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Résumé de l'article

Il y a un paradoxe dans la théorie célèbre d'Engels portant sur la formation de l'état qu'on trouve dans *Origine de la famille, de la propriété privée et de l'état*. L'état représentait, d'après Engels, le triomphe d'une élite peu nombreuse sur la grande majorité de la population et une défaite historique à l'échelle mondiale de la part du peuple. Pourtant, l'état athénien, l'exemple fondamental présenté par Engels, ne se conforme pas au modèle : au fur et à mesure que l'état évolue, il devient plus et non moins, « démocratique ». Mon étude explore la possibilité de résoudre ce dilemme au moyen d'un examen de l'essor du polis athénien à la lumière de la théorie récente de l'état primitif présenté par Henri Claessen et Peter Skalnik. L'analyse propose quelques observations de la dynamique interne des états primitifs et du rôle des relations de parenté et témoigne à la fin de la validité fondamentale de la vue d'Engels.

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Greeks and Victorians: A Re-Examination of Engels' Theory of the Athenian Polis

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There is a paradox in Engels' well-known theory of state formation contained in *The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State*. The state in Engels' view represented a triumph of a small elite of non-producers over the vast majority, and a world-historical defeat for the common people. Yet the Athenian state, Engels' prime example, does not conform to the pattern: it becomes more "democratic" as the state evolves rather than less. The paper explores the way out of this dilemma, through an examination of the rise of the Athenian *polis* in light of the recent theory of the Early State put forward by Henri Claessen and Peter Skalnik. The analysis offers insight into the internal dynamic of early states and the role of kinship, and in the final section argues for the essential validity of Engels' view.

Il y a un paradoxe dans la théorie célèbre d'Engels portant sur la formation de l'état qu'on trouve dans Origine de la famille, de la propriété privée et de l'état. *L'état représentait, d'après Engels, le triomphe d'une élite peu nombreuse sur la grande majorité de la population et une défaite historique à l'échelle mondiale de la part du peuple. Pourtant, l'état athénien, l'exemple fondamental présenté par Engels, ne se conforme pas au modèle: au fur et à mesure que l'état évolue, il devient plus et non moins, «démocratique». Mon étude explore la possibilité de résoudre ce dilemme au moyen d'un examen de l'essor du* polis *athénien à la lumière de la théorie récente de l'état primitif présenté par Henri Claessen et Peter Skalnik. L'analyse propose quelques observations de la dynamique interne des états primitifs et du rôle des relations de parenté et témoigne à la fin de la validité fondamentale de la vue d'Engels.*

The origin of the state has been one of the three key disjunctures that has characterized the evolution of human society, the origin of agriculture and the rise of capitalism constituting the other two. On the question of the origin of the state much ink has been spilt and a plethora of theories have sprung up. Because the actual origins of states often occurred before the full development of writing systems, the details were always hazy and often legendary. Archeological research has added greatly to our knowledge of state origins, but considerable gaps remain. An aura of speculation and mystery still surrounds the question of the *origin* of the state, and perhaps always shall.

In recent years a different approach to the problem has been pioneered by Dutch and other European scholars. Recognizing the difficulties of knowing state origins *per se*, they have shifted to focus on the *early* state as an analytical concept (Claessen and Skalnik, 1978). But instead of including under this rubric all pre-capitalist state

societies, Claessen and Skalnik make a sharp distinction between the *early* state and the *mature* state. In the former, kinship, tribal political forms, and tribal religion still dominate the social life of the polity, while in the latter *civil*, non-kin-based institutions predominate. Thus the early state model replaces the pre-state/state dichotomy with a trichotomy—pre-state/early state/mature state.

Claessen, Skalnik, and their co-workers have been active in putting forward this revised view of the formation of the state. In their two books, *The Early State* (1978) and *The Study of the State* (1981), they have assembled case materials from all over the world and theoretical perspectives from Europe, North America, the Third World and the socialist bloc. A third volume on the early state is in the press (Claessen, Smith and Van der Velde), and a fourth volume is to come out of a conference held in August 1983 in conjunction with the International Congress in Quebec.[1]

The concept of the *early state* appears simple, but it is deceptively so. In fact, it offers us a powerful tool for the analysis of the development of state societies. First, the *early state* concept is inherently dialectical. Much, if not most, previous writing on the state treats its origin as an event. The early state concept treats it as a *process*. As Claessen and Skalnik argue,

> The fact that many scholars have considerable difficulty in drawing the dividing-line between the state and the non-state is the result of their failure to understand that the transformation was not an abrupt mechanical one, but, on the contrary, was an extremely lengthy process. A process characterized by the development of a distinct socio/political organization which we propose to call the EARLY STATE. (1978: 21)

Second, treating the early state as a process rather than an event turns our attention towards the internal logic of its development. As Claessen and Skalnik argue:

> To reach the early state level is one thing, to develop into a full-blown, or *mature* state is quite another. An often long and complex evolutionary process separates these two stages. Hence in the various societies that can be classified as early states, the degree of complexity, the extent of the territory, the size of the population, and the degree of power of the central government may differ considerably. (1978: 22)

Third, because the state's development unfolds over a very long time, the origin of the state is only the starting point of analysis. Although the actual origins of states may be clouded in mystery, the transition from early state to mature state often goes on in the full light of written history. Thus, we have at least the opportunity to understand some of the social forces at work in far greater depth than is true for the origins of the state.

