Economic Models and the Recent History of the Highlands

IAN CARTER

The period since the First World War has seen considerable changes in Scottish historiography. Before 1920 explanations of the changes which have come over the Highlands since 1700 typically were couched in political terms, with Culloden and its aftermath being regarded as a key event. This is Graham's position in his still widely-read book (Graham 1899:205, 210).[1] The work of Margaret Adam heralded a reinterpretation, however. For Adam the causes of emigration from the Highlands in the late eighteenth century were economic rather than political (Adam 1920, 1921), and her interpretation has steadily grown in influence through the succeeding years as a number of outstanding scholars have adopted, applied and elaborated her work. In the work of Hamilton (1932, 1963), Gray (1957), Gaskell (1968) and Smout (1969) we find similar explanations of the radical changes that have affected the Highlands since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In highlighting a basic economic model used by these writers, and in therefore referring to them as economic historians, I do not wish to suggest that any or all of them focus on economic factors to the exclusion of political and social factors. Smout's recent book, for example, has rightly been hailed as a pathbreaking social history of Scotland in the period with which he is concerned. I wish to isolate and examine a model which is implicit or explicit in the work of all these writers rather than to categorise scholars as social, economic, or constitutional historians. This is a task for which, as a sociologist, I would be singularly ill-equipped in any case.

What I wish to do here is to suggest that this economic explanation of Highland history is based on a theoretical model which, as with all models, guides the selection of data—thus systematically illuminating some features of Highland history while systematically ignoring other features, or at least consigning them to a residual category of factors with no causal significance. It is my contention that if one uses different models—and in my case that means sociological models—then firstly one will look for different evidence with which to test hypotheses derived from that model, and secondly one will arrive at different conclusions about the causal factors at work in the Highlands in the past two centuries.

The Dual Sector Model

What I called above the economic model of Highland history is based on an analogy, or more strictly a homology, between the economic history of England and that of

Scotland. Since the model used in accounts of English economic history has been so influential, we need to look at it in some detail.

The Agricultural Revolution and the contemporaneous and even more far-reaching process of industrialisation in England are taken to mark a profound change in economic and, to a lesser extent, in political and social structure. The commercialisation of agriculture, and concomitant changes in agricultural technology, crops and so on is seen to be a prime cause of subsequent non-economic changes—the replacement of ascription by achievement as the basis of recruitment to élite roles; the decline of the extended family (but see Laslett 1965); a move, in Weberian terms, from traditional authority to rational-legal authority: in short, a change from a traditional society to a modern society.

This dichotomy between a traditional society and a modern society is, as Bendix shows, about as old as the processes which we are considering. One of its major sources is the Scottish political economists of the eighteenth century, in particular Smith, Ferguson, and Millar (Bendix 1966, 294–6). The structure of this dichotomy in the economic form in which we are most interested here is very like the structure of the dual economy model employed by many developmental economists when studying developing countries.

> The notion of dual economy implies that, within one political framework, there is one sector which operates according to the principles of modern capitalism. This sector is commercially sophisticated, linked with international trade, dominated by motives of maximisation, and in the colonial context, almost entirely in the hands of aliens or residents of alien extraction. Such aliens are primarily from the metropolitan country of the governing power. . . .
>
> Opposed to this sector and separated from it is the traditional peasant economy, which according to the puristic form of the theory, is conservatively oriented, interested in security and continuity rather than change, not concerned with maximisation of profit or of resource use, oriented towards the satisfaction of social needs rather than reacting to international forces, and incapable of engaging dynamically in trade and commerce. Except for a very small minority of Westernised natives who have left traditional society, the indigenous population lies in this sector.
>
> The puristic form of the theory held that there was minimal interaction between these two sectors, and that the example of the commercial sector did not lead to innovation in the traditional one. (Belshaw 1965:96).

With one important exception we may take Belshaw's lucid passage as a summary of the model being used, implicitly or explicitly, by modern economic historians writing about the Highlands. The exception concerns the question of innovation in the traditional sector. Impersonal economic forces are seen to have been irresistible in the Highlands:

> At least as important as the outcome of the battle (of Culloden), however, were the changed economic circumstances of the rest of the country, transmitted to the north as a rising demand for Highland products within two decades of the rebellion. . . .

> Indeed, so persistent and unprecedented was this pressure that it is hard to believe that it would not have made much the same impact on the country even if the '45 had never occurred. (Smout 1969:341).

What are the implications of using such a dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' sectors? Firstly, this is what Bendix calls a 'retrospective' model. One looks back from the 'modern society', with its unique constellation of economic, social and political elements, towards the 'traditional society', which is marked by a very different constellation. The danger in this situation is of regarding these particular historical variables as valid in all cases of 'modernisation'. It is the problem of keeping a clear distinction between ideal type constructs and actual historical sequences—the classic fallacy of misplaced concreteness.

The second feature of this traditional-modern dichotomy has again to do with the structure of the model. In such a 'before and after' model, where the before and after are linked by a period of change, there is a great danger of regarding the two end points as static, equilibrated conditions, linked by radical change. And since we live in 'modern' society, and can appreciate the changes going on around us, the danger is much greater that we will regard 'traditional' society as static than that we will so regard 'modern' society. Some sociologists of course do manage to regard both terminal points as static but historians tend to be rather better at avoiding such pitfalls of ahistoricism.

One further implication of the traditional-modern dichotomy deserves mention. The dichotomy was generated, in the main, by classical economists who used it as a descriptive tool in the analysis of contemporaneous British (and particularly English) economic structure. It has since been upgraded by many writers to the position of a generalised, theoretical model. But one must not forget the particular constellation of historical conditions that gave it birth. Better to try to develop a historically based typology of structural changes, as Barrington Moore has tried to do for agrarian structure in his seminal work (Moore 1967:413–52), than to force all cases into a Procrustean bed of English economic history.

Economic Explanations of the Transformation of Highland Agriculture

We must now turn to the accounts of recent Highland agricultural history given by economic historians. These accounts are typically couched in terms of two independent variables—population pressure[2] and impersonal economic forces.

