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SLAVERY AS A SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION IN TRIBAL SOCIETY*

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

It is now more than half a century since the publication, in 1900, of the comprehensive study on slavery by the ethnologist H. J. Nieboer.¹ Rejecting the then current theories, according to which the institution of slavery arose, of necessity, at a given stage of social evolution, Nieboer attempted to explain the phenomenon in functional terms.²

In order to establish the factors determining the occurrence of slavery Nieboer based his research on data relating to 391 tribal societies listed in tables compiled by S. R. Steinmetz.³ The authors of the present article have examined Nieboer's hypothesis — which will be discussed later — in the light of the more extensive and presumably more reliable material now available, and in the following pages give an account of this new appraisal.

In addition, an attempt has been made to place the explanation arrived at by Nieboer within a wider theoretical framework, a second hypothesis being formulated on this basis and then analyzed.

Both hypotheses furnish a tentative definition specifying the circumstances under which slavery can be expected in so-called primitive societies.

* We are indebted to J. E. Ellemers and P. Kloos for their numerous valuable comments and we are particularly grateful to Professor Dr. A. J. F. Köbben for his helpful suggestions during the preparation of this article which is an adaptation of an M.A. thesis.

¹ H. J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System*, The Hague, 1900. For this article we consulted the second edition of 1910 which differs only in minor details from the first edition.

² This point is also emphasized by Udy. S.H. Udy, *Organization of Work*, New Haven, 1959, 8-9.

³ A. J. F. Köbben, 'New Ways of Presenting an Old Idea: The Statistical Method in Social Anthropology', in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, LXXXII (1952), 129-146.

In the first pages of this article the nature of slavery is considered. Then follows an outline of the theory within the framework of which this concept should, in our opinion, be incorporated. Some observations on the procedure adopted for our joint investigation precede the final summing up of the results and conclusions reached.

II. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF SLAVERY.

Slavery no longer occurs as a social institution, although the designation is sometimes considered to be applicable to all situations in which a limitation of personal freedom is seen as an unjustifiable restriction. In this article the term 'slavery' is used in a narrow sense, specifically to denote a particular form of servitude.

It is not inconceivable that slavery could occur as a social institution in circumstances such that slaves are not directly engaged in productive labour, but employed, for example, as servants at a royal court or as warriors. However, productive labour is usually the primary consideration. The over-riding importance of this specific economic function is particularly evident in plantation slavery, and, in tribal societies, in the not uncommon institution of domestic slavery with the slaves integrated within the production process based on the family unit.

As a preliminary to any study of the phenomenon of slavery there arises the question of whether it is necessary to distinguish between differing forms of servitude or bondage. In the opinion of Fahrenfort it was not necessary to make any such differentiation.⁴ Supporting this view, Kloosterboer maintained that one single category could accommodate the diverse systems involving the performance of labour under duress which, after the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, were a feature of western societies and of societies showing a pronounced western influence.⁵

This argument justified the standpoint that an all-encompassing definition could be established to describe the functional significance of all labour performed under duress, whatever the form of compulsion, in the societies which are traditionally the subject of study by ethnologists. However, an ethnologist accepting the view of Fahrenfort and Kloos-

⁴ J. J. Fahrenfort, 'Over onvrije en vrije arbeid', in *Mens en Maatschappij*, XIX, (1943), 29-51.

⁵ W. Kloosterboer, *Onvrije arbeid na de afschaffing van de slavernij*, The Hague, 1954.

terboer must also allow for the possibility that, in these so-called primitive societies, the production may be mainly organized on the basis of the family unit. The distinction here between debt bondage and slavery is, within the context of the organization of the labour process, probably more fundamental than, for example, the differentiation between plantation slavery and a system of contract labour with penal sanctions. For that reason, it would seem desirable that any attempt to explain the phenomenon of slavery in tribal societies should be directed towards determining the specific features of slavery, and so establishing the points of divergence between slavery and other forms of labour performed under duress which occur in these societies.

In the various ethnological reference works we have consulted very few of the writers gave a precise definition of their concept of slavery. Whether a given form of compulsion applying to the performance of labour is designated as slavery depends on the concept accepted by the individual ethnologist. In our own efforts to specify the characteristics of slavery we have analyzed the descriptions given by those ethnologists who have, in recording instances of slavery, given accompanying reports detailing the features of the phenomenon so designated. It could only be assumed — as no verification was possible — that other ethnologists who mention slavery without providing any description of the situation are referring to more or less the same phenomenon.

