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LOCAL AND LONG DISTANCE TRADE AND INCIPIENT STATE FORMATION ON THE BAMENDA PLATEAU IN THE LATE 19th CENTURY

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Introduction

In his article "Long distance trade and the formation of the State" Terray criticises Coquery, Amin and others for assuming a direct relationship in West Africa between control over long distance trade by dominant elites and state formation (Terray 1974). Instead, he draws attention to the fact that it is control over the means of production for external trade (i.e. slave labour and the means of acquiring captives) which leads directly to privileged, but not exclusive, access to foreign commodities by a dominant class. The true role of long distance trade therefore, "consisted in the introduction of slave type relations of production into social formations dominated until then by the kin based mode of production" (Terray 1974: 339). In general terms therefore, West African kingdoms of this kind would appear to belong to that category of 'secondary states' which Gordon Childe described for the Ancient Near East, developing on the periphery of primary states in order to supply the latter with raw materials and semi-processed goods. In this respect, the view that West African kingdoms have ultimately to be viewed as part of the various world economies to which they have belonged at different periods, appears to be justified (Gutkind and Wallerstein 1976). But this, as a generalisation, holds true for many other areas of secondary state formation and it leaves open the question whether absolute differences exist in the structure of the social formations that perform these functions or whether such variations refer to their position, at any particular time, in a single developmental trajectory. Certainly, the questions that Terray provides us within his analysis of the Abron kingdom, derive from a relatively developed situation when control over long distance trade and over the consumption and circulation of foreign commodities is already in the hands of a dominant class. However, by couching his critique in the wider framework of the primacy of production over distribution and exchange. Terray is forced to provide us with an essentially static analysis of his particular case. A dependence on slave labour by the ruling class is reduced in Terray's analysis, to an absolute technical requirement for gold mining rather than as a response to the need for more intensive production to meet increased external demand and internal requirements for foreign goods. A narrow focus on production demands that these technical conditions be fulfilled even though we know comparatively that deep mining of gold, copper and other minerals was technically feasible for essentially kin based societies in other parts of Africa.

Given the recent recognition of a more flexible interpretation of Marx's views on the relationship between production, distribution, exchange and consumption (Grundrisse 1973: 99; Friedman 1976), we can argue instead that control over the means of production for exchange, increased external demand for the product of the former and the internal distribution of foreign commodities gained in return, form an organic whole such that one cannot simply be derived form the other. Hence rather than repesenting the development of early states as a disruptive break from some earlier form of kin based society, such that one 'mode of production' penetrates and comes to dominate another, we must view it more in terms of how elements in the preceding social formation are elaborated and come to be controlled by an

emerging dominant class for the reproduction and elaboration of their elite status. The wider question to be raised therefore is how these elements become disarticulated from a previous subsistence and exchange orientated economy to form a specialised branch of production under the control of a dominant class. Slave labour in this instance, provides the means by which absolute control over the means of production for long distance trade is gained by an emerging elite such that the position of the latter does not rely on appropriating surplus from dependent 'free' populations either through political/juridical means or through purely economic relations. Whilst dependence on slave labour avoids the complications of overexploitation of subject populations, it results in the segregation of production for long distance trade from a previously unified structure of production for subsistence and exchange.

Increased external demand for a local commodity, such that production of the latter takes on political significance as a means of control over people, seems therefore to draw apart the strands of a previously articulated 'economy' in which the acquisition of status symbols depended directly on the extraction of surplus from the domestic economy. For this separation to occur, however, an elite must control both the means of acquiring captives for slaves (i.e. Goody's means of destruction) as well as the means of putting them to work. Whilst this double aspect of control may or may not be found in the same local polity, its functioning is reflected in the goods demanded by elites from long distance trade.

It is at this stage that we must recognise the functions that goods gained in long distance trade perform internally since this is critical for understanding why control over commodities required to be given in exchange form the basis on which an elite emerges. Essentially items are acquired through long distance trade that, as sumptuary items, act to reproduce elite status, and serve to extend political control through alliances with neighbouring population. In addition, it is the means by which goods necessary for renewing the technology necessary to gain slaves can be obtained. Long distance trade, in the West African context was the mechanism by which goods were acquired that were necessary for the maintenance and expansion of the political structure and for reproducing the conditions by which the production of commodities given in return could be controlled. In its functioning therefore, it is not to be confused with trade in subsistence goods nor, whatever the term itself implies, can it be defined in terms of geographical distance involved, or the logistics involved, or some notional equivalence with the western concept of commerce.

Specialisation in production for long distance trade and control over this sector of production by a dominant class is a result both of the degree of external demand for its products and also a reflection of increasing inequality within the society. With increased external demand must go hand in hand an increased demand by a dominant elite for the foreign goods acquired, both for their own consumption and for the extension of their political control. Hence, the emergence of incipient state formations in West Africa is based on a separation of production for long distance trade from production for local subsistence and exchange as a class determined phenomenon. However, if separation of a dominant class from its material subsistence base was complete, then we could envisage that at a certain stage, a state structure would emerge that was primarily predatory in its subsistence base and essentially self-contained in its capacity to reproduce itself politically and militarily through controlling the provision of commodities for long distances trade (e.g. slaves, gold, ivory, kola, etc.). This may explain some of the cases of relatively fluid military type aristocracies or 'war bands' that periodically erupted in West African history to superimpose themselves on settled agricultural populations. But this is not found for the relatively stable kingdoms where members of a dominant class were, at the same time, heads of large domestic households and embedded within a larger kin-based society.

It is within the latter that production for subsistence and the exchange of subsistence products occurs, on which a dominant class must depend, at this stage, for its material reproduction. Hence, certain categories of goods gained through long distance trade must be redistributed internally to gain domestic surpluses without involving members of a dominant class in either its production or exchange. Thus, the supply of certain commodities, such as iron, cloth, salt, etc., through long distance trade, forms a source of dependence between dominant and subordinate classes.

The control by an elite of the means of acquiring captives is an essential part of this process of segregation but implicit within it lies a contradiction between the conditions of insecurity that it produces and the maintenance of the material basis of the social formation on which a dominant class must ultimately depend. However, insecurity due to the exploitation of neighbouring populations for captives who might also be suppliers of subsistence specialities would tend to undermine the local basis for subsistence and exchange. As a result, subject populations become increasingly dependent on the military capacity of their dominant elites to provide security for subsistence production and distribution through territorial expansion, for access to new markets, and security to travel through high level diplomatic intervention. Hence the segregation of different specialist branches of production and their control by different classes within a state leads to new kinds of dependency being established. Subordinate kin based populations become increasingly dependent on their dominant elites not through the latter's control of the means of subsistence production but through the provision of the political and military support that becomes an increasing necessity for the reproduction of local social groups. It is the emergence of these new forms of dependency that eventually provide a dominant class with the ability to intervene directly to reorganise the material basis for subsistence production in order to ensure increased supplies of foodstuffs and other essentials (principally landed estates using forced labour).

