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Title: Capitalists, Peasants and Land in Africa: A Comparative Perspective.

by: Gavin Williams

No. 298

Capitalists, Peasants and Land in Africa: A Comparative Perspective

Gavin Williams

Paper presented to the South Africa Economic Research and Training Project Policy Workshop 'Towards a new agrarian democratic order'

Landbouw Universiteit Wageningen, Nederland, 1989.This paper has arises from work towards a comparative and historical study of the development of the agrarian social structures of South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania which will be published, one day, by Routledge as *Land and Freedom*. A Personal Research Grant 0024 2043 from the Economic and Social Research Council enabled me to do much of the work for this study, and this paper extends my report to the ESRC on that research project.
My arguments respond to communications and discussions with a number of friends and colleagues, who have shared their own work and knowledge with me, most particularly Gunilla Andrae, Bjorn Beckman, Debby Bryceson, Paul Clough, Philip Corrigan, Mike Cowen, David Cooper, Judith Heyer, Marian Lacey, John Lonsdale, Abdul Raufu Mustapha, Richard Palmer-Jones, Philip Raikes, Pepe Roberts, Michael Rosen, Bob Shenton, Stanley Trapido, Tina Wallace, Annie Whitehead and Liz Wiley. I have drawn shamelessly on their work, but they are in no way responsible for any of my conclusions, with which they will find much to disagree.

Capitalists, Peasants and Land in Africa: A Comparative Perspective

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The paper compares the development of various forms of capitalist and peasant agriculture and state policies towards them in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania during the coloniao and post-colonial periods. At first sight, our four African examples appear to exemplify distinct patterns of historical transformation: one capitalist (South Africa) and two peasant, one (Nigeria) in a 'capitalist' and one (Tanzania) in a 'socialist' context, and an anmalous fourth version, combining capitalist and peasant forms. However, wage labour and family labour are found in agricultural production in all the countries studied, and labour-, share- and rent tenancies are important in several. These different forms of labour are combined in single enterprises, both on capitalist and peasant farms, and in the strategies adopted by individuals and households to provide for their needs. Similarly, governments of very different political persuasions have often adopted similar policies to control, regulate and 'develop' rural people. Our four examples do not display clearly divergent directions, but they are also not obviously converging on some common destination. In particular, they are not all undergoing the passage from peasant to capitalist, or even to socialist, agriculture. In some cases, the direction of change may be quite the reverse.

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Capitalists and peasants

According to Marx, the original accumulation of capital required the separation of the producers from their means of production.[1] However, the dispossession of the producers, and the displacement of non-capitalist relations of production, has proved to be neither final, nor complete. Nowhere is this more evident than in agriculture. Landowners have found it impossible to recruit, direct, and maintain a labour force through wage payments alone. They have used their access to governments, national and local, to guarantee their markets, and to restrict farm workers mobility and access to independent incomes. To gain control of the labour of others, or of the products of that labour, they have had to engage in a variety of rent-, share-, or labour-tenancy contracts and have often recruited migrant wage workers from members of landholding rural households rather than from a resident, landless proletariat.

The expansion of agricultural production has not always followed from the concentration of holdings into large-scale enterprises. Smallholders have often proved capable of making better use of land and of other resources, of better adapting production to changes in demand, and of delivering crops to the market more cheaply, than have large landowners. Smallholder production can support a larger population than capitalist farming and provide a more extensive market for a variety of locally-supplied goods and services, enhancing rural people's access to non-farm incomes. The most distinctive advantage of large landowners has been their ability to secure privileged access to credit from banks and to markets, and to protection and subsidies from governments.

Rural households usually combine farming with other ways of earning incomes. Peasant farming and wage labour complement one another, both as sources of incomes for peasant-workers, and by allowing capitalists to pay workers wages only for that period when their labour is required. But peasant farming and wage labour also compete with one another, and with domestic tasks, for the labour time of the different members of rural households, as well as for grazing and arable land and access to markets.

Land is necessary, but not sufficient, for agricultural production. Farmers need money to pay for tools and livestock, and for machines and chemicals, as well as to buy many items of consumption. They need access to transport and markets if they are to sell their produce. People seek access to land to cultivate crops and to graze their animals. Some may acquire land in order to secure control over the labour of others; some want access to land as one way of securing a measure of independence from control by others.