This methodological advantage was not lost on the social evolutionist scholars of the last century, such as Morgan, Maine, and Engels, who used the written sources from classical antiquity as the major documentation for their theories of the formation of the state. In fact, a closer examination of these Victorian theorists reveals that their version of the *origin* of the state corresponded to what we would now call, following Claessen, the *transition* from the *early* to the *mature* state. This conflation is certainly true of Engels' and Morgan's treatment of the rise of the Athenian polis (Engels, 1972 [1884]; Morgan, 1963 [1877]). The pivotal events of "state formation" in Engels' classic account occurred in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., at least two centuries after the actual formation of the Athenian city-state in the 8th and 7th centuries (and two millenia after the first state societies appeared in the Near East).

For Engels the development of the state went hand in hand with the destruction of the gentile constitution, that is, the supercession of kin-based jural institutions by the civil institutions of the city government (Engels, 1972: 171-181). This pivotal transformation is built into Claessen and Skalnik's typology of early states (1978: 22-23, 589, 633-34, 639-42). They distinguish three types: the *inchoate*, the *typical*, and the *transitional* early states; each is defined in terms of the relative political weight of kin-based and non-kin-based institutions.

> The *inchoate* early state is found where kinship, family, and community ties still dominate relations in the political field; where full-time specialists are rare; where taxation systems are only primitive and ad hoc taxes are frequent; and where social differences are offset by reciprocity and close contact between the rulers and the ruled.
>
> The *typical* early state exists where kinship ties are counterbalanced by territorial ones; where competition and appointment to office counterbalance the principle of heredity of office; where non-kin officials and title-holders begin to play a leading role in government administration; and where ties of redistribution and reciprocity still dominate relations between the social strata.
>
> The *transitional* early state is found where the administrative apparatus is dominated by appointed officials; where kinship influences are only marginal aspects of government; and where the prerequisites for the emergence of private property in the means of production, for a market economy and for the development of overtly antagonistic classes exist. This type already incorporates the prerequisites for the development of the mature state. (Claessen and Skalnik, 1978: 23)

The early state can thus be regarded as an intermediate form of considerable time depth in which the organs of pre-state society still exert a powerful influence. The early state adapts kin-based institutions, tribal political forms and tribal religions to new and expanded purposes. Only after a period of evolution are the new organs of state power able to supercede and dispense with the pre-existing kin-based order.[2]

* * *

The purpose of this paper, then, is to apply the perspective of the *Early State* to the rise of the Athenian polis and in particular to Engels' theory of the formation of the state which relies so heavily on the Athenian case. In so doing, I hope to clarify two related issues in state origins: first, the question of the role of kinship in social evolution, and second, the correlation between the rise of the state and the development of inequality.

Engels and the Greek Case

The major contours of Engels' argument in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972 [1884]) are familiar to us. Engels argued (following Morgan) that in the beginning human societies were universally based on kinship. And, in the process of social evolution, principles of social organization other than kinship began to dominate human affairs. He also argued that the major movement in human history was from the relative equality and communal ownership of property of the pre-state societies to the increasing political and economic inequality and the private ownership of property in hierarchical societies. The formation of the state represented a key disjuncture and structural break in this sequence.

Engels used Athens as the paradigmatic case in *The Origin*. He delineated the nature of the Greek *gens* (clan) and the depredations made upon it by the explosive growth of commodity production. The merchant and agrarian aristocrats, rising on a tide of wealth in commerce, slaves and land, destroyed the economic base of the old clan order. The state and civil institutions crystallized as an instrument of class domination on the ruins of what Engels called the "gentile constitution."

Engels' general formulation of the broad movement from kin to civil society and from equality to hierarchy has been amply supported by a century of research. The twentieth-century studies of state formation by White (1959), Fried (1967), Childe (1951), and Steward (1955) in the earlier period and later by Friedman and Rowlands (1977), Etienne and Leacock (1980), Flannery (1972), Carneiro (1970) and many others have confirmed the general sequence. The problem arises when we look at the substance of the changes that actually occurred in the Athenian state during the period 600-400 B.C. Here, we are faced with apparent anomalies. For example, the major reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes that crystallized the constitutional form of Athens and destroyed the gens were democratic rather than despotic in character. They expanded civil rights, rather than limiting them, and increased equality rather than decreasing it for the citizenry. In short, they *appear* to accomplish precisely the opposite of what Engels had in mind.

