CAPITALIST AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA *

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is prompted by a divergence in post-colonial Africa between government policy and rural development practice on the one hand and, on the other, theories of rural development, whether of a World Bank or a neo-Marxist variety. The development of large-scale, mechanized, capitalist agriculture, promoted by independent African governments, goes against the grain of both the prescriptions of current international development theory and the analyses of neo-Marxist social scientists. The former argue that government expenditure should be focussed on promoting small holder agriculture and raising the standards of living of the poor. The latter have focussed particularly on the obstacles to successful capitalist development in the underdeveloped periphery of the world economy. One example of the latter has argued that the limits of the expansion of the domestic market in peripheral economies distort capitalist development and lead to a scunted growth of agricultural capitalism *(1)*. The paper will chart the scope and roots of the development of capitalist agriculture in Africa and will suggest implications for rural development policy and practice.

Colonial agricultural capitalism in Africa's white settler economies has been extensively studied in recent years. Post-colonial capitalist agriculture has received comparatively less attention. Is it possible the capitalist farmers will come to dominate the political economies of post-colonial «neo-colonies» *(2)* in the way they have dominated the settler economies? I will argue that a more complex social division of labour is being established in African neo-colonies between capitalist and peasant agriculture as well as between agriculture and industry than that established in the settler economies.

Just as settler capitalist farmers will be contrasted with black African capitalist farmers, so current rural development policy will be contrasted with the settler economies' Native Reserve policies. I will seek to place rural development policy and practice in a wider, if somewhat unconventional perspective. From that perspective I will be able to examine, admittedly at a more-than-macro level, the opportunities for and constraints on rural development in neo-colonial Africa.

A note on terms is required at this stage. I use «capitalist» to describe economic activities carried on by the combination of capital and labour, where the ownership and control of capital rests with private entrepreneurs or investors and from which labourers are excluded. Capitalist production relations are thus distinct from peasant production relations where assets are

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* *Paper presented to the Fourth Bi-Annual Conference of the African Association of Political Science, Harare, Zimbabwe, May 23–27, 1981.*

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owned and controlled by the direct producers. However, where peasant enterprises expand their employment of wage labour, it becomes possible to speak of peasant capitalists.

2. SETTLER AGRICULTURAL CAPITALISM: PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION MARK 2*

It is possible here to give only the barest outline of the characteristics and path of development of white settler agriculture. The picture will be drawn from studies of South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya *(3)*. The establishment of settler agriculture was achieved by more or less massive and forcible land alienation. There was little accommodation with the needs of indigenous people for land, except when their struggles made some accommodation unavoidable. Over the years the settlers used their increasing power to segregate the rural economies into distinct core and periphery zones: core, white, cash crop producing, capitalist areas, and peripheral, increasingly impoverished, labour-supplying native reserves and purchase areas. Segregation was achieved by states in which settler interests were very and increasingly strongly represented. Not only was a land market at first created and then grossly interfered with in favour of the settlers, but opportunities to produce for the market and to work for wages were also manipulated in the same direction. The more lucrative markets (e.g. tobacco, maize and cattle in Rhodesia) were all stolen from black farmers, who were at the same time forced into poorer and poorer territory. Proletarianization was achieved both through dispossession of land and property as well as through the restructuring of opportunity. Were opportunities to be structured more favourably to black farmers even today, in the case of South Africa, considerable agricultural development would probably be possible in the African areas *(4)*.

State power (the power of colonial governments or, in the case of Rhodesia, the British South Africa Company) was used continuously to push African peasants into the margins of the economy. The legal framework of private landownership, the machineries of surveying and policing were provided by governments in support of land alienation. Native Reserves were set up by governments to manage the disruption caused by land alienation and to ensure a measure of rural political control.

State power was used to support exploitative relations between settler land-owners and peasant-proletarians. In general there has been a progression in forms of Wage-labour from squatting, to labour tenancy and finally to forms approximating more closely to free wage labour. Initially African farmers squatted on land expropriated from them by the state and sold to settlers, and paid rent. As the complexity of the social division of labour in the colonies grew, markets grew and squatting was gradually replaced by labour tenancy, in which peasants paid rent for land in the form of labour on the white man's farm. (Such enserfment is similar to the wrongly called

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* *Primitive accumulation Mark 1 is to be found in K. Marx: Capital, Vol. 1.*

«second feudalism» of Eastern Europe and Latin America in which production for the capitalist world economy was carried out by capitalist farmers organized in centralized states but resorting to a different form of labour control from that which developed in Western Europe, due to prevailing conditions of labour scarcity and the requirements of extensive production on the periphery *(5)*. In South Africa labour tenancy was established as the major social relation of agricultural production by the 1920s *(6)*. Farmers could not compete with the wages paid on the gold mines, and peasants refused to work without being offered land to cultivate for themselves. During the 1930s and 1940s the terms of trade continued to go against agriculture and labour tenancy became an inadequate tool to maintain a supply of cheap agricultural labour. White farmers turned increasingly to the state, which resolved their crisis with the Apartheid system which set out to control the movement of nominally free wage-labour and by making convict labour available to farmers on a large scale in the 1950s.