Access to labour is central to any system of agricultural production. People may recruit labour through a variety of relations - family ties and marital obligations to spouses and their kin, reciprocal exchanges, slavery, tribute and compulsion, tenancy of land, and cash payments for a day's work or a job to be done. These are often combined with one another within a farm enterprise, and also as part of a single contract. Rights and obligations, access to and the divisions of labour are differentiated by gender and by generation and take a variety of forms.[2] Household relations changed in response to the expansion of commercial production, and of labour migration, male and female, permanent and temporary. Smallholders and labour-tenants depended for their farming activities on the labour of their households. Settler farmers, and their wives, laid claim to the labour of the wives and children of their male tenants, whose own access to land thus depended on their ensuring that their family were available to work for the farm owners.

The colonial state and its successors have claimed and enforced their authority to define the nature of rights to land, and to decide which people may gain access to which land, what crops they may grow on it, and how they may cultivate it. States authorize, regulate, enforce and tolerate the rights of husbands, fathers, employers, chiefs and the state itself over the labour of others. They regulate and tax external, and often internal, trade and may claim monopolies over external or internal markets. Political authorities protect the access of some to certain market opportunities, excluding others, by criteria of race, community membership or national citizenship. The contemporary state asserts its right to define its own aims as the goals of public policy and to identify its own interests as the public interest.

Access to land, to labour, and to markets are bound up with one another and depend on the actions of political authorities. Different, and often conflicting interests, outwith and within the state itself, seek to use government institutions for their own benefits. Government's directives may be evaded or resisted or turned to other purposes than intended.

Support for nationalism in Africa and the forms it has taken have been shaped by different colonial policies and economic relations, and by people's various class situations and experiences of state authorities. The divergent aspirations and grievances of different groups were generalized by political leaders into demands for national independence, which promised to give people access to resources and opportunities from which they had been excluded.

Rural smallholders look to the state to provide opportunities to better their condition. They want their rights to arable and grazing land protected; roads and markets for their crops and livestock; access to the inputs they wish to use to grow the crops they choose to cultivate. They want to be able to sell their crops freely in the best possible markets and to buy commodities in the cheapest markets. They often want schools for their children and opportunities for them in the urban economy. They do not want to be made to provide labour, or to be told what to grow or how to grow it. In short, they want, though they rarely expect, the state to provide the conditions under which they can progress by their own activities; they do not want the state to develop them.

Those who inherited the political kingdom have generally pursued the project of the 'development' of the country which they inherited from the colonial state. Governments have usually provided resources to rural communities in ways which are designed to extend their control over peasants. They have extended colonial marketing arrangements to tax peasants and to regulate agricultural production. Peasants have evaded and resisted attempts to tax them and to direct their lives in the name of development. Where returns have proven inadequate, they have diverted their activities to other crops, or bought and sold commodities on black markets, or failed to follow the directives of irrigation projects or outgrower schemes. State policies have often impoverished peasants and discouraged agricultural production. In a few cases they have secured the cooperation of peasants and the expansion of production of lucrative crops. 'Development' is an activity of state; it is done to people and, possibly, for them, but not by them.[3] It both requires and justifies the extension of state control over rural producers.

Comparative Perspectives

The four countries considered here, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania, exemplify important differences in their patterns of historical development. They also share certain similarities and common, if not

always contemporaneous, experiences. At the outset of colonial rule land was relatively abundant and accessible in all these countries. The problem was to find labour to work it. Similar styles of colonial administration extended to all four countries - to the 'native reserves' in countries where white settlers had appropriated much of the land - involving such colonial constructs as residential segregation, indirect rule and Native Administration, customary law, communal land tenure, agricultural betterment, and control of agricultural marketing. Since independence, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania have pursued 'development' in different ways, and have been the recipients of development aid and the sites of development projects, a model now emulated by the Development Bank of South Africa.

South Africa

In South Africa, capitalism has come to predominate in agricultural production, as in mining and manufacturing. White settlers appropriated most of the country's land. They used the military, legal, administrative and fiscal powers of the state to define and enforce their claim to ownership of land and to establish, subsidize, and sustain variants of capitalist agriculture.

