3. Un exemple assez représentatif de ce genre d'attitude : L'ouvrage de Stanislas S. Adotevi.
   (Negritude et Négrologues, Paris, U.G.E., 1972) qui voit dans l'ethnologie «un produit des démangeaisons cérébrales de l'homme blanc» (p. 174).
4. «On pourra nous soupçonner d'avoir introduit subrepticement le besoin à satisfaire pour satisfaire le besoin de satisfaire une fonction.» (B. Malinowski, *A scientific theory of culture,* trad; française, Maspero, Paris, 1968, p. 142).
5. Dans le champ de la pensée économique Maurice Godelier écrit : «La rationalité économique ne se montre donc qu'à travers la rationalité epistémologique de la science économique, c'est-à-dire à travers la vérité des explications théoriques construites par cette science. Nous avons ainsi démontré que la rationalité économique et la rationalité de la Science Economique sont *une seule et même question* (soulignée par l'auteur) et que le connaissance de la rationalité économique *dépend entièrement* (idem) de la vérité des hypothèses élaborées par les économistes (et les autres spécialistes des sciences sociales)» M. Godelier *«Rationalité et Irrationalité en Economie»,* F. Maspero, Paris, 1974, I, p. 32.
6. Voir notamment :
   Pour Marx, Maspero, Paris 1964
   et *Lire le Capital,* Paris, Maspero, 1968.
7. Sous Staline, on le sait, l'histoire de l'humanité se résumait à cinq «stades-modes de production» : le communisme primitif, l'esclavage, le féodalisme, le capitalisme, le communisme. Depuis que Wittfogel a exhumé le «mode de production asiatique», on a vu apparaître un «mode de production domestique» (Meillassoux), un «mode de production tributaire» (S. Amin), un «mode de production lignager» (P.P. Rey)... Fossaerts *(La Société,* Seuil, Paris, 1982, V) en a récemment compté onze (!) dont le (provisoirement) dernier est «le mode de production terroriste – concentrationnaire» qui caractériserait les formations sociales de type soviétique.

Seeds of Famine: Ecological Destruction and the Development Dilemma in the West African Sahel – by Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chasin, Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun, 1980.

Reviewed by Thomas M. PAINTER*

«Famines do not occur, they are organized by the grain trade». (Bertolt Brecht quoted by George, 1977).

The subtitle of Franke and Chasin's book, *Ecological Destruction and the Development Dilemma in the West African Sahel,* may lead some prospective readers to expect yet another technicist treatment of development problems in West Africa. In this respect the book's title is a bit misleading, for Franke and Chasin place the 1968/69–75 famine in Sahelian West Africa – its preconditions, consequences, and the response of international development assistance organizations to it – squarely within the

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* *Dosso, Niger. Department of Sociology, State University of New York, Binghamton, New York and the Institute for Development Anthropology, Binghamton, New York, USA.*

context of larger processes of historical change. Specifically, the authors situate the events leading to the famine and its aftermath in relation to the gradual incorporation of Sahelian social formations within a capitalist world economy.

The consequences of incorporation – an ongoing process – are multiple. Among these has been the continued undermining of productive strategies developed over many generations by Sahelian cultivators and herders. These strategies have in the past enabled Sahelian peasantries to produce the means for biological and social reproduction without undue abuse of the environment in which they lived. The most recent period of drought in the Sahel provided poignant evidence of the extent to which these productive strategies had been undermined and the balance between humans and their habitat upset. Franke and Chasin chronicle the events that contributed to the political economy of disaster in the Sahel, or, in their words, «the making of the famine».

The continuing search by Sahelian peasants for money – a quest whose crudely forced beginnings are to be found in the labor and fiscal policies of the French colonial state and the capitalist interests it so effectively promoted – in a world where more and more of the necessities for «subsistence» could be secured only through monetary transactions contributed to a marked increase in the production of «cash crops (principally groundnuts and cotton). Depending on the specific area of Sahelian West Africa in question, these changes gained momentum from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. The increased production of cash crops – for consumption in Europe, not the Sahel – occurred at the expense of a variety of staple crops (e.g., millets, sorghums) *and* contributed to a breakdown of the techniques (interplanting, rotations, bush-fallows) devised by Sahelian producers in order to maintain a modicum of the sandy soil's already limited fertility. This led in turn to declining yields,. to a gradual reduction of staple crop reserves for emergencies and the «hungry months» preceding harvest time, the transformation of staple into cash crops, and a decline in the effectiveness of anti-erosion measures. (For valuable details on the basis of case studies in Niger, see Raynaut, 1980).

