

خاصية محلية

localism (n.) خاصة محلية

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Primitive communism

Primitive communism is a concept originating from **Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels** who argued that **hunter-gatherer** societies were traditionally based on egalitarian social relations and common ownership.^[1] A primary inspiration for both Marx and Engels were Lewis Henry Morgan's descriptions of 'communism in living' as practised by the Iroquois Indians of North America.^[2] In Marx's model of socioeconomic structures, societies with primitive communism had no hierarchical social class structures or capital accumulation.^[3]

Engels offered the first detailed theorization of primitive communism in 1884, with publication of *The Origin of the Family*. Marx and Engels used the term more broadly than later Marxists, and applied it not only to hunter-gatherers but also to some subsistence agriculture communities. There is also no agreement among later scholars, including Marxists, on the historical extent, or longevity, of primitive communism.

Marx and Engels also noted how capitalist accumulation latched itself onto social organizations of *primitive communism*. For instance, in private correspondence the same year that *The Origin of the Family* was published, Engels attacked European colonialism, describing the Dutch regime in Java directly organizing agricultural production and profiting from it, "on the basis of the old communistic village communities".^[4] He added that cases like the Dutch East Indies, British India and the Russian Empire showed "how today primitive communism furnishes ... the finest and broadest basis of exploitation".

1 Nature of primitive communist societies

A term usually associated with Karl Marx, but most fully elaborated by Friedrich Engels (in The Origin of the Family, 1884^[5]), and referring to the collective right to basic resources, egalitarianism in social relationships, and absence of authoritarian rule and hierarchy that is supposed to have preceded stratification and exploitation in human history. Both Marx and Engels were heavily influenced by Lewis Henry Morgan's speculative evolutionary history, which described the 'liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes', and the 'communism in living' said to be evident in the village architecture of native Americans.

John Scott & Gordon Marshall, 2007, *Dictionary of Sociology*.

In a primitive communist society, all able bodied persons would have engaged in obtaining food, and everyone would share in what was produced by hunting and gathering. There would be no **private property** other than articles of clothing and similar personal items, because primitive society produced no surplus; what was produced was quickly consumed. The few things that existed for any length of time (tools, housing) were held communally,^[6] in Engels' view in association with matrilineal residence and matrilineal descent.^[7] There would have been no **state**.

Domestication of animals and plants following the Neolithic Revolution through herding and agriculture was seen as the turning point from primitive communism to class society as it was followed by private ownership and slavery, with the inequality that they entailed. In addition, parts of the population specialized in different activities, such as manufacturing, culture, philosophy, and science which is said to lead to the development of social classes.^[6]

Bourgeois ideology would have us believe that primitive communism doesn't exist. In popular consciousness it is lumped with romanticism, exoticism: the noble savage. Oh, surely you don't *really* believe that they're communist?

— Richard B. Lee, 1992. *Demystifying Primitive Communism*. In Christine Ward Gailey (ed), *Civilization in Crisis. Anthropological Perspectives*. Gainesville FL: University of Florida Press, pp. 73-94

Egalitarian hunter gatherer societies have been studied and described by many well-known social anthropologists including James Woodburn,^[8] Richard Lee,^[9] Alan Barnard^[10] and, more recently, Jerome Lewis.^[11] Anthropologists such as Christopher Boehm,^[12] Chris Knight^[13] and Jerome Lewis^[14] offer theoretical accounts to explain how communistic, assertively egalitarian social arrangements might have emerged in the pre-historic past. Despite differences in emphasis, these and other anthropologists follow Engels in arguing that evolutionary change - resistance to primate-style sexual and political dominance - culminated eventually in a revolutionary transition.

2 See also

- Marx's theory of history
- Original affluent society
- Origins of society
- Classless society

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- Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen* by Joseph Campbell (Introduction) and George Boas (preface), Princeton University Press, 380p., 1992

5 Further reading

- 'Marx, Engels, Luxemburg and the Return to Primitive Communism'
- 'Primitive Communism, Barbarism and the Origins of Class Society' - Lionel Sims
- 'Hunter-Gatherers and the Mythology of the Market' - John Gowdy

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