Capitalist agriculture in South Africa had its origins in many forms of recruitment and control of labour.[4] Labour has been provided by slaves, indentured labour, apprenticed captives and tribute labour; rent- and share- tenants, resident labour tenants and by migrant contract workers and has been obtained from forced labour and prison labour, by the employment, with and without wages, of women and children, as well as through the recruitment of resident male wage workers. Restrictions on access to land and obligations on all adult males to pay taxes were used to get Africans to work for wages. Workers' freedom has always been constrained by pass and by vagrancy laws to restrict their mobility. In recent decades there have, in many farming districts, been sharp reductions in the seasonal labour force and wages have risen for many permanent workers. Huge numbers of labour tenants and workers from farms and from rural towns were relocated to resettlement and squatter camps in the Bantustans[5], where they have often had no access either to arable or grazing land or to jobs. The restructuring of capitalist agriculture has sustained farmers access to and control, over cheap labour, and made farm workers less secure than ever in their access to employment and a place t live.[6]

Production has been expanded to meet South African, African and overseas markets. White farmers were served by railway branch lines and low railway tariffs on crops, and by the Land Bank. Agricultural marketing is dominated by state, cooperative, and corporate interests. The prosperity of capitalist farming, especially maize and beef production, continues to be dependent on state pricing policies and is vulnerable to an ever-rising weight of debts. Corporate interests own extensive areas of land today, as they did at the beginning of the century.[7] Capitalist agricultural production has been fed by increasing volumes of environmentally destructive chemicals, in the interests of agrobusiness firms, at great cost to the health of the land, the agricultural workers and many farmers.

Rural blacks engaged in a long and bitter struggle to maintain their control of land, and some form of access to land where whites had excluded then from it, and to recover, retain, and build up their herds of cattle. Before 1913 some purchased land; others squatted on land owned by land companies or white farmers and engaged in share-, rent-, or labour-tenancies to get access to some arable and grazing land. In the

1920s, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union [ICU] articulated tenant resistance to their loss of access to land on white farms.[8]

The expansion of towns and mining settlements created opportunities for Africans with access to land and to markets to increase the production of crops and livestock for sale, particularly in areas where black farmers acquired title to their land, but also in the native reserves, and black tenants extended peasant commodity production on to the land designated for white farming. Black farmers competed with whites for the use of land, for labour, and in the markets for commodities.[9] White farmers in turn competed for labour with mine owners and with commercial and industrial firms.[10]

A series of laws, notably the Native Land Act of 1913 and the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936, excluded Africans from buying or renting land in white areas, though small pieces of land might be provided legally to a designated number of households of labour tenants on white farms. They were to be confined to land in the areas designated as, or added to, the native reserves, which could provide a reservoir of migrant labour, primarily for the mines, and also for farms and towns. These lands would be protected from purchase by white farmers, but not against the state's own capacity to dispose over them. The state authorized the occupation of land in the reserves and its allocation by chiefs and administrators.

Implementation of these laws has been a slow process, extending over many decades.[11] Districts which sought to replace tenants with wage workers after the passing of the 1936 Act found that their labour had migrated to more favourable places. Only thirty years later did it prove possible to replace labour tenancy with wage contracts. Since 1964 the state has carried through a concerted and continuing assault against African freehold land rights, renting of land, and labour tenancy, part of the massive relocations of blacks to Bantustans and 'group areas'.

Farmers in the native reserves were increasingly constrained by lack of sufficient land for cultivation and grazing, poor access to transport and markets and loss of males to migrant labour. Government sought to protect the soil and to raise agricultural productivity by betterment planning, by which land would be allocated to woodland, arable, grazing and residential areas and people relocated into concentrated villages, a practice which goes back to the conquest of the Xhosa on the Eastern Cape Frontier.[12] The 1955 Tomlinson Commission[13] proposed to settle full-time African farmers on 'economic farm units' or, since land in the reserves was so scarce, 'half-sized farm units', in planned areas; the rest of the population would have to find wage employment. The government continued to impose betterment but rejected Tomlinson's unrealistic plan to make most of the people in the reserves landless.

Betterment disrupted people's lives and reduced the land available to them for farming.[14] It has been a source and focus of local resistance to the chiefs through whom it has been imposed. It was exported northwards to other African countries where it also did little for agricultural production and rural incomes and provoked widespread resistance.[15] In recent years, the language and institutional forms of rural development, as practised under the direction of international agencies, have been imported into South Africa's homelands. Bantustan administrations have adopted a policy of replacing communal with individual land tenure, and enriched favoured beneficiaries at the expense of the public purse.

Over the last three decades stagnating or even declining production has been accompanied by rapidly increasing population and the massive movement of people into the impoverished Bantustans. Many people are concentrated in rural slums, termed 'closer settlements', with little or no land to cultivate. Commodity production has declined, or become a

privilege open to a few, notably beneficiaries of the Bantustan administrations.