Rather than follow Terray in seeing the role of long distance trade in introducing slave type relations of production into a preceding kin based social formation, we would argue instead that the extent to which these processes of segregation and the development of new forms of dependency are realised, depends on the intensity of long distance trade and the degree to which local societies are incorporated into larger regional economies. To understand the origin of evolved West African states, provides us, at the present time, with little more than a general set of propositions divorced from any concrete historical context. An alternative, but by no means original, strategy, would be to recognise that in certain parts of West Africa, cases exist of local societies which had only weakly, if at all, been incorporated into the sphere of indigenous states and their long distance trade networks. Only towards the end of the 19th century with the expansion of the European trading frontier into the hinterland, were such societies exposed to the potential of their own internal transformation through being incorporated into a larger regional economy. As such they provide us with certain insights as to the processes of change that weakly integrated societies underwent at that particular period and help us to focus on the more general processes implied by these particular cases. The Bamenda 'Grassfields' presents us with one such case.

Background

The Grassfields is the name given to the highlands of the North West province of Cameroon. It lies immediately north of the tropical forest zone and ranges in altitude between 2000 and

6000 ft above sea level. The Bamenda plateau lies within the south-western part of the area, and is defined by a series of escarpments which dip down into the lowland forest zone of the Upper Cross River Valley to the south-west and the Metchum Valley to the north. At the end of the 19th century, a number of chiefdoms of differing origin, size and complexity occupied the plateau and have been the object of intensive ethnographic research (e.g. Chilver and Kaberry 1968; Dillon 1973, Warnier 1975). They were linked to each other in a complex relay trade of subsistence products, cross-cut by a long distance trade network in which slaves were exchanged for European goods via the Bamileke chiefdoms to the south and populations on the Cross River to the south-west. These 'economic' relations were in turn embedded in complex systems of political alliances, trade partnerships, inter-marriage and the exchange of status paraphernalia, masquerades and royal gifts. The area as a whole therefore exhibited a high degree of local economic specialisation and hence regional trade. It was wealth gained in this local trade that formed the basis for household expansion as the necessary pre-requisite to gain privileged access to the trade in slaves and European goods. Since the latter served primarily to symbolise and reinforce political relations between individuals and groups within a chiefdom, wealth accumulation, as part of the power structure, was a major incentive to trade at the local level. By the closing decades of the 19th century, the effects of differential advantages in trading had resulted in the growth of certain chiefdoms, particularly in the central part of the plateau, at the expense of those situated on the eastern and western edges. The growth of these central chiefdoms appears therefore to have been possible at the expense of chiefdoms located elsewhere on the plateau. It is not surprising therefore that oral tradition of events occurring in the late 19th century should so frequently refer to patterns of disruptive migration and chiefdom relocation as social groups attempted to reposition themselves in optimal locations within the regional trading network. However, these essentially local processes are only in turn understandable when looked at in the larger regional picture. From about 1870 onwards, the Western Grassfields was increasingly incorporated into a larger geographical division of labour stimulated by the advance of the European trading frontier into the hinterland of this part of West Africa. To achieve a new configuration of inter-regional specialisation and exchange in favour of European trading partners, an existing and more weakly defined trading sphere centred on the Hausa-Fulani emirates and their lamidates to the north, had first to be subverted. The latter had only weakly penetrated into the Western Grassfields by the mid 19th century and as far as one can tell had had a minimal impact on the chiefdoms on the Bamenda plateau. At both periods, however, the Grassfields as a whole acted as a source of slaves but it was the south-western Grassfields that was affected most by being incorporated into the European trading frontier. Slaves from this area were mainly being passed south as a labour supply for the oil plantations in return for manufactured cloth, beads, brass rods, guns and gunpowder. In very crude terms therefore, the Western Grassfields formed part of the northern sector of a larger and expanding regional system which supplied slave labour in return for European imports to a sector to the south producing oil palm products. The role of the Grassfields as a source of labour was to continue into the period of German rule when enforced labour conscription policies to provide for new plantations on the coast replaced the sale of slaves and undermined the position of local elites. For the purposes of this paper however, it is sufficient to note that the Western Grassfields served this function for a wider regional system because of its dependence upon that system for the provisioning of its local political structures with status symbols and the means for warfare and slave raiding. However, the way in which certain chiefdoms in this sector gained particularly favourable access to long distance trade on which their expansion depended, was determined by con-

straints operating within the local regional economy. These acted to favour certain chiefdoms and their elites over others, in local processes of wealth accumulation and consumption. Our problem in the rest of this paper therefore is to show how the local structure articulated with the wider regional system. It was this potentially contradictory coordinate that allowed certain chiefdoms to expand over others as part of the process by which the internal political organisation of the northern sector could be transformed into an incipient state formation to meet the increased requirements of the regional system as a whole. The fact that this process was in contradiction with the organisation of the local regional economy meant that its successful achievement would eventually have required changes in the local regional economy to ensure the supply of foodstuffs and other local commodities and its separation from the disruptive effects of the organised warfare needed to supply slaves for the larger regional system. Whilst this stage in the development of an incipient state was never reached, it can perhaps be seen to have been fulfilled in neighbouring state formations such as Bamum.

Organisation of the Local Regional Economy

As a high altitudinal savannah ecotype, the area has advantages in the production of cereal crops, starch foods, livestock and iron and other craft products which were traded down into the forest zone in exchange for palm oil, camwood and salt. Whilst this evironmental situation formed to framework for local exchange, ecological factors should not, on their own, be assumed to have causal significance. No absolute set of ecological factors existed that would have prevented the Grassfields communities being self-sufficient in most of their requirements. The oil palm for example, can grow at 4000 ft altitude and is today exploited successfully in the Bamenda area. The essential point therefore is not whether certain resources exist or don't exist but rather the degree to which more beneficial environments permit increased production for less work effort. It is in this sense that ecology acts as an effective constraint on the choices available for selecting certain specialisations over others in the production of surpluses for exchange.