(a) *Population Pressure*

It is extraordinarily difficult to be precise about population trends in Scotland up to the decennial censuses beginning in 1801. Parish registers of the type currently being explored to such effect in England (Wrigley 1966) are not common (but see MacPherson 1967, 1968). Even when the decennial censuses are available, problems still remain. The census reports are organised on a parish basis, and parishes, particularly on the

West coast, are too large to serve satisfactorily as units of analysis. It is possible to analyse population changes at a lower level through examination of Enumerators books, but these sources are not available for censuses before 1841 (Storrie 1962:152). Thus more powerful techniques of demographic analysis are available only for relatively late stages of the process in which we are interested.

Some gross statements about population trends may be stated however. Population increased over the whole Highland area between 1750 and 1850, but this increase was unevenly distributed:

> . . . An area including the southerly parts of the country of Argyll together with the whole eastward-tilted section of the Highland plateau . . . was characterised through all its constituent sections by very moderate increase in population; while, in the remaining areas, the seaboard from Morvern to Cape Wrath together with the more northerly islands, the general rate of increase was much greater (Gray 1957:59).

Gray suggests two possible explanations for these differences in the rate of population increase. The first concerns the policies of landlords—up to 1815 landlords in the areas of greatest population increase (West of the watershed) tended to try to hold on to population resources in order to support labour-intensive industrial operations like kelping. The most important factor for Gray, however, is differential rates of out-migration to industrial areas. The pull of the developing industrial towns, particularly those of the Forth-Clyde Valley, was stronger in the Eastern Highlands than in the area West of the watershed. Voluntary out-migration from the Eastern area consequently reduced the problem of population increase in that area. But the rapid increase of population in the Western area caused increasing pressure on economic resources in that area.

(b) *Impersonal Economic Forces*

Most writers who accept the economic explanation of the agricultural transformation of the Highlands acknowledge some social factors—the crumbling of the clan system, the changing situation of the chiefs, and so on. But an emphasis on the economic explanation makes such factors seem less than important. Gaskell puts the point clearly:

> But although it was a situation in which the rich and the ruthless had the best chances of survival, it would be mistaken to put the blame for the resulting clearances simply upon greedy or malign landlords, for they were really the result of impersonal forces beyond the control of either landlords or tenants, of 'the total impact of the powerful individualism and economic rationalism of industrial civilisation on the weaker, semi-communal traditionalism of the recalcitrant fringe' (Gaskell 1968: 26, quoting Gray 1957: 246).

We need to consider how these impersonal forces radically altered the Highland economic structure, with profound social consequences. The basis of Highland agriculture in the early eighteenth century was the production and export to the Lowlands

of black cattle (Haldane 1952). These exports paid for necessary imports of grain from the rich arable lands of the Lowlands and the East coastal plain. Apart from such imports, Highland agriculture was largely self-sufficient:

> To a great extent the ordinary needs of life were met from within the highland farm, by work in the cottage, or by direct local exchange (Gray 1957:41).

The form of agricultural organisation was runrig. Land was divided into infield, outfield, and hill. Infield was intensively manured and intensively cropped every year. Outfield was manured much less, if at all, and was allowed to lie fallow between infrequent crops. Hill provided rough grazing for beasts. Summer pastures in the hills (shielings) were used to relieve pressure on precious pasture in the straths.

The unit of agricultural organisation was the joint farm. From two to twenty tenants, perhaps with their subtenants, cultivated the land co-operatively. Each tenant was assigned a number of 'rigs' of infield and outfield on which he grew his subsistence crop—chiefly oats at this time—and bere, his 'drink crop'. Each tenant was assigned a 'souming', the right to graze a specified number of beasts. Methods of allocating land varied considerably. Allocation of land between tenants might be altered periodically, or the arrangement might settle down into 'fixed runrig'. Under 'mass tenure' allocation would be unnecessary, since herds and crops were husbanded in common, and profits and rent burdens shared (Smout 1969:121–2). No matter how allocation was handled, however, runrig involved a high degree of co-operative activity between tenants and subtenants: co-operation which was underpinned by the kinship obligations of the clan system which formed the basis of the structure of land tenure.

The chief owned all the clan lands, but parcelled all or almost all of it out in large blocks to his tacksmen. The tacksmen in turn parcelled all or most of their holdings out to tenants, who might let some of their holdings to subtenants. The chief and (in general) his tacksmen lived on rents—in the tackmen's case on the difference between rents received from tenants and rent paid to the chief. Rents were paid in money, kind (live bestial, for example) or labour—except in the case of tacksmen—and were heavy, amounting to about one-third of total production.

To this situation, not of idyllic equilibrium to be sure, but of slowly moving economic change, came Improvers intent on repeating in the Highlands their triumphant transformation of Lowland agriculture. The Improvers' creed had four tenets; enclosure, improved technology (the iron plough, for example), drainage, and rotation of new crops like turnips and artificial grasses. These innovations took root most speedily and effectively on the Southern fringes of the Highland area—in Perthshire and, to a lesser extent, in Argyll—and in the East coastal belt from Inverness to Wick.

The next phase of agricultural change in the Highlands was the spread of a new, and extremely profitable, cash crop from the South—sheep. By 1800 extensive sheep-rearing dominated the grassy hills of the West side as far north as Morvern. By 1820 Sutherland, 'once the most traditional (county), had become the stronghold of

commercial farming on the very greatest scale' (Gray 1957:88). By 1850 the rest of the Highlands, and the Western Islands (except Lewis) were under sheep.

The response of the landlords varied to the opportunities presented by sheep farming.[3] In general, however, it seems that landlords east of the mountain watershed tended to have fewer doubts about the unmixed blessings that extensive agriculture would have. Clearance of the sitting tenants would be less necessary in this area, since the pull of the industrialising Lowlands was stronger in this area than on the Western seaboard. What is clear is that, at least until after 1815, the landlords whose lands lay west of the watershed failed to develop sheep-farming on a massive scale since they were already enjoying large profits from other cash crops and industrial activities—linen-spinning, fishing, forestry and, most important, kelp and black cattle. The production of such goods either needed, or at least was not incompatible with, a large population engaged in subsistence agriculture. Kelp collection, for example, was a highly labour-intensive industrial activity and landlords frowned on emigration from their estates as a consequence. Land-tenure was reorganised into the subsequently characteristic Highland agricultural unit—the croft. The landlord allowed the crofter a small consolidated piece of ground from which he could produce enough food for his family. But the croft did not provide its tenant with enough work for a full week. The crofter could also engage in industrial activities like kelp, forestry and linen-spinning. In the interests of the maintenance of a large population, holdings were divided and sub-divided until a bare subsistence was available to the crofter.