The development of South African agriculture appears as a story of the development of capitalist farming and the elimination or marginalization of peasant farming. Rural Africans are steadily transformed into proletarians, working for wages on farms, mines, and in towns, when they are not left destitute. Peasant production appears to have a past, but neither much of a present nor any sort of future. However, the transformation of agriculture in South Africa has been more complex, varied and incomplete than the prevalent images of 'white capitalist' and 'black subsistence' farming suggest. Whether the dispossession of Africans peasants is irreversible and the future for South African agriculture must rest with large-scale farming of a capitalist, or possibly a cooperative or collective, variety is open to question - and a continuing political issue.

Kenya

In Kenya white settler farms and plantations were established in the colonial period limiting, but not preventing, the rise of peasant production which was to expand dramatically after independence. Large areas of land in and around the Rift Valley/ White Highlands were appropriated for white settlement and sold cheaply to white farmers, often over the heads of those who used the land for grazing or cultivation.

Settlers acquired land, but lacked labour, as well as cattle and relevant farming skills. Consequently, white farmers encouraged Africans, mainly Kikuyu, to settle on their farms with their cattle, providing labour in exchange for access to land and grazing. They combined the employment of tenants with migrant contract workers. Once they had established their farms, white farmers sought to persuade the colonial state to secure more effective control over both their land and their labour forces. Thus began a series of bitter conflicts which would continue until independence.

White farmers secured a series of legislative and administrative measures to bring resident labourers under their authority, constrain their ability to change jobs, limit their stock, and increase their labour obligations. Railway lines were built and tariffs set to favour white farmers. They wanted government to assure them of stable and remunerative maize prices. However, the interests of capitalist farmers differed among themselves. Plantations had higher demands for labour than did settler farmers who combined grain production with cattle keeping. Plantations purchased maize for their workers rather than sold it. Many African tenants left the farms rather than accept wage contracts and the loss of their stock. White farmers were thus never entirely successful in reorganizing their estates in accordance with their conception of capitalist farming.

Kenyan settlers were in a weak position to secure state support for their claims during trade slumps, but were able to do so when the state wanted to increase their production during and after the two world wars. Thus Kenyan maize farmers only secured a control scheme to protect their maize prices during the second world war. Even then, Africans far from Nairobi in Kavirondo were able to benefit from the transport subsidies and those in Kiambu, close to Nairobi, to evade controls and sell maize directly.[16]

The land reserved for Africans was designated Crown land, and Africans were prevented from acquiring individual, and mortgageable, title. The colonial state prohibited Africans from growing coffee and tea and keeping grade cattle, except within strict limits and in areas distant

from the white farms and areas of labour recruitment. Government policies thus confined the opportunities open to African entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, Africans continued to use a large share of the land in the White Highlands for their own farming. Producers in the native reserves expanded their production of agricultural commodities, notably of maize and of wattle.[17]

As in South Africa, government sought to deal with the consequences of land scarcity in the reserves by imposing measures to protect the soil against erosion and constraining commercial production of maize. The authority of chiefs, and the communal allocation of land by chiefs, was deemed necessary to save both the soil and the community. The restriction of African commodity production, the expulsion of labour tenants, and the imposition of agricultural regulations all contributed to the explosive growth of African nationalism and the Mau Mau rebellion.[18] Government met the rebellion with massive coercion. The people in the Kikuyu and Embu reserves were herded into concentrated villages; large numbers of Kikuyu were expelled from the White Highlands and from Nairobi to the reserves and resettlement schemes.

The government now tried to promote soil conservation by encouraging landowning agricultural entrepreneurs. It sought to use the opportunity provided by the Emergency to consolidate and to register title to land and organise settlement around villages.[19] However, the rights of small as well as large landholders, though not of tenants, were protected. The government selectively allowed Africans to grow coffee, tea, and pyrethrum and to keep dairy cattle. The incomes projected for African farmers, and the land available to them, were appropriate to peasant producers rather than capitalist entrepreneurs. After the Emergency, people abandoned the villages into which they had been resettled.

The promised agricultural revolution had to await the redistribution of white-owned land before and after independence, and the expansion of production of high-value cash crops amongst larger numbers of smallholders. State agencies and transnational companies directed the expansion of coffee, tea, pyrethrum, dairy and sugar production through their control of marketing and thereby consolidated the growth of a middle peasantry and restricted the expansion of private trade in agricultural produce.[20] Increased export production by smallholders provided the foreign exchange to finance the growth of industry and commerce.

