Rejoinder
Monsieur Paul E. Lovejoy

Résumé
P. E. Lovejoy — Réplique.
Tout en faisant siennes plusieurs des observations et remarques des commentateurs de son article, l'auteur rejette certaines des critiques de Person, en ce qui concerne plus spécialement la situation des Kisi et l'extension de Vimperium ashanti.

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In somewhat different ways, Roberts and I have described the geographical division of labour which characterized the precolonial economy of West Africa. The main features of this division as I interpret it included the following: first, a regional focus for economic development; secondly, relatively weak links to external, non-African trade and production; thirdly, the importance of ecologically determined restraints on production; fourthly, the inter-relationships between ethnicity and the social organization of trade and production; fifthly, production based on a mixture of slavery and peasant labour. I have argued that ecological factors set limits on developments, but it should be emphasized that these environmental factors did not determine developments. Furthermore, I have provided examples of how the State controlled or engineered economic change. Nonetheless, State intervention was only one response to the possibilities for organizing economic behaviour: commercial diasporas, secret societies, ethnic confederations, as well as States performed these functions. Because of my concentration on the origins of the kola trade and the development of the commercial network for the distribution of kola in West Africa, I spent relatively little time on the organization of production, except to emphasize that there was a division between producers, merchants and consumers based on ethnicity. Nonetheless, a more thorough examination of production would reveal various combinations of peasant and slave labour. Peasants were generally mobilized through institutions derived from kinship, while slaves were organized sometimes in large concentrations and sometimes in association with peasants. I have examined these questions of labour mobilization elsewhere (1979: forthcoming).

Amselle, Baier and Chauveau do examine one or more of the five themes which underlie my research. First, Amselle correctly draws attention to the pioneering work of Claude Meillassoux, whose conception of 'autosubsistence' and whose study of slavery are fundamental to my analysis of West African society in the precolonial era. Secondly, Baier's defense of Hopkins is fully justified and consistent with aspects of my own orientation. The market failed to generate sustained growth in West Africa in the precolonial period, as Hopkins has perceptively demonstrated. A focus on market exchange draws attention to the weak

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linkages between the external world economy and the regional economies of West Africa. Thirdly, Chauveau establishes that States were not the only means of organizing productive and distributional systems. He relies on the case of the Baule, who are interesting for comparative purposes, since the Baule occupied the gap which separated the kola production zone into a western region and an Akan segment. All three critics recognize that the old debate between substantivists and formalists has been superseded by new theories, Marxist and non-Marxist, which incorporate elements of the older approaches.

Person's comments require a direct response in order to clarify some factual details and differences in interpretation. First, I had indeed made an error in the identification of Guan as a Voltaic language. Not only do I stand corrected, but I have had Table II and the text changed accordingly. Secondly, on the spelling of Sumanoro/Sumahoro, I must refer to the experts, namely Person himself and Amselle. I have followed Amselle (1977: 54-55) in using 'Sumanoro'.

Person's other two points are more difficult. I can accept Person's remark that Kisi traditions are not clear enough to enable us to reach a conclusion on their origins. I attributed to the Kisi a savanna origin on the basis of Person's earlier research, and certainly if he now has modified his interpretation I must follow suit. The identification of the Kisi with other language groups in the West Atlantic sub-family, specifically the Mel group, suggests that the people who spoke these languages in the past probably lived close to each other, as indeed they still do. The Mande are clearly the later arrivals. If the Kisi were in the approximate area where they now live, it becomes necessary to explain why they were the only ones who successfully resisted the Mande incursions in the 15th and 16th centuries. If some or all of the Kisi came from the savanna at that time and replaced other Mel groups, then their movement south probably was associated with the Mande. No matter what the answer to this particular problem is, my main conclusion still stands: there was a major transformation in the production zone in this period. The Kisi were either part of that transformation or they resisted it. In either case, we need to know more about the organization of the production zone and how this changed over time.

Person's final criticism of my study must be rejected completely. As I state on page 119, Salaga became the largest town in Asante in the 19th century. Person apparently has interpreted my statement to mean that Salaga was an Akan town, which I do not even suggest. The Asante State had come to incorporate Akan and non-Akan areas, including Gonja, where Salaga was located. As Wilks first demonstrated (1971; 1975) and I have subsequently verified (1980; 1981), Salaga became the gateway for the export of Asante kola north. Salaga's rise to prominence was directly related to conscious, administrative decisions in Kumasi. The town was not loosely attached to the Asante State; it was tightly controlled. Hence its status as an Asante town cannot be questioned.
Admittedly, its size can be questioned, since population estimates are based on weak and incomplete data. We are safe to say that Salaga was one of the largest towns in Asante; but was Salaga larger than Kumasi? On this point I must refer to the authority on 19th-century Asante history, Ivor Wilks, who says of Salaga: ‘Although its population fluctuated greatly, for part of the nineteenth century it enjoyed the distinction of being the largest town within Greater Asante.’ (1975: 244.) Salaga, founded in the first decade of the 19th century and part of Asante until 1874, was probably larger than Kumasi for about fifty years and remained about the same size as Kumasi during the 1860’s and early 1870’s. Wilks estimates Salaga’s population as ranging from 30,000 to 40,000 during this period (1975: 244). The population of Kumasi was between 15,000 and 25,000 during the first half of the century, and was perhaps 40,000 in the 1860’s, when Salaga was estimated to have 40,000 to 45,000 people (1975: 93-94, 374, 611). The capital district around Kumasi had a larger population, perhaps much larger, than that of the area around Salaga. The greater Kumasi included numerous villages and plantations, and Wilks estimates the total population as about 155,000. Salaga also had its plantations (Lovejoy 1981), but it is unlikely that the number of people there was as great.

These points raised by Person highlight a crucial dimension of my efforts to reconstruct the history of the kola trade in West Africa, viz. the methodological problems facing the economic historian. I relied on linguistic, ethnographic, written and other sources in my reconstruction. Such a synthesis is bound to contain errors. Amselle’s allusion to such errors in the text, which he considers secondary to the theoretical issues, glosses over this crucial methodological concern. The factual base is essential but difficult to attain, for the economic historian must deal with a large area and long time span if he hopes to examine the geographical division of labour in the precolonial era. The concentration on a smaller area runs the risk of missing the links between different regions. A focus on a shorter period has the danger of losing track of the dynamic element in history. Too often pure theory is static. It is unfortunate that Amselle did not include a list of the factual errors he noticed along with his theoretical discussion.

**ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**

Lovejoy, P. E.


* See also Bibliography, above pp. 128-134.