Similarly, in Rhodesia control over land won by white farmers and symbolized by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 allowed labour control to be achieved through labour tenancy arrangements *(7)*. After the Second World War new agricultural technologies, the commodities boom and a plentiful supply of labour made possible evictions of labour tenants on a large scale in Rhodesia, and the substitution of nominally free wage labour. In South Africa farmers had to compete more strenuously with a more highly developed and higher paying manufacturing sector and with the mines: the Apartheid system was a response to the uneven development of capitalism in South Africa, and in particular to the uneven development of wage labouring opportunities. It led to much immediate canalization of labour back to agriculture from peri-urban areas. Since then, with the use of modern capital-entensive equipment hundreds of thousands of labour tenants and squatters have been removed from the white farming areas which now rely predominantly on permanent, albeit highly regulated, wage labour *(8)*.

Finally, state power was used to support the extremely uneven development of agricultural production in the settler economies. This was particularly visible from the 1930s onwards as capitalist states all over the world took measures to restructure agricultural production. Thus in Rhodesia white farmers were actively wooed in the U.K. and in South Africa; they were given training and credit on arrival and extension facilities were provided. By contrast little was spent in either the native reserves or the native purchase areas. Some effort was made to introduce an extension service in the 1930s on the American model (see below), but expenditures were vigourously opposed by European farmers. At the same time conservation measures were steamrollered through in the reserves, as they were elsewhere in British colonies at this time *(9)*, despite opposition from Africans and the (British) Native Commissioners *(7)*. Conservation measures were implemented to increase the «carrying capacity» of the reserves so that evictions from white farming areas could be absorbed.

Not only was little spent on native agriculture, even in Rhodesia in the 1950s where there was a policy to create a landholding African kulak class, in line with Colonial Office policy, but opportunities to produce for the market were actively denied by settler governments. Of course the roots of such disparities go deep into colonial history. The railways were established to service white settler areas, for example.

The entire interventionist agricultural strategy supported inefficient and exploitative settler farmers. European agriculture was hardly viable (except possibly on a plantation scale) until after the Second World War when investment in marchinery made possible economies of scale *(10)*. Even now, the superiority of white agriculture in South Africa over Bantustan farming has been effectively challenged, academically and in practice. White farmers continue to oppose Bantustan development, despite the potential, because increasing black farmers' productivity and income would also increase their bargaining power and wage demands *(11)*. This lack of superiority of European farming renders meaningless the economic justification for dualism provided by vent-for-surplus-labour theory.

Settlers exerted a more or less overriding influence on economic policy in South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya. The result was to limit severely the role of the independent peasantry in economic development. The policy towards the indegenous population has been one of containment not development: conservation without productivity increases, for example. Any opposition to such policies from foreign companies in manufacturing or mining was squashed, except in Kenya where a combination of a nationalist movement based on peasant rebellion and a smaller, less powerful settler class created a need for the radical revision of the path of agricultural development as a precondition for decolonization.

3. THE NEO-COLONIAL MODEL, OR THE «KULAK ROAD»

At the same time as settlers were establishing one mode of incorporating the rural periphery into the world economy, another and different mode of incorporation was being developed by the ruling classes of America and Northern Europe. This approach to development had two sources of origin: (1) the colonization and exploitation of India and particularly of Indian peasant agriculture, and (2) the attempts by North American capitalists to restructure the agriculture of the Southern States in the wake of the American civil war. The links between colonial economic policy in India and in Africa have yet to be traced fully. However, one may say that in both cases, where European companies with strong trading interests in local peasant agriculture were influential, the colonial government tended to protect agriculture from dispossession *(12)*.

The links between post-civil war agricultural development efforts by the precursors of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations in the American South and modern neo-colonial agricultural development strategies have been traced both at the level of ideas as well as the level of institutions and personalities *(13)*. Indeed the research and development which led to the Green Revolution and the strategies adopted to diffuse Green Revolution technology also find their origin in the American South. Since the nineteenth Century the efforts of the American capitalist class to transform peripheral agricultural economies have centred on the following elements:

1. *Tying the structure of production to the world economy via produce markets and creating a need for manufactured inputs;*
2. *Increasing production to the maximum extent possible;*
3. *Creating a social structure which ensures a supply of labour and which does not threaten capitalist rule;*
4. *Creating a class of farmer-businessmen.*

The strategy was devised by American corporations operating in the American South and later in China, but the task of implementing it was gradually taken over by the U.S. government. However, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations still play a major part on the rural development front. Today other institutions (the U.N., the World Bank, USAID) have come to occupy dominant positions internationally. The influence of the American approach was certainly felt even in British Africa in the 1930s. For example, the thrust of development policy in the Rhodesian native reserves was in imitation of a scheme in the Transkei which in turn derived its structure from experience in the American South *(7)*. And the vogue for conservation measures in British colonies during the 1930s almost certainly derives from the fashions of research and training in the U.S.A. *(14)*.