The analysis we carried out yielded the following summary of specific features generally accepted as characterizing the phenomenon of slavery:

- a) Slaves occupy a subordinate and dependent position and cannot unilaterally break the relationship;
- b) slaves are relegated to a low social status, being subjected to humiliation and insult;
- c) slaves are required to perform the least respected functions, demeaning and arduous tasks often being allocated solely to slaves;
- d) slaves are in a situation of permanent constraint, and may be summoned to perform work at any time;
- e) consequently, in many cases, slaves constitute a distinct and separate social category — this social differentiation being an

important aspect which becomes particularly evident when slaves are obtained by purchase or by capture from tribes inhabiting other localities.

Also relevant to the aspect of social differentiation is the further qualification that slavery can only be said to occur when it exists as a social institution. One school of thought, subscribed to by Siegel and a number of other ethnologists, will acknowledge the existence of slavery only if the elimination of the given form of servitude would result in the disruption of the prevailing social and economic relationships.⁶

The characteristic features specified in the above list were taken as norms in our investigation to ascertain whether slavery occurred in the tribal societies which we had selected for study. When the available reports included references to the existence of slavery without any accompanying description of the situation the author's conclusion was, of necessity, accepted in each case. When a description was given, the data provided was checked against the norms cited above. A rigid application of these norms was, however, avoided, and in doubtful cases it was decided to assume that slavery occurred. As will be seen in the discussion of the theoretical approach, this method tends to increase the likelihood of exceptions to the hypothesis. The resultant incidence of exceptions is, in all probability, greater than the actual number suggested by the incomplete facts at our disposal. Nevertheless, we consider our method to be the most suitable since it is not possible within the limited space of this article to give detailed indications of the combinations of data on which the individual classifications are based. An unspectacular but reliable result is preferable to an evaluation which corresponds with all theoretical expectations and, is on that account, highly improbable.

III. THEORETICAL APPROACH.

Although Nieboer defined slavery in juridical terms — 'slavery is the fact that one man is the property or possession of another' — he consistently adhered to the view that it constituted a system of production. According to Nieboer slavery could only occur in those societies where there is no supply of voluntarily offered labour. In developing his theory, Nieboer sought to establish which factors

⁶ B. J. Siegel, 'Some Methodological Considerations for a Comparative Study of Slavery', in *American Anthropologist*, XLVII (1945), 359, note 10.

determined whether or not the voluntary offered services of a labour force were available. The economic situation was, in his opinion decisive in this connection. In conditions under which subsistence is possible by simple means, without the prerequisite of the possession of capital, the tendency is, Nieboer maintained, for the individual to prefer an independent existence rather than seek a livelihood in the service of another. In his survey of agricultural tribes Nieboer cites examples substantiating this argument. When unoccupied land is available for cultivation — this situation being referred to by Nieboer as providing open resources — each member of the community is able to be self-supporting and there is no group forming a class of employed labourers. Under these circumstances the institution of slavery can arise. But if the resources are closed — or, in other words, if all land suitable for crop-growing has been appropriated and put under cultivation — the services of 'free' labourers will be available to the land owners, a situation in which slavery would serve no purpose and consequently does not occur.

In essence, Nieboer's theory is that a situation of open resources is a necessary condition for the occurrence of slavery, although, as Nieboer points out, it does not follow that slavery is encountered in all instances where resources are open.⁷

It is our opinion that a comprehensive analysis of the nature and functioning of the labour market — and this is the context within which Nieboer evolved his theory — can reveal other relevant factors operative in relation to the phenomenon of slavery. The labour market is considered as being constituted by the entirety of the demand for and offer of manpower. Taken as the sum of component elements, a community can be regarded as comprising two distinct categories, with those in the one category offering their services for a specified remuneration to those in the other category. This relationship allows the possibility of two different situations, either one in which supply and demand are in equilibrium or one in which there is a disequilibrium of supply and demand.

The crux of Nieboer's theory is that an imbalance between the availability and the requirements of manpower gives an impetus to

⁷ As an explanation for exceptions to his theory Nieboer refers to inadequate power to enforce compulsion. At the same time he maintains that the category of the resources, a purely economic factor, determines the occurrence or non-occurrence of slavery. Open resources are defined by Nieboer as constituting a 'primary cause'.

the introduction of slavery. If there is insufficient manpower available for the group requiring the services of labourers the need cannot be met otherwise than by measures of compulsion. Enforcement of measures of compulsion becomes possible only when the strength of the labour-seeking group surpasses that of the group constituting the source of manpower to an extent ensuring the predominant influence of the labour-seeking group in determining working conditions and even allowing the imposition of the situation we have described as slavery. By means of this position of authority the members of the labour-seeking group are enabled to counter the consequences of the absence of equilibrium in the labour market, the quantitative discrepancy between supply and demand.

