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Refining the History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America: A Politico-Economic Analysis of the *American Nations*

I am not a “political scientist” by training. I am an aspiring “political economist.” But, last spring, I wandered over to the Politics and Government Department at the University of Puget Sound and picked up Colin Woodard’s definitive work *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*. I became captivated by the book, and I have since read and re-read *American Nations* and numerous journal and newspaper articles that play on Woodard’s central argument—that America has never been one nation, but eleven distinct nations, each with its own set of political institutions and cultural values. And, like with most great works of art, each rereading, each retelling of *American Nations* brought with it new discoveries, as well as rediscoveries, of the American experience. Along with most casual readers of Woodard’s work, I became more aware of the historical ethno-cultural patterns underpinning our country’s current political and cultural struggles. And, like most political scientists, I gained a greater understanding of the cultural and political variations across and within states, the clustering of like-minded individuals across America’s body politic, the role cultural institutions play in our politics across both time and space, and political polarization. But, as an aspiring political economist, I could not get over the fact that no one was talking about the politico-economics outlined in Woodard’s work. Not even Woodard, as far as I know, has deliberately and systematically cast a light on the political economy of the eleven American nations. Consequently, its implications for Political Economy have yet to be explored, leaving

policymakers and academics with an inadequate understanding of the socio-economic revulsions that have plagued the country for the last four decades.

In this paper, I reveal the political economy of Woodard's *American Nations*. Drawing on Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* and Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, I argue that each of the eleven nations is predicated on one of Wolf's three modes of production: kin-ordered, tributary, or capitalist. These modes of production can be understood as reoccurring sets of social relations that structure the economic foundations of a given society around that society's specific political culture (Wolf 1997: 75). Through demonstrating the applicability of the modes of production concept to the American nations, I argue that we cannot only reveal the underlying economic foundations of each nation, but suggest their future socio-economic trajectories as they batter up against an ever-more chaotic international political economy.

This paper is divided into two parts: one focused on theory, and another focused on applying theories to specific case-studies. In the theory section, I detail the findings of Woodard, Wolf, and Polanyi as they relate to my study, and argue that these authors, despite their disparate backgrounds, are all in conversation with one another. Woodard finds that America is made up of eleven different nations, each with its own unique ethno-cultural characteristics, which have been etched into America's social fabric since the initial settlement of these regions. Wolf's *Europe and the People Without A History* gives us the concept of the modes of production—that is, the “specific, historically occurring set[s] of social relations through which labor is deployed to wrest energy from nature by means of tools, skills, organization, and knowledge” (Wolf 1997: 75). And Polanyi's *Great Transformation* helps us grapple with socio-economic change in America, thereby providing us with a more complete explanation of how each nation wrestles

with transformations in the international political economy. Each section on the different authors begins with a brief biographical note to locate the reader with authors' respective times and experiences.

The second section of this paper will apply these theories to three of Woodard's American Nations: Yankeedom, the Deep South, and Greater Appalachia. I find that Yankeedom most resembles the capitalist mode, turning its wealth into capital and reinvesting it in the production processes of its nation. The Deep South resembles the tributary mode, where elites use the political process to maintain their domination over social labor in the region. Finally, Greater Appalachia resembles the kin-ordered mode of production, with the region's social clusterings resisting the institutionalization of political power as well as economies of scale. The other nations, I contend, coincide with either of these three modes of production, or a mixture of them.

The Theories Underpinning My Politico-Economic Analysis of the Eleven American Nations

Woodard, and his Eleven American Nations

In many respects, Woodard (1968-Present) is not your typical political-science guru. Rather, he is an award-winning journalist and author. Through his career, Woodard encountered "linguistic dialectic maps, cultural anthropologists' maps of religious regions, campaign strategists' maps of political geography, and historians' maps of pattern of settlement across the continent" that indicated to him the existence of eleven distinct American nations (Woodard 2011: 11). Combined with his own observations of political polarization across America, and the works of Joel Gareau, David Fischer, Bill Bishop, and Kevin Phillips, Woodard came to the socio-political observations that underpin the *American Nations*.

The thesis of Woodard's *American Nations* is that we have never been one nation; thus, among other things, we cannot speak of one set of American values or the idea of America as one big melting pot. Rather, America is patchwork of eleven different nations—Yankeedom, Tidewater, New Netherland, New France, Deep South, Greater Appalachia, the Midlands, First Nation, the Far West, the Left Coast, El Norte—“each exhibiting conflicting agendas and characteristics” that “shape the nature and scope of our history” (Woodard, Sep 28 2011). As will be discussed in further detail below, it is Woodard's claim that these nations follow the settlement patterns of the first immigrants to each of these nations, and that these patterns, further developed upon the settling of each nation, continue to define each nation. In other words, each regional-nation had a unique set of factors that determined the formation of their political institutions and cultures.

It is important to define Woodard's use of the term *nation*. To be clear, Woodard is not referring to an independent state—that is, a sovereign political authority that exercises power over a given territory. Rather, in Woodard's words, he is referring to “a group of people who share—or believe they share—a common culture, ethnic origin, language, historical experience, artifacts, and symbols” (Woodard 2011: 3). In other words, a nation is a group of people who share a common political culture. Following from this, it should be no surprise that the eleven American nations do not conform to state or North, South, East, West regional lines. For example, the Left Coast spans only the western coastline of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California, but it does not project itself inland in any of these entities. As you can see from the map of the eleven American nations below, each nation has seemingly chaotic borders that cut across both state and regional boundaries.