Today the whole apparatus of international efforts at rural development and reconstruction has become more massive and more complex. However, despite fashionable rhetoric concerning equity and the removal of poverty, the means towards these apparent ends have not substantially changed. The World Bank, for example, remains financially heavily committed to the promotion of capitalist agriculture *(15)*; the promotion of «progressive» peasants is still at the core of the majority of internationally sponsored development projects. There has perhaps been a slight change of focus, however, away from the promotion of large agricultural holdings to commercially oriented smallholdings, particularly when there are high population densities. But this is only in line with the third element identified above as essential to the neo-colonial strategy: the need to create a social structure which supports the status quo. This requirement goes radically against the principle of a settler economy with its built-in racial contradictions and conflicts, however. It is the argument of this paper that it also goes against prevailing trends in neo-colonies, in many of which an internally imposed colonization of agricultural land is taking place.

4. THE NEO-COLONIAL REALITY: THE NEW SETTLERS

Kenya provides the most obvious example of both continuity and discontinuity between colonial and neo-colonial economic structures. Mau Mau undoubtedly changed the course of Kenyan development, but the decolonization process remained firmly under Birtish control. The Kikuyu peasant-proletarians were accommodated through settlement schemes on former white settler-owned land, but the system introduced by the British of private property rights was maintained, and subsequently extended. The racial separation of the large farm sector was dismantled, but sufficiently large farms were retained intact for the large farm interest to reassert itself. Barriers to competition between the large and small holdings sectors were removed, but the large farms remained heavily subsidized and assisted *(16)*. Despite the disadvantages of the small scale farms (the «high density» settlement schemes), such as relatively poor land, fewer services, and the necessity of coping with squatters unloaded from the favoured low density schemes by the end of the 1960s the small farmers were successfully competing with the large farmers *(17)*.

However, with the saturation of the core agricultural area, the former White Highlands soon became a brake on production and led to concerted efforts to extend bourgeois land tenure to low density, high potential agricultural and pastoral areas. The major policy thrusts of the early 1970s were to allow the Kikuyu to spill over into less developed parts, and to develop capitalist ranching. Land adjudication and registration was speedily carried out; and administration and physical infrastructure expanded in the outlying districts *(18)*.

But these processes have not always vindicated the large farm interest. In some areas much of the inequality in land holdings is amongst peasant households, and not between peasants and influential outsiders, although the latter certainly pertains *(19)*. A commercially-oriented, surplus-producing local rich peasantry is also emerging, stimulated by land reform and infrastructural investments in outlying areas, but also by marketing and processing firms creating markets for commodities produced competitively on a small scale (e.g. tobacco, sisal and recently sunflowers), and by foreign aid projects. The latter are nominally designed to «raise the incomes of the poorest»; but rarely take into account the constraints on the participation of the poor. Once peasant producers own their own land and have the opportunity to cultivate it properly, land values rise and the willingness to part with land falls *(20)*.

Kenyan capitalists seeking to expand their landholdings thus face peasant competition, an obstacle which cannot be removed within the confines of a market economy where the large farm interest is important but no longer dominant. Nevertheless, their requirements for land are likely to be pressing. given the lack of land to purchase in the core agricultural areas, the high degree of competition in trade and transport and the limited opportunities for Kenyan capitalists in manufacturing *(20)*. And capitalist farmers have certain advantages: they continue to influence the price structure, to have easy access to credit and to benefit from the continuing bias in agricultural research towards technology suited to large farms *(21)*. But the viability of peasant production and its usefulness to processing and marketing firms was established during the decolonization process in the high potential agricultural areas, and is now being extended alongside large scale agriculture and ranching into the periphery. A new agrarian division of labour has been established in which at least some elements of the peasantry have a role complementary to large scale capitalist farmers.

Other neo-colonies differ from Kenya in important ways. In many no large farm sector grew up because colonial policy did not favour settlement or plantations and in some cases because the market was often not there for crops which could profitably be produced on a large scale. In the Sudan, however, the market and the technical feasibility for large scale production of sorghums was established by the early 1950s *(22)*, and the terminal colonial years saw the establishment of privately run 1000 acre farms *(23)*. Elsewhere large scale, mechanized production remained in the experimental stage until the 1960s, and peasant agriculture remained the dominant form of agricultural production.

Agricultural capitalism was stimulated in independent black Africa (a) by the development of the home market due to the proletarianization of a significant proportion of the population, the specialization of agricultural commodity producers producing for export markets, and above all the heightened rate of urbanization *(24)*; (b) by the development of export markets which could be captured by large scale producers. In both cases a dominant motive was the search for foreign exchange (or foreign exchange savings) with which to industrialize and modernize the economy. Capitalist agriculture was facilitated by the large amounts of aid from West and East proferred in the form of agricultural machinery and chemicals. In general African capitalists found difficulties in entering industry which continued to be dominated by foreign capital; the tertiary sector was very competitive; agriculture was an increasingly sound investment, particularly as food production per caput stagnated and food prices rose. An open land frontier was thus extremely important to newly independent governments seeking to accommodate if not to promote national capitalists.

With ten to fifteen years' hindsight government policy to promote large scale, mechanized, capitalist agriculture has been seen as irrational from a purely economic point of view. Import-saving has only rarely been achieved since mechanized production using chemicals intensively is highly import-intensive for most African countries; and with world terms of trade increasingly pitted against mechanized agriculture (price inflation of manufactured products, relative reduction in international grain prices), it is unlikely that it will become any less of a rarity *(25)*. The lack of economic rationality, common to settler economies as well as many third world countries *(26)*, flies in the face of the commonly held belief that «following independence the revolutionary countries generally opted for socio-political priorities, the «democratic» ones for a more distinctly economic or economistic solutions» *(27)*.