The landlord raised the rents of their tenants as prices for cash crops rose to their peak after 1815. '. . . Indeed, it had become the accepted policy so as to set rents as to remove the whole cash income (of husbandry) in return for the tenants' right to use arable plots for subsistence agriculture' (Gray 1957:148). The landlords tied their consumption patterns to this income level and, typically, made no attempt to amass capital either for reinvestment or as a buffer against lean times.

Thus when, after 1815, prices crashed for all the cash crops on which West seaboard estates depended, it was the landlords who suffered. The crofter living on his small arable plot was able to subsist by not paying rent. Rent arrears rose all over the West Highlands. Despite more or less serious attempts to economise in consumption, the landlords and their estates drifted deeper and deeper into debt. The crunch came in 1846–7, when the potato crop—the major subsistence crop—was destroyed over large areas of the Highlands. The landlords were now required to supply relief to tenants who had been in arrears of rent for years. The economic burden was too great. Landlords found themselves faced with two alternatives—to sell the estate or to turn it over to sheep, the one still profitable cash crop, which would involve clearing some proportion of the sitting tenants from the land. Even if they sold the estate it was more than likely that the new owner would clear it for sheep. For many landlords the situation had gone so far that there was no alternative to sale—by 1850 the whole of the Long Island had changed hands, for example. Thus passed 'the historic aristocracy of

the clan—the chiefs' (Gray 1957:187), their position destroyed by the impersonal forces of price runs and the penetration of the money economy.

The Dual Sector Model and the Highlands

We must now return to the modified dual economy model presented earlier in this paper, and ask whether the economic historians whose account of recent Highland agricultural history we have briefly sketched do employ such a model. Let us consider Smout's work, for his subtle and compendious work would seem *a priori* to be less open to this charge than either Gray, Gaskell or Hamilton.

Smout is clearly committed to efficient, rational farming methods. In discussing the role of landowners in Lowland agriculture he says:

> . . . Before 1740, indeed, most of the changes were very slow indeed. Economic circumstances generally did not then markedly favour the farmer who went over to modern methods of production, but in that period those exceptional landowners who tried to alter agricultural methods played a vigorous role as innovators and improvers (Smout 1969:292).

He then goes on to commend one particular landowner:

> It is impossible not to be impressed by the energy and vision with which a man like John Cockburn of Ormiston burst open the high walls of tradition on his estate (Smout 1969:292).

The important point is that Smout is accepting the Improvers' definition of their actions (note the assumption that Improvers improve things). The Improvers use 'modern methods', are 'vigorous' as 'innovators and improvers', 'burst open the high walls of tradition'. All of these actions are progressive in that they change the agricultural structure in ways that Smout considers to be ultimately beneficial. What is the goal to which these tendencies lead? The Lothians are seen as being 'In the van of change and in close contact with the market' (Smout 1969:292). The rate of progressive change accelerates after about 1780:

> When in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century rents and prices began to move ahead fast as market opportunities expanded, the scattered improved farms suddenly began to show enhanced profits compared to those of their traditionalist neighbours. . . . The best English farming continued to be held up for admiration . . . (Smout 1969:298–9).

It is clear that 'good farming' for Smout is commercialised farming which is, in Belshaw's words, 'commercially sophisticated, linked with international trade, dominated by motives of maximisation' (Belshaw 1965:96). Good farming is agriculture carried out in the modern sector of the economy.

Conversely, in some areas landowners might face a problem.

> In the backward parts the landowner was still often unable to find tenants who were willing or able to take initiative upon themselves (Smout 1969: 299).

Backward is a relative term. With respect to what were these areas backward? Smout provides the answer earlier in his book when discussing the nature of agriculture before the eighteenth century:

> The trouble was that in the course of time tradition became a god, and when better agricultural practices became known or farming for the market became increasingly important the peasants' blind worship of custom often proved a stumbling block even to changes that might benefit the community as a whole (Smout 1969:123).

In other words, the peasants were

> . . . conservatively oriented, interested in security and continuity rather than change, not concerned with maximisation of profit or of resource use (Belshaw 1965:96).

The existence of a sector exhibiting these features—variously called a traditional, subsistence, or peasant sector in the literature—is a drag on the efficient development of economic resources. Since economic development (defined as the move to a monetised market economy) is the aim, the existence or persistence of such a subsistence sector is a curb on a desirable process.

> Undoubtedly social factors impeded penetration into the Highlands of economic forces that could have changed them. The surplus the Highlanders tried to sell outside was black cattle, but the widespread social institution of stealing cattle from a neighbouring clan was so prevalent that it seriously reduced the profitability of ranching within the hills, and thus limited the impact that market forces could have upon the Highlands until they were completely reduced to obedience to law and order (Smout 1969:341).

Fortunately, however, the impersonal forces emanating from the modern sector are so strong that the resistance of the subsistence sector must inevitably crumble (Smout 1969:345). Thus we arrive back at impersonal economic forces as the irresistible driving force of history.

Does it matter that Smout and, I would argue, Gray and Gaskell are using a covert dual economy model? I think that it does, for two reasons. Firstly it leads them to interpret the actions of Highland tenants in a particular way (and in a way in which the actors themselves did not describe their actions). Secondly, as noted above, it leads them to regard economic forces as the main cause of the transformation of Highland economic and social structure, thus consigning other potentially important causal factors automatically to a minor role.

On the Conservatism of the Highland Peasant

We have seen that the subsistence sector of a dual economy is seen to be composed of actors who are conservatively oriented and not interested in the maximisation of profit or of resource use. We have also seen that this is the view of Smout towards the Highland peasants.

Belshaw challenges the view of actors in the subsistence sector as uninterested in maximisation *per se*. Rather, one should think of actors seeking maximisation of those factors which they themselves believe important (Belshaw 1965:96). To define maximisation solely in terms of profit and resource use is to impose the observer's own categories on the actions of those whom he is observing. Furthermore, the development of motives of economic maximisation is not impossible in the subsistence sector—provided that one finds the right incentive system (Higgins 1968:235). Smout is right in seeing it to be 'a tragedy that no-one in authority ever made a serious attempt to harness the co-operative traditions of the joint-farm to the improving ideal, and to create with assistance from the landlords sheepfarms run by groups of Highland tenants . . .' (Smout 1969:359).