SOURCE: COLIN WOODARD, *AMERICAN NATIONS: A HISTORY OF THE ELEVEN RIVAL REGIONAL CULTURES OF NORTH AMERICA* (VIKING PRESS, 2011). ©COLIN WOODARD.

Entertaining Woodard's argument raises one pertinent objection: how could the cultural institutions of settlers decades ago, in some cases centuries ago, remain in place to this very day? In many ways, you can read the some three-hundred pages that follow the introduction of *American Nations* as a historical refutation of this potential objection. I would direct you to Woodard's book, if you are interested in appreciating this historical account. Alternatively, Woodard draws on the theoretical conclusions of Wilburt Zelinsky's Doctrine of First Effective Settlement to argue that the cultural institutions established by the initial immigrants to a region remain long after those initial immigrants have passed on. As Zelinsky claims:

Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been... Thus, in terms

of lasting impact the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants a few generations later (Zelinsky, Woodard 2011: 16).

The implications of Zelinsky's observations are three-fold. First, unless a settled territory is conquered by an outside force, the cultural institutions established by the immigrants who first settled the land will remain engrained in the social fabric of the given territory. Second, these institutions are self-perpetuating: they reproduce their cultures across time. Newcomers, then, will be socialized and assimilated into the region's particular cultures and political values—they will not upend established institutions, thus, maintaining the status quo. And, third, what follows from our first two observations is that these cultural institutions and patterns not only promote uniformity within nations, but differentiation between them. While there will be socio-political changes across settled regions, it is Zelinsky's contention that these changes will continue to be anchored to the cultural institutions established by the initial settlers to the region (Woodard 2011: 16). Consequently, as a nation becomes more inwardly homogenous culturally, America as a whole becomes more heterogenous. All in all, we have a picture of the United States that highlights the underlying historical, cultural patterns that underpin the politics of America.

It is worth the time, now, to take a second to see how Woodard's *American Nations* applies to American politico-cultural geography. For all intents and purposes, let us look at one of the more unique nations: the Far West. As indicated by Woodard:

This nation encompasses all of the interior U.S. west of the 100th meridian, from the northern boundary of El Norte up to the southern frontier of the First Nation. It includes northern Arizona; the interiors of California, Washington and Oregon; much of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alaska; portions of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories; the arid western halves of the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas; and all or nearly all of Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Utah and Nevada (Woodard, Oct 3 2011).

It is the only nation that is defined by geography and climate, as the arid, rugged, inhospitable climate and geography of the region prevented the settlement of the region until the end of 19th

century (Woodard 2011: 244). Thus, unlike the other ten American nations, no ethno-regional group, outside of the mormons who settled the greater area of Salt Lake City, were able to single-handedly instill their ethno-cultural institutions over the Far West (Woodard 2011: 245).

According to Woodard, it was not until corporations and the federal government decided to invest in the region that immigrants finally settled what became the Far West. As noted above, these immigrants did so only with the help of external corporations—which provided the capital intensive technologies to turn the vast, unconquerable West into a source of extractive industry—and the federal government—which provided the necessary infrastructure (i.e., hydroelectric dams and irrigation systems) to make the Far West a hospitable place to live (Woodard 2011: 244). These social processes, however, represented the effective colonization of the nation. Indeed, as Woodard documents, in many cases, both the coastal mega-conglomerates and the federal government took direct control over the legislative and executive branches of the state governments in the nation to further their extractive ends, regardless of the social ills wreaked upon the people (Woodard 2011: 250-252). Not surprisingly, this process of colonization produced a libertarian-esque political culture that resents the external interventions in the internal, local affairs of the nation. These libertarian leanings, as Woodard has documented, have led this nation's people to, by and large, support political movements that would, in their eyes, rid the nation of colonial domination and economic dependency upon the Left Coast, and the East Coast nations of Yankeedom and New Netherlands (Woodard 2011: 252). Paradoxically, however, the people of the Far West continue to support the federal subsidies that maintain their way of life in this otherwise inhospitable region (Woodard 2011: 253).

In bringing Woodard's work into the study of political economy, it is important to realize that political economists, like Wolf, lament that "more ethnography is urgently required precisely

because we cannot know the answers [about the human condition] on theoretical grounds alone” (Wolf 1997: xii). Woodard’s *American Nations* is just such a study that political economists are looking for. It provides a detailed, historical account of the cultures of America, and how they shape American political life. Moving forward, then, we should keep Woodard’s *American Nations* in mind when we discuss the role cultures play in influencing the economic foundations of particular societies.

Eric R. Wolf, and the Modes of Production

Eric R. Wolf (1923-1999) was a 20th century professor of anthropology at Columbia University who, despite being trained as an anthropologist, drew heavily from the study of political economy—that is, “the study of ways in which resources are made available to society and the state”—in an effort to explain how commodity production affects societies (Wolf 1997: xxii). As he states in his seminal work, *Europe and the People Without History*, his main assertions about the social world revolve around the belief that “the world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality” (Wolf 1997: 3). It was Wolf’s goal to correct, to the best extent possible, these falsifications.