What government policy has achieved is to build up a new agrarian economic and political power base, a sympton of which is the continued importation of machinery and chemical inputs for large farms in the face of considerable national diseconomies and competition between different national interests for scarce foreign exchange. If the promotion of capitalist agriculture is generally economically irrational it is politically rational from two points of view: firstly as an investment outlet for national capitalists, and secondly as it loosens third world countries' crude dependence on food aid and imports, in so far as its leads to overall food production increases destined for the local market. This latter reduces the scope of the major food exporting countries for market manipulation, but comes at the price of increasing dependence on agricultural machinery and chemical producing MNCs and socialist state corporations. The latter benefit not only from increased consumption of their products, generally highly subsidized by African states, but also from opportunities to set up factories and assembly plants which monopolize national markets and produce at prices above world prices.

Before examining more closely the internal dynamics of the formation of an agricultural capitalist class it remains to chart rougly the extent of agricultural capitalism. Table I gives some crude indicators, crude since land productivity and therefore returns vary considerably around the continent, as do population densities levels of technology and therefore demand for land by non-capitalists.

Table I - *The Extent of the Damage: Indicators of Investment in Large-Scale Capitalist Farming in Africa.*

Country / Region	Date	Number of Acres * (Approx) '000s	Number of Farmers (Approx)	Total Cultivable Area '000s	Col 3 as % of Col.5
Northern Ghana	1976	150	750	1,218	12
Northern Sudan	1976	3,476	3,000	65,000	5
Chilalo, Ethiopia	1972	75	150	1,200	6
Kenya (post-colonial)	1970	1,600	?	19,000	8
Kenya (colonial)	1953	7,300	4,000	19,000	38
Rhodesia	1952	31,200	?	90,000	34
	1970	44,900	?	90,000	49

* Used for private, large scale farming. Colonial figures refer to land alienated to all Europeans including companies and are not strictly comparable. Figures for post-colonial Kenya do not include land still held by European settlers and plantations.

Sources:

Ghana: A. W. Shepherd: *The development of capitalist rice farming in Northern Ghana,* Ph. D., University of Cambridge, 1979, Ch. 2.

Ministry of Agriculture (Government of Ghana): *Report on Ghana Sample Census of Agriculture 1970,* Vol. I, p. 102.

Sudan: Simpson and Simpson, op. cit. pp. 3 and 105.

Kenya: Leys, op. cit. pp. 29, 63 and 89–90.

G. Lamb, 'Neo-colonial integration of Kenya peasants' *Development and Change* Vol. 8, No. 1 (1977).

Rhodesia: Palmer, op. cit. p. 185.

Ethiopia: J.M. Cohen: 'Effects of Green Revolution Strategies on tenants and small scale landowners in the Chilalo Region of Ethiopia', *Journal of Developing Areas,* Vol. 9, 1975.

5. THE ROLE OF THE STATE: PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION Mark3

The formation of national agricultural capitalist classes in post-colonial Africa has been achieved above all by the use of state apparatuses. Thus far state machinery has been used to effect a transfer of land and capital to nascent capitalist farmers. The 'agrarian question' in many neo-colonial countries is coming to focus on these transfers. No independent states have as yet undertaken large scale coercive intervention in the labour market, despite frequently prevailing conditions of rural labour scarcity. It is worth asking whether such intervention is likely or possible, on the model of the settler economies.

1. Land

Capitalist agriculture has been facilitated, and in some cases, made possible by a variety of land legislation. In some cases colonial governments allowed land to enter the market as a factor of production, which resulted in the creeping differentiation of the peasantry and the gradual emergence of a rich peasantry. More recently Kenya has sought with some success to introduce the private ownership of land practically throughout its rural areas by capitalist and other migrant farmers, although it has also accelerated the creeping process of differentiation.

Perhaps the most common intervention in pre-capitalist land tenure arrangements has become the nationalization of communally held land by colonial and post-colonial governments. This has taken one of two forms: nationalization of the freehold, after which the state is at liberty to grant leases to individuals or corporate bodies (N. Ghana *(28)*, Sudan *(29)*, Nigeria *(30)* ;) or nationalization of the freehold in order to resell to individuals or corporate bodies (pre-revolution Ethiopia *(31)*.) Table I shows the extent to which state power has been used to effect a transfer of land out of peasant agriculture or pastoralism in N. Ghana, Ethiopia and the Sudan. In Nigeria the conclusion of a student of government land allocation prior to the 1978 Land Use Decree was that

> *«Unless there is a definite change from the past pattern of beneficiary incidence in government controlled land resources, then the Land Use Decree is likely to succeed only in creating the classical landed and landless classes in society» (30).*

In certain cases the expropriation has indeed created a landless class. The Southern lowlands of Ethiopia witnessed two types of expropriation in the 1960s as the technology and finance for capitalist farming became available. Feudal landowners, established by Emperor MENELIK to rule the south after its conquest in the late nineteenth century, evicted tenants on a large scale, and the government *sold* communally held land to commercial farmers without so much as notifying the users*(32)*. In Chilalo Province it was estimated that about 5000 households had been evicted by 1972, and the land rented out to members of the local and national elite *(33)*.