It can be seen, then, that the occurrence of slavery is linked with two prerequisite conditions. On the one hand there must be a shortage of manpower in relation to the demand, and, on the other hand, the labour-seeking group must have the power to acquire by measures of compulsion the service of labourers and to maintain this labour force in a state of subjection.

At this point we can pose three questions to establish which factors create the conditions appropriate to the introduction of slavery —

- firstly, under what circumstances is it to be expected that a supply of manpower will be limited or non-existent;
- secondly, under what circumstances is a demand for manpower to be expected? and,
- thirdly, under what circumstances can the predominant authority of the labour-seeking group result in the institution of that form of compulsory labour we have described as slavery?

The first question has been unequivocally answered by Nieboer, and, bearing in mind that we are considering only agricultural societies, we can state that in conditions providing access to open resources an unconstrained labour force will not be available.

In reply to the second question it can be said that, in general, a demand for manpower is to be expected when the production capacity of the individual exceeds his consumption. A corollary of a demand for manpower is the existence of a socially acceptable possibility of deriving benefit from the extra production of the labour force. This possibility can be realized in various ways. The employer can delegate partly or wholly his participation in the production necessary for the

maintenance of his household and engage in some other activity affording more prestige, so indulging in what could be called conspicuous leisure. The extra production may also be reflected in conspicuous consumption, the display of opulence and luxury. The manner of taking advantage of the increased production must, of course, be socially acceptable, that is to say, in conformity with the norms of the group to which the employer belongs. Conformity to the pattern of a particular group applies in communities where there is social stratification comprising two or more hierarchically differentiated sections with divergent standards of living. In these stratified societies slavery can fulfil the function of preserving the difference in living standards between the various strata.

Turning to the third question we consider the social relationships conducive to the introduction of slavery. As has been noted, slavery occurs only when the labour-seeking group is sufficiently powerful to impose a regime of continuous constraint on the group constituting the source of manpower. It is a situation arising, as a rule, exclusively in stratified societies with a very marked differentiation of status between the highest and lowest sections. This fact prompts the conclusion that slavery will occur solely in societies in which there is a stratification dividing the free members of the community into hierarchic categories. Theoretically, of course, there is the possibility that in a community comprising two strata the group with the higher social status will impose a degree of authority such that all members of the lower category are reduced to a condition of enslavement, but it is hardly likely that a relationship of this type would arise. The more probable development would be towards some other form of duress such as *corvée*, requiring the regular performance of unpaid work, an arrangement which involves intermittent and collective service as distinct from slavery which is characterized by permanent constraint applying individually.

It should not be assumed that slavery will occur in each and every stratified society. There may be in some instances a sufficient supply of manpower provided by free labourers, and the distinction Nieboer made as regards closed resources may be recalled in this respect. Alternatively, the social stratification may be consolidated by other means, for example, taxes, tributes, or occasional obligatory labour. In other words, social stratification does not unconditionally imply slavery but is, in our opinion, a prerequisite for the introduction of

slavery. However, the connection between the two phenomena should not be incautiously interpreted as an association of factors in which the one is, without exception, the cause and the other, similarly in all instances, the result. It does, nevertheless, seem more reasonable to assume that slavery would be a consequence of rather than an impetus to social stratification. In the preceding pages we have regarded social stratification as a feature indicating a prevailing differentiation of status and authority and the existence of a demand for manpower. At the same time, it is not impossible that the introduction of slavery in communities in which social differentiation is not extensive could lead to a further development of stratification.

The results of the foregoing theoretical analysis can be summarized in two verifiable hypotheses —

- 1) the existence of open resources is a necessary condition for the occurrence of slavery;
- 2) social stratification amongst the *free* members of a community is a necessary condition for the occurrence of slavery.

IV. METHOD OF VERIFICATION.

For the verification of these two hypotheses a selection of sixty-two tribal societies was made from those included in Murdock's World Ethnographic Sample,⁸ this number comprising communities from Polynesia, Melanesia, Indonesia, and West Africa. The communities chosen were selected in view of the predominant importance of agriculture in the respective areas, and in all cases crop-raising was the foremost means of subsistence.

Given the terms of the hypotheses the predominance of agricultural activity is all-important, for agricultural communities display the greatest diversity of structural differentiation. Furthermore, the situation as regards resources can be specified in many instances.

Inclusion of West African tribes was decided on because, according to the details on social stratification and slavery furnished by Murdock, the incidence of possible exceptions to the second hypothesis — cases where slavery occurs although there is no stratification amongst the free members of the community — is higher in this particular area

⁸ G. P. Murdock, 'World Ethnographic Sample', in *American Anthropologist*, LIX (1957), 664-687.

than in any other region inhabited by agricultural peoples.⁹ On that account the choice offers an opportunity for further study of deviant cases, so providing a deeper understanding of the subject.