To rectify our understanding of the social world, Wolf drew upon Marxist ideas to understand the intersections of politics, economics, and culture. Despite this, it would be wrong to label Wolf a “Marxist,” for Wolf explicitly renounces many of the fundamental tenets of Marxist thought, most notably Marx’s positivist assertions regarding historical materialism, which sought to reduce the study of political economy to a science aimed at “developing laws of universal generality and linearity” (Wolf 1997: xxii). However, as Wolf acknowledges, he draws from Marx “the basic notion that social life is shaped by the ways human beings transform nature

through production...,” among other things. It is from these Marxist understandings of the social world that Wolf formulates his kin-ordered, tributary, and capitalist modes of production.

Wolf begins his exploration of the modes of production by discussing the underlying assumptions of Marxism, which include the assertions that *Homo sapiens* are products of nature; they are “always linked to others in social relationships;” they have “acquired the ability to transform nature to human use;” and that “by changing nature, man at the same time changes his own nature” (Wolf 1997: 73). But it is important to note that, according to Marx, man could only change nature through social labor, which he characterized as a “social phenomenon carried out by human beings bonded to one another in society” (Wolf 1997: 74). In other words, humankind relies on the social organization of labor to bend nature to its will—a will defined by the given cultural values, morals, and norms of a particular society. The implication of Marx’s concept, most simply stated, is that in every given society, labor will be organized differently to not only cope with nature, but to achieve the cultural values of a given society. In doing so, social labor creates and recreates the social ties and the interlocking cultural values of a society. In all, then, the concept of social labor:

... draws attention at one and the same time to the human relations to the natural environment, the social relations of humans to humans, the institutional structures of state and society that guide these relations, and the ideas through which these relations are conveyed (Wolf 1997: xxi).

Moving forward, the concept of social labor provides us with a concept that allows us to begin to understand how humanity wrestles with nature, culture, and production in the social world. It is important to note that, for Marx, the term “production” represented “the complex set of mutually dependent relations among nature, work, social labor, and social organization” (Wolf 1997: 74). Therefore, it represents not only humankind’s active efforts to transform nature, and those transformations’ effects upon humans themselves, but the active creation and recreation of

social ties within a given society (Wolf 1997: 75). In other words, a society's production processes are embedded in the society itself.

Marx's concept of the mode of production is simply an extension of these two concepts—that is, social labor and production. As Wolf defines it, the mode of production is “a specific, historically occurring set of social relations through which labor is deployed to wrest energy from nature by means of tools, skills, organization, and knowledge” (Wolf 1977: 75). In other words, a mode of production refers to the interconnect political, economic, social, and cultural systems that mobilize labor across time and space. Putting the concepts of social labor, production, and modes of production together, then, we see that humans naturally enter into relationships with one another to cope with nature and, in doing so, they mobilize labor in accord with their morals, beliefs, and customs, which creates and perpetuates particular political-economic arrangements within their society. The practical implications of these observations is that a group of people who share a common political culture will have an economy distinctly shaped by their beliefs, values, and customs. In other words, culture shapes economy. Thus, if each American nation has its own distinct culture, we would expect to see different modes of production across the eleven American nations.

Wolf argues that there are three dominant modes of production: capitalist, tributary, and kinship. It is worth the time, now, to explain each of these, before looking at how they relate to Woodard's nations. We will begin with the capitalist mode. According to Wolf, the capitalist mode has three distinct characteristics:

First, capitalists detain the control of the means of production. Second, laborers are denied independent access to means of production and must sell their labor power to the capitalists. Third, the maximization of surpluses produced by the laborers with the means of production owned by the capitalists entails ‘ceaseless accumulation accompanied by changes in methods of production’ (Wolf 1997: 78).

In other words, what makes capitalism distinct is (1) the separation between laborers and the means of production; (2) wage labor; and (3) the reinvestment of wealth in the society's means of production—for example, in technological innovation and other market-supporting-institutions and mechanisms (Wolf 1997: 79).

Although these characteristics may seem trivial, they are in fact crucial in terms of distinguishing the modes of production. For one, they suggest that capitalism is not simply about accumulating wealth—for wealth, in and of itself, is not capital; Rather, wealth is only capital once its owners use it to command the totality of the production process, and continuously reinvent the process to maximize surpluses to the greatest extent possible (Wolf 1997: 79). Second, the creative destruction of the capitalist mode of production means that laborers will forever find themselves tossed across the three degrees of employment—full employment, underemployment, and unemployment—as producers race towards more productive production processes (Wolf 1997: 77). Finally, the distinct features of the capitalist mode allow it to “enter into temporary and shifting relations of symbiosis and competition with other modes,” which means that the capitalist mode can infiltrate the tributary and kin-ordered modes of production and take up residence in their economies.

In the tributary mode, “social labor is... mobilized and committed to the transformation of nature primarily through the exercise of power and domination—through a political process” (Wolf 1997: 80). In other words, the way in which labor is mobilized is not solely determined by the market, but is heavily influenced by politics. Thus, the way in which labor is mobilized is shaped by those who control political power. Wolf describes two ends of a continuum in which power can be allocated in a political system with a tributary mode of production. On one end of the continuum, political power is centralized and controlled by a handful of elites. On the other,

political power is decentralized and dispersed across local power holders (Wolf 1997: 80).