The benefits of increased smallholder production have accrued disproportionately to households, and to regions, with access to fertile land on which it is possible to grow lucrative crops. Smallholding families have combined agricultural production with urban employment, both as a means for meeting consumption needs and, among the better provided, as a source of funds for agricultural investments. In less favoured regions, rural residents, mainly women have become increasingly impoverished depending on poor local earnings and meagre remittances from migrant relatives to meet their needs.[21] Pastoralists have been confined to colonial 'reserves' and, more recently, group ranches and grazing schemes designed to open grazing land for commercial ranching.[22]

The transfer of large 'mixed' farms to African ownership provided opportunities for rural entrepreneurship, economic and political, to the expanding African bourgeoisie. Between independence in 1963 and 1968, the smallholder share of agricultural commercial production increased dramatically to match the contribution of plantations and large farms. The increase in smallholder production was most marked in the production of crops for export, which enabled smallholders to benefit from commodity booms in the 1970s, and left them vulnerable to the recessions of the 1980s. Large-scale farmers have concentrated on maize and cattle,

produced mainly for more stable and protected domestic markets. Multinational companies continue to maintain plantations which produce exports alongside smallholders and to dominate ranching.[23]

White settlers in Kenya were never able to exclude African producers from the land or from access to markets to the extent that was possible in South Africa. The independence settlement changed the balance between capitalist and peasant farming. It compensated whites for the value of the lands they had appropriated and protected and partly Africanized the capitalist farm sector. Kenyan capitalists have used their political power and their wealth to acquire land and protect large-scale farming but not to displace the smallholders on whose export earnings the economy depends. Scarcities of land and falling export revenues may intensify conflicts over the allocation of resources, but they may be more likely to take place along ethnic and regional than along class lines.

Nigeria

Prior to colonial conquest, southern Nigeria was a major exporter of wild palm produce. The building of railways and, belatedly, roads by the colonial government created conditions for the expansion of commercial production of arable and tree crops for local and export markets, and of the trade in livestock. By the end of the colonial period, Nigeria was the world's largest exporter of palm produce and groundnuts and, after Ghana, of cocoa. Nigeria also exported quantities of cotton, rubber, shea nut and sesame seed. An oligopoly of foreign merchant companies dominated imports and exports, but the extensive network of trade for domestic markets was developed by African traders.

In Nigeria peasants' exports secured the government's revenue base. Trading companies did not wish to be excluded from markets by planters and oilseed manufacturers. Colonial governments therefore resisted Lever's demands that they provide land, labour and trading monopolies for plantations in southern Nigeria. The government itself assumed ownership of land in the North, and vested control of land in the chiefs to protect peasant land from alienation. In practice, Nigerians bought and sold land, though in most rural areas the availability of farm land kept prices relatively low. In southern Nigeria, 'strangers' gained access to land and crops through rent- and share-tenancy agreements.[24]

Office-holders and merchants used various institutions to try to secure labour from their subjects, clients or debtors, and irrigated land and contracts from the state. But they lacked the control of land necessary to subordinate producers to wage labour on their own terms. Throughout Nigeria, peasant households emerged as the predominant form of rural producers. People migrated extensively among rural areas to find land for arable and tree crops or for grazing, as well as to escape their erstwhile slave status or oppressive exactions by officials. In many communities, the management of different crops was divided between men and women. Among both Yoruba and Hausa farmers, men managed crop production. Economic opportunities outside the household enabled sons to contest these demands and to modify their terms and gave rise to conflicts, often covert, over men's capacity to command their wives labour-time.[25] Seasonal migrant workers were recruited from diverse areas to harvest crops. Nevertheless, family labour predominated and most wage labour was recruited from local farming families. In the absence of a landless class in the rural areas, agricultural wages remained relatively high.

During the second world war, the state took over the export and pricing of crops for exports. After the war, the state marketing boards justified their licensing of produce traders by the need to regulate competition and thereby protect the producers from exploitation by

'middlemen'. From the Second World War until 1986, the state marketing boards used their monopoly over exports to impose very heavy taxation on rural producers. However, agricultural exports only began to decline sharply after the Nigerian civil war and the rise of mineral oil exports. Imports of wheat, rice, maize, meat, milk, day old chicks, and even vegetable oils then rose precipitately, accentuated by the overvaluation of the naira. Nevertheless, increased demand encouraged grain producers in northern Nigeria to expand production for urban and for rural markets in Nigeria and Niger after the end of the 1972-74 Sahel drought. A Grains Marketing Board was set up in 1977. In most years it bought no grain but it did buy yellow maize selectively from capitalist farmers and traders when capitalists could not find a market for their grain at an adequate price.[26] In 1986 the marketing boards were abolished, the naira was devalued and the import of a wide range of agricultural commodities banned. This raised the prices of export and locally consumed crops and encouraged some revival of crops such as cocoa and cotton.