Engels was attracted to the Greek material for several reasons. As an educated European of the nineteenth century, Engels was naturally steeped in the subject-matter of classical civilizations. Also, he was obviously following closely on Morgan's plan in *Ancient Society*. Third, the ancient Greeks' emphasis on commerce, commoditization and private ownership of land, as well as their "democratic" form of government, must have struck Engels forcibly as a precursor of nineteenth-century capitalism. And fourth, it is clear that, as a number of previous and subsequent commentators have pointed out, class struggle played a fundamental role in the rise of the Greek state (Wason, 1947; de Ste. Croix, 1981). This too must have attracted Engels.

But, as we shall see, the specific case of Athens gives us a picture that is more nuanced and more complicated than Engels' general theory of the state implies. We will see, for example, that kin-ordered societies may often contain within them fairly advanced forms of inequality; and, paradoxically, the formation of the state may serve to restore equality even while it destroys kin-based institutions.

To his credit, Engels showed that he was perfectly aware of the apparent contradictions, and a deeper reading of *The Origin* will indicate how he disposes of them. But for the moment, let us focus on this apparent contradiction. The issue underlying it allows us to look deeper into the meaning of the state and its impact on the social life of human beings, and allows us to re-examine as well our notions of primitive egalitarianism and the kin-based social order.

The Image of Greece in the Social Sciences

Why is it that so many social scientists and historians have been fascinated by the Greek case

material, and particularly by Athens? There are a number of reasons. We love the Athenians in part because, in our image of them, they are so much like us. Their ideas of citizenship, their political parties and enthusiasms, their "democratic" institutions, their tolerance of scepticism and critical attitudes revealed in the tragedies and comedies and in their philosophies, all appeal to us in terms of the hegemonic ideology of liberal capitalism. The image of the Greeks pervades our thought, perhaps more deeply than we are aware. It is no coincidence that the banks are made of marble, and for 200 years all banks and most public buildings in capitalist countries were built to look like Greek temples (Hamlin, 1944; Hitchcock, 1976). Greek models, Greek thoughts, Greek and Roman law were the core curriculum for western ruling classes until very recently (Turner: 1981). Right into the 1960s Third World scholars in Ibadan and Karachi had to know more about Greek history than they did about the history of their own countries.

Given this hegemony, it was understandable that Morgan and Engels, as classically educated Europeans, would base their arguments on the origin of the state on the Greek polis. As Engels says,

> How the state developed, how the organs of the gentile constitution were partly transformed in this development, partly pushed aside by the introduction of new organs, and at last superseded by real state authorities — this process, at least in its first stages, can be followed nowhere better than in ancient Athens. (1972: 171)

No other case of state formation can possibly have such a multi-layered density of meaning for Western scholars, even today, simply because so much of the very language of social science is embedded in the Greek experience. Anthropology (itself a Greek word), to its credit, has struggled to extricate itself from the graver excesses of ethnocentrism implied in this love of the Greek model. One of the anthropologists who have attempted to peel off some of these layers is Stanley Diamond, in his essay on Plato and the concept of the primitive (1974). The late George Thomson did much to work from the classical side for a rapprochement with anthropology (Thomson, 1946, 1949, 1955). And our studies in Meso-America, the Andes, Angkor-Wat, Great Zimbabwe, Shang China, and other early states have expanded our horizons to the point where no anthropologist would subscribe to the position taken by the Victorian scholar W.W. Fowler in his still-standard textbook, *The City-State of the Greeks and Romans* (now in its fifteenth printing and still on syllabuses in political science at University of Toronto):

> Plato and Aristotle, like Herodotus before them, seeing the peoples around them living in village communities like the Aetolians or Macedonians, or in very imperfect states like those of the Oriental nations, and themselves enjoying the ripe culture, the liberty and the comfort which the city-state had brought them, easily came to believe that there was something almost divine in the polis enabling it to outstrip all other forms of association in the power of developing man's best instincts. (Fowler, 1946: 57)

In short, whether on the keen critical mind of Engels or the bearers of the hegemonic ideology like Fowler and others, the images of the Greek polis exerted a fascination. It is entirely appropriate that anthropology add this "tribe" to our repertoire of classic case materials.