Landlessness, always a difficult phenomenon to measure, has undoubtedly resulted in other countries too. But other effects can also be as, if not more significant. In the Sudan development of the central clay soils has disrupted pastoralists' evolving grazing and migration patterns and gravely exacerbated adverse ecological trends. In turn, this has undoubtedly forced the less viable pastoralist households into labour migration and/or settlement to carry out subsistence agriculture *(34)*. A second consequence is the considerable and often violent opposition which exists between nomads and capitalist farmers, their managers and labourers *(35)*.

Nationalization and the leasing of land to individual farmers does not merely allow easy access to large amounts of land to capitalist farmers, but allows them to farm in a 'strip-mining fashion' or according to ancient laws of shifting cultivation. This has occurred in both northern Ghana and the Sudan, where farmers cultivate until the weeds choke plant growth and/ or fertility is reduced, when they move on to new fields. In the Sudan this process is even actively encouraged by the State, which awards virgin farms first and foremost to experienced farmers *(36)*. Combined with the greater risk of involuntary land alienation under a system of government land ownership, this process of 'eating the ecology' should make every peasant in a neo-colony better off under a free market in land, where land could not be so easily and quickly appropriated, and where land owners would be more likely to invest in their land in order to increase productivity rather than shift to new land. The scarcity and price of land would determine how far the existence of a market in land could constrain strip-mining.

Elsewhere it is not so much the extraction of land but the monopolistic market opportunities held by capitalist farmers which has strained peasant agriculture and stimulated proletarianization via labour migration. South Africa is of course the classic case where opportunities continue to be structured against peasant farmers in the Bantustans *(11)*. In independent black Africa it has not been normal to use the negative and regulatory powers of the state to contain peasant farmers, but it is common to use positive powers of subsidy, guaranteed market and minimum price in favour of capitalist farmers. However, such tools can have unintended consequences which cannot be resolved without the use of regulatory economic powers. In northern Ghana the development of state-supported capitalist rice farming led to a high rate of urbanization, since most of the entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in the rice economy were appropriated by urban dwellers. The greater part of the money made out of rice circulated in the urban areas, and acted as an attraction for rural people. In turn, this led to a much increased demand for peasant produce other than rice, which had in any case not been much grown by peasants, and to considerable inflation in crop prices. The quasi-monopoly of capitalist farmers over rice production paradoxically led to unparalleled increase in the range of production opportunities open to peasants, and to their more complete integration into the market economy *(28)*. In the land-surplus areas peasants were to a large extent freed of the need to earn cash by selling their labour to capitalist farmers or to the cocoa farmers in the south. Out of such opportunities rises a commercially oreinted peasantry with a distinct role in the social division of labour. Similarly in the Sudan, a rich peasantry is emerging in the villages of the central rainlands: one which is able to take advantage of the same inputs. In both Ghana and the Sudan these cash crop producers tend also to be traders, local leaders or cattle owners: in short, local businessmen.

In general the development of capitalist agriculture has not reached the stage where the way forward lies in appropriating *intensively* farmed peasant land on a large scale. Pre-revolutionary Ethiopia was an exception in this; it is no accident that the revolution came when it did. In all the cases discussed here capitalist expansion has occurred mainly in peripheral areas with relatively low population densities. Similarly the overall shortfall in agricultural production has generally left plenty room for both capitalist and peasant production. It is when these two conditions cease to be fulfilled that the contradiction between capitalist and peasant development will result in sustained conflict, as it has done in Southern Africa. Large scale agricultural production does not necessarily displace small; indeed the advent of capitalist agriculture can, indirectly, stimulate peasant agriculture, and as in northern Ghana, provide peasants with the means of expanded production (tractor hire, fertilisers etc) *(37)*.

2. *Capital*

In neo-colonies capital is generally cheapened to the consumer by an overvalued exchange rate and tax incentives; it is specifically cheapened for capitalist farmers typically by sudsidies on fertilisers, HYVs, tractors and other machinery, negative real rates of interest on credit, and of course by the provision of cheap land. Price structures, floor prices and tariffs further support capitalist farmers, as may the provision of physical, administrative and marketing infrastructure. All such subsidies and supports go to make up the generally high level of profitability of capitalist farms. For example, in Northern Ghana in 1973/4, the proportion of subsidy in the income of a 119 acre rice farm was 150 % (sic) *(38)*. In Southern Ethiopia a 111 % rate of profit was possible on a 100 acre farm, because tractors were imported duty free, HYVs and credit were subsidized, and so on *(39)*.

Capitalist farming in black Africa is financially profitable but economically dubious if not disastrous. In some cases the picture might change if world terms of trade changed directions, which seems unlikely, or if the efficiency of capitalist farms were improved, which is more likely, particularly as the opportunities for extensive shifting cultivation become numbered. Financial profitability has led to over-expansion and to growing crops which are profitable but unsuited to a particular terrain.