Production for consumption and exchange in all the chiefdoms was embedded within the compound economy each of which functioned as a self-sufficient unit. Whilst a number of compound heads might co-operate in certain activities, this was never on a prescriptive or corporate basis. A compound was made up of a head, his wives, adult unmarried sons, children and other dependent males. A clear sexual division of labour acted to distribute male labour to craft production, rearing of livestock and trading, and female labour to agriculture and domestic activities and a limited range of low value craft products for mainly compound consumption. An important distinction can be drawn here between the amount of male/female labour drawn into production for consumption and exchange and the amount of male labour that would still be available for carrying out trading expeditions and for the distribution of the product. Hence, if the labour power required for production for exchange within the compound economy is made up primarily of female labour, this not only affects the exchange value of the product vis a vis external partners but it also releases male labour to absorb the costs of a specialist trading role. This contrasts with a mix that allocates female labour primarily for production for consumption, part of which would be used to maintain male staff involved in production for exchange whose labour power then necessarily would not be available to absorb the carrying costs required for trading. However, this still leaves the central question of what are the constraints that act to distribute these different forms of work organ-

isation to different branches of production within the regional economy (cf Kahn 1978). In order to answer this question, we need to examine the different patterns of specialisation on the plateau in more detail.

Palm oil, dry foodstuffs (in particular the hunger foods of maize and beans), salt, livestock (goats, pigs and poultry), hunted meat, ironwork and other craft products were the major commodities involved in the local regional trade. Of these palm oil was a key commodity which all households in the Grassfields required and which none produced for themselves. In the pre-colonial period, the acquisition of palm oil from the forest zone formed the major item around which production for exchange on the plateau was organised. Oil production on the plateau itself was confined to the western edge of Meta, Ngie and Mogamo and in the forest zone of the Upper Cross River, and in the Metchum Valley, north of Bafut. Two distinct technologies were used to extract the oil, both of which were labour intensive and involved principally the work of a compound head and male dependents, with an uncertain amount of support from wives since oil production clashed with the main clearing and planting period of the agricultural cycle. As far as can be reconstructed therefore it was and still is primarily a male occupation, carried out under the supervision of the compound head who owned his own palm trees and would either own his own pit for extracting oil from the nuts or share one with a group of close agnates. The following figures show that whilst the technique used in the Metchum Valley was superior to that of Ngie and Mogamo, the productivity of both appear low in relation to the amount of labour required:

	Compounds	Persons	Hours	Man/Hrs	Productivity (galls)	Prod. per man hr (gal)
Meta	2	7	18	126	4	.031
Bafut	2	8	16	128	10.5	.082

In addition, these figures only represent work at the site of oil extraction and do not include additional labour in collecting the nuts, caring for the trees and maintaining the oil pit. Based on a reconstruction of population figures for the plateau c.1890 (Warnier 1975: 472), we can calculate that at a bare minimum 78 tons of oil were needed annually on the plateau. Converted into man hours this represents the absorbtion of a male labour input of over 1/2 million man hours per annum to meet this demand. The exchange rate of oil against other commodities in markets on the western edge of the plateau also shows that it had a low rate of exchange against other scarce commodities brought for exchange there from all over the plateau. Oil-production in the pre-colonial period seems therefore to have been technically underdeveloped, requiring high inputs of male labour and having a low profitability. In comparison to the other most comparable male specialisation – iron-working – in which a smith would be able to make 2–3 hoes in a day with the help of one other man and a boy apprentice, each hoe being worth a 4 gallon calabash of oil in the oil-producing area, oil-production does appear to have been a particularly arduous activity. Hence whilst everybody needed palm-oil, the constraints of high cost and low profitability encouraged the passing of these costs to the forest zone populations where more beneficial ecological factors acted to lower production costs to a more acceptable level. Comparative advantage for the communities in the highlands

lay in producing lower cost, higher value items which they could exchange for oil and thus ensure its continuous flow to the markets on the western edge of the plateau. My evidence would indicate, in fact, that the bulk of the oil being consumed in the Grassfields, came from the Widekum-Mamfe area of the Cross River where slave villages were established to produce palm-oil and kernels for the Calabar trade. The bulk of the labour costs in oil-production was therefore being met beyond the plateau under a qualitatively different kind of labour process to that used to produce the iron goods, dry foodstuffs and livestock given in exchange.

However, since palm-oil was the key-commodity against which other goods were exchanged, the conditions of its production served to organise the production of other specialisations on the plateau. Transport costs in particular favoured the production for exchange of high bulk items closest to the oil-producing centres with lower bulk items being produced further away. Hence the intensive rearing of livestock – particularly goats and pigs – occurred on the western edge of the plateau. High bulk dry foodstuffs needed as a hunger food were produced in large quantities in the central part of the plateau adjacent to the oil-producing areas, whilst towards the eastern edge there was an increasing emphasis on the production of high value, low-bulk craft items, particularly iron work and woodcarving. This geographical division of specialisation served to select for qualitative differences in the organisation of the labour process by which these different specialisations were produced. Foodstuffs for example were primarily the product of wives' labour within the compound economy. A distinction was made between food for the compound (yams, colocasia, cocoyams, maize and greens) and dry storable food (cowpeas, groundnuts and sometimes maize). Wives maintained control over the compound foodstuffs that they produced as long as they met obligations to provide food for the compound head and other male dependents within the compound. Distribution of the dry foodstuffs on the other hand was controlled directly by the compound head who could also sell out any surplus to compound requirements in exchange for oil, ironwork, livestock, and other commodities. In an area where costs, favoured surplus foodstuff production, a compound head could, therefore, appropriate directly the surplus product of his wives labour and exchange it for oil in the markets on the western edge of the plateau. Wives would also supply the foodstuffs needed to maintain sons and other male dependents who, besides contributing some labour in agriculture and maintaining the compound, provided the staff necessary to mount a trading expedition. Compound heads from chiefdoms in the central part of the plateau were thus more easily able to absorb the carrying costs involved in supporting a specialist trading role. In the late 19th century, a high proportion of adult males of the central chiefdoms were organised as specialist traders, acquiring ironwork and livestock from chiefdoms on the eastern edge, adding surplus foodstuffs and livestock from their own areas and passing them to the western edge in return for oil. In the chiefdoms on the eastern edge of the plateau and the Ndop plain, on the other hand, iron and other craft goods produced for exchange were made by male staff in the compound. Wives produced a surplus of foodstuffs mainly to support their own offspring and other male dependents in the compound rather than to provide a surplus for trade. This pattern of male involvement in producing a surplus for exchange also meant that it competed against the provision of labour to absorb the carrying costs in specialist trading. Compound heads in the central chiefdoms were therefore in a position to appropriate surplus labour and product from male and female dependents and gain a differential advantage for specialist trading in the regional economy.