The Athenian State: Origins and Development

The main contours of this account follow an excellent short paper (in Dutch) by Edward van der Vliet: "The Development of the Greek States: Problems and Hypotheses" (1981). The earliest states in the Aegean date to the 16th-12th centuries B.C. From Mycenaean archeology and Homeric texts we get a picture of Greek society at that period of what Moses Finley has called "petty bureaucratic states" (1970). The Mycaeans were literate; they wrote in Linear B. Though the scale of their states might be quite large, the configuration of the state conformed well to Claessen and Skalnik's *inchoate early state*. The "bureaucracy" was limited to a few palace functionaries and kin and clan dominated the lives of nobles and commoners alike. The kings were really war lords who had to prove themselves in battle in order to validate their claims to the throne. They exacted tribute from a free peasant class which provided the bulk of production. The small slave class consisted, in the main, of women tied to the nobility in domestic service. The contours of the state conformed well to a model of an agrarian polity in which a semi-divine military caste rules over a large kin-based peasantry.

The Mycenaean kingdoms collapsed after 1200 B.C.E., a period marked by invasions from the north by land and sea. The identities of the raiders are problematic. "Dorians" comprised one element. Among others were "sea people," nomads and pirates who scourged settlements as far afield as Syria, Lybia and Egypt, and who came to rest in the Levant (where they became the Philistines hence — Palestine). Internal factors — such as soil exhaustion, overgrazing, social unrest — may also have played a role in the Mycenaean collapse.

A period of "dark ages" ensued in Greece,

lasting about 400 years. Archaeologically there is a dramatic shrinkage in the size of settlements, and a decline in trade (Snodgrass, 1977). Literacy was lost. Since writing in Linear B was strictly a task of palace administrative functionaries, loss of writing can be taken definitively to indicate disappearance from the scene of the state as a political form.

Around 800 B.C. the Archaic period begins, and this is where the subject matter of this paper begins as well. Homer and Hesiod date from this period, although Homer wrote about events, by then semi-legendary, of four centuries before. The Archaic period was marked by two major developments: the rediscovery of literacy, with a new Semitic alphabet borrowed from the Phoenicians, and the appearance of iron.

During the Archaic period there was a rapid development of the productive forces both in agriculture and in manufacturing. Many new communities appeared and these expanded rapidly in size (Van der Vliet, 1981: 80). Each community was stratified by wealth and birth and each was ruled by an authority based in a proto-urban centre. This was the beginning of the Greek city-state or "polis."

A number of these Archaic poleis crystallized during the period 800-600 B.C. Monarchical forms of government existed here and there, but monarchy quickly gave way to oligarchic or aristocratic forms of rule. A few noble families circulated the higher civic offices among themselves.

Social organization consisted of four basic units: the *tribe*, the *phratry*, the *deme*, and the *clan* or gens. Each Greek city had three or four tribes, depending on whether the founders were Dorian or Ionian in origin. (Athens, being Ionian, had four.) These tribes were not exogamous. The phratry was a grouping of clans. The deme was a reference to a locality; its members were not recruited on the basis of kinship but rather on the basis of residence, and therefore it did not correspond strictly to the other units. The fourth unit was the clan, or gens (*genos* or *patria* in Greek), a patrilineal descent group with an apical semi-mythical ancestor.

There is a continuing debate among classicists about the function of phratries and clans during the Archaic and Classical periods (800-400 B.C.). Morgan, Engels, Thomson, and other scholars, following Aristotle and other classical sources, saw the clan as a direct descendent of the kin-groups of tribal society (cf. Thomson, 1949: 104-109). Andrewes (1971: 77-78) argued that the phratries were composed of unrelated groups and that the clans were a recent invention strictly confined to the nobility. He expressed doubts whether they were all kinship groups in origin. Gardner had gone even farther and argued that the clans and phratries of classical Athens were not and had never been kin-based units (1925: 584-85). Bourriot (1976) presents the most forceful recent statement of this position, arguing that the clans were invented aristocratic groupings that had nothing to do with kinship. Roussel (1976) questions, along similar lines, the "tribal" structure of Greek city-states.

One problem with the Bourriot-Roussel position is that if the clans had no link with the kin-based social order, then how did people organize themselves and on what basis? As Snodgrass says,

> [Roussel's] is a clever theory and, like others of its kind, it is destructive as well as constructive in its effects. For if there was no tribal order in the era before the formation of the Greek states then what system was there? To what group larger than the family did men owe allegiance? (1980: 26)

On balance, the evidence suggests kinship must have played a major role in social life and that, though far from egalitarian, the Greek gens must have retained some features which are associated with communal tribal society (cf. Snodgrass, 1980: 25). The gens thus showed, as Engels argued, a distant but unmistakeable relationship to primitive communities.[3]

However, Archaic society was also a stratified society, and had travelled a very long distance from a primitive communal past. With the rediscovery of literacy and the introduction of iron, there was an explosive development of the productive forces. Agriculture became specialized in olive oil and wine production, and land concentrated into larger and larger holdings. Rapid development of commerce and shipping encouraged production of commodities for exchange. There was a trade in luxuries with Sicily, the Black Sea coast, the Levant and elsewhere. These changes were accompanied by a rapid growth of population, soon reaching levels that approached the carrying capacity of the land.