It is clear that Highland tenants were not totally opposed to innovation. Two examples will make the point. Firstly, the basic subsistence crop was switched from oats to potatoes all over the Highlands within a very short period of time—40 years. This is a remarkably fast change when one considers the crucial importance of this crop in a subsistence economy. The spread of potato cultivation therefore represents a remarkable example of the acceptance of innovation by Highland tenants.

The second example concerns attempts to do what Smout regrets did not happen—'to harness the co-operative traditions of the joint-farm to the improving ideal' (Smout 1969:359). Consider Morvern:

> The system was an extension of the old runrig, cattle raising township on a higher level of organisation. In the old days the cattle and sheep were grazed in common, but were always individually owned; the essence of club farming was some degree of common ownership. The club farm in Morvern about which most is known was at Achadh nan Gamhna, where six tenants farmed between them 840 sheep, 48 cows and their followers and six horses on 2,265 acres. . . . The farm may have been organised as early as 1823–4; . . . it came to an end when Sellar bought Acharn in 1838 and evicted the population. About five years later the people who were moved by the Gordons from the Auliston area of Drimnin Estate to Oronsay Island formed themselves into a club farm of six members. The stock on this unpromising islet of 429 acres had to be mostly cattle, but these people achieved the remarkable feat of making it support a population of over fifty, dependent on approximately the same number of cows, over a period of twenty-five years (1843–66). [The tenants were evicted in 1868.]
>
> Lastly there was a club farm on Lochaline Estate before its members were evicted by Mrs. Paterson in 1866 (Gaskell 1968:51–2, 95).

Note that each of these club farms ended in eviction rather than bankruptcy, despite the fact that the period of their existence spans the most difficult economic period in the Highlands in the nineteenth century.

Why were Highland tenants regarded as conservative and as refusing to accept innovation? Part of the explanation lies in the attitude of influential groups outside the Highlands:

> The habit of assuming that the Highlanders were congenitally incapable of any effort or self-help had been ingrained in upper-class Scottish thinking since the days of James VI (Smout 1969:359).

In part, however, it is clear that forms of innovation which did not mesh in with the tenants' definitions were rejected or at least resented. Tenants were willing to take up potato cultivation and to accept the reorganisation of joint-farms into crofts because these innovations allowed the tenants to maximise their preferred good—social solidarity—by increasing the supply of the subsistence crop, thus allowing an increasing population to subsist on the land. Why were tenants not willing to accept other innovations? An explanation may be sought by returning to the dual economy model. Myint distinguishes two possible definitions of the subsistence sector. In the first, subsistence merely means 'non-monetised'. In the second use of the term, the inhabitants of the subsistence sector are living at a 'minimum subsistence level'. In this situation:

> . . . The peasants had to devote the whole of their time and resources to obtain a minimum subsistence level of living before the opening up of trade. Here, even if switching their resources from the subsistence to the cash crops promised some monetary gain, they would have been obliged to reduce their subsistence output to grow the export crop. This would have made their entry into export production and the money economy a hazardous undertaking with no margin to meet a possible risk of starvation if something went wrong with their cash crops. In this case, we should expect the peasants to be justifiably hesitant about leaving the security of their subsistence economy (Myint 1964:45).

One now has to ask why Highland tenants were existing on this knife-edge of subsistence in the eighteenth century. Gray's answer is population increase, and he shows that this increase (and therefore the subsistence problem) was much greater west of the mountain watershed. But the point about these Western areas is that landlords positively discouraged emigration and reorganised land tenure into the crofting system in order to hold a large population on the land—a large population which was needed for labour-intensive industrial operations like kelping. Thus the conservatism of tenants in the most pressed areas—the Western seaboard and the Western Isles—after the cash crop price crash may be attributed in large part to the landlords' own policies.

The same point may be made about the failure of authoritative groups to develop the joint-farm. Malcolm Gray writes that:

> The tragedy of the Highlands in these years was not that sheep came but that this great increase in production was achieved by inhibiting rather than by releasing the energy of the peasantry: sheep created no opportunities for small farmers (Gray 1957:86).

Sheep created no opportunities for small farmers for two reasons. Firstly, Highland tenants could not afford the capital sums necessary to stock a farm with Lintons or Cheviots. Secondly, sheep farms were let out in very large blocks.

These reasons have little to do with the ability of Highland tenants to adopt com-

mercialised sheep farming. But they have a great deal to do with the policies of landlords—the extremely high level of rent demands, the immiseration of larger tenants and those tacksmen who did not emigrate to the colonies with their capital (Adam 1920:1921), and the search for rich Lowland, Southern Upland and English sheep farmers who would purchase the bankrupt estate.

Towards Sociological Models of Highland History

Before considering the suitability of specific sociological models for Highland history, one must consider the validity of the basic distinction between Highland social structure and Lowland. My grounds for making a clear distinction are firstly that the actors involved made such a distinction between the Highlands and the Lowlands, and acted in the light of this distinction.

Secondly, in the early eighteenth century the Highland Line marked sharp discontinuities in language, land tenure, agricultural organisation, and kinship and political structure. It thus seems worthwhile to use a distinction between Highland and Lowland social structure, heuristically at least.

(a) *Social and Cultural Pluralism*

The idea of the dual economy, in a colonial context, is usually attributed to two scholars—J. H. Boeke and J. S. Furnivall.[4] Furnivall foresaw the possibility of more than two sectors coexisting within a given territorial unit, and consequently preferred the term 'plural society' to dual economy. The first sociological model which I wish to consider takes off from this concept of plural society.