In checking his theory Nieboer relied only on data concerning communities in Polynesia and Melanesia. In the case of all other non-western communities Nieboer assumed the availability of open resources wherever slavery occurred.¹⁰ Only a few Melanesian tribal societies have been included in our survey since, in view of the widespread uniformity of social organization in this area, it is impossible to regard the individual communities as disparate entities.

A similar restrictive selection was applied as regards the Indonesian communities included so as to ensure that the choice, again based on the information given by Murdock on social stratification and slavery, would cover a diversity of forms of both phenomena as well as instances not conforming to the general rule.

The choice of examples from Murdock's World Ethnographic Sample can hardly be described as a random selection. In any case, an indiscriminate selection would not offer any advantage, because the source material, Murdock's sample is itself, not a random selection.

Having decided on the choice of examples we then examined the ethnographic data so provided.¹¹ When our conclusions did not correspond with those reached by Murdock we have retained our own interpretation.

The criteria applied in establishing whether or not slavery occurred in any given case have already been explained fully in the discussion on the specific features of slavery.

Social stratification was regarded as being manifest when there were distinct indications of hereditary differences of status, so that the free members of the community were divided into two or more socially unequal categories. Societies in which slavery occurs while there is no hereditary difference of status amongst the free members of the

⁹ The West African societies included have been selected from amongst those inhabiting areas which are unmistakably within the limits of this region. In Murdock's classification West African societies comprise the peoples of West Sudan, the Nigerian Plateau, the Guinea Coast, and also some of the Equatorial Bantu.

¹⁰ Nieboer, *o.c.*, 313.

¹¹ The authors will gladly furnish on request a complete list of the literature consulted for the purpose of evaluating the function of the three factors investigated in the communities selected for study.

community are consequently classified in this article as being without stratification. A further distinction between structural criteria (the number of social gradations) and functional criteria (the degree of social distance between the strata) has been made by Sahlins in qualifying social stratification,¹² and we found this differentiation helpful in our analysis of the ethnographic material we consulted. There was some doubt in a number of instances, nine in all, as to the existence of social stratification. In the classification of characteristics it is specified that as regards these nine communities, social stratification, if occurring, is only incipiently developed.

Classification of the situation as regards open or closed resources — the definition given by Nieboer to denote respectively availability or lack of unoccupied cultivable ground — could not be made with any certainty in some twelve cases. Various incidental factors, including the area of ground allowed to lie fallow, the extensive planting of crops and so on, must be reckoned with in assessing such instances.

V. RESULTS.

1. *Incidence of social stratification and slavery.*

The following list gives the grouping of the selected societies according to the incidence and degree of both social stratification and slavery.

- a) with slavery and with stratification amongst the free members of the community —
Tahitians, Rotinese, Tanimbarese, Kei Islanders, Mossi, Susu, Serer, Dahomeans, Ashanti, Yoruba, Mende, Ibo, Wute, Jukun, Chamba, Igbara (Panda), Ga; (17)
- b) with an incipient form of slavery and with stratification amongst the free members of the community —
Easter Islanders, Mangaian, Gbari, Margi (Kilba); (4)
- c) with an incipient form of slavery and with stratification possibly lacking or occurring only to a limited extent —
Toraja, Iban, Kpe, Senufo, Tallensi; (5)
- d) with an incipient form of slavery and with no stratification amongst the free members of the community —
Dogon, Birifor, Konkomba, Lobi; (4)
- e) with no slavery but with stratification amongst the free members of the community —
Loyalty Islanders (Lifu), Tikopia, Rennell Islanders, Trobrianders, Lau (Fijians), Manihikians, Nsaw; (7)

¹² M. D. Sahlins, *Social Stratification in Polynesia*, Seattle, 1958, 2.

- f) with no slavery and with stratification possibly lacking or occurring to a limited extent —
Ontong-Javanese, Marquesans, Kissi, Yakö (Umor); (4)
- g) with no slavery and with no stratification amongst the free members of the community —
Bougainville, Ellice Islanders, Dobuans, New Ireland (Lesu), Mentaueians, Matakam, Tiv, Bijogo, Gure, Mumuye, Bassakomo, Pangwe, Kabre, Bete, Kadara, Tenda (Coniagui); (16)
- h) no conclusion as to the existence or absence of slavery and stratification —
Hawaiians, Mandingo, Karekare, Ndoro, Vai. (5)

TABLE I Incidence of slavery and of stratification amongst the free members of the community.