To summarise: we have argued that the topology of the local regional economy of Bamenda plateau was in essence shaped by the desire to pass on to neighbouring populations the high costs of producing one essential commodity – palm-oil. Hence the general configuration of

the regional trading system was determined by the need to produce a range of other specialisations, pool them, and to pass them to markets where they could be exchanged for oil. This seems to be generally true of all the Grassfields' local trading systems and we emphasise again that it is insufficient to explain it in terms of local highland/lowland ecological differences. However the constraints governing which speciality and its attendant labour process would be selected for in differrent parts of the plateau were in turn generated by the difinition of the local regional economy as a whole. In the pre-colonial, 'tibal' situation where labour was the primary factor of production and where labour power was concrete and qualitatively irreducable, different specialisations selected for one or other of two essentially different processes of production. In cases where female labour provided for the needs of the compound it also maintained the male staff whose labour was invested in production for exchange, the product of which would be sold out by the compund head. However, in cases where female labour produced both for consumption and exchange male labour would be released, in part, to absorb the costs of specialised trading. The latter strategy favoured particulary compound heads belonging to chiefdoms in the central part of the plateau where transport costs and ecological conditions favoured foodstuff production. The former process was selected for elsewhere where there was a selection for the production of oil, livestock, ironwork and other craft items. We can see therefore that the 'middleman role' of central chiefdoms, by which compound heads gained a differential advantage in trading over those of other chiefdoms, was based firmly in the organisation of local production.

It is not surprising that an important factor in maintaining this nodal position depended on maintaining influence or direct control over access to the different oil producing areas. All the three major chiefdoms on the plateau, Mankon, Bafut and Bali, occupied positions of this kind and competed with each other to maintain control over their respective spheres of influence in the oil producing zones. In Mankon, e.g., various devices such as chiefly gift exchange, trade partnerships and inter-marriage, were used to maintain their economic influence over the Meta village chiefdoms to the west who were the important intermediaries to the oil producers in Ngie, Ngwo and further afield. At the same period, Bafut had extended control, through the use of force, over its dependent oil producing villages in the Metchum Valley, and Bali, with German aid, was moving in the same direction through its encroachment of Mankon influence in Meta and its wars with Pinyin and Ashong. Thus, there are strong indications that an essentially exploitative relationship existed between the central chiefdoms and their oil producing or intermediary partners. The latter, in order to gain access to the whole range of commodities circulating in the regional trade network, had no alternative but to direct their exchange activity towards traders from one of the three major chiefdoms on the plateau. Moreover, with only one commodity, oil, with which to trade and at a relatively low rate of profitability, they could only respond to fluctuations in demand or in rates of exchange by boosting the production of oil or the effort required to gain it, which in turn exacerbated even further the incapacity of such chiefdoms to trade more competitively. Bafut, for example, by eliminating all competition in its trade with its oil producing villages in the Metchum Valley, was able to extract double the rate of exchange of oil against its products in comparison to the rates obtained by Mankon or Bali from their oil trading partners. Chiefdoms on the eastern edge were in a less disadvantaged position since they were able to assemble a range of products to exchange against oil and having alternative outlets, occupied a more competitive position in local exchange. However, their distance from the oil producing centres and their weaker trading position can be seen to be reflected in very general terms, in the decline in chiefdom size and power as one moves towards the eastern edge of the plateau.

The trading network on the Bamenda plateau, therefore was effectively made up of three intertwined strands or sub-networks each of which had one of the three major chiefdoms occupying a nodal position. These chiefdoms were in a position to gain maximum advantage in the regional subsistence trade. However, it was not so much that substantial profits could be made through trading in local markets, but rather that specialist traders in the central chiefdoms had the manpower and trade partnership intermediaries to make further profits by visiting more distant markets. Also, they were organised to cover the whole network – taking foodstuffs to the west for oil, taking the oil to the eastern edge for iron goods or livestock, adding local supplies of foodstuff to these and taking them to be exchanged for more oil. Also they, and their trade partners, controlled the local retailing of the divisible commodities, particularly oil and the foodstuffs, from which maximum profits were obtained. By reinvesting a part of their 'profits' in household expansions, primarily more wives for the compound head and for sons, this served to reproduce directly, on an expanded scale the conditions on which wealth accumulation depended in the central chiefdoms. Elsewhere, the same strategy served primarily to maintain or expand the conditions for intensifying production for exchange and a greater share in local trading by a limited number of adult males. Under these differing conditions, the strategy of household expansion served to intensify the conditions of unequal participation in the accumulation processes operating within the regional economy. However this cannot be considered as a closed process. Whilst the conditions for unequal exchange and differential wealth accumulation existed within the local economy, the incentive for this lay in the use to which surplus wealth was put and its consumption within the local political structure. To analyse this, we must understand the different ways wealth could be consumed and the strategies available for its investment.

Organisation of Exchange and Investment of Wealth

A compound head at least notionally had complete control over the sale of goods produced in the compound, and wealth gained from trade. His sons worked for him even when married and were expected to bring him any profits they gained in external trade for him to dispose of to the benefit of the household as a whole. Unmarried sons and other male dependents worked for the compound head and in return the latter was obliged to pay bridewealth on the first wife, provide them with compound land and help them to build on it. Each wife and her children formed a separate domestic unit within the compound and controlled the use of the foodstuffs they produced as long as they met the obligations to provide food for the compound head, for his visitors and for any other social event for which he might ask for their help. In return, a husband was expected to provide wives with oil, agricultural tools, domestic utensils, cloth, ornaments and camwood. All of which, usually, had to be gained through external trade.

Thus the exchange and distribution of local subsistence products and specialisations on the plateau was organised within the household economy. Wealth derived from trade accrued largely to a compound head as long as he met reciprocal obligations to sons, wives, and other male dependents. A compound head could invest such wealth in a number of different ways. Besides, diverting it back into further trading or into household expansion, surplus wealth could be realised in brass rods and invested in subscription societies. These were informal associations of agnates, age-mates and close friends, the members of which invested fixed amounts of brass rods and each took the collection in strict rotation. In this way, wealth

could be concentrated and realised for a specific need or venture, the nature of which had to be approved by other members of the society. Members could also support each other by delaying their turn to collect and thus passing the collection to a more needy partner or by giving it to another member to trade with on their behalf. Societies were also ranked by th size of payments made and senior notables in a chiefdom, by belonging to high rank subscription societies, could control sizeable funds of wealth stored in this way. They could either invest this wealth in lower ranking societies or give it to ambitious junior members to trade with on their behalf. Richer members were therefore, usually men who belonged to a number of different subscription societies, using their shares to pay bridewealth or to fund a son's trading expedition, or to make arrangements with a network of professional traders to use their wealth to their joint advantage. However, besides these strategies they could also divert wealth into the wider lineage, clan and chiefdom institutions where title and privileges were to be gained.