In order to compensate for declining yields, insure that domestic consumption needs were at least in part satisfied, and secure the money needed for taxes and a variety of household expenditures, peasant cultivators were obliged to plant in more marginal areas long-used with considerable effectiveness by pastoral groups. In addition, increasing numbers of Sahelian peasants migrated yearly to the coastal countries to work and ply petty commerce in order to secure the cash needed to purchase staples and pay taxes. This northward movement of cultivated zones, encouraged by the policies of colonial and post-colonial governments in which the interests of cultivators were promoted at the expense of herders, contributed to a further marginalization of pastoral peoples. The situation continues (Swift, 1977). While the sqeeze on herders was more severe, *both* peasant cultivators and pastoralists became extremely vulnerable to accentuations of the most predictable feature of the Sahel's climate – its capriciousness.

Franke and Chasin offer what they term a «radical approach» to an understanding of the Sahel famine and the continuing plight of Sahelian peasantries. Their approach integrates perspectives from several disciplines (climatology, demography, ecology), some of which have contributed to a veritable explosion of uni-causal hence partial explanations of the most recent Sahelian disaster.

> «A full understanding of the forces that led to the dramatic crisis of 1968–74 takes one far beyond climate, desertification, overgrazing, mismanagement, population growth and the like and compels one to study the colonial and post-colonial international economic and political system» (130).

The authors' perspective on the making of the famine is also characterized by the extent to which they draw upon the pathbreaking critical studies of the famine developed initially by radical social scientists in France (e.g., Comité d'Information Sahel, 1975 ; Copans, ed., 1975, Derriennic, 1975; Egg, Lerin and Vernin, 1975). In addition to the analytical perspective they promote in *Seeds of Famine,* Franke and Chasin provide a valuable service to the extent that they make the French critiques available in a coherent manner, for much of this useful literature remains available only in French (but cf. Meillassoux, 1974).

Once having described the historical development of the peasantry's plight in relation to the gradual reorientation of a «subsistence» economy due to capitalist penetration in the Sahel (Amin, 1972, Suret-Canale, 1971 and Wallerstein, 1976 are recommended for the general reader in search of perspectives on the regional specificity of these changes), Franke and Chasin examine the response of Sahelian governments and the rush of international aid organizations into the region in the famine's wake. This response, particularly but by no means solely by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and on a scale heretofore unknown in West Africa, was linked as much to political considerations (revolutionary forces were gaining strength elsewhere in Africa) as to humanitarian purpose. It has been concretely manifested in the creation of interstate policy-making and coordination bodies (the Comité Inter-états de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse – CILSS – and the Club of Friends of the Sahel). In addition, the Sahel has since been invaded by swarms of development «experts» and there has occured a proliferation of development programs along dimensions set forth in the «three generation» (1977–82, 1982–90; 1990–2000) Sahelian Development Program. The Program is the result of numerous CILSS and Club meetings and was drafted in 1977 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The 1969–74 famine has passed but the Sahelian Development boom continues.

Seeds of Famine provides an extensive critique of the Sahel Development Program, and gives particular attention to programs in Mali, Senegal, and Niger. Finally, Franke and Chasin examine possible alternative approaches to development in the Sahel. Chief among these in their view are the programs of non-governmental assistance organizations (NGOs,

or les ONG). Because of their small-scale, the constant give and take (at least in principle) between planners and the rural populations involved, these programs are considered with particular favor. From the perspective of Franke and Chasin, they offer the greatest promise for the promotion of active participation of Sahelian peasants in efforts of their own making to improve their lot, defend their «political space,» and, as the authors suggest, introduce viable institutional reforms. Unfortunately these non-government programs are treated rather superficially as the book rushes to a close, and the reader is left with little more than a hint of how they are better. Franke and Chasin's preferences notwithstanding, smallness in itself is not sufficient to guarantee success.