M. G. Smith takes up Furnivall's idea of pluralism but Smith is a cultural anthropologist and consequently places cultural factors at the centre of his model, thus rejecting Furnivall's emphasis on economic factors. Pluralism exists when two or more cultural sectors coexist. Since, for Smith, the core of a culture is the institutional system, social and cultural pluralism becomes 'that condition in which there is a formal diversity in the basic system of compulsory institutions' (Smith 1965:82) between two or more sectors. This raises the question of what constitutes 'the basic system of compulsory institutions'. In his study of Jamaican social structure Smith takes this institutional core to be the kinship, religious, educational, economic, legal, and political structures (Smith 1965:162). Kuper argues that such a list can only be determined in the context of a particular society; it is not possible to state *a priori* which institutions will be in the core (Kuper 1969).

Smith makes one further point which is important for our purposes. He distinguishes a *plural society* from a *plural community*. The two or more cultural sectors which make up the *plural society* will, firstly, have different political structure and, secondly, will coexist within a single political unit. Continuing political integration of the whole society is, then, the result not of political consensus between all sectors, but of political

domination of a more or less overt kind by one sector. A *plural community* on the other hand may, as in the case of Negroes in the southern states of the USA, differ from the dominant sector in social, religious and economic structure but does not differ in political structure. Political structure—that is the distribution of power and authority—is thus the central core of cultural pluralism, whereas economic factors were crucial in the dual economy model.

Does eighteenth-century Scotland fit this model? There can be little doubt that it does. To quote Miss Grant:

> . . . It is not easy to realise how utter and how clean-cut was the dividing line between the Highlands and the Lowlands during the four hundred years between the fourteenth and the eighteenth century (Grant 1930:149).

By 1700 this dividing line marked cleavages in language, in religion, in educational arrangements, in land-tenure, and in kinship, economic and political structure. It is with the last four elements that we will be principally concerned here.

Differences between the Highlands and the Lowlands in land-tenure, kinship, and economic structure were linked in the clan system of the Highlands and Lowland feudalism. Smout is not sure about the difference between these two forms of social structure.

> The differences in social structure between agrarian society in the Highlands and Lowlands were therefore mainly ones of emphasis—Highland society was based on kinship modified by feudalism, Lowland society on feudalism tempered by kinship (Smout 1969:47).

But this emphasis on feudal structure in both Highlands and Lowlands demonstrates one of the problems in using an ideal typical notion like feudalism, for the form of feudalism differed in the two areas, and these different forms had different social and political consequences. By 1700 the older form of Scottish feudal land-tenure, wardholding, survived only in the Highland area. Elsewhere wardholding had given way to feuferme. The crucial difference between these two forms was that an inferior's principal obligations to his superior were military under wardholding and economic under feuferme.[5] Feuferme thus represents an early attempt at the commercialisation of agriculture, since rents were originally set at an economic level. But the important point is that, with a few exceptions, wardholding continued as the predominant form of Highland land-tenure well into the eighteenth century, supporting and being supported by the clan system.

It may be true that 'At the root of Highland clanship lay the myth that all in a given clan were descended from a common ancestor who had, in some incredibly misty period of the past, founded the tribe' (Smout 1969:334), but the important point is that clan members believed in this myth and acted on this belief. This gave rise to the emotionally charged patron-client relationships typical of the clan system. The chief was not only a feudal superior: he was also a relative. Indeed, in most cases of conflict

between feudal and kinship obligations it was the kinship obligations that were stronger (Grant 1930:508–10). Kinship ties in Lowland areas declined in importance as 'Improvement' progressed, thus throwing into higher relief the binding nature of kinship obligations in the clan system. (The acceptance of membership in a clan did not, of course, necessarily mean that one was related in blood to other members. It was belief that held the clan together, not genetics).

The economic structure of Lowland agricultural areas differed from that of the Highlands even before the agrarian transformation of the Lowlands. The Highlands were, and remained, mainly engaged in pastoralism while Lowland agriculture was basically arable.[6]

We saw above that the primary defining characteristic of a plural society is for M. G. Smith the existence of two or more cultural sectors, differing in political structure, within a single political unit. We have shown above that the Highlands and the Lowlands could, up until the eighteenth century, be regarded as separate cultural sectors in Smith's sense. What we now have to ask is whether these cultural sectors were part of a plural society, or merely plural communities. In other words, (*a*) were the political structures of the Highlands and the Lowlands different? and (*b*) were both of these sectors part of a single political unit?

Before the accession of James VI to the throne of Scotland in 1567, effective political power was highly decentralised in the feudal systems of the Highlands, Lowlands and Borders. James managed to centralise power in the Privy Council in Edinburgh, bringing order and stability to the Lowlands and, after his accession to the English Crown in 1603, pacifying the Borders. And, with the brief interlude of the Covenanter's Wars, these areas remained relatively peaceful, and political power remained relatively centralised.

The Highlands were rather different, however. Effective political power remained in the hands of the feudal superior or, in those cases where the two offices were not held by a single man, the clan chief. James VI attempted to curb the power of these feudal lairds and clan chiefs in three ways. He tried and failed to make some of the most unruly leaders accept the central laws of Scotland and keep the peace by making them swear under duress so to do. He attempted to colonise the Highlands with Lowlanders and English. Again it was a failure, unlike his successful colonisation of Ulster. Finally, like others before him, James attempted to control the Highlands by setting chief against chief, by supporting certain great nobles with strong Lowland links and thus making them virtual Royal agents whose interests were to serve the King's interests. It is arguable that James did not bring stability to the Highlands by these means; it is true that disorder in the Highlands slowly decreased in frequency and severity as the seventeenth century passed, but Cregeen maintains that the centrally-supported aggrandisement of the Campbells, the Gordons and the Mackenzies added to the disorder in the area (Cregeen 1967:154, 159). But this establishment of Royal agents did have great importance for the future of the Highlands.

It is thus evident that the two cultural sectors—the Highlands and the Lowlands—did have sharply differing political structures in 1700. In the Lowlands power was relatively centralised in Edinburgh if not in London, while in the Highlands power was decentralised. Chiefs and feudal superiors had a high degree of autonomy in legal and political activities within their own areas.

But can we say that both of these cultural sectors coexisted within a single political unit? If we take Weber's definition of the State as the definition of a political unit[7] then it is quite clear that in 1700 Scotland is not a single political unit. The very ineffectiveness of the central government in controlling clan feuds, cattle raiding and so on is evidence enough of its inability to control the Highlands on a continuing basis.

> In truth, the inefficiency of the Government was largely to blame for the lawlessness of the Highlands (Grant 1930:528).