Because none of the regions we are looking at in this study correspond to the decentralized end of the spectrum, I will focus solely on the centralized end.

According to Wolf, centralized tributary modes of production are likely to occur when elites control “some strategic element in the process of production” and wield “some element of coercion” (Wolf 1997: 80). Elites use both of these elements to maintain their privileged positions in society (Wolf 1997: 88). Consequently, they will use coercion to deter local overlords and “grass-roots” organizations from challenging the establishment, and they will use their control over the production process to deprive merchants and laborers of the wealth and power that traditionally comes from commerce (Wolf 1997: 80-88). In terms of the latter claim, it is important to note that in the tributary mode, whatever is not consumed by producers is taken to the market and traded for surplus products, such as luxury goods from exotic markets (Wolf 1997: 85). Consequently, merchants are only involved in the production process so far as they periodically carry goods from the end of the production process to the market. In this way, they only get the small price-differential that comes from transporting the goods (Wolf 1997: 80). Moreover, it is important to note that a merchant’s ability to transport goods is determined by politics—as access to whatever “rolls off of the end of the assembly line” is determined by the elite. In terms of the laborers, their wages are simply expropriated from them as a result of their inability to bargain with the elites, who use their control over the political process and means of production to suppress wages in the name of greater profits for themselves (Wolf 1997: 84).

Finally, it is worth noting that, in a society premised on the tributary mode of production, the elite-producer class is typically involved in cultivating an ideology that valorizes the identity

of the elite, and disparages the identity of the laborer. As Wolf notes, when discussing such ideologies:

Typically they show a hierarchical representation of the cosmos, in which the dominant supernatural order, working through the major holders of power, encompasses and subjects humanity. At the same time, the ideological model displaces the real relation between power-wielding surplus takers and dominated producers onto the imagined relation between superior deity and inferior “subject” (see Feuchtwang 1975). The problem of public power is thus transformed into a problem of private morality, and the “subject” is invited to win merit by maintaining order through the regulation of his own conduct. The displacement also embodies a contradiction. If public power falters and justice is done, the ideological ties linking subject and supernatural are also called into question (Wolf 1997: 83).

Thus, in a tributary mode of production, we should expect to see elites using references to some divine-like authority to justify their superiority and, hence, the inferiority of others. In sum, then, the tributary mode is defined by its elites’ control of coercion, ideology, and production processes.

Finally, kin-ordered modes of production mobilize social labor through extended kinship groups (Wolf 1997: 89). Although the ties that bond these groups together varies from one group to another, all kin-ordered groups make use of social and ideological ties to transform political-economic arrangements (Wolf 1997: 90). Hence, kin-ordered modes of production are premised on the notion that kinship ties cannot only be a human institution rooted in biology, but a political order based on cultural constructs and ritual relations (Wolf 1997: 91). As such, “kinship can be understood as a way of committing social labor to the transformation of nature through appeals to flirtation and marriage, and to consanguinity and affinity” (Wolf 1997: 91).

The consequences of kin-ordered modes of production are two-fold. First, the social clusters of groups prevent the institutionalization of political power (Wolf 1997: 99). Rather, in kin-ordered political orders, groups govern themselves based on consensus among the particular members of their immediate clan (Wolf 1997: 99). This fragmented, unstable form of

governance no doubt hinders decisive, high-capacity governance. Second, the social clustering of groups fragments the labor market, thus, “setting limits on the amount of social labor that can be mobilized for collective purposes” (Wolf 1997: 99). Consequently, the level of production in societies with kin-ordered modes of production is limited. Because of this, kin-ordered societies tend to move transgenerationally across nature, exhausting the natural resources that can be extracted with minimum effort, and then moving on to new territory (Wolf 1997: 99). In sum, a kin-ordered society can be characterized by its social clusters of extended kin networks, which frustrate the institutionalization of political power and fragment the economy, preventing the maturation of economies of scale.

Having just laid out Wolf’s main observations about modes of production, let us now turn our attention to the importance of his observations for the American nations. To begin, let us remember that Woodard defined a nation as “a group of people who share—or believe they share—a common culture, ethnic origin, language, historical experience, artifacts, and symbols,” and that Marx informed us that social labor will be organized, principally, around a society’s particular cultural values, morals, and norms, transforming production and leading to historically-reoccurring social patterns through which labor is mobilized (Woodard 2011: 3; Wolf 1997: 74). Set next to one another, two things become apparent. First, if humankind has a natural propensity to (1) be social and (2) use labor to transform nature, and if the way in which humankind transforms nature is through social labor, we would expect each nation to have a mode of production. Second, since the modes of production are determined by the peculiar culture and historically reoccurring patterns of social relations within a society, we would expect each nation, defined by their own distinct cultures and historically reoccurring patterns of social

relations, to exhibit their own modes of production—that is, variations of Wolf’s three dominant modes of production.