The real costs and benefits are hidden, with the exception of the transfer of land and financial profitability. Modernization ideolody and the 'transformation approach' to rural development *(40)* are used to gloss over the enormous transfers from peasant agriculture, which continues to be the main producer of national wealth (except in oil-producing states), to inefficient capitalist agriculture. This is reminiscent of the colonial Kenyan 'highly elaborate system of economic discrimination, whereby Africans paid the bulk of taxation, while the Europeans received virtually the entire benefit of government services... in addition to being subsidized through the customs tariff... and having privileged access to profitable markets...' *(41)* Now it is not the Europeans who are the main beneficiairies, but the new black settler farmers. The sufferers are the same. The resulting tension is not a racial one, but is often loaded with regional or ethnic meaning, since the transfer often occurs across such boundaries: from southern cocoa producers to northern rice farmers in the Ghanaian case, for example.

3. Labour

We have already seen how important the control of labour was in the settler economies of southern and East *(41)* Africa, and how control over labour was achieved firstly by the appropriation of productive land, but secondly by massive state intervention to regulate population movements, earnings and the alternatives to employment, in the historic pattern typical of peripheral agricultural capitalism *(42)*. Thus far the form of primitive accumulation in the neo-colonies has avoided the direct regulation of labour. On the other hand capitalist agriculture, being inefficient and generally unable to compete with alternative employment, or indeed with the income potential labourers can gain from self-employment as farmers or in town, is structurally hard pressed for labour. Might one expect post-colonial states to follow in the footsteps of the settler economies to regulate labour?

The answer to this question probably depends on the extent to which capitalist farmers come to dominate the state. To the extent they do one might expect to see moves to regulate rural-urban migration and to restrict the production opportunities open to peasant farmers. However, there are constraints: firstly, the influence of foreign and indigenous manufacturing and trading firms, which would tend to work against such regulatory actions. Secondly, the fact that capitalist farmers are often themselves also traders and members of the educated elite: interests are thus intermingled; and thirdly, control of labour would often be impossible, since borders are fluid and labourers are often involved in transnational migrations (e.g. from the Sudan to the Gulf states).

Nevertheless there are other methods of ensuring a labour supply: unofficially sanctioned famine *(44)*, unofficially sanctioned desertification, a steadier rhythm of land alienation, a slow pace to peasant development, a greater labour force participation rate for women and children, continued or enhanced regional inequalities in opportunities, and the recruitment of the urban poor back into agriculture. Which of such methods are adopted, and their adoption may be either consciously planned or they may simply be acceded to, will depend on circumstances. Perhaps the most typical, from which the others follow, is the maintenance of regional inequality. The chronic delays and failures in development projects in underdeveloped regions have to be seen in this light. This is not to argue a concerted conspiracy to proletarianise. It is to suggest that opportunities may arise in which class interests can be satisfied, even though capitalist farmers do not entirely dominate their government machinery. At a local level the use of unfree labour such as that of convicts has also been known in post-colonial Africa: in northern Ghana, for example, farmers resorted to prison labour when they could not afford to pay the market rate for labour in 1977/78 *(45).* An ad hoc reaction in northern Ghana, whereas in S. Africa farm prisons (paid for by farmers) have been institutionalised. Whether the use of non-market methods of labour recruitment will expand remains an unknown.

6. A NEW AGRARIAN DIVISION OF LABOUR

A cynic examining the course of rural development in tropical Africa might conclude, with John BERGER *(46),* that the peasantry is doomed, and that African states will not rest until peasants are a thing of the past *(47);* in short that neo-colonial economies will go the way of the settler economies. But strong arguments can be advanced against this prognostication. The development of capitalism undoubtedly requires a proletariat. The problems in creating a *rural* proleteriat are principally the competition for labour between wage employment and self-employment, and urban migration.

Direct state action is unlikely on the first front, against the existence or development of an independent peasantry, for several reasons. Firstly it would substantially reduce total output. Secondly, the majority of neo-colonies continue to depend on peasant producers for a major proportion of their exports, exports which are needed in order to finance agribusiness imports, and the life style of the urban elite among other things. The interests of international and national trading and processing companies are thus built-in to the peasant foundations of neo-colonies. Peasant production continues to have attractions for such interests: prices are competitive, peasant labour can be closely organized, and a rural political climate favourable to these interests can be maintained. However, such interests are not uniformly present and active. A world of difference exists between the Ivory Coast and Kenya in which industrial and foreign trading interests are strong, and in which there are numerous examples of state and private outgrowers' or peasant plantation schemes, and the Sudan or pre-revolutionary Ethiopia, in which such interests have not been as strong. However, even in the Sudan there has been considerable expansion of peasant agriculture on the Gezira model. The strength of particularly foreign industrial and commercial interests in Kenya and the Ivory Coast derives from their positions as industrial producers for their regions.

Thirdly, the degree of peasant political weight has historically affected the process of land distribution and resource allocation: the examples of Mau Mau, without which the process of peasant incorporation would have gone much less far in Kenya, the struggles for land in southern Africa, the coming to power of the left in the Sudan (1969–71) when an attempt was made to turn the development of mechanized agriculture in the peasants' favour *(48).* Fourthly, and the other side of this coin, the danger of radical peasant movements increases the need for rural political control. To counter this, the administration has to form (directly) closer links with the peasantry, especially as local politics has become somewhat emasculated as a means of control in many post-colonial states. With resources at their disposal, this inevitably means that state officials become the new 'middlemen' *(49);* without resources they can appear more like oppressors.