It follows from this that in 1700 Scotland was not a plural society in Smith's terms. There was indeed a formal diversity in core institutions between Highlands and Lowlands, but these diverse institutions did not exist within a single political unit. By 1760, however, it is clear that Scotland was a plural society. The Highlands had been brought into the centrally organised political system; political power was no longer decentralised. The way in which this incorporation of the Highlands came about is essentially similar to the way in which the plural societies with which Furnivall was concerned were created—by colonisation.

The clearest examples of this colonisation of the Highlands by Lowland and English ideas, social forms and forces occur after the failure of the '45, but in at least one area this process can clearly be seen before Culloden. Many of the changes that one associates with the decline of the clan system and with it the autonomy of the Highland cultural sector had already taken place in Argyll and other Campbell lands before 1745. Hereditary tacks were abolished in 1737. By 1710 leases in Kintyre were already being offered by competitive bidding (Cregeen 1967:164) and kinship and other particularistic criteria, so important in the settling of leases under the clan system (when, indeed, such leases existed) were becoming relatively minor considerations.[8] And who owned these lands which were 'modernised' so early? The Dukes of Argyll; the leaders of the Clan Campbell, which had been such a steadfast supporter of Royal authority in the Highlands, and which had been rewarded so well for that support. The Dukes of Argyll were Protestants and they were Whigs. They thus supported and were deeply involved in that process of internal colonisation which was aimed at the destruction of the autonomy of the Highland cultural sector, which was suspected of Catholic and Jacobite sympathies.

Changes on the Argyll estates preceded the '45. This should warn one against regarding the destruction of Highland autonomy as the sole result of Culloden. The process of internal colonisation was in train before 1745. But after that date the pace

of change increased markedly in response to the close shave that the Hanoverian dynasty had suffered at the hands of the Jacobite forces.

M. G. Smith's ideas on pluralism thus constitute an alternative model to the economist's dual sector model for analysis of the history of the Highlands. The evidence which pluralism leads one to look for is basically political rather than economic, and it thus represents a return to the political explanation of Highland history, though not necessarily in the terms in which that explanation is usually couched. The 'impersonal market forces' which bulk so large in the dual economy model are not regarded as unimportant, but they are regarded as derived aspects of a more fundamental process, which in the dual economy model is often euphemistically referred to as 'the opening up of the subsistence sector'. The economic development of the Highlands—that is the development of the black cattle trade and, later, extensive sheep farming—was contingent upon the 'pacification of the Highlands'; that is the destruction of the autonomy of the Highland sector (Smout 1969:341, Haldane 1952:118–20). It is this process that pluralism would lead us to consider; and it is not only political autonomy that was destroyed —the Gaelic language and culture, the wardholding system of land tenure that underpinned the clan system, indigenous religious beliefs that did not accord with Lowland Presbyterianism, all came under attack in the later eighteenth century. It is naive, as Eric Cregeen reminds us, to regard changes in these areas of social life solely as the result of Culloden (Cregeen 1967:165). But, in the light of pluralism, it is not naive to see them as part of a process of conscious exogenous change which began long before Culloden and ended much later but in which the statutes and proscriptions applied to the Highlands after the failure of the '45 played a crucial part.

Pluralism thus provides us with an alternative model to the dual economy model. It is capable of generating testable hypotheses. Given the dynastic importance of marriage in Highland society before the eighteenth century, one could test the assertion of an autonomous Highland sector by analysing marriage patterns of clan gentry, for example. But pluralism is open to many of the same criticisms as is the dual economy model. Both are 'before and after' models, with the consequent danger of treating the two terminal points in a static ahistorical way. Thus, what is to count as the 'traditional' Highland social system? Is it the clan system as it existed in 1745, as it is often taken to be? But, as Grant shows, most important clans at that time were of recent growth, and to regard the structure of clanship in 1745 as the 'traditional' structure is to freeze history in a potentially misleading manner. The same point may be made about that revered symbol of Highland tradition, the kilt. Prebble would have us believe that this ancient garment was a rather racy new fashion when it was proscribed after Culloden. Its traditionalism thus seems rather spurious.

Again, both the dual economy model and pluralism often lead those who use them to underestimate movement between sectors. Each is seen as an encapsulated natural system. This is not dangerous if one is using the model as an analytical construct, but if one sees the model as a set of interrelated *empirical* variables, then one is in trouble.

(b) *Domain and Role-Bridging.*

The second sociological way of approaching the history of the Highlands which I wish to consider is rather different in emphasis from pluralism. I wish to look at the relationship between clan chief and Highland tenant as a patron-client relationship, and trace changes in this relationship over time. This account will depend heavily on Eric Wolf's work for its theoretical underpinnings.

Many writers describe Highland tenants as peasants. How accurate is this characterisation? Wolf distinguishes primitives from peasants—

> In primitive society (economic) surpluses are exchanged directly among groups or members of groups; peasants, however, are rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers that uses the surpluses both to underwrite its own standard of living and to distribute the remainder to groups in society that do not farm but must be fed for their specific goods and services in turn (Wolf 1966:4).

Highland tenants clearly count as peasants on this definition. The extraction of economic surplus by the clan chief or feudal superior (where the two offices were not held by the same individual) was a marked feature of Highland life well before the eighteenth century.

Wolf's definition leads him to consider the forms of domination practised by patrons over their clients. He distinguishes three forms of domination or, in his words, *types of domain*. These three forms are patrimonial, prebendal, and mercantile domain.

> Patrimonial domain over land is exercised where control of occupants of land is placed in the hands of lords who inherit the right to the domain as members of kinship groups or lineages, and where this control implies the right to receive tribute from the inhabitants in return for their occupance. The domain becomes the right of a line of lords, their patrimony (Wolf 1966:50).

In prebendal domain control over peasants is not inherited but is granted to officials who draw tribute from the peasantry in their capacity as servants of the state. Under mercantile domain land is regarded as the private property of the landowner. Land may be bought and sold. The owner has the rights to tribute from occupants of the land in the form of rent, as does the patron under patrimonial and prebendal domain. But in the case of mercantile domain, rent is regarded as a return on land regarded as invested capital—as capitalised rent (Wolf 1966:53).