The need for a critical reconceptualization of development «problems» and their «solutions» extends beyond the consideration of specific programs and projects. «Institutional structure», too often accepted by planners as givens must also be treated as problematic. It no longer suffices, for example, to look at post-colonial governments in the Sahel as undifferentiated monoliths whose planning priorities vis-à-vis rural populations simply reflect the motives of a particular leader, much less the desires of the masses for whom any given leader, party, or junta pretends to speak. Rather, the state must be approached as a structure which differentially promotes the interests and access of some groups – elites and classes – while repressing those of others. All this occurs, of course, despite a great deal of promotional ideology to the contrary. The oppositional and allied interests of elements within the state must be recognized *in relation to* the peasantries who make up the supposed «beneficiary populations» of rural development projects. Indeed, it is the members of the rapidly growing, manifestly favored and prosperous bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the Sahelian states who administer these projects. And what, we might ask, are *their* priorities in the final analysis? The answer to this question is not difficult – nor is it popular in official circles (Amselle, 1981).

By the same token, the post-colonial states in the Sahel are no more isolated and autonomous than they are monolithic. They remain to a great extent dependent upon and dominated by the core states of Western Europe and North America, and the capitalist interests these states promote vis-à-vis the periphery. This relatively powerless position of Sahelian states within interstate systems dominated by interests which promote the global reorganization of production and distribution on the basis of profit rather than use *cannot help* but influence the planning and consequences of development programs. Thus the situation of Sahelian states relative to other «institutional structures» must also be examined and not taken as given.

Rather than considering Sahelian social formations in terms of the oft-used «democracy of poverty» model, it is also necessary to recognize that despite their vulnerable position in relation to core states, processes of differentiation are alive and healthy. The impoverishment of rural populations is directly linked to growing prosperity (often very showy at that : the Mercedes sedan, the villa, etc..) «private» (e.g. mercantile and service)

and «public» (State and parastatal) «sectors», both of which, it should be clear are *very much* interlinked despite occasional conflicts of interest. Development programs are an integral part of these processes, and the benefits are easily and regularly siphoned off by elements not described in any development project document.

Franke and Chasin convincingly argue against the view that seems to be shared and promoted by any development planners, that their task is strictly technical in nature, and not political, and that while their projects may not accomplish much, «they don't do much harm». We are obliged to consider the real possibility that throughout the Sahel well-intentioned planners and experts are contributing to an absolute worsening of the peasantry's situation. The irony is that this occurs in the name of «enhanced quality of life», «development with equity», and the like.

Also to their credit, Franke and Chasin's book is very readable, hence easily accessible to a more general readership than many of the more specialized sources they employ. The potential contribution of *Seeds of Famine* to development education is considerable. This is an area whose neglect, particularly in the United States, is recognized by the authors.

Students of the development process are well-advised to consider Franke and Chasin's book. They make an important contribution to the demystification of development «problems» and their current «solutions». It would be a mistake, however, to unconditionally promote *Seeds of Famine* as a model for further analysis. Instead, Franke and Chasin's work should be considered as a potential reference point – one with strengths and weaknesses – for the promotion of further critical study.

There is always room for improvement. In several instances (e.g., their treatment of alternative approaches to development, discussed above), issues raised in the book are not treated with the thoroughness we would expect from a critique of this kind, particularly one which claims to be original in its perspective (p. 129). We will see this again shortly. Elsewhere, relevant and important sources are not cited and useful illustrative materials are ignored. This serves to detract from the authors' argument in an otherwise useful work. The following instances, neither exhausting the possibilities nor necessarily representative, are noteworthy.