With the latter we enter a domain of privileges for which payments were made and which formed a sphere of transactions separate from ordinary subsistence and trade in the market. This domain has been recognised as a special category of rights controlled by descent groups and chiefdom institutions which have been called "tshamable" privileges or properties (Dillon: 1973). Such privileges involved rights to own certain physical objects that acted as symbols of the prerogative to perform particular activities or be involved in particular decision making processes. In the chiefdoms of Meta and Mankon, such privileges could only be possessed by title holders as the heads of lineage segments, lineages and clans. Hence their possession also defined the ranking of segments within descent groups and the ranking of descent groups with each other within the chiefdom. In Bafut, the largest precolonial chiefdom on the plateau, a palace based title system had developed at the expense of the autonomy of local descent groups. Here privileges were possessed by individuals as members of palace societies where they represented the interests of the descent groups.

Privileges were paid for in brass rods and livestock which linked them to the sphere of subsistence goods although physically and terminologically, the two spheres of activity were kept entirely separate. Privileges were ranked; rank was defined by the prestige conferred and the rights involved. Once acquired, privileges were inherited by a successor and passed on and as a descent group expanded in size, its members aimed to acquire additional privileges as part of the process of increasing the prestige and importance of the descent group within the chiefdom. Monopolisation of control over the more important tshamable privileges and hence control over access to the hierarchy of prestige and power was therefore the basis for the centralisation of power in the chiefdom which by the end of the 19th century had reached its most elaborate form in Bafut.

Ownership of such privileges gave access to additional sources of wealth for the title holders concerned. For example, they would share in all payments made by others following them in the acquisition of the same privilege. As title holders and councillors they would share in fines imposed by them for a variety of different offences or in the payments made when they were asked to come and rid a compound of pollution. They could also claim higher bridewealth since prestige was conferred in taking their daughters in marriage. In Meta and Mankon the right to trade in slaves was a monopoly held by clan heads who could give it as a privilege to a suitable clan member but could not be passed to other clans. In Bafut, it was a monopoly held by the chief who gave it usually to a title holder recommended by other councillors. As we shall see, the trade in slaves was pivotal to entering the long distance trade in European and Hausa-derived prestige goods, and hence was an important monopoly. A chief had additional

sources of wealth available to him in contrast to other title holders. He had potential rights to any unmarried girl in the chiefdom for a wife or child nurse without having to pay bride-wealth for her. He had full rights to bridewealth for his daughters and partial rights to the daughters' daugthers. All war captives belonged to the chief and could be sold out by him as slaves or given to trusted councillors and title holders. He had exclusive rights to noble game, to labour on his farm or rights to the crops of special plots planted and harvested for him within each of the quarters. Palace retainers could also seize oil, wine, and livestock from any compound if needed by the palace, although councillors and important title holders would usually be exempt from this treatment. As 'father of the people' a chief was expected to be generous and a certain amount of his surplus wealth would have to be redistributed to senior members of the chiefdom and the chiefdom as a whole. For example there were fixed occasions in a year, such as the annual dance, when a chief was expected to feed all the people. Descent group heads when they visited the palace expected to be entertained and given some small gifts when parting. In particular, a chief would have to be generous to senior councillors and title holders giving to them his daugthers and rewarding their services with gifts of cloth or gunpowder from his own stores.

Title holders therefore shared in payments and fines (usually in kind) from their own descent group members and from their position in the wider cross cutting chiefdom institutions as well as benefitting from the redistribution flows of wealth from senior title holders and the chief. The degree to which they could benefit from these sources of wealth depended on the existing title status of the compound head. Through demographic expansion and the acquisition of tshamable privileges, a lineage segment title could be converted into a lineage title and a lineage title into a clan title. Clearly it was to the advantage of a clan title holder to prevent segmentation within the wider descent group. Only in this way, could be retain a maximum support base for the acquisition of additional privileges and increase prestige in the arena of inter clan competition and ranking within the chiefdom. A balance between these conflicting forces was maintained through the concept of 'ndon', i.e. supernaturally caused misfortune, brought about through speaking openly and strongly about a grievance which if heard by the ancestors, as intermediaries to *ngwie* (God), would cause misfortune until the grievance was settled. As Dillon has shown in his analysis of this concept, speech itself was a powerful means of social control by which the words of senior title holders would be heard more strongly than those of lesser title but the open grumblings of the latter could not be ignored indefinitely without some misfortune being attributed to it and the grievance having to be resolved to prevent it recurring.

Whilst in Mankon, according to Warnier (1975: 102), the centralisation of chiefdom institutions had by the end of the 19th century served to block lineage segmentation such that no new lineages had been formed within the recent history of the chiefdom, Dillon's work on the Meta village chiefdoms shows how in a situation of weaker chiefdom institutions, the full play of descent group fission could be stimulated by the ranking of descent groups in the prestige hierarchy (Dillon 1973: 107). Descent groups moved through fluctuating cycles of maximum size, segmentation and the reduction of junior segments to lower but autonomous rank where they were set the task of acquiring the privileges retained only by the demographically weakened senior segment. In Mankon, as Warnier describes it, such a career was blocked by the freezing of descent group segmentation although in practice there were means of making claims to vacant titles and thus solving the double problem of neglected ancestors causing misfortune and resolving the tensions caused by preventing the access of ambitious men to title and the system of privileges. In Bafut, on the other hand, increased centralisation resulted

in a pattern of rapid segmentation of descent groups into numerous local units, the heads of which each had title and therefore the right to enter the palace societies. Competition between descent groups took the form of getting as many title holders into the palace societies as possible to represent the needs of their co-agnates in the centralised chiefdom institutions.

Such individuals were called 'the eyes in the palace' by their descent group members although the latter seem to have had little direct control over their actions. Moreover membership of a palace society was given by the chief on the advice of senior councillors and was not an automatic right for any descent group head. Also once established, promotion within the palace hierarchy depended on the advice of senior members to the *fon* and the ability of a person to make the necessary payments. These payments were traditionally made in livestock, food, wine and brass rods and would be shared out among the other members of the society although part of the food and the brass rods would be sent to the chief. An ambitious title holder would depend on his descent group to help him make these payments which they would only be willing to do as long as he showed himself able to look after their interests in the palace decision making bodies. Descent group members also benefitted indirectly from shares in payments and fines given to their title holders as well as being their only access to privileges such as the right to trade in slaves and thus the wealth items gained in exchange.