These types of domain are ideal types, and one should expect to find mixed forms in empirical situations. It makes sense, however, to regard the recent history of the Highlands as a change from patrimonial domain to mercantile domain. The chiefs increasingly came to define clan lands as capitalisable assets rather than as land to be handed on to their successors. There seems to be no doubt that they were entitled to hold this view, since legally they did own the land. But many of their tenants did not share this

definition—as emerged in the Napier Commission's enquiries in the 1880s—and regarded clan lands as belonging to the clan rather than the chief.[9]

Changes in the Highlands have come not only from a change in the type of domain, however. Changes have also taken place in the form of what Wolf calls 'peasant coalitions', by which he means the typical form of relationships between a peasant and other peasants (horizontal relations) or between a peasant and those individuals or groups who enjoy domain over him (vertical relations). Such relations may involve only two actors (dyadic), or they may involve more than two (polyadic). Finally, relations may be singlestranded—when based on only one tie between actors (an economic relation, for example) or they may be multistranded when a number of ties—economic, kinship, religious and so on—bind actors together. Prior to the 'opening up of the subsistence sector', Highland tenants were engaged in *polyadic horizontal multistranded* coalitions through the joint farm system. That is, a number of groups—families—all of whom occupied the same position—tenants (regarding tenants and subtenants as being in a similar position)—were involved in interaction which involved many sorts of ties—economic, kinship, religious and so on. At the same time, however, they were also involved in *polyadic vertical multistranded* coalitions with tacksmen and the chief through the clan system. The mutual obligations of this system, with grants of land, support in lean times and leadership in battle moving downwards, and rent and firepower moving upwards, cemented together social and economic organisation in the Highlands.

> A (multistranded) coalition . . . gives men security in many different contexts. In this lies their special strength and also their weakness. Each tie is supported by others that are linked to it, the way many strands are twined around each other to produce a stronger cord. At the same time such a coalition is relatively inflexible. It can exist only as long as the strands are kept together; the subtraction of one strand weakens the others. Hence such coalitions will strongly resist forces which strive to unravel the several strands (Wolf 1966: 81).

This provides us with a non-economic explanation of Highland tenants' unwillingness to accept innovation which threatened social solidarity; an unwillingness which was interpreted by outsiders as general conservatism.

How did these peasant coalitions change in the Highlands? Firstly, *polyadic horizontal multistranded* coalitions were destroyed by the destruction of the old joint-farm runrig system by extensive sheep farming and by the development of crofting. The growth of competitive leasing also had its impact here. The result was a change to *dyadic horizontal singlestranded* coalitions where, with the crucial economic co-operation typical of the joint-farm, attenuated ties between peasant families were reduced to the level of 'ties of friendship or neighbourliness' (Wolf 1966:85).

The penetration of network markets, the crofter's unprecedentedly individualised situation[10] and his new exposure to the cold winds of market forces combined to create

a situation where—analytically at least—the singlestranded coalition, based on a single common economic interest, was the predominant form of peasant coalition.

Vertical coalitions were similarly altered. The destruction of the tacksmen as a social group is an important process in this context for they seem to have acted as a restraining influence on the chief.

> Members of the clan . . . sometimes exerted considerable control over the chief, but in all the more circumstantial accounts it is not the clan as a whole but the leading men who do so (Grant 1930:522).

Once this mediating group had gone, through emigration or immiseration, one of the bulwarks supporting the older system of vertical relationships had disappeared.

The relationships between chief and tenants were radically altered as the type of domain shifted from patrimonial to mercantile. Thus, as is frequently noted, before the pacification of the Highlands chiefs tended to calculate wealth in terms of the number of cattle and able-bodied fighting men on their lands. With the destruction of ward-holding and a change to mercantile domain, however, it is the value of the land itself that counts and, particularly after the failure of industrial processes like kelping after 1815, a large population could and did become a liability rather than an asset. Consequently, since chiefs now regarded their vertical relationships with tenants as being *singlestranded*, based solely on an economic relationship, such chiefs need have no compunction about clearing tenants from their lands. But the tenants often did not see it this way. They still regarded their vertical relationships with the landlord as *multistranded*. Thus one of the major causes of the rancour engendered by the Highland clearances—a very ill-defined category—would seem to be this lack of symmetry in the perceptions of their relationship between landlord and tenants, patron and clients.

But this vertical relationship is rather more complex than I have suggested. I noted above that patrimonial domain and mercantile domain are ideal-typical concepts, and that an empirical situation might represent a cross between them. This allows us to understand one of the most puzzling features of the dual economy explanation of Highland history. This model is posited on the usual liberal economic assumption of rational economic action, at least in the 'modern' sector. Now, the dual economy explanation tells us that Highland agriculture and industry became catastrophically unprofitable as a result of the fall in cash crop prices after 1815. One would, therefore, expect landlords to clear tenants from their estates *en masse* at this point. It is not until the middle of the century, however, that the crunch really comes for Highland landlords with the potato famine of 1846–7. Until this point landlords allowed tenants to fall deeper and deeper into rent arrears, with disastrous effects on their estates. Curious behaviour for 'economic men' to countenance! How can we explain it?

F. G. Bailey's concept of *bridge actions* between different systems of interaction can help us here (Bailey 1960:248–55). As the eighteenth century progressed, clan chiefs had roles in two systems of interaction open to them. They could continue to play

the role of chief as that role had been understood before. This, which we may call the 'Highland role' involved the exercise of those reciprocal rights and obligations that were so important under patrimonial domain. Alternatively, the chief could shift his reference group from clansmen and other chiefs towards the Lowland and English aristocracy and play a 'British role' which involved different (and often cripplingly expensive) consumption patterns. Chiefs acting this British role would have little compunction about going against the role expectations of the chief under the clan system.

Those chiefs who adopted the British role early made early, and more thorough, attempts to reorganise their estates. Notable here are the Dukes of Sutherland. This family had been concerned in James VI's attempt to colonise the Highlands. It was very open to Lowland influences. The Sutherland Clearances were economic rationality personified. The straths were cleared, but £14,000 was spent in five years on trying to resettle the evicted tenants on the coast. This was a clearance in which the mutual obligations of the clan system counted for nothing. But then the first Duke was an Englishman, to whom the Highland role would appear, at most, picturesque.