Finally, the need of capitalist farmers for a labour supply could itself become the motive force behind rural development: the only means to keep rural population levels up to the mark at which the supply of labour to work in large scale agriculture becomes feasible. Interesting projects, such as that of King Faisal in the Sudan's Blue Nile Province, where peasant development is planned alongside massive scale capitalist farming point the way to a new realisation amongst the capitalists of their dependence on the peasantry. A highly unequal symbiosis is likely to be the result, with the peasant principle always capable of independent development, but generally repressed into the service of dependent but powerful capitalist agriculture. Only under special circumstances will the peasant principle be more freely developed: these occur when there is no alternative – as in Tanzania (although in Tanzania peasant development is subordinated to the requirements of the state); or where a section of the ruling class (e.g. foreign capitalist firms in Kenya) have a vested interest in peasant development.

FOOTNOTES

1. Usta Patnaik: «The development of capitalism in agriculture», *Social Scientist,* September, 1972.
2. Of which a rough and ready definition would be those states whose direction of development has not been transformed by a protracted political and military struggle. Kenya is, however, included as a neo-colony, whereas there is little discussion of other neo-colonies (on the above definition) e.g. Tanzania.
3. In particular: M.L. Morris: «The development of capitalism in South African agriculture: class struggle in the countryside» *Economy and Society,* 1976; R.H. Palmer: *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia,* Heinemann, London, 1977; C. Leys: *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The political economy of neo-colonialism,* Heinemann, London 1975.
4. Merle Lipton: «South Africa: two agricultures? in F. Wilson et al (eds): *Farm labour in South African,* David Philip, Cape Town, 1977.
5. I. Wallerstein: The modern world-system: capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world economy in the Sixteenth Century, Academic Press Inc., 1974.
6. Morris, op. cit.
7. Palmer, op. cit.
8. M.L. Morris: «State intervention and the agricultural labour supply post – 1948» in Wilson et al (eds), op. cit.
9. J.R. Watson: *The Mlalo scheme and its aftermath: a case study in development decision-making, Ph. D.,* University of Cambridge, 1973.
10. P. Mosley: «White farmers in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1920–1955» Paper to African Studies Association of the U.K. Conference, Oxford 19–22 September 1976.
11. Lipton op. cit.
12. In the case of West Africa, see A.G. Hopkins: *An economic history of West Africa,* Longman, 1973, p. 210–214.

13. H.M. Cleaver: *Origins of the Green Revolution,* Ph. D., Stanford University, 1975.
14. Watson, op. cit.
15. J. Collins and F.M. Leppe: «Whom does the World Bank serve?» *Economic and Political Weekly,* May 12, 1979.
16. Leys, op. cit.
17. C. Leo: «The failure of the 'progressive farmer' in Kenya's million acre settlement scheme», *Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 16, No. 4 (1978).
18. G. Lamb: «Neo-colonial integration of Kenyan peasants», *Development and Change,* Vol. 8, No. 1 (1977).
19. D. Brokensha and E.H.N. Njeru: «Some consequences of land adjudication in Mbere Division, Embu», *Working Paper No. 320,* Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, 1977.
20. D. Hunt: «The determination of agricultural development policy and the viability of basic needs strategies», unpublished paper read to SSRC Development Economics Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, May 1979.
21. J. Heyer (ed): *Agricultural development in Kenya,* Oxford University Press, 1976.
22. Ministry of Agriculture (Government of the Sudan): *Report of the Working Party on Mechanical Crop Production Schemes,* Survey Department Khartoum, 1954. (The Bunting Report).
23. I.G. Simpson and M.C. Simpson: «Alternative strategies for agricultural development in the Central Rainlands of the Sudan,» *Rural Development Study No. 3,* University of Leeds, 1978.
24. For an analysis of the development of the home market in Tanzania along these lines see J.B. Sender: *The development of capitalist agriculture in Tanzania: a study with detailed reference to the West Usambaras,* Ph. D., University of London, 1975.
25. For the best documented case of Ghana see: F.E. Winch III: *Costs and returns of alternative rice production systems in northern Ghana: implications for output, employment and income distribution,* Ph. D., University of Michigan, 1976: and D.J. Ansell: *Mechanized rice production in northern Ghana,* Barclays Bank International Development Fund, London, 1976.
26. cf. C. Hewitt de Alcantara: *Modernizing Mexican agriculture: socio-economic implications of technical change,* UNRISD, Geneva, 1976.
27. J.P. Nettl: «Strategies in the study of political development: in C. Leys (ed): *Politics and Change in Developing Countries,* Cambrigde University Press, 1969, p. 16.
28. A.W. Shepherd: The development of capitalist rice farming in northern Ghana, Ph. D., University of Cambridge, 1979.
29. M.A. el Mahdi: A guide to Land Settlement and Registration, Khartoum University Press, 1971.
30. I. Okpala: «The Nigerian Land Use Decree of 1978», Journal of Administration Overseas, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1979). Land was 'nationalized' in both N. Nigeria and N. Ghana by the colonial government, as in other colonies such as Tanzania and Zambia.
31. J.M. Cohen and S.V. Weintraub: Land and peasants in Imperial Ethiopia, Van Gorcum, 1975.

