves as an indirect bridge between goods (C-M-C') rather than commercial purposes (M-C-M'). These limitations would justify the phrase "primitive money." If all this is agreeable, it further appears that pristine developments of primitive money are not broadly spread through the ethnographic scene, but are restricted to certain areas: especially western and central Melanesia, aboriginal California, and certain parts of the South American tropical forest. (Monies may also have developed in pristine contexts in Africa, but I am not expert enough to disentangle their distribution from archaic civilizations and ancient "international" trade.)

This is also to say that primitive money is associated with an historically specific type of primitive economy, an economy with a marked incidence of balanced exchange in peripheral social sectors. It is not a phenomenon of simple hunting cultures—if I may be permitted, cultures of a band level. Neither is primitive money characteristic of the more advanced chiefdoms, where wealth tokens though certainly encountered tend to bear little exchange load. The regions

noted—Melanesia, California, South American tropical forest—are (or were) occupied by societies of an intermediate sort, such as have been called “tribal” (Sahlins, 1961; Service, 1962) or “homogeneous” and “segmented tribes” (Oberg, 1955). They are distinguished from band systems not merely for more settled conditions of life—often associated with neolithic versus paleolithic production—but principally for a larger and more complex tribal organization of constituent local groupings. The several local settlements of tribal societies are bound together both by a nexus of kin relations and by cross-cutting social institutions, such as a set of clans. Yet the relatively small settlements are autonomous and self-governing, a feature which in turn distinguishes tribal from chiefdom plans. The local segments of the latter are integrated into larger polities, as divisions and subdivisions, by virtue of principles of rank and a structure of chieftainships and subchieftainships. The tribal plan is purely segmental, the chiefdom pyramidal.

This evolutionary classification of social-cultural types is admittedly loose. I hope not to raise an issue over it, for it has been offered merely to direct attention to contrasting structural features of primitive-money areas. They are precisely the kinds of features that, given previous argumentation, suggest an unusual incidence of balanced reciprocity. A greater play of balanced exchange in tribal over band societies is argued in part by a greater proportion of craft goods and services in the societal economic output. Foodstuffs, while still the decisive share of a tribal economic product, decline relatively. Transactions in durables, more likely to be balanced than food transactions, increase. But more important, the proportion of peripheral-sector exchange, the incidence of exchange among more distantly related people, is likely to be considerably greater in tribal than in band societies. This is understandable by reference to the more definite segmental plan of tribes, which is also to say the more definite sectoral breaks in the social structure.

The several residential segments of tribes are comparatively stable and formally constituted. And a corporate political solidarity is as characteristic of the tribal segment as it is lacking in flexible camp-and-band arrangements of hunters. Tribal segmental structure is also more extensive, including perhaps internal lineage groupings in the political segments, the set (and sometimes segmentary subsets) of

political segments, and the tribal-foreigner division. Now the accretion over band organization is particularly in peripheral structure, in the development of the intratribal and intertribal sectors. Here is where exchange encounters increase, whether these be instrumental, peacemaking exchanges, or frankly materialistic dealings. The accretion in exchange then is in the social areas of balanced reciprocity.

A chiefdom, in further contrast, liquidates and pushes out peripheral sectors by transforming external into internal relations, by including adjacent local groups within enclaving political unions. At the same time, the incidence of balanced reciprocity is depressed, in virtue of both the "internalization" of exchange relations and their centralization. Balanced exchanges should thus decline in favor of more generalized with the attainment of a chiefdom level. The implication for primitive money is perhaps illustrated by its absence in the Trobriands, despite the fact that this island of chiefdoms is set in a sea of money-using tribes, or by the progressive attenuation in exchange-uses of shell beads moving northward from tribal California to proto-chiefdom British Columbia.

The hypothesis about primitive money—offered with due caution and deference—is this: it occurs in conjunction with unusual incidence of balanced reciprocity in peripheral social sectors. Presumably it facilitates the heavy balanced traffic. The conditions that encourage primitive money are most likely to occur in the range of primitive societies called "tribal" and are unlikely to be served by band or chiefdom development. But a qualification must in haste be entered. Not all tribes provide circumstances for monetary development and certainly not all enjoy primitive money, as the term is here understood. For the potentiality of peripheral exchange is maximized only by some tribes. Others remain relatively inner-directed.

First, peripheral sectors become scenes of intensive exchange in conjunction with regional and intertribal symbiosis. An areal ecological regime of specialized tribes, the respective families and communities of which are in trade relation, is probably a necessary condition for primitive money. Such regimes are characteristic of California and Melanesia—about South America I am not prepared to say—but in other tribal settings symbiosis is not characteristic and the intertribal (or interregional) exchange sector comparatively underdeveloped. Perhaps just as important are circumstances that put premiums on

delayed exchange and so on tokens that store value in the interim. The outputs of interdependent communities, for example, may be unavoidably unbalanced in time—as between coastal and inland peoples, where an exchangeable catch of fish cannot always be met by complementary inland products. Here a currency acceptable on all sides very much facilitates interdependence—so that shell beads, say, taken for fish at one time can be converted for acorns at another (cf. Vayda, 1954; Loeb, 1926). Big-man leadership systems, it would seem from Melanesia, may likewise render delayed balanced exchange functional. The tribal big-man operates on a fund of power consisting of food, pigs, or the like, stuffs with the common quality that they are not easy to keep around in large amounts over long periods. But, at the same time, the extractive devices for accumulating these political funds are underdeveloped, and collection of goods for a climactic giveaway would have to be gradual and thus technically difficult. The dilemma is resolvable by monetary manipulations: by converting wealth into tokens and by calculated deployment of money in loans and exchange, so that a time will come when a massive call on goods can be made and the whole fund of wealth, given away, converted into status.

An Afterthought

It is difficult to conclude with a dramatic flourish. The essay has not a dramatic structure—its main drift seems downhill. And a summary would be needlessly repetitive.

But there is a curiosity worth remarking. Here has been given a discourse on economics in which “economizing” appears mainly as an exogenous factor! The organizing principles of economy have been sought elsewhere. To the extent they have been found outside man’s presumed hedonist propensity, a strategy for the study of primitive economics is suggested that is something the reverse of economic orthodoxy. It may be worth while to see how far this heresy will get us.