Similarly, holding to the doctrine of first settlement, each nation should continue to exhibit the same modes of production; because, (1) today’s culture in each nation should resemble that of its first settlers; (2) the modes of production tend to reproduce themselves over time through the production and reproduction of social relations; and (3) no dramatic upheaval has upended the cultural institutions upon which the modes of production rest. Under these conditions, then, we would expect each nation’s mode of production to hold to some given equilibrium. Finally, we would expect that each nation will have a greater affinity to other nations that share common modes of production with one another, and for there to be mutual antagonism between nations with different modes of production, as they clash with one another over how resources in their societies should be mobilized. In sum, we have seen that culture influences the way in which labor is mobilized, and that there will be different modes of production scattered across the United States as a result of the existence of the different American nations. In other words, we can conclude that the United States is not one homogenous economy, but many different economies rooted in America’s different regional-nations.

But, as any political economist would tell you, American political economy has followed many different politico-economic patterns—most notably, the rise of free market ideology over the last four decades. How do we reconcile these shifts in ideology and public policy with the narrative that we just discussed above? In the next section of this paper, we will take up this question by briefly analyzing Karl Polanyi’s *Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. What we will find is that the rise of the free market—what Polanyi calls the self-regulating market—does not dislodge the modes of production. Rather, it merely exerts a

“pull” on the modes of production, leaving the underlying ways in which labor is mobilized unperturbed.

Karl Polanyi, and the Great Transformation

In *the Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi (1886-1964) sought to explain the social turmoil of his time: from WWI, to the Great Depression, and WWII. Polanyi believed that “history was geared for social change; the fate of nations was linked to their role in an institutional transformation” (Polanyi 2001: 29). Not surprisingly, then, in *the Great Transformation*, Polanyi sought to couch his analysis of his times in a much broader study of social change. What he found was that the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was defined by the rise of the self-regulating market: the notion that markets are self-constituting and can solve any economic, social, or political ill, if freed from social and political constraints. Polanyi explains these observations by describing a continuum on which the market goes from being adjunct to society, to society being adjunct to the market. I will describe this in greater detail below, but what is important to recognize now is that Polanyi gives us a way of looking at “modes of integration” across economies—that is the degree to which they are aligned with their modes of production relative to the self-regulating market—and the social dislocation brought by moves toward the self-regulating market.

One of the main punchlines of the *Great Transformation* is that the self-regulating is an aberration to humankind’s existence. According to Polanyi, humankind does not inherently have an individualistic, profit-maximizing mentality. Rather, humans possess a communist one—that is, a mindset that puts social relationships before material. As Polanyi states:

...[M]an’s economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end. Neither the process of production nor that of distribution is linked to specific economic interests attached to

the possession of goods; but every single step in that process is geared to a number of social interests which eventually ensure that the required step be taken. These interests will be very different in a small hunting or fishing community from those in a vast despotic society, but in either case the economic system will be run on noneconomic motives (Polanyi 2001: 48)

In other words, the market is not a means and ends in itself; Rather, it is only to serve as a vehicle to achieve society's social ends, as long as it does so within the established cultural, normative guidelines established by the given society. But, according to Polanyi, the self-regulating market seeks to disregard these noneconomic, normative guidelines for they are a hindrance to economic activity. As Polanyi suggests:

The limiting factors arise from all points of the sociological compass: custom and law, religion and magic equally contribute to the result, which is to restrict acts of exchange in respect to persons and objects, time and occasion (Polanyi 2001: 64).

In this way, the self-regulating market seeks to sacrifice the culture, norms, customs, and values upon the alter of the "free market." Nothing can stand in the way of economic progress.

Polanyi argues that as the market strips humankind of its culture, it simultaneously casts humankind adrift. As he documents, the self-regulating market leads to pauperism, starvation, and the enclosure of the public sphere (Polanyi 2001: 108). Social dislocation follows. But this dislocation is not economic in nature. It is cultural. As Polanyi notes:

Actually, of course, a social calamity is primarily a cultural not an economic phenomenon that cannot be measured by income figures or population statistics... The result is loss of self-respect and standards, whether the units is a people or a class, whether the process springs from so called culture conflict or from change in the position of a class within the confines of a society (Polanyi 2001: 164)

According to Polanyi, the reaction to social dislocation is an attempt to re-embed the market in the particular society's cultural institutions. In other words, it is a move away from the self-regulating market, and toward a market premised on the cultural values, customs, norms, and morals of a given society—a process Polanyi calls the "double movement."

As suggested prior, the double movement can be described as a continuum, with the embedded market—that is, where the market is adjunct to society—on one side of the continuum, and the disembedded market—that is the self-regulating market, or where society is adjunct to the market—on the other side. For our purposes, we can define the embedded market as when the market within each American nation is adjunct to the particular culture of the nation being investigated. In other words, it is when the modes of production of each nation are untampered by the self-regulating market. The disembedded market, then, represents the point at which the market is completely divorced from the mode of production of the particular nation. The double movement, therefore, is simply when the mode of production of a given region becomes so disembedded from its cultural underpinnings that the nation reacts and returns the market to the nation's more natural mode of production. From Polanyi's argument, then, it is implied that even in times when the American nations are pulled toward the principles of the self-regulating market, the economies of all of the nations will remain—to one extent or another—rooted in the modes or production of each nation.