The result was an acute and continuing social crisis that racked the Greek cities from 680 B.C. onwards. There were several outcomes of this social crisis. First, there was massive colonization and outmigration from the Greek heartland. Within 200 years the Greek colonies stretched from Marseilles to the southeastern corner of the Black Sea. Colonization thus acted as a safety valve to reduce population pressure. The second outcome of the social crisis was the rise of tyrannies. One-man rule became increasingly common from 650 onwards, and verged in some cases on dynastic succession. A third outcome was inter-state

warfare, a constant background to the development of the poleis in the 8th to the 5th centuries.

But the development that concerns us most is in the agrarian sector. It is clear that the main root of the social crisis lay in the intensifying inequality of land-holding, and the immiseration and pauperization of the peasantry. In Athens, as commoditized agriculture and slave labour developed throughout the seventh century, the aristocracy seized the lands of small holders for non-payment of debts. There were several classes of poor. The *hectemoroi* were share-croppers who had to surrender a one-sixth portion of their crop to the landowner and were thus in a state of permanent debt bondage.[4] A second group were actual debt slaves, who had lost their freedom for being unable to repay a debt. In addition, intermediate categories of people were themselves free but had mortgaged their lands and were forced to surrender their children into slavery for non-payment of debt. By the end of the seventh century B.C., thousands of peasants had lost their lands and had been exiled into slavery in other Greek cities.

The tensions from this intense social conflict threatened to destroy the fabric of Athenian society and led, in 594 B.C., to the appointment in Athens of Solon as Archon, the leading administrative office. This remarkable man, a noble, poet, and merchant with widespread foreign ties, made pivotal reforms that lie at the very heart of the transition from an early to a mature state. Solon, whose edicts were written in the form of poetry, made six major reforms (Moore, 1975: 61). First, he cancelled debts on land, pulling up the pillars or stone markers which indicated a lien or mortgage on agricultural land. He made loss of freedom for debt illegal. Second, people already enslaved were freed, and many were thus allowed to return from exile. Third, he changed the system of weights and measures (there was no coinage at this time) so that people who still had to pay back debts could do so at a fraction of the cost. Fourth, he divided the population into four classes, based solely on wealth. In the past birth — membership in an aristocratic clan — as well as wealth had been a criterion for admission to the highest class. This reform thus broke a key link between clan and society. However, he retained the four old Attic tribes, each of them with their tribal assembly. Fifth, he expanded the pool of citizens eligible to hold public office. The City's offices, called magistries, were distributed to the various classes, the wealthiest class having the most important positions and junior classes having less important positions. City treasurers, for example, were only drawn from the highest class. And finally, he decreed that the actual office holders themselves were to be selected by lot from lists provided by the four tribal assemblies.

After promulgating his laws, Solon was attacked and reviled by elements from both sides: by the rich, for giving away too much; by the popular masses, for not giving enough. Solon, in good liberal fashion, tried to be even-handed. One of the poetry fragments attributed to him states:

> To the people, I gave as much privilege as was sufficient for them, neither reducing nor exceeding what was their due. Those who had power and were enviable for their wealth I took good care not to injure. I stood, casting my strong shield around both parties, and allowed neither to triumph unjustly. (Moore, 1975: 64)

Despite some opposition, the majority of Athenians supported Solon's reforms, and many wanted him to become a tyrant.[5] But this remarkable man declined the honour and is said to have gone into voluntary exile in Egypt for ten years so that his plan could work itself out among the people. Many of his laws were still in place in Aristotle's time, 250 years later.

Viewed from the perspective of economic anthropology, what Solon's reforms achieved, in effect, was to put a floor underneath the citizens as a class. A level was defined below which they could not sink. Recruitment to the growing body of slaves was closed to the citizenry and the distinction between a citizen and a slave became sharper. Henceforth, the Athenian merchants, and later the army and navy, were to provide slaves from external sources.

Viewed from the perspective of the internal class politics of Athens, it is the even-handedness of Solon's reforms that gave the emerging Athenian civil state the appearance of standing apart from society, an independent force free from the contending classes. (We will return to this point in the concluding section.)

Almost a century after Solon, in 507 B.C., Athens had again reached a state of acute social crisis. Peisistratus and his sons had ruled in Athens as tyrants from about 548 to 509. In general, Peisistratus had been a popular and benevolent ruler, supporting the poor and expanding agriculture. For example, he lent state funds to poor farmers to stave off bankruptcy. (Peasants could no longer be enslaved, but they could go into bankruptcy.)