STRATIFICATION

		yes	only incipient or possibly lacking	no	total
SLAVERY	yes	17	0	0	17
	only incipient or possibly lacking	4	5	4	13
	no	7	4	16	27
	total	28	9	20	57

Although not providing a complete substantiation, the analysis set out in the above table does tend to confirm the correctness of the hypothesis that social stratification amongst the free members of the community is a prerequisite for the occurrence of slavery. The hypothesis would be conclusively verified if it transpired that there was no incidence of slavery in communities in which social stratification amongst the free members did not arise. However, in four instances slavery apparently occurred in an incipient form whilst stratification did not occur, and there were five instances of slavery in an incipient form in communities in which stratification was possibly lacking or manifested only to a limited degree.

These nine societies will be examined further in order to determine whether or not the hypothesis should be revised. The various reference works consulted are cited in the notes.

In the case of the *Birifor*, and similarly in the case of the *Lobi*, a community closely related to the *Birifor*, it is by no means certain that slavery was ever a feature of the social organization. Only one ethnographer mentions the existence of slavery in these two communities and further qualifies the institution as no more than slightly developed (Labouret, 1931, 374). In a subsequent publication Labouret stated that the slave was accepted into the family circle (Labouret, 1958, 189-196).¹³

The *Iban* occasionally brought captive women and children back from their head-hunting expeditions. Such slaves were not only very few but were also on more or less the same level of social status as their masters, and, moreover, could be integrated into the *Iban* community. (Ling Roth, vol. II, 200-210). In a more recent account of the *Iban* Leach reported that several social gradations had developed amongst the free members of the community, while the descendants of slaves were forced to form an endogamous group.¹⁴

The *Dogon* also kept very few slaves, all of whom were captured in wars with the *Peul* (Arnaud, 287, note 3).¹⁵ Similarly, the *Konkomba* had very few slaves, because, to quote Froelich, 'leur système social et familial n'en sentait pas la nécessité'.¹⁶

No definite information is available concerning the *Senúfo*. According to Delafosse, contact with the *Mandingo* led to changes in the formerly egalitarian structure, an incipient form of social stratification amongst the free members of the community having been taken over from this more complex society (Delafosse, 83). Originally the entire community comprised only free members, but at a later stage a slave group, consisting of captives taken in wars waged against other communities, became a feature of the social organization. After a few generations the descendants of these slaves were regarded as free members of the *Senúfo* community (Delafosse, 448). Evidently the circumstances were not propitious for the development of slavery. It can be assumed that slavery arose

¹³ L. Charles, 'Les Lobi', in *Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie*, II (1911), 202-220. H. Labouret, *Les tribus du rameau Lobi*, Paris, 1931. H. Labouret, *Nouvelles notes sur les tribus du rameau Lobi*, Dakar, 1958. R. S. Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, Oxford, 1932, vol. II, chapter 46-48. M. Sidibé, 'Famille, vie sociale et vie religieuse chez les Birifor et les Oulé', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, I (1939), 697-742.

¹⁴ J. D. Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, Colonial Research Studies No. 18, London, 1955. J. D. Freeman, 'The Iban of Western Borneo', in *Social Structure in Southeast Asia*, Editor G. P. Murdock, Chicago, 1960. E. H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo*, London, 1911. E. R. Leach, *Social Science Research in Sarawak*, Colonial Research Studies No. 1, London, 1950. H. Ling Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, 2 vols., n.d.

¹⁵ R. Arnaud, 'Notes sur les montagnards Habé', in *Revue d'Ethnographie et des Traditions Populaires*, II (1921), 241-318. L. Desplagnes, *Le plateau central nigérien*, Paris, 1907. M. P. Marti, *Les Dogon*, Paris, 1957. D. Paulme, *Organisation sociale des Dogon*, Paris, 1940. D. Tait, 'An Analytical Commentary on the Social Structure of the Dogon', in *Africa*, XX (1950), 175-199.

¹⁶ G. Asmis, 'Die Stammesrechte des Bezirkes Sansané-Mangu', in *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* (1912), 71-128. A. W. Cardinall, *In Ashanti and Beyond*, London, 1927. J. C. Froelich, *La tribu Konkomba du Nord Togo*, Dakar, 1954, 146. D. Tait, 'The Family, Household and Minor Lineage of the Konkomba', in *Africa*, XXVI, 1956, 332-342. D. Tait, 'The Territorial Pattern and Lineage System of the Konkomba', in *Tribes without Rulers*, Editor J. Middleton, London, 1958.

under the impetus of a growing tendency towards social differentiation — which did not, however, evolve to a clearly defined gradation — amongst the free members of the community.¹⁷

The keeping of slaves was practised only on a limited scale by the *Tallensi*, of whom Rattray reported that slavery became a feature of their society only 'after the arrival of foreign elements which gave them chiefs'. (Rattray, vol. I, 263).¹⁸ Apparently the occurrence of an incipient form of slavery was connected with the initial shift towards social stratification.