Outside of suggesting to us that the modes of production can be moved toward the self-regulating market, while leaving the modes of production in tact, and that social dislocation is a symptom of the growing disembeddness of society from the market, why is Polanyi's work, particularly the double movement, relevant to this study? It is important because Polanyi's concept of double movement defines the current state of American political economy. Indeed, according to many political economists, including Nobel Prize Winning Economist Joseph Stiglitz, the rise of unfettered markets at the international, national, state, and local level—as typified by trade-liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and the cutting away of social safety nets—has defined the last four decades of international political economy, and led to profound

dislocation around the world, particularly within the United States—as symbolized by the Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements, and Sanders and Trump presidential candidacies (Stiglitz, Polanyi 2001: xv). Thus, if we are going to understand the American nations’ modes of production in context of our times, we must understand that these modes will move with the ebb and flow of the dominant market ideology of the time. We will now move to looking at Yankeedom, the Deep South, and Greater Appalachia as case studies for how the modes of production overlay the American nations.

Yankeedom, Deep South, and Greater Appalachia: Exposing the Modes of Production in the American Nations

A Capitalist Mode Case Study: Yankeedom

Yankeedom was founded by Calvinists who settled Massachusetts Bay in the seventeenth century. As the map on page five suggests, with time, the nation’s people moved Westward to settle much of what would become the upper midwest region of the United States. As Woodard notes:

From its New England core, Yankee culture spread with its settlers across upper New York State; the northern strips of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa; parts of the eastern Dakotas; and on up into Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Canadian Maritimes (Woodard 2011: 5).

Along with their culture, they brought with them their capitalist mode of production.

Although it is often overlooked, the religious heretics that founded Yankeedom came to New England with a core set of political-economic principles in line with those of the capitalist mode of production. In part, these principles derived from their former homelands. As Woodard suggests, “nearly half of Yankeedom’s early settlers came from East Anglia, the most economically sophisticated part of the British Isles. Its seven easternmost counties were the most densely settled, urbanized, and educated part of England.” (Woodard 2011: 58). Furthermore:

It was a region profoundly influenced by the Netherlands, the most commercially and politically advanced nation in Europe, which lay just across the English Channel. Dutch Calvinism, republicanism, agriculture, architecture, art, and commerce had left their mark on the region, which had tulip gardens, gabled houses, and a highly literate population of artisans, craftsmen, and yeoman farmers... Many of these East Anglian characteristics were transplanted to New England (Woodard 2011: 58).

Thus, what this suggests is that New England was settled by people who brought with them the ideals of Dutch capitalism, a society already predicated on Wolf's tenets of capitalism—that is, the division of capitalist producers and laboring classes, wage labor, and the reinvestment of wealth into the economy.

Moreover, Puritan doctrines expected personal wealth to be reinvested in the name of furthering their mission of building a heaven here on earth. To use Marxian discourse, the morals, beliefs, and customs of Puritan society impelled New England's Puritans to invest their wealth “to bring the world in closer accord with the divine plan” (Woodard 2011: 61-62). This reinvestment could take many forms, not just economic; But capital was central to establishing the nation's mode of production. Indeed, it was this sense of purposeful reinvestment of wealth that brought the Industrial Revolution, Boston's Route 128, and other profitable production processes to Yankeedom. Similarly, the belief that wealth had to be reinvested to improve the world was what would provide Yankeedom with the financial resources to develop market supporting institutions, from public roads, to the world's best universities (Woodard 2011: 60).

While the belief that wealth must be reinvested in the economy was one of the primary reasons for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production in Yankeedom, it was complemented by settlers' suspicions of elites. As Woodard notes, “from the beginning Yankeedom was opposed to the creation of a landed aristocracy and suspicious of inherited privilege and conspicuous display of wealth” (Woodard 2011: 59). Thus, Yankeedom's elite became “based not on wealth, but education” (Woodard 2011: 59). The ramifications of these

cultural constraints on elites cannot be understated. As a result of these cultural constraints, no elite could accumulate the wealth or power to exercise control over any strategic part of the production process in the nation. Similarly, it meant that no class of wealthy producers could exercise absolute control over the mobilization of social labor through the political process. Hence, labor would always have a voice in Yankeedom politics, paradoxically legitimizing wage labor and the distinction between producers and laborers (Woodard 2011: 298). In sum, contrary to the Deep South's tributary mode of production and Greater Appalachia's kin-ordered mode, Yankeedom's capitalist mode of production relies on capital to mobilize social labor and transform the world for—according to Yankees—the better.

The Deep South and the Tributary Mode

The Deep South was founded by sons of Barbados slave lords in the late seventeenth century. At the time of the founding, Barbados was regarded as one of the most immoral, unequal, despotic colonies in the British Empire (Woodard 2011: 82). These slave lords exemplified the elite of Wolf's tributary mode production, reigning over the economy and society of Barbados via the political process. Dominating politics in both Barbados and Parliament, these slave lords used property requirements to deny the population any say in the affairs of the colony, while shifting any of the tax burdens associated with maintaining the colony to other parts of the British Empire (Woodard 2011: 82). The goals of the elite were simple: to maintain their aristocratic positions in society. But once the slave lords had monopolized all the land on Barbados, their sons had to look elsewhere to establish their own estates (Woodard 2011: 84). They decided to move to what became the Deep South, bringing with them their tributary mode of production.