Concerning resistance to French penetration in Niger, neither the (albeit biased) chronicle by Périé and Sellier (1950) nor Fuglestad's work (1973) on the Tuareg revolts are mentioned. Nor, for that matter, is Rolland's important study (1976) of early resistance cited by Franke and Chasin. The contributions of Gregory and colleagues (Gregory and Piché, 1976 and 1979) to the literature on the «demand-for labor» analysis of Sahelian population growth go unmentioned. The Volta Valley Authority, of particular importance to any discussion of river basin development in the Sahel, remains unexamined. C.A.R.E.'s windbreak program in the Majya Valley of Niger, started in 1975 and of particular interest from participatory and ecological perspectives, is not mentioned in the discussion of non-governmental programs.

Quite aside from its use as an industrial lubricant, and more importantly for the fate of Sahelian peasant cultivator, groundnut oil took on growing importance in the eating habits of larger and larger numbers of Europeans from the early decades of this century on. With introduction of hydrogenation groundnut oil was increasingly used as an ingredient in European margarine whose consumption was rapidly growing. More and more groundnut oil replaced other cooking oils in European, and particularly French, kitchens. Last and not least, there was a marked increase in the use of groundnut oil in the manufacture of bar soap – once again in France. Developments such as these led to an increased demand for groundnuts from West Africa and redoubled promotional efforts by administrators to increase production in the Sahel.

Franke and Chasin describe a millet-groundnut rotation as being a major pre-cash production system in the Sahel. In so doing, they characterize Sahelian agriculture (just when was the «pre-cash crop» era?) in a manner which is not only incorrect, but ignores the substantial variation to be found in the agrarian techniques of Sahelian producers. If the «pre-cash crop» period is roughly co-incidental with the period prior to colonial consolidation (once again, it is not clear), one might wonder just how important groundnuts, to take an example, were. Judging from the energetic – to the point of using coercion – efforts of colonial administrations to promote groundnut production in the Sahel, not very.

While it is true that sandy soils are not appropriate for cotton cultivation, heavier – and suitable – soils *are* found in the Sahel, and in substantial quantities. In numerous instances these were singled out by French cotton interests (e.g., CFDT) for the promotion of cotton production during the colonial and post-colonial periods. There can be no doubt that colonial administrations and post-colonial governments have acted to promote these efforts all along.

Finally, the «radical approach» presented in *Seeds of Famine* is something less than we would hope for. It simply leaves the burden of change to the peoples of the Sahel. Experts, in Franke and Chasin's view, have the role of encouraging support «for the Sahelians' efforts among the people of our own country (i.e., the U.S.A.)». This important educational role of experts is mentioned several times in the book, but Franke and Chasin fail to expand upon the theme sufficiently. Nor is their prescription particularly satisfying as it stands. What of possible contributions to be made by non-African students of development – and yes, even a few «experts» – in Africa to the formulation of strategies for social change in the Sahel and elsewhere? This important issue too remains unclear. Admittedly the issues are complex, the situation delicate, and possibly conflicting interests must – once again – be considered, but retrenchement is not the answer after all that has been done and undone. Indeed, we might ask ourselves if it *is* an option. Clearly the conditions under which such contributions are possible and even desirable must be explored and clarified, and here the voices of the Sahelian people must be listened to with great care. Here we are once again faced with the need to recognize that the «Sahelian people» are *not* an undifferentiated mass. They include peasants and

planners, military, students, merchants, a wide variety of bureaucratic types, artisans and laborers of varying degrees of skill. To whom will we listen and with whom will we work when assistance and expertise are solicited? The choices are thoroughly political and in a real sense, constrained. As for the current situation in the Sahel, Franke and Chasin stress what we should already realize – the articulate voices are those in power. It is they who prescribe development priorities, negotiate international development agreements, and implement them. The question becomes, for those of us who feel, unlike Franke and Chasin, that useful work *can* be done with Sahelians *in* the Sahel *as well as* promoting their interests in our home countries (the core: in this respect, their perspective is rather limited), how best to promote these modes of cooperation, assistance, and study. If not through the pervasive, often one-shot «project approach» – governmental or non-governmental – then in spite of it?

Seeds of Famine is a welcome addition to the groundwork for an ongoing, critically engaged, and accessible analysis of development strategies in West Africa.

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