Before World War II, official policy was generally cautious about interfering with existing farming practices. The government tried to regulate cotton production and cotton markets, and promoted cooperative marketing of cocoa. Attempts to promote 'mixed' grain and cattle farming, irrigation, resettlement and mechanization had little success or impact.

Since the war, Nigerian governments have initiated various projects, some funded by international agencies, to modernize peasant agriculture and to promote large-scale farming, capitalist and state-run. They have financed settlement schemes, established plantations for cultivated oil palms, rubber and sugar and set up state farms and ranches. Under the auspices of World Bank agricultural development projects, state governments have subsidized and distributed credit, fertilizers and tractors, promoted high-yielding cocoa trees and yellow maize. Without World Bank assistance, governments paid for grandiose dams and gravity irrigation systems; they appropriated vast amounts of money and water and produced limited quantities of wheat, rice, sugar, and tomatoes at great economic and environmental cost. [27] Since the ban on wheat imports, large areas of scrub bush have been cleared and levelled to produce winter wheat with tubewell irrigation. This has excluded pastoralists from access to dry-season grazing, and is likely to erode soil and reduce fertility in the search for quick profits.[28] The Land Use Decree extended governments legal rights to control the disposition of land, but governments face political limits to their capacity to appropriate land for irrigation schemes, ranches and large-scale farming schemes.

Governments' and World Bank efforts to promote agricultural production have been marked by an ignorance of the conditions under which peasants cultivate and of demand for their crops, and by high costs and poor, generally negative, net returns.[29] The major contribution of governments in Nigeria to increasing agricultural production has been to build and maintain roads. The Nigerian state subsidized the entry of urban-based capitalist farmers into potentially lucrative but import-dependent niches, such as yellow maize, poultry, and ranching; import bans have created new niches for capitalist farmers using subsidized tubewells. These subsidizies make profits for well-connected capitalists, but do little to contribute to meeting Nigeria's staple food needs.

In Nigeria since the colonial period, agricultural production for both overseas and internal markets has depended almost entirely on peasant smallholders. There have been significant differences and important changes in the relative incomes of peasants growing different crops and living in different parts of the country, and in the extent of inequalities within rural communities. In some important areas of commercial agriculture where ample land suitable for growing lucrative

crops was initially available to those able to develop it, a group of wealthy farmers emerged, who typically combined farming with lucrative commercial activities; subsequent inward migration reduced the supply of land. The result was the emergence of a relatively unequal rural community, but also to constrain the further expansion of inequalities in access to land and to incomes within those areas.[30]

Between 1939 and 1986 the Nigerian state used its control of the exports trade to tax peasants heavily, ultimately undermining Nigeria's agricultural exports. Oil exports briefly allowed the state the illusion that it could import cheap food and overlook the importance of agricultural exports.Fortunately, the government never took control of the internal market for food and other crops so that peasants, particularly in the north, could take advantage of rising prices and expand production of crops for the Nigerian market, despite competition from cheap imports.

Holders of political, civil and military office have sought from government, and often obtained, access to rain-fed and irrigated land, cheap credit, fertilizers, tractors, and guaranteed prices for their crops. This has enabled some of them to make money from their investments in farming. However, they have been unable to secure sufficient control over the labour power of others to establish secure foundations for capitalist farming in Nigeria. Their contribution to agricultural production has been marginal. Nigeria must continue to look to the peasantry to supply its food and to produce crops for export.

Tanzania

Agriculture in Tanganyika, under German and British colonial rule, combined production by plantations, settler farmers and African peasant producers. Settlers were largely restricted to the Arusha and Kilimanjaro areas. They grew coffee for export and tobacco for the protected local market. They were unable to prevent Africans from growing coffee as their Kenyan compatriots had done. From the German period, smallholders grew coffee in Bukoba and Kilimanjaro and cotton in Sukumaland. But most smallholder production was devoted to food crops. Colonial Tanganyika's main export was sisal production on plantations employing migrant workers from areas in the south of the country with poor access to markets.