According to Woodard, the society that these sons of slave lords set up was a “near-carbon copy” of Barbados; In other words, it was based on the tributary mode of production

(Woodard 2011: 82). These slave lords would come to spread their society across “South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana; western Tennessee; and the southeastern parts of North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas” (Woodard 2011: 82). Across these territories, the tributary mode was stitched into the cultural fabric of this soon-to-be nation. As Woodard notes, the political systems established across these territories were based on the slave states of Greece and Rome, “whose elites had been free to pursue the finer things in life after delegating all drudgery to slaves and a disenfranchised underclass” (Woodard 2011: 202). It was a political system that denied all but a handful of elite a voice in politics. In part, this system was maintained by militias, loosely organized by the slave lords themselves. These militia’s not only cracked down on unruly African Americans and sympathetic whites, but also planters who refused to obey the folkways of the elite (Woodard 2011: 89). Despite the abolition of slavery, the oppressive political structures of Deep South remained, symbolized by the institution of poll taxes and literacy tests, which lasted until the adoption of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Today, the region’s adoption of voter ID laws and other second generation voting rights restrictions denote the elite’s propensity to use the political processes to silence debate and maintain their hegemony.

The sons of the slave lords who settled the Deep South also controlled strategic elements of the production processes in the region: namely, land and labor. Indeed, modeled on the economy of Barbados, the Deep South’s economy was dominated by large-scale agriculture, principally bulk commodities such as tobacco and cotton (Woodard 2011: 201). The price differentials created by the sale of these bulk commodities were reinvested in the slave trade or simply erased by purchases of luxury goods from England; thus, while the elite grew wealthy, there has never been a notable amount of capital available in the region—just wealth. Thus, with

little to no capital circulating in the economy, it is not a surprise that the region's economy remains based on agriculture.

Along these lines, slavery was replaced with caste and sharecropper systems following the end of the civil war. Today, the tributary mode of production in the Deep South is maintained through right-to-work legislation, “guest” worker programs, and minimum labor, entitlement, and workplace health and safety provisions (Woodard 2011: 303). Similarly, the elites have consistently taken steps to further their own political and economic power within the region through cutting taxes, deregulating labor and natural resource markets, subsidizing their agribusinesses and oil companies, and dismantling unfavorable federal statutes through political capture of federal regulatory offices (Woodard 2011: 303). Each of these steps no doubt increases the elites' wealth and control over strategic points in production processes in the region. Wolf would expect nonetheless from a society dominated by a tributary mode of production.

But what is the glue that holds this oppressive, coercive, unequal society together? As suggested by Wolf's study of tributary modes of production, what holds it together is “an ideological model [that] displaces the real relation between power-wielding surplus takers and dominated producers onto the imagined relation between superior deity and inferior ‘subject’” (Wolf 1988: 83). In the case of the Deep South, the division between the “superior” and the “inferior” was defined by race and legitimized religion. “The system's fundamental rationale,” according to Woodard, “was that blacks were inherently inferior, a lower form of organism incapable of higher thought and emotion and savage in behavior” (Woodard 2011: 88).

According to Woodard, Southerners used the Bible to legitimize this idea:

Southern Baptist and Methodist preachers broke with their northern counterparts to endorse slavery on the grounds that Africans were descendants of Ham, who was condemned in the Bible to be a “hewer of wood and drawer of water” for his

white masters. Slave lords welcomed the proselytizing of such ideas among the black population. They found allies... like the influential northern Alabama minister, the Reverend Fred A. Ross. “Man south of the Equator—in Asia, Australia, Oceanica, America, especially Africa—is inferior to his Northern brother, Ross wrote in his 1857 opus, *Slavery Ordained of God*. “Slavery is of God, and [should] continue for the good of the slave, the good of the master, the good of the whole American family” (Woodard 2011: 203).

Thus, within this system, “slavery, aristocratic rule, and the grinding poverty of most ordinary people in the southern nations weren’t evils to be confronted but rather the reflection of a divinely sanctioned hierarchy to be maintained at all costs against the Yankee heretics” (Woodard 2011: 265). Although the belief that God sanctioned slavery may have faded, to this day, the politics of the one party nation of the Deep South continues to be mired in the politics of religion (Woodard 2011: 304). Great for political spectacle, it remains one of many of the tools that the Deep South’s elites use to maintain their tributary mode of production. It is also what allows them to co-opt their northern neighbor: kin-ordered Greater Appalachia.

Greater Appalachia

Greater Appalachia was founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Northern Irish, Northern English, and Southern Scottish migrants. Fleeing their war-torn homelands, they brought to America a tried-and-true clan-based warrior ethic (Woodard 2011: 8). And, it was this ethic that would come to define the cultural institutions of the region. As Woodard suggests, “this culture had formed in a state of near-constant war and upheaval, fostering a warrior ethic and a deep commitment to individual liberty and personal sovereignty” (Woodard 2011: 8). With time, these settlers would disperse their cultural institutions across the southwestern portion of Pennsylvania; the western portions of Virginia and North Carolina; West Virginia; the northwestern tip of South Carolina; the northern parts of Georgia and Alabama; northwestern Arkansas, Kentucky; most of Tennessee; Kentucky; the southern portions of Ohio, Indiana,

Illinois, and Missouri; the southeastern portion of Kansas; northern Texas; and the eastern border of New Mexico, instilling their values upon the land.