In many areas—particularly on the West Coast—the position was different, however. Chiefs attempted to run their estates profitably without offending too greatly against their obligations to tenants. Their problems after 1815 should not be seen as deriving from a romantic attachment to the past which was holding back the march of progress in the Highlands, but rather as the result of the collision of two situationally incompatible world views, each of them positive and each giving rise to different expectations of chiefly behaviour from different reference groups.

If we now ask why in the end it was the British role that triumphed, then the explanations are familiar. Those who accept the dual economy explanation will talk about the inevitable penetration of market forces into the Highlands, while pluralism and other political explanations would lead us to look at the political penetration of the Highlands. One of the consequences of this political penetration could be seen to be the spread of network markets and other characteristics of a market economy, but such factors do not, on this model, have independent explanatory value. Instead one would look at factors like the abolition of the hereditary jurisdiction of chiefs and the requirement that chiefs' sons should be educated in the Lowlands or England to explain why all Highland chiefs at last adopted the British role.

The distinction between the dual economy model and the sociological accounts that I have been putting forward is of more than recondite academic interest. Models act as spotlights, but they also act as blinkers. The dual economy model is not only influential today in historical approaches to the Highlands; it is also influential in the area of policy-making. The problems of the Highlands today are officially seen to be problems of remoteness and bad communications. In other words, the opening up of the subsistence sector did not go far enough. Pluralism would lead one to take another line, however, and to look at the political structure of the Highlands today. One would

want to examine links between this political structure and economic and social structure. Who are the individuals or groups who dominate the Highlands economically? What influence do they have in the process of making decisions on the future of the Highlands? At what level is such influence exerted—county council, St. Andrews House, Whitehall? These are the sorts of questions that academic research derived from pluralist assumptions might ask. At the moment they are not being asked.

NOTES

1 This political view of Scottish history has its adherents today. See, for example, Mackie 1964.
2 Once again note the similarity between explanations of Highland and English agricultural history. Chambers and Mingay take the Black Death as the origin of the Agricultural Revolution. (Chambers & Mingay 1966:6).
3 The commercialisation of agriculture means that we now speak of landlords rather than chiefs (Hicks 1969:109). Note the assumption about the new specificity of roles.
4 For exegesis of Boeke's ideas see Higgins 1968; for Furnivall see Rex 1959.
5 For an excellent account of the intricacies of Scottish feudalism see Grant 1930:171–218, 244–86.
6 Some Lowland areas had considerable pastoral activities, of course—Aberdeenshire is an example—and oats and bere were grown for home consumption in Highland areas, though imports from Lowland areas were not infrequently needed (Gray 1957:9).
7 'This system of order claims binding authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent, over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction. It is thus a compulsory association with a territorial basis' (Weber 1947:157).
8 Except in those areas, like Tiree, where the opposition of tenants was too strong to allow the Duke of Argyll to implement his improving plans and the Duke was unwilling to use the draconian tactics employed, for example, in Sutherland. See Cregeen 1967:178–83.
9 A measure of the widespread nature of the belief that clan lands really belonged to the clan rather than to the chief is provided by the fact that Marx based a blistering attack on the Sutherland Clearances on this legally erroneous view. See 'The Duchess of Sutherland and Slavery', reprinted in Bottomore and Rubel 1961:131–2.
10 This point must not be overstated. While it is true that the crofter's situation was highly individualised when compared with his situation at the time that the clan system formed the basis of Highland social structure, this does not mean that cooperative activity among crofters was not important—and indeed continues to be important.

REFERENCES

ADAM, M.
1920 'The Highland Emigration of 1770.' *Scottish Historical Review* 16:280–93.
1921 'The Causes of the Highland Emigrations of 1783–1803.' *Scottish Historical Review* 17: 73–89.

BAILEY, F.
1960 *Tribe, Caste, and Nation*. Manchester.

BELSHAW, C.
1965 *Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

BENDIX, R.
1966 'Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered.' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9:292–346.

BOTTOMORE, T. & RUBEL, M. (ED.)
1961 *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*. London.

CHAMBERS, J. & MINGAY, G.
1966 *The Agricultural Revolution 1750–1850*. London

CREGEEN, E.
1967 'The Changing Role of the House of Argyll in the Scottish Highlands.' In I. Lewis (ed.), *History and Social Anthropology*. London. Pp. 153–92.
1969 'The Tacksmen and Their Successors: A study of Tenurial Reorganisation in Mull, Morvern and Tiree in the Early Eighteenth Century.' *Scottish Studies* 13: 93–144.

GASKELL, P.
1968 *Morvern Transformed: A Highland Parish in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge.

GRAHAM, H. G.
1899 *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*. 2 vols. London.

GRANT, I.
1930 *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland Before 1603*. Edinburgh.

GRAY, M.
1957 *The Highland Economy*. Edinburgh.

HALDANE, A.
1952 *The Drove Roads of Scotland*. London.

HICKS, J.
1969 *A Theory of Economic History*. London.

HIGGINS, H.
1968 *Economic Development*. 2nd edn. London.

KUPER, L.
1969 'Plural Societies: Perspectives and Problems.' In L. Kuper and M. Smith (ed.), *Pluralism in Africa*. Berkeley. Pp. 7–26.

LASLETT, P.
1965 *The World We Have Lost*. London.

MACPHERSON, A.
1967, 1968 'An Old Highland Parish Register.' *Scottish Studies* 11: 149–92; 12:81–111.

MACKIE, J.
1964 *A History of Scotland*. London.

MOORE, B.
1967 *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. London.

MYINT, H.
1964 *The Economics of the Developing Countries*. London.

PREBBLE, J.
1963 *The Highland Clearances*. London.

REX, J.
1959 'The Plural Society in Sociological Theory.' *British Journal of Sociology* 10:114–24.

SMITH, M.
1965 *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*. London.

SMOUT, T. C.
1969 *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830*. London.

STORRIE, M.
1962 'The Census of Scotland as a Source for the Historical Geography of Islay.' *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 78:152–65.

WEBER, M.
1947 *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, translated by A. Henderson and T. Parsons. New York.

WOLF, E.
1966 *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

WRIGLEY, E. (ED.)
1966 *An Introduction to English Historical Demography*. London.