Tanganyika's limited export earnings meant that the administration was always concerned with raising revenue and saving money. Levels of food production were vulnerable to drought and in poor years had to be supplemented by imports and famine relief. Taxes were high relative to cash earnings. Officials sought to regulate peasant production and marketing by administrative direction. They tried to organise coffee, and later tobacco, marketing and cotton marketing and ginning by creating cooperatives. Regulations variously sought to enforce crop acreages for export crops on the one hand and food or 'famine' crops on the other, to counter soil erosion and plant and animal diseases, and to impose improved methods of cultivation. Resistance to agricultural regulations, and to chiefs who implemented them, and resentment at the limited access of Africans to trading opportunities provided support for nationalism in rural areas of Tanganyika.[31]

Attempts to enforce agricultural regulations were abandoned in face of popular opposition. Government tried instead to 'transform' farmers by resettling them, and to 'improve' agriculture by encouraging 'master farmers' to innovate. Peasant production of export crops, especially cotton, coffee and cashew nuts, expanded in the 1950s and 1960s. After independence, several sisal plantations were taken over by their workers as cooperatives. Falling international demand, poor prices and low productivity drastically reduced sisal exports.

Independent Tanganyika took over from its colonial predecessor a heritage of administrative regulation and state control of marketing and a Fabian ideology of promoting cooperation to protect African communities[34] from the disruptive consequences of western capitalism and of state direction of 'development'. The relative weakness of both capitalist and peasant agriculture in Tanzania gave the state greater scope to extend its controls over agricultural marketing, retail distribution and even rural settlement than other governments. It could not make peasants produce crops for sale to legal markets for meagre returns. Between 1967 and 1984 Tanzanian socialism exemplified most sharply the ideology and practice of state direction of 'rural development' promoted by colonial officials, nationalist politicians, Fabian intellectuals and international development agencies throughout Africa, and beyond.[35]

Convergences and divergences

Barrington Moore, in his *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*,[36] identified as critical to the subsequent trajectories of the societies he studied three forms of transition to commercial agriculture: they required respectively bourgeois democratic revolutions, conservative revolutions from above culminating ultimately in fascist regimes, and peasants revolutions giving rise to communist states. Ultimately, they all converged on a common destination - modern, industrial society. In *all* Moore's cases the state carried out a 'revolution from above', before or after, or even in the absence of, political revolution. In Moore's view, a modern society is one without peasants. Whatever their part in the destruction of the old regimes, peasants were bound to be the victims of the revolutions. The continued domination of the Indian countryside by peasants was both evidence of and reason for the failure of the Indian state to create a modern society.

In each of our African examples, the colonial powers defined state boundaries and created state institutions, through which they changed local societies and their relations to the wider world. The post-colonial state has been central to the formation of locally dominant classes, the extension of national control over resources and the pursuit of 'development'. However, except in South Africa, peasants have not been displaced, a sign for the 'development community' of the backwardness of rural Africa and the need to 'modernize' it. Contrary to this image, Africa is part of the modern world and is integrated into a monetary economy.

At first sight, our four African examples appear to exemplify distinct patterns of historical transformation. South Africa might be taken as an example of the imposition of a form of agricultural capitalism and dispossession of the peasantry, comparable to Lenin's 'Junker path' to agrarian capitalism.[37] Peasants continue to dominate agricultural production in Nigeria and in Tanzania. Whereas Nigeria has been dominated, both before and since independence, by variants of commercial capitalism, the Tanzanian state drew on its colonial heritage to produce a strategy of developing the countryside through a form of rural socialism. Kenya (like Zimbabwe) has proved more ambiguous. From the perspective of the late colonial period, Kenya seemed to have more in common with South Africa than with the countries where peasant agriculture survives. The expansion of peasant production since independence has brought about an uneasy balance between capitalist and peasant farming. It has also encouraged a revision of the view that colonial rule marginalised the peasantry. The timing of our perspective is crucial to the ways we understand history.

Still, we may from our African examples be able to identify three variants of rural transition, one capitalist and two peasant (one in a 'capitalist' and one in a 'socialist' context), and an anomalous fourth version, combining capitalist and peasant forms. However, a number of motifs reappear in the descriptions of several countries, crossing the boundaries delineated by our typologies. Wage labour and family labour are found in agricultural production in all the countries studied, and labour-, share- and rent tenancies are important in several. These different forms of labour are combined in single enterprises, both on capitalist and peasant farms, and in the strategies adopted by individuals and households to provide for their needs.

These observations suggest that empirical events tend to escape the limits of the broad concepts we use to analyse them, such as capitalism, peasants or households. They also raise questions about the way we interpret similar phenomena which appear in different contexts. Is wage labour on peasant farms evidence of the penetration of capitalist principles into the peasantry? Is renting or sharecropping the land of a widow who is unable to plough her own land the same as cultivating part of a large company estate? Are labour tenants to be interpreted as peasant producers, providing labour in order to gain access to land, or as wage workers remunerated partly in kind and tied to their employers' land?