The basis for the emergence of elites lay in controlling the acquisition and disposal of slaves through regulating mechanisms at the descent group or chiefdom level. However, the proscriptions were not exclusively monopolised by the senior notables within a chiefdom but formed a privilege, for which payment had to be made, which any adult male, with sufficient wealth, support and reputation, could acquire. Needless to say such qualities could only be achieved either by inheritence or by manipulation of the title system over several generations as part of what Warnier has called the 'cursus honorum' of prestige and power (Warnier 1975: 357).

A chief and his descent groups heads shared a mutual identity of interest in controlling access to the trade in slaves and the distribution of the European imports gained in return. That a chief had a monopoly over captives gained in warfare did not preclude other senior notables gaining advantages from this privilege, since he was obiged to distribute some and could not, himself be actively involved in their sale which was done through intermediaries. There were definite advantages, therefore, for a chief and senior notables to pursue an active policy of warfare over issues that would appear or actually did represent a threat to the interests of the chiefdom as a whole (e.g. encroachment on land, intrusion on trading partners). However, whilst warfare in Bali and Mankon by the 1890's was still at the level of inter-chiefdom competition over resources from which captives were a welcome by-product, Bafut was engaged in an active policy of raiding and depopulating areas occupied by small village chiefdoms that could not otherwise have represented much of a threat to its security. It may well have been forced into such a policy by the expansionist aims of Kom, to the north, which certainly seems to have aimed at appropriating the oil producing villages of the Metchum Valley. Either way, the organisation of military societies in Bafut seems to have been sufficiently strong to have not only given the Germans their most singificant trial of strength in the area but also to have the latter to dismantle the whole apparatus as a first priority such that it could scarcely be reconstructed by the time Chilver and Kaberry were doing research there. It seems clear, however, that the chief and senior notables were the main suppliers of guns and gunpowder to members of the societies, that they appointed the leaders of them and one of the senior houses in the palace (ngoro) had the function of planning military strategy for the chiefdom as a whole.

Whilst members of palace associations gained particular advantages in the internal circulation of wealth within the chiefdom, control over acquisition and disposal of captives by the *fon* and senior councillors was a major independent source of wealth. Access to this wealth divorced members of palace societies from reliance on their descent groups for support. Hence unlike the case of Mankon, title holders in Bafut were not concerned with maintaining descent groups size in a corporate sense, as a means of mobilising support in inter-clan competition and prestige. A separate class of title holders was therefore beginning to emerge in Bafut, which, through their control over the acquisition of slaves, controlled directly the means for the reproduction of their elite status and the means for pursuing an active warfare policy. This emergence of an incipient class in Bafut, on the other hand, was constrained or at least disguised, by the need for descent groups membership for the legitimation of title and for access to land and other natural resources. Also, by their dependence on the population at large for military support, although recruitment to military societies carefully avoided descent groups identification. Hence, title holders had to pursue their own self interest, mindful of the fact that at the same time they had to look after the interests of their descent groups members in matters discussed within the palace societies and aid them in acquiring the necessary European goods and other commodities that were acquired through long distance trade.

Long Distance Trade and Chiefdom Expansion

As mentioned 'tshamable' privileges were embodied in physical objects as the representations of rights gained by having made the necessary payments. These prestige items were derived either from local craft specialisations (e.g. carved wooden stools, carved doorposts, elaborate pipes, antelope skin bags, ivory armrings, etc.) or were the products of the long distance trade in slaves (principally European imports such as guns, gunpowder, cloth, beads and brass rods). Once the necessary payment had been made a title holder would contact a specialist trader who had a trade partner in an appropriate chiefdom where such items could be obtained. Bamessing for example, was well known for elaborate clay pipes and eating bowls, Babanki Tungo for carved stools and carved door posts and Big Babanki for the wooden masks used in the numerous lineage societies that had their own special dances, music and costume. Such items would be sold privately in the compound, usually for brass rods or livestock, although subsistence items might be added.

However, local prestige items played a relatively minor role in comparison to the impact of increasing quantities of foreign items that entered the Grassfields in the 19th century through the European and Northern Trade. Foreign prestige goods did not simply replace local prestige items but were added to the system of tshamable privileges. Payments for these items were high. A gun, e.g. in Mankon or Bafut at c. 1890 cost approximately 25–30 brass rods, a fathom of black cotton cloth would cost c. 10 brass rods and gunpowder was sold in a small measure, made from the neck of a calabash, for 1 brass rod each. The significance of these figures can perhaps be best illustrated by comparing them to costs in the local trade. A 32 lb. bag of beans would have sold in Mankon for 4 brass, and a woman might expect to produce 3–4 such bags from a harvest and be able to provide two of such bags for trade. A unit of oil containing about 4 gallons, would have sold for 5 brass in Mankon and would have formed a single load for a specialist trader returning from a trip to the oil producing centres to the west. It must be remembered that profits from trading were made both in the bulk carrying of goods between chiefdoms and the local retail within them in which easily divisible

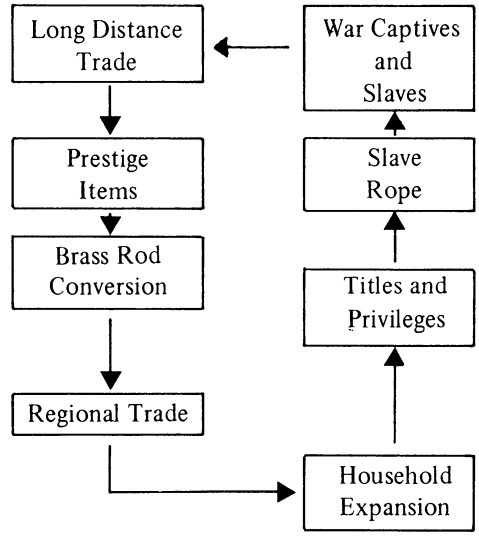
items like the oil and foodstuffs gave a disguised profit since different measures were used in different markets at a uniform value of 1 brass. Even so it seems clear that the majority of adult men would not have found it easy to accumulate the wealth necessary to buy items like a gun through trading alone. Rather it was only title holders that had direct access to the other wealth circuits in the chiefdom and might own the privilege to trade in slaves who would have had the wealth to obtain the full range of prestige items. Hence we can see how the title system and the system of 'tshamable' privileges acted both to represent a system of social positions and also as a kind of self-reinforcing planning mechanism which channelled wealth into the system at a number of different levels and acted to accumulate wealth within it to the advantage of the senior title holders within the chiefdom. No official regulations were required to impose these restrictions since the homology between the status positions and differential access to wealth acted in itself to regulate the system and buffer it against external perturbations and disruptions.