However, after his death and the assassination of one of his sons, Athens was brought again to the brink of civil war. Cleisthenes, the next major figure in the formation of the Athenian state, was a

member of a noble family that had opposed the tyranny. After much struggle, including civil war in the streets of Athens and the armed intervention of Sparta, the tyranny was overthrown and Cleisthenes came to power as Archon with sweeping powers similar to Solon's. While Solon worked to counterbalance the kin-based institutions with civil organs, Cleisthenes made a much more radical break with the past constitutions, and can be said to have ushered in the classical Athenian democracy. He completely reorganized society along civil lines, and broke whatever links remained with the kin-ordered polity.

It is worth looking into his reforms in some detail since we are enabled to see the actual transition from an *early* to a *mature* state form. Let us follow the four basic units in Athenian society through the transformations that Cleisthenes effected.

First, the four Athenian tribes with their tribal assemblies were abolished, and ten new tribes with new cult figures were created from whole cloth. Second, the demes, that is the towns, villages and city wards of Attica, about 170 in number, became the basic building blocks of the new tribes. They were organized into 30 units, called trittyes, ten from the city, ten from the coast, and ten from the interior. These 30 trittyes were assigned by lot to the ten tribes, one from each region: so each tribe had one from the city, one from the coast, and one from the interior. This colossal gerrymander created a total scrambling of loyalties and primordial ties. Fourth, since demes varied greatly in number, the trittyes had to be equalized in size. A single trittye could contain from one to seven demes. The Boul, or council, which had 400 members in Solon's time, was expanded to 500 to accommodate 50 members from each new tribe.

Along with these structural changes, Cleisthenes effected a quantum expansion in the size of the citizenry, by setting a wider definition of who was an Athenian citizen; this secured the claims of those who by reason of foreign birth of one parent or another were threatened with disenfranchisement by the oligarchic factions which had wanted the narrowest possible definition of citizenry. Perhaps most significant were the reforms that further blurred distinctions of rank between low-born and high-born. Cleisthenes decreed that clan and family names were no longer to be used as surnames. Instead, the *deme* membership was to be used as a surname. Furthermore, this deme name became hereditary. Even if one left one's deme, one's children and their children would continue to use the deme name as their surname. (Locality, not kinship, became the criterion of identity.)

This shifted fundamentally the locus of political activity and allegiance. Prior to Cleisthenes, membership in one of the old Athenian clans and phratries was an essential prerequisite to citizenship. After Cleisthenes, the clans were shifted aside and the deme, and only the deme, became the central locus of political life. As one scholar put it,

> The deme was the microcosm of the government of the city as a whole, and the deme was the starting point for anyone who wished to hold any office in the city. As a basic unit for political life the deme was much smaller and radically different from those used before. Thus reform cut across and broke up old alliances and power blocks. (Moore, 1975: 36)

The reforms of Cleisthenes sealed the fate of the gentile constitution. Clans as such no longer played a central role in political life. But the clans were not completely abolished in the new order. They continued to play a very important role in the observance of rituals. Clan shrines, festivals and processions were maintained, and could be observed well into the fourth century (Vernant, 1974). The clans, and other kinship groupings, were now on the private side of a growing public/private split. They undoubtedly played a role in the social reproduction of families and local communities, and hence, indirectly, of the society; but they were basically cast out of any jural role in civil institutions. It is this key disjuncture that Engels made the centrepiece of his theory of the state (1972: 227-233).

Though more reforms and transformations in Athenian democracy occurred in the fifth and fourth centuries, these need not concern us. Enough has been said to lay before the reader the main facts on which to base a discussion of the issues raised at the outset.

Contradiction and Paradox in Engels' Theory of State Formation

How do we account for the extraordinary paradox contained in Engels' prime case? As civil society crystallized in Athens, the rights of citizens expanded, when they should have contracted; conversely, the people gained freedom even as the kinship-based institutions, the ultimate source of their freedom, were being destroyed.

The answer is not too hard to find. The expanding citizenry was only one segment of Athenian society. The "democratic" reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes were closely linked to the

rise of slavery and to the growing economic domination of Athens over her neighbours. As Finley (1963; 1980), Anderson (1974), and others have suggested, the character of the Greek state was the product of a trade-off: power was extended to poor and middle peasants, in order to ensure their loyalty and active participation in the task of running a slave-based commercial and military political economy.