Tenancy and labour contracts which are not based solely on cash payments may be interpreted as aspects of a process of transition towards, or possibly away, from capitalism. But they can only be identified as such after the event, or by first assuming a prior theory of historical change. They will be interpreted differently according to our historical vantage-point. They also look quite different to the various participants, depending on where they stand in these relationships. Conflicts between landowners and labour tenants have proved to be extremely bitter because they go beyond the negotiation of terms - how many days labour is to be provided, how much arable or grazing land is to be available, how much cash is to be paid - to the nature of the relationship itself. People challenge one another's claims to the rights to use and to dispose over 'their' land and 'their time' and seek to enforce these claims through the courts or, more often, by the direct deployment, or the threat, of private and public violence.

Governments of different political persuasions have followed many of the same policies as each other, before and after independence. Colonial administrations tended to adopt similar views and policies towards the administration and the use of 'native' land in all countries. Fashions in colonial agricultural policies changed, but tended to do so across rather than within colonial boundaries. Similarly, the international development agencies reproduce similar institutional forms and policy prescriptions across the continent and, indeed, the globe.[38]

The state's control of land rights has been central to colonial and post-colonial plans for social and political engineering. In some cases, extensive areas were granted to settlers and to companies for plantations; in others peasant rights to land were protected, or a balance was struck between the two. Colonial rulers initially tended to favour forms of individual property rights for indigenous peoples, to reward their collaborators and to encourage commercial farming. Their successors preferred to vest ownership of African land in the colonial state and to allocate it under a system of 'communal land tenure' through their 'Native Authorities'. This was intended to bolster the power, and perhaps the incomes, of colonial chiefs, to enable colonial officials to direct the activities of African farmers and to protect the peasantry from the consequences of commercial developments.

The failures of, and resistance to, agricultural 'betterment' turned state ideology in Kenya, and belatedly in South Africa, to favour individual title to promote a stratum of rural entrepreneurs farming 'economically-viable' holdings. Independent Tanzania preferred the earlier colonial ideology; nationalization of land provided a legal framework for reordering rural land rights and forms of settlement. In Nigeria, the state revived and extended the colonial claim to own all land to make it easier to appropriate land for public, and for private capitalist, purposes. The legal forms of individual 'freehold' property have been used to deny people their claims to land rights. 'Nationalization' has served a variety of ideological and political purposes; it has been used to dispossess peasants from their lands to to subordinate them to state directives.

'Development' villages were central to the strategy of rural socialism in in Tanzania. They were justified by the need to bring people together under a common administration so that the state can more easily provide them with services and encourage them to work together for their own development. They were to enable the state to extend its reach into the countryside and bring people under official surveillance. On the Eastern Cape frontier, during the nineteenth century, nucleated settlements were variously promoted to encourage Africans to adopt modern practices, to concentrate displaced groups into small areas, and to control a recalcitrant people. In Kenya during the Emergency, government relocated people into villages, and sought to base their strategies of agricultural improvement on the new village settlements. In Abakaliki, Eastern Nigeria the colonial government set up a rural water supply project as a way of creating nucleated villages to deal with a breakdown of order. They failed to supply rural water, but did relocate people into villages.[39] Tanzania's combination of relocating people into village settlements, planned on straight lines in military fashion with compulsory agricultural improvement has its most influential African antecedent in the policy of 'betterment planning' in South Africa's 'native reserves'.

All sorts of governments have shown a penchant for regulating agricultural marketing and establishing marketing boards for exports as well as for domestically traded crops. The rule has been that state marketing arrangements and other interventions subsidise capitalist farmers and tax peasants; where peasants have benefitted it has usually been as a consequence of the extension of subsidies to large-scale farmers. Governments and firms have tried to use their control of irrigated land and the marketing of processed crops to make farmers grow specific crops according to their instructions.

Are these similarities simply the consequences of fashions in the policies of colonial administrators and development agencies? Do they reflect common assumptions about peasant backwardness and common problems in taxing and controlling peasants. Are they only superficial phenomenal appearances, belying essential differences? Or do they suggest that there are fundamental similarities in the social structures and state policies of countries who seem to have developed along such different lines?

It seems that our examples do not display clearly divergent directions, but rather a variety of overlaps, cross-overs and combinations. But they are also not obviously converging on some common destination. In particular, they are not all undergoing the passage from peasant to capitalist, or even to socialist, agriculture. In some cases, the direction of change may be quite the reverse.

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