The sources of such disruption could be of two kinds. The appearance of new kinds of prestige items that were not incorporated as privileges in the traditional system would appear to be the kind of situation which would upset the homology outlined above, by allowing a differential control over access to scarce imports to undermine the basis of wealth accumulation at lower levels within the system. In our particular case such a situation always seems to have favoured the elaboration of chiefdom institutions at the expense of local descent group expansion and autonomy. In a wider historical perspective, changes in the orientation and flows of long distance trade would curtail the extent to which this former process was possible. In very crude terms therefore we can anticipate always a rough correlation between the degree of chiefdom expansion or the freezing of these developmental tendencies and the fluctuating patterns of long distance trade over time. Hence within the S.W. Grassfields during the late 19th century, the wider parameter within which the fluctuating fortunes of local chiefdoms must be seen, lies in the expansion of the European trading frontier and its encroachment against the earlier dominance of the Northern Hausa trade in the area.

However, we must first discuss the nature of long distance trade since, so far, we have dealt only with the conditions for the distribution of imports within a chiefdom. In the precolonial period slaves and possibly some ivory and kola were the only items that were accepted in exchange for foreign prestige items in the long distance trade. Slaves were either war captives (and hence belonged to the chief) or were bought, usually from the larger chiefdoms such as Bafut or Kom that carried on an active policy of warfare and raiding for captives against the smaller village chiefdoms of the Metchum Valley. The trade in slaves was a privilege and was symbolised in the possession of a 'slave rope' that was given only to professional traders that had already established a secure base in the local regional trade and a reputation for having established an extensive network of trade partners. In Mankon this license was held by seven out of the nine clan heads and could be given by them to any clan member whom they thought would do well in the trade (Warnier 1975: 162–3). It would be to such a trader that a rich man in the clan might give his share out from a subscription society to trade with and thus indirectly have access to the profits of the trade. A slave trader was free to buy and sell slaves from outside the chiefdom but no member of the same chiefdom could be sold out, although reference was made to this occurring in the smaller village chiefdoms of Meta. A chief would give war captives to certain favoured traders to sell for him and they were given a share of the goods brought back as a reward. In Bafut, a monopoly on the license to trade in slaves was held by the chief alone and was given out to favoured individuals on advice from his councillors. Originally therefore the right to trade in slaves would appear to have been one

of the privileges belonging to local descent group heads, which, in the case of Bafut, was appropriated by the chief in the course of the development of a palace retainer system and the elaboration of cross lineage/clan chiefdom associations at the expense of the autonomy of local descent groups.

At the end of the 19th century, the majority of slaves from the Grassfields were being sent down to the Cross River or further south as labour to work on the oil plantations maintained in the chiefdoms of the southern forest zone. The slaves were passed through trade partners from Bafut and north eastern areas of the plateau to Bali at the south western edge which lay on one of the main access routes to the dense populations of the Upper Cross River area. At the N.E. edge of the plateau, a male slave could be bought for 50–100 brass and a female slave for 100 to 150 brass et the end of the last century. When sold in Bali, in terms of brass, each slave would have realised a profit of about 20 brass which considering the number of relays slaves had passed through does not represent a high precentage of profit. On the other hand the foreign prestige items gained in return were of such a high value that even a small profit when sold internally within a chiefdom represented a high profit in comparison to the subsistence trade. War captives appear to have been only a substantial independent source of slaves for the more northern chiefdoms of Bafut and Kom. Since these involved no direct cost, captives were an important source of prestige goods for a chief although the demands on him to redistribute the majority of them to councillors and title holders was high.



At this point we can see how long distance trade was linked in a systematic manner to the regional subsistence trade although only indirectly since they were buffered from each other by the prestige and title system. Profits from long distance trade could be ploughed back into regional subsistence trade or more fundamentally in expanding the household economy. Before even being able to enter into long distance trade a professional trader would already have had to build a secure base in the regional trade in order to gain the necessary capital to invest in slaves. Hence, production for the local regional exchange was stimulated directly by the long

distance trade and a supply of prestige items available for internal circulation within a chiefdom. As we have seen, this system of 'tshamable' privileges formed a prestige sphere that overlapped with a subsistence sphere due to the fact that wealth from the latter could be realised in brass and livestock to make payments for the former. Increased opportunities to gain wealth in the local trade would be reflected therefore in the elaboration of the title system and an increased demand for prestige items. Moreover the manner in which differences in location and production for exchange in the subsistence trade served to channel wealth towards certain chiefdoms against others determined the degree to which traders could buy slaves and participate in long distance trade. Hence at the local chiefdom level we can present a single model which links the regional trade, household expansion, the systems of titles and privileges and long distance trade.

Chiefdom expansion on the Bamenda Plateau depended on two critical points of control which had to be maintained through force. The first was to retain control over critical resources giving advantage in the subsistence trade, in particular land and the production of oil. The second was the role of warfare for gaining captives to sell out as slaves. Since war captives were a chiefly monopoly this particularly benefitted a chief and the senior title holders more than the traders involved. Hence warfare on the plateau had a double aspect to it: from the viewpoint of the dominant central chiefdoms one aim was to acquire or preserve land and other resources as well as to exert control over oil-producing villages and direct their trade for monopoly advantage and the other aim was to gain captives. The warfare between Mankon and Bali, for example, can be interpreted as attempts by the former to prevent the subversion of their Southern Meta oil-trading partners by the latter; or warfare between Mankon and Meta was clearly linked to attempts by the latter to move further east on to the more fertile soils of the central part of the plateau which were necessary for successful foodstuff production. An ambition they only finally achieved in the German period. In the case of Bafut, captives were being taken from the same areas that they depended upon for control over oil supplies. By the end of the 19th century, their demand for slaves had created a large empty no-man's land to the north west of the chiefdom, such that at the beginning of the colonial period, Bafut was raiding and trying to extend control over oil-producing villages in a radius of up 20 or 30 miles to the north-west.

