Rezumé
R. Roberts — Commerce à spécialisation écologique et croissance économique : réponse.
Réponse aux commentaires de Baier, Amselle, Chauveau et Person. L'auteur admet le caractère mécaniste d'une explication trop strictement géographique (ou écologique) de la division du travail, mais maintient l'importance différentielle des contraintes de cet ordre. De même, en ce qui concerne les rapports entre économie marchande et organisation étatique, il souligne la nécessité d'une analyse contras-tive de l'économie de marché dans les formations étatisées et non étatisées.

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I consider myself fortunate to have S. Baier, J.-L. Amselle, J.-P. Chauveau, and Y. Person comment on my paper. I am equally pleased that the discussions presented have confronted what I consider some of the very pressing issues in African economic history and anthropology.

My paper 'Linkages and Multiplier Effects' consisted of two major parts. The first was a critical discussion of 'The Domestic Economy' in A. G. Hopkins' *An Economic History of West Africa* (ch. II). The second was a speculative effort to reinterpret, in light of the argument presented in the first part, some of the dynamics of West African domestic economic history prior to the 19th century. I was concerned with institutional characteristics of the economy, which I suggested were bound up with the intimate expression of politics and economy. I had hoped that my paper would provoke discussion, and I am glad to see that it has.

Among the very useful issues raised by the commentators, I would like to press two salient criticisms of my paper. The first is the degree to which the concept of geographic division of labour implies a mechanistic interpretation. Amselle is certainly correct to point out that as a means of explanation the concept is faulty, because it suggests human passivity in face of environmental constraints. I use the term in a descriptive sense. By using it, I want to highlight the difference between markets in which social divisions of labour may emerge and those in which this does not happen. This distinction is important. I want to suggest that, despite the brilliance of Hopkins' *An Economic History*, his use of the market as a mode of explanation poses serious analytical problems. By suggesting that in West Africa a geographical division of labour emerged, I am hinting at a very different type of market development and economic growth than that which emerged under capitalism. Moreover, this type of economic growth had important structural consequences which impinged upon future economic growth and change. In attempting to identify the directions of economic growth, both in industrial and pre-industrial economies, concepts such as multiplier effects and linkages do have validity. But they are mere indicators: we need to know much more about the quality and nature of that growth. There are certainly isolated cases of social divisions of labour emerging in

*Cahiers d'Études africaines, 77-78, XX-1-2*, pp. 177-180.
specific areas of West Africa at specific times. One of our tasks is to explain why this happened when it did, and why these cases remained isolated.

This brings me to the second issue, which Baier so excellently presents, but which is also addressed by the other commentaries. What is the relationship between trade and the State, and how can this relationship be expressed in terms of causality and determination? Here too an argument must be made against mechanical explanation of cause and effect. As Amselle points out with reference to Northrup's study (1978) of southeastern Nigeria, trade did exist in the absence of ‘States’—although as one of my students has pointed out, even Horton's stateless societies (1971) have all the attributes of State structures in yet undeveloped forms. The simple dichotomy between the presence and absence of States misrepresents the issues of economic incentives. In a brilliant but ultimately unsatisfactory discussion, Sahlins (1972) asks why some households in some societies consistently fail to use their manpower resources even to meet subsistence needs. Instead, we must look, as Geertz (1973; 1979) and Bourdieu (1977) suggest, to the ideology and culture of societies, to the place where people express their aspirations and strategies for life and survival. This is what Van Dusen Lewis (1979) has attempted in his study of Dukolomba, in Mali. Lewis argues that the Bamana walk a fine line between balancing economic incentives (and extra-economic incentives such as taxes) and the need for societal persistence through the dual strategy of producing both grain and descendants and controlling the potentially deleterious effects of the market on social cohesion. However, the starting point for such a study must lie in a detailed analysis of material conditions and social relations of production, such as advanced by Meillassoux (1960; 1964; 1975).

I think there are two variables which ultimately impinge upon the balance of economic decision making, which Amselle (1977) has pointed out in his study of the Kooroko and in his present commentary. These variables are the level of State organization and the level and quality of market activity. By level of State organization, I am concerned with the mode of articulation and expression of class or social groups, the degree and nature of surplus extraction, the nature and form of bureaucratic institutions, and the nature and ability of the State to interfere, involve, or insert itself in the conditions and relations of production. By level and quality of market activity, I am concerned with not only the nature and volume of commercial transactions, but the degree to which commodity production has altered the organization and social relations of production. A major distinction in regard to the quality of the market activity is between precapitalist and capitalist forms, for the penetration of capital in precapitalist social formations fundamentally alters the articulation of established modes of production (Wolpe 1972; Meillassoux 1975; Post 1979; Shenton & Freund 1978; Shenton & Watts 1979).
I would like to conclude by stating that my short paper on West African economic history had very narrow aims. I wanted to raise the level of discussion associated with Hopkins' monumental work. I turn first to Hopkins when I need a reference or when I prepare a lecture. Yet I believe that despite the ground-breaking achievement of the book, African economic historians and anthropologists must begin to use Hopkins not only as a source of inspiration for particularist studies, but also to address the paradigms presented. We need to analyze the operation of regional economic systems, including the best documented ones we have (the Central Sudan). We need to understand why changes occurred when they did. We are dealing with complex situations in which climate, internal security, military successes and failures, enslavement, political centralization and disintegration, and other variables all occur simultaneously; yet these variables do not affect the economy equally. I proposed that political economy was the motor for economic growth and change. I continue to believe that we must ascertain the nature of the State, its methods of surplus appropriation, its internal dynamics, and its influence on regional economies to better appreciate economic change in the past. But I do accept that my brief discussion of the State begs the issue of the origins of States, the economic foundations of States, and the causality between trade and political economy. Economic activity most certainly takes place without States, but does it change when there are States? We also need to explore more fully the nature of change and development in pre-industrial settings. We need to know more about inter-regional economic linkages, and we need to know more about the nature of production, consumption, and distribution within particular societies in the past. We must pursue all these issues also on a theoretical level, for the reconstruction of past economies rests upon the conceptual tools we employ.

My other goal in writing this general paper on West African economic history was to provoke discussion. In this context, I consider myself successful. I hope that the quality of the discussion can be sustained on the level achieved in the commentaries.

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* See also Bibliography, above pp. 145-148.
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