A similar conclusion would seem tenable as regards the *Toraja*. There are two groups of *Toraja*, the *To Lage*, who kept slaves, and the *To Pebato*, amongst whom the practice was virtually unknown. Significantly, the extent of social stratification seems to have been different in each of the two groups. According to Adriani and Kruyt the slave-keeping *Toraja* (the *To Lage*) displayed 'a greater sense of discipline than the other tribes' (vol. I, 165), while the *To Lage* were also more capable of coordinated action than the *To Pebato*, who 'have no conception whatever of unity or leadership'. The greater awareness of personal power evidenced in the attitude of the *To Lage* chief had, in the opinion of Adriani and Kruyt, developed from his exercise of authority over his slaves. Although it would not be correct to speak of stratification amongst the free members of either of the two groups, the distinctions of status were, nevertheless, more sharply delineated in the slave-keeping group than in the group which did not practise slavery.¹⁹

Much the same situation as regards slavery and social stratification occurring amongst the slave-keeping *Toraja* was found to apply amongst the *Kpe*. In both communities slavery existed only to a limited extent and social stratification was either lacking or merely incipient. According to Ardener the factors determining status in the *Kpe* community were genealogy, age, and personal wealth. In Murdock's classification the *Kpe*, and also the *Toraja*, are regarded as non-egalitarian societies, both being allotted the symbol 'W', denoting 'wealth distinctions'. Slavery never assumed proportions of more than incidental importance amongst the *Kpe*. Organized slave hunts were not engaged in, but lone travellers

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- ¹⁷ M. Delafosse, 'Le peuple Siéna ou Sénoufo', in *Revue des Etudes Ethnographiques et Sociologiques*, I (1908), 16-32, 79-92, 151-159, 242-275, 448-457, 483-486. B. Holas, *Les Sénoufo*, Paris, 1957. M. Perron, 'Recherches sur toute survivance d'esclavage domestique ou de servage en pays sénoufo', in *Bulletin d'Agence Générale des Colonies*, 1933, 282-291. M. M. J. Vendeix, 'Nouvel essai de monographie du pays sénoufo', in *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, XVII (1934), 578-652.
- ¹⁸ M. Fortes, 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process', in *Africa*, IX (1936), 24-55. M. and S. L. Fortes, 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', in *Africa*, IX (1936), 237-276. M. Fortes, 'The Political System of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', in *African Political Systems*, Editors M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, London, 1940. M. Manoukian, *Tribes of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, London, 1952. R. J. H. Pogucki, *A Survey of Land Tenure in Customary Law of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories*. R. S. Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, Oxford, 1932, vol. I.
- ¹⁹ N. Adriani and A. C. Kruyt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes*, Batavia, 1912-1914, 3 vols. A. C. Kruyt, 'De slavernij in Posso', in *Onze eeuw*, XI, vol. I., 61-97.

were sometimes taken captive. The slaves were very few in number, and their position was not hereditary.²⁰

Having considered these nine instances which do not fully conform to the terms of our hypothesis we may now pose the question of what conclusions are to be drawn from the facts elicited.

For Siegel, who accepts the existence of slavery only when it is an established institution, probably none of these nine societies would be classifiable as slave-keeping communities.

It is doubtful whether slavery did, in fact, occur amongst the *Lobi* and the *Birifor*, the ethnographic data being too scanty to allow of a definite pronouncement in either case.

As regards the *Iban*, the *Dogon*, the *Konkomba*, the *Kpe*, and the *Tallensi* the various ethnographers state explicitly that only a small number of slaves were kept. Evidently, in none of the nine societies was slavery developed beyond an initial stage, and the position of the slaves was not clearly differentiated from that of the free members of the community.

It could, of course, be submitted that in the societies conforming to the terms of our hypothesis slavery was a feature of possibly no more than incidental importance. This possibility could apply in a number of instances. As has been pointed out in the comments on the character of slavery, it was, on account of the varying assessments of what constitutes an institution, assumed in doubtful cases that slavery did occur in the given society. The objection may be raised that this method might invalidate to some extent our argument, but that is certainly not so. Had more rigid criteria been applied in defining slavery the figures in the second row in Table I would have been lower and those in the third row higher, so bringing the statistical picture more in agreement with our hypothesis than it now is.

A further point to be noted regarding these exceptions is that the institution of slavery in the *Kpe*, *Senufo*, *Toraja (To Lage)*, *Iban*, and *Tallensi* communities only developed to an incipient phase, while there was also a slight trend towards social stratification. The fact that slavery has assumed minor proportions in societies in which differentiation of social position occurs in a rudimentary form does not contradict, but rather substantiates, our hypothesis.