According to Woodard, “Greater Appalachia started as a civilization without a government” (Woodard 2011: 101). Indeed, “[t]he Borderlanders rushed straight to the isolation of the eighteenth-century frontier to found a society that was, for a time, literally beyond the reach of the law, and modeled on the anarchical world they had left behind” (Woodard 2011: 101). Thus, like Yankeedom and the Deep South, Greater Appalachia’s cultural institutions were largely shaped by the institutions that its settlers brought with them. Unlike Yankeedom and the Deep South, however, Great Appalachia existed without formal political institutions. This was because the nation’s cultural institutions relied on extended kinship ties to organize society and cope with nature. In other words, there was no need, nor desire for, formal political institutions. As Wolf would have suggested, this was because borderlanders relied mainly on social clusters to govern themselves. Indeed, these “Borderlanders” had learned to survive without political institutions in their homelands, when their government’s had sought to repress them. Thus, as Woodard succinctly notes:

Borderlanders learned to rely on themselves and their extended families to defend home, hearth, and kin against intruders, be they foreign soldiers, Irish guerrilla fighters, or royal tax collectors. Living amid constant upheaval, many Borderlanders embraced a Calvinist religious tradition—Presbyterianism—that held that they were God’s chosen people, members of a biblical nation sanctified in blood and watched over by a wrathful Old Testament deity. Suspicious of outside authority of any kind, the Borderlanders valued individual liberty and personal honor above all else, and were happy to take up arms to defend either (Woodard 2011: 102)

Thus, alone on the American frontier, Borderlanders enforced their disparate folkways in an attempt to establish some order in their societies. As Woodard documents, “Borderlanders fell back on their old-country practice of taking the law into their own hands. Justice was meted out not by courts but by the aggrieved individuals and their kin via personal retaliation” (Woodard

2011: 104-105). Along these lines, Borderlanders were hostile to encroachments of other nation's seeking to instill their political institutions on the Borderlands (Woodard 2011: 8). Consequently, they have historically despised the country's political parties, "seeing them them as cartels of powerful interests, and voted for whichever one appeared to vote for ordinary people" (Woodard 2011: 193). This populist sentiment was what fueled the Jacksonian era in the 1800s, as well as the modern day Tea Party movement.

As Wolf would have predicted, Greater Appalachia's kin-ordered society not only prevented the institutionalization of political power, but fragmented the region's economy too. In part, the initial spatial economics of what would become Greater Appalachia prevented the region's economy from developing. With neither infrastructure, organization, nor capital, the poverty-stricken settlers of Greater Appalachia were left with a subsistence economy. Indeed, for the next two centuries, Borderlanders would rely on whiskey, as well as herds of pigs, cattle, sheep, as their medium of exchange (Woodard 2011: 104). Consequently, the region never attained the ability to accumulate capital, and the profitable production processes that stem from it.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the kin-ordered, tributary, and capitalist modes of production can be layered over Woodard's American nations, in spite of movements both across time, and toward and away from the self-regulating market. In reflecting upon this argument, it is important to consider some points of clarification; namely, that in looking at these distinct political and economic ecologies across the American nations, we should remember that they are always in constant interaction with one another. Thus, we must not rush to applying our analyses rigidly across the American nations. Indeed, the usefulness of the analysis here is that it

is a flexible, macro-framework for understanding the different economies and nations of America. As Wolf notes, reflecting on his own analysis of the modes of production and their effects on European and African societies:

...we can no longer think of societies as isolated and self-maintaining systems. Nor can we imagine cultures as integrated totalities in which each part contributes to the maintenance of an organized autonomous, and enduring whole. There are only cultural sets of practices and ideas, put into play by determinate human actors under determinate circumstances. In the course of action, these cultural sets are forever assembled, dismantled, and reassembled, conveying in variable accents the divergent paths of groups and classes. The manner of mobilization sets the terms of history... (Wolf 1997: 391).

What this means for our study is that we must on the one hand acknowledge that there are deep cultural patterns that are engrained across the American nations that shape the way in which social labor is mobilized in these nations; but, on the other hand, human actors have the power to alter these patterns and modes of production, even if ever so slightly. In other words, the system is not static, but dynamic—granted the dominant cultural attributes and modes of production of each nation.

Finally, it is important to highlight what this work suggests for America as a whole, as its distinct nations batter up against an evermore disembedded international political economy. In short, the social dislocation brought about by the disembeddedness of the American nations from their modes of production will manifest itself in different shades of social unrest in each nation. Drawing on Wolf's work, we can expect that in the American nations dominated by kin-ordered mode of production, social unrest will manifest itself in claims about who is and who is not an insider or outsider—who should be privileged to society's scarce resources (Wolf 1997: 390). In American nations dominated by tributary modes, we are most likely to see clashes between the tribute takers and the tribute payers, as each group battles over what is and what is not "right action or commensurate justice, as opposed to wrong action and injustice" (Wolf 1997: 390).

Finally, in the nations dominated by the capitalist mode, we should expect social dislocation to lead to clashes between the owners of capital and sellers of labor, leading to debates about income inequality, minimum-wage reform, and workers rights (Wolf 1997: 390). Thus, looking forward, further research should not only aim to apply the modes of production concept to the other eight nations, but further examine the relationship between these different modes and the social dislocations that result from globalization.

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