The participation of the citizenry was required in three critical areas: first, in the management of a larger and larger slave labour force; second, as soldiers in the citizen army to defend Athens against other Greeks (and, later on, the Persians); and third, and not incidentally, through regular military adventures a regular supply of slaves for the farms, workshops, and later the silver mines. In short, the freedom of the citizen was dialectically linked to the unfreedom of the slave (cf. Finley, 1980; Padgug, 1976). As Perry Anderson has said in relation to slave modes of production in general[6]:

> Military power was more closely locked to economic growth than in perhaps any other mode of production, before or since, because the main single origin of slave labour was normally captured prisoners of war, while the raising of free urban troops for war depended on the maintenance of production at home by slaves; battle-fields provided the man-power for corn-fields and *vice versa*, captive labourers permitted the creation of citizen armies. (1974: 28)

This point is echoed by a number of commentators, who emphasize that the crucial determinant in Cleisthenes' reforms was the military factor, the creation of an efficient hoplite army (Vernant, 1974; Jeffrey, 1976; Snodgrass, 1980). Edward van der Vliet (personal communication) has pointed out that before 507 B.C. the Athenian armies marched in military units recruited from the clans and phratries. After Cleisthenes, the new military formations recruited from the demes meant that the man fighting next to you, on whom your life depended, could well be a stranger. This factor made new forms of loyalty necessary: loyalty to the deme and the state, and not to the clan or the family.[7]

The question can legitimately be raised of how much power the lower classes of Athens actually had. Although there was scope for upward mobility, and many offices were chosen by lot, most of the major offices in civilian and especially in military affairs were occupied by men of wealth, noble birth, or both.

It is also worth noting that besides the foreigners and the slaves, another casualty of the democratic reforms were women (Pomeroy, 1975; Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982). Classical Greek society was patriarchal in the extreme. The equality accorded to male citizens did not extend to their wives and daughters. The double standard was rife. Women were strictly secluded in Athenian society, and remained legal minors throughout their lives, while men carried on a variety of outside sexual activities with other men, with boys, and with slave women. The subordination of women, of course, was a point correctly emphasized by Engels as integral to the rise of the early state.

All this said, it still remains that Engels picked a primary case of state formation which did not fit easily into his general theory of the formation of the state. To paraphrase E.P. Thompson, this anomaly has something to do with the peculiarity of the Greeks. I am indebted to van der Vliet for the suggestion that the case of Athens might be quite atypical of early states (1981: 87-90). The records of Athenian society show an unusually central role for merchant wealth and commerce, when compared with other states at similar stages of development. Soon after 600 B.C., Solon prohibited the export of grain. Not long after, Athens became dependent on foreign grain supply, making it the first non-agrarian state in history. The widespread evidence of debt slavery, mortgaging of land, and in later centuries the appearance of banks, stock exchanges, and other sophisticated financial devices, indicated an unusually high level of monetization (see also, Finley, 1980: 86-89).

I certainly would not go so far as some economic historians (e.g., Levy, 1967; see also Thomson, 1955: 189), who have called the ancient Greeks capitalists; but they certainly qualify in some sense as mercantilists. This is particularly clear when we observe the economic policies of the fifth century Delian League. This factor, I feel, led Engels astray in ascribing to the merchants a decisive role in the formation of the state. Merchants may have played such a role in Athens — but in Hawaii? Shang China? Mesopotamia? Meso-America? The evidence doesn't support it. Merchants are present in all these cases (though less developed in Hawaii), but in none do they predominate the way they did in the ancient Aegean.[8]

If Engels can be faulted for anything in *The Origin*, it is the assumption at points of a unilinearity in social evolution that is not borne out by the facts. There are several pathways through the early state, and the pathway taken by Athens is just one.[9] The irony is that there is nothing in the broader formulation of historical materialism that is incompatible with multilinearity, and at many points in their writings Marx and Engels not only

drew attention to this, but insisted that this kind of analysis was absolutely fundamental to historical materialism — for example, Engels' often-quoted letter to J. Bloch (Engels, 1968: 682).

Athens may not be typical of state formations, but then, in another sense, no state is typical: all have their own peculiarities. Having said this, I don't mean to imply that all bets are off and that an infinite number of pathways exist for the development of the state. In fact, it is probably the case that four classes of phenomena lead to state formation, and all of them have to be present, though the weighting of the four factors will vary. First of all, economic factors: the development of productive forces and societal scale have to reach certain critical thresholds. Second, military factors: through conquest and coercion, political dominance has to be won and defended. Third, ideological factors: the essential creation of legitimacy for the new order. And fourth, political centralization and class struggle, as one class seeks to generate itself and to impose its domination, while the other classes are called into being through resistance and accommodation. The Athenian case material shows us the complexity of how these factors can interact in a specific case, and there is no reason to believe that any other case is less complex.