From an analysis of the exceptions to our hypothesis it is found that marginal forms of slavery are possible without an accompanying

²⁰ E. Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, London, 1956.

occurrence of a marked degree of stratification amongst the free members of the community. Although the majority of cases are in conformity with our hypothesis, an all-encompassing validity can only be arrived at by adopting a less rigid formulation. Throughout our survey we have taken the existence of social stratification amongst the free members of a community as an indication of an operative differentiation of status and authority, and also as an indication of a situation permitting the socially acceptable utilization of the surplus production of a labour force forming a subordinate group in the community. In the case of the *Toraja*, for example, it appeared that both these indicative factors were present whilst social stratification did not occur. Obviously, the level of social differentiation below which slavery cannot occur is somewhat lower than the level above which stratification amongst the free members of the community becomes manifestly operative.

Perhaps superfluously, we point out again that stratification amongst the free members of the community does not necessarily imply the existence of slavery. Gradation of status can be sustained by other means than by slavery, by the imposition of obligatory labour, for example, or taxes or tributes. The question of the relationship between the nature of whatever form of obligatory labour is enforced and the structure of the social organization — that is, an assessment of the factors determining the separate or coincident occurrence of slavery, taxation, debt bondage, and related phenomena — is an aspect which is beyond the limited scope of this article.

2. *Incidence of slavery and category of resources.*

The following list gives the incidence of slavery in relation to the category of resources.

- a) slavery and open resources —
Tanimbarese, Kei Islanders, Mossi, Susu, Ashanti, Yoruba, Mende, Igbira (Panda), Ga; (9)
- b) slavery and closed resources —
Tahitians, Ibo; (2)
- c) slavery but no classification of resources —
Rotinese, Serer, Dahomeans, Wute, Jukun, Chamba; (6)
- d) slavery only incipient or possibly lacking and open resources —
Mangaian, Toraja, Iban, Gbari, Kpe, Dogon, Birifor, Senufo, Konkomba, Tallensi, Lobi; (11)

- e) slavery only incipient or possibly lacking and no classification of resources —
Easter Islanders, Margi (Kilba); (2)
- f) no slavery and open resources —
Loyalty Islanders (Lifu), Rennell Islanders, Bougainville, Ellice Islanders, Marquesans, Dobuans, New Ireland (Lesu), Mentawaians, Nsaw, Kissi, Mumuye, Bassakomo, Pangwe, Bete, Kadara, Yakö (Umor), Tenda (Coniagui); (17)
- g) no slavery and closed resources —
Tikopia, Trobrianders, Lau (Fijians), Manihikians, Tiv, Kabre; (6)
- h) no slavery and no classification of resources —
Ontong-Javanese, Matakam, Bijogo, Gure. (4)

These findings can be summarized in the following table:

TABLE II Category of resources and incidence of slavery.

RESOURCES		open	classification uncertain	closed	total
SLAVERY	yes	9	6	2	17
	only incipient or possibly lacking	11	2	0	13
	no	17	4	6	27
	total	37	12	8	57

From the above list it can be seen that the situation on *Tahiti* and amongst the *Ibo* does not conform to Nieboer's theory. There are various possible explanations for these two exceptions.

As regards *Tahiti* it could have been the striving for prestige on the part of the groups in the higher social strata that led to the economically unwarranted imposition of labour under constraint. The main consideration would then be not the likelihood of economic advantage to be derived from slavery — for there are references to a situation of closed resources — but the function of the slaves as a status symbol for the owner. Possibly also the scarcity of unoccupied cultivable land — with the consequence, according to Nieboer's theory, that slavery becomes superfluous — on *Tahiti* and in the territory of the *Ibo* has arisen comparatively recently. The literature consulted did not give any definite information in this connection.

On the other hand we found that a situation of closed resources does not in all instances indicate the availability of the services of a free labour force.

Progressive subdivision of the already scarce cultivable land on *Tikopia* and in the territory of the *Kabre*, for example, did not bring about the existence of a labour force voluntarily seeking employment. Particularly in egalitarian societies, where the kinship system is of primary importance there is little likelihood of the emergence of a landless group of labourers.

But despite these two exceptions it can be concluded that the distribution of the figures in Table II definitely suggests the existence of a connection, as postulated by Nieboer, between the incidence of slavery and the category of resources.