32. S. Pausewang: «Peasant society and development in Ethiopia», Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1973).
33. J.M. Cohen: «Effects of Green Revolution Strategies on Tenants and Small Scale Landowners in the Chilalo Region of Ethiopia» *Journal of Developing Areas,* 9 (1975).
34. Abdel Ghaffar Mohd. Ahmed: *Shaykhs and Followers: Political Struggle in the Rufa'al – Hoi Nazirate in the Sudan,* Khartoum University Press, 1974.
35. Simpson and Simpson, op. cit.
36. J. O'Brien: «How Traditional is Traditional Agriculture», *Bulletin No. 62,* Economic and Social Research Council, Khartoum, 1977.
37. Shepherd op. cit. Ch. 7.
38. Winch op. cit. p. 97.
39. Cohen op. cit.
40. N. Long: *An introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development, London 1978.*
41. Leys, op. cit. (1975 pp. 30–31, quoting E.A. Brett: *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa,* Heinemann, 1973.
42. Wallerstein op. cit.
43. F. Furedi: «Kikuyu squatters and the changing political economy of the white Highlands», Paper to Conference on East African History, Cambridge, 1975.
44. A.W. Shepherd: «Agrarian change in northern Ghana: public investment, capitalist farming and famine», in J. Heyer et al: *Rural Development in Tropical Africa,* MacMillan, 1980. See also my article in *West Africa,* 16th January, 1978.
45. According to N. Van Hear.
46. J. Berger: «The peasant experience and the modern world», *New Society* Vol. 48 No. 867 (1979).
47. T.G. Forrest: «Agricultural policy in Nigeria», in Heyer et al, op. cit.
48. Abdel Ghaffar Mohd. Ahmed: «The relevance on indigenous systems of organization of production to rural development: a case from the Sudan; *Bulletin No. 4,* Economic and Social Research Council, Khartoum, 1974.
49. cf. B. Beckman: Organizing the farmers: The politics of cocoa in Ghana, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1976.

RESUME

Dans cet article l'auteur s'est assigné comme but d'étudier les fondements et le développement de l'agriculture capitaliste en Afrique et de suggérer des implications pour la politique et la pratique du développement rural. Pour ce faire, il compare d'abord les agents de l'agriculture capitaliste coloniale et ceux de l'agriculture capitaliste africaine, puis l'actuelle politique de développement rurale et celle de l'économie coloniale des réserves des autochtones. Il examinera ensuite les possibilités et les limites du développement rural dans l'Afrique néo-coloniale.

Parlant du Capitalisme agraire colonial , l'auteur fait d'abord remarquer qu'il se caractérisait par une expropriation massive et forcée de la terre des fermiers noirs ainsi que par le partage des communautés rurales en zone centrales et périphériques. Tout cela se faisait avec le soutien de l'état (état compris dans le sens «gouvernement colonial») qui entretenait des relations d'exploitants/ exploités entre les deux communautés.

Une autre approche au développement agricole devait être inaugurée avec la période néo-coloniale. C'est celle qui a conduit à la «Révolution Verte». Elle est dominée par le point de vue américain et se caractérise essentiellement par le désir de la classe capitaliste américaine de :

1– lier la structure de production à l'économie mondiale par le biais des marchés commerciaux et de créer des besoins d'intrans manufacturés
2– augmenter la production au maximum
3– créer une structure sociale qui garantit l'offre de la main-d'oeuvre et qui ne menace pas la domination capitaliste
4– créer une classe de fermiers-hommes d'affaire.

Analysant plus en détails le cas du Kenya et du Soudan dans le cadre de la réalité néo-coloniale, l'auteur en arrive aux conditions qui ont facilité la création et le développement du capitalisme agraire. Ces conditions sont :

– le développement d'un marché local dû à une prolétarisation d'une grande partie de la population
– la spécialisation en matière de production agricole
– le taux élevé d'urbanisation
– le développement de marchés d'exploitation et surtout
– les importantes aides venant de l'Est ou de l'Ouest.

L'auteur étudie ensuite le rôle de l'état dans la formation de classes d'agriculteurs capitalistes en Afrique. L'intervention de l'état s'est faite à trois niveaux : au niveau de la terre, des investissements et de la main-d'oeuvre. Au niveau de la terre l'intervention la plus fréquente s'est faite sous forme de nationalisation des terres qui étaient la propriété des gouvernements coloniaux ou post-coloniaux. Vint ensuite le monopole des marchés d'exportations. Toutes ces interventions ont conduits à la prolétarisation progressive des paysans agriculteurs.

Au niveau des investissements, les fermiers capitalistes ont bénéficié dans les pays néo-coloniaux, de conditions extrêmement favorables qui ont conduit à un taux de profit très élevé. S'agissant de l'intervention de l'état néo-colonial au niveau de la main-d'oeuvre, l'auteur pense qu'elle est plus ou moins indirectement manipulée par les états à cause de certaines données économiques et sociales mais surtout à cause du déséquilibre régional.