Kinship and Primitive Communism

The Athenian case shows that the kin-ordered mode of production should not be conflated with primitive communism. Kinship as a mode of organization is capable of absorbing all sorts of exploitation and inequality. There are a number of examples from recent anthropological studies: the lineage mode of production in West Africa (Rey and Dupre, 1972), the Polynesian ramage (Sahlins, 1958; Goldman, 1970), and the calpulli of the Aztec (Wolf, 1959; Kurtz, 1978) are all examples of extremely stratified societies that still operate in a kinship mode. We have tended to romanticize the kin-ordered institutions and to equate them with communalism, sharing, and mutuality. But they can also be a guise for extreme forms of inequality. Patron-client relations may be carried out in a kin idiom, and many feudal ties use kinship as a metaphor.

The Athenian case, in short, is interesting because it does the opposite of what the main Englesian theory predicts. Here we see the transition from an unequal early state to a seemingly less unequal mature state. And we are dazzled by the appearance of balance and moderation and justice that we saw in Solon's reforms. Yet, the overall effect is as Engels predicted, and the irony of the seeming paradox is not lost on him.

What Engels saw, and what others may have missed, is the sweep of history beyond the confusion of cases. Despite the evident expansion of rights for the class of male citizens, the formation of the Greek state in its net effect on human freedom was negative. Greater equality for men, greater subordination for women, foreigners and slaves, comprising the remaining seventy-five percent of Athenian society in the 5th century B.C.E. The decline of the kin-ordered institutions in Greek society did, paradoxically, create greater "freedom," while allowing the Athenian state as a whole to practise inequality on a much larger scale. It is part of our Victorian heritage that we focus only on the first half of the Greek equation.

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NOTES

1. The Dutch workers have been particularly fruitful in merging anthropology and classical scholarship. I was particularly interested in that aspect of their work, and I spent part of 1982-83 in Holland, talking to early state scholars at Leiden, Amsterdam, and Gröningen.

2. The scheme of the early state/mature state is anticipated in a number of other sources. For example, in

the Soviet periodical *Vestnik drevnei istorii* a scheme was presented in 1952 for a periodization of world history which relied on an early/mature state distinction which corresponds in some ways to the Claessen/Skalnik formulation. As reported by Thomson (1955: 13-14), "Two stages may be distinguished in the growth of slave society — early and mature. In the early stage, slavery is patriarchal and directed towards the satisfaction of immediate needs rather than the production of commodities. Trade is poorly developed. There is widespread enslavement for debt, and a considerable class of small producers, consisting mainly of peasants not yet driven from the land. Property is of the oriental type. The state takes the characteristic form of despotism, and cultural development is slow. In the mature stage, thanks to further development in the productive forces, slavery is directed towards commodity production, and in the main spheres of production free labour is replaced by slave labour.... The characteristic form of state is the *polis*, culminating in slave-owning democracy. Cultural development is rapid, leading to knowledge in the true sense of the word.... As typical examples we may cite, for the early stage, Egypt and Mesopotamia, and, for the mature stage, Athens after Solon" (Thomson, 1955: 13-14).

3. To argue that kin-based social order died out long before the seventh century B.C.E. but the state doesn't appear until the middle of the 6th century is to leave open the question of what *non-state, non-kin* organization would look like. If Archaic Greece had such a system it would place it outside the range of ethnographic cases known to anthropology.

4. Some authorities argue that *hectemoroi*, meaning a sixth-part, referred to the amount the peasants were allowed to *keep*, thus implying a surrender of 5/6 of their production.

5. Until that time Athens had managed to avoid one-man rule, though it was commonplace in most other Greek cities. Tyranny reached Athens a half century after Solon, in the person of Peisistratus.

6. Edmund Morgan (1975) has made a similar point about the connection between slavery and democracy with reference to 18th-century Virginia. It is true that the 6th century Athenian army did not itself capture slaves on the scale of the Roman Empire. However, it is evident that the projection of Athenian military (and naval) power was an essential ingredient in ensuring the supply of foreign slaves from merchant and other sources.

7. After 480 B.C. the lowest class of citizens, who were still excluded from the land forces of Athens, were recruited in large numbers for the expanded navy.

8. George Thomson (1949, 1955) incorrectly reads back into the Mesopotamian and Egyptian early states the same high level of mercantilism observed in classical Athens. On the other hand, we should resist the temptation to read more commercialism into the Greek economy than the data warrant. Sixth-century Athens was a largely agrarian society and overseas merchant activity was a mixture of trade, piracy, and raiding. Van der Vliet suggests (personal communication) that tenth-century Icelandic society (e.g., Njal's Saga) offers illuminating parallels to the pre-Classical Athenians. Garnsey *et al.* (1983) presents further important material on the "primitivist-modernist" debate over Ancient economy.

9. Eleanor Leacock, one of the foremost modern interpreters of Engels, makes this point in her Introduction to the 1972 edition of *The Origin* (Engels, 1972: pp. 48-49).

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