At this point our analysis joins that of others that have emphasised the role of warfare in gaining slaves as a structural precondition for further expansion and hierarchisation in the formation of West African kingdoms. As seen, the latter processes rested essentially on increasing control being exercised over the system of privileges by the palace institutions rather than local descent groups. Hence the demand for war captives to ensure a constant flow of prestige items for increased circulation within the chiefdom, was a necessary precondition for further expansion. However, a stage is reached in the expansion of such systems where the demand for slaves conflicts with the conditions necessary for the maintenance of the regional subsistence economy. Clearly one essential requirement was to ensure that no member of the chiefdom could be sold out since this would represent an absolute loss of labour and demographic capacity. But even if this was strictly adhered to, raiding against neighbours on whom one was also dependent for trade in subsistence specialities, and the consequent increase in the risks of trading, were forces that served to disrupt the local regional economy as a whole and woud, one predicts, have set in motion an inflationary spiral in the rates of exchange that would increasingly have undermined the weaker and more marginal chiefdoms on the plateau. If these were the only implications then we could expect these processes to result only in the depopulation of large areas of the plateau with a corresponding accumulation of people and

politico-economic power in the increasingly dominant chiefdoms. To a certain extent this does reflect the reality of inter chiefdom competition at the end of the 19th century on the Bamenda plateau with conflicts between the four major chiefdoms coming to dominate the local political situation. However, dominant chiefdoms were never economically self-contained units. Instead each occupied a paramount role in organising exchanges within a number of subregional exchange networks, each of which was comprised of a number of politically autonomous chiefdoms varying in rank and size. Bafut for example exercised a dominant influence over the village chiefdoms of the Lower Metchum Valley which varied from direct political control to indirect economic influence depending on distance. Mankon dominated the exchange network that included the oil producing villages in Meta and extending into Nigie, and Bali had special trade partnerships and chiefly alliances with chiefdoms in the area from Ashong to Pinyin which, at the end of the 19th century, they were attempting to convert into political dependencies. It was inevitable therefore that political relations between a dominant chiefdom and its dependents should fluctuate between alliance or trade partnership and warfare depending on the capacity of the former to convert economic dominance into a more concrete form of political control. However, this process will become unbalanced when warfare must increasingly be used to obtain captives to sell out as slaves. Hence there was a tendency for dominant chiefdoms to undermine their regional exchange network by raiding against weaker neighbouring chiefdoms on which they depended for specialised goods and trade. Bafut e.g. raided villages in the Lower Metchum Valley both to gain captives and to extend control over the trade in the oil produced in that area. However, the need for captives became such a dominant feature of warfare in the Lower Metchum that at the time Zintgraff passed through the area in 1889, he was able to travel for five days without encountering a single settlement, although there was plenty of evidence of abandoned habitation for him to notice.

It is well known that the Grassfields were a major source of slaves in the precolonial period, a role that continued under the German Administration in the form of forced labour movement to work on the plantations on the coast. In the last decades of the 19th century, the demand for slaves in the southern forest zone increased substantially, in line with European demand for palm oil and kernels. The political economies of most of the intermediate chiefdoms in the Bamileke region or in the Upper Cross River area relied on the passage of slaves from the Grassfields down to areas nearer the coast or else by incorporating them into separate slave villages. Hence the chiefdoms of the Grassfields were able to obtain ever-increasing supplies of European imports in exchange for war captives and bought slaves. But, as already mentioned, at least part of the oil produced by slave labour in the forest zone was channelled back into the Grassfields to stimulate and orientate the subsistence trade in iron, foodstuffs and livestock. Hence, the production of oil for the trade in subsistence goods was linked, at the regional sector level, to the supply of slaves to provide the labour to produce it. Chiefdoms in the oil producing sector pursued an advantageous strategy of buying slaves from the Grassfields in return for European imports, selling the slaves or the oil produced by the slaves to the south for more European goods and part of the oil, indirectly, to Grassfields populations in return for subsistence products. By using the slave labour directly for production for exchange, the Grassfields chiefdoms were clearly benefitting less than those in the Upper Cross River from their participation in the larger regional system. Also, as we have seen, overloading the structure, by supplying slaves for the short term political gains by elites, undermined local capacity to supply subsistence goods to exchange for the oil that these slaves produced. Hence, it was the demand by the larger regional system for slaves from the Grassfields, and the po-

litical advantages that accrued to elites in supplying this demand, that operated to undermine the subsistence base of local Grassfields chiefdoms. Left unresolved, one can only predict that this situation would have resulted in increased warfare, depopulation and the concentration of politico-economic power in one or more major chiefdoms on the plateau. Only such an incipient state formation would have had the necessary structure to reorganise an expanded territory into discrete sectors of production and buffer them against the exigencies of raiding for slaves. However, such a trajectory was terminated by the imposition of German rule which, by banning the trade in slaves, imposing forced levies in labour and permitting the free circulation of European imports, imposed a different solution to the one outlined above.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that external demand for a local resource promotes the separation and control over the production or acquisition of this domestic commodity by an emergent elite. External demand is therefore a necessary condition for the development of an incipient class based society. In evolutionary terms, we must also come to the conclusion that the distinction between primary and secondary states is a false one, since all class based societies have evolved in such dependent positions and their later history is concerned with documenting their ability to move form peripheral to core status. We must attribute to long distance trade therefore, a more positive function in the formation of the state than Terray allows in his analysis of the Abrom kingdom. However, it is still not necessary to couch this difference of view in terms of argueing for the primacy of exchange over production. Since the local resource is required for either a productive or reproductive function in another society, exchange is simply the mechanism by which factors of production are distributed in space to provide for the maintenance of different specialisations in a larger regional system. Thus, in the case of the Bamenda plateau, chiefdoms supplied slave labour to facilitate the production of palm oil in another sector of the regional economy, in order to ensure the continuing supply of European imports, on which depended the reproduction and expansion of elite status in all the polities within the system. Hence, 'long distance trade' was simply the way in which emerging dominant classes were able to gain access to a new source of wealth by providing the different resources or specialist skills required to satisfy the demands of European trading partners. However, whilst this general process applied to any area incorporated within the European trading frontier, local constraints tended to favour certain chiefdoms over others in their ability to benefit from it. Hence, oil producing chiefdoms would gain at the expense of slave supplying chiefdoms since a dominant class in the former controlled both the labour supply and the means to put it to work. And within the sector of slave supplying chiefdoms, some gained more than others through having a more favourable position in local subsistence trade on which the necessary accumulation of wealth to enter into the trade in slaves depended.

In the sense, that senior notables in a chiefdom were, in general, still heads of large domestic households, had rights to clan land, and were actively engaged in subsistence production and exchange, we cannot say that any of the chiefdoms on the Bamenda plateau were fully formed class based societies. However, the tendency, as in the case of Bafut, for senior advisers to reside in or near the palace and rely increasingly on their control over political, juridical and economic privileges to extract surplus product from their descent group members, bears all the hallmarks of a fully formed class structure in the process of emerging. The degree to which long distant trade became disarticulated from local subsistence exchange was therefore

consistent with the development of a class based society in which control over the former was to come increasingly to dominate the latter. For this to be possible, this local event must correlate, however indirectly, with the increasing demand by the 'outside world' for palm oil products after c. 1870, since it was ultimately on this larger factor that the successful realisation of this internal transformation at the local level was predicated.

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