3. *Social stratification, the category of resources, and slavery.*

If social stratification is factually a prerequisite for the occurrence of slavery, then Nieboer's theory would apply solely to those societies in which there is a differentiation of status amongst the free members of the community. It may be recalled that stratification was operative in all the nine societies having access to open resources and practising slavery. (See Table II). In seven of the eleven societies having access to open resources and practising an incipient form of slavery a system of stratification applied or was, at least, developing. (*Mangaians*, *Gbari*, *Iban*, *Toraja*, *Kpe*, *Senufo*, and *Tallensi*). Regarding two of these eleven societies there was some considerable doubt as to whether slavery did occur. (*Lobi*, *Birifor*). Only in the case of two societies having access to open resources and practising an incipient form of slavery was there no stratification at all amongst the free members of the community (*Dogon*, *Konkomba*). From this data it is evident that a situation of open resources is conducive to the introduction of slavery, but mainly in stratified societies. There remains the question of whether the two factors of social stratification amongst the free members of the community and a situation of open resources together give rise to circumstances which in all cases result in the introduction of slavery, or, in other words whether slavery occurs in every stratified society having access to open resources.

Of the fourteen stratified societies with access to open resources there were nine in which slavery was practised (*Tanimbarese*, *Kei Islanders*, *Mossi*, *Susu*, *Yoruba*, *Ashanti*, *Mende*, *Igbira-Panda*, *Ga*), two in which slavery may or may not have occurred, (*Mangaians*, *Gbari*), and three in which slavery did not occur (*Rennell Islanders*, *Loyalty Islanders-Lifu*, *Nsaw*). Significantly, however, a form of servitude, which could not be described as slavery was a feature of each of these three societies.

It is consequently not possible to regard the combination of a situation of open resources and social stratification as constituting a set of circumstances inevitably resulting in the introduction of slavery.

4. *Conclusions.*

- a) The hypothesis that social stratification amongst the free members of a community constitutes a necessary condition for the occurrence of slavery is, although the connection between the two phenomena does tend to support this contention, apparently somewhat too rigidly formulated.
- b) A situation of open resources is a factor contributing towards the occurrence of slavery, and particularly in the case of societies in which stratification already exists amongst the free members of the community or is in the process of developing.
- c) If social stratification and a situation of open resources constitute prerequisites for the occurrence of slavery the question then arises of whether the combination of these two factors results in all instances in the occurrence of slavery. However, the phenomenon of slavery does not occur in all stratified societies having access to open resources. It cannot consequently be assumed that the combination of these two factors necessarily results in the occurrence of slavery. There are, besides slavery, various other means of direct and indirect compulsion by which a system of social gradation can be maintained.

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APPENDIX

Incidence of stratification and slavery in the societies examined and the category of resources.

The various classifications are denoted by the following symbols:

social stratification	+	open resources	+	slavery	+
egalitarian	—	closed resources	—	no slavery	—
only incipient or		no classification	○	only incipient or	
possibly lacking	×			possibly lacking	×
no classification	○			no classification	○

	Stratification	Slavery	Resources
Insular Pacific			
Hawaiians	+	○	—
Manihikians	+	—	—
Mangaiaans	+	×	+
Marquesans	×	—	+
Tahitians	+	+	—
Easter Islanders	+	×	○
Ellice Islanders	—	—	+
Ontong-Javanese	×	—	○
Rennell Islanders	+	—	+
Tikopia	+	—	—
Lau (Fijians)	+	—	—
Loyalty Islanders (Lifu)	+	—	+
Bougainville	—	—	+
Dobuans	—	—	+
New Ireland (Lesu)	—	—	+
Trobrianders	+	—	—
Indonesia			
Kei Islanders	+	+	+
Rotinese	+	+	○
Tanimbarese	+	+	+
Toraja (Barée)	×	×	+
Iban	×	×	+
Mentaweians	—	—	+
West Africa			
Bassakomo	—	—	+
Chamba	+	+	○
Gbari	+	×	+
Gure	—	—	○
Jukun	+	+	○
Kadara	—	—	+
Karekare	○	○	○
Margi (Kilba)	+	×	○
Matakam	—	—	○
Mumuye	—	—	+
Ndoro	○	○	○
Tiv	—	—	—
Wute	+	+	○
Birifor	—	×	+
Dogon	—	×	+
Kabre	—	—	—
Konkomba	—	×	+
Lobi	—	×	+
Mandingo	+	○	○
Mossi	+	+	+
Senufo	×	×	+
Susu	+	+	+
Tallensi	×	×	+
Ashanti	+	+	+

	Stratification	Slavery	Resources
Bete	—	—	+
Bijogo	—	—	○
Dahomeans	+	+	○
Ga	+	+	+
Ibo	+	+	—
Igbira (Panda)	+	+	+
Kissi	×	—	+
Mende	+	+	+
Serer	+	+	○
Tenda (Coniagui)	—	—	+
Vai	+	○	○
Yakö (Umor)	×	—	+
Yoruba	+	+	+
Pangwe	—	—	+
Kpe	×	×	+
Nsaw	+	—	+